

*White Unwed Mother: The Adoption Mandate in Postwar Canada*

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## **ABSTRACT**

The white adoption mandate was a process of interrelated institutional power systems, which together with socio-cultural norms, ideals of gender heteronormativity, and emerging sociological and psychoanalytic theories, created historically unique conditions in the post WWII decades wherein white unmarried mothers were systematically and often violently separated from their babies by means of adoption in the hundreds of thousands in Canada. These factors, together with urbanization, eugenics, the profession of social work, and the introduction of baby formula; all within the context of two World Wars, collided as a kind of perfect storm to create an unprecedented locus in history where approximately 300,000 unmarried mothers in Canada were systematically separated from their babies at birth for adoption in an attempt to rehabilitate them for normative womanhood.

## DEDICATION

For my son, Christopher (1970-2008)

“Take me outside I want to feel the rain on my face,” he said, so we went outside and sat together holding hands and felt the light, warm Vancouver rain fall on our faces. We talked not about our lost past, but our lost future...

*I remember those days my Beloved  
When we danced in the teardrops of the Goddess  
And the only Angels I have ever seen  
Slid down your cheeks from the windows of your soul  
And the rain, the gentle rain so sweet from Heaven  
Fell down over the temples of our souls  
And we tasted the salt of Her ocean  
Her rain washed away our pain*

Pete Bernard

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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ACCA	Anglican Church of Canada Archives
ARCAT	Archives of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto
ARENA	Adoption Resource Exchange of North America
ASCA	Australian Senate Committee Report
CAS	Children's Aid Society
CCAS	Catholic Children's Aid Society
CTA	City of Toronto Archives
HSP	Historical Society of Philadelphia
LAC	Library and Archives Canada
OCAS	Ontario Children's Aid Society Association
PANB	Provincial Archives of New Brunswick
PA	Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives
SAA	Salvation Army Archives
SGS	Sisters of the Good Shepherd
SNOOLC	A Short Notice on the Origin and Objective of the Sisters of the Lady of Charity Better Known as the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
UCMF	United Church Maternity Facilities
UCCA	United Church of Canada Archives
WHO	World Health Organization
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

## White Unwed Mother: The Adoption Mandate in Postwar Canada

### Introduction

*Adoption practice works on the premise that in order to 'save' the child - you must first destroy its mother (Wellfare, 1997).*

While feminist research seeks to foreground subjugated knowledge and support social justice on issues that resound in the lives of women, only recently have contemporary feminists attempted to locate adoption within feminism. Dominant ideology in mainstream Canadian society and feminist scholarship typically ascribe agency to white unmarried mothers who surrendered babies for adoption post WWII and, as I will argue, obscure the existence of an adoption mandate (Shawyer, 1979; Solinger 1992; Kunzel, 1993; Fessler, 2006; Chambers 2007; Pietsch, 2012) and the subsequent phenomenon of mass infant adoption.<sup>1</sup>

The postwar white adoption mandate might be described as a process of interrelated institutional power systems, which together with socio-cultural norms, ideals of gender heteronormativity, and emerging sociological and psychoanalytic theories, created historically unique conditions in the post WWII decades wherein white unmarried mothers were systematically and often violently separated from their babies by means of adoption in the hundreds of thousands in Australia, New Zealand, the UK, Canada and the United States. In Canada alone, approximately 300,000 unmarried mothers were impacted by the mandate from

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<sup>1</sup> The term "birthmother" will not be used in this work, except as a search tool or as revealed through research since many mothers of adoption loss reject adoption industry terminology as marginalizing, demeaning, and dismissive of their lived experience as mothers. Other terms such as "fallen woman", "unmarried mother", "unwed mother", "bastard", "illegitimate", "negro", "baby-farmer", may be used in historical context or as quoted from primary sources. The term "home" as a reference to maternity facilities is used to reflect the historical name used during the period. It is acknowledged that many mothers of the mandate reject the term "home" for the quasi-incarceral institutions where unmarried mothers resided.

1940 to 1970<sup>2</sup>. The mandate was also influenced by urbanization, eugenics, social work, medical advances, and the introduction of baby formula; all within the context of two World Wars.

These these factors came together as a kind of “perfect storm” to create an unprecedented locus in history wherein the majority of white unmarried mothers in Canada were routinely and systematically separated from their babies at birth for adoption.

Was there an adoption mandate for white unmarried mothers in postwar Canada which resulted in the phenomenon of mass infant adoption? This research aims to provide evidence of the mandate in Canada, to demonstrate that mass infant adoption occurred as a result, and to explore the ways in which adoption can operate or effectively function as a form of violence against women and the maternal body (Shawyer, 1979; Davis, 1998; Roberts, 2002).

This work is original in scope. Without this research, the adoption mandate in Canada and related phenomenon of mass surrender remain hidden, a secreted knowledge that continues to subjugate the women impacted, insofar as they are too frequently portrayed as agents who actively relinquished, rather than surrendered their children to adoption. This research examines the history and challenges the ways in which unmarried mothers have been constructed within adoption as pathological subjects. The postwar institution of adoption, its policies and practices which led to the production of contemporary adoption culture are uncovered and questioned in order to: further critical adoption studies, promote feminist theory and debate about adoption in Western contexts, contribute to the feminist project of uncovering subjugated knowledges, value the lived experiences of women, support social justice, and ultimately, lead to political reform in adoption policy and practice.

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<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 5 for statistical review

While there is much work to be done surrounding race and the unmarried mother in Canada, the focus of this work is the white unmarried mother because it uncovers a specific Canadian history yet to be told. This essentially limits the scope of the research. The rationale behind a concentration on whiteness emerges through a critical exploration of contrasting institutional prescriptions for, and characterizations of, Black unmarried mothers and Indigenous women. How “race-specific meanings” are translated and become attached to the breaching of social norms governing sexuality, maternity and motherhood assists in uncovering the experience of the white unmarried mother (Solinger, 1992:18). Race was a salient factor in the postwar adoption mandate since, race became the most accurate predictor of family and societal responses to out-of-wedlock pregnancy (Solinger: 1992:18). Theories surrounding racialized mothers portrayed unmarried mothers of colour as undeserving of reform and rehabilitation due to their essential nature of ‘Blackness’, or, as described by Solinger, “alleged biological condition of Black womanhood” (Solinger 1992:44), and thus their offspring were deemed unadoptable. The Indigenous mother in Canada, whether wed or unwed, was considered illegitimate. Over 20,000 Indigenous mothers lost their children to adoption into non-Indigenous homes during the Sixties Scoop due to the Indian Act and Canada’s cultural genocide assimilation policies.<sup>3</sup>

Unlike their counterparts, white middle-class unmarried mothers retained intrinsic social value by virtue of their whiteness. During the immediate postwar period when “good” mothers were constructed as white and married, the white unmarried mother was treated as a candidate for rehabilitation to the norms of legitimate marriage and normative white motherhood through adoption separation, and, by extension, her child was effectively rendered a commodity.

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<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 5

Contemporary adoption discourse includes misinformation, myths, and unevenness in voices represented, together with institutional, political, and religious agendas. It is unsurprising that the perspectives of those separated by adoption have only recently emerged as a force in Canada. Those perspectives have for the most part, been methodically silenced by the secrecy and shame entwined in past adoption practice. As pointed out by Sally Haslanger and Charlotte Witt, “in fact they’ve been almost entirely missing!” (Haslanger & Witt, 2005:9). Despite contemporary tropes of openness, governments, religious groups, and social service agencies continue to restrict access to adoption related records. This is exemplified by the fact that only six provinces and one territory have semi-open adoption records in Canada.<sup>4</sup> In addition, those who benefit from, or those likely to benefit from adoption transactions, have mostly remained silent with respect to human rights in adoption practice.<sup>5</sup>

The first law in Canada for the regulation of the transfer of children by adoption was introduced in New Brunswick in 1873, followed by Nova Scotia in 1896 (Strong-Boag, 2006:25). Other provinces followed this trend over the next fifty years. Prior to formal adoption laws most children were transferred from one family to another without documentation (LAC, Canadian Genealogy Centre). In Quebec, prior to 1847, adoptions are found in Notarial Records and are signified by terms such as “Engagement”, “Accord”, “Agreement” and sometimes even “Adoption” (Quebec, Birth Adoption and Orphanage Records, LAC). In Ontario, the transfer of children was usually referred to as a “Guardianship” which appeared with the Guardianship Act in 1827 and, “allowed a Probate or Surrogate Court Judge to appoint an individual to safeguard the child’s ‘property, person and education’ until maturity” (Guardianship and Adoption Records, Research Guide 223, AO).

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<sup>4</sup> Adoption records remain fully closed in Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.

<sup>5</sup> This includes governments, adoption agencies, legal professionals, and adopters.

Prior to WWII, adoption was not widely utilized as a form of child transfer since the traits of the morally “fallen” were thought to be hereditary, an out-of-wedlock child was considered tainted, and the mother was expected to raise the child herself (Solinger, 1992:149). Adoption as a form of child procurement and transfer changed significantly during the twentieth century. Not only did adoption become the chief prescription to rehabilitate white unmarried mothers in postwar Canada, but the postwar adoption mandate heralded the beginning of adoption culture in Western society.<sup>6</sup> By the end of the twentieth century, adoption discourse shifted as adoption practice and popular culture placed the emphasis on prospective adoptive parents. Juan Miguel Petit, Special Rapporteur to the United Nations Rights of the Child reports that:

Regrettably, in many cases, the emphasis has changed from the desire to provide a needy child with a home, to that of providing a needy parent with a child. As a result, a whole industry has grown, generating millions of dollars of revenues each year, seeking babies for adoption and charging prospective parents enormous fees to process paperwork...the Special Rapporteur was alarmed to hear of certain practices within developed countries, including the use of fraud and coercion to persuade single mothers to give up their children (United Nations, Economic and Social Council. Report by Juan Miguel Petit, Special Rapporteur, Rights of the Child, Commission on Human Rights, Fifty-Ninth Session, January 6, 2003)

### **Social Location**

The concept of reflexivity or self-reflection in evaluating one’s relationship to the

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<sup>6</sup> Adoption culture is the invisible normalization of the institution of adoption, its language, policies and practices in western culture. (Andrews, 2016).

research by social location and lived experience is valued in feminist research. Feminist Donna Haraway suggested that the idea of objectivity be replaced with “situated knowledge”, and called for “epistemologies of location, positioning and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims.” (Haraway, 1988:589). Models of feminist research have shifted to include the principle of location, lived experience, and standpoint.

In terms of my social location I do not claim to be wholly objective or disinterested. As a white, heterosexual, middle-class mother who spent five months at Bethany Home, a Salvation Army “home for unwed mothers” in Toronto in 1969-70; I was separated from my firstborn baby by adoption during the mandate. After several years of a positive and reaffirming reunion, my son died in 2008. These experiences compelled me to understand more fully the systems that had been at play in the separation of our mother-child dyad. I am now an adoption activist working to obtain acknowledgment, justice, and reparations for unmarried mothers and children in Canada that were impacted by the illegal, unethical, and human rights abuses inherent in postwar adoption policies and practices. My positionality is also a source of knowledge, however incomplete.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Although this work draws upon a number of theoretical perspectives, the most relevant are critical adoption studies and maternal theory. Even though feminists have taken up questions of adoption since the 1990s, critical adoption studies remain a relatively under-researched area of feminist inquiry, and the institution of adoption as a form of violence and gender injustice remains mostly unchallenged by feminism. As pointed out by Twila Perry, “the subject of adoption has received little attention from feminists in general, but there are many reasons why

this important subject requires further exploration” (Perry, 1998:102).

Feminist theoretical debates surrounding critical adoption studies are emerging through history, motherhood, queer, race, transnational and diaspora studies. Notable scholars include Karen Balcom (2011), who explores the migration of Canadian babies for adoption across borders 1930-1972, and Karen Dubinsky (2010) who identifies the postwar adoption mandate in the context of mixed race and aboriginal babies. Frances Latchford (2012) explores the ways in which voices of mothers who identify as agents are silenced, while Shelly Park (2006) examines adoptive maternal bodies as a queer paradigm for rethinking mothering. Laura Briggs (2012) focuses on those who have lost children to adoption while examining social, cultural and political forces influencing those transactions, and Dorothy Roberts (2002) explores modern domestic adoption in the context of race. A critical analysis of the adoption mandate will contribute to a new body of work within feminism which explores adoption through a number of theoretical perspectives.

