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Institutional experiences of female child migrants in Western Australia between 1947 - 1955

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**Institutional Experiences of Female Child Migrants
in Western Australia between 1947 - 1955**

By

**Diane Parker
(Bachelor of Arts, Grad Dip Ed)**

**This thesis is presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education by Research
Faculty of Education and Arts
Edith Cowan University**

**July
2013**

ABSTRACT

In this qualitative study I investigated the institutional experiences of former female child migrants who were placed in the care of the Sisters of Mercy in St Joseph's Catholic Orphanage, Subiaco, Western Australia. My study was guided by the theoretical orientations of Symbolic Interaction and Constructivism. Data were gathered through a series of individual and group interviews with the Female Child Migrants, who are now in their seventies and had spent at least three years in the orphanage between the years 1947 and 1955. Documents were also obtained from the archives of the Catholic Church, the Sisters of Mercy and the National Archives. Documents, photos and artefacts were also accessed from private collections.

Significant issues to arise from the study were those of identity, opportunity and social control. These issues were broadly examined in relation to the primary and reference groups in the children's lives with a particular focus on the role the Sisters of Mercy had in the children's welfare. A limitation of the research is that some records pertaining to the orphanage during this period have been lost or destroyed and the passing of sixty years since the Female Child Migrants lived at the orphanage has meant that some events and practices may have been forgotten, overlooked or reframed by respondents. One of the most important findings was that the Orphanage's institutional practices with its underpinning of religious teachings, ensured a lack of suitable social experiences and interactions. This shaped the way the participants viewed the world; which in turn impacted upon their life choices. The findings suggest that access to a wide variety of social situations is a necessary feature in a child's socialisation and the accumulation of necessary social skills. The impact of socialisation on educational outcomes of the children in institutions such as orphanages was evident in the data. This investigation goes some way to filling the gap in the knowledge of the experiences of female child migrants who were sent here under the British Child Migration Scheme and it shines a light on a very small part of Western Australia's social history.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- (i) incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- (ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or
- (iii) contain any defamatory material.

Signed:

Date: 21 July 2013

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ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

FCM	Female Child Migrants
UK	United Kingdom
Sr	Sister
NSW	New South Wales
WA	Western Australia
[]	Background information such as asides for explanations, additions to meaning, or contextual and non-verbal annotations.
...	Edited omission from respondent's text
/	Interruption or interjection.

TERMINOLOGY & DEFINITIONS

Child migration refers to the practice of sending orphaned and/or underprivileged children from the United Kingdom to Australia during the post war years of 1948-55. Many of them came from single parent families, were illegitimate, or from very poor families who simply couldn't look after them (Coldrey, 1993).

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

In 1943 the Australian Government embarked upon a plan to bring 50,000 British children to Australia in an effort to boost the population diminished after many years of war. This scheme would come to be known as the British Child Migrant Scheme. With support from various voluntary organisations, such as the Catholic Church, Barnardo's and the Fairbridge Society, it was envisaged that the children would be looked after by these agencies with financial support being provided by the Australian Federal Government. The Catholic Church was an enthusiastic advocate of the scheme and many of the children to arrive had been recruited from Catholic institutions within Britain. Promises by the British and Australian authorities of a carefree life with a loving family environment in Australia, resulted in relatives and guardians signing consent forms for their children to be transported. Connections with country, friends, family and carers were severely disrupted and resulted in a lifelong search for identity for many of the child migrants.

The first group of child migrants sent to Australia under the scheme docked at the port of Fremantle in Western Australia in September 1947 ("Catholic Child Migration Scheme Resumes Operations, " 1947) more ships filled with child migrants arrived later in the same year and the mainly Catholic children, both girls and boys, were sent to a variety of Catholic institutions, including St Joseph's Girl's Orphanage, Clontarf and Bindoon (Coldrey, 1993).

The *Lost Innocents: Righting the record: Report on Child Migration* (Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee, 2001) identified the plight of the child migrants during their time in care in Australia. It is now acknowledged that many of these children suffered at the hands of the agencies who were supposed to protect them. Subsequent to this investigation, millions of dollars have been paid out in compensation to child migrants because of systematic failings of the institutions to provide a safe environment and a failure to educate the children and prepare them for their eventual lives outside the homes.

This study stemmed from my personal interest in the subject. My mother was among the first group of child migrants who arrived in September 1947 on the SS Asturias. Growing up with my mother's stories and surrounded by other female child migrants throughout my life, I was curious about the experiences of these women within the confines of an institution and wanted their voices to be heard in the context of Western Australia's social history.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to focus on how a group of eight Female Child Migrants responded to their institutionalisation in a Catholic run orphanage in Western Australia in the years after World War II. I wanted to explore how the women in the study interpreted their social and educational experiences, within the confines of the orphanage; and what effects those experiences had upon the preparation of the women for their social and economic roles outside the orphanage. My assumption in this study was that meaning is constructed and, although dealing with the same phenomenon, different people may construct meaning in different ways depending on their interactions (Blumer, 1962; Charon, 2007). The meaning made from these interactions then influences how the actors present themselves to others, in turn influencing how others interact with them (Goffman, 1959).

Significance of the Study

In this study I collected and described information about the lived experience of eight women who were former child migrants who resided in a Catholic orphanage in Western Australia. The study builds an understanding of what it meant to spend a significant part of their lives in a total institution and how this experience shaped their sense of identity and impacted upon the educational, economic and social choices available to the women. It was my hope that this study would add to the discourse on the impact of long-term institutionalisation on the social and educational outcomes of the individual.

This study adds to the discussion of the influence of primary and reference groups in the formation of an individual's self-perception, and the need for an individual to access a variety of social experiences and interactions, in order to

acquire adequate and relevant social understanding and social skills. Through achievement of cultural or social competence, the individual, according to Bourdieu (1986), attains conventional, constant, and legally guaranteed value with respect to culture.

Educational Significance

According to Bourdieu and Passeron (1990), economic obstacles alone are not sufficient to explain the difference in the education attainment of children from different social classes. They maintain that if individuals are to succeed within the family, the school and society, then social investment in people by society to inculcate cultural habits and dispositions is necessary (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, p. 14). Thus, for children to evaluate themselves in relation to the wider community, it is necessary that they be given opportunities to test and assess themselves in a range of social and educational situations.

As schools and teachers are increasingly tasked with the responsibility of helping to socialise children and to provide many of them with the social skills needed to negotiate society successfully, it is hoped that this study highlights the importance of a variety of social and educational experiences in helping children to achieve social competency.

Research Questions

1. How are the day-to-day experiences of life in the orphanage remembered by Female Child Migrants?
2. How have these remembered experiences impacted upon the self – perception of these Female Child Migrants?
3. What are the implications of this new knowledge on policy and practice for the education of children in institutions?

Overview of Chapters

This study has eleven chapters. Chapter one is the introductory chapter that presents the aims and significance of the study and proposes the research questions. It presents a background to the thesis and locates it in a historical context. Chapter two presents a critical literature review of relevant literature

and data sources that were consulted over the course of the research. Located in this chapter is a review of child migration in Australia, the role of the Catholic Church in child welfare and the Child Migration Scheme. An explanation of the theoretical perspective that underpins the study is presented, as are the social theories that guided the study. Chapter three provides a description and discussion of the methodology and research design used in the study. Chapters four to seven draw upon the data to examine the lives and experiences of the Female Child Migrants within the United Kingdom and in Western Australia. Chapters eight to ten identify and discuss key findings from the data and focus upon the issues of control, punishment, institutionalisation and identity. Chapter eleven reviews the study, identifies the key findings and proposes recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The available literature on the experiences of female child migrants in Western Australia in the period 1947-1955 is minimal. There is however, a wide range of literature pertaining to child migrants, within the history of White Australia. These resources offer an insight into the experiences of the child migrants and into the philosophies and attitudes of the times, which ultimately dictated welfare policy.

In the existing literature the language and ideas describing various government policies and child migrant experiences often vary according to the historical period in which the policies were conceived, and the backgrounds, personal philosophies and the religious beliefs held by the authors. The voice of the female child migrant, however, has not been given space to be heard.

Child Migrant History

Australia can trace its involvement in the transportation of children and their subsequent care back to the social attitudes and policies of Britain. The beginning of the practice of child transportation by the British began in 1618, when one hundred pauper boys were sent to Virginia, America, to work on the cotton and tobacco plantations (Gill, 1998). This experiment of sending so-called or apparently unwanted children to the colonies not only proved successful in providing much needed labour for the empire's industries, but it also served as a way for Britain to reduce the poor population that was overcrowding the cities of England (Gill, 1998).

According to Holden (1999), the procedure for choosing and sending children to other countries for work, prior to 1718, was an arbitrary arrangement between officials and industry. This informal arrangement was, however, replaced with *The Transportation Act of 1718* (UK). The legislation set the framework for the complex and institutionalised process of sending children around the globe and became a firmly entrenched procedure.

Since the arrival of the British settlers in 1788, non-indigenous Australia has had a long history of exploitation of child migrants. Government authorities have been responsible for relocating relevant demographic groups in order to expand, develop and maintain their interests. The first group of child migrants to arrive in Australia was in 1788. This group was examined by Holden (1999), who asserts that this was a period when children were a labour commodity for the wealthy, a burden for the poor and, when they turned to crime for survival, a burden for the authorities.

Convict children continued to arrive throughout the colonies until 1849, when the last group of boys from Parkhurst Prison in England arrived in the Swan River Colony, now Western Australia (Wagner, 1982). During the 1830s Britain began sending out free children to Australia sponsored by the Children's Friends Society based in London (Gill, 1998). Between the years of 1834 and 1842, seventy one children arrived in Perth and, according to Gill (1998), the welfare agency sending the children asked that the colonists treat the children with respect and place special emphasis on their cleanliness and happiness and particularly their religious and moral welfare.

In the 1850s, in an effort to increase the number of women in Australia, the British government sent girls from the English, Scottish and Irish workhouses to address the imbalance in the male to female ratio (Gothard, 2001). The convents of Ireland were overcrowded with famine orphans, and arranged with the Catholic Church and the British Government to relieve the orphans' plight through transportation to Australia (Hardwick, 2000).

The transportation of children to the colonies was not simply based upon the need for labourers and to increase the population of the recipient country, although these are clearly the reasons for the influx of child migrants into the Australia during the post war era (Child Migration History, 2010). The desire to help poor children in the United Kingdom to have better opportunities in life than those that awaited them in their own country underpinned the notions of many of the child welfare agencies. According to Wagner (1982) benevolent figures, such as Thomas Barnardo, Kingsley Fairbridge and Annie McPherson, believed that the physical and moral wellbeing of street children in Britain was

at risk and that life and work in the colonies would benefit both the children and the countries to which they were sent. Barnardo, Fairbridge and McPherson were enthusiastic supporters of the child migration programme and were instrumental in sending children to Australia, Canada and South Africa. They received generous financial support from the philanthropists of London who agreed that emigration was an excellent way for the poor to better themselves (Wagner, 1982).

There was, however, some opposition to the transportation of children to the colonies. Wagner (1982) reveals that Andrew Doyle, a civil servant working in London for the Poor Law, conducted an inquiry into the placement of children in Canada. Doyle's report was made in 1875 and concluded that the system of placing children with families to work as domestics and labourers, often in remote locations, was a cruel and unjust system, and, that the philosophy of the scheme itself was flawed. He argued that the United Kingdom was more than capable of training pauper children for jobs. Such opposition, however, appears not to have been widespread and did not deter the practice of sending children away from the United Kingdom to Australia. The practice of sending children to Australia continued, according to Rosser (2002), almost unabated, with the exception of the years during WWII and the Great Depression, until the early 1970s.

Child Welfare

According to Liddell (2008) and Rosser (2002), the institutions in Australia that have accommodated female child migrants from 1788 have ranged from 'female factories' to children's homes, group homes, foster families and adoptions. In the early years of the Australian colonies, single female child migrants were allocated to holding institutions prior to being sent to work in private households. Unmarried women who were awaiting the birth of their children and women awaiting punishment from the law also resided in the factories. They were called factories because the women were expected to work there while awaiting their fate.

The conditions endured by children in the early days of Australia's white history were harsh by today's standards. While it may have reflected the times,

it is suggested by Fogarty (2008) that the authorities were aware that many children were forced to endure cruel living conditions that had resulted from abject poverty and neglect, and responded by placing children into orphanages and institutions run by private and religious organisations. This practice proved disastrous, as the care of the children within these institutions was deplorable and, according to Fogarty (2008), public outcry at the shocking conditions in the institutions eventually saw their demise. The use of institutions for child-care, however, re-emerged in the 1920s and again in the 1950s until they were eventually closed in the 1970s.

The authorities throughout most of Australia's child welfare history have asserted that the safety and interests of children, where at risk, should primarily be a concern of religious bodies and ordinary people. As a result of this philosophy, government involvement in the welfare and treatment of 'at risk' children was minimal (Rosser, 2002). This is also confirmed by Fogarty (2008), who explained that the care of children before federation was considered the responsibility of the colonies which, in turn, while concerned for the wellbeing of children, relied heavily upon private child protection societies much like those in England and the United States to care for needy children. This ultimately led to different legislation within the different states and colonies when it came to dealing with the welfare of children.

Historically, it seems that Australia has been aware that the institutionalisation of children was, and appears to remain, detrimental to the physical, emotional and social development of children. Penglase (2007) points to the 1873-74 Royal Commission which concluded that the more children were separated from day to day life of the wider society the more difficult they would find the outside world, when they eventually left the institution. She goes on to explain that 19th century Australia understood the shortcomings of the institutional system and embraced a policy of 'boarding out' or fostering children. This boarding out system seems to have been very successful but, due to economic considerations during the depression and World War 1, many states reverted to the institutional system as there was an increase in the number of children needing care.

While this might be the case, the Doyle Report (Wagner, 1982) claims that the boarding out of children to families in Canada was a dismal failure. Children were reported to have been treated harshly and in many cases endured abuse and brutality. There are any number of stories regarding the abuse of children in family foster care within Australia and it seems that neither system was an ideal place for many children to live (Penglase, 2007; Humphreys, 1994; Hill, 2007). The fact remains however, that there were many needy children and they had to be placed somewhere.

A change in attitude toward the notion of child welfare began to be evident after World War II. The Care of Children Committee, under the chairmanship of Dame Myra Curtis, tabled its report in Britain in 1946, recommending that children be placed into group home situations with boys and girls being placed together in numbers no larger than twelve (Curtis, 1946). It was also recommended that siblings should remain together and all children should attend local schools. The report recommended that children be part of a stable homely environment where the child's self esteem could be nurtured through understanding, affection, and respect for their personalities. This report was highly influential in Britain and the UK government broadly implemented the recommendations (Brill, 1991). It seems, however, that Australia lagged behind in implementing the recommendations and it wasn't until the 1970s that Australia did away with large institutions altogether (Rosser, 2002).

Child Welfare and the Catholic Church

The Catholic Church has a long history of looking after disadvantaged children in Australia with the first Catholic orphanage being opened in 1836 in New South Wales by Bishop Polding. Although Polding initiated and set in place the institution, the Sisters of the Good Shepherd managed the day to day operations. This structural foundation was subsequently mirrored by various convent orders throughout the colonies of Australia and this arrangement appears to have continued into the 1930s. The Sisters from various Catholic orders operated the majority of Catholic orphanages during this time, with the exception of a few orphanages, specifically for boys, which were operated by priests and brothers (Catholic Welfare Association, 2003).

According to McMahon (cited in Gleeson, 2006) the historical role of the Catholic Church in the area of child welfare has not been fully explored and as a result much of the contribution by the Church in this area is unknown. This lack of historical information may be due to the focus of historians on the political rather than the social issues in which the Catholic Church was involved (Gleeson, 2006).

According to Gleeson (2006), until the 1970s Catholic orphanages favoured a child-care system based around the large dormitory style institution. He suggests that this system appeared to be out of step with the wider welfare practices of the time that favoured small family type housing arrangements. The reason for this failure to keep up with changing welfare practices appears to have had its roots in the 1930s, when welfare practices in the wider sectarian community began to be professionalised with the advent of the social worker (Gleeson, 2006). Concerned by secular welfare programmes which encouraged children to be boarded out with families, the Catholic Church was concerned that Catholic children were being housed with Protestant families and were in danger of losing their religion. In response to this practice, and to a system that was seen by the church as a threat to Catholicism by secular groups, the church resorted to large institutions in which to house the needy Catholic children. This put the church at odds with government welfare practices and subsequently the limited government funding was channelled into secular programmes (Gleeson, 2006). This ultimately led to the Catholic welfare system becoming an autonomous sector that set its own standards for the care and education of the children in individual institutions (Fox, cited in Gleeson, 2006).

The establishment in the 1930s of the Catholic Family Welfare Bureau, now known as Centrecare, began a process of reform in child welfare practices in the Catholic Church (Catholic Welfare Association, 2003). However, during the post war period, upon which this study focuses, the introduction of progressive child welfare practices was in its early stages and the restructuring of childcare policy and systems had not yet been implemented in all Catholic institutions. In the case of St Joseph's Orphanage in Subiaco, Perth, the out-

dated large dormitory style institution was still being implemented by the Sisters of Mercy until the 1970s (Pushing & Heinrichs, 2008).

Post War Child Migrants

In 1944, the Australian government, with bipartisan parliamentary support, announced a scheme that would allow for the immigration of 50,000 'war orphans' into Australia (Gill, 1998). The war orphans were to be sourced from a variety of institutions throughout England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. It is now accepted that the word 'orphan' really referred to an institutionalised child from the United Kingdom. Investigations into the former child migrants make it clear that many of them had parents and/or siblings and extended families in their own countries. A large proportion of the children were not orphans, but victims of a family breakdown. Some were illegitimate children who had been placed in the homes on the understanding they would be fostered or adopted out to families (Bean & Melville, 1989).

The Children Act 1948 (UK) paved the way for British children to be taken from the United Kingdom to Australia in the post World War II period. Under the *Immigration Restriction Act 1946* (Cth) legal guardianship of the children in Australia was vested in the Minister of the Interior. The children remained under the guardianship of the Minister until the age of 21. Under the Act, the Immigration Minister was the legal guardian, but was able to delegate his power to the individual state governments.

Initially, the Australian government had planned to bring 50,000 migrant children to Australia at a rate of approximately 17,000 children a year over a three period. This never eventuated, as it was soon realised by the Catholic Church, and other agencies such as the Salvation Army and the Fairbridge Society, that due to a number of legal and social reasons the number of available children was not as great as they had first thought (Coldrey, 1993). In fact, the number of children who eventually came to Australia under the scheme was reported to be between 7,000 and 10,000 (*Child Migration History, 2010*).

It is clear from the literature that the reasons children were being sent from Britain to Australia were to increase the post war population of Australia

and to meet the future labour needs of the country. Because the notion of child migration was well ingrained in Australia's history, there was little opposition to such a scheme. In fact it was touted by the government as the saviour to Australia's population issues and embraced by most parts of the community (Gill, 1998).

One of the few voices of opposition at the time came from John Pittard, Director of the Child Welfare Department in Victoria. According to records from the Australian Archives (A446, 1960/66717), Pittard opposed the policy of bringing 50,000 child migrants to Australia. He saw many practical problems in its implementation and cited cases where British child migrants, such as those who arrived in Australia under the pre World War II Fairbridge farm school scheme, later bitterly resented the fact that they had been sent to Australia in a more or less compulsory manner. However, his opposition to the plan was ignored, as the government, with support from the opposition and the major welfare organisations, implemented the policy and began the task of transporting the children to Australia.

The government of the day saw the scheme as the cornerstone of their immigration policy and, according to Coldrey (1993), the Minister for Immigration planned for voluntary groups such as the Catholic Church, The Fairbridge Society, the Salvation Army and Barnardo's to be heavily involved. In fact, reliance on these groups to provide institutional care for all child migrants would be necessary, as the Commonwealth Government did not favour the practice of private adoptions for child migrants. It was considered by the government that the confusion and dislocation caused by six years of warfare (A461, A349/1/7 part 2) might result in future legal problems.

While it appears to be presumptuous of the government to assume that these private and religious agencies would bear the numbers of the government scheme, historically, the welfare of children had been the domain of these agencies and the government had contributed funding for the upkeep of the children. This arrangement looked set to continue, but with the states being allocated the responsibility of the administration of funding on behalf of the

federal government. The state governments would also be responsible for the overseeing of the welfare of the children.

One of the major organisations involved in the care of the child migrants was the Catholic Church (Gill, 1998). Buti (2002), confirms the notion that the Church was supportive of the policy, as it wanted to increase the numbers of its members in Australia. According to Buti (2002) and Gill (1998), it is around the period 1947 to 1950 that the Catholic Church became more involved with the Child Migrant Scheme, as it was concerned that the Barnardo's and Fairbridge organisations were encouraging too many Protestants to come to Australia. As a result of this concern, the Catholic Church made available more places for child migrants. Gill (1998) reports that the Catholic Archbishop, Justin Simonds, and Christian Brother, Brother Conlon, were enthusiastic advocates of child migration to Australia. In an effort to increase the Catholic numbers in Australia, the two men drew up a comprehensive plan for child migration that they presented to the Archbishop of Westminster in England. Brother Conlon (Conlon personal correspondence, 1940) wrote to Archbishop Prindiville of Perth encouraging him to apply to the British government for 500 child migrants, 200 girls and 300 boys, to be sent to St. Joseph's Orphanage and Bindoon in Western Australia.

Gill (1998), Humphreys (1994) and Hill (2007) also suggest that the church would gain valuable building grants from the government to help house the migrant children and that this was an influencing factor in its eagerness to embrace the idea of child migration. Buti (2002) points out that the British government would fund these migrants and that the church could make more money from looking after the child migrants than from just looking after state boys. In archival material held by the Christian Brothers in WA, Brother Conlon, (Conlon, personal communication, November 21, 1940) reported that he insisted Perth take extra children, and makes reference to the money that would be gained from the payments by both the Australian and British governments for the upkeep of the child migrants. This may indicate that financial gain was also a contributing factor in the Church's enthusiasm to provide placements for child migrants.

Under the *Immigration Restriction Act 1946* (Cth) the Minister for Immigration was able to assign state governments the responsibility for the welfare of the child migrants and for holding to account the institutions in which the children were placed (Gill, 1998). Given that each state government had separate laws and guidelines for the welfare of children, it was always going to be difficult for the federal government to demand or expect a uniform approach to the care of children. Although the Federal and British governments contributed to the upkeep of the children and funding differed from state to state, the states and their agencies were required to make up any shortfalls. There does appear to be some evidence that the money allocated to child-care agencies at this time was not enough to meet the needs of the children. Coldrey (1993) argues that the amount of money given for the upkeep of the children barely covered costs.

It is, however, not always clear where and how the money was spent. The feeling, from anecdotal evidence from former institutional residents from around Australia, would suggest that available funds were not always distributed fairly and that the basic needs of child migrants were not always being met. A former inmate interviewed by Penglase (2007), for example remembers watching the staff having chicken, meat, bacon, eggs and toast with real butter while the children had porridge or leftovers from the night before. The child migrants living at the Fairbridge Farm at Molong in NSW, interviewed by Hill (2007), remember not having shoes to wear in the winter, having cold showers and being provided with little heating during the cold weather.

Gill (1998) asserts that an environment of sub-standard care and abuse pervaded the institutions housing the child migrants and recorded the experiences of those children, as adults, in regard to their institutionalised care in Australia. Stories of poor food, gruelling work regimes, sexual and physical abuse and a lack of educational instruction were at the heart of many stories. Gill's account of the experiences of child migrants, however, was in contrast to Coldrey (1993), of the Christian Brothers, who investigated allegations of abuse in the Catholic institutions. While acknowledging some abuse and inadequate care, he argues that the government-run orphanages and Protestant orphanages

were better resourced than the Catholic institutions. As a result, the latter could neither attract specialist teachers, cooks, and builders and as a result the children were at the time acceptably used as labour. It is not clear how many child migrants Coldrey interviewed. The three examples of former inmates he cites speak of their institutionalised time as happy and, although hard, they feel fortunate for their time in the institution in which they lived (Coldrey, 1993).

Coldrey's investigation, however, drew scathing criticism from Humphreys (1994), who thought it an unbalanced and biased research paper. Humphreys, a Nottingham social worker who brought the practice of child migration to the notice of the public with her book *Empty Cradles* (1994), also writes about the treatment of child migrants in Australia and paints a very different picture about life in the Catholic institutions. Many of Humphrey's (1994), Hill's (2007) and Gill's (1998) interviews with the former child migrants have reflected similar themes of physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect, which knew no religious, nor state, nor gender boundaries. While they write that the abuse was widespread and endemic, Coldrey (1993) differs: he argues that for the vast majority of children it was a hard but fair existence.

