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**MOTHERS' INVOLVEMENT IN THEIR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION: A
COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MOTHERS FROM CANADA, INDIA AND MEXICO**

Meenakshi Gupta

Department of Culture and Values

McGill University, Montreal

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Abstract

This cross-cultural inquiry focuses on the involvement of mothers in their children's education and the ways in which motherhood impacts the personal identities of mothers. The Second-wave feminism started thirty years ago and questioned the role and position of mothers in society. The objective of this movement was to free women from the exclusive responsibility of childcare. However, three decades later women are still the primary caregivers for their children. The study involves 36 middle-class mothers, 12 each from Canada, India and Mexico. Irrespective of their cultural backgrounds, these mothers participated actively in the domestic work related to childcare and in their children's schoolwork. Participants in this study expressed their views about intensive mothering and how they sought their personal identities from the work of mothering. The majority regarded motherhood as a unique and rewarding role, and wished to continue mothering despite the frustrations and stresses they experienced. The findings concerning the childcare strategies of mothers from Canada, India and Mexico highlight some cultural differences. These cultural differences also had an impact on how these mothers perceived their roles and identities.

Résumé

Cette recherche inter-culturelle met l'accent sur l'implication des mères dans l'éducation de leurs enfants et analyse dans quelles mesures la maternité influe sur la propre identité des mères. Le mouvement féministe, dont la deuxième phase a débuté il y a une trentaine d'années, s'est interrogé sur le rôle et la position des mères dans la société. Le but de ce mouvement a été de libérer les femmes de la responsabilité exclusive de l'éducation des enfants. Cependant, trois décennies plus tard, ce sont toujours les femmes qui s'occupent le plus de leurs enfants. L'étude concerne 36 mères de la classe moyenne, originaires, à égalité, du Canada, de l'Inde et du Mexique. Quelque soient leurs origines culturelles, ces mères se sont beaucoup impliquées dans l'éducation et le travail scolaire de leurs enfants. Les participantes à cette étude ont exprimé leur opinion à propos d'une forte implication dans le rôle de mère et comment elles ont construit leurs identités personnelles au travers de leur rôle de mère. La majorité d'entre elles considéraient la maternité comme unique et gratifiante et souhaitaient continuer à s'occuper de leurs enfants malgré les frustrations et le stress qu'elles ont vécu. Les conclusions de la recherche concernant les choix dans l'éducation des enfants des mères du Canada, de l'Inde et du Mexique mettent en lumière des différences culturelles. Ces différences culturelles ont également des conséquences sur la façon dont ces mères ont perçu leurs rôles et leurs identités.

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PROLOGUE

I am not a mother. However, I decided to study mothers in the context of their influence on their children's education because I have seen how my mother has struggled to educate eight independent, self-sufficient children in an environment in which she experienced severe hardships. My mother studied until grade 8; all her children have completed their masters' degrees at the graduate level in various disciplines, such as engineering, commerce, home economics, mathematics, and history. My mother's personal experiences with her children's education sparked my interest to study how mothers from three countries Canada, India and Mexico work in support of their children's education.

I chose to conduct a comparative qualitative inquiry of mothers in three countries, Canada, India and Mexico based upon my personal connections and experiences with each country and its culture. I am an Indo-Canadian researcher, and for the past eight years, I have been pursuing my graduate and post-graduate studies in Canadian universities. This time period has facilitated my understanding of the role and position of white middle-class mothers in Canada. I was born in India and grew up there. My strong ties with India and its society allowed me to understand the cultural challenges faced by middle-class mothers in India from an emic perspective (Geertz, 1973). With regards to Mexico, since 1996, I have been making frequent work related trips to this country. Each visit has helped me to examine and study Mexican culture, and to focus on the roles and responsibilities Mexican mothers carried out to nurture their children.

CHAPTER 1

SITUATING AND UNDERSTANDING MY RESEARCH PROBLEM

Overview

This comparative inquiry of 36 mothers (12 each from Canada, India and Mexico) attempts to take the readers through the work these mothers do in support of their children's education and to investigate how mothering influences their personal identities. During 1998 and 1999, I interviewed 36 mothers with the intent of capturing and recognising their voices through their personal narratives and lived experiences. I define **voice** as an acknowledgement of what meaning these women gave to their everyday role of mothering. I believe it is important to recognize and redefine the role of mothers in order to understand the ways in which some mothers exercise their responsibilities, which are often taken for granted, in the family. These 36 mothers worked as mentors and devoted themselves to guiding their children and helping them to develop their individual personalities. The following examples demonstrate how mothers from each culture perceived their role of mothering.

Mothers' summary of their everyday role

It's a very busy role. I've enjoyed it for 30 years now, and I'm probably going to be doing it for another close to 20 years as we have younger children. Very fulfilling (Nancy, Canada: November 1998).

Everything. Everything. Doing the household jobs, managing the children. I look after every aspect of the family (Haritha, India: March 1998).

The role of a mother is to...I as a mother like to encourage my children. I like to give them...I like to encourage them so that they can benefit from the various good things. For me the best thing for my children is education, a professional degree. And for this I as a mother work, also my husband works, we both work for their (children's) education (Imelda, Mexico: January 1999).

In this inquiry, I focused on *mothers* rather than fathers even though the argument can be made that fathers also play an influential role in the family. I am not denying the importance of the fathers' role in their children's socialization, education and identity construction. My aim, however, is to focus on the legendary mother-child relationship and the diverse range of nurturing work underpinning mothers' involvement in their parenting role and their children's accomplishments. In his seminal research, McClelland (1961) also focused on parent-child relations and the psychological impact of parents' attitudes on the *n Achievement* (need for achievement) of their children during the formative years. This study helped to define the relationship between mothers and children and how mothers' approach produces differences in the *n Achievement* of their children.

McClelland's findings based on actual observation had their own limitations. Firstly, the study did not include daughters and focused only on mother-son relationships. Secondly, it was a psychological research that used quantitative methodology and the crudity of the measuring instruments obscured the findings. My inquiry is sociological and is significant in studying cross-cultural perspectives of mothers' involvement in their children's education.

The involvement of mothers in preparing the children for school, taking responsibility for their homework and other education related activities, is observed as an everyday household work that comes naturally to mothers (Enders-Dragasser, 1991; Reay, 1998). Social psychologists Belenky, Bond & Winestock (1997) wrote that the contributions mothers make for nurturing our society "remain largely invisible, their words unheard, and society fails to reap the full benefit of their contribution" (p. 4). Therefore, it is important to systematically understand the investment of mothers' time and energy

towards their children's schooling and to study the ways in which these responsibilities influence the personal identities of mothers.

Research in the Past and My Position

The Feminist analysis of the past thirty years has been quite critical of motherhood as a social institution. The concept of motherhood was observed as a critical obstacle to women's liberation, which confined women to the everyday chores of the home, such as cleaning, cooking and childcare. On one hand, the white middle-class women's liberationist movements demanded respect and acknowledgement for their housework and childcare responsibilities. On the other hand, some feminists (Firestone, 1970) undervalued their own role of mothering. These views contrasted sharply with the working class and/or non-white women who found "parenting one of the few interpersonal relationships where they are affirmed and appreciated" (hooks, 1984, p.135). Thus, the views of western liberal feminists reflected race and class bias.

Even though the views of liberal feminists resonated race and class bias, the primary objective of liberal individualism was to demonstrate that the observable differences between the sexes are not innate but a result of socialization and "sex-role conditioning". Eisenstein (1981) argued that patriarchy as a political structure "controls and subjugates women so that their possibilities for making choices about their sexuality, childrearing, mothering, loving, and laboring are curtailed" (p.14). Therefore in this inquiry, my position as a critical feminist researcher agrees with the concept of equal opportunities for women, advocated by the leaders of liberal individualism. Women, irrespective of their social class and race, should have the right to stay at home and be

given the status they deserve for their total devotion to their families.

Research Participants and Generalizability

In January 1998, I began my field research in India and the research was expanded to Canada and Mexico. I selected middle-class because middle-class mothers from across the three cultures shared many economical similarities unlike mothers from the lower-income groups of these countries. The criteria for inclusion in this inquiry were that a participating mother belongs to a traditional two-parent, middle-class nuclear family and at the time of the inquiry have at least a boy and a girl, within the age range of 3-18, who attended elementary, secondary, or high school. I predefined the children's age in order to study how these mothers influenced their children's schooling. The other factor I considered for selecting the participants was that they do not have any live-in nannies for their children. Glenn (1994) observed that when mothers from privileged classes had external help with raising their children, then the impetus of childrearing fell upon the hired help which in most cases were "working-class women and women of colour" (p.7).

My analysis is based on a sample of 36 mothers with whom I conducted in-depth interviews that lasted from one to four hours and usually took place in their homes. A few interviews occurred in the participants' offices and one was conducted in my office. My participants came from varied professional, academic and cultural backgrounds. The mothers I interviewed were either full-time/part-time working or full-time homemakers with high school diplomas or university degrees. I selected these 36 participants for the following reasons:

1. Urban middle-class mothers, from both working and stay-home groups were selected because studies have shown that middle-class mothers primarily indulged

in the ideology of intensive mothering (Hays, 1996; see also Reay, 1998; Griffith & Smith, 1987). The majority of the participants in my study conformed to similar patterns of childrearing, as they strongly believed in the cultural model of appropriate childcare and constantly invested their time and skills in the educational development of their children.

2. My middle-class upbringing gave me easy access to my participants and also helped me to better understand these mothers' views on issues such as their personal beliefs about childrearing and the values these mothers promoted with regards to their children's education.
3. I chose families who had a boy and a girl because one of my objectives was to determine if mothers perpetuated gender-bias in their childcare.

The inquiry does not aim to make the sample population selected for this study representative of all middle-class mothers or mothers in general. The goal is to focus on and describe the everyday lives of these 36 mothers without drawing an assumption that these experiences are common to all the mothers. Many qualitative researchers have actively rejected the notion of representation, for example Schofield (1993) wrote:

For researchers... the goal is to describe a specific group in fine detail and to explain the patterns that exist, certainly not to discover general laws of human behavior. (...) However, they do not expect other researchers in a similar or even the same situation to replicate their findings in the sense of independently coming up with a precisely similar conceptualization. As long as other researchers' conclusions are not inconsistent with the original account, differences in the reports would not generally raise serious questions related to validity or generalizability (pp. 92-93).

Objectives of My Inquiry

My objectives focus on how these 36 middle-class mothers perceived their roles and personal identities in relation to their involvement in their children's education within their individual contexts or situations. Economic and social variations prevailed within these mothers that further influenced their personal identities and the findings of my research. I hope their insights can be useful for future work in the area of family, gender and sociological studies.

In this inquiry, I have focused on mothers from three cultures Canadian, Indian and Mexican. It is important to recognize the voices of mothers from different cultures and to examine how these voices add a new dimension to the pre-existing concept of motherhood. By **culture**, I am referring to the ways an individual perceives, believes and behaves, which characterize him/her as a member of one particular social group. Thus, I have four aims in this inquiry: 1) to bring multiple perspectives from different cultures about motherhood to the existing knowledge base; 2) to examine the ways in which mothers' participation influence their children's education; 3) to study mothers' impact on their children's development; 4) and to determine how mothers conceptualize their personal roles in relation to their children's everyday lives.

Mother, Motherhood and Mothering

When asked to define their role as a mother, the majority of these women identified a full-time role that involved providing complete physical and emotional support for their children, in addition to looking after the various household responsibilities. As illustrated in the following examples, Canadian, Indian and Mexican mothers shared a common frame of

reference when they discussed their views about motherhood. For example, in response to the question "Tell me about your role as a mother", some of the typical responses I received were as follows:

My role as a mother is nurturing, teaching, protecting, living by example, showing the kids where...the pathway to go in which way they can become good human beings hopefully (Jessie, Canada: June 1999).

As a mother I think possibly everything I'll do for my kids. Whatever. Not that my husband is not interested but he is very busy (Ekta, India: January 1998).

I like that I can take care of my children, I like to prepare myself for helping them and also I like to always update myself (Geena, Mexico: January 1999).

In the responses quoted above, all these women, regardless of their cultural background, emphasized the ways in which their children should be nurtured. All these mothers perceived motherhood positively and took great pride in looking after their children. They liked to engage themselves in activities specifically directed towards providing their children with proper care and supporting their children's schooling. The participation of the fathers was minimal in childcare, and these mothers attributed their husbands' unavailability to time constraints or work pressures.

After listening to the voices of these 36 mothers, I defined and distinguished between the terms *mother*, *motherhood* and *mothering* as follows: a **mother** is a female parent and society assigns her the primary responsibility of childrearing. Whereas, **motherhood** refers to the concept depicted as a natural role by our patriarchal society that "locks women into biological reproduction, and denies them identities and selfhood outside mothering" (Glenn, 1994, p. 9). **Mothering** is defined as the act of giving full-time care to their children. However, Glenn believed that mothering also restricted women from

thinking independently for themselves because mothering was regarded as women's "primary and exclusive identity" (p. 14).

Middle-class and Family

As informed by Haralambos & Heald (1991):

...middle-class subculture emphasizes an individual rather than a collective strategy. A high value is placed on individual achievement and the route to success is seen in terms of individual effort. Parents have high aspirations for their children and look forward to them achieving a higher social status than themselves (p. 55).

Middle-class can be defined as people working in non-manual occupations and enjoying pay and work conditions more favourable than those of a working-class group. My definition of middle-class mothers evolves from the educational and social backgrounds of all these women participants. Since the majority of the women I interviewed were not working mothers, I could not define their social status based on their profession and income. At the same time, I did not wish to define these mothers' social class based on their husbands' occupational mobility, although traditionally women's social class had been determined by the occupational status and income of the male members (Goldthorpe, 1983).

Each woman has her own fund of knowledge, beliefs and values that she brings into her family and gradually shares with other family members (Witz & Savage, 1992). Based upon individual experiences, a woman's personal credentials, education and cultural values tend to remain intact even if they marry men less educated or more accomplished than themselves (Allen, 1982; Abbot & Sapsford, 1987). The majority of these mothers had university education and was striving for higher or the same educational status for their

children. For these mothers, the idea of parental involvement was "much more an issue of continuity with the past, than disjuncture" (Reay, 1998, p. 58).

As defined in the Penguin Dictionary of Sociology (1988), **nuclear families** are:

... social units comprising a man and a woman living together with their children, nuclear families are often contrasted with extended families. One theoretical position assumes a "functional fit" between the nuclear family and industrialization, in that the nuclear family is free of wider kinship ties, is more geographically and socially mobile, gives greater emotional support via the unconstrained choice of marriage partners, and permits occupational roles to be filled by achievement criteria, all requirements of industrial society. The family structure of contemporary society is thus said to be composed of relatively isolated nuclear family households, although there will be considerable social variations (p.168).

An example of social variation is India, where the concept of nuclear family includes either or both parents living with married sons or daughters (with or without children), and having common property and income (Dube, 1994). However, in Canada and Mexico after marriage young couples establish their independent households and "relationships with kin beyond the nuclear family are not obligatory, they are a matter of individual choice" (Haralambos & Heald, 1991: 355).

Changes in the social infrastructure of families have introduced new challenges to the concept of motherhood. The definition of **contemporary** family is no longer restricted to a **heterosexual** two-parent family where both mother and father have significant roles to play in their children's development. Today, there are lesbian mothers, gay fathers, single mothers and teenage mothers. These mothers bring a new dimension to the concept of motherhood. However, my study focuses on the heterosexual-two parent families from Canada, India and Mexico.

Focus of My Study and Claim to Originality

The data collected indicates the ways in which these mothers wove in and out of their children's activities and drew immense pleasure from their active participation in their children's development. Building on this active participation of mothers, popularly referred to as "mothers' nurturing role", the focus of my study is two fold. Firstly, to identify specific teaching processes these mothers have adopted to influence the academic performance of their children during the school years. These mothers actively engaged in socializing their children to learn significant lessons in "values education". Values education at home, in many cases, was transmitted in two phases. The first phase involved these mothers teaching acceptable moral and social behaviours to their children through role modeling and storytelling accompanied by advice (Bushnell, 1999, p.134). During the second phase, these mothers were actively involved in their children's schoolwork and extracurricular activities. The combination of these two phases had a significant impact on their children's schoolwork.

Secondly, I wish to focus on how the actions of nurturing ascribed a meaning to these mothers' personal identities. In the mother-child relationship, these mothers acknowledged themselves as the primary caregivers for their children. The **personal identity** of being mothers refers to their self-esteem and self-perception in relation to their children and their duties towards them as nurturers and mentors.

Therefore, in this study I have attempted to recognize mothers' identities by focusing on how they perceive themselves in relation to their children's education. I propose two reasons why it is necessary to examine the involvement of mothers in their children's education: (a) no study to date has drawn a comparison between middle-class

mothers from different cultures and their involvement in their children's education; and (b) no cross-cultural studies to date have examined mothers' perceptions of themselves with regards to their children's education.

My claim to originality therefore, is that I am the first to investigate how middle-class mothers from three diverse cultural backgrounds conceptualize motherhood, and their involvement in their children's education using a qualitative methodology. I also examine how this group of middle-class women are relatively contented with their role as mothers and how motherhood impacts their personal identities.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding my inquiry are:

1. How do middle-class mothers from Canada, India and Mexico define the concept of motherhood?
2. What are the similarities and differences between the childrearing practices and cultural values of these middle-class mothers from the three cultures?
3. How do these mothers participate in the educational activities of their children?
4. How do these mothers conceptualize their personal roles in relation to their children's education?

Rationale for Studying Mothers and Motherhood

The rationale of my inquiry is to study the ways in which the 36 mothers selected continue to act as the primary caregivers and agents of socialization for their children at home, and contribute to their children's educational work. This trend continues to prevail

despite second wave feminism which had been seeking equal division of labour between genders.

Various feminist movements across the world are striving for eradicating this traditional image. In the western feminist literature, motherhood had been studied from the sociological and psychological viewpoint. Western feminists had critically analysed the ideological role of mothers and asserted that mothering was a "significant and valuable work which must be recognized as such" (hooks, 1984, p. 136). Different studies focused on the myriad experiences of mothering for women and their perception of motherhood (Boulton, 1983; Abbey & O'Reilly, 1998). The feminist literature of India and Mexico had also addressed the concerns and voices of women with children (Caplan, 1985; Cicerchia, 1997). Yet, the important concept of motherhood remains concealed within the broader themes of feminist studies. As Bose & Acosta-Belén (1995) pointed out, the gender issues confronting most women in developing nations could not be separated from the colonial past since the exploitation of colonies and women within them had been fundamental to the world of capitalism and sexism.

Canada, India and Mexico differ in their cultural and economic organization. These differences impact upon the dominant cultural image of mothers in each context. Yet, the identities of middle-class mothers in each of the three countries embody two common images. One is the traditional image of "a perfect mother" who provides full-time childcare, and attends to other family matters and domestic chores. The other is the newly emerging image, which is on the rise, of the "superwoman" who is employed and simultaneously attends to her paid job and family life. From either of these two careers, a number of mothers including Canadian, Indian and Mexican mothers derive their sense of

personal identities from their countless experiences of motherhood. Some mothers have internalized the ideological concept of motherhood as articulated by patriarchy, while others are contesting this image.

Therefore, motherhood observed as a significant part of women's identity requires research that focuses singularly on the cultural conceptions of motherhood and the personal narratives of mothers themselves.

Mothers Redefine Motherhood

The mothers who participated in my inquiry were actively involved in their children's educational work and the tremendous responsibility of mothering was influencing their lives and identities. I am focusing on these mothers' identities because the women's movement in the earlier years (late 1960s and early 1970s) devalued the role of mothers. Recent analyses point out that society continues to ignore the heavy burden of work and responsibility assumed by women in childcare. Boulton (1983) found that mothers' childrearing responsibilities remain unrecognized in a society "that values production, child bearing and childrearing – that is, reproduction – command little concern or respect" (p. 22). Therefore, it is important to give due respect and recognition to the role of mothers and the way they experience motherhood.

All the interview sessions with my participants helped me realize that these mothers were enthusiastic about the topic and issues concerning their children's development and education. Irrespective of their cultural backgrounds, these mothers expressed deep concerns about their children's social behaviours and the importance of education in their children's lives. Most of the mothers participating in my inquiry had made personal or professional sacrifices in order to provide undivided attention to their children.

Structure of the Study

This inquiry is about a selected group of 36 mothers from three countries, Canada, India and Mexico and how they conceptualized motherhood. I have divided the study into five chapters. Each chapter focuses on an individual aspect of the inquiry. Chapter 1 introduces the various concepts and variables being studied in this inquiry. Chapter 2 provides a brief overview of the literature on feminists' perceptions of motherhood and how they influence the identities of mothers. This chapter traces the history of motherhood and includes contemporary definitions of motherhood. I provide a critical review of the literature on motherhood in Canada, India and Mexico, and values education that is observed as essential for preparing the children to perform well academically and professionally.

In Chapter 3, I describe the various tools of methodology that I used for conducting this research. In this chapter, I also discuss the problems I encountered during my field research and how these problems further shaped my inquiry. Feminist Theory and Phenomenology provide the theoretical framework for my inquiry. I describe the data collection methods I used such as in-depth interviews with structured, semi-structured and open-ended questions.

Chapters 4 and 5 present the data from which I analyse the various themes emerging from the research to provide insights into: a) conceptualization of motherhood in the three cultures; b) mothers' involvement in children's education; and c) the role of fathers in childrearing. In Chapter 4, the many different types of mothering activities are presented. Mothers' involvement in the household, in children's education and values education are all examined. This chapter also analyzes some of the gender issues which

emerged and remain embedded in the patriarchal cultural norms. These mothers *desire* to introduce a change in their childrearing strategies by giving freedom of choice to their children irrespective of their gender. However, in *reality*, mothers continue to re-socialize their daughters and sons in roles that are "gender specific". Thus, consciously or subconsciously they perpetuate some of the traditional roles for boys and girls. For example, most mothers may differentiate between the marriageable age for their daughters and sons, while some do believe in allowing their children to make their own decisions concerning their marriage. In this chapter, I focus on why mothers perpetuate such traditions and question whether mothers are making an attempt to change these pre-existing ideas.

In Chapter 5, I explore the nurturing role of mothers and how mothers perceive their mothering work with regards to their children. I also examine the ways in which fathers are absent or are unable to participate actively in the daily activities of their children. The majority of the mothers responded that play was a much more prominent component of paternal involvement.

Finally, Chapter 6 summarizes the findings and the ways mothers' identities are influenced by the work of mothering. This chapter concludes by emphasizing that the intense labour of mothers from each culture needs recognition and respect from society because often the role of mothers is taken for granted that pulls down the morale of mothers. This chapter also suggests a few recommendations for future research that can make valuable contributions to the area of motherhood.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

In their book A Tradition that has No Name, Belenky et al. (1997) had explored the experiences of women from diverse cultures and discussed how their lives had been “overshadowed by narrow conceptions of gender” (p. 37). The act of silencing these women and not recognizing their homemaking was impoverishing the whole society. From my perspective, it is essential for everyone in society to recognize the task of female parenting as significant and valuable.

Motherhood, as an ideology, has experienced a revolution within the domain of gender studies. Before the 1960s, the dominant cultural ideology of motherhood remained unchallenged and the traditional definition of mothers' roles and responsibilities towards their households continued to permeate the institution of family. According to this tradition, mothers irrespective of their cultural backgrounds, should be all giving, caring and prepared for making sacrifices for their children and other family members (Forna, 1998). From 1960s onwards, western critical feminists began to reject this cultural image and placed “motherhood” in the center of their discourses (Snitow, 1992). The goal of the western critical feminists was to liberate women from the role of intensive mothering (Hays, 1996), to expand opportunities for mothers to participate in the public world, and to ensure that they could accomplish their personal ambitions.

While the western feminist theorists of the 1960s succeeded in giving a voice to the problems of white middle-class mothers, feminism in India and Mexico had more immediate and much larger and basic issues to deal with, such as the after effects of

imperialism and slavery which had serious implications on their society. The feminists from these countries were busy "searching for strategies to confront the many immediate problems facing their own impoverished nations, a task that demanded more grassroots action than theorizing" (Bose & Acosta-Belén, 1999, p. 1).

The women's movements, in India and Mexico, sought rights to literacy, education, childcare, employment and participation in decision-making and political process. As long as the demands of women's social movements were confined to domestic issues such as recognition of their reproductive roles, right to education or other human rights, they were not recognized as any serious threat to the pre-existing patriarchal system. However, when the demands spread to gaining position and leverage in the traditional realm of male authority (such as political parties and trade unions), the women's movement encountered more opposition from the established interest groups who were unwilling to grant legitimacy to the demands of women.

Nevertheless, the concept of motherhood in India and Mexico continues to experience significant changes and the feminist groups are questioning the idealized role of a mother. Critical sociological studies focusing solely on the concept of motherhood are still lacking in India and Mexico, while in Canada motherhood is being researched from a critical perspective (for example, Abbey & O'Reilley, 1998). The only traces of motherhood were found in the general literature of feminist and gender studies. Thus, there is a need to develop more research in this domain. I believe that the lack of studies in motherhood in India and Mexico is related to these countries historical, cultural and social problems, as discussed above. In the process of resolving these problems, Indian and Mexican societies overlooked the importance of focusing on motherhood.

The influence of western feminism has helped feminist movements in developing nations to reflect upon the role of women and to redefine their personal status in their respective societies. The western feminist concept of motherhood does not necessarily meet the individual gender concerns of women coming from diverse socio-economic, political and cultural backgrounds. However, ties with the western feminist groups served as inspirational beacons for women's respective struggles in India and Mexico.

Starting from the late 19th century to the onset of the 20th century, the individual women's movements in India and Mexico began to associate themselves with western feminism and shared some of their concerns about the suppression of women in their own countries. Thus, in a sense western feminism became a microcosm of some women's experiences in India and Mexico. Therefore, to analyse and critically examine the voices of mothers from the three countries, I am using the theoretical and conceptual framework of the western feminists and their theories.

Leaders of various feminist movements participated actively in international conferences (such as The First International Feminine Congress in Buenos Aires in 1910) that dealt with the issues of women's rights and freedom. Participation in such conferences helped women from diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds to come under one umbrella and to gain a new perspective into the themes of family relations and labour, and "to come to grips with the meaning of feminism itself" (Lavrin, 1998, p. 521). The principal agenda of these movements had been to search for unity within diversity, to address the issues of political empowerment and the elimination of male supremacy. Exchange of ideas at the international level guided women of diverse cultures to examine and share common problems.

In the first half of this chapter, I discuss historical and feminist debates about motherhood in Canada, India, and Mexico. In the second half, I elaborate on values education that mothers perceive as important for childrearing and providing better education for their children. It is important to explore and gather information about mothers who have internalized the traditional definition of mothering and show keen interest in their children's education to understand their perception of motherhood.

The Construction of Motherhood

The production of goods before industrialization (before the 18th century) took place primarily at home. The whole household worked as a family enterprise and each individual participated in the process of food production, making of consumer goods and childrearing. Mothers were not solely responsible for childrearing because they sought help from extended family members such as grandparents, aunts, uncles and older siblings.

With the advent of industrialization in the late 18th century, society underwent a radical change and this affected male and female roles in western industrial societies such as Britain and United States. For classical social theorists Weber, Marx and Engels, the impersonality and competitive pursuance of individual gains were the results of the rationalization of social life and the intensification of capitalist market gains.

Engels (1972), a Marxist sociologist, argued that the mode of production altered the roles of family members based on gender. In The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, Engels stated that capitalism gave birth to the concept of private ownership of the forces of production and the nuclear family:

With the patriarchal family and still more with the single monogamous family, a change came. Household management lost its public character. It no longer concerned society. It became a private service; the wife became the head servant,

excluded from all participation in social production... The modern individual family is founded on the open or concealed domestic slavery of the wife, and modern society is a mass composed of these individual families as molecules (Engels, 1972, pp. 136-137).

According to Engels, the emergence of an individualistic nuclear family took the form of dictating norms and practices to all individuals and created a change in lifestyle. The change in lifestyle also influenced the division of domestic labour between the husband and wife, where women were made responsible for the production of children or their upkeep.

Oakley (1974), a radical feminist, discussed how the expansion of professional opportunities outside the home enlarged the social world of men, while for women it became "an involution of the world into the space of the home" (p. 32). Capitalism introduced many structural and political reforms, which restricted women's access to the public world. For example, a series of factory acts in Britain, beginning in 1819, restricted child labour and children became dependent upon their parents for care and supervision. As a result, the responsibility fell on women, thus affecting their status as wage earners (Oakley, 1974b). The emergence of nuclear families further restrained women's freedom because children's development became mothers' responsibility. In the meantime, fathers sought the lure and opportunity of the outside world. Gradually "men's involvement with children tailed off entirely until the responsibility for moral teaching was taken away from them and placed in the hands of women" (Forna, 1998, p. 37).

The emergence of two social worlds, public and private, changed the nature of family life in many countries including Canada, India and Mexico. Gender roles became more defined and "by the second half of the nineteenth century childrearing was synonymous with mothering" (Hays, 1996, p. 29). The emerging patterns of the 19th

century family life in Canada, India and Mexico were similar where the responsibilities of maintaining the family's honour, prestige, children's education and social behaviour were bestowed upon mothers. Mothers, especially from upper and middle-classes and mothers from working classes who worked as maids were affected (Eyer, 1995; Dube, 1994; Yeager, 1994). Thus, irrespective of their social class women were directed towards domesticity.