Motherhood studies and theory on mothers, mothering and motherhood as a distinct body of knowledge within feminist theory has emerged through theorists such as Adrienne Rich (1995), Nancy Chodorow (1978), Andrea O’Reilly (2016), and others who explore motherhood as experience, identity, institution, and ideology. These theorists are useful to draw upon when exploring the concepts of mothers and non-mothers, destruction of the maternal body, and adoption as a form of violence against women as expressed through the adoption mandate.

Within the overall framework, additional theoretical perspectives and concepts are drawn upon to provide structure within various contexts. As an example, relying on psychoanalytic theory is useful to uncover the underlying reasons for the drastic changes in policy for white unmarried mothers in the postwar period. Feminist standpoint epistemologies are concerned

with privileging vantage point as situated knowledge as it relates to the oppression of women (Harstock, 1983; hooks, 1984; Haraway, 1991) and relates to the foregrounding of lived experiences of surrendering mothers in postwar Canada. Standpoint knowledges as expressed by Gloria Anzaldúa's (1987) concept of borderland existence and identity are useful when discussing the formation of borderland identities experienced by mothers separated from their infants by adoption such as "unwed mother", "birthmother" or "non-mother".

Theoretical perspectives that focus on intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1995) highlight socially constructed difference through situated standpoints within social reality and embrace reflexivity for researchers (Mann, 2012:142). These theories are helpful in identifying how illegitimate identities are socially constructed. Intersectional analyses assist in revealing how issues of race, class, and gender operate, or are endemic, in the context of adoption post WWII. The integration of the concepts of violence against women and reproductive justice introduced by Joss Shawyer (1979) and developed by Black feminists such as Angela Davis (1992), bell hooks (1984), Patricia Hill Collins (1990), and Dorothy Roberts (2002) in and through intersectional theory relate directly to the white adoption mandate.

### **Interdisciplinarity**

This research is suitable to the interdisciplinary nature of women's studies and is primarily embedded in the disciplines of history, law, social work, and psychology. As well, this research contributes to the broader theme of locating adoption within feminism.

Women's history in relation to adoption in Canada is an emerging topic. Notables include feminist historian Lori Chambers (2007), who was given extraordinary access to case files of the Ontario Children of Unmarried Parents Act 1921-1969. Chambers explores the post WWII adoption mandate and concludes that case files "disprove the idea that women exercised free and

unfettered choice in releasing their infants for adoption” (Chambers, 2007:85). In addition, Chambers (2016) concentrates on the legal history of adoption in Ontario 1925-2015; Veronica Strong-Boag (2006), who provides provides a historical overview of adoption law and practice in English Canada from the nineteenth century to the 1990s; and, Suzanne Morton (2005), who illuminates the “unmarried mother problem” and Halifax maternity homes in postwar Canada. The examination of history in relation to adoption in Canada is crucial to uncovering the development and implementation of the adoption mandate.

Adoption law in Canada is mostly a provincial matter and has evolved in tandem with child welfare since the late nineteenth century. More recently provincial laws are trending toward adoption industry economic models now used in the United States. Current social justice issues for women in adoption including race, agency, pre-birth matching, consent times, sealed records, enforcement of open adoption agreements, the linking of adoption and abortion by pro-life groups, and the human rights of persons adopted can be informed and influenced by examining past adoption law, policies, and practices.

Although unregulated until the late 1900s, the emerging discipline of social work claimed the field of adoption as its domain prior to WWII.<sup>7</sup> Current social work curricula embrace anti-oppressive policies whereas this work reveals the mostly female profession as an unregulated and less than anti-oppressive body pre and post WWII. This may assist in developing trauma informed care for those currently seeking post adoption services.

In addition, various theories derived from the disciplines of psychology, sociology, and politics, including concepts of class, race, reproductive justice, and the characterization of the unmarried mother as ‘unfit’, ‘unable’ or ‘not ready’ are introduced. Uncovering the origin and

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<sup>7</sup> See Chapter 3 – some provinces did not regulate social workers until the 2010s

evolution of these theories that continue in modern adoption practice may assist in adoption reform and redress.

## **Methodology**

The methodological framework of this research utilizes a feminist approach that is concerned with positioning gender at the centre of inquiry to uncover interrelated power relations, ideologies and dominant discourse as they relate to the oppression of women in social and historical contexts in order to promote social justice for women. The use of primary and secondary sources detailed in the following section reveals qualitative and quantitative data examined within a feminist methodological framework, which seeks to uncover andocentric bias, acknowledge difference, and reflect on the position of the researcher. Further, a discourse analysis is employed to uncover societal attitudes, cultural mores and media representations pertaining to illegitimacy and the unmarried mother.

Factors leading to the mandate are examined and include the construction of the characterization, rescue, and reclamation of ‘fallen women’ in the nineteenth century informed by paternalistic and patriarchal norms, and religious and political ideologies. Major shifts in the characterizations of the white unmarried mother during the twentieth century are explored within Canadian contexts, as well as the associated institutions and power relations that relate to race, the church, the state, the law, and punishment. The moral regulation of women’s sexuality and reproduction which led to the stigma, separation, detainment, incarceration, and ultimately, the often violent and traumatic separation of the unmarried mother and her baby through adoption is substantiated. Historical depictions of the white unmarried mother and her child reveal her construction, first as an abject dyad within nineteenth century society and, ultimately, as a pathological subject whose rehabilitation was located in adoption separation in

the post WWII period.

This work builds cumulatively, and attempts to assemble the major elements that contributed to the mandate, which came together as a “perfect storm”, culminating in a time and place in history that has never before or since been reproduced.<sup>8</sup> Although this work concentrates on pre and post WWII events, research from mid nineteenth century onward provides historical context to illustrate the construction and evolution of the unmarried mother and the conspiring elements that created the postwar adoption mandate and subsequent phenomena. Main keywords used include: fallen woman, Magdalen, unmarried mother, unwed mother, birthmother, adoption, illegitimate, bastard, asylum, child protection, maternal body, and moral regulation.

Sources utilized include books, journals, and theses accessed through library information services. In addition, magazine articles, microfiche, and visual sources were accessed. Government reports were consulted for empirical data collection and historical commentaries. Archival material has been retrieved from various Canadian city archives and the National Archives of Canada. Archival fonds identified include Children’s Aid societies and associations, asylums, prisons, institutions, and social service agencies. Fonds for federal, provincial and municipal governments were also explored. Statistics, commentaries, policies and practices were gleaned from government reports, policy papers, conferences, correspondence, and publications. In addition, the archives of Salvation Army, Catholic, Anglican, United, and Presbyterian churches were accessed to uncover church policies, maternity home records, meeting minutes, correspondence, pamphlets, annual reports, and other relative information.

Historical newspaper research was conducted online for the period 1950-1970 using the

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<sup>8</sup> Due to the confines of this work only the major factors leading to the mandate are discussed.

main keywords noted above. Newspapers accessed include *Toronto Star*, *Toronto Telegram*, *Globe and Mail*, among others in Canada. Christian church publications accessed from the nineteenth century onward include the *Salvation Army War Cry/Salvationist*, *United Church Observer*, *Anglican Journal*, *Presbyterian Record* and *Catholic Register*. No human participants are used in this research.

Chapter one concentrates on the unmarried mother in the nineteenth century to substantiate the foundation of the social and legal construction of unmarried mothers in Victorian Canada; and the choices available to them. Although the postwar adoption mandate was unique in terms of prescriptions and outcomes for white unmarried mothers and their babies, various factors that originated in nineteenth century Canada culminated in that historical epoch. The rescue, salvationist, and charitable carceral movements for the reform of “fallen” women is discussed to identify the relationship of these movements to the mandate as well as the reproduction of the characterizations of unmarried mothers later in the twentieth century as “unnatural”, “uncaring”, “agentic abandoners”. The history and importance of Christian Magdalenism as it relates to the adoption mandate is explored. Magdalenism is a redemptive punitive theory that informed and shaped policy and practice for unmarried mothers in Canada for over one hundred years. Magdalenism was central to the establishment of “charitable incarceration” for unmarried mothers, a practice integral to the adoption mandate.

Chapter two illustrates the four major re-characterizations of unmarried mothers in the twentieth century that led to the adoption mandate, as a threat to communities, as feeble-minded, as sex delinquents, and finally, as psychologically ill.<sup>9</sup> Emerging psychoanalytic theories pathologizing the white unmarried mother led to drastic changes in public policy in postwar

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<sup>9</sup> Due to the limitations of this paper characterizations of the unmarried mother after 1970 are not examined.

Canada. In addition, pre and post WWII research shows increasing emphasis on incarceration and ‘cures’ used to regulate the moral and sexual behaviour of white women in Canada; all are factors contributing to the mandate. Sub-topics that contribute to the adoption mandate, which include eugenics and venereal disease are also addressed herein.

The profession of social work was one of the major factors that influenced the adoption mandate. Chapter three tracks the progression of the “professionalism of benevolence” (Kunzel, 1993:3) and the rise of the scientific “expert” in the early twentieth century. It shows how social workers created a profession for themselves using scientific case work to approach social problems, and in particular, those pertaining to the unmarried mother. In addition, the protracted and beleaguered transfer of power from philanthropic evangelical women to social workers in connection with the “treatment” for unmarried mothers is examined. Social workers played a vital role in creating, perpetuating and endorsing the adoption mandate in the postwar period. Several quotes from social workers expose their thinking at the time “in their own words” and support the fact that social work policy and practice with unmarried mothers was typical and systemic, and not isolated. In addition, this chapter establishes how sociological theories such as “tabula rasa”, “clean break”, and “complete break” embraced by the profession of social work, contributed to a major shift in societal prescriptions for unmarried mothers and their newborn babies postwar.<sup>10</sup> The voices of the women and their experiences in Canada’s hospitals document the illegal, unethical, and human rights abuses which were pervasive in postwar adoption policy and practice.<sup>11</sup> This chapter also includes a brief overview of the use of baby formula and how this impacted the separation of mother and child in postwar Canada.

