Parents' Perceptions of Social Responsibility:

A Case Study of Social Responsibility in One Elementary School

by

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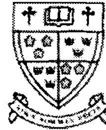

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ABSTRACT

The primary aim of this study is to examine how parents describe the notion of Social Responsibility as an educational objective and to engage them in discussions of its practice in one suburban elementary school. This thesis also considers parents' understanding of their roles in teaching social responsibility to their children. The history of the moral education is reviewed, as are theoretical notions of explicit and implicit curriculum, communities of practice and desired identities.

This study adopts a case study methodology. It relies on open-ended interviews with a group of parents whose children attend the school.

The analysis reveals that: parents had different interpretations of the concept of social responsibility; they believed the primary role of teaching social responsibility to children was theirs; the school's role was to reinforce what is taught at home, and children were passive recipients of social responsibility education.

DEDICATION

To my father for instilling in me the value of education from a young age, and also to my husband for his endless patience and loving encouragement throughout this challenging yet significant process.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all the parent participants for volunteering their precious time for this study.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In this past century, North American public education curriculum has focused both on intellectual and moral development shifting from one to the other at different periods in history. There is some recent movement towards a more holistic curricular perspective that includes intellectual, social, emotional, and moral development (Pinar, 1995). For example, a focus on social responsibility has emerged in the British Columbia curriculum, which echoes long-standing concerns with moral values. This new focus affects several key stakeholders including government, community members, parents, families, teachers, and children. This thesis investigates the roles and perspectives on social responsibility as a curricular emphasis held by parents who constitute one of these stakeholder groups. This chapter will provide background to the study, an overview of the focal school and school district, my theoretical lens and the methodology adopted for the study.

Background

This thesis is part of a larger study titled "A Case Study of Social Responsibility in one Elementary School: School Programs, Policies, and Practices & Cultural and Linguistic Identities", conducted by Drs. Dagenais and

LaRocque, and funded by a SSHRC Small grant. The larger project explores teachers', parents' and children's perceptions of relationships in a particular school community and their notions of the rights and obligations of all community members. The primary aim of that study is to examine the notion of social responsibility as an educational objective, and to engage in discussions about the school practices intended to address social responsibility. The larger study is based on theoretical notions of identity (Hall, 1996) and relationships in communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

My own thesis research focuses on parents' perspectives on social responsibility and how they interpret their roles and practices in relation to the school's adoption of this curricular emphasis.

School District / Focus School Overview

The selected school is situated in a suburban community that serves a diverse student population. This particular institution is one of 95 elementary schools located within a rapidly growing school district in British Columbia. The district student population is over 60,000 and the focal school enrolled approximately 422 students in September 2000. The Elementary School has a dual track program with English and French streams.

Social responsibility is considered a relatively new initiative of the District. The district department of "Social Responsibility and Student Leadership" whose intent is to integrate social responsibility in all aspects of learning and working is

the driving force behind this initiative. The Ministry of Education draft curriculum, *Performance Standards for Social Responsibility* (2000), is currently being used in a variety of district schools (Philpott, 2001).

Theoretical Perspective

The British Columbia Ministry of Education curriculum documents on social responsibility do not explicitly define this concept, but an interpretation can be deduced from the titles of the following four categories that constitute the standard expectations and learning outcomes:

- Contributing to the class and school community
- Solving problems in peaceful ways
- Valuing diversity and defending human rights
- Exercising democratic rights and responsibilities (Government of British Columbia, 2000a, p. 9)

These titles imply that the Ministry of Education views social responsibility as a set of attributes that include classroom, school and community involvement, a pacifist approach to problem solving, cherishing human rights and diversity and embracing democracy. This definition of social responsibility may or may not correspond to the views held by different stakeholders such as parents and community members since each group and individual defines the concept according to his/her experiences. Parents' understanding of their roles and the school's part in teaching social responsibility to their children is embedded in

their identities and positioning in relation to others (Hall, 1996), their community relationships (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and cultural histories (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain, 1998).

Hall (1996) provides a sociocultural definition of identity as "constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices and positions" (p. 4). This implies that identity is malleable and ever changing. Parents' identities are constructed in the context of their relationships with schools, their families, religious organizations, and cultural history. Lave and Wenger (cited in Toohey, 2000) refer to these relationships as communities of practice where groups of people engage in specific practices that reflect particular values and histories. Accordingly, one can interpret parenting itself as a community of practice where parents learn by participating in social groups and begin to identify with the practices these groups adopt (Hanks cited in Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Research Questions

In light of this theoretical perspective, the following questions were posed about parents' responses to the adoption of social responsibility as a focus in the British Columbian curriculum.

1. What are parents' perceptions of the respective roles of schools, parents, and children in the development of social responsibility?
2. What are parents' perceptions of their identities?

3. What are the parents' perceptions of their relationships with other members in the school community?
4. What is the relationship between the way they define their roles, identities, and notions of social responsibility?

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative methodology and specifically a case study approach (Merriam, 1988). This research relies on open-ended interviews (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993) with a group of parents whose children attend the dual track suburban school. Interviews examined the parents' identities and perceptions of social responsibility within this school community. Interview questions also explored parents' experiences outside of the school community that might have informed their notions of social responsibility. In all, fourteen audio-taped interviews were conducted with parents representing various grade levels from both English and French streams. Interviews were conducted and transcribed by research assistants Darlene Vissers and Anita Slater Bates. In the context of my thesis research, I have analyzed these data to identify emerging themes, which is in keeping with established qualitative procedures (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). My theoretical lens is constructed around socio-cultural notions of identity and communities of practice outlined earlier. The school and the university have granted ethical consent to Drs. Dagenais and LaRocque to conduct the interviews and to me to use these data as secondary sources. This chapter outlined the background to this study, the methodology, and introduced

the school in focus within its situated community, the next chapter provides a literature review as contextual background to this research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

I begin this chapter with a brief historical overview of moral and values education in North America over the past century. Situating the social responsibility curriculum in this historical perspective serves to contextualize its current orientation. My sources for the early years are predominantly U.S. simply because of a lack of documentation in the Canadian context. However, wherever possible I have tried to review Canadian and specifically British Columbian literature. In recent years, Canadian moral and values education has been documented more consistently. Several recent sources are specific to the British Columbia Ministry of Education and the development of the *Performance Standards for Social Responsibility* (2000a). Other key constructs reviewed in this chapter include notions of identity as they relate to the acquisition of morally responsible behaviour. I will also discuss how learning of social responsibility occurs within communities of practice, as do notions of parenting. Finally, I will consider views about who should assume the responsibility of teaching social responsibility.

Historical Overview

Education has been associated with the teaching of morals and values since the beginning of formal schooling in North America. In fact, for many the first and primary purpose of schooling was to edify the young in the teachings of the Bible. For example, in 1647 a law was passed in Massachusetts titled the "old deluder Satan Law" that required communities that had more than 50 households to establish schools and appoint a teacher to instruct the young in reading and writing related to the Bible (Balch, Suller, & Szolomicki, 1993, pp. 4-5).

Educational philosophers at the time believed they could create the good society through the proper moulding of children (Balch et al., 1993, p. 5). In his book *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, Locke (1693) introduced the notion of "tabula rasa", which viewed children as "blank slates," neither good nor bad, who could be filled and shaped as desired (Balch et al., 1993, p. 5). This justified the creation of the "perfect schools," ones that were closely linked with religion and the instruction of religious doctrines (Balch et al., 1993, p. 5). In 1869, the National Teachers' Association in the United States issued a resolution that "the Bible should not only be studied, venerated . . . but its precepts inculcated in all the common schools of the land" (Wooster, 1990, p. 54). Some educational theorists would argue that schools in the early history of education were not really concerned with reading and writing; rather their objective was social

control, and affecting conduct rather than affecting states of mind (Wynne, 1986, p. 6).

The Homeroom (1997), which is a website hosted by the History department of Malaspina University College and edited by Dr. Patrick A. Dunae, provides a historical timeline of education in British Columbia. According to the website, one of the first known formal schools in British Columbia was established in 1849 for the Children of the Hudson's Bay Company officers; it was run by an Anglican clergyman and his wife. Other schools that were established in the ensuing years were all also based on religious teaching and/or run by clergy. The first non-denominational "public" or "common" school was not established until 1862 in New Westminster. In March of 1872, the *Public School Act* was established. However, by 1876 the authority of the church in the public school system was already being challenged as evident in the following passage:

> the Reverend Alexander B. Nicholson, newly-appointed principal of the high school, resigns following criticisms that he had allowed sectarian religious sentiments into the school curriculum. (Dunae, 1997, Timeline, 1870's section)

Consequently, the *Public Schools Act* was amended in 1876,

> to exclude all clergy from holding any position -- voluntary or otherwise -- in a provincial public school. This amendment also restrict[ed] religious exercise in schools to the public recitation of *The Lord's Prayer* and the *Ten Commandments.* (as cited in *The Homeroom*, Dunae, 1997, Timeline, 1870's section)

In the late 1800's a new view of education was emerging in the United States as a response to changes in the cultural makeup of society through immigration. Some feared that the newcomers were destroying traditional values (Balch et al., 1993, p. 11). In contrast, John Dewey (1938), an educational philosopher, proposed an alternative perspective in his writing on education. According to Riner (1989), Dewey suggested that values and institutions needed to change to reflect changes in society. Yet, he cautioned that individual motives and goals should not conform to the wishes of the group; education should recognize the worth of all individuals and assist each person to develop to his/her fullest potential (Riner, 1989). Dewey believed in critically examining educational principles and not just accepting them for what they were. He wrote: "Any theory and set of practices [are] dogmatic which [are] not based upon critical examination of [their] own underlying principles" (Dewey, 1938, p. 22). Dewey's philosophy of education can be characterized as child-centred and progressive (Ornstein, 2003). He put emphasis on individuality and individual learning (Eisner, 2003) albeit within a social context.

In the early part of the twentieth century, educators in the United States suggested that universally applicable moral precepts be taught in special "character education" classes. Thus, the Character Education Institution was founded in 1911 (Wooster, 1990). By the 1920's and 1930's character education programs could be found in abundance and schools could choose to adopt from over 200 different programs. However, the trend quickly dwindled and by the

late 1930's character education was in decline in the United States (Wooster 1990).

Education in the 1940's and 1950's was a limited right in the United States; in return for receiving an education, students were expected to obey the rules (Balch et al., 1993). The expectations of schools, teachers, and students were clear. An explicit curriculum as such did not exist at this time, but the concept of moral education was still an implicit part of school life (Balch et al., 1993, p. 12).

By the 1960's, however, individual rights became the focus of educational practice and theory during the civil rights movement in the United States when official authority was increasingly challenged (Balch et al., 1993). It was also at this time that moral education was no longer associated with religious affiliation. Terrel Bell (1976), Commissioner of Higher Education for the State of Utah argued, "spiritual, ethical, and moral values need have nothing to do with any church" (p. 5). Educational theorists argued that moral education did not have to be based in organized religion and that spiritual values occupied a natural place in society and civilization (Bell, 1976). It was believed that no school was "values free" and all taught moral education whether they intended to or not simply by the teacher's attitude, codes of conduct and the curriculum (Bell, 1976). This came to be known as the hidden curriculum in schools (Banks, 1977). Therefore, the task of the day was to teach moral education in a more systematic and effective way and do it in a way that would not discriminate against ethnic, racial, and religious differences in the community (Bell, 1976).

Consequently, two schools of thought in moral education emerged: the "values-clarification movement" led by Sidney Simon, an education professor at the University of Massachusetts, and the proponents of Cognitive Development based on the work of Lawrence Kohlberg, a psychologist from Harvard University (Wooster, 1990).