Hill (2007), a former resident of Molong (a Fairbridge orphanage in New South Wales), describes his time there as physically and emotionally challenging and gives an insight into the harsh practices of institutional life. He draws not only on personal experience but also documents the experiences of other children at the home, and their stories are similar to those interviewed by Humphreys (1994) and Gill (1998).

Female Child Migrants

There is some debate in the literature about the number of child migrants who arrived in post war Australia with various organisations' figures ranging between 3,000 and 10,000. What is known, however, is that girls were in the minority (Child Migrant Trust, 2010). The numerical imbalance could be due to economical and sociological reasons but it does appear that girls were easier to foster and easier to employ and, as a result of such arrangements being in place in the United Kingdom, fewer girls were available for immigration (Gill, 1998).

While the public is now well acquainted with the experiences of the male child migrants through the reports and investigations of the Christian Brothers, and through publications, media reports and films, comparatively little is known of the female child migrants who were in care at the same time. It appears that, because females comprised such a small part of the child migrant numbers, their stories and experiences have not been fully investigated or recorded in detail. With the exception of the *Lost Innocents Report* (2001), most of the documentation and studies of child migrants have focussed on the male child migrant and especially those who attended Bindoon boys home in Western Australia. Any in-depth studies of the stories and experiences of female child migrants appear to be limited to the writings of Humphreys (1994), Gill (1998) and Penglase (2007).

Glimpses into the lives and experiences of the female child migrants can be found in the investigations done by Gill (2003) about female child migrants who were used as laundry workers in the eastern states of Australia. His book *Orphans of the Empire* (1998) also provides a few insights into the experiences of female child migrants, but only one story is from Western Australia.

Over the last ten years, however, the Federal and some State governments have provided opportunities for former child migrants to have their stories officially recognised. In 2007 the Western Australian, Queensland and Tasmanian state governments passed legislation that would compensate child migrants for their time in care in those states. This legislation is commonly referred to as the 'Redress Schemes' (Senate Community Affairs References Committee, 2001) and provides former child migrants with the opportunity to have their stories and experiences recorded, although these are not necessarily for public perusal. The National Library has also embarked upon the Forgotten Children project in which people who were in institutional care, including child migrants, are recording their stories. To date, however, only one female child migrant, Budd (2010), has completed the interview process.

Catholic Institutions.

Of the female migrants who were sent out to Australia many found themselves in the care of the Sisters of Mercy in various orphanages throughout Australia. Anecdotal evidence from Gill (1998), Penglase (2007) and Bean and Melville (1989) indicates that many of the inmates remembered these orphanages as being hard places to live, while others were more philosophical about their time in care. Goodwood Orphanage in South Australia and St Joseph's at Neerkol in Queensland were both Catholic institutions that had reputations for being tough and brutal environments for the children who resided there (Bean & Melville, 1989). Glenis Kenward (cited in Gill, 1998, p.273) remembers that

It was pretty hard really, but I suppose not too bad...if you toed the line you were alright.

The experiences of the child migrants in the Australian Mercy run institutions appear to mirror the findings of the Ryan Report (2009) that investigated the abuse of children in care in Ireland. It found that there was systematic abuse against children in the care of the Sisters of Mercy and this abuse appears to have also been endemic in Australian orphanages run by the same order.

According to Gill (1998), a lesser-known institution, but arguably as harsh as Goodwood and Neerkol, was St Joseph's Orphanage in Subiaco, Western Australia, run by the Sisters of Mercy. Gill (1998) reports that St Joseph's was a tough institution that was the female equivalent to Bindoon, the infamous Christian Brothers orphanage north of Perth in Western Australia.

It was to St Joseph's Orphanage that the first batch of female child migrants to Western Australia was sent in 1947. The first group of girls were from England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales and arrived in September of that year. Another two groups quickly followed them and arrived in October and December of the same year.

While the Christian Brothers commissioned Coldrey (1993) to investigate the Child Migrant Scheme and its problems within the Christian Brothers institutions, there does not appear to be an extensive investigation of the same intensity on female child migrants at St Joseph's. Sue Graham-Taylor's report *Child migration and St Joseph's Orphanage* (1994) is an interesting and informative piece of work which documents the processes and programmes of the institution but it stops short of critically analysing any institutional shortcomings. This may be related to the lack of surviving records for this period.

A recommendation in the Graham-Taylor report (1994) suggests that the Sisters of Mercy examine more closely this period of their history. It appears that an attempt has been made to rectify this shortcoming with oral interviews being conducted with some of the sisters who worked at the orphanage during this era. Two of these interviews are located in the Mercy Archives; those of the two late sisters, both of whom worked at St Joseph's Orphanage for many years, including the period in which the women in this study were residents.

In their interviews both women remember the migrant girls with affection and recall their concern about the trauma the girls had experienced in war torn Britain. They both give a good insight into the day to day running of the orphanage, but these memories and observations were certainly from the point of view of the staff that had the task of running and maintaining the institution. They paint a picture of a well-run orphanage where the care and welfare of the children was the main consideration.

It is clear from the interviews that the sisters were unaware or unwilling to talk about any notions of abuse or brutality that may have occurred with the exception of one comment where it was mentioned that one particular nun was 'severe' with the girls. A Mercy Sister conducted the interviews and that is likely to have influenced both the questions asked and the answers provided. However, to what extent will never be known as both women are now deceased.

A wider, and perhaps more objective, source of information about the female child migrants is found in the government papers. The Australian National Archives (1949) hold records of the inspections of Saint Joseph's

Orphanage. There are also papers in The State Records Office of Western Australia and the Mercy Archives that give some insight into the children themselves, in terms of their health, their educational and work progress.

Under the *Immigration Restriction Act 1946* (Cth), the Immigration Minister was responsible for the child migrants arriving in Australia under the Child Migrant Scheme between 1947 and 1967. This responsibility was then delegated to the respective state governments, who were charged with the responsibility of monitoring the standard of care given to the migrant children. The private and religious agencies that cared for these migrant children were, in turn, responsible for maintaining the welfare of the children to standards set down by the respective governments in the state in which the agencies were located. Because the welfare of the children was a state responsibility, different standards applied throughout Australia. Each state had its own policies and its own legislation and practices. The one thing they did have in common was the reluctance to provide the necessary infrastructure needed for the children, instead preferring to leave it to the private charitable organisations (Penglase, 2007). Historically, the welfare of children in Australia had always been the domain of the religious and charitable organisations and this was to continue in the post war years throughout the country. Both child migrants and state wards would continue to be cared for under this system.

The monitoring of institutions by governments and or welfare agencies appears to have been constrained in its effectiveness for reasons not fully understood. Inspectors reported incidences of abuse and neglect at Bindoon and Clontarf, under the charge of the Christian Brothers, but, for unknown political reasons, these reports did not appear to be acted upon. It is also unclear why reports of sexual and physical abuse made to police were similarly not investigated (Gill, 1998). This is not to suggest that the inspectors were negligent in their duties in reporting their concerns. There is ample evidence from former child migrants who recall the authorities visiting and there is archival material citing official visits and investigative reports completed by government agencies. With respect to St Joseph's Orphanage in Western Australia, it appears that regular inspections were carried out by Department of

Public Service. For the most part these inspections did not involve interviewing the children without the presence of the nuns. Patterson (cited in Gill, 1998, p 291) claimed that welfare officers visited the orphanage once a week. It is clear that inspections did occur but evidence to back up Patterson's claim of weekly visits has not been found by me.

Theoretical Research

A qualitative methodology was chosen for this study of a group of institutionalised women. Qualitative research allows for social inquiry and enables the researcher to understand and interpret the reasons for social action, the way people construct and make meaning of their lives, and it allows a view into the social context of the social actions (Sarantakos, 2005). It also allows for the participants in the study to give an account of their experiences in their own voice and to be active 'co-creators,' thus empowering them in the research process (Klenke, 2008). Qualitative researchers are able to study their subjects in their natural settings and to "interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings that people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p 1). Klenke (2008) proposes that qualitative research is usually inductive, undertaken in a natural setting, is flexible in its design and employs purposive or theoretical sampling. She goes on to suggest that at the heart of qualitative research is the authentic voice of the informant that must be represented. Sarantakos (2005) proposes that humans occupy the heart of the research because they are active creators of their world. People construct and make sense of their world by assigning meaning to the interactions they experience. Those experiences are shaped by a variety of cultural, historical and social influences as well as societal systems and practices. Klenke (2008) suggests that qualitative researchers emphasise a relativist ontology that posits that individuals from within their own contextual interpretation construct multiple realities. Sarantakos (2005) also suggests that people construct reality through the interpretation of their experiences that are historically situated and culturally defined.

Theoretical Framework

According to Cresswell (1998, p. 74)

Qualitative researchers approach their studies with a certain paradigm or world-view, a basic set of assumptions that guide their inquiries.

To allow the voices of the female child migrants to be heard, and to understand their interpreted experiences, this study is situated in an interpretivist epistemology using a theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism and constructionism.

Interpretivism

Interpretivism is a school of thought that focuses on the importance of interpretations and observation in understanding the social world. It proposes that phenomena should be examined as a whole and that there are multiple realities that can differ across time and place, and those multiple realities need to be understood in context (Neill, 2006).

Interpretivism maintains that the study of the use of language and symbols that people use to construct meaning is necessary to describe the social world (Klenke, 2008). Guba and Lincoln (1985) also suggest that the social world cannot be described without investigating how people use language and symbols and meaning to construct social practice. However, Guba and Lincoln (1985) maintain that multiple meanings are difficult to interpret as those meanings depend on other systems for meaning. Therefore, it is important for the researcher to understand the subjective experiences of participants in context (Hudson & Ozanne, 1998). According to Schwandt (2000), to understand a particular social action such as friendship or marriage, the inquirer must grasp the meanings that constitute the action. To find meaning in that action will depend on the context of the action.

Interpretivism and constructivism are related approaches to research that are characteristic of particular philosophical worldviews. Proponents of these perspectives share the goal of understanding the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it (Schwandt, 2000).

Constructivism

Constructivism is a theory with epistemological elements based on specific assumptions about reality, knowledge and learning. A general understanding of constructivism, according to Spivey (1997), is that the individual's mind is active in the making and structuring of knowledge. Beaumie (2001) suggests that the basic tenet of constructivism is that reality is constructed through human activity; knowledge is constructed through interactions with others and within the environment and that learning occurs when individuals are engaged in social activities. It also considers how the broader society, through institutions and belief systems, contribute to the construction of 'self' and that truth or meaning comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities of the world (Crotty, 1998). Constructivism aims to interpret and understand social life and to discover people's meanings (Sarantakos, 2005). It also develops an understanding of how the institutional processes in the wider society, at different times and in different places, help shape the construction of the self. Constructivism theory particularly informed the examination of identity and the acquisition of social capital identified in this study, by examining the religious belief systems, wider institutional practices and the social activities experienced by the female child migrants.

Symbolic Interactionism

Another interpretivist perspective that builds on constructivism is symbolic interaction. Symbolic interaction focuses on how meanings are produced by agents through the interactions they have with symbols (Klenke, 2008). Symbolic interactionism theory was primarily influenced by the writings of George Herbert Mead in the early 1900s (Vold, Bernard, & Snipes, 2002) and elaborated by Blumer (1962). It considers that people learn about their environment through symbolic interaction with others; and that through the sharing of language, objects or actions, people communicate or represent something to others, and through this individuals are socialised (Charon, 2007). Ritzer (2007) agrees that symbolic interaction theory focuses on the way people interact through words, actions and objects.

At the heart of symbolic interaction is the concept of 'self' (Goffman, 1959). Goffman identified how the socially constructed 'self' is actively involved in defining and managing social situations. He argued that when we display our 'self' we not only reveal information about ourselves but we also control the information about who and what we are. These displays also reveal to others what they can expect from us in certain circumstances. Our identities, then, are negotiated during social interaction. These interactions between individuals, and the presentation of 'self' within those interactions, establish meaning and make judgements about class and social status. Meanings are derived through continuous interpretive processes, which follow from social interaction. People don't just internalise the meanings from the interactions, they can modify those interactions by the way they internalise them (Blumer, 1969).

Ritzer (2007, p. 133) explains that symbolic interaction asserts that people become human through social interaction, especially in the early years of life. The process of socialisation typically begins in the primary group, usually the family group. In contemporary society this is rapidly followed and complemented by socialisation within a formal educational framework and other secondary groups and influences such as peer groups, teachers and the media. According to Ritzer (2007, p. 134) the primary and other reference groups in a child's life are the environments where their self-perception is formed and validated and where values and rules are usually acquired. It is during these formative stages of a child's development that individuals are shaped by their identification with prime caregivers and teachers in particular. It is the interaction within and between these groups that enable children to acquire and refine essential skills needed to interact and participate successfully within society. Over time, according to Sarantakos (2005, p. 44), the continuous process of socialisation, through the use of symbols, language and interactions, leads to the endorsement of societal norms, which then become an individual's core values and reflect those propagated by the social group to whom one belongs.

Summary

The literature review was intended to provide meaningful insight into the historical practices of child migration to Australia, and the factors leading up to the relocation of thousands of children to Australia from the United Kingdom in the post war period. It provided an understanding of the roles that the private and religious organisations played in the care of child migrants and the subsequent issues that have arisen as a result of the experiences of the child migrants. Generally speaking the existing literature has yielded a great deal of information about the child migrants as a group, but it appears that the vast majority of literature specific to child migrants has focussed upon the experiences of male child migrants. Stories of the experiences of the female child migrants are only now beginning to emerge in larger quantities and it is hoped that this study will add to the that number. This chapter also provided the theoretical framework in which the study is situated. Both symbolic interactionism and constructivism focus on human interaction and are interpretivist approaches. The methodologies are similar in that they rely on interviewing and observing people in their own environments (Charon, 2007). By using this theoretical framework it is possible to explore how and why actions and behaviours shape, constrain and sustain selfhood (Snyder, 2006).

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of selected female child migrants who were sent to Australia under the British Child Migrant Scheme. This was a qualitative study informed by interpretivist epistemological theory and guided by two theoretical frameworks: symbolic interaction and constructivism. In addition, data analysis was informed by relevant grounded theory techniques. The study was designed to identify and explore how the social constructs of society of the time, and the women's experiences in the institution, impacted upon their lives during and after their time at the orphanage. The use of interview techniques, documents and archival material allowed me to investigate significant issues that would help answer the following research questions.

1. How are the day to day experiences of life in the orphanage remembered by female child migrants?
2. How have these remembered experiences impacted upon the self – perception of these Female Child Migrants?
3. What implications of this new knowledge on policy and practice for the education of children in institutions?

Research Design

A qualitative methodology situated in an interpretivist epistemology using theories of symbolic interaction and constructivism was necessary, as both theories aim to interpret and understand social life and to discover people's meanings (Sarantakos, 2005). As a qualitative researcher, my intention was to explore the construction of the social reality interpreted by the women in the study. To do this I needed to see the social world from the point of view of the actor, which an interpretivist paradigm allowed me to do.

People construct meaning and make sense of their world by assigning meaning to the interactions they experience. The interpretation of the meanings

of interactions develops the 'self' which, according to Elliot (2008, p. 26), is the agency through which individuals experience themselves in relation to others, but is also an object or fact dealt with by its individual owner as he or she sees fit. Those experiences and interactions are shaped by a variety of cultural, historical and social influences, thus the qualitative methodology which assumes that there are multiple realities and that the world is experienced subjectively and is in need of interpreting rather than measuring (Merriam, 1998), is suited for this study. Qualitative methodology also allows for flexibility in design (Sarantakos, 2005), and this has made it possible to be open and reflexive which enabled me to make changes to my preliminary design and to focus on subjects and issues discovered during the research. The inductive approach used in qualitative research also allows for the focus on specific situations or people and has emphasis on words rather than numbers (Maxwell, 2005).

There is a variety of methodological approaches in the qualitative paradigm but the assumption that underlines all these approaches is the notion that reality is subjective and that researchers and participants co-create knowledge (Klenke, 2008). Given that assumption, the research methods associated with constructivism and symbolic interactions, provide the tools to elicit in-depth information and knowledge of the complex factors that influenced the lives of the women in this study.

Collection and triangulation of data in this study was achieved through tape-recorded interviews with eight female child migrants, the examination of documents and literature, and the exploration of archival material. Before interviewing the women it was necessary to have a sound understanding of the history of the child migrants in Western Australia and of St Joseph's Orphanage. In order to do this I accessed archival material from the Catholic Church, the Sisters of Mercy and the State and National Archives. Arrangements for visiting the Catholic and Mercy Archives, while not too difficult to arrange, was somewhat stymied by limited reading time and restricted access to many relevant documents. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) argue that the obstacles to access can help understand the social setting and in this case, given that there

was and remains ongoing legal investigations into the Catholic Church, my research into the Catholic orphanage may have been viewed with some apprehension. However, the information retrieved from all the Catholic and Mercy Archives was invaluable and provided a great deal of insight into the day to day running of the institution, as did the information gleaned from the State and National Archives. The most valuable data obtained in this study was from the women themselves. I conducted a series of individual interviews that lasted between one to three hours with each participant. All interviews were conducted in the women's homes and subsequent communications were made in person, by phone or email.

This study also drew upon grounded theory techniques for coding and categorising significant themes in the generated data. Grounded theory may be defined as "the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 2). It emerged as a research method to study social processes in context. According to Milliken and Schreiber (2012, p. 685), "the ontological, epistemological, method and techniques of Grounded Theory is steeped in Symbolic Interaction and as such the two cannot be divorced." Symbolic interactionism, according to Milliken and Schreiber (2012), is a worldview that provides a philosophical underpinning to grounded theory and provides a window through which the researcher can think and view the phenomena under study, thus enabling the researcher to expand the breadth of theoretical codes available. As Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 24) put it: "By comparing where the facts are similar or different, we can generate properties of categories that increase the categories' generality and explanatory power." As grounded theory allows for the exploration of integral social relationships and the contextual factors that affect the lives and behaviour of individuals and groups (Crooks, 2001), the use of grounded theory coding techniques in a symbolic interactionism theoretical framework was appropriate.

Participants

Finding potential participants was a relatively easy process. As the daughter of a female child migrant I was a member of the 'orphanage family' and this connection was significant in being able to set up interviews with the

women. I knew three of the participants in the study on a personal level and initial contacts about conducting interviews were made informally at social gatherings. When each was approached they were happy to oblige me. These 'Aunties' were also able to use their contacts to put me in touch with other women from the institutional cohort and these strangers (to me), on the word of the Aunties, allowed me into their lives. I followed up five contacts with phone calls and explained the purpose of my study and arranged interview times. I was also invited to the child migrants' annual picnic and was approached by two women who asked to be interviewed. I agreed but after the interviews had been recorded and a copy of the interviews given to the women, they both chose to withdraw from the study.

During the interviews the women had been very open and willing to talk about their experiences in the orphanage, but on receiving the typed transcript they withdrew from the study. The women gave no specific reason for their withdrawal, but subsequent communication indicated a fear of 'getting into trouble', but it was unclear from whom. It appeared from subsequent communications from the women that their fear was based on an assumed punishment from God, in retaliation for the negative things they had said in regards to Catholicism, the nuns and the clergy. The interviews were deleted from both my computer and the tape recorder.

Data was obtained from eight female respondents who took part in the study. All the women had been in orphanages in the United Kingdom and had arrived in Australia in 1947. However, only two of the participants could be considered orphans: three of the women were in contact with members of their family and the remaining three women, who thought they were orphans, have subsequently discovered their families. Of the two women who were orphans, one has been reunited with her extended family but the other has been unable to locate any relatives.

Table 3.1 Snapshot of the respondents

Name	Age at arrival	Years spent at St. Joseph's Orphanage	Total years in an institution
Kathleen	12	5	15
Rose	8	7	17
May	14	3	9
Faith	12	5	12
Emily	12	5	15
Shirley	12	5	17
Bridie	14	3	11
Annie	6	9	17

Setting up the Interviews

Data collection was obtained through recorded interviews with the interviewing process guided by the basic phases of the narrative interview technique (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). The qualitative research method of interviewing enabled the respondents to recall and record in their own words their interpretation of their experiences in relation to institutional life. In-depth interviewing, according to Che, Yeh, and Wu (2006), allows for respondents to communicate their life's experiences without restriction of expression. In-depth unstructured interviews can also give a good insight into how respondent's interpretation of symbols and language can affect the way one interprets the world around them today (Seidman, 1998). Furthermore, the in-depth open interview allows members of social groups and subcultures to tell their stories with words and meanings specific to their social group. The language of those social groups, according to Bauer (1996), constitutes a perspective of the world.

According to Ritzer (2007), a social group is a collection of people who interact with each other and share similar characteristics and a sense of unity. This group usually consists of two or more people who are distinctive because they interact over time and have a sense of shared identity or belonging. The group has norms that non-members don't necessarily share and, while a person may belong to several groups, not all of these groups will be of the same importance or have the same effect or role in their lives (Ritzer, 2007). The

women in this study can be categorised into two main groups: collectively they can be identified as British child migrants who, among thousands, were sent to Australia; But this group of women were part of a much smaller group of 54 female child migrants who were sent to join local girls' resident at St Joseph's Orphanage in 1947. The 'migrant girls,' as the British child migrants were known at St Joseph's, formed close affiliations with each other and their shared identity and experiences ultimately led to the formation of a de facto primary group.

The group of women I interviewed are all well known to each other and I fully expected that there would be behind the scenes discussion between themselves about the interviews. This was clearly the case and I was even invited to a meal with the group on a couple of occasions and topics such as which nun taught which group or who looked after the vegetable garden took place. The women didn't necessarily talk about their personal issues within a group situation but did question each other's memories good-naturedly. On other occasions when I had to check a fact or clarify an answer the women would more often than not give an answer but would follow it up by saying that they would ring another female child migrant and check it with her.

All interviews were arranged around times and places convenient for the participants. This resulted in all the individual interviews taking place in the homes of the women. All the interviews were conducted between the respondent and myself but, in two of the interviews, there was some input from the women's husbands. Although this input was limited to social pleasantries before and after the interviews, both men acknowledged in general conversation, their empathy and understanding of their wife's experiences in the orphanage. Neither husband was present for the bulk of the interview. The length of the interview was determined by the interview itself and ranged from between two to three hours. My intention was to conduct one interview with each participant and to follow up subsequent queries with another visit, phone calls or emails.

Before conducting the interviews I had familiarised myself with events and topics associated with the study. Information was sourced from relevant

literature, documents from both the Catholic and Sisters of Mercy archives, and personal documents in the form of letters and photos from some participants, and personal contacts.

Although the narrative interview was specifically chosen to allow the women to take the interview in directions they thought was important and meaningful, the data that I had gathered up to this point had given me scope to prepare a preliminary framework in which to situate the interview and to address my research questions. The framework was roughly divided into five time periods for the female child migrants:

1. The women's lives before coming to Australia.
2. The journey out to Australia.
3. Their arrival in Western Australia and their new home at St Joseph's.
4. Their time at St Joseph's Orphanage.
5. The immediate period of life after the orphanage.

This approach, however, was used very loosely as the interviews were guided by the women from the moment I stepped through their doors. There was no real beginning to most of the interviews; there was just a continuation of the conversation that began when I entered the house.

Following the idea of Holloway and Jefferson (2008, p. 311), who assert that the best questions for narrative interviews invite the interviewee to talk about specific times and situations, rather than asking about the respondent's life over a long period of time; I directed my questions to specific events, places and topics. This technique was successful in eliciting rich amounts of data.

The narrative interview technique, according to Bauer (1996, p. 7), asserts that no opinionated or attitudinal questions be asked during the interview. Holstein and Gubrium (1995), however, assert that the interview should be an occasion that displays the interviewer's willingness to share his or her own thoughts. In all the interviews, the women asked me questions of a personal nature, particularly about my mother, and I was willing to share my information. These interactions appeared at times to be almost a test for me. If

they were going to share their experiences with me, then I was obliged to do the same.

My willingness to be an active participant in these conversations, coupled with the fact that I had a close association with some of the women, enabled me to explore sensitive topics in more depth. However, I was still guided by the women at all times as to where the boundaries of the interview were, although they differed from person to person. In some of the interviews the respondents were overwhelmed with the subject matter which was being discussed and asked for the tape to be turned off or they changed the subject to something less stressful. Others were not fazed by the sensitive nature of some of the topics and discussed them openly. These actions, however, added to the narrative as it gave me insight into how these topics or issues continue to affect these women. It should be said that the women, more often than not, dealt with the stressful topics discussed with laughter and humour. In many cases this reaction allowed me to continue the exploration of sensitive topics without causing undue stress. This also suggested to me that humour was a way they may have coped with much of their life experience.