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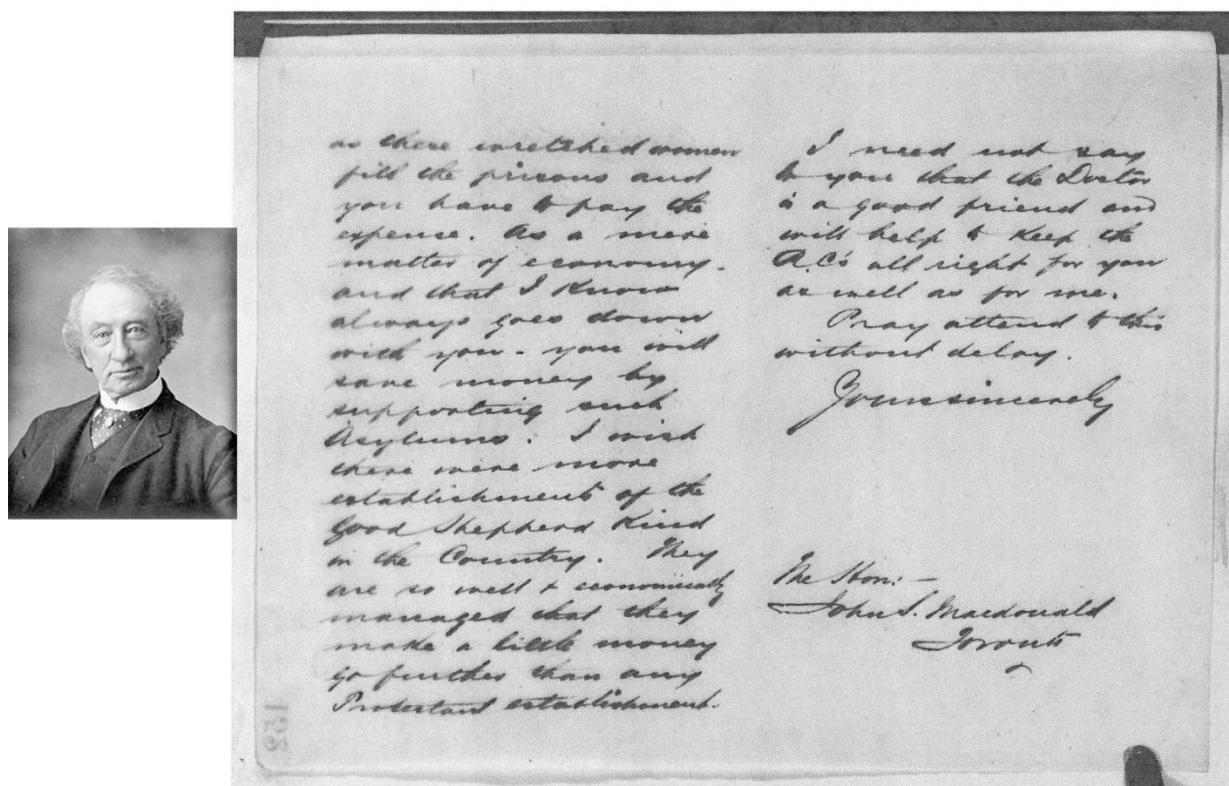
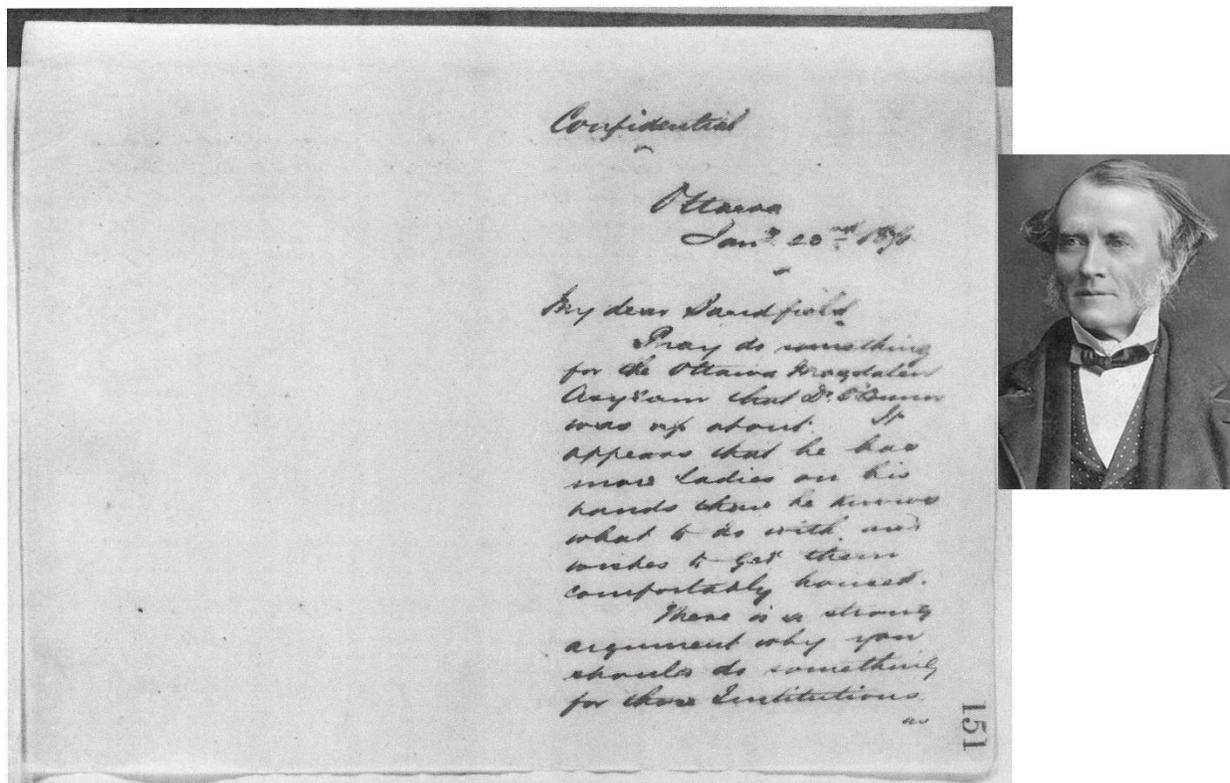
<sup>10</sup> Clean slate theory. The theory that children are solely a product of their environment and not their biology.

<sup>11</sup> Not Illegal, unethical and human rights abuses in retrospect using contemporary standards; but at the time.

Chapter four concentrates on church run maternity homes operating in Canada from 1945-1970. Schedule D includes an original list of these homes and a collection of images never before published in Canada. Maternity homes were critical in the systemic removal of babies from their unmarried mothers during the adoption mandate. This chapter takes the reader through the daily schedule of maternity home life during the 1960s, and highlights and demonstrates the coercive psychological systems at play in these institutions to separate unmarried mothers from their newborn babies. Although not exclusively, maternity homes became the locus of the adoption mandate for many unmarried mothers in Canada. This chapter reveals how maternity homes were “charged sites” (Kunzel, 1993:8) where evangelical women, social workers, clergy, and the medical community colluded to separate unmarried mothers from their newborn babies in postwar Canada.

Chapter five provides evidence of the social climate in the context of post WWII Canada. This period emphasized the return of “Rosie the Riveter” to the private sphere, reinforced the construction of “good” women as white mothers, and promoted nuclear families and heteronormativity, which was a major factor contributing to the mandate. Postwar maternalism and the “mother imperative” affected both married and unmarried women and contributed to an increasing demand for white adoptable infants. This chapter also explores the mandate in the context of race. Social prescriptions for white unmarried mothers in contrast to those for women of colour and Indigenous women are examined. Furthermore, a review of adoption statistics demonstrates the existence of the phenomenon of mass surrender in Canada. Empirical data gleaned from maternity home annual reports, provincial government reports and other sources illustrate trends leading to the number of babies surrendered for adoption by white unmarried mothers in Canada post WWII.

The conclusion offers a brief review of the findings; a discussion of the path forward exploring the relationship and interconnectedness of past and current adoption practice; political activism of the adoption reform movement; and, suggestions for further feminist inquiry in the field of critical adoption studies.



Illus. 1. Correspondence, Sandfield MacDonald Collection 1812-1872, LAC.

**Confidential**

**Ottawa  
January 20, 1871**

**My dear Sandfield,**

**Pray, do something for the Ottawa Magdalen Asylum that Dr. O'Connor was up about. It appears that he has more ladies on his hands than he knows what do with and wishes to get them comfortably housed.**

**There is a strong argument why you should do something for these Institutions as these wretched women fill the prisons and you have to pay the expense. As a mere matter of economy, and that I know always goes down well with you, you will save money by supporting such Asylums. I wish there were more establishments of the Good Shepherd kind in the Country. They are so well and community managed that they make a little money go further than any Protestant establishment.**

**I need not say to you that the Doctor is a good friend and will help to keep the RC's all right for you as well as for me.**

**Pray attend to this without delay.**

**Yours sincerely**

**The Hon. John A. Macdonald  
Toronto**

## Chapter One

### Constructing the Characterization and Incarceration of the Fallen

*The one fact is, that the fallen woman is socially dead. She has forfeited her womanhood, and with it her place in society. Her crime socially has been fatal, and final...she can find no place for her repentance, though she seek it with tears*  
(The Ladies Repository, 1869).



Illus. 2. *Found Drowned* by George Frederic Watts RA (1817-1904). 1867. Oil on canvas. Watts Gallery, Compton.

### Introduction

Poststructural theory suggests that epistemologies are specific to social contexts and that which is normalized or comes to be accepted as truth can be traced historically (Weinberg, 2004). Examining the history and evolution of the characterization of unmarried mothers and the incarceration of the ‘fallen’ in asylums, penitentiaries<sup>12</sup>, and institutions in Canada from the early

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<sup>12</sup> Mumm, 1996. In Victorian Britain, a female penitentiary was not a penal institution for the punishment of crime, but a charitable enterprise entered voluntarily by members of an outcast group, popularly known as “fallen” women”. “Asylum” was a place of refuge.

nineteenth century illuminates the theories that gave rise to the distinctive, un-replicated phenomenon that was the postwar adoption mandate (Shawyer, 1979; Solinger 1992; Kunzel, 1993; Fessler, 2006; Chambers 2007; Pietsch, 2012).

This chapter concentrates on unmarried motherhood in nineteenth century Canada to illustrate early construction and characterizations of the fallen as marginalized identities, the influence of emerging laws pertaining to marriage, illegitimacy, and abortion in a new Canada, and grim alternatives available to unmarried mothers within nineteenth century society. In Section II, various philanthropic movements and associated institutions that purported to rescue the fallen, such as Canada's Magdalen Laundries are explored to demonstrate the major influence of the theory of Magdalenism on the postwar adoption mandate. The evolution of these institutions is also examined as precursors to the maternity home movement in Canada.

## **Section I**

### **Forbidding Options -The Unmarried Mother in Nineteenth Century Canada**

Unmarried mothers in nineteenth century Canada were characterized as fallen women. The term "fallen" referred to a woman who had lost her innocence and therefore fallen from the grace of God.<sup>13</sup> Prior to, and in the nineteenth century, the meaning was associated with the loss or surrender of a woman's purity and the loss of her good reputation, either by seduction, rape, incest, her own free will, or the birth of an illegitimate child.<sup>14</sup> This term was an expression of the belief that a woman's moral and social acceptability was entwined with her obedience, chastity, and purity. Sexual experience was restricted to marriage and women who experienced

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<sup>13</sup> See the Bible, Genesis 3. The concept of "lost innocence" denoting a "fall" has its roots in the Bible. Adam and Eve transition from a state of innocent obedience to a state of guilty disobedience.

<sup>14</sup> See *The Fallen Woman*, art exhibition London UK, 25 Sept 2015 to 03 Jan 2016. "The figure of the fallen woman was popularly portrayed in art, literature and the media Victorian moralists warned against the consequences of losing one's virtue." Victorian art often portrayed woman in a prone position, as literally fallen.

any form of sexuality outside that institution for any reason, were considered fallen.<sup>15</sup> The term was associated with prostitution and unmarried mothers, both of which were regarded as the cause and effect of a woman's fall. In the work *Fallen Angels*, Gretchen Barnhill describes the fallen within ideals of womanhood in the context of nineteenth century Victorian culture:

The woman of the nineteenth century occupied a position of duality within Victorian culture. She was either Madonna or Magdalene, pure or ruined, familiar or foreign. Within this cultural construct, the criminal woman was defined largely by her departure from the ideal Victorian woman who was passionless, chaste, innocent, submissive and self-sacrificing. In contrast to the Victorian ideal, the woman who contravened the idealized conception of womanhood, whether by sexual misconduct or criminal act, was viewed as deviant and unnatural. She represented an unsettling anomaly that both repelled and fascinated the Victorians (Barnhill, 2005:3)

The concept of the fallen woman continued during the twentieth century. Although used infrequently in contemporary western culture, the theory behind the historical term "fallen" still circulates in culture today, for instance, via "slut shaming"<sup>16</sup> for those women who exercise sexual agency. Characterizations of women as either "good" or "bad", Madonna or Magdalene, and based on norms of female sexuality that regulate legitimate entry into motherhood were a major factor in the adoption mandate.

The laws of illegitimacy in British North America directly impacted the unmarried mother, both before and after her child was born. These laws acted as an inducement to marry before birth since a child born within marriage was treated as the legitimate offspring of a

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<sup>15</sup> The Oxford dictionary defines a 'fallen woman' as a woman regarded as having lost her honour through engaging in a sexual relationship outside marriage.

<sup>16</sup> The stigmatization of women for engaging in behavior judged to be promiscuous or sexually provocative.

husband; the act of marriage indicated the man's acceptance of a child as his own (Ward, 1981:38). In New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, legislation was enacted that held putative<sup>17</sup> fathers responsible for their offspring. Upper Canada adopted similar laws in 1837 (Ward, 1981:38). This kind of legislation continued through the twentieth century as a scheme to protect taxpayers from the cost of illegitimacy, along with adoption.<sup>18</sup>

Legislation which classified the children of unmarried mothers as "illegitimate" continued until 1974 in Canada (Canada. Department of Justice, 1999). This distinction not only socially marginalized mothers and their children, it also allowed for legislation, regulations and practices that targeted this specific group. The laws of illegitimacy impeded the rights of a child.<sup>19</sup> An illegitimate child was considered "filius nullius", meaning "kin of no nobody" or "son of no man" (Chambers, 2007:15). As pointed out by Lori Chambers:

...of course the idea that a child is the child of no one and has no kin relations is an obvious absurdity...the illegitimate child did have kin including a biological father, but the designation "nullius filius" reflected the patriarchal importance of marriage and of the father as the legal head of the household. A child born to a mother who was not formally connected to a man was unlawful (Chambers, 2007:15)

The status of being illegitimate<sup>20</sup> had other repercussions including loss of inheritance rights, and usually, the support of a father. Marriage laws, pertaining to children born outside marriage were enacted as part of patriarchal ideology to serve men; marriage became inextricably linked with the adoption mandate in postwar Canada.

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<sup>17</sup> The alleged father of the illegitimate child.

