

GUESS, BARBARA D., Ph.D. Experiences of African American Orphan Educators Once Called “Girls From That Colored Orphanage.” (2008)
Directed by Dr. Kathleen Casey. 352 pp.

First-hand stories about the experiences of orphan African American educators who grew up in the child welfare system are nonexistent. Typically, stories about orphans exclude African Americans and focus on male, European Americans. In cases where African Americans are not excluded from discussions on orphans, the focus tends to be on the negative rather than the positive aspects of their lives. This study investigates the positive outcomes of African American orphans who tell their own stories filtered, not through the eyes of childhood as the experiences take place, but through the mature eyes of educated adults. They narrate their own stories through first-hand knowledge about what it is like to live under the protection of child welfare.

The methodology chosen for this study is narrative research. Narrative research allows the researcher to collect data by tape-recording life histories, transcribing, and analyzing the data, which I did with African American educators who were “orphans” in the 1950s and 1960s. In accordance with the theories of Kathleen Casey, Jean Clandinin, and Michael Connelly, open-ended questions were utilized so that the voices of the participants could be heard through their own words, with all the selectivities and silences that personal narratives entail without losing the richness of the stories.

The six participants interviewed in this study are authors of their own narratives and they create meaning from their experiences through these narratives. Their understanding and interpretation of their orphan experiences may stand in sharp contrast to those of other researchers. My conceptual framework which incorporates narrative,

resilience, and the hidden curriculum of resistance yielded important findings: success in foster care is likely to result from permanence, stability, and resilience; policymakers should assess and promote resilience in children of foster care.

EXPERIENCES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN ORPHAN EDUCATORS ONCE
CALLED “GIRLS FROM THAT COLORED ORPHANAGE”

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of The Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Greensboro
2008

Approved by

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When the children left Havertown Industrial School Home they went their own separate ways. The contacts I made in order to conduct this research on the orphan experiences of six African American educators were made through a network of former residents of Havertown Industrial School Home. To those who helped me make those contacts and to those who trusted me enough to tell me their stories, I thank you. This dissertation is dedicated to you for helping to make this work come to fruition.

APPROVAL PAGE

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

With genuine love and appreciation, I thank my husband for his patience, understanding, encouragement, assistance, and involvement in this research project. My gratitude extends beyond the measure of words.

My appreciation is extended to Dr. Kathleen Casey, my committee chair, who spent numerous hours reading through my work, guiding, supporting, and standing by me when I was most in need of support; Dr. Carol A. Mullen who worked with me intensely and continuously, providing reference sources and helpful suggestions for how I might refine and make improvements in my work; Dr. Camille Wilson Cooper who maintained an interest in and offered important feedback regarding framing and highlighting the significant implications of my study; and Dr. Pete Kellett who was always friendly, encouraging, emotionally supportive, and worked with me in ways that made a big difference. I am grateful to you all.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I discuss my interest in orphans and my rationale for choosing to research the orphan experiences of African American educators. I also provide a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, and the need for the study. In my conceptual/theoretical framework I include definitions of terms, and I end this chapter with an overview of the study.

My interest in the experiences of orphans is an outgrowth of a curiosity and interest I have had since I was old enough to read “Little Orphan Annie” in the Sunday comics. I wanted to know if all orphans lived like Little Orphan Annie. I wanted to know how they lived, what they did, and what became of them when they grew up. I read voraciously and waited anxiously to see holiday television specials about orphans: *The Prince and the Pauper*, *The Little Match Girl*, *The Little Princess*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *David Copperfield*, *Jane Eyre*, *All Mine to Give*, and *Pollyanna*.

The books I read answered many of my questions about White orphans but never my questions about African American orphans. In fact, I never found a book about African American orphans until I began my research on the topic. As a girl, I had seen African American orphans because the children from the local orphanage had high visibility. They stood out because they usually went on excursions in groups: singing at local churches, going to the county fair, the circus, coliseum events, the YMCA, and

shopping. Their visibility was also high because they went to the same camp that most of the local Black children went to in the summer—boys to boys' camp and girls to girls' camp. During the school year the orphanage children attended the same consolidated school that all the Black children in the county attended, filling three school buses nearly to capacity.

I was in the same grade, took some of the same classes, participated in some of the same school activities, and belonged to some of the same school affiliated clubs as some of the orphanage children. Several of the girls from the orphanage were friends of mine, and a few of the participants in my research study were either childhood friends or associates of mine. Occasionally I see some of them when I am at work, at church, at funerals, or just when I am out and about in the community. Some of us remain associates. Still, up to the time I actually began my research, I knew nothing about how these women became orphans, the circumstances that precipitated their orphanage placement and dismissal, or what became of them once they left the orphanage that had been such an integral part of their lives.

I empathized with the orphanage children, and being a private person myself, I never asked any questions about their private lives because I did not want anyone asking me about mine. I had seen girls from the orphanage humiliate some of the other students at school for prying into their business, so I perceived the orphanage children, though friendly, to be a close-knit, but “secretive” group. I sometimes overheard them talk and laugh openly with one another about their orphanage experiences, but they were selective

about to whom they talked and about what they talked. They seemed to guard their privacy and I respected them for that.

As I came to learn, through my research, most of what happens to children in the foster care system is shrouded in secrecy and protected by confidentiality laws. I learned also that orphans in general are not forthcoming about what happens in their lives. They do not want other people to know that they are orphans (Braddy, 1933; Goldstein, 1996; McKenzie, 1995, Toth, 1997). Because I was aware of the private nature and discreteness of “orphans,” I began my research with trepidation. The idea of collecting data on their personal histories filled me with anxiety because I did not know how these “orphan” educators would perceive me in my attempt to conduct a narrative investigation of their life history and expose the details of their private lives to the public.

Since orphans are not generally forthcoming with their stories, their failure to self-disclose about their experiences helps perpetuate people’s ignorance about the social and emotional aspects of life in out-of-home care (Cmiel, 1995; McKenzie, 1996). “Orphans” who do not share their stories are complicit in helping to keep the mythic scripts (Gavin, 1984), romantic notions, and misconceptions about orphans and orphanages alive. The debate between Hillary Clinton and Newt Gingrich, in 1994, about orphanages being either like *Boys Town* or *Oliver Twist* (Cmiel, 1995) illustrates this point. Judging by how they talked about orphanages, neither had ever visited one of America’s orphanages or listened to more than a few if any of the nation’s orphans detail their experiences of living in an orphanage.

It may be easy and convenient for people to use classic novels, popular movies, and stage productions as points of reference about the realities of children in children's homes. However, these references may not be accurate representations of reality (Perry & Szalavitz, 2006). In fiction, orphans' conditions are usually deeply pathetic, and orphans live mechanical lives in loveless institutions (Nelson, 2006) or deplorable situations. Perhaps some real orphans do too, but my research confirms that not all of them do.

A good deal more happened inside orphanage walls than even the most perceptive visitor might imagine (Bogen, 1992). The same goes for other forms of out-of-home care. The real story about orphans' experiences, not to be confused with the "true" story (if such a thing exists) is much richer (Olasky, 1999). At the very least the real story shows how good orphanages combated various kinds of poverty among children who would have otherwise been truly the wretched of the earth (Goldstein, 1996; London, 1999; Olasky, 1999).

Until foster children—past and present—provide their own accounts of what happened to them in the foster care system, the public will never know what happened. One way to find out how orphans live is to hear the different stories that orphans have to tell. Since my interest is in African American orphans whose outcomes are constructive, my study of orphans focused on the experiences of orphaned African American educators.

Statement of the Problem

The child welfare system is in chaos (McKenzie, 1999b; Simpson, 1987) and crisis (Ashby, 1984; Epstein, 1999; McKenzie, 1999b; Roberts, 2002; Schwartz &

Fishman, 1999; Toth, 1997). Thousands of America's children are suffering because they are not properly nurtured, protected, and guided (Downer, 2001). Research shows that children who leave foster care are more likely to wind up homeless than children who grow up in their own homes because they are ill prepared to live on their own immediately following their emancipation from the child welfare system (Cournos, 1999; Fisher, A., 2001; Lindsey, 2004; McKenzie, 1999a; Toth, 1997). Children of the foster care system often wind up on the streets (Ashby, 1984; Bernstein, 2002; Murphy, 1997) and get involved in drugs (Bernstein, 2002; Cournos, 1999). They are also likely to wind up in prison (Lindsey, 2004), or find themselves dealing with unplanned pregnancies (Lindsey, 2004; Murphy, 1997).

If children's homes were still publicly accepted as they were decades ago, with improvements in facilities, proper staff, and supervision of course, then they might be a viable solution to the problem of what to do with children who need decent homes (Moriarty, 1999; McKenzie, 1999a). In their day, children's homes experienced much success because they fulfilled their mission "to clothe, house, and educate children; provide them with a specific moral and religious code; and otherwise care for children until they could be . . . placed in a family, or returned to their own homes" (Hacsi, 1997, p. 5).

All children deserve a happy and secure childhood, enabling them to make full use of their inherent capacity (Maas & Engler, 1959). But how can this be done? The solution to the problem of what to do with and how to provide for children in need of out-of-home care is no longer so obvious or absolute (Murphy, 1997) as the public was once

led to believe. In the early days foster care, which “includes all types of out-of-home placement: foster family care, orphanages, group homes, even adoptive homes” (Myers, 2004, p. 296) was viewed as positively the best solution for many children in need of out-of-home care (McGovern, 1948; Myers, 2004).

Now out-of-home care has come to be viewed as a problem (McKenzie, 1999a; Myers, 2004). As a consequence, the foster care debate that began in the mid-nineteenth century and intensified in the late nineteenth century boiled over into the twentieth century (Myers, 2004; Simpson, 1987). This perennial debate (Nelson, 2006) is now a twenty-first century problem. America still has not developed an effective strategy for caring for its growing population of dependent¹ children (Lindsey, 2004; McKenzie, 1999b; McRoy, 2004; Murphy, 1997; Reifsteck, 2005).

Heightened and renewed interest in children’s homes² began more than a decade ago, in 1994 (Boudreaux & Boudreaux, 1999; Cmiel, 1995; Dulberger, 1996; Gelles, 1999; Goldstein, 1996; Keiger, 1996; Lindsey, 2004; London, 1999; McKenzie, 1999b; Morgenthau & Springer, 1994; Olasky, 1999), when United States Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich called for a return to orphanages as a way to solve some of the problems of welfare. As part of the Personal Responsibility Act, Gingrich proposed that dependent children be taken from their welfare mothers and raised in orphanages. His proposal was,

¹ The 1935 Social Security Act defines “dependent” as children in need of assistance because of the death of their father, the disability of their father, or desertion by their father (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972). The 1935 Aid to Families with Dependent children (AFDC) program refers to “dependent” as minors who expect to depend on their parents for financial support (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972).

² “The word ‘orphanage’ is not good coin among child welfare professionals. It has Dickensian connotations” (Murphy, 1997, p. 162). Children’s home is a softer, more acceptable term (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972).

in reality, about stopping illegitimacy and dependence on welfare. It was about persuading unmarried women and women on welfare to control their reproduction (Johnson, 1997; London, 1999; Polakow, 1998).

Gingrich's proposal seemed to be not so much a strategy to provide for dependent children as a way to punish welfare mothers for being irresponsible and not taking care of their children by taking their children away from them (Roberts, 2002; Van Biema, 1994). Incidentally, nothing was said about what should be done to punish the fathers of children in these single-female-headed households. Gingrich's suggestion was not seriously considered by legislative officials however, (Schwartz & Fishman, 1999) and it "contributed little more than rhetoric" to his Personal Responsibility Proposal (London, 1999, p. 95).

Just the same, Gingrich's 1994 proposal revitalized a debate that was nearly a hundred years old. Thomlison (2004) describes the volume of research on the mistreatment of children as being small compared to the magnitude of maltreatment among children, and she contends that it is the responsibility of child welfare practitioners "to promote healthy development in children" who live in out-of-home care. Assessing and promoting resilience in these children is one such way of doing that (Fernandez, 2006; Fraser & Galinsky, 2004; Klein, Kufeldt, & Rideout, 2006; Masten, 2006).

Though probably not his intent, Gingrich's proposal dragged orphanages out of antiquity and back from the brink of obscurity and extinction and made them a uniquely public and modern-day topic. Additionally, it brought the plight of thousands of families

in need of intervention to the forefront of public awareness. Gingrich's proposal for caring for dependent children in orphanages led some orphanage advocates to seriously rethink the idea of bringing back the "orphanage" (Cmiel, 1995; Crenson, 1998; Goldstein, 1996; Hill, 2004; Keiger, 1996; Lindsey, 2004; McKenzie, 1999b; Murphy, 1997; Olasky, 1999; Schwartz & Fishman, 1999; Shughart & Chappell, 1999; Van Biema, 1994).

The shortage of substitute homes for dependent children (Crenson, 1998; Hacsí, 1997; Lindsey, 2004; McGovern, 1948; McKenzie, 1999b; Schwartz & Fishman, 1999; Zmora, 1994) has been a problem, which is a direct result of outcomes associated with substance abuse (Moriarty, 1999; Pecora, 2006; Toth, 1997) and mental and emotional illness (Dulberger, 1996; Pecora, 2006). It is a result of an increase in the incarceration of women (Wilson, Woods, & Hijjawi, 2004), the AIDS epidemic, poverty (Cournos, 1999; Pecora, 2006), and increases in the number of female-headed households living in poverty (Hill, 2004; Lindsey, 2004).

Even though it was in the first three decades of the twentieth century that more children were cared for in orphan asylums than at any other time in history (Hacsí, 1997), the resurgence of the "orphanage idea" is the result of a genuine need for homes for the thousands of dependent children who are waiting for stable, reliable homes. Children trapped in predatory neighborhoods that are rife with poverty and neglect, from which they are often unable to escape, find themselves in situations of abuse, inadequate parenting and protection, poor educational prospects, and limited opportunity. Moriarty (1999), a juvenile justice, says, "The saddest part of a juvenile judge's job is watching the

progress of a tiny victim of adult crime as he or she is molded by the system into a delinquent and eventually a criminal” (p. 43) all because of unfit home conditions. Children whose home conditions are unfit feel they don’t have anything to aspire to (Johnson, 1997).

Still, it would be a tragedy to return to the widespread use of children’s homes and repeat the mistakes of the past without examining what worked in America’s efforts to find homes for and improve the lives of dependent children. It would be a tragedy to return to the use of children’s homes or become more heavily reliant on foster family homes and adoption for children in need of out-of-home care without examining what went wrong in prior efforts to find homes for these kinds of children through the aforementioned initiatives.

If Americans who are interested in the welfare of children are to repeat the successes of the past, they need to examine what *did* work in former efforts to not just rescue dependent children from adverse situations but to protect them from harm and improve the quality of their lives. Child-saving in America was supposed to mean more than simply keeping a boy or girl safe when the parents were not able to (Lindsey, 2004). It was supposed to protect and mold the child (Cmiel, 1995; Colored Orphan Asylum of North Carolina, 1900; Dulberger, 1996; Goldstein, 1996; Polster, 1990).

Purpose and Rationale

One of my purposes in this study is to construct the personal histories of orphaned African American educators to find out how they talk about their experiences of being wards of the state and how different public and private initiatives helped to shape those

experiences. To tell the stories of these educators who experienced life in a “colored orphanage” in the 1950s and 1960s is to tell the story of generations of African American children who were separated from their families and the obstacles they faced in establishing themselves in the world outside the orphanage.

Since their stories are part of both African American history and the history of dependent children, their stories are worthy of being preserved. As Ted Chandler (1990), a product of the Thomasville (North Carolina) orphanage, said in his book *Tough Mercy*, the world can ill afford to lose individuals who spent part of their childhood in an orphanage because they “are samples of the reality of America” (p. 228). Since these individuals themselves cannot be preserved, what they say about their orphan experiences should be.

Need for the Study

If practitioners knew more about orphans’ experiences and factors that contributed to their resiliency, they could possibly use that information to help other dependent children in ways suited to the children’s individual needs. Although research on orphans “is of historical interest, what it has to say about the benefits and losses of [institutions] as a form of child care also can usefully be extrapolated to issues in the institutional care of current young victims of abuse, of family collapse, and to other problems peculiar to our times” (Goldstein, 1996, p. 185).

But how can an outsider, practitioner or otherwise, know what children in out-of-home care experience? The answer to this question is so painfully obvious that it makes the question seem somewhat of a conundrum. The answer is: ask the children who

experienced out-of-home care. They are the only ones who know (Bernstein, 2002; Burmeister, 1949; Goldstein, 1996; Lefeavers, 1983; McKenzie, 1996; Oxford Orphanage, n. d.; Toth, 1997; Van Biema, 1994; Zmora, 1994). Others only *think* they know. Child-caring experts and practitioners can debate the question, but they cannot know how children experience foster care without employing effective evaluative strategies (Reifsteck, 2005) to find out.

If child-caring specialists do not examine so-called “best practices” as they evaluate homes and services for children in need of out-of-home care, especially African American children, they can miss a good opportunity to improve services for these children (Reifsteck, 2005). According to Peebles-Wilkin (1995), “As the child welfare system continues to seek innovations, current initiatives for African American children [in need of out-of-home care] should be informed by the past” (p. 159).

Conceptual/Theoretical Framework

Before discussing the concepts that guide this study, I identify the terms I use interchangeably throughout this dissertation to refer to children in the child welfare system. I use orphans, dependent children, foster children, vulnerable children, and children in foster care to signify all children who live in a home other than their biological home and children who need assistance in being properly cared for in their biological home. When I speak of the official and social curricula of the orphanage I mean that body of knowledge the adults intended to transmit to the children to shape their understanding of the world through academics, discipline and structured living. Before I

define the children's hidden curriculum of resistance to the academic and social curricula of the orphanage, I discuss the concepts that drive this dissertation.

Several important concepts converge to guide this study—narrative, story, marginality, resilience, resistance, and hidden curriculum. Personal experience narratives provide a gateway for people to enter the world of strangers. By framing my study as narrative, readers are able to share in the lived experiences of the participants whose experiences are documented in this research. A narrative framework is the best way to present those experiences, and it is the best way for readers to understand the experiences of orphan girls who lived in out-of-home care as a direct result of inadequate in-home care. Presenting the participants' experiences as narrative also helps to illuminate their experiences. Since experiences happen narratively, they should be studied narratively (Bruner, 1987; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Merriam, 2002).

Narrative and Story in Research

Arguably, narrative can be viewed from a number of different perspectives as some theorists have done. For example, Gergen and Gergen (1993) identify narrative as the central means by which people fill their lives with meaning. Bruner (1987) says people apparently have no other way of describing "lived time" except in narrative form. Narrative, according to Bruner, imitates life and life imitates narrative. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) argue that narrative is a phenomenon as well as a method of inquiry; they define narrative as "a process of learning to think narratively, to attend to lives as lived narratively (p. 120). Clandinin and Connelly contend that in creating texts and

presenting them to readers, narrative inquirers do not prescribe applications; instead, they offer their readers a place to imagine their own uses and applications.

I argue here in this dissertation, that as a method of inquiry, narrative stimulates interest and allows readers to create visual images of the phenomenon under investigation. King, Brown, and Smith (2003) say that stories provide a window through which people can see into each other's lives, and if people listen carefully, they will learn about people's unique experiences and about experiences they share. An advantage to framing research as narrative is that it helps investigators arouse people's interest in learning about and understanding the experiences of others, and it facilitates that learning and understanding (Bruner, 1987; Coles, 1989; Mullen, 1997; Willoughby, Brown, King, Specht, & King, 2003).

What makes the utilization of narrative as a research methodology problematic is that it is neither simple nor innocent, or without hidden assumptions and limitations (Fisher, M., 2001). Still, narratives that deal with people's lived experiences are creative, and their use as inquiry has proved to be an effective method of teaching and learning about other people's experiences (Bruner, 1987; Casey, 1993; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Coles, 1989; Fisher, A., 2001; Mullen, 1997; Widdershoven, 1993).

Narrative and story are one in the same, and researchers often use the terms interchangeably or equate them. Mullen (1997), in discussing her use of narrative, claims that as a narrative form of inquiry into story, narrative is also "a process that respects people and their stories" (p. 132). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) conceptualize narrative inquiry as a way of thinking and of seeing people as "embodiments of lived stories" (p.

43). Bruner (1987) says the story of a person's own life is "privileged but troubled narrative" (p. 13). Narrative is potentially self-reflexive (Bruner, 1987; Coles, 1986; Mullen, 1997) and serves as a means of helping people make sense of life or of their lived experiences (Bruner, 1987; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Coles, 1986; Gergen & Gergen, 1993; Widdershoven, 1993). This making sense of life as lived applies to both the storyteller and the listeners who shape the stories they hear in order to make them into something of their own (Coles, 1986).

Narrating one's experiences in the form of a story, then, is a logical, imaginative, and natural way of relating the experiences of one's life. Mullen (1997) makes a succinct yet powerful statement about narrative when she says, "*We are our stories*" (p. viii). Because people *are* their stories, narratives about people's life experiences allow listeners to empathize with those who story their experiences. Widdershoven (1993) adds, "Story and life are similar, in that both are supposed to have meaning" (p. 4), and stories tell us in meaningful ways what life is about.

Stories have both personal and social significance (Casey, 1993; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Coles, 1986; Fisher, A., 2001; Mullen, 1997). Stories are "part of our psychological and ideological make-up" (Coles, 1986, p. 24), and all of us have a story inside of us that has yet to be told. When people talk about their feelings or put their experiences into words, they often do it in the form of stories. This makes telling stories an integral part of people's lives; according to Mullen (1997), everyone knows how to tell a good story. Josselson (1993) argues that when people are deprived of the capacity to narrate, they lose their identity, and human comprehension is jeopardized. I believe that

when people are given the opportunity to tell their story, their identity as human beings is heightened.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry tends to be literary in form and personal (Creswell, 2007).

Although narrative can be personal and written from the standpoint of an autobiographer or ethnographer, I do not write from the perspective of either. My approach to this study is purely one of a narrative inquirer and a collector and interpreter of other people's stories.

When I asked the participants in my study to tell me the story of their life (Casey, 1993), none asked about the meaning of my request. They all seemed to intuit the meaning behind my words, and they literally narrated their orphan experiences as stories, with a beginning, middle, and end. Not only does Mullen (1997) argue that people know how to tell stories but that narrative inquiry offers a fresh approach to learning and teaching. This I discovered with the orphan stories I collected.

So much about the private lives of orphans remains hidden treasures.

Consequently, I felt privileged to learn from the study participants as I listened to them story their experiences, their thoughts, and feelings. I also felt privileged to enter their world through their narratives. Narrative researchers minimize the distance between themselves and their research participants (Creswell, 2007). I felt that in order to gain access to the study participants' stories and thereby to enter the domain of their private lives, I had to be invited in. And I was.

My academic background in English and communication skews my lens in the direction of narrative as inquiry and methodology. For me, narrative is more effective in communicating people's experiences than forms of research that, conversely, use numbers and scientific terms to interpret people's experiences. Written and oral narrative helps me to conceptualize and understand what I both read and hear. Gergen and Gergen (1993) who say that meanings are subjective events that are public not private view narrative as the central means by which people give meaning to their lives. Once people tell the story of their life it becomes public and can be shared or even owned by others.

Narrative Identity

From my perspective, people's narrative identity refers to their way of seeing themselves as they reflect on their experiences. Their narrative identity may be informed by their personal view or by others' views of them, or it may be a combination of different viewpoints. As people mature, it is expected that their narrative identity will be less informed or even hampered by others' views of them as it may have once been during their childhood.

When people tell their life stories, they do more than chronicle the events in their lives. They also define themselves in the telling. Widdershoven (1993) defines narrative identity as "the unity of a person's life as it is experienced and articulated in stories that express this experience" (p. 7). McAdams, Josselson, and Lieblich (2006) concur that narrative identity is "the stories people construct and tell about themselves to define who they are for themselves and for others" (p. 4). McAdams et al. (2006) contend that as storytellers we are the stories we tell, and when "The I tells a story of the self . . . that

story becomes part of the Me.” (p. 3). As an analogy, when people look out on a garden they see its beauty differently from the way they see it when they are actually in the garden. Similarly, as people are living their lives they do not see themselves as being in a story or living a story until after their lives become a story. So when they reconstruct the events of their life, they are creating a narrative identity through the telling of past events.

As storytellers change over time because of the stages of life, the way they tell their story also changes. Since the self has different facets, then people’s stories are multi-dimensional, making everyone the constructor of more than one story, with each story having many versions (Mishler, 1992). Because of the multi-faceted dimensions of the self, narrative identity emerges out of a complex but poorly understood interplay between individual agency and social context (McAdams et al., 2006).

One way people construct their identity is by recounting their life experiences to others. Narratives are the means by which people fashion their identities (Gergen, 2005; Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992). These narratives are our chief means of portraying ourselves (Gergen, 2005). Because of their transformative power (Pals, 2006; Riessman, 1992; Straub, 2005), narratives help us understand our lives. Additionally, the “implicit meaning of life is made explicit in stories” (Widdershoven, 1993, p. 2). What we mean by these narratives can become evident when we tell our stories.

Social Resilience

Glicken (2006) provides a number of definitions other researchers use to present the meaning of resilience. He says resilience is (a) the ability to withstand and rebound from disruptive challenges in life; the ability to thrive, nurture, and increase one’s

competence in the face of adverse circumstances; (b) the ability to ‘bounce back’ from adverse situations, to overcome the negative influences that often block achievement; and (c) the capacity for successful adaptation, positive functioning or competence in spite of high levels of risk, chronic stress, or prolonged or severe traumas. Glickman who himself defines resilience as simply “successful social functioning” (p. xii), posits that the variety of definitions of resilience are inadequate and confusing.

Nonetheless, children whose outcomes are promising at the end of their tenure in the child welfare system are living proof that they are resilient. They do not exit the child welfare system as “broken dolls” (Schwartz & Fishman, 1999) as do children whose emotional needs are not met during their tenure in the child welfare system. Resilient children in foster care are those children who have at their disposal an assortment of survival strategies which they use. They set reachable personal and professional goals. They have dreams and they have plans for making their dreams come true. They are self-preserving rather than self-destructive.

Social Resistance and Marginalization

People by nature resist authority whether the authority is malevolent or benevolent. Marginalized people especially seem to have a built-in desire to control their own environment and resist being manipulated by others when they feel they are being oppressed. This resistance begins at a young age when children learn to endear themselves to others or act in contrary ways through aggressiveness or passivity in an effort to resist being outwardly controlled. Marginalized people experience oppression whether as individuals or groups when they become trapped in particular identities or

roles due to their class, sex, or ethnicity (Schutz, 2004). Schutz says that in reality, everyone is continuously subjected to multiple forms of control that are overlapping and intertwined.

Marginalized people, as some might term them, oppose disciplinary control in different ways and for a number of different reasons. One of the reasons is because they experience disciplinary control more often and more overtly than privileged people (Schutz, 2004). Children experience disciplinary control more often and more overtly than adults. Girls experience it more often and more overtly than boys. People, including children, who are managed under disciplinary control, know the pain and sadness of domination in disciplinary contexts, and they exhibit disapproval through resistance.

Poor people, especially those under disciplinary control, feel pressured to act, work, and live a certain way. They feel marginalized by and estranged from the privileged classes of society. Freire (2002) says that under a “paternalistic social action apparatus” where people are called “welfare recipients,” they are treated as marginal persons, but the truth is these people are not “marginals” (p. 74). Welfare recipients, who seem to be outside the main, are inescapably a part of the awareness of America’s governing elite—their high visibility makes them hard to ignore.

Orphaned African American children fit neatly in the category of “welfare recipients.” These children learn from the atmosphere of the school, which is extended from the home (institutional home for the participants in this study), that achieving success comes from adapting to set of precepts (Freire, 2000). Yet, even as these “marginals” learn to adapt, they use resistance by adapting to the precepts in their own

unique and creative ways and at their own individual pace. They develop and conduct their activities and act according to their own set of beliefs, which I refer to as their hidden curriculum. My definition of hidden curriculum is in concert with Giroux's (1983) who defines hidden curriculum as "those underlying norms, values, and attitudes that are often transmitted tacitly through the social relations of the school" (p. 198) and, in the case of the study participants, the orphanage.

Orphaned African American girls during the era of segregation, more than at any other time since institutionalized slavery in America, were perceived to be marginalized due to the limitations imposed on their social and economic mobility. In reality, many of these girls were neither marginalized nor oppressed. They combated oppression and marginalization by resisting every rule, every doctrine, every act of violence perpetrated against them, and sometimes even simple acts of kindness. More than by simply surviving, the would-be marginalized girls from Havertown Industrial School Home succeeded in setting goals for themselves and fulfilling their accomplishments, partly through acts of resistance. Regardless of how it might otherwise seem, the girls' resistance often kept marginalization and oppression at bay.

Overview of this Study

In Chapter II, I review literature on the experiences of children in foster care. In order to understand the experiences of children in the foster care system, whether their outcomes are negative or positive, concerned individuals must familiarize themselves with some of the experiences of real-life orphans. Stories that are negative should move those who work with children to petition for improvements in child caring policies.

Stories that are positive should inspire everyone interested in the welfare of children to search for ways to assess, promote, and enhance resilience in other orphan children so those children too can have success in their lives.

Chapter III is part of my literature review of the history of dependent children, first from an Africentric then from a holistic perspective with emphasis on the conceptions and misconceptions that people have about orphanages or children's homes as they are now called.

In chapter IV, I present the methodology of this narrative analysis which investigated the experiences of six orphan, African American educators who lived in a "colored" orphanage in the 1950s and 1960s. The life histories of the participants in the study add another dimension to the literature on foster children in that the participants each tell a story about the different experiences they had at the same orphanage. Their stories, which all have a positive ending, are told by African American educators to me an African American educator.

Chapter V describes the conditions of the participants' home lives before intervention by the child welfare system. Chapter VI, which is the core of the study, describes life at the orphanage and the participants' perception of their institutional home away from home. It delves into the kinds of training and discipline the participants received through education, religion, work, and leisure. It also includes the participants' perspectives about issues as mundane as the kinds of food they ate, the time they went to bed at night and got up in the morning, their patterns of socialization, and even the songs they sang to add flavor to the ordinariness of their everyday lives.

Chapter VII includes the participants' reflections of their time at the orphanage and their summation of their orphanage experiences. Also, I included in this chapter the participants' current career status. I conclude the chapter with the participants' summation of the lessons they learned from the professional curricula of the orphanage, their own social curriculum of resistance, and the implications of this study.

CHAPTER II

EXPERIENCES OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

This section on the review of the literature reveals what researchers say about children who experience life in the foster care system and what some of the children who actually went through the system themselves say about their experiences. Finally, I examine resilience theories that some researchers talk about in connection with positive outcomes of children of the foster care system.

Child Welfare League of America believes children experience a great deal of stress and trauma when they are forced to leave their birth parents, and as a result, they can be left with severe emotional, psychological, and behavioral problems (McKenzie, 1995). Those who successfully navigate their way through the stress and trauma without becoming unhinged do so because they bring strength with them (Epstein, 1999). I call this strength resilience because, according to Fraser, Kirby, and Smokowski (2004), resilience is a trait that allows children to achieve positive outcomes in the face of risks that might undermine their ability to grow into happy, health, well-adjusted, productive adults.

“Foster children” is an inclusive term that refers to children raised apart from their parents in foster care. Foster care refers to any mode of care where children are raised in out-of-home care, apart from their parents, in substitute or surrogate homes such as foster family homes, group homes, institutional children’s homes—which some say is just a

softer, more modern-day, or politically correct term for orphanages (London, 1999; Toth, 1997)—and in orphanages (as we traditionally think of them). I use “foster care,” “out-of-home care,” and “substitute care” interchangeably as I talk about foster children’s experiences because of the oneness of their meaning.

Experts in the field of child welfare agree that there is a need for improvement in services rendered to children (Askeland, 2006; Barth & Blackwell, 1998; Bernstein, 2002; Derezotes & Poertner, 2005; Everett, Chipungu, & Leashore, 2004; Lindsey, 2004; Myers, 2004; Satz & Askeland, 2006). They disagree about how to meet the needs of children in the foster care system (Askeland, 2006; Barth & Blackwell, 1998; Bernstein, 2002; Myers, 2004; Okundaye, Lawrence-Webb, & Thornton, 2004; Perry & Szalavitz, 2006; Satz & Askeland, 2006; Toth, 1997; Wilson, Woods, & Hijjawi, 2004). Child protection is one of the areas where improvements are needed most in child welfare. Protection from abuse is one the most challenging issues facing children in the foster care system. Many children in foster care suffer abuse prior to entering the system, during their time in the system, and following their emancipation from the system (Barth, 2005; Bernstein, 2002; Hill, 2004; Lindsey, 2004; Roberts, 2002; Schwartz & Fishman, 1999; Toth, 1997). Higher numbers of African American children in foster care suffer abuse than do other children (Barth, 2005; Hill, 2004; Lindsey, 2004) because higher numbers of African American children populate the foster care system. If there is a solution to these problems, it seems to elude all who seek it.

Even in the face of the massive shutdown of orphanages over fifty years ago, Maas and Engler (1959) said it is “vital that every state, city, and rural area of the United

States know the conditions of its children in foster care” (p. 378). When people know the conditions and the experiences of children in foster care, they might have a better understanding of what foster children go through, and they might also be able to ascertain why some children fail and some children succeed in spite of or because of foster care.

Customarily researchers of children in foster care fail to describe the conditions of the children before placement, in placement, and afterwards. According to Epstein (1999), even simple descriptions of the child welfare system are incomplete. Research is inadequate when it comes to girls and children from minority and low-income families (Fraser & Galinsky, 2004). My review of the literature on children in the foster care system has uncovered few documents on the experiences of African American children in foster care.

McKenzie (1999b), in the largest survey ever conducted on residents of America’s children’s home, gathered information from alumni from nine different orphanages in the South and Midwest. These children’s homes were supported by the Masons, Odd Fellows, and various religious groups. McKenzie received responses from more than 1,600 middle-aged and older alumni who, on average, had spent nine years in an institutional children’s home. No African Americans were indicated in the survey. McKenzie (personal communication, August 31, 2006) sees this as “a very big hole” in his research.

Literature on children in foster care in America often reflects this kind of hole or gap in the research. I propose to add to the literature on children in foster care in America to diminish the hole, to lessen the gap. The experiences of African Americans are

conspicuously absent in the literature (Dillard, 1995). Their experiences are ignored (Hambrick, 1997) or under represented (Green-Powell, 1997). Etter-Lewis (1996) says, “Women of color, who by definition experience the double bind of racism and sexism, tend to be underrepresented in research and literature . . .” (p. 3), and in those rare cases where the experiences of African American women are included, their experiences tend to be at the periphery rather than at the center of discussions.

As for African American foster children, their experiences are equally as important as the experiences of Caucasian children’s. But after World War II, only sketchy research on them exists in the literature (Everett, Chipungu, & Leashore, 2004). Most of the literature on children in the foster care system has relied on documents of White children. However, the experiences of African American children cannot be interpreted the same way as White children’s experiences (Everett, Chipungu, & Leashore, 2004). According to Etter-Lewis (1996), research tends to ignore the unequal treatment of different races of people.

To exclude African American children from research on children in foster care is to perpetuate a history of exclusion. Since African American children are overrepresented in the foster care system (Derezotes & Poertner, 2005; Hill, 2004; Lindsey, 2004; Everett, Chipungu & Leashore, 2004; Hill, 2004; Jackson, 2006; Lindsey, 2004; McCown, 2006; McRoy, 2004; Peebles-Wilkins, 1995, Roberts, 2002; Toth, 1997) their experiences should not be ignored. Instead, different lenses and different templates should be used to examine their experiences.

Because so many African American children enter and leave foster care each year, their out-of-home care experiences should be important to everyone concerned with the welfare of children. This includes child welfare agents and practitioners, policy makers, the juvenile justice system, teachers, substitute families, and the entire community because they all impact the outcomes of children in foster care. And in many ways, the outcomes of children in foster care impact the community as well. Failure to acknowledge the experiences of African American children in the foster care system, especially the experiences of African American females, is a failure to acknowledge the importance of the role they played and continue to play in shaping the history of foster care.

Researchers often discuss the challenges that children face in being “raised by the government” (Schwartz & Fishman, 1999), but discussions of *successful* products of the system are often omitted. Although the experiences of African American children in foster care are sparse in the literature, their experiences *should* be considered in child welfare programs and policy design. Becket and Lee (2004) argue that research on successful achievements of individuals, in spite of the odds, should be the central agenda of an Africentric approach to research because they emphasize the empowerment potentials. I argue that successful achievements of individuals should be the focus of an Africentric approach *because* of the odds, because those who *overcome* the odds have much to tell. For centuries maltreated children have served as symbols of human individuality, independence, and strength (Nelson, 2006). This is certainly true of African

American females who continue to struggle for human individuality, independence, and strength.

Foster Children Who Struggle to Overcome the Trials of Childhood

Although my topic is specific to African American girls of the foster care system who became educators, I found nothing in the literature on foster children, orphanages, or resiliency about this particular topic. Consequently, I directed my attention to literature on the experiences of children in foster care in general, searching where I might find information about African American children of the foster care system regardless of whether their outcomes were positive or negative.

Thousands of children grow up in foster care because living in their own homes is not a possibility. For many of them, foster care is preferable to living in their own homes (Maas & Engler, 1959; Murphy, 1997) which are abusive. Of those children placed in “surrogate family, foster homes” about 15% are unsuccessful and they become victims of the foster care drift until they age out (Toth, 1997) at eighteen. Since early on when orphanages were emptied and children were placed in foster family homes, only the troubled children who do not succeed in foster family homes go to group homes and children’s homes. Children in the literature I review next are a part of that group of children.

I reviewed much of the literature on children who talk about their experiences in the foster care system either firsthand or secondhand through a writer/researcher. The pieces of literature that I choose to discuss here, because of their narrative quality, are *The Lost Children of Wilder*, *Orphans of the Living*, *The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog*,

and *Finding Fish*. Of the three books: *The Lost Children of Wilder*, *Orphans of the Living*, and *The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog*, written by a writer/researcher, only *The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog* actually deals with children who are able to get past their childhood traumas and become self-reliant.

Finding Fish also ends with Antwone Fisher, a real life orphan, working through his childhood traumas enough to make peace with his past and move on with his life. Unlike the other narrative accounts, *Finding Fish* is written by the author himself about his own foster care experiences. *The Lost Children of Wilder* and *Finding Fish* are specific to the experiences of African American children. *The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog* and *Orphans of the Living* are about the experiences of foster care children from different ethnicities.

Finding Fish focuses on the foster care experiences of the author himself, Antwone Fisher. *The Lost Children of Wilder* (2002) focuses on the damaging effects that being deprived of parents, being a victim of foster care drift, and living in a psychiatric group home can have on orphan children in America who have no one to love and protect them.

The Lost Children of Wilder

The Lost Children of Wilder is an epic tragedy that spans twenty-eight years and involves three generations of African American children, Shirley Wilder, her son Lamont Wilder, and Lamont's son Sheemie (Shirley's grandson) whose lives are ruined by the foster care system. Children can and do suffer from abuses inflicted on them by growing up in foster care (Pecora, 2006; Roberts, 2002) as this book illustrates. The Wilder case,

also a legal case, is written from the perspectives of Nina Bernstein, a reporter for the New York Times. In *The Lost Children of Wilder* Bernstein shows how Child Protective Services fails in its numerous attempts to protect a maltreated, sexually abused teenage mother, her son, and her grandson from on-going abuse and neglect.

The three generations all suffer from racism inherent in the child welfare system and its associated inequalities. When news reporter Bernstein asks Lamont Wilder, the son of Shirley Wilder, what makes some children in foster care succeed, Lamont says that some children of the foster care system succeed because they just have it in them to succeed. He does not say what "It" is. "It" could be Lamont Wilder's reference to a child's determination to succeed in the face of obstacles that might otherwise thwart the child's efforts, a determination which Lamont himself does not have.

Yet, regardless of a child's determination to succeed, unless there is some outside intervention, unless there is some supportive adult in a child's life, that child is not likely to succeed because children by nature are *dependent*. They need experienced others to guide them and support them until they become self-reliant and *independent*.

The Wilders' story is a good example of how African American children in the foster care system do not receive the kinds of interventions they need to succeed, and the larger community (despite what people say about it taking a village to raise a child) is not always willing to give African American children what they need to succeed while in and after they leave foster care. Unfortunately, it is not the caring support of the community that influences many foster children like Shirley Wilder and her son; instead, it is the

streets that pull them into a spiral of self-destruction. Being swallowed up by the streets is a common theme in the literature on foster children. Fisher (2001) says of these children:

If you're a girl, God have mercy on you. If you're a boy, God have mercy on you, too. Depending on what kind of boy you are, you might survive; but if you're a girl, probably not. You don't need an invitation to come in, doesn't matter what you look like: fat, small, black, white, tall, Chinese . . . if you can breathe, if you're young and homeless, you're drafted [into the life of the streets]. (p. 215)

The government cannot claim innocence when it introduces trusting, innocent little children to the child welfare system and returns them to society after many years as “broken dolls” (Schwartz & Fishman, 1999). This is precisely what happens in the case of the Wilders, a point that Bernstein brings out. Bernstein paints a dreary picture, in *The Lost Children of Wilder*, of children whose lives are managed by the foster care system. Yet, she paints a realistic, unbiased view of what can happen to children who are raised in foster care. Foster care can be a dangerous world for children (Roberts, 2002). It can be a frightening world. It does not always provide children with the kind of safety and stability for which foster care was established to provide.

In *The Lost Children of Wilder*, Bernstein does not show how children emerge successfully from foster care. She does not reveal how they break the cycle of abuse and neglect. She gives no clues about how they break the cycle of poverty and dependence. Neither does the author make a distinction between children simply surviving in the child welfare system and their succeeding in the system. She highlights many of the negative but none of the positive aspects of being in the foster care system. No examples are presented in *The Lost Children of Wilder* to illustrate that the children met with even a

modicum of success. The book evidences only broken dreams, broken promises, broken families, and broken hearts. *The Lost Children of Wilder* exposes the dreariness and desperation of three generations of children who were so full of hope and whose lives, once so full of promise, end in disaster.

Orphans of the Living

Angel's Story

The next case, Angel's, is one of the two narratives I review from Toth's (1997) *Orphans of the Living*. I discuss Angel's case because, like the Wilders' case, Angel's is also a tragic epic of an African American family that spans three generations: Angel's mother, Angel, and Angel's children. At fourteen Angel marries her seventy year old former foster father. They produce five children who are taken from the couple and placed in foster family homes. Later in the marriage, Angel moves in with her thirty-five year old boyfriend who is heavily involved in the night life and suspiciously unscrupulous activities.

In this book, Toth reveals how children often linger in foster care because their mothers refuse to give up their parental rights as Angel does. Like Bernstein's (2002), Toth's book illustrates how parents' having good intentions of rescuing their children from the foster care system is not the same as actually rescuing them. Failure to relinquish parental rights can mean children languish in the foster care system indefinitely unless the courts step in and declare the children legal orphans, freeing them up for adoption. Toth's book also shows how *surviving* in foster care can be misconstrued

as *succeeding* in foster care by people who have little or no understanding of what it really means to be a foster child, especially an African American child in foster care.

Angel's story is only one of a host of stories that "orphans of the living" *could* tell. Her story represents the experiences of many at-risk children in the custody of the state and local government. The history of Angel's problems, like many other children in the foster care system, stems from poverty, neglect, and abuse. The foster care system often fails to provide appropriate services to address these problems in children who live in out-of-home care (Okundaye et al., 2004).

Bryan's Story

The second story I review from *Orphans of the Living*, is also a tragic one, but unlike Angel in her story, Bryan seems to be on the verge of achieving success at the end of the book. Like other children in foster care, Bryan goes through a series of setbacks following a series of successes. When he fails it is usually because of his naïve belief that he should be loyal to his family and friends from the old neighborhood who profess to have claims on him due to ties of kinship and friendship. But they are not good for him nor do they care about or try to help him reach any worthwhile goals. Toth claims that time and again, orphans of the living "reach out for a family that was never there for them and probably will never be. They reach out again and again, despite the hurt they experience after each rejection" (p. 308).

Like the other foster children I mentioned earlier as well as those I talk about later in this review of the literature, Bryan's successes come as a direct result of his hard work and the hard work of caring adults who provide him with emotional and financial

support. The goals that he achieves do not come from any kind of support from his biological family. The supportive adults in Bryan's life work diligently to steer him in the direction of success, guide him along the way, and monitor his progress. They support him in every one of his positive endeavors, and they give him as many chances to succeed as he needs following each setback. Bryan's greatest success comes from Mercy a home for boys that is run "as an old-fashioned orphanage" according to the author.

Mercy's mission is to develop self-reliance and personal responsibility in its boys and give them a chance to succeed. Bryan is one of those boys. Mercy seeks "to prepare them for independent living, advanced education and careers" and "to build in them strength to resist whatever temptation" that might get them off the track of success (Toth, 1997, pp. 290-291). Ironically, even though Mercy tries to teach its boys to be self-reliant and to take responsibility for their own actions, Bryan does not take responsibility for the steps he makes towards being successful. He only takes responsibility for his failures.

Because he neither takes credit for the positive things he does nor blames others for his failures, Bryan obviously is not a victim of self-serving bias. Instead, as he is a boy with low self-esteem. He credits God for saving him from his childhood, and rather than blame the foster care system for the negatives in his life, Bryan *accuses* the foster care system. He accuses the system of nearly destroying him by "banging him around," refusing to listen to him, and pulling apart the remains of his family. Bryan does not want people to know he is a foster child because of the stigma associated with being a foster child. Although he is unaware of it, Bryan acts as though he actually believes foster

children are bad, that they are undeserving and will never amount to much. He stymies his own efforts by living “down” to that stigma.

Even as a young man in his second year of college who knows better because he has been taught better, Bryan slips back into delinquency. He steals, abuses drugs, and associates with derelicts from his old neighborhood. Because Bryan does this, he becomes the victim of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Although he truly *wants* to succeed, he does not truly *believe* he can succeed so he engages in self-destructive behaviors that guarantee his failure rather than his success. He *makes* others’ beliefs about his being an undeserving foster child come true.

Children look to adults for assistance (Bernstein, 2002). Some get it. Some don’t. Cournos (1999) asserts that it is doubtful whether today’s foster children will be given the same *chance* to survive and prosper as children born in the 1940s and 1950s because unlike children today, children born in earlier decades had a significant amount of money invested in their determination to reach their goal of success. There may be some truth to Cournos’ assertion, but in *Orphans of the Living*, Bryan who is not a child born in the 40s and 50s *does* have a significant amount of money invested in him. His college tuition is paid by the Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS), and he receives a monthly stipend to help him as he attempts to advance his education by attending college.

Additionally, Bryan gets *many chances* to do well. He often speaks of the number of *chances* he gets to succeed. His time in the foster care system is even extended beyond the age of eighteen, making his unaided entrance into the adult world less immediate and therefore less stressful. Bryan is allowed to remain in the foster care system until he turns

twenty-one, unlike Lamont Wilder who is pushed out into the world right out of high school, before he is ready and winds up fathering a child before he even knows what it means to be a father or how to be a father. The downward spiral of Lamont Wilder's life on the streets eventually pushes him toward drugs, homelessness, unemployment, and the loss of his son to the foster care system.

Toth unravels the entanglements that Bryan has to work through as he battles the odds of leaving his "street" ways behind and graduating from college. Bryan, like Lamont Wilder in *The Lost Children of Wilder*, says the reason some children of the foster care system make it in life is because they have it in them. One of the reasons Bryan wants to succeed in college and in life is because he does not want to disappoint his sister who has so much faith in him. Neither does he want to disappoint the director of Mercy, the children's home, where he has often been held up as a shining example for the other boys at the home. Both Bryan's sister and the children's home director think Bryan has it in him to succeed. Sometimes Bryan thinks the same thing, but sometimes he's not so sure. What the "It" is, nobody actually says.

The problems of children in the welfare system are numerous and complex (Lindsey, 2004) as borne out by stories like Lamont Wilder's, Angel's, and Bryan's. The loss of a mother early in life equates to a life of inadequate care (Cournos, 1999) as illustrated by these and other stories of numerous children in the foster care system whose stories have yet to be told, in voices that have yet to be heard. What maltreated children need most to help them cope with life's adversities is a healthy community to buffer their

pain, their loss, and the distress caused by early traumas (Perry & Szalavitz, 2006; Toth, 1997) that can land them in foster care.

Finding Fish: A Memoir

Antwone Fisher, as I illustrate in this next review, gets the assistance he needs to stay on a track of success, but it does not come from his foster parents or his foster family home. The guidance and encouragement he gets come from a young African American woman who is his teacher for two years when he is in middle school. The teacher recognizes Fisher's talents and abilities and pushes him to use them as he had never been pushed to use them before. She opens Fisher's eyes to new possibilities and exposes him to new and wonderful experiences, all the while never letting on whether or not she knows he is a foster child. Fisher also gets guidance and encouragement from the staff at George Junior Republic, a private children's home, and from his commanding officer and naval psychologist when he enlists in the United States Navy.

In *Finding Fish: A Memoir* (Fisher, A., 2001), were it not a memoir written by Fisher's own hand about his own life, some readers might think they were reading a horrific tale of fiction. However, this piece of literature complements other literature that exposes the realities of child abuse and neglect in foster homes. It also complements research that says children who leave foster care are more likely to wind up homeless, live on the streets, and get involved in drugs, or wind up in prison. These situations occur more in foster children than they do in children who grow up in their own loving homes because foster children are ill prepared to live on their own immediately after their emancipation from the foster care system.

Aware that at any time his foster parents can return him to the welfare agency, Fisher, like many foster children, does not really feel unconditional acceptance in his foster family home where he is the victim of constant abuse: physical, emotional, and sexual. Foster children have a number of experiences with loss and abuse which causes them to suppress feelings of attachment. Fisher points out that foster children are often seen as *cases to be managed* and nothing more and that caseworkers consider a case closed once a child is placed unless they hear complaints from the foster parents, not the foster children themselves.

Although not explicitly stated, Fisher indicates that children who remain in stable foster family homes, despite their demeaning, belittling, and otherwise cruel environment, are more likely to succeed than those caught up in the foster care drift. Children in stable environments develop coping skills because they have much practice dealing with the issues of a single family and they know what to expect in their foster family home because of the predictability of behaviors and consistency in their routine. Children who move through a series of foster family homes develop shallow roots and shallow relationships. They lose the ability to trust, which leaves them emotionally cold. They are not able to predict what will happen to them from one moment to the next because of the instability in their lives, which leaves them confused and frustrated.

Fisher points out that although adversity is a common denominator in the experiences of foster children, not all outcomes are negative. For example, in Fisher's case, interventions take place in three fundamentally different institutions: the children's home he is placed in, the middle school he attends, and the military. All three provide

Fisher with what he needs to succeed. He learns lessons in survival because he is provided with proper structure, routine, guidance, and outlets for releasing his pent-up emotions. He is allowed to showcase his underused talents that are ignored or stifled in his foster family home. Researchers agree that children in foster care need the tender affections of a caring adult. That caring adult need not be a foster parent or birth parent. Caring adults can be found in a number of different places as Fisher's story illustrates.

Unlike *The Lost Children of Wilder* which challenges institutionalized racism, Fisher, in *Finding Fish*, illustrates how African American children can be insulated against racism by living in an African American community with an African American family. However, he provides no information about how these children learn to deal with racism when they are no longer segregated from other races of people. Fisher intimates that the imposed order and routine of children's homes, public schools, and the military are not as difficult to cope with as institutionalized racism.

People who criticize the order and routine imposed on children and the potential long-term effects that institutionalization has on a child's psyche couch their criticisms "in language studded with comparisons to factories and mechanization" (Nelson, 2006, p. 83) which is why imposed order and routine are not looked upon favorably by people who have not had to live with them. They have no true understanding or appreciation for how and why imposed order and routine work in institutions.

Imposed order and routine in children's homes may be one reason some people view children's homes in a negative light. However, as Fisher (2001) and Perry and Szalavitz (2006) point out, over-stressed children need predictability and routine in their

lives. Predictability and routine give children a sense of security. With so many upheavals in their lives, children in foster care can feel a sense of security when they know from one day to the next what they can expect from adults in their lives and what the adults expect from them. Predictability and routine are instrumental in predicting a child's later success. Ironically, and contrary to popular belief as Fisher's story illustrates, the loss of connectedness, loss of self-esteem, loss of self-worth, loss of security and protection, and loss of love—all the things that the child welfare system tries to keep children from losing—occur in foster family homes as opposed to children's homes.

The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog

The next review, *The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog*, which also illustrates how children in foster care can succeed, is not one that is specific to African American children in foster care. It consists of a series of stories about foster children who experience outcomes of success as a direct result of effective interventions and adult support. This collection of case studies written by psychologists Perry and Szalavitz (2006) provides a different lens through which to view foster children.

The cases in this book are about the traumas children experience after witnessing the murder of one parent by the other, after being victimized by a series of rapes, after being members of the Davidian cult, after experiencing extreme neglect, after being raised by foster parents who use them to practice Satanic Ritual Abuse, and after being raised by a man who knows nothing about raising children, only about raising dogs.

The problems the children in this book face are different, their coping strategies are different, and the interventions in their lives are different. What they have in common

is that a team of caring adults helps them return from the brink of utter separation and loss from humanity. The overarching message of Perry and Szalavitz's (2006) *The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog* is that the time and degree of the distress experienced by a child dictates the kind and amount of intervention a child needs to recover from challenging experiences. However, the authors do not specify the time or the degree of the difficulty, or the kind or amount of intervention a child needs to recover from it.

In one case, the intervention needed by an abused child is a loving foster mother who gives the child as much love and affection as the child needs. The foster mother rocks and cradles the child as if he is an infant despite the fact that the child is seven years old. The rocking and affection allows the child to cope with his situation. In another case the intervention needed to help children cope with their problems is being in the company of other children who have a shared understanding of those problems. Finally, in the case of the boy who was raised in a cage for five years as if he were a dog, the boy survives and learns social skills from the dogs who are his constant companions until he is provided with appropriate interventions that aid in his social development, nurturance, and care.

Despite the fact that children may have innate traits that inspire them to succeed in the face of abuse and neglect, the importance of the protection of other human beings in a child's life cannot be minimized. For example in the case of the boy who was raised as a dog, it is a human being, the child's grandmother, who nurtures the child for the first several months of his life—what Winnicott (1971) calls a “good enough mother.” It is a human being, the man who raises the child as a dog, who takes the child to the hospital

for medical care. And it is a team of human beings who monitors and nurtures the child's progress beyond that which he develops through the constant companionship of the dogs with whom he is raised. Ultimately, it is the nurturance and care of a loving adoptive family that encourages and helps the child to transition in a healthy way into society.

Theories of Resilience

I make the conjecture that when orphans combine their natural abilities with other resources to transcend early childhood difficulties, this transcendence marks them as resilient. I concur with Klein et al. (2006) that resilience is a person's "successful adaptation" (p. 35) to adversity. Drawing from the stories of Lamont Wilder (*The Lost Children of Wilder*) and Bryan (*Orphans of the Living*), I contend that the "It" that both of these boys identify as being in foster children who succeed in life is resilience. The boys recognize this resilience in others but they lack resilience themselves. Perhaps my conjecture is nothing more than a hunch, but Bryan and Lamont's "It" could just as easily be resilience as to be something else.