The division of roles was responsible for the burgeoning of the cultural ideology of motherhood. In view of these responsibilities of motherhood, Pablos (1999), Hays (1996) and Chauhan (1996) studied how women from the United States, India and Mexico perceived motherhood. They discussed how these women were confined to their homes to accomplish their domestic chores and to ensure the needs and demands of their families by complying to the mother-housewife role, the primary role expected of all women. Consequently, many women were restricted from participating in the public world and were conditioned to subordination and obedience. The idealization of motherhood isolated women and prevented them from developing and pursuing their personal interests.

Gradually, during the late 19th century, there was an increase in opportunities for girls' education in the advanced western industrial societies such as Britain and United States. This allowed many middle-class girls to enroll in vocational schools where the school curriculum steered them towards becoming ideal wives, mothers and housekeepers. The colonial governments of India and Mexico (British and Spanish) also introduced similar reforms in the educational system. These reforms opened the gates of educational opportunities to Indian and Mexican women.

The primary objective of education was to help women to become effective nurturers and housekeepers. However, education did have some serious consequences on the traditional family structure, the institution of marriage and the basic human rights of women. Women became much more aware of their personal rights and began to seek equal status in society (Cohen, 1993; Gupta, 1996; Macías, 1982). This change, from the late 19th century to the early 20th century, was apparent in all the three countries, Canada, India and Mexico. Women in these countries began to participate in the economic and political spheres of their country matters (Pierson, 1993; Pablos, 1999; Basu, 1999).

In the next few sections, I review the various theories on motherhood and how feminist studies perceive motherhood in Canada, India and Mexico. A review of western feminist sociological literature (Smith, 1989a) revealed that motherhood had evolved into an autonomous area within women's studies and had been critically analysed in the western world. In India and Mexico, however, motherhood continued to be dispersed within women's studies (Caplan, 1985; Segura, 1994).

Attachment Theory vs. Multiple Identities

Generally, mothers share a special relation with their children which Bowlby (1951) defined as "mother-child bonding" or the "attachment theory". According to this theory, mothers were responsible for providing childcare that was essential for the appropriate rearing of children. Factors contributing to the development of "bonding" between mother and child were classified as biological, cultural and social. These factors were drawn from the research "involving nonhuman animals and on studies of juvenile delinquents and children raised in institutional settings" (Hays, 1998, p. 783).

The principles of the attachment theory deprived mothers from developing their personal identities. This impacted working mothers who often felt “a constant sense of guilt about the deprivation” they caused their children by being on the job (Eyer, 1995, p. 83). Attachment theories have been justifiably critiqued because they validated traditional ideologies and promoted discrimination of women for their reproductive roles. Today, women in different parts of the world have made advancement over these theories and are progressively working towards achieving gender equality in all the domains of society.

Although for centuries, society has held and continues to hold mothers responsible for their children's primary care, the identity of a mother is not the *ONLY* identity that women have. Women attribute different degrees of importance to the identity of being mothers. Being mothers does not signify that women cannot have an outside career away from the responsibilities of the children and housework. There are many women who are seeking paid employment and have successfully created an identity that distinguishes them from the sole identity of a mother.

Women's Perception of Motherhood in Canada, India and Mexico

The Ideal Mother: Canadian Motherhood

Society perceives motherhood as women's moral duty to nurture their children and this makes it a sensitive and debatable topic in feminist writings (Ribbens, 1994; Segal, 1985; Stacey, 1986; Tong, 1989). Many feminists (Friedan, 1963; Firestone, 1970) during the late 1960s worked towards raising gender consciousness to make women aware of the reality of their situations. In depth analysis of the western feminist literature (which also includes the Canadian feminist perspective) revealed how motherhood developed as an

independent subject during second wave feminism. During this period, many middle-class white women began to seek liberation from the isolation of the home and from the demands of their children and husbands.

Snitow (1992) gave a chronological description of the evolution of the concept of motherhood in western feminism. In the late 1960s to early 1970s, the concept of motherhood began to gain individual recognition in the feminist discourse of this period. Feminists such as Freidan who wrote The feminine mystique (1963) and Firestone, authoress of The dialectic of sex: The case for feminist revolution (1970) targeted the childbearing responsibilities of women and discussed how these responsibilities deprived mothers of their personal freedom. Freidan (1963) focused on the domestic isolation of white middle-class mothers and their desire to use their time constructively. Firestone (1970) argued that patriarchy consolidated and institutionalized women's maternal role for its own interests. In my opinion, the issues raised by the pioneers of second wave feminism in the west concerning motherhood are justified. They helped women to reflect critically upon the idealized concept of motherhood, and to study and research the parenting role of mothers that has often been neglected or taken for granted.

Struggle against patriarchy continued throughout the latter period of the 1970s, along with the acknowledgement of women and their personal experiences. During this decade, the white middle-class feminist movements hailed liberalism and demanded recognition of mothers' everyday experiences (Rich, 1976). The objective was to theorize the social and psychological implications of "motherhood" on the identities of women. The personal identities of women were affected when they became mothers because they had to give up their jobs or lose their personal independence as they took over the domestic role.

In their book Knowledge, difference, and power: Essays inspired by women's ways of knowing (1986), Goldberger, Tarula, Clinchy & Belenky wrote about the ways in which "gender is a major social, historical, and political category that affects the life choices of all women in all communities and cultures" (p. 4).

Key theorists of the 1970s such as Rich and Chodorow, published books on motherhood and strove for the emancipation of women from the patriarchal institution of motherhood. On one hand, Rich (1976) argued that potentially motherhood is a powerful emotional experience for women as it puts them in touch with their bodies, and helped them to develop a special bond with their children. But on the other hand, Rich claimed that men used motherhood to alienate women from the workforce and make them dependent on their financial gains. Thus, feminists of this period called upon women to oppose the existing inequality between the genders and to make independent decisions related to their own selves. Instead of accepting the traditional definition of motherhood, women were encouraged to reflect upon their dreams and aspirations (Ladd-Taylor, 1994). Gaining control of their bodies was one of the primary goals of women since the revival of second wave feminism in the 1960s. In Canada, the women's liberation movement organized a large-scale national action during the spring of 1970 for the decriminalization of abortion. This movement received invaluable support from women who came from many walks of life. The struggle for the right to abortion continued through the 1970s. In 1976 "the Attorney general of Quebec declared safe, medical abortions in free-standing clinics legal in the province" (Pierson, 1993, p. 100).

The 1980s saw a new respect being bestowed upon mothers due to Ruddick's work Maternal Thinking (1980). Her study romanticized the idea of what she defined as

“maternal practice” and “maternal thinking”. She believed that to be a mother, a woman took upon herself the responsibility of looking after her children and practicing childcare as a part of one’s daily life. In this article, Ruddick discussed the factors responsible for mothers’ commitment to mothering even under oppressive conditions. Oakley (1980a) studied how feminists completely overlooked the concept of motherhood even though it was of great importance for the self-valorization of mothers themselves, as well as for society which benefitted from mothering. In 1984, Freidan revised her book The Feminine Mystique and published it with a new introduction and epilogue to address the positive reforms married women were experiencing. She praised the post-feminist generation because it had encompassed “female experience, female values” that men were now beginning to recognize (Freidan, 1984).

However, the feminist analyses of motherhood during the 1960s and 1970s neglected race and class issues that mothers from working-classes encountered in their everyday lives (hooks, 1984; Adams, 1995). In her book From Margin to Center (1984), hooks addressed the problems and dilemmas of mothers from the marginalized groups of non-white and/or white communities. She called upon feminists to make their movement “a mass based political movement if it is to have a revolutionary, transformative impact on society” (1984, p.ix). According to Collins (1994), western feminists had failed women of other backgrounds by neglecting the experiences of marginalized mothers. Polatnick (1996) believed that, “motherhood, children, and family remain an important area” which feminists from diverse backgrounds should explore together (p. 703).

In the 1990s, various studies conducted in Europe, United States and Canada have addressed motherhood from the perspective of the marginalized mothers (Segura, 1994;

McMahon, 1995; Hays, 1996; Standing, 1999). Hays (1996) focused on the white working-class and middle-class notions of appropriate childrearing. She described how these contemporary mothers have internalized the cultural definition of intensive mothering which, she argued, "tells us that children are innocent and priceless, and their rearing should be carried out primarily by individual mothers and that it should be centered on children's needs, with methods that are informed by experts, labor intensive, and costly" (p.21). Thus, the cultural image of intensive mothering continues to prevail but at the same time women are able to make informed decisions concerning their lives. The increase in literature on motherhood during this period continued to question patriarchy and sought mothers' liberation from the duties imposed by society and culture (Snitow, 1992).

Uttal's (1996) research in California on employed mothers and external childcare found that wage-earning mothers from diverse cultural backgrounds were creating a new understanding of motherhood that reflected their employed status and the involvement of childcare providers in the socialization of their children. Uttal discovered that, as more women joined the work force, their definition of ideological motherhood was beginning to change. They were incorporating or rejecting the traditional concept of motherhood to instill their own practices of childrearing. Working mothers tried to establish a balance between their jobs and their family responsibilities. In this struggle, mothers quite often took over the role of "super-moms" and expanded their definition of motherhood to "include employment as part of their family responsibilities" (Uttal, 1996, p. 294). She concluded by discussing how the perceptions of working mothers were challenging the hegemony of the dominant ideology of motherhood, and how wage-earning mothers were redefining their situations with respect to the available childcare facilities.

The celebration of motherhood has carried on into the 1990s with other researchers such as Gordon (1990), McMahon 1995, Freely (1995), and Abbey & O'Reilly (1998), who are studying motherhood and addressing women's concerns about mothering. These researchers are working on the concept of motherhood and building maternal scholarship to elevate the status of mothers in society. Freely (1995) argued that many mothers felt that their *desire to mother* has been ignored by feminists, who are concerned only with the needs of "women" and not of the relationship between mothers and their children. In September 1998, O'Reilly with her colleagues from York University, Toronto, Canada launched the "Association for Research on Mothering", the first of its kind in international feminist studies. This association's objective is to conduct and disseminate research on maternal theory from different perspectives.

I believe that the mothering role, usually undertaken by women, is significant and valuable. It must be recognized by every member of society and feminists who are working towards alleviating the marginalization of women. As hooks (1984) pointed out in her book From margin to center:

It (motherhood) should receive deserved recognition, praise, and celebration within a feminist context where there is renewed effort to re-think the nature of motherhood, to make motherhood neither a compulsory experience for women nor an exploitative or oppressive one, to make female parenting good effective parenting whether it is done exclusively by women or in conjunction with men (hooks, 1984: 136).

Therefore, it is important to research motherhood and to study the social, cultural and psychological implications of mothering on mothers and children as well. If women are encouraged to develop their personal identities, then mothers can nurture themselves as well as their families and communities (Thurer, 1994).

The Goddess Mother: Indian Motherhood

The role and status of Indian motherhood can be traced back to its roots in mythology and religion. Indians traditionally venerated mothers as goddesses and believed that motherhood was the essence of womanhood. The mythological and religious themes dominated female representations in India, and the various studies done on women in the earlier 20th century also summarized how Indian traditions regarded mothers with an exceptional degree of respect and reverence (Das, 1932). Basham (1968) made a noteworthy observation about the ambivalent attitude of ancient Indian society towards women. He remarked that, on one hand, women's freedom was generally restricted, but on the other hand, it was not completely taken away, thus women were at once "a goddess and a slave" (p. 183). Kakar (1982) in his psychoanalytic study of childhood and society in India aptly defined the position of Indian women, as he wrote "an Indian woman knows that motherhood confers upon her a purpose and identity that nothing else in her culture can" (p. 56). In India, the feminist movement has "attempted to evolve new concepts and analytical frameworks that can better encompass and explain women's experiences" (Raj, 1986, p. 8). Various studies on women in India indicate that the institution of patriarchy is maintained through the traditional cultural values which perpetuate gender inequality (Kurian & John, 1981; Dua, 1993). Therefore, conventionally, Indian women did not have independent personal identities since their identities were wholly defined by their relationships to others. According to traditions, an Indian woman started her life's journey as a daughter to her parents. After marriage, her husband's home became her world where she looked after the welfare of her husband, her children and her extended family members (Kakar, 1982; Gupta, 1996).

From a very young age girls were socialized to become good wives and mothers. They were taught to obey dutifully their husbands and parents-in-law. Thus, the role of an ideal wife was to devotedly and loyally serve her husband without questioning his authority and to seek pleasure in her husband's happiness because the position of a wife was secondary to that of her husband. When the children were born, the responsibilities of wives encompassed full time childrearing and provision of selfless love to their children.

Indian traditions influenced the lives of many women once they were married and had children. Mothers were "related to the great cosmic mother, the creator and rejuvenator of the universe" (Saidullah, 1993, p. 38). Thus, mothers in India were and still are worshipped and idealized for their *shakti*, meaning power or female energy in its purest form. The popular image of women described in Indian religious scriptures, epics and folklores, is that of the self-sacrificing and all-forgiving individual. If women failed to become mothers they were not accorded with respect. Therefore, motherhood was the only option to gain social status.

In her study of class and gender in India, Caplan (1985) explained that traditionally "sons are more desired than daughters, for they are still thought to provide economic support to parents in old age whereas daughters will marry away, and also because sons have to perform the funerary rites (*sraddha*) for their parents" (p. 55). Therefore, only the birth of a male child invited more celebrations because that ensured the continuity of a paternal lineage. However, this did not imply that daughters were completely neglected in all the Indian households. In some cases daughters were very much loved and cared for until they were married because culturally after marriage, they were supposed to leave their parents and stay with their in-laws.

In Indian society, the position and status of women have been continuously changing with the course of time. Industrialization, urbanization, education and globalization of the Indian economy have introduced some major changes in the role and status of Indian mothers. Nuclear families are replacing the large joint family pattern. This shift allows mothers to spend more time with their children unlike the mothers from the older generations, as a participant in my study remarked:

I tell them that we were in a joint family and all the facilities that you have today we've never had any of these facilities.

Meenakshi: Why not?

Because in my family we were 35 members. Could we have gotten separate facilities for each individual? No, we couldn't have gotten anything (Indu, India: March 1998).

In stating so emphatically that her children were receiving the best education and care, this mother demonstrated the privileges of nuclear family which were replacing joint families in urban India. The changes occurring in the nature of the family have had an affirmative impact on childcare. Contemporary mothers are getting an opportunity to interact more with their children as playmates, nurturer and guides for their physical and emotional needs.

However in India, many women continue to regard marriage and motherhood as vital to women's personal identities. Thus, many contemporary Indian women continue to adhere to the traditional image of an ideal Indian mother who nurtures and looks after the house, as one of my participant's illustrated: "Girl has to take over the house responsibilities. Even if she works, (outside the home) she has to do the household work, boys don't need to" (Veena, India: January 1998).

At the same time, there are many Indian women who are questioning the patriarchal subjugation of women and seeking equal work opportunities before and after marriage,

daycare for their children and sharing of household work with their husbands (Jain, 1988). Many Indian women are refusing to devote their lives only to care for the household and children, and their decisions are influencing the lives of other women. In other words, the focus of Indian women's freedom movements has shifted from "what women can do to what women should do" (Singh, 1990, p. 20). Even though Indian feminists have worked towards breaking away from the myth of idealized motherhood, Indian society has yet to experience significant changes.

My study examines some of the issues raised by Indian mothers with respect to their children's education and their personal identities as mothers. In my bibliographical search on Indian women, I did not come across any sociological research that focuses primarily on the concept of middle-class motherhood in relation to their children's education. Caplan (1985), in her study of Indian women and women's organizations, further pointed out what had been left unexamined in women's literature:

...what middle-class women who are not employed do with their time. Some of the studies of families in urban areas (e.g. Ross, 1961; Singh, 1976; Vatuk, 1972) do, of course, make mention of women, but it is primarily in the roles of wives and mothers, which are rarely examined in any detail. Their significance in the reproduction of the social system, their domestic labour, their biological work of reproduction, and the socialization of children is not examined in any detail, and certainly not in relation to class (Caplan, 1985, pp. 11-12).

This lack of literature on mothers in India creates a vacuum in the discipline of studies on motherhood. Therefore in my research, I have included mothers from India in order to recognize their personal emotions, their perceptions of motherhood and to study how mothering plays a pivotal role in the construction of their personal identities as mothers.

The Devoted Mother: Mexican Motherhood

During the 15th and early 16th centuries, a profoundly religious ancient tribe, *Mexicas* was the dominant cultural group in Mexico (Pablos, 1987/1999). The predominant deities of this tribe were male, with the exception of one female goddess, the goddess *Coatlicue* or Mother Earth. Coatlicue symbolized sustenance, desire and eroticism. However, this goddess did not influence the position of Mexican mothers till the emergence of a motherly icon during the 16th century, *The Virgin of Guadalupe*. Guadalupe symbolized religious, political and cultural images for the Mexicans. The virgin mother-goddess "docile and enduring" by nature was perceived as the nurturer and the caretaker of the oppressed (Anzaldua, 1987). Mexican women were expected to emulate the image of "submissiveness, weakness and devotion", thus aspiring for marriage and motherhood as their primary roles. The primary roles of Mexican women coincided with those of Canadian and Indian women.

In her revised version of Women in Mexico (1987/1999), Pablos pointed out that the education imparted to girls from the 15th to the mid 20th centuries was essentially concerned with domestic responsibilities and religion that complied with the social norms of patriarchy. Girls went to the home of an *amiga* (a female teacher without any formal training who provided basic education to the girls), where they received basic knowledge of reading, writing, arithmetic, religion and domestic chores. The objective was to train girls to adhere to family traditions. Access to higher education was available primarily to the male members and if any woman desired to pursue it, she required financial and paternal support. Only women from upper social classes and the nobility who were interested in studying and were financially affluent, could access higher education. Thus,

many women could not seek higher education because the Mexican patriarchy restricted women from developing critical thinking skills. This was because marriage was considered the most appropriate institution for women, and motherhood followed as the natural vocation (Muriel, 1982; Béneria & Roldán, 1987).

In the 19th century, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, a nun from the convent of San Jerónimo and the precursor of modern feminism in Mexico, fought for women's rights to access higher education. Over time, various advocates of women's rights began to pressure the government to arrange for women's higher education and to emancipate women's social status. In the late 19th century, the republican government of independent Mexico established secondary and vocational schools of education where women learnt arts and crafts along with some scientific subjects. Once it began, the feminist movement in Mexico did not cease.

Throughout the 20th century, the struggle for women's rights in Mexico continued to progress. Many more middle-class educated women joined the feminist movement, than women from previous decades. Women activists from all walks of life took part in national and international congresses, conferences and meetings. The focus of these feminist groups was not limited only to gender issues. They also joined the uprisings of the peasants and working-class people. The teachers' association, whose members primarily came from the middle-class, linked the feminist cause with the popular classes. Even though teaching was a professional extension of a woman's traditional role, the teacher's union gained lot of support and became powerful. On one hand, women were gaining freedom of rights and duties. On the other hand, the traditional image of women continued to prevail with such attributes as docility, respect for modesty and marriage. Until the early 20th century,

married Mexican women had to seek their husbands' permission to join the workforce because childcare was primarily the responsibility of mothers.

During the second wave of Latin American feminism, in the late 1980s and 1990s, the common theme of the feminist groups in Mexico was to seek democratization of political groups and the extension of active citizenship to women from all walks of life (Jaquette, 1994, 1995). A study of gender movement in Mexico revealed that second wave feminism in Mexico began in the 1980s primarily as a "middle-class and intellectual movement" (Stephen, 1997, p. 12). The feminists of this period organized a series of regional Latin American meetings where activists from different countries came together to discuss their concerns about women's rights. The summits and conferences gave feminists an opportunity to represent some of the work being done to promote the interests of women across Latin America. These international conferences resulted in the increase of women in the economic sector, but mothers continued to bear the primary responsibility of the home and children. Therefore, women were burdened with the dual responsibility of the public and the private world.

While it is necessary to understand the impact of political, economic and cultural restraints on Mexican mothers' personal identities, such factors fall short of describing the lived experiences that the mothers in my study endured. Thus, it is important to understand the ways in which Mexican mothers perceive themselves and how the everyday experiences of childrearing and household chores influences their personal identities.

Mothers' Involvement in Children's Schooling

A frequently drawn assumption is that when mothers, especially from middle-class families, promote certain values at home, they have a significant impact on their children's academic achievements (Bourdieu, 1973; Tulkin, 1975; Smith, 1987; Ribbens, 1994). The work mothers do in support of their children's education is often concealed behind assumptions that mothering is a natural process for women. Smith (1987) had been in the forefront of addressing the work mothers do in relation to their children's schooling. Her research focused on situating and conceptualizing women's working experiences as mothers and as mentors for the children.

The available literature on parental involvement assumes that both parents contribute equally to the development of their children. Furthermore, the gender neutrality that surrounds parental involvement is based on the assumption that both parents also share equal responsibilities for their children's schooling. A closer examination of mothers' and fathers' roles however, revealed that mothers continued to do most of the household duties, while fathers were content to leave the primary care taking of their children to their wives (Smith, 1987; Lareau, 1989; Reay, 1998). Thus, it is essential to recognize mothers' involvement in their children's educational activities since many mothers work diligently towards providing physical and emotional support to their children and to ensuring that their children are socialized to become responsible citizens (Uttal, 1996).

In her study of two socially contrasting elementary schools in United States, Lareau (1989) researched the linkages between home and school. Her findings suggested that the parental involvement was gendered for both working-class and middle-class families. The role of fathers was limited to the periodic participation in schoolwork and school activities.

Mothers were more involved in the schooling process, from getting their children ready for school to monitoring their day-to-day activities at school and at home.

Reay's (1998) research on social class focused on the lives of 33 mothers from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds, living in metropolitan London. Her study asserted that mothers' involvement in their children's primary schooling was differentially rewarded through the operation of educational markets that favoured middle-class families. Reay's study was about social class and its impact on mothers' participation in their children's education. The experiences of these 33 mothers all conformed to the ideology of appropriate mothering where mothers assumed the full responsibility for their children's schooling.

In a similar study, Standing (1999) highlighted the experiences of single mothers living on low incomes and the negotiations they drew between the home and school responsibilities of their children. Her study raised issues about the unpaid schoolwork of mothers, which was carried on within the structural, economic and ideological constraints of single mothers. Single working-class mothers were regarded as "bad" mothers according to the normative expectations of proper mothering (Smart, 1996). All these studies, while focusing on social class, also reinforced the gender inequalities that mark the hidden work of mothers at home and in school. The findings of these studies are parallel to the narratives of the 36 mothers I interviewed.

Rethinking Motherhood

A mother's identity is embedded in family life and in her children's upbringing. We seldom ask questions about a mother's desires or the repercussions of family life on her

self-esteem. Even though theoretical debates concerning maternal thinking are a part of feminist discourse, experiences encountered by mothers have their own historical and sociological contexts. These contexts shape and conceptualize a mother's sense of personal identity, which may differ from the patriarchal definition of a mother. Contexts can be defined as various social, cultural, political or institutional possibilities or personal knowledge and experiences that influence an individual's development and identity (Maguire, 1999). In discussing the gender politics in Latin America, Potvin (1997) wrote, "the way a certain world sees, portrays, forms, educates, and conditions women, or men for that matter, is directly linked to the interests of a social class or a particular religious, economic, or military context (among other elements)" (p. 210).

In my study, the tenets of phenomenology assign a new context to the lived experiences of mothers, and critical feminism examines the hidden agendas of women's marginalization in society. Critical feminism is one form of critical ethnography that places the researcher on-site and attempts to study the lived experiences and activities of women living in asymmetrical power relations. Using a phenomenological approach, I attempt to study mothers' perspectives of their lived experiences by gaining entry into their conceptual world "to understand how and what meanings they construct around events in their daily lives" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 31). After identifying the meanings constructed by my respondents to their everyday experiences, the critical feminist discourse approach will allow me to uncover the assumptions and beliefs about the roles of mothers and to promote their emancipation from the role of intensive mothering.

The concept of motherhood encompasses multiple images that range from nurturing mothers to guilty mothers when their children succeed or fail to perform well, academically

or professionally. On one hand, mothers are romanticized as life giving, self-sacrificing and forgiving. On the other hand, they are demonized as smothering, overly involved, and destructive (Glenn, 1994). Society perceives mothers as powerful because the fate of their children, the future citizens of society, lies in their hands.

However, my study is not about the historical feminist aspects of motherhood or the new family structures that are emerging. I am not attempting to reinforce the idea that all mothers, or mothers only are the best nurturers for their children and therefore should confine themselves to their homes. I am dealing with mothers who have opted to remain at home, or work full-time/part time around their children's schedule to build a strong mother-child relationship that focuses on mothers' involvement in their children's education. The mothers who participated in this research described the various values they believed were influencing their children's academic performance. For example, in response to the question "How do you teach your children to be responsible for their actions?", a Canadian mother replied:

Ahh...by allowing them to suffer for the consequences of their actions and if they don't water their plants, the plant dies. But I try to make the punishment a natural consequence of the crime. If you don't study for your test you fail. You fail your course you've to take a summer course and that's no fun because then you miss your summer vacation. So I think that's the best way in the long run instead of always trying to shelter them from the consequences (Sandra, Canada: April 1999).

From this participant's account, responsibility for their actions was an important value reiterated by mothers. Research had generally suggested that middle-class mothers felt that children should be taught to face the consequences of their actions (Snow, 1987). Most mothers strongly believed that it was essential to give their children choices which would promote their self-esteem. Hays (1996) noted that for middle-class mothers, the

development of self-esteem was related "implicitly or explicitly, to self-motivation, self-direction, self-reliance, and self-assertion" (p. 91).

I believe that involvement in children's activities can be divided into two levels, academic and extra-curricular. Academic and extra-curricular activities in most cases can be perceived as one domain because my participants emphasized upon activities that had a direct impact on the school performance of their children. These mothers monitored their children's schoolwork and general performance in school by checking the work they brought home as well as by spending time encouraging them to talk about what had happened at school (Smith, 1987). An Indian participant illustrated this: "Say suppose they have some project I help them out in whatever way I can. Say by bringing some books from the university..." (Tanu, India: January 1998).

The nature of my study is sociological, in that I attempt to study and analyse ways in which the experiences of these 36 mothers "enter into the concerting of the extended relations of the larger social, political and economic order; in the ways in which women's lives *shape and are shaped* by the social order" (authors' italics; Griffith & Smith, 1987, p. 90). The findings from my fieldwork touch on different themes related to these mothers and their involvement in their children's education. The next section focuses on the values that these 36 middle-class mothers observed as essential for preparing their children to become successful members of society.

Values Conducive to Academic Achievement

Generally, the primary socialization of children begins at home and helps shape children's personalities. Parents, both mothers and fathers, individually exert great

influence on their children's physical and emotional development. Gradually, other institutions such as social, religious, cultural and political begin to impact on children's thinking processes and achievement abilities.

Variations existed in the behaviours of mothers that had an impact on the identity construction of their children. Clark (1983) argued that in families where the household responsibility was not heavily weighted in favour of the father, "mothers feel more worthwhile and enjoy more autonomy in their roles of educating the children" (p.125). Many mothers attempted to pursue their personal ambitions through their children. This vicarious living gave them a strong sense of meaning, significance and value. The following excerpt illustrated the feelings of an Indian mother who was unable to fulfill her personal ambitions:

Like I would have loved to become a doctor but then I don't think I was academically so very excellent, or rather than that I didn't show much interest. I would have liked to become but then I didn't take the pain for it. Whether I liked it... (laughs when she expresses this). So there I would like to see my daughter or son being a doctor, so that it definitely brings good. Even Sunil wanted to be a chartered accountant but then he couldn't pass all the papers. That is why he's a tax practitioner. So he always says, " he would love one of them to be a chartered accountant and achieve what I (Sunil) couldn't achieve, and take over the whole firm (Jaya, India: February 1998).

In the process of childrearing, mothers transmitted various values to their children which were communicated verbally and nonverbally through everyday actions. All the participants in my study discussed the significance of inculcating values education in their children's everyday activities because they believed that values would help their children to be "successful" and "respected" in society. For example, one mother offered the following explanation:

They (values) are just a way of presenting yourself in favorable manner. If you don't have those values then other people won't like you and respect you, and you

won't be successful if people don't like you and respect you. (Nicole, Canada: November 1998).

These mothers attempted to raise their children with certain values that will help their children to become obedient citizens and responsible individuals who would be loved and respected by other society members. In effect, these values were tied to their parents' personal beliefs about childrearing. Eisenberg and Murphy (1995) summarized how children with values tended to have parents who "use inductive discipline, provide opportunities for children to learn about others' perspectives and feelings, and involve children in family decision-making and in the process of thinking about moral decisions" (p. 251). Often these parents modeled similar values in their everyday lives in order to foster these beliefs in their children. Thus, children internalized and appropriated the values of their parents as their own.

