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Mount Saint Vincent University
Department of Applied Human Nutrition

Mapping the Social Relations Shaping the Everyday Lives of Single Mothers who
are Food Insecure in Nova Scotia

by
Rita MacAulay

A Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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Abstract

In Canada, single mothers are particularly vulnerable to experiencing food insecurity: a situation that exists when there is limited or uncertain ability to access acceptable foods in a socially acceptable way. This study aimed to map out the social relations organizing the food security status of single mothers supported by Income Assistance (IA) in Nova Scotia. This informed recommendations for policy and program changes that would allow food insecurity to be more effectively addressed in Nova Scotia.

Institutional Ethnography (IE) was used to guide this research. Data collection consisted of two stages. The first stage involved in-depth face-to-face interviews with seven single mothers on IA who were determined to have experienced food insecurity. The interviews were audio taped and content analysis of the transcripts was conducted with the assistance of NUD*IST QSR N6 software.

Results identified that the mothers entered into relations that, together, worked to coordinate their food insecurity. These social relations were organized using Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. Overall, however, the interviews suggested that income was the most basic organizing factor in coordinating the mothers' food insecurity. The two main sources of the mothers' income were the IA and Canada Child Tax Benefit (CCTB) programs.

The second stage of this study aimed to explicate how these programs organized the mothers' food insecurity. To accomplish this, three employees of the IA program took part in in-depth face-to-face interviews to determine how the IA and CCTB programs, including their policies, act, and regulations, were involved in this organization. Similarly, these interviews were audio taped and content analysis of the transcripts was conducted with the assistance of NUD*IST QSR N6 software. Key policy documents, namely the Employment Support and Income Assistance policy document, and information pertaining to the IA and CCTB programs provided more context of the organizing role of these programs.

The findings of this research suggest that many social relations are organizing and reproducing the food insecurity experienced by the mothers. Gaps, referred to as lines of fault, were also found to exist between the mothers' everyday experiences and public and organizational policies as well as programs and nutrition education materials and approaches intended to address their needs. Overall, the identified social relations worked together to maintain the mother's state of food insecurity and the lines of fault that existed. These fault lines were also maintained due to the lack of participation in the policy process of those most affected by food insecurity and because of the short-term strategies the mothers undertook to cope with their food insecurity. These short-term strategies did not increase the mothers' food security, and may have actually hidden the reality of the mothers' experiences of food insecurity.

These conclusions have serious consequences considering the impact that food insecurity has on the health and well being of those that experience it and the economic toll it can have on society. As such, public policy and programs, nutrition practice, and society as a whole must make immediate change and work to make system level change that will address the root causes of food insecurity. Results supported a call for action to change current neoliberal based social policies so that they are more inclusive of the needs and realities of those individuals that they aim to affect.

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Glossary

| | |
|-------|---|
| AHPRC | Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre |
| CCHS | Canadian Community Health Survey |
| CCTB | Canada Child Tax Benefit |
| CFGHE | Canadian's Food Guide to Healthy Eating |
| ESIA | Employment Support and Income Assistance |
| FRC | Family Resource Centre |
| FRC/P | Family Resource Centres and Projects |
| IA | Income Assistance |
| IE | Institutional Ethnography |
| LICO | Low Income Cut Off |
| NPHS | National Population Health Study |
| NSNC | Nova Scotia Nutrition Council |
| NCBS | National Child Benefit Supplement |

Food Security: situation that exists when all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (Agriculture and Agrifood Canada, 1998).

Food insecurity: a limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in a socially acceptable way (Anderson, 1990).

Individualism: an ideological stance that places the responsibility of a person's situation, such as the experience of food insecurity, directly on the individual, thus disregarding any environmental and social forces that may be acting on the lives of an individual or group (Treanor, 2003).

Line of fault: For the purposes of this study, line of fault is described as the disconnect between policies and programs, how they work and their purposes and the real life experiences of those individuals that the policies aim to affect (Smith, 1987)

Neoliberalism- an ideological stance that supports the lessening, and ideally the abolishment of state intervention in the market place and the lessening or abolishment of taxes, increased privatization of public infrastructure and the commodification of human services (Vadoillancourt et al., 2004). Neoliberalism has also worked to created a discourse within our society that holds the general vision that “every human being is an entrepreneur managing [her] own life, and should act as such” (Treanor, 2003 p-10).

1 CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

In this chapter, the issues of poverty and food security and insecurity will be introduced. Following this the theoretical underpinnings of this study will be presented. These underpinnings hold that food insecurity is socially organized through the social relations that people enter into knowingly or not. Next, the influential role of public policies in the lives of those who experience food insecurity will be discussed followed by the need for policies to be structured in a manner that takes into account personal experiences of those who are food insecure rather than the ideological positions of the ruling class. Finally, this chapter will present the purpose and objectives, significance, approach, and scope of this study.

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Poverty, food security and food insecurity

Canada, one of the richest countries in the world and has experienced a period of remarkable economic prosperity in the past decade (Smilek, Bidgood, Parent & Thompson, 2001). According to a recent report from the Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) Canada experienced a 2.3% increase in its gross domestic product in the first quarter of 2005, attributed to improvements in trade numbers and a vibrant domestic economy (RBC, May 2005). The same report estimated that twenty nine thousand jobs were created in April 2005 (RBC), another strong indicator of economic growth and prosperity. Within this economic prosperity social inequities still exist, most notably poverty. According to Statistics Canada's Low income Cut Off [LICO (IBTS)]¹ 14.7% of all Canadians and over 15.2% of all Nova Scotians are considered to be living in poverty (Human Resource Development Agency, 2003). Canada also has one of the highest child poverty rates (15.6%) among the wealthiest countries in

¹ The LICO (before tax) is one of many measures of poverty used in Canada. The LICO (Income level where a household will, on average spend on food, clothing and shelter a share of its pre- tax income that is 20 per cent higher than the average family. (Human Resource Development Canada (HRDC), 2000)

the world (Campaign 2000, 2005). As a result, UNICEF has given Canada a failing grade in this area (UNICEF, 2005). The situation for children in Nova Scotia is even worse; as statistics put the poverty rate for children over 18% (Campaign 2000).

Poverty is a societal concern for many reasons; the most compelling being the negative effect low income has on our population's health and well being. Research has established a strong link between income and health. There is clear evidence that poverty is a key determinant of health, and one that affects all other determinants (Raphael, 2003; World Health Organization, 2002). Further evidence of the negative impact of poverty on health was provided by a Health Canada (1999) review, which found that only 47% of Canadians in the lowest income level rated their health as excellent or very good, compared to 73% of Canadians in the highest income group (Federal, Provincial and Territorial Advisory Committee on Population Health, 1999). Moreover, Canadians who lived in the poorest neighbourhoods were more likely than residents of the richest neighbourhoods to die at an early age (Federal, Provincial and Territorial Advisory Committee on Population Health, 1999).

1.1.1.1 Food security and insecurity.

Poverty, or rather low income, has been inextricably linked to nutritional intake both at the individual and household level (Che & Chen, 2001). In this sense, poverty has been linked to the existence of *food insecurity*. Before food insecurity can be truly comprehended, food security must first be understood. For the purposes of this study food security will be described 'as a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life' (Agriculture and AgriFood Canada, 1998). When food security does not exist, food insecurity is experienced. Food insecurity exists when there is limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in a socially acceptable way (Anderson, 1990). Inadequate income is the most significant determinant of food insecurity in Canada when access to food is considered (Che & Chen, 2001; Dietitians of Canada (DC), 2005; Tarasuk, 2001a).

Recent reports show food insecurity is a real concern. A new report from data collected through the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) in 2000/2001

indicates that almost 15% of Canadians experienced food insecurity during 2000/01 (Ledrou & Gervais, 2005). More concerning is data from the CCHS that shows food insecurity situation is higher in Nova Scotia with rates hovering around 17% (Ledrou & Gervais). National Population Health Study (NPHS) statistics also showed that food insecurity was 10.2 times higher in the lowest third of standardized incomes compared to the highest third (Che & Chen, 2001).

With rates of poverty over 18%, one group particularly vulnerable to food insecurity in Nova Scotia is females (Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD), 2002), most notably, single mothers who have been identified as having poverty over 47% (Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 2002). CCHS data shows that 33% of single mother households experience food insecurity, far exceeding the rate of 18% for male lone parent households (Statistics Canada, 2005). Moreover, a study that included 141 low income lone mothers with two or more children in the Atlantic provinces found that 51.1% NS lone mothers experienced hunger over the past year compared to 22.6% in New Brunswick and 33.3% in Newfoundland (McIntyre, Glanville, Officer, Anderson, Raine & Dayle, 2002).

Individuals who rely on Income Assistance (IA)² programs, with rates consistently set below the LICO (CCSD, 2003), are at increased risk for experiencing food insecurity with rates exceeding 57% (Che & Chen, 2001). Recent data from the Nova Scotia Participatory Food Costing Project clearly showed that lone parent families on IA in Nova Scotia receive inadequate incomes to purchase even a basic nutritious diet (Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre (AHPRC), Family Resource Centre and Projects (FRC/P) & Nova Scotia Nutrition Council (NSNC), 2004). Available published research shows that the mother is the most severely affected by inadequate income in mother led lone parent families (McIntyre et al., 2001; 2002; 2003). McIntyre et al. (2003) found the 141 Atlantic Canadian lone mothers included in their study were much more likely to experience dietary

² I use the term income assistance within this thesis, as this is the term used for social assistance within Nova Scotia. NPHS data the specific group referred to were those individuals whose major source of income was social assistance, welfare (Che & Chen, 2001).

inadequacies, food insecurity and hunger compared with their children during a month study period. Even though food insecure women are severely affected by the complexities of poverty and food insecurity, McIntyre et al. (2002) noted that very little is known about the actual struggles and everyday lived experiences of this group.

1.1.2 *Theoretical Underpinnings of this Research*

To address food insecurity, it is important to understand the dynamics of this situation. Food insecurity is not a static situation. Rather, it is a multifaceted condition that is *socially organized*, meaning it is a result of the social relations people enter into, often unknowingly (Travers, 1993). These social relations that people enter into are guided by an individual's knowledge (Travers). However, as described by Foucault, knowledge is not simply technical knowledge or know how but rather a 'matter of the social, historical and political conditions under which, for example, statements come to count as true or false' (McHoul & Grace, 1993, p.29). Knowledge and social relations have a dialogical and interdependent relationship in that social relations form knowledge and knowledge guides the social relations people enter into. For instance, the knowledge that a mother holds may dictate that she has to do the cooking for a family; continuing the trend of the mother cooking reinforces this knowledge.

Travers (1993) and Foucault (Ingrim, 1994) have identified many forces, such as institutional, cultural, societal, ideological, that shape knowledge and the social relations individuals enter. For the purposes of this study, the focus will be on the social force of ideologies. Ideologies are the beliefs, ideas or 'world views' of the members or a society (Guess as cited in Travers, 1993) and have great influence over the actions and reactions of these individuals (Travers, 1993). The power of ideologies is further reinforced by the everyday lives of individuals and societal discourse (Smith, 1987). Smith contends that the manner of this reciprocity usually ensures that those who hold the power in a society, most often males of high economic status, maintain their power (Smith). Smith refers to individuals in this

group as the *ruling apparatus*. Foucault (Ingrim, 1994) also noted that those less powerful have their knowledge and experiences subjugated by dominant and standard forms of knowledge sanctioned by the established history of ideas held by the ruling apparatus. Because of suppression or subjugation of knowledge the lived experiences of the less powerful is often lost. Smith contends that the lost knowledge falls into the break, or *line of fault*³, created between the dominant knowledge and ideologies and the real lived experiences of the less powerful, such as women, poor, and food insecure (Smith; Ingrim, 1994). This subjugation can often lead to the development of false consciousness (Fay, 1987), a situation that emerges when certain assertions or beliefs are taken as real truths, when perhaps they are not in respect to that individual's everyday experiences (Curran & Takata, 2003).

The infiltration of dominant ideologies into verbal and text based forms of knowledge and discursive practices further works to uphold the power of the ruling. Foucault argues that this ruling may be unknown to both the oppressed and the oppressor (Layder, 1997). Nonetheless, this infiltration process is central in coordinating and maintaining the large-scale organization and relations of ruling that work to propagate situations such as food insecurity and poverty (Devault & McCoy, 2002). Of the text forms used to embed these ideologies, policy documents, which are textual forms of plans of action agreed to by a group of people with the power to carry it out and enforce it (Danahar & Kato, 1995), are among the most influential. The reason for this is tied to the power that policies have in affecting our society; they have been noted as having great authority over the way people live and the choices they make (Danahar & Kato).

Public policies and policy frameworks are most directly created by policy makers and 'experts', both members of the ruling apparatus, in a given government department (Dodd & Boyd, 2000). The ideological beliefs of these individuals usually become embedded within these policies (Travers, 1993), which are noted as not always being congruent with the population that the policies aim to affect (Dodd &

³ For the purposes of this study I have chosen to use Smith's (1987) concept of *line of fault* to describe the disconnect between policies and programs, how they work, their purposes etc and the real life experiences of those individuals that the policies aim to effect.

Boyd). As noted by Dodd and Boyd, unless policy makers actively involve the ‘less powerful’ individuals with whom the policy will ultimately affect it is inevitable that the knowledge and everyday experiences of the less powerful will be suppressed. Evidence suggests that this results in the creation of policies and programs that do not address the complexities of the situations experienced in the lives of those most affected by issues, such as the everyday realities of food insecurity (Dodd & Boyd).

1.1.2.1 Implications of theoretical underpinnings on food insecurity

To better meet the needs of those who experience food insecurity it is essential that the real lived experiences of groups experiencing food insecurity become known and understood. This would allow policy makers, who coordinate the writing of public policies, to better understand the realities of food insecurity and the social relations that work to perpetuate this situation. It would also allow policy makers to more clearly see the fault lines that exist between current policies and programs and the true lived experiences of these individuals and households affected by the policies and programs. This process would facilitate learning what steps, such as policy changes, need to be taken to address the root causes of this pressing problem, and, in turn, improve food insecurity. By making these social relations and lines of fault visible, those most affected by food insecurity may shed any false consciousness (Fay, 1987) and become aware of the relations they enter into that are working to maintain food insecurity in their lives.

1.2 Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research was to begin to explore the everyday lived experiences of single mothers who were in receipt of IA and who experienced food insecurity in Nova Scotia. The purpose of doing this was to identify the social relations that reinforce the social organization of food insecurity as experienced by these mothers. Through this, it was anticipated that lines of fault between the everyday experiences of the mothers and the policies and programs that affect their lives would become apparent. This research began in the everyday world of the

mothers who experienced food insecurity by exploring how they procure and prepare food for themselves and their families.

To meet the overall purpose of this study, five objectives were outlined. The five objectives were:

- To explicate the everyday experiences of procuring and preparing food among single mothers who were food insecure and on IA using in-depth face-to-face interviews.
- To explicate key social relations the mothers enter that organize their food insecurity and to use Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) to identify and situate the identified social relations;
- To explicate how key relations organized the mothers' food insecurity through identifying and interviewing individuals involved in these relations and completing in-depth face-to-face interviews based on questions that arose from the mothers' interviews.
- To analyze key documents to further explicate how the ideologies and social constructs embedded in these documents work to sustain food insecurity in the lives of low income women.
- To create a map of the social relations that were working to organize the food insecurity in the lives of the mothers involved in this research.

1.3 Significance of the Project

The significance of this study lies in the contribution it can make to our current understanding of food insecurity in general and more specifically, food security as it is experienced by single mothers who rely on the IA program in Nova Scotia. This study addressed an important gap in the research literature regarding the disjuncture between the everyday lives of those experiencing food insecurity and the programs and policies that exist within our society that impact food security. Over the past few decades' research has highlighted the trend towards weakening of Canada's social safety net and the negative impact this has had on the food security of

Canadians, especially those who are most reliant on these programs (Che & Chen, 2001; Ledrou & Gervais, 2005). Recent changes to IA benefits in 2001 in Nova Scotia has not seemed to improve the overall situation and instead has resulted in reports that highlight negative outcomes of the changes (AHPRC; FRC/P & NSNC, 2004; Community Advocates Network, 2003; Reed, 2004; McIntyre, 2003; McIntyre et al., 2001). However, no research in the past decade has specifically aimed to identify the relations that are organizing food insecurity in the lives of single mothers on IA and the disjuncture between these relations, more specifically, the public policies and programs that work to address and/or affect these women. Perhaps the identification of the specific lines of fault, especially as they relate to the IA program and policies that guide it and the everyday lives of the mothers, will allow policy makers to be more direct when making policy changes.

This research is also significant because it began in the everyday lives of those most affected by food insecurity, single mothers on IA. The responses of these women then worked to guide this project to the end product. Furthermore, this research may work to allow those most affected by the issue to recognize, that there are many factors working to organize their lives and their food insecurity or at the very minimum, begin this process. By beginning to understand that the society in which we live plays an instrumental role in coordinating their lives, these mothers may be empowered to take action to work against the ruling relations that keep their lives as they are. There is also the risk that the opposite may also happen, that the mothers may become overwhelmed and unable to act once an understanding and acknowledgment of the complexity of the relations involved in the creation of food insecurity is developed.

1.4 Approach of the Study

The design of this study was grounded in a critical theoretical philosophical understanding of the world. A critical theories approach assumes that reality is shaped by social constructs and forces such as political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender factors over time, ultimately leading to these realities becoming crystallised

into a series of structures, which society accepts as natural and static (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Using this approach, this study was based on the premise that food insecurity is socially organized due to the social relations people enter into. The methodological principles of institutional ethnography (IE) were used to structure this research. This methodology assumes it is the individual's working knowledge of her everyday world that provides the beginning of an inquiry (Smith, 1987). This then guides the inquiry to an analysis of how these experiences enter participants into social relations with others outside of her immediate environment (Travers, 1996).

Using *Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory* (1979), the social relations identified through this study were organized into four systems: the microsystem; the mesosystem; the exosystem and the macrosystem. Although all layers are present and impact on the everyday lives of individuals, the *microsystem* layer of Bronfenbrenner's theory is the layer of social relations closest, physically speaking, to the individual and contains structures with which the individual has direct contact. At this level, relationships are dialogical and interdependent as other persons affect the individual or structures in her⁴ immediate environment and she, in turn, influences these other people or structures. For a young food insecure single mother, relations within this system that may affect her food insecurity are those with her family or friends and food bank workers. The *mesosystem* is the layer that provides the connection between the structures and the individual's microsystem (Paquett & Ryan). Again, a food insecure mothers' mesosystem may consist of relations between her extended family members and her children. The *exosystem* is the layer that defines the larger social system, in which an individual does not directly function, such as organizational and government policies and programs and mass media. However, the individual's physical separation from this system does not translate into less influence on the individual. The forces that lie within this system affect, and even regulate, the manner in which individuals function in their microsystem (Melson, 1980). With regards to the food insecure mother on IA, relations in this level affecting her food insecurity would be IA policies because they

⁴General statements of persons in the third person will be referred to as *her* or *she* for the duration of this thesis.

determine the amount of money the mother receives. The *macrosystem* is the layer containing societal values, customs, laws, ideologies, gender beliefs, and class structures. The affect of the larger principles defined by the macrosystem has an overarching influence throughout the interactions among all other layers while being reinforced in different ways by each layer of social relations.

Qualitative data were collected, beginning with in-depth interviews with single mothers who were food insecure and were clients of the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services' IA program. Keeping with the principles of IE studies, the analysis of the mothers' interviews guided the next steps of this project. Through the analysis of their interviews it was identified that the IA program and Revenue Canada's National Child Benefit Initiatives' Canada's Canada Child Tax Benefit (CCTB) Program, through their organizing power over the mothers' income, were key programs that worked to organize the mothers' food insecurity. As such, three individuals from the IA program were identified and recruited for in-depth face-to-face interviews. Key policy documents from both the IA and CCTB programs were also identified and analyzed to assist in identifying how the programs and the policies that guided them worked in the organizing process. All data collected were used to assist in mapping out the identified social relations organizing the mother's food insecurity.

1.5 Scope

Stage 1 of this study involved the completion of qualitative in-depth interviews with mothers who were single, with one or more children under the age of 18, who were over the age of 18 years themselves, and who were the main individuals who procured and prepared food in their household between January and March 2004. The mothers' main sources of income were funds received through the IA and CCTB programs. All mothers were participants of Family Resource Centres (FRC) within the Capital Health District, and all but one mother participated in the FRC, through which I volunteered as a means to facilitate the recruitment process for this project.

Through the analysis of the interviews with the mothers the relations working to organize the mothers' food insecurity began to emerge. The primary factor identified was income, or the lack thereof. This became the focus of the next step of this research. Specifically, the IA and CCTB Programs became the focus of Stage 2 of this project as the mothers' major source of income was received from these programs. Overall, Stage 2 of this research consisted of a series of three interviews with individuals from the IA Program, as well as a detailed review of the Department of Community Service's Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) Policy Manual and other related IA and CCTB documents. Stage 2 of this project took place between August and September 2004.

1.6 Summary

This chapter presented a brief overview of the current situation of poverty and food insecurity in both Canada and Nova Scotia and a short discussion of the influence of policy's impact on food insecurity. This central approach for policymaking, one guided primarily by policy makers who are influenced by the dominant views and ideologies within our society, tends not to consider the everyday experiences of the less powerful in our society. This disconnect results in the creation of policies that may not always meet the everyday needs of these individuals and perhaps even work to further disempower and marginalize these 'less powerful' groups. In addition, this chapter outlined the study presented here, which aimed to examine the social relations, such as policies, programs and societal ideologies, which worked to organize the food insecurity of a group of single mothers on IA in Nova Scotia.

2 CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will begin by describing the definition and dimensions of food security and insecurity that have been adopted for this study. Next, the determinants of food security will be explored with an emphasis on income and poverty, especially for women. Following this, the issue of poverty, with regard to the demise of Canada's Welfare System will be explored and neoliberalism, capitalism, individualism and globalization, the ideological force working to erode the welfare system, will be discussed. Literature on the coping mechanisms that food insecure individuals undertake to deal with their food insecurity, as situated in the market, state, domestic, informal and social economy will be reviewed followed by health implications of food insecurity. Finally, the strategies that are employed to address food insecurity will be discussed and explored.

2.1 Food Security Discourse and Definition

Food security is a complex, multifaceted issue that can be viewed from many perspectives, including individual, household, community, national, and global (Phillips & Taylor, 1991). Therefore, it is vital that those working to address this issue clearly define the term: it has been recognized that the definition adapted is vital in establishing any approaches taken and strategies devised to address this issue (Dietitians of Canada (DC), 2005).

This study will apply a food access, or a social justice, lens to food security. This perspective is focused on individuals' and households' access to food. It holds that efforts to address food security start from the premise that Canada has an adequate food supply with food insecurity attributed to people's lack of access to food, mainly due to inadequate income (Power, 1999). Considering this, the definition chosen to describe food security will be gleaned from that used at the World Food Summit and endorsed by the Canadian government. This definition describes food security 'as a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their

dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life' (Agriculture and Agrifood Canada, 1998). When food security does not exist, food insecurity is experienced. On an individual and household level, this situation exists when there is limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in a socially acceptable way (Anderson, 1990). From a social justice lens, inadequate income is the most significant determinant of food insecurity in Canada (Che & Chen, 2001; DC, 2005; Tarasuk, 2001a).

Other approaches to food security and insecurity exist within Canada and around the world. Aside from the social justice approach, another dominant approach focuses on the food system and calls for sustainable food system practices, such as those involved in the production, processing, and retailing of food, be undertaken in a manner that ensures a healthy and safe food supply both now and in the future (Fairholm, 1998).

Regardless of one's approach to food security, many of those who work within the food security field hold that the concept of food security encompasses five dimensions. These five dimensions include: access, adequacy, availability, acceptability and agency. *Access* refers to the right or entitlement of individuals to secure sufficient food through purchase or production. *Availability* identifies an individual's need for adequate, assured, and reliable food supplies now and in the future. *Adequacy* recognizes the need for sufficient food to meet caloric and nutritional needs. *Acceptability* refers to the need for foods to be culturally appropriate and safe and to have the ability to acquire such foods in a socially acceptable manner. *Agency* is the condition that identifies the need for active participation of people affected by food insecurity in addressing the problem (McGregor, 1996 as cited in the Canadian Home Economics Association, 1999).

2.1.1 *Dynamics of food security*

Food insecurity is experienced when access to food is limited and uncertain. However, individuals or households cannot simply be classified as food secure or food insecure, rather, food insecurity has been shown to be a managed process.

Radimer et al.'s (1990) study found different levels of food insecurity based on descriptions of the experiences of food insecurity among low income women and their children. According to Radimer et al. (1990) anxiety about the adequacy of household food supplies were among the first signals that food insecurity existed for an individual or within a household. The next, more severe level of food insecurity described involved compromises in the quality and then quantity of women's food intakes. Finally, the most severe stage of food insecurity was the experience of hunger is defined as "involuntary food shortages that can vary in intensity, duration, symptoms and causation" (Campbell, Katamay & Connolly, 1988 p. 230).

Hunger among children in a household, rather than both mother and child, was considered the indicator of the most severe stage of food insecurity. This is a marker of food insecurity based on research from Radimer et al. (1990) that found that the quality and quantity of children's intakes did not occur until after parental deprivation. McIntyre et al. (2001; 2002) reported similar findings from their study that analyzed the dietary intakes of 141 low income lone mothers with two or more children under the age of 14 and their children in Atlantic Canada. The findings of this research clearly indicated that the adequacy of the mothers' nutritional intake was consistently lower than that of their children's intake overall and over the course of a month (McIntyre et al., 2001; 2002). As such, McIntyre et al. (2001; 2002) noted that the mothers worked to shield their children from food insecurity; when this failed the most severe form of food insecurity, child hunger, manifested.

2.2 Determinants of food insecurity

Many factors exist that determine whether individuals and households have adequate access to the food they need to support their health. From a food access vantage point, some of the significant determinants include access to transportation; appropriate knowledge and skills to allow individuals to identify healthy food choices and prepare acceptable foods safely; adequate storage, preparation and cooking facilities to handle and prepare foods that they purchase or produce; time and mobility to purchase and prepare foods and social supports as preparing and eating

food is often a social activity and social isolation can lead to loss of appetite or reluctance to cook and prepare meals (Rychetnik, Webb, Story & Katz, 2003). However, the most significant and influential determinant of food security from a social justice standpoint is income (Che & Chen, 2001; DC, 2005; McIntyre, 2004; Rychetnik, Webb, Story & Katz, 2003; Tarasuk, 2001a).

The influential role of income as a predictor of food insecurity is largely due to the decreasing tendency of Canadians' dependence on individual and household production of food and more and more on an increasingly larger system of trade that spans from local, regional, national and now global trade (Lang, 1999; Friedmann, 1991 as cited in Kratzmann, 2003). The acquisition of this food, at least within Canada and many other developed nations (Lang, 1999), is commonly based on a market system, which depends on the exchange of labour for cash, cash for goods and services, or in this case, food, (Michalski, 2003). Money can also be received through the state economy; however, the structures to redistribute monies through this economy to those most vulnerable have eroded in recent years.

Those who do not acquire enough income to meet their basic needs, such as food and shelter are often considered to be living in poverty or to be low income. Forty four percent of those living in low income households and 42% of those in low to middle income households polled in the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) (Ledrou & Gervais, 2005) stated that they experienced food insecurity within the previous twelve months⁵ (Che & Chen, 2001).

2.3 Poverty and Food Insecurity in Canada and Nova Scotia

Poverty can be measured in relative or absolute terms. An absolute measure of poverty determines an individual's inability to meet very basic needs while relative poverty measures are concerned more with the distance [in monetary terms] an

⁵ In 2000/01 the CCHS asked respondents aged 12 or older if, because of a lack of money, in the previous year they or someone in their household had not eaten the quality or variety of food that they had wanted; had worried about not having enough to eat; or had actually not had enough to eat. Respondents were considered to be living in a "food insecure" household if they had been in at least one of these situations because of lack of money (Ledrou & Bervais, 2005, p.. 47).

individual is from the community norm (Canadian Council on Social Development [CCSD], 2000). There is no official definition of poverty within Canada, however, Statistics Canada's Low Income Cut Off (LICO), which is more a relative measure of poverty, has been cited as the most widely used indicator. The CCSD (2002) reported that in 1999, 16.2% of Canadians lived below the LICO and, therefore, were living in poverty. This is up from 15.3 % in 1990. Even though this measure is widely used to measure poverty, other measures also exist,⁶ and Statistics Canada themselves do not consider this as a measure of poverty Canadian (CCSD). Rather, they view it as an indicator of individuals who live in straightened circumstances, a term that is not clearly defined or understood (CCSD).

2.3.1 Women and poverty and food insecurity

World wide, women are at higher risk for experiencing poverty than men, with 70% of the worlds' poor being female (Marcoux, 1997). This trend is evident within Canada and Nova Scotia with 17.7% (CCSD, 2002) and 18.3% (Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 2004) of women experiencing poverty respectfully while poverty rates for men hovered around 14.6% in both Canada and Nova Scotia (CCSD; Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women. Among women, female-headed single parent families are at higher risk of experiencing poverty with over 55% living in poverty in 1999 (CCSD, 2002). Although poverty rates for this group dropped to about 47% in 2001 this was still twice that of male-headed single parent families. Single parent female-headed households were categorized as experiencing the highest incidence of low income in the province compared with other groups (Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 2004)

Food security trends mirror poverty statistics. According to the newest CCHS data 33% of female lone parents with children under the age of 18 were found to experience food insecurity, twice the rate of their male counterparts (Ledrou &

⁶ Refer to the Canadian Fact Book on Poverty (CCSD, 2000) for a thorough description on the different poverty measures.

Gervais, 2005). A study completed by McIntyre et al. (2002) with 141 low income lone mothers with at least two children 14 years old or younger in the four Atlantic Provinces, it was found that food insecurity was experienced by almost all households (96.5%) over the previous year period. Results of this study also showed that 51.1% of the mothers who lived in Nova Scotia and 53% of those living in Prince Edward Island reported being food insecure over a one-month study period versus 23% of the mothers households in New Brunswick and 33% in Newfoundland (McIntyre et al.). Mothers were also found to sacrifice their dietary intakes for their children's (McIntyre et al. 2001; 2003).

2.3.1.1 The impact of poverty and food insecurity on women.

Published literature suggests a deeper complexity of the experiences of food insecurity among women stemming from society's expected roles of women within the household, and indeed with feeding. To truly understand this, it is vital that the underlying, often hidden expectations of women within this society are fully understood. Generally, women's 'experiences' have been hidden, or unspoken for much of history (Devault, 1991; Smith, 1987; Travers, 1993). In the past century women's roles in society have been in a state of flux as women have increasingly left the household to take on employment outside of the home (Devault, 2001; Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 2004;). However, there has been, as described by Devault a 'stalled resolution' in the home (Devault). Even though women have increased their participation in the workforce, women continue to be left with the majority of the responsibility for completing the housework, such as cooking cleaning and child care (Arai, 2000; Baxter, 1997). Despite popular beliefs these roles are not natural and should not be taken for granted. These roles are socially organized within our society (Devault) and are further reinforced through text in the form of an array of self-help, parenting and related literature that is now abundant within our society and further dictate the role of women (Devault, 1991; Smith, 1989).

Van Estrick (1999) hypothesizes that all of these messages work to ingrain within women a sense of self, duty and worth with regards to these tasks (Van Estrick, 1999). A woman's sense of self is often based on her ability to feed her

family (Van Esterik). Those who do not have the ability to feed their families adequately due to lack of money may have a great sense of loss of power, dignity and self worth within their lives. Findings from previous research shows women often go without food as a means to feed their families and with the feeling that this is the only choice they have to make (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004; McIntyre et al., 2001; 2002). These studies suggest that women take on the responsibility of feeding to such an extent that they sacrifice their own physiological need for food in favour of their families.

2.3.2 *Policy and Poverty in Canada: Canada's Welfare System*

Public policies, those rules and regulations developed by governments or their representatives that guide the actions of the population in which they serve (Danahar & Kato, 1995), can have a great influence over food security and poverty. This is understandable considering that these policies have far-reaching effects on the actions, and presumably the values and beliefs of those they affect (Danahar & Kato, 1995). It is felt, however, that often those who create ruling relations, such as policies, infuse their own values and beliefs rather than those they affect either knowingly or unknowingly (Dodd & Boyd, 2000). As such, if special effort is not taken to include those most affected by an issue it is likely that their voices and experiences will be lost. This could lead to the creation of public programs and policies, however well intended they may be, that do not meet the needs of those they are meant to impact (Dodd & Boyd).

Canada's Welfare System and its accompanying set of policies and programs, also referred to as the "social safety net", has been implicated time and again as inadequate to meet the needs of those who rely on it (Davis, Katamay, Desjardins, Sterken & Pattilo, 1991; DC, 2005; Raphael, 2003; Tarasuk & Davis, 1996). Canada's Welfare system is a series of social programs, and is part of the state economy (Michalski, 2003). Indeed, this safety net, once a staple entity for this country, has been severely eroded by government cuts and changes in the past few

decades (Davis, Katamay, Desjardins, Sterken & Pattilo; DC; Raphael.; Tarasuk & Davis).

By definition, a welfare state is “a capitalist society in which the state has intervened in the form of social policies, programs, standards, and regulations in order to mitigate class conflict and to provide for, answer, or accommodate certain social needs for which the capitalist mode of production in itself has no solution or makes no provision” (Teeple, 2000, p. 15). In short, this system is supposed to work to protect the needs of the vulnerable within our population. The welfare system within Canada was based on Keynesian economic theory that was made popular after the Great Depression and the Second World War (Workman, 2003). The aim of this system was to even out ‘boom and bust’ economic cycles and alleviate the human and social costs of capitalism (Workman) and included allowances for families with children, universal health care, public pensions, social housing, unemployment insurance, improved access to post secondary education and social assistance (Gust, 1997). In the past few decades, however, Canada’s welfare system has slowly become inadequate to meet the needs of those whom it once aimed to serve. These changes include overall changes to the funding of social programs, increasingly strict regulation and/or cancelling of programs and the persistent inadequacy of the Canada Child Tax Benefit and Income Assistance programs.

2.3.2.1 Change to funding to social programs

One of the more instrumental changes to the social safety net in the past decade relates to the changes in funding allocation for social programming. In 1995, the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) and Established Programs Financing (EPF) were abolished and in their place came the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) (CCSD, 2004). Under the CAP and EPF funding for health care, post secondary education and social transfers to the provinces, including those that supported programs in the social safety net, were separated. However, under the CHST these three pots were combined (CCSD) creating competition among these three areas for one large pot of money within provincial budgets. As predicted, health care dominated the control and spending of the CHST (CCSD). To further the blow to social spending, accompanying the change was a \$7 billion reduction to the overall

CHST financing. This change aimed to reduce the federal deficit, an obsession of governments in recent years (CCSD). Thus, not only was the proportion of funding to social programs decreased due to the competition but the overall pot of funding was less. In the aftermath, provincial and territorial governments across the country significantly scaled back their social programs (CCSD).

Several changes have occurred to the CHST in the last year (CCSD, 2004). As recommended by the Romanow Commission, the CHST was replaced by two new funds in April 2004: the Canada Health Transfer and the Canada Social Transfer. Although these three important areas no longer have to fight for monies, the Canada Social Transfer, the fund that combined post-secondary education and social transfers, was created from the remains of the CHST after creation of the health fund (CCSD). The overall affect of this change has not been documented at this time.

With the introduction of the CHST came other fundamental changes to social programming that have weakened our social safety net. For instance, the majority of conditions for income security program funding that were present in the CAP⁷ were also changed (CCSD, 2004). As noted by the CCSD 'the right to an adequate income, the right to assistance when in need, and without forced participation in work or training programs, and the right to appeal welfare decisions were eliminated with CAP'. As a result of these changes some provinces reduced or froze income assistance rates, restricted eligibility and the grounds for appeal, and introduced work-for-welfare, which is currently in Nova Scotia (CCSD).

2.3.2.2 *Strict eligibility criteria and cancellation of programs*

The increasing restriction on eligibility to the programs offered is another sign of the demise of Canada's Welfare System (Davis, Katamay, Desjardins, Sterken & Pattilo, 1991). For example, in recent years there has been a restructuring of the Unemployment Insurance program, now referred to as the Employment Insurance program. This has resulted in reduced numbers of workers eligible for benefits, lower benefit levels and shorter benefit periods (Canadian Labour Congress, 2003; Battle, 2001). The federal government also cancelled the social housing program in recent

⁷ Only the right to claim welfare whatever one's province of origin was retained (CCSD, 2004)

years, which creates a great financial burden for those who need affordable housing accommodations (Shapcott, 2004).

2.3.2.3 *Canada Child Tax Benefit System*

Another safety net program that has come under strong criticism for its inadequacies (McIntyre et al., 2001; 2002 National Council of Welfare, 1997; 2004) is the National Child Benefit (NCB) Initiative's Canadian Child Tax Benefit program (CCTB), and its component funds, the National Child Benefit Supplement (NCBS). The NCBS initiative was a program implemented by the federal government to curb child poverty. The program has three specific goals: to help prevent and reduce the depth of child poverty; to promote attachment to the workforce by ensuring that families will always be better off as a result of working when compared with being on IA; and to reduce overlap and duplication through closer harmonization of program objectives and benefits and through simplified administration (National Child Benefit, 2003).

In 1998 the NCB was introduced as a component of the federal CCTB program (NCB, 2003). The implementation of the NCBS portion of the CCTB aimed to eliminate the 'welfare wall', which has been described as the loss of financial assistance for children on IA experienced as they entered the workforce (NCB, 2003). The elimination of the welfare wall was achieved by providing the NCB component of the CCTB to all those who were under a certain income and by giving provinces and territories the ability to 'readjust' (NCB, 2003) or clawback (DC, 2005; McIntyre et al. 2001) their IA payments so that children were no longer included in the IA budgets. As such, while those who were working in low paying jobs received benefit from this new configuration of the CCTB those on IA received no net increase in monies (Community Advocates Network, 2003; DC, 2005; McIntyre et al., 2001). Therefore, although seemingly a positive program, in actuality it is thought that the CCTB does little to assist those on IA and their children who are among the most vulnerable to food insecurity (Che & Chen, 2001) and poverty (CCSD, 2002).

2.3.2.4 *Nova Scotia Income Assistance Program*

In addition to cutting IA benefits to children, provincially other aspects of the IA programs are being eroded. IA programs within this country were established

decades ago to provide support for the most vulnerable within our society. In the past years, however, income received by recipients of IA Programs across Canada has been stagnated or even decreased (Battle, 2001; Boychuk, 2001; National Council of Welfare, 1997). Indeed, wages from IA programs have fallen to below the LICOs measures (CCSD, 2003). Therefore, these wages are widely regarded as insufficient to support an individual's or family's basic needs (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004; CCSD, 2000; Community Advocates Network, 2003; McIntyre, Glanville, Raine, Dayle, Anderson & Battaglia, 2003; McIntyre et al., 2001; National Council on Welfare, 2004; Reed, 2004).

Aside from stagnant IA rates, the changes that were implemented with the CHST also opened the door for mandatory welfare to work programs in Nova Scotia (National Welfare to Work, 2001). Legislation enacted in 2001 made participation in employability activity mandatory for IA recipients, and/or the spouse of a recipient deemed appropriate through an employability assessment (Department of Community Services, 2005). Although on the surface these programs appear beneficial, examinations of such programs in Cape Breton showed little benefit to both those who participate in such programs and the economy (DeRoche, 2002). In addition, this type of program is problematic in that there is no universal childcare system in this country and limited childcare, especially funded seats for low income individuals in Nova Scotia and Canada (Cleveland & Krashinsky, 2004). Individuals who lack a supportive environment, such as single parents who do not have a spouse to assist in childcare are forced to make a difficult decision: whether to leave their role as care provider for their child, assuming they can find affordable childcare, and go to work, or stay at home and choose to go against the social norm of participating in the market economy (Michalski, 2003) to attain an income. To make the decision even more difficult, those who enter the workforce from IA into minimum wage jobs may receive little or no economic benefit due to the stagnated minimum wage rates in this province (Williams, Johnson, Kratzmann, Johnson, Anderson & Chenhall, in press). Results of food costing projects in NS clearly show that minimum wage rates do not allow workers to purchase even a basic nutritious diet or meet other essential needs (Williams et al.). In addition, it was noted that programs that make participation in the

workforce or in programs to prepare one for the workforce mandatory fail to recognize the work single parents do at home and indeed the barriers that exist in entering the workforce (Community Advocates Network (2003). This suggests that single parents, especially single mothers who are made to feel responsible for the work of feeding and caring (Devault, 1991), this program does little to support their everyday needs. At this time it is unclear whether new monies are made available from the federal government to the Nova Scotia government in recent weeks, specifically for childcare will address this problem (Daily News, 2005).

2.3.3 *Food Insecurity and Income Assistance*

Many groups are at risk for experiencing food insecurity. However, recent research has shown that individuals who depended on social safety net programs for their incomes were at higher risk of experiencing food insecurity than all other groups (Che & Chen, 2001; Ledrou & Gervais, 2005; Rainville & Brink, 2001). NPHS results showed that even when other factors were considered 23.3% of residents of households depending on programs such as Employment Insurance and CCTB (Che & Chen) experienced food insecurity⁵. Compared to 10% in the NPHS (Che & Chen) and 14.7% in the CCHS (Ledrou & Gervais), the group that was most at risk of experiencing food insecurity, both overall and among clients of social safety net programs, were those individuals and households that received their incomes from IA Programs with 57% of IA recipients experiencing food insecurity⁵ 53% of whom reported having to compromise their diets (Che & Chen).

Food costing data collected in 2002 (AHPRC, FRC/Ps & NSNC, 2004) helps to further illustrate the deficiency of IA within this province. For example, a reference family of four⁸ whose sole income is achieved through the Nova Scotia IA program is facing a deficiency of \$277, after all expenses, including the cost of a basic nutritious diet, are accounted for⁹. Single parents¹⁰ on IA were short over \$53 per month when

⁸ The reference family of four consisted of two adults and two children, a boy aged 13 and girl aged 7 (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC 2004).

⁹ Refer to footnote on page 51 of *Participatory food security projects Phase I and II: Building food security in Nova Scotia: Using a participatory process to collect evidence and enhance the capacity of*

all basic costs of living were considered⁹. This is significant for these families' food security as food is the most 'flexible' budget (DC, 2005; AHPRC, FRC/Ps & NSNC, 2004) meaning that when income deficiencies are experienced by individuals or households they are more likely to cut their food budget rather than budgets for other basic needs such as shelter and heat.

2.3.4 *Neoliberalism and the demise of the welfare system*

In Canada, the destruction of the welfare system has been linked to neoliberal based, individualistic policy frameworks, which have gained popularity within this same time frame (DC, 2005; Workman, 2003; Bourdieu, 1998). Neoliberalism is an ideological stance that stems from liberalistic ideologies that date back to the eighteenth century (Treanor, 2003). However, unlike liberalism, which focused more on the actual production of goods and the support of nationalism, neoliberalism beliefs are embedded primarily in the market and market forces (Carroll & Shaw, 2001; Treanor, 2003). In short, neoliberalistic values support the lessening, and ideally the abolishment of state intervention in the market place and the lessening or abolishment of taxes, increased privatization of public infrastructure and the commodification of human services (Vadoillancourt et al., 2004). Capitalism, which is defined as 'an economic system characterized by private or corporate ownership of capital goods, by investments that are determined by private decision, and by prices, production, and the distribution of goods that are determined mainly by competition in a free market' (Merriam-Webster, 2005) supports and is truly integrated within neoliberalism and its goal for decreased state intervention and increased focus on the free market.

Neoliberalism has also worked to create a discourse within our society that holds the general vision that "every human being is an entrepreneur managing [her] own life, and should act as such" (Treanor, 2003 p-10). This stance helps to clearly

community groups to influence policy (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004) for description of how expenses were calculated.

¹⁰ A single parent family consisted of a adult female two children, boy aged 7 and girl aged 4 (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004)

identify the individualistic nature of neoliberalism. That is, policy frameworks based on this ideological stance place the responsibility of a person's situation, such as the experience of food insecurity, directly on the individual (Treanor). This disregards any environmental and social forces that may be acting on the lives of an individual or group. In other jurisdictions, such as the United States, a similar ideological stance, neoconservatism, dominates. Aside from neoconservatives' tendency to retain a strong state in order to defend religious values, national security and domestic law and order (Langille, 2004), these two ideologies are very similar. For example, both share the same tenets of individualism and an increased reliance on the market instead of state intervention (Langille).

Overall, when neoliberalism and its underlying tenet of individualism are considered against the basic doctrine of the Keynesian based Welfare System, the incongruencies are starkly apparent. First, the Keynesian modeled social safety net used to work to provide supports for those most vulnerable within our society through the redistribution of wealth, namely through the collection and redistribution of taxes (Workman, 2003). In contrast, neoliberalism is now directing policy makers to lessen government's intervention, and as such social spending, with the assumption that when the market is left alone it will be able to provide more effectively for the population (Langille, 2004). Some experts even argue that the basic underlying principles of the social safety net have changed with the introduction of neoliberal policy frameworks into one that no longer supports vulnerable populations but rather into one that is based on an employability model that emphasizes re-entry into the workforce (McKeen & Porter, 2003).

This decreased involvement of government in social issues and increased emphasis on employment can be seen in the aforementioned changes to the welfare system. For example, the lessening of overall funding for social spending through the CHST and inadequacy of the IA funds (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004; CCSD, 2000; Community Advocates Network, 2003; McIntyre et. al, 2003; McIntyre et al., 2001; National Council on Welfare, 2004; Reed, 2004) shows an overall decreased emphasis in social spending. The emphasis on employment through the CCTB and IA programs indicates that governments are moving away from supporting vulnerable

populations in our society with increased emphasis on employment within the market economy. Some describe this approach as that of 'tough love' in that by decreasing funding and accessibility, those who depend on the welfare system will begin to find means within the market economy to function independently (McKeen, & Porter, 2003). Overall, however, the movement towards neoliberal based policies has played a prominent role in the expansion and deepening of poverty around the world (United Nations Human Development Report as cited in McIntyre et al. 2001) including here in Canada (Hurtig, 1999).

2.3.5 *Globalization: Perpetuating the breakdown of the social safety net*

Closely related to neoliberalism ideals globalization is another force that has arguably had a negative impact on food security in Canada. Globalization has been occurring for centuries, however, it has been happening at breakneck speeds, driven primarily by the capitalistic ideals and neoliberal policies that have been ingrained throughout the western world, in the last few decades (Friedmann, 1991; 1993; Lang, 1999). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) (2000, p.1) has described globalization as the escalating amalgamation of economies around the world, particularly through trade and financial flows. The IMF (p.1) noted that this 'term sometimes also refers to the movement of people (labor) and knowledge (technology) across international borders'. This description does not take into account the cultural, political and environmental dimensions of globalization (IMF).

Globalization is not inherently bad, however, Langille (2004) has noted that current trade agreements have been noted as weakening national barriers, and creating a world market for the trans-national corporations. These companies pressure governments to reduce corporate taxes and decrease spending, as this assists them in increasing the company and shareholder profits (Langille). However, such actions have and will continue to weaken what is left of our social safety net (Langille).

Globalization has caused food to become elusive to many Canadians. In recent centuries, the production of food has moved from the household to broader regional, national and global markets (Freidman, 1991; 1993; Lang, 1999). Most individuals

within our society no longer see food as a life sustaining entity; instead, its move out of the household has resulted in food being viewed more as a commodity than a basis for supporting life (Friedmann, 1993; Kneen, 1993).