In more than a few cases in the literature, resilience has been paired with children and good outcomes when the children show no permanent damage from separation and loss; resilience is also identified in individuals who succeed at coping with adverse situations in childhood (Bernstein, 2002; Dulberger, 1996; Goldstein, 1996; Fraser & Galinsky, 2004; Friedman, 1994; Pecora, 2006; Purpel, 1998; Richman, Bowman, & Woolley, 2004; Smith & Carlson, 1997; Toth, 1997).

Toth (1997) actually says, “The stories in *Orphans of the Living* prove that children are resilient. They can survive and succeed” (p. 25). She says the foster children in her study showed “sparks of resilience” (p. 309). Because Pecora (2006) says research on risk and resilience, including protective factors, is beginning to shape child welfare policies and that it under girds the philosophy that supports early intervention in the lives of dependent children, I followed my hunch about the unidentified “It” being “resilience” to see what I might find. Richman et al. (2004) contend that knowing the characteristics of resilience can help focus practitioners as they consider strategies of intervention that will build resilience in children.

According to Richman et al. (2004), resilience has to do with an individual’s power to recover from adverse situations and the ability to return to those patterns of adaptation and competence that were a part of the individual’s pre-stress life. Resilience (2005) is defined in Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary as “an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change.” While some foster care children who succeed in life do not recover from misfortune, some of them do adjust although the adjustment may not be easy.

Adjustment and recovery may take more time for some than for others. Specht, Polgar, and King (2003) define resilience as “doing well despite adversity” (p. 8). Jenson and Fraser (2006) define resilience as “the ability to overcome adverse conditions and to function normatively in the face of risk” (p. 5); it is “one’s capacity to adapt successfully in the presence of risk and adversity” (p. 8). The researchers’ definitions seem to be a reasonable synonym for the “It” that foster children Bryan and Lamont talk about. The

researchers' definitions also seem synonymous with the sparks of resilience that researcher and reporter Toth (1997) talks about.

While researchers agree that the majority of people have resilience, they disagree about how people become resilient. Resilience is evident in individuals who rebound from abuse and other traumas but it is not evident in those who do not rebound. Glicken (2006) argues that resilience is part of the genetic makeup of human beings, and having resilience is the norm more so than the exception. Although Toth (1997) says the children in her study of "orphans of the living" succeed because of their resilience, she never explicitly says that resilience is part of the genetic makeup of those children who succeed in foster care.

Resilience is a trait that is developed during hardships and crises (Beckett & Lee, 2004; Perry & Szalavitz, 2006). Perry and Szalavitz contend that "Resilient children are made, not born" (p. 38). They posit that children become resilient as a result of the patterns of stress and nurturing that occur early on in their experiences. Jenson and Fraser (2006) claim that resilience results from a combination of individual and environmental factors. Just the same, key characteristics can be found in children who are resilient: social competence, resourcefulness, autonomy, a sense of purpose and a positive outlook for their future (Klein et al., 2006).

Although researchers vary in how they define resilience and disagree about how individuals become resilient, they agree that resilient children have certain things in common. In addition to the characteristics I listed above, resilient children have a support network of neighbors, peers, family, and elders. Resilient children are also curious,

assertive, and independent. Glicken (2006) notes that resilient children have positive self-perceptions, higher intellectual maturity, and higher educational aspirations; they appear to be more empathetic, sensitive to others, respectful, and well liked by their peers. Resilient children also have good internal locus of control and optimism (Glicken, 2006; King et al., 2003).

Beckett and Lee (2004) note that resilient children are independent and hardy. Hardiness refers to individuals' belief that they can control life's events; they believe that life has enough order for them to understand, manage, and create meaning in it. Beckett and Lee's "hardiness" is Klein et al.'s (2006) "autonomy." Resilient children also have close family relationships, a strong sense of responsibility toward the family unit. They are optimistic, which allows them to accept obstacles in life as positive challenges, and they do better in school than do those who lack optimism (King et al., 2003).

Jenson and Fraser (2006) identify three protective factors which they assert are essential for a person to develop resilience: environmental, interpersonal and social, and individual factors. Environmental factors include: opportunities for education, employment, and other pro-social activities; caring relationships with adults or extended family members; and social support from non-family members. Interpersonal and social factors include: attachment to parents; caring relationships with siblings; low parental conflict; high levels of commitment to school; involvement in conventional activities; and belief in pro-social norms and values. Individual factors include social and problem-solving skills; positive attitude; temperament; high intelligence; and low childhood stress.

Some of the environmental and some of the individual factors that Jenson and Fraser (2006) recognize as necessary for resilience to be in place are congruous with what other researchers identify as essential elements of resilience. Protective factors impact a person's resiliency (Jenson & Fraser, 2006) as do their life skills (Specht et al., 2003). Although Jenson and Fraser define resilience a little differently from the way Specht et al. define it, both groups of researchers agree that people cannot have resilience without having specific positive traits, without opportunities, and without the help of others. Essentially, this means people influence their environment, and their environment influences them.

Glicklen (2006) asserts that when resilient people share stories about how they cope with adversities in their lives, we can apply what we learn from those stories to ourselves and others who desire to overcome adversities. Glicklen, a professor of social work intends his book to be a resource for practitioners, administrators, teachers, family service agents, and others in the helping professions. It consists of a compilation of 50 narratives about the kinds of adversities children suffer in their lives: abuse, neglect, homelessness, and childhood violence although he includes nothing specific to African American children. Glicklen's inclusion of his own story in the text is indicative of his personal interest in resilience research. He cautions that *resilience does not mean people's lives are filled with happiness and self-fulfillment*.

King et al. (2003), a team of educators who work with the disabled and who also have backgrounds in psychology and social work, intend their research to be used by people who work with individuals who have disabilities. Yet, their research is useful in

my investigation of foster children because, to my way of thinking, foster children fall in the category of “people with disabilities.” Their *poverty* puts them in the disability category (Specht et al., 2003). In many instances, poverty is a major contributor in cases of abuse and neglect (Myers, 2004; Lindsey, 2004; Schwartz & Fishman, 1999; Sedlak & Schultz, 2005). Abuse and neglect affect children’s ability to trust (Cournos, 1999; Perry & Szalavitz, 2006; Toth, 1997).

Schoon’s (2006) research which is about *positive outcomes* of people who experience difficulties in life, claims that people can and do get past obstacles that occur early in their lives. Schoon’s research shows that, with adaptive patterns, the disadvantaged can achieve competence in school and on the job. Her research supports other research that indicates that despite risk factors, children like those in foster care can have socially acceptable relationships, and their developmental processes are not necessarily irreparably damaged (Fisher, A., 2001; Perry & Szalavitz, 2006). Schoon contends, as I do, that a combination of resources, outside support, experiences, and opportunities in the broader community facilitate people’s successful adaptation to challenging situations.

Schoon’s research, which discusses the transition that children of adverse situations make from childhood to adulthood, provides evidence that indicates not all children who experience adversity fail in life or develop self-destructive behaviors. Some disadvantaged children do quite well in life despite early disadvantages. Schoon, whose model compares the lives of over 30,000 people, gained valuable insights from a landmark study spanning 28 years, conducted by Michael Rutter, which includes follow-

up studies of girls reared in institutions and Romanian orphans. Schoon's model, inspired by Elder's theory of life course which stipulates that developmental processes, is not to be viewed only in relation to individually lived time.

CHAPTER III

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF DEPENDENT CHILDREN

Significance of an Examination of Personal Histories

This section of the literature review is specific to the history of dependent children in America and discusses some of the misconceptions and realities of orphans and orphanages. I begin by discussing changes that have occurred in the child welfare system over the course of time and the impact those changes have had on children in need of out-of-home care from earliest times to now.

The practices and policies of child welfare are heavily criticized and little understood by those who do and do not use the services of the child welfare system. Child welfare was established to secure safety and permanency for dependent children (Cmiel, 1995; Craig & Herbert, 1999; Crenson, 1998; Everett, Chipungu, & Leashore, 2004; Friedman, 1994; Gelles, 1999). Yet the child welfare system is also guilty of harming the very children it is supposed to help by leaving them in abusive homes too long, allowing them to remain indefinitely in nonpermanent homes, and keeping them floating in the system through a process known as foster care drift where they never remain for any length of time in a single home (Bernstein, 2002; Gelles, 1999; Jones, 1993; McKenzie, 1999b; Murphy, 1997; Toth, 1997).

While people have heard horrific tales about how child welfare has mismanaged and mishandled cases, few seem to be aware of the many good homes that child welfare

finds for children, especially African American children. Whereas the African American community stresses the importance of kinship ties and collective identities, the African American community does not guarantee that kinship ties and collective identities are found in one's own home. Neither does the community put kinship ties and collective identities above children's survival, their safety, and their permanent placement in loving homes.

The difficulty of African American children living with kinship care families is that they tend to be headed by grandmothers, older aunts, uncles, or older siblings who have no spouse, no more than a high school education, and live on low or fixed incomes (Hill, 2004). From my perspective, the African American community would be hard pressed to dissuade dependent African American children from taking advantage of opportunities that would allow them to establish strong roots and develop the kinds of skills that would aid them in obtaining economic security in adulthood in favor of maintaining kinship ties and collective identities.

Those in the child-caring profession can learn from the history of children in the foster care system because it has lots to teach (Hacsi, 1997; Peebles-Wilkins, 1995). As they continue to seek ways to improve the lives of "children of the oppressed" (Freire, 1970) and find homes for them, child-caring specialists and legislative officials can make the history of foster children their very best teacher. That is even though the history is imperfect, full of gaps, and lacks perfect sources (Cmiel, 1995; Dulberger, 1996; Goldstein, 1996).

As more African American youths enter the child welfare system each year, with fewer alternative places to go, much like in the 1800s, some youths are again being put in jail (juvenile jails, training schools, and reformatories). Others must face the harsh reality that they may have to fend for themselves (Bernstein, 2002; Fisher, A., 2001; Lindsey, 2004) on the streets and learn to deal with the brutalities associated with being homeless. The fortunate ones, like the participants in my study, will discover the strength of their resiliency and they will learn from and be encouraged by caring adults, perhaps even by an orphan educator, to change the course of their lives so that they too will succeed in life.

History is the filter through which generations of the future see past generations (Winski, 1998). It is also the filter through which people see themselves. People's personal histories are made significant by the lens through which they, as well as others, view their past and evaluate their experiences. When people look back at their history, they are more introspective and circumspect and they see things differently, hopefully clearer and more objectively. Yet, however people look at their history, their history is theirs and their perception of it depends on who they are and the lens through which they look back. Beth Boland, a historian for the National Park Service History says, "[History] connects us to our past and shows us what we have made of ourselves" (as cited in Winski, 1998, ¶ 4).

Like everyone else in America, orphans³ have a history. However, unlike everyone else in America, orphans are tied together by a kinship, a shared history. Though all of them have their own unique experiences, every orphan's history is intertwined with the history of the care of dependent children. Whether it is a single orphan or a group of orphans, every study of orphans invariably involves a study of the history of dependent children. To neglect one is to neglect the other, and research would not be complete without an examination of both. In order to frame the issues that underpin this discussion of African American educators whose lives were affected by the intervention of the child welfare system, this chapter includes a brief overview of the history of dependent children, first from an Africentric perspective then from a holistic perspective.

An Africentric Perspective

Ninety-four years after the first orphanage was established in America in 1728, the first colored⁴ orphanage was established in Philadelphia by the Society of Friends in 1822 (Myers, 2004). Before the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, slavery was considered by some to be a system of welfare for African Americans (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972; Gavins, 1984) because it supplied the needs of Negro slaves on plantations. Slave owners provided slaves with food, clothing, shelter, and medical care, all of questionable quality and quantity (Crow, Escott, & Hatley, 1992; Douglass,

³ "Orphans," which traditionally means children whose parents have died also refer to children who lack the proper care and supervision of responsible parents. These children are often victims of neglect, abuse, abandonment, and poverty (Toth, 1997).

⁴ Orphanages for African American children were called colored orphanages, until about the mid 1960s (Central Children's Home of North Carolina, n. d.), just as African Americans were once called colored people until the mid 1960s (Banner-Haley, 1994).

1845/2002). At the same time, slave owners hardened their hearts to their slaves' suffering when they tortured them, when they took their children away from them, and when they sold their would-be life partners down the river.

Slave owners kept their slaves ignorant of their past and their future, and they shrouded their present in perpetual uncertainty. Providing for themselves and their families was not a viable option for slaves; nor was education (Douglass, 1845/ 2002). White masters "were required by law to educate their White apprentices, but not their Black apprentices" (Roberts, 2002, p. 234). This made slaves reliant on their masters for the most basic of needs, which in turn made it difficult for slaves to educate and provide for themselves without White support once they were freed from human bondage.

Upon leaving the plantation, with few resources, African Americans' struggle for survival was indeed a desperate one. Their hardships were numerous and enormous. Although the situation for African Americans was urgent, African American children were not the focus of early child-saving crusades (Crenson, 1998; Hill, 2004; Holt, 1992; Jackson, 2006; Lindenmeyer, 1997; Peebles-Wilkins, 1995). Early efforts to rescue and find homes for poor children living in the streets and alleys of America's urban areas were not intended for African American children; instead, African American children were considered delinquent rather than dependent⁵ (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972; Roberts, 2002).

African American children—as young as five years of age—were put in jails and poorhouses; they were indentured (Ashby, 1984; Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972; Myers,

⁵ "The term 'dependent child' encompassed orphans, poor children, neglected children, and abused children" (Myers, 2004, p. 27).

2004; Peebles-Wilkins, 1995) or brutally whipped (Bogen, 1992) when they were found on the streets. Orphanages for African American children were, therefore, a godsend. They saved generations of African American children from utter neglect, utter abuse, utter despair, and premature death.

History shows that the child welfare system in this country, an inherently racist system (Roberts, 2002), perpetuated by the institution of slavery (Askeland, 2006), did little to find homes for African American children. With slavery in existence, child welfare initiatives could and did develop without concern for African American children (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972) even though President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation forty-one years *before* the first orphanage for African American children came into existence despite an obvious need.

In 1890, 490 orphanages existed in the United States exclusively for the care of White children, while only 27 existed for the care of non-White children, not necessarily African American (Hacsi, 1997). Dependent African American children were kept by relatives. African American children who were admitted to orphanages found that their orphanages were lacking in the kinds of resources that some White orphanages had (Cmiel, 1995; Hacsi, 1997; Myers, 2004; Roberts, 2002), and these “colored” orphanages struggled to provide the basic necessities for their children.

Orphanages for children of color were unable to give their children the kinds of elaborate academic programs where children took classes in foreign languages, art, music, dance, and classic literature; neither were they able to give their children individualized vocational education programs (Zmora, 1994) that were available in many

White orphanages. Although orphan asylums in America did not become a widespread method of serving dependent children until the 1830s, in the 1830s, they spread rapidly because of an increase in the number of children left orphaned by epidemics like yellow fever and tuberculosis.

The rapid growth of orphanages continued throughout the 1840s and 1850s (Haci 1997). They appeared to be a logical solution to the pressing problem of what to do with large numbers of dependent children who had no one to care for them—a problem that has continued to plague America since Colonial times (Myers, 2005). Down through the years, African American children have been absent from political debates on dependent children (Roberts, 2002, Rosner & Markowitz, 1997). Yet reports of the Child Welfare League have found that conditions for African American children “were always the same—the lack of residential facilities” (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972, p. 128).

President Theodore Roosevelt, who convened the First White House Conference on the Care of Dependent Children, invited two influential African Americans to the conference: the well-known Booker T. Washington, founder of Tuskegee Institute and the little-known Richard Carroll, manager of the South Carolina Industrial Home for Destitute Colored Children. The two men’s arguments about institutionalizing dependent African American children were in sharp opposition to one another’s (Crenson, 1998).

Booker T. Washington’s argued that African Americans are able to take care of their own dependent children. He argued that African Americans had inherited and had it “trained into” them (Crenson, 1998, p. 252) that they must take care of their own dependents. He said they do it more than any other race of Americans. Washington was

convincing in his argument about African American southern communities not needing orphanages for their children and that they looked upon it as a disgrace for anybody to permit their children to be taken from the community and placed in an orphanage.

Washington's view conforms to the traditional view held by many African Americans. They refer to this philosophy as "It takes a village to raise a child." Whether this philosophy is wholesome or not, whether it is rational or not, such a philosophy can be harmful to children who live in dangerous communities or whose homes are abusive. They become street urchins when no responsible adults from the community or "village" step forward to take the children in, to nourish, guide, and otherwise provide for them.

Richard Carroll argued at the conference that orphanages are a great necessity in African American communities, and they benefit children who need care. Having had lots of experience finding home placement for children, Carroll based his opinion on the fact that most African American families already have enough children of their own to take care of, and foster families that are willing to take in African American children do so not because of a desire to help the children. They do it to help themselves by making dependent children work to support the foster family as domestics or as wage earners. Carroll argued that it is not clear whether children's lives are made better or made worse by living in homes that are not their own.

However, Carroll did argue that since orphanages were founded on the philosophy of rescue, save, and improve the lives of dependent children, unlike foster family homes which have no such philosophy, orphanages are better than foster homes for children who have nowhere else to go. Richard Carroll believed that orphanages were a necessity for

dependent African American children in the South (Crenson, 1998; Lindenmeyer, 1997), especially as there were not enough loving foster and adoptive homes for them.

Booker T. Washington's view was the popular view of the day in 1909. It was accepted with resounding applause among White supporters at the conference. However, it is Carroll's view—that not enough loving substitute homes exist for African American children—that has endured over time. It is Carroll's view that continues to ring true nearly a hundred years since the convening of the First White House Conference on the Care of Dependent Children.

From the Civil War to about the 1920s and 30s, the needs of African American children were basically ignored (Jones, 1989) by mainstream society. Services to aid in the welfare of children were developed for White Americans, by White Americans, and maintained and controlled by White Americans; they were never developed for or sufficient for the special conditions of African American children (Bernstein, 2002; Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972; Blanke (2002); Hill, 2004; Roberts, 2002; Rosner & Markowitz, 1997). Charity was intended to be provided for one's own kind (Crenson, 1998) that is, for White Americans. Mothers' Pensions, for example, was intended to help deserving White widows, not Black widows, keep their children in their homes (Creagh, 2006; Hacsí 1997; Roberts, 2002). Even orphan trains were established to relocate White children to good homes, not Black children (Askeland, 2006, Holt, 1992).

Jones (1989) contends that the welfare of children has been in crisis since the 1930s when the number of children in children's homes increased. In 1930, on behalf of

the White House Subcommittee on the Negro in the United States, sociologist Ira Reid wrote:

Though constituting but 10 percent of the total population of the United States, the Negro forms a much larger percentage of the dependent population. The problems of such a situation are both created and augmented by the prevailing racial situation in which the Negro suffers grave economic and social injustices. (As cited in Myers, 2004, p. 210)

Reid's statement, fitting for 1930, is no less fitting today because of its applicability to the child welfare problems of African American children of the present. Derezotes and Poertner (2005) argue that current trends indicate that more and more, African American children are populating the welfare system. According to Fraser (2004), despite improvements in services provided to assist poor families, the quality of life for children showed declines in the 1980s and 1990s, with 41 percent of African American children in female-headed families living in poverty in 2000. In 2003, more than 13 million children lived in poverty; most were children of color (Lindsey, 2004).

If conditions existed where every one of the thousands of African American children currently in the foster care system were adopted today, their problems still would not be solved because of society's inequitable distribution of resources needed to raise the children (Roberts, 2002). Scott McCown (2006), former Texas District Judge, now Executive Director of the Center for Public Policy Priority, in Austin, Texas, alleges that societal discrimination is a problem where the adoption of African American children is concerned. Sandra Jackson (2006), Executive Director of Black Administrators in Child

Welfare in Washington, DC, contends that racism is the problem that interferes with children of color being adopted.

According to Rob Geen (2003) of the Office of Public Affairs:

Given the disproportionate number of black children waiting to be adopted, many agencies have redoubled their efforts to recruit black families. Yet, it may be unrealistic to expect enough to come forth, since black parents already adopt foster children at a rate double their proportion in the population. (¶ 9)

African American children are not the first, but usually the last to be adopted in this country (Jackson, 2006; Lindsey, 2004; McRoy, 2004, Roberts, 2002), so the adoption alternative never was and continues not to be the answer for African American children who need homes. This is despite the fact that some legal orphans⁶ do not want to be adopted (Roberts, 2002) and some parents of dependent children refuse to give up their parental rights so that their children can be released for adoption (Bernstein, 2002).

Since the demand for adoptive homes exceeds supply for dependent African American children, their situation is an urgent one. Many dependent African American children find that their best alternative to a loving home is a youth shelter, group home, or foster home (Jones, 2007). Less attractive alternatives are: the streets, jail, mental institutions, reformatories (Bernstein, 2002; Bogen, 1992; Fisher, A., 2001; Perry & Szalavitz, 2006), and training schools (Ashby, 1984; Murphy, 1997).

Mark Courtney (2005) Director of the Chapin Hall Center for Children, at the University of Chicago Study, maintains that other alternatives for many dependent African American children wind up being drug and alcohol addiction and early death.

⁶ Children whose parents have relinquished their parental rights

Since government agencies have nebulous plans for dealing with sudden influxes of large groups of dependent children (Perry & Szalavitz, 2006), African American children are the ones most likely to suffer from inadequate care.

A Holistic Perspective

Historically, America's orphanages have played an important role in providing care for the nation's children in need of out-of-home care. Early orphanages were generally founded on the premise that, for children without adequate care, they would be an improvement over the almshouse⁷ (Bogen, 1992; Crenson, 1998; Geiser, 1973; Goldstein, 1996; London, 1999; Myers, 2004), which initially was viewed as advancement in the care of the adult poor and disabled as well as children who lacked adequate parenting (Crenson, 1998; Myers, 2004). In almshouses children lived—with no formal supervision—among the infirm, the aged, the mentally deficient and mentally ill (Bogen, 1992), the deaf, the blind, prostitutes, syphilitics, vagrants, drunks, sexual deviants, and criminals (Braddy, 1933, Crenson, 1998; Shughart & Chappell, 1999).

America's system of caring for poor children in orphanages was a practice copied from the British (Boudreaux & Boudreaux, 1999; Geiser, 1973), the French, and the Germans (Bogen, 1992; Crenson, 1998; Myers, 2004). They were created not by a plan but out of a need (Bogen, 1992; Goldstein, 1996). Not many orphanages existed in America in the eighteenth century (Myers, 2006), but between 1790 and 1820 large numbers of immigrants came to America, creating a large transient population. This

⁷ Almshouses were the same as poorhouses. Industrial schools basically were orphanages for adolescents but industrial schools for African Americans admitted children as young as two years of age (Cmiel, 1995).

influx of immigrants, along with industrialization, and urbanization contributed to the establishment and steady growth of orphanages in the first half of the nineteenth century due to changes in area demographics (Bogen, 1992; Zmora, 1994).

The War of 1812 (Cmiel, 1995; Lefeavers, 1983), downturns in the economy from 1815 to 1821, and ever-growing poverty; in conjunction with cholera epidemics in 1832, 1849, and 1852, all helped to fuel orphanage populations (London, 1999; Myers, 2004; Olasky, 1999). Additionally, the Civil War necessitated the founding of orphanages. Bogen (1992) argues that the Civil War “was directly responsible for the nation’s second wave of asylum building” (p. 56).

The current shortage of desirable substitute homes for children in need of care has prompted new discussions about putting children in children’s homes (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972; Cmiel, 1995; Crenshaw, 1998; Hill, 2004; McKenzie, 1999b; Murphy, 1997; Olasky, 1999; Schwartz & Fishman, 1999; Shughart & Chappell, 1999). But there are two problems associated with this idea that just don’t seem to want to go away. One lies in affordability: who will finance these children’s homes (Cmiel, 1995; Wright, 1999)? The other lies in the image that people have of orphanages (Moriarty, 1999).

Some people hold the belief that orphanages are huge, ominous, gloomy (Bogen, 1992), and foreboding, loveless places (Hacsi, 1997). The mere mention of the word “orphanage” is enough to create disagreements among caring adults (Gelles, 1999; McKenzie, 1999b; London, 1999) and frighten children almost to tears (Ashby, 1984). When people hear the words “orphan” and “orphanage,” they tend to recoil, thinking the words equate to the crudeness and cruelty they’ve heard about from storybooks

(McKenzie, 1995). Yet, orphanages were not all the same. There was no typical orphanage (Bogen, 1992; Cmiel, 1995; Colored Orphan Asylum of North Carolina, 1900; Crenson, 1998; Goldstein, 1996; Friedman, 1994; Hacsı, 1997; Lefeavers, 1983; McKenzie, 1999b; Zmora, 1994).

Boswell (1988) contends that it is unlikely that any institution established by human beings is solely anything. That being the case, it would be a mistake to assume that all orphanages fit a single mold. There was a tremendous variety in the way they functioned and how they were run (Bogen, 1992; Crenson, 1998; Friedman, 1994; Zmora, 1994). America's orphanages, or asylums⁸ as they were once called, because they were sequestered from the community, can be categorized as isolating, protective, and integrative. Most fit in a combination of at least two categories rather than one: isolating, protective, and integrative (Hacsı, 1997).

Isolating asylums had monastic qualities (Bogen, 1992; Crenson, 1998; Polster, 1990): drabness, enforced silence, orderliness, sparseness, and such strictness in routine and discipline that it bordered on cruelty (Bogen, 1992; Hacsı, 1997; Polster, 1990). In isolating asylums, managers denied children access to their parents because they believed the children's parents were unfit to raise them (Colored Orphan Asylum of North Carolina, 1900; Dulberger, 1996), and they believed that environments outside the asylum were unwholesome and contaminating (Colored Orphan Asylum of North

⁸ By the end of the 1920s, in many instances, managers wanted the whole nineteenth-century asylum system dismantled, including the keyword "asylum" because of the strong negative connotations they evoked, as something old and out-of-date (Cmiel, 1995).

Carolina, 1900; Hacsı, 1997; Polster, 1990). All of the children's contacts with outside influences were therefore cut off.

The social control model of isolating asylums (reminiscent of Dickens' portrayal of workhouses like the one in *Oliver Twist*, for example, and charity schools for poor loveless waifs, like Dotheboys Hall in *Nicholas Nickleby*, and Lowood Hall in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*) was more like America's nineteenth century orphanages than it was of orphanages that emerged at later times. Administrators of isolating asylums sought to sever the ties between parents and their children and to obtain legal guardianship over children who were admitted to the orphanage.

In protective asylums, which operated under the patriarchal control model where opposition and controversy were not easily tolerated (Goldstein, 1996), the separation of children from the outside world was not as strict as it was in isolating asylums (McGovern, 1948). Children in protective asylums were exposed to the community as much as it was necessary to advance their ethnic and religious heritage (Hacsı, 1997). Managers of protective asylums *expected* families to bring their children to the asylum when families needed help. They also expected families to return for their children when they were back on their feet again following whatever hardships they were experiencing.

Integrative asylums, which the majority of orphanages evolved into by the early twentieth century (Hacsı, 1997), sought to expose children as much as possible to their families and to environments beyond the asylum with the basic assumption that the children would ultimately return to their own homes and communities. Community leaders worked alongside asylum managers to provide adequate facilities, food, hygiene,

and medical care; and to create optimal educational opportunities for children by emphasizing both academic achievement and individualized vocational training (Central Children's Home of North Carolina, n. d.; Contosta, 1997; Lefeavers, 1983; Oxford Orphanage, n. d.). In many cases, children in integrative asylums received educational opportunities they might not have, had they not been in the asylum (Bogen, 1992; Central Children's Home of North Carolina, n. d.; Contosta, 19997; Cournos, 1999; Crenson, 1998; Fisher, A., 2001; Friedman, 1994; Goldstein, 1996; Lefeavers, 1983; Oxford Orphanage, n. d.; Zmora, 1994).

Throughout the nineteenth century and onward, most of the children in orphanages came from destitute families and broken homes, and had either a mother or father or both parents living (Bogen, 1992; Cmiel, 1995; Crenson, 1998; Dulberger, 1996; Goldstein, 1996; Hacsi, 1997; Holt, 1992; Olasky, 1999; Zmora, 1994). The largest population of orphanage children consisted of "half orphans"⁹ and "virtual orphans"¹⁰ (Cmiel, 1995; Hacsi, 1997). If orphanages had not been founded, children who had no place else to go would have had to survive on the streets (Bogen, 1992; Holt, 1992; Myers, 2004) or perished trying. Goldstein (1996) contends that "At its best, the institution or asylum literally *saved* children, rescuing them from the streets, alleys, and their noxious families" (p. 193).

Charles Loring Brace, whom many associate with orphan trains¹¹, established the Children's Aid Society, which rescued 100,000 of New York City's dependent children

⁹ children with only one living parent

¹⁰ neglected, abused, and unwanted children

¹¹ The New York Children's Aid Society was not the only organization to use orphan trains to relocate children in need of suitable homes, but it is the one most remembered (Myers, 2004).

from abuse and neglect. Most of these children had one living parent (Crenson, 1998). He relocated the children to bucolic or idyllic settings, usually the West and Midwest (Askeland, 2006, Holt, 1992). Brace's orphan trains were in operation from 1854 to 1929. The aim of Brace's orphan trains was to situate children in what he considered "decent" homes, away from the corruption of urban areas where children could not play and run free as is necessary for healthy growth and development in childhood.

Children from orphan trains were not always matched with suitable families. While some adults were particular about the type of child they wanted, others wanted any child who was White and healthy, sight unseen. Children placed in their new homes were not always protected from abuse and neglect. Some were denied affection, and unwise agents sometimes took children from their abusive, neglectful homes and placed them in abusive, neglectful substitute homes (Holt, 1992).

Older children who were placed in homes through orphan trains sometimes ran away because the adopting family wanted to sever the children's ties with their relatives and former associates. Other relocated children found themselves used only for labor. Some of the children who did farm labor, however, viewed their experience as just a phase of life that enabled them to earn a living not possible in the city (Holt, 1992).

Some children who were relocated by orphan trains found love in their adoptive homes that they had not found in their biological homes. Still others were taken from loving homes and placed in adoptive homes because the adoptive homes were more financially stable than their own. Even though Brace's Children's Aid Society, in conjunction with other orphan trains and orphanages, could not provide enough homes

for all of the children in need, Brace's efforts did contribute significantly to our present concept of foster homes (Askeland, 2006; Myers, 2004).

Homer Folks, a historian of the child-caring movement and one of the most influential spokespersons for "placing out,"¹² a precursor to foster home care, touted the advantages of every child living in a home setting. Folks said that practical education was much richer, children developed into adults at a natural pace, and children were likely to develop attachments for their own homes and the surrounding communities—all of which would later facilitate their access to job opportunities and advancement.

Folks also catalogued the disadvantages of children growing up in orphanages: children vastly outnumbered the adults providing care, which deprived them of affection that was central to their normal growth and development; children lived under restraints that impeded the emergence of their individuality; and when children were discharged from the orphanage, they were "isolated units" estranged from those who raised them (Crenson, 1998).

Other opponents of orphanages argued that orphanage children exhibited institutional behaviors¹³ and they did not develop to their intellectual potential. Later, researchers like developmental psychologist John Bowlby libeled orphanages for stunting the emotional growth of children. In his three-volume works on attachment and loss, for

¹² Placing out had its roots in France. It was the custom among the French middle and upper classes to place their babies out with country wet nurses (Holt, 1992).

¹³ Children, upon release from the orphanage, it was claimed, having been unaccustomed to taking care of themselves and shielded from the temptations and contamination of the outside world, were not able to take care of themselves as well as children who had contact with environments outside the orphanage (Crenson, 1998). Institutionalized also refers to children "mechanically carrying out assigned tasks" (Ashby, 1984, p. 148).

example, Bowlby demonstrated that children reared in institutions developed attachment and bonding problems that plagued them throughout their lives (Bartholet, 1999).

Progressives also attacked the orphanage, arguing that “it emotionally stunted its inmates” and that children were hurt by asylum living because they were deprived of “needed warmth and succor” (Cmiel, 1995, p. 41).

As early as 1898, in response to complaints by Progressive Reformers that children were not treated as individuals in orphanages, some orphanage managers began remodeling old barracks style dormitories into cottages to create a homelike setting (Cmiel, 1995). However, while Reformers considered the remodeling of buildings a move in the right direction they, along with social workers and some legislators, argued that children in need of homes should, as should all children, have an opportunity to grow up in a loving home. They considered placing dependent children in foster homes a superior alternative to placing them in institutions when the children’s biological homes were not suitable for them.

In order to address another complaint leveled at them by Reformers—lack of personal attention— orphanages limited their intake of clientele, which in some large institutions exceeded 1200 children (Bogen, 1992). Modifications in admissions policies opened up the possibility for individualization and opportunities for children to receive personal attention. Yet, regardless of what orphanage managers did to modernize the physical environment, modify their child intake procedures, and improve their child-caring practices, Reformers continued to indict orphanages as unnatural places to raise children because orphanages were still institutions, not homes (Bogen, 1992; Contosta,

1997; Crenson, 1998; Dulberger, 1996; Friedman, 1994; Goldstein, 1996; Hacsí, 1997; Holt, 1992; McGovern, 1948; Simpson, 1987), and there was no denying that fact.

Progressive Reformers also alleged that institutions were unhealthy warehouses that created social misfits of the next generation (Cmiel, 1995). Bogen (1992) contends that over time:

More and more one heard the rallying cry of foster home care supporters that ‘the worst foster home is better than the best institution.’ The cry grew louder even though it was clear that many foster homes did not live up to the superior reputation being thrust upon them. (p. 159)

In direct opposition to the argument of Progressives, supporters of orphanages argued against the “placing out” child-caring model, saying that just because children were placed in homes, it did not necessarily mean that they were placed in loving homes (Ashby, 1984). Additionally, they argued that unlike orphanages, foster homes could not provide the kinds of moral training and educational opportunities that could transform children into self-supporting adults later in life though it was possible in child caring institutions. In essence, supporters of child-caring institutions believed that children could be saved from a life of ruin and provided with a future that was unlike the one they were destined to have had they not been placed in orphanages (Contosta, 1997; Dulberger, 1996; Goldstein, 1996; Peebles-Wilkins, 1995; Polster, 1990; Zmora, 1994).

Managers of integrative asylums believed in transforming children’s lives through education and creating proper living and social environments (Braddy, 1933; Central Children’s Home of North Carolina, n. d.; Crenson, 1998; Goldstein, 1996; Myers, 2004; Oxford Orphanage, n. d.). They believed that transformations could be made irrespective

of a child's heredity or family history (Ashby, 1984; Zmora, 1994). The single philosophy of transforming children's lives through education contributed notably to the overcrowding of children's homes in later years and ultimately contributed to the financial strain on them (Cmiel, 1995).

Zmora (1994) agrees that the "worst enemy [of children's homes] was their success" (p. 182) in that some parents made concerted efforts to put their children in children's homes. This was to ensure a better life and increased future opportunities for their children (Contosta, 1997; Dulberger, 1996). This resulted in people actually considering children's homes boarding schools for the poor. To some extent children's homes were boarding schools in that children lived on the campus and went to school on the campus of the children's home (Bogen, 1992), and in many cases families were required to make monetary contributions to their children's upkeep while they lived in children's homes (Ashby, 1984; Askeland, 2006; Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972).

Even though they continued to multiply and expand for many years afterwards, a turning point came for children's homes at the First White House Conference on the Care of Dependent Children in 1909. The Conference was attended by more placing-out advocates—social workers, and members of the Progressive Movement (young middle class professionals in medicine, law, business, and education)—than children's homes supporters (Crenson, 1998). These social reformers agreed officially, at the conference, that a home setting was indeed more suitable for the rearing of children than a children's home, and they began the fight that brought about changes in federal legislation

protecting the rights of America's dependent children (Boudreaux & Boudreaux, 1999; Crenson, 1998; Hacsí, 1997; Jones, 1994; London, 1999; Myers, 2004; Olasky, 1999).

Following the 1909 Conference, Mothers' Pensions were used as incentives to help mothers care for their own children in their own homes (Ashby, 1984; Askeland, 2006; Crenson, 1998). Later, other government initiatives were used to keep children in their own homes such as Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), which began as part of the 1934 Social Security Act (London, 1999).

Beginning after World War II, children's homes were gradually phased out (Cmiel, 1995; Hacsí, 1997; Jones, 1993; Lindsey, 2004) as a consequence of their decline in use. Some historians consider the 1909 White House Conference on the Care of Dependent Children to be the most influential event in ending the orphanage era (Hacsí, 1997). Crenson (1998), who argues that the crisis of America's dependent children precipitated legislative action that evolved into our American public welfare system, also argues that the First White House Conference on the Care of Dependent Children "started nothing and settled nothing" (p. 17). Nonetheless, the Conference did come about as a result of a crisis in the welfare of America's dependent children that could not be ignored.

In 1948, when the role of institutions in the care of dependent children was again being studied, two opposing camps existed. In one camp, specialists argued that children's institutions should be closed completely and not used for the care of children. In the other camp were a number of child-caring experts who were supportive of institutions as favorable alternatives for some children from dysfunctional homes.

However, those in the debates seemed interested only in proving that their method of child-caring was the only acceptable way of providing for these children (Ashby, 1984).

By 1980, the majority of children's homes were closed (Shughart & Chappell, 1999) although some private agencies continue to operate as facilities for the care of dependent children (Hacsi, 1997; Keiger, 1996; McKenzie, 1999b; Zmora, 1994). The estimated one thousand orphanages that were operating in 1900, housing approximately 100,000 children (Crenson, 1998) became, for the most part, relics of the past (Myers, 2004; Van Biema, 1994). Many of the facilities that did not shut down altogether were converted into shelters for abused, neglected, and homeless children (Shughart & Chappell, 1999; Zmora, 1994). Others were converted into residential care facilities for children with emotional problems (Hacsi, 1997; Zmora, 1994), behavioral problems (Hacsi, 1997), and children with physical and mental disabilities (Billingsley & Giovannoni, 1972; Giunca, 2007b).

Foster homes, which displaced children's homes in much the same way that orphanages displaced almshouses, were intended to be a short-term solution for children in need of out-of-home care (McGovern, 1948; Simpson, 1987). Yet, they turned into a long term solution for some children because those children could not be returned to their dysfunctional homes. Many of the children who, in theory, are adoptable do not meet adoption qualifications due to age and or race.

Just as children's homes did, foster homes came under fire almost at the very outset. As early as 1921 (Zmora, 1994), problems in the foster care system became apparent in that suitable families were difficult to find (McGovern, 1948). Children in

foster care had problems with personality development and a sense of self-worth (Fisher, A., 2001; Maas & Engler, 1959). Children were placed multiple times (foster care drift), siblings were separated from one another, children lacked proper supervision in foster homes, and there were numerous reports of child abuse in those homes (Ashby, 1984).

Additionally, some children failed to adjust to their new families regardless of the suitability of the child to the home (McGovern, 1948). Generally, foster family homes were used for younger children and for short-term care, and orphanages were used for older children and for long term care (Maas & Engler, 1959)

In the early 1970s, the availability of foster homes could not keep pace with the foster care demand (Simpson, 1987). By the 1980s the foster care system was overwhelmed and newspapers chronicled the failings of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). DCFS was accused of failing to develop long-term plans for children, failing to keep records organized—and most damaging of all—losing track of children whom the DCFS was supposed to find homes for (Murphy, 1997).

Some critics of foster homes saw the foster home system as a huge revolving door that could not offer stability, security, consistent care, structure, and the kinds of values that could be offered to children in children's homes (Bogen, 1992; Goldstein, 1996; McGovern, 1948; Murphy, 1997). Critics suggested that many foster parents were more interested in supplementing their own income than looking after someone else's dependents (Askeland, 2006; Fisher, A., 2001; Jenson & Fraser, 2006; Simpson, 1987), or they just wanted someone to do the work around the house that they themselves did not want to do (Ashby, 1984; Fisher, A., 2001).

The news media enumerated the problems with the foster care system: increased alienation of foster parents from DCFS bureaucracy, large numbers of children floating from foster home to foster home, going for years without any long-term stability; and children sleeping in DCFS offices because the agency did not have sufficient emergency shelters to house them or a foster care system efficient enough to find immediate homes for them (Cmiel, 1995; Murphy, 1997).

When the number of foster family homes failed to keep pace with the number of children in need of homes, the government turned to adoption as an alternative. Yet there are not enough adoptive homes to absorb the high volume of children pouring into the foster care system (Roberts, 2002). In 2003, for example, 2,400 children were found by Child Protective Services (CPS) and the courts to be victims of abuse (Glicker, 2006). Nearly 125,000 children annually wait to be adopted from the foster care system, but only about one third of them typically are adopted in a given year (Satz & Askeland, 2006).

Contrary to what many people believe, adoption did not come about as a strategy to provide for poor children; it came about because it could fulfill the desires of White middle-class women who could not have children of their own (Hill, 2004). Often, the measures enforced in the name of protecting the rights of children are actually a guise for smoothing the way for adoptive parents to get children (Roberts, 2002). Children taken into homes through adoption are not without problems anymore than children taken into other kinds of substitute homes. In the vast majority of cases children in need of out-of-home care prefer their own homes and cling to them tenaciously no matter the wretchedness of the home situation (Holt, 1992). Children in the foster care system rarely

feel unconditional acceptance in surrogate homes (Cournos, 1999; Cmiel, 1995; McGovern, 1948). Adopted children yearn for their real mother, and though it may be unconscious, they believe no substitute mother can take her place (Cournos, 1999).

Children taken in by adoptive parents often feel a loss of security when they learn of their adoption. They yearn for comfort or a buffer as they face the associated pain of separation and loss (Perry & Szalavitz, 2006) from their own family. When they learn of their adoption, they may begin to feel unworthy of their own parents' love as well as the love of their adoptive parents. They may even regard themselves as a burden to their adoptive parents and they may lose their sense of belonging and develop identity problems (Askeland, 2006). Children who lose their real mother for whatever reason, or children who never knew their real mother, often imagine or invent a perfect or flawless mother (Cournos, 1999) against whom the substitute mother pales by comparison.

Family preservation, another alternative to traditional methods of providing for the welfare of children in need of proper care in a family home, has had a significant number of failures (Lindsey, 2004; Murphy, 1997; Myers, 2004; Schwartz & Fishman, 1999). It, therefore, is also not the answer to the problem of what to do with children whose homes do not serve them well.

People who argue that the benefits of a family home outweigh those of a children's home do not understand why a child might prefer living in a children's home to living in a family home (Holt, 1992). But in the old days, some children believed they were better off in a children's home than a foster home because children's homes did not isolate children from their parents as much as foster homes did (Maas & Engler, 1959).

Additionally, the willingness of children to live in rather than leave children's homes is proof of the productiveness of children's homes. It is also proof that children's homes were "not the pit of unhappiness some portrayed it to be" (Holt, 1992, p. 131).

Children who reject foster family homes, as some children do, in favor of children's homes do so because the atmosphere of a children's home is one of tolerance unlike that of a foster home, and children's homes have something definite and worthwhile to offer adolescents which is why, when given the choice, some select children's homes (Lefeavers, 1983; McGovern, 1948). This does not mean that children do not suffer abuse and neglect in children's homes. Children are vulnerable to abuse (Barth & Blackwell, 1998; Bernstein, 2002; Jenson & Fraser, 2006; Lindsey, 2004; Moriarty, 1999; Murphy, 1997; Myers, 2004; Pecora, 2006; Satz & Askeland, 2006; Schwartz & Fishman, 1999) and neglect (Cournos, 1999; Pecora, 2006) in all types of care, including their own home.

Child advocates who have been investigating child welfare reforms for decades have found no magic formula for providing for the growing population of children in need of out-of-home care. Nowhere in any state in any part of the country have they found a single, model, child welfare system that works for all children. Schwartz and Fishman (1999) claim the child welfare system is broken. Worse yet, nobody seems to know how to fix it (Bernstein, 2002; Johnson, 1997; Schwartz & Fishman 1999).

Displaced, neglected and abused children, whose numbers were "bursting at the seams" (Schwartz & Fishman, 1999, p. 37) in the late 1990s, have continued to swell. In

2000, for example, 588,000 children resided in foster care ¹⁴ (Hill, 2004; Myers, 2004). In 2003, more than half a million children were in need of homes. A disproportionate number of those children were African American (Derezotes & Poertner, 2005; Lindsey, 2004; Everett et al., 2004; Hill, 2004; Jackson, 2006; Lindsey, 2004; McCown, 2006; McRoy, 2004).

¹⁴ Foster care here is defined as foster family care, “orphanages,” group homes, and adoptive homes (Myers, 2004).

CHAPTER IV

METHOLODOGY

I begin this chapter with my philosophical assumptions on which I base my narrative analyses. I explain why I chose to investigate the experiences of orphaned educators, and I present my research methodology. Then I introduce my study participants. To protect the participants' identity and their privacy, I use pseudonyms for them and all of the people they spoke of as they narrated their stories. I use a pseudonym for the orphanage in which they lived and the schools they attended.

I am drawn to qualitative inquiry as an approach for this investigation of orphaned educators as it is a study that has not yet been conducted on women of color. My interest in the experiences of orphan, African American educators, coupled with my interest in education, make my use of this subject matter a fitting research method. My curiosity about the orphan experiences of my study participants, which was piqued as a direct result of their successful navigation through the child welfare system, their success in education, and their attainment of middle-class status prompted this narrative investigation. Making the transition from working class to middle class is not easy for African American women, especially women who grew up during segregation. It seems ever more difficult for women who come from broken homes whether through the death of a parent or both parents, divorce, abuse, or lack of parental concern and support.

My review of the literature on children who live in out-of-home care revealed that “orphan”¹⁵ children struggle with complex issues before, during, and after they leave foster care, issues that often impede their ability to succeed in life. I wanted to know if the same was true of the girls from Havertown Industrial School Home who became educators. I wanted to know what their specific “orphan” experiences were and how those experiences might have impacted their lives. I wanted to know how these educators who were once classified as “orphans” were able to get from where they were in life as children to where they are now as adults. I wanted to know how they talk about their experiences and how they feel about their experiences.

Obviously there is something about these girls (the majority of whom were underprivileged) that contributed to their success. They came through an under funded, “colored” industrial school home, and that alone made them different from the majority of children who grew up in the 1950s and 1960s. Although it seems unlikely that they would rise above the ranks of the working class, somehow they did. Something made these women different from other children from children’s homes who went to college but dropped out within the first two years of enrolling, never to return. Something kept the women from winding up in prison, becoming homeless, dying by violence, or relying on government assistance in adulthood, which happens to many children from children’s homes or orphanages as they were once called.

Once I established my focus, did my preliminary reading on orphans and orphanages, and secured IRB approval to conduct research on human subjects, I

¹⁵ Orphan is a term used to refer to any child who lives in out-of-home care regardless of whether the parents are living or dead and regardless of the reason for out-of-home placement.

contacted women who used to live at Havertown Industrial School Home (a pseudonym) about their interest in participating in my research study. Because I knew that life experience research lends itself to narrative, I determined the number of participants from whom I might collect a manageable amount of data. I considered six to be a manageable number. A larger number would make the volume of data unwieldy. In order to give them time to think about whether they wanted to participate in the study and to reflect back over their lives, I waited a week before contacting the women again and getting their written permission. In a phone call and in writing, I explained to the women that I was conducting research on girls from Havertown Industrial School Home who became educators and that I would be asking them to tell me the story of their life.

By telling the women ahead of time that I would ask them to “Tell me the story of your life,” I hoped to minimize or eliminate any element of surprise during the interview. By using the “Tell me the story of your life” prompt I hoped to get the women to talk freely about whatever was important to them that they wanted to talk about rather than what they thought I might want to hear. Also by notifying the women ahead of time about what they could expect during the interview, I felt confident that initiating the interview using Casey’s (1993) method: “Tell me the story of your life,” would be effective.

I believed that using the “Tell me the story of your life” prompt would invite the women to begin at any point in their lives they wanted to and to talk as freely about any part of their lives that they wanted to talk about. My intention in using Casey’s method was to generate as much data as possible and not restrict or constrain the women in any

way. My use of Casey's method, which Apple (1993) says "is deceptively simple, though grounded theoretically in quite a sophisticated way" (p. xiv) worked well with all the participants except one.

The one participant who was reluctant to respond to my prompt insisted that I ask her specific questions, so I encouraged her by asking, "Why did you live at Havertown Industrial School Home?" She answered my question in one sentence then became silent again. When I asked her, "What was it like living at Havertown Industrial School Home?" she became fluent and the interview proceeded without incident after that. I asked all of the women open-ended and clarifying follow-up questions as I deemed them necessary and appropriate.

Because people live storied lives (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), their lived experiences are best told from their own perspectives, in their own words, and through their own voices, which is what I wanted my participants to do. To deny them the privilege of narrating their own experiences would have been to deny them human dignity (Errante, 2000), even though the narrative constructions was to be a joint effort between the participants and me, the researcher (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

My preferred research method was qualitative rather than quantitative research because I was interested in understanding and interpreting the women's experiences. I was not interested in conducting a statistical study. Beckett and Lee (2004) posit that qualitative data are important in research on African Americans because they give meaning to those experiences. Qualitative research "is ideal when the researcher is interested in seeking insight, discovery, and interpretation" (Green-Powell, 1997, p. 202).

By collecting the women's life stories through an oral, narrative approach, which was my primary research methodology, I was able to collect a plethora of rich data which I was able to sift through and interpret. I also chose to conduct oral, narrative research because it involved talking with participants who could provide first-person accounts of the events in their lives. Through oral narratives, participants talk about events in their lives in the form of stories (Merriam, 2002). Oral narratives are also analytically driven and they follow a tradition of critical analysis of marginalized voices (Reyes, 1996).

Since everyone faces adversities sometime in our lives, though not necessarily through out-of-home care in a children's home or orphanage, everyone "can learn from listening to the stories of other people who have reflected on the *what* and the *how* of their successful negotiation of life's challenges" (Willoughby, et. al. 2003, p. 90). By telling their stories, the women can invite readers to share their experiences and give readers some insight into their world. Freire (2002) says that "people often identify with representations that . . . help deepen their understanding of themselves" (p. 23). Life histories and oral histories enable people "to tell their own lives with all of the selectivities and silences this entails" (Apple, 1993, p. xv). I noted these in the stories.

As I examined the narratives, I looked for ways the educators made meaning of their lived experiences, noting where possible, selectivity, slippage, and silence as they were likely to contribute to my understanding of the women's stories. The women had varied reasons for telling certain stories and not telling others, but they did not tell me what those reasons were. I also looked for patterns in their storytelling: common themes, the vernacular they slipped into, and the figurative language they used to create word

pictures, all of which contributed to how the women wanted to tell their stories and how they wanted me to hear and to understand those stories. Their speaking rate, pitch, and volume also contributed to my understanding of their stories, just as their laughter and their sighs did. These elements of communication were important for me to note since the telephone was my primary data collection medium for most of the participants as I conducted only two of the initial interviews face-to-face.

I chose to investigate the experiences of orphanage girls¹⁶ who became educators rather than those orphanage girls who became factory workers, construction workers (yes, some did become construction workers), laundry workers, cafeteria workers, cleaning ladies (housekeeping), hairdressers, and office personnel because, as educated professionals, I thought they might be less reluctant to open up to me because of our shared interest in education and because of our shared socio-economic status.

I was also cognizant of the fact that I was researching past histories; therefore, it was important that I choose people who are lucid enough and reflective enough to recount some of the complexities of their own lives in their stories (McEwan & Egan, 1995). The women educators are still actively working in their careers, guiding the progress of, and advising their students, so I deemed them to be lucid and reflexive. I was not mistaken about their lucidity and reflexivity which I was able to note during the interview. Additionally, I considered the willingness of participants to trust me enough to share intimacies of their life experiences; I thought educators might fit that category.

¹⁶ By “orphanage children” I mean those children who lived in orphanages or children’s homes regardless of the length of their stay in placement.

Because of incompatibility of schedules, the time and cost of traveling long distances to participants' homes or places of employment, and due to participant's personal preferences, I conducted only two of the initial interviews face-to-face. Part of one of the face-to-face interviews took place in the participants' office at her place of employment, and part of the interview took place in my office at my place of employment, which she suggested that we do. The second face-to-face interview took place entirely in the participant's office at her place of employment at her suggestion.

I conducted the other four interviews via the telephone. Where interviews were conducted by telephone, I informed the percipients that I was tape recording the interview. I used Answering System Speakerphone # 1527 and recorded directly through Super Cardioid Dynamic Microphone #33-992A, into Sony cassette-corder #CFD-E90. The telephone interviews were conducted in private, from my home. So as not to violate the confidentiality of the participants I conducted the interviews when I was home alone.

Each initial interview lasted approximately three hours, but since the participants were eager to talk, once they got started, and I was eager to listen, the time seemed to fly by. In no time at all the interviews seemed to come to an end. Face-to-face interviews took place in my office at work or in their office at work. I conducted follow-up interviews as they were necessary, two by phone and four face-to-face.

I was reflexive and took account of my feelings and comments during the collection of the stories, the write up, and my analysis of the data. I respected the participants' confidentiality by supplying a pseudonym for each of them and the people

they talked about during the data collection process. One participant invited me to use her real name in the research but I declined the offer for sake of uniformity of procedure.

Data collection consisted primarily of taped interviews, which Green-Powell (1997) says “seems most appropriate when the purpose of the study is to explore complex issues in considerable depth with a limited number of respondents” (p. 198). King et al. (2003) posit:

Stories offer a window through which we can see into each other’s lives. If we listen carefully, we will hear both unique and commonly shared experiences. Stories illuminate our attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions. They can teach us new things about our world, each other, and ourselves. (p. 1)

I also used historical photographs from newspapers, personal photographs that I took at the orphanage, newspaper articles, superintendents’ annual reports, school yearbooks, and miscellaneous artifacts provided by the orphanage (I was invited to the orphanage to take pictures and claim any artifacts that were of no value to the current residents of the facility). Two participants gave me photos from which I made copies. Those too contributed to my narrative analysis.

From the outset, I wanted to investigate the experiences of girls from *Havertown Industrial School Home* who became educated, middle class professionals to determine how they were able to defy the odds propagated by researchers who said that girls from orphanages, especially “colored” orphanages, would become little more than menial laborers and producers of the next generation of welfare recipients.

By listening to the participants’ stories and analyzing their narratives, I was able to develop some appreciation for their experiences, make sense of them, and note some of

the causes and sources of their resilience. I was able to determine that the women's resiliency was indeed instrumental in helping them to get from where they were earlier in life to where they are now. According to King et al. (2003):

Stories reveal our history and our hopes. They bring to life our struggles and triumphs and our hopes and dreams. Through telling stories, we create meaning: we make sense of our world and experiences. We have much to learn from the stories others share with us. (p. 1)

I chose to use qualitative research for this study because, unlike quantitative research, qualitative research is effective in investigating the quality of people's life experiences. Holstein and Gubrium (2003) state:

It would be difficult to imagine how an experience of any kind could be conveyed except in narrative format, in terms that structure events into distinct plots, themes, and forms of characterization. Consequently, according to this view, we must leave our research efforts open to respondents' stories if we are to understand respondents' experiences in, and on, their terms, leading to less formal control in the interview process. (p. 17)

Further, narratives are suitable for researching life stories because they investigate disruptions (Thorne, 2000) in people's everyday lives. Disruptions are likely to be remembered because of they deviate from ordinary patterns in life and, by doing so, stand out. "The problem with traumatic memories tends to be their intrusion into the present, not an inability to recall them" (Perry & Szalavitz, 2006, p.165); therefore, I conducted my research with the assumption that the participants' past experiences had not been obliterated from their memory.