Parents and child experts from different demographic and cultural backgrounds varied in their definitions of what constituted "good parenting" (Goodnow, 1988). According to them, parental knowledge about the different processes of child development had an impact on the parent's understanding of their children's behaviour and how they interacted with their children (Carrasquillo & London, 1993; Lam, 1997). One researcher in this area, Dunn (1989) recorded a mother-child dialogue to illustrate how children from middle-class families learnt certain rules that became behavioural or moral values:

Child (16 months) throws biscuit on the floor

Mother: What's that? Biscuit on the floor? Where biscuits aren't supposed to be, isn't it?

Child looks at mother and nods.

Mother: Yes, ... Now what's all this? (Points to toothbrush and toothpaste on kitchen table.) Who brought that downstairs?

Child looks at mother and smiles.

Mother: Yes, you did. Where does this live?

Child: Bath. (quoted in Jarrett, 1991, p. 33)

In the above case, the mother was trying to instill the "value of orderliness" in her child. This interrogative style of questioning has been found to be very common, at least among middle-class families. Wells (1986) pointed out that parents' interpretations of children's behaviour had another important function. Parents, as adult members of society had specific ideas about the kinds of behaviour they themselves found meaningful, and thus associated their children's actions, voices and expressions with the same. Parents responded to their children's actions by providing "culturally appropriate feedback that has the effect of shaping the infant's behaviour towards what is culturally acceptable and meaningful" (Wells, 1986, p. 35). Generally, middle-class mothers disciplined their children in this way to teach them about various other norms that were considered as good behaviour (Caplan, 1985; Griffith & Smith, 1987). Children monitored their mothers' faces for clues about how serious their actions were and to discern whether they would be punished or rewarded.

Children have the tendency to voluntarily or involuntarily absorb what goes on in and around their environment. Children's social networks of families, friends and peers provide them with the platform for developing their personalities, thoughts and capacity for self-expression in order to work and to achieve. Dally (1982) noted that the contributions made by mothers had far reaching impact on their children's lives and their "influence continues into later generations" (p.11). Children's values education is an ongoing process. Most mothers' progressively instill these values verbally or through role modeling. An Indian participant discussed the ways in which she taught her son the value of playing independently:

Like Sameer, when he does his blocks he always...there is a lot of difference now because before he use to say- (interrupted by his children) he wanted me to do it, he

wanted me to make a truck for him or a tractor for him. I use to say-you try it you will be able to do it. And before he use to sit and cry, weep saying he couldn't do it and I always will tell-you could do it, you could do it. ...Now there is a lot of difference, he does it himself and now he says himself - I know to make a lot of things (Jaya, India: February 1998)

This mother motivated her son to accomplish the task of using the blocks independently by fostering confidence in his skills and abilities. Thus, with the help of positive reinforcements, this participant drew her child into the process of thinking about the problem at hand and by placing appropriate challenging demands upon the child that focused past the mere concrete problem of handling the blocks.

The selected group of 36 mothers described how they communicated with their children a variety of personal beliefs, values, feelings, myths and basic attitudes such as optimism or pessimism, and suspicion or friendliness. Throughout this transmission of feelings and attitudes, these mothers also communicated their ambitions and aspirations to their children. These ambitions and aspirations were personal desires of mothers that they may have failed to fulfill in their own past and which they hoped to accomplish through their children (Komarovsky, 1962; Busfield, 1974; Leonard, 1980). Thus, maternal attitudes have a deep impact on the behaviour and educational accomplishments of their children.

It is difficult to circumscribe a list of values that mothers promote for influencing the educational work of their children because each mother identifies and organises these values in different ways. The interpersonal processes of mothers' communication styles used at home tend to inculcate a positive educational attitude in their children. Mothers become responsible for defining the difference between "right" and "wrong" which in general can be labeled as "appropriate behaviour" and "inappropriate behaviour". Through

their verbal communication of values these 36 mothers taught their children to understand the importance of education. For example, these children were taught to respect and care for elders and to have good manners which would help them to become good citizens. The following excerpt illustrated this mother's belief:

We don't let them laugh at people or point fingers at people or make fun of people. You know we have, my dad is handicap to certain extent and we try and teach them you know, that he is not any lesser person that you know. He is a, you know...that they have to say good night to him, and be nice to him and not be mean or laugh at him, or anything like that (Jessie, Canada: June 1999).

This quote indicated that many mothers engaged themselves in educating their children in social norms that would help them to grow as self-disciplined and responsible individuals. Many mothers perceive disciplining and educating their children to respect their elders, to listen and to obey adults as the best way to prepare their children for their futures. In other words, most of the mothers I interviewed thought that respect and obedience were valuable and desirable traits for their children.

In order to make their children self-sufficient, mothers encouraged them to follow instructions, understand human relationships and become self-reliant in work. Ogbu (1978), a cross cultural theorist and ethnologist, believed that these values are emphasized in childrearing especially because "they lead to success in school and success in school leads to rewards in adult life in terms of jobs, income, prestige, and the like" (p. 20). Other values that were taught placed high regard for formal education and importance of upholding their family's name.

Many mothers in different cultures encourage their children to acquire knowledge, to understand and to develop critical thinking because they believe that such an approach is essential for children's learning process. These values become intrinsic for any educational

system. Mothers who motivate their children to discuss various issues at home assist their children to become well informed and to act wisely (Lightfoot, 1977).

The active participation of mothers in their children's schoolwork and extra-curricular activities motivates children to perform well. The ability to interact with and to relate to their children's daily activities provides an environment of belonging to their children. Maternal motivational attitudes and values practised at home guide the higher educational and vocational aspirations of their children (Paulson, 1996).

Summary

The development of motherhood as an independent subject has been a very recent accomplishment for feminists. Western feminism has studied motherhood from the sociological perspective, and the concept of motherhood in Indian and Mexican feminism remains to be researched and critically examined. Contemporary feminism has made various attempts to improve the status and position of women across cultures. The idealized role of mothers has been acknowledged and efforts have been made to dismantle the images of a nurturing and a selfless mother. Feminist sociologists recognize the importance of addressing the experiences of mothering, which are linked to the social and institutional fabric particularly of children and their schooling.

Generally speaking, mothers attend to the moral and social development of their children by transmitting values that they deem desirable for their children's academic development and personal growth. In chapter 4, I elaborate on the beliefs and strategies practiced by these 36 mothers to inculcate appropriate values in their children. The definition of appropriate childrearing within each historical period and within any

particular geographical region tends to bear a “systematic and intelligible connection to the culture and organization of the society in which they are formed” (Hays, 1996, p. 19).

In the next chapter, I present the research methodology and methods of data collection that I adopted for collecting the data from the field.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Three interconnected, generic activities define the qualitative research process. They go by a variety of different labels, including *theory*, *method* and *analysis*, and *ontology*, *epistemology*, and *methodology*. Behind these terms stands the personal biography of the gendered researcher, who speaks from a particular class, racial, cultural, and ethnic community perspective. The gendered, multiculturally situated researcher approaches the world with a set of ideas, framework (theory, ontology) that specifies a set of questions (epistemology) that are then examined (methodology, analysis) in specific ways (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 11).

Overview

In this chapter, I discuss some of the relevant theoretical constructs used in my research. I examine critical feminism and phenomenology. I discuss the concept of culture to study how cultural differences can affect mothers' attitudes and roles. Next, I situate my study and review the geographical settings of the cities in Canada, India and Mexico where I conducted my interviews. I describe the data collection methods I employed, including my rationale for selecting a group of middle-class mothers who have chosen to become full or part-time homemakers.

Nature of Design

Qualitative research provides a viable and appropriate tool of inquiry to understand the experiences of mothers in their natural settings, with the objective to study meanings they attach to their everyday role of mothering. An epistemological stance enables us to hear the voices of mothers, voices that speak of mothers' everyday experiences, empowerment and self-esteem. Harding (1987) wrote about the distinctive feature of feminist research that "generates its problematic from the perspective of women's

experiences" (p. 7). Harding had been concerned with the need to recognize women's experiences which could provide new resources for feminist research. A growing number of studies analysed issues and challenges confronted by mothers in their everyday lives (Oakley, 1980a; Rich, 1980; Chodorow, 1978; Ruddick, 1980; Abbey & O'Reilly, 1998). Interesting as these studies may be, they do not address the question of how these women see and understand their roles as mothers in the family.

The following sections discuss how critical feminism and phenomenology have been applied in my research to study the everyday activities of mothers and the impact of motherhood on my participants' personal identity.

Critical Feminism

Various feminist movements around the world have been struggling for decades to liberate women from their traditionally attributed roles of an obedient daughter, a submissive wife, or a guilty mother. The social construction of ideal roles limits women's authority and also that of mothers because our androcentric society defines roles based on its personal requirements rather than the actual needs of mothers and women (Pantony, 1994). Thus, the heavy load of family responsibilities suppresses the needs and voices of mothers. The contributions mothers make in support of their children are also often hidden behind the broader image of **ungendered** parents. The term **ungendered parents** refers to both fathers and mothers, but "the task of childrearing remains primarily the responsibility of mothers" (Hays, 1998, p.782).

Feminist theory explores the hidden voices of women to accomplish emancipatory and democratic goals. Critical feminism expands its domain and addresses not only women

but also the other marginalized groups from the developing countries and people from different racial and cultural backgrounds (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994).

Emancipatory feminist work in the past focused more on the problems of white, middle-class, heterosexual women and the concerns of the "others" remained unquestioned (hooks, 1984). Carty (1992) defined this as "multiple layers of oppression" where women of colour and/or non-Western women's lived experiences were frozen in "time, space and history, while allowing white, Western women a constantly changing history, hence a fluidity to their struggle" (p. 12). In her book From Margin to Center (1984), hooks emphasized that the feminist theory lacked wholeness and broad analysis. Therefore, it failed to encompass a large number of human experiences that would help unify women from different cultures and social classes. The goal of feminism was to eliminate sexist oppression without benefiting any particular class or race of women.

In India and Mexico, the initially organized movements of women also reflected class bias in many of the issues addressed for the emancipation of women. These movements were largely middle-class in origin, therefore the concerns were also primarily those of the upper or middle-class women (Safa, 1995; Mazumdar & Agnihotri, 1999; Mazumdar, 1976). Middle-class women sought the assistance of paid servants to do some or all of the domestic work. This approach helped these middle-class mothers to raise their children independently from the joint family hierarchy where the older women exercised authority over the younger ones (Liddle & Joshi, 1986). During the early 19th century, in Mexico and other Latin American countries, women from lower classes supported themselves and their families by becoming "domestic servants, small tradeswomen, or peddlers, or by running small neighborhood stores, or working in the tobacco factory, or as

midwives or herbalists" (Nazzari, 1997, p. 142). This arrangement continues to exist and oppresses the working class groups, especially women who play the surrogate role of housekeeping for their affluent employers. In their independent studies of Indian and Latin American women, Basu (1999) and Nazzari (1997) discovered that there were certain privileges that surrounded the class hierarchy and that the middle-class women were benefiting from it. This meant that the availability of external help with domestic responsibilities gave these women the freedom to choose between the role of housewives or to become a part of the labour force.

Therefore, in brief, marginalization of women based on their class, ethnicity and sexuality creates disparity between the universal concerns of women and mothers. It is essential to eliminate these differences to achieve complete gender equality and recognition of women. The concept of **self-other** points out that dominant groups (such as males and white-middle-class women) participate in creating the group of "others" (such as non-whites and working-class people) who inhabit the marginal space. Fine (1994) pointed out that it was important to dissolve the hyphen that joined *self-other* in the politics of everyday life because the hyphen separated the dominant groups' personal identities with their invention of "others". She suggested that by dissolving the hyphen, qualitative researchers would be able to probe into and understand the contexts being studied because in learning about the *other* we learn about the *self*. She emphasized:

Self and Other are knottily entangled. ... Working the hyphen means creating occasions for researchers and informants to discuss what is, and is not, "happening between," within the negotiated relations of whose story is being told, why, to whom, with what interpretation, and whose story is being shadowed, why, for whom, and with what consequence. (Fine, 1994, p. 72).

My thesis attempts to address the perception of motherhood through the lived experiences of mothers from three different cultures. During the second wave of feminism (1960-1970), western feminists separated motherhood from the culturally dominant image of women. The objective was to liberate women from the idealized concept of motherhood. The contemporary feminist movements in India and Mexico influenced by the second-wave feminism of the west questioned the culturally constructed role of motherhood.

The concept of motherhood has evolved as an independent subject in western feminism. These feminists believe that motherhood can neither be treated as a dependent variable nor be used to support the pre-existing sociological and political theories that discuss women's lives (McMahon, 1995). It is also not merely about the "mother-child" relationship. It entails many more hidden perspectives that call for placing mothers in the center of our analysis and bringing forth mother's everyday experiences within the changing realm of social relations and political structures. It also includes how mothering impacts their children's school performance and the personal identities of mothers. In India and Mexico, the concept still remains embedded in gender issues. Women's movements in India and Mexico have addressed the subject of motherhood in the ongoing struggle for women's rights for equality, but a lot more remains to be accomplished.

Phenomenology and Motherhood

Schutz (1970) emphasized that the actions and thoughts of human beings were embedded in everyday reality that appeared to be quite natural. It was important to interpret and explain how objects and experiences were meaningfully constituted and communicated in the world of everyday life (Schutz & Luckmann, 1974). Geertz (1973) defined this as the

“emic analysis” or the “*verstehen* approach” in which “understanding a people’s culture exposes their normalness without reducing their particularity” (p. 14).

Mothers also perform certain roles and actions in their everyday lives which are not static as they are continuously evolving. Meanings are ascribed to these actions and roles, and these meanings “arise from and are integrally a part of the uses made of them” by mothers (Psathas, 1989, p. 6). Instead of being ruled out as routine activities of mothers, a phenomenological approach provides an opportunity to give meaning to the everyday reality of mothers. Mothers’ conceptualization of their social world is forever shifting because they constantly add, create and shape their personal worlds. External forces such as social relations, political institutions and cultural systems structure the evolving social worlds of mothers.

In my inquiry, emphasis has been laid on maintaining the integrity of the information provided by my participants about the nature of their lived experiences and social order from their perspectives. Interpretation of the knowledge that these mothers reveal involves a phenomenological approach, which “appears relevant for clarifying the mode of understanding” (Kvale, 1996, p. 53). In other studies on social phenomenology Holstein and Gubrium (1994) noted:

...that an individual approaches the life world with a stock of knowledge composed of commonsense constructs and categories that are social in origin. These images, theories, ideas, values, and attitudes are applied to aspects of experience, making them meaningful. Stocks of knowledge are resources with which persons interpret experience, grasp the intentions and motivations of others, achieve intersubjective understandings, and coordinate actions. (p. 263).

Therefore, my study is grounded in a phenomenological approach in which I use interpretative methods to discover and to understand “what they (the 36 mothers in my

inquiry) are experiencing, how they interpret their experiences and how they themselves structure the social world in which they live" (Psathas, 1989, p.17). It is important to explore how these mothers perceive themselves within their family roles and define motherhood, a concept, which often gets entangled in the identities of women's private lives (home) and their children. In short, people create the definition about who they are through interaction with others (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). Goldberger et al. (1996) discussed that "knowledge is co-constructed" which meant that the construction of meaning did not occur in a solitary environment (p. 14). The next few sections describe in detail my field setting as well as the varied aspects of my data collection.

The Setting: The Geography of the Cities and Towns

The next three figures show the country maps with the cities where the interviews were conducted. The primary reasons for selecting these cities and towns were the economic factors and the availability of a contact person in each city. I did not want to lose much time in finding the participants and, therefore, I selected cities/towns where I could locate a key informant. Furthermore, my limited financial resources did not allow me to travel to distant places. Hence, I selected places which were in close proximity and where I could find less expensive or free accommodation.

Figure 1. Canada: Location of cities where the interviews were conducted

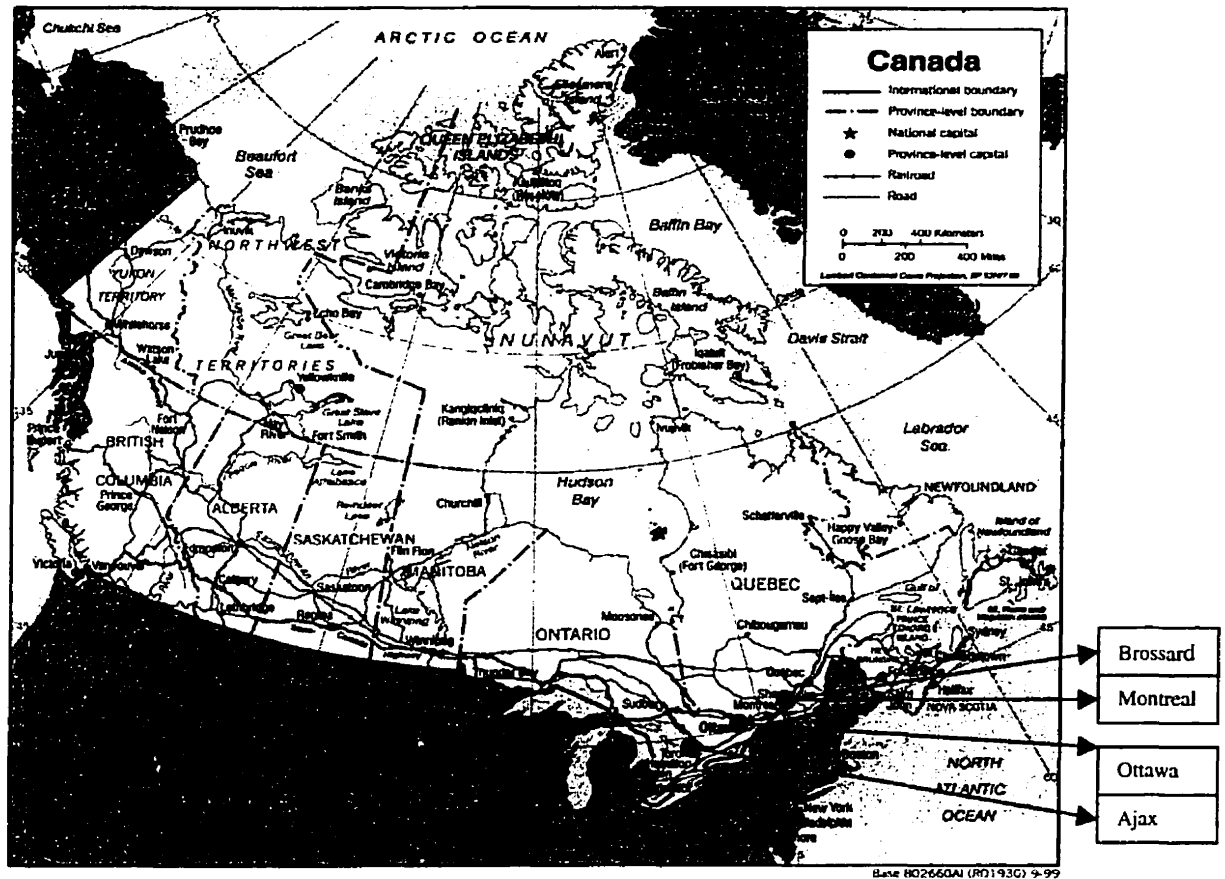


Figure 2. India: Location of cities where the interviews were conducted

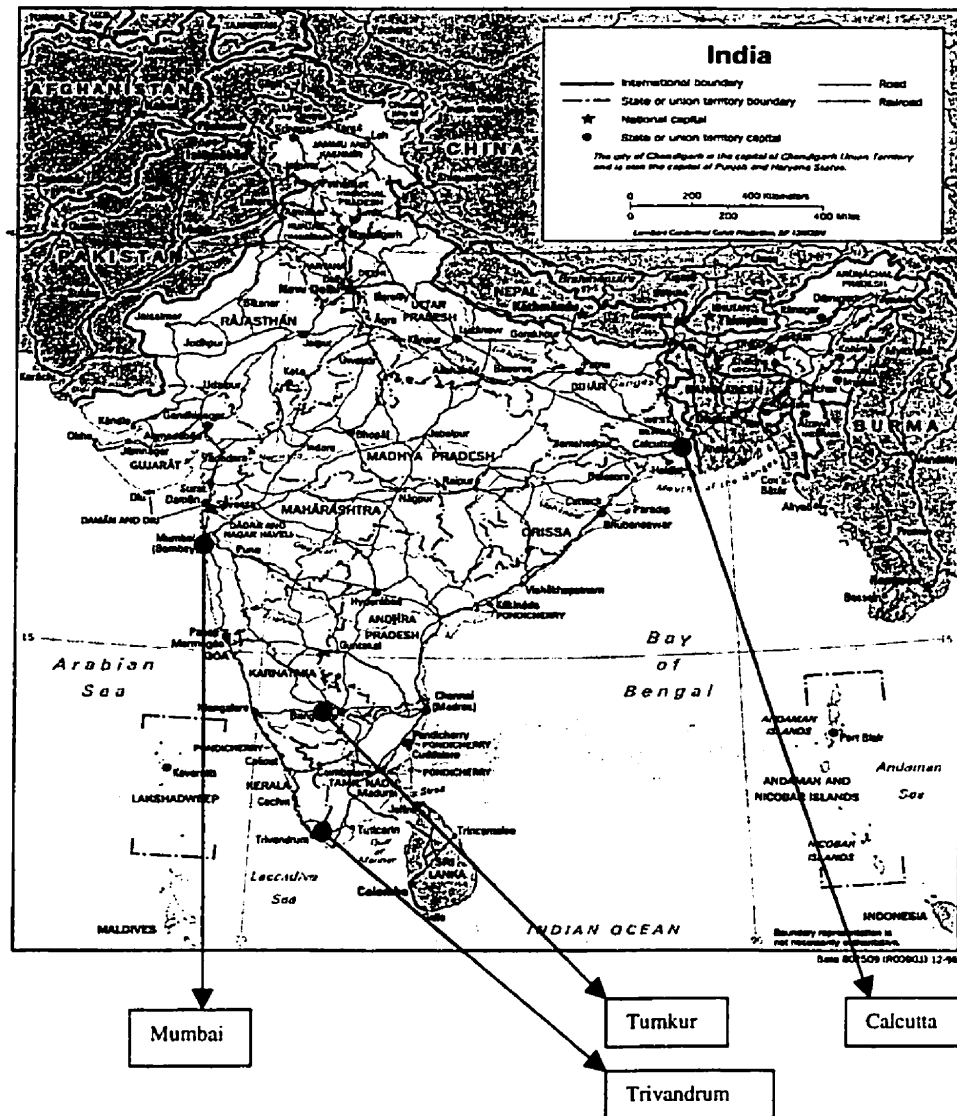
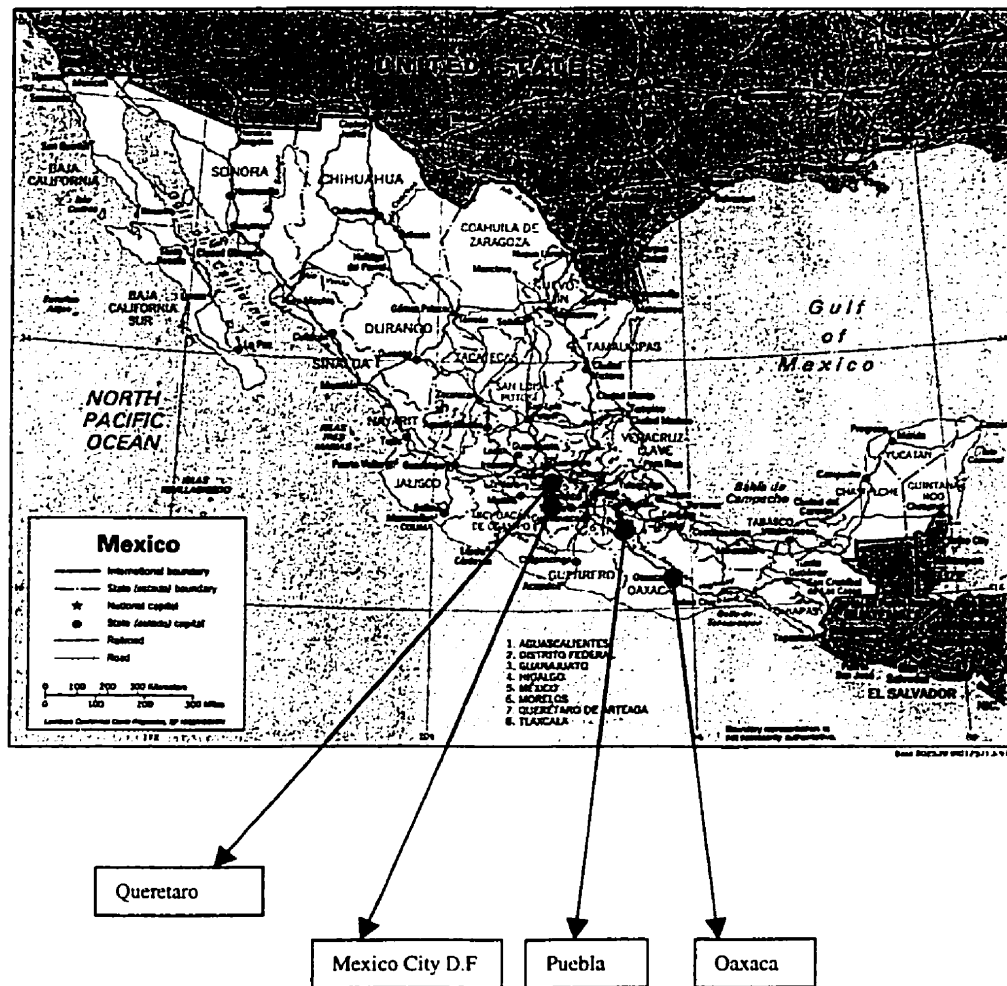


Figure 3. Mexico: Location of cities where the interviews were conducted



Canada

The interviews in Canada were conducted in four places, Ajax and Ottawa in Ontario; Montreal and Brossard (a suburb of Montreal) in Quebec as shown in Figure 1. Ajax has a population of 65,000 and is situated directly east of Toronto. It is a rapidly growing modern lakefront community with a mix of rural and urban areas. Ottawa, the capital of Canada with a population of approximately 1,055,000 is home to some of the major political and cultural events each year. The suburbs of Ottawa, especially Nepean and Kanata have grown to be major centers of technology where companies like Nortel, Alcatel and Cisco have their offices. In 1998, Montreal had a population of approximately 3,423,000 people. The city of Montreal attracts many tourists from America, Europe and other parts of the world for its rich cultural history. This town has a blend of English and French languages that gives it an interesting linguistic flavour. The suburb of Brossard has a population of 77,000 and has a rich mix of ethnic communities.

India

The places selected in India were Mumbai (formerly called Bombay), Tumkur, Trivandrum and Calcutta as shown in Figure 2. Mumbai with a population of 15 million is the financial capital of India and the industrial hub of everything from petrochemicals to textiles. Half of the country's foreign trade takes place from this city.

Tumkur, a small town with a population of 232,000 lies 70 kilometers to the north of Bangalore, the capital city of Karnataka. Bangalore, also known as the Silicon Valley of India, is influencing the political and economic atmosphere of Tumkur. The physical profile of this town is changing from an agricultural town to an industrial hub since many

small-scale industries are establishing their offices in Tumkur. The proximity to Bangalore makes Tumkur a popular town amongst the business community.

Trivandrum, the capital city of Kerala with a population of 854,000 is small compared to other Indian state capitals. This city, known for its touristic and historical attractions and India's primary space research center ISRO (Indian Space Research Organization) attracts many travellers and researchers from various parts of India.

Calcutta, with a population of 12 million is the capital city of West Bengal. This was the capital city during British rule and maintained this status until the beginning of the 19th century. Situated on the banks of the Ganga River, Calcutta is an important center for commercial activities and many small-scale businesses are prominent in the city.

Mexico

In Mexico, the interviews were conducted in the cities of Mexico, Querétaro, Oaxaca and Puebla as shown in Figure 3. Mexico City with a population of 20 million is one of the major cosmopolitan cities in Mexico. This city, a major commercial and cultural center for the whole of Mexico has many colonial buildings and palaces, which attract tourists from all over the world.

The city of Querétaro, capital of Querétaro state has a population of 454,000 and is popularly known as the Constitution City since the Mexican Constitution in 1917 was drawn up here. Situated 220 kilometers to the north of Mexico City, Querétaro has some colonial architecture, active cultural life and burgeoning business activities.

The city of Oaxaca, capital of Oaxaca state with a population of 220,000 is a Spanish built place of narrow, straight streets liberally sprinkled with lovely colonial buildings. The

city of Oaxaca is popular for its handicrafts and cultural ambiance, which brings many international tourists together to study Spanish in the heart of the city.

The city of Puebla, capital of Puebla state with a population of 1.5 million, is adorned with about 70 churches and 1000 other colonial buildings. Many buildings are decorated with hand painted tiles for which the city is very famous. Puebla City is 130 kilometers from Mexico City and attracts many tourists for its rich colonial architecture, heritage and pottery. In March 1999, a major earthquake struck the historic downtown center of Puebla City and ruined some of the important buildings. Puebla's volcanoes – Popocatepetl, Ixtaccihuatl and Citlaltépetl are three of Mexico's highest mountains. Of the three, only Popocatepetl has shown recent seismic activity (most recently in December 2000) and is now closed to climbers.

Time Frame and Locating the Participants

The process of data collection was spread over a period of a year and a half (January, 1998 – June, 1999). I interviewed a total of 36 mothers from four different cities/towns in each country, Canada, India and Mexico.