Remembering the Past

The experiences, events and interactions the female child migrants remembered occurred some sixty years ago. While the women recalled similar events in the interviews, their explanations and interpretations of those events sometimes differed. According to Misztal (2003), memories of the same event are never identical because they evoke different feelings and associations. Given that the women were of different ages, worked at different jobs and interacted with different nuns and children while at the orphanage, this would go some way in explaining some of the differences in those memories. Furthermore, Portelli (n.d.) suggests memory is an ongoing process of elaboration and re/construction of meaning and, as sixty years have passed, the women's life experiences would have added to how they interpreted those events.

Strong memories of particular events were, however, very similar. Most of these events involved significant acts of brutality or acts of collective defiance, and were remembered with exceptional clarity and often with a great deal of

pride. Fentress and Wickham (1992) suggest that particular incidences, where people have a vested interest, are remembered clearly. Memories of these events can reinforce the person's sense of identity and ensures they belong.

The memories of the incidents, events and actions shared by the women were very specific, but less meaningful recollections about day to day events and mundane activities appear to have faded or have been buried.

The Interviews

As a first time researcher I was naturally apprehensive about conducting interviews on a sensitive subject at personal level. Having done a considerable amount of research on the child migrants and their experiences in Australian institutions before the interviews, I was aware that bringing up memories of the past might be confronting for some of the women. I need not have worried as the women were forthcoming in answering any of my questions and no topic seemed to be out of bounds. The women willingly talked on a very deep and personal level at times and, while some conversations occasionally led to tears, I only needed to stop recording once. In this instance, after a short break I was asked to continue recording and the interview recommenced.

With most of the women the need to get the story told seemed to be their number one priority. Conversations began as I walked through the door and on a few occasions it was necessary for me to stop the conversation, as I needed to go through the ethics and consent forms and turn on the recorder. The interviews followed a very similar format. I would be welcomed, invited in and sat down at a table where the interview would take place. When the interview came to its natural conclusion, I would be offered refreshments. It always went in that order. Later on, when I had heard the women's stories, it appeared that this format might have mirrored the work/play structure of life in the institution.

Ethics

Clearance was obtained from the Edith Cowan University Ethics Committee to undertake interviews with the female child migrants. At the beginning of each interview the women and I read and discussed the consent

forms together. It was made very clear that they could withdraw from the study at any time. The participants were also informed that pseudonyms, for all participants and anyone referred to, would be used for confidentiality. Once this was clarified, the consent forms were signed. A copy was given to the respondent and I kept one for my records. (Appendix 1)

Interviews were recorded using a small digital recorder. The information was then downloaded onto a computer to be later transcribed by myself. As part of the study, I had decided to make available a copy of the interview transcript for each woman. Arrangements for delivery of the transcripts were organised at the completion of the interviews and I emailed, posted or delivered them to the respondents. I then contacted each woman a few days later to check that they were happy with the interview and its contents.

Document Analysis

According to Bell (2005), a document is an impression left on a physical object by a human being and can involve the analysis of written and non-written sources. The significance of documents can be found in their historical situation, in their social functions and the interpretations of topics associated with them (Wharton, 2006). Sources used in this study were accessed from the Australian National Archives, the Sisters of Mercy Archives and the Western Australian Catholic Archives. Other documents, including letters, photographs and articles, were sourced from interested individuals, the female child migrants and the World Wide Web. These documents were able to shed light on both the institutional practices in the orphanage, to provide insight into the government policies of the day and to bring to life, in pictures, the stories of the women interviewed for this study.

Scott (1990) suggests that the usual starting points for documentary analysis are the evaluation of the document's authenticity, credibility, and representativeness of the topic being investigated. Therefore, to determine the relevance and importance of the volumes of both personal and archival documents made available to me, in the limited amount of time available to consider them; guiding categories were identified and the selection of documents was defined. Identifying topics and events directly associated with

the female child migrants, St Joseph's Orphanage and the Child Migrant Scheme provided the framework from which relevance and importance of each document could be determined.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data, according to Offerdy and Vickers (2010), is analysed to identify concepts, situations and ideas of how people interpret their world; how they cope within their world; how they view their history and identity, and the history and identity of others who share their own experiences and situations.

For this study I was guided by the coding techniques of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to identify significant themes and explore further the relationships between the data and the theoretical framework used. Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 61) define open coding as "the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data." Codes, according to Strauss (1987), can be about conditions, interactions, strategies and tactics. Mason (2002) suggests codes can be dialogue used, actions, settings and systems.

Open Coding

The interviews were completed over a two-week period. While similar themes and issues presented themselves within the course of the conversations, it was not until the transcribing of the interviews and the coding of the transcripts took place that a clear picture of concepts and categories emerged. After listening to the interviews several times, I transcribed them and, while it took many hours to complete each interview, the exercise was invaluable as it afforded me opportunities to gain a better understanding of the respondents' stories.

Once all the transcripts had been completed, I began the process of open coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In each transcript I identified and highlighted concepts, key words and events. By grouping together similar concepts, words, phrases and events, initial categories, which were relevant to my research questions, began to emerge. On completion of each individual transcript, I began the task of identifying words, concepts, actions, and events that were common

or could be linked in all interviews. From this emerged a set of codes that identified significant themes and ideas (Figure 3.1).

<p>“Um some were cruel. Umm, see there were some girls that um, used to work in the kitchen, I wasn’t that unlucky. This nun put her (a girl who worked in the kitchen) hand on the stove a couple of times and burnt her, just, you know, for being naughty. We got the cane, we got the strap and we used to grab lumps of hair and spit on our hand and when she’d say put out your hand out we’d make sure they’d hit there because the stick used to snap (Shirley, 2011).</p> <p>Oh yes, they were always calling us dirty migrants and ‘oh it’s those dirty migrants’ and we got the blame for everything, it was those migrants you know.(Monica 2011).</p> <p>We were sort of put down a lot you know if anyone was misbehaving in the dining room they’d say why did they waste good seawater bringing you trash out here (Kathleen 2011).</p> <p>She said to me that, “I was being punished by god, that I was just like my mother, dirty and that I was filth and that I would die, that I was going to die, this was true as god is my witness. (Annie 2011)</p>	<p>Chores</p> <p>Cruelty</p> <p>Punishment</p> <p>Resistance</p> <p>Name calling/put downs</p>
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Figure 3.1 Example of some of the initial categories.

I then began axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1967). This is where I began to explore the relationships of categories and began making connections between them. Using a model based on Morrow and Smith’s (1995) grounded theory study of sexually abused women, I began connecting categories and was able to begin building a story that informed my research questions and theoretical framework (Figure 3.2). Each category was examined by looking at the conditions that gave rise to it, the context in which it was embedded, the strategies that people used to manage it and the consequence of those strategies.

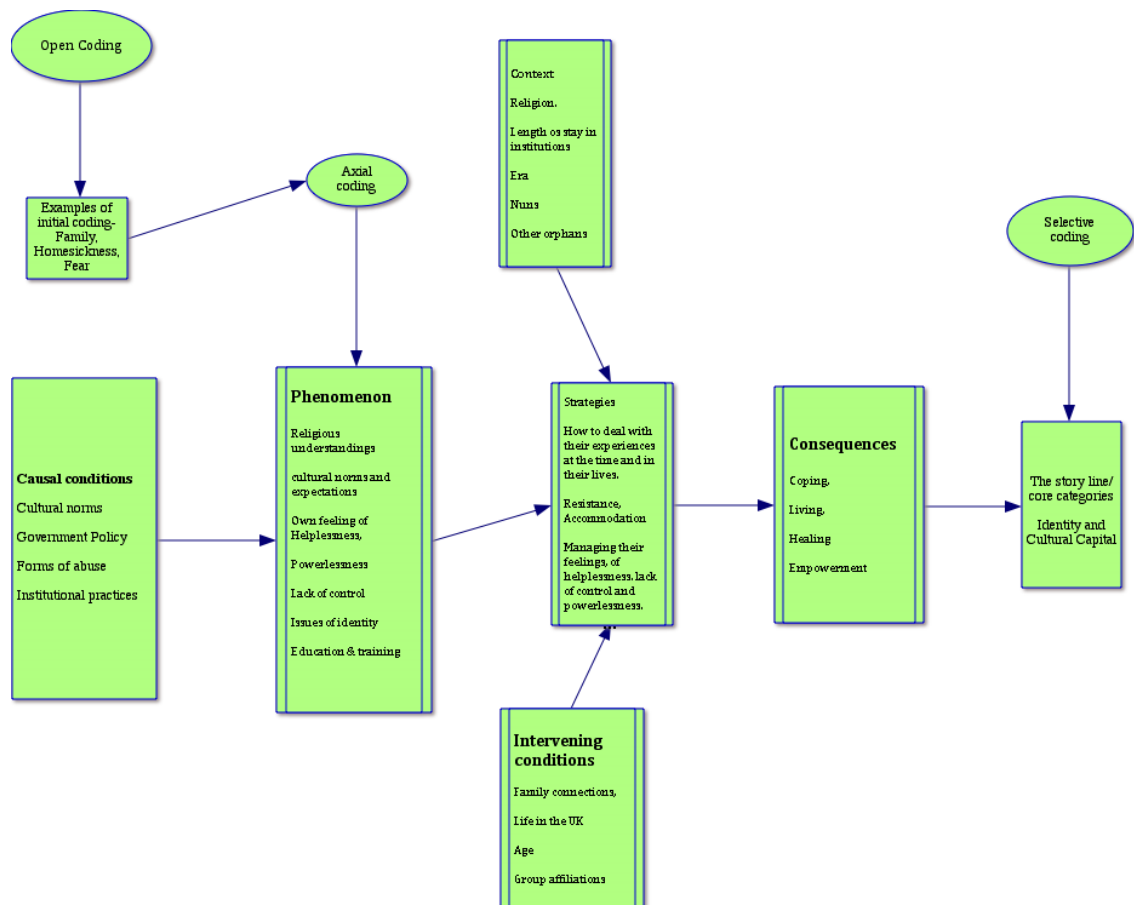


Figure 3.2 Stages of coding the data.

The next step in the coding process, selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1967), led me to refine the core categories and to identify the connections between them clearly. I identified the two key categories of social capital and identity that linked with all areas in the model and built a wider story around that.

Limitations of the Study

This was a small study of only eight women who were child migrants in the care of St Joseph's Orphanage during the years between 1947 and 1955. The study has only focused on their experiences and does not take into consideration, or make a comparison with, non-migrants resident during this period. It should also be remembered that sixty years have passed since female child migrants lived at the orphanage and it is probable that some events and practices may have been forgotten, overlooked or reframed.

Literature and Documents

Information about Catholic orphanages in Australia is readily available but has for the most part focused upon the places such as Bindoon Boys' Home and Clontarf in Western Australia and the Catholic girls' orphanages such as Neerkol in Queensland and Goodwood Orphanage in South Australia. This study was limited in the amount of available material relating specifically to St Joseph's Orphanage. The orphanage records pertaining to this particular period in its history have been lost or misplaced or destroyed. The Sisters of Mercy who worked at the home have all since died and limited information about their experiences there was available.

Practical Limitations

The time required to interview the respondents and then to transcribe those meetings was lengthy. It was envisaged that two interviews would be conducted with each respondent but, due to time constraints, follow up face-to-face interviews were only completed with three respondents. The other interviewees were contacted by phone or emails for subsequent data.

In social research, there are never straightforward and clear-cut cause and effect relationships. Any conclusions made should remain open ended. The recalled experiences of the women in this study were located in the post WWII era. This was a time when Western society was beginning to develop a better understanding of the importance of socialisation in a child's emotional development and of their well-being. According to Liddell (1993), this was also a period in Australia where the standard of living in institutions was being questioned and they began to be phased out in favour of smaller group care.

Summary

In conclusion, this chapter has established that a qualitative study was chosen as it was considered the best way to investigate the experiences of a group of women who were institutionalised in a Catholic orphanage. Data was triangulated through the use of interviews, document analysis and artefacts. Analysis of interviews drew upon the coding practices of grounded theory. The strengths of using qualitative methods allowed the respondents to tell their own

stories from their own interpretations and their lived experiences. It also permitted the consideration of historical and societal structures in the analysis of data.

The following chapters (chapter four to chapter seven) draw upon the data to examine the lives and the experiences of the female child migrants and to provide an insight into institutional life in Australia in the period after World War II. They provide an explanation of the women's backgrounds and explore the reasons for their institutionalisation and their subsequent transportation to Australia. Within these chapters, the data describes the educational and social experiences of the women within St Joseph's Orphanage and the subsequent impacts upon them. Chapters nine and ten examine the process and systems of life in a total institution. They identify and describe issues of discipline and control and the impact of those concepts upon the identity and the sense of self of the female child migrants.

CHAPTER 4

THEIR LIVES IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

This chapter provides information on the background of the women interviewed for this study and on the government policy that underpinned the transportation of children from the United Kingdom to Australia. It details the reasons for the incarceration of the female child migrants in the United Kingdom and follows their journey from their place of residence in England, Ireland, Scotland or Wales, to their final destination at St Joseph's Orphanage. Separated from their cultural norms and their familiar networks and supports, the women began their new lives in Australia with a limited cultural understanding of their new home.

The United Kingdom: Children's Background.

When the British Child Migrant Scheme recommenced in the post WWII years it was made clear to the Australian public, through newspaper articles, that the children who were coming here were illegitimate, unwanted or orphaned (Humphreys, 1994). The children, however, were often told that they were orphans and that their parents had died. While this may have been the experience for many child migrants, it is not the case for all the women in this study. Prior to the children leaving the United Kingdom, four of the female child migrants knew their immediate family and had had contact with them on many occasions, either through visits or by correspondence.

There were many reasons for children being sent to orphanages, but the breakdown of the family unit or parental illness seemed to be the main reason for the children being placed into institutional care. Of the eight women interviewed, five were placed into an orphanage due to the breakdown of the family unit, either through divorce or the death of a parent. The stigma of being born out of wedlock or as the result of an extramarital affair appears to be the reason for the incarceration of the other three girls. Two of the women interviewed fitted this profile but for one interviewee no trace of a relative has ever been found. The reason for her being brought to the orphanage may never be known.

One of these cases was Kathleen. Kathleen remembered being visited by her mother weekly in the orphanage in Britain. Unable to look after Kathleen after a breakdown, Kathleen's mother had placed her in the care of the Sisters of Nazareth in the hope that she would be able to reclaim her daughter when circumstances allowed for it. Unfortunately for both Kathleen and her mother this didn't happen. Kathleen eventually went to Australia but still maintained regular contact with her mother, meeting up again later in life.

She never kept me, she put me with the, with nuns up in Bala in North Wales because she had a break down and um the local priest said to her: "Put her with the nuns until you are able to get on your feet" of which she never did (Kathleen, 2011).

Bridie, on the other hand, belonged to a large extended family. After a family breakdown, she and her siblings were put into a home when it became clear that the family could not cope with the extra burden of the three children:

Well my mum and dad got divorced and my dad got custody of us because my mother had an affair and then dad, because he had an artificial leg he couldn't go into the army and he couldn't do certain jobs so he was only a night watchman on the roads. So he couldn't look after us you know. And then my grandmother came over and looked after us for a while but then that got too much for her 'cause she got quite old. So then we were put away in Nazareth house in Scotland (Bridie, 2011).

After their terrible time at the first home, her father removed the children and the family once again took on the responsibility for Bridie's welfare:

And I was palmed out to my aunt Sarah's and my aunt Agnes' and grannies and oh I was sort of nobody's child really but anyway I coped with it, I mean when you're a kid you just get on with it don't you (Bridie, 2011).

It was, however, decided by Bridie's father that because of disciplinary issues [she opened and read a letter addressed to her uncle] that Bridie be placed into the Home of The Good Shepherd in Scotland where she remained until she was sent to Australia.

Children's Perceptions of Initial Institutionalisation

The female child migrants, who were all over seventy years old when interviewed, had very clear memories of some events from these early years,

especially their entry into the British orphanages. Some of the women were as young as three and four when they were first institutionalised, but the trauma of being left in the homes has left some of them with a clear and profound memory of the experience:

I remember holding on so tight to the door and screaming not to be left there (Rose, 2011).

I don't know whether my mother came in and went out again or I went to jump out to get to her but I cracked my eye open and she never came back, I was screaming because I hurt my eye and that (Emily 2011).

Many female child migrants had been very young when they were first institutionalised. The women, with the exception of Annie and Bridie, had mostly fond memories of their respective institutional homes in the United Kingdom. Emily and Rose recalled the trauma of being left at the orphanage, but the rest of their time there was remembered, for the most part, positively. Kathleen, who began institutional life in Nazareth House in Bala, Wales, but later transferred to Cardiff, remembered her time in Bala in the following way:

That was lovely, we used to put on little concerts and we'd have the lovely grounds to roam in and we used to play there and um some of the girls from Bala [orphanage in North Wales] came out [to Australia] (Kathleen, October 2011).

Shirley who had been in Nazareth House, Cardiff, for all her life recalled her early memories of the home:

Oh yeh we had happy times in Wales. I think we did normal things like kids do. We'd put a saucer with water outside to turn into ice and we used to eat that...there were times when we'd miss class and go and pick the chestnuts and put them up/because our knickers had pockets in and you'd put the chestnuts in the pockets of your knickers (Shirley, 2011).

I didn't mind coming from Nazareth House [Lancaster] because I didn't feel it was a stigma. I didn't think it was an orphanage. It was just Nazareth House (Faith, 2011).

Bridie's experiences of Nazareth House in Scotland were not so happy:

Anyway the life in Nazareth house was horrendous. I got knocked around real bad. We were in the convent and I got knocked around so my sister rang my dad and my dad came up and took us away from there (Bridie, 2011).

I had some very cruel nuns in England and my life there was horrendous (Annie, 2011).

The Chosen Ones - Why Child Migrants?

As indicated in Chapter 1, it was decided by the Australian government to bring 50,000 children from Britain in the years after World War II. This number was never realised due to the lack of available children for migration and the change in social attitudes in the UK, where the practice of sending children to a different country became unpopular (Coldrey, 1999). However, this change in British social attitudes did not deter the British or Australian governments from recommencing the transportation of child migrants in 1947.

Approximately 3,000 children made the journey out to Australia over a period of about twenty years, from 1947 onwards (Coldrey, 1993). Other sources argue the number was much higher than this and estimate the number to be between 7,000 and 10,000 (*Child Migration History*, 2010). Approximately 1300 girls made the trip out to Australia and, of this number, three hundred came to Western Australia and fifty-four of those girls were sent to St Joseph's Orphanage in Subiaco. The orphanage received twenty-five migrant girls from the SS Asturias on 22/9/1947, eight girls from the SS Ormonde on 7/11/1947 and seventeen girls from the SS Asturias on the 10/10/1947 (Graham-Taylor, 1994). Of the eight women interviewed, four arrived on the Asturias in the September, two on the Ormonde and two on the Asturias in the December.

The children who arrived on the Asturias in the September, according to the Catholic newspaper ("Catholic Child Migration Scheme Resumes Operations, " 1947) had been "carefully chosen by Brother Conlon, to travel to Australia." Brother Conlon was a Christian Brother who had been retained by the Australian bishops to organise those Catholic children who were to be sent to Australia (Coldrey, 1993). It would appear, however, that to be 'carefully chosen,' the children would have to meet the basic requirements which, according to Coldrey (1993), were to be British, white and between the ages of six and fourteen. In the case of Conlon's selection criteria, they would also have to be Catholic. While the selection criteria may have been prescriptive, the children themselves had very little idea of why they were being selected.

It has become a commonly accepted story from former child migrants that they were told the most wonderful stories of Australia. It was described as a warm land where the children could pick fruit off the trees, ride horses to school and be brought up with nice families (Gill, 1998; Humphreys, 1994). The story was the same for the female child migrants in this study, who remember people coming to their respective homes and asking them “Who would like to go to Australia?” For children who were institutionalised and who had no idea where Australia was, the thought of leaving their orphanages was remembered as wonderful and they eagerly volunteered. Some of the older girls remembered being excited at the prospect of going to ‘loving families’ in Australia and others just thought they were going on a holiday:

These two [religious] brothers I think came over and said they were looking for children to go to Australia. So of course everybody put up their hands because they said there’s fruit trees growing everywhere and beautiful little houses and they just had fruit off the tree and everything was wonderful so we thought that would be nice. But when the time came, they said we had to go in a boat and it was far away and that you couldn’t come back so then nobody wanted to go (Bridie, 2011).

We didn't know where Australia was but we thought oh we're getting out of here we'll go, you know. We didn't realise where it was so I put up my hand, me and Mary McInerney. So she and I decided, oh we'll go to Australia, oh it will be such a great life and we thought oh this sounds good. (Faith, 2011).

I don't know when/at school somebody came in, I think it was a brother Conroy [maybe Conlon] if I remember his name and our local priest, Father Lynch and asked if anybody would like to go to Australia and we all just looked at him and said, ‘What?’ and he said ‘Would you like to go to Australia?’ We didn't know where Australia was, never heard of it (Emily 2011).

None of the women interviewed recalled having any idea about where Australia was or anything about the country prior to being told that they would be going there. It has been reported in Humphreys (1994) and Hill (2007) that when proponents of the scheme visited the respective orphanages to recruit children, they described Australia as the perfect place for children to live. One of the recipients of this study recalled:

He said ‘Oh it’s a lovely place, lovely sunshine and you can walk along the street and pick oranges.’ After that everybody put their hands up to go. Anyway nothing more was said about it, never heard any more and the next thing I know I’m getting pulled out of the classroom and I’m getting all these clothes tried on me and shoes tried on me and I was saying what’s going on and they said I’m going to Australia and I said, “I didn’t say I wanted to go to Australia.” and they said “Well you’re going.” (Emily 2011).

Obtaining Permission to Go

Permission for the children to go to Australia had to be sought from family members or the main caregiver for the child. In some cases, the Mother Superior or the manager of the institution was considered to be the legal guardian of the child. It is clear that some of the children were sent to Australia without permission and, in some instances, when parents went to visit their children they were told that they had been adopted out and were living happy lives in Ireland (Hill, 2005; Gill, 1998). In many cases emigrating children were transported without permission (Hill, 2005) but that does not seem to be the case for the female child migrants in this study. Subsequent investigations by the Child Migrant Trust and contact with family members by the female child migrants revealed that many of the children who were chosen were sent out with permission from relatives. In most cases, a family member signed the papers that permitted the female child migrants to leave the United Kingdom and for some of the girls in the study who had no family, the Mother Superiors of the respective convents signed the forms.

After the death of Faith’s parents, within weeks of each other, her aunt had been the one to sign the papers giving permission for her and her two brothers to go to Australia under the Child Migrant Scheme. The children were placed in homes and eventually sent to Australia. Faith did not discover who signed the paper giving permission until she returned to England some forty years later:

The first time I went back to England I said to her [Aunty Freda] ‘Why did you send us out to Australia?’ ‘Oh Faith I never did that, I wouldn’t do a thing like that.’ I said ‘Well somebody did, somebody signed the papers for me to go to Australia.’ She said ‘No I wouldn’t do a thing like that.’ ...Then years later, only the last few years I’ve discovered that it was Freda that signed the papers. The one that said she didn’t. She had no children, her other two sisters had two children each, the same age as us (Faith, 2011).

Bridie was fourteen when she was sent out to Australia. She had known her family very well while in the previous institution and had at times been cared for by extended family members. Her father had been the one who had given permission for her to go but, when questioned by her brother on why he sent her to the other side of the world, he simply said that he had had no idea where Australia was.

The issue of who signed the document permitting them to emigrate may not have been a problem at the time. However, the subsequent discovery of who was ultimately responsible for allowing the shipping of a relative, who was a minor, off to another country, would cause pain and anguish for many of the girls. Questions about why they were sent away, or why their family rejected them, remained a stumbling block for many of the women who, when interviewed, seemed still unable to come to terms with the rejection of not only their country but of their families as well.

Setting Sail

The trip from the girl's respective institutions to the docks of Southampton was the longest trip any of the girls had ever made in their lives, so the six weeks' journey that lay ahead was unfathomable for many of them. Four of the female child migrants interviewed were in the first group of child migrants to leave England when child migration resumed after World War II. They boarded the *Asturias*, and sailed from Southampton for the other side of the world, with no real idea where Australia was, how long it would take them to get there and that at least forty years would pass before they returned:

We didn't know how far Australia was (Rose, 2011).