Qualitative research methods are not situated in the positivist or scientific paradigm, where people are led to think of the world as containing observable and measurable facts (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Neither does qualitative research use mathematical models, statistical tables, and graphs, or written data about the research in highly impersonal, third-person prose (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000a).

Positivism, which speaks to the question of validity in terms of reliability—making that which is repeatable and generalizable valid—is counter to what qualitative research does (Altheide & Johnson, 1994). Qualitative research does not aim to control variables so that a specific experiment can be replicated with different groups to test the hypothesis again and again; neither does it presume to avoid contamination (Holliday, 2002). According to Perry and Szalavitz (2006), “The brain is an historical organ. It stores our personal narrative” (p. 82); therefore, what narrators recall about their experiences has credibility. Confirmability builds on audit trails that result from the inquiry such as field notes, memos, field diary, and personal and reflexive notes in a journal (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The method I used to collect data was the unstructured interview, which Connelly and Clandinin (1990) argue is an excellent data collection tool in narrative inquiry because it yields richer data than the structured interview technique. The unstructured interview also allows research participants to express themselves more freely and have more voice in both the research process and report (Fontana & Frey, 1994), which was my intent since I do not own the stories. I am the collector of the data not the originator.

In order to describe and understand the participants' narratives, I made a conscious effort not to lead the storytellers in the direction I wanted them to go.

After I tape recorded the interviews, I listened to the tapes several times until I could safely rely on the accuracy of what I had heard, then I transcribed them. After I transcribed the tapes, I checked the oral accounts against my transcriptions. I read the transcriptions several times before attempting to analyze them. As I analyzed the data, I looked for and described patterns, similarities, and differences as they occurred in the narratives and how the narrative texts played upon other texts. This comparison of multiple sources from the same interpretive community such as newspaper articles, photographs, memos, and biographies was one way for me to determine intertextuality.

“Traditional research argues that the only way to produce valid information is through the application of a rigorous research methodology, that is, one that follows a strict set of objective procedures that separate researchers from those researched” (Kincheloe & McLaren 1994, p. 151). However, that paradigm is not applicable in narrative research. Narrative research is subjective and personal, and no effort is made by the researcher to establish objectivity or set up strict boundaries that separate the researcher from those being researched. Qualitative research involves flesh and blood human beings who answer questions by recapitulating specific events in story format (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003) which the investigator then analyzes.

Narrative analysis does not assume objectivity; instead, it privileges positionality and subjectivity (Riessman, 2003). Part of the complexity of narrative inquiry is that the researcher becomes part of the research. The researcher, even while being empathic and

respectful of participants, ultimately decides what will be included in the research report, and the choices the researcher makes about the research are subjective ones (Stake, 2000). An examination of the life histories of my participants allowed me to recognize and deal with my own subjectivity (Peshkin, 1998). Errante (2000) contends that if the researcher's participation in the storytelling is not taken into consideration, then the story itself is distorted.

Researchers must be attentive to their own subjectivity because "one's subjectivity is like a garment that cannot be removed" (Peshkin, 1998, p. 17). I have an emotional bond with some of the women I used as research participants and I had some hesitation about delving into their personal lives because I did not want to have them lose face with me or later regret having talked with me about their private lives. I also work with two of the study participants and I did not want to jeopardize my working relationship with them.

As an African American educator who shared many of the negativities that some of my participants experienced through racism and silencing, I was a bit leery about the participants thinking that I might want to steal their stories and use them to my advantage. Consequently, I tried to make sure that I stayed focused on my goal of researching and collecting narratives and not try to outthink myself or try to rekindle our childhood relationships. At the same time, I did not want to weaken the fragile relationship or jeopardize the cordiality that still exists between the participants and me.

As I collected the stories of my participants, I was consciously aware of my many subjective "I's" (Peshkin, 1998): my Educator "I," my Friendship-Seeking "I," my

Ethnic Maintenance “I,” my Shared-Gender “I,” my Story-Sharing “I,” and my Researcher “I.” “One of our tasks in writing narrative accounts is to convey a sense of the complexity of all of the “I”s” all of the ways each of us has of knowing” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p.10). Although I have somewhat of a bond with the participants, I could not and did not presume to speak for them. As educated women, the participants are capable of doing that quite well themselves.

Other criteria that exist in narrative research are slippage, selectivity, and silences. Casey (1993) argues that selectivities, silences, and slippage are intrinsic to the representations of reality. *Silence* refers to ruptures in the story of the narrator, those parts of the narrative that the narrator does not talk about. It refers to the stories not told (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), what the narrator does not say (Ely, 2003). Casey (1993) argues that the emphasizing of one aspect of one’s life “cannot fully explain silences on some [other] aspects” of one’s life (p. 18). Ely (2003) contends that what the narrator does “not say is often important—nay critical. It tells us something” (p. 234). It is important, consequently, that researchers note silences in participants’ stories. Where the participants left gaps in their narratives, I looked at those gaps as silences or as parts of their lives they did not wish to talk about.

Selectivity refers to choice. For the storyteller, selectivity refers to conscious selections about what to include and what to leave out of her myriad life experiences (Thorne, 2000). It refers to “the point from which one looks back, by intent and many other subjective variables” (Goldstein, 1996, p. 19). Casey (1993) posits that selectivities are necessary in all research, and what participants select and reject depends on who they

are, who they talk to, what they say, how they say it, and when and where researchers listen. It is likely that the participants in narrating their life stories had varied reasons for telling certain stories and not telling others.

The stories we tell are not meant to be complete chronicles of our lives, for obviously no one can tell the entire story of her life. Instead, the stories people tell “are snippets of [their] experiences, events, thoughts, and feelings at a particular time and place. They are capsules of the experiences that are most important or meaningful to [the teller] —the things that [they] value” (King et al., 2003, p. 1). Undoubtedly then, the stories the participants told me about their experiences are those they remembered and, likely, those events are value-laden (Bruner, 1987; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000a). The stories the participants told me about their experiences were also likely shaped by the selectivity and limitations of their memory (Ferguson, 1984).

Slippage refers to contradictions within narratives, or inconsistencies that pop up in the narrator’s story over time. As Casey (1993) argues, “. . . the internal organization of a life history does not often follow as neat, sequential chronology” (p. 49), and sometimes narrators forget what they said earlier, creating a disparity in their story. Since people’s memories are not infallible, I was aware that disparities were possible in the participants’ stories.

Participants in the Study

My study participants, according to information I gleaned from a collection of school yearbooks and a newspaper article, range in age from about 48 to 60¹⁷ (Giunca, 2007b; Parker, 1964). Some of them told me the age they were when they were admitted to the orphanage; others told me the grade they were in at the time of admission. During the telling of their stories, they mentioned how old they were in some instances. This I took to mean that age was an important factor. It was used to show maturity or lack of maturity; dependence or independence; self-determination or lack of self-determination, and the like. The women's mentioning of age seemed to indicate that they were proud of their behavior and their cognitive ability or puzzled by their behavior and lack of cognitive ability at the time of particular events in their lives.

The positions the participants hold in educational institutions include: (a) teacher assistant/office assistant in an elementary school, (b) program director at a university, (c) program director at a community college, (d) media center coordinator at a middle school, (e) guidance counselor at a high school, and (f) assistant principal at a middle school. All of the participants lived at the same children's home for at least two years, but not all of them were well acquainted with each other. The age differences barred that from occurring. Of the five participants who live in the same state, only two of them live in the same town. One participant lives out of state.

¹⁷ I used school yearbooks to find out who was in the same grade and/or class together and who might know each other since I did not want to reveal the identities of the participants in my study to each other.

I did not ask the participants their age since I did not see the merits of knowing their exact age. I only needed to know the grade they were in at the time of their admission to the orphanage and the grade they were in at the time of their dismissal from the orphanage.

The participants come from similar backgrounds and work in the same contexts, so it was not unexpected that they would have common expressions and interpretations that might bring clarity to their life histories (Huberman, 1995). The participants also have what Rossman and Rallis (2003) call a shared pattern of life experiences. My research attempted to investigate those shared pattern of life experiences.

The educators appear in the study in the order in which I interviewed them. The order in which I interviewed the educators was simply a matter of whoever was available to be interviewed at the same time that I was available to conduct the interviews except for Rita. I lacked the initial confidence to broach Rita about participating in the study, so I deliberately contacted and interviewed her last. I was afraid that she might perceive me as an interloper into her personal life and would not grant me an interview.

To protect their identity, the names I gave to all the women in my study: Lucy, Florence, Cassandra, Sabin, Darlene, and Rita are all pseudonyms as are the names of the people and places associated with them. The orphan educators were admitted to Havertown Industrial School Home at different times and for different reasons. They remained in the orphanage for varying lengths of time, from two to about thirteen years. Later in the research, I present a summary of the lives of the educators in the order in which I interviewed them.

Lucy was admitted to the orphanage as a ten-year-old after she was abandoned by her mother. She stayed at the orphanage for about nine years. She went to college, got pregnant, dropped out, married the father of her child, then returned to college to complete her bachelor's degree. She went on to get a master's degree while she worked

as a high school teacher. She transitioned to the college level where she continued her career as a college instructor and later an administrator.

Florence was admitted to the orphanage as a third grader because she had no place else to go after the only responsible relative with whom she had lived for two years declined to keep her. She remained at the orphanage for about eleven years. She went to college, got pregnant, dropped out, married the father of her child, then returned to college to get her bachelor's degree. She worked as an administrative assistant before taking her place in the classroom as a substitute teacher years later. She transitioned from the classroom to the media center where she continues working with middle school students in the library and as the drama coach for her school.

Cassandra was admitted to the orphanage as a four-year-old after both of her parents died and her sister-in-law was not allowed to keep her anymore. She remained in the orphanage for about thirteen years. She married right out of high school and became a teacher in the Head Start program. She transitioned out of Head Start to the position of teacher assistant in an elementary school. She works as an administrative assistant in an elementary school where she also tutors and provides learning and cultural experiences for African American children.

Sabin was admitted to the orphanage as a fifteen-year-old after she requested it to prevent getting caught up in the foster care drift. She remained in the orphanage for about four years. Sabin went to college, got her bachelor's degree and began working as a bank teller. She transitioned from the bank to a series of jobs in public service and business

before becoming an educator in a community college. She is now an administrator at a community college.

Darlene was admitted to the orphanage as a sixth grader when her father went in search of a wife and mother to replace the one who died. Darlene remained in the orphanage for about two years. She left the orphanage before she finished middle school. She went to college, got her bachelor's degree, and began her teaching career as an elementary school teacher. She later earned a master's degree in school administration and became an assistant principal in a middle school.

Rita was admitted to the orphanage as a fifteen-year-old because she requested it so that she could have the opportunity to go to college. She remained in the orphanage for about four years. She went to college, got pregnant, married the father of her child, completed her bachelor's degree, then later her master's degree in school counseling. She is now a counselor at a high school.

CHAPTER V

LIFE BEFORE THE ORPHANAGE

In this chapter I show the conditions that precipitated intervention by the child welfare system in the lives of my study participants when they were girls¹⁸. Life before the orphanage refers to my study participants' home life, and where applicable, foster family care before they were finally placed in the orphanage. Some of the participants showed, through their intelligence, autonomy, and their ability to make use of the resources of caring adults, that they were resilient before they were out of elementary school, some before they were even school age.

The participants in my study, like many dependent children, lived with crises in their lives, some for a short period of time, and some for years. The crises they experienced in their homes necessitated some kind of intervention for their safety and in some cases even to save their lives. Intervention by the child welfare system was not immediate in each of these cases, but the participants' attitudes toward the intervention are reflected in their responses to the intervention nonetheless.

Reasons such as "my mother died," "my mother left us," or "my mother beat me" do not adequately describe what really happened to the participants before intervention. Only one of the participants went directly from living in her biological family home to living in the orphanage. The other participants lived in foster family homes before they

¹⁸ Also see Appendix A.

were placed in the orphanage. Some of the participants talked at length about their experiences; others did not. Some talked in detail about their biological homes; others did not. I did not press any of the participants to tell me more than what they told me because I knew that to do so would be intrusive and a violation of their privacy. Lucy, the first participant I interviewed said early on that the orphanage children never had any privacy, so I was careful not to violate whatever privacy they now have as adults.

Knowing as I have for years that orphans have a high regard for privacy, throughout my talks with the participants I walked a fine line. I wanted to be a collector of their personal histories without appearing to pry or be voyeuristic and possibly shutting off the flow of communication. I was careful not to violate the participants' privacy because I knew it was taboo. Instead of imploring them to "tell me more," I gave the participants latitude to talk as freely as they wanted. I listened to them. I empathized with them, laughed with them, and cried with them. This evidently was enough to encourage them to talk more and add rich descriptions as they talked and, in some cases, provide careful insight into and analysis of their own narratives.

Most of the participants began the interview by first describing their biological family home situation then they went immediately into explaining what took them to the orphanage. The participants' attitudes towards their childhood traumas varied in degree just as the traumas themselves varied in degree. I expressed surprise and awe at times during the interviews. The participants expressed a full range of emotions. For example, Lucy laughed a lot; Florence was angry and resentful; Darlene was nonchalant; Sabin was unemotional, not fazed by anything; Cassandra was pleasant and matter-of-fact; and

Rita was good-natured and laughed as she recounted one personal experience after another about what I consider the vilest of treatment towards a child.

Although they carry the wounds of their broken homes and the scars of their abuse around with them daily, the participants who talked with me about their traumas seemed to have healed. As I identify the participants in the order in which I interviewed them I give a broad overview of their lives: why they came to the orphanage, why they left, and what became of them. I also include the reason why child welfare intervened on their behalf when they were too young and vulnerable to speak for themselves.

Although they seemed to have let go of the past enough to live in the present, the study participants remembered the past. They remembered why they needed assistance from child welfare, for example. Lucy was abandoned by her mother. Florence was left homeless after her father's girlfriend burned their house down. Sabin had no place to go after her unwed mother died. Darlene's mother died and her father temporarily relinquished his children to the state just long enough to find a new mother for them. Cassandra's parents died within two weeks of each other, leaving her a full orphan. Rita's mother brutally beat her for years.

Lucy's Story: Irresponsible Parents

Lucy spoke with me about her orphan experiences as a way of bringing closure to that painful part of her past. She said, "I'm glad we had this time to talk. Sometimes we *need* closure on certain things."

Lucy who seems to possess a love and a need for independence also apparently lacks patience with people who feel the need to *cling* to their parents. She describes her

younger brother as “needy” because, she says, “He just *needed* his mother, and he’s one of those children . . . he was one of those children who are needy.” She says that her brother “is an adult who is needy. He just *needs* his momma.” Lucy’s saying “I don’t understand where it comes from” evidences her unfamiliarity with Bowlby’s (1980a, b, c) attachment and loss theories.

Lucy was admitted to the orphanage when she was ten years old. She declined the offer to go to live with her mother when her caseworker offered her the opportunity to do so when she was in high school. Lucy says, “I had written both of my parents off, like, mourned them, prayed over ‘em, said ‘they ain’t worth nothing; forget ‘em.’ That’s the only way I had to go on. Otherwise, I could’ve just pined all my life over ‘em.”

Lucy completed high school and went on to college from the orphanage. She dropped out of college in her sophomore year, got married and started her family. Always a smart girl, Lucy said she knew she would not be satisfied with her academic achievements until she got her college degree; this she says she made clear to her husband before they married.

Lucy’s narrative about this part of life presents evidence of her early intelligence by her ability to keep her mother’s attention through storytelling when she was only a toddler. Her autonomy is demonstrated by her ability to retaliate against the child predators who approached her. Through her resourcefulness she was able to accept help from the community in the form of food, and she was willing to accept placement in the orphanage for the sake of the integrity of her sibling. These are just a few of the ways Lucy demonstrated her resilience as a child.

Lucy says she loved attention when she was a child, and she talked glowingly about how she captured her mother's attention by an early display of her intelligence through storytelling. Lucy mimics the small voice and lip smacks of a child as she says "and so, and then, and so" as she narrates this part of her story.

My mother says I was an early talker and I used to follow her around the house while she was trying to do her housework and I'd be trying to tell her stories. She said I'd make up stories and make them longer and longer by saying, "and so, and then, and so."

At the time of my interview with her, Lucy had been a high school and college teacher and was the director of one of the satellite campuses at a community college. She had completed her bachelor's and master's degrees and had worked toward getting her Ph.D.

Lucy detailed the circumstances that prompted the need for intervention in her life. She says she became aware of the extreme differences between her parents' ages when her daughter directed her attention to it when she looked at Lucy's birth certificate. Lucy says, "My mother was nineteen years old when I was born and my father was forty-two years old. I had no idea until my daughter brought it to my attention. Although they were those extreme ages, *they were still irresponsible.*" While she did not point out her mother's flaws except to say that both of her parents were irresponsible, Lucy says her father was an irresponsible abuser of alcohol.

My father drank too much and my mother didn't like that about him, but she was not a perfect mother either, and by the time I got ten years old, my mother had four children. I had a sister who was twelve; I was ten; my brother was eight, and

my little sister was . . . no I was ten; my brother was six, and then I had a little sister who was four.

Lucy says her mother “was not a perfect mother either,” but she does not say what she actually meant. My analysis of the statement is that as a young girl Lucy’s mother got entangled in adult activities when she was still immature. She got involved with a man who was old enough to be her father and had children too soon. Her involvement with an older man required her to take on the kinds of adult responsibilities that she was not ready to handle as a teenager. Lucy’s mother evidently became a mother before she was ready.

Lucy said nothing about her grandparents. They may have been absent in their daughter’s life when, as a teen, she was under the influence and taken advantage of by an older man who fathered her children. They may have been absent in her life when, as a young woman, she ran off with a young man and abandoned her children. Lucy’s mother’s actions seem to point to the fact that she was not only irresponsible, as Lucy pointed out, but she seemed to be easily swayed by old men as well as young. She had four children by an old man and she abandoned three of her children for a young man.

At the time of the abandonment of her children, neither Lucy, her siblings, nor their father knew the whereabouts of the mother. After she left them in the house alone, the children slowly began to let go of the hope that she would ever return for them as illustrated by Lucy’s reiteration: “She never came back.”

One summer my mother and her four-year-old child and her boyfriend took this trip at the beginning of the summer break. She left us alone, my brother, my sister, and I, and we lived in this apartment all summer long. She never came back. We ran outta food. She never came back. The neighbors gave us food outta their garden, and that’s how we survived.

Lucy does not say, “That’s how we lived” all summer; instead, she says, “That’s how we survived,” a clear indication that she knew the difference between surviving and living. When their mother abandoned them, the children simply survived which was evidently not a happy time for them. Lucy and her siblings wanted their mother, but she had vanished from their lives, creating feelings of anxiety and trust issues in the children.

When I apply to Lucy’s case the African American philosophy of “It takes a village to raise a child” then it becomes apparent that while a village may be able to raise a child, in Lucy’s case it did not. It could not. The neighbors’ giving the children vegetables from their garden is not the same as raising a child. The Hope children—Lucy, her brother, and sister—needed more than a handout of garden vegetables; they needed and wanted a real home. They needed love. They needed and wanted their mother. Their abandonment by their mother in the summer of Lucy’s tenth year was a painful experience that was indelibly etched in Lucy’s memory.

I remember eating fried green tomatoes ‘cause that’s all we knew how to cook. So when that movie came along [Fried Green Tomatoes], it stirred some memories, but not good ones. I didn’t think fried green tomatoes were a delicacy. I thought it was something I never wanted to eat again because we survived on that all summer long.

Much like in earlier times when dependent African Americans needed the assistance of White Americans, it was no less so in late 1950s when Lucy and her siblings were children trying to fend for themselves. African Americans needed the assistance of White Americans to help them in times of need because White Americans were the ones with the greatest number of resources. On a whole, they still are. It was a

White insurance man and a White welfare system that saved Lucy and her siblings from virtual starvation and from reverting back to apparent savagery.

A White insurance man came to our neighbor's house and wanted to know, "Where were the parents next door?" because he just saw us running wild all summer. And so the man next door told him my momma had left and they didn't know where she was. Nobody did. So he said he thought he knew my father. Instead of my father being responsible and taking us and providing us with shelter, he turned my mother in to welfare and the welfare took us, so they, it was like they were getting back at each other. That's why I say they both were irresponsible.

Lucy seemed disgruntled that her father did not take the children in and provide for them but reported their mother for abandoning the children instead. Since the father had not married the mother, and since he had not kept the mother from running off with her boyfriend and leaving the children behind, it seems reasonable to assume that the father would not step forward and take responsibility for his three children who were young enough to be his own grandchildren. He was 52 and the children were 6, 10, and 12 years of age. The mother who fled the home was under 30 years of age.

Nothing in what Lucy said about the father's character indicated that he would suddenly become responsible just because his children had been abandoned by their mother. Yet as a child who seemed to need both parents, Lucy apparently was let down that her old father did not step forward and take on a father's role in the absence of their young mother.

Lucy described the neighborhood where she lived before becoming a foster child and the types of people that populated the neighborhood. Her early maturity played a vital role in her being able to protect herself from the advances of grown men, because as

Lucy says, there was no one else to protect her. Unlike Lucy, her mother evidently had not been able to protect herself from the influences of men. The environment the Hope family lived in was safe for neither the mother nor her children, but Lucy set about to change that, at least for herself.

I grew up in an area that was slums, that was a place where people would drink, and a lot of liquor houses. You couldn't just go out and play without people, drunk men, trying to take advantage of you. I mean they'll approach you. You have to learn how to stand up. If you don't stand up for your rights, you'll be one of those persons who'll just get squashed right up, swept right up. You've gotta learn to fight for yourself, and I learned that real early.

Lucy seems proud of her cleverness at being able to outwit the grown men who would otherwise have taken advantage of her. Although she speaks in the second person as she talks about the incidents, it is quite clear that "you" actually is a reference to Lucy herself. Her use of the second person pronoun seemed to be her way of dissociating herself from the situation as she looked back on it. Lucy speaks with much energy and animation when she talks about the retaliatory pranks she used against the men who meant her no good. She also laughs at her own cleverness as she relates her story.

This is what we'd do. If somebody said something fresh to you or out of the way, you just, you just kind of kept moving, but you locked that away. And as soon as you saw 'em drunk on the porch with the chair r'ared back, like this... (She demonstrates). There'd been plenty a day I'd a kicked the chair and run down through the alley. I would just kick the chair out or do things like that. They'd be out like this (She imitates an open-mouth, sleeping drunk), and I'd put a sock in they mouth.

So caught up in the telling of her story of revenge, Lucy reverts back to the kind of speech she used in her neighborhood when she was a child. In telling her story, she

also unwittingly reveals the negative image she had of herself as a child. But, that image is counterbalanced by her pride in her cleverness at outwitting grown men when she was just a child.

Ah, yeah, it mighta so been mean; well it was *so* mean for them to try to say something to me, or try to touch me in the wrong way. “*Oh no! Umma git you back! I mighta been little black and skinny, but look, it ain’t always like that ‘cause you’ll be at a disadvantage, and when I find you at a disadvantage . . .*” We used to do some *terrible things*: pulled the chair from under ‘em and run down the alley and think it was funny and would laugh so hard you cried. Pour salt in they mouth, try to pick they pockets, and take their money! This was terrible. I know it’s just hooligan. But I was gettin’ somebody back. “Uh huh, you’ll notice the next time you say something to me.”

Lucy seems thoroughly proud when she sums up this part of her narrative as evident by the fact that she tells me how old she was when she was actually successful at fending off the men by herself.

“I know when you’re vulnerable,” and so I learned that *before age ten*. I learned that before age ten and it probably kinda stuck, ‘cause, it probably stuck because I had nobody else to fight. I didn’t have . . . Who was I gonna run and tell? Where was my mother? I don’t know where she was, you know? She wouldn’t come home half the time. She was out trying to be young and have a good time, so that left us just out there. “Uh, uh, don’t let anybody take advantage of you.”

Lucy seemed to have some lingering resentment toward her mother for being irresponsible. Also, she seemed to have a notion of what the role of a responsible mother is. She says it is not staying out, “trying to be young and have a good time.” Despite her bravado, and although Lucy admits that she never felt vulnerable, she does admit to having one shortcoming that she has not been able to overcome as a result of having irresponsible parents.

I've *never*, ever felt vulnerable! I feel secure, but when you grow up without the love of a mother and father whom you think should be there for you, you have trust factors. Lack of trust is a big issue with me. I don't trust anybody!

When their abandonment is discovered by the child welfare department, Lucy and her two siblings are sent to foster family homes. The girls are placed in one foster home and the boy is placed in another. Lucy's experience with foster parents is not a good one and it leaves her feeling squeamish.

They sent me and my sister to a foster home and sent my brother to a different one. And we stayed with this lady named Miss Polly and *I did not like it; I didn't like it at all*. Her husband was sick and he had diverticulitis or something like that. So it meant they were elderly. He would uh, did not have control of his bowels and he'd mess up things and so I was always squeamish about where I would sit in the house. Who slept on that bed we had to sleep on?

Lucy says her trust was eroded by her foster family home experience.

I just, you know, it's *hard*. It was *hard* to just go in somebody's house and just trust that that bed is clean, the sheets are clean. I really didn't like it. Because of that foster home experience, to this day I will not sleep on any mattress unless it is White, unless it is *White!* Those people didn't want children; they just wanted the money.

Lucy credits her twelve-year-old sister with having the wisdom and maturity to choose the orphanage as their new home since living there would keep the three children together.

My sister really didn't like it at the foster home because my brother was not with us, and she thought—because she was the oldest—I thought that was mature of her—that we should be together. So of course, when our welfare workers came around, we asked them if we could all be together, and they said, “The only way you all can be together. . . . Nobody wants three children, especially twelve, ten,

and then six. The only way we can get you all together is to go to an orphanage,” and we said, “That’s better than nothing.” And so still, not knowing where my mother was, we went to the orphanage.

Florence’s Story: Becoming Homeless

Florence works as a media coordinator in a middle school and does office work for the principal during peak hours. Prior to that, she worked in a juvenile detention center for young male offenders for several years and as a secretary at a high school for several years. She made her way into the classroom as a substitute teacher. She says she loves it. She says she loves putting on plays at her school and teaching African American students about their culture.

When I interviewed Florence, I was struck by the anger in her voice and I sensed that she felt she had been cheated out of having a happy childhood. Whereas Lucy felt she was able to stand up for herself before age ten and was proud of her success, Florence says she was much younger when she had to stand up for herself. She seemed to be filled with anger.

She was nurtured by her grandfather and her aunt who provided her with religious training by making sure that she went to church. Florence was also a young nurturer of her younger siblings. Her cleverness, her ability to nurture and be nurtured are all important traits of resilience. This part of Florence’s narrative highlights her early cleverness in sensing impending danger and avoiding a house fire.

Florence says she took it literally when her relatives told her to take care of her little brother and sister after their mother died. Her brother was barely three years old and her sister had just turned two and Florence was only four and a half. Florence said she felt

like she was supposed to “mother” her younger brother and sister. Taking on that heavy responsibility at such an early age, Florence says, turned her into a serious person far sooner than it was appropriate for a child. Florence attempts an explanation about how she took on the role of a mother after her mother died.

That was not my position to take, but yet and still, whenever my sister needed something, I wanted to be the one do it for her. Whenever my brother needed something, I wanted to be the one to give it to him or do something for him. Yet and still, I could not punish them when they did something wrong.

At the same time that she was acting like a little mother and nurturing her younger siblings, Florence says she felt like she was deprived of the affection and attention she needed from a mother. She says she sought attention and affection from her father, but she needed more than she got. Throughout her talk with me, Florence expresses her anger and resentment about how she was treated in the absence of a mother. She says she believed that “The people you trust the most are the people who damage you the most.”

Florence is contradictory in several of her statements during the interview. One such contradiction occurs when she says, “I fault my father for a whole lot of stuff, but then I don’t fault him because he probably couldn’t do it, couldn’t have done it any better either.” She says of her situation, “It’s one of those things, one of those circumstances, and I just hate that I had to be one of those people with those special circumstances.”

About the reasons that intervention became necessary in her life, Florence says:

Well, growing up, it was kinda hard for me. First of all, you know, not having a mother, and a father who was basically absent, uh, and you know, being passed

from—my mother died by the time I was four years old—and *passed from one person to another person*. Sometimes I lived with my grandfather, sometimes my uncle and his large family of ten or so children, and sometimes my father's sister who had a grown daughter. Sometimes I moved about with my younger brother and sister and *sometimes it was just me by myself*.

Florence seemed not to realize that when she went to live with her grandfather it was because he had *chosen* to keep her instead of the two younger children. Although Florence had a home of sorts among her relatives, she still felt that her life was hard. Life may have been hard because Florence had no mother yet she was young child who was trying to be a mother to her little brother and sister. Life also might have been hard for Florence because she had no consistent home and little stability in her life, both of which she seemed to need in order to feel secure. Florence was a four-and-a-half-year-old awash in uncertainty. She talks about how precarious her life at home with her father was.

When I lived with Daddy after Momma died, *Daddy's girlfriend tried to kill us children* by setting the house on fire with us in it, but we got away. She tried to trick me by being real nice and sweet. She kept saying, "Come here, Florence," but the way she said it sounded funny, so I told my little brother and sister to run and hide and they did. Then I ran and hid too. Miss Elisabeth did burn the house down but not with us in it. She was really mad because she had not burned us up in the house. She wanted to kill us because she was trying to get back at Daddy about something. She was mad at Daddy.

As Florence intimates, her father's girlfriend had no affection for his children and was ready to kill them in cold blood to get back at their father. Fortunately Florence, even as a four-and-a-half-year-old, was smart enough to detect danger when she sensed it. By being able to discern danger and acting quickly, Florence says saved her own life and the lives of her two siblings.

Here again, as in Lucy's story and Florence's, I was struck by the savvy of the children versus that of their parents. Lucy's mother seemed not to sense the danger of getting involved with older men at an early age, whereas Lucy could sense the danger. Florence's father seemed not to sense the danger of putting his children in the care of a treacherous woman, whereas little Florence could sense the danger. Remarkably, both Lucy and Florence demonstrated their intuitive powers and intelligence early. In fact, Florence was considered mature enough to testify in court about the house fire incident.

I had to testify in court about it and I was just four years old and I cried because I was scared. After the house burned down, all of us, my sister and brother and my father went to live with his brother and his family. I don't think my uncle and aunt got paid for keeping us; I think we were in what you call kinship foster care.

Kinship foster care, a traditional form of care used by African American families, does not guarantee that children will be safe, well fed, or provided with proper guidance, as evidenced by Florence's statement below. Neither Florence's uncle nor her father was a pillar of the community and neither seemed to have much concern for the welfare of their children.

Like Lucy's mother and her boyfriend, Florence's uncle and father were, what Lucy might term it, "trying to be young," and they seemed to love living dangerously. While Florence and her siblings live in kinship foster care, state supervision is nonexistent and supervision by the adults in the house is almost nonexistent.

Nobody checked up on us to see how we were doing or how we lived. I remember that more than one child slept in the same bed together, like maybe four or five. I remember that my father and our uncle had run-ins with the cops; they called themselves being "bad," being gangsters.

The house that the families of the two men squeezed their families into was crowded and substandard. Florence describes its condition.

My uncle's house stood on bricks and the dogs and the cats lived under the house. A goat was kept in the yard. We had a latrine, not an in-door toilet, and we took a bath in a tin tub in the middle of one of the rooms. Several children bathed in the same water before it was thrown out, so basically the children bathed in a tub with soap scum floating on top of the water unless you were the first to get in the tub. To keep the water from getting cold, hot water from the kettle was added.

As for the eating and sleeping routine, there was none. The children usually fell asleep where they sat or they crawled into bed with several other children. Sometimes, their meals depended upon what the men in the family could rustle up. Florence and her siblings were not very happy living in her uncle's house.

I remember eating cornbread and buttermilk out of a glass. It was a meal. The men would go fishing in the lake sometimes so we could have something to eat. We had no rules or routine and we went to bed whenever we wanted to; usually we fell asleep wherever we played. My little sister was picked on a lot in that house and she was very sad most of the time. After about a year of floating between other relatives and my uncle, my little sister and I went up North to live with our aunt, my father's sister. She was his only sibling who was responsible enough to take us. My aunt said she did not want the boy so my brother went to a real foster home.

Florence says it was apparent to her that her aunt wanted her when she decided to take the two girls and declined to take the boy to live with her upstate. Florence's experience with foster family care was different from the other participants who lived in foster family homes because she was kept by relatives. Some of her foster family home experiences were good and some were not so good, but still she was not protected from the foster home drift. Florence's feeling special when she lived with her aunt was short-

lived as her aunt did not take permanent custody of the two girls and they, like their brother officially became wards of the state.

Florence, if only for a short time, says she knew what it was like to live in a real family home when she lived with her aunt. However, Florence noted that real family homes, like institutional children's home, are not perfect.

When we went to live with my aunt, my sister and I still slept in the same bed but we had indoor plumbing and we had a real bathtub. We had real meals too. We lived in a big house and my aunt used to take in boarders. My sister was not picked on by our cousins and other aunt in their house anymore, but this upstate aunt's husband who was an alcoholic used to beat up on her. He used to beat her up so bad that her hands would be too swollen for her to comb our hair the next day. She would have bruises all over her and sometimes she had a black eye.

Florence's aunt apparently wanted to instill religious values in her nieces, and apparently, their normal Sunday routine was to attend church as a family. Even when she was bruised and battered, the aunt made sure her nieces attended church.

My aunt looked so bad that she could not take us to church sometimes because of the bruises. She let us walk to church by ourselves. The church was right down the street. To make sure we got to church safely, my aunt would watch us from her upstairs bedroom window. Later she would sneak into church and sit on the back pew to keep an eye on us, then we'd go home together after church. I must have been about five and a half by then and my sister was three.

Florence was succinct in her reason for being placed in the orphanage. She says, "We were placed in the orphanage after living with my aunt for two years because she couldn't take care of us anymore."

Darlene's Story: Divine Intervention

Darlene was an assistant principal in a middle school when I interviewed her. She had begun her career in education as an elementary school teacher, and after several years was invited into school administration. She was simply in the right place at the right time when she was pointed out by a stranger from among a group of people, in the parking lot of her church, as the desired person to work as an assistant principal at a charter school. She had no training and no experience, but she went back to school, got her degree in school administration, studied and trained for the job, and became an assistant principal.

Part of Darlene's resilience came from her religious faith and her desire to humble herself. Darlene, who is deeply religious, spoke with quiet composure when she talked about her life. Darlene, who comes from a family of educators, was brought up in a Catholic church and attended a Catholic school.

My parents were very young, married at a very young age, and by the time they were twenty-five years old, they had five young children, all under the age of ten, and I was the oldest of the five children. At twenty-five years old, my mother died, and my father attempted to raise the kids alone for two years and then decided, that with three girls he needed help. No relatives volunteered to take all five children and for a year he struggled to do it alone but it got to be too much for him.

Like a good Catholic parent who puts his faith in God and the Catholic Church, Darlene's father sought guidance from the nuns who were his children's teachers. They advised him to put his children in the orphanage, which is how Darlene and her siblings wound up at Havertown Industrial School Home.

Darlene's father, like many fathers in heart wrenching orphan tales, followed the path traditionally taken by responsible widowers. He left his children at the orphanage, but only until he was able to find another wife and a mother for his children. Once he found a suitable woman, he married her. Then he went back to the orphanage, got his children, and took them home to their new mother and a new beginning.

Darlene says she felt a little sorry for her stepmother because she knew that her father had married the woman in order to get a mother for his children. The father's success at finding a woman good enough to be his wife and the mother of his children speaks highly of him as a father. The willingness of the new wife to take permanent custody and the responsibility of raising five children born to another woman speaks highly of her as a person, especially in light of the fact that no blood relatives were willing to step in and take all five children even temporarily.

It was recommended by the nuns where we attended a Catholic church and Catholic school that we be put in an orphanage. So, my dad agreed on that because that way all five of the kids could stay together, and he figured that once he remarried and had a mother for the girls, mainly for the three girls, he would bring us home. And sure 'nough, we went to the orphanage and lived there for *two years*, and at that time, my father remarried and brought all the kids back home. And at that time, from the age of fourteen until college, I lived at home with my father and stepmother.

Things could have turned out quite differently if the burden of responsibility for mothering her siblings had fallen more heavily on Darlene's ten-year-old shoulders as they fell of the shoulders of four-year-old Florence's. Darlene might not have been able to forget so many of the "negative things" that she credits God for allowing her to forget. Instead, she might have become untrusting like Lucy or angry like Florence.

The years preceding her mother's death and the two years that she lived at home with her father following the death of her mother, Darlene was silent about. Darlene uttered not a word about her birth mother, and I took that as a sign that it was a topic I should not broach. Her silence seemed to say that the cause of her mother's death and her absence in Darlene's life were too painful to talk about. Or her mother's life was simply a private topic that she did not want to make public.

Sabin's Story: A Feeling of Disconnect

Sabin did not agree to be a participant in the study right away. She waited for weeks and weeks before accepting my invitation to participate in my research study. By then she had a full time job. When I first invited her to participate in the research, Sabin did not have a full time job although she had held a number of part-time positions including teaching at a community college. She also worked as the evening director at a community college satellite campus. She had transitioned into the position of full time director of that campus by the time she agreed to tell me the story of her life.

Initially, Sabin was not forthcoming about her childhood experiences. She began the interview by talking about how she had helped other African Americans in the community get public recognition. She talked almost nonstop about a number of topics that were only tangentially related to her own life story, almost as if she did not trust me enough to tell me the intricacies of her personal life or she was simply uncomfortable talking about herself with me.

Sabin was not "wholly trusting in the Lord" like Darlene, the Catholic schoolgirl; angry like Florence, the little four-year-old "mother"; or suspicious like Lucy, the child

prodigy who knew instinctively how to ward off grown men's aggressions. Sabin was simply matter of fact. This was part of her resiliency strategy. By not having a sense of entitlement and not feeling sorry for herself, Sabin was able to enhance her resilience. Her resiliency also came in the form of her being able to assess her situation and figure out a solution for it by making use of available community resources.

At first, Sabin seemed to talk with me as if she were doing the interview to complete a class assignment, as if it were an obligation or a chore in which she had no interest. She kept her guard up. She was unenthusiastic and devoid of energy initially. After awhile, she relaxed and spoke freely. By then we were nearing the end of our allotted time for the first interview and she hurried to fit everything in.

I grew up in a home where there was a mother who was the head of the house, a single parent home. She was the mother to eight children, including a set of twins. I lost my mother when I was twelve years old. Following her passing, because we were from a single family home and somewhat being taken care of by the state, we became wards of the state, six of us. I, along with one sister and some brothers who were paired up, went to foster care, following our mother's funeral and burial.

Sabin lived in the foster family home for three years before taking control of her own destiny. Sabin *chose* to go to Havertown Industrial School Home. She was fifteen years old at the time. The foster family home had not been Sabin's home of choice. It was where the social worker put her because of availability and convenience since no relatives would take her and her siblings in.

When she was a child, Sabin says she thought her grandmother should have taken her and her siblings into *her* home, but as she grew older and mature in her thinking, she

says she came to understand the fallacy of such selfish thinking. Sabin confesses that when she was a girl, she could not understand why her grandmother had not taken the children, but when she grew up she realized that her grandmother who was forty-five years old at the time of her daughter's death was not an old woman, that she was a vibrant woman who had a life of her own.

Apparently, Sabin also had not given any thought at all to the likelihood of her grandmother being able to raise 8 children by herself either. A cursory look at the age of Sabin's mother and grandmother reveals that both were probably teenage mothers when they gave birth to their first child. How else could the grandmother have been 45 years old and have 8 grandchildren and two of them be teenagers (Sabin was twelve when her mother died and she had two older siblings and five younger ones)? Sabin said nothing about having a grandfather, so I presume she did not have one. Since living with their grandmother was not an option for the children, Sabin and her siblings were placed in foster family homes.

I lived in a foster home, like I said, from the time I was twelve till I was fifteen. I lived with one family and then when the person whose home it was, was experiencing some personal problems ("alcoholism," she whispers to me) another member of that same family opened their home and made it a foster home, so that's where my sister and I went.

Just as Florence's story demonstrated that living with relatives is no guarantee that children will have stability in their lives, Sabin's story, like Lucy's, also demonstrates that children who live in foster family homes don't always have stability in their lives either.

The person who took us from the first family was deciding to make some changes because we were growing up. By then I was in high school and my sister was a younger girl. Sometimes as parents age, sometimes too much action, too much energy is needed for children, and they decided that “Maybe we can’t do foster homes anymore.” I thought, “*Oh please, Lord, I will not go to another foster home.*” You never feel connected to anyone when you are in a foster home.

Despite the fact that she lived in a home in the comfort and company of her sister, Sabin says she still felt disconnected.

First of all, you have to understand that as a child who moves from one foster home to another, you have a tendency to feel disjointed. You don’t feel like you *belong to* anyone. You have a tendency to think that, “Okay, so this foster home will take girls from the age of 6-10.” That family may decide, “I don’t want to take girls over ten years old, so I’m not taking them, so when they are ten years old, these girls have to leave and I want me some more from 6-10.” That’s the option that’s there for foster parents. People in another home may say, “Well, I’ll only take children who are 12-15.” So that is the way we were placed, based on what the person’s criteria was for being a foster parent.

Sabin’s agitation with the child welfare system giving first preference to the foster parents over that of the children was evident in her voice, which was heavy with discontentedness. In telling me about her dissatisfaction with her foster family home experience, Sabin includes her definition of foster family home.

A foster family is not a real family. How can you feel like you are a part of a family that says they’ll keep you for two years or until you are ten or until you’re fourteen? Most people think of a family as one you’re born into and one you’ll stay with forever. The only time you’ll move is when they move, not till the family doesn’t want to keep you anymore. Children feel disconnected in a foster home, or at least that’s the way I felt.

Cassandra's Story: A Bona Fide Orphan

Cassandra had difficulty getting started with the interview. She said that to respond to “Tell me the story of your life” was too broad and that her response to that prompt would take too long. She insisted, “I can’t tell you the whole story of my life; you got to ask me some questions!” After I asked her this question—“Why did you go to live at the orphanage”—she talked for a short period of time. She talked in generalities about her life as a child, detailing incidents here and there. When she talked about her life at the orphanage she became specific and quite lively, almost running with her words.

Her response was so long and so detailed that all I had to do was sit back and listen. Cassandra rolled information about the orphanage off her tongue as if she had been programmed to speak about her life at Havertown Industrial School Home but had never actually done so. She seemed to know about everything: the rules, the regulation, and the routine. She often said, “I can tell you another thing” or “I can tell you something else.” However, when she told me about why she was admitted to the orphanage, she simply said, “It was because I was actually an orphan. I didn’t have nowhere else to go.”

Follow-up talks yielded more information about Cassandra’s early life. She was an infant when both of her parents died. This part of Cassandra’s narrative revealed the source of her resilience: early nurturing and pride in herself and who she was.

I was four months old when my mother and father died. They died within weeks of each in November the year I was born. I had a brother in the military and his wife, my sister-in-law, took me and my two sisters to live with her while he was away on active duty. She kept us for four years then, for some reason, she was told she could not keep us anymore so we came back to [birth state] and we went to a foster home. I was four years old. When she had to give us up she told the

people in child welfare to “Please keep those three little girls together. Do not split them up.”

Judging by the way she worded her narrative when she talked about her foster parents, as a child Cassandra knew that her sister-in-law was not her mother when she lived with her, but she seemed not to know that her foster parents were not her real mother and father. Perhaps it had something to do with the ages of the different guardians; either the foster parents were noticeably older than Cassandra’s sister-in-law and the child perceived it, or the parenting styles were notably different.

I thought [my foster parents] were my real parents. I held onto my daddy’s leg when they took me to the orphanage, and he had to pull me off. I cried and cried when they left me at the orphanage because I thought they were actually my real mother and father. That’s just how well they treated me. They were really kind to me.

Cassandra never said why she and her sisters had to leave their foster family home and go to the orphanage. It may have been as Sabin, who lived with her sister in two different foster family homes, said: the foster parents did not want to be foster parents anymore, or they wanted a different group of girls who were either younger or older. Nonetheless, Cassandra seemed proud of the fact that she fit the classic definition of an orphan. She kept saying, “I was actually orphaned.” Being an “actual orphan” differentiates Cassandra from other children who historically populated orphanages, whether they were African American or not, whether they lived at Havertown Industrial School Home or not.

Rita's Story: The Power of the Pen

Rita is a high school guidance counselor, but at one time she was a teacher. Rita seemed to relish the opportunity to talk about the circumstances that necessitated intervention in her life. She says, "I don't mind telling anyone about what I went through because I went through a lot and I hope no child *ever* has to go through what I went through." Until Rita said that to me, I had been most apprehensive about interviewing her. I contacted her last and interviewed her last because I had to build up my courage to make the contact. I knew she was scarred but I never knew why and I never asked her why. I knew nothing about the circumstances of her life. I never dreamed she would be so open to talking about what had happened to her.

Rita was by far the easiest participant to interview and she was the most forthcoming with information. Rita was quite animated as she talked about her entire life even about what I consider the most painful parts, parts that I thought she might not talk about. I tried to condense as much of Rita's story as I could without losing the nuance that is such an intrinsic part of her story. Even after I condensed Rita's story, it is still quite long.

Here, Rita's narrative illustrates her resilience: early intelligence, caring adults, cleverness, autonomy, internal locus of control, and use of internal and community resources. Rita told me about how a letter she wrote to her teacher started the intervention after she had *secretly suffered brutal beatings from her mother for years*. Rita was the child of a single mother. She was raised by her grandmother for the first five years of her life. When Rita went to live with her mother at age five, her grandmother lived with the

family for awhile, and she was Rita's protector. Because of her grandmother, it was not readily apparent to Rita that she was an unwelcome member of the family by both her step-father and her mother.

A letter Rita wrote to her seventh grade teacher initiated a turning point in her life. She wrote the letter simply to explain why the teacher should check yes on a note her mother sent to him by her brother asking whether Rita attended school that day. Rita had not attended school. She had skipped school. She had hidden out in the woods behind the school because she was ashamed of her appearance. This was not the first day that Rita has been ashamed of her appearance, but it was the most humiliating day, as I explain later in Rita's own words.

Some days, Rita walked to her grandmother's house and stayed there until school let out because her mother made her wear dirty, smelly clothes to school, the same clothes she had worn for four or five days in a row. Rita had never been criticized about her appearance or hygiene until she entered the seventh grade. Earlier teachers and the other students had noticed her unkempt appearance but no one had said a word to her about it until her seventh grade teacher brought up the topic.

I had a man teacher and he came and he had a talk with me one day and he said, 'You just got to do better. Your brothers and sisters all look so nice and neat, and you Look at you; your sweater's dirty. I can smell your arms' I mean it, that just hurt me for a *man* to say that.

Rita said one day she wore "some high heel shoes, a crinoline slip under a tight skirt, and a real dirty white sweater" to school. I laugh at the vision I conjure up of her going to school so ludicrously dressed in high heel shoes and a crinoline slip under a tight

skirt when she was only thirteen years old. I anticipated the next events of Rita's story, but I should not have. I thought she was going to tell me about how she had done a poor job of playing dress-up one day when she was in the seventh grade. My erroneous assumption marked me guilty of the same offense that adults are often guilty of when they attempt to listen to children talk about what happened in their lives: they think they know what happened before they are actually told what happened.

Since Rita does not laugh as she narrates this part of her story, I stop laughing abruptly. I realize that she is introducing a topic of a serious nature and I become shamefaced about my callousness and lack of empathy for her in her situation. Being a good, obedient child who was eager to please her mother, Rita says she wore the clothes that were incompatible for her stylistically and age wise. She says she could not understand why her mother made her dress in this ridiculous way except to humiliate her.

I had brand new clothes hanging up in the closet, on the back of the door that my aunt sent that still had tags on 'em. My mother wouldn't let me wear them. She just wanted me to be embarrassed and, I mean, she wanted to humiliate me as much as she could. My mother felt like I belonged to her and she could do whatever she wanted to do.

Rita's mother, by humiliating her, seemed to display overt hatred for the child, whereas her "upstate aunt" who sent clothes to Rita demonstrated that she cared about Rita just as the grandmother demonstrated that she cared about the child by taking care of her from infancy. Everything changes for Rita when her grandmother gives her a choice of continuing to live with her after she got married or living with her own mother. Rita

says that was a choice her grandmother should never have given her because children are not always the best judges of what is good for them.

Rita and her grandmother had lived in another state, further south, and further away from the city that her mother lived in, and Rita says there had been no one to play with there and nowhere to go. Because there were lots of children to play with at her mother's home, a store nearby that she could walk to everyday and spend a small amount of money for a bagful of candy, Rita said she made the choice that almost any child would make under similar circumstances. She chose to live with her mother.

When Rita lived with her grandmother, she says it was "just me and my grandma maw." Since Rita's grandmother single-handedly took care of her from the time she was an infant up to the time she was about five years old, I concluded that Rita's grandmother was not an old woman and that she had probably been an unwed teenage mother just as Rita's mother had been. Parts of my conclusions are based on the fact that Rita's grandmother met and dated a man after she moved into her daughter's house. The grandmother moved out when she and the man whom she was dating got married.

Probably, so as not to feel obligated to take Rita with her into her new marriage, the grandmother gave Rita the choice of deciding where she wanted to live. Rita chose to live in a town that was abuzz with activity and in a house teeming with children over living a solitary but safe life with her "grandma maw" as an only child. Once the grandmother moved out of the house, Rita's mother, who already had three other children and was expecting a fourth, began treating Rita with overt contempt.

Based on the information Rita furnished and on information I gathered from reading Rita's mother's obituary in the newspaper¹⁹, I conclude that Rita's mother gave her to her grandmother because (a) as a seventeen year old mother of an infant daughter, she lacked the necessary maturity and means to raise the child herself, or (b) Rita's presence threatened her mother's chances of ever getting married. When Rita's position in the home changed from "family visitor" to "family member," she became a threat to the relationship her mother was trying to forge with her new husband. To keep her marriage in tact, Rita's mother did everything she could to get rid of the child short of killing her, as I show later.

On the fateful day that changed the course of Rita's life, Rita's mother mutilated a dress one of the girls from school had donated to Rita at the request of her male teacher. She made Rita wear it to school.

What she did was, she tore, she tore the half, half way tore the ruffles off of the sleeves; she tore some of the buttons off; she ripped something here, ripped, tore something, just, just made it look terrible, and that's what she put on me to wear to school the that day.

Rita's solution to avoid humiliation and the appearance of being ungrateful to the girls for their clothes donation was to hide in the woods until school let out then run home as if she has been in school. That single letter, the one Rita wrote to her teacher explaining why he should check yes on the note from her mother began a new life for her.

I was sitting in the class one day when these *White* people showed up at the door, they came in and beckoned the teacher and he went outside the door, and then he

¹⁹ Rita's mother died a few months after my interview with Rita.

looked back inside and called my name. Well, when they called my name, fear just . . . now I don't know who these people are. When he called my name, I got up and went outside and I remember it was *three* White men and one woman.

When “White” people showed up in the Black community in the 1950s and 1960s, as I showed in Lucy’s story of abandonment, it was a sure sign that something serious had taken place or something serious was about to take place. During segregation, White people generally came to the black community only when there was trouble—trouble to be started or trouble to be stopped. In either case their presence usually evoked something close to panic rather than calm.

Rita’s first reaction to the White people was fear. The next reaction was to check her memory to try to figure out what she has done wrong. With four White people showing up at a Black school, something *had to be wrong*. Rita was correct; something *was* wrong. It was her home life and the way she was being treated by her mother. It was not something Rita had done wrong.

They took me over to the side of the hall and they said, “Your teacher shared a letter with us that you wrote to him, and we just came to let you know that after we read this letter *we can't let you go back home today.*” When they said that to me, I *about died!*” I mean they

What Rita did not know was that they had come to save her because as a child she could only do so much to save herself. She had done her part by writing the letter. It was up to the adults to do the rest. Had Rita not written the letter in the first place, her chances of being saved would have been slim because she had been so clever at concealing her

anxiety, her pain, and her abuse that nobody outside the home would have known about the beatings except that somebody told. Rita had told.

Although Rita says it was the teacher's letter that saved her, in actuality it was Rita who saved herself. She had innocently written a letter to the teacher to save herself from being punished by her mother for skipping school. That very letter wound up *saving her life*. The teacher had simply gotten the letter typed up and "professional looking," as Rita describes it. At the hour of her rescue, Rita was terribly anxious about her mother finding out. She already knew how her mother reacted to the donation of clothes by the girls at school and the clothes her aunt from upstate had sent her.

I was hard to contain out there in that hall because I knew that if my mother ever knew I wrote that letter, *I may have been saved by the teacher's letter*, but I was really gonna get killed now. So, they said, "We can't let you . . . we're not gon' let you go back home. We'll let your mother know." The more they talked, the worse it got, so I said, "Oh, I got to go home! I got to!" (She manufactures nervous anxiety in her voice.) "No, you can't go back home." They said, "*We're gonna protect you* and your mother will never get to get to beat you again," the whole nine yards.

Many abused children have low levels of trust, as Lucy stipulated earlier in her story of abandonment. Rita, even in the presence of not one or two, but *four* White people, was still afraid of what her mother might do to her if she found out what she had been up to. Rita had difficulty trusting that the White people could protect her from her abusive mother. Finally, Rita says she realized that she had no other choice but to go along with the White people's plan. She had not been able to protect herself from her own mother's brutality, and she certainly could not protect herself from *four* White people.

Well, I just had to trust them. The first thing they did was take me to the hospital so I could get a physical. After the physical, the doctor looked at me I had the kind of sores, I had the kind of sores on me where every time I would sit down, my clothes would stick to, they would stick to my clothes and then they would get soggy, so they never did get well. So, I went to the doctor and oh, everybody was in awe. They were just all eyes

There was no mistake about whether Rita had been abused. She carried the evidence visibly across her back, her neck, and her shoulders like a horse might carry a fierce, wild rider. Rita's Negro ancestors who carried equally brutal scars from their abusive slave drivers might have smiled knowingly at her courage to carry on even in the face of defeat. She would have made them proud. As for Rita herself, she was not proud; no squealer ever is, even though it takes courage to squeal. Neither was Rita proud that she had harbored her secret for so many years. What Rita felt in the presence of the White strangers, the benevolent people who came to rescue her, was abject fear.

When she stood disrobed before a team of medical personnel who examined her lacerated and keloid arms, neck, shoulders, and back, they did not look at Rita with knowing pride as her tormented slave ancestors might have looked at because of her tenacity. Her doctors looked at her with astonishment and awe. The strength of Rita's resilience was beyond their ability to fathom. They looked at her lacerated body and noted that her spirit was still in tact. Rita was still affable. She was still smart. She was still able to go on with life as usual.