This commodification is further intensified by the new wave of branding and advertising of food within our society (Klein, 1999). The acts of branding and advertising, which are rampant in our popular media and everyday lives, also has dramatic implications for what people feel they need to have (Poppendieck 1998 as cited in Kratzmann, 2003) in that it has shaped our ideals and desires to create social norms among food products (Lang, 1999; McNeal, 1998). Thus globalization has not only affected 'our food systems, but 'what' we deem as acceptable means to access it. While branding activities have influence on the entire population, research suggestions that it creates a great deal of stress for low income individuals (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004; Hamelin, Beaudry & Habicht, 2002).

2.3.5.1 Globalization: Creating food norms through branding

While big business directs advertising and branding activities at all groups, children are one of the most highly targeted (McNeal, 1998; Moore, 2004). Recent estimates suggest that children in the United States account for almost \$24 billion in direct spending annually and influence an additional \$500 billion in family purchases (McNeal, 1998). The reasons for targeting children with branding are multifaceted. First, they are easy to reach. On average, children between the ages of 2 and 12 watch 16.8 hours of television per week which translates to 2.4 hours a day (Statistics Canada, 2003). In addition it has been found that children have unyielding power in influencing family purchases. Consequently, advertising through children results in children exerting great pressure on parents. Also, advertising direct to children give corporations more 'bang for their buck' as they are able to establish brand loyalties at early ages (Moore, Wilkie & Lutz, 2002). Finally, children are easy to influence because they are unable to reason out the influencing factors of advertisements, something that is causing great concern among researchers and advocates opposing the advertising to children (Moore, Wilkie & Lutz; Moore).

The struggle to maintain the social norm created by these branding activities puts a strain on all types of families, however, it is likely this strain is multiplied for

those who lack the financial means to meet these demands. Evidence from the food costing data collected in 2002 in Nova Scotia indicated even a basic nutritious diet was unachievable for individuals who receive their income from the IA program and those working for or slightly above minimum wage rates (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004). Therefore, luxuries such as higher priced brand named items are clearly out of reach for many families despite aggressive advertising geared to their children. Hamelin, Beudry and Habicht (2002) found when they interviewed lower income families in Quebec that anxiety was associated with being unable to meet social food norms is great and can cause many disturbances within familial relationships.

2.4 Management strategies for food insecurity

Within a society that does not support food security for all, a range of strategies at multiple levels are undertaken by those who experience food insecurity as a means to stave off the more drastic outcomes of this situation, namely hunger. When food insecurity is being viewed from a social justice lens, the root cause of this experience can be attributed to inadequate income. People experiencing food insecurity are unable to successfully participate in the market economy, the most dominant economy in a capitalistic society, which demands that services and products, such as food, be exchanged for money (Michaliski, 2003). The state economy is continually failing the many Canadians who rely on incomes available through different social programs, as they are insufficient to meet basic needs (National Council on Welfare, 2003). As a result, those who experience food insecurity develop strategies, both within and outside of the market economy, which allows them to meet basic needs (DC, 2005). Undertaking such activities does not improve overall food security; instead these strategies have been noted to render the experience of the problem unknown (Dayle, McIntyre & Travers, 2000; McIntyre, Travers & Dayle, 1999; Tarasuk. & Eakin, 2003; Williams, McIntyre, Dayle & Raine, 2003). Strategies used to cope with food security issues can be classified according to four economies described by Michalski (2003): the market/state, domestic, informal and social economies (Michalski).

2.4.1 *Market economy strategies*

Published research has documented a range of strategies situated within the market economy that aim to manage the inadequate amounts of monies received from these economies in attempts to stave off the most severe stage of food insecurity: hunger. These strategies include not paying or only partially paying monthly bills (i.e. electricity, phone) (Badun, Evers & Hooper, 1995; McIntyre et al., 2001; Tarasuk, 2001b; Tarasuk & MacLean, 1990; Travers, 1996); using credit to buy foodstuff or, alternatively not using credit to avoid having to pay bills later (McIntyre et al., 2001; Travers, 1996); and buying food stuff before it is needed because it is on sale (Tarasuk & Maclean, 1990). Other strategies employed to manage financial resources included selling goods and services (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004; Hamelin, Habicht & Beaudry, 2002; McIntyre et al., 2001; Travers, 1996); picking up odd jobs (Hamelin, Habicht & Beaudry, 2002; McIntyre et al., 2001); not using heat and not having incurring 'extra expenses' such as a phone, cable or recreation costs (McIntyre et al. 2001; Michalski, 2003). Another key technique employed in managing the food budget when shopping involved sacrificing nutritious high quality foods for less nutritious, less expensive foods (McIntyre, 2001; Tarsuk & Maclean, 1990; Travers, 1997).

2.4.2 *Domestic economy strategies*

The *domestic economy* used to be the dominant source of goods and services consumed by household members throughout history (Rose, 1985 as cited in Michaliski) and involves household production activities. Mingione (1983 as cited in Michaliski) described such work as labour for self-consumption or the range of activities such as cooking, cleaning, and mending in which most households engaged on a regular basis. Management activities utilized by food insecure individuals that fell within this economy included baking or cooking more at one time so as to ensure there is enough food made; stretching or spreading meals out over a number of days;

and monotony in the food served and conversely changing food appearance to disguise monotony (McIntyre et al., 2001). Others included locking up or rationing food; improvising when cooking; cooking one dish meals; and not eating (McIntyre et al.). In addition to this, parents were often noted to have skipped meals as a means to manage their household food supplies and ensure their children had enough foods to eat (Badun, Evers & Hooper, 1995; McIntyre et al. 2003; McIntyre et al. 2002; McIntyre et al. 2001). One study completed with food bank users in the Greater Toronto Area also noted that some families had to resort to the most extreme tactics, child hunger, to cope with the food insecurity (Michaliski, 2003).

2.4.3 *Informal economy of kith and kin*

In the *informal economy of kith and kin*, extended family and friends engage in production activities that benefit a household directly or indirectly. Studies have shown that non-household kith and kin provide a variety of resources, services and other types of social supports to meet the needs of the individual/household in question (Edin & Lein, 1997; Martin & Martin, 1985; Parish, Hao & Hogan, 1991; Wellman & Wortly, 1990 as cited in Michaliski, 2003). Relying on family and friends for food and money (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004; Hamelin, Habicht & Beaudry, 2002; McIntyre et al., 2001; Michalski, 2003; Tarausk, 2001; Tarasuk & Maclean, 1990; Travers, 1993) where two main strategies within this economy. Another strategy used by caregivers experiencing food insecurity was the reliance on family and friends for childcare while the caregiver went shopping to avoid pressure from the children to buy foods that were not affordable (McIntyre, 2001). Another strategy noted by Tarasuk (2001) was the tendency of food insecure parents to send their children to their family or friends houses for meals.

2.4.4 *Social economy*

The social *economy* includes the many types of voluntary and charitable organizations, and other independent organizations that may provide services either to

the general public or a defined membership. The use of charitable organizations as a means to cope with food insecurity is arguably the dominant strategy used within the social economy. Although it has been reported that only about 20% of all food insecure individuals utilize food banks (Che & Chen, 2001), the use of charitable organizations is consistently cited as a key strategy that falls within the social economy allowing individuals and households to cope with their food insecurity, albeit temporarily (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004; Badun, Evers & Hooper, 1995; Hamelin, Habicht & Beaudry, 1999; McIntyre et al., 2001; Michalizki, 2003; Jacob-Starkey & Kuhlein, 2000; Tarasuk, 2001; Tarasuk & MacLean, 1990; Travers, 1996;). In fact, the usage of these organizations by the Canadian population has consistently increased over the past fifteen years, with a 120% increase between 1989 and 2004 (Hyman, MacIssac & Richardson, 2004).

2.5 Health Implications of Food Insecurity

Income is considered the most influential determinant of health in Canada (DC, 2004; Public Health Agency of Canada, 2005). Inextricably linked to poverty (Che & Chen, 2001; Vozoris & Tarasuk, 2003), food security is also considered a key social determinant of health (McIntyre, 2004; 2003). The section below will highlight the many nutritional, physical, psychological and social health implications that have been linked to food insecurity.

2.5.1 *Food Insecurity and Nutritional Adequacy Implications*

It is well documented that the nutritional quality and adequacy of individuals' diets is at risk of being compromised when they experience food insecurity (Badun, Evers & Hooper, 1995; Kendall, Olson & Frongillo, 1996; McIntyre et al., 2001; Jacob-Starkey, Grey-Donald & Kuhnlein, 1999; Tarasuk, 2001b; Tarasuk & Beaton, 1999; Vozoris & Tarasuk, 2003). Jacob-Starkey, Grey-Donald and Kuhnlein (1999), who studied nutrient intakes of food insecure food bank users, found that both male and female subjects had below average intakes for calcium, vitamin A and zinc.

These researchers also noted that women between the ages of 18-49 years were more likely to consume fewer servings of vegetables and fruit than the recommended minimum as compared to their male counterparts (Jacob-Starkey, Grey-Donald & Kuhnlein, 1999). Similar findings were found by Badun, Evers and Hooper (1995), who studied parents living in economically disadvantaged communities, when they noted that subjects' median intakes were below the Recommended Nutrient Intakes (RNI)¹¹ for calcium, iron, folate and zinc.

Tarasuk (2001b), who undertook a study focused on low income women, also showed that the extent of these nutritional compromises increased among those households reporting severe or moderate hunger over the month, versus those households where no hunger was present. Aside from this, a recent study involving 141 lone mothers in Atlantic Canada who had two or more children under the age of 14 found that the mothers' dietary intakes and the adequacy of intake were consistently poorer than their children's intake over the course of the year previous and within, the week study period over the course of a month (McIntyre et al., 2003). This occurred even when additional monies were received, around the third week of the month, which coincided with the receipt of the CCTB. During that time, the child's nutritional intake improved while the mothers remained inadequate (McIntyre et al.). This suggests women are at higher nutritional risk with regard to increasing severity of food insecurity, compared to children, and that they tend to sacrifice their nutritional well being in favour of their children's ((McIntyre et al).

Although the aforementioned studies show a link between food insecurity and nutritional inadequacies, it is still difficult to show their direct impact on health as these studies only examined nutritional intake over a short period of time, during which the frequency, chronicity and severity of experiences of food insecurity were not generally assessed (Tarasuk, 2004). However, data have been collected in the United States providing evidence of the link between food insecurity and health. That

¹¹ Prior to the implementation of the Dietary Reference Intakes, Recommended Nutrient Intakes (RNIs) were used in Canada (beginning in 1990) and worked to outline recommended intakes of essential nutrients and were intended to be used in planning diets, for estimating the total needs of the population for energy and nutrients, and for judging the need for public health interventions such as food fortification.

is, within a US population based survey of elderly disabled women in which food insufficiency was examined to relation of three biochemical indicators of nutritional status¹² it was found that those who reported food insufficiency were three times more likely than food sufficient women to have iron deficiency anaemia (Klesges, Pahor, Shoor & Wan, 2001).

Canadian data also show that individuals who are food insecure are more likely to have multiple chronic conditions related to nutritional deficiencies, including heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure and food allergies (Che & Chen, 2001; Vozoris & Tarasuk, 2003). In addition to this, food insecurity has been linked to obesity within the United States (Townsend, Pearson, Love, Archterberg & Murphy, 2001); however, data are inconsistent in Canada regarding obesity and food insecurity (Tarasuk, 2004).

The costs of these chronic diseases both socially and economically to Canadian society are staggering. Indeed, overall diet related disease such as those noted above costs the Canadian economy \$6.3 billion dollars per year and Nova Scotian tax payers over \$389 million per year directly and an additional \$571 million dollars annually due to lost productivity (Coleman, 2002). These data further emphasize the immediate need to address food insecurity in Canada.

2.5.2 *Food Insecurity and Physical and Psychological Health Implications*

Although quantitative measurements related to direct physical health impact of food insecurity are currently lacking, several qualitative studies have documented valuable information on the self-reported health status of food insecure individuals (Che & Chen, 2001; McIntyre et al., 2000; Vozoris & Tarasuk, 2003). Vozoris and Tarasuk (2003) noted that food insufficient households had much higher odds of rating their health as poor or fair, of having restricted activity, poor functional health, suffering from multiple chronic conditions and having heart disease, diabetes, high blood pressure and having food allergies compared with those individuals who

¹² The biochemical measures under investigation included hemoglobin, serum albumin and total cholesterol.

resided in food secure households. Similarly, Hamelin, Beaudry & Habicht (2002) found that subjects who reported food shortages or unsuitable food consumption, both indicators of food insecurity, experienced physical side effects that manifested themselves as hunger pains, loss of appetite and episodes of fatigue and illness. Although the findings of these studies are valuable other variables related to inadequate income such as inadequate shelter experienced by the participants of these studies also result in the reporting of poor physical health status. To date no specific biochemical or physiological studies have been completed that directly link food insecurity to physical health issues.

In addition to physical health implications, food insecurity has also been found to impact the psychological health of individuals. Hamelin, Habicht and Beaudry (1999) found that food insecure individuals experienced negative psychological effects, such as feelings of being constrained to go against held norms and values present in their communities in Quebec at the time of the studies. These individuals also experienced enormous stress in the home, which manifested itself in a wide range of reactions, including decreased interest in food and nourishment and fear of losing custody of one's children (Hamelin, Habicht & Beaudry). Badun, Evers and Hooper (1995) also noted that almost half of the individuals reporting food insecurity reported experiencing anxiety because they were unable to buy food when they felt it was needed. In a subsequent study focused on the elderly, older women who were food insecure were at higher risk for experiencing depression (Klesges, Pahor, Shoor, & Wan, 2001). Story sharing workshops held in Nova Scotia in 2003 also indicated that food insecure mothers experienced much stress around having to provide food for themselves and their children (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004).

2.5.3 *Food Insecurity and Social Implications*

Food insecurity has been reported as having many negative social implications. Most concerning are the feelings of stigmatization reported by those who do not have the economic means to access the required amount of acceptable foods in socially acceptable manners (Hamelin, Habicht & Beaudry, 1999). Story

sharing workshops held with women involved in FRC/Ps in Nova Scotia identified that those who were food insecure often felt stigmatized and judged because of their inability to acquire the amount and types of food their families needed (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004). Studies have shown that having to access food banks to acquire foods to feed themselves and their families often left individuals feeling judged and socially excluded (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004; Hamelin, Beaudry & Habicht, 2002; McIntyre et al., 2001). Social exclusion is detrimental to a sense of social well being, equity and citizenship, all key aspects of social inclusion (Freiler, 2003). Such exclusion leads to individuals becoming increasingly removed from the larger society, and situates them outside the boundaries that define membership or inclusion into our society (Dechman, 2003). The repercussions of social exclusion are far reaching and have negative consequences to community life and society (Hamelin, Habicht & Beaudry, 1999).

2.6 Professional and societal discourse creating stigmatization

The stigmatization that accompanies the many aspects of food insecurity may stem from individual ideals, previously described as working within neoliberal policy frameworks, specifically those that put the onus to achieve food security and nutritional health on the individual (Travers, 1993). Current nutritional education material and approaches continue to be based on individualistic ideals that translate current scientific knowledge into recommendations to be disseminated to the broader society, which has been unable to address and take into consideration the complexity of issues that impact on nutritional intake (Achetburg & Miller, 2004). Although this type of approach has some merit in that it allows for recommendations to be put forth to the public that are intended to improve an individuals' health, such approaches to nutritional education assume that each individual has both the responsibilities and ability to follow such instructions. This manner of nutrition education inherently assumes that all prerequisites required for food security, such as access to transportation, and more influential, adequate income, are accessible by all. With almost 15% of the Canadian population (Ledrou & Gervais, 2005) and 17% of Nova

Scotians reporting food insecurity (Ledrou & Gervais) this is clearly not the case. It should also be noted that, although no specific studies were found that document nutrition knowledge, studies with parents from low income households in Quebec (Hamelin, Beaudry & Habicht, 2002) and story sharing workshops in Nova Scotia (AHPR, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004) indicate parents felt frustrated by not being able to purchase foods they knew were healthy clearly indicating that their nutrition knowledge was not the issue that needed to be addressed. Individualized approaches to addressing the nutritional inequities of food insecurity do little to address the underlying determinants of this situation most notably adequate income. Recognizing this, Travers (1997) has made strong arguments that nutrition professionals must move beyond educating individuals with regards to how to eat to be physically healthy. As such she noted that to make significant improvements in nutritional health and well being practitioners professionals must work to identify societal problems impacting certain populations and move to make change at the societal, rather than individual level change (Travers).

2.7 Strategies to Address Food Insecurity

Due to the multifaceted nature of food insecurity, many strategies have been established that begin to address its root causes and immediate consequences. MacRae (1994) first organized these strategies into three stages, efficiency, substitution and redesign stages, in the first discussion paper put out by the Toronto Food Policy Council. This paper aimed to outline an 'evolutionary series of policy initiatives designed to eliminate the need for food banks' (MacRae, p.3). Houghton (1998), through a survey of dietitians to identify food security initiatives in British Columbia, built on MacRae's work and further organized these strategies into similar categorizations of actions, collectively referring to these stages as the Food Security Continuum (Houghton). Kalina also made additional contributions to the Continuum and has renamed efficacy and substitution strategies, short term and capacity building strategies. More recently, the Nova Scotia Food Security Projects has subdivided the second stage of strategies into individual and community capacity skill building

strategies and capacity building actions and has renamed the last stage system change strategies (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2005).

2.7.1 *Short-term strategies*

Actions that fall into the first stage strategies are directed towards finding short-term solutions for addressing food insecurity (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2005). These strategies usually involve creating emergency food programs such as food banks, children's feeding programs and soup kitchens and are commonly referred to as "Band-Aid" measures (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC; Kalina, 2001).

Although well intended, these strategies are often ineffective in addressing food insecurity. An ethnographic study in Southern Ontario examining the function of extra governmental, charitable food assistance programs in relation to problems of unmet food related needs (Tarasuk & Eakin, 2003) suggested that those who accessed these venues did not acquire the types and amounts of food they needed. Food received through these venues was largely a symbolic gesture; and food banks, overall, lack the capacity to response to the food needs of those who sought assistance (Tarasuk & Eakin). Tarasuk and Eakin concluded that because the distribution of food assistance did not meet the true needs of the client, the clients' needs were made invisible. It was felt that this invisibility of the realities of food insecurity resulted in little initiative for communities and governments to take true and substantive action to address the underlying issues of food insecurity (Tarasuk & Eakin).

Several experts agree with Tarasuk and Eakin's (2003) findings that charitable food assistance programs, such as food banks and children's feeding programs, do little to address and improve the food insecurity experienced by the most vulnerable populations (DC, 2005; Davis & Tarasuk, 1994; Dayle, McIntyre & Raine-Travers, 2000; McIntyre, Travers & Dayle, 1999; Riches, 1986; 1997; Tarasuk & MacLean, 1990; Williams, McIntyre, Dayle & Raine, 2003). These types of initiatives, unknowing or not, are working to perpetuate rather than reduce the inequities they are intended to alleviate (DC; Davis & Tarasuk; Dayle, McIntyre & Raine-Travers; Riches, 1986; 1997; Tarasuk & MacLean).

2.7.2 *Individual and Community Skill Building Strategies*

Actions that fall within this stage move beyond looking for quick responses to hunger and food insecurity and focus more on individual capacity building, by improving individuals' skills to address the issue (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC; Kalina, 2001). Examples of strategies that fall within this section include community gardens and kitchens, which serves to increase awareness and mobilize communities (AHPRC & NSNC, 2003). The DC position paper (2005, p. 8-9) also identifies these types of programs as providing an 'alternative to the charity model, providing healthier, better quality food and preserving participants dignity by requiring their participation, time and often some investment of financial resources'. A Canadian study showed that these types of initiatives provide benefits beyond food; they include social support and interaction (Tarasuk & Reynolds, 1999). Overall, however, these programs do not address the root problems of food insecurity, such as poverty. Instead they retain a focus on accessing food much like that of short-term relief strategies (Power, 1999). Furthermore, by charging participation fees, some of these programs exclude those most in need (Tarasuk & Reynolds).

2.7.3 *Capacity Building*

Capacity building strategies address food insecurity through a process with an underlying goal of implementing policies and systems that support community health and well being (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2005). These approaches are built on the assumption that bringing those affected by an issue and those who can have an ability to influence the issue to identify and define the issue is an effective way to address the issue. One of the main goals of this type of strategy is to mobilize communities and/or individuals 'to organize and participate in influencing and developing public policy through system change strategies' (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2005p. 17). The Participatory Food Costing Projects in Nova Scotia, through its development and support of a workbook to build capacities within communities to take action to

address food insecurity is one example of a capacity building strategy (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2005). The project that supported the development of the workbook also provided supports to trains community champions within Nova Scotia to use the workbook and guide their communities to identify actions to address food insecurity. Unlike the previous strategies mentioned, capacity building strategies are more effective in making sustainable improvements to food security (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC).

2.7.4 *System Change Strategies*

System change strategies move beyond dealing with the issue of food insecurity within our current social structures by trying to change structures, most notably public policies and programs that are impeding certain segments of our population from being food secure (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2005). Public policies are ‘an identifiable course of action hammered out through the political arena though debate and compromise to maximize the satisfaction of relevant interests...’ (Seidl, 1999). Such policies have a great deal of influence over the population at which they are aimed (Danahar & Kato, 1995) and often encompass the values and beliefs of a society, or at least those that hold power within a society (Dodd & Boyd, 2000; Smith, 1987). Thus, in order to change policy agendas or to make a real difference, many individuals must work together to change the underlying values and beliefs, and hence society ideologies.

Changing public policies often take a great deal of time, energy and persistence (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2005). This is due in part to the ideological barriers that must be over come to be successful in the process. Other reasons for this can be attributed to the complexity of making and changing policies. Traditionally elected officials, other bureaucrats and specific members of the public are the primary individuals involved in the process, while those most affected by an issue are excluded(Dodd & Boyd, 2000). Public policies are also bound by regulations that take large amounts of time and effort, and most importantly political will, to change.

2.7.4.1 *Levels of system change strategies*

Whitehead, Burstrom and Diderichsen (2000) describe three levels of policy, or system, change that can work to address social inequities. The first level of policy change influences the social position individuals have within a society; the second level aims to influence exposure to health hazards faced by people in different social positions; and the third level aims to influence the effect of being exposed to a hazardous factor [due to the social position] (Whitehead, Burstrom & Diderichsen). Although a discussion of the manners in which these policy changes can be accomplished is beyond the scope of this section, it must be acknowledged that a key driving force involved in gaining interest of these policy makers is strong public support for a particular policy change or implementation (Dahaner & Kato, 1995), which in itself can be very difficult to garner. It has also been noted that identifying a champion, such as someone who already has some power in the policy making process, is an important step to raising awareness of an issue (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2005). However, this also takes much work and time.

The importance of including those most affected by an issue in all levels of system change cannot be understated. If those dealing with the realities of situations, such as food insecurity, are not able to voice their opinions or lived experiences throughout the policy making process, there is a strong possibility that the policy will not meet their real needs (Smith, 1987; Travers, 1997). Indeed, Travers contends that because social structures, such as the barriers that exist to healthy eating, are recreated, reproduced and transformed by the interplay of people and social structures, those who are affected by the issue must be included in addressing these barriers if social structures are to be recreated and transformed to address and ‘fix’ these problems. As such, it is vital that those who experience food insecurity be present at the policy table so that policies that affect them will work to improve rather than hinder their level of food security.

Although the process of including those most affected by food insecurity is very time consuming, such strategies have the greatest potential of enacting long-term improvements to the state of food insecurity. As a result, these strategies are the most effective way to address poverty, food security and their health consequences

(Federal, Provincial, Territorial Advisory Committee on Population Health, 1999; Canadian Public Health Association, 1997; National Forum on health Canada Health Action, 1997 as cited in Reutter, Harrison & Neufeld, 2002). One example of a systems level strategy involves that being undertaken by the Nova Scotia Food Security Projects. Over the last four years this project has undertaken a number of different, interrelated projects, working to involve those who are affected by the issue of food insecurity as well as practitioners and policy makers with the insight and power to assist in making systems level changes (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2005; 2004; AHPRC & NSNC, 2003). Although the work of this project is still continuing, and their overall goal of achieving food security for all in Nova Scotia is far from achieved, several small success have been realized. These include the recognition of their projects by the current provincial Conservative government (PC Nova Scotia, 2003) and a one-year funding commitment to support food costing in Nova Scotia in 2004/2005 and the creation of a “Building the Case” document that will encourage provincial level policy changes to support food security (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2005). Although this project will not achieve quick results, the work is instrumental in reshaping the context of Nova Scotia society to build, rather than impede, food security.

2.8 Summary

The literature review began with a discussion of food security and insecurity and their determinants. Income was identified as the main factor influencing food insecurity in this country, at least from a food access lens. As such, issues related to poverty, specifically related to women, were discussed. One of the contributors to the level of poverty in this country, the demise of the welfare system, was discussed next, followed by an identification of the societal ideologies, namely, neoliberalism, individualism and globalization, that are contributing to this demise of the welfare system. Coping strategies utilized by food insecurity were identified next along with the health implications of food insecurity and the impact of professional discourse on food insecurity. Finally, strategies for addressing food insecurity, along with their

merits, were identified and discussed. Chapter 3 will move beyond the literature and work to describe the theoretical framework and methods used to structure this study.

3 CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter has two main sections. The first section focuses on describing the theoretical framework and methodology that guided this study. Specifically, the study was based on the critical theoretical paradigm and utilized Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and key critical theory concepts to situate the data collection and analysis process. Institutional ethnography (IE) was used as the methodological underpinning of this study. The second section of this chapter will review the methods undertaken to complete the data collection and analyses for this thesis.

3.1 Theoretical framework and methodology

3.1.1 *Theoretical framework*

This research has been guided by the *critical theoretical paradigm*, which is ontologically based on *historical realism* (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This means that it takes the position that reality is shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender factors and that through time this reality becomes crystallized into a series of "facts" or structures that are taken as real (Guba & Lincoln). When these facts are taken as real truths, even when perhaps they are not in respect to that individual's everyday experience, this marks the development of a 'false consciousness' (Curran & Takata, 2003).

As outlined by Kincheloe and McLaren (1994, pp-139-140), individuals who use the lens of critical theoretical paradigm in their research accept certain basic assumptions and attempt to use their work as a form of social or cultural criticism, which aims to critically examine current social and culture trends and how they interact. First, the *critical theoretical paradigm* enacts an epistemology that is both *transactional*, in its assumption that the researcher and researched are interactively linked, and subjective, in that reality is perceived from the researched's perspective (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Thus, unlike the positivist paradigm, which assumes that the

researcher is the knower and the researched is an entity from which to study and draw knowledge that will translate into hard and fast facts, the critical theoretical paradigm takes the position that knowledge is shaped through the dialogue between the researcher and researched. As such, the knowledge drawn from research based on this paradigm is dependent on the actual interaction and relationship between the researcher and researched and as such will not be the same, or perhaps even similar, if two different individuals were to take their place and discuss the same issues (Guba & Lincoln).

The transactional nature of the paradigm results in this methodology being *dialogic*, meaning the inquiry requires dialogue between the researcher and the researched (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Within this dialogue, knowledge is not just reported, it emerges through the interaction between the researched and researcher. The quality of this critical theoretical paradigm would then limit the number of approaches to research, as an approach involving continual dialogue is key. Further, the dialogical quality of this paradigm leads to the assumption that the language shared between the researcher and researched, is central to the formation of subjectivity (Guba & Lincoln). Therefore, the researcher must also scrutinize and understand the meaning of the language used by the researched with regard to her particular situation at the particular time in history that the research is taking place. Finally, the critical theoretical paradigm is also *dialectic* or enlightening such that through the dialogue it is hoped that the researched will eventually recognize the oppressions they are under and as a result would be able to transform their ignorance into informed consciousness (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Overall, the basic assumptions of this paradigm are valuable to guiding this research and ensuring that the actual lived experiences of the single mothers who are food insecure are captured and interpreted in a manner that does not subjugate their voices. This allows for the identification of the social relations they enter that coordinate their food insecurity.

3.1.1.1 *Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory*

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) also known as the Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model or Framework, assisted in guiding

this project and organizing the analyses and interpretation of the collected data. The basic underlying principles of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory mesh well with the principles of the critical theoretical paradigm, in that this theory allows for the explication of the various social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender factors that shape an individual's reality.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems' theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) provided a framework for a description of relationships that the participants of this study were involved with throughout the various environments they were exposed to and the forces that shape these relationships. This framework helped to delineate the levels of relationships in the individual's ecosystem by showing the interactions between relationships at different levels. As a means to fully understand how this theory fits with a study situated in the critical theoretical paradigm, a brief description of this framework is given below. For the purposes of this description, this individual will be a low income food insecure single mother.

The *microsystem* is the layer of the ecosystem closest to the individual and contains structures that the individual has the most directed and knowable relationship. The microsystem encompasses the relations that the mother has with her immediate surroundings, such as her children, friends, food bank volunteers, or her IA caseworker. At this level, relationships are dialogical and interdependent as these individuals and structures affect the mother in her immediate environment and the mother in turn influences these individuals and structures.

The *mesosystem* is the layer of the ecosystem that provides the connection between the structures in the mothers' microsystem (Berk, 2000 as cited in Paquett & Ryan, 2000). Meslon (1980, p. 21) noted that the "elements of a specific place in which individuals engage in specific activities as part of their roles during specified times are integral to the notion of the *microsystem*". Examples of these connections would be between those mother's children and her caseworker, friends or other family members.

The *exosystem* is the layer of the ecosystem that defines the larger social system in which the mother does not directly function. The structures at this layer impact the mother by interacting with some structure in her microsystem. The mother

may not be directly involved in this level, but she does feel the positive or negative forces involved with interaction with her own system. Relations at this level, although not normally visible to the individual they affect, have a great deal of regulatory influence and control over the lives of the mother in that they most often shape the mothers' lives, and choices available to them. i.e. IA and transportation policies.

The *macrosystem* is the layer containing societal values, customs, laws, ideologies, gender beliefs, class structures etc. The effect of the larger principles defined by the macrosystem has an overarching influence throughout the interactions of all other layers. Indeed, these relations are embedded in all other layers and are rendered visible through the actions of the individual in their everyday world. For example, if societal ideologies dictate that a parent is solely responsible for the health and well being of a child then the society in question is more likely to cut funding to social programs that assist parents or address societal inequities that perpetuate the situation.

It must be noted that these different systems of relations do not act independent of each other. As noted by Melson (1980) the relations are interdependent insomuch as when a relation at one level changes other relations within the ecosystem are affected as well.

(As adapted from Paquette & Ryan, 2000)

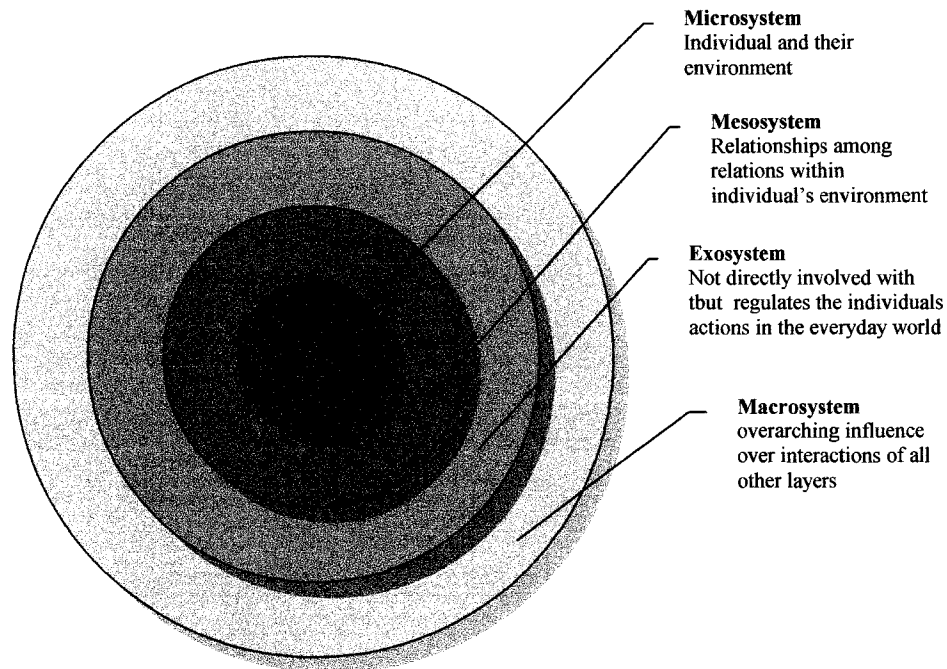


Figure 3-1 Bronfenbrenner's' Ecological Framework

3.1.1.2 *Social Organization, Relations, and Forces*

As Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System's theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) explains, people enter into social relations with others on many different levels. These relations can occur between two people who are situated in the same environment, or an individual and a structure that are not intimately linked in any manner, such as the relationship between an individual and someone or some structure in her exosystem. The philosophies of the critical paradigm assume that there is a dialogical interdependence between the subject/object, agency/structure. This is the basis point of the explanation for the conceptual frame that will guide this research project. *Social organizations* result from social relations people enter into: social organization influence the *social relations* people enter into. It is the relation as process that connects people in the social world. As theorized by Foucault (McHoul & Grace, 1994) and Smith (1987), these social relations are guided by an individual's knowledge, while their knowledge is a construct of their social relations and the

reality they live. Many social forces that exist within the macrosystem in *Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model* (Bronfenbrenner), such as the dominant ideologies of neoliberalism, shape this knowledge.

3.1.1.3 *The Ruling Apparatus*

Social forces, such as ideologies, knowingly or not, often work to benefit the socially and economically powerful in our society, such people as business leaders and bureaucrats (Smith, 1987). These individuals are referred to as *the ruling apparatus* (Smith). The power of this ruling apparatus was described by Smith (p-3) as “the complex organized practices including government, law, business, and financial management, professional organization and education institutions as well as discourses in text that interpenetrate the multiple sites of power.” The ruling apparatus within North American society is strongly linked to capitalism, meaning that the economically prosperous have more ruling strength (Smith). As such, it should not come as a surprise that neoliberal individualistic based ideologies, aimed at concurrently decreasing taxes and social spending (trends that are more beneficial for the rich than the poor), are currently dominating and shaping social policy frameworks (Carol & Shaw, 2001; Treanor, 2003). Looking at *Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory* (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), the ruling apparatus is situated primarily in the exo and macrosystem: it is from this place that this power structure works to regulate the lives of the mothers.

3.1.1.4 *The Problematic and Line of Fault*

The *line of fault* is a term coined by Smith (1987) and refers to the break point between prevailing ideologies of society and the actual everyday experiences of the “less powerful” or the subordinate (Smith). It is the actual rupture point between what an individual, such as women who are food insecure, experiences, feels, and deals with in their day-to-day life and what society “tells them” they should know or feeling. As a result of this rupture, women who are food insecure most likely have two competing forces working in their lives, those that come from their own local experiences and those that are told to them by extra local forces. Unfortunately, the local experiences are often suppressed and hidden so that those social forces from the extra local, mediated by ruling relations, often take president and dominate. The

resultant experiences and feelings that are lost within this line of fault is what are referred to as the *problematic*. That is, those experiences that do not get expressed, heard or dealt with because of the gap between the extra local forces and the women's real life experiences fall into this fault line, and get lost there. This has great epistemological consequences in that the loss of these experiences ensures that policies, programs, academic works and general information do not consider the everyday lives and experiences of the less powerful (Smith). This then works to create an everyday world, in this case for the women who are food insecure that is disjointed: problematic.

3.1.2 *Methodology: Institutional Ethnography*

As a means to ensure that the lived experiences of single mothers on IA can be heard as they are, this research will employ the qualitative research methodology of IE (Campbell & Gregor, 2002; Smith, 1987) to guide the exploration of social organization as it relates to the food insecurity of the mothers. This methodology was chosen because of its congruency with the theoretical framework. According to Smith (1990), the methodologies of IE do not look to identify the "truth", but rather "to know more about how things work, how our world is put together and how things happen to us as they do" (p-34). Thus, like the underpinnings of critical theoretical paradigm this methodology holds that our worlds are complex and fluid and are as a result of the interplay of many forces and relations. Indeed, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) then provides a useful framework for understanding the world that is explored using Smiths' IE methodology.

Institutional Ethnography also assumes it is the individual's working knowledge of her or his everyday world that provides the beginning of an inquiry (Smith, 1987). This then guides the inquiry to an analysis of how experiences enter a participant into social relations with others outside of her or his immediate environment (Travers, 1996). Again, IE, like the critical theoretical paradigm, is based on dialogical interplay between the researcher and researched. IE also serves to highlight the connections among the contexts and happenings of an individual's

everyday life, professional practice, and policymaking (Syracuse University Sociology Department, 2001).

3.2 Design

As noted by Campbell and Gregor (2002) explication is the analytical core of the research process in institutional ethnography. For this to occur successfully the researcher must start in the local setting and collect information about the everyday world of those experiencing the identified problematic. They then must go beyond what can be known in any local setting and discover how trans-local relations, or those beyond the individuals' micro and mesosystems, work to organize the everyday world of those individuals in question (Campbell & Gregor).

3.2.1 *Stage 1: Exploring the Local*

3.2.1.1 *Becoming Situated in the Local*

The purpose of this research was to explicate the local ruling relations organizing the food insecurity of single mothers who were food insecure in NS. As a means to begin to situate this research in the local setting and facilitate the recruitment of participants, I volunteered at a local Halifax Family Resource Centre (FRC) four hours, twice a week for three months. Although volunteering at the FRC did not provide me the opportunity to experience the everyday world of the mothers, it did allow me to become more attuned to the lives of the mothers whom I sought to interview and to recruit participants to participate in this study. Unfortunately, the scope of this Masters project, did not permit me to become submersed in the lives of the mothers' day to day activities and complete participant observations for this project, a key process often part of IE research (Campbell & Gregor, 2002).

Gaining access to the FRC. As the researcher, I recognized that careful work had to be undertaken in negotiating access to the FRC for this project. Mishandling the process of entry into such a facility could have greatly compromised the likelihood of access to the site and the collection of quality data (Murphy, Speigal & Kinmonth, 1992). To begin this process, my advisor and other key individuals were consulted during the process of choosing an FRC in which to volunteer. The FRC to be included in this project was chosen because of my thesis advisors' previous work

with the program through her research projects. After the FRC to be included in this project was chosen, my thesis advisor made initial contact to explain my project and ask if this project was something the FRC might be interested in. I then contacted the Director, explained the details of this project and arranged to meet with her to discuss questions and concerns she had regarding the project. During the meeting, I provided her with a written description of the project, discussed the details of the project, and obtained feedback regarding what I had proposed. We also discussed the volunteer opportunities available through the FRC. I obtained verbal consent to volunteer at the FRC and use the FRC as the primary area for recruiting participants for this project. We also agreed that all individuals at the FRC, both staff and participants, would be made aware of why I was volunteering and the details of the project. This was done both verbally and through recruitment posters (see Appendix A) placed around the FRC outlining my project and clearly identifying myself as the primary researcher.

Volunteer experience. Through my volunteer experience I undertook several different tasks; however, the primary task I assisted with was childcare. The childcare was mainly for parents who were taking part in programs that were held on the FRC. During certain weeks I had extended volunteer hours. Mainly, this was a result of a lack of childcare providers at the FRC.

Although I was not interacting directly with the mothers on a continual basis while I volunteered, through this experience I became acquainted with many individuals at the FRC. This made the recruitment process for this project much easier and, I believe, created a more comfortable environment during the interviews. This was due in part to having met several of the mothers at the FRC before they were recruited for the project.

3.2.1.2 *Development of Interview Guide and Interviews with Mothers*

Development of interview guide. An interview guide (Appendix B), aimed at explicating the every work of feeding undertaken by the mothers. This guide was developed based on those outlined by Travers (1993), who had developed questions structured to allow her entry into the everyday world of feeding as experienced by the women in her study. This approach was equally useful in allowing me to explicate the everyday dealings of food insecurity, through investigation into the work of

feeding, as experienced by the mothers involved in this study. The questions asked in the interview centred on the mothers' daily activities around buying and preparing food. Additional demographic data was collected on the mothers' education level, age, main activities and sources of income.

After the interview guide was drafted, it was validated through face validity. My thesis committee reviewed the interview guide to ensure it met the goals of this project and that the questions were clear and concise. A pilot interview was also held with a mother who was not a member of the chosen FRC, but who met all the inclusion criteria. My thesis advisor identified the mother to be included in the pilot through her current involvement with FRCs in NS. The mother was given a full verbal and written description of the study prior to the interview and completed a consent form. This pilot interview aimed to ensure the questions in the interview guide were meeting the objectives of the study and allowed me to become comfortable in the interviewer role. The interview guide was finalized after the pilot. Although the mother was not from the identified FRC, because she met all other inclusion criteria, in that she was a single thirty eight year old mother on IA, with three children, the data collected from her interview was used in the project after approval from the MSVU University Research Ethics Board (UREB).

Subject selection. In order to be situated in the local setting I needed to begin in the everyday world of those who were experiencing the problematic, in this case, single mothers experiencing food insecurity. The primary tool used to accomplish this was in-depth face-to-face interviews with the mothers. Overall, seven interviews were completed; six with mothers from the FRC and one as a pilot interview as described previously, with a mother who did not attend the FRC.

Purposive sampling techniques were used to select the mothers for the interviews. This sampling technique allows the researcher to identify participants with certain characteristics, experiences, or behaviours that represent one or more perspectives deemed relevant to the research goals (Shepherd & Achterberg, 1992). The criteria for the mothers to be included in this study were that they had to be over the age of eighteen years and have at least one child under the age of 18 years who relied on them as their primary caregiver. It was also required that the mothers'

marital status be single. This specific marital status distinction was made because the literature highlights that single mothers are one of the groups most vulnerable to experiencing food insecurity (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004; Che & Chen, 2001; Jacob-Starkey, Gray-Donald, Kuhnlein, 1999; McIntyre, Connor, Warren, 2000; Tarasuk & Davis, 1996; Tarasuk & MacLean, 1990). The mothers also had to be clients of the IA program and consider themselves the main food managers of their households. In other words, they were low income and the individuals most responsible for procuring and preparing foods for themselves and their families.

Several recruitment methods were utilized for this project. As noted previously, posters were displayed throughout the FRC during the recruitment phase. Although this ensured FRC clients were aware of the project, no FRC clients contacted me directly as a result of seeing these posters. Instead, an employee of the FRC, who worked directly with the mothers, facilitated the majority of the recruitment. This employee, who had been made aware of all aspects of the project when I began volunteering, contacted the mothers directly, explained the details of the project and asked if they were interested in participating. If the mother agreed be contacted to discuss her participation in the research, the employee provided me with the mother's contact information. Following this, I contacted the mother, introduced myself, described the project, including all the benefits and risks of being involved, and discussed the compensation that they would receive for taking part in the project, which was a twenty-five dollar honorarium. If the mother agreed to participate, a time and place was scheduled for an interview with the participant.

Interview procedure/Initial data analysis. At the beginning of each interview an informed consent form was reviewed with each mother (see Appendix D). To aid in this process, each mother was given her own written copy of the informed consent, which I then read to her to ensure it was thoroughly understood and to address any literacy issues that may have been present. Following this, the mothers were asked if they had any questions or if further clarification or explanation regarding the project was necessary. If there were no concerns voiced and the mother agreed to participate, she was asked to sign the informed consent form and to return it to me. The mother

was provided with a copy of the interview guide and the informed consent for her own records.

Screening questions, which aimed to document and ensure participants met the inclusion criteria for this project (see Appendix C), were asked prior to the commencement of the interview. Semi structured, in-depth, face-to-face qualitative interviews were used to gather information from the mothers. Qualitative interviews begin with the assumptions that the views of other individuals are “meaningful, knowable and able to be explicit” (Patton, 2002 p- 341). Therefore, the semi-structured interviews allowed for the exploration the mother’s everyday experiences with procuring and preparing food for themselves and their families, which was the first step in mapping the social relations organizing food insecurity. As noted by DeVault & McCoy (2002), IE interviews are primarily thought of as a process of “talking to people” (p-757). Therefore, care was taken to ensure the interview guide allowed for dialogue and for similar open-ended questions to be asked at each interview. However, the questions did evolve slightly throughout the process of conducting the interviews. This aspect of the interview guide was important for the IE process because it has been recognized by Smith (Devault & McCoy, 2002) that the questions of a subsequent interviews should be based on the responses of previous interviews in the researcher’s attempt to determine ‘how things work’.

Each interview was tape-recorded after written consent was provided by the mother. During each interview, I also took notes of the mother’s responses. Following each interview, further notes and reflections were recorded and the tapes were checked for quality and subsequently transcribed in full by a transcriber. After each transcription was completed and reviewed for clarity, initial analysis was performed. Therefore, data analysis commenced while data collection was still occurring. This worked to ensure the interview questions built upon the responses of the previous mothers as the research progressed. Overall, this portion of the data collection phase occurred between January and March 2004. Each interview took between thirty minutes and one and one half hour to complete.

Analysis of mother’s interviews. In order to identify the relations impacting on the mothers’ food insecurity the data from the mothers’ interviews were initially

analyzed using a process referred to as thematic or content analysis (Janesick, 1994; Shepard & Archterberg, 1992); in other words, the transcripts from these interviews were reviewed to draw out consistencies and inconsistencies. As suggested by Pope and Mays (1995), during analysis it is important not to impose prior categories and concepts, or deductive coding, from the researchers' own professional knowledge. With this in mind, care was taken to use inductive coding to develop categories and themes from the transcripts. It was at this stage that it was determined there was no inherent differences between the experiences of the mother who participated in the pilot interview and the other mothers involved in this study.

After the initial coding scheme was developed, I worked back and forth among the data to verify the placement of the data into the themes and developed theoretical suggestions about the relationship between the themes (Patton, 2002). The process of data analysis continued until data analysis was complete. My thesis committee reviewed the initial coding scheme and analysis of the mother's interviews as a method of peer review. The process of member checking also facilitated a peer review process of my analysis. To complete the member checking the mothers were sent the full transcripts and a short analysis of the interviews. A few weeks later I telephoned each mother to verify they had received the transcript and that no changes were required. Five of the seven mothers completed this process.

Data management. In order to efficiently code and organize the themes and key ideas of the transcription of the interviews, the qualitative data management program *NUD*IST QSR N6 Qualitative Data Analysis* © (QSR International, 2002) was utilized. DeVault and McCoy (2002, p. 768-769) warned against using computers in IE as it most often makes the process more difficult. However, I found it a useful means to allow me to begin to make sense of the data, realizing, however, that the program's use was limited to the management of data and organization of my thoughts on the interviews.

3.2.1.3 *Summary of Mothers Interviews*

Unlike other methodologies, IE is materialist and empirical. That is, to make something of the data in IE, researchers go back to the field to discover actual, not theoretical, connections (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). Therefore, although coding the

data and finding themes were vital in identifying trans local ruling relations organizing the mothers' food insecurity, it was not the overall goal of this project. What was done with the results of this coding was what was important. To be true to IE methodology, the findings from the mothers' interviews, the identified relations that were organizing their food insecurity, needed to be used to go forward to explore how these relations organized their food insecurity. These findings were then built back into the analytic account (Campbell & Gregor). To try to make sense of this process I will review, step-by-step, how I analyzed and applied the mothers' experiences to the subsequent stages of data collection, analysis and interpretation in the next sections.

3.2.2 Continuation of the Mapping—Explicating the Local

After identifying ruling relations organizing the mothers' food insecurity further exploration was required to determine how these relations were working to organize food insecurity for this group. Through the analysis of the interviews, many factors were noted as impacting on the food insecurity of the mothers. However, the scope of this project was limited to allowing for the investigation of the major ruling relations. The most influential relationship identified through the analysis of the mothers' interviews was income, or the lack thereof. Since the mothers' major source of income was received from the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services' IA Program and Revenue Canada's CCTB Program these programs became the focus of the next stage of this project.