The values clarification philosophy emerged in 1976 and was based on the notion that students could clarify or become aware of their own values rather than having a set of values imposed on them (Balch et al., 1993). The teacher acted as a facilitator, emphasizing the process rather than the actual values in question. The teacher was not permitted to moralize or restrict the student's choices of values; only when it resulted in danger or distortion of the (relative) truth could the teacher interfere (Balch et al., 1993). However, by the late 1970's, values clarification became the target of much criticism as educators began questioning its effectiveness (Balch et al., 1993). Parents also became increasingly apprehensive that schools were teaching immorality because whatever values students chose were deemed to be correct (Wooster, 1990). Underlying this view was the assumption that values within society were diverse and no consensus could be achieved about them, thus all values were deemed to be valid since they were intimately related to the experiences of a person (English, 1982). One of the major criticisms of values clarification was that it let to moral relativism, i.e., that one person's values were as valid as another person's

and that there was no way to show one moral interpretation to be better than the other (Balch et al., 1993).

The "Cognitive Development" scholars who advocated Lawrence Kohlberg's theories of stages of moral development and moral reasoning (Hodge, 1989) proposed another approach to moral education. This approach was based on Kohlberg's research in the 1950's. He conducted a number of tests presenting children with a series of moral dilemmas in order to understand how they learned about values. He concluded that there were six stages of moral development that everyone could potentially pass through in the course of their lives (Wooster, 1990). Kohlberg and his followers did not believe that teachers should moralize to students or impose their beliefs. He argued that values should be taught by asking questions and not giving the answers (Wooster, 1990). In 1974, Kohlberg established a school based on his philosophy. The "Just Community School," as he called it, was highly committed to the democratic process (Kohlberg, 2003). However, this initiative failed because in practice students were not interested in making all decisions and setting all school policies. The students became bored and they did not turn their school into a modern society as Kohlberg had expected (Balch et al., 1993). Kohlberg himself admitted this:

> The 1970's may be remembered as the decade of failed educational experimentation. . . . Open campuses, unstructured time, and free schools lessened the restrictions on adolescents but did not foster self-direction or participation. (Wooster, 1990, p. 53)

Parallel to developments in the United States, outlined above, in Canada a Bible Study course was added to the provincial high school curriculum of British Columbia in 1941 and two additional courses followed in 1942 and 1943 (Dunae, 1997). This may be interpreted as a return to religious teaching in British Columbia. In 1943 the Public School Act was amended again to state that: "All public schools . . . shall be opened by the reading, without explanation or comment, of a passage of scripture . . . to be followed by the recitation of the Lord's Prayer." This return to religion coincided with Canada's participation in the Second World War. Furthermore, in 1940 mandatory cadet instruction was introduced in all provincial high schools. Interestingly students with "racial origins," i.e., Japanese, German, or Italian, were excluded from cadet corps for "security" reasons (Dunae, 1997).

It is difficult to summarize the development of moral education in Canada because the country is constituted by a diversity of education systems (Boyd, 1988). Canada's educational system falls under provincial jurisdiction so that each province establishes its own educational policies and curricula, which vary from one province to another.

Cochrane and William (1977) and Cochrane (1992) conducted a survey, to determine the extent to which Ministries of Education in the ten Canadian provinces promoted moral education in their public schools. Both studies determined that issues related to values and moral development received little to no attention in Canadian education (Cochrane & William, 1977). They concluded

that Canadian education has failed to give children opportunities to reflect on and morally conduct their lives (Cochrane & William, 1977). Although they found that no province explicitly excluded moral education, many did not encourage it either. Cochrane and William attributed this lack of enthusiasm to confused notions of moral education, ignorance of recent theory in this area, fear of controversy, religious friction, general public apathy and disagreement about the role of schools (Cochrane & William, 1977).

In surveys conducted by Cochrane and William (1977) and Cochrane (1992), Quebec was one of the only provinces that had a mandated moral and religious educational program. In the early 1990's, the Assemblée Nationale passed Law 107 that recognized the right of each student to choose religious instruction as practised within either the Catholic or Protestant traditions or to opt for moral instruction that was non-religious (Cochrane, 1992). Thus, in Quebec, official curricula have been developed for: 1) Catholic; 2) Protestant; 3) non-religious instruction (Weeren, 1972). An opposite situation existed in Prince Edward Island where no guidelines for moral education were established (Cochrane, 1992).

Cochrane and William (1977) highlight how the Public Schools Act of British Columbia (1872) stated, "the highest morality shall be inculcated" (Cochrane, 1992, p. 2). In the late 1970s values clarification was listed in the elementary social studies guide for British Columbia but was not necessarily encouraged (Cochrane & William, 1977). By the early 1990s, references to values

clarification were replaced with statements such as, "students should know and understand the role, rights and responsibilities of an individual as a member of society . . . through the exercises of critical thinking and problem-solving skills" (Cochrane, 1992, p. 2). Based on their survey, Cochrane and William (1977) and Cochrane (1992) concluded that the British Columbia Ministry of Education did not provide teachers with any curricular guide in moral development, nor the students with any resource material, and the Ministry could not provide any evidence of evaluation activities in this area (Cochrane, 1992).

The Origins of the British Columbian Social Responsibility Curriculum

In the 1990s, moral education focused on exposing students to emotionally evocative studies and responding to complex moral issues. Educational theorist John Basourakos (1999) states that by doing so, teaching focused on moral reflections based on perceived judgements rather than teaching a set of moral values. In British Columbia, this type of education fell within the social studies curriculum and was thus content-based and focused on developing critical thinking (Clark, 1999). In 1996 a Simon Fraser University team funded by the Ministry of Education produced *The 1996 Provincial Learning Assessment in Social Studies* with very bleak results (Bognar, Cassidy & Clark, 1997). They found a decline in performance in Social Studies in British Columbia, in all three grades tested: grades 4, 7, and 10. They also found that students had little understanding of their role as citizens in a democratic society and insufficient

knowledge to make informed decisions regarding civic responsibilities. They are also less likely to want to help others, and some students show negative attitudes towards people who are different than themselves.

This team called for a major review of the purposes and practices of Social Studies education in British Columbia (Bognar, Cassidy & Clark, 1997). They raised a series of questions about the social studies curriculum that were organized into four categories:

- discussion of government and political issues
- discussion of international issues
- discussion of an individual's **social responsibility**, and
- participation in activities directed towards community improvement (Bognar, Cassidy & Clark, 1997, chap. 7, emphasis added)

The term social responsibility appears again later in the same document under a list of summary statements about the Social Studies curriculum:

- the importance of social studies
- critical thinking
- **social responsibility**
- the content of social studies as a discipline (Bognar, Cassidy & Clark, 1997, chap. 8, emphasis added)

The research team underscored how an ethic of care and notions of being socially responsible to one another and the environment needed to be embedded in the culture of schools and that simple changes to the social studies curriculum

were not enough to address the development of social responsibility in students. Nevertheless, a few years later the Ministry of Education produced a formal curriculum document titled the *Social Responsibility Performance Standards* (2000a). It laid out standards for a common set of cross-curricular expectations for student development at various grade levels.

1. Contributing to the class and school community
2. Solving problems in peaceful ways
3. Valuing diversity and defending human rights
4. Exercising democratic rights and responsibilities (Government of British Columbia, 2000a, p. 9)

Thus, the term "Social responsibility" emerged in the formal British Columbian curriculum at this point.

Another trend that led to the production of the *Performance Standards for Social Responsibility* (2000a) in the formal British Columbian curriculum was the increased emphasis on accountability and consistent measurement sweeping across North America.

In a paper presented at the American Educational Research Association, Jeroski, Chapman, Dockendorf, and Walt (2001) state three reasons for the perceived need for *Performance Standards for Social Responsibility* (2000a). Firstly, these authors indicate that the British Columbia Ministry of Education stated in 1997 that standards were "essential for monitoring achievement, guiding practice, identifying students who required additional support, and evaluating

interventions" (p. 5). Secondly, they highlight how teachers reported that they lacked "relevant assessment tools" (p. 6) to evaluate students' development. Finally, the authors suggest that if teachers are required to evaluate and report on student behaviour and attitudes by law, the Ministry should provide resources for that evaluation.

In March 1999, the Ministry of Education created the British Columbia Social Studies Task Force, which was mandated to make recommendations with regards to:

- Measures to address the issues of education for citizenship and social responsibility across the British Columbia K-12 education system;
- The conceptualization of 'social studies', including alternative conceptualizations and their practical implementation; and
- Measures to improve the implementation of British Columbia social studies curriculum, including aspects related to teaching and student learning. (British Columbia Social Studies Task Force, 1999)

The Task Force agreed with the Ministry's 1996 Review Team's Assessment of Social Studies, stating "schools no longer explicitly address their obligation to prepare socially responsible citizens" (*British Columbia Socials Studies Task Force,* 1999, p. 6). According to the Task Force, the potential result of such neglect was "student alienation and violence . . . [and] the absence of community-mindedness" (p. 6). The task force seemed to place most of the blame for this crisis on lack of teacher preparation; almost all of their recommendations

addressed teacher professional development and training while the social studies Integrated Resource Packages (IRPs) were left untouched.

According to the British Columbia Ministry of Education, schools are obligated to promote the growth of social responsibility in their students. Ministry documents state that a goal of the education system is to educate "citizens who accept the tolerant and multifaceted nature of Canadian society and who are motivated to participate actively in our democratic institutions" (Government of British Columbia, 2000d, p. 4). The Ministry elaborates on this by stating that, among other goals, the school's responsibility is to develop citizens who are "cooperative, principled and respectful of others regardless of differences . . . aware of the rights and prepared to exercise the responsibilities of an individual within the family, the community, Canada, and the world" (Government of British Columbia, 2000d, p. 4). Human and social development is also a part of the greater goals that the British Columbia Ministry of Education sets for its schools.

> Goals that are Shared Among Schools, the Family, and the Community: *Human and Social Development*: To develop in students a sense of self-worth and personal initiative; to develop an appreciation of the fine arts and an understanding of cultural heritage; to develop an understanding of the importance of physical health and well-being; **to develop a sense of social responsibility**, and a tolerance and respect for the ideas and beliefs of others. (Government of British Columbia, 2000b, K-12 Education Plan, Goals section, emphasis added).

> The education system is committed to delivering education that is relevant to students' individual needs and teaching them **to be**

> **responsible, ethical citizens** who contribute to a healthy and productive society. (Government of British Columbia, 2000b, K-12 Education Plan, Attributes of the School System section, emphasis added)

The above two quotations are extracted from the *British Columbia Ministry of Education Mission Statement*. The notions of social responsibility and citizenship are thus conflated in these statements. Moreover, the notion of an individual's obligation towards society and community is also evident in the following excerpt from a *Statement of Education Policy Order.*

> The purpose of the British Columbia school system is to enable learners to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed **to contribute to a healthy society** and a prosperous and sustainable economy. (Government of British Columbia, 2000d, p. 4, emphasis added)

Besides including social responsibility in its mission statements and its goals, the British Columbia Ministry of Education also requires teachers, by law, to report on "student progress in intellectual, social, human and career development . . . including written comments to describe student behaviour . . . information on attitudes, work habits, and effort" (Government of British Columbia, 2000c, p. 1). Following the trend in other curricular areas, assessment of social responsibility while not a stated part of the reviews and studies summarized in the preceding pages, is now expected to be more precise so that the public can hold teachers and schools accountable. Measurement and accountability language permeate current official discourse on education and the

Performance Standard for Social Responsibility developed by the British Columbia Ministry of Education is just one recent example of this trend.