I kept up my grades, didn't run away I was still maintaining the *highest grades* in school, *in class*. Every time the report cards came out, *I was the highest one in the class*.

By working hard in school, Rita had won the admiration and affection of her teachers. She says she had used the same strategy to try to win the affection of her mother, but the strategy did not work with her mother. Rita says her mother was not interested in her performance in school. Rita's mother was not interested in Rita, period. But being a child, Rita did not know any other strategy to use, so she says she kept perfecting the one she knew.

I was thinking that if I made good grades, maybe I could just tap into something that would spark . . . make my mother like me, but seems like the harder I tried the worst it got, but I still didn't give up. I kept on trying, kept on trying. Everything I did, it just wouldn't satisfy her and I would just, *I tried to do just everything just perfectly* but none of that satisfied her. For every little thing there was a beating. Beating.

Rita, using a child's logic, thought it was something she had done that caused the change in her mother once her grandmother moved out of the house, so she says she tried to be the perfect child. What she did not know was that to her mother's way of thinking, the only way Rita could be a perfect child was to be a child that was never born to her. Since that was not a possibility because the child was already a living, breathing human being who *had been born to her*, Rita's mother had tried to beat the life out of her.

Rita interrupted her story several times, as she does here, to provide a bit of historical background about her mistreatment. Rita says, "My momma completely changed from, from the person I knew when I first moved there to a different person."

Rita provides what she says she thought was a possible reason for the change.

Between five and six, just about time to start to school, my grandmomma met a guy. They started to date and they wanted to move someplace else, but she had been staying with my mother ever since we had moved there.

Without the protective presence of her grandmother, and in the home of a step-father who repeatedly told Rita's mother, "You need to get this other man's child outta my house," life for Rita changed. Rita says she really didn't know then what her step-father's statement meant when she was a child, but she knew it was something negative. Rita says her mother began beating her when she was in the first grade and continued "up to the beginning of eighth grade."

Children can have difficulty accepting the reality that their parents actually hate them. Rita was no different. Rita did not point the finger of blame at her mother for her cruel treatment. She blamed her step-father for her mother's behavior instead. During the interview, Rita was even hesitant to tell me that her mother beat her. She became detached and spoke of the brutality as if she were dissociating herself from the trauma. Initially she says, "Some beatings started" instead of saying, "My mother beat me."

When Rita does admit to who applied the weapon of punishment, she still puts the blame for her mother's actions on her step-father. Rita says, "I think Mother heard, 'You need to get this other man's child outta my house' so much till after 'while she just started to, just started being mean and then some beatings started.'" Rita seemed to have a sense of blind loyalty to her mother even in face of the physical and emotional abuse and absence of love. Throughout the telling of her story, Rita never once said she wished she had gone to live with her grandmother or that she regretted choosing to live with her mother over living with her grandmother.

Like Rita, who was clever at hiding her abuse by her mother from the public, Rita's mother was also clever at hiding the abuse and her feelings about her child.

We lived in like a, a, it was a duplex. I can remember Mother would just wait until the guy next door left, because we shared a common outhouse here, a common wall. But she would just wait until he left and, to go to work, and she would just come and hit me, just beat me for nothing, just, just . . . and so he did not . . . My stepfather had told her, he, he never saw her beat me, but he knew that it was going on because I would have bruises and stuff like that. He told her, "Don't ever touch *my* children." That's what he said, "Don't touch *my* children," so that further let me know that like I was on the outside.

After providing background information about the brutality, Rita returns to her story about the medical staff being in awe of her resilience.

They kept asking me all of those questions. I remember one doctor said to me, said, "Unless when you get older, get to be grown, unless you get plastic surgery, you're gonna take these scars to your grave." I remember him so good. Those were the exact words that he said. I was fourteen, no thirteen years old.

Rita had more than a "tree" on her back like Sethe in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987); she wore visible signs of maternal hatred, signs that said, "You are nothing to me. I hate the day you ever born."

When Rita was taken to court she wore the same clothes she had worn on the day that child protective service agents took her out of school a month earlier, but the judge did not allow court to proceed until new clothes were procured for Rita. Once that matter was taken care of, the hearing proceeded.

Well, I looked around and *every one of my teachers that I had ever had in LIFE* was up there. They had closed Lowland School for half a day to allow everybody at the school to come to the courts. And I looked around and saw all my teachers,

I, I was just in awe! And I, I saw the teachers and I was also scared that I had failed for the year 'cause I hadn't been to school in a long time. The social worker told me; she said. "No, you're not gonna fail." She said, "Your grades were so good that it's no way they can fail you."

Rita had always been a teacher pleaser. It allowed her to get the positive attention at school that she did not get at home. She wanted to maintain the good name she had made for herself by being a teacher's helper and a teacher pleaser, but she misread the presence of her teachers in the courtroom. She says she thought they were there to condemn her. They were not. They were there to support her because they thought she was a wonderful student. They thought she was a wonderful child.

Anyway, the teachers got up on the stand and the teachers said, "We knew something was *going on but we couldn't put our fingers on it*, and the child would always have an excuse for, you know, for what we were asking her, what we saw . . . , and so we never did know. It is all coming so clear to us now."

Whereas Rita says she was awed by the turnout of all her teachers, she was even more awed when she saw her mother sitting in the courtroom. She says she became terror-stricken when they handed her the letter and told her to read what she had written about her abusive mother.

And I'm a tell you, the worst time of my life (She addresses me by name with emphasis here.) *Barbara, was when they gave me this letter that I wrote . . . and I done forgot about that letter, that, that 14 page letter! They had that thing ALL typed up and handed it to me and they wanted me to READ that thing!* (Rita stutters and speaks not like the professional educator that she is, but she speaks in a language that she seems to feel comfortable speaking.) I took, I took, I took one look at that and I said, "I, huh-uh, I ain't readin' this in here with my momma sittin' over *there!*" Even with all of them people in there, I was still *afraid* of her. "Y'all," I said to myself, "Y'all don't *know her! You all haven't been locked up in*

the house with her, haven't been behind closed doors.” That lady, she thought she was gonna get ME to read that letter! “Huh uh!”

Like other situations that Rita managed to get out of, except the beatings of course, she got out of reading the letter too. The social worker read the letter instead. Rita was evidently a good writer for she was able to present a graphic description of her mother's maltreatment of her, which brought the court audience to tears.

*Boy, when she finished reading that letter, it wa'n't a dry eye in that court! Everybody was just a boohooing and I think I was leading 'em. I wasn't crying because of what I was hearing. I was scared because, “Lord, Lord, my momma's over there *listening* to this thing here” (She is laughing as she tells this part.). But anyway, after it was all over, oh no, one other thing happened. The lady went and got a sheet and she kinda like, shielded me and had me show the jury my back and my arms and stuff. (I ask her to tell me again what she had said because I did not hear her. I ask, “She went and got a what?” She tells this part again.)A sheet, so that when I took my top off, it wouldn't, you know, I wouldn't bare my private parts. They wanted the jury to see the scarred area, the evidence.*

Rita's story was most heart wrenching, but throughout the telling, she remained upbeat and positive, often laughing as she talked about her pain, her abuse, and her alienation at home. She spoke of the love/hate relationship her mother had with her which was *baffling* to Rita as a child. The fact that Rita survived her torment and remained pleasant as she recounted the tale of her abuse is proof of her indomitable spirit. Her creative survival strategies also stand out as proof of her resilient nature.

Whenever my step-father got mad with my mother—and I was a part of her—and if he put her out the house then I had to go. Some nights we would walk the streets all night long till we knew he was gone to work then we would Whenever we would walk the streets, she would be as *nice to me as, I mean you just wouldn't even imagine! As soooon as we got back in the house and he was*

gone to work she like turned into another person. And what she would make me do is “Just get on outta here and go to school.”

When the two of them returned home after walking the streets all night, Rita’s mother promptly made her get out of the house and go to school. She probably did this so she could wake up her other children, get them fed, and ready for school so she could rest from the weariness of her nocturnal eviction herself. As for Rita, she did not get a chance to rest and recover. For Rita, there was, “No breakfast. No washing up. No nothing. ‘Just git on outta here and go on to school.’”

In order to stay alive, Rita had to be adroit. She had to devise ways to protect herself and do so without being detected at the same time. She did both.

In the winter time I would get to school so early until I didn’t want the custodians to know that I was in the bathroom, so what I would do is, I would go and stand on the toilet so you couldn’t see my legs beneath the, uh, you know, the stall. And that’s how I stayed warm until school started.

Although Rita found a way to stay warm, she said nothing about what she did to stave off hunger when she went to school without having breakfast. She must have been hungry since she went to school directly after walking the streets all night long without having a bite to eat.

When Rita became a ward of the state, she was taken first to one foster home, which was more like a temporary emergency shelter than a foster home, and then she was taken to the orphanage, then to another foster home, and finally back to the same orphanage she had been put in initially. Rita is quite detailed in her description of the

emergency shelter foster home. She begins by describing the appearance of the house and how the outside was a stark contrast to the inside.

My foster parents lived in a *great big, fine looking house*, but people would never know that she kept children. People would not know that inside of her house was fixed up like a *jail*. Outside of the house it just seemed. . . . If you ride through an expensive looking neighborhood, you see all these big, fine houses, with nicely cut lawns, but inside of this house there were some rooms about the size of . . . just big enough to have a cot, a dresser, and a little rack to put your clothes on, and a place to put your suitcase. She had like, had all of these children there and all of them were teenagers. There were no little kids. At night, everybody got locked in their room, so it was really like a *jail*. There were *no windows*.

Nobody would suspect that the "*great big, fine looking house*" with the manicured lawn was a multi-child family foster care home (or an emergency foster care facility) that had the capacity to house more than a dozen children because no one ever saw any children at the house. For their own safety, the children were not allowed outside.

I don't know how many children the place held total but I know it was about fifteen when I was there. Everybody Black. All Black children. There was not a racial mix thing. Every girl was pregnant except me. Physically pregnant. Except me. All of the girls were there waiting to go to Virginia I guess. That's where they sent girls from my state who got pregnant. They had to leave; you had to leave wherever you were and go someplace else. The boys were kind of offensive. They were there because they had maybe gotten in a fight or shot somebody with a BB gun or I mean just little things. They were just like in a holding pattern until they could go where they were supposed to go.

Almost as if it were a foreshadowing of Rita's future at the orphanage, the emergency foster home was run according to a regimen and routine. The regimen and routine allowed the foster parents to manage the large number of children under their care.

We had to get up at the same time. You had your specific time to get in the bathroom, wash up, and put on your clothes. Everybody would get in line; the boys and the girls would join each other after everybody had made their bed up and all that, and we would have breakfast. She fed us good. She had this room where she had his *looong* table where everybody could eat at one time. It looked like the Last Supper. She didn't want us to wash the dishes or anything. We didn't have to do any chores while we were there. Right after breakfast she would send us down in this basement.

What Rita calls the basement might just as well been called the dungeon because of its oppressiveness and its capacity to conceal lurking and impending danger. The basement or storage cellar was dark, unfinished, and windowless, and its dirt floor extended the length of the house. Rita says, "If you wanted to be near the light you had to stay near the entrance going upstairs. So that's where I mostly stayed."

Rita says she stayed near the light because she feared the teenage boys who seemed to be sexual predators. The irony of the whole situation is that Rita was taken from her physically abusive mother's home and put in a home that was equally devoid of love, but more importantly, she was also the target of abuse, only this time it was sexual.

These other girls, they were not worried about having sex with boys because they were already pregnant. When they start looking at me, well Lord! I had never had no boyfriend, ain't never done as much, as much as held hands or nothing, so here I am, down here with all these girls and these boys who were after me. I had to invent something to do.

Rita again demonstrated her ability to handle difficult situations in her own creative way by making the best use possible of the bushel baskets stored in the cellar. They were all she has for protection. Her grandmother was gone. Her teachers were gone. The White social workers, the court, and the judge were all gone. The foster parents had

shut the teens up in the cellar and left them to their own devices. Rita was *completely on her own* now, and the bushel baskets were the only things that stood between her and the boys who saw her as “fresh meat.”

The ever clever Rita pushed her bottom into one of the bushel baskets and stayed that way all daylong, letting her legs and feet hang out over the side. By doing this, Rita says she kept the boys from molesting her. For added protection, she says she never left the stairs because that was where the light was.

I never went way back in the back, because the further you went into the cellar, the darker it gets. I would stay very near the steps and they would try to come and like drag me with the basket, but I guess I was a fighter. They never got me very far from the steps. But that’s how I survived at not getting raped by them or becoming pregnant or being molested or what-have-you.

This vicious game of trying to molest the innocent young maiden lasts for a month. In the meantime, Rita and the others never speak a word of it to anyone. They never bring the deeds of the dark cellar up to the light of the upstairs. Consequently, no one ever knew that Rita, who had been rescued from her abusive mother, was in need of being rescued from the underground at her foster family home. The child welfare system had put Rita directly in the center of harm’s way without ever giving it a second thought.

Not only did Rita have to defend herself against older boys who were bigger and stronger, she also missed a month of school. Missing school bothered her more than having to fight off the boys. Rita could handle the boys, but she had no way of handling her absence from school. She was not allowed go to school because her siblings would see her and report it to their mother who might discover Rita’s whereabouts. When the

social worker came to see the children at the emergency shelter, their visitations always took place in the living room of the foster home, and Rita was physically close enough to see her mother get off the city bus right across the street from the house where Rita was holed up. Rita says, "That's just how close I was to my own house." Yet few people knew where Rita was, and nobody knew that Rita was in a kind of protective custody from which she needed protection.

It was a secret as to where the children were because they would fear that the parents would try to get 'em or something but anyway I didn't go anywhere or nothing. I think I stayed there about a month and I was very concerned because I just thought I was gonna fail my class 'cause I had not been to school.

After leaving the emergency foster family home, Rita was admitted to Havertown Industrial School Home where she says she stayed "for maybe about two or three weeks." Then she was put in another foster home. Rita made conjectures about why the second foster parents, who were not officially foster parents, took her into their home.

The new foster parents were good friends with my social worker and they took me in their home. They were not officially foster parents, and I don't know if they got paid for keeping me, but my gut feeling was that they just took me because they had heard such good things about this child and how she deserved to be guided. My caseworker knew a lot of the teachers in the school and they had been talking about what a fine student this child was so they just took a chance and took me in their home.

Rita says she knew what she wanted to do with her life. She wanted to go to college. This desire precipitated another change in her housing situation. Rita says, "I stayed in the second foster home till I got in the tenth grade, then I started thinking about going to college, but they couldn't afford to send me." Rita was silent about her

experiences in the second foster home, but her attitude toward it seemed to be a positive one. She says she kept in contact with the family until her foster parents died, and she still refers to their son as her foster brother.

Summary

All of the participants in my narrative study spent some time in foster family home care except Darlene. Being that their own homes were detrimental to their health and wellbeing, some of the participants' caseworkers thought that putting them in a foster family home would be a better alternative. These foster family homes were a temporary solution that did not work out, so the participants who would later become educators spent more time in the orphanage than they did in their foster family homes.

As evident by the vernacular some of the participants used to tell their stories, they were quite comfortable with me. They reminisced about old times and fell easily into using the kind of talk they used as children. They did not try to use sophisticated language though as educators they are quite capable of doing so. They used language suitable for describing their feelings and vulnerabilities, a language I understood well.

The participants seemed to know instinctively when to use "Ebonics" and when to use standard American English to describe different situations. When they were in the thick of their storytelling, they seemed to relive particular moments without the accompanying pain and drift easily into language appropriate for narrating the events to make them come to life. They seemed to want to paint images of people, places, and events using the kind of language they thought would make those images visible.

Not only did the participants express themselves by being creative with the language, their creativity was also made manifest by the types of survival strategies they used to protect themselves from harm when they were girls. Their creativity was evident throughout their narratives. Their resiliency was also evident although none of the participants actually used the term “resilience.” Through the telling of their stories, the traits of resilience that I was able to detect that the participants had when they were girls were: cleverness and intelligence, emotional maturity, courage, tenacity, sense of humor, imagination, affability, and an indomitable spirit. Additionally, they had the help and guidance of an older sibling and or caring adults.

CHAPTER VI

LIFE AT HAVERTOWN INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL HOME

In this chapter I show how the participants lived at Havertown Industrial School Home. I talk about the oppressive nature of the academic and social curricula of the orphanage and the participants' ways of resisting that oppression through their own hidden curriculum. I provide details about the mundanity of the participants' lives and the events and occasions that made the participants feel special.

I begin with a brief overview of how the participants fared in comparison to their siblings who were also admitted to the orphanage. I include the participants' initial impression of the orphanage, and then I discuss their associated adjustment patterns, corporal punishment, stigmatization, and routine at Havertown Industrial School Home. I conclude this chapter with the participants' views about their experiences at the orphanage.

Contrary to what people believe, all children are not placed in orphanages by their parents or by court order. Some children actually choose orphanage admission for themselves like two of my participants did: Sabin and Rita. Others who are too young to make a decision about their out-of-home placement seem to nonetheless understand the trauma associated with being separated from their siblings, and they go along with the orphanage idea because it keeps what remains of their family together. This was the situation for the other participants in my study: Lucy, Florence, Darlene, and Cassandra.

Since life in any “children’s home” is different from life in any private home, children admitted to institutional children’s homes are required to modify their behavior, adjust to the highly structured environment of an orphanage, and establish a collective identity. Some children adapt quickly and some children, especially those who come from wholly unstructured environments, adapt more slowly. Still others do not adapt at all. The attitude of orphanage children whose lives are altered as a consequence of their adaptive behavior patterns can be affected either positively or negatively or both.

Lucy’s Admission and Initial Impression

Lucy, the little girl who felt compelled to protect herself from the advances of lecherous old drunks after being abandoned by her mother one summer, was admitted to the orphanage when she was in the fifth grade. She was accompanied by a sister who was in the seventh grade and a brother who was in the first grade. Lucy was the only one of the three who stayed at the orphanage long enough to complete high school. She went on to college from the orphanage, but she did not complete her education until some time later, then she obtained her baccalaureate and a master’s degree in education.

Lucy’s older sister lived at the orphanage for less than five years. She ran away because, as Lucy says, “She just could not take it. She had to find her mother.” Lucy says her sister needed her mother and so “She ran away so many times they stopped looking for her, and one day she found her way [up North] where my mother was.” The children’s caseworker allowed Lucy’s brother to leave the orphanage and live with their mother too because he missed her so much and “pined away” for her according to Lucy. Lucy says neither her sister nor her brother turned out well, however. Lucy’s sister became an

unwed, teenage mother. Her brother wound up in prison where Lucy says he'll be "for a long, long time." She says all of her siblings, even those who never went to the orphanage, became substance abusers.

Ironically, reuniting and living with their mother whom their caseworker had earlier termed an "unfit mother" resulted in negative outcomes for Lucy's siblings. Lucy, who declined the invitation to return to the care of her mother, became a successful career woman in education. Unlike her sister and her brother who were admitted to the orphanage with her, Lucy did not seek attention and affection from her mother once her mother abandoned her. Lucy seemed to have fortitude and the kind of presence of mind that her two siblings lacked. Despite the loss of her family, Lucy remained steadfast in her convictions about not living with her mother even though she was isolated from her family by staying at the orphanage. It was a true test of her resilience, and Lucy passed.

I knew my mother did not have the wherewithal to send me to college, and I had sense enough to know that was where I wanted to go. So when my brother left, I was the only one at the orphanage. That was a really lonesome feeling. When I was in high school, my brother left the orphanage, and I was the only one left. I only remember that time because one Christmas when the other [orphanage] children had gone to spend Christmas with their families, I had nowhere to go. I was so lonesome. I would just stand in the girls' building and look out the window. I looked out the window and just cried because I had nowhere else to go.

After feeling sorry for herself and her predicament at the most celebrated season of the year, Lucy became realistic again. She stoically accepted the fact that she was alone. She also accepted the fact that her situation was not as dire as it had first appeared. By the time her siblings departed the orphanage, Lucy had lived at the orphanage long

enough to understand that her break with her family was a turning point in her life to which she could never return.

I guess I had to sacrifice that; I had to go through that in order to get a college education. I *knew* the orphanage would provide me with a college education, and so I just made the choice. I could have taken the easy choice and gone with my mother, but I knew she didn't have two nickels to rub together. The social worker had told me that they had found my mother and checked her place and it was nice. He told me that I could go and live with her like my brother and sister had if I wanted to. I said, "I don't want to." I didn't wanna go. I just didn't wanna go. And I didn't have that longing that my brother had for her because I knew by then I wanted to get a college education.

My conjecture is that Lucy, the middle of the three children, probably got the necessary attention she needed from her mother in early childhood because for four years she had been the baby of the family. For four years, she had the experience of having what Winnicott (1971) calls a "good enough mother." Her sister was two years old when Lucy was born, so she likely was pushed out of the cradle, figuratively speaking, while she was still very much attached to her mother and needed more of her mother's attention.

This same theory might hold true for Lucy's brother. He too was only two years old when the next child was born. Like his oldest sister, he was probably deprived of the time and attention he wanted from his mother. Both children, evidently, were left "needy" as Lucy refers to it. The mother apparently broke the bond between herself and her other two children before they were ready for it to be broken. However, Lucy deliberately broke her bond with her mother when she was at the orphanage by refusing to go live up

North with her. She broke with her mother consciously and on her own terms when she was in high school.

Lucy's impression of the orphanage says a lot about the kinds of privation she must have suffered in her own home when she lived with her mother. When she was admitted to the orphanage, she says she was excited about mundane things, the kinds of things children who grow up in adequate homes automatically take for granted.

We could take a bath. We had at least a change, two or three changes of clothes, whatever. You know, it wasn't the best of all worlds, but it was better than what we had come from, and I really enjoyed it. It was like uh, sorta like *play land*, you know! *I played a lot and enjoyed it*. Of course, *there were some harsh times too*, but you learn to adjust. Children are like that; we're flexible and we adjust. We all went to school together of course, and I *really* did enjoy it.

Lucy said children are flexible and they adjust, but not all children are flexible and not all children adjust. What is likely true is that *resilient children are flexible* and *resilient children adjust*. Evidently Lucy's siblings were not resilient because they were inflexible and they did not adjust. Neither were they forward-looking as Lucy who was determined to go to college. Lucy was future-oriented, but her younger brother and older sister were present-oriented; they wanted their mother *now*. They did not look beyond the present.

Florence's Admission and Initial Impression

Florence was admitted to the orphanage when she was in the third grade. She was accompanied by her five-year-old sister and her six-year-old brother, who earlier had been placed in a foster family home. Florence graduated from high school while living at the orphanage and went on to college. Her brother ran away from the orphanage when he

was sixteen. He never completed high school. He married and started his family as a teenager. He died shortly after he turned twenty-four years of age: a self-inflicted gunshot to the head. Florence's sister completed high school while living at the orphanage and then went on to college. She later obtained a master's degree in English.

After leaving the North where she and her sister had lived with their aunt for two years following the incident where her father's girlfriend had tried to burn the children alive in a house fire, Florence says she felt worthless when she was admitted to the orphanage. She says she considered her time in her aunt's house to be representative of a normal childhood because she was in a loving home where she said she felt safe and someone cared about her. Immediately, at the orphanage, Florence says she felt unwanted and abnormally small in a large institution with so many children. Her anger and resentment about her situation are evident in her impression of the orphanage.

When you are thrust in an orphanage, there is nobody who comes to see you. Nobody comes to visit, you know, and you just feel like, "What is my worth?" Other kids used to get a chance to go home with some of their parents or with their families, but my siblings and I never got a chance to go home.

Unlike Lucy the abandoned child I spoke of first, Florence seemed to be resentful about what she did not have in her life as opposed to being grateful for what she did have: an unbroken bond with her siblings, the consistent care of responsible adults, and a permanent home. Florence seemed to view her past through the lens of self-pity: a poor, little, loveless, motherless child. She seemed to give little thought to the fact that her father could not and did not want to do as much for her and her siblings as the state did. Her father turned his children over to the state. The state did everything else.

Unlike Lucy who said she cried because she knew she had nowhere else to go, Florence seemed to forget that she never went home as other the orphanage children did because she *had nowhere else to go*. Her father's girlfriend had burned down their house and her father himself was bunking with relatives.

Florence seemed to have an unrealistic view of the kind of life that was possible in the early 1950s for a poor, colored, orphan girl such as herself whose father was out "trying to be a gangster." She seemed to bemoan the fact that she was not special to the orphanage superintendent who had no attachment to her without considering whether or not she had affection for the superintendent or wanted to be attached to him in some kind of way.

Being thrown in with all those children at the orphanage with no common bond . . . I was not special to that man [the orphanage superintendent] who had no attachment to me. I always felt a little unwanted from the time we came from [the North] and went to the institution. I felt unwanted. I felt like nobody loved me; nobody cared about me.

So bent on giving a negative impression of the orphanage, Florence does not say that she was *admitted* to the orphanage; she says she was "*thrown in*." What Florence seemed not to realize, as she narrated her story, was that while she was not special to the superintendent who had no special attachment to her, she was also not special to her own father who *did have an attachment to her, a biological attachment*. My assessment of the situation is that if Florence *had* been special to her father, he might have found a way to spare her the traumatic experience of being sent to the orphanage, or he might have

prevented her from remaining in the orphanage from the time she was in the third grade until she went off to college.

Without realizing it Florence was the victim of a self-fulfilling prophecy when she was a child: she felt like she was unwanted and unloved, and so she acted like she was unloved and unwanted. As a consequence, she apparently did not endear people to her. Instead she created a metaphoric box, shut herself up in it, and hid from the world. By making herself invisible in this way, Florence restricted her ability to reach out to others, and she restricted others' ability to reach out to her. While using her metaphoric box to shield herself from pain, Florence apparently did not realize that shields are not discriminating. They disallow giving and receiving. They even disallow healing to reach the hurt and pain children suffer when they lose their family and their home.

Have you ever been a child who hides in a box, but there were little holes that you can peek through? Well that's what I felt like. I felt like a child in a box or under a box, and there were little holes and you could see daylight, but yet and still had to kind of shelter yourself from all these things that were happening around you, unpleasantries that were happening around you.

Florence appeared to want to project her feelings of vulnerability onto her siblings and protect them from potential harm. She seemed to feel called upon to protect them from feeling alienated and unloved as she herself felt without actually knowing how they felt. She never said she asked them if they felt about the orphanage as she felt.

I think that is the very reason that I started so young trying to protect my younger sister and brother because I didn't want them feeling that way 'cause I knew just how I felt. I hated being at the orphanage. I just think it was awful, as you can tell, probably can tell that I *hated* being there! With a passion!

What probably made Florence think that life at the orphanage was awful was that it did not fit her idea of “home” and “family.” The home and family she was looking for did not exist for her anywhere except maybe in her imagination. It existed neither at the orphanage where she had no common bond with the children and no connection to the superintendent. Neither did it exist in her own home with her father who engaged in gangster-like behaviors and allowed a vindictive girlfriend, who tried to kill the children in a house fire, to look after them.

Florence’s idea of home and family also did not exist in the home of her loving aunt who was regularly battered by her husband. It certainly did not exist in her uncle’s house that was overcrowded with his own children. Like many orphans, Florence envisioned living in a perfect home with a perfect family. Hers was simply a storybook image like those created for Hollywood movies. Yet her idea of home shows the creativity of Florence’s imagination which was another one of her resiliency traits.

Darlene’s Admission and Initial Impression

Darlene, whose placement came as a result of her father’s following the advice of the Catholic nuns who taught his children, was admitted to the orphanage as a twelve-year-old. She was admitted to the orphanage with four siblings—two girls and two boys. The youngest was four years of age. They stayed at the orphanage for two years. More importantly, they remained together and had stability in their lives for those two years. Darlene and one of her sisters are the only two of the four children admitted to the orphanage who went to college. Both became educators.

After being admitted to the orphanage, Darlene transferred from her private, Catholic school to the public school system. She said she did not fit in with the public school children, and she did not fit in with the orphanage children. With the loss of her mother, her home, her school, and her community, Darlene seemed to completely lose her sense of belonging when she was placed in the orphanage. However, Darlene says she was a quiet, reserved child who did what she thought was best for her. She faded into the background and tried her best to make herself obscure.

I'm the type child that I don't make waves. I just go do what I'm told and leave. And therefore, that's probably why I didn't have a lot of negative experiences. The students in the city didn't really know where I had been for the last couple of years, and I never told them. Regardless of where I went, I could just blend in with the surroundings and not really stand out. And that's kinda how I felt about both of those years I was at the orphanage. I don't remember having any friends hardly.

Once she returned to her home environment after leaving the orphanage, Darlene never revealed to anyone at her high school that she has spent two years in an orphanage. She began high school with a new group of students, and Darlene says (Her voice livens up when she utters the words.), “All of a sudden, I was pretty and I was popular. I was smart, and I just had everything going for me.” Before she entered high school, Darlene says nobody had ever told her that she that she “was pretty or anything.” All the same, Darlene seemed unperturbed by her time spent in the orphanage.

The two years I was in the orphanage, those years were just okay. As a matter of fact, they were kinda like a blur. I found that . . . I just realized this the other day. I was talking to my brother day before yesterday, and he was asking me things Every time I talk to him he says, “Do you remember this?” and “Do you remember that?” about different situations. And ninety-nine percent of what he

asks, I don't remember. And I don't know if he just has an excellent memory or if I tend to tune out some of the things that are negative.

Having attended a private, Catholic school and studying under strict nuns who were harsh disciplinarians, if Darlene's father had transferred the role of mother to her (as Florence felt it was transferred to her) it might have broken Darlene's gentle spirit. Darlene says that she was by nature a gentle child. Fortunately the orphanage was a viable option for the family, and Darlene's father had taken advantage of that option. Perhaps, it was as Darlene says she believed: God only gave her what she could bear. Darlene, who is deeply religious, is the only participant who gave evidence that she viewed her life through the lens of her religious faith. When Darlene called me on a Sunday evening to talk about her orphan experiences (I had called her, but her husband said she was not in but she would call me later in the evening), her disposition was sweet, and her voice was calm and cheerful, almost soothing as she talked. Her interpretation of her life through religion is remarkably consistent throughout the interview.

I just do not remember a lot of negative things, and I really think it's God's way of just kind of helping me because I can't ration out why I don't remember so many things. You know that little saying that God only gives you what you can bear? Maybe I don't remember these things because He knows it's only so much negative stuff that I could bear to stand, but it's a lot of negative I don't remember.

Darlene's saying, "It's a lot of negative I don't remember" could be a specific reference to her orphanage experience, or it could also be a reference to the entire experience surrounding the loss of her mother. I surmise that leaving her home and her only surviving parent and going to the orphanage to live among strangers was a painful

experience for Darlene. Yet, it is highly unlikely that the entire two years Darlene was in the orphanage her experiences were negative; otherwise, she would not have described them as “just okay” or “a blur” as I indicated earlier.

Darlene’s resilience shows through in her creative ability to blend into the background until she, through other’s views of her, developed a self image that she was smart, popular, and pretty. Until she gained this self image, she relied on her religious faith to protect her from the negativities in her life. Both tactics are evidence of Darlene’s resilience.

Sabin’s Admission and Initial Impression

Sabin was a teenager when she was admitted to the orphanage with the younger sister who lived with her in two previous foster family homes. She graduated from high school and went on to college from the orphanage, but she did not complete her college education while she was a resident of the orphanage. She did that after she was emancipated. The orphanage closed before most of Sabin’s siblings finished high school, but as she did not mention college in connection with them it suggested to me that they did not all attend college. However, her younger sister did go on to college after completing high school. Sabin played the mother role and insisted, in a no nonsense manner, that she go to college, and she went.

Sabin says she *chose* to go to the orphanage because she wanted to keep her siblings together and avoid the foster home drift. The orphanage was her only available option.

We went to Havertown Industrial School Home because I requested it. I would rather go where all of the children are together rather than be separated in different foster homes. I felt disconnected till I went to Havertown Industrial School Home. I felt like I was *in a family* when I went there because we were all in this situation together.

What some people saw as an institution full of children, Sabin saw as a family.

Sabin says she chose Havertown Industrial School Home as her home because she knew about this particular orphanage before she became one of its residents.

To eliminate some of that *not belonging* that I felt in the foster home, I thought going out to Havertown Industrial School Home would be a good thing because I went to camp with the children in the summertime already because I started going to day camp when my mother *was* alive. I went to camp and the children from Havertown Industrial School Home were already in camp also. So I already had some type of friendship with them. So, it was just a natural thing for me because I thought, “Well, they seem to get along fine. They seem like they’re a family.”

Sabin knew what kind of family she wanted as illustrated above. She wanted a family that was friendly and accepting of all its members, one where its members got along. What she did not anticipate was the difficulty of penetrating the bond of such a close knit family and becoming truly one of its members.

I decided that going to Havertown Industrial School Home would be a good move for us. Eventually my other brothers joined us at Havertown Industrial School Home, but by the time the younger ones got there I was going away to college. During that time of living at Havertown Industrial School Home—of course I didn’t get there till I was fifteen—many of the students who lived out there knew each other for *years and years* so they really *were* sisters and brothers. So, I really was trying to horn in on a relationship that was already in place.

Along with the living arrangements and the familial relationship between the children, Sabin was also impressed by the beauty of the campus. She was actually able to

see its beauty. All of the participants were admitted to the same orphanage, but they each saw the place according to what was important to them at the time of their arrival. How they saw the orphanage and their initial impressions of it were colored by their personalities, their prior experiences, and the value they placed on being there.

Like Sabin, the other participants had a distorted view of the orphanage. Florence saw the campus mainly through the peep holes of her metaphoric box. Religious little Darlene's view was hazy because her whole experience at the orphanage was a metaphoric blur. Impish little Lucy, who retaliated against the drunks who tried to touch her, saw the campus through the wonderment of a child's eyes. In seeing the campus as a play land, Lucy may have missed the beauty of the campus but saw what was most significant to her. She saw it as a place to play. Like the other participants, Sabin saw what was important to her: a beautiful home and a real family. However, Sabin's view of the orphanage seems to be the least distorted because she was much older at the time of her arrival and she was old enough to see the place more for what it was than for what she wanted it to be.

Unlike the other participants who had not chosen, Sabin had chosen to live at Havertown Industrial School Home. Immediately she was able to see the natural beauty of her bucolic home, and she was pleased. She was also pleased with what she saw inside the dormitory where she would live throughout the remainder of her high school years.

As I said, I had gone to camp with the kids from Havertown Industrial School Home. I was already in high school with them, so my first impression, aside from the beautiful campus, was that it was I had *my own room, my own bed* at the orphanage because my sister who is six years younger than I, we shared the bedroom at the foster home, which was no problem.

While she says she has no problem sharing the same bedroom with her younger sister, Sabin seemed nonetheless pleased that she did not have to share her room with her sister at the orphanage.

At the orphanage, children were housed in separate quarters according to sex and grouped as much as possible according to age. When Sabin was admitted to the orphanage the dormitories had just recently been converted into rooms that could accommodate two to four girls per room. The way Sabin exclaimed over the living quarters indicates that they were not like the arrangements of her foster family homes.

I believe that coming out to the orphanage, I believe that when I got there the girls building had just been remodeled. I never was there when it was an open dormitory, so when I came it was two girls to a room, with your *own desk* for studying, your *own closet*, and that type of thing. I felt very much at home. I felt like I *did* belong and that I *did* have a spot that was mine. That was something I don't believe that I felt in the foster home.

Sabin seemed to almost breathe a sigh of relief that life at Havertown Industrial School Home was not going to be the same as life had been for her in the two foster family homes she had lived in. For the first time, she says she felt like she belonged, and this new place, this orphanage, was her new home. Sabin's ideas about the orphanage contradict taken-for-granted notions that the public has about an orphanage being a home.

Living at Havertown Industrial School Home was *my first feeling of belonging*, and when I say "belonging" I'm talking family type belonging. Before my mother passed away, we all lived in the home together. You felt like you were connected. You are part of a circle of people, and that was the feeling I got at the orphanage. Over all, I really felt like I belonged. I did not feel like a visitor. I didn't feel like, "Where do I go next?" I felt like I belonged to a family of people and that we were all concerned about all of us.

Sabin was so precise with her words as she talked with me that she seemed almost too formal. She seemed to be uncomfortable talking about her experiences and she seemed to be uncomfortably aware that I was recording words that would be written down and exposed to the general view of the public. She never used the speech patterns of a child. She remained professional in her approach throughout the interview. She used no humor, and she laughed only once. That was when I laughed near the end of the interview. She asked me, “What’s funny?” I had laughed because of her understatement about leaving the senior prom (Sabin was among the first group of Black students to attend her White high school). Her saying with such a deadpan expression “It was not like I wasn’t ready for it to be over” struck me as funny, so I laughed.

Sabin’s resilience showed in her ability to be forward looking, adaptable, and having a sense of belonging. Additionally, she had caring adults to look out for her, and she was able to look out for and nurture her younger sister, which are resiliency traits too.

Cassandra’s Admission and Initial Impression

When Cassandra was admitted to the orphanage she was accompanied by the two older sisters who were with her in the foster family homes. All three girls completed high school at the orphanage, but none of them went to college from the orphanage. Cassandra seemed to be proud that “orphan” was part of her narrative identity. She made sure that I understood that she was not like the other children who lived at the orphanage who were not orphans in the true sense of the word. She told me repeatedly that she was *an orphan*.

I was actually *orphaned*. I went out to the orphanage when I was four years old. I was not in the orphanage because of some other incident or because I was not taken care of by a parent or by both parents. It was because *I was actually an*

orphan. I had no place else to go. And not having a mom and a dad to relate to or to refer back to when I got into trouble, I had no other choice but to turn to my older sister. When you are growing up, you don't want to be left with no one to talk to about things. It's not a good feeling.

Unlike Darlene, the little Catholic girl who said God gave her only what she could bear and whose orphanage life was just a blur, Cassandra remembered her orphanage experiences well. Her life at the orphanage was not a mere blur like Darlene's was. Cassandra says she reminisces about her institutional childhood home and wonders sometimes what life might have been like for her had her mother lived and she had not gone to the orphanage.

Right now, I sit and think about times when I wish I could go to my mother and ask her something or I sit back and think how it would have been if I could have asked my mother some questions or if I would have had a relationship with my mother and my father which not my oldest sister but my next to the oldest sister served that purpose.

Cassandra was younger than all of the other participants when she was admitted to the orphanage, only four, yet she talks as if she had wisdom that was beyond her years when she details the events of her life there. Cassandra says she knew she had no choice but to accept her situation because it was outside her control. She, like Sabin who chose to go to the orphanage when she was fifteen, uses the "family" metaphor to refer to the orphanage. Cassandra says she accepted the orphanage children as her family even though separating from her foster father, whom she thought was her real father, was hard.

At the orphanage we *were family*. I had lots of brothers and sisters because all of us *were family*. We got respect from the people that were there. I got respect from all of the matrons that were there. I actually got my respect. I got respect, and I

was kinda babied on up through the ranks. There were actually people that took me under their wing because they knew I was actually orphaned per se. It was just one of those things. I knew that some of them loved me.

During the interview, I perceived that Cassandra had a collectivist view of the world because of the value she placed on the bond she had with the other orphanage children. She described the children at the orphanage as her *brothers and sisters*, as a *family*. Florence, the girl who hid under her metaphoric box punctured with peepholes, was an individualist in her worldview in that she viewed her orphanage placement as being “thrown in with all those children at the orphanage with no common bond.” Florence did not recognize the *common bond among the children* but Sabin and Cassandra did, and forthwith they said they appreciated it.

Cassandra’s resilience is manifested in her ability to adapt, get respect, and accept love from the adults and children in her life whom she regarded as her family.

Rita’s Admission and Initial Impression

Rita is the only participant who was admitted to the orphanage twice. Her first stay was a temporary one which followed her court appearance precipitated by the letter she had written about the brutal beatings she was given by her mother. Rita was admitted to the orphanage alone, without any of her nine brothers and sisters. She completed high school and went on to college from the orphanage, but she did not complete college while she was a resident of the orphanage. She left the orphanage after completing her sophomore year in college. Then she completed college and got her bachelor’s and master’s degrees.

When she was in the tenth grade, Rita, who was already in a foster family home, decided she wanted to go to college but her foster parents could not afford to send her.

Rita knew the orphanage would send her free of charge. She says she made her decision.

In order for the ---- Endowment to pay for you to go to college from the Havertown Industrial School Home, you had to be there two years, so my foster parents [at the second foster home] had to let me go because they could not afford to send me to college and they weren't sure if I would get a scholarship. So they sent me back out to Havertown Industrial School Home when I was in tenth grade so that I would be there in the eleventh grade and in the twelfth grade and then I could go to college, you know, go to college for free. That's why I had a break in my tenure at Havertown Industrial School Home. I went and stayed with my foster parents and then went back to the orphanage and stayed for my eleventh grade and twelfth grade year. Then I went to college.

Rita expressed her sentiments regarding the orphanage by saying everybody at the orphanage “*was kinda in the same boat,*” so they became “*one, big giant family.*” Rita’s collectivist worldview is evident in those two statements. It is a view similar to the one expressed by Cassandra who was proud that she was actually orphaned in the true sense of the word and Sabin who took pride in choosing the orphanage as the best place to live in the absence of her only parent, her mother. Rita’s collectivist worldview, her ability to adapt, and her positive attitude show evidence of her resilience.

Dealing with the Stigma of Living in the Orphanage

Regardless of the many positive gains the participants got from living at Havertown Industrial School Home, they still had to make adjustments. They had to deal with the stigma of being called “Havertown Industrial School Home girls” as if that was their official moniker. After they began attending integrated schools in 1965, the White students called them “girls from that colored orphanage” as if that was all they were, as if

that was all they *could* be. In this part of their narratives the participants' act of resistance were quite obvious. Their hidden curriculum of resistance yielded positive results and changed the negative image they had of themselves. Through their hidden curriculum of resistance, they also changed the negative images that others had of them as well.

Stigmas about children who live in orphanages can be damaging to the children's sense of self-worth and they can be problematic for the children, but the children of Havertown Industrial School Home found creative ways of dealing with stigmas associated with living at the orphanage. For example, they shortened the name Havertown Industrial School Home to HISH. It was a name they used comfortably and with ease, but outsiders were not privileged to call the orphanage the HISH, in much the same way that some children are comfortable being called particular nicknames by people in the family but not by people outside the family.

The orphanage children took offense at outsiders referring to Havertown Industrial School Home as the HISH. Unmindful people thought the children were saying *hicks* so the orphanage children did not give others the privilege of shortening the name because they did not want to be called hicks. In more formal settings and in the presence of adults, when the orphanage children wanted to shorten the orphanage name, they called Havertown Industrial School Home "The School" rather than the HISH.

As a way of poking fun at themselves and dealing with the harshness that they sometimes had to endure as residents of the orphanage, the children created an etymology for Havertown Industrial School Home. They said, "Industrial" meant work. "School" meant learn. "Home" was where you lived. Together they meant that you were going to

live and work at the orphanage till you learned something. Rita explained this to me with laughter, “Yep, that was our slogan. ‘Industrial meant work and school meant learn,’ so we was gon’ work right out there at the orphanage till we learned something!”

The orphanage children were accepting of each other but they were often stigmatized by outsiders. Because of the sheer numbers of them—90 was the capacity—(Santa Visits the Orphans, 1953) and the diversity of talents and personalities among the children, they were quite successful in changing outsiders’ perceptions of them. They did this by befriending and blending in with other children, blending into the background, and proving their self-worth through their academics and other talents and achievements.

Lucy’s Perspective of the Stigma of Living in the Orphanage

Ironically, Lucy’s self-esteem was chipped at by her teacher rather than by other children. Before age ten, Lucy had stood up against the derelicts in her “slum” neighborhood who leered at her and made sexual overtures. As a twelve year old girl in the seventh grade, and still defiant, she says she had to stand up for herself against her teacher’s diminishing remark about her living at Havertown Industrial School Home.

I remember one time my seventh grade teacher asked, “Who’s going to college, raise your hand,” and I raised mine and he said, (a chuckle in her voice) “You put yours down.” (She laughs and talks as she laughs.) “You ain’t going nowhere; you ain’t got no money!” (We laugh.) He said something like that, and I thought, “Well, I’ll be damned. I’m gonna go to college just to spite him, with his little *black* self.” (We break into full-blown laughter that lasts for a long while.) He told me I wasn’t going to college. (We continue our prolonged laughter as I wipe away the tears from my eyes.)

Lucy says she was angered by the teacher’s statement, but she says she also used it to spur her onward and upward. Lucy confessed that she had her own way of knowing

what she would do with her life and she resented her teacher telling her what was and what was not possible for her when he knew next to nothing about her.

That's one reason I *had* to go to college because I was gon' spite him (We laugh again). How dare he try to put somebody down! I remember he told me, (She mimics her pedantic teacher.) "No Lucy, you'll never go. You can't go to college," and I guess he said it to me because I was at an orphanage, and that *stuck* with me, and I thought I would go to college to spite Mr. Jefferies. I decided I was just going to go to *prove* it to him, and he's been like my driving force. I, I keep going back and I keep thinking he's the one I'm fighting against; *I'm trying to prove something to him* and the man's been dead a long, long time.

The something that Lucy says she is still trying to prove to her teacher is that she is just as good as anyone else and that her orphan status does not consign her to a particular station in life. Lucy had already proved to her mother, with her early abilities in storytelling, that she was smart. From the seventh grade on into adulthood, through her hidden curriculum of resistance, Lucy says she continues to try to prove that living in an orphanage is no indication of a child's inability to succeed in life, that it is no indication of a child being undeserving. I recognize defiant as part of Lucy's narrative identity.

I want Mr. Mr. Jefferies to know that I *can* go to college, that I *could* succeed, that I *can* make good grades, that I'm just as *good* as everybody else. Although I didn't have the background and the strokes, and all those other things that other students had, I can still do it. I'm just really *proud of my own progress*.

Lucy was specific about the one thing she liked about being in Mr. Jefferies' seventh grade class. She says she got special attention, but it was not from Mr. Jefferies even though Lucy eventually conceded that Mr. Jefferies was a good teacher. Like Rita,

the little teacher pleaser who tried to win her mother's affection by getting good grades in school, Lucy says she also sought and got the kind of attention she wanted at school.

I know what was so good about Mr. Jeffries' class. Mr. Jeffries had a student teacher named Mr. Henson, and I was Mr. Henson's pet. Oh, Mr. Henson just loved me, and I could just do no wrong! So, honey, I was glad he was there.

Aside from working hard to disprove and resist the negative image that her teacher had of her as an orphan, Lucy sought and got positive attention from the student teacher who thought highly of her. Her defiance toward her teacher, through her hidden curriculum of resistance, kept Lucy positive, helped her to get positive attention from the student teacher, and it ensured her college attendance—sure signs that she was resilient.

Florence's Perspective of the Stigma of Living in the Orphanage

Florence, the one who escaped being burned alive in a house fire when she was a four-year-old child and eventually protected herself at the orphanage by hiding under a metaphoric box, is also the participant who was the least positive about her experiences. Florence said she felt stigmatized just by living at the orphanage. According to Broten (1962), many children admitted to institutional children's homes lack conviction about their own worth, value, importance, and ability; and they are unsure of themselves so they are slow to get into good relationships with other people. Florence was one of those children. By admitting how she once felt about herself she reveals her narrative identity.

I always felt like, that I was, I felt unwanted, like somebody just threw me away. I felt *ugly, small, unwanted*. People used to compare us orphanage children to animals. I'm thinking, "Why would anybody say that about a child?"

Florence's fumbling to find the right words to describe herself led me to believe that she had low self-esteem when she lived at the orphanage. The words she finally uses in her narrative identity further support my claim about her having low self-esteem. Florence, who had been the little mother and hero in her siblings' lives because she took care of them and saved them from a fiery death when she was only four years old, says she never got enough of the kind of attention that she thought she needed. Such is the unfortunate case with many children who live in orphanages, so Florence's situation was not unusual. Florence, however, felt that it was unusual not to get sufficient attention so she devised many strategies to get the attention she needed, even if it was at the same time demeaning. She describes a time when she was given acclaim for her creative ability but at the same time was put down for it.

When I was growing up I loved to perform. That gave me a chance to outdo anybody else, to try to be better than anybody else, or to say, "Hey, I did it." Whenever the Jaycees (Junior Chamber of Commerce) would come out to the HISH, my brother and I would always dance. That was just *my time to shine*, to let somebody know that I could do *something*. They gave us maybe a dollar, and they would tear it in half. *Tear the dollar in half! It was like a monkey show! Tear the dollar in half!* They gave my brother half and me half of it. So actually, we got fifty cents apiece for all this dancing. So, *it was like a minstrel show, like a monkey show* to me. Now, what does that do to a child's *worth*? *How does that make a child feel?* (Florence's ire is up as she narrates this incident.)

Florence says she felt denigrated by the incident and it eroded her self-esteem even further than it already was simply by being at the orphanage. Yet she had inner strength. Even at an early age, Florence had shown signs of her strength by her ability to protect and nurture her younger brother and sister. She refers to her competitive dancing as *proving* to somebody that she could do a little something. She evidently did not realize

that she had already proved she could do more than a little something. She had actually proved that she could do something big. I can think of nothing bigger for a four-year-old than saving herself and those she loved from a house fire.

Obviously, Florence did not see herself as others saw her. She seemed to be too preoccupied with hiding under her metaphoric box and nursing her low self-esteem which further contributed to her poor self-concept. Florence says that proving herself was her “escape.” I call it her hidden curriculum of resistance because it kept her from being completely mired in self-pity and sinking into the depths of despair. She was resilient.

My escape was to try to do the best I could academically, not that you know, we got all these opportunities that were supposed to be all that good, but, you know, still, it was my time to try to prove to somebody that I could do a little something.

Aside from being demeaned on the dance floor, Florence was also demeaned in the classroom by her teacher. She accuses her teachers of disparaging her.

I had a history class, or geography and the teacher told me to find California on the map, and I was looking for California and I couldn't really see exactly where it was. She mauled my head, *mauled my head into the map* and said, “Don't you never tell nobody you ain't never been to California.”

Although Florence demonstrates that she had low self-esteem because of the image she had of herself and others had of her, she maintained her resilience partly because of her undeniable talent. She could dance. She also knew how to protect herself from further emotional damage by hiding her feelings. This too made her resilient.

Sabin's Perspectives of the Stigma of Living in the Orphanage

Sabin says she found out, after trying and succeeding at fitting in with the children at the orphanage, that she no longer fit in with children who were not from the orphanage. She had crossed over the line that separates “us” from “them” and become one of “them” (“them children from Havertown Industrial School Home”). Obviously, Sabin was not irreparably damaged by her experiences at the orphanage or by the stigma associated with living there. Her resilience minimized any lasting damage to her identity.

It was outsiders who picked on us. When we went to school, we all rode the same bus and so we used to get those slurs and we'd get those jeers and things and all of that as if we were coming off another planet. (I laugh here because I had written a paper about how orphanage-reared children are looked upon as oddities by outsiders and about how curious outsiders are about orphans and how they live. Yet at the same time these outsiders think they *know* how children in orphanages live.)

Despite others' images of the orphans, Sabin wanted to fit in and become one of the children. Accepting and adapting to the precepts of the orphanage posed no problem for her because she welcomed the narrative identity of “HISH girl.” It signified resilience.

Cassandra's Perspective of the Stigma of Living in the Orphanage

To deal with her self-esteem issues, Cassandra, the bona fide orphan, says she developed a stubborn streak which no one could penetrate. That stubbornness, which was part of her hidden curriculum of resistance, seemed to serve as a protective shield against the stigma she experienced while living at the orphanage. It was instrumental in helping her maintain her sense of self. Because the girls at Havertown Industrial School Home

thought of themselves as one unit, as “one big family,” as Cassandra put it, they formed solidarity among themselves which she says was virtually impenetrable by outsiders.

As if she finds others’ non-acceptance of her intolerable, Cassandra switches from referring to herself in the first person to referring to herself in the second person when she speaks about being out of favor with the other school children. When she talks about the united force of the orphanage girls, she uses the inclusive “we,” which signals that she likes being included in this group of girls. She, like Sabin, identifies with the HISH girls.

When I got to the tenth grade. . . . There was a time when you feel like you’re not popular and nobody likes you and that kind of thing. I had this little stubborn streak. When I clam up, and I still do that, you can’t talk to me. You can’t get anything out of me. I think I was stubborn because nobody likes you or whatever, and I know it is because once the orphanage girls got together, nobody could touch us. *We stood up for each other*. If you fought one of us you had to fight us all. That’s just the way it was. If one of them from the orphanage got hit, here come all of them. Here come fifty more and you have to fight all of them.

Cassandra talks here about a specific time when she was in high school and her hidden curriculum of resistance prompted her to ignore her teacher. She says she knew it was blatant disrespect, but her narrative identity—stubborn—was more important to her.

My teacher called the orphanage superintendent and he came to the school and the teacher was talking to the superintendent who wanted to know what the problem was. The teacher said, “Whenever I talk to her, she won’t answer. She’s just stubborn. You say something to her and she won’t say nothing. She won’t say *anything!*” and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. The superintendent looked at me and said, “Don’t you ever let me have to come back out here.” And he didn’t. He didn’t have to. That tenth grade teacher would tell you, “Boy! That was one stubborn child!” (She says this with laughter in her voice as if she is proud of her narrative identity.)

Cassandra took considerable pride in being stubborn when she was a child without caring that her stubbornness, though effective, was not an endearing trait. Rightly or wrongly, however, Cassandra used her stubbornness to shield herself from adults, not to endear herself to them. She used her stubbornness as an act of resistance to protect herself from anyone whom she thought was against her as she had no parents to do it for her because they died when Cassandra was just an infant.

Cassandra's resistance, in the form of stubbornness, proved to be quite an effective strategy for her. Rather than engage in a battle with others about her self-worth, a battle which she might not have won, Cassandra barricaded herself in her stubbornness. She did not talk during those times when she felt she was being verbally attacked. This apparently allowed her to keep others from knowing that they hurt her with their words. It was an effective resiliency strategy.

Rita's Perspective of the Stigma of Living in the Orphanage

Rita says she was aware of the stigma associated with living at the orphanage, and she had her own way of resisting it just as many of the others did. She speaks with a kind of wisdom and lightness of heart about the stigma that it was almost baffling to me. Like Lucy, the storytelling toddler who laughed often during her interview; Florence, the child rescuer who was cynical during her interview; and Cassandra, the bona fide orphan who was matter of fact during her interview; Rita, the abused child, was quite pleasant during her interview. Being pleasant is part of her hidden curriculum of resistance.

The teachers made the decision for you that you're not gonna be able to go to college, 'cause you're from Havertown Industrial School Home and they put you on the commercial track rather than the academic track. I can remember one time,

I think I was in the eleventh grade, and I was number one on the honor roll. They had passed out all of the paperwork and everything. The newspaper came out and I was named number one, and I took the paper home. I got back to school on Monday, and the lady said she had made a mistake in calculation and that I was number two (She says this with defiance in her voice.). That was kinda disheartening.

Rita says she refused to let even the “lady” who calculated the scores for the honor roll students put her down because, after all, Rita had once brought an entire courtroom to tears with the power of a single letter. She *knew* she was smart and no one was going to deny her that. She gives me her analysis of the situation.