<sup>18</sup> See Children of Unmarried Parents Act Ontario (1921-1969), Saskatchewan (1978).

<sup>19</sup> See Bastard Nation. Those born out of wedlock and subsequently adopted continue to have their human rights impeded as they fight for the right to know their identities.

<sup>20</sup> Sometimes referred to as "bastard" child

The social penalties for pregnancy outside of wedlock could be severe. As Ward suggests, having broken the code of respectable sexual deportment, unmarried mothers were generally condemned for their delinquency (Ward, 1981). Discovery of a pregnancy outside of marriage often resulted in disgrace, termination of employment and diminished future prospects for marriage or employment (Backhouse, 1991). However, if a marriage occurred before the child's birth, penalties were often lighter, "no doubt their indiscretions earned them knowing looks, private chastisement, brief local notoriety, and some embarrassment but beyond this nothing more" (Ward, 1981:45).

In Victorian Canada, as in the postwar mandate, unsupported, unmarried mothers had few options. Societal prescriptions based on religious and patriarchal values resulted in stigma, shame, and loss of family honour that left few alternatives for those faced with illegitimate motherhood. Peter Ward, a leading scholar on unmarried mothers in the nineteenth century, locates options for unmarried mothers as being accepted by family<sup>21</sup>, abortion, infanticide<sup>22</sup>, baby-farms, and asylums.

According to Ward, evidence suggests that abortion and infanticide were quite common in the nineteenth century. He writes:

It seems safe to conclude that, despite strong sanctions in the criminal law, both were common solutions to the predicament of childbirth outside marriage. Although high rates of infanticide are estimated, it was difficult to prove in an environment of high infant mortality<sup>23</sup> (Ward, 1981:43-45)

Constance Backhouse also suggests that infanticide was a fact of life in nineteenth century

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<sup>21</sup> Mostly in rural communities

<sup>22</sup> The murder of an infant

<sup>23</sup> Infant deaths due to various causes such as disease, failure to thrive, etc. measured by the infant mortality rate which is the rate of number of infant deaths per 1,000 infants.

Canada. According to Backhouse, the bodies of newborn infants were routinely found in various locations in major cities (Backhouse, 1991:113). In Toronto, a few women were charged with the crime of infanticide, but none were given the death penalty (Strange, 1995:73). Those caught were often young, unmarried, domestic servants who had attempted to hide the pregnancy and “the harsh economic and social realities left these women with almost no options” (Backhouse, 1991:113).

Unlike those committing infanticide, who were often women in the working classes, women seeking termination of pregnancy were generally from the married, middle, and upper classes (Backhouse, 1991:146). According to Carolyn Strange, women wishing to terminate a pregnancy often depended on women’s advice networks, druggists, and midwives (Strange, 1995). Abortion in the nineteenth century often resulted in the death of both mother and child, and laws<sup>24</sup> inflicting heavy penalties for abortion after “quickening”<sup>25</sup> were enacted for the person performing the abortion. In postwar Canada, access to legal, medically safe abortions continued to be a barrier to reproductive choice for unmarried mothers.

Child surrender was employed by unmarried mothers, which resulted in the rise of foundling homes. Desperate mothers bundled up their babies and left them in the doorway of a church or foundling home where they might be taken in and cared for. It is unlikely that these mothers were uncaring abandoners as illustrated by a recent exhibition at The Foundling Museum in London, UK displaying the written petitions of mothers and the various keepsakes

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<sup>24</sup> See Ward –“New Brunswick made abortion a felony punishable by death in 1810, although it provided for lesser penalties if the child was not quick. At mid-century this distinction was abandoned and the penalty lowered to a maximum of 14 years in prison. In 1841 the first law in the Canadas imposed penalties of up to life in prison for convicted abortionists.”

<sup>25</sup> Medical term to describe the time at which the fetus can be felt by the mother, usually the second trimester.

left with their children in order identify and reconnect with them at a later time.<sup>26</sup> Nonetheless, these mothers were portrayed as unnatural, cold, uncaring women. The characterization of unmarried mothers as cold, uncaring, abandoners remained prevalent during the adoption mandate and beyond, wherein unmarried mothers were characterized as shameless women discarding their babies with little or no sentiment. An article in the *Winnipeg Free Press* in 1966 illustrates this: “One Children’s Aid Society official said he has seen unwed mothers discard their babies ‘as if they were used Kleenex’.” (Winnipeg Free Press, June 27, 1966).

Another form of child surrender was the use of informal transfer of a child to strangers or relatives to raise them. Adoption was uncommon, rarely referred to as “adoption”, and did not take the form in the nineteenth century that it later would. As articulated by Veronica Strong-Boag:

throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries many, even the majority of, single mothers, driven by circumstances or sentiment, appeared to have kept their babies, though how many and for what length of time is impossible to determine (Strong-Boag, 2006:7).

The most common form of caring for children surrendered to stranger families were indentures or apprenticeships to farm labour for boys and domestic service for girls. In these kinds of informal arrangements mothers and children retained filial attachments, and mothers who entered into these transactions usually had access to their child (Strong-Boag, 2006:11).

In urban centres, although not a legal transaction as yet, changes in fee structure by those providing child care from monthly or weekly to a one time lump sum fee suggested some kind of “adoption” or permanent transfer of a child. An adoption scam is described by Benjamin Waugh

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<sup>26</sup> See The Foundling Museum – The Fallen Women Exhibition – September 25, 2015 – January 3, 2016. Also see Permanent Collection of Artefacts “which reveal lives of the children and the desperation of the mothers”.

in the 1890 publication *Baby Farming*:

She advertised, Wanted a child to adopt by a respectable married couple; premium required; apply, etc.....two living babies were made over to her, one from Havre, one from Edgbaston. In neither case did the mother of the child see the advertisers' house. These brief advertisements brought her one ten pounds and one twenty pounds from persons who knew nothing of her, and not know her name and address. The children were never to be seen again (Waugh, 1890:7)

As suggested by Waugh, an additional option employed by unmarried mothers in nineteenth century Canada was known as baby-farming. This type of informal fosterage of children rose as an industry along with industrialism and urbanism. Much Victorian philanthropy was in response to the practice of baby-farming. Baby-farming or baby-farms were operated by procurers of mostly illegitimate infants and children, who would ostensibly take infants and children into a form of foster care upon receipt of a fee. Strange refers to baby-farming as a form of "passive infanticide" (Strange, 1995:75). Since most babies died in their care, baby-farmers were often referred to as "angel-makers".<sup>27</sup> Weekly payments were often not enough to ensure the survival of children who were weakened by malnutrition and frequent neglect. Even with a well-intentioned caregiver, children usually died.

Mothers who sent their children to baby-farms were reviled. In his work *Baby Farming* Waugh refers to the "infamous creatures, mere she-things, who look out for foul and dishonourable people to consign their children to" (Waugh, 1890:7). Notwithstanding Waugh's

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<sup>27</sup> See, H. Horstmann, *Consular Remembrances*, 1886 referring to baby-farmers in Germany. "In England they call these people "baby-farmers" – here they have the more poetical expression of "angel-makers". The children suffer in both countries but in Germany there is some slight consolation expressed in the term, which proclaims, at least, that the little innocents, if prematurely shoved out of this world and all its troubles, are furnished with wings for a better one".

characterizations, it would appear that for mothers to employ such a method suggests a kind of desperation difficult to conceive in contemporary Canada. In *Baby Farming*, Waugh describes the deplorable conditions found at one baby-farm:

It was a back room of a tumbledown labourer's cottage, scarcely fit for a coal place, about twelve feet square. Crouching and sprawling on the floor, in their own excrement, were two of them. They were tied in rickety chairs, one lay in a rotten bassinet. The stench of the room was so abominable that a grown man vomited on opening the door. Though three were nearly two years old, none of them could walk, only one could stand up even by the aid of a chair. In bitter March, there was no fire. Two children had a band of flannel round the loins; one had a small shawl; the rest only thin filthy, cotton frocks. All were yellow, fevered, skin and bone. None of them cried, they were too weak. One had bronchitis, one curvature of the spine, and the rest, rickets; all from their treatment. There was not a scrap of children's food in the house...and a man and his wife sat watching them die of filth and famine, so making their living (Waugh, 1890:7).

Although Waugh's accounts were made in England, baby-farming in Canada was essentially the same; children were either procured for "adoption" or to be cared for with payments made to those who neglected the children leading to their deaths; a form of passive infanticide (Ward, 1981:53). According to Strange, baby-farmers were mostly immune from prosecution, "because the untimely death of infants, who, were after all, bastards, was seen as nothing more than unfortunate" (Strange, 1995:75). By the late nineteenth century, baby-farming would decrease and be replaced with infants and orphans homes. Lack of societal support for unmarried mothers including childcare and financial assistance remained a problem for unmarried mothers throughout the twentieth century.

Another option for the unmarried mother was to leave the community to hide her shame in a larger urban centre, although Ward suggests there is persuasive evidence that unmarried mothers often had family and community support, particularly in rural areas. According to Ward, unmarried mothers were not as ostracised as novels, legends and general consensus might suggest, and evidence supports the idea that unmarried mothers “commonly enjoyed the support of their families and, probably, the toleration of their neighbours as well” (Ward, 1981:46). Despite this, leaving home for large urban areas was often the first step in leaving their shame behind when families were less than sympathetic, or too poor to assist (Strange, 1995:74). Some women crossed the border to a nearby American city to hide her shameful circumstances (Ward, 1981:49). Sending daughters far afield or to institutions to escape scandal and uphold the family honour was a strategy used by families of unmarried mothers until at least the 1970s.

In urban centres, with few employment prospects, unmarried mothers and their children were at the mercy of social reformers and rescuers of every sort, as well as the baby-farmers. As Ward suggests, “on her part the unmarried mother found it difficult to get help from someone who wished neither to exploit, nor to improve her” (Ward, 1981:56). Ward’s comments are profound as those seeking to improve and/or exploit unmarried mothers was endemic during the adoption mandate.

There is still much to uncover pertaining to unmarried mothers in the nineteenth century. As pointed out by leading scholars, Patricia Rooke and R.L. Schnell:

The problems attached to illegitimacy, foundlings, abandoned infants, infanticide, and nineteenth century back street abortion, are still awaiting sustained and serious quantitative and qualitative study in this country. Without such documentation, we can only speculate on the fates of pregnant, unwed, or deserted women who found themselves

without employment or shelter, or who after confinement were forced to surrender or abandon their babies or commit infanticide. (Rooke, Schnell, 1983:115).

## Section II

### The Magdalen, Rescue, Salvationist and Maternity Home Movement



Illus. 3. “In the Laundry’s Steam Mangle”, Home of the Friendless, Wellington St., Ottawa, circa 1917.<sup>28</sup>

In the mid to late nineteenth century, the rescue movement,<sup>29</sup> a movement motivated by a paternalistic and philanthropic concern for illegitimacy, prostitution, baby-farming, and the moral and physical contagion they represented, created societal strategies for the moral

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<sup>28</sup> <sup>28</sup> See Ritchie, (2013). No Longer Forgotten or Friendless “Any girl or woman desiring to forsake a life of sin will find a helping hand and shelter if needed at the Home for Friendless Women, 412 Wellington Street’ was the notice that ran regularly in the Ottawa Citizen’s classified advertisements through the 1880s. The home was located just west of Bay Street. It was a workhouse, operating as a laundry.”

<sup>29</sup> A movement to rescue the fallen woman.

regulation of women. Those strategies included the development of institutions to house and ultimately reform the moral character of the fallen. This philanthropy was directed solely at women<sup>30</sup> including prostitutes, criminals, and unmarried mothers considered fallen from grace, and was already established in Canada by 1871 as the letter from Sir John A. Macdonald to Premier Sandfield suggests (John Sandfield MacDonald Collection, 1812-1972, LAC).

Charitable institutions based on British philanthropic models<sup>31</sup> included women's refuges, infant homes, poor-houses, and orphanages.<sup>32</sup> Some of these institutions offered refuge to unmarried mothers and their children, as well as referrals to domestic service or wet-nurse situations to assist mothers in obtaining employment (Ward, 1981:51). These homes were usually founded by Christian women benevolent societies and admittance of inmates was often determined based on the prejudices and preferences of the ladies admitting committees. Catholic Magdalen Asylums also provided refuge, although not maternity care, and were strongly supported by governments, again, as MacDonald's letter to Sandfield implies. Although many institutions were founded to house the fallen, even homes not specifically designed for the purpose housed unmarried mothers

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<sup>30</sup> See Mahood (1990). *The Magdalenes: Prostitution in the nineteenth century*. There was no corresponding class of men whose status and behaviour was targeted in this way, primarily because women seemed naturally to appear as paternalism's objects based on the sex specific roles of 19<sup>th</sup> Victorian Britain. This raises issue of the "double standard" and the social construction of a "dangerous" female sexuality.