Yes, we didn't know where Australia was, or what we going to or what we'd see when we got here (Faith, 2011).

All of the female child migrants clearly recalled the day they boarded the ship and left for Australia. Most were excited but for Shirley the thought of an adventure was tempered by her apprehension on seeing the ship:

I couldn't believe that a boat could stand up on the water I just thought how's it standing up (Shirley, 2011).

From all accounts, the trip out was remembered as a wonderful experience for most of the children. With the exception of a little seasickness and a couple of rather strict chaperones, the children had the run of the ship and were able to mingle with the other boys and girls on the ship:

Oh, it was wonderful I loved it, six weeks (Faith, 2011).

Another favourite of the trip was the food. After coming from the austerity of post-World War II Britain and places where food was often scarce, or just plain bad, the female child migrants all mentioned their delight in being able to eat as much as they wanted:

I loved the meals on the boat, I loved the sausages because we never had sausages in Ireland, you know. We had these sausages, pork sausages on the boat and they were just lovely. I used to look forward to my breakfast every morning (Emily, 2011).

There were also memories of docking at exotic places like Port Said and sailing through the Suez Canal:

And people were throwing all money and these black fellas would dive and were putting them in their cheeks. Their cheeks were like that [demonstrates puffed up cheeks] they were putting all the money in. I can remember that as plain as anything (Shirley, 2011).

Most of the girls were fortunate enough to board the ship with at least one other child from the same institution and new friendships were forged. Some of the respondents remembered that variations in regional accents meant that communication with each other was difficult at first but, after six weeks travelling together, accents became familiar and differences accommodated:

Oh the journey over. I was sitting on the steps with Delia [female child migrant from Wales] one day and she was talking away and I was talking back and she turned around and she said to me, "I don't know a word you're saying." I thought why couldn't she understand me, I couldn't work out why she couldn't work out what I was saying (Emily, 2011).

I remember I couldn't understand the Welsh for ages. Their accent was so strange and then we all learnt the Welsh national anthem. By the time we got here we could sing in Welsh (May, 2011).

On the six-week journey to Australia the children's welfare was overseen by chaperones who were Catholic nuns, brothers or laypersons who happened to be on route to Australia anyway. Faith says of the trip and her chaperone:

Wonderful, wonderful, because we had this lady, she got the trip free because she was looking after Mary and I and Joy, her sister. She was going over to get married, and live in Moonee Ponds but she was having an affair with a bloke on the boat. So we used to tuck our pyjamas in our clothes and we'd run around and we'd get in the portholes and throw orange peels at the lovers (Faith, 2011).

Emily however remembers her chaperone in a different light:

Sister Robina, she was a bitch, pardon me. She was a bitch, she was terrible to us, she wouldn't let us out of the cabin, we'd stay in the cabin (Emily, 2011).

The sense of freedom enjoyed by some on the voyage, the plentiful food available to them and the experience of meeting people and other children of the same age, probably distracted the girls from worrying too much about where they were going or what they might face, especially as some thought they were going on a holiday and would return 'home' in due course.

Docking in Fremantle

All the female child migrants remember vividly their arrival in Australia. For the four female child migrants who arrived on the *Asturias* that docked in the September of 1947, however, their arrival was possibly more memorable than those who arrived on the *Ormonde* in October and on the *Asturias's* second trip that year in December. The arrival of the first child migrants on the *Asturias* was a significant event for both the children and for the Australian Government, who saw the Child Migration Scheme as the cornerstone of the post war immigration policy. As such, dignitaries and the media met the arrival of the ship. The children and their escorts were formally welcomed to Australia by the Catholic Archbishop Prindiville, Senator Tangney, the Mayor of Fremantle and representatives of the Commonwealth Government. The Catholic newspaper, *The Record* ("Catholic Child Migration Scheme Resumes Operations, " 1947) recorded the event in glowing terms and ran a front-page news article extolling the virtues of the Child Migration Scheme. While the media recorded the event as a momentously significant occasion for Australia, the description of the

children as 'human cargo more precious than the rarest merchandise' did not seem to quite match how they were being, or about to be, treated on the ground:

I didn't realise Australia was so far away. When I got to Fremantle, I said to the nuns. "Um oh when are we going home to Ireland?" And she gave me a clout [slap] (May, 2011).

The female child migrants arriving that day remember being photographed on the wharf and then being ushered into the quay's woolsheds, where they were officially welcomed and fingerprinted by the Immigration Department. They were then taken to St Patrick's Hall in Fremantle where they were welcomed and given food and drink:

Yes we had to line along the thing [wharf] in Fremantle and it was our first taste of milk, pure milk. And we all had a glass each and then we had to sing and all the Aussies came round and we were harmonizing (Shirley, 2011).

We had oranges, fresh oranges (Kathleen, 2011).

Further Degrees of Separation

With the conclusion of the official welcome, the journey to St Joseph's Orphanage began. The children were separated along gender lines and transferred to buses and trucks that would take them to their new homes. The girls were sent to St Joseph's where they were again separated into groups. One of these groups left the following morning to go to Nazareth house in Geraldton. The younger boys who had been on the ship were sent to Clontarf or Castledare and the older ones to Bindoon.

The separation of the boys from the girls caused a great deal of sadness for some of the children who had made friends with the boys on the ship. The separation was especially hard for Faith as she was separated from her brothers, with whom she had only just been reunited with on the boat:

Well I didn't even know my brothers and now my family was separated again. Brian was in Bindoon, Malcolm was in Clontarf and I was at the orphanage and I never saw them again (Faith, 2011).

It was not until adulthood that some of these siblings were able to meet again with the help of the Child Migrant Trust, set up in 1987 as a support network for child migrants.

The Arrival

The short journey from Fremantle to Subiaco enabled the girls to see firsthand the land of milk and honey that had been promised them. Some of the women recalled that they noticed that the houses looked very small and that there were no kangaroos in the street. Etched in all their memories, however, was the arrival at the orphanage, to be their home for the next few years:

Happy are we, our greetings to bring

On this our meeting day.

May God's best blessings be with you all

Ever to start each bright day anew

And so the Australian children at St Joseph's Orphanage sang these words as the first children from the Asturias arrived, frightened and wide-eyed. The Australian children had been taught the song by the Sisters of Mercy to welcome the new arrivals:

When we got here, we got off the bus in front of this building here and all the children- all the Australian children were lined up on each side of the avenue and they sung "Welcome dear children to this sunny land, may joy and gladness shine on your way" (Emily, 2011).

As this quote makes clear, a dichotomy was being made between the identity of the new arrivals and the locals, the *Australians*.

For the subsequent arrivals, any recollections of singing are hazy but what was clearly remembered by those subsequent arrivals was the warning they received as newcomers to the home. The female child migrants who had arrived before them were quick to pass on information about how best to deal with their new situation:

I remember it was Delia [female child migrant from Wales on the first ship] or one of them told us how terrible Gerrad (nun) was, “Don’t upset her - she’s cruel” (Faith, 2011).

It was quickly realised by all the children that this was not a holiday and that they were there to stay. Hopes and dreams of going to live with loving families were quickly forgotten as life in another institution commenced:

I had a terrible time because I thought I was coming here for a holiday, I just thought I was coming for a holiday and I cried and I cried and I cried because I wanted to go home (Emily, 2011).

Something in Common

Collectively the female child migrants in this study were categorised as British citizens. Data from the interviews identifies the various parts of the United Kingdom from which the female child migrants originated. These places included England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales where, in all locations, they spoke in the vernacular and identified strongly with their cultural roots. This cultural identification was to be an important element in the girl’s resilience on arrival in Australia and an identity they would attempt to recapture in the later years of their lives.

The girls may have hailed from different areas of the United Kingdom but the common thread that connected them was twofold: firstly, they had been institutionalised at an early age, under six; and secondly, they had all been brought up as Catholics in Catholic orphanages. While in the orphanages in the United Kingdom all the girls were cared for by either the Sisters of Mercy or the Sisters of Nazareth. On arrival in Australia the Sisters of Mercy cared for all the female child migrants. Being raised in institutions and communities based on the teachings of Catholicism provided the girls with some common and familiar ground in their new homes in Australia.

Summary

In the post-World War II period the Australian government undertook a scheme to help repopulate its depleted numbers with British stock. Both the British and Australian governments, under the *Immigration Restriction Act 1946* (Cth) agreed on a plan, the British Child Migrant Scheme, that made it possible

for children to be taken from orphanages in the United Kingdom and be placed in orphanages in Australia.

It was clear from the interviews that most of the women had attachments to their country of origin, the institutions they had lived in and, for some of them, their immediate and extended family. The upheaval of being taken from that life posed challenges for many of the women. Even though they were institutionalised before they left the United Kingdom, they remembered a sense of belonging and a place and a culture with which they could identify. More importantly, they were competent in their cultural understandings and could identify confidently with their wider community.

Their arrival in Australia and their subsequent incarceration in St Joseph's was a challenge for all the female child migrants interviewed. The absence of adequate social and cultural knowledge in a strange land and the lack of any familial networks or support resulted in a difficult transition for the women. However, the familiarity of Catholic rituals and practices provided some commonality between the newly arrived immigrants, the staff and the non-migrant children.



Figure 4.1 The arrival of the first group of female child migrants at Fremantle in September 1947.



Figure 4.2 Girls and boys on the Asturias, 1 September 1947.

CHAPTER 5

LIFE IN THE INSTITUTION

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the history of St Joseph's Orphanage in Western Australia and focuses on life within the institution during the time the female child migrants lived there. Data from the interviews with the women provides insights into the daily routine of life inside the institution and of the processes and systems that were implemented to maintain efficiency in the orphanage. The memory and interpretation of daily life at the orphanage by the female child migrants provides data on how these interpretations and experiences were internalised by the women themselves, and the subsequent impact upon their own senses of self.

Historical Overview of St Joseph's Orphanage

St Joseph's Orphanage, Subiaco, has a long and rich history in terms of child welfare in Western Australia. In 1846 the Catholic bishop, Bishop Brady, purchased 300 acres land in the Lake Monger and Herdsman Lake area of Perth. In 1852 this land was chosen to be the site for an urban monastery with the construction overseen by the then bishop, Bishop Serra. Originally set up as a self-sufficient community run by the Benedictine order, the buildings underwent many changes, before eventually becoming known as St Joseph's Orphanage (Pushing & Heinrichs, 2008).

St Vincent's Orphanage

By 1872 the buildings had become vacant due to the departure of many of the Benedictine monks to their monastery in New Norcia. Under the direction of Bishop Griver, and with the support of the St Vincent De Paul Society, St Vincent's Orphanage for Boys was established on the site. Responsibility for the care and training of the children was given to Father Carreras, a Benedictine priest, and lay staff employed to carry out the day to day running of the institution. In 1876, after the very public arrest and conviction of Father Carreras and a lay teacher, Whiteley, for the aggravated assault of a twelve-year

old boy, Bishop Gibney handed over responsibility of the care of the children to the Sisters of Mercy (McLay, 1992). In 1897, the Christian Brothers took over the management of the orphanage and remained in charge until 1901, when the boys were moved to the newly constructed Clontarf Boys' Home. In the same year, the Sisters of Mercy, under the guidance of Mother Ursula Frayne, took over the running of the orphanage. At this time female orphans from Victoria Square, now Mercedes College, were transferred to St Joseph's and the Sisters of Mercy's long commitment to looking after female orphans in Western Australia continued (Pushing & Heinrichs, 2008).

The initial dozen or so girls in the orphanage grew rapidly and by 1908 there were nearly ninety girls at St Joseph's. By 1940, according to McLay (1992, p. 355), residents in the home numbered approximately two hundred and sixty. At the time of the arrival of the female child migrants in 1947, it was estimated by two nuns who worked there that the number was around two hundred (Sr N Killian, personal communication, May 10, 1990; Sr M Eagers, personal communication, May 4, 1990). As records pertaining to the years 1947 to 1955 have disappeared, an exact number is not known (Graham-Taylor, 1994). Similar estimates were, however, made by the female child migrants who participated in this study. It should be noted that these numbers also included the babies and infants in the foundling home that was built on the site in 1914.

Over a period of seventy years, beginning in 1901, an array of buildings were constructed on the orphanage site to cater not only for the needs of the orphans, but also for the so-called 'unwanted' babies and the unwed expectant mothers. Female orphans were housed in the old monastery building which had been renamed St Joseph's Girls Orphanage in 1901, and the babies and toddlers, both boys and girls, were placed into St Vincent's Foundling Home on site. The unwed mothers were housed in St Margaret's Hostel and delivered their babies in St Gerard's Maternity Hospital, also on site. While waiting for the birth of their children, the women worked in the on-site laundry.



Figure 5.1 St Joseph's in Subiaco, Western Australia, when the female child migrants were there.



Figure 5.2 An earlier photo of St Joseph's Orphanage.

The Sisters of Mercy

The nuns responsible for the operation of the orphanage belonged to the order of the Sisters of Mercy, founded by Catherine McAuley in Ireland in 1831. Like similar orders, it professed vows of poverty, chastity and service to the

poor, the sick and the uneducated. These vows, together with the everyday aspects of religious life such as prayer, silence, work and routine, provided the structure of the sisters' lives.

According to McLay (1992, p. 355), there were about twenty-five nuns working at the orphanage during the time examined by this study. This small group of nuns were entrusted with the responsibility of caring for approximately two hundred children, and managed the orphanage according to strict routines and guidelines. These daily routines were adhered to, with only minor changes on the weekends or holidays. The women interviewed described many of the nuns as being very stern and reported that the Sisters demonstrated little compassion towards their charges. The phrase "Sisters of No Mercy" was a common term used by most of the women when talking about the nuns. Reports of the nuns being nasty and humiliating the girls were reported extensively (Chapter 8 & 9), but the women interviewed did speak affectionately of a couple of nuns.

Daily Routine

The respondents in this study reported that their typical day in the orphanage began with morning mass, then morning chores, attending school between the hours of 9 a.m. and 3 p.m., play, more chores and bed at 7 p.m. These activities were interspersed with meals and religious obligations, such as prayers in the morning, at night, before and after meals and the Angelus at 12 p.m.

Well I think - the way I feel in the orphanage, we kind of - I feel that you just survived. You didn't live you survived because you got up at a certain time, you went to mass, you went to breakfast, you went to school and then and everything was kind of time, time, time, time... (Faith, 2011).

You see you went to church in the morning, you had mass in the morning, you slept in, well what we called sleep in. I don't know how long it was but we were up before seven and you were on your knees at night before you went to bed and you were on our knees in the morning as soon as you got up (Emily, 2011).

While it is completely understandable that the children were allocated chores, the female child migrants reported that the work was often physically

hard, exhausting and relentless. From their accounts they were often expected to perform duties well beyond their years and to be responsible for jobs that, even in that era, would normally have been expected to be carried out by trained adults. Among the variety of jobs the female child migrants were rostered on to do, a few in particular appear to have left lasting impressions on the women:

The day began for most of the children at 7 a.m., but for some of the older girls like Bridie who worked in the kitchen, their day began at 5 a.m. when they went to prepare breakfast.

Most of the women remembered doing chores before school. If you were an older girl who did not attend school then you would spend your day working in either the foundling home, the laundry, the kitchen, the church or on general cleaning duties. Through the eyes of a children, however, the day began on their knees praying at 7 a.m.

The Foundling Home

Having to work at the foundling home had significant impacts on the lives of the female child migrants. All of them had memories of working at least once in the home. Some of the girls, such as Shirley and Emily, spent weeks or months at the home. Working the night shift at twelve years of age was not only physically demanding but, on some occasions, emotionally draining, as Shirley recalled:

I was there with Ms Lanigan [Lay member of staff who was managing the Foundling Home] and that was dreadful, that was dreadful, awful. We used to have to go round about four times a night and change the babies if they were wet and messed and one little boy had messed everywhere and put it all on the thing [cot] and Ms Lanigan got him and she whacked him and then she got hold of his little penis and pulled it and said “You do that again” and oh she was cruel. And then when it came to the morning they [the toddlers] had to sit on the pots so they could have a motion and they’d be sitting there for nearly two hours and when I went to pick one of them up the bowel was outside and I said to Ms Lanigan “Oh look at this child” and she said “Oh just push it up and it’ll go back.” (Shirley, 2011).

Shirley remembers that she spent months working in the foundling home. It is unclear why she spent so much time there, but it appears it may have been during the period between the time she completed her schooling and before commencing outside employment:

I looked after ah twenty three brand new babies and there was only me and sister, sister Stephan I think on and um you just never had time to shut your eyes, you're just on the go all the time. You know, you had to change the babies and then turn them over make their bottles and then by the time the morning came, you had to get home and just go straight to bed (Shirley, 2011).

It appears that working at the foundling home was also used as a form of punishment:

But I mean I wasn't very popular up there for some reason, I was always sent over, when the movies were on I was always sent over to the foundling home to look after the babies (Emily, 2011).

Emily's time at the foundling home as a twelve year old came to an abrupt end when Arthur Caldwell, the Immigration Minister and architect of the Child Migrant Scheme, came to visit the orphanage in 1948:

Shirley and I were on night duty at the time and somebody came and said you have to get up and come down and get dressed... Shirley and I came out and we're looking at this bloke and Mother Cecilia saying, "This is Emily" and he said, "And what do you do Emily?" and I said, "I should be asleep, I'm on night duty," and he said, "What?" and I said, "I'm on night duty at the foundling home." and he looked at Mother Cecilia and said, "What's she talking about?" He didn't know what I was talking about. Anyway he said, "She should be at school, not on night duty doing that." So I wasn't on night duty any more after that and Shirley, I don't know what they said to Shirley but I was just so tired I just wanted to sleep (Emily, 2011).

The Kitchen

Providing three meals for two hundred people per day is a precision task for any institution and the kitchen at the orphanage seemed by all accounts to be well equipped to meet those demands. Sr Una, head of the kitchen during the time the female child migrants were there, supervised the preparation and cooking of the meals. The labour done in the kitchen fell to the girls who were at least fourteen years or over, who reported they were expected to perform hard

physical labour, learn the finer arts of butchering the meat that hung in the cool room, chop wood, peel vegetables and undertake the cleaning. At fourteen years of age these girls were likely to have finished their formal education and about to go out to work after the age of fifteen. Bridie, who was fourteen when she arrived in Australia, was put straight to work in the kitchen. She explains her morning duties that began at 5 a.m. in preparation for breakfast:

Five o'clock mmm, because we had to have everything ready for the priests and the nuns and the porridge for everybody so we had a lot to do. We had to chop wood. I'd never chopped wood in my life, had to clean grease traps which I'd never done, which is eww, you have no idea, well you can imagine grease traps (Bridie, 2011).

I had to get up early because I was in the kitchen and we had to make great big things [tureens] of porridge. We had to have everything ready for the priests and the nuns and the porridge for everybody so we had a lot to do. We had to chop wood. I 'd never chopped wood in my life, had to clean grease traps which I'd never done. Anyway and we had to, we would put out cages to catch the rats you know. We had to take them and drown them. Oh it was horrendous. We had to put them in this water these big things of water, big containers of water and drown them. But anyway um we'd do all the breakfasts and everything and then I'd have to go out into the scullery and peel all the vegies for the tea or for lunch and then I'd have a bit of a break. In the orphanage and I was 14, just turned 14 and we had to lift these great big baking dishes full of a leg of lamb, a shoulder, onions, potatoes all the things for a baked dinner and we had to lift them from the oven, which was down on the floor up to the these great big terrazzo tables so you can imagine how that felt (Bridie, 2011).

Other younger children were occasionally seconded to prepare vegetables and do the dishes but it appears that these were more punishments than regular jobs for the younger girls.

We had to go and sit in the kitchen on the floor and pod peas for two hours, peas for the nuns for their dinner, not for us for the nuns, and we were eating them (Emily, 2011).

The Laundry

Like many of the Catholic convents around the country at this time, St Joseph's ran an industrial laundry. It was used for the orphanage's laundry needs but it also took in laundry from St John of God Hospital, St Mary's Cathedral, and the laundry from the Catholic boarding schools around Perth. (Sr

M Eagers, personal communication, May 4, 1990).) While the laundry was done by some of the older girls who were long-time residents, some of the younger female child migrants were also assigned to laundry duty:

We'd all... most of us were sent to the laundry and when you worked in the laundry, they had like the big washers, and these huge big washers, they had one on each side and they used to tumble the washing and everything else. Then when all the sheets; 'cause they got laundry from elsewhere as well, not just the laundry we had. The laundry used to come from, don't know if it came from St Anne's, [hospital] not sure where it all came from but they had extra laundry. And when it came to using the mangle; we were only short children so we used to, some of us used to stand on the bench to feed the sheets through the mangle and at the other end of the mangle was the other girls, you know to collect and fold 'cause you know none of that went out on the line. It was only the small stuff that went on the line you see and so that was mainly washing day. Monday and Tuesday was like the ironing day and Wednesday was the folding day and then of course in between you did the olives, picking the olives, you did the Mallee roots, cleaning the orphanage from top to bottom (May, 2011).

Floors

The appearance of cleanliness of the orphanage was a priority and visitors to the home always commented on the beautifully polished floors of the buildings. All the female child migrants recall having to polish the floors and they remember clearly the penalties if they could not see their reflections in the timber:

You know you could see your face on the floor, that's how good it was, the floors. And Saturday morning, everything was moved you know, you did it all, on your hands and knees and if you weren't rubbing hard enough, god help you 'cause you'd be getting the cane around your backside and your feet. Bare feet and everything (May, 2011).

We used to have to polish all the church and we had to move all those seats, two girls, we had to move all those seats up and sweep and wax and polish the floor (Emily 2011).

I can't remember how old I was when I started cleaning but I know I had to go up to the dormitory and clean the floor 'til we could see our faces in it. Then after they had the new bathrooms I was responsible for the bathrooms. And there were four bathrooms with proper baths in. Had to clean them, [and] do all the floors (Rose, 2011).



Figure 5.3 One of the dormitories at St Joseph's.

Olive Picking

Throughout the hundred-year history of the orphanage, the pressing of olives for olive oil sales contributed to the finances of the institution. Although the olive grove had been considerably reduced by the time the female child migrants arrived, enough trees remained to produce some oil. During harvest time, the labour of olive picking fell to the children. Pressing of the olives was done on site but not by the children. Some of the female child migrants thought this might have been done by Mr Stead, the gardener. According to Sr Eagers (Sr M Eagers, personal communication, May 4, 1990), a large tarpaulin would be placed under the trees for the olives to fall on. The children were then given kerosene tins in which to collect the olives. She remembers, as do the female child migrants, the children half filling the kerosene tins with sand in order to fill their tins as quickly as possible:

She [Mother Cecilia] made us fill a kerosene tin up and the kerosene tins were fairly big [20 litres] about that high and about that wide, so what Emily and I did was put sand in the bottom and put the olives on top. But she knew and she made us empty it out and start all over again (Rose, 2011).

Yeah we just worked, worked, worked. ... We were always picking olives in the olive season (Faith, 2011).

Food

The process of food preparation and eating a meal was not a simple affair at the orphanage. As with any other institution food had to be mass-produced, produced efficiently and systematically dished out and served at the same time each day. The children were made to line up and enter the dining hall where they sat and ate at the same table, with the same people, for every meal. At all mealtimes they were expected to eat in silence.

The meals for the children differed little from day to day and most of the female child migrants remember the food as bland. There was some debate amongst the women as to what breakfast consisted of, but the majority of them remember large tureens of Weeties cereal mixed with warm water. Bridie, who worked in the kitchen, remembers making large pots of porridge to serve the girls; and she remembers how the tea was made:

All the teapots [leftover tea] were tipped into the jug which stewed on the kitchen stove and that was our tea (Bridie, 2011).

We had what we used to call slops which was the Weetbix. They used to put it all in a big copper and fill the copper up with water and it was all mushy. I think we got an egg about once a year and that was at Easter time (Kathleen, 2011).

It was horrible food, that was horrible the breakfast. And I think we got one egg a year at Easter time, a boiled egg (Shirley, 2011).

... stews were all fatty and bread and jam was just bread with jam on, no butter but they used to do it in the morning and by the time we got to have it at 4 o'clock in the afternoon it was covered in ants so you would have to shake all the ants off and eat the bread (Kathleen, 2011).

We used to have... it was soup, it was just barley... water and barley, no vegies, nothing in it! (Rose, 2011).