I think what happened is something was going on under the table, over the weekend and they said, “Well, she’s out there from the HISH, and so she ain’t gon’ get no protest.” Nobody protested, so it just stayed number two. So I felt like the paperwork and the word had already gone out and I was still number one in my eyesight.

Rita explains why she thought the orphanage children were stigmatized and made to feel ashamed of a situation in life over which they had no control.

Orphans then had a kind of stigma attached to them because people didn’t look at an orphanage as, “This person, this child is at an orphanage because they had a traumatic experience.” They looked at orphanages as a bad place to be or because your momma didn’t want you. That was the *main thing* that people thought about a person who lived in an orphanage. People would just look at us as if we were just *inhuman*.

Being down on themselves and feeling ugly, small, unpopular, and unwanted as various participants indicated, some of the girls from Havertown Industrial School Home began to believe that how others perceived them was really what they were. They began

seeing themselves through outsiders' gaze. Over time, their low self-esteem deepened into feelings of shame. Rita, though pleasant during the interview, was not exempt.

Since the world outside was much bigger than we were, we kinda didn't feel good about ourselves. We started to feeling, "Well, dag!" All of our friends and all of the children at school, they, they looking at us as being different We started feeling different. I know I started feeling different, so every chance you got , you tried to downplay that you were in this orphanage, tried to like, blend in with everybody else.

Trying to downplay their difference from other children had a special meaning for the Havertown Industrial School Home girls. It meant being inventive at making themselves *invisible*. Even though Rita uses the second person pronoun, here she is also referring to herself when she speaks.

A lot of times we would be so ashamed of being known that we were from Havertown Industrial School Home until we would hide. When the green HISH truck, hee, hee, hee The superintendent would carry us downtown and wouldn't he have to go down on Main Street and everybody you knew, look like, was down there. We used to get down in the bottom of the van and act like we were a bundle of clothes hee, hee, hee. We used to (She stops her story to laugh with me, as I am laughing throughout the telling of this part.). *We used to act like we were a bundle of laundry.*

Here again, the girls demonstrate how they thought they were seen as "not being human" by others by making themselves appear to be bundles of clothes on the floor of the "HISH truck." The HISH truck was actually a commercial size van that took large numbers of children to and from their destination, but the children downgraded it to "truck." When they rode through heavily populated areas of town they hid on the floor of the van so people would not see them because of the associated stigma and criticism.

When people perceive you as inhuman you begin to act like you are inhuman as Rita's "bundle of clothes" analogy illustrates.

If anybody was looking in the van they wouldn't see anybody in there. The superintendent's face was the only face they saw, because uh-uh, we weren't gon' let nobody see us sittin' there because people had made, made us feel so ashamed to be where we were. They used to say, "Here come the Hicks bus. Here come the Hicks truck."

As they grew older, they resisted the stigma. Rita says, the ridiculing diminished and the children were less uncomfortable about themselves and their situation. Their hidden curriculum of resistance allowed them to see that they looked as good as and they were certainly better off than some of the children with whom they attended school. The study participants resisted the stigma by being presentable and academically astute.

The children at school sometimes made us feel very uncomfortable because we were at Havertown Industrial School Home, but as we grew older, they gained a little bit more respect for us because they saw that *we were always clean; we were always presentable*. We were good kids, *good students* in school; we were on the up and up. So, after awhile they kinda got acclimated to us as not being aliens.

Going to college was nothing the orphanage children who wanted higher learning stressed over. Those with a desire to attend college had only to do well in school and apply for admission. The financial aspect of it was taken care of. They could then concentrate on their studies which was not a problem for lovers of learning. But the orphanage children stood out no matter where they went, even in college. If they were so inclined, they could lie about their home situation or they could simply keep quiet about it. However, a light probe into their background would reveal the reason why they stood

apart from other college students. Nothing the children did could hide the fact that they were somehow different. Nonetheless they tried to hide it. Rita explains why.

When we went off to college, we would tell people we lived in the city, because if we said we lived in Dell Hall, they used to pick at that. They used to say, "There's a sign in Dell Hall that said, 'Nigger if you can read this sign, run, and if cain't read this sign, still run.'" (We laugh.) So we didn't tell people we were from Dell Hall because there would be a big laugh; we would have to explain where we lived, so we used to say we were from the city.

Black students at the colleges where the orphans attended school ridiculed Dell Hall. Those who were not familiar with the township of Dell Hall thought it was silly for a town to be named like it was a college dormitory. If the orphans told their college friends they were from Dell Hall they got ridiculed. Living in a town called Dell Hall was apparently a direct indication that the residents were "country." It meant they were backwards, unsophisticated hicks. Since matriculated orphanage children did not want to be considered backwards and unsophisticated, they told people who did not already know them that that they were from the city. It was easier for all involved.

Several of the participants laughed loudly and often about situations that they said used to be embarrassing or painful to them at the time of their occurrence. Judging by how they laughed and talked about their experiences, the women seem now to have a "devil may care" attitude about what others think of them. Their laughter indicated to me that they were proud of their successful navigation out of the painful and emotional entanglements of their past. It was an indication that they could stand on their own two feet now and they were proud of it. I too was proud of them. When the participants

laughed at the stigmas that used to be hurtful and belittling to them it, demonstrated to me that their hidden curriculum of resistance had been effective in enhancing their resilience.

Disciplining the Orphans

More than in any other part of their narrative, here the participants illustrate their proficiency in using their hidden curriculum of resistance and they demonstrate the strength of their resilience. The job of the orphanage was to mold character, teach manners, and develop good habits in the children (Friedman, 1994; Hacsı, 1997; Polster, 1990; McGovern, 1948; Oxford Orphanage, n. d.). It was part of the official curricula of the orphanage. Therefore, much was expected of the orphanage children. The girls especially were expected to be representative of Havertown Industrial School Home in deportment; that is, they were expected to be respectful, polite, honest, hardworking, and diligent. They were expected to be neat and clean, well disciplined, punctual, and studious. Of course, the children, including my study participants, did not always achieve or maintain the high moral, ethical, and academic standards expected of them.

Orphanage children were not perfect children and most of them did not try to be perfect. Some of them tried to get away with as much as they could, and others simply tried to avoid punishment, as was true of the participants in my study. Some of the participants were positively affected by the punishment they got for failing to conform. Others were negatively affected by it. However they were affected, those who remembered the punishment were not shy about letting me know how they felt about it.

Corporal punishment was very much a part of the lives of children who resided in orphanages (Chandler, 1990; Goldstein, 1996; Gregory, 1995; Hacsı, 1997; Johnson,

1982; Lefeavers, 1983; McGovern, 1948; McKenzie, 1996; Myers, 2004), and many of my study participants felt the sting of the strop. Corporal punishment was oppressive, so was public and private humiliation. The type of punishment meted out to the children to modify and control their behavior was similar to the type of punishment used in private homes and in public schools before about the mid-1960s. Still the orphans resisted it.

Stepping out of line was often fatal for African Americans before the Civil Rights Movement (as it is sometimes the case nowadays), so conditioning the children to abide by rules and regulations and stay on the right side of authority was essential. Children were expected to subordinate themselves to their elders at home, at school, and at church. Before the Civil Rights Movement, in the South, Black people were expected to subordinate themselves to the Whites they came in contact with regardless of the White person's *age*, regardless of *who* the White person was, and regardless of *where* that White person was.

The orphanage children were whipped sometimes for what the children called minor infractions like moving too slowly, being sassy, failing to do their chores, dodging work, not being academically prepared in school, and not knowing their Bible verses for Sunday school. Corporal punishment was used in White orphanages until the 1950s (Goldstein, 1996), but it continued to be used in African American orphanages well into the 1960s.

In the African American community, corporal punishment was considered an acceptable form of punishment to control the behavior of children for many, many years regardless of its ineffectiveness. Whipping a child with a paddle, a belt, or a switch was

not considered child abuse before the integration of schools, and it was a common practice in many private homes (Goldstein, 1996; Johnson, 1982; Straus, 1994).

Havertown Industrial School Home children were expected to exemplify good behavior, first, because they were at the orphanage and, second, because they were Black. To exhibit less than exemplary behavior was to embarrass the orphanage and to bring shame to the Black race. Not to be considered “a credit to your race” was nearly as embarrassing as it was to be touted as “a credit to your race” if you were Black. However, as exemplary behavior is not naturally a part of children’s makeup and must be taught, children were often reminded, in painful ways, of what good behavior was.

Havertown Industrial School Home children were taught proper behavior in a variety of ways but the tactics used to remind them to exhibit good behavior were: fear, religion, lecturing, humiliation, and corporal punishment. Mostly, corporal punishment was used. The participants in my study say they expected somebody to get a whipping everyday at the orphanage. Some of the participants say they were not opposed to getting a whipping if they thought they deserved it, but they were angrily opposed to getting a whipping when the staff could not identify the culprit among them and beat everybody in the group, which they termed “group beatings.”

Adults punished the children according to what they thought was appropriate for the offense, not according to what the children thought. Adults believed that children should be seen and not heard, but the children had no such belief. They were simply children and they acted like children. If they were quiet, it was out of fear of being punished for being noisy. McGovern (1948) says that corporal punishment does little

more than “develop bitterness and rancor” in children (p. 364). When children at Havertown Industrial School Home thought their punishment was unfair, whether it was corporal or otherwise, they became resentful, stronger-willed, or more stubborn, sometimes all three. *Stubbornness* was a common defense used by the participants in my study. It was one of their *resilience strategies*. Humor and laughter were others.

Lucy’s Discipline

Lucy who found humor in tricking the drunks in her old neighborhood where she had lived until she was about ten years old, usually found humor in remembering her former days of corporal punishment. However, she does not seem amused when she talks about the advice she gave to her older sister when her sister got a whipping.

I remember saying to my older sister when Mr. Warman whipped her one time, “Don’t sit up there and let him whip you like you are supposed to just stand there and take it. No! Fight back and when I say fight back I don’t mean hit him and fight him, but give him a hard time. Don’t make it easy for him to just tear you up. Run up that side of the wall, (I laugh.) run all the way over, run all the way around the room, slide across the floor. Tire his old ass out! (We laugh). Yeah, don’t make it easy for somebody. . . . Don’t take that stuff. Oh no! Don’t take that stuff,” and that’s really and truly what I believe. Give ‘em a hard time.

Lacy also speaks without humor in her voice when she talks about the time *she* got a whipping from the assistant superintendent of the orphanage.

Mr. Warman whipped me *one* time. I used to think Mr. Warman beat people like dogs! I never tired to cross him, but he did beat me *one* time and I tried to give him a *heart a-damn-tack!* I tried to run up one side of the wall and down the other. I thought, “If he gon’ beat me, he gon’ have to *work* for this beating.”

The children were cleverer than the adults when it came to getting a whipping. Through their hidden curriculum of resistance the children devised ways to pad their pants, tire the adults, and make the adults look foolish in their attempt to apply the strop.

I remember we used to put comic books in our underclothes if we had on a dress or a skirt, or put on more clothes under our pants so we wouldn't feel the licks. We would run around like they were killing us. No, I wasn't about to just stand there and take no beatin'! I used to run all around the place screaming like it hurt and I didn't even hardly feel anything because I had stuffed my pants so I *wouldn't* feel anything.

When she recalls her whippings administered by the superintendent, Lucy returns to her usual amused self and colors the incident with humor. She occasionally even softens the word "whipping" to "spanking" indicating that the lens she used to look back over those long ago days were not the lens she used during the actual time of the events. Her present-day look at some of the incidents seems to be colored with understanding. Yet, as though rendering her tale through her subconscious, in no time at all, Lucy returns to calling the punishment what she called it when she was a child: a beating.

The only thing I did not like was sometimes you would get spankings, but then I was one of the worst ones for cuttin' up, and had attitudes, so I, I, I think that helped me to kinna get pulled into shape. By the time I was sixteen I stopped getting a beating everyday from the superintendent (We chuckle.).

Lucy's ultimate understanding about her "beatins'" came one day when the superintendent attempted to pay for her being good. Up to that time, Lucy says she had not realized the kind of image she had been portraying to others. As she speaks, Lucy

changes her narrative identity and she laughs. Lucy sometimes initiates the laughter and we laugh together, but when I initiate the laughter she laughs longer and harder.

One day the superintendent just gave me nickel; I said, “What’s this nickel for!” (We laugh and she can hardly continue.) He says, (talking through her laughter) “This is the first day you haven’t had a beating *everyday*, so I’m just giving you this nickel for being good.” I didn’t even think about that. I thought, “I get a beating *everyday*?” (We are laughing really hard now, so hard that my stomach starts to hurt.) *Everyday!* And I was sixteen by then, and I thought, “Oh, I need to stop cutting up (We continue laughing. I laugh till I cry.); I need to stop this.” It just never did dawn on me that I was getting beat *everyday* (We are still laughing.)!

Lucy seems to understand something about corporal punishment that the adults apparently do not understand: corporal punishment is not effective in promoting desired behaviors in the children, certainly not in Lucy. A mere nickel offered as a reward for exhibiting good behavior is enough to turn Lucy around.

Evidently, it wasn’t meaning nothing to me (still laughing), so I stopped, and I started thinking, “Maybe, I need to straighten up. I’m sixteen and still being beat like I’m a child.” I thought, “I’m sixteen years old and . . . I have a reputation evidently for just being bad and having to get spanked all the time.” And he gave me a nickel for being good (She says this in a voice that is almost exhausted from her laughter.), and I thought to myself, “No, I can do this everyday. This is a shame. *I’m sixteen years old,*” so I stopped being so bad, a bully or whatever I was doing.

Lucy analyzes the reason why she got a beating everyday just as she analyzed the reason why she made up stories and made them longer and longer as she followed her mother around the house when she just a toddler. She says it was because she wanted attention. She had resisted being good at the orphanage because she thought she would not get noticed if she were good. She knew she would get attention if she were bad.

Sometimes, I got in trouble for, I'm sure, to get attention because we never got attention for the good things we'd done; we only got attention when we were doing wrong. And I'm probably sure I was acting out some of it to get just some attention from adults because we never got those strokes that we should have gotten. I used to cut up and make people laugh because when you are oppressed (I laugh out loud before she finishes her statement and she joins in). . . . *You understand this* (she says in response to my laughter). *Nobody else would understand.* (She breathes a sigh of relief.)

I felt privileged when Lucy interpreted my laughter as understanding. I wanted her to know that I was one of her supporters. I wanted her to know that yes, I do understand that the people resist through a hidden curriculum when they feel oppressed. It protects them.

Lucy says she used humor to get attention, but she also used humor as a protective shield against defeat. Lucy was adamant when she talked about controlling her own behavior and her own life. Lucy says, "Some people want to *take your life away*. They want to *subject you*, but they *can't* get to a certain part, and that's the part I put this *shield* around." Lucy resisted being controlled and oppressed by others to protect her inner self.

Lucy says she needed strict guidelines just as other youths do but she does not equate guidelines with control. She says that the reason she needed strict guidelines is the same reason other children need strict guidelines. Although she concedes that the guidelines at the orphanage were quite stringent, she nevertheless adds that children who live by guidelines do much better in life than children raised without guidelines.

I think young people who are growing up need guidelines. I think that's what *we* had at the orphanage; they were *strict guidelines*. I think everybody needs guidelines. When people don't have guidelines, I think that's when you go wrong. Some people had guidelines that were not as strict as ours. Their guidelines may have been: you have to be home at night, every night by eleven o'clock, but we would have thought that was *lax, really lax!* So you have to have boundaries, and I think it was good for us [children at the orphanage] to be raised with boundaries.

Lucy gives an example to explain why she thinks she needed a stringent upbringing. She bases it on a statement one of her friends made to her when she was an adult. With a smile on her face and a twinkle in her eye, Lucy says:

I have a friend who said to me, “Honey, I’m just so glad you had that raising at the orphanage. Had you not, you’d’a been on the corner *twisting and dancing*.” I say, “Why you say that?” He just say, “Because of your personality. That’s what you would have done.” He said, “*on the corner! Dancing!*” (She says this with amusement in her voice and face.) *Not just standing on the corner but “dancing and shaking it up!”* (We laugh.) He thinks that’s what my *personality* would lend itself to.

Lucy admits that she *was* sometimes recalcitrant and just “mean.” She speaks glowingly of her fifth grade teacher who often gave her a beating, but I was not sure if Lucy spoke affectionately of her fifth grade teacher *because* he whipped her repeatedly for misbehaving or *despite* the whippings he gave her for misbehaving.

I had only Mr. Timmons as a teacher when I went to school on the orphanage campus. I often used to tease Mr. Timmons whenever I used to see him after I was grown. I’d say, “You were the first man to call me daughter.” By the time Mr. Timmons called you daughter, he was ready to beat you. He would say, “Come here daughter,” and you know you gon’ get beat (We laugh really hard.).

Lucy says she *liked* her teacher Mr. Timmons because she used to think she was his pet. She says she used to think Mr. Timmons always called on her to read in class because he liked her and because she could read very well. One day Lucy decided to resist the teacher by refusing to read properly when Mr. Timmons called on her to read.

I said to myself, “I’m *tired* of reading (She laughs playfully as she demonstrates her blatant determination to resist her teacher.). I’m ‘a read as fast as I can read.” So I started reading. I read really fast and he said, “Slow down, Daughter.” (She

interrupts her story with a big laugh and I join her.) I thought, “I ain’t slowing down.” (She laughs as she speaks.) I started reading again, and I started reading so fast (still laughing) . . . I started reading faster than I could see. He said, “Daughter! Didn’t I say ‘slow down?’ Come up here.”

Lucy was evidently quite familiar with the routine and the habits of her teacher, and she knew that her defiance would result in a beating.

When he called you daughter, he’s ready to give you some licks in the hand (We are both still laughing). He gave me some licks in my hand; I went back, you know, trying to be *stubborn* again, I started reading so fast and the tears were coming then, and I had to (We are both still laughing.) stop because I couldn’t see through them tears. (We laugh through the end of the story).

Lucy says it was not the licks in the hand that brought her to tears; it was something else. It was her wounded pride. It was her loss of control over a situation she thought she had complete control over. Lucy was just a child. She had no more control over this classroom situation than she had over her home situation when her mother left her to fend for herself. But Lucy was resilient. She was capable of bouncing back.

I just put my head on my desk and cried because he hurt my feelings. He really did hurt my feelings, and I would not take my head off the desk. By then I was crying and snottin’ (We’re still laughing) and everything. He said, “Sit up, Daughter.” I wouldn’t sit up. I would *not* sit up. I would *not* read (We are still laughing). I guess at the end of the day I just got up and left. That was funny. (Lucy’s laughter depletes her and she ends the story with an audible sigh.)

Lucy seems to really enjoy talking about the times when she insisted on doing things her own way despite the fact that it would result in punishment. The technique Lucy used in this next instance to protect herself was not desirable in the classroom as it might have been in her old neighborhood when she had no one else to protect her from

the inappropriate behaviors of the aggressive men of her “slum” neighborhood. When she was teased by the boy sitting behind her in the classroom, Lucy instinctively reverted back to her old way of defending herself. She became aggressive and retaliatory, but it was not appropriate.

Although her tactics had worked with the drunken men in her neighborhood, these same behaviors were deemed inappropriate in the classroom with fifth grade boys. Unlike Lucy’s mother who was off “trying to be young” and who acted irresponsibly toward her children by leaving them unattended all summer long, Lucy’s teacher was right there in the classroom with her, and he *was responsible*. He bristled at Lucy’s unladylike behavior and chastened her for it. Ladylike behavior was part of the official curriculum.

Another time I used to (big sigh) What did I used to do in Mr. Timmons’s room? Play with my friend’s brother. Her brother used to sit behind me. Oh, Lord, he used to hit me in the head with rolled up paper, would pull my hair, and everything. He used to always pick on me and I was just thinking it was because he ain’t have nothing else to do but pick on me. I would always turn around and fight him and Mr. Timmons would say, “Turn around, Daughter.” Mr. Timmons used to always get me for that. (We laugh.)

It took more than a single lesson to teach Lucy what was appropriate behavior for girls, as indicated by her statement, “Mr. Timmons used to *always* get me for that.” Lucy talks about a specific incident where she deliberately provokes the teacher for no apparent reason except to provoke him. It could have been her subconscious attempt to get attention, or it may have been her attempt to prove to herself that she had control over her own environment when in reality she had little control.

One time I was turning around in my seat, talking to my friend and I think I must have crossed my legs like this (She demonstrates.) and my dress was up and my friend pulled my dress down and I thought, “Hum, I want my dress back up there.” Mr. Timmons (She laughs.) was looking in the pane in the classroom door. He was outside the classroom door talking and joking with the superintendent and we were just sitting in the classroom. (I laugh as I anticipate how the story will end.)

Lucy says she prepared herself for what she knew was coming.

“Come here, *Daughter.*” (We are laughing so hard that tears start rolling down our cheeks and Lucy’s words become distorted as she attempts to talk while laughing.) And it wasn’t like my dress was *way* up there, but it was just like my knee was showing and my friend was gonna try and pull my dress down. I thought, “Nah, I want my knee to *show.*” He said, “Come here, *Daughter,*” and he tore my tail up *again!* (We laugh almost before she concludes the story.)

Despite the number of times she recalled getting whipped by her teacher Mr. Timmons, Lucy spoke affectionately of the man. She always told her stories about him with light-hearted humor and with laughter until she reached the end of her tales about how he responded to her classroom antics. She knew she was resisting the official curricula, but she wanted to demonstrate that she had her own curriculum of resistance.

I liked Mr. Timmons. He taught us a lot. I used to like it that he would make us memorize poetry, then we’d have to recite poetry. Sometimes he could hit you hard, and sometimes he would whip you and it wouldn’t be hard. One time he had us reciting our multiplication tables, and I remember saying to somebody, “Let’s don’t say our multiplication tables and see who can get a whipping and not cry.” When it was my turn to say my multiplication table, I didn’t know it so I would get a spanking, but I wouldn’t cry.

Lucy did not cry when Mr. Timmons beat her in this instance, but in the end she says she realized she did herself a disservice by failing to master her timetables as she should.

Today, some of my multiplication tables I don't know because I really didn't learn them like I should have, so I did myself a disservice. But when Mr. Timmons would spank us for not knowing our multiplication tables, that wasn't a real hard spanking, so I never cried hard or anything. I probably didn't even cry. I enjoyed his class. I enjoyed his class.

Lucy seemed pleased to talk about her teacher and she did it in an affectionate way. The attention she got from him was different from the attention she got from the other males in her life: her father and the drunks in her neighborhood who tried to accost her with their perverseness. Mr. Timmons' attention was the kind of attention he gave to his own daughter whom he wanted to behave properly as a young lady.

Mr. Timmons' way of disciplining Lucy and calling her "Daughter" had a positive impact on her. She says she deemed it a true sign that he really did care about her as a person. Lucy says when Mr. Timmons brought his little three-year-old daughter to school he would treat her just like he treated Lucy: "Don't pull your dress up, Daughter," he'd say to her when she used to pull her dress up over her head."

He just tickled me calling people daughter. I told him that too after I grew up. I said, "Mr. Timmons, you're the only man who ever called me daughter; not even my daddy called me daughter." But I just loved that man. When we went to see him before he died, his wife said, "Oh, honey, y'all just done *made his day!*" 'cause me and Sabin went to visit him. He was just so glad to see us. It was good visiting with him, and I'm glad I did because I could not go to his funeral. I *could not go*. I just *could not go* (big sigh), but that was about two weeks before he died that we went to visit. *I'm so glad I did.* (Lucy's tone is suddenly serious.)

Lucy spoke disparagingly of neither Mr. Timmons her teacher nor Mr. Ogee the superintendent of the orphanage even though both men whipped her repeatedly for resisting the official curricula of the orphanage and the school. Lucy evidently understood that they were trying to teach her the proper way to behave and she learned from both men despite her hidden curriculum of resistance.

Florence's Discipline

Unlike Lucy, Florence had no lightness or humor in her voice at all when she talks about her punishment. She is resentful. Several times Florence uses a slave metaphor when she talks about her experiences.

(Big sigh) Punishment to me . . . didn't do a whole lot but make me *stubborn*, the physical punishment. Uh, I would get a whipping and because I wouldn't say "Yes sir" or No sir" or "No ma'am." I was whipped for doing that. And the thing was, was to make me cry, and I did not cry. Uh, I, it was almost like, you know, I, I guess I felt like uh Kunta Kinte²⁰. When they would whip him, he wouldn't flinch. Well, that's, that's the way I uh... that's the way I was. *I wouldn't flinch*. I would stand there and take it and sometimes I'd have whelps all over me.

Florence seemed not to realize that the superintendent was trying to instill certain precepts in her about how a girl dependent on charitable contributions and the welfare system should behave. He apparently wanted her to adapt to the official curricula of the orphanage by trying to beat her into submission and trying to humble her and show her that the adults were in charge not her. But since the time Florence was four years old, following the death of her mother, she had been led to believe that *she* was in charge, not just of herself but of her younger brother and sister as well. Perhaps Mr. Ogee was trying

²⁰ (Kunta Kinte is an African slave in Alex Haley's epic book, *Roots*.)

to make her cry when he beat her as Florence says he was, but more than likely he was trying to make her remorseful for her inappropriate behavior. Beating her seemed to be Mr. Ogee's way of "beating the Devil out" (Straus, 1994) of her, the Devil being Florence's hidden curriculum of resistance exhibited as strong-will and stubbornness.

Florence had protected herself and her siblings from a house fire, and she had appeared in court about the house-burning incident. Like a little adult, Florence had sat on the witness stand, and she had testified in front of a judge. It would naturally follow then, that she would not easily be brought to tears by the superintendent beating her with a strop. Early traumas evidently had already taught Florence lessons in resilience. Still, the superintendent wanted to show Florence that she was *not* in charge at the orphanage. He wanted to show her that she was *not* an adult at the orphanage. She was just a child.

Florence says she thought her punishment at the orphanage was unduly harsh and unjustified even at school when she was first placed in Miss Cranes' third grade class. Florence said Miss Crane, the teacher of the combined group of first, second, and third graders at the on-campus school, had no business being a teacher. She says, "I was absolutely *nothing* to that teacher." Florence adds that the teacher loved for her to make her lunch for her and scratch her head. These were part of Florence's daily, in-school duties. She says Miss Crane enjoyed these personal favors, but she was neither partial to Florence nor gave her any special consideration as a result.

Apparently the teacher showed no special interest in Florence because Florence was hard to like. Broten (1962) says, "Some [children] are hard to like. Some make it hard for us to like them" (p. 32). Maybe, in her effort to protect herself, by withdrawing

inside her metaphoric box and acting as a little adult Florence had kept others from getting close enough to her to know and like her. Perhaps her hidden curriculum of resistance had made her too emotionally distant to bond with anyone except her brother and sister once she was in the orphanage. Florence recounts this story in tones of anger.

Whenever I would make a mistake, Miss Crane would make me bring my tablet to her, and she would mark all the way through my tablet. When I say through my tablet, I mean there were about five or six sheets of paper that she had dug so hard through because I had added something incorrectly or subtracted something wrong. Then she would, and, and then she would proceed to *sling* my tablet across the classroom.

Florence says her third grade school teacher Miss Crane believed in humiliating her students rather than using corporal punishment to correct their behavior. She says the humiliation was much worse than corporal punishment.

Rather than as a justification or excuse for Miss Crane's behavior toward Florence, I offer this explanation for her behavior. According to McGovern (1948), the strain on teachers who work in schools at institutional children's home is far greater than it is on teachers in regular schools because of the continuous flux of children at the orphanage. The instability of the student population in institutional children's homes' schools can heighten the stress of the teacher because she deals almost constantly with exceptional children who tend to be academically behind other children. The teacher in an institutional children's home should, therefore, have a flexible and well-balanced personality and she should be a specialist in her profession. Florence asks me:

Can you imagine a child, being in the *third* grade, someone doing *that* to *him* or *her*? In front of, you know, other kids? Already feeling *ugly*, *small*, *unwanted*, and

then you do that to a child! So, what does it do to your self-worth? To me, it kinda puts you really down.

The same teacher who denigrated Florence in the third grade happened to see her at the orphanage superintendent's house one day years later when Florence was on semester break from college. She is still not satisfied with the teacher's reaction to her.

She called herself paying me a compliment, I guess. She said, "Ain't it so that the ugly duckling *can turn into a swan*! Oh, I just can't believe that an ugly little nappy headed girl like you could turn out so well."

Florence intimates that her former teacher Miss Crane, by her thoughts, deeds, and hurtful words was not a specialist in her profession. Florence says Miss Crane did not have the personality for the job nor was she a caring teacher. She added that Miss Crane knew little about how to relate to and teach her vulnerable students at Havertown Industrial School Home whose self-esteem was already fragile and easily made worse.

After leaving the lower grades and moving up to the next tri-level class of fourth, fifth, and sixth graders, Florence says she saw little difference in the way the students were taught and how they were punished. Lucy, who was three years behind Florence, received the same kind of corporal punishment as Florence, showing the consistency of Mr. Timmons' style. Unlike Lucy whose tone was light with laughter as she talked about Mr. Timmons whipping her for misbehaving, Florence's tone was heavy with resentment.

The differences between Lucy and Florence's perspectives may be an illustration of how two people who experience the very same thing experience it differently. The reason Lucy and Florence experienced the same teacher and his methods differently may

be due, in part, to any number or combination of factors such as Florence and Lucy's: temperament, personality, personal histories, expectations, when and why the experiences took place, and their evaluation of their experiences. Florence does not have high regard for Mr. Timmons as Lucy does. Florence is quite negative.

In the fourth, fifth, and sixth grade, I don't think Mr. Timmons was a whole lot better as a teacher than Miss Crane who used to get me to scratch her head and make her lunch for her. I really don't, but his method of teaching was not nearly as harsh. But if you forgot your timetables, you got a whipping. You would stand in front of the classroom. He would take a ruler and hit you in the hand, or he would take off *his belt* and and and whip you.

Whereas Lucy spoke in terms of endearment about Mr. Timmons, Florence speaks of him with anger and contempt. She says she did not like the double punishment she once had to suffer as a consequence of not knowing her timetables.

He would just take your hand and just *beat* you in your hand, or *twist* your skirt tail and just *whip* you on your legs and your buttocks and thighs because you forgot, you know, maybe . . . what is three times four. And and then you had to go sit uh uh in front of the class. You were moved out from the row that you were sitting in and made to sit in *front of the class!*

Florence returns to her box-with-the-peepholes-in-it metaphor as she talks about how humiliating and worthless her on-campus school experiences were. The box metaphor Florence uses so often seem to serve the same purpose for her as a security blanket serves for very young children. She is consistent in her use of the peephole-box metaphor. Hiding, figuratively, under a peephole-box seemed to enhance her resiliency.

In Miss Crane's room we had first, second, and third graders. We had fourth, fifth, and sixth graders in Mr. Timmons' classroom. So it, it, it was, you know, it

was kinda humiliating to me to have to sit apart from the other students when you did not know your timetables. That's what I mean when I say I always felt like I was in a box, and I was peeking out through those holes because I would always have to kinda withdraw within myself.

Florence talks about an experience with punishment that began at the on-campus orphanage school and spilled over into her home life at the orphanage. She speaks vociferously about the unfairness of being punished twice for the same infraction.

At the orphanage, back during that time, we just had to stand up and do our timetables, and the teacher would call out multiplications and we'd have to give him the answer. And seven times nine was the one, and I will never ever forget it. I didn't, couldn't remember what seven times nine was. I had gotten up to everything else but I couldn't get the answer to seven times nine for some reason, and the teacher, Mr. Timmons, whipped me.

Florence says after the teacher whipped her, he took her to the orphanage superintendent's office, which was right down the hall, and she received additional punishment. Her punishment was that she could not see the movie that was due to be shown on campus that Friday night.

One of the advantages of the close proximity of the orphanage superintendent's office to the children's classrooms was that both the superintendent and the teacher could stay abreast of the children's progress (McGovern, 1948) and deal with problems immediately. This advantage worked against Florence. She received double punishment.

I wanted to go see the movie. Do you know *I was the only child sitting out there in a dark hallway* on that bench in front of the superintendent's office *with one light on*? Can you imagine a child, you know, nine years old, sittin' out there? *It's kind of crazy* the way they doled out punishment.

Recalling that her punishment was not unlike the punishment of other children who were punished for similar infractions did not lessen Florence's negativity toward the way the children were punished. When she was at a loss for words to describe her feelings about how unfairly she thought the children were treated or the unjust way she thought *she* was treated, Florence habitually said, "It was crazy" or "It was kinda crazy."

Florence says she did not like the rule, which was not specific to the Havertown Industrial School Home orphanage, which stipulated that children be separated by age and sex. She did not understand why such a rule existed so she says she took it upon herself to defy the rule by sitting and talking with her younger brother. Florence says: I got a *whipping for talking to my brother* one day because the orphanage staff said they wanted boys and girls separated, and I'm trying to say, "This is my *brother*."

Florence's reasoning did not allow her to understand that it was not her sitting with her brother that got her in trouble. It was her insubordination; it was her rule violation that caused her to get in trouble. The administrators wanted Florence to understand that she was not the authority on issues pertaining to the rules of the orphanage; she was a child, and she was expected to adhere to the rules of the orphanage.

Florence says sitting and talking with her brother at her discretion was a privilege she believes she was denied simply because she lived at the orphanage. What she did not admit was that through her hidden curriculum of resistance, it was also blatant disobedience and disregard for the social curriculum of the orphanage. During her interview, Florence was unwavering in her view. She looked at the incident of sitting and talking with her brother through the same lens she evidently used when she was a child.

In this next example, which Florence calls a cry for help, she describes her involvement in a malicious act where she deliberately harms another girl. Whether or not the girl did anything to Florence that might have provoked her Florence does not say. What she does say is that nobody investigated the children's misbehaviors to find out why they did what they did. She says the children just got a whipping when their behavior was out of line. She says she thought that was a big problem.

The time when I stuck a girl in the neck with a needle, that was a cry for help. What did I get? I got bruises on me so badly that I couldn't sit down. I was about thirteen. I guess she was about eleven. That's what I'm talking about. Nobody came to me and asked me, "Why did you do that?" I was just whipped so badly by the orphanage superintendent that I could not sit down for several days to even eat my meals.

Florence appeared to take delight in adding the conclusion to this story. It was a testament to what I consider her hidden curriculum of resistance. It was her proof that she *was like Kunta Kinte*, as she said earlier, and like him, she had resisted showing any sign that pain was being inflicted on her. Florence says it was Mr. Ogee who was worn out by the beating, not her, and she talks proudly about the outcome that her resistance created. Florence says she stood victorious at the end of the whipping. She says she had defeated the superintendent by not shedding a single tear.

And because I did not cry, he whipped me longer than he would have ordinarily. He broke out in a sweat whipping me, and the next thing I know, he's running around there trying to find his blood pressure pills.

Florence recounts another incident between the superintendent and herself where she resisted even though she knew it would result in punishment. She was much older

than she was in the previous examples. Florence says she knew she might be punished for her impudence, but she admitted that the punishment she got was not what she expected or was prepared for. She confessed that she was surprised by what took place after her outright insubordination. Florence seemed to find self-satisfaction in the outcome, however. This incident with the superintendent is a turning point in her life in much the same way that Lucy's *failure to get a whipping for not misbehaving* was a turning point in her life.

I was in college, had been there—this is my second year, had been there two years—I came home and my sister was in the kitchen cleaning up, and everybody else was gone. I asked her, “Why are you in here by yourself?” And my sister said, “The superintendent told me I had to clean up this kitchen.” I said, “Well, go on. I’ll clean it up.” My sister said she wanted to go and get her hair done, do her hair. I said, “Well go on. I’ll clean up the kitchen for you,” and the superintendent came through the room. He asked me where my sister was and I said, “I told her to go ahead and get her hair done.” (She imitates the superintendent.) “That’s not what *I* told her to do!” So I said, “Well, *I* told her to do it!” (I am awed.)

Florence tells me that she was ready to have what she called a “knock-down-drag-out” with the superintendent. She says the superintendent told her she was being smart, and Florence says she told him she was not being smart, and she continued sweeping the dining room. Florence declares that what happened next surprised her and her response, in turn, surprised the superintendent.

He *smacked me*, and I stood right there and said, “The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green . . .” I said the Twenty-third Psalm. His slap left his hand print on the side of my face. (Anger is in Florence’s voice, and I listen attentively for find out what happened next.)

Still unperturbed, Florence says she continued sweeping. She says when the superintendent was about to strike her again, she put up her fist to block the blow.

I said The Lord's Prayer. He said, (She shouts.) "*Shut up!*" I kept right on saying it. He hit me again, and I said it even *louder*, and he said, "I'm gonna *whip* you!" and I said, "No, you're *not* gonna whip me." (She seems to relive the moment and speaks louder in the telephone as if she wants me to hear every word.) "You ain't grown just because you been to college." Then I turned around and started saying the Lord's Prayer, and it really, really made him mad (She chuckles softly.).

Through her hidden curriculum of resistance expressed in the form of stubborn determination, Florence appeared as a winner again in her battle with the superintendent over the power for control. Florence says with amusement and anger intermingled in her tone, "This man walked out of that kitchen huffing and puffing." Florence seemed proud of how the incident ultimately ended. It ended when the superintendent's wife walked in on the tail end of the incident and confronted her husband with Florence at her side.

Florence, who had told me earlier that the children at the orphanage had no advocates, either did not regard the superintendent's wife as an advocate in this instance or she failed to see the connection between her definition of "advocate" and the superintendent's wife's behavior as that of an advocate.

Florence confessed that "The superintendent's wife said to the superintendent, 'Ogee, Let me tell you one thing; this girl has got a behind.' She's got a behind! (Florence laughs.) I thought she was gonna say don't hit her again, but no, she was telling him *where* to hit me." Still, Florence says she got satisfaction out of watching Mrs. Ogee lambast Mr. Ogee for his thoughtlessness and misconduct. Florence continues her story

about what Mrs. Ogee said to Mr. Ogee. She uses a tone of irritation to recreate the incident.

Don't' you ever put your hands in her face again, or you're gonna have me to deal with!" And she took me by the hand and took me back in the kitchen and she said, "Now, you were wrong; don't you know you were wrong?" She says, "I know when you get to college you're grown and you don't want nobody whipping on you. I know that!"

With self-satisfaction in her voice, Florence concludes. She had obviously won her battle for supremacy. She had won the control she said she had sought. Her hidden curriculum of resistance had topped the official curriculum of the orphanage.

That was the last whipping I got. That man hit me with his belt! (She sounds angry again.) Slapped me in my face! *All* because I said I told my sister I would do her work for her so she could go get her hair done.

Once again Florence, as illustrated in the story above, apparently failed to see that the real reason for her punishment was her insubordination. Through the official curricula of the orphanage, the superintendent evidently had sought mastery over Florence. He wanted to continue to mold her character by subordinating her, but Florence had resisted and won. Her narrative identity indicates that she was beyond being molded by the superintendent as she was now already grown.

Florence disagreed with the superintendent's assessment in the above situation as she disagreed with his wife's assessment. Florence says she needed neither the superintendent nor his wife telling her what to do. She said she had her own way of

knowing (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1997) what was appropriate in the situation and she clung to it steadfastly. She resisted being under his oppressive control.

Florence's stories as well as Lucy's illustrate how fear of punishment was ineffective in getting the orphanage girls to do as they were told. Instead of controlling the girls by beating them, the girls, through their hidden curriculum of resistance, became more stubborn, defiant, and determined to control themselves. As if the superintendent's actions in the face slapping incident justified her negative feeling towards him, Florence says, "See, that's another reason I hated him" (She laughs.).

Cassandra's Discipline

Cassandra did not have much to say about the corporal punishment, but she did confess to getting her share of beatings.

Being at the orphanage, I can say that I got whapped for a lot, but I still got respected. Sometimes now I think about all those beatings I used to get, but then I think I deserved every one of them. I was *one stubborn child*. They'd tear your behind up. I didn't like getting them beatin's!

In addition to being punished for failing to keep up with their studies in school and for otherwise misbehaving, as Lucy and Florence pointed out, the orphanage girls, through the official curricula of the orphanage, were expected to be neat and clean or they would suffer painful consequences. Here, Cassandra talks about the routine locker inspections. Before the dormitories were converted from barrack to cottage-style, where the girls had rooms and kept their clothes in their closets, they kept their clothes in lockers in a large locker room. Although not with military precision or by military standards, the lockers were inspected and they were expected to be tidy.

I had to keep that locker clean because if I didn't keep that locker clean, I was going to be in trouble. When the matrons come by to inspect your locker and see that you done threw all them clothes up in there or whether you had things hanging up, shoes put in the right place, and your little stuff up on that top shelf of your locker neat, and when they come around there and open up that locker and all the junk start falling out of your locker, you were in trouble.

Cassandra says inspections were not always planned, so there was no way to be prepared for them except to keep the locker neat and organized at all times.

The matrons would come through there and start pulling lockers open. When stuff start falling out after you done come in there and taken off them clothes of yours after you came from school and changed clothes If you threw 'em up in there, and slammed that door shut, you were gonna get it. (Cassandra speaks with amusement and excitement in her voice.)

Cassandra is the participant who lived at the orphanage the longest. I learned a lot from her about the adults' official curriculum and the girls' hidden curriculum.

The locker inspection was done in your presence, Oh yeah! They come in and say they're getting ready to inspect lockers; you're in trouble if yours is not clean. (She continues talking with excitement and amusement in her tone.) You got to go stand beside your locker because when they get over there to it, you're going to open it up. And when you open it up, they look at it and if everything's in its place, it ain't no problem. But if you open it up and all that stuff's jammed up in there, you in trouble. Now, you *know* you were gon' get a *whuppin'*! Who was gon' whup you? The superintendent or his wife! One or the other!

When the girls (called laundry girls) worked in the laundry they were expected to wash, dry, iron, fold, and get the laundry back to the right building within a specified time frame. The boys brought the dirty clothes to the laundry, and they returned the next day to pick up the clean clothes. The laundry was underneath the girls' dormitory, so it was simple enough for the girls to go outside and enter the laundry through the double

doors below. The distance of the laundry from the girls' living quarters was about the distance from the front door to the back door of a private family home.²¹

Cassandra says each laundry girl had to iron a certain number of pieces in a specified amount of time in order for the whole operation to run smoothly. Lack of efficiency meant that work piled up and nobody would get their laundry back on time. The laundry girls did the washing and ironing for the entire campus, including the staff's laundry, and any glitch in the system jeopardized the entire system.

When the girls aged out of the orphanage at eighteen, unless they went off to college, some of them were asked to stay on as matrons and work for pay like the staff. Matrons who worked at orphanages could be as young as eighteen and as old as seventy-five years of age (McGovern, 1948). One of Cassandra's older sisters was one of the girls who stayed on and worked as a matron. In this next example regarding Cassandra's punishment, she talks about how she defied her sister who was in charge of the laundry.

I remember one time, and I never forgave her for this, my sister was the matron in charge of the laundry and she told me I had to iron them *ten* shirts before I went to school and I told her *I wasn't ironing nothing* and she sent me to Mr. Ogee and I got a whipping because I talked back. I know I shouldna talked back but she didn't have to make me get a whipping. She used to get on me about leaving cat faces in them *shirts* too. To this day, I can't stand to see things wrinkle. I can't stand to see cat faces in shirts. That really taught me a lesson.

In her narration, Cassandra does not focus so much on the whipping as she focuses on the lesson she learned from the back talking incident. Although she got a

²¹ I was invited out to the orphanage on October 16, 2007 to help clean out the buildings, take possession of any artifacts that were not of value to the current residents of the property, and take as many pictures as I wanted. I accepted the invitation and I walked every inch of the campus which is closed to trespassers.

whipping for being insubordinate and disobeying her sister, Cassandra says she learned a valuable lesson about neatness in the process. She learned that the appearance of the clothes a person wears says something about the person wearing the clothes.

The Discipline of Sabin, Darlene, and Rita

I group Sabin, Darlene, and Rita's perspectives together because they are short. Sabin, Darlene, and Rita did not experience the punishment like some of the others did because they were admitted to the orphanage when they were older than the others. Also they never attended school on the orphanage campus. By the time they were admitted, all of the orphanage children were being bused to the county's consolidated school for Black children. Additionally, Sabin, Darlene, and Rita were already disciplined when they were admitted to the orphanage so they were spared corporal punishment for the most part.

Sabin's perception of the discipline. Since she was in high school when she was admitted to the orphanage and already had experience with following house rules and living according to the regulations of her foster family homes, Sabin already knew how to behave appropriately. As a consequence, she did not get punished as much as girls who were admitted to the orphanage when they were much younger. Yet, Sabin must have felt the strop at least a few times; otherwise, she might not have spoken about it as she does.

I used to hate those group beatings. I remember one time Lucy did something—I can't remember what she did—but we were in the “truck” and Mr. Ogee was driving us back home from some place. Lucy said something and Mr. Ogee said, “Who said that?” and nobody said anything; we just laughed. Mr. Ogee said, “I'll find out when we get back to the house.” He had us all lined up there in his kitchen—everybody who was in the “truck”—and he was gon' beat us. Lucy still would not speak up and he beat every one of us for something Lucy said, or did or something. I don't remember, but I used to hate those group beatings (She laughs.).

Darlene's perception of the discipline. Darlene's comment is rather like Sabin's, only she added an additional comment or two about her general thoughts on spankings. Part of Darlene's training in deportment came from having attended a strict Catholic school, so she, like Sabin, was spared many of the whippings experienced by the other participants.

I used to hate those group beatings. Usually someone would take up for me, so I didn't get beat a lot. There was one girl out there who used to always try to get me in trouble. One of the older girls would always step in and take up for me. I just remember that one of the "big" girls at the orphanage used to always take up for me. She always looked out for me and kept me out of trouble.

Darlene says, "I never asked anybody to help me, but I think a child kinda wants someone to step in and take charge. They just don't know how to ask for help." Darlene maintained her religious convictions even though she was no longer a Catholic by the time of our talk.

I think that's one of the worse things that could have happened when they took *paddling and prayer* out of schools. I think a spanking and child abuse are very different. Very different! And I don't think if you swat a child on the hind parts with a paddle two times or with your hand it will make a child violent. There are some people that say that if you pop a child, or if you spank a child, that's hitting him and it makes him wanna hit. That's hogwash! That's the craziest thing (She uses a deep pitch of voice.). That does not make a child wanna fight or hit.

Rita's perception of the discipline. Rita, whose court appearance caused the shutdown of her elementary school so that all of her teachers could be at the hearing, was a teenager when she went to the orphanage. Having already established a pattern of behavior that resulted in strokes from adults, Rita did not experience the whippings that

the other participants experienced. The brutal beatings she received from her mother for years had conditioned her to *seek adult approval* rather than *challenge adult authority* through a hidden curriculum of resistance. Consequently, Rita had little to say, from personal experience, about the corporal punishment used at the orphanage. However, she knew about it. Her statement provides comic relief and proof of her knowledge.

The superintendent used to wear them sponge bottom shoes. He could be up on you in *no* time! I wouldn't put too much past the superintendent every since I found out that he was going with one of the matrons. I always held Mr. Jude in high regard and the assistant superintendent in high regard, but one of them used to say to the children when they got in trouble, "What'll you want me to do, *bust*²² you now or *bust* you later?" They used to say, "Bust me now!" (We laugh.)

Regardless of the type and amount of punishment the study participants got when they were young girls, the punishment came as a consequence of their adherence to their own curriculum of resistance to the official curriculum of the orphanage. Some of the participants resented the punishment they got and thought it was too extreme and too harsh for the offense, some came to accept it as a kind of "tough love" that kept them on the right track, and others thought the punishment was just what they needed and deserved. In later years, corporal punishment was frowned upon as a technique for enforcing the adult official curricula, even those in institutional children's homes. By that time the participants in my study were no longer at the orphanage.

²² "Bust" is short for "bust your butt" which means the same thing as getting a good whipping or a "killing."

What They Hated, What They Tolerated and What They Loved at Havertown Industrial School Home

The children who lived at Havertown Industrial School Home were not prone to idleness. It was part of the official curricula of most orphanages for the children to help keep the institution running. It cut down on operating expenses. The older children were assigned chores that were directly related to maintaining the facility and the food supply. Duties were assigned according to age and gender, with the older girls doing traditionally female chores.

Elementary school age children performed minimal chores. The younger children made their beds, helped with the sweeping and dusting, and keeping their rooms and their cottage clean. Their job mainly was to play, which is one of the reasons Lucy used the metaphor “play land” to describe her initial impression of the orphanage. When she was admitted to the orphanage she was first placed at the baby cottage where play was part of the official, social curriculum of the younger children.

None of the women’s reactions to the official curriculum of the orphanage regarding the chores, the rules, regulations, and daily routine was the same. None of their reactions to the meals or the special events was the same either. Each of the women talked about what was important to her. Over time, the rules and regulations changed and the children who came to the orphanage later were governed by less stringent rules than those who arrived in earlier times. This may partly explain the disparity in the attitudes the participants had toward their chores and the types of chores they had.

As I examined their narratives in juxtaposition, I could not help noticing the sharp contrast between how Florence who looked at the world through peep holes, figuratively speaking, felt about the chores as opposed to how the other participants felt. The contrast is noticeably different. Darlene, who was placed in the orphanage on the advice of the Catholic nuns, said nothing about the chores. Rita, who was beat for years by her mother, talked about her chores with pride. Cassandra, the stubborn one who was proud of her narrative identity as a true “orphan,” talked about the chores in a matter of fact way. Sabin, who requested admission to the orphanage when she was fifteen, talked about the chores as if they were of no consequence at all. Florence, whose narrative identity points her out as autonomous because of her resistance to being controlled, talked about the chores with disdain. Lucy, whose mother abandoned her and her siblings, by running off with her boyfriend, found humor in talking about the chores.

Lucy's Perspective of the Chores

When she talked about her assigned chores, Lucy and I laughed so much and so hard that I left the interview feeling completely relieved of all stress. In almost every instance, Lucy had me laughing till my stomach hurt and tears were rolling down my cheeks because she told stories about her experiences in such a comical fashion. After the interview, Lucy told me that the more I laughed, the more funny stories she wanted to tell me because she loved the attention I gave her by laughing. Lucy begins this segment of the interview by telling me a story about the chores she was assigned when she was a “little girl” at the girls building. She was ten.

When I went to the girls building, I was the *youngest* girl there. I was so small that my chore was to just sweep the front porch. Sweep the front porch and finally to sweep all the way out to the end of the walkway in front of the girls building. And that was hard because I was out there in the dark and I'd be standing out there staring into the dark (She laughs hard.) for fifteen minutes (She can hardly speak for laughing so hard.) before I would sweep the porch, (We are both laughing now.) like I was scared of the dark.

Lucy, who said she could defend herself against "dirty old men" before age ten, was, *at age ten*, still scared of the dark. She says her preoccupation with what might be lurking in the dark woods just beyond the sidewalk of the girls building kept her from completing her chores as timely as she should. Instead of sweeping the front porch, Lucy spent much of her time gazing out in the woods and allowing her imagination to get the better of her.

I'm wondering, "What is other there in them dark woods?" (The story is interrupted by our laughter as she tries to finish telling her story.) I'd be standing there for thirty minutes and then I would sweep the porch, and I hated going out to the end of the walkway because it was really dark (We laugh really hard.).

Lucy says that as she grew older, more responsibility was given to her, but by the other girls' standards, the responsibilities were more suitable for a younger girl than one of Lucy's age.

When I got some more responsibility, you know what my job was? Sweep the porch and clean the water fountain in the hall. That's all I had to do (She stops for awhile and we have a good long laugh.). Everybody, Sabin, used to say, "*I'm in there cooking biscuits and rolling dough* (I cannot stop laughing throughout the telling of this part of the story.) and *cooking grits and you out there sweeping the porch and cleaning the water fountain!*"

Lucy says she didn't complain half the time about her chores because she didn't have much to do except clean the porch. But even cleaning the front porch had its drawbacks according to Lucy.

One thing I used to hate about sweeping the porch—all I had to do was sweep the porch. Them little hard bugs we used to call dookey bugs, they'd get around the light and they'd be dead on the porch. I used to *hate* sweeping those bugs up, and all you do is sweep them out into the yard, you know? That was stupid, but that was all. . . . I didn't mind those chores.

Lucy's experience of working in the kitchen was no more distressing for her than sweeping the front porch and cleaning the water fountain.

When I was in the kitchen with the big girls, I used to be in there just playing, like stirring up some gravy and making something, and I They didn't even serve that little stuff I used to make. I'd just be in there playing, and nobody ever *made* me do anything. All I did was wait tables. I waited tables and that's all I did. Everybody else would be in the kitchen washing pots and pans, them big ole pots. I washed the tables and cleaned the tables and set them back up. I'd be running down there to the girls building to get dressed to go to school. But, I didn't work that hard, not to the point where I was just so tired, and that sorta thing.

Lucy talks about her experience of working in the laundry. She is older here.

The hardest chore I ever had was like hanging up clothes. In the winter time it was so cold out there that the clothes would freeze by the time you get them out on the clothesline. That was hard. As for ironing, I'd just have them old work shirts and you can do anything to them 'cause they didn't even wear them to school. Just hit 'em and fold them or whatever. I also ran the mangle, that thing with the sheets.

Lucy was evidently as astute in lessons about life as she was about lessons in school. Through her hidden curriculum of resistance, she says she learned that it does not

pay to be a good worker because the matrons would give good workers the hard jobs. Just like she was when she was a toddler who made up long stories strung together with “and so” and “and then” to keep her mother’s attention, at the orphanage Lucy was still perceptive. The orphanage did nothing to diminish her powers of perception.

When Miss Cash was in the laundry, they would make the best ironers—the matrons would rotate just like we would rotate. They would rotate and go in the kitchen for three months and then they’d go in the laundry for three months, just like we did, so sometimes when we would be in the laundry, she would make Sabin iron, like, the white shirts because she thought Sabin was a good ironer. She would make Sabin do all the hard things like the superintendent’s shirts. But I never worked that hard. I never did

Florence’s Perspective of the Chores

Florence, the autonomous one, who saved herself and her siblings from a house fire and who recited the twenty-third Psalm when the superintendent slapped her face, spoke in a negative tone throughout the interview. Her narrative identity seemed to affect how she behaved during her actual experiences and during the interview, which was also true of the other participants. When Florence talks about her assigned chores, her tone is still negative although sometimes she laughs during the telling.

When I worked in the laundry, I did not like having to go outside and hang clothes on the line in the winter because they would freeze before you could even get them up on the line. I hated that. (She sounds angry.) Five thirty in the morning and it is just freezing outside and there you are trying to hang out clothes on a line.

Florence assesses this situation as she assessed most of the situations she talked about. “Crazy” is her favorite summarizing term. She seemed to see no logic in hanging

clothes on the clothesline when there was a dryer in the laundry. What she apparently did not consider was that the dryer could not dry all of the clothes the girls washed before they went to school. Drying clothes takes more time than washing clothes.

The crazy part about hanging out freezing clothes was that we had a dryer, but most things were not dried. They were put on the line. Those are the things that I hated. I also hated having to make sure you ironed three shirts or four shirts and a pair of pants before you go up for breakfast in the morning. We had to go down to the laundry and do all this work on an empty stomach.