Social Responsibility Performance Standards

Performance Standards for British Columbia curriculum have been developed in four areas: reading, writing, numeracy, and social responsibility. The Social Responsibility standards are a common set of expectations for student development in these four areas. While its use is voluntary, many schools are integrating it as a part of "school improvement plans," making its use mandatory in those particular schools. The standards used to be known as "reference sets". The Performance Standards Document is categorized in four grade groups: K-3, 4-5, 6-8, and 8-10. The Ministry (Government of British Columbia, 2000a) describes two main reasons for developing performance standards: one is to enable teachers and parents to compare student performance with provincial standards and the other is to support ongoing instruction and assessment. There are three suggested means of gathering data to assess social responsibility in students:

1. Direct observation
2. Student products or projects
3. Student reflections and self-reports (Government of British Columbia, 2000a, p. 7)

The Document recommends "teacher assessment and evaluation of social responsibility develops from accumulating observations in a wide variety of situations" (Government of British Columbia, 2000a, p. 6). This clearly suggests that the Ministry's emphasis in social responsibility education is on obtaining evidence of socially responsible behaviour in students.

The Ministry of Education emphasizes that the development of social responsibility is not assigned to a specific grade or curriculum but that it is a responsibility shared by all teachers, administrators, families and the community at large (Government of British Columbia, 2000a, p. 12). For example, it does not promote teaching social skills for 15 minutes a day in grade 2 as the way to promote or ensure a child's social development; rather, it underscores the importance of sharing this responsibility with a larger community over an extended period of time. As mentioned, social responsibility standards are not connected to any one curriculum area; rather, they are supposed to be overarching goals and relate to prescribed learning outcomes from several curriculum areas. The Ministry of Education has not set content standards for teaching social responsibility, as in curricular areas such as math or reading. Jeroski, Chapman, Dockendorf, and Walt (2001) applaud this decision, stating that confining social responsibility to a specific part of the curriculum increases the danger that "problems of apathy and disconnectedness that appear to characterize many young people" (p. 2) will be intensified.

As a practicing teacher, I have observed that the *Performance Standards for Social Responsibility* (2000a) have resulted in some tension among stakeholders in education (mainly teachers, administrators and politicians) between promoting personal growth (social responsibility) and the perceived need to measure growth in this area in precise ways.

The Ministry of Education (Government of British Columbia, 2000a) also makes it clear that social development should be an educational objective shared with parents and community (p.13). This view is supported by researchers such as Ornstein (2003) who discuss the development of a school culture or ethos that focuses on the whole child and teaches the importance of values, ethics, and moral responsibility through community care for that child. In such a school, social responsibility is "deeply embedded" or "infused" throughout the entire curriculum and function of the school (Sizer & Sizer, 2003).

Even so, many educational theorists argue that the desire to create a school culture of care is limited by the current emphasis on measurement, which focuses more on the students' performance outcomes than on "the quality of engagement or the character of the journey they have taken" (Eisner, 2000, p. 346). Sizer and Sizer (2003) explain that one of the reasons educators focus on standards is that "grappling" with moral issues is a messy and time-consuming activity and that schools by contrast tend to value "order" and conformity (p. 148). Developing standards makes teaching seem more efficient and more scientific, supporting the rational philosophy that still guides much of our

Western thinking. One of the most influential beliefs within education is that "without standards people will not know where they are going and without knowing where they are going they will be unable to plan for its realization" (Eisner, 2000, p. 344).

However, there are dangers inherent in this belief. As Eisner (2000) explains, the development of standards and accountability measures can lead to over-emphasizing "the extrinsic use of what [the students] study rather than its personal meaning" (p. 349). Kohn (2003) warns that extrinsic motivation— even positive reinforcement— erodes the students' intrinsic motivation, leading them to being less likely to respond in socially responsible ways when they are on their own.

Identities and Social Responsibility at School

As social institutions, schools are expected "to inculcate what society regards as desirable" (Mordecai, 1996, p. 5). This appears to assume a social consensus on what is considered acceptable. Some social responsibility and character education programs aim at changing undesirable behavior. Kohn (2003) argues that many character education programs teach conformity and refer to the conforming child as responsible. As Toohey (2000) has indicated, children quickly learn that enacting desirable behaviour can enable them to acquire desired identities; children might invariably seek to be affiliated with a "sanctioned" identity as a responsible child. In fact, some studies show that

character education can even increase 'immoral' behaviour; for example in order to do well on conduct records students resort to cheating (Balch et al., 1993, p. 11). As Dewey (1938) suggests:

> enforced quiet and acquiescence prevent pupils from disclosing their real natures. They enforce artificial uniformity. They put seeming before being. They place a premium upon preserving the outward appearance of attention, decorum, and obedience. (p. 62)

Furthermore, according to Charles Taylor (cited in Basourakos, 1999), moral agency must be understood inductively based on a purpose that is grounded in human experience and moral choices; thus can true moral identities be constructed.

In recent years, theoretical developments in constructs of identity within several disciplines have led to a view of identity as discursively constructed. Traditionally, identity was articulated in terms of individual characteristics based on essentialist notions of the subject (or self) as having fixed traits. More recently, social science theorists argue that identity results from complex interactions between the individual and the socio-cultural environment (Moshman, 1999, p. 92). Stuart Hall (1996) argues that identity is constructed through discourses, practices, and subject positions that are often interconnected and sometimes antagonistic. Along the same lines, Toohey (2000) states that identity is not an essence but rather a social and political construct. This view emphasizes the instability of identity and its basis in unequal power relationships. Toohey argues that the practice of positioning people through

discourse creates social hierarchies and establishes norms and standards to which people are compared and situated inside or outside the constructed "norm." Toohey reminds us how the French philosopher Foucault observed the practice of grouping individuals and attributing particular identities to prisoners and school children in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries. Those who did not conform to norms needed to become "normal" by undergoing punishment or restrictions (Toohey, 2000). Hence, coercion served to instill fear about deviating from the norm.

Thus, if one can acquire a desirable identity by performing or displaying desirable behaviour. This has direct implications for social responsibility curriculum. First, the Performance Standards may coerce individuals into adopting behaviours or displaying desirable identities. Second, displaying desired practices or identities does not necessarily translate into internalization of moral beliefs and actions (Hensen, 2000, p. 7). Some educational theorists argue that if people hold values that are essential to their identity, then they feel compelled to act according to those values. Mordecai (1996) gives an example of this:

> a person may consider a certain activity, such as reading philosophical works, to be of great value, and yet they may not feel any obligation to do so because it is not part of their identity, or their perception of who they are. On the other hand, a symbolic activity such as raising a flag may have no intrinsic meaning for the individual, but since it is meaningful for the group they belong to they will feel a need to participate in it. (p. 3)

Furthermore, knowing what are considered desirable behaviors does not necessarily ensure a commitment to those "norms." For example, Mordecai (1996) argues: "People may judge a certain act to be morally wrong or undesirable, yet nevertheless choose to perform it" (p. 1).

Children and parents learn social responsibility from the words and messages they interpret from interactions with other children, parents, school, and community members about how to behave in a socially responsible way. These practices may then be interpreted as "normal" and "standard." Foucault (cited in Toohey, 2000, p. 8) argues that norms serve as hierarchies and "in the articulation of standards . . . people are compared and differentiated on the basis of their relations to standards". Foucault considers norms to be expressions of value judgments that impose laws of truth on individuals so that those who are far from normal undergo sanctions to "normalize" them. Likewise, the *Performance Standards for Social Responsibility* (2000a) can be viewed as a set of norms to be adhered to. This form of categorizing marks the individual by attributing an identity to him or her, and imposes a law of truth on the individual.

Social Responsibility and Communities of Practice

Parenting may be considered as a practice that is learned in many contexts. It is learned through participation in cultural and historical institutions. Those who participate in a social practice learn to do so through

their membership, engagement and interactions within particular community contexts. Lave and Wenger (1991) refer to such relationships as communities of practice, defined as "a set of relations among persons, activity, and worlds, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice" (p. 98).

Therefore, a practice such as social responsibility can be understood to develop in various communities of practice such as families, schools and workplaces. For example, in their interactions with family members, children learn what practices are considered desirable and in keeping with socially responsible behaviors in that milieu. Moreover, the interpretation of what is "normal" is constructed in relation to the particular cultural and socio-historical contexts in which their families are situated. What a child learns about social responsibility in one community of practice such as the family may or may not correspond to the socially desired identities and practices valued in other communities of practice such as the school.

Moreover, since some think the state has a role in teaching social responsibility through public schools, this may cause tensions over what constitutes social responsibility when particular value systems collide. For example, recently in the French government banned any visible religious symbols in schools. This posed a problem for female Moslem students who wear the hijab (a scarf covering their hair and sometimes face) as an expression of religious belief (Kastoryano, 2004). There was a similar case in Quebec where a

12-year-old boy was kept away from school because he refused to leave his kirpan (a steel dagger carried sheathed against the body as a ceremonial article of faith for observant Sikhs) at home. Eventually, the Quebec Superior Court allowed the boy to wear his kirpan provided that it be concealed under his clothing, carried in a wooden sheath, and the sheath to be encased in cloth sewn shut and stitched to carry a strap (Peritz, 2002). In British Columbia, the board of the school in this study has stated that culture and religion cannot be separated and thus Sikh children are allowed to wear their turbans and to carry the kirpan, even though it may violate school regulations against hats and weapons. Thus, examining diverse practices in the social responsibility curriculum requires negotiating different value systems held by the state, schools, and families.

Some would propose that schools, families, and community should work together to define what constitutes social responsibility. Epstein (2003) also supports the notion of partnership; as the parents and school interact and work together they send a common message to the child about the importance of school. McDermott (1993) suggests that learning is a condition that brings people together and creates points of contact and it is at those points of contact that information takes on relevance. The community is one example of a place where points of contact are created, since it includes parents, teachers, administrators and the students. Thus, learning takes place within the context of the community and takes on a collective nature. Learning becomes mutually

beneficial as teachers, parents and administrators learn alongside and from the students.

Teaching Social Responsibility: Whose Responsibility Is It?

As indicated earlier, only in recent decades has a clear legal separation been made in British Columbia between organized religion and public education. Currently, within our democratic society, it is broadly accepted that education is everybody's business (Gareau & Sawatzky, 1994), whether one has children in the education system or not. This view is based on the assumption that children really do not belong to individuals but are members of the community. Associated with this assumption is the belief that children are products of the societies in which they live and who they become as adults will directly influence and impact their community. Thus, according to this logic not only should parents and schools care for children, so should communities: "There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about" (Wheatley, 2002, p. 75).

According to a "social constructivist" theory, children learn through their experiences and interactions with others as they use cultural tools in their daily lives (Daniels & Shumow, 2002). However, some believe that students have a passive role in social responsibility education, to sit back and learn a body of information about socially desirable behaviours. Yet, research shows that children are active in their learning. For example, Manyak (2001) indicates that

learning involves full participation in social interactions and is not necessarily a passive response to information, provided by instructors.

Students can thus be involved along with educators, parents, and community members in the development and implementation of educational programs. The involvement of each of these groups does not happen in isolation, rather learning takes place as they connect and build relationships with each other. Students need to be given opportunities to engage in such democratic educational practices and become full members of their community.

A 'self-actualization' curriculum (Klein, 2003), in which students are curriculum developers and study what is of interest to them, offers an interesting venue for having them express their voices and views. In such a curriculum, growth is viewed as a process of self-actualizing and not necessarily the acquisition of a body of knowledge or a set of cognitive processes. Some would argue that in contexts where no consideration is given to involve students in curriculum development, a hierarchy is established in teacher-student relationships, where the teacher/adult is morally superior to the student by nature of his or her age and position.

Philpott (2001) argues that teachers and parents are in a position of privilege and it is their responsibility to ensure all voices are heard, especially those of children:

> And those of us involved in education need to look at the implications of our privileged and trusted positions. Having critically examined our privilege, we then need to open the floor to

> a variety of voices to expand the exploration and help us understand social responsibility from a variety of perspectives. (p. 134)

Some schools have tried to involve students by getting them to re-write the language of the *Performance Standards for Social Responsibility* (2000a) in more 'child-friendly' language. However, one can ask whether this is true involvement, or is it just another way to encourage students to talk the language of the *Performance Standards for Social Responsibility* (2000a)?