Although there was a nun rostered on at meal times to supervise the girls, the nuns themselves ate in a private dining room away from the children. It was, however, noted by all the female child migrants that the nuns ate beautiful meals every day. The girls working in the kitchen observed the cooked breakfasts, the good meat and vegetables, bread, milk, butter and eggs and they recall serving the priests and the nuns beautiful meals:

I remember once standing outside the nun's dining room waiting for the scraps to come out because they had chops, we didn't have chops and grabbing the chop bones and finishing them off (Kathleen, 2011).

While the girls said that the food allocated to them was not always palatable it was all there was and they ate it or went without. They reported that they were always hungry but they did find ways to help alleviate their hunger, as Shirley remembered:

One day I went into the kitchen and I thought I'm going to get myself a nice... make myself a nice bread roll, and this long French roll. And I grabbed that, snapped it in half, grabbed a half a pound of butter thickened it on there and ran down to the toilet block and locked myself in there until I'd eaten the bloody lot (Shirley, 2011).

Other ways of obtaining food was becoming a [local] girl's 'best friend' if the girl was expecting visitors on visiting day. Visitors would normally bring food treats as gifts for the Australian girls and if the female child migrants were lucky enough they might get something to eat as well:

Rhonda Stockton and her parents used to come up and we'd hide behind the tree. She'd bring us over a block, a box of Kraft cheese and bread and oh we were like bloody animals. We'd rip the thing off and we'd bloody eat all that (Shirley, 2011).

Other ways of supplementing their diets included stealing food from the vegetable garden, eating the peas whilst podding them or scrounging scraps from the scrapheap [compost] before the birds got to them. Occasionally fresh fruit was donated to the orphanage by a benevolent orchardist or other members of the public.



Figure 5.4 The dining room at the orphanage.

Private and Personal Time

Basic privacy was not a luxury in the confines of the orphanage. The girls slept in large dormitories, showered together and dressed together. While this in itself was not really regarded as an issue, the way they went about these daily routines was. In the first year or so after the girls arrived at the orphanage, the bathroom situation was described by the female child migrants as primitive. All the girls remember arriving to find that they were expected to bathe in the same water as each other and brush their teeth under the tap in the outside drain; but most humiliating of all, they were made to wear a thin coat in the bath to conceal their bodies from each other:

Oh look, yeah, when we first got there though there was an enormous bathroom with broken sinks and there were these three enormous baths, all open and you used to have to get in one after the other, the same water. And we had these kind of like a dress cut right down the back and you'd put your arms in and you had to put that on. Freezing cold and wet one after the other into the bath. When you had a bath because everyone else is waiting for their bath they're watching you in the bath! (Faith, 2011).

And as far as....and bath time oh awful, they were those um cement baths and they had clumps and lumps of cement all round it and twenty-five girls. We used to use the same water and all the scum was on the top (Shirley, 2011).

Well that's right you had to/ there was a nun outside the door and we'd be natter, natter and she'd say, "You're all mad and you'll end up in Roe St." and then you'd have to go in the bathroom and you had to put these rags around your boobs before you got in the bath (May, 2011).

Having to take their weekly bath while dressed was something that none of the girls said they had experienced in their lives in the United Kingdom. The first group of female child migrants to arrive initially refused to comply with having to bathe in dirty water fully clothed, but the following bath day, they fell into line. A year after their arrival new bathrooms were built and the girls were able to bath in relative privacy.

Being young women it was only a matter of time before the girls had their first period. All of the female child migrants interviewed recalled that they had no idea what a period was, were not told anything about menstruation by staff and most of them were terrified when they found blood on their pants. Some thought they were dying and others who stained the sheets of their bed were too afraid to say anything in case they were punished:

Oh that was horrible. We were never taught anything about that. I remember I went to the toilet and I was crying. I went to Stella [older girl and long term resident at the orphanage] and I said, "I think I'm going to die." so I told her. She said, "Oh Faith". She told me and she got me some pads and things like that but the nuns never told us. We used to just have to tell each other, you know when it happened (Faith, 2011).

Even when the children told the nuns they had a period they said they felt they were often treated with disdain, as though they had done something wrong or were dirty. To add to the humiliation of not knowing what was happening the lack of sanitary napkins was also an issue for the girls:

We never/ I never told anybody, we used to steal sheets, old sheets and sew them up and then wash them and put them on the line and someone would pinch them, so you would have to go and get some more. I don't remember ever being given anything (Bridie, 2011).

I got my period. I didn't know what was happening to me.... Anyway I thought what the hell's going on with me I felt wet in my pants all the time and I went in the toilet and I thought oh I'm dying. The nun that was on with me [working with her at the foundling home] I told her and she said, "Don't tell me your problems. I don't want to hear any of your rubbish." I went to sleep

that night and you can imagine what my bed was like the next morning, yeh it was a mess and of course [Sr] Gerrad went off her brain (Emily, 2011).

It was also difficult to keep clean when the girls were only issued with one pair of underpants per week. In an effort to stay clean the girls would wash their underpants at night and put them under the mattress hoping they would dry overnight. In the event they didn't dry, the girls would be reduced to wearing damp knickers throughout the day.

From all accounts there was only one nun who the girls felt they could turn to when they had their period. Without exception all the female child migrants found her to be the most compassionate and caring nun who helped during this time. (Chapter 10)

Summary

This chapter gave a brief historical overview of the history of St Joseph's Orphanage and its role in providing care for needy children in Western Australia. It also identified the major daily activities and routines of the orphanage and examined how the female child migrants experienced these practices.

An examination of daily life in the institution identified an environment where hard work, humiliation and punishment were used to ensure compliance and control of the children. The practices and systems of work and the discipline imposed upon the inmates ensured a homogeneous population in which the children behaved out of the fear of physical punishments. The rigid timetabling of all daily activities provided limited opportunities for freedom of expression or imaginative play.

From a symbolic interactionist position this chapter provided insight into how the treatment of the women by their carers, and the practices and process of institutional life, affected the way the women interpreted the way they saw themselves, which ultimately impacted upon their sense of 'self'. Being made to cover their bodies, being punished for having a period and being fed substandard food were all actions that the data show were eventually

internalised negatively by the women and which had long lasting impacts upon their lives.

CHAPTER 6

SCHOOLING

The major focus of this chapter is on the schooling and training experiences of the female child migrants at St Joseph's Orphanage. Taught by the Sisters of Mercy at the onsite school, the women remembered their educational experiences, and their outcomes, with negativity and disappointment. The chapter data provides a window into the role that reference groups and a variety of social experiences play in the accumulation of social capital (Bourdieu, 1990). In the case of the female child migrants, they lived, socialised and were schooled in the one cloistered environment. The insularity of their social interactions resulted in limited preparation for life beyond the orphanage gates.

I must say when I left the orphanage one of the first things I did was go down to Perth Tech and enrol. I've always wanted to learn. Learn learn learn! Still like that (Kathleen, 2011).

The women respondents in this study were between ten and fourteen years old when they arrived at St Joseph's. As the school leaving age of the time was fourteen years of age, most of the girls were of compulsory school age.

From the female child migrants' accounts they had all attended schools in the United Kingdom. Three of the respondents attended schools outside the orphanage in which they lived, while the others attended school onsite but were joined by boys from other institutions for their lessons. Their memories were a little hazy on what grades they were in when they left the United Kingdom, but the older girls (Bridie and Emily) remembered school there as a positive experience:

Well I wasn't too bad at school, I was pretty good at school in Ireland. The nuns use to call out mental arithmetic and she'd just call out "Add up so and so and so" and I'd always have my hand up first, I was pretty good. I was pretty good at arithmetic and I wasn't bad/ I was pretty good at reading, I loved reading I was pretty good at reading (Emily, 2011)

I was a good, I was a good scholar at school. I really was, I mean I'm just not saying that (Bridie, 2011).

While Emily and Bridie, who had been in Ireland and Scotland respectively, recalled positive experiences of their school days, the girls from Wales had little or no memory of being in school. What few memories they did have were mainly of singing and dancing. Kathleen, who was from Nazareth House in Cardiff, remembered:

Oh yes we went to/we had the classrooms, we didn't go out to school we had the classrooms in Nazareth House I remember we did a lot of singing and dancing and we used to put on pantomimes and had benefactors who used to come up and do shows for us and we'd do a little show for them but lots of singing and lots of music (Kathleen, 2011).

When asked whether they attended school in Wales, Shirley and Rose, also Nazareth House girls, did not have strong memories of the subject:

Yeh I think so. Yeh must of. [Gone to school] See I wasn't interested in school all I wanted to do was sing. I was wrapped up in all those hymns that were in Latin. I just whizzed through that (Shirley, 2011).

I can't even remember going to school in Cardiff (Rose, 2011).

While the recollections of education may be clouded by time, all the women interviewed reported that they had some literacy and numeracy skills when they arrived in Australia.

On arrival at St. Joseph's the younger children attended the orphanage primary school that was situated on the orphanage grounds. The school consisted of two classes: the junior class that catered for children in grades one to four, and the senior class that catered for students in grades five to seven. Of the eight women interviewed, five were placed in the senior class on arrival, two were placed into the junior class and one was sent to work in the orphanage itself.

It was clear from the data that the structure of the primary system reflected schools in Western Australia at that time. Primary classes began in infants (now grade one) in the year that children turned six and continued through to standard six (now grade seven). Normal school hours applied and the children attended their classes from 9 a.m. until 3.30 p.m. five days a week. The school itself was situated in the grounds of the orphanage and the Sisters of

Mercy taught the classes. It is unclear from the data whether these nuns were trained teachers or were just allocated the task of teaching.

As there are no records available from the orphanage for this time, it is impossible to know why the female child migrants were placed in the grades to which they were assigned but the data suggests that the children were placed into classes that corresponded to their age. Most of the girls who were put into the senior class were between ten and fourteen and the younger ones in the junior class were between six and ten. There does, however, appear to be some evidence to suggest the children were allocated their grades according to their academic ability. Rose, who arrived as a ten year old, remembered:

Well when we first came to the orphanage, [St Joseph's] when we left Cardiff and came out to Australia, some or three elderly ladies came out and they gave us a test to see how we were with our brain, to see if we were any good. They put us all down to first grade. I don't know whether they did that to Emily [older age group] but my age group they did. They [the FCMs who had been put into Grade 1] stayed there for a little while and they went up. That's what I've been told, I can't remember. I know we all had a test and we were put down in grades and then we only went up to/we didn't do high school (in Perth) (Rose, 2011).

Most of the women interviewed were put into the senior class when they arrived but there was some confusion amongst the women as to how long they remained there. Some of them recalled being as old as fifteen in grade seven:

Yeh Kathleen, Jean, Delia we were in the senior class. I suppose because being twelve I suppose that's where we were but I was never interested in school (Shirley, 2011).

Well we went first grade to seventh grade and that was it, never went any further than seventh (Annie, 2011).

I think it finished in grade seven. We never went any further. We seemed to be ready for work when we were in grade seven (Kathleen, 2011).

No I was older, you know so I might have been 14 coming up 15 when I was in grade seven (Rose, 2011).

From the information gathered it would appear that, once the girls completed grade seven, they were either made to repeat the class until they turned fourteen or they were sent to the Catholic high school for one year. On

completion of the year the girls turned fourteen years of age, they returned to the orphanage and were sent to work in the home. Some, however, remained in year seven until they were old enough to be gainfully employed outside the orphanage.

For other female child migrants, the chance to continue school in Australia was not an option. Bridie, being fourteen on arrival, went to work in the kitchen and was unable to continue her studies. However, May, who was also fourteen, was allowed to continue with her studies and was the only female child migrant interviewed who said she had passed her Junior Certificate.

It is unclear why all the girls were not given an opportunity to attend secondary school, but the fact that compulsory education in Western Australia during this period concluded at age fourteen may account for the decision not to send some of the older girls to further schooling. Another reason may have been one of funding. Faith explains why she was unable to attend high school:

I was picked to go [to secondary school] and then this man who had two children Colleen Riordan and her sister were there. [At the orphanage, presumably visiting his daughters] When he heard that we were going to go the college, he said he wanted one of his girls to go to the college and he would pay for her and Mother Cecilia [Mother Superior in charge at St Joseph's] said, "Well I've only got four places and the four girls are picked. He said 'I want my girl.'" So Mother Cecilia said, "Alright, the first one to get into trouble gets knocked out." So they never told us that and I was going into the dining room for tea and I had a comic stuffed down my pinny or whatever you call it and I had nothing to hang onto because we didn't have bras or anything so as I was going in the comic fell. Of course straight away I had to go to the office, it was a love comic, 'Take that dirty comic with you.'" So I went to Mother Cecilia and I said I have to come and show you what I was reading. She said, "Faith I'm ashamed of you!" I said, "There's nothing in it Mother, it's just a love comic" so then she told me, she said I can't go to the college now. I said, "Why?" So she explained to me, I was so upset. So I never went to the college the girl Riordan went instead of me. (Faith, 2011).

Victoria Square

Only two of the women interviewed seemed to have had the opportunity to attend secondary school at Victoria Square, a long established Catholic boarding and day school in the centre of Perth. Emily and Shirley both attended

for a twelve-month period. The short experience of attending school outside the orphanage grounds gave the girls a glimpse into the lives of other children and an opportunity to have a variety of different learning experiences. Shirley, a gifted singer, has fond memories of the lovely girls who were at the school and recalls the joy of singing in the choir at St Mary's Cathedral. Her desire to learn the piano was not satisfied, she thinks, due to the cost of tuition fees:

And then out of the blue they just sent me to Victoria Square for a year. It's a college by the cathedral. I mean all I liked was the uniform. But all I wanted/ everyone else was playing violins and piano and I said why can't I play. (Shirley, 2011).

After twelve months at the Victoria Square, Shirley was brought before Mother Cecilia, administrator of the orphanage, who informed her that her time at Victoria Square was finished:

Mother Cecilia just said I was no good and that my report was bad so I wouldn't be going back (Shirley, 2011).

Emily's time at Victoria Square also finished after one year, at which time her formal education concluded and she commenced work at the foundling home. Both Shirley and Emily recall that the girls at Victoria Square were lovely and the teachers, also Sisters of Mercy were very nice. Shirley's words, "They never hit you", suggest this might not have been the case in her other schooling experiences.

Teachers and Life in the Classroom

Life in the classroom at St Joseph's resembled that of ordinary classrooms. The girls all remember desks, blackboards, being read to and having to learn the catechism. They all have vague memories of doing reading, writing and arithmetic, but at what level, or to what standard they were taught is unknown. One of the women interviewed remembered that the female child migrants were made to sit at a different end of the classroom to the Australian girls, but the reason for the segregation was unknown to the respondent:

Yes, well we were there. [In the classroom] There was about eight of us, eight or twelve of us. We were in the classroom there and we learnt reading and writing and some I used to sit there, [Pointing to photograph.] that was the English table, yes they [Australians] sat down the other end. We didn't learn much at all (Faith, 2011).

Annie, a younger female child migrant explains her experiences of her school days at St Joseph's:

Oh Mother Margaret, Mother Margaret used to read to us. We never ever owned a book or a pen or anything like that. But we had the reading books from school, but she mainly read to us. She taught fifth and sixth standard. You see after we left Sr Patrick [junior teacher] we went up to fifth and sixth standard. We had Sister Patrick for [grades] three and four and that and had Sr Joan. What's her name, Joan Michael in grade two and we had Sr Lena for grade one. Yeh but fifth and sixth standard/ she [Mother Margaret] used to read to us. She used to read to us um the Secret Seven (Annie, 2011).

The female child migrants who attended school had very few memories about the lessons they received at school, but they do recall the times when a visiting teacher or instructor provided a welcome distraction:

I tell you what, we started learning tennis. The Redmonds from down the corner, the house down the back, [of the orphanage] they came and taught us tennis and we used to play basketball, that's right. Mrs Beck used to come and teach us speech. Then we had another teacher for PT [physical training] and things like that (Faith, 2011).

Resources within the classroom seem to have been at a minimum. Art and crafts were not taught until the children reached years five, six and seven. There was limited access to books and the girls were not encouraged to read outside the classroom. Much of the learning, according to the female child migrants, was based around religion. The books they had access to within the classroom were mainly the catechism or books based on the parables of the bible. Much of their time was taken up learning Latin and new hymns to be sung in church.

There is no evidence in the data to indicate why books were lacking. While it is clear that the religious texts took precedence in the classrooms, the lack of funds may also have contributed to the scarcity of resources. There is evidence in the data to show that the necessary functional literacy skills needed by the children to secure their future in the outside world was at times left wanting. (Chapter 8) For others who had already received a sound education in the United Kingdom, the critical literacy skills that they so desperately wanted remained unavailable to them.

While the orphanage's Sisters of Mercy undertook most of the teaching, the occasional lay teacher would be brought in for specific lessons such as physical education or swimming. However, the nuns were responsible for the academic instruction as well as the wider welfare of the children. It is also clear from the data that public servants from various government departments were also regular visitors to the school:

We quite often had people coming up from the government and I suppose the Child Welfare Department and school inspectors and of course we all got dressed up. You were never left alone with them. The nuns were always there and we all got dressed up in our navy blue uniforms and tidied up and presented to these inspectors. And they would take photos of you sitting around the piano [Figure 7] having a good time or playing netball which I never ever played up there, and things that you normally didn't do, all for show. They never took photos of you picking olives or sitting there with your feet in a bucket of water because you were plagued by mosquitoes and had stone bruises and things like that. As far as I know they never asked to see our work or school- work, as long as we sang for them they were happy (Kathleen, 2011).

Discipline in the Classroom

It was clear from the data that strategies for discipline within the classroom differed little from those used in general orphanage life ranging from the occasional slap across the face to the use of the cane. This was sometimes tempered with the use of rewards for good behaviour. Faith remembered:

Every day we had to meet in the chapel before school and of course I was always late so when we got down to school Mother Scholastica used to put a sweet on everyone's desk except for mine and I'd say "Mother S I didn't get one" "When you're early for prayers you'll get one." And the very day I'm early there's no sweets. The day that I'm late the sweets came out (Faith, 2011).

Training and Educational Outcomes

There is ample evidence from the female child migrants, and documents related to the sisters who worked there at the time, that the girls were given a rudimentary academic education. The interviewed women have no copies of school reports that recorded their academic progress, however, they had clear memories of teachers and classroom activities. The children were instructed in the areas of reading, writing and mathematics, and had access to occasional

extra curricula activities such as swimming, elocution and tennis lessons. They were also encouraged to sing and perform musicals and plays for benefactors. (Chapter 8)

This attention to the education of the children, albeit with its shortcomings, seems to be in contrast to the stories from other institutions during this period of Australian welfare. Penglase (2007, p. 129) recalls the plight of many girls in institutions in the Eastern states who, instead of attending school were put to work as early as eight years of age. The *Lost Innocents: Report on Child Migration* (Senate Community Affairs References Committee, 2001) acknowledges that for many child migrants education was virtually non-existent.

It appears that a genuine effort was made to provide a meaningful academic experience for the girls. However, it is the quality of the education that appears to be in question. The data clearly shows that the academic education of the children at the orphanage was without doubt wanting in both resources and specialised teachers. Coldrey (1993) suggests that the Catholic schools were underfunded and, as a result, they could not attract specialised teachers and were under resourced. He argued that the money received from the governments was not necessarily enough to meet the basic necessities for most children and that the dependence on financial donations from the public was necessary in most institutions.

For the younger female child migrants who were educated through the system from a young age, it is clear that this system failed in providing them with functional literacy skills. The older girls, however, arrived at or near the end of their primary school years and as the data suggests, they were already equipped with literacy skills. It may have been that the work was considered the best option for them.

Summary

This chapter identified the education practices of the orphanage and explored the educational and training opportunities afforded the female child migrants. It appears that those experiences were, for the most part,

remembered negatively, and opportunities to further their educational studies were limited for a variety of reasons. Furthermore, the children were taught by the same people who cared for them in an onsite school, thus denying the children opportunities to access or experience the influences and knowledge of the outside world. According to Bourdieu (1986), the reference groups in a child's life are important in the accumulation of the necessary social skills needed to participate successfully in the social world. Usually these groups can be divided into primary groups (usually family) and secondary groups (schools or sporting groups); but in the case of the women those groups were the same. The female child migrants were cared for and educated by the same reference group, the Sisters of Mercy, and mixed with the same children in and out of school. Social skills and understandings acquired by the women at this time were confined to the limited experiences in both their schooling and social activities, thus the ability to evaluate their interactions, their knowledge and skills in terms of their place within their habitus (Bourdieu, 1986) were limited to a homogeneous group.

CHAPTER 7

SOMETHING DIFFERENT

Life in the orphanage was remembered by the female child migrants as a series of routine activities timetabled around God, chores, food and school. The women interviewed welcomed any break from the repetitiveness of the day, but access to varied social activities were few and far between for most of them. The data in this chapter focuses on how the female child migrants remembered and interpreted some of those events. In addition, the data provides an insight into how the lack of suitable social interactions, combined with the isolation of institutional life, led to many of the female child migrants experiencing problems in negotiating the outside world when they left the orphanage.

A Break From the Norm

As expected, the girls welcomed breaks from the routine of orphanage life. All the female child migrants remembered clearly the times they were able to participate in activities that enabled them to experience life outside the gates and to indulge in activities where they could be creative and have fun. One such activity was the staging of the school musical *The Mikado*. Nearly all of the women interviewed talked with animation about the preparations and their involvement in the production.

...so I loved all that so I used to get up on the stage and that was the best time you know...(Bridie, 2011).

We had a lot of plays and that at the orphanage, we used to have concerts, we had plays and those sort of things. We got dressed up, we all got/ they dressed us all up and people used to come and see us and everything (Emily, 2011).

Singing was also another activity in which the girls, especially the Welsh girls, received positive recognition. From all accounts, the vocal harmony of the girls' choir was exceptional and they were regularly made to sing for benefactors and visitors:

We had a really good choir, really good choir, we used to go over [to sing] to the Little Sisters of the Poor [aged care home]. When somebody died and we learnt all the dead mass in Latin and we used to have to sing all the dead mass in Latin. We used to go

down to St John of Gods Hospital, there's a few places we used to go to sing. We used to go out and sing for all – if any visitors came, like important people, we'd have to sing. The Welsh girls used to sing the Welsh national anthem and we used to sing the Irish one, Hello Patsy Fagen, they loved that too (Emily, 2011).

Yeah that was a great thing the singing. When people came, we always had to go and sing. But it's mainly the Welsh I think, the Welsh, they had lovely voices. Yes! I mean Maisie was a great harmoniser, herself and Shirley, they were wonderful. They had to sing for everybody (Faith, 2011).



Figure 7.1 The girls dressed in their finest and singing for the visitors.

The female child migrants also recalled the other limited opportunities that they had to spend time outside of the orphanage grounds. Expeditions to the outside world ranged not only from assignments with the choir but included supervised walks around the neighbourhood, and for some, fortnight stays with families during the Christmas holidays. Such excursions into the outside community not only provided a rare glimpse into the lives of others, but could also provide opportunities at times for the girls to address their perceived deprivations:

We used to occasionally be taken for a walk around the block, which is around the outside wall of the convent you know. You'd be walking along and you'd see chewing gum on the footpath so you'd pick it up and kick it up with your foot and scrape it off and have a chew and then pass it on to someone else (Kathleen, 2011).

For some girls, their annual visits to the same family were a welcomed relief from the orphanage. The chance for a holiday or visit with strangers, however, wasn't always a welcomed intrusion into the girls' lives. Having been in an institution all their lives, the expectations of fitting in with a family, negotiating the minutiae of family life and being isolated from the crowd, was often very challenging for some of the girls.

Kathleen used to go out [to stay] with a lady, Mrs Andrews in Wembley. I went once with her, that's the only time I'd ever been out, I went with Mrs Andrews and I was quite alright because Marie was there as well. When they asked if I wanted to go again I said no. When it came next Christmas, she wanted us and I said, "No, I'm not going" (Emily, 2011).

...I had a lovely family that used to take me out by the name of the Andrews and they lived in Jolimont (Kathleen, 2011).

It is unclear why Emily found the experience of being with the family so challenging and why Kathleen enjoyed her stay so much. Emily had never left the institution, not in Western Australia and not in Ireland. On the other hand, Kathleen had had regular visits and outings with her mother in Wales from the age of two when she was placed in the orphanage. These social experiences in Wales may have gone some way to contributing to her positive experiences with the Andrews.

You sort of have that initial love in the first place and that makes a big difference how you look at life later on and how you accept things along the way. (Kathleen, 2011)

Some of the younger children recalled that the Sisters of Mercy acquired access to land in Rockingham for a holiday house and the children were able to spend time there during the summer holidays. The girls remembered that, although they spent much of the time clearing the block in preparation for the construction of a building, it was an opportunity to have a bit of time on the coast and to mix with other people and children in the town centre.