Florence's story about the chores segued into the topic of the importance of school. School had a different connotation for the orphanage children than it apparently had for other children. The orphanage children used school as an escape from work and as a chance to mingle with other children whom they noted seemed free of many of the constraints imposed on them by the official curricula of the orphanage. The study participants used their hidden curriculum of resistance to counterbalance both the social and academic curricula of the orphanage. The official social curriculum of the orphanage required the participants to work together efficiently and effectively to complete their chores. The official academic curriculum required them to attend school and do well in school.

Sometimes you would try to rush back up stairs after finishing up in the laundry and get ready for school and we'd end up missing the school bus. When you missed the school bus that was work for the day (She laughs and I join in.). You didn't wanna miss the school bus! (She laughs through the end of the next sentence.) Sometimes, you'd be running up the street trying to flag the bus down, dropping your books and everything, because you didn't wanna stay home. That was something *you didn't want to do!*

When the girls stayed out of school, work was waiting for them. No one had to think up something for them to do. There was always work that needed to be done at the orphanage. Idleness was not part of the official curricula of the orphanage.

Sometimes the girls worked in the canning kitchen. Staying out of school! And that *worried* me more than anything else, to have to stay out of school to uh can string beans and shell peas, and peel apples, and peaches. During hog killing time we had to stay out . . . I had to stay out of school to wash jars for the canning. Well, it's, it's kinda crazy to me, uh the way they did people. It's almost like your education wasn't important, but yet and still they tell you it is. They whip you because you didn't know your timetables, but yet and still . . . Does that make sense to you? (I only chuckle.)

Florence used *her slave metaphor* when she talked about the work regimen. Her anger is apparent in her tone of voice when she talks about Fridays and Saturdays.

I *hated* Friday! That meant that I was gonna be a *semi-slave* for three days. Friday night when you come home, you have to cook, you have to clean up, you have to wax floors, you have to scrape the wax off the floors. On Saturday mornings you get up, you got to do your hair, you got to wash your clothes. I mean nothing ever let up! *Nothing ever let up!* On Friday afternoon—after I started attending the public school—were the *most down time of my life*.

Sabin's Perspective of the Chores

Sabin, who went to the orphanage by choice at age fifteen, talked about all of the chores she was responsible for at the orphanage as if they were nothing special. She said she even found some of the chores enjoyable. She is quite resilient.

The jobs I had at the orphanage didn't bother me because I was a big girl as opposed to being a baby cottage girl. Those little chores, they were no bother to me. They were not something that agitated me. It was just what was expected and it didn't bother me a bit. In fact, I got where I kinda loved the kitchen pretty good. Miss Cash was so instrumental in helping me with learning to do different things

in the kitchen and cooking. I think I liked the kitchen much better than I did the laundry. (Sabin is placid as she speaks; she shows no emotion at all.)

Sabin referred to working at the canning kitchen as punishment although it really was not. Unless the girls canned much of the food the children ate, when the growing season was over, their food supply would be affected, so canning was a necessity (Parker, 1964). Staying out of school and working in the canning kitchen could easily be considered punishment, however, because there were fewer girls to do the canning and the work probably took longer and probably seemed harder. Working in the canning kitchen also probably seemed lonely to the few girls who stayed out of school to work.

I also had the experience of the canning kitchen. I had the punishment of staying home from school (She laughs.) when it was slaughter²³ time. I had that punishment of being home one day to start with the experience of chit'lins from the bottom to the top.

Sabin summarizes her feelings about working at the orphanage.

Of course, I enjoyed the sewing room because of the fabric. *We had choices*. We could choose what we wanted and learned to make it. So those are *survival skills* that I'll always have because if all else fails, I *can* cook. I *can* clean. I can make a skirt and a blouse and a jacket. So, I'll be all right. My impression of "The School" is that it was exactly what it was meant to be; an industrial school. It taught us a lot. That little bit of work we did at the orphanage, *that wasn't nothing*. I didn't even consider that work.

Since Sabin's impressions were so different from Florence's, her comments about the chores made me wonder if she had to do heavy chores when she lived in the two different foster family homes before going to the orphanage and was therefore used to

²³ In the fall, hogs were slaughtered and the girls helped with preserving the meat.

doing heavy chores. The way Florence talked about the chores, it sounded to me like the work at the orphanage was absolute drudgery. Since Sabin's experience with doing chores at the orphanage was so much different from Florence's I wondered if coming from a large family of ten, Sabin might have even been responsible for a fair number of chores when she lived at home with her mother. I wondered if some time before she went to the orphanage Sabin had already been acclimated to the routine of getting up early in the morning, cooking, cleaning, and ironing during the day. I wondered if something had accustomed Sabin to heavy work before she was admitted to the orphanage and therefore the continuation of labor was neither unexpected by nor unfamiliar to her. I did not ask.

Sabin says, "By the time we got ready to graduate, I really had been a laundry girl and a kitchen girl for maybe a year and a half. The rest of my time was spent working at the superintendent's home." That one statement satisfied my curiosity about the list of things I wondered about. Sabin had worked in the kitchen and the laundry for only a year and a half. The other participants had performed the chores for several years.

Cassandra's Perspective of the Chores

Cassandra, who went to the orphanage as a four-year-old and almost immediately accepted the children as her brothers and sisters, was quite matter-of-fact when she discussed the chores. She seemed to know the regimen well and she seemed to take it all in stride. Having lived at the orphanage longer than any of the other participants, Cassandra who said she was "babied on up through the ranks," probably learned the routine gradually unlike some of the other girls whose transition period was short.

Like any family where the younger siblings disobey the older sibling who is left in charge by the adults in the home, Cassandra disobeyed her sister who was put in charge of the laundry and she suffered the consequences and learned her lesson about doing her chores well at the same time. Cassandra's sister was a matron then as I indicated earlier but to Cassandra, who was in high school, she was just her older sister.

I had to iron *ten* pieces before breakfast and *twenty* before going to school. If I did not finish I had to stay out of school and get it done. My sister would tell on me, so I did not get away with anything in that laundry just because my sister was in charge.

Cassandra says she had no problem with the official curricula of the orphanage but sometimes, through her hidden curriculum of resistance, she refused to obey her sister when she was the laundry matron. Although she sometimes uses the first person pronoun and sometimes the second as she discusses her experiences, in this next statement Cassandra seems to be referring to all of the children at the orphanage, not just herself.

You didn't take it for granted, but you knew that's the way it was at the HISH. When I was at the orphanage, I was up at five o'clock in the morning and had to be in the kitchen by five-fifteen. I would go through the regimen, you know? So being up early doesn't bother me. And I know what time I've got to get there. That's what I expect of *me*.

Rita's Perspective of the Chores

Here again, as she talks about the daily chores, Rita displays *a pleasant and positive attitude*. She changes the word "chore" to "trade." Rita's impression of the children's performance of chores, like Sabin's, is the impression the orphanage meant to convey: children performed jobs or chores to cultivate skills for future employment. It

was an important part of the official curriculum of the orphanage. The general view or the rationale for why the children worked so hard at orphanages was that they were performing chores that were designed to teach them a skill or trade. The skill or trade was expected to be instrumental in helping the children earn a living for themselves once they were out on their own. It was theorized by researchers of orphans and orphanages that once children left the orphanage they could get jobs anywhere doing menial but honest, productive work (Cmiel, 1995; Contosta, 1997; Hacsı, 1997; Zmora, 1994).

We had a routine. I don't think there's *anybody* who came through Havertown Industrial School Home who can say they didn't already have a trade or that they didn't work because it was no such thing as *no work!* Now, a person could have been lazy but you had to overpower that laziness with *something*. They were gonna make you do *something*. Not only were you gonna *do* something, they were gonna make you be diversified, not to keep the same job for the duration.

Like the others who talked about the chores they did, Rita says the girls were in the developing stages of cultivating a work ethic, something that was expected of all children in orphanages.

When I was at the orphanage, I worked in the laundry; I washed; I ironed. I worked in the kitchen . . . I never did learn to fix them biscuits like Sabin. Every time I see Sabin, I say, 'Sabin, you got them biscuits in your pocketbook? (She is jovial.) *Boy, Sabin could put something on some biscuits!* I never learned to cook biscuits like Sabin. I worked in the kitchen. I remember one time I was in *charge* of the kitchen; I was in charge of the *baby cottage*; I worked up at the *boys building* Yeah I worked, this was later, at the boys building. Mr. Warman and his wife slept on the right and I slept on the left side of the hall.

Rita seems to want me to know every job she had while she lived at the orphanage as if she is *proud of her diversification*.

I worked in the boys building; I worked in the sewing room That's how I learned to sew. The superintendent's wife used to take us over there and show us how to make them hoop skirts. I think the duration that I was there; I think I did just about everything. Oh! And I used to be in charge of the *merit* money that we got once a month. And we used to sell pigs feet and stuff and we used to collect the money and count it (Her voice is quite lively).

To give me some idea of the division of labor among the children, Rita adds more.

The boys took care of all of the yards and the farm and all that. The boys who worked on the farm were called farm boys. The girls never did have to do anything in the yard like cut the grass, tend the flowers, or nothing like that. The boys took care of that. Everything else: the cooking, the cleaning, the washing, the ironing, taking care of the baby cottage children, the girls did that.

Although she is positive throughout the interview, Rita is also able to identify something she hated about the orphanage. It is a hatred shared by the other participants.

Something I couldn't forget about that we did out to The School! Well, let me tell you what I hated the most, and that was having to stay home from school. I think I could deal with it if the superintendent told us the night before, but he would not tell you till you had already gotten your clothes on and in line up there waitin' to catch the school bus. Then you would have to go back home, take off your school clothes, and to me that was a *long* walk. That was *very sad to me* (the liveliness leaves her voice).

To reiterate her displeasure of having to stay home from school, Rita prolongs her explanation. Evidently she wanted me to get a real feel for how much she hated missing school.

That was the worst thing! I used to hate getting up in the morning, getting ready for school, and be standing in the line waiting for the school bus—I think you had to stand in line up by the boys' building—and the superintendent would come down the line to see how you were dressed and then he'd tap you and tell you that

you cain't go to school today 'cause you got to stay home. Then that's when . . . that's when *I just wanted the ground to open up and I would just fall through*. I would. I would. I, it, I mean, I wanted to go to school *every day!* (She is emphatic as she speaks.)

Like Florence who said that on the weekends she would be a semi-slave, Rita says she abhorred staying home from school because she knew the consequences. She says it meant being “a servant” in addition to doing the chores for which she stayed out of school to do. Sometimes it meant working in the laundry or the canning kitchen as Florence and Sabin pointed out. It always meant waiting tables.

I think all of us wanted to go to school 'cause you know if you stayed home you would have to go serve the matrons. You gon' have to go serve all of the staff their dinner. They would be sittin' up there waitin' for you to feed them at dinner time. I remember that matron who used to like Florence would be sittin' up there with the rest of them, waiting for us to feed them. I don't know if it was once or twice a month, but somebody had to stay home every day. I think the older ones stayed out. I think twice a month I had to stay home, and *I just dreaded those days*.

Almost as if to say the superintendent was not completely callous and unfeeling in enforcing the official curricula of the orphanage, Rita adds a disclaimer.

But if you had something real special to do, like if it was picture day, or when we got to be seniors, the superintendent would not keep you away from school. *They would not keep you away from your education. They saw to it that you participated. They saw to that.* (She is emphatic.)

As per the official curricula of the orphanage, the participants said that as girls they learned the value of hard work, they learned to be efficient at completing whatever task that was before them, and they learned the value of getting a good education. Lucy

and Rita said that early on they had a love for school. Florence and Cassandra said they liked school because of the social involvement. Sabin said nothing about how she felt about school. Darlene said school was just something you had to get through. They said school was preferable to staying out of school to do undesirable chores. The participants said they learned efficiency through fear of missing the school bus and having to “serve” the adults, as Rita put it. Florence, Cassandra, and Rita said they participated in school activities, and that cut down on the number of times they had to stay out of school.

Equally important, I discovered as I analyzed the participants’ narratives, was that the girls were being taught indirectly how to deal with disappointment. Being plucked from the school bus line after they were physically and mentally prepared to go to school gave them practice in dealing with disappointment, which along with adaptability and flexibility, is a resiliency trait they learned through the official curricula of the orphanage.

Working at the Superintendent’s House

One category of work the women talked about was cooking and cleaning the superintendent’s house and babysitting his sons. Before actually working there, the girls thought that working at the superintendent’s house was a prestigious job. They called it “working at the house” or “working at the big house.” Girls who worked at the house did not have to work at the canning kitchen or work rotating shifts in the laundry and the kitchen as the other girls did. Once girls began working at the house it became their routine responsibility. Only four of the participants in the study worked at the superintendent’s house: Lucy, Florence, Sabin, and Rita.

Lucy says she and Sabin worked at the superintendent's house together. She says Sabin requested her to fill a position vacated by another girl who had been emancipated from the orphanage. Lucy contends that since Sabin always acted so mature she was always given much more responsibility. Lucy says she worked at the house when the superintendent's boys were little boys but she made no comment about them or their behavior as Florence does as I show later.

Lucy, who routinely seemed to have fewer responsibilities than other girls her age, says she didn't have a lot of chores at the house either and she didn't know why. Neither did she know why she swept the front porch of the girl's building and cleaned the water fountain when she was old enough to have been assigned chores more suited to her age which she stated earlier.

By the time I started being decent the superintendent's wife said, "Well, you can come and work at the house." I probably was civilized then and wasn't just buck wild. I started working at the house and I got along fine with the superintendent and his family. I worked at the house with Sabin. Must have been by the time I was fifteen and in the tenth grade and I worked there till I went to college.

Lucy worked at the superintendent's house just as Florence did but Lucy went into no detail about it, so I surmised she had no problem working there. The same was not true of Florence, who saw the world through the metaphoric peepholes of a box. She begins her statement with mock laughter, a sure sign that it was not a good experience.

Oh, God! Working at the superintendent's house was a big farce! It was (big, audible sigh) . . . You know, I liked working there because it kept me from standing on my feet all day, but I had to wash the superintendent's wife's *nasty* underwear, put 'em in the bathtub, wash her underwear, bras, and girdles, stuff

like that, under panties. I had to change their bed linen and you could see where they had had sex and I had to clean her house and stuff like that.

From Florence's description, cleaning the superintendent's bedroom was kind of like cleaning a hotel room. Women "housekeepers" who make beds in hotels have a shared experience with Florence. After leaving college and being married with a child, Florence actually did work in housekeeping at a hotel for a short time, changing beds and such. So her work at the superintendent's house probably helped prepare her for the hotel cleaning experience.

By having such intimate contact with the superintendent and his wife's personal belongings and working in their home, Florence says she knew more about the Ogees than girls who did not work at the house. Florence says she knew the Ogees had a life that did not involve the orphans. She knew they had sex. The other participants who worked at the house did not mention the topic. Although Florence says she liked working at the house, she gave no indication that she liked it. She found fault with everything she did there including baby-sitting.

I baby-sat all the time. There were times when I had things I wanted to do but I couldn't do them 'cause the superintendent and his wife had gone to see her momma, or the superintendent was out doing whatever he had to do, and I had to stay with their two sons.

Although Florence says she baby-sat "*all the time*," she was likely exaggerating, but it was also likely her way of showing how often it seemed to her that she baby-sat and how she disliked the job.

There were times I didn't even have my books up there with me, so I couldn't study, because when you go to the superintendent's house in the afternoon, you're not going there with your books. And when I went to supper, normally I did not have to go back, but a lot of times I couldn't study because I was baby-sitting.

Florence does not say why she did not go and get her books after supper and take them back to the house with her. It occurred to me how odd it was that Florence, as a "big girl," was not as imaginative as she had been when she was a "little girl." As a little girl, Florence had devised workable solutions to her problems: at age four, she saved herself and her siblings from being burned alive in her father's house; at age eight, she created an invisible box to protect herself from harm; and at age nine, she mustered the courage to sit in a lone hallway despite her fear when she was punished for not knowing her timetables. I wondered what happened to Florence's earlier take-charge, adult-like behavior.

The superintendent's wife would say to me, "Go get your books and you can study up here tonight." That's not what she wanted. She wanted me to baby-sit, and you talking about baby-sittin' those two little *bad* boys! I didn't like working for the superintendent's wife. No, I didn't! (She sounds angry.)

Florence had just told me, "You know, I liked working there because it kept me from standing on my feet all day." Moments later she said she didn't like working for the superintendent's wife. I was not sure if she did not remember what she had said earlier or if she contradicted herself for some other reason. Maybe it was not a contradiction at all. Maybe *working at the house* was different from *working for the superintendent's wife* at the house. Maybe she did not like it when she discovered Mrs. Ogee's hidden curriculum.

What was even more noteworthy about Florence's narrative was that she, who was by then a high school teenager, spoke as if she was irritated by having to baby-sit the superintendent's boys. Yet she mentioned no irritation when she told me how she protected her little brother and sister when she was but a small child herself. Taking care of her siblings, from my perspective, was the same thing as baby-sitting them. Florence got no pay for taking care of the superintendent's boys, but she also got no pay for taking care of her younger siblings. I was confused. I could not see the difference between the two situations except that maybe Florence had an emotional attachment to her siblings that she did not have to the superintendent's boys.

Florence talks about the indiscretions the superintendent had with the girls who worked at the house. In talking about her experience, she belittles herself by disparaging her looks, but she gleefully adds that her lack of good looks was an asset when she worked at the house because it protected her from molestation. Her looks were both a blessing and a curse. They were a curse because they lowered her self-esteem. They were a blessing because they repelled unsolicited attention from the superintendent.

Let me tell you something I did not have a problem with, and maybe being ugly was one of those things that kinda helped me out a whole lot. I didn't have nobody bothering me, like some of the girls did, like the orphanage superintendent used to do. Okay, Mary used to work up at the orphanage superintendent's house. He messed with those girls. But I never had that problem. *Never had any problem!* And I guess being ugly was one of those things that kinda helped me out a whole lot. I'm not gon' say ugly, but homely-looking. I didn't have that problem, but Mary did.

A girl did not have to be "ugly" or "homely looking" to put off the unwanted advances of the superintendent as Florence illustrates in the next part of her story.

Perhaps Florence had lost the earlier courage she had for standing up for herself when she went to work at the house. Whatever it was that made *little* Florence act as a sentinel for her siblings when she was much younger, she seemed to have lost it by the time she became a *big* girl and it was time for her to stand up for herself at the house. Instead of coming to her own defense, Florence hid behind the audaciousness of the girl who stopped the superintendent's fuddling with a face slap. Florence also hid behind the fact that she was an eye witness who could use what she saw against the superintendent if she needed to.

Anna didn't have the problem either, 'cause he tried to touch her on her boob, and she slapped him, and I was there. I witnessed that, so (She laughs.) I knew I wouldna had no problem with him. (She continues laughing.)

Florence concedes that while she did not like working at the superintendent's house, there were a few advantages to working there—the official curricula.

I never thought in a million years, that I'd get the chance to go to college. So by the time I started working at, at, at the *big house*—that's what folks called the orphanage superintendent's house—the superintendent's wife made me understand that studying was important. Studying was the most important thing that you can do. And she'd always say things like, "You need to get an education. You need to finish high school."

Florence says she was good at not letting her feelings show on her face or in her demeanor, so the superintendent's wife seemed completely unaware that Florence did not like working at the house. She seemed to have Florence's best interest at heart.

It never dawned on me that the superintendent's wife might have been right about the importance of going to college, but I applied to three colleges and the third

college I applied to was the one that I went to. They accepted my eight hundred dollar scholarship, and the orphanage superintendent's wife told me that, "Okay, the women's club, I can get the women's club to help pay your tuition." She belonged to a women's club. And they did that; they really did do that. (Florence seems pleased, and her tone softens.)

Florence seemed genuinely surprised but pleased that the superintendent's wife helped her with her college tuition. Florence says, "That was like to me, the *best thing that could have ever happened to me* because without that, I think I would have probably ended up on the street somewhere on welfare."

Not only did Mrs. Ogee take care of Florence's tuition, Mrs. Ogee's friend helped out as well. Florence says, "I met Mrs. Ogee's friend who did send me money from time-to-time when I went to college, spending change!" The orphanage scholarship fund paid for Florence's room and board. Even in the face of these acts of generosity, Florence seemed hesitant to acknowledge that someone *did care about her*, someone *was looking out for her*, and *she did have an advocate*. Florence's advocate was Mrs. Ogee.

The irony in her situation is that the person who was looking out for Florence and who saw to it that her college tuition got paid was the very woman whom Florence did not like working for. It was the very same woman whose "nasty underwear" Florence used to wash out in the bathtub. Once Florence accepted the generosity of Mrs. Ogee, she says, "The holes in her metaphoric box got just a little bit bigger because *somebody cared*."

Florence never said whether she ever established a connection with the superintendent or his wife. She had said when she was first "thrown in" the orphanage "that man [Mr. Ogee] had no attachment" to her, yet it was "that man" and his wife who

provided for Florence. Although she said she loved her father and wanted to be home with him, it was the Ogees who changed the course of Florence's life, not Florence's father.

The word "opportunity" came up more than once when I talked with the participants, including Florence, about their experiences. Even as she speaks of the opportunities she is given by working at the house, Florence seems begrudging in her acknowledgement of her appreciation of Mrs. Ogee's kindness.

There were breaks that I had that other children who didn't work at the house didn't have. I didn't have to work in the laundry room or in the kitchen. I think working at the house also gave me an *opportunity* to learn how to do home cooking for a family and clean and care for a family. It did give me that. I guess working up at the house had its perks, and I think that's probably one of the reasons I did get an *opportunity* to go to college, was because the superintendent's wife *did have those connections*. So, you know, it worked out.

Sabin worked at the superintendent's house and describes her job there in detail in much the same way that Florence did, only she expresses no negativity. Sabin talks about how she felt about working at the superintendent's house, how she came to work there, and what her chores were. Her tone is nothing like Florence's.

I worked at the house, but I did not feel like a part of the superintendent's family and they didn't do anything to make us feel like we were family. I was there 'cause I had a job to do. I was a worker and that's what I felt like. I was fifteen when I came to the orphanage. I was in a group of girls and we'd go from working in the laundry for a period of time to working in the kitchen for a period of time, and then eventually I went to work at the superintendent's house with another girl. That girl and I ended up being roommates. She asked for me to work with her at the house.

Sabin gives outsiders an inside view of the division of labor at the house.

When I worked at the house, I was “the back of the house girl” and my roommate worked in the kitchen. When I say “the front of the house,” there was always a girl who was responsible for the cooking and cleaning the downstairs, main part of the house. There was a young lady who was responsible for cleaning the bedrooms and the bathrooms, which almost, I guess it was like being a kitchen girl and the laundry girl.

Sabin likens the division of labor at the house to the division of labor between the kitchen girls and the laundry girls.

When I first went to work at the house, my roommate was the cook. Her role was to prepare the food for the superintendent’s family and of course we were instrumental in baby-sitting the superintendent’s boys then.

Although they gained experience in cooking for and serving guests at dinner parties, the girls who worked at the house were not compensated for their time or their services. These after-hours duties were considered a part of their responsibilities as girls who worked at the house. One of the official curricula of the orphanage was to serve.

If the superintendent and his wife had an event, we would work at the house in the evening because the superintendent and his wife would have guests over in the evening. We would prepare the food and serve those people who visited the house like we were *maids*.

Rita had talked earlier about the girls serving the matrons their dinner like they were servants when they stayed out of school to work at the canning kitchen. Sabin talks about how the girls who worked at the house served the guests of the superintendent’s like they were maids. The terminology used by Rita and Sabin is quite significant because being trained as maids and servants was exactly the kind of training the girls at Havertown Industrial School Home, as well as other orphanages, were supposed to have.

How the girls transitioned from other positions on the campus to working at the house was not an arbitrary one. The girl who was already working at the house chose the girl she wanted to work with. It was generally a friend. Sabin chose Lucy.

When my roommate graduated from high school, she left and I became the cook. I asked for Lucy to take her place. So I moved to the kitchen and Lucy was responsible for the back of the house.

Sabin found something positive to say about working at the house, much like Florence did toward the end. Sabin says she thought that working in the kitchen at the orphanage and working in the kitchen at the superintendent's house was "the best of both worlds."

Because the superintendent's wife was a home economics major in college she had her way of knowing how to do a quick meal and of course I had the experience of cooking for the orphanage, so *I had the best of both worlds* in the kitchen. I found that I enjoyed that. Working at the house gave me a smaller work pattern in the sense that No, I wouldn't say "smaller" because the groups had a number of girls in 'em so I would say that the work was equitable in that sense. It just seemed that we had a smaller work pattern because we were in a different setting. We were in the private home.

Sabin talks about how working at the house provided her with some special *privileges* others girls did not have just as Florence pointed out in her interview. Like Florence, Sabin also talks about the *opportunities* she was given by working at the house.

Sabin says:

At the house, we did not have to come to vesper services on Sundays. Also, after we served dinner and everything, we were off like the kitchen and the laundry girls. Being at the house gave me an *opportunity* to use the telephone. I just

remember working at the house was *an opportunity*. We even had the choice of eating at the house or going to the dining room.

Sabin also introduces the concept of privilege, which heretofore, none of the other educators had mentioned.

These were *some privileges* we had in the evenings, and it was very rare that we left the house to go to the canning kitchen. If they were gonna be canning peaches or apples or whatever, we were at the house taking care of the superintendent's home and family because Mrs. Ogee was at the canning kitchen because she was somewhat directing. She rarely made us come to the canning kitchen. We were just *glad to be at the house*. In some ways it was kind of *a special privilege* to work at the house because some things we were not *made* to participate in.

As with everything, there was also a downside to working at the house just as there was an upside and Sabin talks about that too. Florence had talked about one: sexual harassment. Sabin talks about another: not having days off.

Of course sometimes we weren't off. Especially if it was merit money time, you had to come and buy your snacks, so we were responsible for doing that. But when the children were able to buy snacks it was after dinner. After they were able to buy their little candy bars or whatever, we could go over to our dormitory.

Providing for the needs and desires of the Ogee family and providing for the needs and desires of the orphanage children after hours sometimes restricted the freedoms of the girls who worked at the house.

By the time we got to the dorm it was about time for everybody to start getting ready for bed and study hour and that type of thing. As far as the days when the laundry was not open and the other girls were able to watch television, *we didn't have days off*, but we did not have as large a crowd to prepare for either.

By working at the house the girls had *choices*. The girls were in charge of *making more of their own decisions* and *they were rather independent*. Unlike the other children who had specific schedules and repetitive tasks, the girls who worked at the house could *decide* if they wanted to participate in the activities the other children participated in.

Going to the on-campus movies was optional for us when we worked at the house. We were not able to get into any trouble because we were right there at the house, so we were not made to go to the movies. I think if we wanted to go to the movies we could. It was somewhat of an option for us.

As to whether or not she felt like she was part of the family when she worked at the house, Sabin is quite clear. She says working at the house gave her no special feelings of endearment to the superintendent's family. Her sentiments in this matter are similar to sentiments expressed by Florence. Yet, Sabin seemed to believe that other girls who worked at the house before she did had a special kind of bond with the superintendent's family.

Working at the house was my job. It was my chore. It was what my role was. I did not feel like I was part of the family. I don't think they gave me anything extra to make me feel like I was part of the family, but I think the girls who were there before I came may have felt like they were part of the family. I think they may have felt more comfortable.

Florence, who worked at the house before Sabin came, painted quite a different picture from Sabin's illusionary one about the special bond between the superintendent's family and the previous girls who worked at the house. Perhaps her view, as do many views, look better from a distance than what they look like up close and personal.

Maybe because they were going away to college and then coming back, the girls who previously worked at the house had a bond with the superintendent's family. One of the girls used to come to the house and watch the wrestling match with Mr. Ogee. I think the previous girls felt more connected to the family than I did. We may have done some teasing with the superintendent, but I don't think we really felt I don't think *I* felt like I was a part of their family. But I *did* feel like I was a part of the family of Havertown Industrial School Home, with all the other children who were there.

Rita says she also worked at the superintendent's house. Her comment was succinct. She mentioned working at the superintendent's house simply as a way of including it as one of a number of the responsibilities she had to fulfill while living at the orphanage. She supplied no details about her experience of working at the superintendent's house.

The Role of School in the Lives of the Orphans

In the section on punishment, I talked about Lucy and Florence's perception of the importance of school in their lives, so in this section I talk about the other women's school experiences. Sabin did not attend school on the orphanage campus because she was admitted to the orphanage when none of the children were still taught on the campus. By the time she was admitted to the orphanage, all of the children from the orphanage rode the school bus to the segregated county school for Black children. It was a consolidated school for children in grades 1-12. It was the only school for African American children in the county.

Sabin's Impression of the Role of School in the Lives of the Orphans

Sabin talks about herself in the second person as if she is not confident speaking in the first person. She tells me about the social learning she got indirectly by being in

association with African American teachers. She says she clearly understood the teachers' messages. It was part of the intended, official curriculum for their students.

I thought that it was very important, to colored children, to the colored educators that the children realize that they were as good and as important as any other human being. So it was instilled in you, and wherever you went to school it seemed to be that those instructors who were involved in your life impressed upon you the importance of the way you carried yourself, the way that you presented yourself in public, how people saw you because when you were not in the setting where the colored school was, no matter where you went, you were representative of everything that was Colored.

By "You were representative of everything that was Colored," Sabin was referring to those positive attributes that African Americans expected to see in their own race of people, those traits that made the Black race proud. Children were expected to live in accordance with the standards of the Black middle class, not by the stereotypes that others used to signify and judge them. African American students were taught middle-class values by their middle-class teachers. The orphanages children got a double dose of it: one from school and one from the orphanage. Sabin provides her view.

I thought the teachers had our best interest at heart; they were encouraging in the sense that they wanted us to understand that we should strive only for the very best that life had to offer. At some point, we were told that the *key to everything* was a good education, so we were encouraged to *do well* in school. We were encouraged to get an education because *education* was gonna unlock *every door we tried to get into*. That is what we believed and that is what we were taught, and when we came out we expected that that education was *really gonna unlock all of those doors*.

The children were not talked to about racism, but they were protected from racial prejudice, for the most part, as long as they stayed in the Black community: living there,

learning, there, and working there. However the “real world” is not all Black. The “real world” is not necessarily encouraging, accommodating, or fair to African Americans, which Sabin points out.

We didn't realize that there were some little underlying issues that we were gonna have to go through because as much as it wasn't as blatant later on in years, things were very segregated. Segregation was still there. It was not as visible. It was not as bold, but you encountered it in different situations.

By living in a segregated society, the children from the orphanage were protected from the outside world, basically, and their real experience of learning about the world came at a time when they had already received the kind of training that would allow them to buffer whatever negativity that might come their way. Still, they knew what racism was and they experienced the sting of it when they integrated formerly all White schools.

Darlene's Impression of the Role of School in the Lives of the Orphans

Like Sabin, Darlene did not attend school on the orphanage campus either. She was in junior high school when she was admitted to the orphanage, but she provided me with some insight into what her school experiences were like. Darlene says she was a quiet, well behaved child who did as she was told without protest no matter where she was. She, like Lucy and Florence, also had problems with self-esteem. Darlene says, “I went to a Catholic school from grades kindergarten to sixth grade, and very strict. I found the nuns, as a whole, were sarcastic, very cold, and non-caring.”

So as not to disparage all of the nuns who taught at her at school, Darlene retracts her statement about all of the nuns being cold and uncaring; then, as if without realizing

it, she again categorizes them as teachers who were neither caring nor nurturing. I present Darlene's views in her own words.

Some of them were just the opposite, but I think, as a whole, at my school, they didn't really care about the kids, per se. I don't know why they were there, to tell you the truth. I think they wanted to be nuns, but then the teaching part of it was an after. . . . It was like, if you want to be a nun, then you gotta do this too. So looking back on it now that's the only way I can figure it out. I think I got a good education, pretty good education, despite the fact the teachers weren't that caring or nurturing.

Darlene, who earlier had told me that she does not remember a lot of negative things, says she could not remember ever getting punished in school except for one time. It had a lasting effect on her.

I remember one time I was in third grade, and my feet must have been swinging, and I must have been kicking, kinda subconsciously kicking the back of the desk in front of me and I didn't know I was doing that, and the nun swung around and said (imitating the nun), "*Who is that that keeps kicking!*" And everybody froze. Everybody froze except the girl in front of me, and she pointed to me.

Even though Darlene says she was a well-behaved child who tried to blend into the background whenever she could and wherever she went, she could not blend in in this instance because the girl sitting in front of her had pointed her out.

Even to this day, that might not have been me. I just never knew. But, she said it was me and the teacher said, "You need to get up and leave out of the room and go just stand in the hall," and I was like, "Oh my word." I couldn't believe this, so I went out and stood out in the hall, and I was just standing there by the door. Well, the principal comes down the hall, and she says (imitating the principal's pleasant voice), "What are you doing out here?"

This one instance of being called out left an indelibly, negative impression on Darlene whose narrative identity was “The Good Child.” Judging by the grade she was in, the incident occurred about the time of her mother’s death, which probably made the incident stand out in Darlene’s memory even more.

Apparently, I was a kid who never got in trouble because I remember the principal saying something like, “You never get in trouble. You've never done anything wrong. This is the first time I've ever seen you out here.” And I was very thankful for that, and she said, “You just go back in, and you won't do that again, will you?” Or, “Tell the teacher you're not gon' do that anymore,” something like that, and she sent me back in the room, and I got to sit back down. Ah, I was thankful. I was like, “Ah! Thank you Go. . . .” It could have been a lot worse. But that's about the only time I remember being punished.

Darlene remembered her school experiences much like she remembered her experience of living in the orphanage; few things stand out either good or bad. She says she did not like drawing attention to herself and she used a technique that would get her through school unobtrusively.

I was just one of those average kids that just blended into the woodwork, and said, “I just wanna get through here without throwing a lot of attention on myself, good or bad, positive or negative. Just let me kinda slide through. You don't speak to me then I don't speak to you.”

Darlene says she had difficulty fitting in with other children at school, but she does not say why. Her narrative identity is also “The unobtrusive Child.”

My first year in the orphanage, I went to the all-Black school, but I didn't really fit in because those kids had been together from kindergarten up to what—I was in sixth, seventh grade—and so I just didn't fit in. I didn't know any of them. They didn't let me into their circles or their group, so I had no friends, really. I don't remember having any friends hardly.

As for how she handled being in an integrated school, Darlene says:

I was in the first group that integrated, so out of five hundred students, there were twenty-five African American students, and I happened to be one of them. Well, I didn't fit in there either. One would think, being in an all-black school, I would fit in and I'd be more comfortable there. I was no more comfortable there than I was at the integrated school.

Although Darlene says she does not remember any school experiences that really stand out, good or bad, she obviously remembered a few positive and negative things because she remembered the chair-kicking incident and she remembered a few other incidents. Darlene's narrative identity changes again: "The Child Who Does Not Fit In."

Out of all my years in school, I think the first year back at home, I went back to an all-Black school. It was a junior high school. I was a ninth grader. I had that going for me. That was great. The kids accepted me! I was going to school with neighborhood kids that knew where I lived, so that was not a negative. They just probably assumed that I'd been in the Catholic school somewhere, but they really accepted me. It was the first time that I'd been where . . . kinda looked up to. Even the girls and the guys kinda thought I was pretty. It was the first time.

As I analyzed this part of her narrative, I note that Darlene is reluctant to actually compliment herself directly. He uses the qualifying word "kinda" to keep from sounding conceited, it seems to me. Being in the all-Black middle school gave Darlene confidence and it raised her level of self-esteem, so she no longer wanted to fade into the background or seem invisible. When her father, who was still a devoted Catholic, suggested that she go back to her Catholic school when she completed middle school, Darlene becomes assertive. Evidently it was the first time. It also seems to be the first time that she actually

verbalizes what she thought of her earlier experiences at the Catholic school. Darlene speaks up for herself and her narrative identity changes once more. She is assertive.

My dad said, "Okay, you're going to high school. I don't want you to go to the all-Black high school in your neighborhood, so you need to go to Catholic high school." And I thought, "Oh, no! Not again!" You know? "Here we go again. Prison." I just couldn't stand it. (She spaces her words.) *I just could not stand it!*

Earlier, Darlene had seemed reluctant to say how she actually felt about attending Catholic school. She seemed to have a desire to not offend. This evidently led her to soften her criticism of the nuns at her school whom she said were "uncaring" and "not nurturing." She was reluctant to say the Catholic school itself was prison-like. It seemed that when Darlene talked about her elementary school experience at the Catholic school, she took on the narrative identity of the good child and tried to be kind.

When Darlene talked about fitting in at her neighborhood middle school, her assertiveness manifested itself. Her middle school experience away from the orphanage evidently gave her confidence, and she came to discover something about herself that she had not known previously. In Darlene's own word, she says she discovered at the middle school, "I was pretty and I was popular. I was smart, and I just had everything going for me that year." Darlene sounds proud of this new narrative identity bestowed on her.

Darlene dropped the identity of the timid elementary school child that did not fit in, and she took on the identity of a confident person when she said she talked to her father about her school preference and when she talked with me about this part of her life.

This assertive person showed evidence of resilience. Assertiveness is what she needed in order to talk to her father and it is what she would need later in her career as an educator.

You know, after having such a great year in ninth grade, the thought of going back to, uh, what'll you call it? I don't know, just going back to being one of a crowd, lost in the crowd. I just didn't wanna do it. I just couldn't. I just couldn't. I guess anonymity surges? I just didn't want to back to that. And the strictness of the . . . I just did *not* want to go back to that.

After getting her father's consent to attend a public high school Darlene says she left many of her insecurities behind. She says, "I caught the bus everyday, went out of the neighborhood, left all the friends I'd made that past year, and went to [the White high school], and helped to integrate [the high school]." By being one of a handful of African American students in the large prestigious, White high school, Darlene returned to her desire to disappear into the background. She became chameleon-like once more.

It was the kind of year that you just say, "If I could just get through school; that's it. That's all I wanna do. Just get this over with." School was just kind of a thing you had to do to get an end. . . . It was a means to an end. You just got to get this over with. Whereas, sometimes it seems like school is more a social thing . . . it wasn't for me. I just went and it's just something you have to do and just go ahead and get this over with and get on with *life*.

Up to the point where she actually helped to integrate the White high school, Darlene apparently had been training, without being aware of it, to learn how to deal with unpleasant situations. Her strict discipline at the Catholic school had helped; so had her two years at the orphanage where she lived by rules and regulations daily. Additionally, based on what Darlene said about hating those "group beatings," she also learned to think in terms of "the betterment of the group." Both the curricula of her elementary school and

her industrial school home had taught Darlene not to call attention to herself. They had apparently taught her about the value of uniformity, conformity, preparedness, and rules. Most especially, they apparently taught her discipline.

As Darlene talks about her schooling, she is able to remember another school incident and she is quite articulate in this instance. It is about racial unrest at her school. Darlene says her feelings about loyalty to her family and loyalty to her fellow classmates conflicted. She says she had to be assertive and feel confident about what she thought was the right thing to do. She apparently had to rely on herself and decide for herself what was right and how she should act in this situation.

Oh, I do remember at [the White high school], we had this The Blacks protested about something. I don't even remember what it was about! But they decided they were gon' protest, and that made me *very nervous*. *Very nervous!* The Black students had decided on this certain day they were gonna walk out, have a walkout, and I was torn between the loyalty of the Black kids versus my dad. I just didn't know what to do. *I just didn't know* And I knew that my dad was not into being Black and proud. He was like, into "You do the right thing, regardless of what color you are."

Evidently, siding with her classmates was the right thing to do. Darlene says she thought there might be repercussions no matter what decision she made, so she let her heart guide her.

And I knew my dad wouldn't really approve, but I *knew* I had to live with those Black *kids*, come Monday morning or tomorrow. And I just remember saying, "*What should I do? What should I do?*" And I thought, "If all of the Black kids get kicked out and I get kicked out, I could be in big trouble at home, but if I don't, then I could be on a terrible list here at school."

Darlene made her decision. After some deliberation, she decided to walk out with the other students. This was a turning point in Darlene's life.

*So many of the kids did it that the school didn't give any punishment, any consequences. My daddy found out that I did it, and he didn't say anything. He didn't really It was like It was almost like, he probably *knew* the predicament I was in, and nothing happened. There were no consequences. And so I was relieved. Nothing happened at either place, so I ended up making the right decision. That worked out good for me. It could have been disastrous! If all the kids who walked out got expelled or suspended, that wouldna been good. It just so happened that it worked out fine, but that was *a scary, scary thing. Scary time!**

Fundamentally, Darlene says she knew that education was a requirement and a necessity for future success because of the mindset of her family which they passed on to her. More than a high school education was expected of Darlene.

I knew it was a requirement. It wasn't an option. Coming from my family, as far as When I graduated from high school My parents didn't even celebrate when you graduated from high school. *That was expected!* It was "Okay, now, let's get on with the next step. So yeah, you graduated from high school, big deal." We don't send out invitations. So it was just no big deal. It's just like "Get on with the next meal," you know? You've had breakfast. Lunch comes next, right? That's kinda the way high school and college was. It was expected!

Cassandra's Impression of the Role of School in the Lives of the Orphans

Cassandra, who identified herself as a true orphan, said that at the orphanage, children were not allowed to get a grade lower than a C in school. She laughs as she supplies the details of her school experiences.

Coming up in the era that I was coming up in, I learned a lot. When I started school, I was so smart, I just kinda forgot about the first grade. They just sent me on. My schooling was very good. I had very good teachers from first through

sixth grade at the HISH. *Very good teachers!* Teachers actually cared about me, and then when I got in the seventh grade, we went to school off campus. I had good teachers there. In fact, *I had really good teachers.* I could tell they *cared.* They *were real nice to me.*

I noticed that Cassandra's school experiences seemed so different from Florence's experiences. Both of them went to the same on-campus school at the orphanage and they went to the same off-campus, public school. Cassandra scratched Miss Crane's head and made her lunch for her just as Florence had when she was in her class, but both of the participants indicated the teacher treated them differently—liking one but not the other. Cassandra and Florence also had Mr. Timmons when they were in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grade, and again their experiences with the same teacher were different.

I could not figure out what made their experiences different. Maybe it was their personality differences. Their narrative identities were similar: Cassandra was stubborn and strong-willed; Florence was stubborn and strong-willed. Neither trait is endearing. Whatever the reason for the difference was, Florence, who came along after Cassandra, had a series of negative experiences. Cassandra had a series of positive experiences.

Cassandra says she was not always the best student but she knew the official, academic curriculum of the orphanage. She knew that the orphanage children were expected to be diligent in their studies. She says she knew they were not expected to have all "A"s on their report card but they certainly knew better than to bring home any grade lower than a C. To illustrate her point about how anxiety-provoking it was to get less than a C on a report card, Cassandra tells me this story:

My history teacher made me so mad. She gave me a D and I asked her about my grade and she told me to tally the grade myself and see what I got. Well, when I tallied the grades, I came up with a C-, but she said it was a D. I got mad about that thing because we weren't supposed to bring back any grade lower than a C. Well, me and that teacher fought about that thing—I don't mean a fist fight—but she wound up putting a C- on my report card 'cause I wasn't about to go back out there to “The School” with that D on my report card. I woulda really been in *trouble* then! (She laughs.)

Although the orphanage children had the kind of hardships in their lives that might tempt a person to feel sorry for them, Cassandra says they were basically treated like everybody else by their teachers. If they were treated differently it was not with a lighter hand; it was with a heavier hand. It was intended to enhance their resilience.

The teachers knew every child from the orphanage, and the orphanage children received no special treatment. The teachers knew for a fact, that if there was any problem with us we knew what the deal was. The teachers knew we didn't want them to call the superintendent. *Under no circumstances!* Everybody knew we were from the orphanage because we had three buses of kids. They *knew* the orphanage kids. *They knew the orphanage kids* (Her tone is one of amusement.).

Cassandra becomes almost nostalgic when she talks about her school days. She says she thinks that one of the reasons African American children have problems in school now is because of some of their teachers don't care.

If we had the teachers *I had back then*, I think some of our Black kids wouldn't be struggling the way they're struggling now. When I was coming up, our curriculum was not what it is now, so that makes a difference. We had reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, science, whatever, that kind of stuff, and we did it as a subject. Now, they don't have reading, writing, arithmetic. They don't have spelling. They have reading but they call it guided reading. They teach comprehension. They teach whole language. When our kids get ready to test, they can't do it because they haven't been taught words or been given spelling words like we were given spelling words.

Although Cassandra had completed high school by the time of the Civil Rights Movement, she says she was aware that there was tension between the Black and the White race but she says she tries to get along with everyone.

People are people. We knew what was going on but race didn't bother me. When I got out in the workplace in the sixties, I guess it was going on, but I just didn't pay it any attention. I really didn't, and I still don't really. In the other school where I worked, it didn't really faze me. We're just people, and it's not like I don't like you because of color.

Cassandra says she believes in treating people with fairness, which I inferred came partially from the official curricula of the orphanage where she was required to get along with so many children by living with them and attending school with them.

If you're a nice person and you treat me like you want to be treated, then we're fine. That doesn't mean I haven't run into some adversaries in my lifetime. I just kinda let 'em know where I'm coming from: don't bother me; don't faze me. I don't have to go through that, and they understand that.

Cassandra tells me of an incident where one of the children in the elementary school where she worked had a problem with racism. I love this story.

I had one little girl who came to kindergarten who looked at me and said, "I hate you! I just hate you! I don't like you! I don't like you!" The more she said I hate you, the more I said I love you, and I held that child on my lap *all day long*, and the more she did that, the more I hugged her and the more I loved, and she realized that I did love her. She didn't want me to touch her because of the color of my skin, but I held her in my arms, held her in my lap and we just rocked, and I said, "I love you." We got along fine after that. Everyday that same little girl would run and hug me.

Rita's Impression of the Role of School in the Lives of the Orphans

Rita says she became an overachiever early on in her school career because she wanted approval from her teachers and most especially from her mother. She says she always got approval from her teachers. She even got approval from the orphanage superintendent and his wife for her academic achievements, but she never got approval from her mother who beat her brutally for years. Rita says she was eager to please the adults in her life and she loved school. I define her narrative identity as overachiever.

I always had a real good printing handwriting and the teachers would always get me to fix their posters and everybody in the school, all the teachers in the school, would get me to make their posters and signs and stuff like that. I just, I became kind of an overachiever. I always made the honor roll.

Rita was put on a “commercial track” when she was in high school because as a girl from the orphanage, the teachers assumed that she would not be going to college. At her school, bright students were customarily assigned to take commercial classes when the school assumed they would not be attending college.

I had my commercial skills, typing came in real handy when I went to college. I could type papers. I could write papers. All through high school, I had real good English teachers. My English teachers were just wonderful, and I imagine they were wonderful because that was something that I liked, and the things that you like, you do very well in. English was my thing. One of my English teachers influenced me to be an English teacher.

Rita says when she went off to college she discovered that her “commercial track” education was responsible for her having to take remedial classes because she was

deficient in her academics. She says she was academically two years behind the other students but she says she caught up. Overachievers usually do.

They [college advisors] put me in remedial classes, so I had to pass these remedial classes and then get in these classes with the rest of my classmates and catch up. What the other students had in four years, I had to catch up in two years. After two years, you could declare your major and so I worked real hard. I was determined to get outta there.

Rita says initially she wanted to major in English because of the influence of her “wonderful” high school English teachers. She says that changed when she started taking psychology and began reading about herself in the textbook.

Well, when I got in psychology, I had to take a lot of things that kin’a dealt with the mind and dealt with abuse and stuff, and I said, “Dag! This is something that happened to me.” And lo and behold I went and became a guidance counselor because I looked upon the teacher who I sent that letter to as *my counselor*, as *my lord and savior*. He really *saved me that day* by just writing *one word* on that paper: “*yes*.” The question was, “Did Rita come to school Friday on such and such a date?” He wrote on this piece of paper “*yes*” and signed his name. So I became a guidance counselor.

Rita says she was encouraged to excel in her studies at Havertown Industrial School Home, and she continued to get praise from the caring adults in her life.

I think of how *proud* the superintendent and his wife were when I used to excel in school, unlike what my mother would show. It seemed like, with her, no matter how much better I got at doing things and how much I got involved in things and being recognized in school, it did not faze my mother. It seemed like it took the reverse effect. The more I did, the worse it got. But with the HISH staff, especially the superintendent and his wife, they would put you up there on the *right hand of God if you made the honor roll*.

Rules, Regulations, Routine, and Supervising Staff

The children at Havertown Industrial School Home had scheduled eating, sleeping, and waking times. The routine, it was theorized, was to help the children live more compatibly with one another, especially since children in institutional children's homes spend more time associating with many other children than children in private family homes do (Brotten, 1962). As part of their routine, the children had assigned chores and duties. In addition they had scheduled times for studying for school. Although the children were not aware of it, the orphanage had its own official curriculum which was different from the one the children thought the curriculum should be. The children had their own curriculum as well. They apparently did not know about and were not interested in the official curriculum of the orphanage. Consequently they did not investigate the whys and the wherefores of the curricula the orphanage adhered to.

Yet, the official curricula of the orphanage was vital because they were geared toward teaching the children to be obedient, hard working, independent, law abiding citizens capable of contributing to society. According to the official curricula it was important, therefore, for the children to cultivate a desire to: (a) be self-disciplined, (b) know right from wrong, (c) generally want to conform to acceptable behavior, (d) make good judgments, and (e) use their good sense (Brotten, 1962).

All institutional children's homes have imposed schedules and routines to help staff manage large numbers of children and to facilitate the operation of the infrastructure. Havertown Industrial School Home was no exception. In fact, Havertown Industrial School Home had more stringent regulations than some White orphanages

because it was an African American institution, and its budget was tighter and its resources were fewer (The Duke Endowment, 1925).

The children's adherence to the rules, regulations, and routine under the watchful eye of the staff was a necessary part of helping the institution to operate within its fixed budget and to make its limited resources go farther. All of my study participants talked about the rules, regulations, routine, and staff except Darlene. Consequently, her opinion is absent.

Lucy's Perspective of the Rules, Regulations, Routine, and Staff

Lucy does not say anything directly about the rules, regulations, routine, and staff, but she concedes that she knew a lot about children and how to relate to them because she was continuously in the company of other children as part of the orphanage routine. Because the boys and girls were separated from one another except at specified times, Lucy says she was ignorant about how to relate to the opposite sex when she grew up.

I think living at the HISH really prepared me for my job in education because I really knew the nuances, at least, of children. I didn't understand a lot about men, how they play games and they'll use you. By living at the orphanage, I had a chance to observe other teenage girls. And living and growing up with them, I knew every trick in the trade, and I knew how to relate. Sometimes people grow up and they're the only child in the family and they have no other child to relate to, so I was better off than some of those who did not have brothers and sisters in their home.

Lucy discusses part of the hidden or social curriculum that was so important to the children at the orphanage. By living with and being in close contact with so many children, Lucy says she could see that it was important to: (a) wait your turn, (b) share, (c) help others, and (d) understand the concept of give and take. These traits are not ones

people typically associate with children in orphanages, but Lucy could see, at least in these areas of the social curriculum, that the orphanage children had advantages that some children who lived in their own homes did not have.

Children in their own homes don't know how to *give and take*. They don't know how to *share*. They don't know that they *have to share*. They don't know how to *compromise*. Well, all those things I learned how to do because I lived at the orphanage.

When Lucy moved to the girls building she was ten years old. She was considered a “little girl” at the girls building because of her age. As a “little” girl whose responsibilities were light, Lucy says she was able to learn turn taking by watching the dynamics between the “big” girls and the “little” girls as they performed their morning grooming rituals.

The older girls were *privileged* to wash and dress themselves in the mornings before the younger girls because their tasks were more important to the running of the orphanage than those of the “little girls.” The older girls were responsible for preparing the food, doing the laundry, and cleaning the dormitory. Lucy says she learned turn taking by watching the other girls and by having to wait her turn. Lucy's wash basin example refers to the time when the girls lived in barracks-style dormitories.

You might walk up to a sink to wash your face; it may be ten other girls around there. Now, everybody can't get their washrag under that water, so you have to learn *how to wait your turn*. You have to know *how to give*.

It was important, as Lucy said, for the girls to learn how to give and take, but first they had to be able to recognize the difference between *charity* and *kindhearted giving*.

Orphans, often the recipients of pity and charity, shy away from *exposing* their orphan status (Braddy, 1933; Cournos, 1999; Fisher, A., 2001) because they do not want charity and they do not want to be considered charity cases. Their perception of charity is extremely important to them.

Being publicly acknowledged as an orphan and the recipient of a charitable gift produces a different effect in the giver than in the receiver. It elicits praise for the giver, and pity for the receiver. Although the primary purpose of public acknowledgement is to laude the generosity of the philanthropist, public acknowledgements can be humiliating to the recipients of charity. Although not intentional, accolades can condition recipients of charity to be wary, to be suspicious of the motive behind any gift-giving. Recipients wonder if the gift is really awarded to help the recipient or if it is to win praise for the giver. The orphans at Havertown Industrial School Home were both distrustful and suspicious of other people's motives for giving.

Lucy says, "When you grow up without the love of a mother and father whom you think should be there for everybody, you have trust issues." Lucy makes another observation about orphans. She says, "One of the other traits we children at the orphanage have in common is that we are suspicious." Because of their distrustful and suspicious nature, learning how to accept gifts of kindness without thinking of them as pity or charity was important for the girls at Havertown Industrial School Home. Knowing how to accept a gift as an act of kindness was probably as important as being able to give a gift of kindness. Lucy says gift-giving was one way the girls could "*stroke*"

each other, to show each other *compassion*. She says she learned compassion because other girls showed compassion to her.

In my earlier discussion about corporal punishment, I related how Florence said she was baffled by how her simple *act of kindness* towards her sister was interpreted as insubordination by the superintendent. Florence said she had told her sister that she would clean up the kitchen for her while she went to get her hair done. Lucy's older sister showed similar *compassion* towards Lucy when she offered, as an *act of kindness*, to do her chores on her birthday. She wanted to show Lucy that she had not been forgotten.

You have to know how to *stroke* other people. When your birthday comes, even if you don't get lots of gifts, and we never did get lots of gifts, but sometimes *people would just do your chores for you* on your birthday. Oh, I remember my sister saying, "I'll sweep the porch." That was my only chore. "I'll sweep the porch for you. This is your birthday. You don't have to do it." But it's learning *to give and to share* and *to take turns* and *to be concerned* about other people. That, I learned at the HISH.

Lucy did not have many chores nor did she do any heavy work as a ten year old. Since her sister was a "big" girl with important responsibilities, Lucy says she thought of the extra burden she might be placing on her sister by allowing her sister to do both her own chores as well as Lucy's. This kind of *consideration for others* was helpful in the girls' daily *cooperative living and learning*.

Lucy's comments about the staff, including the superintendent, are both positive and negative. Lucy says, "I really didn't like the assistant superintendent! I thought he was too stiff and unbending." Although Lucy says she thought the assistant superintendent, Mr. Warman, was stiff and unbending, he did teach her something about

the kind of behavior that was proper for a young girl. He did show that he was interested in her development as a young lady.