This next step consisted of a series of three interviews with individuals from the Department of Community Service's IA Program. The interviews were based on questions that arose through the analysis of the mothers' interviews and were aimed at examining the IA program, how it interlinked with the CCTB program and how both worked to organize the food insecurity in the mothers' lives. This stage of the research also involved a detailed review of the Department of Community Service's Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) Policy Manual (Department of Community Services, 2005). Interviews were not held with individuals involved in

the CCTB program directly because the time frame for this project did not allow for this. However, because the CCTB and IA programs interlink, questions regarding the CCTB program were asked to the IA employees regarding this program. In addition, relevant data regarding this program was gleaned from the National Child Benefit (2005) website and progress report (2003).

3.2.2.1 *Stage 2: Interviews with IA Employees*

Subject selection. Purposive sampling methods were again used to identify individuals for interviews in Stage 2 of this study. My thesis advisor, who had worked closely with the Department of Community Service's IA program and employees from this department through her role as Principal Investigator of the Nova Scotia Participatory Food Security Projects, facilitated gaining access to IA employees for this set of interviews. To initiate the interview process, a meeting was arranged between myself, my thesis advisor, and two employees from the IA program in late July 2004 to discuss the purpose of my project and what would be required from the IA employees. During this meeting the IA employees were given a detailed description of the project and the questions that were to be asked during the interviews. The employees were also able to provide feedback on the project and clarify any questions they had. From this meeting, three Department of Community Services IA employees, who worked in the head office and worked directly with the IA policy, agreed to take part in this project. It was at this time that the three interviews were scheduled.

The interview guide for the IA employees. As noted previously, an interview guide was created for Department of Community Service's IA employees (see Appendix E) after the analysis of the mothers' interviews. The questions focused on examining specific components of the IA program affecting the mothers' food insecurity, how this program interlinked with the CCTB program, and how both worked to organize the food insecurity in the mothers' lives. Due to this, changes needed to be made to the initial interview guide. Therefore, further approval was needed from MSVU UREB for this guide. This approval was gained in June 2004.

The overall goal of these interviews was to allow me to further map out how these two programs worked to organize the food insecurity in the lives of the mothers

who were included in this project. As before, semi-structured, in-depth, face-to-face interviews were used to gather information from the identified IA employees. The interview guide ensured that similar open-ended questions were asked at each interview. Once more, however, the questions evolved to some degree throughout the interviewing processes; specifically, the questions of subsequent interviews were based on the responses of previous interviews. The interview guide was validated through face validity using the techniques used to validate the mothers' interview guide. No pilot interview was held. The interviews took place during August and September 2004 and each interview took between fifty minutes and one and one half-hour to complete.

Interview procedure for IA employees. At the commencement of each interview, an informed consent form was reviewed with each of the IA employees (see Appendix F). To aid in this process, each employee was given their own written copy of the informed consent and I read it aloud to ensure it was thoroughly understood and to address any literacy issues. Following this, the employees were asked if they had any questions or if further clarification or explanation of the project was necessary. If there were no concerns voiced and the employees agreed to participate, they were asked to sign the informed consent form and to return it to me. Each employee was provided with a copy of the interview guide and consent form for her/his own records.

Each interview was tape-recorded after receiving written consent from the IA employee. During each interview notes of the employee's responses were taken. Following each interview, further notes and reflections were recorded and the tapes were checked for quality and subsequently transcribed in full by a transcriber. After each transcription was completed, initial analysis was performed on the interviews. Again, data analysis commenced while data collection was still occurring. This helped to ensure the questions for the employees were built upon the responses of the previous employees.

Analysis of IA employee interviews. Data analysis of the IA interviews was completed through thematic analysis (Janesick, 1994; Shepard & Archterberg, 1992) using the same methods used for the mothers interviews described earlier.

Data management. As with the mother's interviews, the process of data analysis started at the first interview and continued until data analysis was completed. NUD*IST QSR N6 © (QSR International, 2002) was utilized to aid in management of the data.

3.2.3 *Stage 3: Method of Choosing Text to be Analyzed*

After initial analysis of the interviews with the mothers and during the interviews with the IA employees, several documents were identified as being key in playing a part in the organization of the mothers' food insecurity. The primary document chosen for review was the ESIA policy manual (Department of Community Services, 2005), and the act and regulations guiding the policy manual. Literature around the CCTB was also reviewed to give further insight into this program. The main documents included in this review included The National Child Benefit Progress Report: 2002 (2003) and literature contained on the federal/provincial/territorial Web site (National Child Benefit, 2004). In addition, supplemental literature (AHRPC, FRC/P, NSNC, 2004; Community Advocates Network, 2003; McIntyre et al., 2001; Reed, 2004; Williams et al., in press), which had recently reviewed the IA program, was also utilized as a means to clarify questions related to the program. The mothers' responses guided the analysis of these documents in that the documents were examined to further understand how they worked to organize the lives of the mothers. Analysis of these documents was combined with the analysis of the IA employees interviews to determine how these programs worked to organized the mothers' food insecurity, and in addition, how certain text were used to organize the programs. Furthermore, the interviews were important in the identification of the other layers of ruling relations that worked to organize the mothers' food insecurity. More specifically, reading and analyzing the wording, syntax and presentation of these documents also allowed for the identification of ideological forces and discourse utilized in the creation of these documents.

Additional data collection methods. To further assist in the documentation of the overall process of data collection used for this project, I kept a reflective journal containing the significant happenings during the study. This journal included a personal diary for reflection of the events that took place and any other pertinent information, such as decisions on key design issues, or related topics. Patton (2002) recognized that journaling is an effective way to reflect on each aspect of a study.

3.2.3.1 *Overall data analysis*

Although the data collection and analysis for this project took place in different segments, each phase built upon the other with the ultimate goal of mapping, or at least the initial stages of mapping, the social organization of the mother's food insecurity. Although theory guided this project, the links that were identified through the mapping process were real and were only identified through support from the data. As noted by Campbell and Gregor (2002) the data have to support the links and the analysis must thoroughly explain to the readers where the links existed and how they, in this case, worked to organize food insecurity in the everyday lives of the mothers who were interviewed. Therefore, it was not good enough just to state that there was a link; specific data had to be found and presented that supported this, as well as explain how this link existed and how it worked to organize the lives of the mothers.

As noted earlier, the process of analysis began with the first interview. After all the interviews were completed and the identified texts were reviewed, the next step was to put it all together. Unlike other methodologies, there is little literature available to guide a beginning researcher with regards to how one should go about this process. The one suggestion that was levied by Campbell and Gregor (2002) was to begin telling the story, piecing it together, and asking questions. So this is where the data analysis began. I started with writing the accounts of the mothers and how food insecurity existed in their daily lives. Following this, I asked the question: What is happening? Why? Who or what is really influencing what is involved? From the beginning of the data collection, I attempted to explain how this organization was occurring in a number of ways. I quickly realized that income, or more concretely money, was one of the major factors guiding the organization. This led to the

identification of IA and CCTB programs as the key relations in the ecosystem that had worked to organize the mothers' food insecurity. The questions asked to the IA employees assisted me in understanding how the program worked, and the factors working to organize the program itself. Reviewing the documents allowed for further refinement of the questions for the IA employees and fill in blank spots that existed in the map. However, the process of actually putting it all together, trying to make sense of it and explicate the links was quite difficult. In the end, telling the story and filling in the blank spots highlighted by other reviewers and myself was the main process used to create the map.

3.2.4 *Quality of the Data*

Within the qualitative research world, the importance of establishing trustworthiness of qualitative data has been clearly established. In order to establish the trustworthiness of the study, researchers must take steps to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Patton, 2002 p-70). As noted by Campbell and Gregor (2002, p.90) unlike other qualitative methodologies,

...the purpose of IE is not to give evidential weight to specific views; an institutional ethnographer attempts to explicate how the local settings, including local understandings and explanations, are brought into being. That is, getting to an account that explicates the social relations of the setting is what an IE account is about.

While establishing the quality of the data is important, how the data are put together attempts to 'show' why things are happening in the local setting the way they are, and is the ultimate goal of the research. Nonetheless, establishing the quality of the pieces of this project is important to ensuring the quality of the finished product, the map.

3.2.4.1 *Credibility*

Creswell (1998) described credibility in qualitative research as the extent to which the research's interpretations of the participants' subjective realities are accurate. Creswell offers a set of procedures that are most commonly used to

establish the elements of credibility, such as prolonged engagement at the site, member checks and peer review. Although I spent three months at the FRC in question, it cannot be said I spent had 'prolonged engagement' by volunteering at the FRC. At the very least, however, I believe it can be stated that this experience sensitized me to the issues experienced by the mothers. Also, my prior experiencing working with the issue of food insecurity allowed me some level of insight into these experience, albeit, as an outsider.

Member checking was completed during the course of this project. Each mother took part in a member checking process. Permission to contact the mothers for the member checking was obtained during the initial interviews. The mothers were contacted and their mailing addresses obtained. The mothers were then sent the transcript and the summary/analysis of the interview as a means to complete a member check. Two weeks later the mothers were called to ensure they received their packages. The mothers were asked if they had time to review the documents. If they had received and reviewed it, the member checking process continued. If not, the mothers were asked when the best time would be to contact them. To address literacy issues, I briefly reviewed the summary/analysis with the mothers on the phone. The mothers were then asked if they had any comments or concerns with the transcript and/or the summary/analysis document. Five of the seven mothers took part in this process. One mother could not be reached after the interview because her phone had been disconnected and another mother had lost the key to her mailbox and was unable to access her mail.

The IA employees took part in a similar member checking process. The transcripts and summary/initial analysis of the interviews were mailed out to the employees and it was confirmed that they had received the documents. The only difference in this case was that the IA employees were asked to contact me with any questions or concerns about the transcripts and summary/analysis document. The decision for this change was based on the hectic schedules of the IA employees and the difficulty in arranging a time to discuss the member check.

Peer debriefing was also used to provide an external check of my research process (Creswell, 1998). My thesis advisor reviewed my methods and interpretations

by reading through a few of my transcripts and/or summaries of the interview, emerging themes and interpretations. My three thesis committee members also reviewed summaries of the interviews and subsequently reviewed my draft findings. Both my thesis advisor and committee members also provided suggestions on the specific findings, the organization of the findings, the overall flow of the results, and interpretation of the findings.

Other processes identified by Patton (2002) were also used to improving the credibility of this research project. More specifically, I used the interview transcripts, the identified documents, my journal notes, feedback from peer and participant member checking and my own position to verify and bring clearer context and description to emerging themes. Comparing and contrasting the interviews and my journal notes provided more context and clarity to the findings, therefore, providing more credibility to the study. Other processes undertaken to ensure credibility included the pilot test of the mothers' interview guide and obtaining face validity of both interview guides.

3.2.4.2 *Transferability*

Transferability refers to the applicability of the research to other similar situations or settings (Creswell, 1998). This involves providing a thick description of the data and enough detail to allow a reader to determine the utility of this study within another context. Therefore, I have described the participants in detail, without identifying them, to allow for an understanding of their context. It is hoped that this will allow the reader to visualize the situation and understand the participant's perspective, and may assist them in deciding if these findings are applicable to their own settings.

3.2.4.3 *Dependability and Confirmability*

Dependability and confirmability can be established through maintaining an audit trail of the research process, including ideas or changes to the study (Creswell, 1998). I was able to achieve both dependability and credibility through keeping an audit trail through my journal and by using the memos and annotation functions in QSR NUD*IST N6 © (QSR International, 2002) to document the thoughts, ideas, and decisions that were made throughout the research and analysis.

3.2.5 *Researcher Identity*

As with all qualitative research, the researcher is the primary tool of interpretation. Therefore, it is important that all readers of this research have an understanding of me, the researcher. I have been studying nutrition for the past seven years. Although I have been involved and interested in many social justice projects for as long as I can remember, I have been interested specifically in the area of food security since the third year of my undergraduate degree. This coincided with my first year coordinating the St. Francis Xavier University Food Bank. This interest led me to complete my undergraduate thesis work in a food security related project. Upon entering the present Masters program I was able to continue working on this issue. In addition to this project, I have worked on several food security related projects with the Nova Scotia Participatory Food Security Projects¹³ over the past three years. More specifically, I have worked as a research assistant on the Food Security Projects' Food Costing and Story Sharing projects and on a Policy Working Group that aimed to create a document that put forward a case for addressing food security in NS through public policy. I have also completed my Community Dietetic Internship placement working with the Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre and Nova Scotia Nutrition Council on these same projects. Through these experiences I have worked, either directly or indirectly, with many mothers who were single and food insecure. In addition, I have also worked with many individuals in government, including individuals from the IA program. Therefore, I had some exposure to the everyday lives of mothers who had experienced food insecurity before beginning this project. I had a basic understanding of how certain policies were impacting on their lives. However, I can honestly say I had no clear idea of the extent to which these policies, specifically IA and CCTB policies had on the lives of the single mothers.

¹³ The Food Security Projects are a number of food security related projects that have been undertaken primarily by the Nova NSNC, AHPRC, and individuals from Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP) and Canada Action Plan for Children (CAPC) FRC/Ps. These projects are guided by participatory and capacity building principles and promote the inclusion of a wide variety of partners that impact on food security.

Overall, I must confess that food security and the variety of related issues that surround it are not a casual interest of mine; they are issues that have shaped my lifestyle and my outlook on the world. I truly believe that, although much work needs to be done, changes can be made, and those most affected by these issues and those who hold the power within our society can be emancipated to work to improve the current situation and improve social inequities such as food insecurity.

3.2.6 *Ethical Considerations*

I took a number of steps to ensure this research project was conducted in a manner consistent with the ethical standards of MSVU, the institution under which the research was conducted. After the research proposal was proposed to the Department of Applied Human Nutrition and was accepted by my Thesis Supervisory Committee in October 2003, an application for approval was submitted to the MSVU UREB in December 2003. Approval was granted in January, 2004 (see Appendix G). Informed consent was obtained from both the mothers and the IA employees prior to the initiation of their in-depth interviews. I also took precautions to ensure that all reports, transcripts, and any other material with identifying information remained anonymous. Tapes were destroyed immediately following transcription and member checking; following this they were stored in a locked filing cabinet at MSVU. Transcripts will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at MSVU for five years. Access to the data was granted only to my Thesis Advisor, Dr. Patty Williams and myself.

4 CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

[In IE] The very success at recognizing how intertwined their problematic is with all sorts of other issues and places may be upsetting. It can create a feeling of being overwhelmed by the enormity of what they are studying. (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 84)

The words of Campbell and Gregor provided some reassurance as I undertook the task of sifting through the documents and interviews I had collected in an attempt to piece together and make sense of the lives of the mothers involved in this study. The fruits of this labour are presented in this chapter. The purpose of Chapter 4 is to provide an explication of the social relations working to organize the food insecurity of the mothers who participated. This is made possible through a descriptive summary of the findings from the seven interviews with the mothers, three interviews with Department of Community Services Income Assistance (IA) program employees and analysis of key documents related to the IA program and Canada Revenue Agency's Canada Child Tax Benefit (CCTB) program, identified through interviews with the mothers as working to organize their food insecurity.

This chapter presents the findings of this study. Section 4.1 introduces the mothers involved in this study. Section 4.2 presents the social relations that emerged from the analysis and were identified as organizing the mothers' food insecurity. They were then mapped according to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System's Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This map will be used as a guide for the remainder of this chapter. Section 4.3 explores the relations that exist in the mothers' everyday world at the micro and mesosystem levels that worked in the organization process. This is meant to begin the exploration around how the relations identified in the map actually worked to organize the mothers' food insecurity. Subsequent to that, the relations identified within the exosystem organizing the mothers' income levels and food insecurity will be explicated. Using data analysis of the three IA employees' interviews and key supporting documents, section 4.4 focuses on the coordinating power of the Department of Community Service's IA Program and the CCTB Program on the mothers' food insecurity. Section 4.5, identifies other relations in the exosystem that do not necessarily influence income but play a part in the organization

of the mothers' food insecurity. This will include those with the food retail sector and transportation systems. It should also be noted that there were many relations identified in the macrosystem that were organizing the everyday lives of both the mothers' food insecurity and other layers of relations. They will be referred to throughout all sections of the document as a means to show the coordinating power of these relations.

4.1 A Place to Start- The Everyday World of the Mothers

To begin to understand the social organization of food insecurity in the lives of the mothers who took part in this research, their daily activities around buying, preparing and doing meals, referred to collectively as the feeding process (Devault, 1991) or the work of feeding, were explored. Before embarking on the exploration of the tangled web of social relations the mothers who took part in this project, who told their stories and allowed me learn about the social organization of their food insecurity will be introduced.

4.1.1 The Mothers

Seven mothers agreed to participate in interviews to begin this project. All mothers that were contacted to participate agreed to do so. As indicated in Table 4.1, and consistent with the inclusion criteria for this project, each of these women were single mothers with one or more children under the ages of eighteen years, and were themselves over eighteen years of age. Each mother also received her primary source of income from the IA program. While IA was the main source of income for all of the mothers, several had other sources of income they accessed to support themselves and their families. All mothers, however, indicated that their yearly incomes were well below the Statistics Canada's LICO rates for their family size. This was determined through questions regarding household income, as compared to LICO rates for families in the Halifax Regional Municipality (see Appendix C).

The ages of these women ranged from twenty to thirty eight years. The number of children each mother cared for differed as did their levels of education. Each of the mothers involved in this study was the main person in the household responsible for procuring and preparing food for themselves and their families. Also, screening questions (see Appendix C) established that all mothers had experienced food insecurity as recently as one month prior to the time of their interviews. *Table 4.1* provides an overview of the descriptions of each of the mothers who took part in this project.

Table 4-1. Characteristics of mothers who participated in study.

| Pseudonym Names of Participant | Household make- up (excluding mother) | Source of Income ¹ | | | | | Age (year) | Education Level ² |
|--------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|------|---|----|----|---------------|---------------------------------|
| | | IA | CCTB | M | PW | OB | | |
| Alice ³ | 3 children | x | x | x | x | | 38 | Gr-12, CC |
| Beth | 3 children | x | x | x | | | 28 | Gr-12, CC |
| Carol | 2 children | x | x | x | | x | 31 | Gr-12, PSD |
| Diana | 2 children ⁴ | x | | x | | | 38 | Gr-12, CC |
| Erin | 1 child | x | x | x | | | 28 | Gr-12, CC |
| Fran | 1 child/ 2 adults ⁵ | x | x | | | | 20 | Gr-10 |
| Gale | 1 child | x | x | | | | 21 | Gr-12, CC |

¹. Source of Income: IA, Income Assistance; CCTB, Canada Child Tax Benefit; M, Maintenance Support from father; PW, income from Paid Work; OB, Orphan Benefits

²Education Level: Gr X, grade level completed; CC, Completion of community college course and/or program; PSD, Post secondary degree.

³. Alice was the only mother who was not a participant in the FRC through which I volunteered, however, as noted in Chapter 3, due to the similarities in circumstances, her interview transcript was included in the final analysis.

⁴. Diana only had two children living with her at the time of her interview; however, she had a child who no longer lives with her whom she referred to throughout the interview.

⁵. Fran had two roommates living with her at the time of the interview.

4.2 The Map of Social Relations

The task of identifying and mapping out the social relations organizing Alice's, Beth's, Carol's, Diana's, Erin's, Fran's and Gale's food insecurity proved to be much more complicated than first thought. Many times the map was dismantled and reorganized; however, as I became more familiar with the data and gained more understanding of the mothers real life experiences, the organization of these relations and the connections that existed across Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) began to make themselves clear. Below is a map, organized using Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Framework, of the identified social relations organizing these mothers' food insecurity. It should be noted that this map, and indeed this study, did not aim to identify all relations, as this would be an endless task. However, it is felt that the map provides a solid starting point for further explication of this topic.

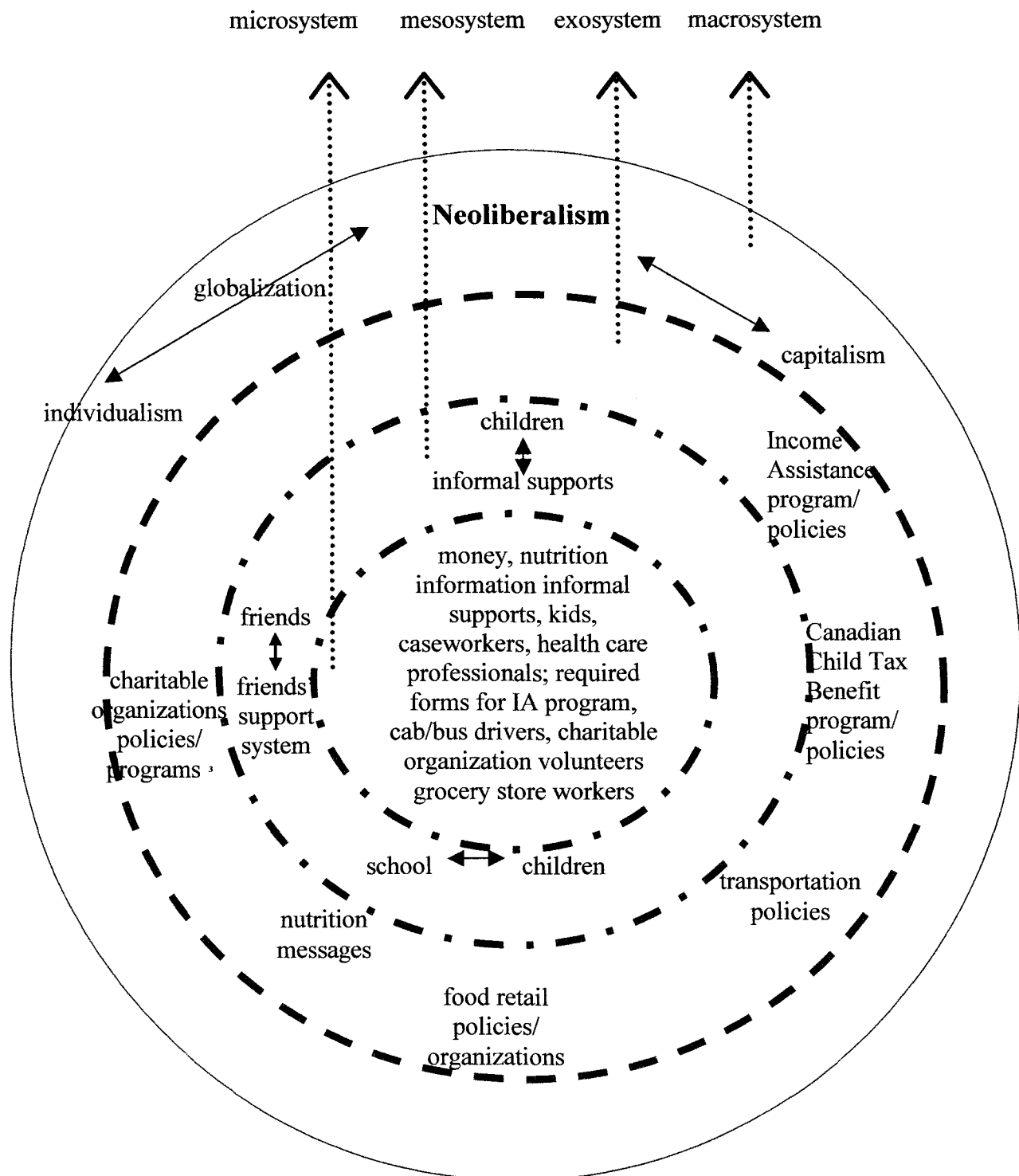


Figure 4-1. Map of the identified social relations organizing the food insecurity of the everyday lives of the participating mothers organized according to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

4.3 Social Relations Organizing Food Insecurity- the Everyday World

Figure 4.1 shows many different relations, and highlights those relations within the mothers' micro and mesosystem working to organize their food insecurity. Within the microsystem those identified included money; the mothers' children (kids); informal supports, including the mothers' family, friends, neighbours, roommates, fathers of their children and other professionals; and charitable organizations and volunteers within these organizations. In addition, IA caseworkers, forms required by the IA program and grocery store and transportation service workers were also identified in this organization. However, because the majority of the power that these relations had over the mothers' food insecurity came from the exosystem, and they themselves were not fully recognized by the mothers, these relations will be discussed in sections 4.4 and 4.5. This does not negate their presence and organizing power within the microsystem.

4.3.1 *Money as mediating food insecurity*

This section will illustrate the influential power money, or lack thereof, had over the mothers' food security. Throughout the interviews it became increasingly evident that the mothers were influenced by money regularly throughout the day. This occurred in both the actual physical form and more abstractly through such tasks as budgeting and borrowing money and, most commonly, worrying about it. The coordinating power of money was blatantly evident throughout all interviews as the mothers discussed how they did the work of feeding¹⁴. For example, when Diana was asked when she usually shopped for her food, she replied simply, "*When I have the money*" [Diana: 536 - 535]. Implicit in the inclusion criteria, the reality was that these mothers often did not have enough money to buy the foods they wanted or the amounts of foods they needed—situations that define food insecurity.

¹⁴ 'Work of feeding' is the broad term that will be used to describe all the work, hidden or otherwise, that the mothers in this study did to procure, prepare, and serve food to themselves and their families.

Money not only influenced when the mothers shopped but also the variety of foods the mothers could buy and how they planned and prepared meals. This will become evident throughout this section. Alice emphasized this when asked about her meal patterns.

... it takes a lot of time...now if I was really organized I could do a menu plan, but I find whenever I make lists I leave it home anyways, no matter how many you make, it just happens so I don't bother but I kind of know what we eat and I try to really stretch it and still often around the 17th, 18th or 19th around those times before the baby bonus comes in on the 20th, yeah it's pretty slim here, there's usually not a lot to pick and choose from so it will be... I know it will be macaroni and canned tuna or you know Kraft Dinner for lunch or they'll take some soup or something like that for lunch to school, you know... [eat]out of a can, those three or four days in there, I find we eat a lot of canned stuff.
[Alice: 276 - 293]

Here, Alice described how her meals changed when her disposable income was limited, especially in regards to how the timing of when she received money influenced the quality, and seemingly the quantity, of her meals. As will be discussed in section 4.4 in greater detail, the mothers received their CCTB cheques on the twentieth of each month and their IA cheques at the end of the month. The monies available for food and other goods and services were very limited the week before these cheques were received. Alice also noted that the types of food she and her family consumed at times before cheques were received changed when she stated that for three or four days before the money arrived they *eat out of a can*. For Alice, at least, eating out of a can was synonymous with these few days, thus it can be assumed that canned foods represent a time of greater food insecurity for her.

Alice's description, along with similar dialogue by other mothers in this study, also helped to identify that food insecurity seemed to operate in a cyclical fashion: it was more extreme right before the IA and CCTB cheques were received. This is not a unique trait to this study. McIntyre et al. (2001; 2003) documented evidence of similar cyclical pattern of food insecurity and compromised dietary intakes among the 141 Atlantic Canadian lone mothers, and their children, who participated in their study over a month time frame. McIntyre et al. (2001; 2003) found that food security for both mother and child were better at Time 1, which correlated with the receipt of

the IA cheques, than Time 4, right before the cheques were received. It is important to note that the mothers were blinded as to the actual time of Time 1 versus Time 4. They also noted that the children's food security increased somewhat at Time 3, after the CCTB cheque was received indicating that the money received was benefiting the children, but, not the family as a whole (McIntyre et al., 2003). The parallels between these experiences and those of the mothers in this study were striking.

Not surprising, the days before the cheques arrived were stressful for the mothers: they had to *stretch* what food they had to try and feed their families. This was evident when Alice was asked about the types of feelings that usually arise around meal times.

Sometimes it depends on ... well it depends on my mood too you know and if it's those you know 16th, 17th, 18th, or 19th ... days I'm kind of like oh shit what am I going to have for supper and you know you get frustrated ...
[Alice: 461 - 466]

Accordingly, anxiety over food seemed to heighten at those times when money and food were limited, right before the cheques were received. Hamelin, Beaudry and Habicht (2002) noted similar expressions of anxiety during their study involving members of low income households in Quebec that sought to better understand food insecurity from the perspectives of these household members. The authors also described similar correlations between anxiety and the time of the month, with the end of the month being the time when food anxiety was heightened, at least for the caregivers (Hamelin, Beaudry & Habicht).

4.3.1.1 *Moneys Mediating Balancing Act between Nutrition and Hunger*

Although the goal of the mothers seemed to be to buy enough food to prevent hunger, they also struggled to purchase foods of good quality, especially nutritional quality. The findings showed that the level of nutrition knowledge among some of the mothers who participated in this study was quite impressive and included knowledge of food groups, Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating (CFGHE) (Health Canada, 2002), food additives, vitamins, minerals, fat and much more. Alice's knowledge was clear throughout her interview:

... although a lot of Sundays lately I have been making more of a larger meal and if I have meat, salads of vegetables and I always try to have something green, whatever I can find that's green like it depends, sometimes out here

Dave's you can get spinach, like spinach is on this week so I might have a spinach salad, just with mushrooms and onions, its pretty plain, and dressing, homemade dressing, vinegar, quite plain, but it kind of depends on what he's got on sale too, but I always try to eat something green with everything we eat, to absorb all the vitamins and stuff so...but yeah if I'm going to make, like today I have no idea what I'm making, it's Monday, which is...

[Alice: 418 - 432]

Here Alice identified that she ate foods from various food groups, and recognized the nutritional value of certain vegetables, such as the dark leafy green vegetables, consistent with recommendations made in Nutrition Recommendations for Canadians (Health Canada, 2003). Carol's knowledge of nutrition also became apparent when she discussed how she went about grocery shopping.

I buy vegetables first... meats, well meats the most expensive stuff but . . . milk, dairy products that comes next and then I buy juice or punch, usually punch it's cheaper... I used to buy juice, orange juice but it used to be 69 cents for orange juice, now it's 89 cents the cheapest one... I don't know why it went up 20 cents ...

Interviewer: [Why do you usually buy the orange juice instead of the punch?]

Well orange juice is supposed to be better for you cause the punch is. . got a lot of sugar in it.

[Carol: 295 - 313]

Carol obviously recognized that certain foods are healthier than others, specifically that fruit punches are less nutritious than fruit juices. Other studies have also found that levels of nutrition knowledge were apparent among low income populations (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004; Badun, Evers & Hooper, 1995; Hamelin, Beaudry & Habicht, 2002; McIntyre et al., 2001).

Some mothers also named specific nutrition education materials or programs they used to increase their nutrition knowledge. The mothers were clear that many of these nutrition recommendations were difficult or impossible to follow on a limited budget. For example, a nutrition professional provided Fran with a CFGHE during a program she attended. However, as noted by Fran *it was so hard to follow that [CFGHE] on social assistance* [Fran, 380]. Although the nutrition professional's objectives for providing Fran with CFGHE cannot be assumed, and perhaps it was done in conjunction with other strategies, at the very least it can be concluded that the

ability of such a tool to increase the nutritional health of low income individuals is minimal or non-existent. This puts into question the usefulness of using such tools among low income families. That is, although the information contained within the CFGHE was nutritionally accurate, those who are financially insecure simply lack the money to follow it.

Erin also identified that certain programs offered through local resource centres, even through they were seemingly geared towards lower income individuals, may follow in the same light as CFGHE in that they are unable to address the true nutritional barriers individuals on limited incomes face when purchasing foods for themselves and their families. This was evident when Erin discussed her frustrations with a nutrition course available through a local FRC.

And when you have that dilemma even though you seem to be very aware of the nutritional values... You have to get over it...like I was taking like food classes and nutrition classes and they understand that kids want like fun things or whatever, like normal things quote unquote all the kids want chicken nuggets or kids will want pizza ...whatever and in the nutritional classes they're like and you can still give those to them but you can make it healthy... no we can't, we can't afford... like you... they're like so when you when your processed you can make your own fish sticks or your own chicken nuggets, or your own pizza and I'm like I can't afford to buy fresh fish and fresh chicken and fresh ... you know the stuff to make little breadings I can never... especially like fish. Even the process fish, like sticks or whatever, are expensive enough. I couldn't imagine how to buy like a fresh cut of fish and making strips of stuff like in the boxes.

[Erin: 134-157]

Here, Erin highlighted a disconnect between the mothers real life experiences and some nutritional programs available to low income individuals. The ability of Erin to vocalize this disconnect also suggests that perhaps all mothers were not in a full state of false consciousness. Erin and Carol also helped in the identification, of the first line of fault within this study. This line of fault existed between the lived experiences of some of the mothers and the nutritional messages touted within our society. Instead of improving the health of low income individuals, such messages appear to work to create an aura of self-blame among individuals who cannot realistically follow such recommendations. Travers (1997) identified this line of fault in her study with women who attended a FRC in Halifax in the early 1990s. These

findings and Travers study both suggest it is possible that this self blame may actually make individuals less healthy: it is likely they feel less confident about themselves and more socially excluded because they cannot realistically follow such messages. This fault line created great stress for Diana. Diana displayed a wealth of nutrition knowledge, but did not have enough money to apply her knowledge. This was evident when she was asked if mealtime ever got stressful:

... when I can't provide ... or I have limited funds to provide the essential nutrients and vitamins and protein, it's awful. Those are important things to me, I know what should be there and when it's not yes it's very frustrating, extremely frustrating. It makes me angry.
[Diana: 94 - 106]

Regardless of the knowledge held by these women, the lack of money mediated the types of food they could purchase. The resulting frustration was not unique to this study. Evidence of nutrition knowledge among low income populations and frustration and stress that results from the inability to follow these recommendations has been well documented in the literature on income related food insecurity (AHPRC, NSNC & FRC/P, 2004; Badun, Evers & Hooper, 1995; McLaughlin, Tarasuk & Kreiger, 2003; Travers, 1996). These findings further strengthen the argument in health promotion circles that poor nutrition intake of low income individuals cannot be improved solely through nutrition education programs. Other strategies that aim to change societies and circumstances in which the food insecurity exists must be undertaken if this is to be achieved (Travers, 1997).

4.3.1.2 *Money as Mediating Social Participation*

Inherent in the definition of food security, food is often used to celebrate and express cultural diversity. These findings highlighted that money limited the extent the mothers in this study were able to use food in this way. Because of the inadequate income they were unable to celebrate many occasions that are deemed by society and themselves and their families as normal. Diana talked about her children's last birthday party where her lack of income prevented her from celebrating what is considered a basic manner.

Like September, my daughters' birthday, I couldn't even buy them a present cause I didn't have the money, I couldn't buy them a cake and if it wasn't for

our neighbours who we have remained in contact with and they have been here to visit us and we've been there to visit them, he bought my girls their
[Diana: 722 - 729]

The frustration of not being able to participate in these activities was apparent and it was easy to see that this inability caused the mothers to feel like outsiders in our society. Hamelin, Beaudry and Habicht (1999) noted similar experiences and reactions among members of food insecure households. They reported that not being able to participate in such activities and having to go against held norms and values led to considerable physiological suffering, as it manifested itself in stress and anxiety.

Special occasions were just one example of seemingly normal food related activities that were constrained because of the mother's food insecurity and predisposing poverty. Even routine social practices such as eating out were found to be limited because of the mothers' lack of income to expend on such activities. These findings provide evidence of another example of the social exclusion these mothers' experienced. The normality of eating out is made evident from the 2001 Census data which indicates that, on average, Canadians spend 30 cents of every food dollar on restaurant meals, up from 28 cents five years earlier (Statistics Canada, 2003). In contrast, those in the lowest income bracket in Canada spent a mere 23 cents of every food dollar in restaurants, compared to 36 cents spent by those in the highest income bracket (Statistics Canada). These statistics do not indicate that low income individuals do not want to spend their money at restaurants; instead, as made evident by almost all of the mothers, it is more likely due to the lack of financial resources necessary to participate in this social activity. In fact, six of the seven mothers discussed their desire to take their children out to eat more often, or their inability to do so at all. As some mothers discussed this issue, it almost seemed this act would legitimize them as 'normal' members of society. For instance, when asked if she or her family ever ate meals outside of her home, Diana clearly articulated this tendency when she talked about her rationale for taking her son out to eat even when she did not have very much money.

We don't really eat out much cause it's really expensive so ... what I used to do with my son is we would go out once a month when we'd get our cheques,

he would know that we were going out, his choice, like McDonald's or... just once cause we couldn't really and really then I really couldn't afford to do it but I thought that it's been a good ... so that he'd never had to say well we never got to go out...

[Diana: 21 - 32]

Even though Diana felt that her budget was not adequate to allow her to eat out, she ensured that she and her children experienced this on occasion. It was important to her that they not *miss out* on an activity that exists as a social norm in our society through continual advertisements and is often taken for granted.

Participation in such social events did not come easily or without other costs to these mothers. Having to stretch the budget to ensure that this additional cost would likely increase the stress and anxiety experienced by these mothers because it resulted in even further work for them. Again, this inability to participate in activities considered to be a social norm leads to stress and anxiety (Hamelin, Habicht & Beaudry, 1999; Hamelin, Beaudry & Habicht, 2002), which no doubt existed for Diana as she clearly stated she did not have the money to go out to eat but did so anyway just so that her son *would never had to say well we never got to go out*.

4.3.1.3 *Money as Mediating the Feeding Process*

The lack of income mediated many of the specific tasks the mothers undertook around the feeding process. In this respect, the lack of money seemed to result in the mothers acquiring a number of common coping mechanisms to try to ensure their families at least had the amount of foods they needed, although this was not always the case. Overall, the mothers used many techniques to try to operate within the current food system with limited incomes, both when shopping, preparing and doing meals. In regards to shopping the mothers tended to develop refined budgeting skills, bought less nutritious foods, purchased in bulk and tended to buy the same foods each time they went shopping, a technique not previously identified in the literature. This technique, also inevitably resulted in another coping mechanism, monotony in the types of food served. Other strategies used when preparing meals were creative cooking; cooking in bulk; hiding food; and the mothers' tendency to forgo eating altogether.

Food procurement coping strategies. First and foremost, it was evident that because of the extreme lack of income, many mothers developed very keen budgeting skills to ensure limited incomes would cover the foods they wanted or needed to buy at the stores. Similar budgeting skills were noted in a number of other studies that identified the management strategies of food insecure individuals, mostly women (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004; Badun, Evers & Hooper, 1995; Hamelin, Beaudry & Habicht, 2002; McIntyre et al, 2001; 2002; Tarasuk, 2001b; Travers, 1996; Travers, 1993; Tarasuk & MacLean, 1990).

Although some mothers seemed to have the above mentioned skills fairly refined, as noted by Alice, *it took a long time to figure that all out* [Alice: 329], meaning the planning, mathematic and budgeting skills were not simply skills that each mother 'had'; instead they were learned skills that had to be tested, and updated continually. Alice also stated that, *the learning of these skills certainly didn't happen overnight* [Alice: 330]. The younger mothers' lack of description around these processes as compared with the older mothers indicated that they did not seem to have the depth and breadth of expertise as the older mothers. Nonetheless, all mothers were very aware of the struggles faced when trying to achieve the balance of nutrition and budget.

As indicated by the recent food costing completed in Nova Scotia (Williams et al., in press), the cost of even a basic nutritious diet is out of reach for individuals on IA. Thus, the budgeting decisions outlined above resulted in the mothers using the strategy of buying less nutritious foods as a means to ensure they had the quantity of food they needed for their family. Erin, like many of the mothers, was explicit about how she employed this strategy, while holding the knowledge that she was sacrificing nutritional health so that she could ensure she had the quantity of food needed to stave off hunger.

... But sometimes it's necessary to make the cheap processed food just to make the foods last ... well we could make a whole supper out of French fries and grill cheese sandwiches, it's not very good for you but then you've got a whole meal out of it. That kind of thinking, like.
[Erin: 712 - 719]

As Erin described the balancing act, the work that she had to undertake to achieve this balance and develop *that kind of thinking* became apparent. These comments again clearly showed that it was not the nutrition knowledge that was lacking among these mothers, but the resources to buy them. Erin recognized that the foods she was feeding her daughter did not always meet her standards for nutritional adequacy. She also recognized that she lacked the resources to purchase the more nutritious foods. However, to her, that *kind of thinking* seemed to be the uncomfortable acceptance that she had no choice but to buy the less nutritious food if she wanted to stave off hunger.

Another strategy the mothers used to cope with their food insecurity and limited budgets related to this involved watching for sales and using flyers to plan what they would buy. Although this strategy was not a technique unique to low income individuals, it was no doubt more critical for those living in poverty than it would be for their more affluent sale-watching counterparts. Alice discussed how her skills at watching for sales assisted her in trying to achieve greater food security when she was asked how far ahead she usually planned her shopping trips.

Yeah only a week only because that way I can get a chance to look at fliers and of course I really do buy according to what the fliers are and if you don't and you miss a week where you've missed you know chicken breasts on sale, which you know a lot of people still don't buy, or chicken thighs of something, if you miss that and then they don't have them for two weeks well that means for two weeks you're not eating any chicken and we eat a little bit of chicken, I eat more chicken. Or if I say have... if you know that week, like halibut or salmon or something has been on, I think it's on \$4.99/\$5.99 for salmon well that week you know the trick... you know that they're going to have salmon trimmings, like the trimmings from the end of the fish which is just the same as the rest of the fish except they're trimmings and they're usually a dollar less...
[Alice: 307- 329]

As Alice noted, if she missed a sale of products such as chicken, a food item that was presumably higher in price than other foods, she would have to do without chicken until the next sale. Consequently, if she did not have the knowledge and skills around sale watching she may not have the monetary resources to purchase the foods she needed or wanted to feed her family. She also talked about other hidden values in sales, such as the further reduced price of trimmings when salmon is on at a special price. This was a learned practice that Alice had picked up over the years, which no

other mother mentioned. However, by being aware of this Alice was also able to purchase foods such as salmon, normally higher priced grocery item.

Buying in bulk was another technique for the budgeting work of the mothers, as this was perceived as a way to get more food for less by the mothers in this study. Within this study, Erin illustrated her belief in the benefit of bulk shopping, with regards to budgeting, when she noted:

...When I grocery shop or whatever I buy bulk, I can buy everything in bulk and afford it right, if you're buying single small packages it's too expensive, so I buy things in bulk...

[Erin: 377 – 384]

Related to this, Erin also identified her tendency to cook in bulk. McIntyre et al (2001) and Tarasuk and MacLean (1990) also identified that low income single mothers involved in their studies in Atlantic Canada and Ontario respectively also bought in bulk as a strategy to cope with their food insecurity.

Contrary to these findings and Erin's beliefs around the perceived benefit to budgeting money and buying bulk, Diana stated that *bulk food is not always cheaper* [Diana: 704] and therefore she did not always buy foods in bulk. The perception that bulk food is always cheaper, held by several of the mothers, whether correct or not, may be linked to marketing schemes developed by many food retail outlets as, in the end, these corporations main goal is to make money (Travers, 1993). This may mean that certain advertising is geared towards making consumers think that certain products are cheaper when this is not actually the case.

An additional coping technique employed that has not been documented to date in the literature was the tendency of some mothers to buy the same foods each time they went shopping. This strategy in and of itself did not work to decrease the mother's food budget; however, it did help them ensure their budget would cover the costs of the foods bought. Erin acknowledged her tendency to do this when she stated that *I stick to whatever I've always bought over and over again because that is what you can afford to* [Erin: 340 - 345]. This strategy not only ensured she had the money to buy the foods she needed to feed her family, it was a technique that allowed her to work through the grocery store process more quickly. Undertaking such a strategy

may; however, result in the mothers knowing or not forgoing buying the foods they, or their families, truly want.

Consistent with the strategy of monotony in shopping, Erin also noted that she usually bought her food at the same store so that she knew what would be available and what it would cost.

The [Store B], I know it's there, I know what's offered so I know how to afford what's in there, which day you know, I can go in and not be overwhelmed and stand in the store going ehm, ehm, ehm, you know, I know what I'm getting, and how much it is and all

[Erin: 678 - 683]

By shopping at the same store and buying the same foods Erin seemed to be able to decrease the variables that may cause her food costs to exceed what she could pay. Such techniques, although limiting, allowed her to help ensure she and her child had food to fill them throughout the month.

Food preparation coping strategies. The strategies listed above that were used in shopping translated into inevitable coping strategies in the preparation of meals. First and foremost it resulted in the monotony of meals served in the household. Alice expressed her frustration with the monotony she experienced in her diet when she stated:

... I don't like to eat a lot of canned stuff and I find if I do that two or three days in a row I just get frustrated and I'm like oh gross and you don't feel... I don't find you feel like ... you're eating a lot of canned stuff all the time and processed food...

[Alice: 477 - 483]

The monotony of meals may have worked to ensure that the mothers and their families were eating and not hungry; however, Alice clearly indicated that this practice was not acceptable to her. Alice did not seem to enjoy her meals when she had to eat the same thing day after day. Therefore, although these last two techniques stave off hunger, it is questionable how or if they do anything to increase food security. Not surprising, this strategy has been documented throughout the literature as a coping strategy used by food insecure individuals (Hamelin, Beaudry & Habicht, 2002; McIntyre et al., 2001). Similar to Alice, these studies also show that the acceptability of this practice is limited in that the desire to eat seemed to decrease

when monotony of foods served existed (Hamelin, Beaudry & Habicht; McIntyre et al.).

As a means to try and gloss over the inevitable monotony of many of the meals, many of the mothers also identified they had acquired skills that allowed them to be creative with meals using their limited resources. Diana described how she used her creativity to create meals for her two children.

...I have to make sure that these extra as much as I can so when I go and get groceries then I know I have so many cans of goods and so many boxes of Kraft Dinner and I get Kraft Dinner even though it's more expensive, I know it tastes better and you know there's some things I can do that with and I know there's some things I can't do that with, so you know I just buy the no name tuna cause it's o.k. ... it's tuna and we all like it and I mix it in with eggs and we have tuna in this ... very creative. That's a side effect, that's a good thing I guess. You have to be sometimes you get tired of the same ...
[Diana : 188 - 200]

As noted by Diana, creativity was the *side effect* [Diana: 198-199] of being food insecure, a survival mechanism of sorts that allowed the mothers to cope with trying to prepare meals with limited resources. This strategy seemed to be more common among the older mothers, a learned tendency towards creativity, and has been documented by McIntyre et al.'s. (2001) research with lone mothers in Atlantic Canada.

The final, and perhaps most disturbing strategy used by six of the seven mothers in this study, was not eating. These mothers identified that by deliberately not eating they could better ensure that their children had enough food. Some mothers noted that this occurred on a regular basis while with others it was unclear how often it occurred. Gale described how the amount of food that she had in her house determined her meal patterns

There will be times when I will only eat breakfast and supper or just have supper or maybe a little snack. I don't come home. It all depends on how much food there is. When things get tight I may only eat one meal or two meals or maybe there's times when I'll eat all three meals and have snacks
[Gale: 689 - 699]

Through Gale's description it was clear that the amount of food in the household and money available, rather than her own internal physiological need for food, dictated whether she ate. When asked if her child ate during the times when she

noted there was not enough food in the house she replied, *Yeah [child] always has all his meals and his bottles*[Gale: 702]. Therefore when Gale indicated food and money was tight, it did not mean for her household rather for herself. This finding may indicate that there is some threshold of food that, when household food stores become lower, the mothers decide not eat and in lieu of their children. Overall, Beth summed up her rational for feeding her children before herself, and sometimes going hungry herself, when she stated *That's how it goes, as long as they eat and I have a little bit, I'm fine* [Beth: 478 - 480]. The tendency of mothers sacrificing their diets for other family members, most notably their children, has been documented throughout the literature (Badun, Evers & Hooper, 1995; McIntyre et al. 2003; McIntyre et al. 2002; McIntyre et al. 2001). The existence of this strategy should be a beacon to indicate the need to develop strategies, at multiple levels, that address the food insecurity experienced by these mothers so they no longer have to resort to such harmful coping mechanisms.

