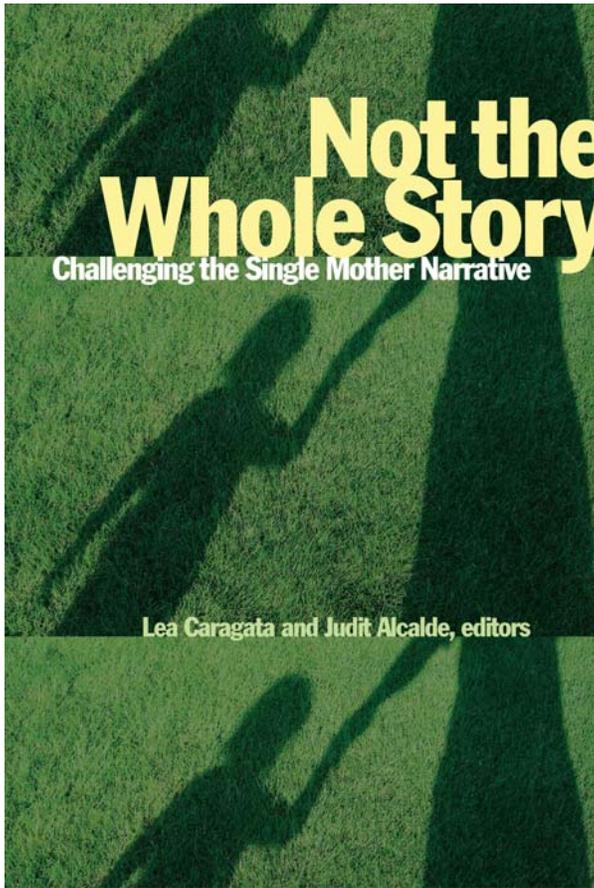


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Not the Whole Story Challenging the Single Mother Narrative

Lea Caragata and Judit Alcalde, editors

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How do single mothers break the cycle of poverty and what got them there in the first place? What are the barriers they face and how can we assist in breaking them down? How do they maintain hope as they try desperately to put food on the table at the end of the month? The real-life experiences of these tough, resilient, and resourceful mothers provide a road map and inspiration to reform our social and financial policies. Read their stories, and then work for change.

—**Olivia Chow**, former Toronto city councillor and Member of Parliament

The stories of the lone mothers depicted in the book are often horrifying, but the women are not defeated. They are realistic about the so-called choices available to them, but all can see a future. Caragata's text vividly captures the violence and poverty that shape these women's lives. She counterpoints participants' words to academic language. The result is not discordance but rather a wonderful analytic balance wherein the two voices resonate and reinforce each other.

—**Sheila M. Neysmith**, Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto

Not the Whole Story is a compilation of seventeen stories narrated by single mothers in their own way and about their own lives. Each story is unique, but the same issues appear again and again. Abuse, parenting as single mothers, challenges in the labour market, mental health and addictions issues, a scarcity of quality childcare, immigration and status vulnerability, struggles with custody, and poverty—these factors, combined with a lack of support, contribute to their continued struggles.

The themes that recur across stories illustrate that the problems the women face are not just about individual struggle; they demonstrate that major issues in Canada's social system have been neglected in public policy. In order for these issues to be addressed we need to challenge the flawed public policies and the negative discourse that continue to marginalize single mothers—in terms of the opportunities in their own lives and in terms of how they are understood by other Canadians.

The first-person narratives of the struggles and issues faced by low-income single mothers provide narrative richness and are augmented by introductory and concluding chapters that draw the narrative themes together and offer overarching discussion and analysis.

Lea Caragata teaches in the Faculty of Social Work at Wilfrid Laurier University. Her areas of research and specialization include marginalization and oppression and, most recently, labour market changes and welfare-state retrenchment and their impacts on lone-mother-led families. A long-time activist, she collaborates with peer researchers and looks at popular and scholarly dissemination activities with an eye on social change.

Judit Alcalde, a graduate of the Community Psychology M.A. program at Wilfrid Laurier University, has over twenty years of experience working in community-based settings. Her work has spanned numerous topics, but much of her time has centred on issues faced by women, including abuse and poverty. She works as an independent community research and evaluation consultant in Toronto.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

Introduction | *Lea Caragata*

Workfare and Precarious Work

The Making of This Book

Methodology

Issues Shaping Poverty, Single Motherhood, and Social Status

Format of the Volume

On the Process of Creating This Book and on the Stories That Needed Telling

The Individual Stories

Making Meaning | *Lea Caragata and Judit Alcalde*

Story Summaries

Pulling It Together

Conclusion | *Lea Caragata*

References

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