<sup>31</sup> See P.T. Rooke & R.L. Schnell, *Discarding the Asylum*, 1983. Institutions included: Kingston House of Industry, Toronto House of Industry, Toronto Almshouse, Hamilton House of Refuge, Halifax Poor Asylum (1759), PEI Poor Home (1869), Montreal Orphan Asylum (1822), Hamilton Ladies Benevolent Society and Orphan Asylum (1851), Saint John Protestant Orphan Asylum (1854), St. John's Church of England Widows' and Orphan Asylum (1855), Toronto Girl's Home and Public Nursery (1856), Kingston's Orphan Home and Widow's Friend Society (1857), Halifax Protestant Orphan's Home (1857), Saint Paul's Almshouse of Industry for Girls, Halifax (1867), Montreal Protestant Infant's Home (1870), Victoria Protestant Orphan's Home (1873), Women's Refuge and Children's Home and Home for Orphans, Aged and Friendless, London (1874-76), Halifax Infants' Home (1875) Protestant Children's Home, Winnipeg (1885), Methodist Orphanage, St. John's (1888), Maternity Home, Victoria (1893), Alexandra Orphanage, Vancouver (1894), Kingston Infants' Home and Home for Friendless Women (1894), Protestant Orphans' Home, PEI (1907), Wood's Christian Home (1915).

<sup>32</sup> See Backhouse (1991, p.137). Infant mortality rates in these institutions was extremely high. As reported by Backhouse, *La Creche D'Youville*, managed in Montreal by the Grey Nuns looked after over fifteen thousand infants between 1801 and 1870 and between 80-90 percent died in institutional care.

and their children from time to time.<sup>33</sup>

The concept of the deserving and undeserving poor also migrated from England<sup>34</sup> and the unmarried mother, due to her fallen state, was among the least deserving of any type of support. In *Discarding the Asylum: From Child Rescue to the Welfare State in English Canada*, Patricia Rooke and R.L. Schnell provide us with a glimpse into some of these institutions and the fate of unmarried mothers and their babies during the nineteenth century. Protestant Orphan Homes, mostly established in the mid to late nineteenth century, had strict admittance requirements. According to Rooke and Schnell:

Like most Protestant Orphan's Homes, the Winnipeg and Hamilton being notable exceptions, the Ottawa establishment did not receive illegitimate children as Mrs. Armstrong discovered when she was obliged to produce a marriage certification for a suspicious ladies' committee before they admit her three children from Brockville (Rooke, Schnell, 1983:115)

Specialized homes and foundling hospitals were created for the illegitimate, which, as pointed out by Rooke and Schnell, caused a great stir as it was thought these institutions “encouraged women to escape the punishments their fallen condition deserves” (Rooke, Schnell, 1983:115). Despite Victorian ideals, it was often socially conscious Christian women who organized lying-in hospitals, female rescue homes, and foundling homes for “that unforgiven class of women who received little psychological or physical support during their confinements” (Rooke, Schnell, 1983:116). Some offered after-care for the unmarried mother and her infant, as well as

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<sup>33</sup> See Ward – Although the Kingston House of Industry “forbade the admission of unchaste women and their bastards... between 1850 and 1857, twenty-eight unmarried mothers and their children too refuge there for periods ranging from two days to ten months.”

<sup>34</sup> Even though the English Poor Laws did not survive the migration and were not included in Upper Canada's Civil Law in 1792.

job placement bureaus where the unmarried mother could receive training for domestic service. As an example, the Women's Refuge and Children's Home in London, Ontario required a twelve month stay in which a mother might be trained into a better situation or at the very least be religiously improved (Rooke, Schnell, 1983:117).

Some homes allowed mothers to board their children while they worked, whereas others required mothers to wet-nurse not only their children, but the children of others. An example is the Toronto Infant's Home where a system of "mother nurses" was employed. Mothers were required to remain four months and nurse one other baby besides their own. In the first year a woman was expected to suckle four infants in return for room, board, and training in domestic service (Rooke, Schnell, 1983:118). For this service, the home received a government grant in addition to a city grant. Baby formula had not yet been developed, and using unmarried mothers as wet-nurses was common practice throughout institutions in Canada. The Halifax Infant's Home "required wet-nurses wishing to have their own infants with them to pay \$3.00 a month for the privilege in 1875" (Rooke, Schell, 1983:119). Despite the use of wet-nurses, infant mortality remained at approximately 30% in these institutions (Rooke, Schnell, 1983:119).

Some women judged too "low" or "fallen" usually due to multiple illegitimate pregnancies, were not admitted into these homes, but were expected to attend at the Magdalen Asylums or the London and Hamilton homes that accepted infants. Despite the disapproval of those who insisted that institutions taking care of "natural"<sup>35</sup> children were in fact "putting a premium on vice", an Act for the Protection of Infant Children was passed in 1887 followed by the Maternity Boarding Act, twenty-seven years later (Rooke, Schnell, 1983:121). Unmarried mothers were often required to enter these homes before birth, and to agree to stay if they wanted

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<sup>35</sup> Refers to a child born out of wedlock.

their infants admitted. The committee of the Winnipeg Female Refuge Home, concerned about disdain for these rules by some mothers, regarded such disdain as an attempt to avoid the consequences or the responsibilities of their sins (Rooke, Schnell, 1983:123). The Friendly Home in Montreal had similar rules, “insisting that a girl attend her child during nursing and not ‘add to one’s sin by casting the baby off’” (Rooke, Schnell, 1983:123). Catholic Institutions were less judgmental surrounding admission, but this was often criticized as encouraging promiscuity and abandonment. The higher number of infants accepted by Catholic run institutions meant they were more susceptible to higher numbers of infant mortality, and thus greater criticism (Rooke, Schnell, 1983). Rooke and Schnell also note that many unmarried mothers were forced into poor houses to deliver their babies and that the records of these institutions had a large number of “bastards” in their records as inmates. Mothers were criticized for the “ease with which they could hide their shame at provincial expense” (Rooke, Schnell, 1983:129).

Race is mostly invisible in Rooke and Schnell’s work except it is noted that the Halifax Infant’s Home declined the admittance of children of colour; they were relegated to poor houses until the founding of the Halifax Home for Coloured Children in the twentieth century. Different prescriptions for unmarried mothers would continue to be employed for white women, women of colour, and Indigenous women in Canada during the postwar adoption mandate.

### **Magdalenism - Canada’s Magdalen Laundries**

To illustrate the interconnectedness and reproduction of nineteenth century attitudes, philosophies, characterizations, and institutions pertaining to white unmarried mothers during the postwar adoption mandate, I concentrate on the influence of Magdalenism, a punitive theory of redemptive penance to restore the fallen through voluntary and involuntary incarceration. With recent revelations about, and restitution to, Magdalen Laundry survivors in Ireland it seemed

appropriate to examine Canada's Magdalen Laundries,<sup>36</sup> which today are largely forgotten, to uncover the use of Magdalenism and the institutionalization of the fallen in Canada. This examination illustrates the establishment of illegitimate motherhood identities, which continued to be reproduced throughout the twentieth century up to and including the 1970s. To overlook the role of Magdalenism, Canada's Magdalen Asylums, and similar institutions as forerunners to the maternity home movement in Canada would leave out crucial information that illustrates not only the philosophies, theories, and principles that informed the detention of women deemed morally defective, but also the forms of admittance and regulation of the daily lives of the women in these facilities, which changed little over a hundred and fifty year period. To study the influence of Canada's maternity homes on the adoption mandate without first looking at its Magdalen Asylums would neglect the historical context within which these homes evolved. With this in mind, this section will explore the Magdalen movement to reform the fallen and how this movement of redemptive, punitive penance and incarceration was embraced by governments, social reformers, the citizenry of Victorian Canada, and future generations.

Named for Mary Magdalene,<sup>37</sup> a prostitute in the Bible who anointed the feet of Jesus as an act of faith, was forgiven her sins and reformed (Luke 7, 36-50), the purpose of Magdalen Asylums was the transformation and reclamation of fallen women. Following the path of Mary Magdalene, the prior sins of the fallen, once expunged, discontinued, and appropriately suffered for, would set a woman on the path to respectability and a return to the grace of God. Magdalen

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<sup>36</sup> An in-depth study of the Magdalen Asylums [Laundries] in Canada is still not available.

<sup>37</sup> Although Magdalene is spelled with an "e" most institutions were spelled Magdalen and penitents known as Magdalens.

Asylums<sup>38</sup> not only confined women voluntarily,<sup>39</sup> but also became an informal arm of Canada's criminal justice system, which although non-statutory, allowed for Justices to incarcerate women for sexual misdemeanours, for years, or even a lifetime (Mahood, 1990).

Magdalenism was not a new idea. As far back as 1005 the Metz Convent in France is possibly the first house of this kind, although this continues to be disputed by historians. The Magdalens in Germany were in existence by the 13<sup>th</sup> century as "attested by the Bulls of Gregory IX and Innocent IV (1243-54) which granted them important privileges" (McGahan, 1910). Other notable communities of Magdalens were established in Naples in 1324, Rome, established by Leo X in 1520, and Seville in 1550 (McGahan, 1910). In Marseilles, France Magdalens were established by Bertram around 1272, who was known as a "saintly man who associated with himself in his work of rescuing fallen women along with other zealous men" (McGahan, 1910:1). By 1696 there were several institutions in France, in Paris, Rouen and Bordeaux, although it appears that all were abolished during the French Revolution (Tait, 1842). It wasn't until 1821, with the resurgence of Magdalenism fuelled by the social reform movement, when another institution, the Bon-Pasteur (Good Shepherd) was established for receiving penitent prostitutes in Paris (Tait, 1842).

These institutions were often named or referred to as penitentiaries or asylums. Magdalen Asylums and later, maternity homes, were female bastions. These institutions were managed by women, usually unmarried Protestant matrons; or Anglican and Catholic nuns. Although men were often on the Board of Directors, they rarely entered the internal sanctuary of a Magdalen Asylum or later, a maternity home. Most establishments had rules and regulations for the

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<sup>38</sup> Often referred to as Magdalen Laundries due to the unpaid laundry work done by inmates.

<sup>39</sup> Although women often entered voluntarily they were required in most cases to agree to be detained for one year as "voluntary prisoners" although some women were detained for life. See James M. Smith, Ireland's Magdalen Laundries and the Nation's Architecture of Containment.

admittance of men.

Some institutions stated their purpose as giving aid to women released from jail, while others, such as Lock Asylums<sup>40</sup>, were locked, and for the isolation and treatment of women with Venereal Disease (Mahood, 1990). Most cited their purpose as the reclamation of the fallen, which could include perpetrators of petty crimes, alcoholics and the feeble-minded (Mumm, 1996). By the end of the nineteenth century, due to financial constraints, many institutions allowed admittance to women for multiple reasons (Mumm, 1996). In the book *Magdalenism* written in 1842, William Tait offers an overview of the purpose of Magdalen Asylums:

Magdalen Asylums are institutions established for the purpose of receiving such unfortunate females as appear to have experienced a conviction of the sinfulness of their conduct, and are willing to avail themselves of the advantages which they hold out to them. The object which these asylums have principally in view, are to afford a temporary refuge till a more permanent one be obtained - to give them a religious and other necessary instructions, such as reading, sewing, washing, glazing curtain &c &c. – to endeavour to effect a reconciliation with their friends, and restore the females to their status in society – or to produce for them such situations as they are qualified to undertake, after their residence for a certain period in the institution (Tait, 1842:325)<sup>41</sup>

The theories associated with Magdalenism and its related asylums spread quickly during the nineteenth century. According to Frances Finnegan, a leading authority on Magdalen

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<sup>40</sup> Mahood, 1990. The first Lock Hospital in Scotland was located on the site of the medieval leper house in Southwark. It has been suggested by Walkowitz (1974) that prostitutes became the social lepers of the industrial revolution as syphilis replaced leprosy as the symbol of social contagion and disease. Also see Backhouse *Petticoats and Prejudice* for more on the Contagious Diseases Act in Canada. In Canada no lock hospitals were ever certified even though the Contagious Diseases Act was in effect. (Backhouse, 1991).

<sup>41</sup> As we shall see later in this work, the purpose of Magdalen Asylums is almost identical to the stated aims and objectives of maternity homes in Canada.