4.3.2 Kids and Money

Children, regardless of household income levels, have a major affect on the family's buying and feeding patterns (McNeal, 1998). The lack of income experienced by the families in this study, however, had a direct affect on the feeding relationship between mothers and their children. Thus, in addition to organizing the mothers' coordination of this process it also impacted how the mothers interacted with their children in regards to food and virtually all other relations. Although the children impacted the feeding work for the mothers who participated in this study, they did so only to the extent to which income would allow. At a certain point, even if children tried to exert pressure, the overriding impact of income, or lack thereof, downplayed or overrode this pressure altogether.

To see how money mediated these relations this section will first examine how children influenced the procurement, preparation and serving of meals while presenting evidence of how income affected this relation. The interactions between children and their participation in school and the impact of these relations on the feeding practices of the mothers will also be explicated.

4.3.2.1 Procurement

The children's influence on the shopping process was clearly evident throughout all interviews. On the most basic level, the genuine physical needs of the children impacted what the mothers bought. Gale identified this factor through her description of the need for things such as diapers for her young child and how these costs impacted her budget.

That's not included with that ... I've kept that \$80 in my pocket, the rest of my child...my baby bonus got after groceries... I didn't even buy him diapers with it. I just bought groceries so now I'm left with...well not even ... I'll just here as honest as the day I have \$60 to my name until I get money again and I have to buy him diapers a package of diapers is like \$30, a big pack. ...It's absolutely sickness ... I'll say and do and share my information with whoever I need to- as long as I'm getting my point across to anyone.

[Gale: 796 - 807]

Although the costs of items such as diapers, considered necessity items, are incurred by all mothers' regardless of their income level, for mothers like Gale who

was already struggling to ensure her budget covered the necessities of life, the added strain of purchasing such items no doubt greatly impacted her family's food security. This impact is mainly as a result of the tendency of food to be one of the more flexible budgets (DC, 2005; AHPRC, FRC/Ps & NSNC, 2004).

Within popular media children are common targets for advertising and branding (McNeil, 1998). As such, it is not surprising that the children had an impact on the types of foods the mother bought. However, for mothers on a limited income the process of trying to fit the food requested by their children into the budget was quite cumbersome and seemingly stressful. Erin, who usually purchased the same types of food each time she shopped, explained the process she underwent when trying to incorporate her child's preferences into the grocery list.

... These salted cans you know but when that's all you can sort of afford ...but in the summer time I'll like give up something I was going to buy after the month or whatever, I'll give up something if it's something [child] loves like [child] loves corn on the cob so if its there I'll buy it for her or whatever ... it's really, really difficult.
[Erin: 609 - 633]

Although this 'give and take' process may occur throughout the feeding process in families of all income levels, Devault (1991) noted it is a much more intricate, necessary process among those families living on low incomes. In this case, Erin made a concerted effort to fulfill her child's preferences; however, it was obviously not an easy task. Not only did Erin have to *give up something* to meet her child's needs she relinquished a common coping mechanism discussed above, monotony in purchasing as a means to control the budget when purchasing, something that she is not used to doing on a regular basis. Hamelin, Beaudry & Habicht (2002) noted that the caregivers from the low income households who were food insecure felt similar feelings of anxiety and of being constrained when they were unable to purchase or serve the foods their children wanted.

Aside from the types of foods bought, children also greatly influenced the actual shopping process. Alice was the only mother that identified that her children actually assisted her in this process. She described how her children helped her balance her budget during her shopping trip.

I usually take my kids grocery shopping cause then they help ... and I really just don't like doing it at all and I think I don't like doing it cause I know I have \$100 and that's what I usually try to go for is \$100 and I keep it around \$60 but I usually have \$100 cause it always goes over and xxxx adds it up in his mind kind as we go along and they go and they get ... I don't know I've never liked grocery shopping, I don't know...

[Alice: 989 - 997]

Undoubtedly, the assistance of her children was very helpful for Alice. At a deeper level, however, it was also evident that income was mediating the relationship between Alice and her children during the shopping process. If Alice had an adequate amount of money to spend during her shopping trips and could afford to buy all of the foods she needed, the role of her children, as accountants, would not be as critical. Therefore, even the helping role is mediated by income.

All other mothers, aside from Alice, indicated that their children made the shopping process much more difficult. When asked whom she usually shopped with Diana made it quite clear she made every effort to go shopping when others could watch her children. For instance, she indicated that she usually aimed to shop when her children were with their father, on Tuesdays or Thursdays.

...if I can avoid it, which I try to avoid it cause taking [children] to the grocery store is an experience, shall I say, so ... and when they were younger it wasn't as I mean it was cumbersome as far as having them but it didn't interfere with what I bought because they weren't giving me a hard time, but I know that that will change so I will try to do it on a Tuesday or Thursday evening...

[Diana: 559 - 570]

This coordination of schedules resulted in even more work, albeit hidden, to Diana's life. Not only did she have to try to ensure her limited budget bought enough food for herself and children but she needed to coordinate her shopping trips with the care-giving schedule of the father of her children. Although difficult, it can be assumed the burden is even greater for the majority of the mothers in this study who had no support from the fathers and had to look for other sources of support for childcare or, the alternative, take the children to the grocery store and battle with them along with their pocket book. Of course, the supermarket environment employs many marketing techniques aimed at children, who further increase the pressure on mom, thus increasing the complexity of the shopping process (Travers, 1993).

Preparation: The influence of children reached beyond the shopping trip to how and what the mother prepared for supper. First, the different life stages of the child determined what could actually be served. For example, younger children could be breastfed, an option that greatly affected how Diana fed her children when they were younger. In addition to the health benefits of breastfeeding being touted in the mass media and conventional health stream, breastfeeding is also economical. Diana discussed how her ability to breastfeed her children impacted on the feeding process.

*... I nursed my [children] for 15 months because of food insecurity and I ate...the best I ever ate was when I was nursing my [children] and since they haven't been nursing, they've been eating. I eat and I'm not saying that I starve myself cause I have to take care of myself or I can't take care of my [children] so I do eat but I know. I don't eat like I should or like I'd like to for to take care of them because I want to make sure they're eating, cause they're growing little [children] so I get... but I get once they've had,
[Diana: 268 - 280]*

By breastfeeding, Diana also allowed herself to consume a healthier diet than she would have otherwise. This was significant because, as stated earlier, the mothers who participated in this research often sacrificed healthy eating themselves so that their children could eat healthy. The act of breastfeeding seemed to give Diana the 'permission' to eat healthy as she was actually helping her children by doing so. Although it was not specifically discussed it is possible that the duration of her breastfeeding was influenced by Diana's lack of income to purchase other acceptable foods for her children. This can be assumed because Diana breast-fed for fifteen months in a province where statistics show that almost one third of children are never breast-fed and most that are only receive their mothers' milk for a few weeks (Office of Health Promotion, 2005). Overall, the ability to breastfeed positively impacted Diana's food security.

As the children's physiological needs changed, the impact they had on the feeding process seemed to be altered. For Diana this change added new frustrations. At the time of the interview Diana's children were toddlers and were able to eat table foods; however, they were also accustomed to playing with their foods, which was associated with food being wasted. Diana expressed this frustration as she discussed a typical mealtime at her house.

But [the children] are pretty messy at two and a half and if they're really hungry and that's the frustration part comes in, not if they're hungry cause then they eat, but if they're not hungry they end up playing with it, throwing it on the floor, and I think it could have been another meal ... that gets to be frustrating ...

[Diana: 53 - 59]

Although the frustration with children playing with their food was probably a common occurrence within most families, it can be assumed that in families where the food budget is tight such occurrences can cause frustration on many different levels. For these mothers wasted food was not a menial issue. It created extra stress and worsened their food insecurity as it decreased the supply of food available for consumption.

Children also had a major impact on the types of foods that were cooked. Several mothers noted that they often had to cook many different variations of a meal or even two or three different meals all together because children did not like a certain food that was being served. Carol described what happened when her son did not like what she was cooking:

my [first child is] fussy... well [second child] is not that bad but, [first child] doesn't always want to eat the same food and then you've got to... don't always want to cook something different cause [first child] should eat ... well not what we're eating but...just a few days ago we were having... we had soup and [first child] wanted fries like to eat. . .

Interviewer: [Did you have to get the fries?]

Yeah, I didn't have no bagged fries, I have no bagged fries anymore left right now so [first child] had to have homemade fries ... home fries...

[Carol: 48 - 63]

While the process of making several meals for one family meal is no doubt a common occurrence in many households, Carol highlighted the complications it posed for those living in a low income household. In Carol's case, her first child would not eat what was first made and she had to scramble to make something else. Because she ran out of pre made French fries she had to make them by hand. The option of running to the store to purchase the more convenient form of this food product, something no doubt taken for granted within our society, was not available

because Carol was only able to shop at certain times and often did not have extra money for such items.

Through the interviews it became evident that this struggle sometimes led to the mother's wants and preferences being sacrificed in lieu of their children's during the feeding process. That is, studies indicate that women are still expected to perform the majority of feeding and caring work (Arai, 2000; Baxter, 1997; Devault, 1991), thus, when resources do not allow them to do it with ease, it should not be surprising that they sacrifice their own needs to meet these expectations. Below Alice discussed how she attempted to meet the wants and preferences of her children and how she seemed to settle for a less appealing meal or even less food as a means to try to feed the children the types of food they wanted.

But the kids' they are good. So we do eat different food and that's really hard because different food cost a lot more money to eat for sure, so you have to be careful, so there are times where you know I might be a little bit hungrier and I'll cook up some like really plain rice for myself instead of like eating a potato or whatever.

[Alice: 242 - 248]

Although this is another technique used by mothers to cope with their food insecurity it also highlights how seemingly common family dynamics, such as a picky eaters, can be particularly problematic in low income households. For Alice, picky eaters led to her having to choose to feed her children their preferred meals over satisfying her physiological need for food.

Children and School: Alice, Beth and Erin were the only mothers who had children in school. While it can be assumed that the mothers had relationships with the school system within their microsystem, these mothers did not discuss any direct interaction with schools. Instead, the children's relationship with the school system, a relation that was situated in the mothers' mesosystem, was referred to most often. Regardless, these relations were found to have considerable influence over the mothers' work of feeding and in turn their and their family's food security.

To begin the explication of the impact of this relation of children and school this section focused on Alice and Erin's discussions about school lunches. Although Beth had several children in school she did not mention this much in her

interview; this could be related to the circumstances within which her interview was conducted.¹⁵

School lunches: The school system impacted Alice's and Erin's work of feeding at all stages. Before the mothers even shopped they had to consider how the children would take their lunch to school (i.e. in containers or a bag) or would they buy their lunch at school. In addition, these mothers had to consider what could be sent to school and what would actually be eaten. Therefore, the children's likes and dislikes played a big role in the decision process for shopping for food for lunches. When she was asked if her children ate lunch at school Alice discussed how she had to balance her children's needs and wants along with the process of buying and choosing packaging so that the children could take the food to school.

... last night they all packed their own lunches and they shared a can of canned peaches and they each took an apple and an orange and they each took a chocolate granola bar and my daughter took Puff Rice, Cheerios and Rice Krispies in a container with sesame seeds, that's what she likes. My mom bought them juice packs so that's what they had last night. And they packed their own lunch, so we have lots of plastic containers and stuff and I buy big cans of whatever and they split it up.

[Alice: 58 - 72]

Here Alice described her children's likes and dislikes and how they differed from child to child and how they worked to coordinate the types of food that she bought at the store and sent in their lunches. No doubt this is a dilemma faced by all mothers who have to work to satisfy the needs of their children when packing school lunches; however, the complexity is heightened dramatically when dealing with income restrictions as well as the child's needs and wants.

Alice also noted that her children packed their own lunches but did not explicitly describe the work she had to undertake to make that possible. In order to make it possible for her children to do this Alice had to ensure that she had the types of food that her children liked available in the house and in the proper quantities. Alice's description allows readers to see that this was achieved through at least two mediums,

¹⁵ Beth was the first interview after the pilot; therefore, I was still in the process of becoming familiar with the interview process. Also, during Beth's interview her two young children were quite rambunctious. Although it was a valuable interview, and the fact that she had no one to care for her children during the interview was an interesting situation this interview was the shortest among the mother's interviews.

her and her mother, a microsystem relation that will be discussed in the next section. Therefore, this too needed coordination. The detail that she used to describe this process indicated that Alice also had to supervise the children during the process. Alice also had the proper number and types of containers available so that her children could pack the lunch.

The affect of income on these relations became evident as Alice and Erin continued to speak about their children's school experiences. That is, although the children and school environment seemed to be dominant relations that organized what was brought to school for lunches, money was ultimately the overriding factor determining what could be brought. Below Erin expressed her frustration over the restrictions that money held over the types of food she could buy for her child's lunch.

It bothers me if she eats a lot of those fruit by the foot things. What bothers me the most about making her[school] lunch and giving her lunch is because she has recess and lunch, at school, she has to have two drinks too and I can't afford...even juice boxes, even like apple juice so I buy them flat...like twelve pack flat of the little drinks, they're just like little plastic bottle things cause they're cheaper, but then there's sugar... so I have to ... it would cost twice as much to buy all that in like say juice boxes, but apple juice, you know like real juices instead of just sugar so that's the part I really don't like a lot, but she typically has them every day.
[Erin: 41 - 55]

Here, Erin's frustration with not being able to send healthy food with her child for lunch was apparent. Despite having the knowledge, Erin lacked the resources to purchase the food she knew her daughter needed to be healthy. On top of this, she also lacked the monies to purchase the foods that were 'common' or 'normal' to bring to the school environment. Erin could not simply send any types of food in her house, as this may lead to her daughter being judged at school.

Availability of hot lunches: Income also limited the extent the mothers' children could participate in such things as hot lunch days. To clarify, hot lunch days were days that hot lunches were available to the children at school for a certain price. For individuals in a higher income bracket the price of two dollars that Erin had to pay for her child to receive a hot meal may be quite reasonable. However, for Erin,

who spoke quite passionately about this issue, the two dollars a week extra was a huge barrier.

The thing is though I spend a lot of money now, once a week her school offers hot lunch and I, for a number of reasons, I want her to have it, I don't want her to be left out, like her eating another sandwich while all these kids are enjoying a hot lunch ... and I think it's good for them to have a hot lunch once a week because they have to eat cold lunches all week, that kind of thing so that costs usually like my parents end up paying for it.

[Erin: 211 – 219]

Erin seemed very frustrated with being unable to provide her child with the money for school lunches. Erin did not want her child to be *left out* of being able to acquire a hot lunch. While she was fortunate that her parents were able to cover the cost, in doing so, Erin no doubt felt a loss of autonomy over her own household in being unable to meet her social expectation to feed her family. It was also evident that this frustration came from not only wanting to nourish her child but also wanting her child to participate in this seemingly 'normal' activity in the school. Erin was keenly aware that if her child was not able to participate in such an activity her classmates within this school environment might exclude her child. Certainly, Erin has cause for concern as it has been noted by Galabuzi (2002) that, among youth, the psychosocial stress of discrimination due to social exclusion can lead to such health problems as hypertension, substance abuse and mental health concerns.

School staff's coordination of school lunches: The organizing relations of the values and beliefs held by the schools, the institution itself, the employees and even the students, became very clear during Alice's interview when she discussed comments that some staff had made about her children's lunches.

There's no meat in their lunch which I always get flack for, there was no bread in their lunch, because lunch at their school is a sandwich made with process meat and I try to stay away from as much process meat as I possibly can with them, they're just ... they don't need it. So they get flack for it from the students... from the lunch monitors because they don't have a sandwich which is kind of bizarre, but that's the way they do it. But they'll have...they'll take crackers, I'm just pointing over there cause that's where all the stuff is, yeah so they take different types of crackers and they all like different types of crackers, sometimes there's four or five plain sorts of crackers is what they'll take or whole wheat crackers, one likes whole wheat the other likes the soda with the salt and the other just plain little crisp thin things so they all get what they want.

[Alice: 72 - 92]

Although Alice did not seem to buckle to the apparent pressure that was exerted by staff at her children's school, it was obvious that it affected and bothered her as she had spoken quite poignantly about this issue. The 'school' valued certain types of foods as being healthy and good lunch foods. However, this did not always coincide with what Alice sent with her children. Presumably, the comments by the school official were not meant to be malicious, but, their reaction was no doubt based on the dominant literature on healthy eating circulating within our society. While this literature contains sound nutrition recommendations it fails drastically in recognizing the social barriers that make following such guidelines difficult or impossible for some individuals (Travers, 1997).

4.3.3 Support Groups/Individuals

The findings presented above show the far-reaching affect income had on the food insecurity of the mothers who participated in this study. Through the analysis process it became clear that money also worked to enter the mother into other relations as a means to further organize their food insecurity. That is, if the mothers had adequate incomes it is unlikely that the relationships that are discussed in the following section would not be as they were, and in some cases, may not exist at any level.

The relationships the mothers entered into at the microsystem level that served to shape their food insecurity can be organized into two groups: charitable organizations and informal supports. Although not all relations entered into helped the mothers improve their food security per se, most of these established relationships did assist the mothers to cope with their current situations related to food insecurity and at the very least assisted them to ensure they had enough food to stave off hunger.

4.3.3.1 Charitable Organizations

In recent years the institutionalization of charitable organizations and depoliticization of poverty has been noted in the literature (Tarasuk & Eakin, 2003). This institutionalization is a direct result of neoliberal policies that have lead to the erosion of our welfare system and the inevitable downloading of the past of work of this system to private charities (Wagner, 2000; Brown, 1996). Although reports indicate that food insecurity does not preclude the use of food banks (Tarasuk, 2001a), there has been increasing usage of these facilities to supplement food supplies over the last decade (Hyman, MacIssac & Richardson, 2004). As such, it was not surprising that many of the mothers interviewed for this project entered into relations with charitable organizations that supplemented their monthly food needs and addressed the more extreme issues of maternal and child food insecurity: hunger. Consistent with other findings (Badun, Evers & Hooper, 1995; Hamelin, Habicht & Beaudry, 2002; McIntyre et al., 2001; Tarasuk, 2001b), a commonly utilized program used by the mothers in this study was food banks. However, others charitable

organizations were also mentioned including Christmas charities and a community support program for youth.

Food Banks. Four of the seven mothers who participated in this study used food banks on a regular basis as a means to help ensure their families had enough food for the month. While the experience and work of accessing the food banks was present in the microsystem, it was also regulated through the relationships the mothers had with the food bank policies and procedures, which lie within the exosystem of the ecological framework¹⁶. The mothers did not seem to recognize the influential power of these policies, however, indicated a level of false consciousness. The regulatory influence of these policies on the mothers' work of feeding will become starkly obvious in this section however.

Overall, the four mothers who had been accessing food banks at the time of the study spoke openly about their experiences within this. In Diana's case, her reasoning for being open became evident when she stated:

I'd reached the point I think where... not that [going to a food bank] is no longer demeaning just that it's a necessity, you know, if you want to look down your nose at me cause I go to a food bank to feed my children, then go ahead... at least I'm not out there hooking on the streets...
[Diana: 444-449]

Diana emphasised the importance food banks played in ensuring she and her family had enough food to eat. However, Diana also highlighted that she felt feelings of shame, or at the very least, past shame, for having to access food banks. This was apparent when she said; *it is no longer demeaning*, indicating that at one time she did find the experience demeaning or perhaps that these feelings are so common they no longer seem negative. Nonetheless, such feelings are not uncommon among food bank users. Other studies have documented that female food bank users often experience shame, guilt, and stigma associated with going to the food bank (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004; Tarasuk & Beaton, 1999). The feelings of stigma may be a by-product of a society, which expects individuals to care for themselves, and at the

¹⁶ Food bank policies will not be discussed at length within this study as they were not investigated beyond what the mothers' discussed in their interviews. Some studies that examine the experience associated with accessing goods from food banks in more detail include Tarasuk and Eakin (2003) and Kratmann (2003).

same time works to dismantle any state funding social supports that once aimed at assisting individuals to improve their lives.

Aside from this stigma, the food bank worked to organize the mother's food security in the most basic manners: it provided food so the mothers and their children would not go hungry. Also, because the policies at the food bank dictated what was given to each client, these organizations also were the gatekeepers of how much, when and what foods the mothers received. As such, the food banks had a major impact from food procurement, right down to what was served at meals in the households of individuals who accessed this service. Below Beth discussed in more detail the types of food normally acquired during this process.

[food bank] give mostly the same stuff every month, a lot of canned goods, the only thing I don't like about the food bank is that you don't get meat. And sometimes you don't get very good stuff and they do give treats. I usually get a lot of cans ... I usually get some juice, there's a big box of cereal that I never used ... cause I get so sick of Cheerios. Which sucks. Well a lot of their bread you don't know how old it is, so we don't eat a lot of their bread, but mostly I get white bread, we only eat white bread.

[Beth: 341 - 366]

Like Beth, other mothers spoke at length about their discontent with the types of food provided through the food bank. It was evident that some food banks at times did not provide personally acceptable food of good nutritional value to the mothers. Erin, who was no longer using a food bank at the time of the interview, described the food she had received from the food banks as *the kind of stuff that you keep on your shelf for the next five years* [Erin: 881- 883]. Therefore, although the food banks decrease hunger, these findings indicate they may not be successful in decreasing food insecurity, in terms of providing acceptable food in a socially acceptable manner. This finding is supported by Tarasuk & Eakin (2003) and Kratzmann's (2003) analysis of perceptions of food banks in Ontario and Nova Scotia respectively.

Although a blatant line of fault seems to exist between the perception at food banks of what food mothers need to support their health and well being, caution is taken in doing so. This is because the supply of food from food banks is largely, if not fully, organized by donations given by the broader public. That is, by going to the food bank the mothers not only entered into relations with the specific food bank but

also with those individuals and organizations that donated the food to the food bank and of course the policies and procedures that guide each institution. Therefore, it may be more accurate to draw an obvious line of fault between both the publics' thoughts of what those who access food banks need or will use for food and food bank acquisition policies, and what food bank clients really do need or want.

Food banks also organized how mothers acquired foods. Accessing a food bank was a complicated process. Diana helped to unravel both the emotional and procedural intricacy of the processes undertaken when accessing a food bank.

You have to have your medical card; you have to... you have to go on a certain day, follow whatever, you know the food bank rules.

Interviewer: [You have to go on a certain day?]

You have to go on a certain day and you have to have your... I had to have their medical cards, my medical card ... the girls and mine ... And then you wait in a line-up and then you get your information and you wait, your number comes up or whatever, your turn and you go and you ... they give you bags, well I guess it depends on the food bank, they're run different ways, different food banks, but I've been to the [Name of specific food bank]- food bank and they tend to give you fresh vegetables and some fresh fruit ... so it's worth it to go there even though it's farther... but then I have to make arrangements with somebody to either go for me or borrow a car, take me there. . . something, but yeah I don't know if I lost track here or not, did the whole food bank thing but ...years ago it used to be very demeaning but now I've reached the point I think where...not that it's no longer demeaning just that it's a necessity, you know, if you want to look down your nose at me cause I go to a food bank to feed my children, then go ahead. . at least I'm not out there hooking on the streets or you know ... or stealing or ... I'm doing it the way I have to, the best way I know how and keep myself dignity cause that's important to me too. Its hard to be on assistance and keep your dignity... it is ... but I know I won't always be this way so that's all right. People can look down their nose all they want.

[Diana : 419 - 455]

Diana spoke without hesitation about her experience. Through her dialogue it became evident that using a food bank required a certain learned knowledge of the organization of these institutions and how they operate, with the recognition that these processes likely fluctuate between food banks. This work was no doubt hidden, not only because food procurement is 'women's' work, which in itself is hidden work within our society, but also because of the social unacceptability of such work.

Therefore, not only is it a complex system that, through its links with more regulatory relations in the exosystem serves to coordinate the feeding work, but one that is not likely discussed openly. As such, it is likely that individuals not accustomed to such organizations would find it very difficult to learn the hidden processes of using a food bank.

The work of accessing a food bank was further intensified by the additional relationships that needed to be forged with food bank volunteers. Carol highlighted the importance of the relationship entered into by the volunteers who helped to run the food bank when she recalled a time when her interaction with one volunteer dramatically shaped how and when she accessed the food bank.

... the first time I went to the food bank, I didn't go for a long time at the [food bank name] and I took quite a bit of these Granny Smith apples and [food bank staff member] started ... she yelled at me ...
[Carol: 390 - 420]

The volunteer's reaction worked to greatly impact Carol's food insecurity as she noted that she did not go back to the food bank for a long time after this encounter. This may have decreased the variety and amount of food available to her feed her family. It must be recognized that the volunteer's reaction was likely influenced by many factors such as their own life experiences, with others and their attitudes, values, and beliefs. It is important to note here that no other mother spoke of a negative experience with food bank staff. However, recent story sharing workshops around the experience of food insecurity in Nova Scotia among women involved in FRCs found that those who had accessed food banks felt stigmatized and judged, both by society and volunteers, because of their use of food banks (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004).

Christmas Charities. Two of the mothers in this study discussed their experiences with receiving additional support at Christmas. These charity drives meant different things to each of the mothers. First, Diana's relationship with this program was positive. She discussed the significant support it had provided her during the Christmas Season.

... and we were adopted at Christmas and ... it was really amazing in a family sense we got presents and food like boxes of food and laundry detergent and a Christmas dinner, and a turkey, like everything, it was just...when I get on my feet and I'm no longer on social assistance, I'm going to be one of those people who does adopt a family, cause it is just... if I could tell that family, I mean I know that's what they do because they want to too, but if I could tell that family anything that's what I tell them. I want to be that family so anyway... you know what I have done too, is ... I'm sorry ... and I will be one of those family, my girls may have trees and may have presents or people, kids who want this or want that and my girls next year are going to pick a name and we're going to buy a present for somebody else cause that's important to me even though we don't have a lot, that's what it's about. Anyway ...I'm sorry ... I'm not at all bothered by that, but they helped with my food insecurity which is the whole point, they really did, and they don't even know how much, well maybe they do but it was amazing, so I mean I still have stock in my shelf and that's how I have to make sure that these extra as much as I can so when I go...

[Diana: 160 - 188]

Diana was obviously very moved by the amount and types of support she received from the family who provided her with food and gifts. She noted that they helped with her food insecurity in the sense that they not only provided her enough food for Christmas but also enough to last until well after.

Alice had a different perspective with regards to Christmas charities. Unlike Diana, who seemingly felt that it provided her with increased food security, Alice felt that receiving such supports were demeaning. Therefore, even though she may have needed the food, this form of support was not acceptable. As such, Alice's food security would not be improved in the same sense that Diana's was as acceptability of food is a key component of this state. Alice's contention with this form of support was clearly expressed when she stated:

I didn't apply for Christmas assistance this year cause I just decided I didn't want to... I just didn't want to do it this year for lots of reasons and mostly because it's hard on my nerves, you don't know what you're going to get, if you get anything at all, sometimes you get lots, sometimes you don't get much and I just ... it's degrading and I didn't want to do it, I don't want to do it anymore.

[Alice: 13?? - 1334]

Community Support Program for Youth: Fran indicated that the support she had received from an independent support organization impacted her food security in the sense that it provided her with food directly and offered many different classes

related to nutrition. In a more indirect manner, this program seemed to benefit Fran in that it provided skill-building courses and offered both emotional and physical supports. Although Fran did not indicate stigma was absent, she did not indicate it was present throughout her interview. This may be related to the presence of other programs at this centre that she was able to become involved with. In Kratzmann's (2003) study comparing a stand-alone food bank and one that offered services outside of food provisioning, the level of stigma and guilt seemed to be less in the organization where resources aside from food, were available.

4.3.3.2 *Informal Supports*

The mothers also entered into relationships with various individuals who were not mandated to support them, either knowingly or unknowingly, as a means improve their access to food for their family. Although not as well documented as the use of charitable organizations, the practice of relying on other people as a means to cope with food insecurity is not uncommon and has been documented in several other studies (Michalski, 2003; McIntyre et al, 2001; Tarasuk, 2001b; Tarasuk & MacLean, 1990; Travers, 1993). Informal supports, including family, fathers of the children, friends, roommates, neighbours, and service providers who were not mandated to deal with food insecurity, were distinguished from more conventional forms of supporters, such as the charitable organizations discussed above, that also worked to shape the feeding process. For the most part, those who comprised this group positively influenced the mother's level of food security, however, in some instances the impact of these relations seemingly resulted in unintentional negative outcomes. Such negative outcomes of well-intended actions have also been document by McIntyre, Travers & Dayle (1999) and Williams, McIntyre, Dayle & Raine (2003) who reported on a study that explored the impact of children's feeding programs in Atlantic Canada and noted that such programs might be reproducing, rather than reducing inequities in health and food access.

Before the explication of these relations is undertaken, readers must be clear that this study did not attempt to explicate the entirety of the relationship that the mothers have with these individuals. Rather the aim was to identify the relations that

the mothers entered into with these individuals that specifically worked to organize their food insecurity.

Family. Family members seemed to have the greatest role in influencing and coordinating the mother's food security of all the informal supports. Beginning at the procuring stage, several mothers noted that their parents were currently or had in the past, influenced how they accessed the food they needed to feed their family. On the most basic level, several of the mothers noted that they had at one time asked their parents for food when they ran out. The mothers indicated that their parents were willing to provide support in the form of food if they were asked. Below Alice described a situation in which she often requested food from her parents.

...Like my mom buys a 50 lb. bag of potatoes and it does her for months and months and months, you know she buys this big thing of carrots and it does for months and months ... so sometimes I'll go to my mother's and I'll get another carrot to add to what I have or whatever, a couple more potatoes to add to what I have and I'll go and buy the stew beef just cause ... I don't want to have another can of clam chowder and I don't want to have another can of whatever, like split pea soup, and beans ...

[Alice: 478 - 487]

Through her relation with her mother, Alice not only received food but she was also able to create more acceptable meals for herself and family, thus, allowing her to reach a level of food security that would be unattainable without such assistance.

Many of the mothers indicated that their parents understood their situations and provided them with food without them having to ask. Gale indicated this when she stated *A lot of the time my mom brings some things home to me from her own freezer* [Gale: 667 - 670]. On another level, some of the mothers indicated that their parents were themselves often living on tight budgets and, therefore, were compromising their own situations to help. This is evident by the following statement by Diana:

I know my mom who doesn't really have a whole lot her own self, has brought things over to me as well, you know, family.

[Diana: 772 - 776]

This account not only identified how parents were impacting the mothers' food security but also helped to recognize a depth of poverty that existed in these families'.

Alice noted her parents also assisted in the transportation aspect of procuring food for the family.

I had my mom and my mom would come and get me and then when my kids got in school and I still didn't have a car... I'd go back and forth [to the store] with my mom,
[Alice: 1166 - 1195]

On the surface, this act of generosity by Alice's mother seemed to be helpful because it gave her more flexibility with her budget, as she did not have to spend money on transportation. However, as Alice continued to discuss how this impacted on her feeding process, she became agitated. This frustration is expressed below:

...but she always got her groceries on Thursday morning and so we had to do whatever, but Thursday morning was it and that's just when she gets her groceries and she's always gotten her groceries on Thursdays and...that's the way it is. ...so that was fine, I could cope with that and I would go back and forth but my mom is a very...she likes everything in packages, she's really ... I don't know why, cause we had a large family and it was easier for her, and she only did big meals twice a week, on Sundays always and Friday nights, and she just... the way she eats but she eats stuff that I think oh why do you buy that for? We get in a fight in the grocery store and everything like it would be awful and she's like that's not enough to do you for two weeks and then she gets disgusted at me cause she didn't think that would be enough, there was always a fight going on between the two of us... it was awful so that stopped and I thought oh my god forget it, I just would rather be independent and I'll come and go right so then I would just take the bus one way with the kids.
[Alice: 1170 - 1195]

Although Alice's mother probably had good intentions, having to rely on her for transportation seemed to agitate Alice and perhaps left her feeling somewhat stripped of her autonomy in procuring food. Alice's frustration may also have stemmed from her inability to participate fully in the food procuring process, which is a process women are made to feel is their duty and an aspect that defines them (Van Estrik, 1999). Such a privilege as to decide when to go shopping is often taken for granted; therefore, when individuals are unable to participate in this process because of factors out of their control, such as lack of income, feelings of frustration should

not be surprising. Although Alice's mother increased Alice's access to food retail outlets, because this did not seem to be an acceptable manner of support to Alice this apparent act of kindness may actually have done little to affect Alice's food security.

Children and Relatives. As a relationship that existed in the mothers' mesosystem, relatives had a more indirect affect on how the mothers bought and prepared food and their food security through their interactions with the children. The more common manner in which this occurred was when the grandparents provided food directly to the child, such as Alice's mother's tendency to buy a treat for the kids every week. Doing this seemed to be an acceptable manner of providing assistance for Alice and it no doubt lessened the pressure to provide other treats to her children. In addition, as discussed above, Erin's parent's also provided her child with money for school lunches. This was a service that Erin liked to see her child have access to. Yet, she noted, *that kind of thing ... costs*, therefore, it can be assumed that if it were not for the assistance of her parents Erin's child would not be privy to these meals. Although neither Erin or Alice voiced any direct frustration, the inability of being able to provide these amenities without parental support may have caused some level of anxiety.

Aside from the school lunches, Erin identified other ways in which her parents influenced her food insecurity through their relationship with her child. This influence was felt when her parents would take her child for the night. In the quote below it is evident that this greatly impacts on Erin's normal feeding processes.

And a lot of the time if [child] happens to like go to stay at my parents' house that night I'm like good I don't have to make food and even eat. You know she's not home I ... You know she's not home I don't have to worry about it, I don't have to worry about what I'm feeding her, what I'm feeding myself, how much is going to be left and I just say I can't eat that and I just keep it and like good... I don't have to worry ...

[Erin: 273 - 276]

Such strategies to cope with food insecurity are not uncommon. Several studies with food insecure mothers have documented sending children to other people's homes for meals as a coping strategy for food insecurity (Tarasuk, 2001b; Travers, 1993). In Erin's situation, she indicated that when her parents take her child she altered her feeding process to a point that she does not eat, a habit that, as

indicated in section 4.3.1.3, is not uncommon among the mothers who participated in this study. Erin also indicated that when her child was at her parents she was confident that her child would be fed. Therefore, this relationship between her child and parents ensured her child ate well and allowed Erin to save food in her own house. That is, not only did she not have to feed her daughter but neither did she have to feed herself.. Although not eating made Erin feel the most extreme form of food insecurity- hunger- when this situation is examined very narrowly this situation helped Erin's cope with her food insecurity just by decreasing her anxiety about having enough food in her household. Such coping strategies increased food security in the present; it did nothing to build long-term food insecurity. Such strategies also download the responsibility for achieving food security solely on the backs of the mothers, leaving society blameless.

Father of Child. These findings position fathers as informal supports. While fathers should see themselves as responsible for taking an active role in raising their children, the mothers in this study did not seem to view the fathers as a primary, consistent, support or caregiver and treated their support as more of an 'extra support' rather than an expected support. Two of the seven mothers, Diana and Gale, mentioned that the fathers of their children impacted their food security. Both mothers noted that the fathers helped with aspects with shopping. Gale, who had a very sick child, noted that while the father of her child did not provide her with any financial support, he did help out with groceries.

Ummm, [father], like [father] went [shopping] Monday, a lot of the times I do up lists and [father] goes for me. The majority of the time because it's just too much [to shop] with [child]. I've got to watch [child] around germs and stuff, but premies are very prone to stuff so. A good, more than half the time, I do up a list and [father] gets exactly what's on it and brings it back.
[Gale: 586 - 598]

In Diana's case, the father of her children inadvertently became involved in the procurement process in that Diana tried to shop when it was his turn to look after them. He also impacted her feeding work when he took the children out to eat.

... and the [children] now they get to out [to eat] a lot with their dad so, that's a fortunate thing for me...
[Diana: 34-36]

Diana noted that taking her children out to eat once in awhile was important to her because she did not want them to miss out on this seemingly normal activity. Therefore, by taking her children out to eat, the father of Diana's children seemed to decrease her anxiety about this in that he ensured the children did not miss out on the experience while decreasing the financial burden on Diana for having to do this. Undoubtedly, however, this caused Diana frustration in that she herself was unable to provide her children with this experience.

Friend. Friends of the mothers were also part of the informal support that worked to organize the mother's food security. Overall, the influence that these friends had on the mothers' food insecurity was positive. On the most basic level friends impacted the mothers' feeding process by providing food to them directly. For instance, Diana noted that *we have been very fortunate to have a few friends that you know genuinely care and you know come out to see us, so when they come over they bring food to cook* [Diana: 752 - 755]. As a result, the mothers could avoid having to buy food, a task most mothers noted that they disliked, and be more secure that they would have enough food to feed their families.

Several of the mothers also identified that friends often facilitated the process of accessing food venues that otherwise may not have been accessible to these mothers. For example, Diana stated that *I've had other people go to the food bank for me because I have twins and how am I going to carry it when I've got to carry twins.* [Diana: 264 - 268]. In Diana's situation, without a partner to assist her in caring for her two young children on a continual basis, it could be assumed without the support of friends she would not be able to access the food bank. Diana, as well as others, also noted that friends provided her transportation to and from the grocery store.

Beth and her friends had developed a technique to ensure they all had sufficient amounts of food, which involved swapping unwanted food received from the food bank with each other so that none was wasted. As Beth noted *between me and my friends [food from food bank] get used. If we don't need it we pass it around* [Beth: 364 - 367]. This finding not only demonstrated the support provided by friends but also Beth and her friends' resourcefulness. Travers (1993) reported similar

resourcefulness in coping when she undertook a study involving low income mothers involved in a FRC in Halifax who participated in her study.

Both Beth and Alice indicated that friends played a supportive role in preparing meals.

... and if I have a friend here and we're cooking, we cook together, you know it would be a couple of hours that we would cook, depends on what we're going to make, if I have a roast and then peel potatoes and then make dessert, but we usually don't eat much dessert, except maybe some fruit ...
[Alice: 133 - 139]

Not only did Alice's friend help prepare food when she was over visiting, she also provided Alice a kind of support not often felt among these mothers. These supports cannot be seen and may taken for granted by those who have them. This involvement by Alice's friend seemed to instil some sort of enjoyment into the mealtime that may not often have been felt in her home where the stress of poverty seemed to often overshadow any possible pleasure in this event. Throughout the interviews it appeared that the mothers did not often get to access these types of supports but when they did the impact seemed to be felt and translated into a more positive feeding process.

Friends and their Support Systems. Relations within the mothers' mesosystem involving her friends also coordinated the mothers' food insecurity. In this case, some of the mothers' friends facilitated the shopping process by providing access to other individuals, such as their own relatives, who themselves provided the supports. These impacts were clearly illustrated by Erin when she noted how the provision of transportation by her friend's mother allowed her to buy more foods.

[Friend's name] but her parents said well we'll come and get you and she said oh my parents are coming to get us and I'm like good now I can go buy that other item that I didn't pick up, now that I have a couple more dollars ... it really does come down to that wire. You know what I mean? Oh I can get that thing of cheese or that thing of milk or the thing of whatever, you have another three dollars that you were going to spend on a cab or whatever so. . and cabs went up so I think it's \$5.00 now.
[Erin: 743 - 755]

This quote illustrates the immediate impact of seemingly small acts of support on the feeding process. With the money she saved from not having to take a taxi home, Erin was able to directly purchase more food than first anticipated. This was

especially significant as it was noted above that she had a strong tendency to buy the same things each week to ensure she had enough money to buy the necessities.

Roommates. Fran was the only mother interviewed with roommates. For her, the roommates had an important role in organizing her food security, especially in regards to shopping and cooking. She also noted that *the only time I really get to enjoy a meal is when [child] sleeping or if [roommates] is here to watch him and I can eat.* [Fran: 105 - 109]. The assistance of her roommates allowed her to be able to eat and enjoy her meals.

Neighbours: Alice indicated that she entered into relations with their neighbours in a manner that worked to organize her and her family's food insecurity. Alice noted that her neighbours often brought her and her family leftover food, provided her with food processing equipment, and picked up items at the grocery store for her, particularly when she was sick and could not go shopping. It was clear Alice would not accept this support without reciprocity, however, when Alice discussed how her neighbours sometimes pick up things for her at the grocery store:

... like the other day the car wouldn't go and it was too cold and I said I'm just not going out for milk, and it was Friday so we just had powdered milk like Friday and Saturday and my neighbour went out yesterday morning and got groceries which they're really good next door and I said can you get me some milk, yeah so it helps when you have neighbours like that and I gave him the money and everything and he said no, no and I said oh no, I have to buy milk, here's the money, don't insult me please,
[Alice: 880 - 890]

As noted above, this is just one example of how Alice's neighbours facilitated her food security. Alice stated that she gave back to these neighbours in different capacities in which she was able. Therefore, even though Alice may not have always been able to "trade" money for food, a system that defines our more socially acceptable food system, she has established other means with different people so that she can access foods.

Service Providers. Erin and Gale each identified a service provider who was organizing their food insecurity. In Erin's situation, she had talked extensively in her interview about her milkman who let her run a tab. Erin seemed to feel strongly that if she did not have [the ability to run the tab] *then probably wouldn't have milk either*

because, as she highlighted, a lot of people can't you know afford milk. [Erin: 20 - 25]. To further illustrate the importance of this point Erin described the cost of milk and how it impacted on her food budget.

... when she started drinking milk, like when she switched from formula to milk or whatever, it was at least \$60 a month just for milk. When you only have like \$100 to cover groceries, and \$60 of it is milk, so now you know why I got a tab started ...so I try and give him money but its not always enough-so there's always a little bit more and that little bit more is getting bigger and bigger.

[Erin: 455 - 467]

Several mothers throughout the interviews discussed the cost of milk.

However, Erin was the only mother who seemed to have established a manner, albeit not perfect, to ensure her child had access to as much as she wanted. To establish such a system of acquiring milk not only required work on the milkman's part, but Erin also had to then keep track of what she owed, when she had to pay, and how much. She was also no doubt under a great deal of stress as this system was very fragile and could easily be broken if the milkman left his job or was forced to collect on the credits.

During Gale's interview her relationship with the staff at the IWK Children's Hospital was also identified as organizing her food security. Gale's child was very sick when he was born and at the time of the interview continued to be chronically ill. As a result, he required a litany of special treatments and foods. In order to help her understand the specifics of her child's condition and his nutritional needs, Gale noted that the dietitian at the IWK would *sit there for hours trying to figure out the best ways to feed [child] and how much...* [Gale: 190 - 193]. Gale also stated that the staff at the hospital was instrumental in arranging the delivery of special formulas to her house free of charge and an exemption from the co pay for prescription through the IA Program, which will be discussed further in section 4.4.2.5. Both of these arrangements were an absolute necessity for Gale. Without the assistance from the hospital staff Gale may have been without the co pay exemption and/or the special formulas for a long period or may not have received them at all thus placing her in even greater financial strain.

4.3.4 *Summative Discussion: The Everyday World*

Section, 4.3 aimed to explicate the social relations present in the mothers' micro and mesosystems organizing their experience of food insecurity. To try to draw a deeper meaning to these findings, this Summative Discussion, which consists of two parts, will use relevant published literature to situate these findings. First, the work of feeding and the relations the mothers' entered into their micro and mesosystems will be examined through an income lens, explicating the finding that money was organizing the mothers' feeding work both within and outside of the market economy. The next section of the Summative Discussion will briefly identify and discuss the two lines of fault identified in section 4.3. The first line of fault existed between nutrition education and the mothers' needs. The second line of fault was identified as existing between the food available in food banks and the true needs of the mothers. The identification of these fault lines is the first step in highlighting the disjuncture between the mothers' lives and programs and policies designed to improve the mothers' lives. The overall purpose of this discussion is to highlight how the relations impact the mothers food insecurity and eventually work to, seemingly unknowingly, create barriers, along with the lines of fault, to the implementation of broader based long term strategies that will better address food insecurity.

4.3.4.1 *Money as coordinating food insecurity in the everyday*

Although the relations the mothers entered into with their kids, informal supports and charitable organizations coordinated the overall experience of food insecurity for the mothers, the underlying impact seemed to be more one of helping the mothers cope with food insecurity. Indeed, these relations only increased food security for a short period of time, if at all. The one relation that did have a powerful coordinating reach over the food insecurity of the mothers and these other relations, however, was money.

The question still remains around the power money can yield in this organizing role. The main reason for this can be linked to the coordination of our current food system. In recent centuries, the production of food has moved from the household to

broader regional, national and global markets (Freidmann, 1991; 1993; Lang, 1999). With this change, many individuals within our society no longer have knowledge around how food is produced and view it more as a commodity than a basis for supporting life (Friedmann, 1993; Kneen, 1993). This commodification of food has made the market economy, in which money is exchanged for goods and services (Michaliski, 2003), the dominant economy through which people access food. In addition, as noted by Travers (1996), accessing food through this avenue is the most socially acceptable manner within our society.

Monies to participate in the market economy can be accessed within and also through the state economy, such as through the IA or CCTB programs. However, as will be discussed in greater detail in section 4.4, the monies available in NS through these programs are inadequate to meet the needs of those who rely on them (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004; Community Advocates Network, 2003; Reed, 2004). Without adequate income, the mothers within this study were forced to adopt mechanisms to try to function within the market economy. These mothers, however, found it necessary to access other markets, including the domestic, informal and social economy, as a means to ensure they were able to access enough food. The follow section will look at how the mother worked within the market economy, to try and make monies purchase the food her family needed, and also how they accessed the domestic, informal and social economy to help them stave off extreme food insecurity. This discussion will help to facilitate a deeper understanding about complexity of the mothers' everyday lives in dealing with food insecurity and build the case for systemic change to improve food security.

Surviving within the market economy. The inadequacy of the monies received by the mothers through the state economy was made evident in section 4.3 and has been widely noted in the literature examining this in Nova Scotia (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004; Community Advocates Network, 2003; Reed, 2004; Williams et al, in press). This inadequacy resulted in the mothers having to enter into relationships and develop techniques to try to function within the market economy. Many strategies have been documented that are situated within these economies that work to assist the mothers in the short term, but do little to improve their overall level of food security.

Within the market economy, as a means to try and make the money ‘stretch’ the mothers had to develop elaborate budgeting skills, a finding consistent with other food security related studies (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004; Badun, Evers & Hooper, 1995; Hamelin, Beaudry & Habicht, 2002; McIntyre et al, 2001; 2002; Tarasuk, 2001b; Travers, 1996; Travers, 1993; Tarasuk & MacLean, 1990). These budgeting activities often included strategies such as watching flyers and buying in bulk, also noted by McIntyre et al. (2001) and Tarasuk and MacLean (1990). Buying less nutritious food was another commonly used technique uncovered in this and other studies (McIntyre, 2001; Tarasuk & MacLean, 1990; Travers, 1997). It was used by mothers to ensure they have enough food in their homes to, at the very least, fill stomachs. Although not noted previously within the literature, this study also showed that monotonous shopping lists were used as a means to allow some of the mothers to ensure that their budgets, however limited, could purchase the foods they needed.