In each country, I contacted a key informant to gain access into the field and to interview mothers who met the predefined demographic parameters of my research (See p.71, Ch. 3). Milroy (1980) identified a "key informant" as someone who assists in accessing the social worlds of the participants. The key informants in each city and town varied. All my key informants were women, except for two male professors, one in Trivandrum, India and the other in Oaxaca City, Mexico. My key informants were familiar

with their surroundings and through their network of friends helped me to locate potential participants. This variation influenced the type of respondents I selected for my study.

In Canada, my key informants were my colleagues from McGill University, a professor from my department and a friend from Ottawa. Since I resided in Montreal, it was easier for me to locate participants in Montreal and Brossard with the help of my colleagues and friends. In these places, four interviews were conducted in the participant's homes, one was conducted in my office and the other was in the respondent's office.

In Ottawa, I had a key informant who helped me to contact two participants for my research. The third participant was identified through an advertisement my fiancé placed on the Intranet (company's internal e-mail service) of his Company's classifieds (Alcatel formerly Newbridge Networks). One individual responded and the interview was conducted in the respondent's office in Kanata, Ontario. One of my colleagues whose hometown is Ajax helped me find three participants from her town. One interview was conducted in my friend's parent's house and the other two were conducted in the respondents' homes. In Canada, all the 12 interviews were conducted in English, one of the official languages of Canada.

In India, my key informants were two full-time homemakers, a professor of dance in Mumbai and a professor at an institute of management in Trivandrum. In each city/town, which I selected for my study, my key informants generally hosted me in their homes. The lady of the house made arrangements for my research and travel, and quite often accompanied me because I was not familiar with the city/town.

All the 12 interviews were conducted in the homes of the respondents, where I often was asked to join them for lunch or dinner or snacks depending on the times at which

I arrived. At times, special Indian food was cooked in my honour and some respondents requested me to join them again at a later date for a meal. Four interviews were conducted in Hindi (the official language of India) and the remaining eight were conducted in English. Since the post-colonial days, English has been the medium of official communication, and middle class Indians prefer to use English for formal situations. I did not encounter any problems in interviewing the participants in Hindi because it is my mother tongue.

My principal key informant in Mexico was a professor of education and she connected me with other university professors. My Mexican key informants also accommodated me in their homes, except in Oaxaca City where I stayed at a hotel. The interviews in Mexico were conducted in various places such as my host's house, the gym where the participant's children were taking swimming lessons, the respondent's office and the respondents' homes. In Mexico, I travelled alone to access my participants. During my previous trips to Mexico, I had the opportunity to learn Spanish and this helped me to conduct ten interviews in Spanish, the mother tongue of my respondents. The two remaining were conducted in English because the participants were well versed in English.

I used public and local transport such as trains, buses, taxis, metro, and *autorickshaws* (three wheeled vehicles used as one of the economical means of public transport in India) for commuting within and outside each city.

Participants' Profiles and Negotiating Access to the Mothers

I selected as participants, only middle-class mothers from traditional nuclear families who had both a boy and a girl, in the age group of 3 –18. Another criteria for selection was that the respondents would not have live-in domestic help for their children.

All the 36 mothers I included in my study were drawn from different age groups and had varying degrees of education (from high school graduates to mothers with graduate or professional degrees). The selected sample consisted of mothers who were working full-time, part-time or were full-time homemakers.

Accessing women for my research from each country was a difficult task since many mothers were uneasy with the idea of participating in a study, or shy about the idea of being interviewed. In India and Mexico, I had an easier access to my participants because my key informants did the preliminary work of making formal introductions and presenting my work to the participants. In Canada, it took me longer to locate the participants because often when I contacted some people, referred by colleagues and friends, they never responded or returned my telephone calls. As a result, I lost many weeks and months in trying to identify participants in each city.

Potential participants were contacted over the telephone and objectives of my research were explained. I explained in detail the type of research and where and which university I am studying at, in Canada. If the potential participants required some time to think about participating in my research, I left them my contact number for that particular city and the duration of my stay. Generally, the response was positive because most of the participants immediately arranged a day, time and venue for the interview.

The appointment was scheduled based on the convenience of the respondents. My respondents' attitudes varied from genuine interest and appreciation to indifference and amazement towards my study. Those who thought that the voices and experiences of mothers should be heard participated very enthusiastically in my research. At the end of the interview sessions, they inquired about my perception about motherhood in different

cultures of my study. I was unable to respond to all their queries since I was yet to complete my data collection and document the analysis. Therefore, I refrained from making any comments during the data collection process.

After the interview, some participants also indulged in friendly conversations. In Canada, mothers were happy to discuss their role and gave detailed accounts of their childrearing practices. Indian mothers were anxious to participate and often remarked that they had never perceived their maternal role in any other light than a natural role that they are socialized to takeover after marriage. Some of the respondents in Tumkur, India felt that they should start discussing the issues of motherhood with other mothers because this would help them to profit from each other's experiences. This reaction made me feel that my work was well-accepted and recognized by my participants. A few participants from Mexico were curious to know about my country of birth, educational qualifications, and age.

However, there were some participants who did not share the same interest and enthusiasm. In fact, some questioned my interest in studying mothers' everyday lives and experiences. Their reaction was, that the role and responsibilities of mothers were a known fact and questioned what was interesting in this topic that could add a new dimension to women's studies. For example, some outsiders (people who did not participate in my research, such as host families' friends) and respondents from each country inquired why I wanted to study motherhood and literally scorned at the objectives of my research. For a while, I was quite upset and my confidence was completely shattered and I did not return to the field for a couple of days. Of course I reasoned that some people have a difficult time in

understanding social issues that they take for granted. These issues when studied have significant meanings which can be useful for society.

Most of the participants also reacted indifferently to the situational vignettes that inquired about their attitudes towards their daughters' and sons' education and marriage. These respondents believed that these questions were not relevant since they reported and/or perceived their children equally regardless of their gender. However, my data analysis shows otherwise.

Interviewing

A series of questions collected demographic data to study mothers' age group, educational qualifications, the number of children they have and how they assess their children's academic performance (See Appendix A).

I used a semi-structured interview with open-ended questions to inquire about women's perceptions regarding motherhood and childrearing practices. Each interview session lasted about two hours on average (See Appendix A). All the interviews were audiotape recorded with the consent of the respondents. In discussing methods of interviewing Reinharz (1992) wrote, "interviewing offers researchers access to people's ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher" (p. 19). For example when asked, "Do you think your active participation in your children's daily activities influences their academic performance? Can you give some examples?", the participants from each country provided concrete and specific responses:

Mothers' influence on children's education

Ahmmm...Yaa, I think it's a whole way of thinking about yourself and your life that encourages you to be successful in academics. I guess just the standards that we set in our home like everybody has a desk, like you know, you have a workspace you organize yourself. Like we all will have our paper organization, like my son has his papers well organized and he has his shelves and you have your desk, and my daughters have their own, and I have my own. I guess it's just the way we value those kinds of things that encourage us to pursue them. Like it's not like we go to a home where that isn't valued, our children come to a home where it is valued. So I think that contributes to their attitudes about it and the fact that they will pursue those kind of goals (Nicole, Canada: November 1998).

...I would say it does influence. If I actively participate say in my son's education he scores good percentage. Maybe...right from the beginning I left my job because I was...there was nobody to look after them. And that is the reason they are so much involved with me, you know, that for everything they want me. That can be the reason, I don't know (Tanu, India: February 1998).

Yes, yes, yes. For sure it has that they go ahead, but for example, I with my son Juan who is a little weak, is unable to go ahead. It costs me more work than with the girls. I influence equally all the three but it's always one who's weaker, and more irresponsible.... I try to make them understand that they need to study, that he's a man, and that tomorrow he'll need to support a family, right. It's the same now for women. Like I said to you, women need to be prepared just like the men, the two. But he needs to be more (accomplished) as a man (Laura, Mexico: January 1999).

The responsibility of children's education weighed heavily upon these mothers and they reported that they worked diligently towards promoting the value of education in the minds of their children, irrespective of their gender. Yet, some mothers discussed the negligence of their sons towards education, when it was perceived as much more important for their boys to seek higher education because after marriage, they needed to support their family.

Situational vignettes provided a framework for studying whether mothers' attitudes differed towards daughters and sons with regards to education, marriage, and household responsibilities. For example, in response to the vignette 'If one day your daughter says –

Mom, after completing high school I want to get married. How would you respond and feel?", I received a range of responses which are illustrated in the following excerpts:

Mothers' perceptions about children's marriage

I would encourage her not to get married. I really would encourage her to not get married. I mean it's...I would just you know try to encourage her to wait if that's she feels is the guy for her in life then wait but, you're too young to make that decision at that age (Rose, Canada: March 1999).

Upon hearing this I will feel sad (the expression here was less negative). I will try to make her understand that this is not the time to get married please continue studies. After the completion of your studies I will arrange for your marriage and also I will try to understand her mental conditions and I will search for that boy whom she has selected that after the completion of your studies you can get married (Indu, India: January 1998).

Well, I will not feel very good for sure because nowadays they (referring to girls) need to possess a lot. They need to enjoy their work, the school. There is a lot of time to get married. I believe that all will come. I don't know (Laura, Mexico: January 1999).

The same mothers expressed greater concern when asked about "If one day your son says – Mom, after completing high school I want to get married. How would you respond and feel?

Worse even (laughs). No, I would definitely discourage him to not get married. Oh! (Rose, Canada: March 1998).

I will be very upset and I will try to stop him (in son's case mother expresses her emotions more strongly). This is not the age because high school is completed at the age of 17+ this is not the age for my son to get married (Indu, India: January 1998).

The same, the same (expresses the same concern for her daughters). In his case more, it will give me more fright because he's a boy and needs to support a family. I believe that I will support him with his decision, but I think that they will have major problems sooner (Laura, Mexico: January 1999).

Some of the respondents reemphasized the cultural ideas of marriage. These mothers believed that their daughters should get married earlier than their sons. In Chapter 4, I discuss the various factors responsible for these views.

The semi-structured questionnaire helped me to keep the interview sessions on track. Although I used a questionnaire, I allowed my participants to converse freely, which in turn gave them an opportunity to spontaneously express their ideas. Often in response to a question, some of the respondents indulged in long detailed conversations and inadvertently provided some extra information that answered the questions that were to follow. For example when asked, what they enjoyed about mothering, the response covered the information about what they also disliked about mothering.

During the interview, I listened carefully to the information these 36 mothers provided and introduced new questions whenever the participants raised various issues on their own accord. For example, some mothers talked about their children interacting with "good kids" and I inquired how they defined "good kids". The frequent response to that was, children from respectable families who are taught good morals and behaviour similar to what these mothers practiced at home with their children.

I usually interviewed these 36 mothers in the absence of other family members. In the case of full-time homemakers and part-time working mothers interviews were usually arranged for the early afternoon, or days they were not working. The time fixed was based on when their children were away at school and husbands were at work because the participants felt they could spare some hours during such time without any distractions. In such situations, if it was possible I stayed on to meet the children and the husbands, and on some occasions the participants themselves invited me to stay over to meet their families.

However, if family was present, the participants chose the privacy of their living or family room for the interview sessions. In the case of two participants their husbands were with them during the interview. I did not object to the silent attendance of my participants' husbands because absence of the spouses was not a condition of the interview sitting. In addition, I respected the fact that my participants were already volunteering their time and homes for participating in my research. I feel that the absence or presence of the husbands did not affect the responses of the participants. However, one husband remarked to his wife's answers "For everything it is I, I (meaning his wife was taking the credit for everything)" (Beatrice, Mexico: January 1999). I believe that if I had included the fathers in this study, I could have gathered different data and examined the roles of fathers in their children's upbringing. However, for this study my focus was not on the fathers, but it's an area for future research.

Mothers working full-time were interviewed in their work place during lunch hours and three mothers from Ajax, Canada agreed to be interviewed on a weekend because I was in town for only a Saturday and a Sunday.

As a researcher, it was essential for me to make my participants feel comfortable. Questions raised by the respondents were answered, before or after the interview. If respondents did not comprehend any question asked, then they made queries about what I was looking for in their responses. I made a conscious effort not to guide their responses in any particular direction. Therefore, I just rephrased my questions. For instance, a participant from India failed to understand the question "How do you participate in your children's schoolwork". In this situation, I rephrased the question as follows "What is your role in your children's studies and home assignments?". I was not always successful in

merely rephrasing the questions and had to provide the respondents with examples. The examples given helped the participants to respond to the questions appropriately.

Table 1, shown below describes in chronological detail the number of participants interviewed in each country, and the time frame I used to conduct the interviews.

Table 1
An overview of the interviews: Time frame and duration

Country	City	Interviews in each City	Time Frame (From-To)	Time duration
Canada	Ajax	3	28 Nov'98-30 Nov'98	Int. 1=4 hrs; Int. 2=2½ hrs; Int. 3=1½ hrs.
	Brossard	3	26 Mar'99-29 Apr'99	Int. 1= 3 hrs; Int. 2= 2½ hrs; Int. 3=2 hrs.
	Montreal	3	30 Oct'98-3 Mar'99	Int. 1=4 hrs; Int. 2=3 hrs; Int. 3=1½ hr.
	Ottawa	3	30 Mar'99-30 June'99	Int. 1=1¼ hr; Int. 2=2½hrs; Int. 3= 4 hrs.
India	Mumbai	3	22 Jan'98-4 Feb'98	Int. 1=3hrs; Int. 2=2 hrs; Int. 3=2½ hrs.
	Tumkur	3	5 Feb'98-20 Feb'98	Int. 1=3hrs; Int. 2=4½ hrs; Int. 3=1¼ hr.
	Trivandrum	3	21 Feb'98-6 Mar'98	Int. 1=4hrs; Int. 2=2½ hrs; Int. 3=1½ hr.
	Calcutta	3	7 Mar'98-20 Mar'98	Int. 1=2½ hrs; Int. 2=2hrs; Int. 3=1hr. 50 mts.
Mexico	Mexico City	3	10 Jan'99-17 Jan'99	Int. 1=2hrs; Int. 2=2½ hrs; Int. 3=2hrs.
	Querétaro City	3	17 Jan'99-22 Jan'99	Int. 1= 3hrs; Int. 2=2¼ hrs; Int. 3=2 hrs.
	Oaxaca City	3	22 Jan'99-29 Jan'99	Int. 1=2½ hrs; Int. 2=1½ hr; Int. 3=1 1/2hr.
	Puebla City	3	30 Jan'99-7 Feb'99	Int. 1=2 hrs; Int. 2=1 ½ hrs; Int. 3=2½ hrs.

Scheduling an interview was an arduous task because of the time constraints or the participants' last minute unavailability for personal reasons. For example, one Canadian participant had finalized the day and time with me for conducting the interview. However,

the participant called to reschedule the interview a few hours before, due to an unforeseen emergency. In India too, a participant abruptly asked me to stop the interview because her husband had come home early. The reaction on the participant's face told me that she was afraid of her husband and did not want to continue participating in the interview. I was unable to reschedule the interview because I was leaving town the next day, and had to finish with the required number of interviews the same day. Except for delaying the fieldwork, the cancellations and rescheduling did not affect my data collection.

Role of the Researcher

Qualitative research can be divided into theory, method and analysis. A gendered researcher takes charge of these activities and speaks from his/her social class, racial, cultural and ethnic perspective (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). A researcher has been defined as 'bricoleur' (Nelson, Treichler & Grossberg, 1992; Weinstein & Weinstein, 1991). 'Bricoleur' is a concept that exemplifies the position taken by qualitative researchers. According to this term, a researcher brings together different pieces of information to secure an understanding of the phenomenon under analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). In this particular study, I am responsible for not only collecting data but also for extracting meaning from the collected data.

Interaction within the social world helps the socially situated researcher to construct realities that influence the topic being researched. To capture the mothers' words and actions, I used semi-structured and in-depth questionnaires. I collected data primarily in the form of audio-taped interviews from Canada, India and Mexico.

Kvale (1996) stated that a qualitative approach allowed ethnographers to focus on "single cases" to investigate the meanings people ascribe to their lived world, to their experiences and to self-understanding. I predefined the profile of the participants for epistemological and methodological reasons.

My physical presence in the field helped me to closely examine the mothers' perceptions of their roles. The majority of the mothers felt comfortable with the idea of being interviewed for my study. Many mothers shared their personal experiences of mothering and at times, these meetings acted as therapeutic sessions where mothers confided about their fears and emotions consciously or subconsciously.

Demographic Profile

Since my inquiry focuses on the experiences of middle-class mothers, I talked to a group of 36 middle-class women from Canada, India and Mexico who have chosen to stay wholly or partly at home and are relatively content with their role as mothers. Of the 36 mothers interviewed, 19 women worked full or part-time and 17 were full-time homemakers. Amongst the women who worked 11 had full-time and 8 had part-time jobs. From the 17 full-time homemakers, 2 were Canadian mothers, 8 were Indian and 7 were Mexican mothers. The full-time mothers engaged in work specifically directed towards supporting their children's education and development. These mothers were aspiring for their children's academic success, which they strongly believed could be accomplished only if they as mothers spend maximum hours with their children. However, irrespective of their professional backgrounds, all 36 participants had similar views about mothering. All

the 36 mothers regarded mothering as an important role and devoted full attention to this responsibility.

My participants in India and Mexico belonged to the majority population, while my participants from Canada were white, Anglo-Saxon people. I selected these participants because I wanted to draw a comparison between the strategies of mothering pursued by mothers who belonged to the majority population of each country.

Socio-cultural Differences

The socio-cultural worlds of the 36 mothers varied to a great extent. There were various factors such as culture, economy and political infrastructure that have had influenced the demographics of these countries. The same factors influenced the family structure, educational and employment opportunities. Table 2 illustrates some of the socio-cultural differences between the participants of each country. Next, I explain the factors that have created these differences in each country.

Table 2
Demographic Description of the Participants

Country & City	Education			Working Mothers		Full-Time	Nuclear Families	Joint Families
	HS	UG	PG ¹	FT	PT ²			
Canada								
Ajax	1	1	1	3	0	0	3	0
Brossard	0	0	3	0	2	1	3	0
Montreal	0	0	3	1	2	0	3	0
Ottawa	0	0	3	1	1	1	2	1
India								
Calcutta	0	1	2	1	0	2	2	1
Mumbai	0	1	2	0	0	3	3	0
Tumkur	0	1	2	0	2	1	1	2
Trivandrum	0	1	2	1	0	2	2	1
Mexico								
Mexico City	1	0	2	1	1	1	3	0
Querétaro City	1	2	0	0	0	3	3	0
Oaxaca City	2	1	0	3	0	0	3	0
Puebla City	2	1	0	0	0	3	3	0

Canada

My field research in Canada began in June 1998 and continued right up to June 1999, and the participants selected were from Ajax, Ottawa, Montreal and Brossard. Women in Canada have had an influx of opportunities to improve their educational qualifications. Consequently, middle-class women availed these opportunities and many opted for post-graduate education as their minimum academic qualification. The changing nature of the western economy created a demand for both men and women to be employed and today, most women seek employment outside the home. However, women with children prefer part-time employment over full-time since they like to spend maximum

¹ HS: High School Certificate; UG: Under Graduate Degree; PG: Post-Graduation Degree

² FT: Full-time; PT: Part-time

time with their children. The concept of nuclear families has replaced joint families where the focus is on the individual needs of the single household.

In Canada, 3 participants were within the age bracket of 30-39, 8 were in the age group of 40-49, and one participant belonged to the age group of 50 and above. With regards to the number of children, 8 participants had 3 or more, while 4 mothers had two children each. The majority of the children were 14 years or younger and some were in the age bracket of 14 and above. Most of my participants rated their children's academic performance as very *good*, while the rest were rated *excellent*, *good* or *satisfactory*. These mothers perceived these value-laden qualifiers as tools to define the academic performances of their children.

India

I started my field research in India in January 1998 and travelled through four different cities/ towns to collect my data. I conducted the interviews in Mumbai, Tumkur, Trivandrum and Calcutta. Since the late 1970s, the educational opportunities for middle-class women in India have improved considerably. Today, many women are aspiring for the same qualifications as their male counterparts, and parents also take equal pride in the academic qualifications of their daughters as they do in the case of their sons. However, ambivalence surrounds the academic qualifications of girls because quite often, after marriage, girls are unable to apply their education to the public world. It is even more so, after they become mothers. Generally, women who opt to work make a conscious effort to accommodate the needs of their family by choosing professions such as teaching or starting their own enterprise which allows them to organize their days' activities around their

children's schedule.

In India, 9 mothers were in the age group of 30-39, and 3 were in the age group of 40-49. The information about the family size revealed that 11 mothers had 2 children and one mother had 3 children. The age group of most of the children was 14 and under, while a few were in the age group of 14 and above. Children's academic performance was rated as *very good* in most cases, with the exception of a few children who were rated as *excellent* or *good*. None of the mothers rated their children's academic work as just *satisfactory*. Value-laden qualifiers were used as tools to grade their children's schoolwork.

Mexico

Interviews in Mexico were conducted during January 1999 in Mexico, Querataro, Oaxaca and Puebla. In Mexico, the educational opportunities for women have improved. From the 12 Mexican participants, 6 were high school graduates, 4 were under graduates and 2 were post-graduates. The majority of these mothers are full-time homemakers, 4 are working full-time and one is a part-time worker. All the participants lived in nuclear households and the concept of joint family did not appear very popular. Members of the extended family usually lived in close vicinity, but each family maintained their independent households.

In Mexico, 4 participants were in the age group of 30-39, while 8 participants were in the age group of 40-49. In 9 families there were 3 or more children, while 3 families had 2 children. Most of the children were under 14 years of age, while a few were above 14 years. These mothers categorized their children's academic performance based upon their general results at school. Some children were ranked *excellent*, few *very good* and others

just *good*. Mexican mothers used these value-laden qualifiers to describe the academic behaviour of their children.

Ethics and Confidentiality

The objectives of the study were explained in advance to the participants and if the respondents raised any questions, they were answered to the best of my ability. Before conducting the interviews, formal consent of the participants was obtained by signing a consent form (See Appendix B). The participants were advised that they were free to withdraw from the research at any time during the interview and in fact, one participant did so for personal reasons.

For ethical purposes the real names of the participants are not being used. As the researcher of this study, I am very conscious of the rights of the mothers who participated in my inquiry. Therefore, names have been changed to protect the identities of the participants. The direct reference to the country allows me to present these mothers' perceptions regarding different issues and subjects of discussion. I will not share any personal information obtained during the interviews with anyone outside the research, for example, committee members.

Summary

The data collection approach is situated in critical feminism and phenomenology. The discussion of culture has helped to situate the cultural differences between mothers and their childrearing practices. The semi-structured interviews were audio-taped for analysing the role of mothers in their children's educational activities and how childrearing impacts mothers' personal identities. In this study, I describe the experiences of these mothers in

the context of their own social processes by allowing them to use their own terms to describe the situations they experienced. Griffith & Smith (1987) described this approach as "a sociology in which we do not transform people into objects but preserve their presence as subjects" (p. 89). The next chapter focuses on the ways mothers participate in their children's academic work and the influence of mothers' personal ambitions on their children.

CHAPTER 4

UNDERSTANDING THE EVERYDAY LIVES OF MOTHERS

Overview

Mary and I had been discussing the influence of mothers' participation in their children's education, when I asked her this question:

Meenakshi: Do you think your ambitions sometimes influence your children's performance?

Mary: Ahnn...well, I know a mother's confidence has a lot to do with the child's ambitions. You know, if the mother is not confident, I think that affects the children a lot more so than the fathers. I think that's really important. So if a mother is confident being at home and you know, fulfilling herself at that and keeping herself you know, abreast of what's going on in the world and you know, is happy. I think that'll affect the child's achievements. If the mother is happy going out to work and still can put the child first, I think that will affect the child's achievement. I happen to be very happy being at home with my children for many years, you know not now, but for many years I was happy being at home with them. So I think...and I was confident at what I was doing. I thought I was doing the job you know. So I think that have a bearing on their idea of achievement but I think other people can do it different ways, you don't have to do it all one way (Mary, Canada: October 1998).

The above quote reflected the active involvement of this mother in her children's everyday activities and especially their schoolwork. She kept herself well informed of the events happening on everyday basis that could influence their academic accomplishments. However, the everyday experiences of mothers are not given much recognition because all their activities appear so obvious and banal, that they merit little consideration in the literature on mothers' work (Standing, 1999). I came across similar attitudes in some of the responses of my participants. An in depth analysis of the 36 mothers' daily experiences with regards to their children's education and the ways in which these experiences are articulated in the everyday context, allows us to gain an insight into their local practices. Smith (1987) also situated the working experiences of mothers "in its real conditions" to

study the work mothers do with regards to “the caring for and the social development of children, which is articulated to the work of the school” (p. 183).

In this chapter, I present my data analysis and then I explain and interpret my findings. First, I describe how mothers were involved in the household activities which invariably focused on the well-being of their children. Next, I discuss how the routine activities of mothers exerted great influence on their childrearing practices as well as their children's academic performance. Finally, I discuss mothers' gender specific socialization of their children that perpetuated traditions in the minds of their sons and daughters.

Coding the Data

I conducted indepth interviews with all the 36 mothers and then analysed the data to study the ideology of mothering these mothers espoused for raising their children and influencing their schooling. Irrespective of their diverse cultural backgrounds, these mothers share “a specific set of ideas” (Hays, 1996) about proper nurturance of their children. In other words, the participants in my study allowed me to anticipate some of their responses before they could express their views, views that reinforced the traditional ideology of intensive mothering.

In order to analyse the data, first, I transcribed all audio-taped interviews. After completing the transcriptions of the interviews, the data was categorized under different topics following the process of coding. The data was then selected, identified and refined to study the themes that emerged from the interviews. I explored connections between the differing themes and identified the emerging patterns and incongruities within the data collected. To differentiate between the data from each country, I provided a header and a

footer for each page that was transcribed. The header contained each participant's name, country, date and time of the interview. For analysis, I used the acronyms CT (Canadian transcript), IT (Indian transcript) and MT (Mexican transcript). To protect the identities of the participants, I have changed their names. After coding each transcript, I made two photocopies of each interview. The raw data and the original transcripts were put away and I used photocopies during the analysis.

The responses of the participants were classified under different categories. Transcripts were critically read to develop different units of meaning (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Then each unit was cut and pasted on individual sheets, so that cross references could be made in order to observe if any cultural differences could be identified between the participants from each country.

Mothers in the Household: Domestic Labour and its Implications

Mothers primarily carry out the responsibilities of domestic labour and sometimes other family members also contribute in sharing the work, depending upon the understanding between individuals and the composition of the household. In nuclear families, some husbands share certain activities in the household, for example looking after a few aspects of their children's education. If the household belongs to a middle or upper class, mothers seek external help for relieving themselves from some of the domestic pressures. When the children are old enough, they also participate in sharing a few household chores that allow mothers to shed some of their responsibilities. However, all of the above mentioned situations are ideal situations, but fail to work at all times. Instead, mothers shoulder more responsibilities than the other family members.

The respondents in my study from the three cultures engaged themselves actively in the nurturance of their children and husbands. This image paralleled the idealized cultural image of mothers who expended the majority of their time and energy in raising their children. Therefore, indirectly all these mothers appeared to have internalized the dominant image of a caring mother that is promoted by the wider society. The main work at home, as perceived by all these mothers, is connected with cooking, cleaning, doing the laundry and looking after the needs of their children and husbands. The first three activities were observed as more exhausting, while the latter two were connected more with their children and spouses and therefore, not perceived as painstaking tasks because they were done out of love and duty. In fact, some mothers viewed work and childcare as separate entities.

However, the working pattern of mothers in each country differed because it was based on the cultural and social contexts that each individual experienced. For example in Canada, none of the participants sought external help for their household activities, whereas in India and Mexico most of the mothers employed part-time maidservants for cleaning their homes, washing their dishes and clothes. I believe, in Canada, it is relatively expensive to hire domestic help and the availability of modern electrical appliances further reduced the household work. In India and Mexico, domestic help was easier to access and this allowed mothers to rely on their services. Conversely, most of the respondents in Canada irrespective of working full-time or part-time or being full-time mothers enrolled their children in daycare centers, while Indian and Mexican mothers remained the primary childcare providers for their children.

Society perceives the various acts of parental involvement, such as preparing food, taking the children to school or helping them with their homework as an essential part of

mothering (Caplan, 1985; Smith, 1987; Reay, 1995; Dore, 1997). Everyday activities of these mothers played an influential role in the smooth functioning of the household. These mothers invested a lot of effort in managing the two worlds, the domestic and public. Their activities in these two spheres had far reaching implications on their family members and themselves. The majority of the participants in my inquiry took great pride in being able to provide for their children and husbands, and the desire to accomplish more kept growing.