Curriculum as an Embedded Practice

Two views emerge in discussions of moral education. One considers the teacher/adult as 'omnipotent' and aims to teach the child how to behave and act. This perspective on curriculum is based on the assumption that knowledge and ideas are transferred from the adult to the students. It corresponds what Bakhtin (1981) described as the authoritative word:

> The authoritative word demands that we acknowledge it, that we make it our own; it binds us, quite independent of any power it might have to persuade us internally; we encounter it with its authority already fused to it. The authoritative word is located in a distanced zone, organically connected with a past that is felt to be hierarchically higher. (p. 342)

Some of these programs develop extrinsic motivation in students. However, as outlined earlier, when children are offered extrinsic motivation, it erodes their intrinsic motivations for moral behaviour and action (Eisner, 2003).

When moral education or the development of social responsibility is seen as a life-long process with no final stage of development, adults are encouraged to model for students the notion that personal growth and development continues in adulthood and never reaches completion. In keeping with this second school of thought, Noddings (2003) advocates an "ethic of care" and argues that one of the major aims of schooling is to care for students and teach them to care. Noddings (2003) espouses modelling and dialogue to encourage caring for others.

Curriculum can vary depending on the method of delivery, even though it may be the exact same content. The notion of curriculum as embedded practice implies that the way curriculum is taught is just as important, if not more so, than what is being taught. Kagan (2002) argues that the embedded curriculum will serve our students throughout their lives more than the academic curriculum. He gives the example of teaching historical facts as opposed to teaching the content with a structure that has analytic thinking as an embedded curriculum (Kagan, 2002). The same can be argued when it comes to social responsibility, teaching students how to lead socially responsible lives and making choices themselves is more important than expecting a set of uniform behaviours in all children.

Summary

Historically, moral education in North America has been part of the both the formal and hidden curriculums. In recent years, there has been a movement in British Columbia to address moral development through the formal curriculum such as the *Social Responsibility Performance Standards* (2000a). These standards represent the Ministry of Education's focus on socially desirable behaviours.

In expecting that schools teach social responsibility, the Ministry assumes that everyone agrees on what is acceptable social behavior. In an increasingly diverse community, this stance does not accommodate the various identities, beliefs, and value systems of a diverse community, and it assumes one understanding of acceptable behavior to be superior over others.

Moreover, social responsibility education is not solely the terrain of the school; it is also a domain of practice in the community and within the family unit. Since these various communities of practice each operate within specific socio-cultural contexts, tensions may arise and value systems collide as differences emerge over what constitutes acceptable social behavior or social responsibility.

It is precisely for this reason that educational theorists argue that the community, parents, and students need to collaborate and consult more closely around the notions of moral education and social responsibility.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Background to the Fieldwork

The primary aim of this study is to examine how parents describe the notion of social responsibility as an educational objective. To achieve this, parents were interviewed about their understanding of the emphasis on socially responsible practices in their children's school and their response to this curricular focus. This study is part of a larger research project that evolved out of the principal researchers' prior collaboration in the Metropolis Project and specifically the Vancouver Centre of Excellence for Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis (RIIM). That study explored teachers', parents' and children's perceptions of their identities and relationships in a particular school community that had an emphasis on social responsibility and examined their notions of the rights and obligations of all community members.

Rhonda Philpott conducted and analyzed interviews with 11 teachers under the supervision of Dr. Beynon. Those data formed the basis of her MA thesis (Philpott, 2001; Philpott & Beynon, 2005). Drs. Dagenais and LaRocque focused on parents' perspectives of the social responsibility curricular emphasis. The interview data relating to parents' perspectives were collected in January 4, 2001 – January 2002. Research assistants Darlene Vissers and Anita Slater Bates conducted and transcribed 14 sets of audiotaped interviews with the parents

whose children were enrolled in kindergarten to grade 7, in either the French immersion or the English Programs. The interview questions are included in Appendix A. This research relied on open-ended interviews (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993) and interview questions explored parents' experiences that might inform their notions of social responsibility. Parents were asked to reflect on the ways in which the school's expectations of social responsibility related and interacted with their own family experiences and those of their community. Questions also aimed at examining how parents thought the school's emphasis on social responsibility affected their children, their family and their identity construction.

Upon receipt of ethical consent from both the school and university the research assistants who conducted the interviews obtained a list of a potential pool of participants from the school. The research assistants began phoning the parents on the list and sending a package out to interested parents (enclosed in Appendix B). All but one of the interviews took place in the participants' home. One interview was conducted at the school in the counseling office. Each interview lasted between 45 minutes - to 1 hour. The research assistants transcribed the interviews according to the protocol presented in Appendix C.

Qualitative Research

I have adopted a case study approach (Merriam, 1988) to conduct my thesis research. According to Becker (1968, quoted in Merriam 1988) the purpose of a case study is to:

> Arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the groups under study and to develop general theoretical statements about regularities in social structures and processes. (p. 11)

Therefore, I analyzed data from parent interviews to identify emerging themes, which is in keeping with established qualitative procedures (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Qualitative research falls under an interpretivist epistemological paradigm that assumes reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever changing (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). It does not aim at producing generalizable results but seeks to understand and interpret how participants in a particular social setting construct the world around them (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

This case study is descriptive in nature so that results are presented qualitatively using words and pictures rather than numbers (Merriam, 1988). Themes and theoretical reflections in this thesis emerged from careful analysis of the data. After interviews were collected and transcribed, I reviewed the content of information collected from all sources as well as memos and interpretive summaries written in relation to the data. Then I proceeded to code the interviews to identify salient themes.

Since I came into the study after all data were collected and transcribed, my knowledge of the participants is second-hand and based on reading the data. This could be seen both as an advantage and a disadvantage. It presents a disadvantage because it makes me more detached from the fieldwork, yet it can also be viewed as an advantage because this allows me to focus on the data and perhaps see the bigger picture.

Parallel to reading the transcripts, I pursued my literature review and developed my theoretical framework. As indicated in Chapter Two, my theoretical lens is constructed around sociocultural notions of identity and communities of practice, thus I think it important for me to make mention of the history, the influences, and the personal lens with which I approach this case study.

I am a 28-year old woman and a Canadian citizen, born in Iran and immigrated to Canada with my family in 1988. My family escaped from Iran because of religious persecution; I am of the Bahá'í Faith. In Iran Bahá'ís are a religious minority and do not have any rights, especially the right to an education. My parents decided to move to Canada to provide their children with the opportunity to pursue their educational goals. Throughout my high school life in Canada, I was an English as a Second Language student. I did not speak a word of English when I started grade 8 in the Surrey School District. Growing up as a minority and living in a diverse community such as Surrey, I became very interested in culture and community development. I began

travelling at an early age to various countries in Africa, South America, and South Pacific to gain a better understanding of community development around the world. From my experiences, I have come to believe that education plays a key role in every community; thus, I decided to become a teacher. However, I continued to pursue community development by completing a Post Baccalaureate Diploma in the area while I was working as a teacher. I have now been teaching for 6 years. All these experiences have helped me to better understand the perspectives of parents of diverse backgrounds and the diversity of their responses to questions of social and moral responsibility.

Research Questions

1. What are parents' perceptions of the respective roles of schools, parents, and children in the development of social responsibility?
2. What are parent's perceptions of their identity?
3. What are the parent's perceptions of their relationships with other members in the school community?
4. What is relationship between the way they define their roles, identities, and notions of social responsibility?

The School

The school is situated in a suburban community that serves a diverse student population and houses both an English and a French immersion program. The school population in September 30, 2003 included 264 regular

English program students and 197 French Immersion students with an ESL enrolment of 27.6% (School District #36, October 2004a).

> On the district web page the school's mission statement reads as follows: At [...] we work together to create a positive, caring environment where students will be able to grow to their potential: intellectually, physically, socially and emotionally. (School District #36, October 2004b)

The school philosophy is rather lengthy and echoes the mission statement:

> We take on the responsibility of guiding and developing our children into becoming adults who will value learning, who will value work or community service of any useful kind, who will value responsibility and honesty and, most of all, who will value themselves as worthwhile people. We believe that education continues outside school hours, throughout a person's lifetime and that education does not stop when a young adult leaves formal schooling. Therefore, we believe that it is only through the staff, the parents, the students and the community working together that we can reach our common goal of providing the best education possible for each child that enters . . . [school]. (School District #36, October 2004b)

At the time of this research, the British Columbia Ministry of Education required that all schools undergo accreditation and develop a school growth plan. This particular school had developed a growth plan and set school-wide goals. Several of these goals are of particular interest to this study since they include:

- School-wide implementation of Second Step program [a problem solving, anti-violence program]
- Improving students' social behaviour by providing them with the skills to make better decisions
- Student initiatives to increase acceptance of others, reduce vandalism, and improve the community

- Enhancing community relationships through improved understanding of new programs, reporting, and assessment
- Students, parents, and staff working together to continue their school beautification project
- A socially responsible, active Student Council and Student Leadership Club. (School District #36, October 2004b)

The Participants

As mentioned earlier, 14 interviews were conducted. Table 2 provides information about the interviews and the families. Table 3 presents information about the parents. The parents who participated in 8 of the interviews had children who were enrolled in the French Immersion program and in 6 interviews the children were registered in the English program. The participants' children were in various grade levels from Kindergarten to Grade 7. All parents but two were Canadian citizens and one parent's interview did not provide that information. All children, except four, were born in Canada. In addition, one child who was adopted by her biological grandparents was of aboriginal ancestry.

The parents' cultural backgrounds varied greatly. Although most were Canadian citizens, they were born in countries such as the United Kingdom, Viet Nam, Jamaica, Bolivia, Taiwan, Germany, Slovenia, Sri Lanka, Philippines, and the United States. Two participants were single parents. For 8 of the 14

interviews, both parents were interviewed together and in the rest of the interviews, one parent was interviewed alone.

Parents' educational backgrounds varied considerably as well. All were high school graduates, about half had undertaken technical institute training, and a few had a university degree. In 10 out of 14 interviews, parents claimed to adhere to some kind of religious beliefs and / or participated in religious activities and practices.