4.3.4.2 *Other’ economies role in coping with food insecurity*

The strategies employed by the mothers to cope within the market economy, such as budgeting, buying the same items, watching for sales, buying less nutritious foods and/or buying in bulk, were quite elaborate, however, this and other studies (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004; Badun, Evers & Hooper, 1995; Hamelin, Beaudry & Habicht, 2002; McIntyre et al, 2001; 2002; Tarasuk, 2001b; Travers, 1996; Travers, 1993; Tarasuk & MacLean, 1990), show the inadequacy of these strategies to assist even in the short term. These techniques were insufficient to allow the mothers to be food secure. Friedmann (1993, p-214) noted that ‘those without money are increasingly forced to enter large networks of buying and selling at the expense of self provisioning-in order to survive’. The broader networks employed by the mothers in this study as a means to help cope with their food insecurity, and in some cases to increase their viability within the market economies, included participation in the domestic, informal and social economies described by Michalski (2003). Michalski (p. 279), suggested these economies can be viewed as being ‘especially important among low income households with limited access to state and market incomes’. Although the classification of all the mothers’ actions into these economies would be

futile, as a means to show their impact on the mothers' food insecurity a discussion will follow regarding how these economies impacted, improved or worsened their food insecurity.

Domestic economy. The domestic economy involves those activities that produce goods and services within the household (Michaliski, 2003). Until about a century ago the domestic economy was the dominant source of goods and services consumed by household members (Michaliski, 2003), that is, until globalization broadened the food system to include the regional, national and global levels (Freidman, 1991; 1993; Lang, 1999). The management strategies identified here within the domestic economy have been identified within several studies, although they were not specifically classified as such. Similar to the findings here, domestic economy strategies documented in published research include baking or cooking in bulk (McIntyre et al., 2001); monotony in the food served (Hamelin, Beaudry & Habicht, 2002; McIntyre et al.) and conversely being creative in the foods cooked so as to make the monotony bearable (McIntyre et al., 2001). In addition another strategy that can be classified in the domestic economy and identified within this study involved the mothers skipping meals, as a means to attempt to ensure their food supplies would last and their children would have enough to eat. This is a common finding in many other studies (Badun, Evers & Hooper, 1995; Hamelin, Beaudry & Habicht; McIntyre et al. 2003; McIntyre et al. 2002; McIntyre et al. 2001). Although these strategies did not increase the mothers' buying ability in the market economy, it enabled them to conserve of the resources they did purchase.

The informal economy of kith and kin. The informal economy of kith and kin involves the engagement of extended family and friends in production activities that benefit a household. The mothers entered this economy to cope with food insecurity through their relations with family members, friends, neighbours, roommates and other informal supports. For example, sending children to eat at parents' houses saved the mothers from having to use their limited amounts of food and as such increased the amounts of food available to serve at other meals. Also, trading foods with friends and neighbours allowed the mothers to vary their food intakes and overall increase the amount of food available for consumption. Such engagement is a common

mechanism to cope with food insecurity. Much of the same literature as outlined above also noted the reliance of low income women on such supports a means to address and cope with their food insecurity (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004; Hamelin, Beaudry & Habicht, 2002; Tarasuk, 2001b; McIntyre et al. 2001; Travers, 1993).

Social economy. The social economy includes goods and services available through the many types of voluntary and charitable organizations, and other independent organizations that may provide services either to the general public or a defined membership. Overall, the social economy aims to put people and community, rather than profit, at the centre of their missions (Social Economy Network, 2005).

The primary participation the mothers undertook within the social economy to help cope with their food insecurity was their relation with charitable organizations. Although it has been reported that less than one third of all food insecure individuals utilize food banks (Che & Chen, 2001), the use of charitable organizations was the component of the social economy noted as being used to try to cope with food insecurity both by participants in this study and within other similar studies (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004; Badun, Evers & Hooper, 1995; Hamelin, Habicht & Beaudry, 1999; McIntyre et al., 2001; Michalizi, 2003; Jacob-Starkey & Kuhlein, 2000; Tarausk, 2001; Tarasuk & MacLean, 1990; Travers, 1996).

4.3.4.3 *Lines of fault*

Nutrition education material vs. mothers' reality. As noted at the beginning of this Summative Discussion, two lines of fault have emerged thus far. The first line of fault was noted to exist between current nutrition education programs and materials and the mothers' realities they relate to having the ability to follow these messages. Within this study several mothers identified frustrations with being unable to meet common nutrition recommendations present throughout our society. Although it can be argued that these materials and programs were not trying to address income disparities, the fact remains that such 'population' based materials as CFGHE do not consider, or fail to recognize their limitations in addressing, the realities of low income populations. This is unfortunate and concerning, especially considering that Travers (1997) identified that feelings of self-blame arose among the low income

women who participated in her study¹⁷ due to their inability to meet nutritional standards as promoted by nutrition professionals. Indeed, Badun, Evers and Hooper (1995), who undertook a study with parents living in disadvantaged communities and aimed to, among other things, determine nutrition knowledge of their participants, also concluded that nutrition inadequacies are more likely a result of inadequate resources than poor food choices. Overall, these findings help supports experts' assertions that nutrition education alone is not enough, not nearly enough, to combat food insecurity (Tarasuk, 2001c; McLaughlin, Tarasuk & Kreiger, 2003; Travers, 1997).

Food available at food bank vs. mothers' reality. The second line of fault identified in this study was between the mothers' food needs and types of food received from food banks. That is, mothers felt the food received was not the quality or types they truly needed to assist them in addressing their household food insecurity. This is not surprising, Tarasuk & Eakin (2003) noted that within their research, charitable food assistance workers felt that those who accessed these venues did not acquire the types and amounts of food they needed, that food received through these venues were largely a symbolic gesture and that food banks, overall, lack the capacity to response to the food needs of those who seek assistance (Tarasuk & Eakin). In addition, participants of recent story sharing workshops held in Nova Scotia who also accessed food banks noted that the foods received from the food banks was often unsatisfactory (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004). Overall, Tarasuk and Eakin felt that because the distribution of food assistance often does not meet the true needs of their clients, these needs are then rendered invisible. As such, the invisibility of the everyday needs of those who experience food insecurity leaves little initiative for communities and governments to take true and substantive action to address the underlying issues of food insecurity (Tarasuk & Eakin, 2003). This is significant: this hiding of the mothers' reality further widens the line of fault that already exists within the lives of many low income individuals.

¹⁷ Travers' (1993) study was focused on explicating the social organization of nutritional inequities using various methods of qualitative data analysis process and based on the methodologies of institutional ethnography.

4.3.4.4 *Summary*

Thus far this chapter has explicated relations and lines of fault identified in this study at the micro and mesosystem. These findings are significant showing that, even at the local levels the inadequacy of our society to address food insecurity is strikingly apparent and has far reaching consequences. However, the relations organizing the mothers' food insecurity go beyond what is tangibly experienced in their everyday lives.

4.4 Continuing the Explication: Exosystem Relations

Section 4.3 examined how money, or more fittingly, the household's level of income, was organizing the mothers' food insecurity. The questions I remain: Why do they lack food and resources? What are the causes for them to be poor? The answer to these questions is, of course, multidimensional. A total explication is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, some of the culprits can be identified when looking at other relations that exist within the mothers' exosystem, most notably, the policies and programs that work to determine the amounts of money they receive to support their and their family's health and well being. This section will explicate the relations that were regulating the amounts of money the mothers received and how the policies and programs that worked in this regulation process also coordinated the mothers' food insecurity. These relations, the policies and programs that governed the mothers' incomes levels, fall within the mothers' exosystem, however, they were present within the mothers everyday life more concretely in their regulatory power they had over their income levels and perhaps unknowingly, their food security. The main relations identified as having an impact on the mothers participating in this study were the IA Program, National Child Benefit Initiative's CCTB program, and its component funds the National Child Benefit Supplement. These were the main programs the mothers accessed income from to support, attempted to support, their health and well being. Other relations identified as organizing the mothers food insecurity, but not necessarily their level of income, included the food retail sector and transportation policies, both located within the exosystem.

While both the IA and CCTB programs were vital to the mothers' overall income intake, and sometimes the CCTB provided a greater portion, the mothers emphasized the IA Program much more. The reasons for this were not clear. Perhaps the mothers felt they had a closer tie to this program because of such things as their direct involvement with caseworkers. This finding could also be as a result of the inclusion criteria for this study: all participants were aware that they had to be on IA and consequently may have unconsciously put more emphasis on this program.

The remainder of section 4.4 will explore how these two programs affected the mothers' food insecurity, from the mother's point of view. In an attempt to attain a more thorough explication of these programs, three employees from the Department of Community Service's IA Program were interviewed and the Employment Support Income Assistance (ESIA) Policy Manual and relevant CCTB literature was reviewed and analyzed. These additional data assisted to identify further ruling relations organizing the mother's food insecurity. Quotes from these interviews will be ***italicized and bolded*** while the mother's comments will be *italicized*. By discussing these issues together it is hoped that the lines of fault that emerged from these data as existing between these two worlds will become apparent.

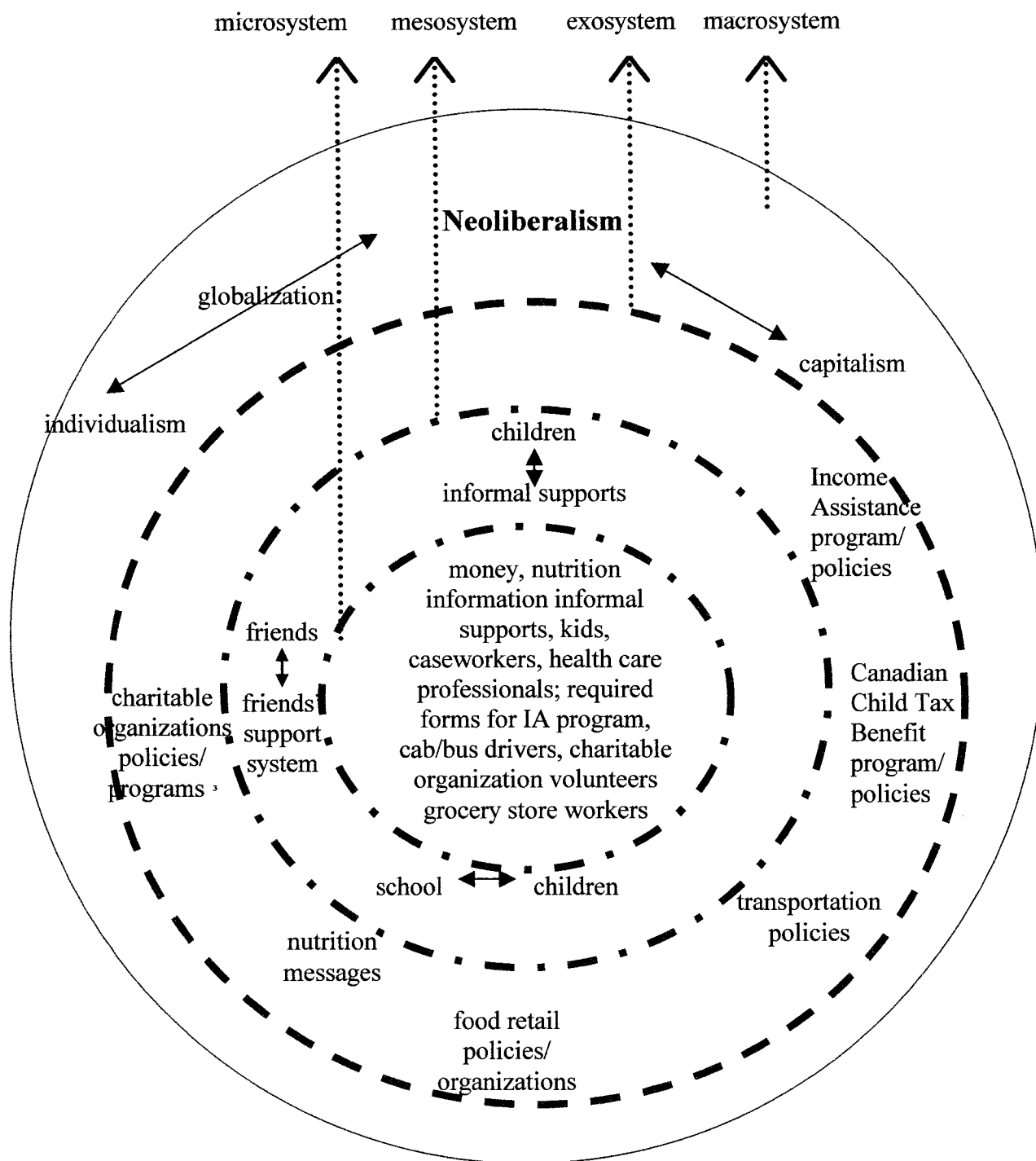


Figure 4-2. Map of the identified social relations organizing the food insecurity of the everyday lives of the participating mothers organized according to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

4.4.1 *Income Assistance Program: Beginning the explication*

The subsections of section 4.4.1 will outline the manner in which the IA and CCTB programs organized the mothers' experiences of food insecurity. Before this is done, section 4.4.1.1 will provide a backgrounder on the history and details of the IA program. This will be done to provide context for the remainder of section 4.4 and to ensure readers have the background knowledge to clearly identify any lines of fault that may exist. The following subsections will identify specific aspects of the IA and CCTB programs impacting on the mothers' food insecurity with a specific focus on explicating any fault lines.

4.4.1.1 *ESIA Policy, Act and Regulations: The details and analysis*

The ESIA policy manual states that the purpose of the ESIA Act is to 'provide for the assistance of persons in need and, in particular, to facilitate their movement toward independence and self-sufficiency'. To begin to understand this policy, the history of how it was developed was discussed with the IA employees.

History of the IA Program. Understanding the history of the IA program is pertinent to truly understanding the current policy and how it organized the mothers' food insecurity. It has only been in recent years that major changes were made to the program. The changes were referred to as the Redesign and were implemented in 2001; however, several changes have occurred to the program since that time. In 2001 the redesign combined the old Family Benefits program for mothers with the disabled and the Municipal Social Assistance for all other individuals who needed income support into one program. The IA employees discussed several reasons for the changes. One of the major reasons centred on the desire to ensure that the program was more transparent and inclusive. Below Employee 1 outlined this goal when she stated:

Well I think that's the other thing with this new act and regulation and the policy is that we want people to understand, we want it to be transparent, we want people to ask questions, we want to be kept in check here, right, so that's why we say we hope our policy is transparent, we want it to be inclusive, we want... you know, that's why its online, so that people will have that resource and you'd be surprised at ... I get phone calls from people who have good ideas right, did you think of this?

[Employee 2: 1201 - 1211]

Employee 1 also described how in 2001 the Nova Scotia government wanted to make their income support program more consistent across the province.

O.K. let's talk about... the program has changed a great deal right because when we look at our focus, because our focus in the past was before we had the new act in 2001, and before we did the amalgamation and the province took responsibility for all of the municipalities, as you can imagine, there were certainly inconsistencies, so the goals of that was one to have more consistency so that regardless of where you were living in Nova Scotia, right, that you could understand how you could be eligible for social assistance or for income assistance. So that was one of the things, was to get rid of the inconsistency and I think that's happened...

[Employee 2: 345 - 359]

The increased emphasis on employability was another far-reaching change that occurred in the IA program. In 2001, there was a shift from assistance and income support to emphasizing and supporting the transition from the IA program to employability and self-sufficiency. As noted by Employee 2, the increased emphasis on employability took the form of increased funding for special needs that were intended to decrease barriers to employability.

So when you look at the old family benefits program, one of the things that wasn't attached to that provincial program was special needs and special needs whether employment related, transportation, all of that and I think that's probably one of our biggest ... one of the biggest changes I think with this new act...

[Employee 2: 368 – 373]

Such a focus on employment is in line with the neoliberal ideology that has infiltrated social policies in recent years in Canada and presume that ‘every human being is an entrepreneur managing [her] own life, and should act as such’ (Treanor, 2003 p-10).

While it was not clear whether or not this change to a self-sufficiency focus was as a result of, or a motivating factor for the changes, the IA employees also noted that the new IA system removed categorical income support. The employees stated that the current system did not predetermine what type of support someone could apply for; they described how instead, the person is assessed for employability and if determined employable, the amount and types of support they can access are then determined. Employee 2 discussed the thinking behind the reasons why the removal of categories would be more beneficial to the client.

Family Benefits was more for single parents and disabled, and as you know we have no categories [in the current system], or it's not categorical because as you come in the system you're assessed for employability so if you're not employable then we work with you to try ... some support and to give you ... and it can be anything... a self-esteem course or help you with your resume or I mean because people
[Employee 2: 295 - 305]

This policy and procedure reflects the increased emphasis on employment and self-sufficiency.

Current Policy. The analysis of the ESIA Policy Manual also resulted in the identification of many other ruling forces in the exosystem and macrosystem working to organize the ESIA policy. On a most basic level, the ESIA policy is simply a translation of the Act and Regulations that govern this program. The Act and Regulations themselves have to be approved by government, Executive Council and Treasury Board before they are adopted. Once approved they are considered law and are not easily changed. IA employee 2 discussed this process in detail.

O.K. there's actually there's the Act the regulations. So there's two different processes for it... because the Act of course is the long and the regulations support the Act and then the policies support the regulations and the Act and with the Act and the regulations it has to go through government, through the Treasury Policy Board. There's a whole procedure because it is the law so you're asking to make an amendment or change or revision to the law so of course it goes through the whole process, through government, through cabinet. There's this form that needs to be filled out to support the recommendation. It goes over as a recommendation or as a request for change and then it's up to government basically... whether it needs to be changed or you know... based on all the recommendations, suggestions and you know information, given to support it. In order to do a policy change of course policies are built around the regulation so we have the authority, when I say we, the executive director and the minister, to change policy. But it's all backed and supported by the legislation. So there is ... it takes time even for the policy to be revised and ...
[Employee 2: 83-109]

Clearly, aspects of the IA program that are regulated cannot be changed quickly or easily. A main component of the program that is regulated are the Rate Schedules, which outline specific amounts of income available for budget items covered under the IA program. There are two categories of rates schedules: Schedule

A: Personal Allowances and Maximum Shelter Allowance and Schedule A: Items of Special Need (See Appendix H and I).

Politicians and the public. Although the processes to achieve change to the regulations guiding the IA program are lengthy, it is not an impossible task. For example, from the above quote it is evident that politicians, their parties and their vested interests, and therefore societal ideologies, values and beliefs (which are key to creating political ideals) can have an influence on these rate schedules. Therefore, although the politicians seem to be the gatekeepers to any changes to these schedules, the approach of this study would help to identify other ruling powers actually organizing the work of the politicians. This was evident when Employee 2 talked about how a Minister can affect the ESIA policy and program.

... it depends on the Minister [of Community Services] too... right you may have a Minister that you know social policy is a big thing and he asks us to move into different directions with it, so... from the level that I'm at, I don't see a whole lot of big difference, but it's not to say that the deputy or others may be asked to do things differently. And it depends on what that minister has promised right as far as you know improvement and that kind of thing so. [Employee 2: 225-234]

Clearly, the personal beliefs and values of the individual who is appointed to be the Minister of Community Services can have substantial influence on the ESIA program and policies. Employee 2 also highlighted how election promises made to constituents during elections influence what is done with the program and policies. These data would indicate that public opinion and advocacy have important roles in shaping policy change. Indeed, the force of public opinion on shaping policy has been previously documented (Page & Shapiro, 1983; Danahar & Kato, 1995).

Fiscal Restraint: The fiscal situation of the government was noted by the IA employees as mediating changes to the IA program.

Interviewer: [... so you would do the research on that and those would be recommendations . . .]

That's right, [changes] would go forward to government, and when I say government [I mean] Cabinet for their approval or not...and of course, [these changes must] live within the financial aspect too as well. And then you have a budget, here's your budget, you know where are you going to put.

[Employee 2: 241 - 251]

It would appear that the overall fiscal situation of the province, the yearly budgets, the needs of other Provincial Departments, the values of society and the impact this has on policy work influence the IA program and the income available to recipients.

Bureaucrats and Policy Forum. Bureaucrats also wield influence over the IA program; however, the ruling relations, outlined previously, guide their influence. Although IA bureaucrats can make changes to policies, to the extent that they still meet the requirements of the regulations, these individuals cannot change the act and regulations directly. One of the main avenues through which bureaucrats can influence policy was through Policy Forums. Policy Forums are meetings held periodically throughout the year. IA employees such as district managers, supervisors and head office employees attend these forums and discuss pertinent issues.

Employee 1 explains the process of these Policy Forums

And how we do that is that we have what we call a policy forum, and it's a meeting of the specialists, in each of the four regions, maybe other representatives like a district manager, to a supervisor depending on what the policy issues are of the day and the directors and managers here and head office. And we meet on a monthly basis and this is an opportunity for issues to come forth for us to be able to problem solve and then determine whether...which policy needs to be twigged, which policy isn't working for us, is there any kind of legislative changes that may have to come out of this policy... and we do that on a monthly basis... so it's quite a time-consuming...and what's good is that it gets to. . .a lot of the issues don't just come from us... folks up here, it comes from our front line workers, they're dealing with clients and they're saying you know what, when I read that transportation policy, that's not clear to me and this is how it's being interpreted. What did we really mean to say? And it also deals with issues of inconsistency so if you know one region is doing something differently than the others, then we can at least have a chance to chat about that and say o.k. is that how the policy was intended to be interpreted? So it's also clarification of interpretation of policy.

[Employee 1: 86 - 126]

The description of the Forum identified that the bureaucrats attending have influence over the IA program and, therefore, indirectly the food security of the mothers who participate in this program. Although IA bureaucrats cannot make policy changes on their own, they have the power to identify and suggest changes to the regulations that may be accepted by government and clarify existing policies.

Clients and front line workers are not invited to these Forums. From the perspective of the IA employees interviewed, the client's voice is brought to this table through the bureaucrats who themselves receive feedback from the caseworkers who hear the issues of the clients. Clearly, the client's and caseworkers voices are subject to many filters before they are heard at the Policy Forum.

IA Employees did recognize however that stakeholders have been involved in policy change and/or policy consultation. For example the ESIA Handbook which provides clear and concise information about the ESIA program to clients was developed in consultation with stakeholders through regular meetings with Department of Community Services. ESIA Employee 2 described this involvement.

And the minister actually and with the deputy minister as well, the Community Advocacy Group...they meet on a monthly basis or every couple of months, and discuss issues that they ...I think they're moving towards including the stakeholders in decisions and . . .the whole client handbook, of course all the input that was put in there from the stakeholders. Yeah there's a building of trust,
[Employee 2: 142-150]

Other relations organizing the IA program. While it was recognized that changes to policies and regulations could be initiated at the Policy Forum, several other factors work to act as the basis for new policies/policy changes and possible changes to the ESIA Act and Regulations. Below Employee 2 identified several of these factors.

You're talking the personal allowance and the shelter rates... how are they determined and how are they...they are legislated of course...it's... there's a lot of work put in to... they're getting more refined as we go because of course, [policy forum participants] can put something forth, a recommendation and then it depends on whether the government is going to approve it not. There is of course...around the index and benchmark ... I mean I think that they do... especially with furniture, the furnishing schedule, they've just updated that... a special item. I'm not quite sure how to answer, because what I'm thinking is what if there were special needs of course if there's a cost up and above just your basics, of course it's the program is a last resort and given that we... you know the philosophy and the concept now is that we're helping people move towards self-sufficiency, there's that ability to help them a bit with furniture and what have you. I mean before that...family benefits clients didn't have that opportunity; you were just doing what you could. How those are rated, how I understand it, I think there was from the former municipality, because they of course were

the ones that administered social services, prior to 1998 and they were, that's where you went if you needed furniture, so in relation to how the rates are set, I know there's a lot of review, jurisdictional review....and I'm usually involved in doing the analysis, but as far as in relation to. . .and LICO and the low income, and the market basket measure, there's all those factors taken into consideration.

Interviewer:[So market basket is used and those...]

And actually recently the food costing [completed by the] Nutrition Council¹⁸. We've actually, I mean that's going to be a great tool as well because it gives you for Nova Scotia as opposed to other regions because you have to modify it to sort of fit into your... .you know area, here in Nova Scotia. I don't know if that's helpful.

[Employee 2: 185 - 239]

Here several impacting factors were identified. Through this statement, and the other interviews, it was evident that research on current policies and regulations from other jurisdictions and the use of indicators such as the Market Basket Measure¹⁹ are often used to base changes or establish new income rates. Employee 2 also highlighted that the participatory food-costing project that was completed in NS in 2002 (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004), was a useful tool in assisting them to assess rates. It has not been used, however, to index rates to date.

¹⁸ The Nova Scotia Nutrition Council completed food costing for 23 different age and gender groups in 2002 in partnership with the AHPRC and local FRC/Ps (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004). The Department of Community Services has provided representation on the Steering Committee since the Winter of 2003.

¹⁹ The MBM was developed by HRDC in consultation with a Federal-Provincial-Territorial Working Group of officials on Social Development Research and Information. The MBM is a result of a 1997 request by Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Social Services who asked their officials to work on developing the MBM to complement two Statistics Canada low income measures- Low Income Cut-offs (LICOs) and the post-tax Low Income Measure (LIM-IAT). The MBM is not an official measure of poverty nor will it be used to determine eligibility for federal government income support programs. Government of Canada income support programs will continue to determine program eligibility under existing criteria. The MBM, which was designed to complement existing low income measures that are used to help track low income trends among Canada's children, will be introduced in the upcoming *National Child Benefit Progress Report: 2002* (as described at <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/cs/comm/news/2003/030527.shtml>).

The Social Assistance Policies that existed prior to 2001 also seemed to have a lasting affect on the current IA program and rates schedules. As indicated by Employee 2, these past rates were used to base the current rates.

4.4.2 *Income Assistance- Areas of Concern Identified by Mothers*

This section will highlight findings around the different relations organizing the food insecurity of the mothers as identified through interviews with the mothers. The overall disjuncture between the objectives of the current policy and program and the everyday lives of the mothers will be discussed. Next, the amount of income that the mothers received and the impact it had on their food insecurity will be examined. Finally, the specific policy areas that impact the amount of money the mothers received will be explored. The main sections of these policies that impacted on the mothers' income were: the overall amount of income, maintenance support, Pharmacare, special diets and dental procedures. In addition several of the mothers discussed specifics of the CCTB program coordinating their food insecurity and how the IA and CCTB programs interlink. Finally, the timing of the cheques for both the IA and CCTB worked to organize the mothers' food insecurity.

4.4.2.1 *The Purpose of the IA Program: Support vs. Self Sufficiency*

The purpose of the ESIA Act was ***to provide assistance to persons in need and, in particular, to facilitate their movement toward independence and self-sufficiency*** [ESIA Policy Manual, Chapter 2 page 1]. The Department of Community Services and the IA program held the goal of supporting a person's basic needs seriously and worked hard to achieve it, in the capacity that it was given to do so. However, analysis of the ESIA Policy Manual and the interviews with IA Employees indicated that government programs movement towards self-sufficiency, which appeared to begin in earnest during the Redesign in 2001 was prominent and of higher importance. This finding suggests the existence of neoliberalistic ideologies within the policy with the goal of self-sufficiency through employability carrying considerable weight. This finding is not surprising considering the changes to CAP and CHST (CCSD, 2004), which resulted in the elimination of the regulation prohibiting governments to mandate welfare to work type programs (CCSD, 2002), during the time period before the Redesign. This movement was further illuminated

when Employee 2 was asked to describe the purpose of the ESIA program. During this dialogue the IA employee discussed both goals; however, the emphasis and detail of the explanation centred on self-sufficiency.

I would say the main goals is to help people in need and help them move towards self-sufficiency, to help people with maybe some of the barriers that they're facing with respect to employment, and it's hard ... although I'm in the IA, it's really hard to talk about you know the goals of the program because we're so linked to... employment support right so...when I talk about self-sufficiency, helping people with their employment goals, that kind of thing, it does involve ESS so ... actually that's a key focus. . .we understand we have to provide basic needs and also to help people move off of assistance so they can be self-sufficient.

[Employee 2: 35 - 49]

The emphasis on achieving self-sufficiency was again emphasized when all three IA employees noted that the [IA program] *is a program of last resort* [Employee 1: 211; Employee 2: 1373 – 1374; Employee 3: 207]. That is, when all other means of accessing monies through the conventional market economy fail, and individuals have no other viable means of accessing adequate incomes to support their health and well being, they then go to the IA program for assistance.

Aside from this, the fact that the Employment Support (ES) Services and IA Program were so closely linked, and shared the same policy document, also emphasised the weighted goal of achieving self-sufficiency. Employee 2 confirmed this close link when she stated:

We talk a lot, we meet a lot, we're involved together in policy development, procedures, process, all of those kinds of things ...we provide consultation and support to regional staff, so there's a lot of connecting and the fact that we have one employment support and income assistance policy manual ... so... one doesn't go without the other ...

[Employee 2: 55 - 62]

Although many IA policies support the goal of employment, the policy surrounding the requirement of single parent employment/continuing education after the youngest child is one year of age, unless reasonable childcare cannot be found²⁰ had particular impact on the mothers interviewed. This policy statement was no doubt

²⁰ This requirement was not explicitly stated within the ESIA policy manual but is alluded to in Chapter 5 Section 2 (DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES, 2005) and was highlighted by Community Advocates Network who completed a detailed survey with stakeholder groups and focus groups with IA recipients to detail the affects the Redesign has on IA recipients.

aimed at promoting the movement to self-sufficiency of single mothers. Other specific policies worked directly in supporting this policy statement: the policy provided those who went into the workforce/continued education with special allowances for childcare and transportation to facilitate these endeavours [DSC, 2005, Chapter 6 Sections 5 and 6]. The only other circumstances where support was given for childcare and transportation involved health and safety issues. Therefore, although it is clear that the IA program was put in place to support individuals in need, the movement towards the conventional work place for the purpose of establishing self-sufficiency seemed to be more of a focus since 2001. Indeed, within our capitalistic society where neoliberal policy frameworks dominate, such a goal seemed to be admirable and encouraged. However, the merits of such initiatives are unknown.

Indeed, when the self-sufficiency goal of the IA program was referenced to the real life experiences of the mothers interviewed, numerous lines of fault began to emerge. One of the more evident fault lines was between the purpose of the IA program and the mothers' views of their central roles in their daily lives: these involved caring for their children. Carol was one of the mothers who clearly highlighted the emergence of this line when she talked about how the social support system had changed since her mother had been on it.

When my mom was on [income/social assistance], she just had to take care of me and my brother but now it's totally different...you've got to go to work and that's a stress too on me, like cause the kids only have me, like I'm the only one taking care of the kids and if I go to work I'll be worrying about my kids, like are they all right. .
[Carol: 533-541]

Here, it is evident that Carol experienced much anxiety about having to go outside of her home to go to work despite it being emphasized and valued within the IA program. This anxiety could be translated into an assumption that she did not value the achievement of self-sufficiency. It is more likely that achieving self-sufficiency, especially through working outside the home, was not the primary priority of her life at the time of this study. The decision for these mothers to stay home with their children seemed to more of a necessity than a choice as they were the only individuals who were available to care for their children.

Other evidence of this fault line emerged as many of the mothers expressed the importance they put on raising their children properly; something they felt could not be done if they were outside of the house. Diana spoke passionately about this issue during her interview.

And then there's the whole quality childcare, which is why I'm home with my children on assistance and I'm not out there working because I'm not having you know god knows who take care of my children and come home to god knows what so... my children will be with me. And they're happy and I will keep it that way.

Interviewer: [What do you value?]

And that's it and that's.. to me it seems like our society is not valuing what they should value. You know tomorrow's future, which is our children today ... I'm done ... that's it.

[Diana: 885 - 900]

Diana seemed to recognize the conflict between her values and society's values as well as those of the IA program. Her beliefs in what was best for the future of her children, however, seemed to force her to make a choice that was not congruent with other values held in society and reflected in the goal of self sufficiency. For these mothers, the idea of going outside the home to get work while leaving their children with someone else was just not an option. Studies show that the ideological belief of the mother as providing the primary role of caregiver is still very strong within our society (Arai, 2000; Baxter, 1997) suggesting these feelings of needing to provide care giving were not simply a result of personal choice.

4.4.2.2 *Income -General*

Income, or the lack thereof was the main coordinating power influencing the mothers' food insecurity and the IA program, as the primary source of income, regulated the amount of monies received by the mothers. Different technical aspects around how money is transferred from the IA program to the mothers will be explored in the follow sections.

The Process of Determining Income. To provide an understanding of the particular income policies with the IA program the overall process used to determine how much money the mothers received through the program must be described. To begin, to be deemed eligible to receive funds through the program the mothers were

subject to quite a detailed assessment process. This process is outlined in Chapter 5 Section 1 and 2 in the ESIA policy manual (Department of Community Services, 2005). Each month the mothers were required to fill out a form, a small sheet of paper, which served to report any 'chargeable income' that they may have acquired over the month. Chargeable income of an applicant or recipient has been defined as 'as the income that is included for the purposes of computing the amount of assistance payable to the applicant or recipient pursuant to the regulations' (Department of Community Services, 2005, Chapter 4). Beth described the work she did to complete this sheet each month.

Yeah ...This is what I have to send in every month [small sheet of paper will blank spaces for income amounts]. Information and then you have to fill out the back, how much money you get ...so it's everything and if it's not in you don't get a cheque.

[Beth: 542 - 564]

This monthly procedure where the mother filled out the piece of paper and sent it to her worker, was essential in determining the amount of IA received. At the most basic level, this form, which existed within the mothers' microsystem but was created by policies and procedures present within the exosystem, worked to regulate how much money the mothers received each month and therefore the amount of money she had to spend on food. Although the procedure itself did not provide any money, if it was not filled out or if it was filled out incorrectly the amount of money received was impacted. As noted by Beth, if it is not received by the caseworker *you don't get a cheque*. The significant ruling power of this sheet of paper will be illustrated further in section 4.4.2.3 when Maintenance is discussed.

Actual Income Received. Aside from the procedural issues, the mothers also identified issues with the actual amount of income they received through the IA program with an emphasis on the apparent inadequacy. Chapter 5 Section 3 of the ESIA policy manual stated that individuals receive support to meet their basic needs and some special budget items through the IA program. Specifically, this part of the policy manual states:

In determining ongoing eligibility for income assistance, the following shall be included in the budget calculations of the applicant:

- ***The expenses prescribed in Schedule A of the ESIA Regulations for basics and special needs;***
- ***Expenses for participation in an employment plan.***

[ESIA Policy Manual: Chapter 5 Section 3]

IA employees reiterated this point frequently throughout their interviews as well. For example, Employee 2 explained what the IA program considered as a basic need when she was asked about coverage for telephone costs.

Yeah, they're not like a basic need, like your personal allowance and your shelter, but you may receive it if it's for health and safety. They may provide a telephone...

[Employee 2: 1334-1335]

Both the basic and special needs allowances were governed by a rate schedule that was itself directed by regulations. Basic needs allowances included shelter and personal allowance costs and special needs costs. Personal allowance monies received were to pay all other expenses outside of shelter, including all personal and household products, and food for each adult within the household.

Throughout the interviews with the mothers it became clear that they felt the funds received through the IA program were not providing them with the amount of money required to be food secure or meet many of their other 'basic' needs. That is, the funds provided through the IA program did not allow them to access adequate amounts of personally acceptable foods in a socially acceptable way. Diana summarized this feeling when she stated:

It makes me angry. Not angry with them, not with my [children], just angry at the system it sucks. Yeah it does. I mean I'm thankful for Income Assistance but it's not enough really to provide the necessary foods for your family.

[Diana: 105 - 109]

While Diana was very frustrated with the inadequacy of the funds made available through the program, she did note that she felt fortunate for the support. This was interesting because it is as if Diana felt that the IA program and society as whole were going out of the way to provide support, like she was lucky to receive it. Clearly she did not feel she deserved the support.

Gale provided an even more detailed account of her budget, which allowed a clear picture around the inadequacies of the IA funds to develop.

[I] write it out on paper so I had enough money for groceries, but here's an example for you know like, all together I get \$794 and I don't think that's ... cause it's pretty sad and pathetic so I don't care who knows about it, it's not me personally, it's them you know ... so...it's hard ...there's \$794 per month, my rent is \$580, so that brings me down to \$214, so the month before last month I didn't have enough money to pay for my phone bill so I doubled on it this month, so that's \$104. You take \$104 from \$214 I was left with and pay the phone bill that left me with \$110. Then on top of that, my baby cheque, \$275, yeah I got cable \$16 big deal that's the least I can have for myself, so that's nothing and then my power bill was like \$75, I couldn't afford to pay for it all last month, so I had to owe an extra \$30 on top of that when I get it on this month's rent money so... that \$794 that I get from them, after everything is paid for left me with \$80. That's what I'm supposed to do... that's my money to look after me and ... until next month's cheque.

Interviewer: [And half of the ... what's the child tax?]

That's not included with that... I've kept that \$80 in my pocket, the rest of my child ... my baby bonus got after groceries. I didn't even buy him diapers with it.

[Gale: 766 - 798]

Carol and Diana reiterated this point during their interviews as they discussed the difficulties they had in meeting their food needs on such a limited budget.

. .like I said, as the month goes by it just gets harder cause you can't, you don't have the money to go to the store to get what you need if you run out, so if you run out of cheese or milk, you don't always have the money to go to the store.

[Carol: 451-456]

because when I can't provide . .or I have limited funds to provide the essential nutrients and vitamins and protein, it's awful. Those are important things to me, I know what should be there ... it's very frustrating...

[Diana: 97-105]

Such descriptions were common throughout all interviews with the mothers. These quotes from Gale, Carol and Diana, however, clearly show the inadequacy of the income received through the IA program and the impact it has on all aspects of the feeding process. In short, these quotes show that there was simply not enough income to meet basic needs. This recognition is certainly not unique to this study. Several significant studies based in NS (AHPRC, FRC/Ps & NSNC, 2004;

Community Advocates Network, 2003; Reed, 2004; Williams et al., in press) and Atlantic Canada (McIntyre, et al, 2001) have recognized the inadequacies of IA rates and their impacts on food insecurity, and more notably single mothers (McIntyre et al.).

4.4.2.3 *Maintenance*

Maintenance support was the income the custodial parent received from the non-custodial parent. According to the ESIA Policy Manual, ‘applicants/recipients [of IA] are required to access all available sources of income including maintenance’ (Department of Community Services, 2005, Chapter 9 Section 1). The policy and procedures surrounding the receipt of maintenance receipt was quite detailed. IA Employee 1 summarized the policy as follows:

... family maintenance income support workers program falls under the umbrella of the income assistance program. And what they do is they meet with new moms to determine whether mom ... and I should say dads, because it could be dads as well who are in need of income assistance and they’re looking at securing maintenance, so they’ll help them go through the process of determining whether there can be a monthly amount or a settlement if a couple separates and it’s usually based on the Nova Scotia Child Support guidelines. So it’s income based, you go down the line, they’ve got two children, this is your income, this is the amount of the monthly payment. So those family maintenance income support workers will try to do informal agreements with the clients.

Interviewer: [And they deal ... and also they deal with the department of justice.]

And in that sense, it said in the policy, and I’m not sure if you’re familiar with this part of it, with the maintenance, it said something like if they don’t receive it... if they... they may not receive the maintenance from the person. . so in that case ...you don’t reject. What we’ll do ... what you’re referring to there, is that they have a maintenance order and if the non-custodial parent is defaulting on that maintenance order, and the client has done everything they can, maybe it’s you know setting up a new court date, providing information, well I mean this is an order ... regardless of the order amount, but if it’s an order of \$400 a month and that’s what they are supposed to be receiving and they don’t get that, that’s certainly hardship...
[Employee 2: 630 - 671]

If a maintenance agreement could not be reached for some reason, the following procedure was undertaken.

Assignment of maintenance payments will be made to the Department of Community Services. In this case the Maintenance Enforcement Program will forward all payments received on assigned cases directly to the Department and maintenance will not be included in the recipient's budget deficit as chargeable income...

[ESIA Policy Manual: Chapter 9 Section 1]

Once a maintenance agreement was reached, the amount of maintenance received was counted as chargeable income and deducted from the recipient's monthly eligible income.

Although this aspect of the IA program seemed thoroughly outlined, as the mothers spoke about their experiences in dealing within this policy it became evident that the policy and the safeguards that have been established did not truly meet the everyday needs of all mothers. First and foremost, some of the fathers were noted to have missed payments or on occasion failed to pay altogether. As indicated by Alice, although the system seems to be thorough in the end it *depends on whether my former decides he wants to pay his maintenance or not*. [Alice: 1458 - 1486]. The mother, therefore, was ultimately responsible for ensuring and dealing with the maintenance payment. That is, the money was still taken off the cheque because the mother had indicated on the form referred to earlier that she should be receiving the income: the form was submitted two weeks before she was scheduled to receive the cheque. Therefore maintenance was deducted from the IA cheque before she received it. Beth, whom seemed to experience this situation regularly, discussed this dilemma.

So you if you get child support that comes dollar for dollar right off your check... a caseworker, [caseworker] determine that... Yeah if you get child support, if not, then you go after and it comes right off your check.

Interviewer: [You would have to go after the child support?]

Yeah. And if [father of children] miss a month [IA program] will take it off regardless. I just went through that I told [caseworker] that I didn't get [maintenance money from father of children] and it still came off my check.

Interviewer: [So what do they say when you . . .]

... I wrote [caseworker] a note like the things you have to spend each month and everything and I told [caseworker] that I didn't get it and I talk to [caseworker] about it ...

[Beth: 512 - 542]

At the time of the interview Beth had still not received any money back from IA or the father of her children; therefore, she had quite a bit less money available to buy food than she would normally have. Consider that even in a month when she received all eligible monies she was still short money to buy enough food to feed her family and that under these circumstances she was even more strapped; no doubt, she experienced more severe levels of food insecurity.

Since the IA program and policy guiding the maintenance program could not actually make the fathers pay the maintenance, this part of the IA Program can be seen as holding the mother responsible for ensuring payment in the end. That is, the mothers were responsible for ensuring the non-custodial parent paid; if not, she was left dealing with the consequences - even less money to meet her and her family's basic needs. Through the interviews with IA Employees it was evident that, overall, it was the expectation of the program that fathers would pay maintenance. This was clear when IA Employee 2 discussed what happens when the father defaults²¹:

I would think because to me... I mean maintenance enforcement is going to get the money if they can and they're going to reimburse the funds ...

Interviewer: [So either it would go to the mother from maintenance or...]

Maintenance or we'll include it in the budget and then get it back. They have to sign a form that will ensure that we'll get the funds because I mean the father should have been paying all along.

[Employee 2: 505 - 514]

This highlights another example of an existing line of fault between some employees working within the IA program and the lived experiences of the mothers who were interviewed. In this case, Employee 2 assumed and hoped that the non-custodial parent would pay the agreed upon maintenance amounts. The reality these mothers' live, however, told a different story. For whatever reason, as made evident through the above dialogue, the mothers' that took part in this study experienced some problems, to differing degrees, with fathers who could not or would not pay the maintenance monies.

²¹ Default was a term used frequently when talking about maintenance agreements with IA employees. This term refers to the situation when the non-custodial parent, for whatever reason, does not pay the agreed upon amount for maintenance support.

Avoiding the Maintenance Policy. As a means to avoid problems resulting from the maintenance acquisition process, Diana had chosen to receive the maintenance monies directly from her children's father. Although this did not always work out perfectly, it was a system Diana felt was better than the one used by the IA program. Here Diana described why she chose to opt out of the Maintenance Enforcement Agreement.

*...it's supposed to be through maintenance enforcement, but that's another whole thing, that's another. . . nothing seems to work for us... like maintenance enforcement, you go through them and if you don't get the money, you're supposed to wait ten days or no... they make you wait ten days to make sure that they have the money in their account so I've been getting it straight from the father because it's easier and even if he doesn't give it to me, at least I know when he gets it he will give it to me and maybe it's a week late or maybe it's a couple of days late or you know... but at least I know I'm not going to have to have a cheque bounceyeah I know so many have so many friends who the cheque bounces and then the rent bounces and ... cause the father's payment is not there yet, so the rent bounces and you know the cheque she might have paid on this bill or that bill bounced so then she's got \$25 from her bank charging... and you know it's a nightmare cause then how do you feed your kids because they take the money out of it for the groceries. . . and then you're left to deal with the outcome that you can't feed your kids. Cause I still don't have this month's yet. So, ah, I'm supposed to get that tomorrow so ...It's hard ...it's a struggle...
[Diana: 340 - 365]*

In this case, Diana chose not to deal directly with maintenance enforcement because her knowledge of how the policy worked, or did not work, led her to not trust the process. She felt that getting the child support on her own was easier. However, as she noted, it was not “fool proof” because the system she had developed did not ensure she received funds on time, as was the case the month that the interview took place. Not all mothers were able to do this, for several different reasons such as they did not have an established relationship with the father of their children. Therefore, regardless of the method used to acquire these monies, the mothers were never sure of their receipt. As such, they lived in constant uncertainty around whether they would have enough money to buy food and other necessities their family's needed for survival.

4.4.2.4 *Special Needs Funds*

Through the IA program recipients were eligible for monetary allowances for special needs to ‘support their participation in employment and employment enhancement activities and to meet specific health and safety needs’ (Department of Community Services, 2005, Chapter 6 Section 1). Within these funds, issues with several dental and special diet allowances were discussed throughout the interviews of several mothers. As noted in Chapter 6, Section 11 and Chapter 7 Section 1 (Department of Community Services), ‘recipients and/or their spouse and/or dependents, or former recipients and/or their spouse and/or dependents’ were also eligible for dental and Pharmacare coverage.

Dental. The allowances for dental procedures are outlined in the Dental Rate Schedule in Chapter 6, Section 11 (Department of Community Services, 2005). Although Fran was the only mother who discussed the policies governing the amount of money available for dental procedures, it was evident that these policies worked to organize her food insecurity. In Fran’s case she found that the amount available for dental coverage was inadequate and prevented her from getting the procedure done. While this did not directly affect her income, the lack of support available through this portion of the IA program resulted in Fran being physically unable to eat certain foods.

Your dental care, you get one cleaning a year. They will pay for a dentist if it is causing you pain, which I actually need a whole new root canal. That’s going to cost a whole lot of money so I can’t get that done. I can’t bite into an apple cause my tooth will come out, I have a fake tooth. And my gums are infected and I can’t find a dentist who will do it because it will cost too much money. It will cost more than what personal assistance and that will cover.
[Fran: 420-421]

Because she could not afford to pay for the procedure, Fran’s gums had become inflamed and she was unable to get a much-needed root canal, and would likely need even more complicated procedures in the future. Again, she may be faced with similar barriers if and when more expensive emergency procedures are needed. In the most fundamental manner, this policy and the inadequacy of the funds as prescribed through the regulated rate schedules, worked to organize Fran’s food

insecurity because it prevented her from eating the foods she wanted and likely interfered with her quality of life.

Although not discussed during her interview, Alice also talked about issues with the dentist during the member checking process. She noted that her dentist performed a procedure that cost more than was prescribed in the rates and had only charged Alice what she could afford. Therefore, if not for the values of this individual Alice may have been in the same situation as Fran.

The inflexibility of the dental allowances as prescribed in a rate schedules (Department of Community Services, 2005, Chapter 6 Section 11), was, of course, because they are bound by the legislation of the Act and Regulations. These schedules, which are set using indices, are inflexible, as indicated in the following quote by IA employee 2 as they talk about the rate schedules in general:

Interviewer: [so both the regulations and the . . .special . . .like eye glasses and dental care and all that, that's ...]

If those are in the regulations, which some of them are, they're scheduled in there, then we'd have to go and do a legislative change.

Interviewer: [So if somebody. .the case worker doesn't have the flexibility to ...if a dentist is charging more ... they just have to get that amount?]

Yeah...we are bound by legislation...as you can imagine cause if [IA bureaucrats] weren't then [IA bureaucrats] could say "thanks government" and [IA bureaucrats] can do what we want...and I don't think [provincial government] like that very much.