An examination of the day-to-day activities of my respondents revealed that their work involved being responsible for all the domestic work such as shopping, cooking, cleaning, bringing up the children and looking after their husbands. Indian and Mexican mothers also assumed these responsibilities even though they employed part-time help for their household activities. The part-time help was sought primarily for the menial chores (cleaning, dusting, washing clothes and dishes) but chores related to childcare and husbands (for example preparing special meals) were not handed to the maidservants, instead mothers took over the complete responsibility. Like one mother said, "You know typical mother role, they come to me for those things" (Mary, Canada: October 1998). Therefore, these mothers have adopted the processes of "contestation, accommodation, resistance and negotiation" (Gilroy, 1999, p.158) to deal with the complex situations arising in their households. The following three are accounts of the various roles that mothers assumed within their family situation:

Well I participate very actively in my children's lives. I do work but otherwise when it's off work time I spend a lot of time with them and help them with their education, play games with them and take care of their personal needs at the best. (Tessa, Canada: March 1999).

Actually it's more than my husband. I play the full role of both father and mother with my children. I teach them in the morning, I devote one hour in the mornings, and evenings around one and a half-hour for teaching. I do not send them for

tuition. The main object for this is so that I can spend more time with them and I can have more interaction with them. Otherwise we simply don't sit with our children to spend time. Only we see...only when we see TV, that time we cannot...we cannot understand their feelings. (Sneha, India: February 1998).

Well, it is I think that the role of mother is everything, no. The responsibility is such that it's the same all over the world. I always from the time I had my first child I did not have the tension to go to work, for dedicating the time in other places. It (the time) was for them. I was in the house for my first son, also for my daughter. (Fanny, Mexico: January 1999).

From these comments it can be deduced that mothers, irrespective of their cultural backgrounds, identified their central roles in relation to their children's needs. For most of the mothers, the day began by waking up early and preparing themselves for the everyday challenges of the household. Irrespective of their professional status, these mothers devoted maximum hours looking after their children. In other words, these mothers have internalized the idealized image of appropriate mothering and defined their main role at home as connected with bringing up their children and interacting actively with them on an everyday basis. Alongside, the "super moms" who were busy juggling their professional lives with their household responsibilities considered themselves "modern". For example, a Mexican mother reported, "Well I work and take care of my children. I am a very modern mother" (Beatrice, Mexico: January 1999). In this particular case, the respondent equated modernity with her professional status since many more women were participating in the public arena to "gain greater legitimacy" (Safa, 1995, p. 236). Although in this example she talked about herself as a Mexican mother, it is important to stress that much of what has been occurring is a result of broader changes in the global economic system. Consequently, some other developing countries are also experiencing similar changes in the nature of women's employment.

The majority of these mothers used self-referencing personal pronouns 'I/

Me/Myself' to discuss who woke up first in the morning and helped the children get ready for school. The morning responsibilities of these mothers did not seem to change even if they woke up after their children or husbands. Mothers carried out their morning activities of "preparing breakfast", "helping the children with their school bags" or "driving them to school". In their descriptions of early morning routines, recurring evidence of maternal involvement was found:

First it's me I have my alarm clock, then my daughter has her alarm clock. So I wake up at 10 to 7, she get's up at 7. And then my son I go up to him at 7:15, and then I go up to him second time and he comes out of bed, kicking and screaming at 7:25. (Quincy, Canada: December 1998).

Myself. Why you mean (laughs) because it's started from the very beginning. I don't know why. I sleep around 11:30 then get up. I am a morning early riser, or maybe I feel that I have so much work to do in the house I get up. (Priya, India: February 1998).

The image of an ideal mother did not spring naturally. It had been constructed socially to meet the interests of the patriarchal society. The major expectations from any mother were to look after the household and the children from their young age, until the children grew up to become mature, independent adults (Weisner & Gallimore, 1977). As one mother from Mexico commented:

Each day, well they are dependent on me for all their things like going to school, their food, they always have their clothes ready, their uniforms. It's a lot. The role of a mother involves a lot of things. They all are dependent on you – children, house, your husband and the people who help me in the house. It's all. (Laura, Mexico: January 1999).

The actions of these 36 mothers revealed that the widely shared image held was that women were primarily responsible for the care of home and children. While articulating their feelings about childcare, some mothers explained how they played the dual role of being fathers and mothers for their children. Fathers' involvement in relation to parental

care was limited to very few activities. Yet, these mothers hesitated to express their resentment in explicit words, or they hid their concerns “under a list of reasons why they should be grateful for whatever help they do receive” (Hays, 1996, p. 105) from their husbands. Connected to this fact is another problem that even if husbands wanted to help, they were very busy with their professions. One mother, for instance, said that she informed her husband about everything happening with the children at school and at home because he did not have the time to be physically present and to devote time to his children. Therefore, he did not help them personally with their activities:

Oh! Just about everything. Yaa, he knows what's going on pretty much. He doesn't have the time so much at the academics but I let him know. (Ursula, Canada: April 1999).

At the same time fathers tended to play the role of a “good cop” after the mothers had spent the whole day meeting the needs of their children. For example, one Indian mother quoted her husband “Always your mother is behind you to study. Come on we'll enjoy. So till the time he's here we won't study” (Sneha, India: February 1998). In Chapter 5, I will further explore the ways in which fathers got involved in the household activities and in bringing up their children.

Keeping the Kitchen Warm

I was...where was I reading this...I think it was a filmmaker, celebrated filmmaker. I forgot his name, a director. ...And he said that, you know he remembers that people ask him why he's so successful and he says- I know it sounds simplistic but he says, it boils down to my mother being...having the kitchen warm when I got up in the morning, you know (Mary, Canada: October 1998).

The following respondent elaborated on the value of “food preparation” in the lives of the children. Examples of this kind reinforced the idea that “in all cultures, cooking and

giving food are loaded with emotional significance" (Caplan, 1985, p. 71). Observation of many women's actions in any given society revealed that they defined themselves in relation or in connection to other people and this could be a socially constructed reality (Chodorow, 1974). This social construction had a deep impact on the beliefs and practices of my respondents, such that they followed the ideology of traditional mothering to the core and thereby influenced the intellectual development of their children. For example, they worked hard to adequately nourish and feed their children and husbands before they left the house. In the majority of the homes, mothers were fully in charge of the food preparation and many women began their day in the kitchen, irrespective of the time they woke up. The structuring of mothers' time within their families was shaped by meal preparations for the children and husbands. Many mothers also prepared lunches that the children normally carried along with them to school. As the following three accounts illustrated:

My eldest because he leaves by seven then it's me. I give them breakfast, check usually their things ready to school, their homework, I make sure it's there, make their lunches. (Ursula, Canada: April 1999).

I (referring to herself when talks about who wakes up first in the morning). Baby's (daughter's nick name) tiffin (lunch) needs to be prepared because she goes to school by 8:30 a.m. By 7:30 I prepare her tiffin and then I wake her up and send her to the bathroom. Then to wake him (referring to her husband) up, I prepare tea and give him bed tea. Then I comb Baby's hair and give her breakfast. (Veena, India: January 1998).

I, (wake up first in the morning) because my children...O.K. more than anything I need to prepare the breakfast and the food (lunch). Prepare the tortillas (flat Mexican bread), prepare other things so that they can have their breakfast before going to school. Prepare the clothes for everyone who will leave because almost the same time we all leave. In the house there is no one to help (meaning a maid-servant). (Heather, Mexico: January 1999).

All the women, regardless of their employment status discussed the ways in which

kitchen work controlled their days' routine. The routine started with preparing tea or coffee, followed by breakfast which was eaten by different members of the family at different times, depending on when they left the house for school, college or work.

Depending upon the school hours, many mothers had to keep an afternoon snack ready for feeding the children after they returned from school. Therefore, stay-home mothers spent the time they had, after the children and husbands had left for school and work, to clean the house and prepare food for the evening. At suppertime, most of the families had their meals together and the responsibility of setting the table was sometimes delegated to the children. However, the main task of cooking and serving always remained the mothers' duty. Many mothers derived immense pleasure from their feelings of being wanted alongwith their role of food preparation.

Mothers' Role in Children's Education

The role of mothers in their children's education has not gained much recognition until recently. The work done by mothers with regards to their children's education is often hidden behind general assumptions about mothering being a natural and easy process, which is far removed from what counts as real work (Reay, 1998). Until very recently (from 1970s to early 1980s), the tasks of mothers were not recognized as work (Oakley, 1974) instead these tasks were categorized as mothers' duty towards their families. Gaskell and McLaren (1987) criticized the way educational researchers had taken the work of mothers for granted. They asserted:

This research (referring to educational research) makes little reference to the work of mothers in its abstracted reference to "families". It is primarily concerned with a one-way relationship-how families affect the educational achievement of children. It blames mothers for any failures in their children, but takes their

work for granted. It neglects to question how schools affect families, and more specifically, how they affect the work of mothers in the home (Gaskell & McLaren, 1987, p. 27).

Many mothers played a versatile role in their children's educational activities. Some children's socialization and education started from home and were transmitted through story telling, games and language learning. The emphasis was placed on teaching them acceptable behavior. Other children experienced the same through formal education in structured nursery programs. The process of imparting informal education to the children continued until the time they entered school, and gradually mothers' roles in the educational and extracurricular activities started diminishing as the children moved to higher grades (DeRoche & Williams, 1998).

In this study, I have recorded the voices of 36 mothers from three cultures to focus on how they carried out their roles of mothering primarily in support of their children's education. Smith (1987) had written about the ways in which mothers, and in some instances both parents regularly monitored their children's schoolwork. Parents also encouraged them to converse about things that happened at school. These mothers were involved in a range of activities in relation to their children's schooling and the common responses were, helping with everyday homework, research projects and general vigilance over their everyday school activities: "At present I just observe them. I only look over their work but when they were young I helped them more and gradually, I left them on their own" (Catherina, Mexico: January 1999).

In response to a question about how many hours these mothers spent on their children's education and how they participated in children's schoolwork, some of the

mothers with very young children expressed the same sentiments but in differing words as the following excerpts illustrated:

Petra: In a day, three hours-four hours, three hours with their homework and then our playtime. We do things together or watch a movie together. Like that. (Petra, Canada: November 1998).

Meenakshi: How do you participate in your children's schoolwork?

Petra: Help them with their homework; try to make it to their school for their trips and just independent reading, aside from their homework, we read together. (Petra, Canada: November 1998).

Lata: Studies are only evening sessions, 2-3 hours in the evenings. Mornings just talk to them, see that everything is in order (Lata, India: February 1998).

Meenakshi: How do you participate in your children's schoolwork?

Lata: Schoolwork is I just help them out in doing their homework and make them understand, like if they don't understand a particular thing so she comes and asks me what is this, what is that. So I try to see that she...I explain to her and I correct her (Lata, India: February 1998).

Heather: One hour (for their studies) and half an hour for playing with them (Heather, Mexico: January 1999).

Meenakshi: How do you participate in your children's schoolwork?

Heather: First, I ask them to study or to do their homework in the house. If they have some problems then I get involved with them to help. But first I ask them to study it (Heather, Mexico: January 1999).

These mothers used expressions like "help them with their homework", "schoolwork is, I just help them out in doing their homework" and "if they have some problems then I get involved with them to help" to describe the different ways they get involved in their children's activities. The common word in all these expressions was "help" that these mothers provided their children with their schoolwork.

Without any exception, all the mothers undertook full responsibility for their children's education. However in India, I also came across the concept of private tutors who were engaged to help mothers in sharing the increasing pressure of their children's

studies. This may be attributed to the fact that the Indian "educational system demands a great deal of memorization and rote learning, and most schools impose a considerable burden of homework" (Caplan, 1985, p. 76). The education system in India is such that most of the children from middle-class families seek the help of tutors for coping with the workload and to prepare especially for the 10th and 12th grade exams held on the British model of "O and A" levels. For instance, in response to the question, "How do you participate in your children's schoolwork?", an Indian mother provided the following description:

Schoolwork! Both of them have got a tuition (extra preparatory lessons taught at home with the help of a private tutor) sir who comes three days...four days a week that is Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday. One hour each. One hour for Sunil and one hour for Renu. The thing is I decided to put a tuition master because during her younger days, when she was Sunil's age, till then I was the one who use to look after the studies. He (referring to her husband) doesn't involve in the studying part – doing the homework or teaching them. And he doesn't have the time, he says- he doesn't want to teach the children you take care of that (Jaya, India: February 1998).

Another mother added:

Schoolwork means education. For their education...till the 8th grade I taught my daughter but now she is in 9th so we have kept a teacher for her since we don't understand science that well (Indu, India: January 1998).

For many mothers from across the cultures, the responsibility for some of their older children's education diminished, as the following three accounts illustrated:

Well Sam is getting independent with her homework, she doesn't need a lot of supervision mostly just checking, signing things and working with her if she has a test, just giving her an overview and stuff like that. So maybe a half an hour on most days because she does most of it on her own. It was more when she was younger, more supervision. (Veronica, Canada: April 1999).

Now they are grown up children right. They are studying themselves. If they have any doubts we will clear them, anything. They are grown up, one is 18 years and one is 16 years. We don't have so much worry about studying them (the respondent

here meant "less worries about their studies"). (Haritha, India: February 1998).

Now I don't. When they were very little the whole afternoon. Times when they needed me I dedicated myself exclusively to them. (Donna, Mexico: January 1999).

Therefore, once the children moved to senior grades mothers spent less time on their children's schoolwork. Older children looked after their homework independently and help was sought primarily for "research projects" or to write "term papers". Even though the responsibility decreased, mothers remained vigilant and monitored their children's assignments and exam results in order to "sustain or advance" (Smith, 1987, p. 191) their children's performance in the school: "You know as far as the teaching goes, I mean we certainly keep an eye on what the teachers are doing and if there's something that we're not happy with, we write in there saying maybe this is not for Kevin, or maybe this is not for Emily" (Anne, Canada: June 1999). In some homes, the combined effort of the father and older siblings was sought to help the younger ones with their assignments thus, relieving mothers of the some responsibility of their children's education:

My son just wrote an essay the other night, it was interesting because he went to his sister for certain parts, you know for the structure of the writing of the essay, and he came to me, to read it over to see about the flow and how to connect one idea and other, that kind of thing. And he went to his dad for the final editing. (Nicole, Canada: November 1999).

Some mothers visited the schools on a regular basis to discuss their children's academic work with the teachers. These mothers established a home-school relationship as part of their monitoring work to share their concerns about their children's academic performance: "...We go to school together, also for some school ceremonies that we are invited for" (Beatrice, Mexico: January 1999).

Two Canadian mothers assumed a different role with regards to their children's education, they had home schooled them for a couple of years. Therefore, these mothers were totally in charge of their children's formative years of academic development. The following accounts expressed the feelings of these two mothers:

I'm a mother of five children and for many years I was responsible for taking care of their physical, their just everyday life. But at one point I decided, or they decided that they'll like to stay at home and not go to school. So in fact I became a teacher as well because I taught them at home for many years. (Mary, Canada: October 1998).

...I never went back full time to work with kids at home. And I would be at work full time now if it weren't that I was home schooling one of my children now. So I've had the opportunity to accept or reject full time positions. (Rose, Canada: March 1999).

In the past two decades, there has been a steady increase in the practice of home schooling in the western countries (for example, United States and Canada). Lines's (1991) defined home schooling as "instruction and learning, at least some of which is through planned activity, taking place primarily at home in a family setting with a parent acting as teacher or supervisor of the activity, and with one or more pupils who are members of the same family and who are doing grade K-12 work" (p. 10). The one parent who takes over the responsibility of home instructing is "usually the mother" (Lines, 1991, p. 17). Children experiencing home schooling have the opportunity to develop their interests without any peer pressure, but they also have the disadvantage of having little or no social interactions with other children of the same age group. The two respondents who home schooled their children did not elaborate on the topic of children's isolation from the mainstream activities. Instead they talked about the additional work they had to perform with regards to their children's education.

While the above mentioned two Canadian mothers home schooled their children, most other mothers complemented their children's schoolwork by adopting different means to monitor their academic performance. The majority of mothers provided their children with maximum assistance in doing their home assignments and in preparing them for tests that often stressed their children. In fact in India, I found it difficult to locate participants for my research between the months of late January and mid-March, since most of the school boards scheduled their exams during this time period. Therefore, the Indian mothers were reluctant to spare even an hour from their routine to participate in my research. An Indian mother elucidated her feelings in the following excerpt:

Whenever they had exams I use to stop all my social activities of going out. I use to stay behind for them only. It should not be like this that... I use to feel that this should not be in their heart that we have our exams, we are studying and mummy is enjoying herself. It should not be like this. For this reason when my daughter had her exam, 10th class exam, board exam, for full one year I had stopped all my activities of going out. I didn't go out at all. (Geeta, India: March 1998).

Similarly, the growing number of students in classrooms has further increased the intervention of mothers in the educational matters of their children, since teachers are unable to give individual attention to all their students: "... I think it's up to us to provide some kind of guidance that of course these days the teachers don't at school because they don't have as much time. They have more students then they use to" (Tessa, Canada: March, 1999). These mothers conceptualized this relationship between home and school as "one of complementing the education their children received" (Reay, 1998, p. 95). Thus, all mothers in this study attempted to monitor their children's educational progress and often intervened whenever they identified a problem in their children's school performance. They obtained information about schoolwork from their children, which the children did

not always volunteer spontaneously. In such situations, these mothers regularly monitored their children's schoolwork and visited the school to get an update on the activities of the classroom.

Consequences of the Mothers' Monitoring

All the mothers I interviewed regarded monitoring of their children's school activities with a very positive attitude. The daily educational exigencies of the children required mothers to invest a lot of their time at home in helping their children with their educational difficulties. Smith (1987) in her ethnographic study of mothers described the situations where mothers initiated "some course of action with the child to remedy" (p. 191) the work brought back from school. This need arose because, according to these mothers, the work lacked a certain standard. Therefore, these mothers assumed the responsibility of resolving their children's academic problems, so that they would not fall behind in their studies. Therefore, when asked if mothers' participation in their children's daily activities influenced the academic performance, the majority of the mothers affirmed that it did:

Yes, definitely yes. Well I'm always there to guide them and listen to them so that they get good results. They listen to me. For example, my daughter says- I want a car like my aunt. Yes my child, but your daddy will not buy it for you. You need to buy it with your strength therefore, you need to study. (Fanny, Mexico: January 1999).

To a certain degree yaa. If they see that you are interested, I think, sometimes they are going to try to put a little bit harder to achieve a higher level. And in that way they like to see their moms and dad to come and see things at school and they like to see their parents be proud of them. (Nancy, Canada: November 1998).

Besides working as "ancillary teachers" or monitoring their children's studies at

home, most of these mothers kept themselves informed regularly about the activities at school. These mothers believed that this information helped them to keep abreast of their children's performance at school and the various social, political and cultural institutions influencing their development. A mother from Canada, a teacher by profession, elaborated about the significance of parents' involvement in their children's schoolwork:

I think parents have to know what's going on at school and what's required and how their children are doing and they have to be involved. I see it as a teacher there. I can tell who are not organized they don't know what their homework is, they don't do their homework ... parents don't look at their homework. It's obvious, the ones (parents) that take interest in their children are much more successful, they are happier, they are more organized, they know what they are doing, their achievement is higher. I think it's very important. (Veronica, Canada: April 1999).

An Indian mother reinforced this idea with her response:

They say the difficult things they don't want the Sir to teach them. Especially she (referring to her daughter). And I always find that if I just leave them with the tuition sir (the participant referred to a 'tutor' as 'tuition sir') they don't get good marks. If I...so I involve with their work as I use to do before, like there is a test I see that all the portions are taken care of. They know it. Each lesson-by-lesson I go and make sure that they know it or else teach them about it. (Jaya, India: February 1998).

Some of the participants also discussed how their personal accomplishments influenced their children's performance at school. For example, one Canadian mother remarked:

...I think they are proud of us in our careers. Like my son will say, "Oh! My mother is a vice-principal" or my daughter. So I guess they admire what we do, so that's part of the reason why they might want to do the same thing. (Nancy, Canada: November 1998).

In her study of mothers' involvement in their children's schooling, Reay (1998) commented that the results were not very positive when mothers shed the responsibility of their children's education on the school authorities. Whereas, when mothers themselves

accepted the responsibility for their children's education "there seems to be a greater likelihood of success" (p. 85). Many mothers in this study affirmed this observation, as one mother remarked:

... when they have a game they say-mummy today is our game. So I like to go and see because I understand that if their guardian is around they will gain more energy because they will feel that their mummy is around. Even if I have lot of things to do at home I still go because it is my duty. (Indu, India: January 1998).

This remark had traces of "obligation" that mothers felt towards their children's well being. Thus, the data indicated that the majority of mothers took keen interest in their children's school activities and provided them with proper guidance whenever it was required. Based on previous research (Griffith & Smith, 1987; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989), the monitoring behaviour of these mothers with regards to their children's schooling can be conceptualized as a middle-class activity.

However, in her recent study about work mothers did in support of their children's education, Reay (1998) found that the concept of class was far more complex than a simple distinction between a middle-class and a working-class influence. The working-class mothers had limited access to certain educational and cultural resources in comparison to middle-class mothers. Yet, the working-class's involvement in their children's school activities was equally intense as the middle-class mothers. The only differences Reay identified were that the working class mothers found it difficult to "assume the role of educational expert" or to "persuade teachers to act on their complaints" when their children were experiencing difficulties with their studies. This problem occurred because some working class mothers were "ill-equipped financially, socially and psychologically to compensate for deficits they perceived in their child's education" (Reay, 1998, p. 163).

Therefore, the differences in the approach of mothers towards their children's education were linked more to the family's economic resources and the availability of cultural resources, than to the social class factor per se. In their individual research, Griffith and Smith (1987) and Standing (1999) identified similar problems encountered by "single-mothers" or "lone-mother families" who often lived on inadequate incomes and were unable to meet the schooling needs of their children.

In Growing up literate: learning from inner-city families, Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines (1988) argued persuasively that "sex, race, economic status, and setting cannot be used as significant correlates of literacy" (pp. 201-202). The lives of individuals from specific groups such as poor families, inner-city families, teenage mothers and their children were often defined by stereotypical images perpetuated in the mass media. However, when we observe the lives of these individuals, the stereotypical images become irrelevant because the reality is different from the images created.

The opportunities available to the middle-class mothers placed them on privileged pedestals, which allowed them "access to occupations with the possibilities of career advancement" and "...to invest considerable time and skills in the development of children in relation to (their) education" (Griffith & Smith, 1987, p. 98). Thus, the way in which mothers in this particular study wove in and out of the educational lives of their children, reflected these mothers' personal educational training they had that helped them to understand the implications of monitoring the "emotional and educational work in support of their children's schooling" (Standing, 1999, p. 119).

Emotional Labour

Gilligan (1982) discussed the ways in which women were socialized to be sacrificing, selfless and giving and these characteristics had serious implications on the task of mothering that women often assumed. The daily routine of mothers was organized around domestic tasks such as shopping, cooking and cleaning in addition to attending to the needs of the children and husbands. The initial tasks of mothering were physical in nature and they gradually started shifting towards emotional labour when their children started growing up, and mothers experienced differing challenges in their everyday lives. Mothers' involvement in children's pedagogical and educational tasks levied a range of emotional responsibilities on them. An essential task of mothers was to conduct emotional work in their transition from home to school and in support of their children's schooling (Tivers, 1985).

Emotional support is a part of mothers' daily activities and mothers from all three cultures intervened when their children were unhappy. They intervened by listening to their children's concerns and providing them with their feedback. For example, a Mexican mother reported: "I have a moment with them, alone with one of them so that we can talk and to be able to tell them what I think. But first it is important to know what they think because they think differently many times" (Donna, Mexico: January 1999). Most mothers liked to give their children personal space to think over the various issues that were disturbing them. Many mothers respected their children's feelings without trespassing on their emotions. Sometimes when younger children asked questions, mothers decided whether they were appropriate or inappropriate for replying. For example, this mother from India narrated her experiences with her four-year-old daughter:

Things that can be told or what they can understand we tell them. You know kids ask all kind of questions including some odd one's like-Mummy where did I come from? These things are not to be told. (Veena, India: January 1998).

Some mothers expressed that their children in their adolescent years ignored any advice given, but later returned to seek the same. The following excerpt from a Canadian mother's interview illustrated this:

And for many years in there, like between 12 and 15 they don't want my advice any ways. And then after that I notice more and more Steven who's been more rebellious, say-so what do you think, whereas they never would before. (Mary, Canada: October 1998).

The technique mothers used to give advice was through giving examples from everyday lives or their personal experiences:

Yaa...well I try to relate it to when I was growing up too, you know. I will say...yaa things like these use to happen to me and this is how I handled it. (Anne, Canada: June 1999).

When children were depressed, the mothers allowed them to have their own space and later inquired about the cause of their grief. To help their children overcome their pain, these mothers reported that they showed concern: "Well a big hug first, calm them down (laughs). And then you talk it over, figure out why they are upset" (Anne, Canada: June 1999); "I embrace them and ask them to tell me what happened" (Donna, Mexico: January 1999). However, if the children were upset because their mothers had scolded or disciplined them, then these mothers often gave their children the opportunity to comprehend the implications of their actions:

Sometimes I try to pacify them but sometimes (laughs) I scold them also, that why are you upset like this? If it's my mistake then I go and tell them that OK, but if it's their mistake then I go and explain it to them that see you have done like this and it's your fault. So they come and say sorry. (Geeta, India: March 1998).

These mothers bore a big responsibility for guiding their children and providing them with emotional and psychological support. The task of providing constant emotional support inflicted wear and tear on the emotional strength of these mothers, because fathers rarely participated in the emotional needs of their children. Information about fathers' participation was gathered from the mothers' responses which disclosed the minimal role fathers played in their children's nurturance. Thus, from the data collected, we see that mothers assume the primary responsibility of relieving their children of their pain and anxieties. I believe that this interaction between my participants and their children tended to bring the children emotionally closer to their mothers than their fathers. The lack in communication between the children and their fathers could be attributed to the fathers leaving the day-to-day management of the house and childcare to their wives.

Concern for the Children: Pressures at School

The educational work of mothers ranged from monitoring the everyday schoolwork to providing moral support in times of failure. As children moved through the school system and failed to secure good results in their examinations, mothers took over the dual responsibility of "educators" and "emotional support providers". The majority of mothers talked about organizing and planning their activities around the emotional and academic requirements of their children. These mothers believed that if their children were not emotionally secure, then that could have adverse effects on their school performance. All these mothers expressed their concern for their children's emotional difficulties and the ways in which they helped them to cope with the pressures of schoolwork:

Well, in fact this happened. It's my daughter...failed her Math we were at the end of last school year. We were surprised because she hadn't been doing great but she'd

been doing OK. Very disappointed, and I spoke to her about it and she had to go to summer school. And so I stayed with her every single night, but she went to summer school for like two hours every morning for three weeks. And I worked with her for about three hours every day on top of her two hours. She's doing a lot better now (Quincy, Canada: December 1998).

However, when some children failed to perform well at school their mothers were overcome with feelings of guilt:

...I don't think they'll come out with that type of result, but in case they come out I'll feel very bad because I have not taken equal responsibility in teaching them or something wrong has happened so I'll feel bad (Lata, India: February 1998).

These mothers often assumed responsibility for their children's failure, because society continues to perceive mothers to be solely responsible for the needs of their children. Thus, it was common for mothers to feel pressurized to maintain high standards of education for their children. All the 36 mothers strongly believed that if their children successfully grasped the basics of different subjects and achieved good marks, they would grow up with a strong sense of self-esteem and succeed professionally. Lack of a strong educational foundation would restrict professional opportunities and consequently, children could potentially encounter financial difficulties. A number of studies documented the ways in which middle-class women participated in their children's schooling (Bourdieu, 1973; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Carnoy & Levin, 1985; Lareau, 1987; Hays, 1996).

While the majority of my participants placed strong emphasis on the importance of formal education for the financial success of their children, there were some mothers who emphasized on "over-all development of their children". These mothers asserted that it was important for their children to develop an interest in extra-curricular activities, such as sports, music, drawing and practical knowledge. According to them, this knowledge

accumulated from their physical environment would help their children to relieve themselves from the stress of educational pressures and to subsequently perform well academically. Formal education, according to these mothers, was solely “bookish knowledge” or theoretical knowledge, which inhibited individuals from developing other skills required for critical thinking. Bourdieu (1984) also emphasized the importance of extra-curricular activities that generated a cultural capital to yield high academic profits.

In Reproduction: In Education, Society and Culture, a sociological work on education, Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) defined the Cultural and Social Reproduction Theory. The reproduction theory viewed education as a significant social and political force that recreated the class structure of society. Bourdieu drew a link between class, power and education by arguing that the texts and language used in schools reflected the taste and values of the dominant classes. Thus, children of the elite inherited the style, taste and language from their families, and thereby transformed their cultural capital into academic capital. Cultural capital is, therefore, central to understanding the behaviour of my participants regarding how they encouraged their children to get involved in extra-curricular activities. Social capital is generated through social interactions between the family and society and it determines how an individual reproduces cultural capital to embrace the dynamics of social profits. My participants generated cultural and social capital through deciding which out-of-school activities they wanted to enroll their children. For example, this Indian mother illustrated:

Oh! Yes, although see my daughter we had a... we have some elementary drawing examination, intermediate drawing examination which is not in her curriculum..., school curriculum it is an extra-curricular activity. So I made her appear for both the examinations. I use to sit down with her and see that she at least gives one hour-two hours daily to practice her drawing and all. Now she goes for dancing, now I see that whenever I get time I do see her do dancing in front of me because usually

they go to the classes, and they come back and forget. So I make them, I see that she does it in front of me also. Now in singing, I had kept a vocal teacher also for her, but just because I had gone out she couldn't continue. But all other activities, even in school if she has to appear for some say for poems which are not in the curriculum has to be brought from other subjects I help her out in bringing those poems and all. Same thing for my son. He had appeared for lot of say-Bhabha Science Examination. He had appeared for that, he did very well in that. Then he had appeared for all the Hindi extra exams they have, besides school exams-Sanskrit, Hindi- and all that you have to study of your own. Teachers and all don't help you. So I had helped him out with all that. And he loves calligraphy, so I had sent him for the calligraphy classes, I made him sit here and do in front of me. I ask him to teach me, so that he gets encouragement. So that way in all these extracurricular activities I help (Tanu, India: January 1998).