Asylums, the first Magdalen charity was established in London, UK in 1758. By 1898 there were more than 300 Magdalen institutions in England (Finnegan, 2001). Early patrons were often royalty and aristocrats. As an example, the Patroness of the London institution in 1803 was Her Majesty Queen Charlotte and governors included the Earl of Hertford, Charles, Earl of Romney, Hugh, Duke of Northumberland, and Thomas, Earl of Wilton among others.<sup>42</sup> Rules for admission were strict and the concept of admission requirements would transfer both ideologically and literally to twentieth century maternity homes.

In Scotland, the Edinburgh Magdalen Asylum opened in 1797 followed by Glasgow in 1815, Aberdeen in 1842, and many more were scattered throughout the country in smaller centres (Mahood, 1990). In Ireland, a Magdalen Asylum for Protestant girls was founded in Leeson Street, Dublin in 1767 by Lady Arabella Denny, an Irish philanthropist. Two homes operated in Cork, one a Catholic Magdalen Asylum established in 1809, as well as a Protestant Refuge in 1810. Another opened in Dublin in 1813 for “fallen females of every religious persuasion” (Finnegan, 2001:9). The history of the Good Shepherd Sisters, an order that ran many of these institutions, is synonymous with the worldwide spread of Magdalen Asylums (Smith, 2007). According to Finnegan, “the Good Shepherd Sisters, committed to the reform of fallen women, would dominate the Female Penitentiary Movement in Ireland for almost a century and a half” (Finnegan, 2001:10). In Australia Good Shepherd houses opened in Oakleigh and Albert Park, Melbourne, Bendigo, Hobart, Perth, Sydney, Brisbane and Adelaide between 1863 and 1946. In addition, houses were opened in New Zealand, in Christchurch, Auckland, and Wellington.

The Magdalen movement migrated to the United States and Canada when the first

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<sup>42</sup> See A List of Governors of the Magdalen Hospital, January 25, 1803.

institution of its kind, run by the Magdalen Society of Philadelphia, was founded in 1800 to rescue and reform wayward women and prostitutes (Historical Society of Philadelphia (HSP), 2003). The Philadelphia Magdalen Society was founded by prominent clergymen with strong affiliations with either the Episcopal or Presbyterian Church. (HSP, 2003). By the late 1900s the home concentrated on “wayward or homeless girls rather than prostitutes”, which was the trend for many of these institutions by the end of the nineteenth century (HSP, 2003:3). Other Magdalen institutions were formed in Boston in 1816, New York in 1832 (McDowall, 1832), Chicago (Smith, 2007) and San Francisco in 1857 by Catholic Sisters.

The first Catholic Magdalen Asylum in Canada was founded in Montreal in the late 1820s (Ward, 1984:15). As religious rehabilitation was one of the central aims of Magdalen Asylums, institutions founded in Canada were either Catholic or Protestant. According to Ward, between 1829 and 1836 the successor to the first Magdalen Asylum in Canada admitted over 300 women and was subsidized by the colonial government<sup>43</sup> and the Catholic Church (Ward, 1984). It is unclear but probable that this was the Magdalen Asylum of Maria Monk.<sup>44</sup> Maria Monk was a nun who attested: that she was sexually abused by a priest in a Montreal convent, that this was widespread within the institution, and that there was a method to dispose of infants created by such activities. An affidavit in the case sworn by Madame McDonnell, the matron of the Montreal Magdalen Asylum before a Justice of the Peace in Montreal in 1836 declared “that for six years past she had conducted and managed an institution in the city of Montreal, commonly known and distinguished as the Magdalen Asylum”.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> In 1836 colonial government was divided by Upper and Lower Canada. Montreal was in Lower Canada.

<sup>44</sup> See *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk*. Maria Monk was widely discredited. According to the Affidavit of Madame McDonnell, Maria Monk spent time at, and left pregnant from the Montreal Magdalen Asylum.

<sup>45</sup> See Affidavit of Madame D.C. McDonnell, Matron of the Montreal Magdalen Asylum, Ste. Genevieve Street, sworn in the Province of Lower Canada, District of Montreal.

Upon the invitation of the Bishop of Montreal in 1844, The Sisters of the Good Shepherd arrived in Montreal to found a Catholic Magdalen Asylum. The Canada Directory for 1857-58 shows two Magdalen Asylums in Montreal, a Protestant Magdalen Asylum on St. Catherine Street with Miss Veitch listed as Matron, and a Roman Catholic Magdalen Asylum at Sherbrooke St. with Sister St. Gabriel listed as the superior. The Soeurs du bon Pasteur also established St. Magdalen's Refuge in 1850 in Quebec City directed by Marie-Josphte Fitzback (Mrs. Roy) to receive women released from jail. Although the Quebec establishment does not appear to be listed in the Canada Directory for 1857-58, it does appear in the 1865 Statutes for the Province of Canada. According to a history compiled by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, this home remained in existence in different forms until 1975 (SGS).

In Toronto, middle class women organized a Magdalen home to provide shelter to women as an alternative to jail, "Mrs. Elizabeth Dunlop... joined with fifteen other prominent Toronto women to incorporate the Toronto Magdalene Asylum" (Backhouse, 1991:234). This institution was founded in Toronto in 1852 and was known as the Industrial House of Refuge or Magdalene<sup>46</sup> Asylum. The first Annual Report states:

The First Annual Meeting of the Friends and Subscribers to the Toronto Magdalene Asylum was held on Monday afternoon, the 20<sup>th</sup> of March 1854, in the Hall of the Mechanics' Institute. There was a large attendance of ladies and a number of the most influential gentlemen in the City were also present (First Annual Meeting of the Toronto Magdalen Asylum, 1877).

Twenty-one years later, in 1877, the Twenty-Second Annual Report of the Toronto Magdalene Asylum in 1877 reports that:

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<sup>46</sup> Toronto Magdalene Asylum did use the "e" in the word Magdalene.

In a few months, this Institution will have completed its twenty-fifth year, having been established in 1852 – a quarter of a century ago – and was carried on for about seven years in a small two-storey house in Richmond Street. Afterwards, it was removed to the old building on Yonge Street, Yorkville, which was recently sold to assist in building the present commodious premises.<sup>47</sup>

In the same 1877 report, the Matron of the establishment states:

We never reject any, however low or degraded, who ask admittance, and are willing to stay the prescribed time and submit to the rules. They have comfortable workrooms and dormitories, have plain but nourishing food supplied to them, and are kept busily employed on remunerative work such as washing, sewing &c., as well as the household duties, and are encouraged to fit themselves for the places of service to which they will be sent at the end of their term (Twenty-Second Annual Report of the Toronto Magdalene Asylum, 1877)

This report also provides insight into the daily routine of the inhabitants. These early reports on the internal pastimes and schedules of the inmates of Magdalen Asylums in Canada are significant, because the daily schedules for women in Canada's maternity homes continued to be almost identical in postwar Canada (See Appendix A).

Unmarried mothers were exploited for their labour not only in early Magdalen laundries but also in maternity homes in postwar Canada. The use of unmarried mothers for unpaid and unregulated work within such institutions, which were financially subsidized by governments

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<sup>47</sup> From this report it appears there may have been two separate addresses for the Magdalen Asylum in the Yorkville area as it is mentioned that the building at Yonge Street, Yorkville was sold. Most probably the "commodious premises" referred to in the 1877 report, is the Magdalen Asylum situated on McMurrich St. in St. Paul's Ward, formerly the Village of Yorkville. See History of Toronto and County of York, 1885, by C.B. Robinson. Presently home of Belmont House.

and churches, continued for over one hundred years in Canada. As an example, in 1876, property was acquired at West Lodge Avenue north of Queen St. West by Archbishop John Joseph Lynch of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Toronto, which he sold to the Congregation of Our Lady of Good Charity of the Good Shepherd for one dollar to establish a Catholic Magdalen Asylum in Toronto<sup>48</sup> (Laycock, Myrvold, 1991:37). The order supported the charity by running a laundry. An undated letter from Sister Mary of the Good Shepherd to His Grace Reverend Lynch requests steam laundry machinery in the amount of \$600 along with alterations to be made for its installation which indicates there was a large laundry enterprise at the Toronto Magdalen Asylum (ARCAT). In addition, a list entitled “Sisters Names and Charges” suggests that many Sisters were actively involved in overseeing the laundry work<sup>49</sup> with Sister Magdalen St. Ignatius being identified as the Laundry Accountant (ARCAT). The work done by unpaid penitents in the commercial laundry was a source of “considerable revenue” according to the Inspector of Asylums in 1887 who reported the following:

I visited the Good Shepherd Refuge Toronto on the 10<sup>th</sup> March when there were in residence forty-five adult women and three girls. The premises were in excellent order and perfectly clean. I found that the structural addition to the building had been completed, and that the laundry operations, which form a source of considerable revenue to the Institution, largely extended (Sessional Papers, 1887, Vol.XIX, Part V, First Session of the Sixth Legislature, 1887, AO).

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<sup>48</sup> See Watercolour circa 1800 at Toronto Reference Library, Baldwin JRR528

<sup>49</sup> This document reveals many names and charges related to the laundry including Sister M. of St. Clare as Mistress of Linen Room, Sister Mary De Pazzi as Mistress of Tacking Room, Sister M. of St. Jerome as Mistress of Ironing Room, Sister M. of St. Veronica as Charge of Laundry Machines, Sister M. of St. Dositheus as Second over Laundry Machines among several others. Sister M. of St. Martha and Sister M. of St. Philomena are listed as employed in the packing room with a notation in the document that Sister of St. Philomena was “not well, 16 years old”.

Detaining and utilizing women for work against their will was not without its detractors or notoriety in Toronto newspapers. In The *Toronto Daily Star* in 1919 an article appeared with the headline “Issues Writ Against Good Shepherd Home” in which a woman named Louisa Telling sued the institution for \$20,000 for being detained against her will and forced to work in the laundries of the institution for no wages. The article states:

It will be remembered that, during the inquest into the death of Alice Halloran, who died January 29<sup>th</sup> from injuries received while escaping from the Refuge of the Good Shepherd, Mrs. Louisa Telling swore that she was taken to the institution on West Lodge Avenue under the pretext that she was going downtown, and was kept in the refuge for one year and eleven months without any legal warrant of commitment and against her will (The Toronto Daily Star, February 28, 1919:2)

In 1927 this institution was again in the news with the headline “Good Shepherd Home – Inmates not paid for work in laundry” in which the home was criticized for its policy of paying no wages to those working in the laundry. The article states:

Ostensibly a charity it is a money-making laundry business where prison labour is employed in competition with capital invested in legitimate laundry businesses... there is no wage or recompense given to those who work in the laundry (Toronto Telegram, September 16, 1927:1-3)

On April 3, 1866, the Sisters of the Good Shepherd opened the City of Ottawa’s first Magdalen Asylum (Pearl-McDowell, 2010). In 1882 a book entitled *A Short Notice on the Origin and Object of the Sisters of Lady of Charity better known as Sisters of the Good Shepherd*<sup>50</sup> (SNOOLC, 1882), was published by the Asylum. This document aids in the

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<sup>50</sup> See National Library of Canada. Written by a friend of the institution.

understanding of the classes within most Magdalen Asylums and in particular the Asylum in Ottawa, the first being the “Preservation Class,” which is made up of young girls “who had not given open scandal but whose position had been such as to expose them to great danger” (SNOOLC, 1882:10). These girls and women were kept separate from the penitents, the next class within the Magdalen Asylum. Penitents were women who had forsaken the path of virtue. These were the fallen women, many who entered the house of their own free will, or had been sent there by family or local justices. The third class included those women who formed the class of the “Perseverance or Magdalens,” a neo-religious order.<sup>51</sup> After a probationary period of one year they were given a new religious name, and permitted to wear semi-religious garb, “they are all clothed in black, and wear a crucifix on the breast; and a rosary at their side” (SNOOLC, 1882:10). For prostitutes and unmarried mothers, the option to become a Magdalen required them to maintain vows. However, reformation had its limitations. Due to their prior sins, Magdalens could not take full religious vows and be equal to the Sisters that aided them:

These good creatures lead lives of extraordinary penance and prayer, yet for obvious reasons, no matter how pious a penitent may become, no matter what talent, rank or fortune she may have possessed, she can never be received as a member of the Community of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. On this point the rule knows no exception (SNOOLC, 1882:11)

Women were “voluntary prisoners” and so remained off the public purse while under the private auspices of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd as intimated by Sir John A. Macdonald in his letter to Sandfield. Although inspected annually by the Inspector of Prisons and Asylums, comments

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<sup>51</sup> Inspector of Prisons and Public Charities report of 1887 “I made an inspection of the Good Shepherd Magdalen Asylum, Ottawa on the 7<sup>th</sup> September, and on that day there were in residence, 100 females in four different classes into which the population of the charity is divided. I found the inmates thoroughly employed in laundry work, sewing etc. and the Asylum was in good order. The books were properly kept.

of Inspectors were mostly restricted to cleanliness, number of and disposition of inmates, the state of bookkeeping, and general orderliness of the institution.<sup>52</sup>

The essay printed by the institution also affords some insight as to the work being done in the Asylum by the penitents.