One day I was at the girls building and one of my friends had me by the arms and another girl had me by the legs and they were swinging me from side to side. We were laughing and having a good time. My dressing was swinging in the dirt and all my bloomers and everything was showing and Mr. Warman came by and told the girls to stop swinging me and to put me down. He said it was not proper for a young lady to have her dress up like that.

Lucy laughs and says, "He was always ruining something." Lucy says she kept her distance from Mr. Jude, the other male supervisor on the campus. She told me that she had heard rumors that Mr. Jude got fresh with some of the girls but she also said she did not know if he actually acted out sexually with any of them. She said she simply stayed away from him. Lucy evidently was good at staying away for potentially dangerous situations. She had learned that trait by having to steer clear of the lecherous men in her old neighborhood because they were up to no good. Lucy says, "Mr. Jude usually didn't say too much to me, and I didn't say anything to him."

Whereas Mr. Jude did not have much to do with Lucy, Mr. Ogee the superintendent did. According to Lucy, Mr. Ogee directed her path in more ways than one. When she was but a child, Mr. Ogee had given Lucy a nickel for not getting a whipping one day. Mr. Ogee seemed shrewd in his observation of Lucy's behavior and guided her in the direction that he thought was appropriate without her being aware that that was what he was doing. When she was in high school, for example, Lucy says she noticed a difference in how Mr. Ogee treated her and how he treated the other three high

school seniors who were planning to go to college. Lucy says she said nothing to Mr. Ogee about the different treatment, but she tucked it away in her memory.

Lucy recalls that when she was in high school, Mr. Ogee would not let her work off campus like he did the other girls except for one time, and he would not let her work on campus when she actually went away to college.

The superintendent *never* let me work off the campus, even when we went to college! I asked him to sign for me to get a job; I wanted to be a work-study student when I was in college. He said, “You just make some good grades; that’s your job right there, and he wouldn’t let me work! He said, “Your job is to make some good grades. You just do that.” And I *never* had money when I was in college (I laugh). I mean twenty-five dollars a month! Boy! Humph! I don’t know why he wouldn’t let me work, but he did not let me work, even when I was at college. I know Sabin worked. I think Sable even worked down at Cutter Nova College. I’m the only one who didn’t work.

Lucy says Mr. Ogee also did not allow her to choose a college to attend. Instead, he chose a college for her. She says he chose a strict, church-affiliated, private college for her. In order to keep from interrupting the flow of the story, I include here Lucy’s comments about her perception of the college Mr. Ogee chose for her.

He didn’t give me a choice. I said, “*I don’t wanna go to Huntington!*” (We both laugh.) He say, (through hard laughter) “*You going to Huntington!*” That ain’t funny (she says to me good-humoredly when I laugh)! I thought, “Huntington!” I went down there and saw them big old *raggedy buildings*, and he dropped me off and *left!* I kept going to Huntington! *Oh, I didn’t wanna be there!* I wanted to go some place like where Countess went, to N _ _ _ , but Mr. Ogee had some ideas why he picked the college that he picked for me.

Lucy asks me about my choice of colleges and why I did not want to go to a state university when I went to college. When she learns my reason, Lucy says:

You thought *there was too much sex on campus!* (We laugh.) (In an exaggerated tone, she continues.) *That's probably where I wanted to go then!* I should have said *I wanted to go to ___ State!* (We laugh.) Well, I sho didn't have a choice. I *sho* didn't wanna go to Huntington! I don't think I knew where I was going at first. I asked Mr. Ogee, "Where am I going in the fall?" He said "Huntington!" And I said, "*Oh, God!*" *Who wanted to go to Huntington? Humph, humph, humph!* Anyway, that's where I ended up.

Although Lucy criticized the college Mr. Ogee chose to send her, her criticisms are sprinkled with a good deal of humor, and the lightness and heaviness of her tone mingle to create a nostalgic effect. The official curricula she lived by at the orphanage apparently had prepared Lucy for the strictness of her private church-affiliated college, but strictness was not what Lucy says she had in mind when she went off to college.

The superintendent chose a college for me. It was the strictest school of all of them. It was a school where you couldn't go out. You had to be in at 9:00 on *Sundays*. You had to be in at 7:00 *during the week*. I thought, "Lord, I just jumped out of the frying pan into the fire (I laugh.), and we couldn't wear *pants on campus* because it was a church supported school.

Lucy details what she means by strictness.

We couldn't wear pants on Saturday! We couldn't wear pants any time! I mean, as a Christian woman, you couldn't wear pants. I thought, "*Good Lord!* This place is gon' kill me. It was *really* strict. It was *really* strict! Good Lord, Humph! I figure he just picked that college because he felt, "That's strict; she needs something real strict and that sorta thing, so that's what I got.

Although Lucy complained about not being able to go anywhere because of the stringent mandates of her college, she says she was also restricted by what she could do because she had so little money. Lucy's moral restrictions at college coincided with her monetary restrictions at home. Cassandra talked earlier about the monthly merit money

the older children got. Their on-campus merit pay was, as Cassandra stated, fifty cents, but evidently their college merit pay was, as Lucy states below, twenty-five dollars.

Twenty-five dollars a month was a stipend the superintendent used to send me. I guess he sent it to me because I didn't have a job. But I thought all the college students were getting that *plus* getting work-study money. I thought, "Okay, twenty-five dollars *milk money* (She chuckles.). We used to get merit money at the HISH. I thought I was still getting it in college, so that's what I would get: twenty-five dollars a month.

Florence's Perspective of the Rules, Regulations, Routine, and Staff

Florence's dissatisfaction with the orphanage was no less evident when she talked about the rules, regulations, routine, and staff than it was when she talked about the punishment and the chores. She talked about what the children did not have and what they could not do as opposed to what they *did* have and what they *could* do. She was consistent in her narrative identity: precious little seemed to please her.

Florence admitted that her perception of life at the orphanage was based on how she thought children in their own homes were treated. She gave no evidence that she knew for sure what the curriculum of a private home was though there is no doubt that Florence knew the professional curriculum of the orphanage. It was to instill middle-class values in the children and to train them to meet middle-class standards in attitude and behavior (Contosta, 1997; Olasky, 1999) although they were not actually expected to reach middle class status (Cmiel, 1995; Contosta, 1997; Goldstein, 1996; Hacsı, 1997).

Florence says part of her dissatisfaction with the orphanage was based on the fact that she could *see that what was expected of middle-class children was also expected of the orphanage children*. At the same time, the two groups of children were treated quite

differently. Florence says she could see that middle-class children who lived with their parents *felt loved*. In the orphanage there was a *lack of love* (Brotten, 1962; Friedman, 1994; Whitt, 1982). Florence says she could not only *see* there was a lack of love at the orphanage, she actually *felt* the lack of love herself.

As Florence talked about her experiences, she seemed to be having an argument with herself. She seemed to be voicing an opinion that she had not been able to voice long ago when she lived at the orphanage. She found fault with *everything* at the orphanage: the rules, the routine, the regulations, and the staff. She even found fault with the study period held in the library, the library itself, and the children's medical care. Florence says, "I think everybody at the orphanage was put on, like, a generic plan. Everything was done the same way. *Everybody was treated the same way!*"

Whereas some people might call the treating of all children the same way fair treatment, Florence called it a generic plan. She says, "You can't *do* that." What she probably meant to say was, "You *shouldn't* do that" because it was obviously *done*. Florence seemed to think all the children at the orphanage should be treated as individuals, but in institutions where large numbers of children spend most of their time, treating all of them as individuals is too big a task. Even in schools, for example, all of the children are not treated as individuals in the classroom; they are treated as a unit, as a class.

Individual treatment of children whether in a classroom or in an orphanage can look like favoritism or unfair treatment to some people. In school, students may be given individualized instruction or individualized attention when it is fitting, but the

individualized treatment of all the children in a classroom or an orphanage would mean that each child would be paired with an individual care provider or an individual teacher. This type of pairing of child with adult would be prohibitively costly. Uniformity of treatment was part of the official curriculum of the orphanage, not individualization.

Chaos would prevail if all the children in the orphanage got up when they wanted, went to bed when they wanted, ate when and what they wanted, and did their chores and homework if and when they wanted. Even middle-class children are not allowed that kind of individualization. Privileges and freedom of this kind do not instill discipline in children. They do not teach children patience. They do not teach children that adherence to rules and regulations in childhood is an important prerequisite for adherence to rules and regulations in adulthood. Without understanding the importance of adhering to rules and regulation children's future careers could be jeopardized; so could their liberty.

As she continues to lambast the orphanage, Florence says:

There was a long time when we didn't have shampoo for our hair. We washed our hair with soap. There were times when we would want to read a newspaper. A *newspaper was not available for us to read!* That, I don't understand.

Evidently, Florence did not realize that shampoo and newspapers were not high on the list of priorities for poor Negro children who lived in a colored orphanage in the 1950s and 1960s. Cleanliness and literacy *were important*, but the medium through which these goals were reached was not as important. Once their essential needs like food, clothing, and shelter were taken care of, the orphanage children *did not need a lot of tangibles*.

They could make do, and they often did, as illustrated by Florence's mentioning that the girls used soap to wash their hair. Orphan children have to be creative and adaptable.

As Lucy pointed out in her statement about the lessons the girls learned about give and take, the orphanage children did not get a lot of gifts, but they apparently got something that was far more valuable. Through the different curricula of the orphanage, they got what they needed to be independent and self-reliant once they left the orphanage. They got character-building *intangibles* like moral and ethical training and a solid academic foundation. They apparently gained skills in *getting along with and being respectful of others*. They developed a *work ethic* and learned *self-discipline*.

Each week night the children's character-building skills of getting along with and being respectful to others, being independent and self-reliant, and having self-discipline were tested during study hall. The disparity between the academic intelligence of the children and the matrons who supervised study hall was of concern to Florence. Yet, regardless of the level of the matrons' academic intelligence, the children were required to respect them because they were the children's elders and their superiors.

We had the *dorm* matrons conducting the study halls, supervising study hall. Not a one of those people could have helped us with our homework. Not a one! Maybe just one! Yet and still, if you talked, somebody was gon' *call you out, get upset, or try to get you in trouble* because you were asking someone else how to do something. For instance, I was in a class with my friend and she was not sitting at the same table with me during study hall. I would go over and ask her, "How did the teacher say do this?" But not a dorm matron could do it.

Even as a schoolgirl, Florence seemed to think she knew what the orphanage was *supposed to do* for the children, how it was *supposed to operate*, and the criteria under

which the staff *should have been hired*. She was not diffident about expressing her views on these issues even though she seemed to have little interest in the official curriculum of the orphanage. Neither as a child nor as an adult when I interviewed her did Florence seem to have an unbiased view of her experiences at Havertown Industrial School Home. From my perspective, she colored most of her orphan experiences with anger and hatred.

You don't have somebody conducting a study hall, holding a study hall, when *they can't help you*. The only thing that they could do was to give you a pencil or paper or say, "Yeah, you can sharpen your pencil." I mean, *they couldn't do anything to help you*. But that's what I'm talking about. When it came down to being realistic and *helping a person to grow*—and I'm assuming that's what the orphanage was supposed to be about, not just keeping children, or not just feeding and clothing them. *I felt like you were supposed to*—right now they are saying you're supposed to address the *whole person*—but *they didn't address the whole person* at the orphanage.

Florence was adamant about how she felt. She talked on and on, berating everything about the orphanage that did not meet with her approval or her idea about how the orphanage was *supposed to be run*. Judging by the details of her descriptions of the matrons, Florence was more than a casual observer of people. Although she indicated she did not remember the names of some of the matrons, she says she remembered what they looked like, what they did, and something about their personal history.

You probably had a whole lot of *dorm matrons* out there that didn't even finish the eighth grade. I know that lady who used to be the dorm matron down at the older girls building, dark skinned, short woman. She used to be Catholic and she used to have the Catholic Church to come out to do vesper service for us sometimes or Sunday school for us sometimes. *That woman went to third grade!* Now, how was she gon' help me with my homework? You understand where I'm coming from? See, that's what I don't understand. I did not understand it then, and I don't understand it now.

Florence was not aware that it was *she* who had unrealistic views about how poor Black children in orphanages in the fifties should be raised via charitable donations and government assistance. Through the official curricula, she obviously had been spared the burden of knowing the ins and outs involved in running an institution for the care of African American children. She seemed not to take into account the inherent racism in society generally and in the child welfare system specifically. She had not been apprised of the fact that one of the reasons much of the staff was under educated was because they were the only ones willing to work day-in-and-day-out, around the clock, for low wages.

Some orphanages offered less than a living wage to the staff whose job was little more than the custodial care of children (McGovern, 1948). Havertown Industrial School Home probably fit that category because it was a private orphanage for African American children. Working at the orphanage meant that staff was away from their own families for days at a time, and they had to follow the same eating, sleeping, and waking schedule as the children. Their burden was made light by their not having to do as much of the heavy work as the children did. Their jobs were mainly custodial or supervisory.

Some institutional children's home directors felt that other than the ability to read and write there should be no formal educational requirements for institutional personnel who did merely "a nursemaid's job on a group scale" (McGovern, 1948, p. 97). Orphanage directors or superintendents who could not pay the staff a reasonable wage could not demand qualifications for *skilled services*, so in essence, orphanages got what they paid for.

Florence continues to rail against the injustices of study hall and the official curricula of the orphanage that required the orphanage children to do more than other school age children did in a single day. The orphanage staff expected the children to remain alert during study hall and complete their school assignments despite the fatigue that came from working hard in other capacities during the day.

It's kinda hard to have to work, come home *every* day and work, then they tell you after you've cleaned up the kitchen and done all that stuff, and stood on your feet ironing for a couple of hours after you got out of school that it's time for you to go do your homework and you're not supposed to be tired and sleepy after having gotten up at five o'clock in the morning.

The unidentified "They" that Florence accuses of having unrealistic views about how things should work, unbeknownst to her, was not the Havertown Industrial School Home superintendent. He was responsible for operating the orphanage and hiring the matrons, but the unrealistic views about how things should work in an orphanage belong to the general public. The public's unwillingness to finance the orphanage is the real reason it did not work the way Florence thought it ought. Florence is insistent on expressing her views.

When I say unrealistic, *they had unrealistic views about how things should work*. If they were hiring them dag gone matrons out there, then make them get up and do some of that stuff! They paid 'em! Why didn't they get up and have our breakfast cooked?

Florence contradicts herself various times during our talk. She criticizes the matrons' lack of empathy for the children during study hall and the matrons' inability to help the children with their homework because of their own academic ineptitude. She

obviously had some kind of special relationship with some of the matrons because she had more information about them than a person typically gets through casual observation.

When she talked about having to stay out of school and serve the matrons their dinner, Rita had said, "I remember that *matron who used to like Florence* would be sittin' up there with the rest of them, waiting for us to feed them." Florence made no mention of the matron whom Rita described. Perhaps she did not remember her, but Florence insists that the children at the orphanage had no advocates.

Uh, we had no advocates at the orphanage. We could not go to anybody in particular when we had problems. And you have to kinna withdraw within yourself. It's like uh I'm under this box and uh I I can peek out certain li'l' holes and I can see some stability sometimes.

Florence says she once revealed her feelings about how she felt about being at the orphanage to another girl as they were doing one of their mundane, summer chores. By then Florence was in the seventh grade. A whole four years had passed since her admission to the orphanage. She had not shared her feelings. Keeping her feelings private for four years says a lot about Florence's fortitude. Her inability to refrain from making this outburst also says something about her level of frustration over not having family to care about her. It might even say something about her current level of anger.

I think I was in the seventh grade. Uh I said to a girl from the orphanage who was much older . . . and I just broke out to crying, and she said, "What's wrong with you?" I said, "I just feel unwanted." And when I said that she said, "You feel what?" I repeated myself. A matron was sitting over not too far from where we were shelling beans, and she heard me.

The matron overheard Florence's comment and she was instrumental in initiating the process for Florence to go home with relatives for a week-long visit because of her empathy for the child.

The matron said she did not want any child going around feeling unwanted. And that was the first time that I've known, other than one Christmas when Daddy came and got us to take us to uh spend Christmas with Uncle Jon that, that's the *first time* that anybody had taken me away from there for a week's time at any given time.

Florence admits that she did not know how the adults knew particular things about the children when the children had not told them directly. The cooperative but discrete behavior among the staff was similar to that engaged in by parents in private homes. They talked about pertinent and relevant family issues but not in the presence of the children.

I don't know how my aunt knew about the situation since she lived out of state, but she sent my cousin some money so my cousin could take us for that week. And, you know, I often think about that, and I'm grateful to my cousin for that because my cousin couldn't take the children home because she had four children of her own, plus my little brother. But then my aunt sent my cousin some money.

Florence says even though she and her siblings were taken in for a week by their cousin who was paid to take them away from the orphanage for awhile, the cousin saw Florence's visit as an *opportunity* to get help with her own maternal responsibilities, which Florence said she had not expected. The home visit taught Florence that children in their own homes can have responsibilities and chores too; they do not spend all of their time sitting idly in front of the television. The chores Florence did at her cousin's house,

however, were not the kind of chores seventh and eighth girls did at the orphanage. Girls at the orphanage were older when they did the cooking, cleaning, washing and ironing.

You know what? Because I was a big girl, at my cousin's house I had to help do the cooking. I had to do the ironing, the washing. But it was good to be able to see my baby brother who lived with my cousin as if she were his mother because he was just two months old when Momma died. I did not know a whole lot about him. So after that home visit I started writing letters to him. About that time I was in the seventh grade, going to the eighth grade that year.

The logic behind sending the girls (and the boys) home to visit was so they could experience life in a real family home with relatives. Florence says she once was able to go home at Christmas with Rita when Florence was in the eleventh grade.

When I was in the eleventh grade, Rita's former foster mother came to take her home for a few days at Christmas. Rita and I were friends, so the foster mother took me home with her too. I didn't wanna go because my sister couldn't go. Mrs. Ogee *made* me go. She *made* me go! We spent a weekend or two days with Rita's foster mother. I didn't like being at her house. She was nice enough and the food was great, but my sister was not there. Also, there did not seem to be any love in that house. The foster mother was nice and kind, but there was no love there.

When Lucy (the participant who laughed a lot during my interview with her) and I talked about the girls' home visits, we were equally amused about how portions of the children's social curriculum were remarkably different from the official curriculum of the orphanage. We were not amused by all of the differences however.

During home visits, as it turns out, some of the girls became reacquainted with their role as the Cinderella girl who did the washing, the cooking, and the cleaning for indifferent relatives. They became reacquainted what it was like to sleep with multiple children in a single bed. They became reacquainted with eating irregular and sometimes

unbalanced meals that had to be fished out of the lake. They also learned to drink sugar water because the family could not afford to buy lemons to make lemonade. Lucy and I laughed at the irony of the children longing to go home even though the orphanage, with its standards and goals for providing the children with a better future, was far superior.

Some of the girls learned what it was like for relatives to steal from the small sum of money they took with them on the home visits. Some of the girls were introduced to and developed a taste for beer and such. Still others learned what it was like to be molested by cousins and older men in the family and their friends. Lucy and I found nothing amusing about these situations. We just shook our heads in sorrow.

Basically the home visits gave the naïve Havertown Industrial School Home girls a number of undesirable experiences. Yet the girls breathed not a word about those experiences except to close friends. So the home visits continued without the orphanage staff knowing what was really going on. They never knew that they were doing the girls a service on the one hand and a disservice on the other.

Florence does not draw as much attention to the positive aspects of her life at the orphanage as she does to the negative. She highlights a multiplicity of things she found fault with like the ineptness of the matrons, the way study hall was conducted, even the place where study hall was conducted: the library itself.

We had what they call a so-called library, but the only thing that was in there were dictionaries and encyclopedias and old books somebody else didn't want, and stuff that didn't interest us. And you think that's fair? And then people would say, "I did the best I could." I don't believe so. No! You didn't do the best you could. You did what was convenient for you. And that's the way I felt they did.

Florence had no idea how tightly the hands of the administration were tied regarding funding the needs of the orphanage for repairing buildings, purchasing new supplies, paying salaries, and providing food, recreation, clothes, and medical care for the children. She had not read any of the annual, orphanage superintendents' reports. She had not been to any of the board meetings, nor had she read any of their minutes. Her opinions seemed to be based solely on her own perception of her own needs. Once Florence begins spewing out criticisms about what seemed to be everything she can think of, she transitions easily into criticizing the children's medical care.

When we had the long dormitory where we had all these beds in a row²⁴, thirty or so beds in the dormitory, we used to have to sleep like we were in a sanatorium or something, like everybody had the whooping cough or pneumonia or something, TB, and they had to have all this fresh air. . . . We had to sleep with windows open! And then you wake up with your head all stopped up and you are coughing and they want to know why you are coughing! (She laughs.)

Florence laughs as if she sees the ludicrousness of the whole experience, not because she thought it was funny that the children woke up with head colds. I laugh because of the nature and consistency of Florence's criticisms.

The first thing they'll say, if you didn't have a fever, you didn't get no aspirin. If you got a fever, you got an aspirin, but if anything else was wrong with you, you had to suffer. One thing you did get aspirin for, if you had cramps, you got an aspirin for that now! But nothing else.

²⁴ Florence is referring to barracks style. Before 1960 the buildings were set up for congregate living. In the 1960s the buildings were renovated so that children could have small bedrooms that could sleep 2-4 people (Parker, K 1964).

Florence seemed not to realize that the careful dispensation of aspirin was for the children's own sake to prevent overdoses. She may not have been aware that children in orphanages try to kill themselves by overdosing on aspirin, but evidently the staff was aware of it and therefore the careful and documented dispensation of medicine. Just as Florence thought the orphanage children should have access to newspapers and have shampoo for their hair, she also thought that common cold remedies should have been dispensed to the children for their coughs, sniffles, and runny noses.

Again, it occurs to me that she really did think the orphanage children should be treated just like middle-class children rather than like the poor children they were.

You didn't get cough syrup. Oh, they gave you some Vicks salve sometimes, but other than that, they didn't do a whole lot for you. Twice a year we got a tablespoon of some kind of oil: cod liver oil in the fall and castor oil in the spring. It may have been the reverse: castor oil in the fall and cod liver oil in the spring. That was supposed to be our medicine.

The tablespoonful of castor oil and cod liver oil was common practice in many orphanages, as far back as Dickens' time, if we can believe storybook accounts. But back then the medicine was treacle rather than the cod liver and castor oils. These simple remedies were used as preventive medicines. Florence continues her tirade.

There was *nobody* to say, "I think this child needs to go to a doctor." It was not prudent for them to take us to a doctor if we got sick. There was *nobody* to say that. They would get on me because I would give my milk away. Nobody knew I was lactose intolerant. They didn't care. If they had taken me to a doctor, they may have found out that milk was making me sick.

Milk was a natural part of the orphanage children's diet. It was considered a part of a healthy meal, but as Florence said, not all children can tolerate milk. She was one of them. Florence says her brother had allergies too. His symptoms were obvious and they were treated though not by professionals. Florence seemed to believe all the ailments the children had should merit professional treatment without considering the cost of medical care for the children. Florence evidently deemed the lack of medical attention to be an act of callousness; otherwise, she might not have summed up her feelings by saying, "They didn't care."

When my brother was allergic to chickens or hay or something on the farm and he broke out. The only thing they did for him was go ahead and wash his hands in green soap and bandage them up. And when the sores went away, they sent him back to the farm. So that's what I hated about it. The medical care was just awful. It was really awful. (Florence's tone is laden with anger.)

Florence's account of her experiences kept me laughing because she seemed so unaware that she was comparing a poor "colored" orphanage girl's life with the life of a middle-class White girl's life or at the very least the life of a well-to-do Black girl from a prominent family. She probably thought I was laughing at her stories but I was actually laughing at her logic. Florence seemed to give no thought at all to the fact that most of her time in the orphanage occurred in the early 1950s when many Black families were too poor to take their children to the doctor and they concocted some of their own home remedies to cure their children's ailments as well as their own. Or they simply waited for time to cure their illnesses. Many African American families struggled in the 1950s.

Florence seemed also to forget that the home she came from was far worse than the institution she lived in. After Miss Elizabeth burned their house down, the house that stood on bricks near the train tracks with the outhouse not too far away is the house that Florence and her siblings moved into. It was her uncle's house, and it was already overcrowded with his nine children still living there. Apparently Florence had forgotten that she was a poor, unwanted child who might not have gotten the little medical attention that she did get had she not been at the orphanage.

Unlike some of the other participants who said they were grateful for having lived at the orphanage, Florence says she was angry for having lived there. She is contemptuous about the regulations imposed on the children.

When we went off campus to school and we had the *opportunity* to mingle and make friends with other children, I got uh, I couldn't *imagine* the things that they would do with their parents that we couldn't do. Uh, but uh, you know they got a chance to watch TV. We couldn't watch TV except for on the weekends. So when other kids would come back to school and start talking about what they did over the weekend, I had to live through them. I had to live through them vicariously because I did not have any idea what they were talking about.

Florence only talked about those children who had televisions in their home, but not all the children at the public school had televisions in their home in the mid 1950s. Nor did any single family home have to provide for eighty-two to ninety children as was the case at the orphanage. Watching television nightly was not built into the orphanage children's schedule as it was not part of the official curricula, first, because time did not permit it, and second, because watching television on week nights did nothing to build character in the children. It only interfered with their homework and study schedule.

Many children look forward to the weekend and a break from school but not the children from Havertown Industrial School Home. Being away from school meant isolation from school friends and loss of contact with the larger community. Recreational activities were scheduled for the orphanage children, but in her characteristic way, Florence finds fault with the activities because she says she was not given a choice regarding the activities. Here, she shows her dissatisfaction with the movies that were shown on Saturday nights.

Like I said before, we never had a choice about the movie we wanted to see. We gotta go in there and see John Wayne and Cochise and Phil Silvers, or somebody. We had to go and see something that *somebody else decided* we had to see. I didn't like it.

Florence says she was dissatisfied with the way study hall was run during the week because of the ineptness of the staff and the strict regulations regarding silence and somnolence. She says she was equally as dissatisfied with having no scheduled time to study and do school assignments on the weekend.

We didn't have a study hall on weekends. On Sunday night sometimes you had homework you had to do, so you'd have to sit there and try do your homework when they are telling you it's time for you to get ready and go to bed. Those are little things like that. . . . They say they gave you all the possible *opportunities* to get your homework done, but they didn't.

Florence summed up her opinion about the weekend routine without saying anything positive about it. She continued to liken the orphans' treatment to the treatment of Negro slaves. Her exaggerated comparison seemed to be her way of showing her dissatisfaction with the way the orphanage was run. As I illustrated earlier in the section

about the orphans' punishment, it was evident that not all of the orphans did *everything* they were *told* to do. Otherwise there may have been no need for punishment. There was more than one recalcitrant among the orphans, and Florence was obviously one of them. Yet in this next part of her story Florence talks about the children doing everything they were told to do.

I really hated when weekends came. Everything, whatever they said do as a slave, you did. You did everything they told you to do. You worked. Lights out! You can try to read a book at nine o'clock at night if you want to; you mess around and get a whipping.

Because Florence's perceptions are so one-sided, if I had to decide based on her narrative alone what life in a "colored" orphanage was like for the African American girls who lived at Havertown Industrial School Home, I too would have a narrow view of that life. Fortunately, I have five other educators' narratives to help broaden my view. Undoubtedly, Florence's over exaggeration is for emphasis, to demonstrate her high degree of hatred of the orphanage, not to say that life at the orphanage was on par with the life of slaves. Slaves had no time for daydreaming. *Daydreaming* means that Florence's life was not like that of a slave; instead, it means that she was resilient.

I used to sit and *daydream*, *daydream all the time about when I get grown, I was not gon' do this and I was not gon' do that*. The only thing we saw was four buildings, woods, clothes to iron, a cement floor for the canning kitchen, in the kitchen cooking, or eatin', that kind of stuff. For a long time I didn't even know there was a store up the street from us because we never went anywhere.

Florence did not realize that by daydreaming she was learning to be imaginative and creative. Through her daydreams, although she was not aware of it, she was planning

for the future and at the same time she was developing survival skills. But, she was just a child then and she thought her weekends were slave-like. As an adult, as Florence looks back over her time at Havertown Industrial School Home, her dislike of the place still colors her lens almost completely with a negative hue.

It was a common practice for children to be separated by age and gender in institutional children's homes for the purpose of providing appropriate accommodations, supervision, and gender and age appropriate activities for the children (Goldstein, 1996; Hacsí, 1997; Jones, 1993; Lefeavers, 1983; McGovern, 1948; McKenzie, 1996; Myers, 2004; Oxford Orphanage, n. d.; Polster, 1990). Whether the separation of the children by gender was common place or not, Florence was adamantly opposed to the practice and she says she saw no logic in it.

Other children got a chance to interact with their brothers and sisters, whereas at the orphanage, I wanted to sit and talk with my brother, and I couldn't. *Just could not go* and sit with my brother. Why would you want to separate your brother from your sister? It's not like he was just some other *boy* . . . and that, I, I always thought To me, some of those rules that they had were just down right *crazy!*

Some of Florence's comments about the orphanage led me to believe that she expected the orphanage to be a *perfect home* for children and to provide a *perfect home environment* for them, neither of which was possible. An orphanage can never be a perfect home for children. At best, an orphanage can only be an adequate home for a child who has no place else to go, and a child raised in an orphanage can only be as adequate as she or he is raised to be.

Florence returns to her slave metaphor when she refers to running away as “escaping.” She seems to approve of this behavior in the children.

The way they treated the children was enough to run any child *insane*, and I understand why we had so many *escapes*. If I had some place to go, I think I probably would have too. The only thing was I wouldn’t have left my sister. If I . . . if there would have been some place for me to go, and I would have been able to take my sister with me, I would have gone. I would have escaped just like all the rest of them did even though *they brought ‘em back*. I would have escaped because it was just *crazy* the way they treated children.

Florence does not say why they brought the runaways back. However, the reason lies on the surface of her statement: “the children had nowhere else to go.” They ran away because they *thought* they had somewhere else to go. They forgot, evidently, that they were unwanted children and the only place that was *willing to take them in* was the orphanage.

Florence says the children did not have advocates at Havertown Industrial School Home, but the orphanage staff must have been their advocates because they kept the children engaged in activities suited for their age, unlike Florence’s grown cousin who gave Florence adult responsibilities because she needed help with her domestic chores. The matron who overheard Florence’s plea about her feeling unwanted was also an advocate, as was the superintendent’s wife who came to Florence’s aid during the face slapping incident in the kitchen involving the superintendent when Florence was a sophomore in college.

Even the matron whom Florence said only had a third grade education was an advocate for Florence. The matron occasionally invited her priest out to the orphanage to

conduct worship service; she also took Florence to her church. Florence says, “Miss Evans would take us to her church, and I would. . . . It was just like my eyes couldn’t take in everything. I wanted to see everything. You just couldn’t see enough!”

Another matron, whose education level Florence does not mention, had been a nurse before becoming a matron at the orphanage, so she obviously was not uneducated. She, like the other matron I mentioned above, was also one of Florence’s advocates. Florence was special to her and, by extension, so was Florence’s younger sister whom the matron occasionally bought clothes for and gave special attention and consideration. Florence must have forgotten about that matron although Rita, who was a friend of Florence’s, remembered her.

In high school, even as she continued peeking through the holes of her metaphoric box, Florence’s literature teacher from the public school acts as her advocate. On several occasions Florence says the teacher saw to it that she had the supplementary materials she needed for her literature class.

My high school literature teacher was the first person who gave me *true hope*, and the orphanage superintendent’s wife gave me *hope* because, you know, she found some money for me so I would be able to go to college. She paid for my tuition. That was like to me, the *best thing that could have ever happened to me*.

Although she does not say it directly, Florence concedes that somebody cared about her and gave her a helping hand in setting and reaching the right kinds of goals. She does however admit that they gave her hope.

When my literature teacher and the superintendent’s wife began showing interest in me it was like all of a sudden those li’l holes in the box I felt like I was peeping

from got bigger, where I could see more daylight; I could come a little more out of my shell. I mean, there was some *hope* for me somewhere.

Even in the face of Florence's obvious good fortune of having someone sponsor her in college, she still finds fault with the hidden curriculum of going to college. It was to find a husband. The idea that a woman needed a man to provide for her seemed to be too antiquated a concept to Florence who had already proved, as a young girl, that she could take care of herself, her siblings, and her cousin's household.

The notion that she is a capable person must have been put in Florence's head when she was four years old and it probably still nestled there, for she seemed to be too independent and progressive in her thinking to accept wholesale that she needed to take home economics so she could get a husband to provide for her. Florence rejects the concept.

It was almost like the superintendent's wife was saying, "You better take home economics 'cause if you don't take home economics you ain't gon' know how to get no husband," so to speak. Finding a husband was one of those kinds of things they kinda pushed. I just hated that!

Sabin's Perspective of the Rules, Regulations, Routine, and Staff

Unlike Florence who found fault with nearly everything and every matron she had contact with, Sabin waves her hand to say she had no problem with the rules, regulation, or the routine. As for the matrons, she remembers a number of them favorably.

I think I felt closer to some of the matrons than I felt to the superintendent's family, particularly Miss Cash the kitchen matron and Miss Bynder the relief matron. When Miss Cash worked in the kitchen, she stayed in the girls building in a room behind the living room. I would go to Miss Cash's room in the dormitory

in the evening and talk with her. I appreciated that she was open and honest in a number of ways.

This next part of Sabin's narrative touches on the topic of sexual impropriety. In many orphanages, there were reports of staff taking indecent liberties with some of the children (Bernstein, 2002; Goldstein, 1996; Lefeavers, 1983; McKenzie, 1996; Polster, 1990; Toth, 1997; Whitt, 1982). Staff acting out sexually with children under their care was one complaint that opponents of orphanages had against institutional children's homes. Miss Cash, the matron Sabin trusted, advises her about her suspicions.

I remember some of the girls said Miss Foote, a real dark skinned woman, used to pat the girls. My nerves were bad, and I guess listening to the girls talk about that woman made me paranoid, so I started sleeping with a stick in my bed under my covers. I thought if she ever came to my room and touched me, I'd take that stick and I was gon' hurt her.

Sabin says she regularly confided in Miss Cash and took her advice on certain matters. After she confided in Miss Cash about the suspicious behavior of the matron, Sabin says she took Miss Cash's advice about that too.

Miss Cash made me get rid of the stick because she said that matron might be coming to my room to tell me, "Telephone!" and I might hit her with that stick. The matron never did come to my room or did anything to me. Anyway, I got rid of the stick. Miss Cass was right.

Relationships between the children and the staff were not always broken when the children's tenure at the orphanage ended or when the tenure of the staff ended, as Sabin's account bears out.

When I left the orphanage I still had that connection with Miss Cash but not like Lucy had with Miss Armstrong. Lucy was very close to Miss Armstrong and she kept that connection with her after she left, actually until Miss Armstrong died many years later.

Sabin, like many of the children who lived at the orphanage for years, says she was a good judge of people because of her close contact with a diverse number of children and staff who came and went during her stay at Havertown Industrial School Home.

Miss Haith, I critiqued her, and Miss Cousins worked very hard, and Miss Jude was always so ladylike. But we all had our own ideas about who they were and whether you could penetrate the shell and meet somebody that was a little different. I appreciated Mrs. Royall too. She comes to my church and I see her from time to time in the sanctuary and speak to her. There are some people you may not see on a regular basis but have had some impact on my life.

Although she is positive about her orphan experiences, Sabin is also realistic. Just as she was able to notice that Mr. Ogee and his family did nothing to make her and the other girls who worked at the house feel included in his family, she was able to discern that not all of the matrons were ones she could get along with either.

I remember Miss Boykin. She had pretty hair. I didn't have much time with her; I was a big girl then and I am grateful for that. I was not a little girl. When some people come to work at the orphanage you *want* to be a big girl (We laugh.).

Darlene's Perspective of the Rules, Regulations, Routine, and Staff

Darlene mentions the school morning routine at the orphanage and the layout of the consolidated school for Black children just in passing. Her focus is really on telling a story about when she got sick and the superintendent took her to the hospital. Above, I

gave Florence's account about the children not getting the kind of professional medical care they needed. Darlene paints quite a different picture, using her own experience, about how she got sick and got professional medical care immediately. Darlene, the little Catholic schoolgirl who said she wanted to be inconspicuous and blend into the background to avoid notice, acknowledges that she had difficulty doing that sometimes.

I remember one time I was at the segregated Black school and these are minor incidents, really minor I think, compared to what some people would have, but I remember being sick. I was in, I guess seventh grade, yes, seventh grade, at the Black school because, you know how they had the school divided. And the elementary like was on one end, and I think, after you went through these double doors, you were now in the middle school part. So I was in the middle school part, and it was early in the year, I think, and I was sick, but not feeling sick.

Darlene says she was not a complainer. Her Catholic school training and her personality likely did not create a pathway for complaining. As a consequence, Darlene says she hid her illness to keep from being a nuisance to anyone by complaining about it.

Every morning when we were at the orphanage we'd get up and we'd eat, and I think a lot of mornings we had oatmeal. And I would eat. I don't remember feeling bad or anything, but I would eat and I would go to school and as soon as I get off the bus, I go in the bathroom, and I would get sick. And I would come out of the bathroom ... wash my face... come out of the bathroom and go to class, never say a word to anybody. So I was not able to keep my food on my stomach, but I didn't know why.

Darlene appeared to be not only Stoic about her illness, she seemed patient and she tried to use self-control to stifle her cough, but as this was no ordinary cough, Darlene could not bring it under control.

One day, I was sitting in class and I would have this bad cough and I would cough, and as long as I could clear my lungs of the mucus, I would be fine. I'd cough and clear my lungs so that I could breathe real good, and that would last me till the next bathroom break. I started coughing in class and I tried to suppress it. *Could not suppress that cough!* It just (She imitates the cough.) and the more I coughed, the worse it got. The class was really quiet, and to me, that was *the most embarrassing* time of my life other than getting put out in the hall when I was in third grade for nervously kicking the back of the desk in front of me.

Since she did not understand the gravity of her illness, Darlene's health was placed in the hands of responsible others, but she does not identify them. Instead, Darlene calls the unidentified persons "they." Remembering the embarrassment is obviously more important to Darlene than remembering her care providers. She does remember, however, that the orphanage superintendent eventually took charge of the situation.

They ended up calling the orphanage superintendent to come and get me, and when he did, he took me to the doctor. *He took me straight to the doctor*, and the doctor put me in the hospital because I had pneumonia. I don't know how long I had this pneumonia, but I had a pretty bad case of pneumonia. They kept me in the hospital for—I don't know—a week or so. So, I remember that. More so than the hospital visit, I remember the cough in the class and being embarrassed over that. So, *I'm real sensitive about being embarrassed about anything.*

Cassandra's Perspective of the Rules, Regulations, Routine, and Staff

Cassandra is quite detailed in her narrative about life at the orphanage. Like Florence, the angry participant who hated being at the orphanage, Cassandra talks about her attitude toward the rules, the regulations, the routine, and the staff. However, she seems to be grateful rather than resentful about the way she was treated at the orphanage. When Cassandra compares her life to the lives of children who did not live at the orphanage she considers herself to be on the winning end. Cassandra does not highlight

the *missed opportunities* she could have had in her life as Florence did. Instead, Cassandra talks about the good and the bad and she seems to have an “It was a fact of life” attitude.

Cassandra who came to the orphanage as a four-year-old and left after graduating from high school lived at the orphanage for about thirteen years. She was well acquainted with the official curriculum of the orphanage with its rules, regulations, and routine. She is quite cheerful as she rattles off, point-by-point, the understood but not taken for granted routine of her childhood experiences at Havertown Industrial School Home.

Cassandra was refreshing, almost comical as she talked about the official curricula of the orphanage. I enjoyed listening to her veritably chirp about what the children *had* to do and what they could do as opposed to listening to Florence gripe about what the children *had* to do and what they *could not* do. Sometimes Cassandra spoke in the second person and sometimes the first person, but I knew she was speaking from her own perspective because she usually talked to me about her experiences in this manner.

You *knew* you were going to have your books. You *knew* you were going to have to stay out of school and can food. You *knew* you were going to have to stay out and can beets. You knew that you were going to be taken care of. Even if you didn't get but *fifty cents a month*, you *knew* you were going to get the fifty cents. That was it. You had to be “big” to get the fifty cents. It took awhile but you *knew* you were going to get it. I *knew* I had to save that little fifty cents that I got each month to buy me the Mum deodorant, the Baby Ruth, whatever I had to have!

As she compares herself to other school children who seemed to be better off than the children at the orphanage, Cassandra says she saw right through their façade. Words roll off Cassandra's tongue in near poetic fashion like she was a rhetorician.

At school, some of the other kids were trying to borrow money to buy lunch while the rest of them are around there trying to bum a dime or fifty cents to get lunch or trading off whatever so they could have some money to get lunch.

The orphanage children did not have to worry about what they would eat or if they would eat. Cassandra explains why.

Whether we were going to have lunch or how we were going to pay for it was never an issue for us. We *knew* we were going to get lunch at school because we got *free* lunch. We knew we didn't have to worry about it. We just went through the cafeteria line, said our name, and came on out. And we *knew* we were going to have supper when we got home. So, we *knew* we were going to be taken care of. Food was not something we had to worry about.

Cassandra talks as if she felt secure living at the orphanage. The regularity of the routine and its inevitability seemed to give her that kind of security.

When you've got a schedule from five o'clock in the morning till nine o'clock at night—your eyes are supposed to be closed and you're supposed to be in that bed at nine—and *you know what the regimen is, you do it*. You know that when you come home from school, you got to take off your school clothes, you're gonna head one way: to the laundry or to the kitchen. As simple as that! There ain't nothing you can do about it.

Cassandra says she learned some important life lessons by living according to the official curricula of the orphanage.

I don't like to be late doing things because that's not the way I was taught. I got to do what I've got to and do it right now. *That's the way I was brought up*, so that has a lot to do with just *building my own character*.

Although she did not see any humor in it at the time of the occurrence, when Cassandra talks about getting caught sleeping in study hall, she talks about it with laughter

in her voice. She says she knew sleeping was not allowed in study hall, but as Florence had said earlier in her narrative, sometimes it was just too much to ask children to stand up for two hours doing chores after school and then expect them to stay alert in an hour-and-a-half study hall.

You better not be sleeping up there in study hall. One time I was sleep in study hall with my head on the table and Mr. Ogee came by there and saw me sleeping and he lashed me across my back with that belt and I jumped up. I didn't say anything smart to him but *I did cry*. But, I'll tell you this: *I never slept in study hall again!*

Some of the orphanage children quickly learned their lesson about adhering to the rules and regulations. Cassandra was one of them. A single lash across her back during study hall was all it took to make her stay alert in study hall. That one lick was a powerful teacher. Another powerful teacher was a threat. Mr. Ogee admonished Cassandra when she was being stubborn at school, "Don't let me have to come over here again," and Cassandra said he never did.

Other children took longer to learn to adhere to the rules and regulations, like Lucy who said she got a beating everyday from the time she was ten until she was about sixteen years old. Of all the participants in my study, Florence took the longest to learn to adhere to the orphanage's rules and regulations. She learned on her own terms. From the time she was in the third grade to the time she was a sophomore in college, Florence was unable to see the logic behind the official curricula of the orphanage.

Cassandra saw the logic behind the official curricula of the orphanage and she talks about every aspect including the religious training. Sunday worship services were as

important in the religious training of the orphanage children as cultivating a work ethic, being a good student, and abiding by the rules.

We had Sunday school and church every Sunday. We had prayer meeting every Wednesday. We had Bible study every third Sunday in the month. Mrs. Walls would come out with her Bible study on the third Sunday in the month. I learned a lot about religion, about everything in the Bible. We had to learn the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes, all the Bible verses and so *it helped me to be the way I am.*

Cassandra was not reticent about giving credit to the orphanage for positively shaping her character. She was proud to say she was trained well in a number of important aspects.

Cassandra's narrative identity: Proud Product of Havertown Industrial School Home.

Rita's Perspective of the Rules, Regulations, Routine, and Staff

Rita does not say much about the daily routine, regulations and such, but she does mention the weeknight study halls. She speaks in a straight forward manner. Like Cassandra, Rita seemed unfazed by the rules and regulations. Since Rita was a child prodigy early on in her school career because she wanted to "tap into something" to get her abusive mother to like her and to garner praise from her teachers, Rita says she had no problem at all with the study hall requirements.

In the evenings, all of us had to go to the HISH library. You get your books out, and don't you be goin' to sleep in there. You were going to study whether you had assignments or not. So everybody studied.

Part of Rita's focus in this section about religious training is on the type of humor the children used to lighten serious moments.

On Sunday mornings, the superintendent would get up in the chapel and preach, and one time he had finished preaching and he plopped down in the chair and fell backward because the chair slipped from beneath him. Mr. Ogee was a big man, and boy! We could not stop *laughing*. We were laughing and he got up there and punished us, made us do pushups or something, *but we just couldn't stop laughing*. You know, if something appears to be funny in a place where you're not supposed to laugh, it gets even funnier. (Rita and I laugh heartily.)

The children probably laughed also because they saw their superior humbled. They probably thought it was funny to see "the man in charge" brought down to the floor in front of the whole campus. Here was a man who was responsible for their well-being lying flat on his back in full view of the entire congregation of orphans. Mr. Ogee obviously failed to see the humor in his misfortune, and the children failed to offer him compassion. Their laughter seemed to be a sign of their disrespect for his authority.

Rita recalls another time when the children were punished in church. It was not for disrespecting authority; it was for showing *disrespect for the Lord*. Rita says religion was supposed to be taken seriously by the children, but they were able to trivialize it as they were able to trivialize everything else they thought was being forced on them through authoritativeness, patriarchy, and autocratic control under the guise of the official curricula. The children's trivializations were playful audaciousness (Goldstein, 1996) and acts of defiance which apparently were necessary in their need for their self-mastery.

We got punished in church because we were jazzing up that song about, let me see (She starts to sing.): "We are soldiers in the army." We were *jazzing that thing up* and the superintendent came in. We were singing when he was somewhere else and he came in the room and he thought we were poking fun at *one of God's songs*, and we got punished for that too (She laughs as she talks about the incident.). We had that thing *going!* We coulda *cut a record* because we had a different tune to it and it had a beat to it, but boy, we got whipped for that now! They called that playing with the Lord. You *don't play with the Lord!*

The story above gave me the notion that the children had a collectivist way of thinking because Rita gave no indication that the children were coerced into joining in the singing. They seemed to feel like a collective body of one and they willingly joined in the group sing. In the next example, Rita confirms my belief about the children's collectivist thinking. The children seemed to be inundated with religiosity, and so to make it manageable, they became creative with it. Whether they knew it or not and whether they liked it or not, something about church and religion was filtering through their hidden curriculum of resistance right into their brain, right into their whole being.

On Sunday, when I go to church now, I know all of the hymns; I know all of the verses; I don't have to get the Bible out, because I know it by heart. I don't have to get the hymnal out, and I can stand right there and sing away, sing all the verses to the songs because we learned them.

The orphanage children had no choice about whether they would participate in church activities or show respect for matters of a religious nature. It was understood.

I can remember on Sunday evenings, this White lady used to come out there. She used to have us in the chapel in a competition early, saying them Bible verses, and we thought that was the *worst thing in the world*, but I tell you we really, I mean *it really helped me in my adult life*. I guess it helped the others too because we weren't running the streets; we weren't fighting each other. . . . We were off learning some Bible stories.

Sundays must have been quite important to Rita because she dwells on the topic more than any of the other participants. She says the children "sat in the sun" on Sunday. Although it may have been a pun, I did not sense that Rita meant for it to be. I sensed that Rita was sincere in trying to convey her message that Sunday was a special day. It was a

day of rest; it was a day to sit with friends and wish the best for them and their family visitations.

On Sunday, you don't do any labor. You have to get your stuff ready for Sunday on *Saturday*, and *don't talk about ironing on Sunday; don't talk about washing on Sunday*. On Sunday you ate your dinner; you kept your Sunday clothes on; you went out there on the yard and *sat in the sun* where Mr. Jude planted all those flowers.

Lucy had told me when I interviewed her that Rita was the only person who ever called the HISH the HISHing or called the road the HISHing Road. She said she thought it was just something peculiar to Rita. When I first heard Rita say the HISHing and the HISHing Road I thought it odd that none of the other women called the orphanage that, so I said, "The what road?" She said HISHing. I asked for no explanation and she offered none.

We used to go out there and sit, and the cars would pass by on the public road and we would just be praying for one of 'em to turn in, put on brakes and turn in to the HISH, come down the HISHing Road. We were happy if it was anybody's family, even if it wasn't somebody coming to see you. We were really happy to see. . . . "Ooh, here comes so-and-so's momma"; "Here comes so-and-so's brother." Your people would come to see you on Sunday.

Rita's perspective of the children running away is also dotted with humor. Her perspective is quite a contrast to Florence's perspective. Florence used her slave metaphor to refer to running away as escaping, but not Rita. Rita indulges in laughter.

I remember two boys ran away and flagged the superintendent's wife down. The two boys ran away and were going down the road. The superintendent's wife was taking us somewhere that night and the car passed by and we said, "Oh, there go so-and-so!" The superintendent's wife stopped on the side of the road. Them

boys started running and they hopped in the car. They get in the car and look and there was the superintendent's wife (We laugh.).

Rita tells me about the simplicity and the complexity of running away from the orphanage and not being caught.

I remember they used to bring kids out there to the orphanage; they used to come in the front door and go out the back door. If you ran away from out there you had *a long ways to go*. Unless you were cuttin' through the woods, people could see you 'cause it wasn't but two roads leading to and from the orphanage, one up by the boys building and one down by the girls building.

Like Florence, Rita remembers the matrons who supervised the children. Rita does not say anything about their level of education as Florence did, but she does make a few comments about the orphanage staff. Having been supervised by them and working with many of them as a junior staff member herself, Rita had the opportunity to observe most of them rather closely. She says just enough about the staff to let me know what they were like. Rita recalls Miss Boykin the kitchen matron having a strong need to be important.

I remember the matron who, everything you talked about she acted like she had been there. The children got a whiff of the fact that she was lying because anything you said, she'd say, "Oh, yeah, I was there. I was there." So people started making up stuff. They started making up something like, "You know, that big coliseum that's on such and such a street, in such and such a city?" The matron would say, "Oh, Yeah! I been there." And the kids would be making it up (We are both laughing.). That's when they found out that she was telling one.

To check the matron's genuineness for herself, Rita says she administered her own test.

I even tricked her on something one time. There was a place in Charlotte; it was a house of ill repute and I mentioned it. It had a fancy name and she said, “Oh, yeah! I been there many times!” (We laugh.) See, it’s not good when you’re not telling the truth.

Rita worked at the boys building so she had a chance to observe the boys building staff too. The matron at the boys building whom Sabin described as “real ladylike” Rita describes as being like a mummy. Rita says she said nothing to the matron’s husband Mr. Jude because it was rumored that he touched the girls inappropriately.

I remember one matron who used to work at the boys building. She used to walk upright. She used to remind me of a mummy. She wouldn’t expend any kind of energy. I never saw her walk fast, never saw her run, always being just. . . . She made the same stride, no matter where she was going. Her husband was a real, slow, quiet guy. He was a real slow, quiet guy, he and his wife. We used to say they acted like they were *dead*.

“The assistant superintendent had his ways” is all Rita said about the man whom Lucy described as one who used to beat people like they were dogs and so she tried not to cross him. One of the baby cottage matrons made a lasting impression on Rita but not the kind of impression she left on Sabin who says she occasionally sees the woman at church. Rita’s memory of the woman is more nightmarish.

When I worked at the baby cottage there was a matron up there who had a miscarriage. She had two children, a girl and a boy. She had a miscarriage. She had been sick. She was right there in her room and she was sick and I was taking care of her, and she asked me to get her up to help her to go to the bathroom or something. Some kind of *great big old something popped out of her* and fell on the floor. *I didn’t know what that was!* (Rita and I both laugh.)

Rita says she called for help since she was not able to adequately assist the matron.

I called the superintendent's wife and she came running over there to the baby cottage and whatever it was, I just took it that I wasn't supposed to be in there in the matron's room because the superintendent's wife sent me outta there. Then the ambulance came and they took the matron to the hospital, and I ain't hear no more about that.

Rita, like other children in orphanages, was kept ignorant about sex, and nobody talked with the girls *knowledgeably* about it. But as children do not remain children forever, they grow up and discover for themselves some of the mysteries that baffled them in childhood. Rita recalls her revelation.

As I grew up and I looked at that, I figured it out. She'd had a miscarriage right in that room. The staff was whispering around there. They didn't want the children to know about it. Boy! That thing *scared* me! I was helping her to go to the bathroom and something fell. . . . Looked like her liver fell out! (We laugh.)

Rita's topic of the matron's miscarriage segues into the topic of sex. Rita was a preteen when she was put in an emergency shelter when she was removed from her home because of her mother's brutal beatings. When she lived in the emergency foster home Rita stuffed her bottom in a bushel basket to keep from being sexually molested by the teenage boys who were in the same emergency foster home. Rita, like the other girls at the orphanage, says she was basically *kept ignorant about sex*, but the superintendent must have assumed the girls knew *something* about the topic because of the condoms that were recovered from the cesspool. As illustrated in this next example, the "chapel" was used for more than worship service. It was a generic assembly hall for any kind of forum.

I remember when the boys used to have to clean out the cesspool, something called a cesspool and the superintendent used to swear out that he used to find some rubbers in there. He used to come up there to the chapel and he had a big

meeting and he said, “There’s a reward for anybody who tells me who’s using these.” Wasn’t nobody gon’ tell that! I ‘bout half didn’t know what they were myself!

Just as she had the opportunity to observe the other staff, Rita says she also had a chance to observe the superintendent and his wife, but she did not said she saw any signs that they were ever intimate as Florence who changed their bedding had. Relationally, Rita only saw how the Ogees broke off and reestablished their marital friendship.

Rita’s comparison of the fights between the Ogees and her mother and her step-father reveals that the fights were nothing alike. Unlike her step-father who put Rita and her mother out of the house at night and they had to walk the streets because they had nowhere else to go, Rita says the Ogees were soon friends again after their fights.

I remember Mrs. Ogee called Mr. Ogee by his last name and he called her by her last name. They used to fuss sometimes but it was never like the kind of fussing I heard *at home*. Sometimes she’d be mad with him. They would soon be friends again though.

Judging by what she said about Mrs. Ogee, Rita apparently was mystified by and revered her. Rita says, “The superintendent’s wife kinda had some intuition about herself. She seemed like she knew what was going on before it happened.” Rita had high regard for the superintendent too, and she thought his importance was more wide spread than it actually was. She found out differently only after she went off to college.

The superintendent’s influence, his high visibility in the local community, and his benevolence toward Rita combined to all color Rita’s perception of the man. Rita says Mr. Ogee had facilitated her admission to the orphanage so she could qualify to attend

college. Rita was a freshman in college when she found out that the superintendent was not as well-known as she, for so many years, believed. The educating of Rita in this matter came purely by accident when Mr. Ogee dropped her off at college on the day of registration. Mr. Ogee evidently lived by a “Do as I *say* do” not a “Do as I do” philosophy. Rita says he insisted on punctuality in the children, but he did not insist on punctuality in himself.