Gift Sunday

Each November, St Joseph's would hold its annual fundraiser, the *Gift Sunday Fete*. This was a significant day for the institution, as the general public and the regular benefactors of the orphanage were able to inspect the facilities and the grounds of St Joseph's. It was also an opportunity for the girls to mix with the general public. In the lead up to fete day, the female child migrants spent many hours embroidering tablecloths to be sold on the day:

I had rather nice handwriting and when it came time for the fete at the school, we had a fete every year and we used to do a lot of fancy work, needle work at night time. We were taught to embroider and we'd do big supper cloths and tray cloths and serviettes and it would all be sold on what they'd call Gift Sunday and they'd usually had a nice big supper cloth that they would raffle and quite often she [nun] would get me to write the tickets. Su-pp-er-cloth you know, nice lovely writing you know up stroke slanting the down stroke straight, round at the bottom there. Supper cloths, supper cloths, [I had to] write all these tickets for supper cloths (Kathleen, 2011).

With the orphanage on show to the general public, it was an opportunity for the girls to wear their 'Sunday best': an experience all the female child migrants interviewed saw as hypocrisy on the part of the nuns:

Gift Sunday! Oh we used to have to put on our best clothes and we'd never see them. Shoes and socks, dolls on the bed, lovely white counterpanes and the people [would] be walking around. [saying] "Oh you're very lucky you children you don't know how lucky you are." We weren't allowed to say anything. So as soon as they'd gone, off with your clothes off with the shoes and on with the rags. And the dolls and the bedspreads all got put away. Everything was for show, Yeh (Shirley, 2011).

Even all those beautiful dolls on the beds, we never touched them. They were there, put on there on a Sunday and you had to collect them all up again (Faith, 2011).

Oh yes they [dolls] only came out on show, we weren't allowed to play with them as were the counterpanes. [just for show]. These were all folded up and taken off the beds you know (Kathleen, 2011).



Figure 7.2 The white counterpanes and the beautiful dolls which only came out on special days.

Leaving the Orphanage

For many of the female child migrants, leaving the security of the only home they had known in Australia was a traumatic experience. Their knowledge of the outside world was minimal and what little understanding or experience they had was likely to be skewed by the teachings of the church and the nuns:

They just gave us a suitcase and, and the priest said- you had to go and see the priest before we left and he said, ‘Whatever you do, do not let a man put his hands under your clothes’. And I thought “Why would he say a thing like that?” My God did I find out! (Bridie, 2011).

For some of the respondents, regular contact with former female child migrants made life on the outside a little easier. Emily, who lived at the orphanage for two years whilst working at the Water Department, was instrumental in helping some of the women cope with the transition from life in the institution to life in the outside world. Some of the girls worked in the same government department and others would meet regularly:

Oh yes, we used to meet up for lunch. Kathleen and Rose and all them worked in town, I worked up at the Water Board, you know where the arch is? I worked right up there. I used to run from there down to meet them and we'd go skating in our lunch hour. (Emily, 2011).

I felt I was safer in the orphanage, than being out in the world. I was shit scared. If it wasn't for Emily I would have been buggered (Rose, 2011).

Once suitable employment was found, the women would leave the orphanage to begin their lives on the outside. It appeared from the information given by the female child migrants that the Catholic Welfare Society was charged with the responsibility of finding suitable accommodation for the girls. It was a condition that the girls be housed, sometimes in pairs, with Catholics, and preferably an older single female or with Catholic families. The female child migrants said that they had little input into where they were sent and, for some of the women interviewed, the families they were sent to were unsuitable:

When I left the orphanage, I went to that many different places. One was in North Fremantle and the people used to talk to me through the bloody gate and then I had to go down to my room [in the backyard] and eat my meals on my own. And I said to the orphanage I'm not staying there and then they put me into this place in Inglewood, no, not Inglewood, in Bedford Park but when I went there um Mr. Harris, that was the father he was in the army and every Saturday he would bash hell out of his wife. Sunday, [he is] like this in church [Gesture hands together in prayer] (Shirley, 2011).

Many of the women reported being unhappy with the people with whom they had to live and, on a few occasions, they returned to live in the orphanage while a more suitable place could be found. Although the girls did not necessarily want to return to the orphanage, they had little choice, as this was the only available alternative for most of them. To the nuns' credit, they appear to never have turned down such a request to return to the orphanage:

I left the orphanage when I was 17 I think - I'd just turned 17 and they sent me to live with this woman in Osborne Park. She was 87 years old and Millie McIntyre and I went to live there and when we'd come home from work she had the house all locked up and we couldn't get in. She never cooked us any dinner and we were paying three pounds ten a week board but we never got anything to eat. We worked it out we had some boxes we put near the window

of the room we slept in so we used to leave that window open and when we came home we used to have to climb up to get in the room. She'd be in bed sound asleep. Anyway I thought no I can't take this so I rang Reverend Mother up and I told her what was happening and she said, "I'll send a car over for you." So she sent a car over and McIntyre said, "I'm not going back to the orphanage," and I said, "Well I'm not stopping here." So I went back to the orphanage for another twelve months (Emily, 2011).

Although the female child migrants were under the charge of the Child Welfare Department until they were 21, once the girls were placed with a suitable family they were, in theory, free to travel, work and socialise as they wished. This seemingly normal transition into adulthood, however, was challenging for the girls who were used to being with large groups of children and having their days and activities organised for them. Some of the women were fortunate enough to be able to meet up with other female child migrants on the outside, but others were less fortunate and lost contact with each other:

I went to live with someone, a lady that was on her own, and I was on my own. I would have stayed with the lady all the time and I would have been comfortable with her but being with Emily I'd go dancing, I 'd dance, you know. I was lucky in a roundabout way I was with her (Rose, 2011).

A lot of us didn't keep in touch with each other because we were all boarded out with different families, mainly Catholic families. I was boarded with some people out in North Perth, by the name of Richards (Kathleen, 2011).

For Faith, even though she had been employed in a government department and had lived for a time with a family, the thought of leaving the safety of the institution forever was too much and she joined the convent.

I didn't have the guts that the other girls had, you know to go out and I was terrified I mean the nuns were always saying how bad the world was, the men and all the rest of it you know. I was absolutely terrified and I thought the only way I'm going to be safe is if I enter the convent and that's why I entered (Faith, 2011).

Working Girls

The women who were interviewed seemed to think that the nuns, together with the Catholic Migrant Society and the government departments, were responsible for finding jobs for the girls. Of the women interviewed, four

went to work as clerks in government offices, three worked in the textile industry and one went on to do nursing training. Most of the female child migrants were used to hard work and reported having few problems with the work they were given. It was the lack of experience in the outside world and in some cases inadequate education, that appeared to present the biggest challenges. Shirley recalls her job at Zimpels soft furnishings in the city:

My biggest downfall when I was at Zimpels, I had to go, being a junior, I had to go around and take lunch orders and I'd nearly pass out because I couldn't write what they wanted (Shirley, 2011).

I worked in a factory as a sewing lady. They used to make nurses uniforms, football jumpers and football socks. So I was on eight or nine machines, which I learnt, you know, I was learning at the factory. But I would walk from West Leederville to Subiaco every day of the week and of course when it was raining I'd get drenched till I got to work so Mrs Hargreaves [woman she was living with] rang up the Child Welfare and said I needed some more, I needed clothes. So she got me a raincoat, a warm coat, some boots, some more underwear. She just took me shopping and got some more stuff for me. I had nothing. I couldn't afford anything (Rose, 2011).

So I worked there [at the orphanage] and then I left there when I was 18 and they put me in a belt factory of all things, you know, which wasn't my scene. But I thought, well I've got to do it and we [the workers] stayed in this little tiny room and there was no air conditioning, no windows and the smell of the blasted glue that you had to put on the belts really got to me and I said, "I can't do this." so they said "We'll put you outside on the machine but you have to do 10 more belts every day." I could sew, I learnt that at the orphanage, in school and in Scotland. And I had to keep up the pace, 10 more belts every day and so I didn't have to go back into that room. Anyway they said from there you go on to learn to make dresses and I thought that was great but I never got to do that 'cause I was so good on the machine I never got to get a promotion so I left there (Bridie, 2011).

Their lack of worldly knowledge often led to some humorous moments as Faith explains:

I said 'Oh we're going to Roe Street'. He [Rob, the boss] said, "What!" I said, "Oh we're going to Roe Street, the nuns are always telling us that we'll end up there so we want to go and see what's there." He said, "Don't you go near Roe Street." and I said, "What's there?" and he said, "There's brothels." And I said, "What are they?" We didn't know what brothels were. He said, "Oh my God." So we went to lunch in the gardens and I said, "Girls we're not allowed to go to Roe Street." and they asked why and I said,

“There’s brothels there and of course they said, “What are brothels?” I said, “ I don’t know but Rob said we’re not allowed to go.” so we never went (Faith, 2011).

Penglase (2007, p. 128) argues that the lack of education received by the children in care in Australia meant a life in which former residents were condemned to working in unskilled jobs and resulted in shame and embarrassment for these children. To some extent this was true in the case of the female child migrants. All the women interviewed were disappointed to some degree in the quality of education and skills training that they had received. While they acknowledged that the deficiencies in their education had impeded their access to some areas of employment, they were adamant that it did not define who they were.

Friends

While the female child migrants acknowledged that they had friends in the orphanage, none of the women interviewed said that they had a ‘best friend’ or someone close in whom to confide. They explained that personal thoughts of family, feelings of sadness and the need for love and physical comfort were never discussed with each other when they were in the orphanage. However, during the interviews many of the women reported that on many occasions they had wanted to help and comfort each other, especially in times of fear and anxiety or when stressed by punishment meted out. It appears, however, that any type of interference in the punishment being administered often made the situation far worse for the recipient (Chapter 9):

I didn’t really form any close friendships with any of the girls, we were all like the Welsh ones stuck together. We were all sort of friends but I had no extra special friend. I suppose Delia was to a certain extent but then she got sent away to the home of the Good Shepherd...I can’t ever say who my best friend was up there. I never had a best friend. I was sort of a withdrawn child I suppose (Kathleen, 2011).

We never kept each other’s birthday or anything like that. Yeah when you look back now you know, sometimes I hurt so much inside because even the girls - we don’t know each other as true friends. You know you tell your best friend your secrets and that. We’ve never been told to trust people or to love someone. I never heard the word love, never (Faith, 2011).

While the female child migrants may not have formed close friendships in the orphanage, they all reported that being part of group was very important to them in terms of identity (Chapter 11) as membership entitled them to some form of security and support:

All the migrant girls stuck together. We were loyal, never dobbed. But you never talked about your family (Rose, 2011).

The female child migrants also reported 'getting on' well with some of the nuns but never considered them friends. One nun the girls overwhelmingly liked was Sr Patricia, and all spoke about her with affection:

She was lovely, lovely, Sr Patricia. She was um, we always used to go to her when we had any problems (Emily, 2011).

I liked Sister Patrick although Patrick never taught me but I liked Patrick and I liked little Sister Vera although she didn't have much to do with us. We used to just see her walking around the convent, she was beautiful. She was very thin. I liked Sister Patricia, she was nice to us but she didn't have much to do with us. See the ones that we didn't have much to do with we never got to know because we couldn't talk to them or tell them anything, you know (Faith, 2011).

The female child migrants who were interviewed were all known to each other and most of them remained in contact with each other on a regular basis. The friendship between these women appears to have stood the test of time and, according to the women, they are closer today than they were in the orphanage. According to the women, however, contact with one another after their departure from the orphanage was often difficult to sustain due to distance, family responsibilities and work. While a few of the girls interviewed met regularly in the years following their release, most of them lost their contact with many other female child migrants. However, their loyalty to each other remained steadfast. (Chapter 9)

Summary

This chapter identified the social events that broke the monotony of life in the orphanage and presented opportunities for the women to interact with people from outside the home. It also mapped the experiences of the women when they left the confines of the home and some of the problems they

encountered as they negotiated the wider society. A variety of social experiences with different reference groups and in different social situations are necessary for children to acquire social skills. Varied social interactions and experiences provide opportunities for the individual to interact with others (Goffman, 1959). It is clear from the data that the female child migrants had limited and irregular access to external interactions with outsiders. The lack of meaningful social experiences resulted in the women having limited opportunities to interpret and evaluate their interaction against others and to be able to form a deeper understanding of who they were.

CHAPTER 8

CONTROL AND PUNISHMENT

Introduction

This chapter identifies the methods used by the Sisters of Mercy to impose and maintain discipline within the confines of the orphanage. The experiences, remembered by the women interviewed, indicated that use of physical and emotional punishments were the preferred methods of maintaining control over the inmates. The harsh and sometimes humiliating punishments meted out appeared to have maintained an atmosphere of compliance amongst the inmates. The use of such disciplinary processes, however, resulted in most of the women perceiving their identity as a child migrant to be one of shame. This damaging image of the child migrants appears to have been reinforced by some of the carers and resulted in many of the women internalising this negative sense of self.

Religion

Every aspect of the children's lives in the orphanage was underpinned by religion. Their day began with prayers at their bedside followed by early morning mass, prayers at school, prayers before and after meals and prayers before bed. Catechism was taught at school and hymns learned. Other religious rituals included attending church for benediction, reciting the rosary, performing the Stations of the Cross and confessing their sins to the priest each Saturday. Even when they were polishing floors or working, the women were expected to recite Aspirations. The religious instruction and ritual was reinforced with multiple images of the crucifix, statues and bible stories and at night the dormitory was dimly lit by the red light of the statue of the Sacred Heart. The fear of God's retribution, and having to spend eternity in hell, was remembered as a constant incentive for the children to be good, but as one respondent observed:

I grew up fearing God (Annie, 2011).

From the time the children woke in the morning to the time they went to sleep all activities of the day were supervised with the children rarely being out of sight of a nun. The site was divided into sections and a nun allocated to supervise each area. The women clearly remembered which nun was in charge of which section. The main areas were the dormitory run by Sr Gerrad, the kitchen and dining room managed by Sr Una and Sr Patrick and the school that was staffed with nuns. The sisters were also responsible for the supervision of any other necessary duties. There were few opportunities for the children to indulge in unstructured activities, with the exception of an hour or so in the afternoon when the nuns attended chapel for prayers. At this time the children were allowed free time spent in the playground under the supervision of one sister. Continual surveillance was maintained throughout most aspects of the children's day, including meal times, when they were bathing and at night:

You know like going into meals we had to stand in twos on the lattice, on the trellis as they used to say, and you'd be standing there waiting to go in for dinner and we'd be talking and Sister Lena, she was very tall and she always had her arms like that [Arms were in a crossed position with a cane being held in one hand] but she'd be poking you, you know, "Go in there" and well it used to hurt! She was sticking it into you and she was a hard one but not as hard as the others. But like if you were talking there or if you spoke in the dining room you'd get hit, you'd get into trouble (Faith, 2011).

Anyway if the kids were talking we would never own up to who was talking but she [duty nun] would have a bamboo stick right and you could see it at the back of your head and as it came down you could hear the sound (Rose, 2011).

However, the nuns could not be in all places at all times and, as a result, girls who had been long term residents of the orphanage were delegated the responsibility of keeping an eye on the younger and newer inmates and reporting any misdemeanours. The issue of peer control was one that the female child migrants appeared to be reluctant to discuss. Only one female child migrant, Emily, recalled one inmate being particularly nasty. The others could not remember being bullied or chose not to speak about it.

Punishment

The use of punishment as a means of discipline was revealed in all of the interviews. The girls recall being punished for any number of reasons, often not knowing or understanding why they were being punished. Punishments ranged from being slapped across the face to being hit, being placed into solitary confinement, receiving severe beatings or being made to perform extra work. Nearly all of the nuns used physical punishment in varying degrees, but a few nuns stood out as being regarded by the female child migrants as brutal tyrants.

Sr Gerrad, the dormitory supervisor, was mentioned by nearly all the female child migrants as being an excessively cruel nun. She ran the dormitory with military precision and any resistance to her rules or instructions could result in a beating. The fear of being the recipient of one such punishment seemed to ensure the children's compliance. However, they felt that the unrealistic expectations imposed upon them by Sr Gerrad, and some other nuns, often resulted in them being punished for arbitrary reasons:

She [Sr Gerrad] used to take us for singing on a Sunday, which we hated. The bell would go at 2 o'clock and they'd [children] all go down the hall. We were never allowed to use the hymn book and she'd come around at night time and she'd say, "Morgan" [Faith's surname] say the third verse of the hymn that you learnt today." And I wouldn't have a clue and I'd say, "Sister, I can't remember." and she'd say, "Sit there and think." So I'd kneel by my bed all night, too scared to get back in bed again, kneeled there trying to remember and the girls couldn't tell me because if they told me, you know, they'd be in trouble too. But they couldn't remember it either. Because when you learnt it in the hall that afternoon - and the third verse! I couldn't remember the first let alone the third. So I just knelt by the bed all night... (Faith, 2011).

Many of the women interviewed remembered the beating Tracey, a female child migrant, received at the hands of Sr Gerrad. The very public display of cruelty sent a clear message to the girls as to who was in charge and the severity of the punishment has remained an indelible imprint on many of the girls. The positioning of the punishment beneath the statue of the Sacred Heart appeared to infer that permission to punish by the sisters was ordained by God:

I remember Tracey Leeds - now Tracey would never say boo to a goose and we had this big statue of the Sacred Heart with his hands out here like that at the end of the dormitory. She'd [Sr Gerrad]

have Tracey on the ground, on the floor, hitting her with her sticks under the Sacred Heart and we all remembered that. Because we thought there was the Sacred Heart with his hands up and there's Tracey (Faith, 2011).

Emily remembers being belted black and blue on her arm for being with a group of girls who were raffling a square of chocolate:

We don't know where the chocolate came from but if we had any we'd raffle it and so she [Mother Bernadette] took me out of the school room and took me over to the sewing room and she was shaking the daylights out of me wanting to know where this chocolate came from and I had no idea and told her I had no idea and she said, "You're lying!" So she got a ruler and she belted me on my arm with the side of the ruler and when I woke up in the morning I was black and blue from there to there [indicating the length of her upper arm] (Emily, 2011).

In some circumstances there appeared to be no reason at all for the punishment:

[Sr] Joan Michael hated me, she never ever taught me at school but every chance she got she'd take me in the bathroom drag me in by the hair of my head and she would flog me, she would flog me and then she would throw me back on the back verandah. She just didn't like me. That was as simple as that. (Annie, 2011).

I never forgot that. I was crying and crying and then I got a belting after that. I was upstairs [in the dormitory] and she was belting me and the girls were downstairs and they were counting and the more they counted the more I got. She said, "Until the girls keep quiet you're going to get more." So of course I couldn't say anything, you know. Then the girls realised I was getting quite a bit so they stopped (Faith, 2011).

Prized possessions of the younger female child migrants were the little rag dolls they used to make. Tiny dollhouses were made on the bottom shelf of the lockers and the children indulged in the innocent activity of playing with dolls. This simple pleasure was a risky activity for the girls and was only done in the absence of a particular nun, Sr Joan Michael. Faith recalls the day when Sr Joan Michael returned from her holidays earlier than expected. Not having time to hide her doll or clear her doll house, Faith was called up to explain what was in her locker:

So she sent for me, 'What do you have in you locker?' So I said what was on the top shelf, what was on the bottom shelf. She said, 'What's that?'" and I said, "I just made a doll's house." She said, "Pick them all up." So I picked them all out. 'Follow me'" She took me down to the boiler and she made me throw them in the fire. I never forgot that. I was crying and crying and then I got a belting after that (Faith, 2011).

Humiliation

The female child migrants reported that they were often shamed and ridiculed by the nuns and made to feel worthless. They were told that they were 'dirty and worthless migrants' and this notion was reinforced through the humiliating treatment of the girls when it came to personal issues:

Just called you dirty woman you know, "You'll end up working down in Roe Street." [area of Perth known for its brothels at the time] And we didn't know where Roe street was. We were sort of put down a lot you know if anyone was misbehaving in the dining room they'd [nuns] say, "Why did they waste good seawater bringing you trash out here?" (Kathleen, 2011).

She'd say, "All you wet the beds" and I had to go out because I wet the bed that once and sit on the bucket and go to the toilet before we went to bed. I've never forgotten - that was horrible, it was the only time and it was just because I was too scared to go to the toilet because I knew if Gerrad found out she'd kill me. Horrible isn't it (Faith, 2011).

The humiliation of wetting the bed was a constant fear for the children. Although none of the women interviewed considered themselves to have been regular bedwetters, they all remembered those who were made to sleep on beds outside on the verandah. Kerosene tins and buckets were placed along the side of the verandah for the children to use as toilets during the night. While this, in itself, was probably useful there was no privacy and the children were expected to go to the toilet in front of the nuns and the other children. The bedwetting children were not merely publicly humiliated in these ways, but they were also punished:

Now the ones that really suffered were the wet bed ones, the ones that wet their beds. We had a dormitory and then we had a verandah. They called it the wet bed verandah and course; they never used to change their beds. They [sheets] were dried off and they'd sleep in the same sheets. ... And it used to smell (Rose, 2011).

They were made to stand there for an hour with a wet sheet over their head (Shirley, 2011).

Worrying about wetting the bed was only one concern for the girls at night. Each morning the girls were made to inspect each other's pyjamas to see if there were any stains on the girl's pyjama pants. It is unclear as to why this was done but it did reiterate that the notion that there was something dirty about the girls' natural bodily functions and it served to reinforce the nuns, in this case Sr Gerrad's, power over all aspects of the girls' lives:

And then you'd get up in the morning and the girl alongside you grabbed your pyjamas and I said what are you doing? And they had to inspect. If we had a brown mark we got flogged. That means if you [just] passed wind in you jarmies [pyjamas] (Shirley, 2011).

Summary

This chapter identified the methods used by the nuns to control and discipline the children. It gave an insight into the methods of punishment used against the children, that included physical punishments, humiliating practices and name-calling. The use of hierarchical observation and surveillance in the orphanage in which an omnipresent God, supported by nuns and senior inmates who watched over the inmates continually, was used successfully to ensure the children's compliance.

According to Foucault (1979) central to the discipline of the social body is the use of surveillance. He uses the example of the panopticon, a structure used to observe prison inmates, to explain how surveillance can be used to control the social body. The panopticon is designed so the guards are unseen and an inmate is unable to see whether or not they are being observed. The assumption is that they are at all times being observed and as a result compliant behaviour is maintained. Foucault (cited in Ritzer, 2007 p. 220) suggests that panopticon and variations on it are the base disciplinary society, and in this case the children of the institution.

These arbitrary and ritualised punishments and humiliating labels, bestowed upon the migrants, were highly effective in maintaining order and discipline in the home. Building on previous chapters, this chapter has shown

how these disciplinary measures added to the women's negative interpretation of their places within the orphanage. Continual negative reinforcement by their reference group resulted in many of the women internalising a negative identity that resulting in a sense of shame and a fear that 'normal' people might find out they were orphans. This fear, described by Goffman, (1963) as a discreditable stigma, was internalised by many of the women.

CHAPTER 9

TOTAL INSTITUTIONS

Introduction

Goffman (1961) considers the main aim of the institution is to provide for the needs for large groups of people who are under bureaucratic control. St Joseph's Orphanage also aimed to meet the need for the religious wellbeing of the female child migrants through the teachings of the Catholic Church. This chapter examines Goffman's (1961, p.13) concept of the Total Institution and how the exertion of power over the female child migrants, and the other inmates, was maintained through constant supervision, structured activities and harsh punishments. Furthermore, notions of self-image indicated in Chapter 8 are further explored through the acts of resistance remembered by the women interviewed.

Total Institution

It is possible to define St Joseph's as an organisation that Goffman would consider a total institution. Goffman (1961, p. 13) proposes that total institutionalism is found when all aspects of life are conducted in the same place under one authority. Daily activities are in the immediate company of others with all phases of the day scheduled and enforced activities are designed to fulfil the official aims of the institution (Goffman, 1961). Although this concept, according to Goffman, usually excludes orphanages because of the ability of inmates to become socialised through a cultural osmosis, it is clear from the evidence of the women that their days were totally and fully regimented and contact with the outside world was limited.

Although the women interviewed had come from institutions in the United Kingdom it appears that these places, while sometimes brutal, did not meet the criteria of a total institution: they provided opportunities for the girls to experience themselves in situations and roles other than inmate or orphan. Being geographically close to their families they were able to receive visitors and to spend time with family members. In these situations, they were able to interact as sisters, daughters, nieces and grandchildren and not simply inmates.