Table 1 **Information about the Interviews and the Families**

Participant Pseudonym	*Interviewer*	*Date of Interview*	*Interview Location*	*School Program*	*No. of children at the School and Grade Level*	*Single or Dual Parents*	*Languages spoken at home*
Alex (mother)	Darlene	Dec. 7, 2001 8:30 pm	school's counselling office	French Immersion	1 child Grade 6	dual	French and English
Bob & Nicole	Darlene	Dec. 9, 2001 2:00 pm	home	French Immersion	2 children Grades 2 & 5	dual	French
Susan & James	Darlene	Dec. 9, 2001 4:00 pm	home	English	1 child Grade 7	dual	English
Angelo	Darlene	Dec. 10, 2001	home	English	3 children Grades K, 5 & 6	dual	Two dialects of Tagalog and English
Daniel & Louise	Darlene	Dec. 10, 2001 6:00 pm	home	French Immersion	2 children Grades 3 & 6	dual	English, French and Tamil
Bill & Karen	Darlene	Dec. 10, 2001 8:00 pm	home	English	2 children Grade 1 & 4	dual	English and Sign Language
Marsha	Darlene	Dec. 11, 2001 6:00 pm	home	English	1 child Grade 6	Single Mother	English
Marilyn Jones	Darlene	Dec. 14, 2001	home	English	1 child Grade 2	dual	English
Andy & Amy	Anita	Apr. 8, 2002 10:15 am	home	French Immersion	1 child Grade 7	dual	Chinese and English
Claudia & John	Anita	Apr. 8, 2002 8:00 pm	home	French Immersion	1 child	dual	English, Spanish and Portuguese

Participant Pseudonym	*Interviewer*	*Date of Interview*	*Interview Location*	*School Program*	*No. of children at the School and Grade Level*	*Single or Dual Parents*	*Languages spoken at home*
Sarah	Anita	Apr. 9, 2002 11:00 am	home	French Immersion	1 child Grade 1	dual	Spanish and English
Diane	Anita	Apr. 10, 2002 10:30 am	home	French Immersion	1 child Grade 6	dual, biological grandparents	English
Sophie & John	Anita	Apr. 11, 2002 7:30 pm	home	French Immersion	1 child Kindergarten	dual	English and Cantonese
Sue	Anita	Apr. 13, 2002	home	English	1 child Grade 4	Single Mother	English

Table 2 Information about the Parents

Participant Pseudonym	*Parents' Birthplace*	*Citizenship*	*Background*	*Parents' Education*	*Parents' Occupation*
Alex (mother)	M - Alberta F - Jamaica	Canadian	Catholic	M - 2 yrs University F - 3 yrs University	M - sales F - graphic arts company
Bob & Nicole		N/A	N/A	M - BA French/Teaching F - Masters electronics	M - teacher F - engineer
Susan & James	M - BC F - BC Bkgd. German	Canadian	Christian related celebrations	M - degree in financial management F - High school	M - Canada Customs F - sales
Angelo	M - Philippines F - Philippines	Canadian	Christian / Catholic celebrations	M - High school F - degree	F - quality control inspector
Daniel & Louise	M - Sri Lanka F - Sri Lanka	French (Refugees) in Can. Since '97	Christians - go to church, celebrate Christian holidays	M - college F - 6 yrs. University	M - nurse assistant F - manufacturing Supervisor
Bill & Karen	M - BC F – BC Bkgd. Ukrainian	Canadian	no religion, but celebrate Christian holidays	M - diploma F - high school	M - Teacher assistant F - dry Waller
Marsha	M - BC Bkgd. Swedish	Canadian	not practicing Christians, but celebrate holidays	M - high school	M - Federal government worker
Marilyn Jones	M - Ont. F - Alberta	Canadian	no religion, but celebrate Christian holidays	M - high school F - high school	M - dental office F - printing business
Andy & Amy	M - Taiwan F - Taiwan	Canadian - in Canada since	attend church but don't define themselves as	M - college F - university degree	M - assists dad F - self-employed

Participant Pseudonym	*Parents' Birthplace*	*Citizenship*	*Background*	*Parents' Education*	*Parents' Occupation*
		1996	Christians		
Claudia & John	M - Bolivia F - BC	Canadian	attend church	M – Aesthetician F - 2 yrs college	M - self-employed F - brick manufacturer
Sarah	M - Germany Bkgd. Spain F - Slovenia	Canadian	Catholics, celebrate Christian holidays	M – College F - university degree	M - home business in computers F - courier
Diane	M - BC	Canadian	attend church regularly	N/A	M - stay at home mom
Sophie & John	M - Viet Nam F - United Kingdom	M - Canadian F - British	Christian and Chinese holidays but no religion	M – college F - college	M – software F - unemployed, awaiting visa
Sue	M - United States	Canadian	Christian holidays, no religion, have spiritual beliefs	M - University degree	M - Occupational therapist

Note. N/A = Not Available

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS

The first part of the analysis explores parents' definitions of social responsibility. The analysis next focuses on parents' understanding of what they perceive the school's role and their own role to be in teaching social responsibility. In the third section of this chapter, parents' interactions with the school and community are explored. The fourth part of the chapter looks at parents understanding of their children's role in learning and acquiring social responsibility. Finally, the last two sections consider the effectiveness of this program and recommendations the parents make to the school.

Parents' Definitions of Social Responsibility

When parents were asked about their definition of social responsibility, they gave varying responses. To one social responsibility was having a virtuous character "patience . . . kindness . . . active sharing" (Marilyn Jones, December 14, 2001). To others it was preventative "I think it is recycling [environmental /ecological responsibility], it is kind of social responsibility, and to educate the kids...don't let them to get involved with gangs or drugs" (Amy & Andy, April 8, 2002), or behaviours associated with respect "respect for other people, respect for other cultures, respect for peoples' property . . . respect is the biggest thing"

(Marsha, December 11, 2001). Many parents also linked social responsibility to interactions with the community at large. For example, Sarah said:

> Just to be aware of your surroundings, the people around you . . . appreciate . . . differences . . . not stereotype . . . treat everyone the way you would want to be treated. (April 9, 2002)

Diane, Sophie and John also made a connection between the community and society. Diane believed social responsibility is "how you act within your community, your family. . . . It's . . . the privilege of being part of society. It's a responsibility that everybody should have" (April 10, 2002). Sophie and John also saw it as being a part of a society and more specifically how one performs within that context; to them social responsibility meant, "how [one] interact[s] within society" (April 11, 2002). Some believed that social responsibility is how one treats others and meets others' needs without immediate recompense. For example Sue believed it is "how you should treat other people . . . how you should be able to be treated" (April 13, 2002). Bob and Nicole took it a step further and argued that it is not only treating others with respect and meeting the needs of our community but also doing it without expecting any reward or recognition; doing it because it is the right thing to do.

> [They should] reach beyond their own immediate needs and work towards recognizing and meeting the needs of people around them, without any expectation of compensation. (December 9, 2001)

Sue believed that being part of a community implies that we recognize our diversity, acknowledge that we are different and accept one another, not only for our similarities but also our uniqueness.

> [It] means being part of a community . . . being aware that you are part of . . . a community of people, and that people are different, and you have to accept each other (April 13, 2002).

Claudia and John took it a step further and related the term to broader parameters rather than just the immediate community. Their definition also went beyond a set of behaviors but saw social responsibility as a 'voice within' that speaks to political responsibility in a democracy.

> Another part of social responsibility is learning about what's going on politically. In our country, in our province, in our municipality. And trying to cultivate a voice within yourself, that's going to say, that's going to strive for a democratic society, a true democratic society. (Claudia & John, April 8, 2002)

Alex acknowledged that her definition stems from a religious and cultural background. She explained, "the whole value system, . . . for me is based on my church and stuff and through the Bible" (December 7, 2001). Others did not have a religious affiliation and but did see themselves as spiritual beings and believed in teaching their children moral issues. For example Sue said:

> I did grow up that way [with religion]. And I didn't like, I guess the organized religion aspect, so I moved away from that, I certainly have spiritual beliefs. (April 13, 2002)

Finally, some parents' definitions of social responsibility were tied to cultural affiliations and diverse approaches to teaching social responsibility. Andy and Amy saw themselves as different than Caucasian parents and they also had a particular view of how Caucasians view their Asian parenting approach in racialized and unflattering terms. They said:

> From our view, we always think, for education of kids, they have good education they will have a good future . . . so we ask, we ask more than the, you know Caucasian people? Ask kids. Sometimes they will think that we are push[ing] them. (April 8, 2002)

Parents' Views on the Balance Between Home and School in Teaching Social Responsibility

Almost all parents strongly believed that they were the primary educators of their children in the areas of social responsibility or moral education. Angelo thought that schools do not even have legal rights to tell children what to do or how to behave.

> I believe it comes from parents. They [the school] have no right probably. The school have no right to teach the kids what they can do. (Angelo, December 10, 2001)

Marsha, Daniel and Louise believed that parents should teach their own children social responsibility and they would like the school to reinforce what they teach at home.

> Well I really teach him that [social responsibility] at home and I think that it should be reinforced at school. I think that the first line is at home. . . . But I also think that he gets that at school. (Marsha, December 11, 2001)
>
> I think it's 50 % for the parents. . . . I think more than 50. . . . If we don't teach them proper respect and manners, they are not going to learn from school. School is a place they try to how is it called - REINFORCE them to do that but if you don't make them do it at home they won't do it at school. (Daniel & Louise, December 10, 2001)

Several parents agreed that the school's role is to support the education that goes on at home and if the children are not getting a consistent message from home and school, then learning about social responsibility will not take place. Alex (December 7, 2001) thought: "The school can do only a fraction. If they don't coincide with home it is going to break down pretty darn quick." Andy and Amy also emphasized shared responsibility between home and school "Yeah I think both duty for school and for family . . . if both school and family do their duty, and kids will grow health[y]" (Andy & Amy, April 8, 2002). Likewise, Marilyn stated that although the school did a good job attending to many areas, it was still important that parents and the school had similar expectations.

> I think the school for the most part covers a lot of bases . . . working with the school and making sure that you're . . . following the same . . . idea . . . is important. (Marilyn, December 14, 2001)

Susan and James suggested that the effectiveness of social responsibility programs in schools depended on parental involvement. "I think that these programs would be much more effective if the school pulled the parents in more with it" (Susan & James, December 9, 2001).

Sophie and John argued that a much closer relationship should be established between schools and families in this area:

> it's a case of . . . going back to the grass roots level, that the school and families have a much better relationship than they do now . . . So, but if they made the school have a better relationship with the families, and . . . maybe actually help the families in terms of the, social skills, as a support I mean to the actual student but also . . . to the actual families themselves. And maybe, there'd be that sort of bond. (April 11, 2002)

The parents also suggested that the school plays an important role since children spend most of their day at school: "They spend most of their time in school . . . also now . . . rightly or wrongly parents spend . . . a lot of time working" (Sophie & John, April 11, 2002).

According to Marsha, the school's role is critical in cases where children do not receive this type of education at home, either because of neglect or

because of cultural and social differences when it comes to moral standards. In such cases Marsha believed the school should intervene and step up to the task.

> I know that in a perfect world, we would all be teaching our child those morals and this doesn't happen. Things happen in people's lives . . . so they don't realize that they're not teaching their children how to treat things, so I think that you can tell as a parent being a cub leader I can see who has that in them and where they're coming from. I think that the school should be able to see that as well. If a teacher's been around a kid, they can see which kid is being destructive . . . and [they] should be putting a little more emphasis on those children . . . but I think that the school could do more for certain children. (Marsha, December 11, 2001)

As Diane noted, not all children have the same needs in this area. Some children such as her own may have a solid foundation from home and in that case she would like to see the school have a reinforcing role.

> But I think, children have to be taught social responsibility in the home first. And, five or six hours a day [at school] in our case is a reinforcement. In another child's case, could very well be, that they are just learning it. . . . Not all kids are the same. (Diane, April 10, 2002)

Bill and Karen proposed that the school's duty is to fill in where parents do not assume their role.

> Well that starts in the home. And if it's not at home then I guess the school should have to shed some light on, what a good citizen looks like . . . [the primary role] is with the parents. Well, I mean it is, it's our responsibility to instil the values that we believe are good. (Bill & Karen, December 10, 2001)

The parents had varying expectations of the school in terms of teaching social responsibility. For example, Sue wanted it to "set the environment or the climate at the school to make it clear that, no one is going to want to disrespect each other, hurt each other" (April 13, 2002). Bob and Nicole expected even more: "I don't think it's unrealistic to expect the school to weave into those activities, activities that will develop a social conscience in the children" (Bob & Nicole, December 9, 2001). Claudia and John suggested that the school was failing in doing its job to teach social responsibility; that the school and society at large are too preoccupied with economic productivity. Born and raised in South America, Claudia maintained that standards are different where she comes from and that people in Canada seem to be satisfied with the status quo.

> They don't [teach social responsibility]! . . . They're too busy to do that. They have too much on their agendas. . . . They only focus [on], teaching, to read, to write, but when it comes to moral principles, they're all far off the mark, way far . . . I guess to the community standards . . . it will be acceptable. . . . Where I come from . . . you're going to have to do more than that. . . . A lot of the university

> curriculum is now business-geared, economics-geared, technical-geared. . . . You have to understand the school takes our kids, how many hours a week, from eight thirty to three thirty. If you add up those hours, they're taking a big chunk of their lives. (Claudia & John, April 8, 2002)

Claudia and John argued that the present system raises children to function like machines and fit in the same mould rather than cultivating their identities; they argued that is why many children do not survive the system and drop out.