The superintendent was *notorious* for taking you somewhere late. I remember I was supposed to register for my college classes at a certain time and he took me late. When I walked in to registration as a freshman, first coming to school, I was overwhelmed seeing all of those people. They were all lined up at a desk.

Rita followed the students and went up to the desk. She had been regimented to follow.

I walked up there and this guy asked me my name. I told him. He said, “You were supposed to be here two hours ago! He said, “*You were supposed to be here two hours ago!*” (Rita raises her volume and speaks with irritation in her voice as if she is trying to imitate the school official and to also show that she is still annoyed by the insensitivity of the man.)What kinda greeting is this for a college official to say to a scared freshman?

Being overwhelmed seemed to come easily for orphanage children because they were so isolated from the mainstream. They were not totally confined to the campus, but their associations were limited and monitored, so the orphans’ ways were noticeably different from the ways of other students. Sometimes the difference was a blessing and sometimes it was a curse. In Rita’s case, on the day of college registration, her difference was not exactly a curse but it certainly seemed to be a rude awakening for her. She says

she knew she was not the culprit in this situation, so she cast the blame where it belonged, on Mr. Ogee.

I just thought that everybody in the *world* knew Mr. Ogee, the superintendent, so I said, “Mr. Ogee brought me late.” (She says this with mock tearfulness, and I chuckle. We are both laughing when she continues.) He said, “Who the *hell* is Mr. Ogee?”

Rita says she was surprised that the college official asked her the question, but she kept her thoughts to herself.

I looked at that man and as if to say, “You scatterbrain, you don’t know Mr. Ogee?” That’s when I learned that everybody in the world *didn’t know* our superintendent. I thought *everybody*. . . . I thought he was *world renown*. I thought he was *a world renowned person* and that *the mention of his name would make everything all right*. But that day, it didn’t make it all right.

The day Rita learned that merely mentioning Mr. Ogee’s name would not make everything all right seemed to be another turning point in her life. It apparently was the day she, for all intents and purposes, became independent. She says that after that incident she realized that she could no longer depend on Mr. Ogee to shore her up at every turn or give her assistance as he had done for the two years she lived at the orphanage.

Meals at the Orphanage

Children are generally hard to please when it comes to the kinds of foods they are willing to eat, but the children at Havertown Industrial School Home had no hand in planning their menu. They ate what they were served. According to McKenzie (1999b),

the food children in orphanages ate was generally well-balanced, and while it was not inspiring, “it resembled the food served in most college cafeterias in the 1950s” (p. 16).

Only four participants talked about the food served at the orphanage: Lucy, Florence, Cassandra, and Rita. Lucy said the least about the food. She simply said, “We were able to get three meals a day, may not have been what we wanted to eat but they were good balanced meals.”

Florence’s Impression of the Meals at the Orphanage

Only Florence, who seldom wavered from her negativity, spoke negatively about the food. She begrudgingly said something positive when she first broached the topic however. Florence says, “We didn’t eat meat unless it was on the weekend and I liked that part to a point. We had three or four vegetables or two starches and a vegetable, that kind of stuff.” After she says that, her criticisms begin.

We all had to eat at the same time. We were not asked how much we wanted to eat. Portions were put on your plate and you had to eat every bit of it, whether you were hungry or not. We never had a choice about the foods that we ate. You had to eat every bit of what was put on your plate. Nobody ever asked you, “You want a little bit? You want a few string beans or a lot of string beans? You want a lot of macaroni and cheese?” “You want a big old fat sweet potato or a little skinny sweet potato?” Seems like we had pinto beans everyday, and macaroni and cheese.

Florence is consistent in her negative assessment of the orphanage. She talks as if she thought only the orphanage children had a problem with the kind and amount of food that was put on their plate.

We never had those kinds of choices. We *never had choices*, and that’s what bothers me, and that’s why I say it’s almost like a *slave*, because when they tell

you what to do, you did it. It's kinda *crazy* the way we were done. Yeah, we had food. I don't know what they call that that space under the older girls building. Places were full of food, was spoiling, and every year we were steady putting more in the. . . . (The word comes to her.) The lock-up! That's what it was called. We would stay out of school to can food or shell peas. Yes, we had clothes. Yes, we went to school whenever *they decided* they weren't canning anything. But *choices, we didn't have*.

Cassandra's Impression of the Meals at the Orphanage

Cassandra talks about her understanding of the logic of the meals and the menus.

We *knew* you were going to have three meals a day. We *knew* you had to eat, and we *knew* you were putting the food away *to* eat. We had pancakes, syrup and butter on the weekends, or oatmeal. Sometimes we had sausage, eggs, and grits. We always had that for Christmas breakfast: sausage, eggs, and grits. I know because we used to can sausage. We had gingerbread, peanut butter and apple sauce on Saturday for supper, and for Sunday supper we had apple pie and cheese.

Cassandra says, "You know one thing I cannot stand? That's white gravy and wieners. I used to *hate* eatin' those wieners in white gravy in the mornings with grits."

She lists other foods the children consumed with regularity.

We ate squash and okra a lot. Now, I can eat squash and okra all day long, even boiled okra with all that snot coming out of it (We laugh.), but I will *not* eat them wieners in white cream sauce. I can even eat souse meat.

Cassandra compares her repugnance for souse meat to her repugnance for wieners in white cream sauce to show me that even something as unappetizing as souse meat was still not as bad as wieners in white cream sauce. Cassandra's tolerance for the different varieties of food is outmatched by that of the orphanage boys who worked on the farm.

I hear people talking about they can't eat day-old bread. I remember the farm boys used to come by the kitchen before they went to the farm and ask the girls for them *day-old biscuits and that cornbread*. Now people talking about they can't eat day-old bread. Honey, back then we ate day-ole bread. Them farm boys would put that bread in they pockets; that was some good eatin'!

Rita's Impression of the Meals at the Orphanage

Rita includes some special details when she talks about how the girls helped preserve food to be put away for the winter months. Her perspective is completely the opposite of Florence's and more in line with how Cassandra talked about the food.

Animated humor is Rita's characteristic way.

We ate good! We ate good food! We preserved it and we ate it and it was good food. I *cannot* forget the canning kitchen. I used to be kinna leery of the big jars in those big ole pots at the canning kitchen. I used to always be real afraid that that thing was going to explode, but it never did.

Suddenly as if she's had an epiphany, Rita remembers something and she continues joyfully as if she is singing a song she loves.

Oh, how could I forget? When it was time to can, whatever you were doing, your hands would turn to. . . . If you were doing peaches, your hands would turn orange. If you were doing beans, you had no fingernails and your fingers would be green. I can remember sitting, doing bushels and bushels and bushels of beans and looking over at the Blue Ridge Mountains and daydreaming about how wonderful it would be to cross those Blue Ridge Mountains.

Like Florence who used to sit and daydream about what she would and would not do when she grew up, Cassandra says she used to daydream and wonder about what was beyond the trees that encircled the orphanage. Rita also had time to daydream and

wonder. She says she daydreamed about how wonderful it would be to cross the Blue Ridge Mountains that stood majestically in the distance far from the canning kitchen.

The study participants said the tendency to daydream took their mind off of mundanity. Daydreaming probably sharpened their creative thinking abilities too, as it helped them to dream about and set attainable goals. Goal-setting and dreaming are useful survival strategies and resiliency traits. Florence said she dreamed of being self-governing. Cassandra said she dreamed of venturing beyond the trees of the orphanage (to live in town). Lucy said her dream was to travel abroad. Rita said she dreamed of crossing the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Social Activities and Special Occasions

Havertown Industrial School Home was not just a place for the children to live, learn, and work. It was also a place where they played. It was a place where the African American community could come together for worship, for recreation, and for leisure. The children were often a part of these community gatherings, sometimes as providers of services and sometimes as recipients of services. The children did more than work even though work was part of their daily routine; they also got a break from work. Many activities were available to them; some originated at school and some originated at the orphanage. For example, the children had dances, talent shows, movies, poetry recitals, and dramatic performances.

The participants, as well as the other orphanage children, were active in conducting the worship services and in participating in holiday activities like Easter, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. They were

involved in organizations like the Y-Teens, the Girl Scouts, the glee club, the 4-H club, and other clubs organized by and for themselves. They played intramural sports at school and at the orphanage and they went dancing and swimming at the YMCA. They acted as host at various on and off campus functions and they participated in summer camp as both campers and counselors. Many of the children had the opportunity to go home for a week during the summer, and during the Christmas holidays they could spend a few days at home with relatives.

Sabin said she went to camp with some of the orphanage girls before she became one of the orphanage girls. That is as much detail as she went into on the topic of social activities and special occasions aside from what she said about not being made to participate when she worked at the house. All Lucy said was, "I used to love going to camp. I went to camp every summer. *I just loved it!*" Darlene said nothing about the special occasions and social activities, so again her voice is absent.

Florence's Perception of the Social Activities and Special Occasions

Florence, the negative participant, exhibited a light, positive tone as she talked about the social activities and special occasions at the orphanage. Florence says she was a member of the drama club, the glee club, the 4-H club, and the Girl Scouts. She says, "We used to have intramural basketball. Of course, I played that too." She proudly announces that she also sang in talent shows at school accompanied by the school band.

I loved singing, loved performing! I remember when I was a little girl, I used to dance, roll my shoulders, and do all that stuff. (She laughs.) If I had the backing, and probably had a good voice coach, I would be a singer. I tried my best to get in as many activities as I possibly could.

Apparently, Florence was not too damaged by the humiliation of sharing a dollar with her brother when she won the dance contest when she was a little girl. Florence said the Jaycees who sponsored the holiday party tore a dollar in half and gave her and her brother each a part. She said she was humiliated by that, but evidently she recovered from her humiliation because she continued to perform. Florence is quite lively when she talks about her many and varied talents and all the activities she was a part of. Despite the fact that she said she hated being at the orphanage, obviously she had some joy in her life when she lived there. She obviously had fun *sometimes*.

Sometimes we'd have to go to the Y for various functions like dancing, swimming, banquets, and summer camp. When it was time for the prom, the superintendent's wife took me to the prom in her car and told me I could have the after-party downstairs in the basement, which was nice, because other than that, I wouldn't have been able to go to an after-prom party.

Just as talking about what she did not like about the orphanage prompted her to talk about other things she did not like, the same thing happens when Florence talks about what she does like. Talking about one thing that she liked easily opens the way for her to talk about other things she liked at the orphanage.

There were some good moments. Everything was not all bad. When we would stay out of school on snow days, we would have snow cream, or we'd have a dance. In the middle of the day, we'd have dances. We'd get candy or something like that, as far as our little snacks. There were even times when we had potato chips or cookies or oatmeal cookies.

Even in the midst of talking about the "good" times she had, Florence interjects a negative statement or two almost as if to let me know that she still hated being at the

Havertown Industrial School Home. Florence says, “The movies were supposed to be a pleasurable thing. Since you didn’t have a choice about the movie you saw, maybe it was a good movie and sometimes it wasn’t a good movie.” Almost as if not to change the positive direction in which her discussion was headed, Florence drops her negativity and gets back to reminiscing about the fun times she had at the orphanage.

There were times we would do our work, like working in the canning kitchen or we working in the laundry room, we would sing. It wouldn’t be unusual for somebody to break out and start singing “My Girl” or something the Temptations or Clyde McFadden or somebody, some artist would sing.

Florence was especially animated when she talked about the Halloween parties the children had in lieu of trick-or-treating. She was on the giving end in this instance as she was a “big” girl who lived at the girls building. Being a giver seemed to suit Florence’s temperament because she had been conditioned to be a *caregiver* from the time she was a four-year-old girl put in charge of her little brother and sister after the death of their mother. Being a caregiver also seemed to give Florence more control over her environment which she seemed to need and want. Her feeling that control was being denied her was the cause of many of the conflicts between her and the superintendent.

I remember the Halloween parties we used to have too, and the baby cottage children would throw their fishing pole over some kind of partition we had. I was one of the big girls and we used to hook prizes to their fishing poles. We always knew who was casting their line because somebody would tell us so we could get a prize for a boy or a girl. One time, I put a doll on the end of my sister’s fishing pole because somebody told me it was her who threw her casting line over the wall. So there *were* some *high* moments.

Cassandra's Perception of the Social Activities and Special Occasions

Cassandra, who was at the orphanage before any of the other participants and stayed there longer than any of them, is also eager to talk about the fun times she had at the orphanage. She too seems to be proud of her involvement in the various activities.

I played basketball when I was in the ninth grade, and of course, the orphanage had a softball team, so we played against teams from the city. They came out to the orphanage to play. We were in the Y-Teens. We were in the Girl Scouts. We were in summer camp. We played softball among ourselves and that kind of thing.

The orphanage children learned something about African American culture as indicated in Cassandra's next statement. Apparently it was part of the official curriculum.

We put on plays and learned Negro poems like "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" and "The Creation." We used to act out poems by Paul Laurence Dunbar too. We had dances on the weekends and on snow days when school was closed. We used to have movies, talent shows, and we used to play all kinds of games on the main campus.

Cassandra, like Florence, seemed to enjoy these activities more than she enjoyed activities not associated with holidays and special occasions. She talks cheerfully about these special events. She had been involved in them from the time she was young enough to sit in the lap of the students from the local women's college up through the time she was old enough to be an accomplished soloist who could provide musical inspiration for the orphanage children and visitors from the community, including students from the local women's college who routinely came to provide merriment for the children.

Cassandra uses the second person pronoun as if to generalize her experiences and enjoyment to the other participants to say their experiences were like hers.

The girls from the local women's college used to meet the children and sit them in their lap and you felt real special when they called your name for the Christmas presents. One time the American Legion brought Santa Claus out to the HISH in a train and one time Santa Claus came in a helicopter.²⁵ We got fruit at Christmas and toys and we sang Christmas carols. I liked Christmas caroling!

Cassandra says she was on both the giving end and the receiving end of events that took place at special occasions.

When I got older, I used to be the soloist to sing "Sweet Little Jesus Boy." We used to have Easter egg hunts at Easter. I used to like the cookouts we used to have at the boys building at the Fourth of July, Labor Day, and Halloween.

Some of the children did not know their birth date and therefore were not sure when they became a year older. Cassandra says she was one of those children. She says the children had monthly birthday parties to celebrate the birthday of all the children born that month. It was helpful in getting them to know when their birthday was.

We had a birthday cake to celebrate every child's birthday that was born that month. I used to go up every month because I thought it was my birthday. One time Mrs. Ogee told me to sit down because it was not my birthday, that my birthday was *last* month (She laughs.).

Going on home visits was part of the special occasions the children looked forward to as well as I discussed earlier. Unlike children who could go home to visit

²⁵ I researched these seemingly odd occurrences to satisfy my own curiosity and to verify for myself that they actually were true since none of the other women mentioned them. The events occurred in December of 1953. (Winston-Salem Journal, 1953).

relatives because they had a family apart from the orphanage, Cassandra was not able to have home visits until her sister grew up and left the orphanage. Then she allowed Cassandra to spend time with her away from the orphanage. Unlike Florence who felt unwanted because she was at the orphanage for years before she went on home visits, Cassandra seemed to understand that a child cannot go home if there is no home to go to. The difference between Florence and Cassandra's perception of the matter, however, is that Cassandra never says she felt sad about it or lonely or unwanted. She is too logical.

I never did get to go home to visit when I was in the orphanage when I was little because I didn't have anybody to go home to visit. We didn't have a lot of family, and once my sister graduated and went to college, then she got married, then I had somewhere to come and visit. Before then, I didn't because all three of the girls [her sisters] were out there at the orphanage.

Rita's Perception of the Social Activities and Special Occasions

Rita who was at the orphanage for two years before going off to college, returning during semester breaks, holidays, and during the summer, talks with liveliness and excitement when she enumerates the activities the children engaged in.

I remember some girls from the women's college used to "adopt" us. They used to pick our names and get us gifts for Christmas and we used to have Christmas programs where we put on plays, recited poetry, and sang Christmas songs with them. That was fun. Everybody *loved* that. Other [community and college] groups used to do the same thing.

Other holidays besides Christmas were special for the orphans as Rita points out.

At Easter, different churches used to come out and have their Easter Sunrise Service at the HISH. They used to have that breakfast over there in the dining room and all of these people used to come. We used to go and we used to have to

dress up in white uniforms and go over to the kitchen and cook for them and serve them and stuff. I used to *like* that. The boys directed traffic and some of boys parked their cars.

Rita, who was beat by her mother, remembers vividly the fun times the children had on special occasions like the other participants did. The difference between the descriptions of Florence the negative participant and Rita's tells me, not only that the women remember the same things differently, but also they remember different times. Just as people and situations change over time, activities change too. The holiday events that Florence talked about were at a chronologically different time from the ones Rita talks about here.

We used to have parties right out there at the orphanage and people from the city and kids from everywhere else used to come out there. We used to have dances over there at the same place where we held Sunday school. We had Christmas parties. Christmas would come and that's when people would come from the city and bring stuff and the superintendent's wife would make us stuff.

Rita talks about a different Halloween from the one Florence talked about where the children played games and cast their fishing lines to have the older children put prizes on the end of the line.

We celebrated all of the seasons. At Halloween, the little children used to dress up and go around trick-or-treating. We didn't have anything to give 'em but the superintendent would have little candy in each little cottage to give to them.

Rita seemed most proud of the reception the girls were given when they went to dances off the campus. When they went to the YMCA, for example, they were considered "new girls," so the air was charged with anticipation and excitement.

I can remember us having dances at the Y. Oh, they would be waiting for the HISH truck to pull up because we were like, you know how a farmer has ten daughters and all of a sudden they grow up to be beautiful then he let 'em outta the hills; he let 'em come down the hill outta the woods, and everybody says, "Wow! Where you been?" Well their reception of us was something similar to that.

Rita explains why the boys at the Y anxiously awaited the girls from the orphanage. Her explanation is simple and straightforward enough.

We didn't go to a whole lot of places, but when we did go, we were always looking nice. The guys from the city didn't see us often. They didn't see us out everywhere they went, so the few places that we did go, *we were kinda like from New York*. We were like from another city, another state or something. We used to have a pretty good time at the parties at the Y.

Summary

Lucy, Sabin, Darlene, Cassandra, and Rita all had a cooperative spirit and an affable nature as they recounted stories about their lives. They each allowed others to intervene and assist them with their problems when they were children. Unlike the others, Florence seemed to want to maintain her individuality and cling to her independence when she was a child. When I looked back over the narratives, I discerned that Florence never did see the necessity of subordinating herself and following the official curricula of the orphanage entirely. She kept saying that it was "just crazy" how the children were treated, hence her hatred for having lived at Havertown Industrial School Home.

Florence's refusal to subordinate herself and her insistence on acting in accordance with her own hidden curriculum of resistance rather than accepting the prescripts of the orphanage was probably instrumental in allowing her to tolerate life at

the orphanage. Florence seemed to feel a need to assert her independence and to think for herself. It was something she had done since she was four years old. Sabin, like Florence, appeared to need to assert her independence and think for herself too. Had she not, she might have been a victim of foster care drift. Assertiveness and autonomy, which both of these participants used were likely two of their resiliency strategies.

As for the other participants, Rita benefited from having someone intervene on her behalf because her loyalty to her abusive mother and her cleverness at hiding the abuse could have ended in her death. As savvy as Lucy was at warding off the undesirable attention of the lurid men in her neighborhood, she too benefited from having someone intervene on her behalf to show her that her aggressive and “bullying” behaviors were not appropriate for a young girl who desired to do well later in life. Darlene benefited from having someone intervene on her behalf just as Lucy did because she was willing to conceal a health condition that could have taken her life, all because she did not want to draw attention to herself in the classroom.

All in all, the participants in this study collectively demonstrated that there were negative and positive aspects to living in an orphanage. Their summations reveal that the negatives though numerous, were outweighed by the positives. Only Darlene had a home to go to, so she left the orphanage before she entered high school. She returned to her family home where she lived with her brothers and sisters and her father and step-mother until she graduated from college. The other participants left the orphanage following their emancipation but they continued to pursue their dream of completing their education.

CHAPTER VII

LEAVING THE ORPHANAGE

How the Participants Sum Up Their Orphanage Experiences

In this chapter, I present a summary of how the participants make sense of their experiences. I discuss the themes, metaphors, and curricula of the orphanage as they pertain to the participants in this study.

The participants eagerly gave their impressions of Havertown Industrial School Home²⁶. Their impressions were neither all positive nor all negative. Some of the participants included disclaimers in their statements despite the fact that they knew I was seeking their personal opinions not a consensus and disclaimers were not necessary.

Those participants who included disclaimers seemed to intuit that their feelings about the orphanage were not shared by all of the residents of the orphanage. Others seemed to have no problem speaking for all of the children who lived at the orphanage as if their opinions could or should be generalized to all the children who lived at the Havertown Industrial School Home and not be applied just to themselves. I present the participants' comments in the order in which I present their narratives.

Lucy's Summary of Her Experience

Lucy was the little girl whose mother abandoned her children and went up North with her boyfriend, leaving the children to fend for themselves all summer long. Lucy

²⁶ Also see Appendix B.

went to the orphanage when she was ten years old and got a whipping everyday until she was sixteen. She was intent on going to college to spite her seventh grade teacher who said she could not go to college because she was from the orphanage. As she compares her orphanage experience to the experiences of other children of her time, Lucy says:

I didn't know till we left the HISH, but I found out that people raised by their own parents or their own families had it *much, much* worse. When you start hearing people really tell you about their lives, they had it *much, much* worse than we did, oh gosh, *much, much* worse! *MUCH, MUCH* worse! Especially the choices they had to make.

Lucy speaks here not about the positive choices the orphans did not have but about the negative choices they did not have.

We didn't have a choice whether to take a drink or whatever. We didn't even have a drink to take! And when I did make the wrong choice . . . All those bad choices were not present to us all of a sudden, and that was so good. That was so good. It was just not part of our standard of living and I thought that was good.

Even without the social comparison, Lucy says her orphanage experience was a positive one.

Being placed in the orphanage was probably the best thing that ever happened to us. I think I would have been worse off if I had not been at the HISH. I look at my brother and sister who left there—and the ones who didn't even *get there*—and they have problems because they never had boundaries.

Speaking partly from the perspective of her siblings who had negative outcomes as a result of not having boundaries, Lucy says:

Nobody is gonna set a boundary for themselves most of the time, so my siblings had no boundaries and so they lived a “boundary-less” life, and it just took them willy-nilly. It just wasn’t good. My brother’s in jail; he’ll be in jail for a long time. One sister . . . Well, a lot of them have abused substances.

Lucy holds a bachelor’s and master’s degree in English and works at a university in the education department. She worked for many years as a teacher before going into school administration at the college level. She says she did not fulfill her dream of being a language interpreter at the United Nations because she had no role models for the position. She says she is pleased that she fulfilled her dream of traveling abroad however. Lucy admits that she is still trying to prove to her seventh grade teacher who has been dead “for a long, long time” that she is just *as good as anybody else*, that she *can* go to college and she can make something of herself, which is part of her narrative identity.

Florence’s Summary of Her Experience

Florence was the little girl whose mother died when she was four years old and was told to take care of her younger brother and sister whom she saved from being burned alive in a house fire set by her father’s girlfriend. She went to the orphanage as a third grader and hid in her metaphoric box to protect herself and looked out at the world through a few peep holes. Her individualist viewpoint made her defiant and critical of the orphanage. Yet, even as an individualist she concedes that she benefited from living at the orphanage. She says, “I got something out of being there. There were some good moments. Everything was not all bad. But the bad things are what normally stick out in a person’s mind.” As to what the benefits were, Florence speaks honestly.

I learned a lot from having worked in the kitchen; I learned how to cook. Working in the laundry room, I learned how to iron a shirt, put creases in slacks or pants or something like that. But I can say that *some* good came out of it. I got some good out of it, because I do believe that my life would not be as it is today had I not been there! I think I would have probably ended up on the street somewhere. Probably would have ended up with ten or twelve babies and didn't know how to take care of them, been on welfare.

Florence holds a bachelor's degree and is currently working toward a degree in library science. She continues to pursue opportunities, the last one being the acquisition of a position in the children's department of her city's library. She is currently a media center coordinator at a middle school where she regularly stages plays for the school because she says it gives her an opportunity to work with children and teach them something about their heritage and what is considered appropriate behavior.

Florence, who used to sit and daydream about growing up and deciding for herself what she was and was not going to do, fulfilled her dream. She says she is now an independent woman, which is also her narrative identity.

Darlene's Summary of Her Experience

Darlene is the participant whose mother died when she was a primary schoolgirl at a Catholic school. She went to the orphanage on the advice given to her father by the nuns at her school when he decided he needed to find a mother for his motherless children. Darlene stayed at the orphanage for two years, the shortest time of any of my other study participants. Darlene did not summarize her experience at the orphanage but she does give a few parting remarks that tells me that being orphaned did have a lasting impact on her life.

I think I've been an advocate for kids since my mother died. I became an advocate for my brothers and sisters, and I think that has transferred over into my job and from the day I walked into the classroom as a student, I was an advocate for kids. And then, it has just always been with me. Whenever I'm around kids, then I'm an advocate for them, to help them, to make sure, you know, that they are protected, to make sure they're getting what they should be getting.

Darlene is also the participant who was embarrassed by being put in the hall when she was in the third grade for nervously and unintentionally kicking the back of the desk in front of her. She is the participant who was embarrassed by coughing in class when she had pneumonia in middle school. Both left indelible impressions.

As a teacher, I would *never, ever* let a child laugh at another child for *anything*. *Never!* Whether the child gave the wrong answer or they were different in any kinda way—it didn't matter how they were different—I *never* let kids pick on each other, make fun of each other, laugh at another student. *Never!*

Darlene holds a bachelor's degree in early childhood education, a master's degree in early childhood education, and a master's degree in education administration. Her dream was to be a social worker but she says that once she set foot in the classroom, it was a job she knew she loved. After teaching for several years at the elementary school level, she became an assistant principal at a middle school then a principal of an elementary school. Darlene is currently a principal of a brand new elementary school where she says she was responsible for hiring everyone who works there including the custodial staff. Darlene rightfully deserves the narrative identity of confident professional and child advocate. It is a combination of how she as well as others see her.

I thought it was a high compliment when a teacher came to me one day when I was assistant principal at a middle school because she was having a problem with

one of her eighth grade boys. He was just causing all kinds of havoc in the room, and another kid said, "Why don't you just send him to the assistant principal; she can talk to him. *She'll help him!*" I appreciated that because it epitomizes what I do on my job.

Sabin's Summary of Her Experience

Sabin's mother died when she was twelve years and after going through a series of foster family homes, she went to the orphanage at age fifteen at her own request. From a distance, Sabin, before she was even admitted to the orphanage, says she could see that the children from Havertown Industrial School Home were a family. After she was admitted to the orphanage she says, "I felt like I was in a family when I went there because we were all in this situation together."

Sabin sums up her impression of her experience at Havertown Industrial School Home quite succinctly and quite sincerely.

Living at Havertown Industrial School Home was *my first feeling of belonging*, and when I say "belonging" I'm talking *family type belonging*. If all else fails, I *can* cook. I *can* clean. I can make a skirt and a blouse and a jacket. So, I'll be all right. My impression of "The School" is that it was exactly what it was meant to be: an industrial school. It taught us a lot of *survival skills* that will always be with us.

Sabin holds a bachelor's degree in business economics. She taught part-time at junior colleges and worked in several businesses and service-related jobs before becoming the director of a community college off-campus centers. She is regularly involved in community and church projects. Sabin never told me about her daydreams so I have no way of knowing if they came true for her. However, her narrative identity is survivor and versatile woman.

Cassandra's Summary of Her Experience

Cassandra was the little girl who was orphaned when she was two years old. She went to the orphanage when she was four and remained there until she graduated from high school. Her matter-of-fact attitude allowed her to accept her situation and she learned quickly what was and what was not acceptable behavior in school and at the orphanage. She knew the routine and expectations of the orphanage so well that she had no trouble recalling any number of things about it. Cassandra says, "I learned compassion by being right there at the orphanage, not from the adults per se but from being around all those children." But more than that, Cassandra says she could rely on the safety and predictability of the orphanage.

A lot of those kids in [public] school with me probably couldn't say this but I *knew* I was gon' have supper, and I *knew* I was gon' have breakfast, and I *knew* I was gon' have lunch at school. I just knew that, and I knew I was gon' have clean clothes to wear because I knew I had to work in the laundry to get those clean clothes.

When she was emancipated from the orphanage shortly after graduating from high school Cassandra says she was in awe of the responsibilities required for her to take care of herself.

Once I got to the city, I kinda wished I was back out at the orphanage. *I did. I did.* The city was a little more than I bargained for. It was a rude awakening coming to the city. When you're used to living on a regimen of something and you knew what time of day it was gon' happen every day, and when you got to the city it wasn't that way, *I was kinda lost! I was kinda lost* because I had to come out, find a job, take care of myself, and everything wasn't laid out but if you're going to survive, you've gotta do what you've gotta do. I knew that I had to get a job and take care of myself. *If I have to hold three jobs, I will support my family!*

Cassandra started out as a Head Start teacher then went into early childhood education in the public schools as a teacher's assistant and transitioned into her current position as office assistant. She tutors African American children at her school in reading and she teaches them about their heritage. Cassandra says she felt like she could give children something she did not have: the love of a parent.

When Cassandra was a girl at Havertown Industrial School Home she says she used to daydream and wonder about what was on the other side of the trees that surrounded the orphanage. She says, "I always wanted to know. I used to always wonder what was on the other side of those trees." When Cassandra left the orphanage, she found out. Compassionate quick learner is another of Cassandra's narrative identities.

Rita's Summary of Her Experience

Rita is the participant whose mother brutalized her for years before she wrote a letter to her teacher which changed the course of her life. She is the participant whom I was most apprehensive about approaching about being a part of my study but she was the most pleasant participant to interview because of her upbeat attitude and effervescence.

Rita spoke glowingly of the orphanage. She says, "When I was at Havertown Industrial School Home, I didn't know it then, but being out there was the best place I could have ever been. I'm talking for me and I'm also talking for the rest of the children who were there." She explains why she thinks the children became one gigantic family.

All of us were like, homeless. Something had happened in our background. Either we were neglected or we were left on somebody's doorstep or our parents were alcoholics or the parents just didn't want the children or parents were in jail. Every child there had some kind of stressful background or some traumatic

background. So everybody was kinda in the same boat, so we became one, big giant family.

Rita sums up her impression of the orphanage in a positive manner, in much the same way as many of the others did. Rita says she was actually glad to have been at the orphanage and she was proud of her orphanage home. She insists she is speaking for herself and all the children at the orphanage.

I am very proud of the HISH. I won't hesitate to tell somebody about the HISH for nothing because I can look back and see the value of it. *We didn't know the value of it then, but thinking back now, we had the best of all worlds. We had a place to sleep. We had a place to eat. We had discipline.* They just did a good job, I think.

Rita seemed to want to avoid painting a picture of the orphanage that might indicate that she thought it was perfect. She adds that it had its flaws and was not without drawbacks.

They did as good a job as they could. They may not have been saints themselves, but *they tried to point the children in the right direction.* I'm one of those who think I benefited greatly from having passed that way. I am not sorry that I was there. *I am glad I was there.* I think it gave me *many, many values.*

Rita began her career as a teacher. She taught in high school, middle school, and junior high school; then she went back to college and got her master's degree in secondary guidance and counseling and became a high school guidance counselor. She became Guidance Counselor of the Year for her tri-county area and then went on to become Guidance Counselor of the State. Now, she trains young guidance counselors.

Rita says, “Everyday I show them how long my piece of the baton is. I’ve been a mentor for many of the interns from major and minor colleges in the state. She exclaims that:

As a guidance counselor, I can help other children. I have children come to me and I can *see right through them*. I can just *see* that they are *lying* about how they got that black eye, *lying* about how they got them scars, *lying* about how they got those *bruises* on them—I mean just the whole nine yards.

Guidance Counselor Rita sounds a lot like Principal Darlene who says she disciplines with compassion and *will not tolerate* children’s picking on one another because of differences due to her experience of being embarrassed when she was in school. Guidance Counselor Rita sounds a lot like Office Assistant Cassandra who held a little White schoolgirl in her lap, enfolded her in her arms, and telling her, “I love you,” as she rocked her back and forth, back and forth—all the while the little girl kept screaming and crying and telling Cassandra how much she hated her and her black skin. As a guidance counselor, Rita has to be shrewd and discerning. She has to be caring, and she is naturally caring as she illustrates using her own words.

When I have students in my office, or when I’m doing group, my antenna’s up because I don’t wanna miss a cue; I don’t wanna miss a word; I don’t wanna miss something, a signal that a child is trying to give me. And I’m oblivious to what they’re *saying*. When a child comes into my office, no matter what I’m doing, I stop, and I give them my *undivided attention, because* (She spaces out her words.) *I don’t want to miss a cue because that might be the last time I see that child.*

When Rita was at the orphanage, she says she used to daydream about crossing the Blue Ridge Mountains that stood in the distant view of the orphanage. She says, “I can remember sitting, doing bushels and bushels and bushels of beans, and looking over

at the Blue Ridge Mountains and saying, “One of these days, I’m going to cross the Blue Ridge Mountains.” Rita’s dream comes true.

One day, one year, my husband and my two children were going out to Colorado and we were going on to California and he (She spaces her words.) *crossed the Blue Ridge Mountains*, and when we crossed the Blue Ridge Mountains, you talking about *a yell in that car . . . !* My kids thought I had (She spaces her words.) *lost my last mind!* I gave out a *yell!*

Rita says her unusual behavior merited an explanation so she explains to her family.

I tried to explain it to them. I said, “Many a days, y’all, I sat at a canning kitchen, doing beans, in the hot sun, just doing beans and looking at the *Blue Ridge Mountains* and *wishing* that one day I would get there, and (I say in unison with her) *today is my day*.”

Good-natured, compassionate survivor who impacts others is Rita’s narrative identity.

Making Their Orphan Experiences Public

By talking with me about their experiences the orphan African American educators were, in essence, talking to the world since this study is now public. They echo the sentiments of another orphan educator, the highly vocal Richard McKenzie, who proclaims his beliefs about private orphanages or children's homes being a favorable option for children who have no place to call home. McKenzie, who is not African American, is a product of Barium Springs, a (historically White) children’s home near Charlotte, North Carolina.

McKenzie’s orphanage experiences, like those of some of the participants in this study, also took place during the 1950s. He is now the Walter B. Gerken Professor of

Enterprise and Society at the Graduate School of Management at the University of California-Irvine. McKenzie says:

Until recently, I have told few people other than close friends of my background, but not because I resent the way I grew up. On the contrary, I am proud of it, and thankful. Rather, I have kept my childhood a guarded secret because of the gross misconceptions many people have of what it meant to be an “orphan” and to grow up in an “orphanage.” To me, and to many of my cohorts at “The Home” (which is what we called it), the words “orphan” and “orphanages” were “O-words,” and not to be used except in the closed company of those with whom we journeyed through our formative years. (1995, End Note, 2)

My study participants acknowledged that being orphaned and living at Havertown Industrial School Home shaped their responses to other people especially to children. They said their orphan experiences shaped their perception of themselves, their perception of others, and the way they interact with and treat other people. Every single one of the participants said she is an advocate for children at school and at home as a direct result of having been “orphaned.”

Resilience played a major role in the success of the orphan, African American educators. They probably would not have survived their childhood ordeals had they not used a variety of coping strategies often identified in resilient children. Their resiliency came as a result of: (a) the nurturance and guidance of caring adults, (b) adapting to their home environment, (c) maintaining the belief that they could control their environment, (d) academic intelligence, (e) emotional intelligence, (f) assertiveness, (g) audaciousness, (h) having dreams and plans for the future, (i) obedience and compliance, (j) belief in a spiritual being, (k) maturity, (l) reliability, (m) sense of humor, (n) having positive role models, and (o) having stubborn determination to act in their own best interest.

In Lucy's case, for example, she was able to determine that if her mother was going to abandon her and not look out for her, then she would have *to look out for herself*. Lucy became aggressive and began bullying and she was determined to *control her own environment*. A nickel, just one single little nickel offered to her by the orphanage superintendent for being good was all it took for Lucy to turn her behavior around. By then she was *emotionally intelligent* enough to see that her way of doing things was not appropriate. *Adaptability* was obviously one of Lucy's resilience strategies. Lucy also had dreams for the future.

Florence *matured early* because it was necessary in order that she might protect her younger brother and sister and it was necessary for her to protect herself. *Hiding* under a metaphoric box gave Florence the kind of protection and cover she needed until she was bold enough to *stand up for herself* figuratively and literally. Like Lucy, Florence also had dreams. She daydreamed about growing up so that she could decide for herself what was in her own best interest.

Sabin, who had neither mother nor father like Cassandra, was mature at an early age like Florence. Coming from a large family of nine children, Sabin said she felt *responsible* for the care of her younger siblings. She decided that she and the rest of her siblings needed to be together and the orphanage was the right place for them to be. Once she was admitted to the orphanage, Sabin perceived her work related responsibilities the way she thought they were meant to be perceived: as a job, as a duty, as a requirement. *Her maturity and reliability* were part of her resilience traits.

Darlene, who said *God* gave her only what she could bear, used her *religious faith, quietude, and inconspicuousness* as part of her resilience strategy. She tried as much as possible to *stay out of harm's way* by being *obedient and compliant*. She was like Florence in that she felt she had to advocate for her little brothers and sisters after the death of her mother. She was also like Florence in that she hid but not under a pretend, peephole box; Darlene camouflaged herself like a flower petal on wallpaper and blended in with the background. Darlene says she believed in a “*You don't say anything to me and I won't say anything to you*” philosophy. This was part of her resilience strategy. She later learned to be assertive.

Like Lucy and Florence, Cassandra also felt called upon to protect herself since she had neither mother nor father to protect her. Cassandra was *stubborn*. When it suited her needs she was able to *ignore* a lot of would-be damaging remarks and actions directed toward her when she was a vulnerable child. She like the others had dreams. She daydreamed of one day finding out what was beyond the trees that encircled the orphanage. She also learned what it meant to be compassionate.

Rita was *smart*. She was *friendly, affable, and lighthearted*, all of which helped to make her resilient. She, like Florence and Sabin, *matured early* and was quite *reliable*. She also knew how to align herself with protective adults who were caring and supportive of her desire to better herself. These too helped to make her resilient.

While all of the women had different levels of *academic intelligence*, they all apparently had sufficient *emotional intelligence* and the kind of worldview that kept them *imaginative, creative, forward-looking, and determined to achieve their goals in life and*

fulfill their dreams. Equally important, they said they refused to get, as Lucy said, “swept right on up” in self-pity and loss of hope. As Florence admitted, there was someone in their lives who gave them “*hope.*” Part of that hope came in the form of protection, permanency and stability, training and guidance, and a *college education.*

Conclusion

The participants learned many lessons from the complexity of the orphanage operating on three different curriculum levels: the official curriculum, the academic curriculum, and the social curriculum. The official curricula were constructed around adult expectations and understandably were more important to the adults than to the children. The official curricula were overt. The children’s social curriculum of resistance was unconscious. Through their unconscious curriculum of resistance, the study participants learned a variety of lessons simply by living according to a schedule, a routine, and a ritual—attributes which contributed to their successful careers.

The official curricula determined that the participants would conform to the established routine and work cooperatively to keep the orphanage running smoothly. Obedience was also a part of the official curriculum. Obedience, like conformity, required the participants to respect authority by subordinating themselves to the adults in charge. Also, the participants were expected to follow the rules and regulations of the orphanage. They were expected to be neat, clean, organized, punctual, studious, courteous, well-behaved, and diligent.

The study participants were not passive objects to be acted upon by the official curricula. They also acted. They responded to the official curricula through their social

curriculum of resistance. The official social curricula were constructed around the daily routines of the children. Through their social curriculum of resistance, the participants learned to be stubborn and audacious. They learned to backtalk and be mean in order to maintain a modicum of control over their environment. They learned to criticize the staff behind their back, calling them: stupid, ignorant, rigid, and mommy-like.

Through their social curriculum of resistance, they learned to poke fun at the habits of their elders. The participants in this study poked fun at some of the staff whose behavior they critically observed. Lucy said the assistant superintendent was “too rigid” and he “beat people like dogs.” With amusement in her voice, Lucy also poked fun at her fifth grade teacher for “calling people ‘daughter.’” Rita poked fun at the matrons sitting at the dinner table “waiting for somebody to serve them.” With laughter, Rita also poked fun at the superintendent’s habit of “wearing them sponge bottom shoes” and trying to catch the children doing something wrong. Florence poked fun at the superintendent for “running around looking for his blood pressure pills” when he was physically exhausted after whipping her.

Additionally, the official curricula of the orphanage were that it would provide the children with structure, protection, stability, permanency, religious instruction, and vocational and academic training, without developing emotional attachment to them. Through their own social curriculum of resistance, the participants learned to rush through their chores. They learned to deliberately provoke the staff, jazz up religious hymns, and laugh at the staff when they made mistakes. They made light of the children’s running away from the orphanage, and they daydreamed while doing mundane chores,

and fell asleep in study hall. They decided to do just enough in school to keep from getting a D on their report card, and they learned to endear themselves to the staff by seeking their personal advice and guidance, visiting them in their rooms after hours, and continuing their relationship with them long after they and the staff had left the orphanage.

The academic curricula of the orphanage basically remained the same throughout the time the participants were in residence at Havertown Industrial School Home. The academic curriculum demanded excellence in academics and deportment. The study participants were expected to learn their timetables, practice good penmanship, develop good reading habits, and they were expected to cultivate ladylike behavior. Although their social curriculum of resistance was to get away with doing as little as possible, the participants learned much of what was expected of them through the official social curricula of the orphanage. They enhanced their reading and writing skills, and they learned to dress neatly and appropriately.

The participants who, through their social curriculum of resistance, did not learn their timetables when they were in the fifth grade said they regretted it. They said their effort to outwit and disobey their teacher backfired. Their refusal to learn their timetables in an effort to provoke the teacher left them deficient in that particular academic skill.

Although they followed the guidelines of the official, nonacademic curriculum the participants had an unconscious or hidden curriculum in this area too. It was not a curriculum of resistance. It was beneficial patterning. The participants learned to be observant of their own behavior and the behaviors of other. They learned turn-taking,

give and take, and the importance of nurturing or stroking each other. They learned compassion and concern for others, respect, punctuality, and not to take everything so seriously. They learned to be disciplined, to share, and to love and appreciate learning. The participants did not intentionally learn these lessons; they learned them simply by imitating, living with, and observing the behaviors of the other orphanage girls and the adults in their environment, especially their classroom teachers. The lessons they learned through beneficial patterning came gradually and contributed to their personal and career success.

Just as their learning through beneficial patterning came gradually, so did the rigidity of the official curricula of the orphanage relax as policies changed over time and the participants in this study got older. The curricula that were in place when some of them were admitted to the orphanage were no longer in place when others were admitted: attending school on the campus, studying in the campus library during study hall, and staying out of school to work in the canning kitchen and the laundry.

Changes in the official curricula encouraged more social interaction between the orphanage children and children not from the orphanage. Through their social curriculum of resistance, the participants said they taught outsiders that they were not “aliens” or “from another planet” as those not from the orphanage once considered them to be. Instead, the intermingling of orphanage and non-orphanage children taught their peers to admire the girls from the orphanage and welcome them like they “were from New York,” as Rita put it. The study participants also learned to accept themselves independent of the

stigma associated with living at the “HISH”²⁷ and the embarrassment of riding in the “HISH truck.”

The stories the participants in this study tell do not represent all the stories they could tell; neither do they represent the stories of other African American orphans. Not every child who grows up in a children’s home turns out like the study participants turned out, and not every child admitted to Havertown Industrial School Home turned out as the participants turned out. Nor did the participants all turn out the same though they lived in the same children’s home. Children’s homes are not appropriate for all children who need out-of-home care, and putting all such children in children’s homes is not the recommendation of advocates of children’s homes. What child caring specialists and concerned individuals advocate is that all children be placed in loving homes, not necessarily children’s homes.

When no loving homes are available, then children’s home may be a viable alternative for children who might be abused or homeless. As with other types of out-of-home placement, the timing of placement is of utmost importance for vulnerable children. Children placed in children’s homes before they have a chance to bond with a caring and nurturing adult are not good candidates. Neither are children who have already been irreparably damaged by living in unsafe environments without the protection, love, and care of a nurturing adult.

The world is not perfect; neither are children’s home or the children who populate children’s homes. However since resiliency can be learned, it can be taught, and when

²⁷ I use the term with their permission.

resilient children and children's homes come together outcomes can be positive. If any child is to have a good outcome in a children's home whether of yesteryear, today, or tomorrow, that child must be resilient.

Implications for Foster Care Provision, Policy, and Research

This study, which details the lives of African American girls before and during their time in the foster care system, is authentic. It contains the perspectives of the study participants as told to me in their own words. It can be a valuable resource for individuals interested in the welfare of children in out-of-home care: policymakers, care providers, teachers, and the community. Other readers of this narrative research may find value in it because it emphasizes resiliency strategies that can be useful in their lives. However, my purpose, as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) contend, is not to prescribe applications, but offer readers a place to *imagine their own uses and applications*. Therefore, I draw from the study's data to discuss implications for foster care provision, policy and research.

Lessons for Foster Care Providers

Data from this study supports other research that highlight the importance of care providers, teachers, and various members of the community helping children in out-of-home care feel included, valued, loved, and respected (Bernstein, 2002; Cmiel, 1995; Goldstein, 1996). They point out the need for children in care being treated with kindness and sensitivity as I indicated earlier in the study. The study participants show that they understand how treating children in out-of-home care in negative ways can create an atmosphere of opposition and encourage them to develop their own curriculum of resistance. They also show how treating children in positive ways can empower and

promote resiliency in the children. Adults in charge of children in out-of-home care should promote resilience in the children to help them develop a good self-concept and positive narrative identity which are vital for their success in care and later in life.

In addition, the participants' data suggest that adults who supervise, teach and guide foster care children should help them establish bonds of trust and friendly and cooperative relationships among themselves and others. Other research shows that children of foster care are more vulnerable than children who do not live in foster care, and their mental health is more fragile and easily damaged (Teggart, 2006). When these children are treated with insensitivity, they have fewer successes and more failures. Therefore teachers and concerned others should be sensitive to how they teach children in care and how they treat them.

Children are flexible human beings, and their outcomes are not predetermined or inevitable. Furthermore, while all children in foster care have some degree of resilience, some have more resilience than others. When given the right opportunities, support and help, however, children in foster care can show considerable resilience (Iwaniec & Sneddon, 2006), as this study pointed out.

The data from my study participants also revealed that teachers can be complicit in de-motivating and devaluing children of foster care rather than encouraging and building them up, and helping them acquire a sense of self-worth. Contrary to how it might otherwise seem, not all teachers have reached the realization that children in foster care are not responsible for their circumstances. These unwise and unsympathetic

teachers tend to condemn and victimize the children and act towards them in overly and unnecessarily critical ways.

As I indicated elsewhere in this dissertation, teachers and care providers may need special training in how to work with children of foster care. In fact, everyone involved in working with children of foster care, regardless of the capacity, can benefit from being trained in how to treat the children with sensitivity and care (Iwaniec & Snedden, 2006).

Throughout this dissertation, I have emphasized how foster children respond to callous treatment. They resist. Their resistance which is not strenuous, though sometimes overt and obvious, is also limited because children need the very lessons and the very people they resist in order to survive. Yet this study's data pointed out that the children's acts of resistance were not looked at by teachers and others in authority as a struggle for dignity, power, or self-control. Instead, these adults perceived the children's resistance as insolence, arrogance and insubordination for its own sake. Ironically, the children's acts of resistance that often resulted in punishment also enhanced their resilience. Without resistance or struggle there can be no resilience; and resilience, plus resistance, equals empowerment. Children in foster care need to be empowered in order to succeed in life.

The bulk of this study's findings clearly indicate a need for change in all areas that pertain to the care and treatment of children in foster care to decrease their vulnerability and feelings of being unloved, unwanted, excluded and alienated from the larger group. Children of foster care are sensitive to being singled out for punishment and they long for acceptance and inclusion. This singling out of children for punishment is unusually cruel and can be psychologically damaging to them, and it creates resentment

and cultivates fertile ground for resistance (Fisher, 2001a; Goldstein, 1996; McKenzie, 1996). Teachers should refrain from publicly humiliating children in care and alienating them from other children. They should refrain from tracking foster care children based solely on what they believe the children's eventual role in life will be.

The data in this study also indicated that organizations and sponsors of programs and activities for children in foster care should teach children socially appropriate behaviors. They should promote social growth and development to help all children reach their potential in order to become productive adults. Children's early experiences influence later outcomes, but they do not determine them (Iwaniece & Sneddon, 2006). As this study indicated, children of foster care can and do make something positive of themselves when they are encouraged and allowed to. Indeed, resilient children are likely to demonstrate that they can do better than their past circumstances might predict (Aldgate, 2006). Studies that highlight resiliency in children, such as this one, "have the potential to inform practices and policies aimed at changing the odds for positive development" (Masten, 2006, p. 3).

Lessons for Policymakers

When children are moved in and out of homes at the discretion of the foster parents it disrupts stability in children's lives and gives them no sense of permanency. Permanency plays an important role in children becoming resilient. Permanency can be both physical and emotional. Physical permanency has to do with stability of placement, and emotional permanency has to do with children's feelings of attachment to others (Brown, Leveille, & Gough, 2006). A lesson policymakers can take away from this study

is that permanency and stability in children's home placements are important to enhancing resilience.

Children caught up in the foster care drift often lack the permanence and stability they need in order to be resilient. Instead of children floating from home to home due to improper placement, care providers should be given the kinds of support they need to facilitate children's adjustment in out-of-home care.

Further, policymakers should listen to the stories children in foster care tell. What these children have to say about their experiences in foster care should be taken into serious consideration before, during and after they leave foster care, even if they have been out of care for years, like the participants in this study. What former orphans have to say about their time in the system as foster children can play a vital role in improving the policies and procedures implemented for the benefit of present and future orphan children—it may be life-saving.

If policymakers could hear the stories that orphans tell about their experiences in foster family homes, they might determine that it is necessary to better monitor the children's care and safety. They might also become more careful about how they assess the needs of the children and the foster parents and then provide them support to minimize the children's separation and emotional pain.

To promote resilience in children of foster care, policymakers must enhance children's progress at every stage in their cycle of learning and developing. Policy should operationalize elements of resiliency by providing and encouraging programs for children in care such as some of those experienced by the participants in this study: sports, music,

drama, arts, Boys Scouts and Girls Scouts, etc. (Brown et al., 2006). “When developing both policy and practice, [policy makers] need to look at [their] plans through the eyes of children” (Brown et al., 2006, p. 101) because it is the children for whom these policies and practices are made and the children are the ones most affected by them.

Suggestions for Future Research

As I conclude, I offer a few suggestions for expanding this study and conducting future research on foster care youth. While this study describes the orphan experiences of women who are African American educators, its implications could be extended to include African American girls and boys who did not become educators. Future research could also examine whether other children from the same industrial school home (or different orphanages/children’s homes) had experiences similar to or different from those of the participants in this study.

In addition, a comparative study of White and Black children’s home could be conducted to examine differences, inequalities, and perspectives with or without focusing specifically on educators or positive outcomes. Studying the experiences of other children in foster care, regardless of their gender or cultural background, would help to address some of the questions of: What happens to children and why they go into foster care? What happens to them while in foster care, and how are they treated? Who determines placement for them and for what reason? What are the affects of foster care policies and practices, and how and why are they put in place?

One of the issues that arose in this study of the orphan experiences of African American educators is that people do not believe children when they talk about their

experience in foster care. Furthermore, some outside the foster care system cannot imagine what goes on in foster care homes (foster family homes, children's homes, and group homes). Yet, this narrative study helps show the importance of studying, believing, valuing, and learning from orphan stories.

Through the participants' stories, I was able to identify at least three reasons why they told the particular stories they told. One, it showed the strength of their resilience. In telling their stories the participants put themselves in the position of the protagonist and allowed themselves to defeat their opponent. Two, narrating their stories gave them the opportunity to process and rationalize their childhood behavior in a non-threatening environment. In the early days, as they pointed out in their stories, children were not taken seriously, they were not listened to, and they had few advocates who understood their problems. Three, sharing their stories allowed the participants to reveal secrets they had kept hidden away, thereby offering them some closure to a difficult part of their life so they can live more fully in the present.

In total, this study's data helped to show how researching the experiences of orphan children in foster care through narrative enhances our understanding of how people construct their narrative identity by telling their story. Narrative provides a powerful and effective medium for assisting people in contextualizing their experiences, and it helps storytellers and others understand and learn from their lived experiences. Additionally, narratives about the experiences of children in the foster care system show that these children develop and maintain a social curriculum of resistance to prevent losing their sense of who they are as thinking, feeling human beings. Their social

curriculum of resistance, which offers them some protection from the negative aspects of the child welfare system, also enhances their resiliency.

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Appendix A

Overview of the Background and Personality of the Participants

The Orphan Educators	Length of Time in the Orphanage	What Brought Them to the Orphanage	How They Came to Leave	Personality During the Interview
Lucy	5 th grade to 2 nd year of college	Mother left the state with her boyfriend, leaving the children home alone all summer	Got pregnant in college and married the father of her child	Laughed lots during the interview Loved her 5 th grade teacher who often spanked her
Florence	3 rd grade through 2 nd year of college	Father's girlfriend tried to burn the house down with the children in it	Got pregnant in college and married the father of her child	Critical of just about everything Acknowledged good times but said the negatives stand out most
Darlene	5 th -7 th grade	Mother died and father went in search of a new wife and mother	Father found a new wife and a mother for his children and took his children back home after two years	Calm Catholic who said God gives me only as much I can bear
Sabin	15 years old through 2 nd year of college	Chose it to avoid foster care drift	Said nothing about the reason for leaving	Serious and matter of fact Interviewed like it was a school assignment or job
Cassandra	4 years old to graduation from high school	Mother and father both died and was not allowed to remain in foster home	Completed high school and went to live with her sister	Liked talking about her experiences, Slow to start but loquacious once started
Rita	10 th grade to 2 nd year of college	Mother beat her for years, leaving her back heavily scared	Got pregnant, married the father of her child	Quite lively Talked easily about everything

Appendix B

The Current Perspective and Position of the Participants

The Orphan Educators	How They Evaluate Their Orphanage Experience	Where They Are Today
Lucy	<p>The orphanage children were much better off.</p> <p>Some children not from the orphanage had it MUCH, MUCH worse!</p>	Academic Program Director (University)
Florence	<p>I was better off</p> <p>Were it not for the orphanage I probably would have been on welfare with ten or twelve children</p>	Media Center Coordinator (Middle School) Part-time Public Librarian (Children's Department)
Darlene	<p>It was just okay</p> <p>I don't remember a lot of negatives</p>	Principal (Elementary School)
Sabin	<p>It was my first feeling of having a family for years after the death of my mother</p>	Off-Campus Center Director (Community College)
Cassandra	<p>It was home and we were family.</p> <p>I really wanted to go back after leaving there and being on my own.</p>	Office Assistant (Elementary School)
Rita	<p>Speaking for all of the children: We did not know it then but it was the best place for us</p>	Guidance Counselor (High School) Writing a Book on Child Abuse