[Employee 2: 1026 - 1104]

Obviously, this schedule was not reflective of Fran's or Alice's needs for everyday life. Its inadequacy prevented Fran from getting her procedure done and caused Alice to depend on an outside individual's kindness to get her procedure completed. Thus, a line of fault exists between the monetary needs for dental support and the rate schedule and policies that coordinate the funds available for these procedures through the IA program.

Special Diet. Gail, whose child was born prematurely and had several health problems, was the only mother who was eligible for the IA program's special diet allowance for her child. The amount of money she received was also governed by a

rate schedule, which was itself bound by regulations. Below Gail discussed how the extra money she received from this allowance affected her daily feeding activities and therefore her food security.

I try and budget for myself. Recently I've been getting a little bit more than usual but that's only because I had to cry to the hospital. I'm young, nobody cares what I have to say you know, I'm a young person and nobody takes me seriously. Except the ones that I deal with at the hospital, so I had to get them to kind of do my dirty work you know but actually the dietician, she wrote a letter to my worker saying look xxxx needs to go on a special diet, she needs extra money to pay for things for him, so now I'm getting an extra \$50 a month and it's just for this special diet...

[Gale: 700 - 712]

Unlike the other policies discussed, it seemed that this policy had allowed Gail the extra money she needed to purchase the food her child requires. In this respect, perhaps the policy was working to improve the food security of her child. Unfortunately, the positive effect seemed to be overshadowed by the overall inadequacy of the total IA funds received. This was evident as Gale continued to the talk about the money received for the special diet:

...do you know what that's [special diet money] paying for? Rent, phone bill and power bill is what that money is going towards. Same with his baby cheque... as far as I'm concerned that money is his and that's what I've always said...

[Gale: 712 - 717]

While money was acquired for the child's special diet, the mother was forced to use this money for other outstanding costs. By itself, this practice seemed grossly inappropriate, however, considering that Gale and her child would have been evicted and/or at great risk if costs such as shelter and power were not paid, her use of the special diet allowance for her bills was not only appropriate, it was understandable. The practice of reallocating money for one necessity, especially food, as a means to pay off other necessary bills is not uncommon and has been cited throughout the literature (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004; Badun, Evers & Hopper, 1995; McIntyre et al., 2001; Tarasuk, 2001b). While this special diet money eased the burden for Gale and presumably other recipients, it clearly did not do what it should have done, which was to ensure that Gale's child had the food needed to support his health.

4.4.2.5 *Pharmacare*

While Gail was the only mother who discussed issues related to the Pharmacare policies in the ESIA policy manual specifically, this issue clearly had a significant impact on her overall budget and level of food security. As noted in the ESIA policy Manual, the purpose of the Pharmacare plan was:

To provide prescription drug coverage as per the Nova Scotia Formulary issued by the Nova Scotia Department of Health to recipients and/or their spouse and/or dependents, or former recipients and/or their spouse and/or dependents who meet the eligibility criteria.

[ESIA Policy Manual: Chapter 7]

This plan specified that individuals who were covered must pay a five-dollar co pay charge for any prescriptions. However, it was also stated that certain individuals might eligible to receive a 'co pay exemption', under which the five-dollar co pay charge would be waved and prescriptions would be received at no charge to the IA client. Individuals may be considered co pay exempt under the following circumstances:

***There is the existence of a disability;
Clients with large, ongoing monthly prescription drug costs; and
Clients with a small dosage amount specified in the prescription, which is to be taken on a frequent basis.***

[Department of Community Services, 2005, Chapter 7]

For Gale, the section of this policy that had the greatest impact on her was the five-dollar co pay exemption, and the process that needed to be undertaken to access it. According to the ESIA Policy Manual, in order to become exempt the client's caseworker will:

***Obtain supervisory approval;
Document the reason for co pay exemption, average monthly cost of the drugs, and evidence of supervisory approval on the file; and
Forward notification of approval of co pay exemption to the attention of the Operations' Manager***

[Department of Community Services, 2005, Chapter 7]

ESIA Employee 1 described this process in lay terms and with more detail during her interview:

There's a process [to become exempt] where [IA client] would write in ... first of all [the need to become exempt] would be identify through discussions with the case worker, and then the case worker would make a

recommendation to head office and from there ... and most times, I mean you look at their budget and you know what [IA client] is spending for drugs and the \$5 co pay would be exempt.

[Employee 1: 842 - 850]

Again, the process involved in receiving the exemption, from the description found in both the ESIA Policy Manual and that provided by Employee 1, seemed fairly straightforward. However, through Gale's interview it became apparent this process was not always this smooth. Gale's child had had many health problems since birth and required a number of prescriptions. When these health issues first began to surface, Gale was paying the co pay costs and ended up paying upwards of \$100 per month from her already tight budget to cover the prescriptions. This left her with very little money at the end of the month. Gale had been aware of the exemption option but faced several barriers when she tried to access it. Gale outlined these barriers and her frustrations when asked how her son's health issues, and his many medications, affected her budget.

Right now no, I got a new worker a couple of months ago and she's better than the last one I had. The last worker I had was a just an evil person. She wouldn't help me get the medication for my sick child, you know that's wrong, as far as I'm concerned and I guess I don't like to sit here... it's not that I'm using him as an excuse for things but this is a different type of situation as opposed to an average full term children, so...but it's really hard to... she wouldn't help me in the beginning. So that was a lot of money for medication. Like I said earlier his medications were over like coming to over \$100 a month and since I got my new worker, well no I shouldn't say that, a few months went on and I had to get the hospital involved because, the hospital just thinks my situation with social assistance was actually outrageous, they couldn't get over it, like they really cannot get over it, so I had to get them to help me and tell them, look this child needs this medication, she don't have enough money to pay for it, you need to help. So after a few months of fighting with her, they finally covered it for me where I have to pay a fee of \$5.00 for each medication but even still, where he was getting so many medications it was still hitting like \$50 and plus myself, my medication right. I don't have a lot of medications, but once in a while I do and I mean that was coming to about \$50 a month and that was just too much, it was still too much even though I was really thankful that each prescription was \$5.00 right cause because some of these prescriptions that he gets are like up to \$80 a prescription so if I only had to pay \$5 that's great but still because there were so many it added up but now I'm really, really thankful, she finally saw that I had to pay for a lot [and I received an exemption]...

[Gale: 416-456]

While Gale finally achieved the co pay exemption the process she described to accomplish this was much more complicated, stressful and frustrating than that described by Employee 1 and in the ESIA Policy Manual. In addition, Gale had to involve hospital staff to assist her in the task. Although Gale was the only mother who noted such frustrations in this study, other research within NS has identified problems with Pharmacare co pay exemption (Community Advocates Network, 2003; Reed, 2004).

Although other individuals express other reasons for experiencing difficulties accessing the exemption, it seems that in Gale's situation, her caseworker seemed to have a major stumbling block in terms of her access to the funds, an issue to be discussed further in section 4.4.3. Clearly, a line of fault also existed between the policies outlined for the Pharmacare program and, in this case, Gale's everyday world. The policy did not illustrate what needed to be done when a client had trouble accessing the funds nor did it provide the client with the tools, opportunity or environment to advocate for the funds.

Overall, it can be assumed that securing of the exemption from the co-pay amount resulted in a substantial ease on Gail's undoubtedly tight budget. This had a direct impact on her food security as this would result in more monies being available for other expenses such as food for herself and her child. This relief was also evident when Gale indicated at the end of the quote that *now I'm really really thankful, she finally saw that I had to pay for a lot.*

4.4.2.6 Telephone Expenses

The mothers interviewed also identified telephone bills and the IA program's policies as working to compromise their level of food security. Although telephones are a social norm within today's society, at the time of this study the ESIA Program only covered the costs for this service 'where a telephone is required for medical or personal safety reasons' (Department of Community Services, 2005, Chapter 6, Section 8). However, ***connection charges and deposits will not normally be paid by the Department*** (Department of Community Services, 2005, Chapter 6, Section 8). In short, telephones were not considered basic needs in the IA policy and, therefore, their costs are not covered. When asked to comment on this Employee 2 stated:

It is. . you know I mean in this day and age of course people would . . . the phone is a necessity and unfortunately they don't look at it in the budget calculation as it being a necessity and I mean I have my own opinions on that ...so ... but anyways so if there is a health and safety...and you're sick and you need to have a phone or for safety reasons, it is covered in the actual cost within your shelter ...

[Employee 2: 854 - 863]

The IA Employee clearly felt that these costs should be covered. The employee indicated, however, regardless of views held, 'fiscal restraints' within the current provincial budget governed what could be covered under the IA program. It was also noted that jurisdictional reviews indicated that basic telephone costs were not, or were rarely, covered in other provinces and territories.

Despite this limitation of the IA policy, all mothers had telephones. Only one mother, Gale, who had a chronically ill child, identified that the cost of her telephone was covered through the IA program. Diana expressed her frustration with this policy.

Right ...but you know I need a phone because I have [two children], to me [telephone] is a necessity but I was told that it's not a necessity, but to me a phone is a necessity when you don't have a vehicle, to take them to the hospital if there's a problem, I have to have phone, they [IA caseworker] told me it was not a necessity.

[Diana: 111 - 132]

Without a telephone Diana obviously would not feel a sense of security and would fear for the health and safety of her children. However, in order to have a telephone she had to sacrifice money from other parts of her budget, no doubt at the expense of meeting her family's food needs to pay for it.

Another complication that arises from not covering telephone costs under the IA program lies in the requirement that all clients must be in contact with their caseworkers and/or be actively involved in employment searches. Without access to a telephone, these two tasks are seriously hampered. Employment searches may even be impossible in society where such an amenity is taken for granted.

Again the ruling relations governing IA policies became evident during the analysis of this policy. Obviously, bureaucratic opinions, an example that was presented above, and the lived experiences of those most affected can only make a limited amount of difference on the overall IA program. Fiscal restraint, research, and

of course, government and the public's priorities work to rule these policies to a much greater extent than even the expertise of the bureaucrats or the experiences of the mothers.

This issue allowed once more for the emergence of the line of fault. This fault line existed between the IA Program's telephone policies and the regulations and act that guide its current layout and the real life needs of the mothers, both physically and socially, for telephone access. It was clear the mothers felt telephones were a basic necessity in their lives. Without such a basic amenity, the mothers would not only be physically excluded from certain activities but also even more socially excluded from a society that has worked to keep them out as much as possible.

*4.4.3 Issues with Caseworker*²²

Through interviews with the mothers it became apparent that, at times, caseworkers had the ability to impact the acquisition of funds and thus the mothers' food security. Although this happened seemingly on an individual basis, it can be assumed that because the caseworker's tasks were guided by the ESIA Policy Manual, negative affects felt by the mothers were as a result of failures within the policies and/or supervision that should have been there to guide the caseworkers' actions.

While Gale was the only mother who seemed to have had negative experiences with her caseworker in relation to accessing funds, as was made evident when special diets and Pharmacare were discussed above, this was a very significant organizing factor in regards to her food insecurity. Gale described having a very difficult time in accessing funds from her first caseworker when she discussed trying to receive exemption from her Pharmacare co pay.

²² Although individual caseworkers interacted with the mothers in their local everyday lives (microsystem), because they were inevitably mediators between their clients and IA policies, their impact on the mothers' food insecurity will be presented here in relation to the implementation of the policies and procedures of the IA program.

Right now no, I got a new worker a couple of months ago and she's better than the last one I had. The last worker I had was a just an evil person. She wouldn't help me get the medication for my sick child, you know that's wrong, as far as I'm concerned and I guess...

[Gale: 416-421]

The individual power Gale's first caseworker had over her budget was significant considering she was paying up to \$100 per month without the Pharmacare co pay exemption, something the ESIA Policy Manual indicated she was eligible to receive. The impact of the caseworker was made especially clear when it became apparent that Gale was only able to get the exemption once her caseworker changed. Although one of the main goals for the IA Redesign in 2001 was to better ensure consistency, through Gale's story it was evident that this was not fully achieved. In her case, access to the funds available to her changed only when caseworker changed.

Gale's story raised another question: how do clients change caseworkers, or is this even permitted? Employee 1 explained the procedures to get a caseworker changed, particularly in situations similar to Gale's where certain caseworkers and clients may not work well together.

O.K. And if a client is having problems with an assigned case worker, is there a procedure that they can go through to get a case worker changed or...? There's always procedures and I'm sure that's not a situation that hasn't happened cause I know it has ... I know it has and I think it depends on what the issue is, I mean they can always talk to a supervisor. They can always talk to the case worker's supervisor or the district manager. There's a way to resolve those kinds of situations so we can serve the client. That's not normally a big issue, but if someone just says well look I don't like the look of them, I want to change my case worker, well that's not fair to the case worker either...I mean you know. . so, but it's something that the supervisor will certainly address.

[Employee 1: 877 - 894]

From an objective standpoint the procedure around changing caseworkers is logical and relatively straightforward. From Gale's point of view, however, undertaking this sort of task is very intimidating. This became apparent as she discussed the reservations she had about trying to change her caseworker.

Interviewer: [You switched... how do you switch, do they...]

They apparently... she's gone now, apparently I wasn't the only person who had problems with her ...but I was going to do that and ... I was told it was

too much of a process going through supervisors and this and that and I looked at it well I can sit here and go through all that to try and get a new worker, but the odds of getting a new one weren't that good so why was I going to go through all that and just make things worse between me and her? Right ... so why bother.

[Gale: 507 - 528]

The line of fault between Gale's everyday experiences and the point of view of authority figures, in this case the IA employee, was striking. From Gale's point of view, having to deal with supervisors who were authority figures and who may be intimidating to some IA client was not worth the risk. Sometimes there is not sufficient energy to face all the hurdles even if it means being reassigned to a caseworker that could better address current needs.

4.4.4 Canada Child Tax Benefit Issues

The NCB Initiative's CCTB program, and its component funds the NCBS was the mothers' second main source of income. Next to the IA program, the CCTB program provided the mothers' with income for the purposes of supporting their children. At the time of this study the provincial IA program provided very little money to support children. The Canadian Revenue Agency provided a general overview description of the CCTB in a fact sheet on the National Child Benefit Website.

Federal, provincial, and territorial government program to help low income families with children. It has three goals: to help prevent and reduce the depth of child poverty, to help families move from social assistance to work, and to reduce overlap and duplication of government programs and services.

[Canada Revenue Agency, 2002]

To further clarify this program the excerpt below is from a pamphlet released by the Canadian Revenue Agency, meant to clarify the details of this program:

The CCTB is a non-taxable amount paid monthly to help eligible families with the cost of raising children under the age of 18. Included in the CCTB is the National Child Benefit Supplement (NCBS), a monthly benefit for low income families with children. The NCBS is the Government of Canada's contribution to the National Child Benefit (NCB), a joint initiative of federal, provincial, and territorial governments. As part of the NCB, certain

provinces and territories also provide complementary benefits and services for children in low income families, such as child benefits, earned income supplements, and supplementary health benefits, as well as child care, children-at-risk, and early childhood services.

[Canada Revenue Agency, 2004]

All mothers except Diana were receiving funds through the CCTB program. Among these mothers several indicated that the CCTB provided them with a portion of their expendable income. For Alice, the CCTB provided the largest portion to her budget when she discussed her main sources of income.

The main source is... right now, my Child Tax Benefit would be my main source of income, I get more child tax benefits than I do receive on social assistance.

[Alice: 1434 - 1437]

At the time of this study the CCTB was clearly an important social program within Canada. However, when examined more closely it became clear that the benefit this program offered the mothers interviewed in this study, compared to before its inception, was negligible. This is because the extra money that the federal and provincial governments provide through the CCTB program did not increase the mothers' incomes. When the NCBS was added to the CCTB in 1998 the amount of money that was given through the NCBS was removed from the Provincial IA cheque in NS: it was deemed chargeable income. Critics coined this as the *claw back* (DC, 2005; McIntyre et al., 2001) of the IA Program. This budgeting scheme has changed in recent years in Nova Scotia. At the time of this study, IA recipients who were eligible for the CCTB Program received its funds in full. However, aside from special budget items since the Redesign in 2001, children no longer receive monies through the IA Program. This is clearly presented in the ESIA Manual where it is stated that:

Personal allowance for dependent children in the care and custody of an applicant, under the age of 18, is not included in the budget calculation.
[Department of Community Services, 2005, Policy Manual Revisions Section]

Employee 3 provided the perspective of this change from the IA Program's point of view, which is found below:

They would get their child tax credit, the budget would be done up, all their expenses would be listed and then all their income. Well at one point the child tax credit was listed as income, to the family so that would be deducted off and then they would give them whatever the difference was ...so

whatever the federal government gave, the provincial government would deduct from the check o.k., so that's where I think claw back . . .

Interviewer [And at that point the children were on...]

They were on the budget...

Interviewer: [The budget, o.k. ... And as indicated in the literature, for the Canadian Child Tax Benefit, it says that the money now that's being... the money that's now taken off that used to be on the budget is being reinvested... am I interpreting that right?]

Well wait a minute ...no . . . there's ... the dollars ... the families still receive all those monies, we don't invest money at allthe dollars ... the family would have received. . .still receives the same amount of dollars, with the goal that they will get more, and I'm talking about 2001 cause that's when sort of special programs really came into the current ... day one they wouldn't have seen really any difference because all it meant for most of them is they got two cheques, same amount of dollars but ...

Interviewer: [Just distributed differently . . .]

That's right, they would get their cheque from ... because children were then taken out of the budget, but we no longer considered the money from the federal government as income. They still got x number of dollars, same amount of dollars that they did before, different times of the month from two different sources ...there's some confusion there cause it involves budgeting and it's also ... philosophy ... as the program ... to be is that they would ... no longer considered as income, the total combined income would be larger for the people who went back into the labour force and to continue to get that until they no longer need it.

[Employee 3: 581 - 630]

Employee 3 reaffirmed that when first established the NCBS of the CCTB used to be considered chargeable income and, therefore, deducted off the IA cheques dollar for dollar. She also noted that although the CCTB was received in full at the time of this study, children were not provided for in the IA budget (except for special budget items). It should be noted however that the NS government did pay money into the NSBS and they had made efforts to reinvest some of the monies that used to be provided to children through the IA program. Therefore, at the very least Nova Scotia was ahead of many of the other provinces that did not even do this. However,

in the end the mothers in this study received no extra income related benefit from the CCTB program.

Employee 3 also highlighted another important aspect of the CCTB program with regard to the goal of this program to making the transition towards self-sufficiency easier by lowering the *welfare wall*. The method through which this is presumably accomplished is described below.

Before the NCB, moving from social assistance into a paying job often meant only a minimal increase in family income for low income parents. It could also mean a loss of other valuable benefits, including health, dental and prescription drug benefits. As a result, families could find themselves financially worse off in low paying jobs as compared with being on welfare – a situation known as the “welfare wall”.

The NCB works to reduce the welfare wall by providing child benefits outside of welfare and ensuring that enhanced benefits and services continue when parents move from social assistance to paid employment.
(National Child Benefit, 2004)

This goal, however, disregards to fact that even when this money is factored in, those working for minimum wage are still worse off than those on IA due to the grave inadequacy of minimum wage rates in Nova Scotia (Williams, et al., in press). This goal of the CCTB program, like the IA program, places emphasis on self-sufficiency; therefore, ignoring the real life situations of those who cannot for some reason, participate in the conventional job market. This indicated that the line of fault between the lives of the mothers in this study not only conflict with provincial IA programs but also federal CCTB policies.

Mothers Responses to the CCTB Program. The perceived claw back of the NCBS portion of the CCTB did not go unnoticed by the mothers' in this study. Beth expressed her frustrations with this move when she discussed the CCTB program, which she refers to as the baby bonus.

Once welfare took the money, what they used to do is take off so much for the baby bonus off of that and then they said no, you're going to keep that baby bonus we just won't give you money for the kids. They give us shelter and money for us but they don't give us for our kids unless it's childcare.
[Beth: 501 - 515]

Although the aims of both the IA and CCTB programs were to help vulnerable families meet their basic needs, when looked at from the perspective of the

mothers it seemed that the manner in which these programs worked together did little to alleviate the poverty and food insecurity they were experiencing. This finding was supported by previous studies completed within Nova Scotia (Reed 2004; Community Advocates Network, 2003) and Atlantic Canada (McIntyre et al. 2001).

Problems with accessing the CCTB Program: Diana was the only mother who did not receive monies from the CCTB Program. The reason given for this was because she did not follow the proper procedures to become eligible, in that, she did not file her Income Tax return on time. As a result, Diana did not get the money from this program. Moreover, she did not get money for her children from IA during this timeframe either. This left Diana in a very tough situation, and greatly hampered her and her families' food security.

Right but I haven't had it since August... I've lived without the child tax since August.... because my income tax wasn't filed until August so ... but then I called and they hadn't received it so I had to re-do it and that didn't get ... that got done around Christmas time...waiting for this big lump sum of money and I can't wait, I can't wait because it will be retroactive...
[Diana: 214 - 246]

Diana continued to describe her experience with this program.

It's been pretty stressful living on very little, very little, very little ... and part of it was my responsibility and I accept that, however, at the same time... you know... and then when it rains it pours and then I ...well I don't know if I wrote something down wrong, I don't know what happened, but they never, ever caught it, when they did finally send it in late... but then I had to get another whole... form, T5007 form from social assistance which took amazingly long in my opinion too long.

Interviewer: [How long did it...]

Beginning of November when I asked for it....

Interviewer: [And you didn't get it til December?]

I didn't get it until January. And I kept waiting, and I kept waiting ... everything so I mean I know it's not just us but it's ...come on ... I haven't you know and I know it's not their fault that I haven't had my child tax benefit, but it's been really hard ...I can't wait to get this money, I swear I'm going to have a party, I'm going to have such a food fest you just don't know ...It's very important to me.
[Diana: 294 - 298]

As indicated by Diana, the Canada Revenue Agency's (2002) policies governing the CCTB Program require that individuals file their Income Tax in order to receive benefits. This policy, like all others, was strictly upheld. Therefore, because Diana missed submitting her Income Tax she was deemed ineligible and, as a result, had very little expendable income. When Diana did try to file her Income Tax she faced many barriers. Primarily, she could not gain access to the proper documents to file her return. These documents acted as gatekeepers to the income she needed to feed her two children because if these documents were not submitted, no funds from CCTB could be received.

The line of fault between the policies guiding access to the CCTB program and the real life experiences of these mothers was apparent. Like many IA policies, the CCTB policy seemed fairly straightforward - file your taxes and get your CCTB benefits. However, this policy did not take into account that real life experiences of people may make them difficult to follow. In this case, the inflexibility of this policy worked to ensure Diana had no money to support her children for seven months. Although there were strict rules in place ensuring compliance to the CCTB policies, there were no supports available to people in Diana's position who could not, for one reason or another, comply with these policies. Neither were there safeguards in place to fix these and other problems that may arise, in a timely manner. Moreover, although the money from the CCTB stopped very quickly when Diana did not file her tax return, the process to get it started again was long, complicated and frustrating.

4.4.5 Cheque Times

Although the timing of the IA and CCTB cheques did not affect the actual amount of money a mother had access to in any given month, it had a great impact on when and what the mothers could buy. In this sense, the cheque itself could be looked at as a powerful textual mediator of the mothers' food insecurity, affecting when and what the mothers could buy and more significantly the level of food insecurity they experienced particularly at certain times of the month. At the time of these interviews the CCTB cheques were received around the twentieth of every month and the IA

cheques at the end of the month. The manner in which the timing and frequency of the cheques arriving mediated the mothers' food security was evident in all interviews. Alice discussed how cheque times influenced the timing of food insecurity in her household.

Yeah, at the end of the month when I would have more money, I would tend to... and this takes time and sometimes you fall off this wagon, sometimes you tend to buy a lot of stuff at the end of the month and don't save your money or maybe like the 15th, 16th or 17th of the month, whatever is on sale, like a roast or pork chops or something like that and I'll tend to do one of those like once a week and maybe I can spread it out a bit more and sort of spread out what I'm buying like for larger meals...

[Alice: 163 - 191]

Here Alice helped to illustrate how the timing of the cheques governed when mothers on IA shop. At the first of the month they tend to spend more of the budget leaving little left for those few days before the CCTB cheque, or as Alice put it, *fall of the wagon*.

This was not a unique phenomenon among the mothers participating in this study; discussed how the timing of cheques impacted their food insecurity. In fact, Carol, Diana, Erin, Fran and Gale shared similar experiences with Alice in regards to the timing of their cheques and food insecurity. Through the mothers' interviews it became clear that cheque times determined how much and what food was in the house. As the 20th of the month approached the mothers described how the amount of food available, and therefore the choice of foods, to feed the family became quite sparse. This is consistent with findings of research completed with lone mothers in Atlantic Canada; it was found that food insecurity was cyclical in nature and was more extreme during the times before IA, and CCTB cheques were received and less extreme at times after their receipt (McIntyre et al., 2001; 2003).

Cheque times and going out to eat. The timing of cheques significantly impacted when, and if the mothers could take their children out to eat. For the mothers involved in this study events such as going out to eat were rare and strictly governed by when money came into the household and how much they had to spend.

Yes, in other people's homes. We don't really eat out much cause it's really expensive so ...what I used to do with my son is we would go out once a month when we'd get our cheques, he would know that we were going out,

his choice, like McDonald's or... just once cause we couldn't really and really then I really couldn't afford to do it but I thought that it's been a good ...so that he'd never had to say well we never got to go out, so that...he knew it was a special thing and he got to look forward to that and yeah it was a good ...

[Diana: 21 - 32]

Like many of the mothers noted, Diana wanted to have her child experience the things most in our society take for granted but what are special events for those who are on low incomes. Although the timing of cheques did not override the finding that the cheque amounts themselves were inadequate to ensure food security, the timings did govern when the mothers had disposable income allowing them to participate in activities and to feel somewhat included in our society or 'normal'.

With regard to the policies surrounding the receipt of the cheques, the ESIA Policy Manual stated that unless special circumstances arise, clients receive support monthly.

Assistance will normally be issued on a monthly basis, in advance of an entitlement month. However, depending on the requirements of the recipient, assistance may be issued weekly and/or bi-weekly.

[ESIA Policy Manual: Chapter 5, Section 19]

Employee 3 shed some light on the reasons for the cheques being issued once a month.

The monthly payment is mostly based on the fact that things are calculated on a monthly basis... it's probably more consistent ... the clients have to pay their expenses usually [monthly, except for food] because it's easier to get food and that weekly but [normally] your money out to pay the rent ... so that's . . . it's been in place but I'm thinking that's probably the logic behind this... somebody has difficulty ... based on their having no other source of income [this can be changed].

[Employee 3: 498-508]

However logical this explanation may seem, and recognizing the finding that the timing of the cheque was a secondary issue to the larger issue of the inadequacy of the cheques, a line of fault existed between this policy and the frequency of receiving cheques for the mothers in this study. The mothers' everyday realities would appear to indicate an increased benefit associated with receiving cheques more frequently.

4.4.6 *Summative Discussion*

Several of the lines of fault between the mothers' everyday lived experiences and IA and CCTB policies were identified in this study. These fault lines existed between the real life experiences of the mothers and the employment focus and income received from the IA and CCTB programs and the policies surrounding the IA program serving to coordinate dental, Pharmacare and telephone allowances. Other fault lines existed between the mothers' lived experiences and the IA policies guiding the maintenance program, how those funds were accessed as well as CCTB policies around accessing funds and policies guiding how clients switch caseworkers.

4.4.6.1 *Employment vs. care giving*

One of the first lines of fault that emerged was between the mothers' experiences and the stated (ES) IA Program goal, and the goal of the NCB Initiative's CCTB Program around achieving employment and economic self-sufficiency. One of the two main goals of the IA program is to move recipients towards self sufficiency; the CCTB program was set up consistent with this goal but in such a manner that it provided economic advantages to the working poor but not to those on IA.

While the achievement of self-sufficiency is an ultimate goal from a neoliberal stand point and a stated goal of the IA and CCTB programs (Langille, 2004; Treanor, 2003), this study illustrated how the emphasis on leaving children to go into the workforce was of great concern for many of the mothers in this study; they wanted to be the ones to raise their children. These feelings may be related to society's expectation, although presumably not as visible as in the past, that mothers assume the majority of the work of caring and feeding (Arai, 2000; Baxter, 1997; Devault, 1991; Rashley, 2005). As such, although society holds self-sufficiency in high esteem, so too does it say that women are still responsible for the majority of care giving. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that some of the mothers expressed concern around leaving their children with childcare providers and going into the mainstream workforce.

This conflict, while not identified as a line of fault per se, has been recognized by several recent studies that have examined the affect of the ESIA changes in 2001

on IA recipients (Community Advocates Network, 2003; Reed, 2004). The Community Advocates Network identified this as one of the top five issues that arose from surveys of community based social services and focus groups held with individuals directly affected by the Redesign. This group also noted that by touting self-sufficiency, the ESIA program has ‘no recognition of the work single parents do at home all day’ (p-3).

This sentiment is also expressed by those who have assessed the current structure around how the NCB Initiative distributes the NCBS amounts of the CCTB program. Many have been critical of the way in which this program has attempted to decrease the ‘welfare wall’ and entice people into the workforce by ensuring that parents on IA do not receive any increased monetary benefit from the NCBS (Community Advocates Network; McIntyre et al., 2001; National Council on Welfare, 1998; Reed, 2004; Shillington, 2000). As such, several of these groups have called for the inclusion of children in the IA budget (Community Advocates Network, 1998; Reed, 2004).

4.4.6.2 *Income received vs. actual income needs*

Another overarching line of fault that was raised by the mothers related to the policies, Regulations and Act that guided the amount of income they received through the IA program. Overall the mothers noted that the monies received through the IA program were inadequate to meet their everyday needs. This finding is consistent with several NS studies completed in recent years using different methods including food costing and story sharing (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004; Williams et al., in press), surveys (Community Advocates Network, 2003), focus groups (Community Advocates Network; Reed, 2004) and in-depth interviews (Reed; McIntyre et al., 2001), and quantitative dietary analysis (McIntyre et al.) to examine the adequacy of IA incomes to meet the basic needs of IA clients .

This identified inadequacy has resulted in a call for increases to the monetary support received through the IA program (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004; Reed, 2004; Community Advocates Network, 2003; McIntyre et al., 2001). First, it has been suggested that children should be added back into the IA budget so that parents on IA, like low wage earning parents, can receive the full benefit of the CCTB

program and children can receive the intended benefit of the CCTB (Community Advocates Network; McIntyre et al.; Reed). There has also been a strong call for IA incomes to be indexed to reflect the true cost of living, both for food and other necessities (AHPRC, FRC/P & FRC/P; Community Advocates Network; McIntyre et al.; Reed). This however would also require that the rate schedules become more flexible allowing for frequent changes to the real cost of living.

4.4.6.3 *Dental funds vs. true cost of dental services/ Pharmacare exemption vs. Accessing Pharmacare exemption*

Another line of fault identified by Fran and Alice was in relation to the amount of income received for dental work through the IA program. Both mothers noted that the funds available for dental care were inadequate to meet the actual costs of getting procedures done. Again, individuals who were impacted by the changes to the IA program recognized this inadequacy as a serious issue affecting the oral health of IA recipients during a series of focus groups held throughout Nova Scotia (Community Advocates Network, 2003). To address this issue the Community Advocates Network has called for the expansion of dental allowances.

A line of fault was also found to exist between the current policies dictating how Pharmacare is accessed through the IA program and the realities of how this support is actually accessed. As noted by Gale, accessing the exemption for the five-dollar co pay fee, although seemingly straightforward in the ESIA Policy Manual (Department of Community Services, 2005), was a long and arduous process. Indeed, the barriers created by the co pay amount for IA recipients who are already living within very tight budgets was identified during focus groups held by the Community Advocates Network (2003) and through interviews with women related to their experiences with the ESIA program (Reed, 2004). As such, both Reed and the Community Advocates Network have called for the removal of the Pharmacare co pay amount altogether.

4.4.6.4 *No telephone allowance vs. true need for telephone*

Through the interviews, a line of fault emerged between the mothers' perceptions around having a telephone, seemingly considered a basic and necessary expense, versus the contrary viewpoint of the IA program, that of a telephone not

being a necessity. As noted by Reed (2001) and within this study, IA recipients are expected to keep in contact with their caseworkers, so in effect the IA program itself is creating the necessity of having a telephone. Both Reed and the Community Advocates Network have called for the inclusion of an allowance to cover the basic costs of telephone service for IA recipients.

4.4.6.5 *Other fault lines with IA program*

A fault line was explicated between the mothers' lived experiences and how policies guiding maintenance support were unable to ensure the mothers received monies from the non-custodial parent on a continual basis. Although no literature was identified specific to Nova Scotia highlighting the inadequacy of this particular policy, the findings of this study strongly support this suggestion.

Another line of fault explicated in section 4.4 concerning the CCTB program and existed between the policies dictating how clients become eligible for the CCTB (by filing income tax) and real life barriers that may impede individuals to meet the requirements to become eligible. Diana did not file her income tax on time and thus, at the time of the study, had been without CCTB funds for over 6 months. Although no other study identified this specific issue, the consequences this had on Diana's life, and indeed her food insecurity, makes it very concerning.

Finally, Gale also explicated the fault line between the IA policies and procedures governing clients changing caseworkers and the real life experiences of actually changing caseworkers. Although this specific issue was not identified as a problematic within other studies, both Reed (2004) and the Community Advocates Network (2003) identified that communication between caseworkers and clients is often problematic and that services rendered by some caseworkers can be inadequate. Presumably this issue may be assisting in the creation of the fault line identified by Gale. In an attempt to improve this issue with caseworkers, the Community Advocates Network has levied a strong call for an increase in ESIA human resources, an increase in hours during which caseworkers are available to be contacted by telephone and increased guidance and training, including sensitivity training, for ESIA caseworkers.

4.4.6.6 *Summary*

Section 4.4 aimed to explicate that the main influence coordinating the mothers' food insecurity was income. The lack of income coordinated the mothers' feeding practices and resulted in them developing many coping strategies, as was identified in the Summative Discussion in section 4.3. The lack of income, and the many fault lines that existed in their everyday world, mediated the relationships between the mother and child. It also entered the mothers into relations with informal supports and charitable organizations as a means to further assist the mothers in coping with their food insecurity. The amount of income the mothers had access to was coordinated primarily by the IA and CCTB programs and the policies, acts and regulations that guide these programs. These findings are significant in that they highlight the inability of the IA and CCTB policies to address the lived experiences of the mothers involved in this study.

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4.5 Other Exosystem Relations Organizing the Mothers' Food insecurity

Food retail and transportation, coordinate food practices among all citizens regardless of their income level. Independently these relations would have an impact on all Nova Scotians' state of food security. However, the lack of income among the mothers in this study coordinated these relations, in that their effect on the mothers who participated in this study would be different from those who had adequate incomes. This section will explore how these two relations worked to coordinate the mothers' food insecurity.

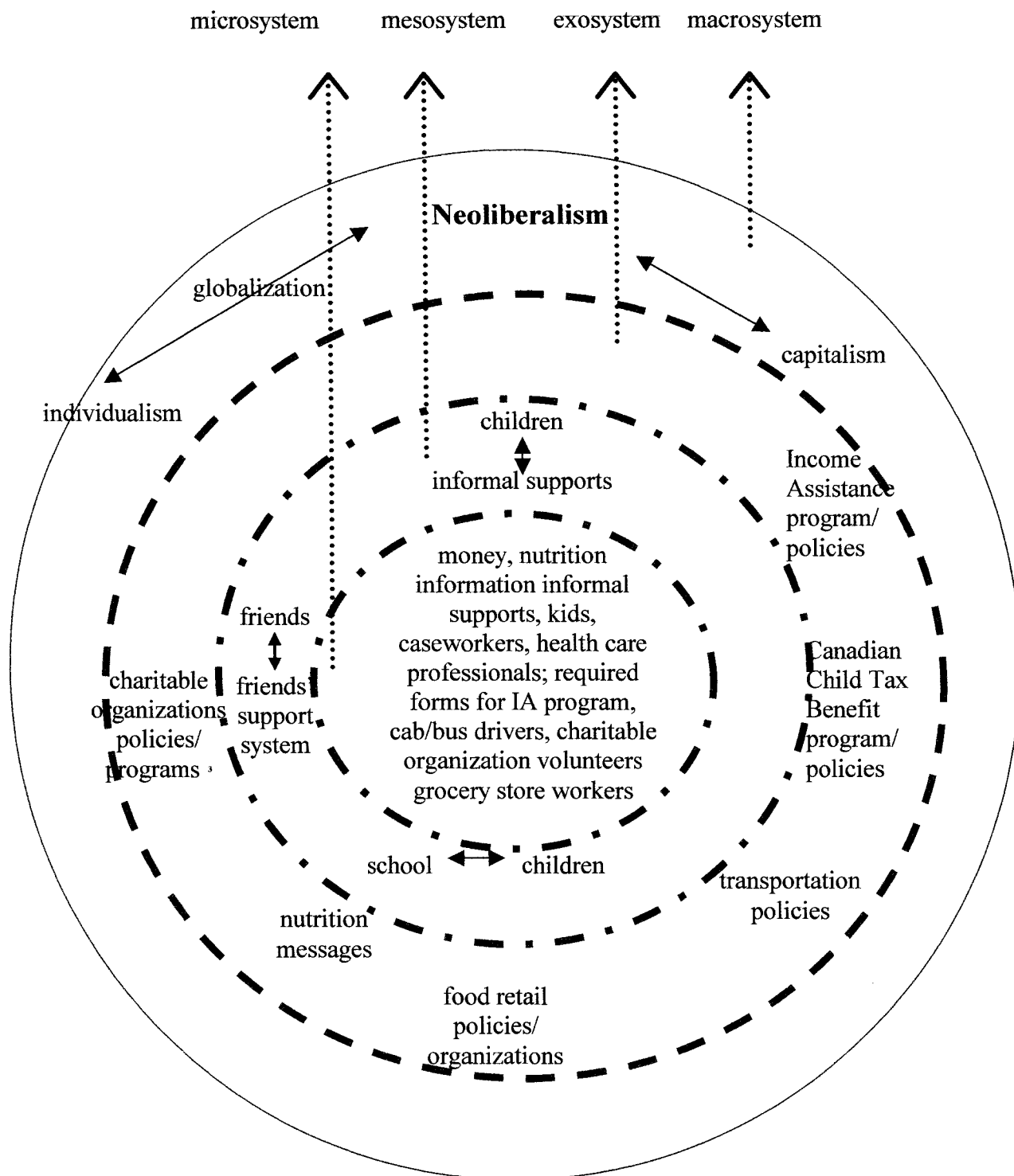


Figure 4-3 .Map of the identified social relations organizing the food insecurity of the everyday lives of the participating mothers organized according to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

4.5.1 Food Retail Sector

The coordinating power of the food retail sector related to how the price of food at stores, the sales available in the store (either as seen within the store or through flyers), the availability of other bonuses and perks at the store, the location of the stores and the existence of ‘perceived store policies’ influence how the mothers shop for their food, and therefore their food security.

4.5.1.1 Price of food at store

Many mothers interviewed identified that the overall prices of foods at grocery stores, including sales and regular priced items, influenced where they shopped. Related to this, many of the mothers stated they felt certain grocery stores were cheaper than others. Not surprisingly, each mother tended to shop at the one she felt was cheaper. Beth noted this point when she stated that:

[Store A] prices are a little bit better...better than [Store B]. Now if I only have to pick up a few things I go to the [Store B]. If I buy all my big grocery order, I go to [Store A]...

[Beth: 170 - 173]

However, within the stores some of the mothers noted that the prices of different types of food affected what they would buy.

Anything processed I find has gone up a little bit here and there, like I said I bought a big bag of... it's called California style mixed vegetables, and it used to be \$5.99 like a year ago and now it's \$7.99... and sometimes I did get it for \$6.99 in November but I went to look at it again and I'm sure it was \$7.99, and I thought wow I know I just paid like \$6.99 for that, so yeah... so you tend to...you'll tend to go and buy canned vegetables and stuff and I just ... I always find they're really salty...

[Alice: 803 - 829]

In this situation, Alice seemed to forfeit buying her more preferred frozen vegetables because of the increased price. She instead bought canned vegetables even though she found them less desirable. Obviously the store's pricing policies had a significant impact on what the mothers could buy. It must also be recognized that food prices are affected by many relations such as the farmers who grow the food, the wholesale companies that buy the food and sell it to the store, and all policies held by these individuals and companies. In essence, when the mothers shop at the

conventional grocery stores they enter into a relationship with our market economy and all players that compose our food system. These relations, in turn, have a major role in the organization of the mothers' overall level of food security.

Although price was a major factor involved in determining what the mothers bought at stores, cheaper items were not always purchased. For example, Erin noted that if certain, more nutritious, food were on sale, even when they were still more expensive than comparable products that were less nutritious, the value derived from purchasing the more expensive, nutritious product outweighed the price difference. Erin discussed this when she was asked how she planned her meals.

... like juices although it's not really juice. And I'm not just talking about the school juices cause those are just all really sugar, the juice that we drink in the home it's either canned no named canned and frozen, whatever, and it's punch so it's partial juice, it's not real juice. There was real orange juice on sale, frozen cans, the real orange juice, but they were on sale for a dollar, now the no name punches are 50 cents, like you still... so I bought them but I'm still... I got half as much juice as I could have you know... anyway... [Erin: 412 - 426]

In this case, the store's sale price of the orange juice enticed Erin to buy it instead of the punch, which she knew was full of sugar and did not want her child to consume. This reflects the struggle to buy nutritious foods. Research from Travers et al (1997) provides evidence of the existence of this struggle. In their study it was found that the price of lower fat food choices in Nova Scotia were higher when compared to a nutritionally adequate but higher fat basket of food.

4.5.1.2 *Flyers of Food Retail Outlets*

Related to the pricing of products, flyers, their timing and the sales they contain also greatly impacted how the mothers planned their shopping trips and ultimately what they bought and when they went to the stores. Erin was very descriptive about how the flyers and sales affected what she bought and when she bought it. She discussed strategies she used to help her buy the foods she needed on her limited budget.

... the strategy is pick up a flier, look for the food I typically get and wait for them to be on sale... so that's my strategy... I can't afford to go [to the store] so unless it's something like, some kind of fruit or something is on sale I'll try and work it in somehow, but I have to drop something else... but typically it's just when is the hamburger on sale, when is the ... you know whatever... it's

marked down, reduced. Typically it revolves... actually typically it revolves around the hamburger, how much I get of all the other items revolves on how much hamburger is in the freezer and whether it's on this week or if I have to... cause I can have a bunch in the freezer but if it's on this week, I buy it, I have to buy more because it could be another three weeks before it goes on again ...what I've run into, I've gotten stuck you know for a while without it so- We make a variety, we make pasta, we'll make hamburger on potatoes or hamburger helper or whatever...so we stretch it ... we use it...
[Erin: 801 - 828]

This quote worked to identify the many ways flyers, distributed by the food retail sector, organized how the mothers shopped for food. First, Erin identified that the types of foods on sale in the flyer coordinated what she bought. Although many individuals, regardless of their economic status, look at flyers, this task is likely more critical for those who are food insecure and have limited incomes. As Erin noted, she could not afford the additional costs associated with going to a particular store unless something was on sale.

The flyers also coordinated what was not purchased by the mothers in this study. For example, Erin noted that when key foods, such as fruits and vegetables were on sale she would *work it in* by excluding something from her list that she usually bought. Under analysis, this process could become very complicated, requiring much knowledge and skill. Mathematical skills were needed to determine how to stretch the budget to ensure the foods could be purchased. A level of nutritional knowledge was evident as Erin noted she would make these trades if fruits and vegetables were on sale, nutritious foods she had previously stated she had difficulty accessing because of lack of income. Erin valued these foods for their nutritional content and, therefore, deemed them important enough to cause change in her normal shopping list. The amount of hidden work Erin was required to undertake to achieve the balance of buying from flyers, determining what was a valuable sale and what was not, and what she must give up if she choose to buy more of the sale items was immense, even more so considering the limits of her food budget. As Erin put it, if she failed in this work she would get stuck without some key foods and her schedule of usual meals would have to change. This would result in creating more work for her and no doubt negatively impact her food security.

4.5.1.3 *Availability of other services and perks*

Although price was the main determinant when mothers decided where to shop, both Alice and Carol indicated that bonus offers in the form of bonus points also played a part. In this study, both of these mothers pointed out that because certain stores had the points available they shopped there even though Carol noted *Store A is not always the cheapest* [Carol: 197 - 201]. Presumably, the process of collecting points may be compromising the amount of food the mothers can buy if indeed [store A] is more expensive, however, this was not substantiated through the interviews. Alice did state, however, that these points could be used to go to movies and other places. Although this may not directly affect Alice's food security, the ability to go to the movies may allow her to enjoy herself and participate in this part of society. Perhaps Alice would be less likely to partake in such activities if she did not receive the points; without them she would have to take the money from her budget or be forced not to do something like this.

4.5.1.4 *Location of food stores*

Some of the mothers decided where to shop simply by the location of stores. If stores were closer or more convenient they tended to shop there more. As noted by Fran, *we're closer to [Store A] than we are to [Store B] so we usually go more to [Store A]* [Fran: 285 - 287]. This may seem like a simple explanation; however there is no doubt that Fran's lack of income also dictated that she shop at the closer store to defer transportation costs to and from the stores.

4.5.1.5 *Perceived store policies*

Diana felt that there were several 'hidden' store policies that worked to affect how she shopped and, therefore, her food insecurity. The first policy she noted centred on product placement within the stores. Related to this, she felt that the stores placed products in a manner that made the more expensive foods more accessible to the buyer.

I know the trick ... I try not to ... just buy things on the end, I have to go look in the aisle ... time, time ...and because there's everything at eye level is not necessarily your best buy, something that's lower, sometime that's higher, yeah all of that, I have to ...it's usually an experience...
[Diana: 684 - 692]

As businesses based on a capitalistic model, the main goal of grocery stores is to increase profits. As such, techniques aimed at increasing profits should not come as a surprise. In fact this specific tactic by food retail outlets was identified over a quarter century ago by Peak & Peak (1977 as cited in Travers, 1993) when they noted that careful product displays and placement act as the ‘silent salesmen’ in that if the display is set up properly, the products will sell themselves. If these tendencies within stores actually existed at the time of this study, they were no doubt as a result of certain store policies and marketing schemes that govern where products are placed. In this case, if individuals were unaware of such marketing ploys it would greatly influence the amount and types of food they would be able to buy. For those receiving limited incomes they would complicate the food procurement process and no doubt lead to unknowingly purchasing of more expensive items, thereby negatively impacting their food security.

Diana also felt that some grocery stores had policies that worked to ensure that sales did not coincide with IA cheque days.

I believe that the groceries stores ...their sales are not keyed around social assistance ...and I try to avoid going shopping at cheque days because I don't like the crowds for one and it's just... I don't like the grocery store so it's easier for me when it's not as busy so I try not to go on those what I call peak times when it's around the 20th or the end of the month, I try to go in between and I do find, I don't know if I'm right or wrong but I do find that it seems the sales are on the opposite of our cheque times. Which to me is you know nothing unusual for the system because the system sucks . . . and that's how I feel, unfortunately but it does ...it doesn't work for the low man ...it seems to really work against.

[Diana: 613 - 629]

Although trends of price gouging within grocery stores has not been studied previously, low income lone mothers within McIntyre et al.'s (2001) study also suggested that this practice was in place. If this policy does exist it would undoubtedly be implicated in regulating negative outcomes on low income individual's food security.