Thus, participants in my study provided equal opportunities and encouragement to their children to pursue their educational interests and to participate in extra-curricular activities.

Competition

Mothers across the sample regarded competition as a tool that motivated and encouraged their children in building confidence. For example, a few mothers commented on this issue: "Competition does bring you know, a lot of confidence in yourself" (Tanu, India: January 1998); "That's good because (a long pause) you have competition in every thing" (Janet, Mexico: January 1999). The majority of these mothers believed that if competition was promoted within certain limits, it could help their children to improve their performance and to nurture their best abilities. However, they also believed that it should not be imposed or observed as the scale for measuring the performance level of all the children.

As long as competition fostered diligence and autonomous thinking, it should be promoted. But at times it pulled down some children's self-esteem when competition was

encouraged without recognizing the individual capabilities of the children. For example these two mothers commented about the positive and negative aspects of competition:

...Ah, there is good competition and bad competition. I don't like competition that is at the expense of others (Jessie, Canada: June 1999).

Competition should be there because then it brings out the best in them...But at the same time you have to teach your child not to be jealous of anybody who has defeated you (Ekta, India: January 1999).

These two mothers' accounts demonstrated that competition between children should be monitored to veer children's attention from unhealthy competition where they could develop feelings of insecurity from their classmates.

Mothers' Role in Children's Extra-curricular Activities

The principal role of mothers in the extra-curricular activities of their children was to chauffeur them from home to the activity centres. Normally the activities were scheduled after regular school hours or during weekends. These mothers were required to juggle their household chores and children's activities outside the homes. In the case of working mothers, the pressure increased more because besides working in paid employment they had to complete their housework and meet the needs of their children. In situations like these, a few fathers shared some responsibilities for coordinating their children's school and outdoor activities:

...And just the driving back and forth the three kids you know, it's not the usual routine. They all are doing three different things and we kind of to arrange the taxi service. But we have two cars and that's how we move. But just the logistics of it, today there's a workshop at McGill that I would like to go to, from 4:00-5:30 that means my husband has to get home 4'o clock from work because he has to pick up... I have to drive one of my daughters, I have to pick her up at 3:15 and drive her to a rehearsal for 4' o clock. My other daughter finishes her piano lesson at 4:00, she

has to be driven home. My son he has swimming class at 5:00, then my other daughter has soccer (laughs) she has to be driven home from her rehearsal. Tibor goes to swimming, he gets driven home then Tara has soccer then she gets home...so it's totally nuts. (...) I mean it's great for them, they have all these opportunities to experience all kinds of things and I don't mind. But it's just the hours that if you add up that you spend just driving around it will be interesting to see how many hours you spend (Sandra, Canada: April 1999).

Thus, mothers' involvement in the extra-curricular activities was indirect, implying that children were enrolled in activities that interested them and mothers provided encouragement and support:

Yes, you mean like swimming and all. Yes, if there is a competition I accompany them. I cheer them (gets a chuckle out of it while telling me). Yes, I like to involve myself in everything that they do, so that they feel that we are there to support them and wherever they want to go. My older son has "Black Belt" I always accompany him to all his tournaments (Donna, Mexico: January 1999).

Generally, the extra-curricular activities were conducted outside the schools, but some schools also had their home teams for inter-school competitions such as debating, karate, soccer and swimming, and the children enjoyed participating in them. Without allowing them to compromise their studies, these children were encouraged to participate in various non-academic activities. Children had permission to stay back after regular school hours, provided they managed to complete their studies and homework in the remaining time: "Some restrictions would be there definitely because after she has to come and do a lot of schoolwork, lot of other things" (Ekta, India: January 1998).

These mothers believed that their implicit and explicit involvement in the educational and extra-curricular activities had a very positive impact on the overall development of their children, and thereby on the personal identities of these mothers (Henderson & Berla, 1994; Reay, 1998). Yet, children underwent great stress because they

had to balance their everyday schoolwork with their extra-curricular activities. This phenomenon has been termed the "hurried" child syndrome where children are expected to participate in various activities that deprived them from relaxing.

Rewards

Mothers who volunteered to participate in this research closely monitored the academic and non-academic activities of their children. Do these mothers believe in rewarding their children's accomplishments? They regarded the concept of "rewards" very positively because they believed in recognizing the efforts of their children. However, the definition of "rewards" varied from occasion to occasion for each mother. Some mothers showed their appreciation through verbal praise or small tokens to make their children feel proud of their efforts. As the following three mothers reported:

No, none of us buy gifts for them. We don't encourage them in such a manner. We make them understand that the most important thing is that they themselves feel satisfied (Donna, Mexico: January 1999).

...Your children are human beings they can think. Of course small reward always encourages them to do better (Tanu, India: January 1998).

Oh! Yes, always. Definitely just praise, verbal praise, hug, a kiss, a treat sometimes, yaaa (Petra, Mexico: November 1998).

Rewards were observed as stimulants that encourage children to keep up their fine work. These mothers also explained to their children how their achievements were in themselves rewards, and how they should feel pleased with themselves: "But I think children should be rewarded for their achievements but I also want them to have a sense that the achievement is the reward" (Nicole, Canada: November 1998). Thus, mothers continued to weave a network of guidelines juxtaposed with its consequences, from which

children drew their everyday values and inspiration. The next section discusses values education and its implications on childrearing.

Values Education

Two questions arose from the approach adopted by these mothers in their childcare. First, where did these mothers learn the art of childcare? Second, how did they incorporate the strategies to deal with and relate to their children?

Each mother attempted to impart values such as encouragement, support and confidence to their children, which they believed would have a positive impact on their schooling. Mothers received different forms of advice with regards to childrearing, but they only adopted the ones that met their personal requirements. All these mothers were socialized to similar childrearing practices and thus, conformed to the ideology of intensive mothering as pronounced by religion, culture and advice givers.

Women were not formally trained to become mothers, although in contemporary western societies women are encouraged to participate in discussion groups and to take parental courses to learn about effective parenting (Philp, 1998, p. A9). Generally, mothers learnt the art of childcare from their personal experiences of growing up, their education, and the feedback they received from their families and peers. In traditional societies (for example, Indian and Mexican) grandparents guided mothers and trained them for rearing their children. Along with these sources of information, continual advice on appropriate childrearing came from pediatricians, child counsellors and self-help books readily available on childcare. From this plethora of advice, mothers in general selected certain information and then they reproduced it by making modifications to suit their own

requirements. In Hays (1996) words, the advice received was distinguished much like the tasks of "sorting the mail",

... mothers make selections among these sources and develop interpretations based on their social circumstances — including both their past and present social positions and their past and present cultural milieux. In sorting through advice, interpreting it, and deciding what is worthy, individual mothers therefore actively engage in reshaping the social ideology of appropriate child rearing (Hays, 1996, p. 72).

This process of selection implied that the understanding of each mother differed and was unique. Thus, these mothers adopted certain ways of raising their children that were observed as essential for character building and for socialising their children to foster a greater sense of personal and civic responsibilities. These mothers developed a value-laden home curriculum which permeated all throughout the growing years of their children.

In addition to monitoring their children's education, mothers across the sample stressed the importance of disciplining their children. To accomplish this, certain values were imparted in everyday life through role modeling, giving examples, telling stories or explaining the facts of life:

Certainly we give them through stories. If we tell them to do this way or that then they will not do it. We have to tell them everything that if you do this then this happens. When we were young this is how we have grown. I tell them that we were in a joint family and all the facilities that you have today we've never had any of these facilities (Indu, India: January 1998).

In my open-ended questionnaire, I included a few values namely obedience, respect for others, honesty and good manners to study the mothers' perceptions about these values for childrearing. In India, all the mothers recognized the importance of each of these values for educating their children. These mothers emphasized the importance of obedience to teach their children discipline and respect for others:

This without saying it has to be there-obedience, and they obey. Like now a few

things they say no, and all but then I tell them you have to do and they do it. They aren't disobedient children they obey me, and the others (Jaya, India: February 1998).

However, in Canada and Mexico obedience was singled out as an ambiguous value.

In the opinion of a few mothers, obedience is important but they also believed that it should be practiced differently. Some Canadian mothers strongly felt that the children should be obedient, but as the children are growing they should learn to reflect upon the nature of the task being asked of them. For example one Canadian mother explained:

Obedience, you know that's such a loaded term because you know, there is like blind obedience and then there is you know it's the Victorian thing- Kids should be seen and not heard, and they should follow, and you say jump and they say-how high? My kids aren't like that. But you know if I insist on something certainly they are obedient but they will argue with me too (Quincy, Canada: December 1998).

In spite of holding different beliefs about obedience, the majority of the mothers across the three cultures adhered to teaching all the values mentioned above to their children. According to these mothers, parents were the primary source of imparting values to their children. Therefore, when children lacked these values, it implied negligence on the part of the parents.

All my participants believed in teaching their children to respect their elders and others. This was regarded as an important value for their children to practice in their everyday lives. These mothers were of the opinion that when children respected their elders they received their blessings and would be successful in life. One of the ways this value was inculcated was through role modeling, as well as according their own children with the same respect. As the following quote illustrated:

Basically I've always tried to treat them as much as possible with the same respect as I would an adult, and just hoping that my modeling respect that they would learn to treat everyone with respect (Sandra, Canada: April 1999).

However, these mothers felt that in modern society more children have become less tolerant of their environment and are disrespectful to their elders, teachers and classmates.

A mother from Mexico commented:

Well right now many children of this era don't have these values. But I will say that this depends a lot on the parents of the children. But yes, children of this era don't have these values. They have very little of it (Imelda, Mexico: January 1999).

Conversely, many mothers in the Canadian, Indian and Mexican contexts who felt that there were children who practiced these values, taught to them in their everyday lives: "Oh! Not all of them (referring to children). Maybe some of them, maybe few" (Neha, India: February 1998).

Most of my participants did not individually discuss the other two values on my list, *honesty* and *good manners*. These values were grouped together as important values, and my participants wanted to inculcate them as a part of their children's development. Three mothers elaborated on the importance of *honesty* and *good manners* in their children:

Honesty, yaa what a story. That's a big one and that's a hard one because a lot of times you can't tell whether they are being honest or not and I think everyone wants their kids to be honest whether or not they always are is another story. We had an incident with Stephanie where she was pretending that she was seeing tunnels, black tunnels and it took a year before we finally got it out of her that she was pretending. And she wasn't being honest and meanwhile we had gone to the neurologist, to the cardiologist and done blood work we've done all sort of MRI's and cat scans you know, the whole thing, ophthalmologist. And finally found out that she was pretending, she wanted... she was having problems with me going away and Sean being in North Carolina instead of here and I guess it was her way of looking for attention. But it took us like almost a year like when we knew he was going to be leaving well she was trying to get that bit of attention, so man we were not happy when we found out that she'd been fooling us all this time. Because it involved her school and everybody. So, yaa honesty is important you don't always get it though. Good manners yaa, yaa. Nobody likes a kid whose rude.(Jessie, Canada: June 1999)

Honesty, definitely and I tell them always like, you can do something bad but if you lie about it, that's ten times worse. So you know we can forgive and work on mistakes but dishonesty is gonna get you in big trouble. (Nicole, Canada: November 1998).

And honesty well here in Mexico, sometimes honesty is bad understood. But I try to let them know that even to make small cheats is not being honest. They are very, very honest with me, my children. Good manners is important because you have to socialize with other people, so if you want to be well treated you have to treat others well. (Aronza, Mexico: January 1999).

Thus, these mothers asserted that values could be preserved only if parents spent more time with their children and gave them proper guidance combined with love and affection. These mothers believe that parents should emulate these values in their own actions, and act as their children's role models. Emphasizing upon the importance of families' influence, this Canadian mother commented:

Well, I think family life first of all is most important and should have stable background. I think most of these qualities can be passed on to children. And today's day and age it's probably little bit more difficult because so many broken families and it must be very difficult to be in a one family to... you know, to keep things under control all the time. But I think the family is the center point of everything for us (Nancy, Canada: November 1998).

The overriding issue for this mother was a stable family life, which would help in guiding the children to learn the right values. Implicit in the idea of "broken families" was the assumption that certain types of families (divorced, separated, single and poor mothers) were not good enough for rearing children (Standing, 1999). Upon reviewing the numerous previous studies (Lareau, 1989; Reay, 1995; David et al., 1996), it could be proven that regardless of their marital status, economic situation and cultural backgrounds, mothers often assumed the primary responsibility for values education of their children. As this mother from India pointed out:

... you have the responsibility when they go bad. That is the worst time. Nobody ever thinks then like how much can you or is their father with them. At least I don't think he will be there to teach them values. He is there at certain times to say what is right and wrong, and not always (Ekta, India: January 1998).

This mother's account narrative reemphasized the fact that society blamed mothers for their children's misbehaviour, when both parents should be held equally responsible. I also believe that the minimal role of fathers in children's upbringing influences the socialization of the children. I examine this theme in the latter part of this chapter.

Independence and Responsibility

Independence and responsibility were two other important aspects of children's socialization. When asked about how important it was to promote independence in their children, mothers across the three cultures replied, "it's very important". These mothers believed that being independent allowed their children to build self-confidence, self-pride and to become self-sufficient. For middle-class mothers, it meant that if children were encouraged to conduct independent research it allowed them to develop skills in critical thinking and independent decision-making. Like this Mexican mother explained:

...The children who are not independent of their parents by and large suffer, they suffer and then they say that their parents did not teach them to be independent. That's why I teach my children to learn everything. Not just one thing, but also another and another. What they need to do, they should do it, and not wait for me to do it for them (Geena, Mexico: January 1999).

Thus, for this mother the idea of detaching children from the parents was connected to the importance of preparing these children to develop the skills of leadership and to become successful in life. At the same time, it was essential to maintain certain boundaries, as this mother explained:

I was always brought up, you know, from an early age to be indepe...independent (raises her voice) but not to the extent, you know, that you are out of the door when you are 6 years old (Quincy, Canada: December 1998).

Imposing restrictions on children's behaviour helped them to learn discipline and to respect law and order. These mothers perceived these useful for children's development, and were constantly juggling their perceptions of childrearing with the ideas that had been socially constructed. Thus, many of these mothers "try to repeat the way their mothers mothered them to the extent that they experienced it as positive and struggle to avoid what they consider as the mistakes their mothers made" (Hays, 1996, p. 74). For example, two mothers, a Canadian and an Indian, observed how the authoritative and strict nature of their parents did not allow them to develop their own interests and to make their own decisions. These mothers regarded such restrictions negatively as one of them expressed:

...My mother and father were very strict and most of the decisions were made by them, they did not allow me to...even if I want...in the beginning I wanted to take secretarial training. And although I don't want to work but at that time it was the fashion all the girls use to go for secretarial training and all or airhostess. My mother, she was very adamant, she said nothing doing you are not going for work (Priya, India: February 1998).

The inability to make decisions about her personal life had left this mother with low self-esteem and some unaccomplished dreams. Today, she is trying to give more autonomy to her children:

But I feel now the... I don't think I am bringing up my children like that. I want them to be independent. I want them...if they want to for work, I'll allow that. Whichever profession they want to take I'll allow that, I want them to be independent and outspoken (Priya, India: February 1998).

The above account illustrated the powerful push for change that "mothers' own educational experiences can exert on their involvement in their child's schooling" (Reay,

1998, p. 56). These mothers adopted various strategies to teach their children to be independent. For example, children were given a range of "positive and negative" choices that enabled them to reflect and to make independent decisions. From their everyday lives, the mothers picked various instances to teach their children about the importance of independence. Often children were guided to do their research independently and to study on their own. Freedom to choose their clothes, ride their bikes, look after their pets and to travel alone (only teenagers were allowed) were different strategies adopted by mothers to encourage independence in their children:

...As they get a little older, maybe 10-12 years, maybe going to a friend's on their bike. Maybe which is at first a block away, then a little farther or taking the bus. Once they learn which bus and I'll ride with them and then eventually I'll let them go on their own. It's a little step at a time (Ursula, Canada: April 1999).

With reference to this mother's example, independence in children was promoted gradually through negotiations and by providing them with choices at every stage of life. In response to whether their children had grasped the meaning of responsibility, some of the mothers responded "not yet" with regards to their younger children, whereas the older children were thought to be responsible enough even though they did not act responsibly at all times. The following comments from a Canadian and a Mexican mother illustrated:

They understand it, they don't always live up to it but they understand it. Yes, for sure (Rose, Canada: March 1999).

Yes, my children are very responsible with everything. With regards to caring for their things, their studies with which they are very responsible as they get very good grades (Krista, Mexico: January 1999).

Intense labour and organization of mothers was involved in the backdrop for the children to understand the importance of responsibility. Most mothers encouraged their

children to take responsibility for simple things such as refraining from opening the door for strangers, keeping the rooms clean, socializing with guests, helping in the house work and concentrating on their studies. Responsibilities were distributed and consequences explained to the children when they failed to fulfill their tasks. As the following quote illustrated:

I tell them that you are responsible for anything that goes wrong. ...Like I give them examples where certain things have happened because they have not been responsible-they have let in strangers - that is the only way you know. Like if they have lost their books it is their responsibility, I cannot help them (Ekta, India: January 1998).

Almost half of the mothers discussed similar strategies they adopted for teaching their children to behave responsibly. In Canada, 3 mothers also identified the importance of their children acting responsibly towards the family. These mothers strongly felt that each family member should behave in a responsible manner and prevent family dishonour:

...And also letting the family down. I guess that's one of them you know, like if it's their responsibility to put out the garbage and ...for example, Matthew if it's his job to put out the garbage on Wednesday night and if he doesn't do it then the whole family has to pitch in and help. Well he does feel guilty because he was irresponsible and let the family down (Nicole, November 1998).

This account focused on how mothers wove their personal everyday events into the lives of their children to make them understand the meaning of responsibility towards themselves and their families. Thus, children learnt the value of responsibility combined with independence, which along with many other traits were observed to have a positive influence on children's academic accomplishments.

Other ways of Teaching Values

Most mothers taught discipline to their children and monitored their children's everyday behaviour. In situations where children had misbehaved, my respondents communicated their displeasure to their children. For example:

When my children do something that I feel that they should not do, I tell them look this is bad for this, for this. Don't do it. The consequences would be this (Heather, Mexico: January 1999).

First I try to make them understand that this is not good. I try to show them the bad effects of it, by doing this what can happen (Asha, India: March 1998).

The majority of the mothers emphasized discipline because they considered it an essential requirement for their children's future happiness and success. In her studies, Hays (1996) found that "the middle-class mothers' focus on time-outs and negotiation is also connected to their stronger emphasis on giving the child independence-fostering choices, including choices regarding forms of punishment and reward" (p. 93). However, when children failed to behave, then mothers punished them in various ways such as depriving them of their favourite things. The following quote emphasized this:

I yell and I let them know. Sometimes they have time out and they've got to go to their room, sometimes things are taken from them that are really important like their bike or their Nintendo (Petra, Canada: November 1998).

These mothers believed in providing their children with a set of choices and examples to make them understand the meaning of proper behaviour and appropriate punishment. The following quote from an Indian mother illustrated the approach she adopted for teaching her children appropriate behaviour:

When they do something wrong I sit with them and explain. I give them examples. Like, see that person did something bad. If you do something like this, or you go in this bad line then this can happen to you also. This way I explain to them and at

times I scold them also. And most of the time I patiently, my daughter is a little older, I don't scold her much, I explain it to her patiently, in a friendly way I talk to her. She understands this is right and this is wrong and she also asks why is this right or wrong. With an example I explain it to them (Geeta, India: March 1998).

Thus, all my participants focused on disciplining their children as they regarded discipline as an important tenet of intensive mothering.

Mothers' Aspirations for their Children

My respondents transmitted some of their ambitions to their children by encouraging them to focus on their education and to develop an interest in extra-curricular activities, because they observed an overall education as the key to success. Therefore, implicit and explicit promotion of this desire was undertaken at home. At times, when the children were not interested in formal studies, mothers negotiated different options with their children. Reay (1998) found that the emotions that mothers experienced and communicated to their children "in the course of supporting their education could have both positive and negative efficacy" (p. 83). If children failed, mothers communicated their anger through minimal tolerance and punishment. In such situations, children became less productive and had the tendency to resist the emotional pressures of their mothers by ignoring them. In contrast, when mothers expressed enthusiasm, children were motivated and their academic results improved. In my inquiry, most mothers encouraged their children to be "happy" in any career choices that they made, as the following three accounts illustrated:

I hope they have completed school, get what they want and have happiness. I wish in whichever way they find happiness (Petra, Canada: November 1998).

Influence, I don't influence them but we observe whether they have also tendencies in that field. We'll observe it. I have interest in sports so I also encourage them in every sense. But I don't force them but I will encourage them (Asha, India: March 1998).

Well yes, I will like them to do their bachelors. For sure they'll do what they want to. I cannot oblige them to study what I like, but what they want to study. Presently the older one is doing his senior high school (12th grade). We support them and help them in what they want to study or what they desire to study (Geena, Mexico: January 1999).

Mothers gave full respect to their children's right for autonomy and personal space by allowing them to pursue their personal interests. At the same time, most of these mothers kept an eye on the overall activities of their children to ensure that they performed well at school. The primary goal of mothers' involvement was to encourage their children to aspire for a higher degree of education than they as parents had earned: "...my husband and I are educated and we would like them to study more than us" (Beatrice, Mexico: January 1999). There were some mothers who were married young and were unable to pursue higher education and now desired that their children, especially their daughters, achieve a masters or doctoral degree:

Like I don't have much. I have only secondary and vocational course training. My mother, she invested a lot in the development of their sons, always. I told them, (my children) a boy or a girl, they all need to study well. Especially my daughter because she's a woman and she should know how to defend herself in life because each day it's a difficult situation (Fanny, Mexico: January 1999).

I wanted to study well but I was married. So I want my children to be educated well (Neha, India: February 1998).

The common ambition of these mothers was to see their children in remunerative professions such as medicine, engineering and computer sciences because they believed that disciplines like theatre or sports will not have much financial paybacks. One Canadian mother mentioned:

My older son who's a swimmer and a student at the university, I'd like to see him do what he really wants to do. Though it's hard for me because what he really wants to be is just a swim coach and (laughs) so funny we've spend so much on his education. It's hard, but of course that's what he really wants and we will accept him for that. So that's where I would like him you know to find that job that he wants. You know we'd encourage him to go on in education to get a master's but he doesn't seem to be interested in that right now. So if he's happy being a swim coach at a college or something like that, or a school in States then that's for him. And my daughter who's 19, she's doing Theatre Arts and I can see it's not going to be very lucrative career. I don't want her to suffer financially but I think that I'd like her to develop that in herself what's important to her (Mary, Canada: October 1998).

This mother home schooled her children for many years and today, faces the dilemma of allowing her children to pursue their interests in non-traditional and less lucrative professions. Indian and Mexican mothers were also hoping for post-graduate degrees from their children. They felt that merely graduating from the university was not going to be sufficient, since the job market had become more competitive in the past few years.

Mothers across the sample wanted to see their children happy and successful in life. These mothers believed in guiding their children to help them make the right decisions. Most mothers expressed serious concerns for their children whose interests differed from regular academics. In other words, according to my participants, children were required to adhere to the traditional professions to attain a better quality of life:

My daughter seems to be more artsy oriented so I'm not sure what she'll do but hopefully she'll do something. I guess I have more concerns for her than I do have for my son who I think is much more all round academically, whatever (Quincy, Canada: December 1998).

Yaa, I keep telling them naturally the ambition...like, I like her to study a lot. Like she has to come out with flying colours. They have to study...because I do not just like her to finish off with a degree. I want her to be a professional. So in any sense let it be anything it's not finish a degree, and sit at home or get married I don't like that. So I keep telling them, you know, that I have to see that you both are coming up good professionally (Lata, India: February 1998).

Yes, I would like them to complete their Bachelor's degree. For me Master's or Doctorate because I feel that for their generation they need to prepare themselves more because there is more and more of competition (Catherina, Mexico: January 1998).

Travelling was another notable ambition these mothers expressed for their children. Some Canadian mothers would love to see their children travel across the world and gather experiences that will enrich them intellectually and assist them in having a broader perspective of social and cultural life:

Travel. Travel too. We like to travel. We haven't travelled a lot, we have travelled in North America quite a bit and I'd like to travel in Europe and maybe see more of the world. And I think I didn't do a lot of it when I was younger but I would like them to do that (Nicole, Canada: November 1998).

Mothers from metropolitan centres of India and Mexico were interested in sending their children to foreign countries, especially United States or Britain for pursuing higher studies:

I will leave my daughter once to go to the States, perhaps to study a master's degree, perhaps a doctorate and the... I don't know what the other two are going to do (Aronza, Mexico: January 1999).

My ambition is not fully completed like...because I spend more time in house or something even though I am an engineer. So I'm advising my daughter you better go abroad it's better. In India it is not possible to be a complete successful... (Sneha, India: February 1998).

*Meenakshi: A Successful woman or a successful person?
Successful woman. You can be a successful person. Here we (referring to women) have to give equal importance to the family life also, we just can't neglect them (Sneha, India: February 1998).*

The changes occurring in the demographics of the population and the job market are creating a need for children to understand the cultural differences that prevail amongst countries. National governments are proclaiming education as the key to success in the fast changing global economy. There is an interdependent relationship between education and

the global economy. The quality of education determines the competition in the global economy, whereas "the goals of education are dependent on the economy" (Spring, 1998, p. 6). In Culture and Imperialism (1994), a work on colonial education, Said concluded that the strides made by modern empires in the field of electronic communication and global trade have helped to bring remote and distant corners of the world together. Thus, globalization of the economies requires the new generation to work in a multicultural environment and only a multicultural workforce can support that. For example, today, a large number of people from the *developed* nations travel to the *developing* nations to teach English allowing individuals to gain enriching experiences from their travels. Few Indian and Mexican mothers from smaller towns also expressed their desire to send their children to bigger cities for university education. This push-pull between urban and rural living underlines an important phenomenon of globalization.

The ultimate aspiration of most of the mothers for their children is that they settle down with a person of their choice and have a happy, married life. The majority of the mothers clearly articulated their aspirations to see their children professionally established and settled in their marital lives with "children" and "homes" as the following quotes illustrated:

Happy, I hope that they are happy (laughs). Oh! I would love to see them close by, I would love to see them near us but we're...I don't know what the chances are of that. I'd love to see them happy in jobs, secure financially, secure with families if that's what they want and I'd like them to be wherever they want to be, whatever it is (Rose, Canada: March 1999).

I want to see that they get some good service. After completing their education they are absorbed in some good service (Asha, India: March 1998).

Well, I would like them to have achieved their careers, and well settled with a nice man and woman and that they have their children (Fanny, Mexico: January 1999).

These quotes therefore, expressed the common sentiment of all the 36 mothers interviewed.

Socialization of the Children: Tradition versus Modernity

The literature review in Chapter 2 expanded on the social construction of mothers' personal identities that defined them as nurturers, caretakers and providers. These identities of women started developing from childhood when family, peers and other social institutions impinged on the freedom of the female child. Thus, children were provided with a milieu that promoted sexism between siblings and peers. A focus on the socialization of children attempts to provide a valuable check against some of the gender-biased childrearing practices of mothers and it stimulates critical reflections and debates that surround this subject within each cultural context.

Traditionally, from a young age, girls were socialized to obey and to follow the male members of society. This segregation had been practiced at all levels including nourishment, developing social skills, education and construction of personal identities. Childrearing practices had always been based on gender. Therefore, boys have had more autonomy over girls. This suppression silenced the voices of girls such that even though feminism created an awareness and sensitivity towards androcentrism, its roots were so deeply embedded in our social systems that we have had problems in determining what are the feelings and thoughts of women.

While feminists have overtly promoted a shift in the practices of childrearing, some practices continue to create differences in childcare. Cross-culturally, attitudes of mothers have changed towards daughters, but beliefs about marriage and family life have yet to

change. The next two sections focus on the various aspects in which mothers consciously or subconsciously reproduce traditional gender-biased values.

Household work and the Children

As mentioned earlier, even though the participants occasionally sought their children's help to accomplish the household tasks, the primary responsibility of the housework was essentially borne by the mothers. Children, irrespective of their gender, were encouraged to participate in all kinds of household chores. Almost all my respondents said that they did not differentiate between the tasks that they distributed to their daughters and sons. For instance, this Canadian mother mentioned:

So we try not to always say - Oh! The girl gets to do the stuff in the kitchen and the boys gets to do the stuff outside (Jessie, Canada: June 1999).