Attending school in the local area, or being joined by boys from other orphanages, also provided opportunities to mix and socialise with the general population and members of the opposite sex. While these occasions were remembered by the women, it appears that, while they may have contributed to how the girls located themselves in the world at that time, any social capital that may have been acquired seems to have diminished within the isolation of the orphanage in Australia.

St Joseph's was a reasonably large institution with a population of approximately two hundred children (Graham-Taylor, 1994). In order to meet and maintain the basic needs of the children, there was little time for the individual socio-emotional needs of the children to be considered. Providing for the group had to be completed quickly and efficiently and, as evidenced in military and prison contexts, maintaining an homogenised and regimented population was the easiest way to achieve this. The organisation and control of a large population also relied on efficient methods of discipline and this was achieved through effective surveillance of the inmates and harsh sanctions for any refractory behaviour.

As Foucault (1979) and Goffman (1961), before him, have explained, by being able to move blocks of people around with minimal supervision, authorities are able to supervise inmates through surveillance rather than through inspection or guidance. The form of surveillance used within the orphanage could be considered in these terms. Whether or not it was God, the nuns or the older trustees watching, the children were acutely aware that their actions were at all times being monitored and for the most part modified their behaviour to suit:

I didn't have a lot of trouble with the nuns because I was a quiet little thing, I was quite shy and I was probably frightened of them you know in case I got a botting or something (Kathleen, 2011).

Power

Power over the children was evident in all facets of day to day life. The female child migrants were told when to eat, when to sleep, when to play, what to wear and what to do. The nuns could inflict punishments arbitrarily,

generally without fear of consequence. It was only on rare occasions that news of their treatment of the girls filtered out beyond the orphanage gates:

One of the Australian girls had her mother come up to see her and she was telling her mother, [about the beating that Annie had received] so her mother told her to go and get me so I went up with this girl, to this girl's mother you see and ah she said to me she said, "Let me look at you, do you mind if I lift your dress up?" and I said "No" She lifted my dress up and I was covered in bruises from head to foot you see. So on the Monday she reported it to the Child Welfare Department (Annie, 2011).

Such a serendipitous act, by a member of the public, however, had a cost for Annie:

Child Welfare came up, I didn't see the Child Welfare Department but after they left I was called to the office and Mother Cecilia was back then and I was in a terrible thing, I was going to go to the Good Shepherd Convent; 'cause I was filthy, I was dirty you know.

Another occasion of outside scrutiny came from the Sisters of Mercy at Victoria Square:

When I woke up in the morning I was black and blue from there to there. [from the shoulder to the elbow] Of course I had to go to Vic Square the next day which was PT [physical training/sports] day and I had that uniform with no sleeves. All the girls at Vic Square would say 'Mary! What happened to you!' and I said, "Mother Bernadette did that" and they say, "Sister Mary Margaret, Sister, come and look at Mary's arm!" And she nearly had a heart attack and she said. "Goodness me, what happened to your arm?" I said, "Mother Bernadette did it." And she must have rang Mother Bernadette up because when I came home that night she met me at the gate and she said, "Show me your arm." and I said, "No." I wouldn't show her I kept walking and she said 'SHOW ME YOUR ARM!' And I wouldn't show it to her (Emily, 2011).

The harsh punishments and systematic abuse inflicted upon the female child migrants were fairly consistent with that reported in other Australian institutions of the time (Senate Community Affairs References Committee, 2001). It is clear from the interviews that much of the punishment the female child migrants received by some of the nuns surpassed what would be considered acceptable adult/child discipline at the time. It appears that while some of the nuns seemed particularly cruel, others were uncomfortable with the

physical punishments meted out to the children. When Emily was being belted by Mother Bernadette, she remembers another nun did try to intervene:

Sister Patricia was in there when she was doing it to me and she tried to stop her but Reverend Mother was the Reverend Mother and Sister had no say (Emily, 2011).

I remember once we were arguing about that [polishing the last floor board] or discussing it and the sister in charge, Sister Kyle, she was very soft she said, "Come on now, someone has got to do it." and then Sister Gerrad came up and she was very hard, you know Irish, pale faced and she used to say, "Give them a belting Kyle, it's the only way they'll learn," and for the first time ever Sister Kyle belted me and I was so upset because I used to like her, she was a nice little nun, I was so upset and I just sobbed and sobbed and sobbed (Kathleen, October 2011).

Faith remembers one of the nuns who would be rostered on once a week in the dining room:

She was very gentle "I'm not going to punish you girls, when I go to heaven I'm not having the Lord say that I was cruel to you girls." The girls all played up on her you know but she was really lovely, very gentle, very nice and she was lovely to the kids in school (Faith, 2011).

All the women interviewed spoke of the emotional and physical abuse they endured at the hands of the nuns but were keen to emphasise that they did not suffer any sexual abuse. They reported that the very real threat of physical punishments was enough to make them behave and to try and stay out of the way of the nuns, almost an impossible feat given the levels of surveillance. Many of the women described their behaviour within the orphanage as being timid and shy, explaining that it was easier to acquiesce to the demands of the nuns than to invite punishment from them:

I was frightened to say boo you know and everything was so strict (Bridie, 2011).

Resistance

Power exercised over others is never total and where there is power there is always the possibility of resistance, no matter how oppressive the system (Foucault, 1979). It is clear from the interviews that the orphanage was in many ways an oppressive institution. The female child migrants were aware that they

had no alternative, and little power, to alter their situation and they were completely reliant on the nuns for their survival. Any attempt at outward acts, disobedience or transgression of the rules was never seriously considered. On the rare occasion acts of open defiance occurred, the consequences were immediate and usually harsh. In particularly serious acts of defiance, the nuns sometimes responded with the threat of banishment to the Home of Good Shepherd, a home for bad girls. In the case of one female child migrant who spat at a nun, the threat of banishment was carried out and she was sent away to the home away immediately (Kathleen, 2011).

There were stories of girls who ran away but they were always brought back and punished:

Maisie [FCM] ran away, yeah she ran away, I never ever ran away because I was terrified, I didn't know where I was going to go. She [Maisie] didn't know where to go and then another one, she was part Aboriginal, she ran away. She [Maisie] rang up and said she was somewhere else and they went and picked her up. Three or four girls ran away. They just ran out and played going up to Shenton Park Station (Emily, 2011).

Although the threat of punishment always hung over the girls' heads, it never deterred them from finding ways to get out of class to enjoy some forbidden activities. Tales of leaving class to listen to the radio serials or to steal food left by donors were told by many of the female child migrants:

It used to come on the radio and there was this blind lady at the orphanage and she had a room up on the balcony and at 11 o'clock this Pretty Kitty Kelly (radio series) use to come on and we all wanted to go to the toilet at the same time (Emily, 2011).

Maisie [FCM] would say she was just going to the toilet and she would go out and fill her pants up with all these apples and come back in and she's walking in and the apples are all dropping out and the nuns wondered where they were coming from and they were coming out of her pants (Emily, 2011).

The female child migrants were unable to escape the drudgery of work and, although the nuns were ever present with an inspecting eye, any chance to cut corners or have some fun was always on the cards:

I had to go and polish the reception where the nuns used to sit. I was supposed to do it on my hands and knees. Like you had to go on your knees with a big polisher in your hands and go 1, 2, 3, move, 1, 2, 3, move, so I thought bugger that, so I tied them on me feet and I'd race up and down. So I got all the girls to do that in the end and that's the way we polished (Shirley, 2011).

Maisie, me and Emily, and we used to, every Sunday was country and western we'd go down there turn the wireless on and of course that wasn't enough for me. I said, "While you're singing, I'm going to go and get dressed as mother superior." And I came out with the gown and the thing [habit] and I'm saying "Excuse me girls" and Maisie's trying to tell me that Mother Cecilia was behind me and I'm saying "Now I'm going to get thy strap and flog you." And I looked round she [Mother Cecilia] said, "How dare you get into that habit." So she grabbed me by the cheek all the way up the road and then I got punished... (Shirley, 2011).

Acts of passive resistance however were commonplace. The female child migrants found a number of ways to challenge the rules and regulations of the orphanage and, although these acts would be considered mild today, these small acts of resistance were seen by the children as brave actions, considering the possible punishments if they were caught.

The most common forms of resistance were small mundane actions, such as not praying while they polished the floors, talking during dinner or eating peas while they were podding them:

Then we had to polish the floor every day after school, it used to shine, it was beautiful. It was shiny and we were talking away to each other and Mother Scholastica would say 'how many'? 'How many aspirations are you saying?' Of course the others would say 'Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy' they'd say about 20 just like that. '20 mother' 'Good girl' '21' so of course every time we saw her coming then we'd say 'Lord have Mercy, Lord have Mercy, Lord have Mercy, Lord have Mercy' I was always in trouble for not saying them (Faith, 2011).

The female child migrants reported more sophisticated acts of resistance when on occasions they would deliberately not take communion at Mass and pretend they had committed a mortal sin. This was done so the nuns would be kept wondering what the girls had done. Others reported deliberately getting into trouble so they didn't have to attend church. The female child migrants also remembered resisting practices they thought were unnecessarily harsh. Some

of the women reported cuddling the babies in the foundling home when told not to and washing the toddler's sheets if they wet the bed, so the nuns could not punish the children. There were also stories of stealing food from the vegetable gardens and from the kitchen, as well as trying to run away from the nuns if they were receiving a beating (Group interview, 2011).

In the event of a physical punishment sometimes a stoic attitude towards the belting would be adopted:

She tried to make me cry, you see, and I wouldn't cry. Tried to make me cry and I wouldn't cry and it was killing me, it was really hurting. You can imagine the side of a ruler (Emily 2011).

Other forms of resistance came in some of the girls' abilities to negotiate a better deal for themselves:

I went to one nun and I desperately wanted to learn the piano, this was at St Joseph's and I went and asked her would she teach me the piano and she said yes but you'll have to work for it, so I had to go every Saturday morning and clean her- they used to call the rooms they stayed in the cells. Her little cell and I had to polish her cell and polish her black shoes and polish her black belt. Then she would give me an apple and a piano lesson (Kathleen, 2011).

Goffman's (1961) observations concluded that when inmates resisted institutional demands an under-life was created where different values reigned. In the case of the female child migrants, the under-life that emerged within the orphanage appears to have rejected the values being modelled to the inmates by the nuns. A system of loyalty and fairness amongst the inmates, and especially amongst the migrant children, seems to have evolved and clear lines were set as to what was acceptable behaviour amongst the group. It appears that pressure to enforce solidarity was applied among the peer group:

I don't know. Whether she was pimping on us or something I don't know. I thought she was pimping on us. Her and I got into a fight one day and her and I had to stand under the clock in the dining room until one in the morning (Emily, 2011).

Part of the code of conduct amongst the girls was the sense of loyalty to each other. There was a culture of no dobbing:

Anyway if the kids were talking we would never own up to who was talking. You'd hear that sound of that bamboo stick coming on the back of you. But we wouldn't do anyone in (Rose, 2011).

Summary

Goffman's notions about total institutions are explored in this chapter. The timetabling and continual supervision of all activities by the sisters and the harsh punishments endured by the children all contributed to the negative feelings the girls had about themselves and about their migrant status. Acts of resistance to these structures were also identified and explored in this chapter.

Foucault (1979) maintains that where there is power there is resistance. This chapter offers an insight into the acts of resistance by the girls toward the institutional structures. This resistance, albeit small, was all that could be done in a situation where the girls were completely reliant on the nuns for their welfare. However, these acts appear to have had a positive impact upon the women's identity. Goffman (1961) maintains that when resistance in an institution happens the result of that resistance is that a subculture is formed. It is clear from the data that the resistance of the girls, to the nuns and the orphanage rules, resulted in a subculture of their own in which codes of conduct were evident. Particularly evident were the close affiliations the female child migrants maintained with their own cultural groups. Identifying with a group and displaying loyalty to that group appears to have engendered a sense of identity and a sense of belonging. These affiliations, born out of the resistance to the institutional structures, appear to remain as strong today and continue to provide a forum where the women are able to evaluate themselves in terms of their own norms, and a provide a place where they can drop the discreditable stigma.

CHAPTER 10

IDENTITY

The data discussed in this chapter provides insights into the impact of the women's experiences upon the formation and understanding of their identity. The absence of any support networks or family, (Chapter 4), together with the systems and processes adopted to maintain an efficient institution resulted in a homogeneous existence with little time for individual needs to be met. The dehumanizing effect of being treated as a number, together with the frequent and humiliating punishments (Chapters 7 & 8) experienced by the women, resulted in a perceived stigmatised identity which impacted upon their sense of self and their social and professional interactions.

Personal Identity

It would appear, from the data, that the systems and processes used to organise the orphanage efficiently also had a dehumanizing effect upon the female child migrants. They were referred to by their surnames, assigned an identification number and allocated their clothes, their beds and their seats at the dining table. These structures may not have been implemented intentionally to demean the children, but the women's accounts suggest they have experienced lasting issues of self-mortification clearly linked to these practices.

But I think to live in an institute you survive, you don't live. That's how I feel. The real you doesn't come out because you've got so many rules, you get up, you go to mass, and you go to breakfast, you go to school, you go to play, you go to tea and you go to bed (Faith, 2011).

It was standard practice for the female child migrants to be called by their last names but for some of the women they were shocked to find that they didn't know their own real names. Rose was unaware that her name was Jennifer and only found out when she was sixteen. Shirley, who was called Margaret all her life, was told on the day she left the orphanage that her name was Shirley. On hearing this one of the nuns is reported to have said, "Oh, that name is too good for her." When Shirley finally found her birth certificate in the 1980s, she discovered her name was neither Shirley nor Margaret but Helen

Jean. When Kathleen first arrived at St Joseph's in Subiaco she found out her name was actually Teresa:

They did a roll call of the child migrants and they were calling Teresa Watts and nobody answered you know. I was about the only one left and they figured out it must have been me you see. I was always called Kathleen always, yet my family in Wales always refer to me as Teresa. They always knew me as Teresa. I think my mother must have changed my name or the nuns changed it when I was first put in the convent (Kathleen, 2011).

The children were not allowed any possessions and on their arrival at the orphanage and the female child migrants were relieved of all their personal items. Any toys, keepsakes or artifacts surviving from their previous lives in the United Kingdom were surrendered to the nuns. It is clear that the removal of the girl's private possessions by the authorities and the replacement of their clothes and shoes with a uniform did ensure a homogeneous group but it is unclear as to whether they were taken from the girls to ensure a clean break from their old lives. Had that been the case, letters back to their families and friends would certainly not have been allowed. It is more likely that the confiscation of their keepsakes was done simply to ensure that the children knew who was in charge and that they were compliant inmates. Additionally, possessions were also considered unnecessary by an order of nuns whose lives were founded upon the vow of poverty and this may have been a factor in the decision to take away belongings.

We were lined up and everything was taken off and we had to undress and they gave us change clothes. We got one pair of knickers for a week and I was made number 95 from the day I got there 'til the day I left. So I was number 14 in England for as long as I can remember and I was number 95 out here. I had absolutely nothing. On the ship I had the doll but nothing after that. So you didn't have anything that belonged to you (Annie, 2011).

When Bridie was relieved of the precious items given to her on her departure she was denied a tangible connection with both her community and familial identity:

...and I never saw, what broke my heart was that I never saw any of the beautiful things that I had brought over, and the clothes, we were beautifully dressed [on arrival from the UK] (Bridie, 2011).

Whatever the reasons, the female child migrants reconcile their sadness at losing their possessions by observing that it would have been much easier for the nuns, and fairer for all the children, if they were all treated the same. This noble sentiment may have had some credence if it were not for the fact that Australian children in the orphanage were allowed gifts and possessions from their families who visited on Sundays:

Discriminatory Labels

The purpose of the total institution is to protect the wider community from contamination from the inmates (Goffman, 1961). The idea that the children were contaminated or polluted through the actions of their mothers and the rejection of their country was one that was constantly reinforced by some nuns at the orphanage. As indicated in Chapter 8, all the female child migrants remember being told they were dirty when they had their first period and being referred to from time to time as “dirty migrants”.

While the female child migrants were identified as the migrant girls, as opposed to the Australian girls, it is clear that they were treated as equals when it came to being clothed, fed and schooled by the institution. However, in the women’s recollection the status of “migrant” was often used to condemn and humiliate them. It would appear that the term “dirty migrant” did not simply refer to cleanliness, but was a label that conferred negative traits upon the female child migrants. To be called “a dirty migrant” inferred that they were somehow inferior, untrustworthy and undisciplined. For some of the women, the continual reinforcement of this negative image throughout their stay at the orphanage resulted in a lifelong shame about being a child migrant.

Faith sums up her perception of the treatment of the migrant girls:

Oh yes, they were always calling us dirty migrants and ‘Oh it’s those dirty migrants’ and we got the blame for everything, it was those migrants you know.... That’s why we were thinking we’re different, we’re different migrants to them, yet they came out to enter the convent -they’re still migrants aren’t they (Faith, 2011).

Yes, stop talking dirty migrants. Our table [in the dining room] always got it you know, it wouldn’t be us at all it’d be the Aussies down the other end but it was the migrants that were talking. Anyway I don’t know what they had against us but - whether it was

- it never came out but whether they rejected us for coming out because there was so much work to do with all the children, I don't know, that's what makes me think you just survived, you didn't live as such because you didn't get any love (Faith, 2011).

Cultural Identity

It is clear from the data that the cultural and institutional identity the girls shared was not only important in helping them cope in the orphanage, but was instrumental in the survival of many of the girls once they had left the institution. The solidarity of the group which was forged on the journey out to Australia (Chapter 4), and reinforced over the years, was evident on the first day of their arrival at the orphanage when the girls were ordered to put on a pinafore and bathe in dirty water:

We told her, [older Australian girl] "We're not putting them on." So we told her to go away and leave us. So we let all the dirty water out and ran our own bath. I think they must of thought to themselves "Oh we're going to have trouble with this lot" (Emily, 2011).

When the female child migrants arrived in Australia they seemed to do so with a very clear cultural identity and understanding of who they were. All the women spoke with immense pride of being Irish, English, Scottish or Welsh. They had a history and had experienced a variety of relationships in their lives. Nearly all of the women interviewed spoke of the times when they would get on the round-a-bout swing, where they would reaffirm their identity by getting on one side of the swing and yelling out "England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales." Such a simple act reflected the need of the young girls to maintain a sense of personal identity and collective connection with their country of origin. It provided an avenue of resistance, albeit small, to the situation in which they now found themselves

We just went on the merry-go-round and we'd say, "there will always be Wales, there would always be England and there will always be an Ireland (Faith, 2011).

The girls very much identified themselves with the UK institution from which they came and, for most of the women, these institutions were remembered with fondness. Most of them had lived in homes run by the Sisters of Nazareth and so identified themselves as the 'Nazzy Girls'. From all accounts,

the girls who had lived with the Nazareth nuns had enjoyed a relatively good life. Faith, who came from Lancaster, spoke about going to school each morning and the local children calling out, “Here come the Nazzy bombs.” She remembers being treated very nicely by her peers. Kathleen, who was in a Nazareth home in Wales, recalls:

The nuns were lovely. The nuns in Bala were lovely, there was one nun that was – she was absolutely lovely, Sister Margaret her name was. Funny enough, when the nuns opened their place down here in um, not Winthrop, Fremantle they had a Nazareth house they opened up for old people and Sister Margaret that looked after me in Wales worked in this one here and I went to see her and catch up with her (Kathleen, 2011).

The Welsh girls from Nazareth house in Cardiff found a very positive identity through their ability to sing and harmonise beautifully. They were often made to sing for the visitors, on fete days and for the school choir. The positive affirmation received through their singing was significant in the girls’ lives as they all remembered the singing as one of the strongest positive memories of being in the institution:

Whenever any visitors came it was always ‘Get those migrant girls’ because we used to sing and with the Welsh girls we used to harmonise you see. It was just a natural thing that we did, so then we’d have to go and get all prettied up and go and sing for the visitors and be on show (Kathleen, 2011).

Emily, who was in Nazareth House in Belfast, gives an insight into how being part of the Nazareth homes in the UK enabled the girls to identify themselves as a group:

Well sort of, we sort of stood up for ourselves – we used to have this merry go round thing in the garden and we’d get on that and we’d sing ‘We’re the gang of the Nazzy [Nazareth] home so we can play you see, we’re off to every (?) thing, whatever it may be. The Aussies think we’re silly but they’ll find a big mistake for when they come to the Nazzy home they’ll find us all awake’.

That’s the songs we used to make up. We used to get [on the swing] The Nazareth girls and then the Aussies would get on the other side and of course we’d always beat them in the singing (Emily, 2011).

The female child migrants who arrived as twelve year olds or older were able to maintain a sense of national identity through their singing competitions, the memories of their lives in Britain and, for some, through the correspondence with friends and family. The ones who arrived at a younger age sometimes struggled to remember their time in the United Kingdom but remained loyal and deeply attached to their imagined homeland. This is understandable as they could identify with a group within the orphanage. Ultimately it was a connection to their roots and a place where the answers to their identity-related questions could, and for many would, be found.

Given their ages, it is difficult to say how much influence the orphanage had on the construction of other aspects of the girls' personal identities. Of the eight women who were interviewed, five had contact with their families as children in the UK. Four of the women had spent some of their time with their families and/or had lived with their parents, their brothers and sisters and their extended family. While their experiences within the family may have been traumatic and, in some cases tragic, they all spoke of their place within a family unit and all identified with a home and or community.

The other three women interviewed, for the most part, had no recollection or knowledge of their families and had only ever experienced institutional life. However, the relationships made in those institutions were, for two of those women, lifelong connections. Despite having a sense of belonging, albeit somewhat tenuously, the female child migrants' induction into, and subsequent existence within, St Joseph's institution, led to a process where many of the girls' individual identities and self-esteem seemed to be systematically eroded by the social and religious rigidity of the institution. The personal connections and links with the United Kingdom for most of the female child migrants lessened over time to the point where, for most, all contact was lost for decades. However, the need to reconnect with family was strong in all the girls and the female child migrants spent the best part of their adult lives looking for, or reconnecting with, the families they had left behind. They were all driven by the need to know who they were, to whom they belonged, where they fitted in and why they were institutionalised and sent away from their countries. Only Emily

and Shirley were successful in maintaining communications with friends and, in Kathleen's case, with her mother. As indicated above, some of the women were eventually reunited with family members when, as adults, with the support of family, the British Migrant Trust and the Sisters of Mercy, they were assisted financially and provided with help from social workers to trace their families.

A variety of factors including family responsibilities and finances were barriers in the search for the families they had left behind. It was not until 1997 that an opportunity arose for all the women to travel back and hopefully meet family members. The Sentimental Journey Programme, initiated by a former St Joseph's girl, and supported by the Sisters of Mercy and the British Migrant Trust, enabled many of the women to travel to the United Kingdom and visit their families. For some of the female child migrants, this trip allowed them the opportunity not only to meet family members but also to discover siblings, some of whom they were aware and others they were not. It was also an opportunity for them to meet the girls who had come to Australia, who they not seen for decades.

The trip back to the UK was covered extensively by both the British and Australia media and was a catalyst in bringing the story of the child migrant into the public arena. For some of the female child migrants, the experience of meeting family members was positive but for others the journey held challenges for both the female child migrants and their UK families. With the exception of Shirley, all the female child migrants interviewed for this study have made contact with members of their families.

St Joseph's Girls

When interviewing the female child migrants one of the questions asked of all the women was, "What is your best memory of the orphanage?" They all replied that they had none. Despite this answer, and the negative aspects of the remembered lives at the orphanage, the female child migrants continue to identify themselves as the 'St Joseph's Girls'. This association appears to have provided support for many of the women after their release from the orphanage and continues to do so at present.

Before the responsibilities of marriage and children, the female child migrants would try to socialise regularly:

We used to go out with boys but I had this bloke and he was from the country somewhere but he'd come down and he'd take us out on the weekend. I had to bring all the girls with me. I'd say, "I can't go unless they come." He used to take us all out and we'd go down to Scarborough and have lunch and everything (Emily, 2011).

Most of the female child migrants married in their early twenties and contact with each other became irregular or in some cases non-existent. Factors such as distance, children and finances, meant that physical contact was not always possible but the girls always managed to catch up for marriages, births, special events and sometimes at the *Gift Sunday* fete. In later years, when access to each other was easier and when time would allow, the female child migrants would gather for lunch with each other:

We used to meet regularly but now when the children have all grown up and they've got their grandchildren it's so different now but Emily rings me up often, very regularly (Faith, 2011).