4.5.2 Transportation Systems

Access to food is one of the five key components of food insecurity, thus, the influence transportation systems play in organizing food security is paramount. However, like the other issues mentioned in this study, due to the mothers' lack of adequate income the impact of these systems on their food security is likely heightened in comparison to those individuals who are financially secure. It was identified that some mothers' accessed grocery stores via transportation provided by family, friends and neighbours rather than established transportation systems. This decision was made because the later transportation systems were accessed more as a result of the mothers' lack of income to access conventional modes of transportation and served as a coping mechanism to deal with their lack of income.

4.5.2.1 Personal vehicles

Alice was the only mother who stated she had access to her own personal vehicle. Even though it is more of a societal norm for individuals' Alice's age to have access to a personal vehicle, Alice did not seem to view her ownership of a car as a normal amenity. Instead, through her discussion, it seemed that she felt a car was a luxury. This was evident when she noted that she *kind of got spoiled in the last few years having a car* [Alice: 1144 - 1150].

Alice did note, however, that the car was not always reliable; therefore, her relationship with the car as a means to access food was conditional. This was evident when Alice was asked to discuss her usual shopping patterns.

...I'd say I pretty much have the same pattern [of shopping] yeah. I wouldn't really wouldn't have any changes, of course if there's something that pops up like the car not going that would be a change because then that definitely affects where I would go, cause if I have to get on the bus which you know...
[Alice: 1122 - 1135]

How this affects her food security was evident when she discussed her inability to replace staple foods when her car was broken down.

... around or ... like my car hasn't been working so that's why I don't know what I'm having for supper today, you're kind of like oh what am I going to have... you know and I'll go down and I'll. . I do have a freezer, there's a lot of bread in it and my neighbours use it ...
[Alice: 510-519]

Without her car, Alice could not quickly replace staple foods. For example, she may have to do without fluid milk, or use an alternative such as powdered milk, until she had her car fixed or arranged for alternate transportation. In this case, Alice's neighbours assisted her in accessing needed foods. As a result, Alice's unreliable relationship with her transportation entered her into a relationship with her neighbours as a means to establish better food security. Alice's access to a mode of personal transportation was unique within this study. Most other mothers indicated they did not have access to their own car because they could not afford this form of transportation. Because of this, most of the mothers interviewed had to formulate relationships with other means of transportation, such as the Metro Transit System and local taxi companies, in order to access the food they needed to feed their families. The lack of personal transportation would limit the choices for childcare, and indeed, the achievement of self-sufficiency as the mothers, even if they were able, would be limited in the types and hours of employment they could undertake because of this.

4.5.2.2 *Metro transit*

As a means of transportation to grocery stores and food banks many of the mothers used the Halifax Regional Municipalities' (HRM) Transit System, the bus system that services the greater Halifax Regional Municipality. As a result, the workings of this transportation system greatly affected the mothers' food procuring processes and, therefore, their food security. For instance, Alice noted that when her car was broken down she sometimes took the bus. In her case, the bus was a key determining factor in where Alice went shopping because, as she stated, when she does not have a car [she] *will go to [Store A] cause that's where the bus goes* [Alice: 1134-1135]. Alice had to shop here even though she felt [Store A] *is a little bit high in prices* [Alice: 1192-1194]. Consequently, the Metro Transit's bus routes had a major impact on where Alice could shop and her food security as she had limited access to stores she felt offered cheaper food prices. Alice also noted that the bus limited the types and amount of foods she could purchase. For example, Alice said she could not buy bulk when she had to ride the bus because *it was too much to carry*

[Alice: 1188]. Therefore she could not buy the foods she needed to feed her family in the manner she wanted to.

Diana also identified the cost of accessing the Metro Transit System as a factor affecting how she shopped for food for her family.

Sometimes you know if I can work it out in the budget and I'm not taking more money bussing somewhere to get a deal, then I will look through the fliers and I may go to [Store A] to get a few things, and [Store C] because peanut butter is on sale there for a \$1.00 off or something like that cause you know there's a [Store C] by my bank which I have to go to my bank anyway. I just work it out so that I'll get the most for my money.

[Diana: 509 - 519]

Here Diana described the work she must do to ensure her bus ride paid off. Throughout this process she had to determine what sales were at the different stores. Following that she had to determine if the cost savings from any sales was not overridden by the cost of a bus ticket, and perhaps, if there was no one to watch her children, the hidden emotional costs of taking two young children along! If Diana failed in this work, she would compromise the amount of food her budget would allow.

Although the scope of this research did not allow for further investigation into the workings of the Metro Transit system, it must be recognized that the bus routes being referred to here were not static entities. Instead, they too were developed by individuals and groups with certain agendas and were impacted by many factors, such as government decisions, transportation policies, roads, research, population densities and trends. In addition, the rate schedules were also influenced by many other factors, which the mothers again enter into relationships by accessing this type of transportation. These include policies and regulations such as those governing gas prices, and certain municipal, provincial, and federal transportation policies. Clearly, a line of fault existed between the policies and guidelines used to establish bus routes and rates and the actual mothers need and for transportation routes and the ability to pay. This requires further study to explicate the specific relations involved.

4.5.2.3 Taxi Services

Several of the mothers noted that they used taxicabs to access grocery stores. Although this form of transportation made grocery stores and food banks more

accessible, the cost of this form of transportation was often a barrier to its use. This was noted below by Erin.

... the flat rate is \$2.50 to even sit in a cab and some of them charge you extra per person and extra per bag, some of them don't. . .so it's like \$2.50 and extra for the bags but some of them like charge 50 cents per bag too. One time it was pretty bad, when it was typically \$4.00 for every other ride, I came home one time, this guy charged me \$6.00 for the same exact ride that I've always been taking, an extra \$2.00. So anyway, that's what it's like, travel wise...

[Erin: 757 - 768]

It was evident that the payment policies for cab companies, and personal policies of certain cab drivers, had a great affect on how much money the mothers had to spend on transportation and what was left to spend on food. Some of the mothers noted that they could not afford the price of a cab and opted to transport the goods themselves if they had no other means to do so. Below, Diana describes how she used unconventional methods to transport her food home because the cab was too expensive.

I would put it... like make a couple of trips with the girls in the stroller and that's how I would get the stuff home in the bottom of the stroller, or tied on or ... because I couldn't afford to pay for a cab besides the fact that it wasn't... I wasn't able to take a taxi with the girls cause I couldn't bring their seats and their stroller and ... it was feasible, I couldn't do it.

[Diana: 577 - 588]

Therefore, the cost of the taxicab excluded Diana and many of the other mothers from accessing this form of transportation to get their foods home. Those mothers who had to transport their own groceries were limited in the amount of food they could buy because they, like Diana, had to transport their children as well as the groceries. Here Diana also points out that some taxi cabs exclude individuals with children in the sense that they do not offer car seats or allow them to be brought along.

4.5.3 Summative Discussion

4.5.3.1 Food retail outlets

The data collected from this study indicate that while food retail outlets have very little direct impact on the income received by the mothers, they do exert tremendous influence over their food security through a role as the primary food source for Nova Scotians (Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, 1999). Thus, the reliance on these outlets for food, and the fact that they have no government regulations dictating pricing, leaves the power of setting prices of food, thereby organizing the amount of food the mothers' could purchase with their (limited) income, to food retail outlets and other primary players of the food system. This is concerning considering the food retail outlets are privately own companies, which, it can be generally assumed, have increasing profits as their primary goal, not the health and well being of Nova Scotia citizens.

Diana highlighted possible abuse of this power, which, if true, no doubt negatively impact on the mothers' food insecurity. Diana felt food arrangements in grocery stores are organized to increase profit, something that has been substantiated by Peak & Peak (as cited in Travers, 1993, p. 191). This would have a grave impact on the food security of all individuals, especially those on limited income, if this policy were not recognized. In addition, Diana noted that she felt sales at grocery stores do not coincide with the receipt of IA cheques, something that has not been substantiated but is being investigated using a food costing approach completed in Nova Scotia in June, 2005 (C. Johnson, personal communication, June 14, 2005). Undoubtedly such policies would increase profit for the company; however, such a policy would have significantly negative impacts on the mothers' food insecurity.

This section also highlighted many strategies the mothers had to work with the coordinating power of the food retail outlets. Similar strategies have been documented in previous research. McIntyre et al. (2001) noted that several of the low income lone mothers who participated in their study also checked flyers for sales, looked for sales in stores and collected 'bonus' points at the stores. Travers (1996)

also noted that mothers within her study tried to access the cheaper stores; however, within this strategy the additional barrier of accessing transportation also became apparent. To better explore the impact of transportation, it will be discussed briefly in the section below.

4.5.3.2 *Transportation systems*

The mothers interviewed explicated that the HRM's transportation systems in the HRM have an impact on their food insecurity. The major influence was the costs related to having one's own vehicle and the costs associated with accessing buses and cabs. With regard to bus services, the particular routes laid out by the HRM's Metro Transit had an impact on the mothers' food insecurity. Although the complexity of the regulatory power of transportation systems in the mothers' food security was unable to be fully explicated in this study, the importance of transportation in ensuring food security cannot be understated. Research is very limited in this area. However, a recent study was identified that used in-depth interviews to look at the food security issues of an elderly latino population in the United States. It found that even when income was sufficient, when transportation was lacking access to food retail outlets was difficult or impossible (Wolfe, Frogillo & Valois, 2003). This, of course, impacted very negatively on the food security status of this population (Wolfe, Frogillo & Valois).

Although access to transportation in and of itself is a key point, within this study the main coordinating aspect this service held over the mothers' food security was the cost of access versus the availability of transportation. Thus, the lack of income received by the mothers may be more of a root cause of this fault line than the transportation system policies. Nonetheless, similar to this study, other research focused on exploring food security among low income populations has noted the limiting affect of the cost of transportation in accessing food retail outlets (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004; McIntyre, et al., 2002; Travers, 1996). Both McIntyre et al. (2001) and Travers (1997) found that very few of the mothers involved in their studies had access to personal vehicles. In addition, due to the cost of cab rides, some mothers involved in McIntyre et al.'s study had to forgo using this service. However, other mothers also noted that due to the convenience of a cab versus walking or

taking the bus, they would stretch their limited budget to access this service (McIntyre et al.). Story sharing workshops held throughout Nova Scotia with participants and staff of Family Resource Centres also identified that some mothers limit their number of shopping trips during the month to enable them to access a cab at least once a month (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004). The tendency of mothers to avoid the bus may suggest support for the line of fault identified in this study, as it existed between the mothers' need for bus routes to the stores and the policies that establish the actual bus routes and prices. However, this cannot be assumed; there may be other aspects of the bus that discouraged the mothers from using the bus.

4.5.3.3 *Summary*

Both the food retail outlets and transportation systems have an influence on the food security of the mothers within this study. Furthermore, as will be shown in the final section of Chapter 4, these relations have both an independent and collective impact on the mothers' food insecurity. To better illustrate this and as a means to summarize and synthesize the totality of the relations identified in Chapter 4, this next and final section will provide a short review of the relations as they are situated within Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System's Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

4.6 Explicating the Web of Relations and Summary of Findings

The overall purpose of this study was attained using Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System's Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and the methodology of IE. The purpose was to explicate the relations organizing the food insecurity experienced by seven single mothers who were on IA in Nova Scotia. Using the findings in Chapter 4, this section will highlight the key findings as they are situated within Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

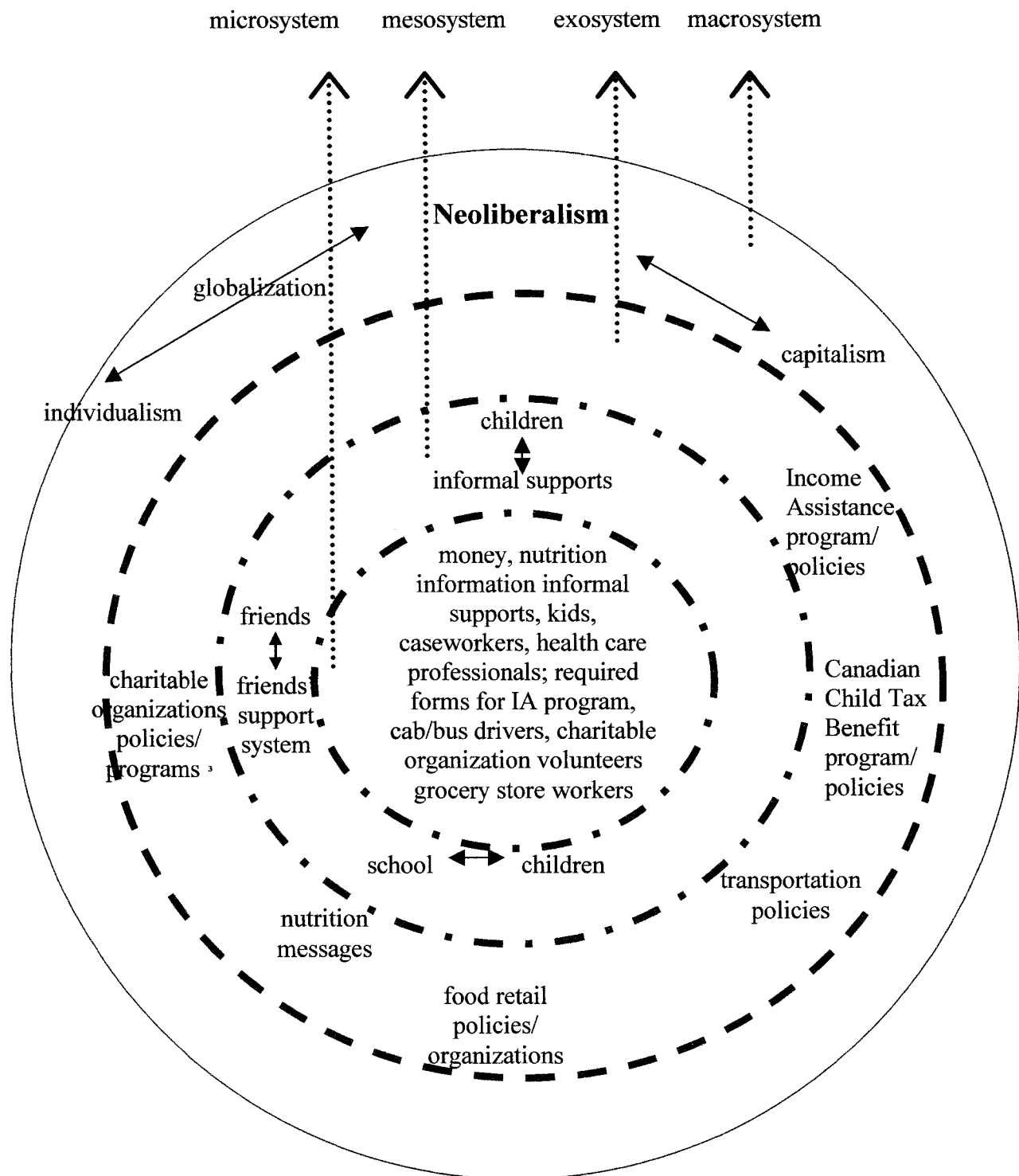


Figure 4-4. Map of the identified social relations organizing the food insecurity of the everyday lives of the participating mothers organized according to Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

4.6.1 Microsystem

The relations that were found to exist in the microsystem are those relations that are most knowable by the mothers, as they are physically present within their everyday. This was where I actually began with the mothers because I entered their everyday worlds' as a means to facilitate this explication process. The main findings that are situated within this section include:

- The relationship with the most coordinating power that existed within the mothers' microsystem was money.
 - For the mothers' money, or the lack thereof, was the determining factor around how each step of the feeding process was carried out. In this way money worked to organize the mothers' food insecurity.
 - Money organized many of the relations that existed within the microsystem. For example, the relationship that the mothers entered into with the informal supports and charitable organizations, while at first seemingly worked to organize their food security independently, were recognized later as being mediated by money.
- Other relations identified as impacting the mothers' food security and falling within the microsystem were those with their children; informal supports, which included the mothers' parents, the fathers of children, friends, neighbours, roommates, milkman, hospital staff; and charitable organizations'.
 - The mothers utilized these relations as a means to cope with their situation as it related to food insecurity. These relations did not have a large effect in creating food insecurity; however, as suggested by Tarasuk and Eakin (2003) and several others studies focused on children's feeding programs (Dayle, McIntyre & Travers, 2000; McIntyre, Travers & Dayle, 1999;

Williams, McIntyre, Dayle & Raine, 2003) these relations may have been working to make the mothers' experiences of food insecurity unknown. Entering into these relations is not an uncommon practice as many other studies noted that similar relations with individuals in the microsystem were relied upon to help food insecure individuals deal with their situations around income insecurity (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004; Hamelin, Beaudry & Habicht, 2002; Tarasuk, 2001b; McIntyre et al. 2001; Travers, 1993).

- Two other relations were identified at the microsystem level: those with staff at food retail outlets and with front line transportation providers (i.e. taxi and bus drivers).
- Two major fault lines were identified. The first existed between the mothers' lived experiences and nutritional messages. The second existed between the mothers' lived experiences and food available at food banks.

4.6.2 *Mesosystem*

Relations that lie within the mesosystem exist between two relations within the mothers' microsystem. The main findings that are situated within this section include:

- Three relations existed within the mothers' mesosystem that impacted their food insecurity.
 - The first relation existed between the mothers' children and individuals providing informal support. In this relationship family members sometimes bought the children 'treats' and fed them meals when the children were visiting them. Such relations have been well documented within the literature. Both Travers (1993) and Tarasuk (2001b) found that mothers experiencing food insecurity often sent their children to their

parent's or other individuals' houses for meals as a means to deal with their household food insecurity. The establishment of such a relationship was key in helping the mothers manage their scarce food resources (Tarausk, 2001; Travers, 1993).

- The two other relations existed between the mothers' children and individuals at their educational institutions and between the mothers' friends (informal supports) and their own support systems also existed. It was clear that the relationships they had with money impacted these mesosystem relationships. That is, the current relations between the children and informal support, which existed to assist the mothers with their food insecurity, would not exist as it did if adequate income was accessible.

4.6.3 Exosystem

The relations identified within the exosystem were not as 'visible' to the mothers; however, the regulatory power these relations held over the mothers' food insecurity was immense and worked to organize the mothers' everyday lives and food security. The main findings that are situated within this section include:

- The major exosystem relations explicated were those between the mothers and the IA and CCTB programs (and the policies, regulations and act that guide them). These programs had a significant impact on the mothers' income.
 - Many fault lines were identified as existing between these programs and the policies, regulations and act that guide it and the everyday lives of the mothers' indicate that these programs did not truly reflect the everyday needs of the mothers who were involved in this study and arguably others in similar social positions. The majority of the disjunctures identified in this study are not unique and have been previously identified by many other Nova Scotian (AHPRC, FRC/P, NSNC, 2004;

Community Advocates Network, 2003; Reed, 2004) and Atlantic Canadian studies (McIntyre, 2003; McIntyre et al, 2001; 2002).

- Two other relations were identified between the food retail outlets and transportation systems and the policies and regulations that guide them.

4.6.4 *Macrosystem*

Although the micro, meso and exosystems worked to coordinate the mothers' food insecurity, relations that were situated there were embedded and shaped by broader level relations that existed within the macrosystem. For the purposes of this study, only ideological forces were explicated; however, readers should be aware that there are an endless number of cultural, ethnic, political and social forces existing within the macrosystem that are influencing the ecosystem. The main findings that of this section need more explanation and as such will not be presented in a dialogue to ensure a clear understanding can be garnered.

Entering the everyday lives of the mothers allowed for the explication of four main macrosystem ideological relations that were working to organize the mothers' food insecurity. The ideological force that seemed to have the most impact on the food insecurity of the mothers' in this study was neoliberalism, however, findings suggest that individualism, capitalism and globalization play an important role as well. Moreover, these ideologies are not separate entities but work to support and reinforce each other. That is, as noted in Chapter 2, neoliberalistic values support the lessening, and ideally the abolishment of state intervention in the market place and the lessening or abolishment of taxes, increased privatization of public infrastructure and the commodification of human services (Vadoillancourt et al., 2004) are strongly supported and intertwined with the ideology of capitalism, which briefly favours the free market approach versus state intervention. Individualism is also strongly situated within neoliberalism, in that neoliberalism also works to created a discourse within our society that holds the general vision that "every human being is an entrepreneur

managing [her] own life, and should act as such” (Treanor, 2003 p-10). Finally, the globalization movement, although not inherently harmful, has been noted by some as weakening national barriers, and creating a world market for the trans-national corporations due to the current set of policies that are in place to support it at the detriment of local control (Langille, 2004). Thus, like neoliberalism, the trend for the globalization movement presently favours the decrease in state interventions that limit trade of goods such as foodstuff.

The question remains, how do these ideologies work to organize the mothers’ food insecurity? Part of the answer to this lies in the basic values of neoliberalism, capitalism, and globalization that work to favour a decrease in state intervention in the market economy. When this value is considered against the findings of this study, which strongly suggests that the major coordinating factor of food insecurity among single mothers participants in this study was income, and considering the mothers’ main source of income came from the social programs of IA and CCTB, the coordinating factor of these ideologies emerge. In short, these ideologies, most notably neoliberalism, have been noted to lead to a decrease in social spending and have been implicated in playing a key role in the erosion of our welfare system (DC, 2005; Workman, 2003; Bourdieu, 1998). In addition, in this same coordinating role, neoliberalism has been implicated in the creation of the current high level of poverty in Canada (Hurtig, 1999). The individualist underpinnings of neoliberalism can also be implicated in the push towards self-sufficiency rather than supporting the most vulnerable within our population, which was found to be a component of both the IA and CCTB programs. Because these ideologies are coordinating the IA and CCTB, and thus the amount of money the mothers have, they too are coordinating those relations identified within the microsystem and mesosystem. In tandem, these relations were also working to reinforce these dominant ideologies through their everyday actions and knowledge.

Primarily, the macrosystem relations of globalization and capitalism also coordinate the mothers’ exosystem relationships with the food retail system. Indeed, the structure of the food system is no longer centred within the household, where it was for much of history; rather, the forces of globalization and capitalism have made

our food system increasingly global (Freidman, 1991; 1993; Lang, 1999). The overall focus of this system is the commodification of food for profit (Madeley, 2000), presumably leaving the nutritional and health concerns of the population, and the environment, behind.

In summary, the findings of this study suggest that a major fault line exists between these ideologies and the mothers' lived experiences in that these ideologies do not represent their everyday needs and realities. However, because relations within the macrosystem are not tangible, we often do not aim to address them or change them, we merely work within the current system to find solutions that are inadequate to cause long-term sustainable changes. By explicating the ruling power of these ideologies, however, we can see how they work and as such be better able to devise strategies to alter the ideological stances so powerful in coordinating all of our lives and, of course, the food insecurity of mothers involved within this study.

4.6.5 *Summary*

This section worked to summarize the relations identified in Chapter 4 that were working to organize the mothers' food insecurity. This section also helped illustrate the interactions between the relations at different levels of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Implicit within this theory, is the principle that these relations were impacting and reinforcing each other. Overall, the theoretical standpoint on these relations has great implications when deciding when and what actions need to be taken to address food insecurity, an area to be discussed further in Chapter 5.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The primary purpose of this study was to explicate the social relations organizing the mothers' food insecurity. In its totality, Chapter 4 worked to do this. The findings of this explication process are mapped in Section 4.6. However, mapping it out does not fully describe what is going on and the factors underlying the relations identified. This will be the focus of this chapter. This chapter will move beyond the description of the map and attempt to situate these findings within relevant literature as a means to draw out main and overarching conclusions. These conclusions will focus on the lines of fault created between some of these identified relations and the mothers' real life experiences, what they are and how and why they exist as they do. This section will also aim to identify the implications of the current organization and identify recommendations for policy, practice and research.

Section 5.1 of this chapter will discuss the broad findings of this study as they relate to similar studies completed in Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada. It will focus on how the use of Institutional Ethnography (IE) and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System's Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) allowed this study to add to add new insight to the current literature in this area. Within this section, the findings of this study will be compared to Travers' study (1993; 1996; 1997), which utilized the methodologies of IE to examine nutritional inequalities, and provided a starting point in designing this study.

Section 5.2 will move beyond discussing the overarching aspects of this study, and begin to explicate the major implications of the findings of this study as a means to draw conclusions. To do this, the lines of fault will be presented briefly to situate the discussion. Next, using the theoretical underpinnings of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System's Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and critical theoretical concepts, the question of how the social relations are working to create fault lines and organize the mothers' food insecurity and arguably, food insecurity and social inequities for others in similar situations will be examined. Following this, the question of why lines of fault exist within this current organization will be presented

and discussed. The specific implications of the fault lines, as situated within the present state of food insecurity in Nova Scotia, will then be discussed.

Section 5.3 will present recommendations for policy makers, with an emphasis on those working in the Department of Community Services' Income Assistance (IA) and the National Child Benefit Initiatives Canada Child Tax Benefit (CCTB) program. Recommendations for the nutrition profession and society will also be included within this section. Section 5.4 of this chapter will then identify limitations to the findings of this study. Following this, section 5.5 will present recommendations for future research. Finally, Section 5.6 will summarize this chapter and highlight the key points discussed.

5.1 Situating findings in the current literature

To begin to understand the implications of the findings of this study, this section will focus broadly on situating the findings in relation to other similar studies. First, the contributions from this research, specifically focusing on the value of using IE and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System's Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) to situate and understand the findings and their interrelationships, will be discussed. Finally, the findings of this study will be compared to findings of Travers' work in the early 1990's, which utilized IE to explore nutritional inequities in Nova Scotia.

5.1.1 *Using IE to explore Food Insecurity*

This study used the methodology of IE to explicate and make visible the organization of food insecurity in the lives of single mothers on IA in Nova Scotia. One of the major underlying principles of IA is to allow the explication to occur from the view of those who experience food insecurity, in this case specifically by single mothers on IA. Through this, an incredible depth of knowledge was gleaned around the mothers' actual everyday experiences of feeding their families and the different relations they entered into that were influencing this feeding work and affecting the

mothers' food security. The principles of the methodology also allowed for an in-depth look at the relations that were involved in this organization.

Many relations were identified as influencing the mothers' food insecurity; however, money was noted as having the major coordinating power. The mothers indicated that the IA and CCTB programs were their major sources of income; therefore, an investigation of the policies that guided these programs was the focus of the second stage of the data collection for this study. Using the mothers' words to guide this explication, it was possible to identify general and specific aspects of these programs working to organize the mothers' food insecurity and many lines of fault that existed between the policies guiding these programs and the mothers' everyday experiences.

Other studies based in Nova Scotia and Atlantic Canada had previously identified the majority of the fault lines (although not referred to as such) that occurred between the lives of the IA clients and policy areas and the negative impact they had on the lives (Community Advocates Network, 2003; Reed, 2004) and food security of IA clients (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004; McIntyre, 2001). However, the methodology employed within this study allowed for the explicit disjuncture between the policy and the mothers' needs and realities to be shown. This allowed the disjuncture that occurred between the policy and the mothers' lived experiences to effortlessly emerge. Being able to document the mothers' lived experiences along side the policy statement allowed the reader, with very little explanation, recognize where the gap was truly occurring. Although the other social relations were not explicated in as great a depth, the disjunctions between the mothers' lives and different aspects of these relations also became vividly apparent within this study, including those with charitable organizations, nutrition messages, food retail outlets, transportation systems and dominant ideologies. This helped to emphasize the complexity surrounding the issue of food insecurity as it occurred for the mothers, and to highlight areas where changes in programs and policies are required to better meet the needs of mothers and improve their food security.

5.1.2 *Food Insecurity and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory*

This is the first study to use Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System's Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) to organize the relations identified as coordinating the mothers' food insecurity. The framework of this theory allowed for the findings of the relations impacting on the mothers' food insecurity to be placed as they relate to the mothers' everyday lives. This was beneficial for several reasons. The underlying principles of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), that all elements within the micro, meso, exo and macrosystems are interconnected, assists the reader in recognizing the complexities around food insecurity. In addition, it helps to highlight that change on one level, without recognition and attention to the other levels, cannot achieve sustainable improvements to food security for these mothers' and others in similar situations. These findings and the framework that emerged to increase understanding around their interconnectedness and complexity assist to emphasize the need for multiple strategies to be undertaken that can address food insecurity in a sustainable and meaningful manner. It must be noted that the diagrams depicting the framework, like the heuristic utilized by Travers (1993, p. 299), is 'not meant to be interpreted as an unchanging or ridged abstraction of reality but rather as a conceptual device or a map suggesting ways in which the social organization of [food insecurity] was made more explicit in the context of this research.'

5.1.2.1 *Institutional Ethnography as utilized by Travers*

Although no studies were identified that utilized IE and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), it should be noted that Travers (1993; 1996; 1997) utilized IE to study a food insecurity related topic in Nova Scotia in the early 1990's. Indeed, Travers' work was also a major influence over the structure of this study. Within her study, Travers worked to explicate the social organization of nutritional inequities²³ among socially and economically

²³ In my study I focused on food insecurity while Travers focused on nutritional inequities. Although these terms are similar some important differences exist between them. Food insecurity refers to a

disadvantaged women and their families. Travers, however, undertook a much more intensive study involving participant observation, ethnographic interviews and group interviews. Through this study, Travers identified social relations. However, she also took this explication one step further. Travers also explicated the social constructs, which she defined as constructs produced by the social relations, the women in her study entered into that created the nutritional inequities they experienced (Travers, 1996). The constructs identified by Travers (1993; 1996) included gender, class, bureaucratic and political organization of food health and welfare, commercial organization of food health and welfare and discourse, which she noted may be ideological in nature.

When the findings of this study are considered using Travers' identified constructs (1993; 1996), similarities could be identified. First, the findings of this study suggest gendering of food insecurity. This was not as readily apparent as it was in Travers (1993; 1996) study where participant observation was completed and males were present within the household for comparison, allowing the gendering to be 'seen'. However, because the mothers in this study were the primarily caregivers and the findings suggest they had little or no assistance from the fathers of their children with the work of feeding, and because the mothers commonly did not eat to ensure their children would have food, there is the suggestion that a gendering aspect of food insecurity is present among the relations influencing the food insecurity of these mothers. Findings also strongly suggested that class played a major role in organizing the feeding work of the mothers. That is, the mothers' lack of income influenced all stages of the feeding process. Similarly, the findings of this study suggest that the organizational capacity of the commercial organization, in this case the food retail sector, was noted to exist and to impact the feeding work of the mothers in such things as their pricing policies and location of stores. However, this issue was not investigated within this study to the depth undertaken by Travers (1993;

situation when a limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in a socially acceptable way is present. As it was interpreted, the term nutritional inequities takes this concept a step further through implying through its definition the reason for the inability to access the food. Nutritional inequalities are thought to exist when inequities in distribution of opportunities, resources, services, or environmental conditions that are conducive to health are present.

1996). While the main focus of the second stage of this study was on the IA and CCTB programs, this study also identified aspects of the role bureaucracy and politics have in organizing food insecurity. Finally, common societal ideologies were noted to strongly influence the social organization of the mothers' food insecurity in Section 4.6.

The similarities between these two studies are important for two reasons. First, in a procedural manner, it further assists to legitimize the value of using IE to understand the lives of those who experience social inequalities such as food insecurity. The value of IE in this regard is its requirement for researchers to be guided by the words and realities of those most affected by an inequity and taking the research project forward with this focus rather than to view it from other positions where ruling relations may come into play (1993; 1996; 1997). More specifically, however, the broad similarities between the findings of these studies suggest that, during the twelve years since Travers (1993; 1996; 1997) presented her findings, no real changes have occurred that work to significantly improve food insecurity. This is concerning considering Travers (1993; 1996) noted that her study was carry out in the midst of one of Canada's worst recessions in recent history. This makes the findings of the present study even more disturbing given it was conducted at a time when Canada was experiencing a period of remarkable economic prosperity (RBC, 2005; Smilek, Bidgood, Parent & Thompson, 2001) and a period when our GDP was rising steadily; the Royal Bank of Canada (2005) noted that we had a vibrant domestic economy (RBC).

5.2 Implications: Investigating the Roots of the Lines of Fault

This section will move beyond discussing the overarching aspects of this study and begin to explicate the major implications of the findings of this study. To do this, the lines of fault will be presented briefly to situate the discussion. Next, using the theoretical underpinnings of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System's Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and critical theoretical concepts, the question around how food insecurity and these fault lines were organized in the lives' of the mothers' and

presumably others in similar circumstances will be addressed. Following this, the question of why lines of fault exist within this current organization will be presented and discussed. The specific implications of the fault lines, as situated within the present state of food insecurity in Nova Scotia, will then be presented.

5.2.1 What are the Fault Lines?

Starting from the mothers' words and discussions about the everyday work of feeding, this study identified numerous fault lines existing between the mothers and the social relations identified spanning Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System's Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In general terms, these fault lines will be organized into three main areas to facilitate the discussion. The majority of the fault lines existed between public programs, namely the IA and CCTB programs, and the policies, regulations and acts that coordinated them. These fault lines will be referred to as public policy and program fault lines. A fault line was also identified between the types of food distributed at the food bank and the types of food the mothers really needed within their households to decrease food insecurity. For the purposes of clarity, these fault lines will be referred to as organizational policy versus real needs of the mothers fault lines. Finally, fault lines emerged between nutritional messages and approaches for delivery of these nutritional messages and the real life ability of the mothers to meet these recommendations. This fault line will be categorized as a nutrition education fault line. One other exosystem fault line emerged between policies organizing the costs and routes of the local transportation service and the real everyday needs of the mothers involved in this study. This fault line, however, was determined to be more a result of the lack of adequate income to access this mode of transportation versus the cost itself. Although it will not be discussed as such below, the reader should be aware that together these fault lines and the relation involved reinforce and are reinforced by a broader fault line that emerged between the mothers' everyday lives and the dominant ideology of neoliberalism, and other prevailing ideologies of individualism, globalization and capitalism that have had a

strong role in shaping the social policies, such as those governing the welfare system, DC, 2005; Workman, 2003; Bourdieu, 1998) in this country for over a decade.

Why do these fault lines exist? As a means to identify solutions that may work to improve the food security of these mothers and others in similar situations through the explication of the social relations organizing the food insecurity of these lone mothers on IA, it is essential that this question be answered. What exists in our society that is perpetuating this food insecurity among low income single mothers on IA? This question will be answered as a means to draw conclusions around this issue and shape recommendations.

5.2.2 How is food insecurity being coordinated in the mothers lives'?

The relations identified within this study, as situated within Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System's Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), were working to reinforce and reproduce the identified lines of fault. How this is occurring will be discussed below. However, it should be noted that the purpose at this point is not to explain these concepts, it is to emphasize the complexity of the organization of food insecurity and how this organization is actually occurring.

On a broad level, the current ecosystem and the totality of the relations that exist within it work to reinforce and produce the situations that exist. A full explication of this interconnectedness is beyond the scope of this master's thesis. However, on a basic level, this organization can be understood by utilizing critical theoretical concepts. In short, the dominant societal ideologies of neoliberalism, individualism, globalization and capitalism, as theorized by Smith (1987), influence the social relations the mothers entered into and the mothers' knowledge (Smith; Travers 1993). As these data indicated, the strong role policies played in the organization of the mothers' food insecurity also confirmed Smith's assertion that text plays a strong role in social relations and that dominant societal ideologies are embedded within these texts. This identification helps to emphasize that the origin of the mothers' food insecurity cannot be pinpointed, and is a result of the intertwined relations occurring across the ecosystem. This provides a definite framework for

strategies that should be enacted to address food insecurity, an area to be discussed in the following section along with recommendations for future policy, practice and research.

5.2.3 *Why do these fault lines exist?*

Throughout Chapter 4 fault lines were explicated. The gaps created by the fault lines were working to organize the mothers' food insecurity. The reason for these fault lines cannot be fully explained due to the sheer complexity and interrelationship between the social relations organizing the mothers' food insecurity or within the limitations of this study. However, the findings of this study do suggest two main contributing factors involved in the creation of the food insecurity experienced by the mothers through their involvement in the creation of fault lines.

The first factor centres on the lack of venues in terms of the mothers' having their voices' and realities become known. That is, the findings of this study suggest the realities of these 'less powerful' individuals often gets suppressed or overlooked, and as such those within the ruling apparatus often create policies, programs and educational material that, unknowingly, does not reflect the realities of those impacted. A second reason for these fault lines, which could be considered as an extension of the first, can be attributed to the strategies that are being undertaken to address food insecurity and poverty, most of which lie within the short-term relief stage of the Continuum of Strategies for addressing food insecurity (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2005; Kalina, 2001). As will be discussed below, although well intended, the literature suggests that these types of strategies may be "reproducing, rather than reducing" social inequities (Dayle, McIntyre, Raine-Travers, 2000; McIntyre, Travers & Dayle, 1999; Williams, McIntyre, Dayle, Raine, 2003; Tarasuk & Eakin, 2003). In short, these strategies are working to suppress the realities of the mothers and thus adding to the fault lines. The following sections will explore these two areas further.

5.2.3.1 *The lost voices*

As noted above, the fault lines identified within this study can be divided into three main sections: public policies and programs, organizational policies and

programs and nutritional education. It is within these three areas that the mothers' voices and recognition of their realities were noticeably absent. As such, these areas will be discussed in relation to the relevant literature to help identify how the mothers' experiences are going unnoticed.

Public policy and programs. The findings of this study suggest that, at least in relation to the IA program and the policies that guide it, there is a lack of inclusion of the mothers and presumably others who experience social inequities, in the creation of public policies and programs. Within this study the two main public programs investigated were the IA and CCTB programs.

Overall, no meaningful, sustainable manner for participation of clients, especially single mothers, in the policy making or changing process was noted. In relation to the CCTB program, no avenue for input was identified. Certain mechanisms were in place within the IA program that seemed to attempt to achieve this. In this regard, the only identified avenue by which a client's concerns could be heard on a consistent basis was through the policy forum. However, even at this, clients were not present at the table. Instead, any concerns put forth by clients were passed through caseworkers to supervisors or district managers. This is of particular concern given that IA employees indicated that IA policies are constantly being revised. It should be noted here that, with regard to the IA program, clients were involved and had input into the development of the ESIA Client Handbook (Department of Community Services, 2004). ESIA employees also sit on the Steering Committee of the Nova Scotia Participatory Food Security Project, which provides another venue for voices to be heard. Although this is a positive step for inclusion, this participation influenced how the policy was communicated, not the IA policy and guidelines specifically.

The lack of direct participation of the mothers' in the IA, and seemingly the CCTB programs and the policies that guide them is concerning for several reasons. Based on Smith's (1987) description of the ruling apparatus, which includes policy makers, politicians and bureaucrats, it would appear these individuals are likely to infuse their ideological beliefs, knowingly or not, into text, such as public programs and policies. These ideologies are likely to be structured to keep them powerful and

to keep the less powerful in their current social position. Therefore, by not including the mothers in the policy process in a meaningful manner, the policy makers are, seemingly unknowingly, rendering the true dimensions of the mothers' experiences invisible. That is, without a venue, the mothers were unable to inform those within this part of the ruling apparatus about their struggles to feed their families the quantity of food they needed to support their health or the quality of foods deemed socially acceptable through societal messages of advertising and branding because they lacked the resources to do so. The mothers were also not given a venue to express their frustration around not being able to access the food they needed through the market economy, the most socially acceptable manner to access food (Michalski, 2003).

As noted by Dodd and Boyd (2000), this lack of participation eventually leads to the development of public policies and programs that do not meet the needs of those they aim to serve; this was made evident within the pages of this study with regards to many aspects of the IA and CCTB programs. Dodd and Boyd also noted that this process of exclusion leads to less powerful individuals feeling frustrated and further disempowered.

What makes these findings even more concerning, is that they have previously been identified within this region. Several recent Nova Scotian (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004; Community Advocates Network, 2003; Reed, 2004) and Atlantic Canadian studies (McIntyre et al., 2001) identified gaps similar to those identified in this study in relation to the IA and CCTB programs and policies. This situation is not specific to this region either. Because this is not a new phenomenon it suggests that these lines of fault are deeper and more prominent than this study could show. These findings, along with previously published research, provide strong evidence that real change must occur broadly within the policy making process so as to increase congruency between lived experiences and poverty.

Organizational Policy Fault Lines. In this study a fault line existed between the mothers' actual need for food and the types of food received from food banks. This finding may suggest that individuals experiencing social inequities such as poverty and food insecurity are also largely excluded or overlooked in the creation of other policies and programs aimed to assist them aside from public programs and

policies. With regard to this, Tarasuk and Eakin (2003, p.1506) noted that the food given to food banks was ‘essentially a symbolic gesture, with the distribution of food assistance dissociated from clients’ needs’. In addition, story sharing workshops held in Nova Scotia in 2003 also identified that FRC participants who used these services felt the food bank was not truly meeting their needs (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004). More specifically, these participants felt that the operating times of the food banks did not meet their real needs, food was often inadequate in quality and quantity and some volunteers were noted to give certain clients preferential treatment over others (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC). Again, as noted by Tarasuk & MacLean, the low income women involved in their study noted that the food bank was their last option; it was used to stave off hunger. Although the reason was not specifically cited, it could be presumed, based on the findings, that food banks were not the most favourable choice in terms of addressing the food insecurity of the participants; these institutions lacked the ability to meet the client’s true needs.

The scope of this study did not allow for the investigation of the development of policies within food banks in Nova Scotia. However, as noted by Kratzmann (2003) some food banks are more inclusive and flexible than others (Kratzmann). Not surprising, Kratzmann noted that individuals visiting food banks with more flexible personalized policies had more positive experiences, even when the food received was less than adequate, versus the feelings felt by those who visited food banks with stricter policies. This supports the claim by Dodd and Boyd (2000) that including individuals in the creation of policies and programs affecting them increases their satisfaction with the policy and/or program. Thus, the findings of this study provide further evidence around the importance of including those most affected in the creation of policies and programs at all levels.

Educational Message Fault lines. This study identified fault lines between the mothers’ everyday needs and realities and the nutritional messages and approaches used for delivering these nutritional messages. These findings suggest that the processes undertaken to create both the messages and the delivery approaches did not consider the barriers poverty and food insecurity have on accessing nutritious food. Instead, those creating these messages seemed to be guided by individualistic ideals

that presume everyone has an equal opportunity to achieve success and health within our society (Travers, 1997), a standpoint that has been strongly refuted by the findings of this study.

The finding that popular nutrition messages do not recognise or address the nutritional needs and barriers to healthy eating of those who are living in poverty is consistent with previous research. On a broad level, among the limited research on the theoretical underpinnings guiding the deliverance of these messages, findings suggest that the current theories used to shape nutritional educational material must be broadened; at present, they are unable to address and take into consideration the complexity of the issues impacting on nutritional intake (Achetburg & Miller, 2004). Since nutrition has become an area of study, a relatively short time ago, the majority of theories used have been based on psychological theories (Archetberg & Clark, 1992) that have appeared to be inadequate when attempting to address the true complexity surrounding the many factors influencing nutritional health (Achterberg & Clark). Travers (1997) has made strong arguments suggesting that nutrition professionals must move beyond educating individuals about how to eat to be physically healthy. Travers argues that nutrition educators must recognize that nutritional inadequacies reach far beyond the individual and are embedded within society. Therefore, to make significant improvements in nutritional health and well being practitioners must work to identify societal problems impacting particular populations and move to make social, rather than individual level changes (Travers).

Travers' assertions are indirectly supported by the literature, and directly supported by the findings of this study. This is evident specifically around the fault line that still exists between the mothers' economic ability to acquire 'healthy food' and popular nutrition messages and approaches. With regard to the literature, story sharing workshops held in Nova Scotia (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004) along with studies undertaken by McLaughlin, Tarasuk and Kreiger (2003), Travers (1993; 1996) and Devault (1991) indicate that low income participants involved in their studies held a high level of food preparatory skills. Although these findings cannot be used to presume all low income individuals have adequate food preparation skills and nutrition knowledge, as noted by McLaughlin, Tarasuk and Kreiger (p. 1509) these

findings work to ‘challenge the stereotypical notions that families in poverty lack the skills or motivation to cook food from scratch and importantly raise questions about the extent to which food skills can protect very low income families’. To further support this, Badun, Evers and Hooper (1995, p. 79) noted that nutrition inequities identified within their study were ‘more likely a result of inadequate resources than poor [nutrition] choices’. In the end, this evidence reinforces Travers’ call for societal level, rather than individual level strategies to address nutritional inequities.

Although individualistic ideals are still embedded within the nutrition literature, evidence shows that this shift in focus from the individual level to societal level is slowly occurring. Some evidence of this was in the creation of the *Nutrition for Health: An Agenda for Action* (Office of Nutrition Policy and Promotion, 1996), which emphasized the need to look at social along with individual determinants to achieving nutritional health and well being in Canada. More recent evidence of this in Nova Scotia has been the release of the Healthy Eating Nova Scotia (Office of Health Promotion, 2005) document unveiled in March 2005. This document outlines a strong framework for strategic and comprehensive action on healthy eating which recognizes societal as well as individual barriers to achieving nutritional health and well being. Although positive, these approaches have, in large part, been absent from nutritional messages and approaches devised for the general public. As such, there is still much work to be done within the nutrition profession and undoubtedly other health professions, to ensure social inequities are a major consideration when developing and dissemination nutrition and other health messages.

5.2.3.2 *Strategies that work to hide the true nature of food insecurity*

The findings of this study identified that the mothers, and presumably others in similar situations undertake coping strategies that do not assist in increasing their food security and, instead, may work to hide the true nature of their food insecurity. This occurs because such strategies prevent the full manifestation of hunger and malnutrition, severe side effects related to the lack of food, but do nothing to assist those who have to rely on these strategies to ensure they can continue to purchase the foods they need and want. Many relations were identified as working to organize the mothers’ food insecurity; most were working to assist the mothers in staving off the

most severe affects of this situation - hunger - while still leaving them in a state of food insecurity. These relations and the individual coping strategies the mothers developed to deal with food insecurity were then organized into different economies. Overall, these strategies allowed the mothers to cope with their food insecurity in the short term, and as such were classified in the first level of the Continuum as short-term strategies. There was no evidence that suggested that any of the strategies undertaken had any long term, positive implications for improving the mothers' food insecurity.

Unfortunately, when we consider that 17% of Nova Scotians, and over 57% of those on IA in Canada and 33% of single mother families in Canada are food insecure (Che & Chen, 2001), it is necessary that there are strategies and programs in place that can stave off food insecurity and hunger (Radimer et al., 1990). The most concerning aspect surrounding the mothers accessing short term strategies to cope with their food insecurity is linked to the suggestion that these strategies do not provide long term solutions to addressing food insecurity and to their tendency to mask the true nature of the social inequity being experienced by those who are food insecure (Dayle, McIntyre & Travers, 2000; McIntyre, Travers & Dayle, 1999; Tarasuk. & Eakin, 2003; Williams, McIntyre, Dayle & Raine, 2003). As noted by Tarasuk and Eakin (2003), food banks lack the structural capacity to truly address food insecurity. These researchers also found that the food given to food bank users was symbolic and as such worked to render the true needs of the clients invisible (Tarasuk & Eakin). In addition, other strategies that fell within the individual capacity building strategies have been noted to do little to improve household food insecurity (DC, 2005; Power, 1999). Tarasuk and Reynolds (1999) noted that participation in community kitchens can increase coping skills and provide very valuable social supports; however, because they lack the ability to alter economic circumstances they cannot substantially affect food security.

Overall, the findings of this study, along with evidence from the literature, suggest that the true experiences of those who are food insecure may be rendered invisible because of the short term and perhaps individual capacity building strategies undertaken to cope with household food insecurity (Dayle, McIntyre & Travers,

2000; McIntyre, Travers & Dayle, 1999; Tarasuk. & Eakin, 2003; Williams, McIntyre, Dayle & Raine, 2003). These findings have major implications. First, as noted by Tarasuk and Eakin (2003) by undertaking these strategies the mothers are rendering their experiences of food insecurity invisible. This decreases the government's and the public's recognition of the need to develop long term, system change strategies to address food insecurity. In addition, the work of these short term strategies makes it difficult to recognize the true dimensions of this social inequity especially for individuals who are working to be inclusive when shaping policies and programs. This would also contribute to the creation of policies and programs that do not meet the true needs of those they aim to affect.