Many are engaged in the laundry, drying and ironing rooms, and some in the fields and garden. Others who have a taste for it are taught plain and fancy sewing; some make gloves, others artificial flowers; in the Monastery at Ottawa is a printing press, where books relating to the community are printed<sup>53</sup> (SNOOLC, 1882:23)

Seven years after the opening of the Ottawa institution, an Act to Incorporate the Hamilton Female Home was assented to on the 29<sup>th</sup> of March 1873. This home was a Protestant facility with similar aims and objectives, and listed as a Magdalen Asylum in Sessional Papers of 1887 which include the reports of inspections.<sup>54</sup> In this report, it is noted that the Matron informed the inspector that she was very anxious to extend the building so that an infirmary for infants might be established. The Inspector reported that “the outside laundry work has had to be given up, so the time of the adult inmates was fully occupied in the care of infants” which attests to the prior existence of a commercial laundry similar to other Magdalen establishments.

In 1885, the Women’s Christian Association of London incorporated and an Order in Council was ratified in 1880 to establish the Women’s Refuge and Infant’s Home, which was recorded in the 1887 Sessional Papers as a Magdalen Asylum. This institution was inspected on

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<sup>52</sup> See as an example the Eighteenth Annual Report of the Inspector of Prisons and Public Charities upon the Houses of Refuge and Orphan and Magdalen Asylums 1887. The report for the Good Shepherd Refuge for Fallen Women Toronto shows movement of inmates, religious denomination, nationalities, and place admitted from. The inspector in his commentary states that “I found the Charity in its usual condition of order and cleanliness, and the inmates busily employed. The books were in good order and neatly kept.”

<sup>53</sup> Including the one quoted.

<sup>54</sup> Inspector visited this institution on the 24<sup>th</sup> June, 1887 reporting nine adults and fifteen children in residence.

the 7<sup>th</sup> of May 1887. At that time, there were reported to be seven women and thirteen children in residence, and it was reported that the building had brightened up considerably since the last inspection and that it was in good order. In Ottawa, a Home for the Friendless<sup>55</sup> was founded in 1887 which was financed by the running of a laundry. The women in this Ottawa home received “reasonable” wages and became skilled Laund-resses” (Ritchie, 2013:4). Similar to other homes of its kind established near the turn of the century, this home took in women with various problems, including unmarried mothers. An annual report from the home states its purpose:

provide a temporary shelter and employment to any homeless, friend-less women, without reference to creed, nationality, age or condition, at any time, night or day; the only condition of admission being a desire to forsake sin and a willingness to comply with the rules of the Home (Ritchie, 2013:3)

The work of the Good Shepherd Sisters continued in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. In 1891, the Good Shepherd Sisters incorporated in the city of Halifax, the incorporation stating that:

7. The institution established in the city of Halifax by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd at Halifax, for the purposes of reforming Roman Catholic women and girls who have lapsed from virtue, or been guilty of offences against the law, and of protecting and preserving girls who are in danger of falling into dissolute or vicious habits, shall be called the Good Shepherd Reformatory and Industrial Refuge (Statutes of Nova Scotia, 1891)

The convent of the Good Shepherd in New Brunswick was originally a Federal Reformatory at

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<sup>55</sup> Image at the beginning of this chapter shows the Home for the Friendless, Ottawa. In 2013, a plaque commemorating the burials in three plots was erected at the Beechwood Cemetery in Ottawa for those who died in this home, the Protestant Orphans Home, and the Protestant Home for the Aged.

133 Waterloo Street in Saint John. This institution was established as a federal prison around 1870 by King Edward VII, and the Sisters of the Good Shepherd were paid by the federal, provincial and municipal governments to run the Magdalen Asylum. Female inmates were treated as forced labourers in the commercial laundry. A publication about this institution entitled *Fifty Golden Years 1893-1943* states, “The Monastery is a home where young girls learn to repair the past, to be upright souls and good Christians, and thus to become useful members of society” (Sheldon, 2012). These ideals were to continue into the following century and in fact, became the premise on which the adoption mandate rested.

Although some women did speak out about the horrors they experienced, their claims were usually dismissed. Georgina Williams is a survivor of the Saint John Magdalen Asylum.<sup>56</sup> Georgina was conceived through rape and her mother, a 12 year old Migmaw girl, was sent to the nuns for being pregnant. Georgina alleges that she was born in this institution, sent to the laundries to work alongside her mother at the age of 8, and escaped through an unbarred window at the age of eighteen. Georgina took her case to court. In the forward of her book entitled *Delcina's Tears* she writes:

Fifteen days and seventeen witnesses later, Justice Turnbull declared that I was of unsound mind and none of the events had ever happened, therefore the following is obviously a work of fiction (Williams, 2005)

The lived experiences of unmarried mothers and others confined in Canada's institutions for the fallen continue to be minimized and dismissed. This denial of women's accounts continues today as women from the postwar adoption mandate begin to share their lived experiences as unmarried mothers in Canada's maternity homes and hospitals. They are often met with

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<sup>56</sup> See Global News 16x9 “Slave Labour: Magdalen Laundries Disgraced Irish Catholic Women” which aired February 5, 2012 in which Georgina Williams (now Bowman) is interviewed.

incredulity.

The Sisters of the Good Shepherd were not the only Catholic sisters housing the fallen. The Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul of Halifax were also involved in rescue work with unmarried mothers along with the Grey Nuns of Montreal who were involved in many areas of social welfare.<sup>57</sup> The Miséricordia Sisters, founded in Montreal in 1845 as a lay charity was constituted as a Catholic order and given their name by Bishop Bourget three years later. As the twentieth century approached, it was the Miséricordia Sisters and the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul, and not the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, who would loom large in the adoption mandate in postwar Canada.

### **Conclusion**

Characterizations of the “fallen” and institutions to house them, both Catholic and Protestant, in the UK, Canada and the United States slowly evolved, although the Catholic Magdalen Laundries continued mostly in their original form throughout the twentieth century in Ireland and Australia.<sup>58</sup> Through the work of the Salvation Army, the major churches in Canada, and the YWCA, theories of Magdalenism and its institutions, although somewhat reformed, survived industrialization and urbanization in Canada. In fact, Magdalenism flourished in the twentieth century more than ever before as the notion of the good and valuable Canadian woman became entrenched as white, pure, and devoted to motherhood.

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<sup>57</sup> See Grey Nuns of Montreal. The Sisters of Charity, also known as the Grey Nuns established more than 60 institutions for seniors, orphans, and the sick.

<sup>58</sup> See Smith, *Ireland's Magdalen Laundries and the Nations Architecture of Containment*. According to Smith, the ten Magdalen Laundries which operated from 1922 and 1996 in Ireland took on a distinct character after political independence, functioning less as rehabilitative short term refuges with fewer women entering voluntarily and being detained for longer periods, and increasingly served a recarceral and punitive function until 1996. Magdalen Laundries run by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd in Australia maintained a similar profile. See *Sydney Morning Herald* December 21, 2013 “Australia had eight Magdalene laundries – all at Sisters of the Good Shepherd convents – from the 1940s until the 1970s. There is no firm data on how many girls they held but it’s estimated to be several thousand.”

As the next chapter will elucidate, the theory of reclaiming the fallen white daughters of the nation through redemptive penance and punishment would remain a prominent theme with respect to unmarried mothers in the twentieth century; and the high value placed on white unmarried mothers and their infants would lead to more severe systemic punishments as the century progressed.

## Chapter Two

### Characterizations of the Unmarried Mother in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

*When gender functions as a governing and normalizing force in society, those who transgress the standards are constructed as sexual, social, and moral deviants.*

(Pietsch, 2002:88).

#### Introduction

As Canada shifted from a rural to urban society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, traditional values of family no longer served the same economic function they had on farms, and a broader array of choices for independence were created for young adults (Weinberg, 2004:21). In major urban centres, the single working woman was seen as a moral threat, and the unmarried mother became the focus of contempt in a way that differed from the previous century. Maternity homes increased, established by Canada's Christian churches.<sup>59</sup> Other related Christian groups, such as the YWCA and various national women's organizations continued to grow and assert influence on the characterization of "good" women in Canadian society.

As the twentieth century unfolded, the unmarried mother remained a social outcast. Moral regulation intensified. New scientific theories fuelled by Darwinism and Galtonism created a climate of eugenics, intolerance, and changing approaches to illegitimacy. Theories, policies and practices related to Magdalenism continued to be reproduced and entrenched in Canadian society without any significant change until the 1970s and beyond.<sup>60</sup> The new twentieth century became the harbinger of an increasing emphasis on incarceration and cures to

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<sup>59</sup> Mostly Roman Catholic, Salvation Army, Anglican, United, Presbyterian.

<sup>60</sup> The theory of the fallen women to be redeemed still exists today. See Bassett, L. (2015), *Huffington Post*, "Jeb Bush in 1995: Unwed Mothers Should be Publicly Shamed".

regulate the moral and sexual behaviour of white unmarried mothers based on Magdalanism, and the redemptive, punitive, penance it embodied.

This chapter builds on previously examined nineteenth century foundations that shaped the characterization, institutionalization, and regulation of unmarried mothers in Canadian society; it illustrates some of the major theories which, informed by these foundations, lead to the postwar adoption mandate.<sup>61</sup> In particular the major influences it examines are the four major re-characterizations of unmarried mothers in the twentieth century up to 1970 including emerging psychoanalytic theories in pre and postwar Canada and their indelible influence on the adoption mandate. It also briefly explores the sub-topics of eugenics and venereal disease, which will show how unmarried mother identities became conflated with those social issues. This chapter also explores societal preoccupation with the “unwed mother” in Canadian society during the 1940s and immediate postwar decades that lead to drastic changes in public policy.<sup>62</sup>

### **Recasting the Unmarried Mother in the Twentieth Century**

During the twentieth century, changing characterizations led to changing prescriptions as dominant discourse surrounding unmarried motherhood evolved. Illegitimacy was reconceptualised and unmarried mothers re-characterized, as social work practitioners sought to claim the field of out-of-wedlock pregnancy through scientific methods. As articulated by Kunzel, “social workers created new scripts within which to comprehend out-of-wedlock pregnancy” (Kunzel, 1993:52). Previously characterized as fallen victims of seduction and abandonment in the nineteenth century, unmarried mothers in the twentieth century were recast

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<sup>61</sup> Due to the confines of this work an in-depth examination of all factors is not feasible.

<sup>62</sup> It is important to note that characterizations, prescriptions, voluntary and involuntary incarcerations, and psychoanalytic theories surrounding illegitimate parenthood referred only to women, and not to men.



Feeble-minded woman ; inmate of a maternity hospital.

Illus. 4. Office of the Inspector of the Feeble-Minded. Report Upon the Care of the Feeble-Minded in Ontario, 1908.

as wilful actors and as a major cause of social ills.

Four critical re-characterizations of unmarried mothers emerge during the twentieth century in Canada.<sup>63</sup> These characterizations, which become major factors that contribute to the adoption mandate, were largely created and endorsed by experts in the emerging fields of psychology, medicine, and social work; the voices of experts became increasingly prominent and powerful in the lives of unmarried mothers during the twentieth century. The first re-characterization occurred at the turn of the century when unmarried mothers were recast as a threat to communities, rather than communities being a threat to young single women. A second re-characterization took place pre and post WWI, when unmarried mothers were recast as feeble-minded by science and medicine in a climate of eugenics. During the 1930s, unmarried mothers were re-cast again, this time as sex delinquents with increasing societal emphasis on moral regulation, incarceration, cures, and punishment. Finally, with the emergence of psychoanalytic and sociological theories in postwar Canada, unmarried mothers were re-characterized as pathologically ill. The importance of these major shifts in social and medical interpretations of unmarried mothers within the twentieth century cannot be understated, since public attitudes, policies, programs and various types of formal and informal incarceration produced and supported these characterizations. Institutional prescriptions pertaining to the disposition of babies of unmarried mothers also changed dramatically in relation to these categorisations.