> They're teaching you to be a slot in the machine. And they're teaching you how to fit into society whether you want to or not. . . . I think there's a lot of lost people out there. I think there's a lot of people who go through this system and they drop out, or they're just sick and tired of, the boredom. . . . The worst of all is when you talk to some people, and you want to say something that is meaningful, they just look at you. . . . Like what the hell are you talking about. . . . They have NO CLUE of what is true identity. (Claudia & John, April 8, 2002)

Contrary to other parents, they thought the school is not fulfilling its obligation to teach social responsibility so that a lot of responsibility falls on their shoulders as parents. "Then, the responsibility is put upon me. . . . You know, that's actually too much. . . . Where I come from, it takes a whole team of people to raise a child, not just me" (April, 8, 2002).

As mentioned earlier, most parents thought that they should be the primary educators for social responsibility and 'morality;' they thought the school should play a supportive role. Sarah argued:

> The family should be the main . . . core as to how the child perceives, anything, and you know I mean the school helps out, but, I don't think we should make the school responsible for everything. (April 9, 2002)

Alex told her children:

> I only have you for a short period of time, and my job is to teach you what is right. . . . And I can only be a guide and be there, you know, and teach, and hope that they make the right choices. . . . My full goal is to be there and to teach them and guide them. (December 7, 2001)

Susan and James had a similar view:

> Well ultimately I think it's the parents responsibility. You know, you can, you can try to make it somebody else's but in the end they're your children, and they walk out of your front door every morning, not somebody else's. (December 9, 2001)

Marsha believed that parents provide the foundation of moral education for their children. She alluded to religious teachings and guidance and said that although the schools cannot teach religion, they can teach the more general moral principles.

> I think that the parents are giving the roots; they are the base of it. They have to show, they have to teach it, it has to be a way of life. You

> know you can't just bring a kid up with no respect for anything, and then all of a sudden, blame the school. I think the bulk of it has to lie with the parents and then as the child gets older, it should be reinforced through the school. The school carries on the same message. . . . You know schools are not allowed to teach religion . . . but they can teach about doing unto others and . . . respecting people's property and ( ). So the school has to reaffirm it. (December 11, 2001)

Marilyn was clear about the divide between parents' and the school's roles. She believed teaching moral education was the domain of parents and teaching academic subjects was the school's responsibility:

> I think the school should be a reinforcement. . . . I don't think it's the school's responsibility to teach children how to behave. Primarily it should come from home. Um I mean you're at home more than you're at school. . . . School should . . . concentrate on . . . their academic subjects. (December 14, 2001)

Many argued that social responsibility is the parents' responsibility but not many elaborated on how it should be taught. Only Sue made specific suggestions:

> I think example is always the soundest . . . the things that we do and how we treat people and things that you say . . . just moving about in the community . . . showing tolerance and respect. (April 13, 2002)

Parents' Participation in the School and Community

In general, the parents described their involvement with the school to be positive. Bob and Nicole said they had a good working relationship with the staff and found them to be approachable.

> I feel comfortable to go in . . . if I need to ask questions about anything. I don't spend a lot of time at school . . . I always think I should spend more, but I don't . . . I feel comfortable, I don't feel intimidated asking questions or seeking information about what is going on at the school. (December 9, 2001)

However, parents found that their involvement in the school was more welcomed by the teachers in the primary grades. For example Marilyn described her relationship positively and expressed that she volunteered more when her child was in Kindergarten

> Um, it's [relationship with the school] pretty good . . . in her [the child] first year of school I spent a lot of time there, at kindergarten . . . you know volunteer work. (December 14, 2001)

Marsha also articulated this point, she said: "It was in his earlier years when I was doing that [volunteering]. By the time he hit grade two, they didn't really want me to be there" (December 11, 2001).

Some other parents were not involved simply because of work and family commitments, even though they expressed an interest in participating more

actively in their child's schooling. Alex said, "I don't participate as much as I'd like to because I work full time…" Marsha explained: "I work full time, so I am not as involved with the school"or Angelo stated, "…I have no time to go there because, you go to work, you got three kids, you have to cook, you know, you have to rest…" Also Sarah reported: "I do help on field trips, once in a while, but it's a little bit tough for me because I work from home as well, and I have the little one" (April 9, 2002).

Susan and James attributed their lack of knowledge regarding school programs to working full-time and not being able to visit the school regularly. They said: "I don't really know any more because I've been working full-time. It's a little harder to see who's at the school?"

Susan and James suggested another reason why parents do not get more involved in school activities, especially immigrant parents. They mentioned that perhaps it is harder for new immigrant parents to get involved with the school because of cultural differences, and suggested that the PAC should make a more concerted effort to involve them.

> I think that sometimes initially there's a hesitation if people don't know what to expect, and I think a lot of times for new immigrants . . . they're not quite comfortable with it yet? It may take the, the next generation before they're involved, or feel like they can contribute . . . they may just be too bus- . . . lot of times when you're new in a country . . . you have to work a lot harder. (December 9, 2001)

Susan and James suggested that perhaps even the school might make parents feel unwelcome by the types of school programs they adopt because such programs are based on generalizations made about the socio-economic status of families living in the immediate area. They said:

> There's a real mix at the school as far as economic backgrounds. . . . I've noticed over the years, the administration and the teachers at times are, not intentionally, but they're condescending to the area. Because of the economic background of some of the area they see it as a [have] not instead of a have area, and seem to focus a lot of attention to that. (December 9, 2001)

This stems perhaps from the fact that the school is dual-track and French Immersion students come from a broader catchment area where the socio-economic status of families may vary from those in the local area. It was Susan and James' perception that the parents of French immersion students came from higher socio-economic backgrounds than the English stream parents and they thought the school treated them differently based on that.

Claudia and John said that they would like to have a better relationship with the school and teachers but they simply did not feel that the teachers have time for them. Claudia said:

> Actually I like to have a better connection but, it seems to me that they're always too busy? I like the teacher. I connect with each one, over the years, ...but, there isn't much, really, in terms of ... sense of

community between the teachers and the parents, and the children, everyone seems to be running a fast-paced life. (April 8, 2002)

Children's Role in Acquiring Socially Responsible Behaviour

Another common thread in all the interviews was the parents' expectations that their children had a role in learning social responsibility. However, the role many described is a passive one where children just 'learn' what they are taught, "everyone can lead the kids, cause the kids don't know"(Susan & James, December 9, 2001). Some parents adhered to the belief that knowledge is transmitted from the adults to children. Susan and James articulated this view as follows:

> Their role is . . . to be kids. We're there to guide them and teach them. They don't have any role in this, other than to be there and to participate, and maybe pick something up, and [be] good. (December 9, 2001)

This view implies a hierarchy in the adult - child relation, where the adult is morally superior to the child by nature of his or her age and position. Philpott's (2001) study titled *Teachers' Perceptions of Social Responsibility* revealed that teachers had a similar view of the teacher student relationship. According to her analysis, adults are in a position of privilege and it is their responsibility to ensure all voices are heard, especially those of children.

> And those of us involved in education need to look at the implications of our privileged and trusted positions. Having critically examined our privilege, we then need to open the floor to a variety of voices to expand the exploration and help us understand social responsibility from a variety of perspectives. (Philpott, 2001, p. 134)

Educational theorists such as Manyak (2001) argue that children learn by actively participating. He adds that learning results from full participation in social interactions and not necessarily as response to instruction.

Furthermore, one parent had a differing perspective on the matter. Sue believes that students should be taught to ask more questions and know why they are doing what they're doing.

> I think the best way is for them, especially when they get older, to really think about what they're saying and doing, (4) and kind of, taking from it and learning from it like, and not just to do something because they're told to do something. (April 13, 2002)

Claudia and John, also saw a role for students to assume. They believed that all stakeholders had a role to play like a team: "[Teaching social responsibility] by example . . . it's like a teamwork . . . each has their share of responsibility, they [the students] need to be encouraged" (April 8, 2002). Alex even stated that children can inform adults in this area: "Kids are great. They are not like us, they hold [no] grudges and stuff . . . they are quick to say--oh we are fine again let's go play" (December 7, 2001).

In fact, a couple of parents believed that children are the best peer teachers. They can teach one another; and serve as role models.

> And I think that's where our kids can come in too. . . . They model their behavior, and they show other kids, what it should look like. . . . Having children modeling these positive behaviors. (Bill & Karen December 10, 2001)

> Last year my son joined a break dancing class. It was after school . . . and . . . the high school kids . . . taught it. He really enjoyed that. Then we go out somewhere driving, to the mall or something and he say[s] "MOM I KNOW THAT PERSON, HE WAS FROM DANCE. . . . He was really thrilled to know a high school person who would take time to show him these things and any little praise that a teenager can give an elementary kid like "yah he thought I was good" really brought up the self-esteem and his ego. (Marsha, December 11, 2001)

Marsha also suggested that role-playing can be a good way for children to develop empathy for one another and know how it feels. "Role playing is always a good one. Put themselves in somebody else's shoes and see how it feels . . . if they like what they've done" (December 11, 2001). Finally, Sue suggested that students be involved in decision-making and allowed to make informed choices.

> My daughter gets an allowance. . . . She gets some of it, some of it gets saved up to go in the bank, some of it gets saved up to donate to a charity, and she gets to choose what she wants to do with that. . . . At

> the school I'm not quite sure who decides what it's going to be for, . . . even how much information the kids are given as to exactly where it's going and why. (April 13, 2002)

Effectiveness of This Particular Program

Before discussing how parents viewed the effectiveness of the program, it should be noted that many parents were unaware of its existence. When the researcher asked Bill and Karen what they knew about any social responsibility programs at the school they responded: "Not really anything to tell you the truth" (December 10, 2001). The researcher suggested that information about the program may have been conveyed through newsletters and notices and perhaps those notices have been lost between school and home. To this Bill and Karen responded:

> Oh no, no, we always see them, and I can't recall ever seeing anything in there about social responsibility . . . I don't know how they [the school] describe social responsibility . . . they've never written it down and given it to me on a piece of paper or even, had a conversation or told me about it. (December 10, 2001)

Andy and Amy also admitted that they did not know anything about the program either. "I don't know that much [about any programs]" (April 8, 2002). When the researcher asked whether they may have heard anything through the school or their son, they responded: "Not from [son]. . . . Not in these terms

anyway . . . We just only in here, one year" (April 8, 2002). Marsha also said that her son had never talked about it at home and suggested that perhaps the children knew the program by another name or as something other than "the social responsibility program". She said:

> No, and my son has never talked about it [S.R. program], so I'm not sure how it's come out to the kids, he's never discussed it with me, so I'm not sure whether he doesn't know about it, or whether he's not interested or involved. (December 11, 2001)

Some other parents who knew a little about the program questioned its effectiveness citing various reasons, such as attachment to funding and long-term effects. For example, when Susan was asked about the program, she flatly replied:

> What's the program called this year? . . . We've been through a few programs . . . I think they're based on funding? And as soon as that funding's gone, they grab for the next one. . . . They all have good points, but I don't, think the kids understand the changes. . . . But if in the end, they get any of the values from it, that's fine with me . . . I understand that you can't have programs without funding, and these things tend to be quite cyclical. Oh, we've tried that, now we're finishing the study on it. (December 9, 2001)

They felt bombarded by different programs or the 'flavour of the month' as Susan called it. Susan and James particularly believed that the programs

changed all the time as they are all very dependent on funding and they just could not keep up with the changes nor could the students. Programs were popular in schools because they were a tidy and generally measurable way of fulfilling district or school wide goals. One reason why parents at this school may not have been aware of the details of the program may be that they did not have a hand in developing it. Often such 'programs' are uniform; they are usually 'one size fits all' and such programs are usually not developed with the help of parents and do not require parental involvement in their implementation.