5.2.4 So what are the implications of these conclusions?

Major implications arise from the two aforementioned factors that are creating the fault lines. The first is the loss of the mothers' voices in the creation of policies, programs and educational materials; the second is the tendency of short term strategies to make the experiences of food insecurity invisible. Both these factors are working to silence the mothers' realities. That is, both of these factors are working to subjugate the mothers' knowledge (Ingrim, 1994). They are creating a false consciousness (Fay, 1987) among the mothers, the public and the policy makers. This will work to further suppress the experiences of the mothers' and others experiencing social inequities. Furthermore, the current state of food insecurity and the inability of policies, programs or educational materials to address this issue indicates our province is in grave trouble and at great risk of experiencing further increases in food insecurity if not addressed.

5.2.4.1 Creation of false consciousness

One of the broad implications of excluding the mothers' voices and undertaking strategies that may hide their true experiences of food insecurity centre's around its apparent contribution to the creation of false consciousness (Fay, 1987). Although the existence of false consciousness was not explicated explicitly in Chapter 4, there were signs indicating that it existed. Overall, the mothers did not

recognize the totality of the relations working to organize their situation, or that the current organization of our society was not meeting their needs as parents. That is, many of the mothers seemed to accept their situation, feel shame and blame themselves for being food insecure.

5.2.4.2 *Worsening food insecurity in Nova Scotia*

The findings of this study indicate that the policies and programs currently in place within the IA and CCTB programs, and presumably policies in all government departments, are unable to address the social inequities being experienced within this province. This is very concerning considering the current state of food insecurity in this province and the implications for individuals and society when food insecurity exists. Furthermore, those experiencing food insecurity have been noted to be at risk of compromised nutritional (Badun, Evers & Hooper, 1995; Kendall, Olson & Frongillo, 1996; McIntyre, Glanville, Raine & Dayle, 2001; Starkey, Grey-Donald & Kuhnlein, 1999; Tarasuk, 2001b; Tarasuk & Beaton, 1999; Vozoris & Tarasuk, 2003), physical (Che & Chen, 2001; McIntyre et al., 2000; Vozoris & Tarasuk, 2003), and psychological health and well being (Badun, Evers and Hooper, 1995; Hamelin, Habicht and Beaudry, 1999; Klesges, Pahor, Shoor, & Wan, 2001). Food insecurity also leads to feelings of social exclusion (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004; Hamelin, Beaudry & Habicht, 2002; Hamelin, Habicht & Beaudry, 1999; Kratzmann, 2003; McIntyre et al., 2001). Social exclusion has been noted to result in individuals becoming increasingly removed from the larger society and thus becoming situated outside the boundaries that define membership or inclusion into our society (Dechman, 2003). The repercussions of social exclusion can be far reaching. Hamelin, Habicht & Beaudry, (1999) recognized this when they stated that the affects of food insecurity could have very negative consequences to community life and society.

Considering that the evidence gathered during this study shows the existence of neoliberalistic-based social policies, and those who hold neoliberal ideals often measure cause and effect in dollars and cents, perhaps a more concrete message about the negative effects of food insecurity can be centred on the increased health care costs. The health care costs related to chronic diseases linked to unhealthy diets are

staggering. Diet related diseases, such as those earlier, cost the Canadian economy \$6.3 billion dollars per year and Nova Scotia tax payers over \$389 million dollars per year directly; an additional \$571 million dollars is spent annually due to lost productivity (Coleman, 2002). These data emphasize the need to immediately address food insecurity and to ensure the health and well being of Nova Scotia's citizens and our broader society. The following section will aim to outline recommendations for several groups in this regard.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Recommendations for situating food security strategies

In this study, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System's Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) allowed for the placement of the social relations into systems in the context of the mothers' everyday lives as well as for the recognition of these relations, and how they work to reinforce and recreate each other. The theoretical standpoint on these relations indicates that there are many strategies to be enacted at various levels of the ecosystem to address the multifaceted nature of food insecurity. That is, we cannot change microsystem relations unless the exosystem and macrosystem are able to support these changes and ensure they are sustainable. Conversely, without the support of individuals, and the recognition that many of the ideologies coordinating our society are not speaking to our everyday realities, the ideologies present in the macrosystem, which in turn coordinate exo, meso and microsystem relations (Melson, 1980) will not change. Considering this standpoint, the following sections will discuss specific recommendations for change that would assist in building food security within this province and country.

5.3.2 *Recommendations for Policy*

5.3.2.1 *Include those most affected in the policy process*

Policy deficiencies became starkly apparent throughout the entirety of this study. Broadly speaking, the most immediate need to be addressed within the scope of policy is the manner in which policy is developed, implemented and changed. The results of this study highlighted the need for those most affected by an issue to be included, in a meaningful and sustainable manner, in the development of policies and in the review process. Although this need was most apparent and immediate within the IA and CCTB program, all policy and program development should consider the lived experiences of those whom they aim to affect. This is a recommendation mirrored by the work of the Food Security Projects in Nova Scotia (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004). This, of course, cannot fully guarantee that policies developed will address and meet the everyday needs and realities of all individuals they aim to affect; however, it can be presumed it would facilitate the development of policies that are meaningful to those they serve (Dodd & Boyd, 2000). In addition, acknowledging the perspectives and knowledge of those most affected creates a more inclusive and healthier community (Dodd & Boyd).

5.3.2.2 *Specific policy changes*

More specifically, this study allowed for the identification of public policy areas, namely around the IA and CCTB programs and policies, that need to be addressed in order for these policies and programs to better meet the needs of the mothers involved in this study, and arguably, others in similar circumstances. These recommended changes will be organized loosely around the conceptual framework introduced by Diderichen and Haliquist (as cited in Whitehead, Burstrom & Diderichsen, 2000).

Policy recommendations influencing social position. Several policy changes can occur within the government as a whole and more specifically within the IA and CCTB programs affecting the social position of the single mothers' who took part in this study. This was noted by Whitehead, Bronstrom & Diderichsn (2000) as entry point A. One major recommended change centres on social spending with the priority

of decreasing social inequities on government agendas. That is, considering the disparities resulting from social inequities, addressing this issue should become a priority for federal, provincial/territorial and municipal levels of government. In tandem with this, funding for social programming should be increased to adequate levels, beginning with increased funding through the Canadian Social Transfer (CCSD, 2002). Of course, such a change would require an ideological shift away from neoliberalism in government strategies to address social issues. As such, it is recommended that all levels of government investigate the true needs of the people they serve and not presume that such policies are able to meet the needs of all individuals and groups.

Policy recommendations that influence exposure to negative health outcomes.

Policy changes that would fall into the second level, described by Whitehead, Bronstrom & Diderichsn (2000) as influencing exposure to health hazards faced by people in different social positions, are those policy changes that would improve the current IA and CCTB systems making them better able to address the true needs of those who rely on them (Whitehead, Burstrom & Diderichsen). Based on the findings of this study, recommended policy changes within this section applicable to the Department of Community Service's IA program, and in conjunction with recipients of this program, are as follows:

- Reassess the goals of the ESIA program to ensure it is able to consider the true needs of those who rely on it.
 - Single parent families' dependant on the IA program must be given the choice to raise their children or enter into employment support activities that will support the single parent to enter into the paid workforce²⁴.
- Index the income available to IA clients to the cost of living, using an established measure for assessing the true cost of living. In doing so, the current manner through which IA rates are established must be

²⁴ Recommendation is supported by findings of the Community Advocates Network (2003)

reassessed so that changes to IA benefits can be made as the cost of living changes^{24, 25}.

- As suggested by AHPRC, FRC/P and NSNC (2004), the personal allowance portion of the IA program must reflect the actual cost of a nutritious food basket based on age and gender^{24,25, 26}.
- Index dental costs to the actual cost of dental procedures and ensure all clients are able to access dental care on a regular, not an emergency, basis²⁴.
- In conjunction with the National Child Benefit Initiatives' CCTB Initiative, restructure the IA and CCTB programs to ensure that those families on IA receive a real monetary benefit from the National Child Benefit Initiative's CCTB program^{24,25}.
- Assess telephone costs as an essential need and include monies to cover the cost of this service^{24,25}.
- Assess Pharmacare policies and enact policy change to ensure easy access to the Pharmacare co pay exemption. Reed (2004) and the Community Advocates Network (2004) go further suggesting that the co pay amount should be eliminated altogether.
- Re-evaluate the Maintenance enforcement program and enact policy changes to ensure that the care-giving parent is not held responsible if the absent parent does not pay maintenance.

Recommended policy changes within this section are applicable to Canada Revenue's National Child Benefit Initiative Department, and were developed in conjunction with those who are recipients of funds from this program. They are follows:

²⁵ Recommendation is supported by findings of Reed (2004)

²⁶ Recommendation is supported by AHPRC, FRC/P and NSNC (2004).

- Re-evaluate policies, and enact policy changes to ensure those who do not file income tax on time can obtain support from this program in a timely manner.

Other policy changes that would ensure more adequate support, although not directly identified by the mothers would be the inclusion of monies to support transportation costs. This would assist the mothers with accessing grocery stores and other necessary services^{24,25}. It may also promote and support alternative food acquisition projects such as home delivery, direct to the consumer purchasing and community gardens.

5.3.3 *Recommendations for Practice*

The continued existence of nutrition education programs and materials based on individualistic theories of change indicate the nutrition profession has to make fundamental changes. Instead of focusing on changing individuals' behaviours, an approach that negates the social factors that make it difficult to access healthy foods, the dietetic profession must work to ensure systemic changes are made. Systemic changes would serve to create a more opportune environment for making healthy and nutritious food choices. As well, it would work to ensure that all citizens have the resources necessary to access the types and amounts of food they need to stay healthy. Until this is achieved the work for nutritionists both within Canada and throughout world will not be complete. Several recommendations to facilitate this process include:

- Using the findings from this study to inform current nutrition professionals about the numerous societal factors working to influence the food security and nutritional choices of individuals within our province and country.
- Using the findings of this study and other similar studies to develop curriculum around the determinants of food security for students enrolled in post secondary nutrition and social science and health related programs throughout Nova Scotia and Canada.

5.3.4 *Recommendations for society*

The importance of the aforementioned policy and nutrition practice recommendations cannot be understated. However, action to address food insecurity cannot stop here. We as a society must begin to recognize that the ideologies working to shape and rule our lives are not speaking to the experiences of the majority in our society. We, meaning you the reader and I, must not sit idly by and simply work to provide change within the current structure. We must begin to question why things are the way they are and not merely accept our social structure, one in which poverty and food insecurity exist, as a reified entity that cannot change. As noted by Dodd and Boyd (2000), public pressure is a powerful tool with regard to policy change and in terms of changing our social ideologies. This change will not be easy and may not occur quickly. However, by becoming interested and active within our society and by trying to influence our politicians, policy makers, business leaders, and indeed, our next-door neighbours to make sustainable, structural and ideological changes, it can happen. How can this be done? We can start by talking, by informing others and ourselves about the lived realities of those who experience inequities and why, and by not being completely influenced by the ideas of the powerful and elite.

5.4 Limitations

Limitations existed within this research design that may have impacted on the findings of this study. First, and foremost, this is my first research project meaning my skills are far from refined, thus posing creating a limitation to what could be yielded from such a complex study design. Although each consecutive interview yielded more detailed information than the previous, my interviewing skills are still developing. Indeed, this thesis is a reflection of a first attempt in undertaking the challenges of qualitative research,.

As noted above, the scope of this study must be considered when findings of this study are extrapolated for use to support other research. This limitation is muted by the fact that the purpose of this study was not to make the findings generalized to a

broader population. However, it is an important issue to highlight as the resultant lines of fault relate to the lives of the mothers involved in this study only. Thus, their presence in other individuals' lives, even in similar life circumstances, cannot be assumed. In addition, because the map of relations presented within this study are representative of a certain point in time and is not a reified entity, as societal and individual characteristics change, so will the relationships and fault lines identified within this study.

Another limitation of this research arose from the recruitment design and stemmed from the use of FRC as recruitment sites. In doing this, I eliminated a segment of the population most at risk. Specifically, those mothers who visited the FRC may receive more social support, in the form of FRC staff and other participants, than those single mothers on IA who are food insecure and cannot or will not access a FRC. As such, key issues surrounding food insecurity may have been overlooked.

The language used for the recruitment process was another limitation of the research. Throughout the subject selection process all recruitment posters were printed in English, thereby eliminating other individuals who may not have been literate, may not have been literate in English or those who did not feel comfortable speaking this language. This aspect of the recruitment process stemmed from my inability to converse in detail in any other language. However, eliminating individuals of different cultural experiences limited the richness of the data collected. In addition to this, the mothers who were involved in this research were also living in an urban area. As such, it can be assumed that their food insecurity experiences differed from mothers in similar life circumstances who live in rural areas of Nova Scotia.

Finally, the scope of this study did not allow for participant observation thereby decreasing the richness of the data collected. As noted by Campbell & Gregor (2002), participant observation is as a key component of IE studies. By missing this step, I was unable to truly immerse myself in the everyday worlds of the mothers who were food insecure. As such, the intricate details of their experiences are still lying in that fault line I attempted to reveal.

5.5 Recommendations for future research

This study identified many different relations organizing the food insecurity of the mothers involved; however, due to the scope of a Master's thesis, I was only able to explicate the ruling relations of the IA and CCTB programs and policies to any notable extent. As such, the findings here suggest the need for further research to explicate the coordinating forces of other identified relations regarding the impact charitable organizations, food retail outlets, and transportation systems have on the food insecurity of single mothers on IA in Nova Scotia. Research is needed to identify other relations that may exist but have not been identified within this study to gain a better picture of the social relations impacting the mothers food insecurity.

In order to explicate the intricacies of the IA and CCTB programs additional research involving individuals from the CCTB program and IA caseworkers would be beneficial. Such an investigation would allow for further understanding of the coordinating power of these relations. Future research into the relations organizing programs such as IA and CCTB would also be beneficial in further explicating the workings of these and other similar programs.

Furthermore, IA recipients are only one group of many who are vulnerable to experiencing food insecurity. As shown by the recent food costing data (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004), other groups include those who are employed for wages at or only slightly above the current minimum wage rates who are also unable to earn enough money to purchase a basic nutritious diet when other basic costs of living are considered. In addition, Che and Chen (2001) identified that renters and Aboriginals living off reserve are at higher risk of experiencing food insecurity. The high rates of food insecurity among Aboriginals living off reserve, at 31%, were further reinforced by a recent report published through Statistics Canada (2005). Explications into these individuals' experiences with food and the work of feeding would add much to our current knowledge of food insecurity and allow us to identify more precise strategies to address this situation.

This study suggests that it would be valuable if future research, with a knowledge translation focus, were aimed at an investigation into the extent to which

policy makers, who have direct impact on the lives of the less powerful in our society, are aware of the research existing around food insecurity and vulnerable populations in this province. This question stems from the amount of literature I found on food insecurity in Nova Scotia while I worked on this project. Several studies and papers from this province were already in existence. They identified areas of concern in relation to our society's treatment of low income individuals, especially problem areas within the IA program (AHPRC, FRC/P & NSNC, 2004; Reed, 2004; Community Advocates Network, 2003; McIntyre et al, 2001; Travers, 1993). Even though some of these findings have been in existence for more than a decade, little seems to have been done to address the areas of concern raised by these studies. The most notable concern centers on a call for adequate funding through the IA program; funding that would ensure basic needs can be met by those who depend on IA.

5.6 Conclusion

This study sought to map out the social relations organizing the food insecurity of seven single mothers on IA in the Halifax Regional Municipality of Nova Scotia through the use of IE. Many relations were identified and were organized using the Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). To be true to IE methodology, the findings from the mothers' interviews, the identified relations that were organizing their food insecurity, needed to be examined to explore how these relations organized their food insecurity. These findings then needed to be built back into the analytic account (Campbell & Gregor). Income was noted to be the most influential relation organizing the mothers' food insecurity and the IA and CCTB programs were the main sources of income for the mothers', therefore, these programs became a main focus for the second stage of this research.

The findings of this research suggest that many social relations are organizing and reproducing the food insecurity experienced by the mothers. Many fault lines were also found to exist between the mothers' everyday experiences and public and organizational policies and programs and nutrition education materials and approaches. Overall, using Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems' Theory

(Bronfenbrenner, 1979), it was understood that the identified social relations worked together to maintain the mother's state of food security. However, two main factors were working together, specifically in the maintenance of these fault lines. The first was the lack of participation of those most affected by food insecurity in the policy process. As noted by Dodd & Boyd, (2002) excluding those most affected by an issue, in this case the single mothers experiencing food insecurity, in the creation of policies aimed to affect them leads to the development of policies and programs that do not reflect the realities of the population. Second, the mothers' tendency to undertake short term strategies to cope with food insecurity, and society's abundance of programs designed to provide short term solutions to food insecurity, were noted as working to hide the true reality of the mothers' experiences of food insecurity. As a result, the true realities of the mothers were suppressed, thus contributing to the creation and maintenance of these lines of fault and their food insecurity.

These conclusions have serious consequences considering when the implications food insecurity has on the health and well being of those who experience it (Badun, Evers & Hooper, 1995; Kendall, Olson & Frongillo, 1996; McIntyre, Glanville, Raine & Dayle, 2001; Jacob-Starkey, Grey-Donald & Kuhnlein, 1999; Tarasuk, 2004; Tarasuk, 2001b; Tarasuk & Beaton, 1999; Vozoris & Tarasuk, 2003) and the economic toll it can have on society (Coleman, 2002). As such, public policy and programs, nutrition practice and society as a whole must take immediate action and work to make system level, sustainable changes that will address the root causes of food insecurity. This change will not be quick, nor will it be easy. The first step to solving the social inequity of food insecurity is very simple: begin to listen to the voices of those who experience food insecurity.

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Appendix A Poster

Are you interested in taking part in a research project?

Food Insecurity and Women in Nova Scotia

Food insecurity means not being sure that every day you will have enough healthy and affordable food suited to the needs of you and your family.

We want to learn:

What single mothers who experience food insecurity face in their daily lives?

Is anything being done to improve food security in Nova Scotia?

If *you* are a single mother who:

- Is over 18 years old
- Has children under the age of 18 years
- Buys and prepares the food in your home, and
- Faces food insecurity from time to time.

We would like you to take part in a 1-2 hour interview.

If you want to know more about these interviews or would like to take part in an interview, please contact Rita MacAulay at 423-0679 or 456-1296,

We will provide you with \$25.00 for your time and any expenses

Appendix B Interview Guide for Food Insecure Women

Duration: Approximately 1-2 hours minutes

Location: To be decided upon with participants

Introduction

Thank-you for agreeing to participate in this interview. The purpose of this project is to get to know more about what mothers who deal with food insecurity face in their daily lives. This project will also look at current public programs that affect how you buy and prepare food and the policies, or plans of action, that guide these programs. Food insecurity means not being sure that every day you will have enough healthy and affordable food suited to you and your family. Therefore, food security means being able to get all the healthy food you need and enjoy to support your and your family's health. Lack of income has been noted as one of the biggest barriers to being food secure. There are many programs and policies that have an impact on whether or not someone is food secure. Through this project I hope to find some key public programs that have an impact on your level of food security. I will then invite some of the people involved with these programs to take part in an interview. I will also read some of the key policy and program documents that affect the lives of women who are food insecure to try and find out if there are ways that these public programs or policies can be changed so that food insecurity can be better dealt with in Nova Scotia.

Hearing about your daily activities with food and money is very important to my research. There are no right or wrong answers of course because the responses are based solely on your experiences of getting and preparing food for you and your family to eat. Your responses will guide the rest of my project.

As indicated in the consent form, I will be using a tape recorder to capture this interview. If the taping of this interview makes you feel uncomfortable at any time please let me know and we can turn it off. Also, this interview will be held in extreme confidence. No identifying information will be used in this study.

There is no set time limit for the interview, however, it often takes between one to two hours. Please let me know if you want to stop at any time. Feel free to ask me any questions throughout the interview

Before I begin, do you have any questions? May I begin?

Interview Questions

On a typical day, what activities do you take part in that involves food and eating?
(Start with asking them to recollect the previous days experiences of food and eating)

Probes:

Eating/feeding meals

- Describe a typical mealtime for your family
- Where are your/families meals eaten? (home, work, school, friend's house)?
- If meals are eaten at home, what are the meal times like? (rushed, relaxed, stressful, enjoyable)?
 - Why?
- Do your meal patterns change during a typical month?
- Do changes occur around pay days? Grocery days?

Planning Meals

- Tell me about how you usually plan meals for you and your family
- How far ahead are they planned out? (day, week, month)?
- What do you consider when you plan a meal?
 - Budget?
 - Nutrition?
 - Convenience/Time?
 - Health?
 - Other factors?
- What feelings arise during the planning of meals? during meal time? After meals?

Description of Preparing the meals

- Who is involved with preparing a meal? Why?
- What is used to prepare the meals?
- How much time is usually involved in this process?
- What budget/nutritional considerations are taken into account?
- What feelings arise during preparing meals?

Shopping

- Where do you shop for your food?
- When do you usually shop?
- Who do you shop with?
- What influences your choices when you shop and why?
 - Budget?
- What strategies do you use to ensure your budget can purchase the food you need?
 - Buying on sale?
 - Using coupons?
 - Buying no name?
 - Buying from reduced racks?
 - Nutrition?

- Do your shopping/how you get food to feed your family patterns change? (during the day /week month)?
- What affects changes to shopping/food acquisition
 - Money?
 - Transportation?
 - Availability of foods you like?
 - Health issues?
- Do you use any other methods or sources to get food?
 - Food Banks?
 - Soup kitchen?
 - Breakfast program?
 - Family/friends
 - What are your experiences with these programs?

Demographics

Can you tell me a bit about yourself and your family?

What is your age? _____

What would be your main activity and the main activities of other adults in your home?

| | Respondent | Other Adults |
|---------------------------------------|------------|--------------|
| Caring for family | | |
| Working for pay or profit | | |
| Going to school | | |
| Recovering from illness or disability | | |
| Looking for work | | |
| Other | | |

What is your main source of income for your household?

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Employment | |
| Employment Insurance | |
| Income Assistance | |
| Old Age Security | |
| Pension | |
| Scholarship | |
| Alimony/child support | |
| Benefits/insurance | |

What is your current education level?

Appendix C Screening Questions

SCREENING QUESTIONS

Please answer yes or no to the following questions?

Are you a lone parent?

Yes _____ No _____

Are you the main person who buys the food and cooks in your home? Yes _____

No _____

Do you have one or more children?

Yes _____

No _____

How many? _____

Are your children all 18 years or younger?

Yes _____

No _____

Are there any adults living with you?

Yes _____

No _____

How many? _____

Statistics Canada considers that a family of _____ living in this area is considered low income if they make less than _____ a year. Would you say that your income is less than that?

Yes _____ No _____

Low Income Cut-offs for Halifax (pop. B/t 100,000-500,000) based on 2001

Statistics Canada Data:

| Size of Family | Low income cut off (\$) |
|----------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | 13,107 |
| 2 | 15,992 |
| 3 | 20,227 |
| 4 | 25,192 |
| 5 | 28,157 |
| 6 | 31,122 |
| 7 + | 34,087 |

B.

Criteria used to establish if an individual is experiencing food insecurity are based on the three questions used in the National Population Health Survey Food Insecurity Supplement Questionnaire (1998/1999). If participants answer yes to at least one of the following questions, the presence of food insecurity will be established.

Have you or anyone in your household ever:

worried that there would not be enough to eat because of a lack of money?

If so, have you worried about this in the

past year? Yes ☐ No ☐

6 Months? Yes ☐ No ☐

Month? Yes ☐ No ☐

not eaten the quality or variety of foods that you wanted because of a lack of money?

If so, have you done this in the

past year? Yes ☐ No ☐

6 Months? Yes ☐ No ☐

Month? Yes ☐ No ☐

not had enough food to eat because of a lack of money?

If so, has this occurred in the

past year? Yes ☐ No ☐

6 Months? Yes ☐ No ☐

Month? Yes ☐ No ☐

Appendix D Informed Consent form for mothers

**INFORMED CONSENT FORM: INDEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH SINGLE MOTHERS WHO ARE FOOD INSECURE IN NOVA SCOTIA
MAPPING THE SOCIAL RELATIONS SHAPING THE EVERYDAY LIVES OF SINGLE MOTHERS WHO ARE FOOD INSECURE IN NOVA SCOTIA*****Introduction***

You are invited to take part in a research project being done as part of a Graduate Studies Program in the Applied Human Nutrition at Mount Saint Vincent University. Whether or not you take part in this project is up to you, and you may withdraw at any time. If you do choose to take part you should make sure you know the details about this project. If at any time during or after this interview you feel that you would like to talk about or ask questions about any part of this study please feel free to contact or myself, Rita MacAulay, my advisor, Dr. Patty Williams.

Purpose

The purpose of this project is to get to know more about what mothers who deal with food insecurity face in their daily lives. This project will also look at current public programs and policies, which aim to address the problem of food insecurity. Food insecurity means not being sure that every day you will have enough healthy and affordable food suited to you and your family. Governments and other organizations have many policies, or plans of actions, that impact on how people buy and prepare food and therefore, on people's level of food insecurity. By learning more about what it is like to live with food insecurity and how you and others deal with this, I hope to find some key programs that impact on your level of food security. I will then invite some of the people involved with these programs to take part in an interview. I will also read some of the key policy and program documents that guide how these programs work and affect the lives of women who are food insecure. By doing this I will try and find out if there are ways that these programs and the policies that guide these programs can be changed so that food insecurity can be better dealt with in Nova Scotia.

Who is Participating in this Study

The first part of this project will include women from the Single Parent Resource Centre. The responses I receive from these women will guide the rest of this project.

Who Will be Conducting this Research

I, Rita MacAulay, will be the primary researcher for this project. However, my research committee will have input into how I carry out this project and in describing the information that I collect.

What I am asking you to do

For this project, I am asking you to take part in a 1 to 2 hour interview at a location of your choice. During this interview I will be asking you questions about your everyday activities around getting, preparing, and serving food for yourself and/or your family. With your permission this interview will be tape-recorded and later it will be typed out. After it is typed out and I have had time to read it, I will contact you again to arrange another visit so we can review the answers you gave during your interview. During this time you will also have a chance to go over my initial understanding of the information I have collected for this project.

Benefits

Although no benefits can be guaranteed, the information you provide may allow me to identify parts of policy and programs that could be changed so that the problem of food insecurity can be better dealt with in Nova Scotia.

Risks

There will be little risk to people who take part in this project, however, some risk may be present. First, there is a risk that the information gathered will not let me identify ways that policy and programs can be changed so that food insecurity can be better dealt with in the lives of Nova Scotian women. There is also a risk that you may also become upset when talking about your experiences with getting and preparing and serving food for yourself and your family. If this does happen please feel free to contact myself, the primary researcher, Rita MacAulay, or my thesis advisor, Dr. Patty Williams. Also, although I have kept the Single Parent Resource Centre and its location secret, because I have been volunteering at the Single Parent Resource Centre there is a chance that the site may become known by policy makers and other individuals.

Confidentiality

All written material, such as the informed consent forms, transcripts, and notes, will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at Mount Saint Vincent. Access to the original data will be limited to myself, Rita MacAulay, my research committee and during the transcription process the transcriptionist. Following the transcription of the audiotapes the researcher will destroy the tapes. When the project has been finished, data will be kept for five years in the event that an audit of the project is conducted, or that the information is required for further analyses. Any information that would let others figure out who took part in this project will be removed from all records or reports.

Compensation

To thank you for your time and to help with any costs you may have had because of your participation in this interview, such as travel and childcare, you will be given twenty-five dollars.

Other Considerations

Any information you tell me in this interview may be used to in future publications.

Questions

Rita B. MacAulay, Primary Researcher: Tel. (902) 423-0679

Patty L. Williams, Primary Researcher's Thesis Advisor; Tel. (902)457-6394 Fax (902) 457-6134

Email patty.williams@msvu.ca

In the event that you have any problems with, or wish to voice concern about, any part of your participation in this project, you may contact Dr. Stephen Perrott the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board Tel. (902) 457-6337 Email Stephen.Perrott@msvu.ca .

-INFORMED CONSENT FORM-**MAPPING THE SOCIAL RELATIONS SHAPING THE EVERYDAY LIVES OF SINGLE MOTHERS WHO ARE FOOD INSECURE IN NOVA SCOTIA**

If I, the Primary Researcher Rita MacAulay, have read the information sheet that explains the research project and you are willing to participate, please let me read the following summary sheet to you and sign below.

I understand that:

- This is a study being conducted by Rita MacAulay, a Graduate student in the Applied Human Nutrition Program at Mount Saint Vincent University.
- The purpose of this project is to get to know more about what mothers who deal with food insecurity face in their daily lives. This project will also look at current public programs that impact on my level of food security. Overall, this project will also try and find out if some public programs and policies that guide these programs can be changed so that food insecurity can be better dealt with in Nova Scotia.
- All the information I provide is confidential.
- A potential benefit for me as a participant is that the information I give may allow the researcher to identify parts of some policy and programs that can be changed so that the problem of food insecurity can be better dealt with in Nova Scotia.
- Possible risks for me as a participant in this project are that the information gathered may not lead to changes that will improve the situation for food insecure individuals in Nova Scotia. There is also a risk that I may also become upset when talking about my experiences with getting and preparing food for myself and my family. In addition, although the researcher has kept the <name of FRC> and its location confidential, because she has been volunteering at the <FRC name> there is a possibility that the site may become known by policy makers and other individuals.
- Any feedback/comments I provide during the interview may be used in future publications.
- I do not have to answer any questions or take part in any discussions if I so choose, and I can stop this interview at any time.
- The researcher will contact me again to arrange another visit so she can review the answers I gave during my interview and her initial understanding of the information she has collected for this project.
- If I have any questions about this research project, I can contact the primary research, Rita MacAulay at (902) 423-0679 or Dr. Patty Williams at (902) 457-6394.

I will keep a copy of the consent form for my records.

I have been read and understand the information given about the project. I am willing to participate. I have been provided with enough information to make a decision as to whether or not I would like to participate in this research project.

Participant's Name _____ Participant's Signature _____

Date _____

Researcher's Name _____ Researcher's Signature _____

Date _____

Appendix E Interview guide for IA Employees

Questions:

Thank you for taking the time to talk to me about the Department of Community Services Employment Support and Income Assistance Program. Please note that you may decline from answering a question or stop the interview at any time.

1. To begin this interview, please discuss your role in the Department of Community Services?

Goals and Objectives

2. What are the main goals and objectives of the Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) program?

Policy Development

3. Who or what is involved with development and/or revisions of the policies guiding the ESIA program?

Overall Funding

4. How has funding changed to the Department of Community Services and specifically the ESIA Program in recent years?

Caseworkers/loads

5. How many different types of caseworkers are currently employed through the ESIA program? Throughout the Department?
6. The 2004 budget indicated that caseloads for ESIA caseworkers decreased. How do you think this has affected the workloads of caseworkers?
7. Please discuss with me the amount of flexibility caseworkers are given in interpreting the ESIA Policy Manual to address each client's individual situation?
8. What do you think a caseworker's responsibility is in regards to informing the client of possible benefits that they can receive through ESIA program?
9. If a client is having problems with their assigned caseworker, what procedure does a client go through to attempt to lodge a complaint/ change the caseworker?
10. How is this information provided to clients?
11. Are there any supports available to caseworkers to assist them with any difficulties that may arise when working with clients?

Specific Funding Topics

12. How were the allowances, as outlined in Chapter 5 section 4 Schedule 1; Chapter 6 Section 1 and 2 (special items and furnishing rate schedules), decided upon?
13. Are they based on an index/benchmark? Under what circumstances would they change?
14. Please explain for me the rationale for making the following changes to the ESIA program in August 2001:
 - The requirement for single parent employment/continuing education after youngest child is one year unless they can find reasonable childcare?
 - New work incentive program (keep 30% of income earned and no exempt amount Chapter 5 section 18)?
 - The removal of food as a budget item on the Income Assistance cheques.
15. How is the cost of food factored into the clients' personal allowance in the current ESIA program?
16. How do you determine the frequency that a client gets paid (monthly, weekly or biweekly (refer to Chapter 5 section 19 of the ESIA policy)?
17. How does a client attempt to become exempt from the \$5 pharmacare costs (chapter 7 section 1 –co-pay exemption policy/procedure)?
 - Is it the responsibility of the client or caseworker to look to get this exemption?
18. How is it determined if a client's telephone costs are covered under ESIA? (Chapter 6 Section 8 indicates that it is covered under special circumstances).
19. How does the ESIA program and caseworkers interact with the Maintenance Program?
 - What procedure is followed if a parent is supposed to receive Maintenance but does not receive it on a certain month and the amount is still charged against their allowance?
 - What happens if a parent does not receive the Maintenance from the absent parent?
20. How is eligibility determined for support from ESIA for a special diet?
 - Are any other institutions/programs/departments involved with covering the costs of such products for ESIA clients?
21. Can I have a copy of the three questions asked to determine an applicant/spouse's employability participation (Chapter 5 Section 2)?

Canadian Child Tax Benefit

1. As indicated in the National Child Benefit Progress Report (2002)“Most provinces, territories and First Nations have adjusted social assistance/income assistance benefits on behalf of children by the full or partial amounts provided under the National Child Benefit Supplement”(National Child Benefit, 2002). How has Nova Scotia changed its assistance rates since the introduction of the NCB?
 - Please discuss the perceived clawback (refer to McIntyre et. al. 2002 if interviewee is not familiar with the term) of the child benefits from provincial income assistance since this NCB has been established?
 2. As indicated by the Canadian Customs and Revenue Agency (2003), social assistance adjustments have allowed provinces and territories to pay for new and enhanced benefits and services for low income families and children
 - What percentage of this money has the Nova Scotia government reinvested (if unknown how would I find this out)?
- What types of programs/services have they been reinvested in (if unknown, how can I find this out)?

Appendix F Informed Consent for IA Employees

INFORMED CONSENT FORM: INDEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH DEPARTMENT
COMMUNITY SERVICES EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT AND INCOME
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
MAPPING THE SOCIAL RELATIONS SHAPING THE EVERYDAY LIVES OF
SINGLE MOTHERS WHO ARE FOOD INSECURE IN NOVA SCOTIA

Introduction

You are invited to take part in a research study, being performed as part of a Graduate Studies Program in the Applied Human Nutrition at Mount Saint Vincent University. Whether or not you take part in this study is completely up to you, and you may withdraw at any time. If you do choose to participate you should be aware of what the study involves. If at any time during or after this interview you feel that you would like to discuss or ask questions about this study please do not hesitate to contact myself, Rita MacAulay, or my advisor, Dr. Patty Williams using the contact information listed on the next sheet.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding of the day-to-day work of buying and preparing food as experienced by lone mothers who are food insecure and on Income Assistance in Nova Scotia. This research is also aiming to identify different relationships, especially those related to current public policies and programs, these mothers are involved with that have an impact on their level of food security. This will allow the researcher to determine if current policies and programs are meeting the needs of food insecure women. It will also allow the researcher to make recommendations for changes to these policies and programs, if needed, so they are better able to address food insecurity in Nova Scotia. For the purposes of this research, food insecurity means not being sure that every day you will have enough healthy and affordable food suited to you and your family's needs.

This research began by interviewing mothers who are on Income Assistance and deal with food insecurity with the aim to better understand their real life experiences. By better understanding the mother's experiences living with food insecurity I was able to identify programs that affect their food security. The Department of Community Services' Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) program and related policies were identified through this process as having a major impact on the mother's food security. The purpose of this interview is to understand more about the ESIA program and the policies that guide it. Please note that you will not be personally tied to the responses you give, as you are a representative of the Department of Community Services' ESIA program. Also be aware that the outcome of this process is to provide recommendations for policy/program changes, if any are identified, NOT to shed any negative light on the ESIA program. You will also have a chance to view your transcript and my initial analysis of the results of this project to ensure I am correctly interpreting your answers. Overall, through this process I will try to determine if anything can be changed in the Department of Community Services' ESIA program or other current programs or policies to better allow us to address the food insecurity issues here in Nova Scotia.

Who is Participating in this Study

Individuals who are involved in the Department of Community Services' ESIA program will be included in these interviews.

Who Will be Conducting this Research

I, Rita MacAulay, will be the primary researcher. However, my research committee will have input into describing the data I collect and how I carry out the research.

What I am Asking you to do

For this project, I am asking you to take part in a 1 –2 hour interview. During this interview I will be asking you questions about your everyday work activities with the Department of Community Services' ESIA program and the policies that guide this work and specifically how you work with lone mothers who are food insecure. This interview will be tape-recorded and later it will be typed out. After it is typed out and I have had a chance to analyze the data I have collected, you will have the chance to read it over to check your responses and review my initial analysis of this study.

Benefits

Although no benefits can be guaranteed, your responses will be used to help me understand more about policies and programs that impact people who experience food insecurity, specifically those related to the Department of Community Services' ESIA program. This information, along with the experiences of the mothers who are food insecure, will be used to make recommendations for changes to programs and policies, which could ultimately work to decrease the prevalence of food insecurity in Nova Scotia.

Risks

There is a risk that the information gathered will not uncover ways that policies and programs can be changed in order to improve the lives of the lone mothers who are on Income Assistance and are food insecure in Nova Scotia. There is the chance that the information that is gathered about the Department of Community Services' ESIA program may indicate that it is not truly addressing all of the needs of the food insecure and changes to these policies and/or programs may be suggested. You will have a chance, however, to review the initial analysis of the data and the completed thesis project and offer input at any point.

Confidentiality

All data will be analyzed in an aggregate manner, and will be presented without any identifiers so the participant cannot be recognized as the respondent. All correspondence (informed consent forms, transcripts, notes) will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at Mount Saint Vincent University. Access to the original data will be limited to myself, the primary researcher, Rita MacAulay, my thesis committee and during the transcription process the transcriptionist. Following the transcription of the audio tapes, the tapes will be destroyed by the researcher. The transcripts will be kept for five years in the event that an audit of the project is conducted, or that the information is required for further analyses. No identifying features of participants will be present on any documentation or reports to ensure participant anonymity.

Other Considerations

Any information that you provide in this interview may be used in presentations, such as the researcher's thesis presentation, at relevant meetings and in future publications in peer review journals and in the researcher's thesis write up.

Questions

Rita B. MacAulay, Primary Researcher: Tel. (902) 423-0679

Patty L. Williams, Thesis Advisor ; Tel. (902)457-6394 Fax (902) 457-6134
Email patty.williams@msvu.ca

In the event that you have any difficulties with, or wish to voice concern about, any aspect of your participation in this study, you may contact Dr. Stephen Perrott the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board Tel. (902) 457-6337 Email Stephen.Perrott@msvu.ca

**-INFORMED CONSENT FORM-
MAPPING THE SOCIAL RELATIONS SHAPING THE EVERYDAY LIVES
OF THE FOOD INSECURE IN NOVA SCOTIA**

If you have read the information sheet that explains the research project and are willing to participate, please read the following and sign below.

I understand that:

- This is a study being conducted by Rita MacAulay, a Graduate student in the Applied Human Nutrition Program at Mount Saint Vincent University.
- The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding of the day-to-day work of buying and preparing food as experienced by lone mothers who are food insecure and on Income Assistance in Nova Scotia and to determine if current policies and programs are addressing food insecurity or if changes need to be made to these policies and/or programs. Specifically, the purpose of this interview is to understand more about the Department of Community Services' ESIA program and the policies that guide the program because they were identified as impacting the food security of the lone mothers.
- All information I provide is confidential.
- A potential benefit for me as a participant is that my responses will begin to allow the researcher to identify if current policies and programs could be changed to better address food insecurity in Nova Scotia.
- A potential risk for me as a participant in this project is that information gathered will not lead to policy/ program changes that will better the situation for lone mothers who are on Income Assistance and trying to access food for themselves and their family. There is also a chance that the information that is gathered about the Department of Community Services' ESIA program may indicate that it is not truly addressing all of the needs of the food insecure and changes to policies and/or the program may be suggested. I will have a chance, however, to review the initial analysis of the data and offer input at any point.
- Any feedback/comments I provide during the interview may be used in future publications.
- I do not have to answer any questions or take part in any discussions if I so choose, and I can withdraw from the project at any time.
- The researcher will contact me again to arrange another visit so she can review the answers I gave during my interview and her initial understanding of the information I provided.
- If I have any questions about this research project, I can contact the primary researcher, Rita MacAulay at (902) 423-0679 or Dr. Patty Williams at (902) 457-6394.
- I will keep a copy of the consent form for my records.

I have been read this consent form and understand the information given about the project. I am willing to participate. I have been provided with enough information to make a decision as to whether or not I would like to participate in this research project.

Participant's Name _____ Participant's Signature _____
 Date _____
 Researcher's Name _____ Researcher's Signature _____
 Date _____

Appendix G Ethics Approval
Mount Saint Vincent University Research Ethics Board



Excellence • Innovation • Discovery

University Research Ethics Board

UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD

Title of project : *Mapping the social relations shaping the everyday lives of food insecure low income women in Nova Scotia*

Researcher(s): Ms. Rita MacAulay/ Dr. Patty Williams

This document confirms that the above named study has been approved in accordance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement as outlined in the MSVU Policies and Procedures: Ethical Review of Research Involving Humans.

This certificate is valid one year from the date of issue. Renewal is contingent upon submission to the UREB of a satisfactory annual ethics report.

**Chair
UREB**

January 7, 2004

Date

Halifax Nova Scotia B3M 2J6 Canada
Tel 902 457 6296/6350 • Fax 902 457 2174
www.msvu.ca

Appendix H Basic Needs Assistance Rate Schedules

Chapter 5 Section 4 (Department of Community Services, 2005 p. 14)

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT AND INCOME ASSISTANCE POLICY MANUAL
Department of Community Services

Chapter 5
Basic Needs

Section 4
Rates of Assistance - Schedules

Issued: August 1, 2001
Revised: October 27, 2004

Regulations:
31(1)(2) Personal and Shelter Allowances

Act:

Intent

To provide for the inclusion of personal and shelter allowances for applicants/recipients.

SCHEDULE A: Personal Allowances and Maximum Shelter Allowance

PRESCRIBED ALLOWANCES

| SHELTER ALLOWANCE | | |
|-------------------|---------------|-------|
| FAMILY SIZE | RENT/OWN HOME | BOARD |
| 1 | \$235 | \$197 |
| 2 | \$550 | \$242 |
| 3+ | \$600 | \$282 |

| INCREMENTAL SHELTER ALLOWANCE | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------|-------|
| FAMILY SIZE | RENT/OWN HOME | BOARD |
| 1 | \$300 | \$26 |

| PERSONAL ALLOWANCE | | | |
|---|-------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Shelter Situation | ADULT | DEPENDENT CHILD (up to age 18) | DEPENDENT CHILD (age 18 to 20 inclusive) |
| renting, own home, boarding | \$184 | \$133 | \$184 |
| in hospital 30 days or more | \$105 | Not prescribed | \$105 |
| in a residential rehabilitation program | \$81 | Not prescribed | \$81 |

Appendix I Special Needs Assistance Rate Schedules

Chapter 6 Section 1 (Department of Community Services, 2005 p. 1-3)

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT AND INCOME ASSISTANCE POLICY MANUAL
Department of Community Services

Chapter 6
Special Needs

Section 1
Special Needs

Issued: August 1, 2001
Revised: July 23, 2002

Regulations:

12 Ineligibility for Assistance
24 Information to be Provided
26 Determination of Eligibility
27(1)(2) Supervisor may Determine Higher Amount
29(1) Expenses Considered in Determining Eligibility
30 Amount Payable
46 Supervisor can Modify Calculation of Budget

Act:

Intent

An allowance may be provided for certain items of special need to support participation in employment and employment enhancement activities and to meet specific health and safety needs.

Policy: Provision of Special Needs

An applicant/recipient may request assistance for an item of special need. The applicant/recipient must demonstrate that they have exhausted all possibilities for full or partial coverage of the cost of the special need. The applicant/recipient shall provide the following information, where applicable, when requesting a special need item/service:

- ◆ the reason for the request;
- ◆ a description of the special need;
- ◆ any professional documentation supporting the special need;
- ◆ the cost of the special need;
- ◆ the resources or alternative that have been investigated with respect to obtaining the special need from other sources;
- ◆ requested estimates;
- ◆ invoice or receipt for the item/service.

The applicant/recipient may request assistance for an item of special need either before or after the purchase of the item of special need. In determining eligibility in cases where the special need items being requested is related to the health or medical needs of the individual, the caseworker may consult with a person qualified to provide advice regarding appropriateness, necessity and effectiveness of the requested special needs item.

In cases where a special need is provided where basic assistance had already been issued to cover that item (i.e., fuel, electricity, etc.), an overpayment may be established.

Procedure

The caseworker will:

- ◆ obtain authorization from a supervisor when the requested item is not specified in policy and an approved fee is not noted in policy or regulation;
- ◆ include one of the following in the calculation of the budget deficit of the applicant or recipient:
 - ◆ the lesser of the actual cost of the special need as noted in regulations;
 - ◆ the allowed cost of the special need as approved by a supervisor.

Policy: Supervisory Determination of Higher Amount

The supervisor may determine a higher amount when:

- ◆ there is documentation to support that the maximum amount allowed for any item of special need as prescribed in regulations is insufficient to pay for the cost of the item due to the distinctive need of an applicant or recipient or spouse or dependent child of the applicant or recipient, the higher amount, as documented, may be included in the calculation of the applicant's or recipient's budget deficit; or
- ◆ in urgent circumstances pertaining to the health or safety of an applicant or recipient or spouse or dependent child of the applicant or recipient, where there is a budget deficit for a portion of the cost of the special need and payment of the total cost is approved by a supervisor.

Policy: Individuals not in Receipt of Income Assistance

When an individual, not in receipt of income assistance, makes a request for a special need only, eligibility will be assessed in the same manner and under the same policy criteria and rate structure as is applied to all applicants for income assistance, with the exception of those special needs that can only be provided to recipients (i.e., house repairs policy only applies to those in receipt of income assistance for six months or longer).

Procedure

The caseworker will:

- ◆ assess each request for a special need to establish whether applicants/recipients have alternate means to obtain the item/service requested, such as family resources, other

- government programs, community volunteer organizations and/or insurance plans;
- ♦ request and record required documentation relating to special need requests/approvals and/or denials as previously outlined;
- ♦ explain the reason for refusal.

Policy: Special Needs Purchase Guidelines

The purchase of goods and services is the responsibility of the client. Applicants/recipients purchasing special need items are required to purchase the most economical item. Where no purchasing guidelines exist within policy for individual items in excess of \$200, two estimates are required, where possible.

Procedure

The caseworker will:

- ! refer to the expenditure guidelines as per Schedule AAA.
- Where no guidelines exist, approval of special need items/services will be determined by the casework supervisor.

Schedule "A"

| Items of Special Need | |
|---|----------------------|
| Transportation | up to \$150 |
| Child Care | up to \$400 |
| Single Vision Glasses | \$90 |
| Bifocal Glasses | \$110 |
| Dental Costs | up to \$300 per item |
| Funeral Costs for opening and closing of grave, grave lot, clothing, transportation | up to \$1000 |
| Funeral Costs for professional services and cremation urn or casket | up to \$2500 |
| Special Diet | up to \$150 |

Note: For dental policy and rates schedule refer to Chapter 6, Special Needs, Section 11 - Dental Policy and Rates Schedule.