This response reflected that parents, especially mothers, were making a conscious effort to involve both their daughters and sons in a range of household work without any gender-bias. However, when these mothers described who helped them the most with the various household chores, the reference to daughters was more common than to sons. This pattern occurred in the mothers' responses across all the three countries. Mothers sought the help of daughters in the kitchen and for other chores related to cleaning and dusting. Daughters, irrespective of their age, naturally took over the responsibilities of assisting their mothers. As all these mothers responded in varying words: "My daughter is the best help..." (Ursula, Canada: April 1999); "Mostly my daughter who's the oldest" (Tessa, Canada: March 1999); "My household chores, my daughter" (Ekta, India: January 1998); "My daughter. She's too small but still I just ask her..." (Lata, February 1998); "Well, the daughter, the daughter" (Fanny, January 1999); "The older one. At times she's the one who helps the little ones" (Heather, Mexico: January 1999).

The boys also helped with the household tasks. However, these mothers self-reported that they had to either coax them or remind them each time. This Mexican mother stated that of her twin children, the daughter acted more responsibly than the son:

The twin boy is also a little irresponsible but if I tell him then he helps me out (Laura, Mexico: January 1999).

Help of the sons was sought more with the outdoor things like feeding the pets, mowing the lawn, shopping and so forth, as these mothers reported:

Matthew's job is the garbage, putting out the garbage, the garbage keeping it tidy (Nicole, Canada: November 1998).

The yard has to be done, worked in, you know, snow shoveled my boy usually does that (Rose, Canada: March 1999).

He (son) helps him (meaning her husband) sometimes in the shop (Veena, India: January 1998).

If Antonio wants to go for his basketball classes then he needs to help me by feeding the dogs, to do the garden, whatever else is required (Krista, Mexico: January 1999).

Thus, these responses indicated that subconsciously mothers adhered to a traditional distribution of tasks where the "feminine" tasks like cooking or cleaning were assigned to daughters, while the sons were assigned "masculine" tasks such as taking out the garbage and mowing the lawn. If in some cases the sons helped more, mothers found it "interesting" and when the daughters seemed to be less involved, that trait was considered "strange" as these mothers remarked:

...usually I think girls are more helpful than boys, eh...but not in my case. I don't know (Quincy, Canada: December 1998).

They all do. Interestingly enough my son is the one who's the most willing to help. He's the youngest and he seems to take real pride in doing his work well (Sandra, Canada: April 1999).

Most of the participants discussed ways in which their children, irrespective of gender, participated in the household chores. In India and Mexico, the majority of the mothers were full-time housewives and therefore, did not distribute too many tasks to their children. However, even in these more traditional societies mothers were beginning to encourage their children to share the household tasks. I believe that the change in the family structure from joint to nuclear families requires all the mature individuals to participate in the housework. Thus, it is becoming important for the sons to participate equally with their sisters and mothers to share the household chores.

Children's Marriage

Marriage was another domain in which these mothers subjected their children through another test of gender-bias. In India and Mexico, mothers had very strong views about the age at which their daughters should get married and these ideas were culturally reproduced. The ideal marriageable age for daughters was believed to be anywhere between 21-25. Some of these mothers believed that this was an ideal age because physically girls mature earlier than the boys. According to these mothers "physical maturity" implied that their "biological clock was ticking away" if they married at a later age:

Girls' marriage, if goes beyond 25 then you don't find a good boy (Veena, India: January 1998).

...simply because after 25 it is more difficult for girls to get married. It is a beautiful age between 25 and 30 for women to get married. But for men more because they don't grow old as fast as women do physically (Beatrice, Mexico: January 1999).

Furthermore, sons were socialized to assume the role of breadwinners, therefore they required time to settle professionally and financially before getting married. This

responsibility conferred to the sons was contrary to the traditional role of daughters which did not require them to seek financial independence. Generally, parents aspired for their daughters to marry men from respectable families with an established profession.

According to these mothers, the definition of "respectable families" was a family with strong cultural and moral values often similar to the participants' own families. An Indian mother expressed her views as follows:

If the husband is well-off then the girl can stay home why does she need to work. Most of the Indian women do not work they depend on their husbands (Neha, India: February 1998).

This respondent's views were not representative of all the middle-class Indian mothers because many of them were, in fact, encouraging their daughters to be self-sufficient even though they wanted them to get married young. A more typical response was:

Tanu: (...) I would like my daughter also to work.

Meenakshi: Why?

Tanu: Because inflation is going so much that after a certain stage, a time will come that only husband's income will not be sufficient. And not only that, a girl should maybe in future you know, just now we have been brought up in a different way, but in future they may not be feeling secure if they are not earning.

Meenakshi: Secure in what sense?

Tanu: Secure in all the sense. You are totally dependent on your husband, now your husband tells you whether you should spend your money on this particular thing or you should not spend. If she wants to spend on clothes and all, she should be free to do that. So she should be independent in that way. (Tanu, India: January 1998).

In Canada, one fourth of my participants shared similar views about their daughters' marriage that is they preferred their daughters to get married at a younger age in

comparison to the sons. When asked about this discrepancy in the marriageable age of boys and girls, two Canadian mothers responded:

Because in our society the girl tends to be a bit younger than the guy. I have no idea why, but culturally it's more acceptable. Maybe it's in terms of having kids you know, I mean guys can do it forever. The girl can't give birth when she's 60, you know (Quincy, Canada: December 1998).

Well for boys over 30, up to 35, I think it's more acceptable. For girls it's up to 30. I hope they are married and settled (Tessa, Canada: March 1999).

The attitude of mothers towards their children's marriage has definitely changed considerably from the past and more mothers are encouraging their children, both sons and daughters to become financially independent. Thus, socialization of children is changing and mothers are trying to promote equality amongst children irrespective of their gender. In India and Mexico, many young girls prefer to get married in their late twenties and early thirties, but their parents are finding it difficult to accept this change of ideas. The socially constructed image that defined women as being sacrificial to the needs of others and a primary homemaker needs to be challenged. If sons and daughters are socialized to share the responsibilities of different genres, then the sons can be expected to participate in the household routines more consciously.

Summary

This chapter examined the ways in which mothers had actively participated in their children's schoolwork and extra-curricular activities. Some mothers experienced different challenges in their role of parenting as they invested their emotional labour to help their children overcome the barriers of learning and allowing them to choose for themselves. At the same time, some mothers pursued their personal ambitions through their children by

encouraging them to undertake disciplines that were of interest to these mothers before they got married. Values education played a vital role in the education of children's life because mothers' observed that moral development allowed children to become good citizens and responsible individuals.

The major preoccupations of these mothers' everyday lives involved teaching values, meeting the needs of their children and "decision-making about how to deal with and relate to children" (Ribbens, 1994, p. 29). Mothers resolved their concerns by guiding their children to be independent and responsible, and at the same time providing them with their love and affection.

Thus, childcare embodied mothers' love and affection that helped in the prosperity of the children. These mothers were continually learning and acquiring new skills of childrearing. However, prejudices were embedded in childcare and daughters in general became victims of this discrimination. Discrimination of daughters was occurring even though mothers were interested in promoting egalitarian opportunities for their children and in transforming the traditional patriarchal practices in their individual families and communities.

The next chapter focuses on the gender inequalities in the sharing of parenting responsibilities, and how this inequality influences the identities of mothers. I discuss how fathers' involvement in the children's schooling and other activities is very limited and in many cases, altogether absent.

CHAPTER 5 THE ROLE OF MOTHERS AND FATHERS

Overview

The nurturing role of mothers is considered to provide a comforting environment for the children to develop socially, physically and emotionally. But does this nurturing role have any impact on the personal identities of these mothers? Previous research (Oakley, 1980a; Pistrang, 1984) suggested that many women who became mothers for the first time precipitated a loss of personal identity because they were obliged to give up their public life and became primarily responsible for their children during their formative years. However, all the mothers who participated in my inquiry reported that they enjoyed being a mother and regarded motherhood as a very positive experience for themselves. Furthermore, the availability of various options that allowed them to plan their families had given them a better control over their personal lives. For example, a mother of three explained:

...And I was fortunate enough when I first married to be able to delay having children and I knew that it was something I wanted to do but I wanted it to be the right time to be a mother (Nicole, Canada: November 1998).

The advancement technology made allowed women to plan childbirth. This liberty gave women better opportunities to control and organize their domestic and professional lives. For example, Gordon (1976) suggested that the ability to resist the pressure of public policies by using contraceptive knowledge helped women "to make their own decisions about child bearing" (p.418). This allowed parents to establish the time and frequency of child bearing and gave women reproductive freedom. The ability to plan their pregnancies

also enabled many women to develop positive social identities because they had prepared themselves mentally to face the responsibilities of child bearing.

Most of the mothers in this inquiry described their husbands' involvement in childrearing on a very minimal level. In other words, their involvement in their children's education was not discussed by most of the mothers. Fathers did not share many responsibilities in the household chores either, and they mainly enjoyed playing or taking the children out for relaxing activities.

This chapter examines mothers' childrearing practices that have an impact on their personal identities. It also discusses how fathers participate in their children's schoolwork and domestic responsibilities related to childcare. I define responsibility as knowledge of their children's needs and how to respond to these needs.

Experiences of being a Mother

Mothers from across the three cultures enjoyed the tasks of mothering and expressed strong emotions of happiness in their responses. Each participant articulated very positive thoughts about their role of mothering because they immensely enjoyed the act of spending time with their children, and in return receiving the feeling of being loved. Elaborating on their feelings in relation to the question "What do you enjoy most about being a mother?", the majority of the mothers I spoke to responded with these words, "being a mother", "being with them" and "achievements of the children". The terms used were stunningly consistent as illustrated in the following excerpts:

I think the communication, you communicate or you love or whatever and you receive back from the child as they are growing up and changing and developing. It's interesting to see that the love you give them, and the love that comes back to you (Veronica, Canada: April 1999).

Oh! I like the love, the affection that I get from it all and the fact that they need me. I find that really awesome (Jessie, Canada: June 1999).

Taking care of the children. Keeping the house neat and tidy (Neha, India: February 1998).

Well, my usefulness to my kids and to do what they need. And they also like that I am there for them (Janet, Mexico: January 1999).

To attend to them, look after them and take them where they wish to go like if they desire to go for a party. Make them what they like to eat (Krista, Mexico: January 1999).

Implied in the responses of these mothers was the sense that each participant cherished nurturing. These mothers seemed to forgo all their problems whenever they received unconditional love from their children. They were not contesting the cultural ideology of intensive mothering, instead they were reinforcing the image by assuming and identifying with the roles of nurturers, caretakers and providers for their children. Providing for their children created a bond between mothers and children that was immediate, warm, affectionate and life long. In the following quote, an Indian mother elaborated her feelings:

See actually I was...my husband has an...you know, APTECH (a computer training center). We have a franchise center in Kollam. It's about one and a half drive from here. And I use to commute by train everyday that happened for the last year. And I found it a real bother to me because I couldn't spend time with the children at all. And it then, I found that I really enjoyed being a mother, being in the family, not going anywhere, not doing anything, just being with them (Jaya, India: February 1998).

Embedded in the idea of creating a family, is a mother's desire to have a fulfilling life with no emptiness. These mothers provided their children with constant and exclusive care to "build a warm relationship with kids" and to escape "from a very boring life". In fact, a few mothers expressed their fears about when their children would leave the home

then, they would have nothing to keep them occupied. As one Canadian mother illustrated, "We talk about it all the time to the point, that I worry about when children go off we'll have anything to talk about (laughs)" (Mary, Canada: October 1998). Some mothers believed that if they did not have children, their lives would be meaningless and there would be no joy in living and doing things as these mothers narrated:

Very exciting, challenging, keeps me young, keeps me active. I think life would be very boring without them (Petra, Canada: November 1998).

Just spending time with them. Then ...(pauses) I think it's because of them the life is not boring (Sneha, India: February 1998).

For most of these mothers, interactions with their children provided them with a unique kind of closeness and they felt that the relationship they shared with their children was free from any obligation. The relationship between mothers and their children was not merely of nurturance but also of love. These mothers reported that they were constantly working towards building a meaningful relationship with their children and husbands:

I just loved the feeling of the fact that they loved me no matter what I am, or what I look like, or what I am like. You know, they don't care about all the exterior stuff. They love me because I'm me and I can love because they are them. And it's just the feeling of affection that you get back and forth, which I really find is the thing for me (Jessie, Canada: June 1999).

What I like is to look after my children, talk to them. Very rarely do we talk as we all work but when we have time we talk about everything. This is what I like the most - to give love to them (Geena, India: January 1999).

I like that my children are very affectionate and always give love and show it because it is so lovely when a child arrives hugs you and kisses you (Fanny, Mexico: January 1999).

Thus, all these mothers regarded love as the basis of good childrearing, and were committed to loving and nurturing their children. In this process of caring, these mothers

often passed certain traits to their children. Whenever their children displayed these traits in their actions, mothers felt proud of their childrearing practices. The following quotes reflected how some of the mothers enjoyed seeing their own reflections in their children:

I think that's the most enjoyable fact of life for me in seeing how much they are similar or dissimilar to me (Tessa, Canada: March 1999).

Seeing my children develop and have their own personalities, and see myself reflected in them (Nicole, Canada: November 1998).

Implicit in the account of these two respondents, was the gratification that these two mothers drew upon from the development of their children in which they had invested a lot of time and energy. From a young age, children experienced the emotional involvement of their mothers in education and various other activities of life. These mothers had incessantly provided and looked after the advancement of their children in various ways. There was a constant flow of encouragement, empathy, frustration, guilt and anxiety on the part of these mothers with regards to their children's education and extra-curricular activities as illustrated in these comments:

I enjoy doing the fun things with my children. I like going to places like the water slides or the zoo or wherever carnival, I'll enjoy going out and doing things with them (Ursula, Canada: April 1999).

I enjoy everything what they do. I like everything what I do with my children. That's why I go everywhere with them. For their singing class I take them, for their art school also I take them (Indu, India: January 1998).

I like to hang around with them, on Saturdays and Sundays we talk about what they like (Imelda, Mexico: January 1999).

The principal concern of these mothers in encouraging participation in the outdoor activities along with the educational work was to spend time with their children in an informal environment where they could build friendship and understanding and learn about

their children's internal values. These mothers cherished everything about the role of mothering, especially the accomplishments and achievements of their children:

When they get good results that time I enjoy, and when they win any sport at school or win a prize at that time also I enjoy (Geeta, India: March 1998).

The varying degrees of children's successes were often regarded as personal achievements for most of the mothers. Most of these mothers had made the needs of their children a priority, and concentrated on different strategies they could adopt to encourage their children that would in turn help them to grow as independent and self-sufficient individuals.

A Good Mother

The majority of the mothers in this sample from Canada and India were university graduates, with the exception of one mother from Canada who was a high school graduate. From Mexico, 6 mothers were university graduates and the other 6 were high school graduates. This variation in their academic qualifications however, did not appear to hinder their views on how to raise their children. All the mothers in this inquiry expressed similar concerns and views with regards to the task of intensive mothering (Hays, 1996). As the following quotes illustrated:

...I think it's just the person. I mean if you are not going to be a good mother whether you're a university graduate or just a high school graduate it doesn't make any difference (Anne, Canada: June 1999).

Not necessary, because you get your basics in school. What a mother needs is she should understand things, she should be able to guide her children in the right way, educate them, I mean get involved in their education. There maybe the university that plays a bit of part, because the better you know the better you will be able to help them in their studies. Like that is the only thing I think. Other things like making them perfect in their character, in their moral way or anything the university doesn't play much of a part (Jaya, India: February 1998).

No, no, I don't think so because there are mothers who don't have any studies and are very good mothers. Of course, if they can't help them at school in various things. It is better when you have a grade at the university, but to be a mother I don't think you need to go to school because each day you learn something with your kids (Emily, Mexico: January 1999).

Even though education was viewed as an important factor required for raising the children, it was not entirely the determining factor in assessing the quality of mothering. These mothers sought the best in the interests of their children and thus provided child-centered care with the objective of seeing their children happy and successful members of society. Although these mothers conformed that university education was not essential for mothering, some discussed how mothers with university education could contribute to their children's schooling. More precisely, over half of the mothers I interviewed believed that mothers with higher education could certainly make innumerable contributions to the education of their children as the following quotes from some university educated mothers illustrated:

I think if you are better educated you have better understandings, and how things are, and why things are. You do a better job, not to say you are trying to do a great job (Quincy, Canada: December 1998).

Yaa, they are educated more, now. They'll know more about the things in the world. They can help the children in a better way (Neha, India: February 1998).

Contrary to the views of these mothers, some Mexican mothers with a high school diplomas responded:

No, no, no. I don't have university degree and I am satisfied as a mother. The truth is that I have no faults (Krista, Mexico: January 1999).

Well probably in the aspect of education they can help more. But I don't think that as an educated mother only you can help them, guide them, or give them your love, your training, your values (Janet, Mexico: January 1999).

While education of the children was the primary concern for all these mothers, they also made indirect references to some highly educated mothers who "evidently care more

about maintaining the image of themselves and their children as members of the wealthy elite than about actually providing their kids with time and nurturance" (Hays, 1996, p. 88).

Some of the mothers who did not receive university education remarked:

Meenakshi: Do you think mothers who have university education are better mothers?

No, I thoroughly disagree 100 per cent with that. Like, I said, I don't have a whole lot of education and I feel that I'm a very good mother. I do know some people who have several degrees from university and I would go up against them any day if there were a competition between mothers (laughs) (Nancy, Canada: November 1998).

Many of my respondents believed that mothering was not merely about children's education, but about providing them with full-time, intensive care. In the process of looking after their children, these mothers' principal objective was to cater to all the various needs of their children. Even though not all mothers had university education, they participated actively in their children's schoolwork. On occasions they were unable to personally help with their children's schoolwork then they sought the help of tutors or made regular contacts teachers at school.

Are you a Good Mother?

The mothers I interviewed, perceived themselves as responsible parents who were providing the best they could for their children. At the same time, they believed that there was a need to improve their childrearing practices. In meeting the demands of their children, these mothers themselves began to take their role of mothering for granted. Most of these mothers were very modest and hesitated to credit themselves as exceptional mothers, and instead elucidated the need to improve their childcare practices:

I think, I'm OK, I don't think I'm great. I think I'm better than what my mother was, and I hope that Tara will be a better mother than I am (Jessie, Canada: June 1999).

Not much. I am very impatient. I have...I am very short tempered I think which is bad for them. Because they are the one's to bear the brunt of it. Like...definitely not a very good mother (Ekta, India: January 1998).

I expect too much of my children. I am always looking for more. So I think I lack a lot to be a good mother (Catherina, Mexico: January 1999).

These statements demonstrated that the mothers underestimated their contributions made towards childrearing. Expectations placed upon them by society, made mothers very critical of their own childrearing practices. However, there were mothers who considered themselves well-informed and praiseworthy, since their children were performing well at school and in various other disciplines for which mothers were generally held responsible. These mothers talked about their roles in the accomplishments of their children in the following excerpts:

Yes (the answer came instantly). I do. I think I meet the needs of my children. I try to help them in any way that I can. I give them opportunities to pursue in activities, as much as they want (Petra, Canada: November 1998).

I feel that I am a good mother. I have satisfaction because my expectations are not beyond a certain limit. As much time I spend after the family, my expectations should also be the same (Asha, India: March 1998).

I think that I'm a good mother because I encourage my children to move upwards in life, I signal them what is good or bad, giving them examples-like if you are inclined towards this, then you will finish off with this (Imelda, Mexico: January 1997).

The above responses reflected the confidence and self-esteem of these mothers in their childcare strategies. I believe that confidence in their childcare was a new perception for these mothers because often they hesitated to applaud their own actions. In the past, the physical and emotional commitment of mothers to their children had always been evaluated

against the cultural ideology of intensive mothering or rather "woman has always functioned 'within' the discourse of man" (Cixous, 1976, p. 887).

In Eyer's (1995) terms, if a child did not conform to the definition of a "good child" then mothers were held responsible for their failure. Most of the mothers I interviewed adhered to the image of an ideal mother and derived confidence from their strategies of childcare. There were also some mothers who realized the importance of their contribution only after others commended them. For instance this mother from India illustrated:

When you know, I am not able to tackle their some of the problems. Then I feel that maybe, I'm not a good mother. But when I see people appreciating them on the respect where mother is responsible for all these then I do feel yes, I'm a very good mother. So I don't know (laughs and says) I think you should ask this question to my children (Tanu, India: January 1998).

The reaction of this mother revealed that her self-esteem as a mother was quite low. Mothers who lacked self-confidence in their mothering sought recognition for their childcare from others such as husbands, friends and sometimes even from the children themselves. Gilligan (1994) described the ways in which many women identified themselves in relation to others:

Sensitivity to the needs of others and the assumption of responsibility for taking care lead women to attend to voices other than their own and to include in their judgment other points of view. (...) The reluctance to judge can itself be indicative of the same care and concern for others that infuses the psychology of women's development and is responsible for what is characteristically seen as problematic in its nature (Gilligan, 1994, p. 35).

Thus, the tendency of women to define themselves in relation to other members of society was deeply entrenched and was even more apparent after they became mothers.

There is no exact definition of a good mother. Each mother attempted to provide the best for her children based on her understanding and knowledge. The major objective of these mothers was to facilitate a healthy and balanced development of their children. The following excerpt illustrated the way an Indian mother sacrificed her personal interests:

I'm trying to be a good mother (pauses). Like most of the...my time I know that I never see TV in the evening or just whenever they.... 7 to 9 usually all nice programs are there but I think I should devote my time to my children (Sneha, India: February 1998).

Thus, these mothers felt responsible for the development of their children and provided them with constant care by exclusively devoting all their time to mothering. They had embraced the traditional ideology of mothering and constantly questioned their childrearing strategies to provide the maximum comforts for their children. For instance, these two Canadian mothers illustrated:

It's the stress I'm going through. Providing them with the most that I can and I never can provide them with as much as I want you know, financially (Mary, Canada: October 1998).

I guess the worry is that I won't have done everything I can to ensure their success in life. ...So sometimes I worry have I done enough, have I done too much you know that kind of thing. So it's whether I have struck that balance I guess (Nicole, Canada: November 1998).

These mothers had rejected the logic of individualistic behaviour as they were engaged in worrying about the future of their children. A few mothers engaged in paid employment had made a commitment to the world of "formal and political life" that emphasized upon the "individualistic, calculating, competitive pursuit of personal gain" (Hays, 1996, p. 152). But at the same time, these employed mothers worried about the constraints that deprived them of the time they could devote to their children. They

expressed a strong desire to spend maximum time with their children. As these two mothers illustrated:

Ah...well the time constraints, the responsibilities and the hecticness of everything really. I'd like to have more time to spend with them that's really hard. We have to work as well (Tessa, Canada: March 1999).

I would like to have more time for them, to educate them more. More and more time for them. Yes, as I work so much therefore I have very little of this. Yes, this is the only thing that gives me pain that I don't have much time for them (Beatrice, Mexico: January 1999).

These two mothers perceived full-time mothering to be ideal, allowing them to provide exclusive mothering to their children. They felt that full-time mothering would allow them to structure their daily activities around the needs of their children. Even though full-time mothering was seen as a desirable and valued position for women, the work of childrearing goes unrecognized by society (Bernard, 1976; Boulton, 1983). The question remained as to how one could determine which group of mothers was satisfied with their role of mothering. As Ranson (1999) pointed out "from their side of the fence" both groups of employed and non-employed mothers "construct an ideal picture of motherhood which bears little relation to their own lived experience of it" (p. 65). Therefore, it is important to study motherhood from the perspective of each individual mother because the context and experiences of each would shed a different light on the role of mothering.

Discontentment of the Mothers

Even though women across the sample enjoyed nurturing their children, certain household chores made some of these mothers resent their work of mothering. There were

instances where mothers expressed discontentment from the drudgery of housework and disciplining their children. Most of the respondents from each culture expressed serious concerns about the monotony of everyday housework:

Oh! Just the drudgery. The cooking and the cleaning and the picking up and having to nag (Quincy, Canada: December 1998).

To cook two three times everyday. I don't like cooking at all. I get bored. It becomes a regular routine and it bores me. I find it boring (Indu, India: January 1998).

(laughs) Well, it's a lot of work. I need to do everything, but at times it's not possible. Because, at times I feel it's a lot of work for one mother, the education of the children, the food, everything (Geena, Mexico: January 1999).

Many mothers reiterated narratives of similar kinds and expressed a desire to have a space of their own to retain their composure. Educating and disciplining their children were other tasks that these mothers did not enjoy because they drained them of a lot of their energy:

I find it very hard the teenage pressure years those are the most difficult. When they were younger you had more control over who their friends were, what they could do, how long they stayed out. There is still a certain amount of control but it's so much more difficult (Rose, Canada: March 1998).

Always correcting them. Always from morning till evening whenever I see them don't do that, don't do this that is the most boring thing, like (Sneha, India: February 1998).

I don't like to discipline them, the cleaning, the dusting, the lack of discipline in my children (Catherina, Mexico: January 1998).

Their accounts suggested that constant monitoring of their children's actions was extremely exhausting for them. An Indian mother expressed how the everyday needs of her children did not give her any personal time with her husband:

After they come home, when they are here (referring to her children) they always need me with them. They don't understand that he needs me too (Jaya, India: February 1998).

The children obviously did not realize that they were impinging upon their parents' personal space. Thus, childcare was felt to be particularly frustrating when mothers were unable to find time for their personal activities. The role of mothers is at times taken for granted, as a Mexican mother expressed:

...When they leave, I look after the food, the house is clean, all their things are in order and they don't say-thank you mama. To the contrary-when they don't have the things they go-oh! Why my slippers are not there? Why my sweater is not clean? They won't say-oh! How good the food is here. Or aye! How beautiful the house is. ...And you don't have the time to rest either on holidays, Sundays, neither on festivals, not a single day. This is what I don't like the everyday routine, the slavery of the house. It becomes dull to do the same, and same, and same (Janet, Mexico: January 1998).

This mother pointed out that her childcare and domestic responsibilities were taken for granted and this resulted in feelings of irritation and frustration. She disliked the routine because her everyday life followed a regular pattern that destroyed the freedom and flexibility of her personal life. This example illustrated how intensive mothering was taken for granted. Another mother expressed how she had tried to balance her personal interests by juggling her own needs with her children's and thereby not becoming "a martyr on the altar of you know, motherhood" (Sandra, Canada: April 1999). This mother felt that she disliked the isolation from the public world when her children were born, because her mobility became restricted. In very explicit words she explained her initial experiences as a mother:

I remember I spent seven years without sleep. (Laughs) It could always be at least one of them waking up middle of the night and wake you up 3 or 4 times, and it's very difficult to go back to sleep and you get progressively more and more tired to the point where I had something that I will classify as a burnout. When I was trying to do everything from morning till night, just pushing myself trying to do all the

things that I thought I should do, and I'm always pushing myself to be a perfect employee, to be a perfect mother, to be a perfect wife. And you know then I realized that my health began to suffer, I was sick all the time, and my system was just rebelling and I think psychologically too, I wasn't doing anything for myself, I wasn't doing for...I was just doing because I wanted to do it. I always did things because I thought I had to do. And so it came to the point where I was just exhausted and it almost felt like life wasn't worth living. I really don't know what it was and then I consulted doctors and of course they couldn't find anything wrong (Sandra, Canada: April 1999).

The various powerful emotions such as guilt, anxiety and frustration that this mother experienced made her realize that she needed her own personal space. Therefore, she decided to direct her emotions towards the pursuance of her interests. Being a music lover, she enrolled herself in the master's program for music and began to spend a few hours away from home and her children. This change in her lifestyle gave a new focus to her role of mothering and once again she began to enjoy her family life. Thus, the above example resonated the importance of personal space mothers required to build their own personal identities.

From the total number of participants in my study, only one participant felt that there was nothing she disliked about her role of a mother as she said: "Won't believe it, I like everything. I am very content, since I got married, with my role of being a mother, a wife, and to be of assistance to everyone" (Laura, Mexico: January 1999). In other words, some mothers across the sample seemed to have, without realizing accepted their lack of personal space and personal identities.

Mothers' Autonomy in the Decision-making

Even though most of the mothers that I interviewed had made inroads into seeking gender equality, their primary identification was with their own families. These mothers,

across the cultures, were dedicated to their reproductive roles and expressed concern for their children's activities. Motherhood had a deep impact on the socialization of children and my participants conformed to this idea (Rayaprol, 1997). It is usually the mothers who made decisions about housework, their children's education and extra-curricular activities. Generally mothers discussed the issues with their husbands before finalizing the matter, but if the time did not permit, they did not hesitate to make the decision independently, as these mothers reported:

OK! When it comes to their lesson I'll probably make most of the you know decisions as to say one of the girls is asked to do competitive dances I will take that upon myself (Nancy, Canada: November 1998).

Yaa, like buying anything for the house, about the studies of the children, like school. To which school they have to be admitted like that, and for the tuition. That's all (Neha, India: February 1998).

Well, for example the boys want to do something and well, my husband is not ready to help. So I say that is not possible, I support them. I tell them (the boys) go and study so that you don't fail because if you fail your father will say that I am guilty of it (Geena, Mexico: January 1999).