Bill and Karen also questioned the effectiveness of such programs. They believed that the few hours of instruction students receive were not enough to make a lasting impact on the children. "From . . . three hours or two hours that they're going to hear about it in maybe a month, I can't imagine it changing them any" (December 10, 2001). When the researcher asked them whether they felt the program had had any effects on their family, they responded: " No . . . it probably doesn't. It would be nice if it does" (December 10, 2001).

Andy and Amy on the other hand, believed that the effects of such programs would not be seen immediately and would take a long time to make a difference in the students. "I think it take long time to get that effect [positive effect], not just one day or two day" (April 8, 2002). Susan and James agreed with the long-term effectiveness:

> It's so long term . . . if the kids learn these things [at] a younger age . . . it may have a long term effect on them . . . at home, you teach them the

> right things, that doesn't mean they always do the right things. But in the end, as adults, hopefully they'll remember those right things and follow them. (December 9, 2001)

Regardless of why programs are brought to a school, even Susan and James agreed that something was better than nothing.

> With all . . . of the programs in the end, the same problems exist every year, so as new children come, you're still working on those same core issues year after year, so whichever program you're working with, it's important to have some sort of program . . . otherwise . . . things will . . . go downhill. (December 9, 2001)

Some parents had specific examples of where they saw the effects of the program in their children. When Marilyn was asked whether the program had been effective she said:

> Yes. In some ways it has. Um . . . if I've acted . . . out of line . . . she will say . . . Mum . . . this is how we resolve this in SCHOOL . . . she reinforces, this is what [she's] learned in school. (December 14, 2001)

Sarah gave a similar example:

> They're [the school] . . . into kindness, they reward . . . for opening doors for people . . . it's great, and I'm really seeing it in my daughter . . . we're at, the mall, and a little old lady is trying to go reach, to open the door, she'll run in front, and do it for her . . . I think it has a big effect . . . she [daughter] notices things . . . there's . . . a couple a kids

> that go to school on a wheelchair, and so she notices . . . she's very accepting now and . . . at ease . . . with people like that. (April 9, 2002)

Parents' Recommendations to the School

At the end of the interviews all parents were asked whether they had any suggestions and whether they wanted to see the school do anything differently. Several took the opportunity to share their concerns and give recommendations to the school. Others were very content with what the school was doing and encouraged it to continue as it were. The parents' recommendations varied and some were not related to social responsibility.

The two suggestions unrelated to the program had to do with extracurricular activities. Not surprising, since the interviews were conducted in the school year 2001/2002 when the teachers' union was taking job action against the school district and had cut all extracurricular activities. Daniel and Louise suggested:

> I would like the school to have extra activities for the kids. I like them to do it because if I am five or ten minutes late we are scared about our kids. The school has to do for money - I don't mean for free . . . I think they should have extra classes if they are really weak on something . . . If my daughter is weak in English - they have ESL classes . . . - but I think it better they have it after school because always they are taken

from the class and instead . . . they should do it after school for one hour. (December 10, 2001)

Regarding field trips, Marsha requested: "So far this year he [the student] hasn't done any . . . I think they really need that outside stimuli to different events and how to act in different situations" (December 11, 2001).

The remaining suggestions were all related in some way to social responsibility. Marsha suggested that the school focus more on prevention and on educating the children at the younger grades so that when they hit the crucial age groups they were equipped with the right knowledge about how to make good choices.

> Prevention!! [relating to] Drugs, smoking, gangs . . . Get them before they are of the age that they will do it . . . now they're still young enough so that they are very influenced. Now is the time to tell him of the consequences of drugs . . . here is a drug addict. (December 11, 2001)

Bill and Karen's suggestion related to prevention as well. They wanted to see the school implement sex education as it related to social responsibility. They indicated that they have seen such a program at other schools but not in this particular school.

> I think part of this falls under social responsibility . . . sex education? . . . And it's not just the sex education part of it, I think it's more the relationship part of it? . . . We treat each other . . . and . . . about

> respecting someone's space and privacy. . . . I'm not aware of the school doing that for the kids but I know other schools have done it. (December 10, 2001)

Susan and James requested that the school implement effective consequences, although they do not give specific examples of what that may look like. "Consequences, proper consequences [are not covered by S.R. program]." This did not imply that the school does not have any consequences in place, but perhaps the parents did not see it in effect consistently among the staff. Diane also wanted to see more power given to schools in order that they hold students accountable for their actions. She said:

> I think the school [should be] given a little bit more power. That was all taken away, and I'm not necessarily saying . . . corporal punishment. I am saying that children have to be taught to be responsible for their actions. And I don't think the school has enough power to reinforce that. (April 10, 2002)

Marsha suggested that there should be a school wide approach and all staff be trained together so that they may respond to concerns in a consistent manner. "I think that the teachers should all have training . . . they should all deal with certain issues in the same way" (December 11, 2001).

Although several parents adhered to a religion or a set of beliefs, only one felt that religion was lacking in the school. Diane believed however, that it was being taught in school whether they realized it or not. "I'd have to say the

Christian . . . aspect of it . . . whether the school likes it or not, it's still being taught, do unto others as you would have them do unto you" (April 10, 2002).

A few parents pointed out the importance of partnership between the parents and the school. Sue said: "I do sort of see the home and school as working together and having a role in teaching the child." Marsha suggested that the school should involve parents more into their activities and ask for their help when they need it. "Why not use more parental help? There are a lot of parents that I know that don't work during the day" (December 11, 2001). According to Susan and James, in order for this collaboration to happen, the parents and the school need to communicate openly with one another. They asked that the school communicate successes with the parents as well and not just when something has gone wrong. They said:

> Open communication with parents, that's one of the things they talk about, but do a little less . . . talk . . . if the school would have better communication back to the parents[regarding social responsibility], when things are good, and when things are bad, with a specific child, that would . . . draw the parent into it more, right from grade one onwards. (December 9, 2001)

Two groups of parents wanted to see the school be more involved in the wider community and to teach social responsibility within that greater context rather than just confined to the school. Bob and Nicole suggested for example that the school might want to implement the "adopt a street program" to help

clean up the community but more importantly to instil a sense of ownership of the larger neighbourhood in the children.

> Instead of just picking up garbage on the schoolyard . . . they have that adopt a street program where you pick up garbage . . . where kids are out there [in the community] if - the older students are studying about aging . . . that they visit a nursing home or a rest home and read to older people who can [not] read for themselves any more . . . where they interact with members of community providing a service to these people. (December 9, 2001)

Sarah also mentioned this notion of service and giving to the community rather than always wanting and taking from it. She also suggested that this be implemented into more meaningful field trips.

> I know they have a lot of field trips, like for skating . . . It would be nice for them to have a field trip to go to maybe an old age home. You know, maybe go to a hospital. Things like that . . . interact with them. Not just sing . . . they can . . . draw them a picture . . . things like that really make people happy. I mean it's giving . . . they would learn that it's not just to receive all the time . . . it's nice to . . . show them the importance of giving, giving to the community, giving . . . of yourself. (April 9, 2002)

Finally, Bill and Karen had concerns that programs such as social responsibility were taking away from the core academic subjects and the

students were losing valuable learning time when they were being taught these social skills.

> I want him [son] to be in a class where he's challenged . . . the focus is on the education and not only on, okay, this is the way we behave . . . they have a child care worker in there [classroom] three days a week. Well to me that doesn't benefit my son at all. Because they're spending so much time on behaviours . . . that are preventing learning in the classroom. So, to me, the focus has to switch . . . back to the education and . . . the curriculum. (December 10, 2001)

Bill and Karen acknowledged that even though they taught the social skills at home to their children there were homes where those skills were not being taught and that is where the schools can play a part but they saw this as hindering his son's progress because he already had acquired those skills.

> A lot of the kids in S's class, need . . . the social responsibility, how to fit to society, how to be a good citizen. They need that, because they're not getting it at home, but unfortunately when you're teaching that, you're not teaching reading, [you're not teaching writing... There's only six hours, ...five and a half hours of instruction in a day? And if you've got to take one hour, out of every day, to teach kids how to brush their teeth, how to cross, crosswalk, that you're not supposed to push John in the mud, then you can't teach something else. (December 10, 2001)

Bill and Karen saw education as a pendulum that goes back and forth between academic and social teachings and they believed that currently the system has allowed the pendulum to swing too far to the social extreme and the academic subjects have been neglected.

> It would be great, just go back to teaching school . . . it's almost like the balance has sort of gone the other way too far and education has taken a back burner. . . . Oh it's a pendulum . . . it's always been back and forth. . . . And the pendulum just happens to be over on that side. (December 10, 2001)

In analyzing the parents' perceptions of Social Responsibility, it quickly became clear that the parents had different interpretations of the concept. However, as the first part of this chapter indicates, generally all the parents' definitions referred to interactions within a society or community and its members. The interviews also revealed parents' notions of who ought to take on the task of instilling children with social responsibility. In general, parents believed that such a role was primarily reserved for them and that schools should play a supportive role. The children were mostly viewed as passive participants, as empty barrels to be filled. Nevertheless, a few parents did want to see children involved more actively in this process.

The second part of this chapter explained parents' overall participation within the school and community at large. In a few cases, parents seemed to

know little to nothing about the Social Responsibility programs at the school. However, regardless of what parents thought social responsibility programs were, the majority believed them to be effective and wanted them to continue. Finally, in the last part of the chapter the analysis focused on parents' recommendations for enhancing social responsibility education in their children's schools.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Study Summary

There seems to be a general crisis of perception in the way we think about the world around us, and the kinds of values we cherish (Orr, 1994). This crisis is being felt in all aspects of society including our schools, and classrooms. Today, many people feel that children today are increasingly displaying irresponsible, and intolerant behaviour. Social institutions, such as schools are diagnosing these isolated ailments as symptoms of one larger malady; a general lack of social responsibility. Thus, many educational policies are shifting from just teaching academic skills to include teaching social responsibility.

The Social Responsibility Document, which was developed in 2000, is an attempt on the part of the British Columbia Ministry of Education at providing this type of education. The objective of this study was to examine closely the Social Responsibility Curriculum and explore a group of parents' responses to it and uncover their own views of social responsibility as it relates to the education of their children.

Thus, the guiding questions to this study surveyed parents' perceptions of social responsibility, their identity, and their relationships with members of the school community. The purpose was to gain insight into the connections

between the way parents define their respective roles, identities and their notions of social responsibility.

Implications

The themes emerging from the analysis of interviews included: 1) parents' definitions of social responsibility; 2) their understanding of the responsibility of the school, themselves, and their children in teaching and learning social responsibility; 3) the interactions of the parents with the school; 4) their views of the effectiveness of the Social Responsibility program and; 5) their suggestions for the school.

Programs

The themes emerging from this investigation have several implications for both theory and practice. One concerns the notion of 'programs' implemented in schools. In my experience, programs are implemented in schools to meet the needs as identified by school accreditations, growth plans, standardized testing, or a perceived problem. Such programs are very popular in schools because they are a tidy and generally measurable way of fulfilling the above-mentioned needs. For example, a school can say in concrete terms "yes we are doing something about developing social responsibility in our school, we are using the *Effective Behavior System*" (a program based on behaviour modification principles). It is far more difficult to explain briefly and on a more profound level that social

responsibility is a way of thinking and being and even more difficult to measure. Social responsibility does not neatly serve the purposes of data collection in schools to assess the program or learning. This implies that we must recognize the limitations of such measured curriculum and packaged programming.