Labelled for Life

The female child migrants were only in the orphanage for an average of six years, but at a formative stage and, during this time, their institutional experiences significantly influenced how the girls identified themselves in relation to the outside world. They weren't just orphans, they were migrant orphans. The shame of being an orphan and the accompanying stigma meant that some of the women never spoke about their background with friends, acquaintances or, in some cases, family members:

I was ashamed, because, I was ashamed of my...I've always felt like a second-class citizen. You know because my, my childhood and my being in a home for bad women and then coming over here and being you know in an orphanage and I just didn't want to talk about it. I never talked about it to my husband, which was a shame, I would like to have done that you know. (Bridie, 2011).

We always felt different because we were in the orphanage. We always kind of felt that we were beneath others. We would never tell the people where we worked that we were orphans because in our day it was like a stigma to be an orphan. Because an orphan wasn't just - I don't know what it was (Faith, 2011).

It is clear that some of the women were treated badly because of the stigma associated with being an orphan, but these negative experiences, however, appeared to have been mainly from future mothers-in-law:

And then when I met Dan's mum when we got married and she used to really put me through the ringer (Shirley, 2011).

And so she [mother-in-law] didn't like me, she gave me an awful time but we finished up the best of friends and I was really, really good to her (Bridie, 2011).

But even when I met up with Barry [husband] his mum didn't like me at first because I was an orphan, I'd been an orphan and she probably thought who's my boy marrying, you know, an orphan with no money (Rose, 2011).

For the most part the women reported that, when co-workers or acquaintances discovered they were orphans, the attitude of the others was positive and supportive:

He [Mr Penny, the boss at the Water Board] was on the board that was looking after all the children that came out from England, from the Immigration Department. They were looking after all the children and he was on the Immigration Department and he had like a special room in the - where I worked, the Immigration Department. We were having morning tea and he said to me one day, 'How many are working now Faith?' And I said, 'About eight.' 'Eight!' and they realised then that there was something - so Mr Penny said to Kathleen and I, 'Well you go and fix up the ice for summer?' and we said, 'Isn't it a bit early?' 'Yeah but just go and order it, make sure they've got it in.' We said 'Alright then.' So while we were away he told them [staff] that we were from the orphanage, you know, and everything about us. And when we came back they were completely different. You know they were really lovely. We were ashamed to say that we were from the orphanage and yet every time they asked us questions we'd always kind of, you know, try and get out of it or something. We didn't mind after that (Faith, 2011).

One day we got on to the bus and I don't know what happened, I think he [bus driver] asked Mary something and Mary said, 'Yeah we live up there.' and he said 'Oh are you all from the orphanage?' and we said, 'Yes' and he said, 'Oh' and after that he was wonderful, he never took our fares or anything like that, he'd say go and sit down. If he saw us coming down he'd always wait for us because he knew that we were coming and he'd say, 'Come on.' so we'd run on down. He was really lovely to us. (Faith, 2011).

With the exception of Faith, who joined the convent, all the female child migrants married in their twenties, some younger, and all had children. Although they assumed the identity of mother and wife, many of the women reported that they felt that they never really had their own identity. Some of the women explained that their identity was in relationship to their husbands and their children and that they had no understanding of who they were:

Oh oh I tell you I was.... They [nuns] tell you, you do this, you do that and I just did that, I was very, very timid. You can't believe now, because I've got more of a personality even since I lost my husband and I was always Mrs Keith Smith, you know, whereas since he's been gone, about 18 years now and I developed my own personality but before that, you ask anybody at the orphanage I didn't say anything I was quite timid (Bridie, 2011).

I was really in a bad way and I was crying and everything and I said oh God I just wish, I really wish I just knew who I was and he [doctor] said, and he grabbed hold of my hand and said, "Shirley the way you have been brought up". And he said, " You know you've had a real tragic background". And he said, "You know you're looking for your roots and who's this and who's that" and I said, "Yeh, but I really don't know who I am" (Shirley, 2011).

Over the years, most of the female child migrants interviewed have been in contact with each other and with other female child migrants from St Joseph's. Due to the profile of the child migrants being raised in the public arena over the last decade, Community Link and Network (CLAN), a support network, has enabled the women to make contact and to stay in touch with other child migrants, both men and women. Gatherings are held regularly throughout the year and a newsletter is produced twice a year, updating news and events for all the child migrant groups in Western Australia.

Sixty years after the female child migrants left St Joseph's Orphanage they still wear the badge of being a "child migrant orphan" but distinguish themselves within that group as the "St Joseph's Girls." This acknowledgment of identity and association with the orphanage may seem incongruent with the descriptions and experiences of the girls while inmates at the home. However, for them to deny or forget this significant part of their lives would be difficult as it has defined much of their opportunities and the decisions in their lives. Their continued affiliation with each other and the extended family of the child

migrants allows the female child migrants the opportunity to mix with people who have endured similar experiences.

Summary

This chapter examined the impacts of the issue of identity upon the lives of the female child migrants. Stripped of their identity and connection with their previous lives in the United Kingdom, the need to identify strongly with a group, and to locate their selves within that group, was a significant issue for all the women interviewed. The desire to find and reconnect with their familial and cultural identity, and to divest themselves of the stigma associated with being a child migrant and an orphan, has been a driving force in the lives of the women.

Most of the women were ashamed of the fact that they were child migrants and they attempted to hide their institutional background. The women perceived a stigma around their identity and assumed what Goffman (1963) refers to as a virtual identity. The absence of a stable, familial identity and a perceived stigma left many of the women feeling unable to interact with “normals” at a confident and intimate level. Some of the women reported that they only really felt comfortable when they were with other girls from the orphanage. Goffman (1963) suggests that, when stigmatised people gather in groups of like people, they are provided with an opportunity to stop managing the information they feel they need to do when interacting with “normals.” With their identity management relaxed, they can better evaluate themselves and their situation within the norms of that like-minded group. In terms of the female child migrants, I would argue that this was the case for many of them over the years as they struggled to manage their stigma. As time has passed, however, and the stories of the child migrants have permeated the public consciousness, they are letting go of the feeling that they need to manage this information about themselves. When accompanying one of the female child migrants to the movie *Oranges and Sunshine* (Alizart & Loach, 2010), a movie telling the story of the child migrant, the female child migrant stopped outside the cinema, introduced herself as a child migrant and then related the details of her experiences to all those present.

While the need to manage their stigma has diminished for most of the female child migrants interviewed, the evaluation of identity is still evident in child migrant gatherings. At a CLAN barbecue (2011), to which I was fortunate enough to be invited, former child migrants from a variety of Catholic institutions gathered for a Christmas celebration. While all the women were known to each other, they tended to sit together in their institutional groups. I was quietly told that the St Joseph's girls were just a little more refined than the others.

CHAPTER 11

CONCLUSION

Overview

This study provides an insight into the lives of a group of women who were part of a child migration scheme that saw thousands of children sent to Australia after WWII. It addresses, to some extent, the gap in the literature related to female child migrants in Western Australia, and specifically the life of female orphans at the Catholic-run institution of St Joseph's Orphanage, Subiaco.

The purpose of this study was to understand the impacts of the institutional experiences of eight former female child migrants on their sense of identity and their ability to negotiate the world outside the orphanage. I wanted to find out, through asking for their perceptions, how their experiences at St Joseph's Orphanage had impacts upon their lives. I sought to examine how daily interactions within the walls of the orphanage contributed to the women's senses of identity and to discover what kinds of social and cultural understanding of their new country they acquired while institutionalised. I focused on how the women interpreted their relationships and interactions with the nuns, who ran the institution, and with other orphans; how their experiences within these groups and how the socialising activities informed their view of the world.

Discussion of Findings.

Using a qualitative methodology, I conducted narrative interviews with eight female child migrants, and triangulated the data that emerged from those interviews with archival material and personal documents and artifacts. The findings that emerged from that analysis resulted in a rich amount of data that enabled me to answer my research questions. In analysing how the institutional experiences of the female child migrant informed the accumulation of cultural capital and the impact of those experiences on the identity of the female child migrants, my research was informed by the theories of symbolic interaction and constructivism. By documenting and comparing the interactions of the women in their everyday lives and examining the wider social influences, I explained

how those interactions had impacts upon the women's senses of self and the social capital they attained.

Research question 1

How are the day-to-day experiences of life in the orphanage remembered by female child migrants?

The respondents interviewed remembered the day to day experiences of life at the orphanage as a negative experience. They all recalled and described an environment of deprivation and fear in which they were routinely and arbitrarily punished and at times humiliated. Religious rituals and sentiment underpinned the regimented daily routines, and all activities were tightly scheduled, allowing few opportunities to break from the monotony of the day. A gruelling daily workload was imposed upon all the women that required them to perform hard physical labour, attend school, and to engage in religious practices.

It appears that St Joseph's Orphanage mirrored a total institution as described by Goffman (1963). The children had aspects of their identity suppressed, had all aspects of their day regulated and were, for the most part, isolated from mainstream society (Chapter 5). Discipline and control were achieved through a "panopticon-like approach" (Foucault 1979) with the hierarchical power of the Sisters of Mercy being maintained through structures of surveillance and punishment (Chapter 8). Informed by the teachings of Catholicism, the systems and processes through which discipline and control were maintained resulted in an environment that was at times brutal and dehumanizing. These institutional factors led to a homogeneous environment where daily interactions and interpretations were, for the most part, far removed from social reality.

Meltzer et al (1980) propose that society is constructed from behaviour of humans who play a role in developing and maintaining the socially acceptable limits to be placed on behaviour. It is reasonable, then, to expect that these social limits reflect societal norms. It is clear, however, that the female child migrants were not provided with realistic or balanced social limits (Chapter 7). The social limits experienced by the female child migrants were, on many levels,

unrealistic and unattainable by any standards. The punishment for small and arbitrary infringements, based on religious interpretations by some of the nuns, meant that many of the children had a distorted understanding of what were acceptable and unacceptable actions in the wider society. From a symbolic interactionist position (Ritzer, 2007), the individual and society are inseparable; therefore an understanding of one requires' an understanding of the other. In the case of the female child migrants, their limited engagement with the outside world, and their skewed understanding of what was expected and acceptable behaviour, especially when it came to dealing with personal interactions between themselves and others, left them with a limited understanding of wider society (Chapters 7, 8, 10).

Research question 2

How have these remembered experiences impacted upon the self-perception of these Female Child Migrants?

The findings in the study were convergent with Bourdieu's (1986) notion that social competence is inculcated by family, school and society and that social understanding acquired by people is the product of the time and effort that is invested in them by their primary and reference groups. For the female child migrants the primary and reference groups at St Joseph's were identical. This led to a circularity of interactions in which the social competence being inculcated was based only on religious underpinnings and the systems and practices used in the orphanage. This social capital, however, did not invest the women with the social skills needed in the world outside the institutional walls. All the respondents interviewed acknowledged that they were socially unprepared for the world outside the orphanage (Chapters 7 & 12) and that this initially resulted in a limited understanding of their place in that world.

Bourdieu's (1986) theory of habitus asserts that preferences that seem to be individual choices are in fact determined by the access that one has to particular cultural and material capital. These choices are important as they determine how a person fares in the world. It was clear from the data, and supported by the literature (Penglase, 2007; Humphreys 1994), that the lack of varied and suitable social experiences and interactions contributed to a

deficiency of social development for the female child migrants. This had direct impacts upon the social and economic choices available to the women when they left the home. A lack of educational opportunities and/or meaningful training beyond household and nursery-related duties also contributed to reduced opportunities for the women.

It is clear that all the female child migrants had arrived at the orphanage with a cultural competence that reflected where they had come from in the United Kingdom. All respondents spoke of the importance of maintaining their cultural identity and being a part of a group in which they could find commonality and cultural familiarity. All but three of the women had had access to various social experiences outside the institutions in the United Kingdom, but structures and systems internalised by the women provided them with limited knowledge about their new environment. With the exception of the shared knowledge and understanding of the Catholic rituals and religious teachings, the female child migrants all reported that they found themselves in a very alien environment when they arrived in Australia. (Chapters 4 & 10).

Rubin and Rubin (2005) argue that people strive to comprehend the world they live in, and learn from their conversations with their friends, relatives and neighbours. For the female child migrants, however, the knowledge that is readily available to people who move in and out of contact with a variety of groups was unavailable to them in the confines of an institution. Their day to day experiences of living in such a confined environment directly affected the type of cultural information available to them. What information they did obtain was grounded in religious teachings and enforced within a system based on a combination of strict rules and regulations.

There was limited opportunity for diverse social interaction, with all activities done in the company of the same people every day. This limited social interaction also meant that they had no way to perceive or evaluate their own world (Goffman, 1959) inside the institution. The circularity of symbolic interaction meant that the same skewed, limited messages, very often negative, were being reinforced throughout their years of incarceration.

Any social skills the female child migrants accumulated in the orphanage provided them with little currency in the economic and social world outside the home. The wider society became a scary place for many of the women. For most of the women, life outside the orphanage was a testing time but, as Ritzer (2007) suggests, people are capable of reflection and therefore can shape their actions and interactions. In the course of the study, it became clear that most of the women have been able to reflect on their time at the orphanage and have come to understand how their time there affected their life choices and opportunities. While some are still coming to terms with the years spent there, they have for the most part been able to negotiate the world successfully. As Rose put it, *"It doesn't define me"* (Rose, 2011).

Identity

A significant finding of this study was the importance of the need to be identified as belonging to someone or something. From a constructionist position, Laing (1961) proposed that others' confirmation or disconfirmation influences the sense of self and confirms that person's existence in society. On arrival, the female child migrants were stripped of anything relating to their personal identity. The reasons for trying to create a homogeneous group can only be speculated upon at this point, but it is clear from the data (Chapter 9) that attempts made by some of the nuns to get the female child migrants to forget their cultural ties were resisted by the women (Chapter 9). Being able to identify with a particular culture or group was important to the women interviewed. The need to retain their identity by any means was evident throughout the study (chapters 4, 6 & 10).

Although the women interviewed were only in the orphanage for an average of six years, it appears that their experiences there had significant impacts on how they viewed themselves and their status in the world. Many of the women reported that they felt stigmatised by the label of "orphan" and "migrant." The negative stigma that often accompanied the term "orphan," and the term "dirty migrants," was frequently used by some of the nuns and instilled a sense of contamination (Goffman, 1963) about being a female child migrant in some of the women. The perceived cruel treatment of the "migrant girls" was

also significant in how the women saw themselves as individuals and in relation to others. Thus the continual use of the term “dirty migrants” and the constant negative reinforcement, through interactions with a homogeneous group of people in a closed community, resulted in many of the female child migrants believing that their identity of child migrant and orphan was something to be ashamed of and best hidden from the wider community.

Disciplinary practices in the orphanage, and the general treatment of the inmates is also likely to have contributed to the social stigmatisation and the diffident sense of identity reported by many of the respondents. Even though this perceived stigma was a discreditable stigma (Goffman, 1963), many of the women were reluctant to admit their background to friends and, in some cases, families. This reluctance, however, has now been overcome by the women and all the respondents have searched, and continue to search, for their origins and to relocate themselves within their cultural and personal/familial frameworks (Chapter 10).

Research question 3

What are implications of this new knowledge on policy and practice for the education of children in institutions?

The placement of children into orphanages in Australia, such as that at the centre of this study, is not currently widely practiced in Western societies. However, the orphanage system appears to be the standard arrangement for the care of children in many economically developing countries. Csaky (2009) reports that there are at least eight million children worldwide in a variety of institutions, with many of those institutions being orphanages.

The findings of this study indicate that the use of the total institution (Goffman, 1961), as a way of providing care for orphaned children, is not conducive to providing children the necessary social skills needed to participate successfully in mainstream society. It appears that the abilities of orphanages to meet the basic and immediate needs of food and shelter for collectives of children comprise, for the most part, an adequate way of providing for children who require basic necessities of survival. It is unlikely, however, that

institutional life can offer the necessary individual attention or constructive and diverse interactions for the development of competent social skills.

Furthermore, findings in this study also suggest that the running of large institutions means that systems and procedures are developed primarily to ensure efficiency of the day to day routines. With the focus upon efficiency for the greater good, these systems can sometimes result in processes that depend on harsh disciplinary actions, with possible detrimental effects on the residents.

For children to be able to evaluate themselves in relation to the wider social environment, it is necessary that they have the opportunity to participate in a range of socialising experiences. Limited access to a variety of social encounters outside their immediate primary and reference groups can be considered a disadvantage, as access to a range of meaningful interactions with people and events outside one's own habitus adds to the accumulation and evaluation of culture capital (Bourdieu, 1986). For many children, however, the opportunity to access and experience a variety of social interactions is unavailable.

Implication of Educational Practices

It is clear from the data that the educational practices of St Joseph's Orphanage lacked specialised teachers and necessary academic resources. The women were provided with a rudimentary education but it wasn't simply the lack of academic rigor that marginalised them, it was the lack of understanding about how the social world worked that presented them with their greatest challenges. As the respondents in this study recognised, the cloistered upbringing they experienced in the orphanage denied them a diversity of experience of the wider society of neighbourhood and community. This lack of social experience failed to prepare them adequately for participation in the wider society and left them ill-prepared when leaving the orphanage.

Without exception, the women in this study expressed their sadness at not receiving an opportunity to access a meaningful education. They acknowledged that the lack of academic achievement, together with their reduced opportunities in social situations, diminished their employment prospects.

While all the women participated in paid labour when they left the orphanage, all but one were employed in factories or in government offices where they worked in unskilled positions. Although some of the women sought to further their studies when they left the orphanage, it appears that domestic duties and family responsibility eventually took precedence over further educational or training opportunities.

Future Study

It is estimated that ten thousand child migrants were sent to Australia after World War II and the profoundly negative effects that this practice had on many of the children involved is only now being fully realised. Investigations into female child migrants have been limited, or overshadowed by stories of the male child migrants whose experiences have been well documented. Further investigation into female child migrants would contribute to a better understanding of the experiences of this under-explored part of Australian history.

A future study examining the long-term effects of institutionalisation on subsequent generations of child migrants might also contribute to the bank of knowledge on the long term and intergenerational effects of institutionalisation.

My Thoughts

This research has provided an opportunity to study the impact of government policy upon the individual. The experiences of the female child migrant resulted from a policy that appeared to have the Australian nation's best interest at its heart but little consideration was given to the effect on those at the centre of the policy. It is only in recent times that the Australian and British governments have acknowledged the plight of the children who were sent to Australia under the Child Migrant Scheme. In 2009 the former Prime Minister of Australia Kevin Rudd, provided an unqualified apology to Child Migrants who suffered abuse or neglect in care. This was followed by an apology from Gordon Brown the then British Prime Minister in February 2010 (Alliance For Forgotten Australians, 2013). According to the participants in this study, the acknowledgment of their suffering and the subsequent apologies by both

governments have had a positive effect on their lives and helped in the healing process.

The women interviewed for this study achieved the outcomes the government had envisaged but, for some of the women, the emotional and physical cost was, at times, challenging.

Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the little voice at the end of the day that says I'll try again tomorrow."

Mary Anne Radmacher

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APPENDIX 1

INFORMATION LETTER

Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Information letter regarding Research by Diane Parker

Date

Dear Mrs X,

Educational Experiences of Female Child Migrants in Western Australia between 1948 - 1955

My name is Diane Parker and I am writing in my capacity as a Masters Student from ECU. I am conducting a research project that aims to explore the educational experiences of female child migrants in Western Australia between 1948 -1955. This will involve interviewing women who were child migrants at this time and allowing them to share their stories with me.

I hope to record and document the interviews. My aim is;

- to find out former Child Migrants' attitudes and values to education as a result of their experiences,
- to identify their own educational achievements and employment, and
- to identify the educational achievements of their children.

The project is being conducted through Edith Cowan University, School of Education, and my supervisors are Dr Anthea Jo Taylor. and Ms Barbara Harris. This study is part of a qualification I am completing to attain a Master Degree by Research (Education). My Bachelor degree is that of Women's Studies, and I have a Graduate Diploma in Education. I currently work as a teacher for high school students teaching Politics & Law. I am also the daughter of female child migrant (now deceased) which is a motivating factor in this study.

I would like to invite you as a former child migrant to take part in the project as I believe that your contribution would be of great value. In the past, there has been little opportunity for female child migrants to formally tell their stories and to get a real sense of their day-to-day lives during their time under the Child Migrant Scheme. It is hoped that the material gained will add to this body of

knowledge regarding the unique individuals and their lives during this time.

What does participating in the research involve?

You are invited to participate in an initial interview with myself, and then again a follow up interview some months later. The interviews will be relaxed and informal, with the focus on letting YOU tell YOUR story as it relates to life in an institution. Subject to your permission, the interviews will be recorded on audio, or on audio-visual. The information in the final report to the University however, will be a written report, which may include excerpts of oral recordings and visual representations.

Do you have to take part?

No. Participating in this research project is entirely voluntary. This decision should always be made completely freely. All decisions made will be respected without question.

What if you wanted to change your initial decision?

If you wish to participate, the decision will need to be made by / 2011 for you to be included in the project. Once a decision is made to participate, you can change your mind at any time up until the final report is compiled - around December 2011.

There will be no consequences relating to any decision you make regarding participation, other than those already described in this letter.

What will happen to the information I give, and is privacy and confidentiality assured?

Participant privacy, and the confidentiality of information disclosed by participants, is assured at all times. Information that identifies anyone will be masked from the data collected, however as this is a small study group participants reading the dissertation may be able to identify other respondents. I will then store the data securely, with limited access to only my supervisor. The data will be used only for this project, and will not be used in any extended or future research without first obtaining explicit written consent from you, myself, and subsequently, a family member for perpetuity.

It is intended that the findings of this study will be compiled into a thesis report and presented to my University for examination. You will also be given a transcript of you interview to review before it is

used in the study. A summary of the research findings will also be made available to you upon completion of the project.

Is this research approved?

The School of Education, Edith Cowan University, Mt Lawley, and the ECU Human Ethics Research Committee have approved the research.

Who do I contact if I wish to discuss the project further?

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this study please contact me on the number provided below. If you wish to speak to my Supervisor about how the project is being conducted or was conducted, please contact Dr Anthea Jo Taylor anthea.taylor@ecu.edu.au or Ms Barbara Harris on (61 8) 6304 5377 ext 6720 or by email b.harris@ecu.edu.au. If you have any concerns or complaints about the research project and wish to talk to an independent person, you may contact the Research Ethics Officer, Edith Cowan University, 270 Joondalup Drive, Joondalup WA 6027, telephone 08 6304 2170, and email research.ethics@ecu.edu.au.

How do I become involved?

If you have had all questions about the project answered to your satisfaction, and are willing to become involved, please complete the Consent Form on the next page.

This information letter is for you to keep.

Kind regards,

Diane Parker
Research Student - for Master of Education
School of Education
Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Science.
Edith Cowan University, Mt Lawley, Western Australia.
Home telephone: 9294 3825 or mobile: 0403354009
Email: dparker@helena.wa.edu.au.

APPENDIX 2

CONSENT FORM

Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Research by Diane Parker - Consent Form

Educational Experiences of Female Child Migrants in Western Australia between 1948 - 1955

- I have received an information letter explaining the Research Project intended by Diane Parker and I have read it or had it explained to me.
- I understand what the study is about and how it will be done.
- I understand that the information obtained at interviews and throughout this process is confidential and the information will not be shared outside of the University (unless it is a legal requirement)
- I understand that I can choose not to participate and I can withdraw my consent to participate at any time and this will be respected.
- I understand that the reports of this research may be published and if so I will not be identified without express written permission.
- I understand that I will be given a copy of the Summary of the research at the conclusion of this project.
- I have been given contact information and understand that I can contact the researcher, Diane Parker, or her supervisor Dr Anthea-Jo Taylor to answer any questions.
- I am willing to become involved in the study as it has been described in the information letter.

Signed

Name & Address

Date

Diane Parker

Researcher

School of Education

Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Science.

Edith Cowan University, Mt Lawley, Western Australia.

Home telephone: 9294 3825 or Mobile: 040 335 4009

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APPENDIX 3

INTERVIEW STRUCTURE

The interviews undertaken in this study were open-ended with participants being invited to talk about their experiences in the following areas. Guiding questions included:

- 1 What memories do you have of your life before coming to Australia?
- 2 What are your memories of the journey out to Australia?
- 3 Tell me about your arrival in Western Australia and at St Joseph's Orphanage?
- 4 What are your memories of your time at St Joseph's Orphanage?
- 5 What do remember about the immediate period of life after the orphanage?