Irrespective of their cultural backgrounds most of the mothers' responses were in synchrony with each other. Almost all my respondents from Canada, India and Mexico vehemently stated that they had no restrictions making decisions concerning household matters and about their children's everyday lives such as sending the children for school trips or enrolling them in different extra-curricular activities. However, Gabaccia (1991) pointed out that many western scholars including some feminists, assumed that women from the developing countries had very little or no power within their families because they were not recognized as individuals. Scholars of the developing countries have written positively about mothers' experiences in the family (Mohanty, 1988; Dore, 1997) and contested the stereotypes constructed by the western feminists such as Rosaldo (1974).

These mothers from India and Mexico exercised considerable authority within the family and were active participants in the decision-making. These mothers had found meaning to their lives and defined their social identities within the framework of their cultural values and norms. Thus, the role of mothers from the developing nations should be studied in the cultural context that is specific to their situations and not confounded with the image perpetuated by western social scientists (Rayaprol, 1997).

Although these mothers enjoyed the freedom of making independent decisions, they regularly discussed the major issues of the household and their children's socialization with their husbands and made mutual decisions. Some of these mothers also spent time with their husbands to discuss their personal matters such as their professional lives and personal ambitions.

Fatherhood on the Margins

Very little research has been done to study the paternal involvement in the everyday activities of children and their schoolwork (Lareau, 1989; 1992; Sharma, 1990; Ribbens, 1993). The available resources revealed that the role of fathers in their children's schooling activities was generally limited and distant, and the accounts of all the participants in varying terms expressed this lack of involvement and resourcefulness. The husbands of all the participants worked outside the home with the exception of one husband who worked from home. According to the respondents, their husbands had little time for involvement because they left for work around 7:00-8:00'o clock in the morning and arrived home after 6:00'o clock in the evening. In general, half of my respondents were full-time homemakers and the other half worked full-time or part-time in traditional sectors such as teaching. Only one mother worked in the high-tech industry as a technical writer. These mothers

communicated all the major activities of the children to the fathers and fathers' intervention was primarily at the level of decision-making or advice giving. When I asked these mothers how much they shared with their husbands about their children's everyday activities, their general reply was "everything, everything that goes on". The following comments from an Indian mother summarized this response:

Everything cent per cent. Whatever we do we do it together, like it's not that I like this or he doesn't like or what he likes and I do not like. We mutually... we discuss about one particular thing and see to it. And he also never refuses because it's good for the kids. So cent percent we discuss about the kids, everything we discuss about the kids (Lata, India: February 1998).

These statements reflected that the fathers shared a mediated relationship with their children, implying that this father witnessed his children's development through the accounts of his wife. On some occasions, when I met the fathers while interviewing mothers, the actions of the fathers reinforced their lack of involvement in childrearing. The personal needs of the fathers tended to take precedence. The following example illustrated this, during my research in India one of my respondent talked extensively about her involvement in her children's activities and father's unavailability for the children due to the workload at the office. I conducted this interview in the evening and the respondent's husband had just returned from work. While the participant was discussing her children's education and development, the father was busy getting ready for the club to relax himself. The participant rarely accompanied her husband because she had to help her children with their homework and studies. The responses of this participant did not reflect any resentment towards her husband and his actions.

In another situation, while I was interviewing a Canadian mother her husband had just returned home after picking up their son from the daycare centre. The father retreated

to a corner to read a book and the son began to play with his toys. About half an hour later, the son wanted his father's attention and my respondent was seeking his help to start preparing the dinner. The father grudgingly conceded to the two requests and the delay in the father's actions made my participant very uneasy and she wanted to end the interview session as early as possible.

Thus, these two situations reflected that the father's participation in household matters was very limited. However, very few of my participants expressed their views about their husbands' unwillingness to participate in household chores or their children's development. Most of the mothers seemed to not mind their husbands' lack of involvement because they felt that their husbands worked hard as the breadwinners of the family.

Paternal Involvement in Schoolwork

The majority of the mothers responded that their husbands' were involved in their children's schoolwork, but the word "involvement" had a different significance for each father. There were some fathers who merely made inquiries about their children's school activities and expended time with them to watch television or to play games. Some other fathers helped their children with their schoolwork only when their help was sought:

When they have some work, some things that they do not understand say in Mathematics, they ask him and he helps them. It is rare because he has little time. Or they call him on the telephone to ask- father, this word in English or something else. They ask him to help and he does (Laura, Mexico: January 1999).

Even though some mothers claimed that their husbands helped with their children's schoolwork, the husbands' involvement did not expand beyond providing the information the children had requested for or the tasks mothers delegated to their husbands. In a study of household labour, Coleman (1989), defined the role of fathers as "helping with" rather

than “taking responsibility for” the childrearing. Most of the fathers in this study failed to assume the duty of childcare *naturally*. Therefore, they did not voluntarily get involved with their children’s schoolwork. Generally, the mothers made regular inquiries and kept themselves well-informed about their children’s schoolwork, while the fathers did not show interest in this activity. For example, a Canadian mother responded:

He'll say you know how was school today and they'll say – O.K. And that's the end of it. And then he gets annoyed because they won't tell him whereas I...you've got to ask the right questions (laughs). So I like to ask, I usually like to...it doesn't happen much anymore because he's doing this and I'm doing this, and we don't ever, we don't sit down for an evening meal together as much as we use to. So the reason that time when I can ask the questions and he can hear the answers because he doesn't ask the right questions. He tends to be more impatient and I'm more patient (Nicole, Canada: November 1998).

This mother’s response outlined that her husband failed to phrase questions appropriately that would provide them with information about the school activities of their children. Because the children were not very forthcoming with their responses, the father lost his patience and interest and at the same time, made no further attempts to rephrase his questions that would allow him to gather the required information.

Some mothers clearly expressed their active involvement in their children’s schoolwork because fathers were generally absent around the homework time. For example, when I asked the question “how does your husband gets involved with the children’s homework?”, one Mexican mother responded:

Very little, the truth is that children do most of their activities with me. He (father) participates in very few because of his work (Krista, Mexico: January 1999).

A few respondents also made an interesting reference to the gendered division of labour in relation to their children’s curriculum. Fathers helped with the technical subjects

(such as Science and Computers), while mothers provided support with the arts and social sciences (such as English and History). These statements from a Canadian mother elaborated on the gendered division of labour in their home:

Yaa, I probably participate a lot more than my husband. But if they have a paper, we didn't have a computer last year and my husband has a laptop, so he would do all the administrative stuff like, they were doing something on the computer and they would do it on his laptop. And he'd rush off to his office to print it for them. That was his participation. Anything needs photocopying, he photocopies he takes care of that. And, I do more sit down and help them with what they can't do like French and their Math. And, sometimes I might help them with their science but I'm not so good at that and he helps them if they have got history questions but they don't tend to have that much history questions as much as Math, English and French. And sometimes, you know, I have to remind myself that he needs to take a bigger part. For years I was the one who was doing more of that. And when I get busier last year I said John- you may have to take some load off my plate. I have too much but he doesn't do it as...doesn't get into it as much as I do. Because I'm the teacher, I think (Mary, October 1998).

The last statement made by this participant "Because I'm the teacher" referred to her home schooling that she indulged her children in, during their formative years. Some mothers expressed their discontentment with their husbands especially when they arrived home early from work and remained preoccupied with their own activities like watching the television or reading the newspaper. For instance one Canadian mother quoted:

Well he gets home around 6'0 clock and sometimes I wish he would interact more because he goes down to watch the news on the TV. Then we have our meal (Sandra, Canada: April 1999).

The above example reflected this father's self-centered approach, which made him insensitive to the needs of other members of the family. Many mothers expressed concerns of the same nature about their husbands' participation in the school activities of their children. Although all these mothers would like their husbands to participate equally and

share the burden of their children's schoolwork, they reported that majority of the fathers exercise a very limited role, which was further subjected to their personal work pressure.

The primary activity that fathers participated in was playing indoor and outdoor games with their children. Frequently in the evenings, children after completing their studies waited for their fathers because he usually participated in the fun activities. These mothers defined **fun activities** as activities that did not relate to education. While the children spent time with their fathers, the primary responsibility of the mother was to prepare the dinner. The following quote from a Canadian mother illustrated this:

Well he likes to be the treat man or the hero. He asks them about their day, and he'll go out and do sports. Two of them play baseball. He'll go in the field and practice with them. He's the driver for cabs so he does that. The karate. He chats a lot with them. He's very artistic my husband so he helps them with their any art projects. He participates with them but they tend to come to me if there's a problem. They tend to speak to me (Ursula, Canada: April 1999).

On one hand, children sought their fathers' involvement for sports and activities related to enjoying themselves. On the other hand, fathers' involvement reinforced the idea that domestic responsibilities were gendered. Connected to this parenting approach was the argument that since fathers spent very little time with their children in comparison to mothers, they (fathers) tended to be more relaxed towards childrearing. An Indian mother responded:

Basically he's too busy. So he comes only around 6: 30-7:00 p.m. by then they sit for their studies. So if he has time or patience or if he is in a good mood he sits with them for making them do the homework. Or else if he's very busy, he's in his own world (Lata, India: February 1998).

These statements reflected the limited time this father spent with his children and how the time was used to help the children relax from their studies and schoolwork. Since

the mother had taken charge of the studies, the father did not see the need to indulge in the same activity. I believe that this father did not feel any of the pressures of childrearing because he spent very few hours with his children. The factor responsible for the gendered distribution of work in most of the families was related to intensive mothering. As one Indian mother commented:

On weekends they do go to him. Definitely, because he has got more patience than me and that is half the reason they feel that he will listen out their problems much better (Ekta, India: January 1998).

The same mother added that if her husband were to spend 8-10 hours daily with their children, only then would he be able to understand the real strain of raising children. Thus, in many of the accounts above, the presence of fathers often had little impact on the amount of work mothers undertook in relation to their children's schooling.

Fathers in the Household: Division of Labour

Fathers played a very minimal role in helping their children to wake up, have their breakfast, prepare lunch for school or to get ready for school. The responsibility of providing for the children in the morning remained primarily the domain of mothers until the children were prepared to take on the responsibility themselves. In fact, most of these mothers also nurtured their husbands by preparing their breakfasts and lunches. The following interaction between a Mexican mother and myself illustrated this:

Meenakshi: Who helps your children to dress for school and to get their books ready?

Krista: They get ready. They take care of their things and prepare the breakfast.

Meenakshi: Where is their father in the meantime? What does he do? (Asked only if mothers looked after the above chores).

Krista: He's doing his exercises and when he returns I have his breakfast ready, and I go to leave the kids at school. And right now I'm taking computer classes and

I go for that. He has his breakfast and he leaves. I just leave the breakfast ready for him (Krista, Canada: January 1998).

The above statements about the morning activities of the father reflected the ways in which his personal interests were well taken care of. Another mother discussed her husband's role in the morning activities as follows:

He's usually here unless like I said he has an early morning meeting. He just gets himself ready and comes down for breakfast (Nancy, November 1998).

Either he's sleeping, or he's busy with his own office work, some little office work he has to do like phone calls (Tanu, India: January 1998).

The above quote illustrated that this mother's duty started early in the morning and she had to provide not only for her children, but also for her husbands. Only a few mothers discussed how their husbands actively participated in the morning activities:

He's here. He's the usually one who makes the breakfast, he makes the best breakfast as my son says- he makes the best breakfast and I make the best suppers. So he's the one who gets the breakfast going and I'm the one that usually gets the young one up and dressed (Anne, Canada: June 1999).

When they were young I helped them for their studies and dressing. Father will take them to school in their younger age. I made food for them and my husband will be ironing or some other thing (Haritha, India: March 1998).

These two accounts outline the ways in which there was division of labour and how some fathers got involved in the regular morning chores of the house. Irrespective of these fathers' involvement, the mothers never discussed instances where husbands were made fully in charge of preparing the breakfast and lunch, or helping the children to dress and get ready for school. In a few families where the fathers did get involved in the early morning chores, mothers continued to remain engaged in other activities related to the children and household work. Women across the sample revealed how fathers earned more respect

irrespective of the amount of work they did, while the mothers' contributions were taken for granted.

The accounts of all the 36 participants rarely problematized the division of labour between their husbands and themselves with relation to parental involvement. It appeared that most of the mothers had accepted their husbands' marginal role in parenting. Fathers' lack of involvement in the children's development and educational activities was a common feature in the mothers' accounts across the three countries. Furthermore, the explanation these mothers gave of their husbands' roles with regards to childrearing reflected the unequal power between the wives and husbands. This imbalance emerged in the accounts where these mothers described the different ways in which their husbands helped out in the daily household tasks. It was manifested through the fathers' involvement in their children's fun activities rather than the educational work. The power imbalance permeated the early morning accounts discussed earlier, where the husbands were involved in looking after their personal needs, while the mothers were busy preparing the children for school. Thus, it is primarily my participants who had undertaken the day-to-day labour of parental involvement, while the fathers disappeared under the pretext of workload at the office. This unequal power distribution, which existed between the two genders, had damaging consequences on both the parents. One consequence was the wide range of emotions mothers' experienced in the process of supporting their children's development and schooling. The other consequence was that the fathers' were insidiously distancing themselves from the lives of their children. Thus, it is essential for the parents to understand and to share childrearing responsibilities and to provide positive role models for their children.

Summary

In this chapter, I have examined the impact of mothering on women's personal identities. All the mothers interviewed were involved in undertaking the day-to-day labour, while the fathers adopted a relaxed attitude towards childrearing. The primary concern of the mothers was to look after the interests of their children and husbands rather than pursuing their personal interests. The role of fathers varied in each household and they often participated in the extra-curricular activities of their children. The mothers shouldered the major workload in the house without any complaints. In fact these 36 mothers were quite content with their duties and tasks and drew great pleasure from their childrearing practices. Therefore, it is important to recognize the contributions mothers make to the development of their children and how their accomplishments are regarded as mothers' personal achievements. Chapter 6 elaborates on the necessity to respect and recognize motherhood, because until the voices of mothers are heard, the suppression of women and their work will continue to cripple our society.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION: MOTHERS AND THEIR PERSONAL IDENTITIES

The primary objective of my inquiry was to focus on the work mothers across the three cultures indulged in with regards to their children's education, and how this indulgence influenced these mothers' personal identities. I developed my study on the frequently drawn assumption that mothers are the primary caregivers for their children. Their perception of motherhood is linked to the belief that, to be a mother is a normal and a desirable feminine quality (Oakley, 1974b). This responsibility restricts the mobility of mothers because they have to provide for and nurture their children. There are many mothers who enjoy this role, while others feel frustrated because motherhood deprives them of their personal space and identities. My respondents also exhibited strong emotions in favour of their tasks of mothering and shared their views about motherhood. These mothers took great pleasure from the act of giving and caring for their children. The majority of the mothers conformed to the belief that the best childcare was exclusively maternal, and were committed to the demands of full-time mothering. All the mothers I interviewed, also experienced constraints on their personal lives due to physical and emotional stress linked to childcare.

All these mothers had been subjected to patriarchal norms, but their experiences were different due to their cultural contexts. In the next section, I explore the role of intensive mothering and the cross-cultural differences that I identified during the course of my research.

Childrearing Practices from Cross-cultural Perspectives

It was difficult to examine maternal work with respect to children's education without analyzing these mothers' daily activities that focused in the development of their children's academic work and values education. These mothers often established a network of resources to help their children with the schoolwork and other activities. Standing (1999) stated that parental involvement meant helping with the homework, reading with the children and taking part in their outings and activities.

This involvement entailed providing time, space and educational resources (for example, books and toys) for children to use at home and at school. For these mothers, participating in parent-teachers meetings and attending different school events were all essential requirements for the development of their children. These mothers monitored their children's progress closely and attempted to solve any educational problems they encountered (Griffith & Smith, 1990). Active surveillance of schoolwork was regarded as an important evidence of mothers concern in their children's educational progress. Thus, these mothers played a pivotal role in generating cultural capital by effectively transmitting their beliefs, values and knowledge to their children (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977).

The majority of the participants were enjoying being full-time or part-time mothers. The organization of childcare and mothers' activities around the needs of their children appeared common to mothers from developed (Canada) and developing (India and Mexico) societies. The social organization of both India and Mexico has been changing and the emergence of nuclear families is influencing the nature of childcare. In both these countries, middle-class mothers were primarily responsible for their children's nurturance and education, and this practice paralleled childcare in middle-class families from western

societies (Roopnarine & Hossain, 1992; Stephen, 1997). Even though childrearing in all the three countries was centred around mothers, I came across some cultural differences between the childrearing strategies and mothers' perceptions in these cultures.

In Canada, the majority of the mothers sought the assistance of daycare centres before their children began formal schooling. However, in India and Mexico, daycare centres have still not gained popularity because the social structure in these countries has yet to accept this concept. Analyses divulged that even though the structure of nuclear families in India and Mexico resembled nuclear families in Canada, the functioning of Indian and Mexican families are culture specific. For example, mothers looked to their extended families and neighbours for assistance with looking after their children whenever the need arose. This supportive environment further dissolved the need for sending the children to daycare centres.

Analyses of the data collected through open-ended questionnaire revealed that only a few participants described their daily routines as frustrating and boring. The attitudes and assumptions enforced upon women by society influenced the identity development of these mothers. In spite of enjoying childrearing that they termed as "labour of love", there were moments in these mothers lives when they were overwhelmed with the responsibilities of the household and childcare. However, none of the mothers came up with any suggestions as to how they would like to deal with these moments that drained them emotionally. I strongly feel that there is a need to provide these mothers with a platform where they could come together to share their experiences of mothering. I believe that mothers in India and Mexico require this platform more, since they are passive and have internalized the norms of society to such an extent that they feel guilty even to admit that they are momentarily

discontented with motherhood. When I refer to Indian and Mexican mothers as being passive, I am not indicating that Canadian mothers are aggressive but I want to highlight that the attitudes of the Indian and Mexican societies “remain quite distinct from those of women’s liberation in the West, and factors determining women’s status in the societies are not the same” (Ghosh, 1981, p. 60).

The following cultural similarities and differences stated above should be studied only as experiences of my participants. I am not forwarding the proposition that these cultural beliefs can be generalized to the experiences of other Canadian, Indian and Mexican mothers. However, they indicate trends of childrearing in each culture and I am merely attempting to gain some understanding of how childrearing is practiced in each culture through the reflections of my participants.

Mothers' Personal Identities

In my analysis of these respondents’ mothering experiences, I discuss the lived worlds and responsibilities taken for granted that obscure the individual identity of mothers. I identify the esteemed contributions mothers make with regards to their children’s schooling and the ways in which these contributions impact their personal identities.

These mothers had positively internalized constructs of ideal mothering that supported their children’s development. Even though these mothers had positively internalized mothering, it cannot be inferred that the mothers should remain solely in charge of childrearing. Mothers who stayed at home to look after their children or mothers who combined their professions and household responsibilities subjected themselves to a

lot of work pressure because intensive mothering imposed innumerable commitments on mothers. Besides the need to have a stage for expressing their views as mentioned in the previous section, these mothers would also appreciate active participation from their husbands and from society to distribute the workload of mothering. However, society continues to prevent mothers from dismantling this cultural construction of motherhood.

Some Canadian mothers who had pursued higher education with certain ambitions were keen to join the work force and to develop their independent identities besides that of a mother. Other mothers were content with full-time mothering, irrespective of their educational qualifications. Nevertheless, all these mothers wanted to be appraised for their mothering work and be recognized as individuals. The belief that mothers are the primary caretakers is prevalent in Canada, but industrialization and urbanization have transformed the functions of a traditional family. Thus, Canadian mothers are exploring new identities for themselves, in addition to the identity of mothers.

Mothers from the developing countries have yet to question their roles and identities in their families. From childhood, women in India and Mexico are also socialized into thinking that mothers are the ideal caregivers for their children. Thus, many Indian and Mexican mothers have not experienced or perceived alternative ways of life. They do not express much discontentment about their present roles, and neither do they realize the need to develop their personal identities besides the sole identity of being mothers.

Finally, the salient theme that emerged from these mothers' responses was that the selfless care provided by all mothers should be recognized and respected. According to the participants, mothers should not be confined to the ethos of motherhood, but be given ample opportunities to explore new identities for themselves. In order to accomplish this

these mothers suggested that the support from their husbands is essential. They believed that only when both parents, fathers and mothers, will internalize the importance of sharing the responsibility for their children changes can be expected in the contemporary ideology of childrearing, as summarized by Ghosh (1981), "...the roles of men and women are complementary, not competitive, and the issue of education towards attitude change in the family and in employment, which affects the whole of society, may make a larger difference in the daily lives of people." (p. xiv). Thus, this inquiry suggests that mothers' involvement in their children's education needs to be recognized across the cultures and mothers' contributions should not be taken-for-granted. At the same time, fathers' involvement in their children's education will reduce the entire responsibility of childrearing for mothers and will help to redefine the traditional definition of motherhood.

Some Directions for Further Research

It is evident from reading this inquiry that the primary focus has been on middle-class mothers from Canada, India and Mexico. The analyses drawn from my inquiry provide a one-sided image, but to conduct such research it is essential to limit the variables. The issue of appropriate mothering is an issue for all mothers and it has different implications for mothers from different cultural and economic backgrounds. Therefore another area, which requires further exploration is that of the influence of marginalized categories (single, divorced, working-class or lesbian) of mothers on the socialization of their children.

Mothers in this inquiry did not articulate the role of fathers in their children's schooling and the factor responsible for this is the gendered division of labour. It would be interesting to study how fathers' socialization has affected their childrearing practices. In

many situations, there are fathers who contribute equally in childrearing or want to have equal involvement in their children's schooling. However, the nature of state policies or peer pressure makes them self-conscious about taking responsibility for their children and other domestic chores. A comparison between mothers' and fathers' childrearing practices will shed light on the factors responsible for mothers to remain responsible for the tasks of childrearing.

This inquiry presents the views of middle-class mothers about their ambitions and aspirations for their children. It will be interesting to interview children and examine how they perceive their mothers' ambitions and dreams. Research in this domain will be valuable in assessing to what extent mothers influence their children's academic development.

Finally, further cross-cultural research with emphasis on the indigenous conceptualization of motherhood in each culture will enhance our knowledge and reshape our sociological principles that will provide a useful framework for future scholars.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire

Demographic Questions

1. You are in the age group of:
20-29
30-39
40-49
2. How many years of education have you had:
Less than 8 years
8 - 12 years
12-15 years
15 years or more
3. How many sons and daughters do you have:
Sons _____
Daughters _____
4. How old are your children:
Under 14
14-16
16 and above
5. How will you rate your children's academic performance:
Excellent
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory

Open-ended questions

Personal views about Mothering and Child Rearing

1. A) Tell me about your role as a mother?
 B) What do you enjoy most about being a mother?
 C) What do you enjoy least about being a mother?
2. A) Do you think your role as a mother differs from the role of mothers in Europe, Latin America or Asia? Give me some examples.³
3. A) Do you think it is important to promote independence in your children? In what ways do you do this?
 B) Do your children understand the meaning of "responsibility"? How do you teach them to be responsible for their actions? Give some examples?
4. A) In a day how many hours you spend with your children?
 B) Out of the total time how much you spend on their studies and in playing with them?
5. A) How do you participate in your children's schoolwork?
 B) Do you get involved in your children's extra-curricular activities? How?
 C) Do you think that mothers should provide educational resources such as books, educational toys, computers, etc. to their children? Why?
 D) Have you provided them with these facilities?
6. A) When at times your children come to you for advise how do you show interest?
 B) When your children are upset what do you do?
7. A) How do you make your children realize that they have done something that you don't consider acceptable? What would be an example or two?
 B) Do you think it is a good idea to reward your children's achievements? Why?
8. A) Is their television watching monitored?
 B) Who monitors their television watching?

³The name of the country changed depending on where I am conducting the interview.

- C) Who decides what your daughter(s) or son (s) should wear?
 - D) Who decides with whom your children should interact?
9. A) Do you hope your children pursue higher education? Why?
- B) Where do you hope to see your children in the next 10-15 years?
 - C) What kind of jobs will you like your children to aspire for?
10. A) Amongst your children who helps you with your household chores?
- B) How do you encourage them?

Values Education

- 1.1 What do you think about these values for your children such as:
- A) Obedience?
 - B) Respect for others?
 - C) Honesty?
 - D) Good Manners?
- 1.2. What do these values mean to you?
2. A) Do you think these values are held by children today?
- B) What do you think should be done to safeguard these values?
 - C) As a mother how can you help in preserving these values in your children?

What constitutes mothering?

1. A) Do you make any decisions independently of your husband? Give me few examples.
2. A) What do you think about competition?
- B) What does academic achievement mean to you? Do you think it is required for the success of your children? Why?
3. A) Do you think your active participation in your children's daily activities influences their academic performance? Can you give some examples?
- B) Do you think your ambitions sometimes influence your children's performance?
 - C) How much do you share with your husband about your children's activities?
4. A) Do you think that mother's who have been to university make better mothers than those who have only high school education?

B) Do you think you are a good mother?

Situational Vignettes

1. If one day one of your child comes home and says- "Mom, I failed in my final exams". How would you respond?
2. If one day your son says- "Mom, I don't want to study anymore". How would you respond and feel.
3. If one day your daughter wants to stay in school after regular hours to participate in the extracurricular activities, what would you say to her? Would there be any time restrictions?
4. If one day your son wants to stay in school after regular hours to participate in the extracurricular activities, what would you say to him? Would there be any time restrictions?
5. If your son wants to go out of town with his friends on a trip what would you say to him?
6. If your daughter wants to go out of town with her friends on a trip what would you say to her?
7. If one day your daughter says- Mom, after completing high school I want to get married". How would you respond and feel?
8. If one day your son says -"Mom, after completing high school I want to get married". How would you respond and feel?
9. If one day your children come home and say- "Mom, today a new student came to our class and he/she was wearing torn and dirty clothes" What would you say to your children?
10. If one day your children come home and say-Mom, we have some children in our class who don't look like us and who speak quite loudly". What would you explain to your children.

Daily Activities

1. In the morning who wakes up first? Why?
2. Who helps your children to dress for school and to get their books ready?
3. Where is their father in the meantime? What does he do?(Asked, only if mothers do the above chores.)
4. How do your children go to school?
5. When your children are leaving for school do you both (mother and father) see them off?
6. In the morning how much time is spent on household chores?
7. Is your family religious? Do you have a prayer room at home? Who does the prayers? Do your children ask you questions about religion? Do they take interest?
8. When your children get home do they share their school stories with you?
9. Do you ask them questions about their day's activities? For example, how did their day go, what did they enjoy or dislike at school, etc.?

10. In the evening how does your husband interact with the children?
11. Who sets the dinner table?
12. Who sits at the dinner table first?
13. At night when your children have to study do you (did you) and your husband participate in their school work?
14. Who puts them to bed?
15. Do/did you read a book or tell your children a story before they go to bed?
16. Do you ever leave your children alone at home?
17. What do you advise them to do when they are alone at home?
18. What do your children enjoy doing in their spare time?
19. Do you encourage your children to read and play?
20. How much time are they given for watching T.V.?

General Questions

1. What do you think at what age should your son and daughter get married?
2. Could you give me an example of where your children demonstrated something that they learnt from your habits or actions?
3. What do you think about Asian or Latin American culture?

Appendix B

Subject Consent Form

I hereby consent to participate in a research project conducted by Meenakshi Gupta, (McGill University, Montreal, Canada). The nature of the project and the objectives of Ms. Gupta's study have been explained to me and I have had a chance to raise questions about the study.

I reserve the right:

1. To refuse to answer any questions which I regard to be an invasion of my right to privacy of information; and
2. To terminate participation in the project at any time should I feel that I am not being treated with appropriate respect by the researcher.

I understand that all information obtained from me in the course of the project will be kept strictly confidential and that my name or address will not be mentioned in any written or oral report that is developed as a part of the study. Descriptive data will not identify individuals or give direct quotes, which would be attributable to them.

I voluntarily consent to participate in the research project.

Signature _____

Print Name _____

Date _____

**Research Ethics Committee of
The Faculty of Education**

**Statement of Ethics of Proposed Research
in the Faculty of Education**

It is assumed that the responses to the questions below reflect the author's (or authors') familiarity with the ethical guidelines for research with human subjects that have been adopted by the Faculty of Education.

1. Informed Consent of Subjects

Explain how you propose to seek informed consent from each of your subjects (or should they be minors, from their parents or guardian). Informed consent includes comprehension of the nature, procedures, purposes, risks, and benefits of the research in which subjects are participating. Please append to this statement a copy of the consent form that you intend to use.

Informed consent will be sought through a consent form that the respondents will be requested to sign. Prior to signing the consent form, I will explain to them the objectives, purpose, and procedures of the study and if the respondents have any further questions I will answer them to my best ability. (Please find attached a copy of the consent form).

2. Subject Recruitment

2.1 Are the subjects a "captive population" (e.g., residents of a rehabilitation center, students in a class, inmates in a penal establishment)? **No**

2.2 Explain how institutional or social pressures will not be applied to encourage participation.

The principal goals of this study will be explained before confirming the subjects' participation. If they are not comfortable with any section of the research they will have the freedom to withdraw from the study.

2.3 What is the nature of the inducement you intend to present to prospective subjects to persuade them to participate in your study?

The goals and objectives of this study will be elaborated to encourage the participation of mothers in contributing to the philosophical development of motherhood and its application to education