Another drawback to such programming is that often it is highly dependent on funding and when funding is cut or priorities change, so do the programs. The parents expressed frustration with this lack of consistency and admitted that they could not keep up with the new programs from year to year.

The Relevance of Performance Standards

Another theme emerging from the analysis was related to the effectiveness of the Social Responsibility program. One parent in particular questioned the superficiality of such programs; and whether it was simply modifying behaviour or actually transforming the students on a deeper level. The Social Responsibility Performance Standards lay out a certain set of expectations and standards along with a new set of vocabulary to be taught and when children use this vocabulary the child is deemed to be socially responsible.

Thus, a second implication of this study relates to the relevance of these standards. One may question the motivation of children for performing desired behaviours or using the vocabulary of the program, especially if they are attached to extrinsic motivators, such as grades or material rewards. Are these values being integrated into the child's own belief and value system and are they being carried over to the community at large? When we constantly tempt them

with extrinsic motivation we are stifling their intrinsic motivation. Philpott (2001) asks a similar question: "Is it possible that through the accountability compulsion to rate and measure skills and behaviours more competition and self-centeredness are encouraged?" (p. 132)

Effectiveness Measurement

A third implication of this research is to question the notion of effective measurement. Currently, the process of assessment and evaluation in social responsibility is characterized by standards and accountability. Schools today are highly focused on the measurement of skills and knowledge. Not only do we want to measure everything in concrete numerical terms but we also want all students to arrive at the same place (i.e. meets expectations) at the same time (i.e. by a certain Grade). If we want everyone to be the same then how can we say we value diversity in our students and schools? Eisner (2003) argues that good schools actually increase the variance in student performance (p. 242). He says that this focus on standards sacrifices the quality of conversation, and promotes self-interest among students. There needs to be a shift from mastery of subject (or behaviour) to mastery of one's person (Orr 1994, p. 12). Self-monitoring and reflection is an alternative method of assessing and evaluating social responsibility. Self-assessment should be for the purpose of improving the self and its results should not be rewarded or punished by an external source, then students would have no reason to be dishonest.

Accounting for Diversity of Beliefs and Practices

A fourth implication of this study for practice signals the need to account for the diversity of definitions of social responsibility and the fact that schools' and parents' interpretations may converge and collide. Issues related to morality and behaviour may even deeply divide our society since they are all based on differing and sometimes conflicting value systems. This variance in beliefs has repercussions for the schools and the programs they adopt, such as the Social Responsibility Performance Standards. Do those standards match with the parents' beliefs and own standards? If they do not, how can schools expect parents to support them in their educational programming?

Furthermore, diversity of beliefs and opinions also exist within the classroom as teachers and children bring their own perspectives to social responsibility activities. How do we fairly include everyone's beliefs in social responsibility curriculum? Are everyone's beliefs valid? McDermott (1993) believes that teaching social responsibility to a specific set of standards is just a way of normalizing children. If they meet the criteria they are normal and if not they are labelled abnormal. He writes:

> There is never a question of whether everyone is going to succeed or fail, only of who is going to fail. . . . Failure and success define each other into separate corners, and the children are evenly divided as if by a normal curve, into successful and failing. (McDermott, 1993, p. 295)

Communication Between School and Home

The parents' responses to questions of social responsibility reveal that this is a complex issue; parents, teachers and children can only begin to discuss it openly through dialogue. Dialogue is the key to articulating diverse values. As Freire (1970) writes, dialogue is a key tool in transforming education as it liberates and focuses on humanization. However, dialogue must be facilitated with care to ensure that no one is left out and that all voices are invited and heard. Moreover, this signals the need for close collaboration and consultation with parents before implementing such programs, not after the programs are in place. Philpott and Beynon (2005) also reiterate that dialogues where differing discourses are articulated are "central to the process of creating collective visions for educational change"(p. 46). Involving parents in classroom programs should be more than having them volunteer to cut and colour paper or drive on field trips. Parents are individuals who have their own identities and rich histories and experiences that can be a great resource in the classroom. In order to meaningfully involve parents, educators have to believe their contribution to be valued and that schools really care about them. "The ways schools care about children is reflected in the way schools care about the children's families" (Epstein, 2003, p. 354) and if children are feeling cared for then they are more likely to succeed in school and do their best. Often new programs are developed without the help of parents and do not require parental involvement in their implementation.

As is evident in the interviews, a key link between the school and the home is the student. The student is the one who communicates information and activities at school to parents or even physically carries messages home through newsletters and notices. This suggests that perhaps their involvement is more important than most parents believe.

Children's Involvement

Finally, the analysis of interviews with parents indicates that there is a need to sensitize parents (in addition to educators) to the fact that children must be meaningfully involved in their own social and emotional development rather than simply following a set of rules. The consensus among parents was that children have a passive role; they believed that children need only to sit back and learn what adults have to teach. Educators who understand that children can be active agents in their own learning also have a responsibility to educate parents about this contemporary view of learning.

Some teachers in the Philpott and Beynon (2005) study associated being respectful with being socially responsible. However, Philpott and Beynon (2005) compare respect with care (Noddings, 1992) and argue that although respect "implies regard for others' rights . . . care [on the other hand] implies a more personal emotional commitment to and engagement with others" (p. 44).

Some schools have tried to involve students by getting them to re-write the language of the Performance Standards for Social Responsibility in more

'child-friendly' terms. One can ask, however, whether this is true involvement or is it just another way to encourage the students to talk the talk?

In fact, one could suggest that in the current system, a hierarchy exists in adult-student relations, where the first is deemed as morally superior by nature of his or her age. Hence student involvement in curriculum development is not given serious consideration. Adults are in a position of privilege and it is their responsibility to ensure active participation of children.

Final Words

Ornstein (2003) argues that schools have a dual purpose: individual growth potential and collective welfare (creating social order and good citizens) (p. 3-9). Many educational institutions are trying to incorporate this dual responsibility.

However, the current formal curricular emphasis on measuring socially responsible behaviour obscures the need to develop a culture of care in schools that is embedded in the implicit curriculum. Moreover, I believe that moral education in the area of social responsibility is a life long process not confined to the school-aged child. Many educational practices lead children to believe they have achieved an end result or they have arrived at their destination of personal growth upon graduation or by reaching a certain grade or meeting certain expectations. We need to encourage students to continue their personal growth

into adulthood, by modelling this ourselves. Only then can we hope to cultivate critical minds and caring hearts in our students.

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APPENDIX A: PARENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Introduction

In this study, we are looking at the school's focus on social responsibility and we are most interested in how parents view this. We want o hear from parents who represent all of the diverse language and cultural groups that form this school's community. We'll begin by asking you questions about your own family's background, then we'll talk about the focus on social responsibility in the school and your views of social responsibility.

Children and school

How many children do you have?
How many attend this school?
What program are they in?
What grads are they in?
Why did you choose to send your child/ren to this school?
Can you tell me about your relationship with the school? What is it like?

Languages

What languages do you speak t home? With whom? When?
What languages do you speak in the community? With Whom? When?
What language do your children speak at home? With whom? When?
What languages do your children speak at school? With whom? When?
If the children speak the parents' heritage (non-English) language, ask:
What does it mean to you to have your children speak (language X)?
If the children are in French Immersion, ask:
What does it mean to you to have our children speak French?
Does anyone else live in your home other than you, your spouse and your children?

Residence, Education, Employment

Where were you and your spouse born?
If born outside Canada:

What countries have you and your spouse lived in?
When did you and your spouse come to Canada?
Are you/ our children Canadian citizens?
Where were your children born?
Did any of your children attend school in another country/province?
Where did d you and our spouse attend school?
What languages did you and your spouse study in?
What schooling have you and your spouse had?
Where do you and your spouse work now?

Identity

How would you describe your own identity?
Can you tell me what things you do that make you (identity name parent used)?
How would you describe your children's identity?
Can you tell me what things they do that make them (identity name aren't used)?
What traditions and customs does your family practice?
Does your family practice a religion? If so, how do you observe your religion?
Are there other people of your language/ identity term/ religion in the community? What is your relationship with tem?
Are there other people of your language / identity term/religion in the school? What is your relation ship with them?

Social Responsibility

Can you tell me what you know about the school's focus on social responsibility?
How did you find out about this?
What kinds of things is the school doing in the area of social responsibility?
What do you thing about these things?
What do your children say about these activities?
Have you been involved in any of these activities? How?
What is the effect of the schools' focus on social responsibility on your children?
What is the effect of the schools' focus on social responsibility on your family?
What is the effect of the schools' focus on social responsibility on the school community?
What does social responsibility mean to your?
Is this the same way the school describes social responsibility? How?
If not, please tell me how it is different.
What role should parents play in teaching social responsibility?
What role should children play in learning about social responsibility?
What role should the school play in teaching social responsibility?

What aspects of social responsibility does the school cover?
Is there anything that is not covered?
What else would you like to see the school do in focusing on social responsibility?

APPENDIX B: PARENT PACKAGE AND LETTER

Simon Fraser University
Faculty of Education
Burnaby, British Columbia V5A 1S6

Date:

Dear Parents,

We plan to begin a study of social responsibility at your child's school. Our colleagues—Doctors Beynon, Toohey, and Cassidy—are also conducting research on social responsibility at the school and each of us is focusing on a different aspect of this issue. We are particularly interested in parents' views of social responsibility. The description on the next page provides information to help you decide whether you would like to participate in this research.

We would like to conduct interviews with parent-couples or individuals parents. The interviews will last about 90 minutes and will be audio taped. The audiotapes will be transcribed and analyzed by our research assistants and us. We might want to use excerpts of the transcripts if we write an article about this research for a journal or if we give a talk to teachers and researchers.

While you may learn something new about your child's school and social responsibility as a result of participation in this study, it is possible that you may find it uncomfortable to participate in an interview. You can be assured that your identity will be protected, as we will not use real names in reports of the research. Audiotapes and transcripts of the interviews will be labeled with a pseudonym, not your name. The transcripts will be shredded and the audiotapes erased when they will not longer be needed for the research or teaching. The signed consent forms will be stored in a separate place from the audiotapes and transcripts. You may obtain a summary of the results, once the study is completed, by contacting either of us at the address indicated below.

Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at anytime. You may direct any concerns about this project to one of us or to Dr. Robin Barrow, Dean, Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC V5A 1S6 (tel. 291-3395). Please feel free to raise any questions you have about this study. If you agree to participate in the study, please fill out the information in the permission form n the next page.

Thank you for your valuable collaboration.

Sincerely,

Diane Dagenais, Ph.D.
Associate Professor

Linda LaRocque, Ph.D.
Associate Professor

PERMISSION FORM

I understand that:

1. My participation is voluntary and I may withdraw from the study at any time;
2. I can register any concerns or raise question about the project at any time by contacting Dr. Robin Barrow;
3. Participation in this study involves being interviewed;
4. I can obtain a summary of the results, once the study is completed;
5. My name will not appear in reports of the research.

I consent to participate in this research:

PARTICIAPNT'S NAME (Please print): ______________________________
ADDRESS: ____

____
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT: ________________________________
DATE: ____

Principal investigators: Dr. Diane Dagenais and Dr. Linda LaRocque, Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC V5A 1S6 (tel. 291-3395).

APPENDIX C: TRANSCRIPTION PROTOCOL

Transcription Protocol	
R:	Researcher
S:	Student
P:	Parent
[	beginning of overlap
]	ending of overlap
/ /	speaker interrupts
---	rephrasing, shift of discourse or parenthetical adjunction
MUST	words spoken at higher volume than surrounding normal speech
( )	inaudible utterance
(stage?)	uncertain reading of a word
(4.0)	elapsed time in seconds
,	brief pause
-	longer pause
?	upward intonation
.	downward intonation
...	speaker is about to continue
dictee	foreign word italics
(laugh)	listener's observation