These characterizations were also interdependent in the creation of a fallen, disease-ridden, feeble-minded, criminal mother, who was a threat to society to be dealt with harshly. And even though the unmarried mother would be recast medically as primarily ill by the early 1940s,

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<sup>63</sup> Up to 1970. Unmarried mothers were re-cast again later in the twentieth century as “welfare moms”, “breeders” etc. however this paper is concerned only with the various re-characterizations leading to the adoption mandate.

she often continued to be seen socially as a sex delinquent toward whom harsh treatment was justified.

### **Unmarried Mothers as a Threat to the Community**

Dominant narratives surrounding unmarried mothers in the late nineteenth, and early twentieth century were often hyperbolic, dramatic, racially charged, and conveyed the sexual dangers facing unmarried women living in cities (Strange, 1995:62). Numerous stories of poor unfortunate girls who were victims of seduction, betrayal and abandonment, and of “unnatural mothers” who disposed of their infants in urban environments regularly appeared in Canada’s newspapers (Strange, 1995:54). With industrialization and urbanization, and as a result of WWI, which allowed for a certain independence to women through their participation in war related activities, young women were drawn increasingly to urban centres. As articulated by Pederson, “the concentration of employment and educational opportunities in cities attracted large number of young single women” (Pederson, 1986:20). This became known as the “girl problem” (Strange, 1995:3). According to the Young Women’s Christian Association, (YWCA) the “girl problem” was:

the result of major social and economic changes taking place in late nineteenth century and early twentieth century Canada that were having an important impact on the life course of young women ...unprecedented numbers of young women were thus experiencing a significant period of relative economic and sexual independence, unknown to their mothers and grandmothers (Pederson, 1986:21).

The YWCA was a Protestant evangelical social reform and rescue organization that viewed its role as solving the girl problem, and established a Toronto chapter in 1878. The work of the YWCA, its project, illustrates the prevailing view of urban centres as dangerous to single

women. YWCA boarding homes strived to ensure that women did not succumb to the dangers of city life, offering protection from prostitution, seduction, abandonment, loneliness, and despair. They provided shelter, acquaintances of good character, and a roster of wholesome activities for Canada's most respectable young women<sup>64</sup> (Strange, 1995:58).

From the onset of WWI, a seemingly subtle, but important change took place in that the unmarried mother began to be regarded as a threat to communities, opposed to communities being regarded as a threat to young women (Kunzel, 1993). This shift in the way unmarried mothers were viewed became one of the most significant changes that impact the lives of unmarried mothers in the twentieth century. The transformation of unmarried mothers from fallen sisters, passive victims of seduction in Victorian Canada, to unnatural aggressive agents in the new twentieth century, added fuel to the notion that unmarried mothers were a threat to normative families and communities. As articulated by Tamara Myers, "the insatiable fallen woman became the peril of the modern city" (Myers, 1996:64). Unmarried mothers were cast as dangerous during a period when women were increasingly finding and vocalizing their independence. By casting the unmarried mother to the public as dangerous, she was othered, thereby reinforcing patriarchy and normative roles for women in the private sphere.

### **Unmarried Mothers as Feeble-Minded**

At the turn of the century, Canada also became preoccupied with the "feeble-minded". Indications of feeble-mindedness were decidedly gendered. Feeble-minded men were associated with crime, while feeble-minded women were defined in sexual terms. In the report "*The Care of the Feeble-Minded in Ontario 1907*", a report commissioned by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, feeble-minded women were described as follows:

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<sup>64</sup> See Strange (1995:58). Catholics, women of colour, and those without spotless reputations were not admitted.

The feeble-minded are capable of useful work. They are also capable of profiting by training and instruction...they can do farm work, household work, washing, cleaning, knitting, sewing, weaving, sometimes lace making... What they cannot do is manage their own affairs...they lack the power of restraint and inhibition. The feeble-minded are difficult to define, but not difficult to recognize. They are below those of normal, but small, intellect, but above actual imbeciles and idiots. They are able to act and speak fairly well though usually more or less foolishly...they lack prudence and self-control...they have not proper will or judgement. Hence we find them in maternity hospitals, refuges, gaols and poor houses... (Ontario. Upon the Care of the Feeble-minded in Ontario 1907, Legislative Assembly of Ontario, AO).

Social workers embraced feeble-mindedness as a diagnosis for unmarried mothers beginning in the 1910s, and debated the meaning of the catchall term of “feeble-minded”. Some included subjective standards such as untruthfulness as a mark of the feeble-minded person (Kunzel, 1993:52). A circular definition of feeble-mindedness was constructed by social workers wherein unmarried mothers were conflated with the feeble-minded (Kunzel, 1993:52).

Feeble-mindedness and the proliferation of the feeble-minded through illegitimacy became central social concerns in Canadian society. Fears of the feeble-minded “reproducing their kind” were initially sparked by Anglo-Saxon concerns about their own low fertility rates in comparison to those in the French Canadian and migrant communities. Societal concern about the losses of the “best” young Canadians in WWI, while the “worst” reproduced their kind at home intensified these concerns (McLaren, 1990:43). A report on the Feeble-Minded in Ontario illustrates this:

I reluctantly call to your attention the tendency, especially of feeble-minded women to

lead dissolute lives, nearly all their offspring are illegitimate...it is impossible to calculate what even one feeble-minded woman may cost the public, when her vast possibilities for evil as a producer of paupers and criminals, through an endless line of descendants, are considered. If the state can seclude such a woman and thus at one stroke cut off the possibility of a never-ending and ever-widening record of evil and expense, should it not do so at once? Can it afford not to do it? (The Care of the Feeble-Minded in Ontario 1907, Legislative Assembly of Ontario, AO).

New social forces unleashed by the purity movement, including Children's Aid Societies, National Council of Women (NCW), Women's Christian Temperance Union, YWCA, The Salvation Army, mainstream Canadian churches, along with the social experts in the medical and social work community contributed to the discourse of unmarried mothers as feeble-minded. In *Toronto's Girl Problem: Perils and Pleasures of the City 1880 -1930*, Carolyn Strange quotes Miss M.J. Clarke,<sup>65</sup> one of the first graduates of Social Work from the University of Toronto as saying, "we often find that those who used to be considered 'incorrigible', 'bad' and 'immoral' are, as a matter of fact, feeble-minded, and not responsible for their actions" (Strange, 1995:128).

The Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene was founded in 1918 and, like its counterpart in the United States, published a journal. The Canadian Journal for Mental Hygiene published its first edition in April, 1919. The editorial board included medical doctors from across Canada, the most notable being C. K. Clarke<sup>66</sup> of Toronto as Medical Director. Its journal lists the Duke<sup>67</sup> and Duchess of Devonshire along with other lords and knights of the empire as

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<sup>65</sup> Daughter of C.K. Clarke, M.D., Psychiatrist.

<sup>66</sup> As Dean of Faculty of Medicine at the University of Toronto, C.K. Clarke was instrumental in the creation of the Department of Psychiatry. First practised at 999 Queen St. in Toronto. An early proponent of eugenics. The Clarke Institute of Psychiatry in Toronto was named in his honour; renamed Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) in 1998 when it was absorbed into a consortium of mental health clinics.

<sup>67</sup> Governor-General of Canada at the time

patrons in October 1920. Its publications from the early 1920s illustrate how unmarried mothers were viewed.

In the first edition of the *Canadian Journal of Mental Hygiene* (1919), an article by Gordon S. Mundie, M.D. of Montreal examines the out-patient Psychiatric Clinic at Royal Victoria Hospital in Montreal and indicates that unmarried mothers were routinely sent to the Psychiatric Clinic:

The Women's Directory of Montreal looks after the problem of the unmarried mother. Their policy is to refer each case to the psychiatric clinic, but owing to stress of work and insufficient social workers, only 44 had been examined when this report was undertaken. Out of the 44 women, 25, or 56.1 per cent, were mentally deficient (Mundie, 1919: 297).

A survey of Nova Scotia institutions, which appeared in the April 1921 issue of the same journal, notes with respect to the Monastery of the Good Shepherd that, "As had been noticed in so many places where unmarried mothers are kept under observation, no less than 40 out of the 47 examined were found to be defective." (*Canadian Journal of Mental Hygiene*, 1921:25). In the same report, under the heading "Mental Defect and Illegitimacy", the Salvation Army Maternity Home and Hospital in Nova Scotia was examined and included the categories of "Dull Normal" and "Primitive" to describe unmarried mothers:

The Superintendent believed that at least half of the unmarried mothers cared for were of a dull type mentally and stated that less than 50% make good after they leave the hospital. Thirteen patients were seen, and while a detailed study of each case was not made, it was felt that sufficient observation was made to warrant the following classifications:

Feeble-minded .....11

Dull Normal .....1

Primitive .....1

(Nova Scotia Survey, Canadian Journal of Mental Hygiene, 1921:30).

The classifications “High Grade Moron”, or “Dull Class/Dull Normal” are in a class described by C.K. Clarke as:

the most difficult form of all the defectives to manage, and possibly the greatest menace to the community, as they are so often attractive in appearance, and plausible, to the ordinary observer (C.K. Clarke, Canadian Journal of Mental Hygiene, 1921:12).

Also surveyed in the same issue was the Nova Scotia Presbyterian Rescue Home with a report that states:

14 beds. Seven girls were in residence – all unmarried mothers. Two who were examined proved to be low grade morons, and Miss McDougall states that a large proportion of the girls admitted are mentally defective (Nova Scotia Survey, Canadian Journal of Mental Hygiene, 1921:31).

A Saskatchewan survey conducted by the Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene in June 1920 found similar results in maternity homes (Canadian Journal of Mental Hygiene, 1920:314), while a study by C.K. Clarke, M.D. of 767 cases of unmarried mothers conducted at Toronto General Hospital from 1914 to 1920 stated that:

The 767 mothers added no less than 917 children to the population, and it goes without saying that many of this number will be defectives...mental defect and illegitimacy go hand in hand no matter what may be said to the contrary, and the fact that 68% of those examined were abnormal should convince the most critical of the truth of the contention

(Canadian Journal of Mental Hygiene 1921:18).

By the 1920s, the notion that feeble-mindedness and illegitimacy were interconnected was entrenched not only in the context of medicine, social work, and psychiatric communities, but in broader society.

### **The Role of Eugenics – Controlling the Proliferation of the Feeble-Minded**

The term eugenics was first coined by Sir Francis Galton in 1883 and referred to “the investigation under which men of a high type are produced” (Ward, 1913:738). Galton’s vision of eugenics included positive and negative eugenics whereby he hypothesized that “increasing the frequency of a ‘desirable gene’ or decreasing the frequency of an ‘undesirable gene’ could be achieved” (McLaren, 1990:15). From the assumption that undesirable traits were genetic, the idea of sterilizing those with negative traits became a Canadian fascination; in fact, Acts were passed in Alberta and British Columbia in 1928<sup>68</sup> and 1933<sup>69</sup> respectively to allow for the sterilization of ‘defectives’ (McLaren, 1990:99-101). The Alberta Act named “mental defectives”<sup>70</sup> unfit to reproduce children. This included new immigrants, alcoholics, epileptics, unmarried mothers, those with venereal disease, women seeking abortions<sup>71</sup> and Indigenous people.<sup>72</sup>

In *The Age of Light Soap and Water*, Mariana Valverde illustrates how the combination

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<sup>68</sup> See McLaren (1990), *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada 1885-1945*. Sexual Sterilization Act, Alberta passed March 7, 1928, p.100. British Columbia Sexual Sterilization Bill passed on April 7, 1933, p. 103.

<sup>69</sup> See Schissel and Mahood, *Social Control in Canada* (1996). The same year the Nazis began their racial hygiene campaigns in Germany.

<sup>70</sup> See Province of Alberta. Sexual Sterilization Act. Statutes of the Province of Alberta. First Amendment April 14, 1937 and Second Amendment March 19, 1942 which broadened the scope of those who could be sterilized as mental defectives and those with psychosis and epilepsy.

<sup>71</sup> See McLaren (1990:170), *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics In Canada 1885-1945*. Some women seeking abortions were forced to agree to sterilization as “part of a package deal”.

<sup>72</sup> See Whiting, G., Director, (1996). *The Sterilization of Leilani Muir*. Leilani Muir is an Indigenous woman who was sterilized in Alberta because she was considered a ‘mental defective’. Leilani Muir eventually sued the Alberta Government and won her case.

of moral purity and science as practiced in the early twentieth century is personified by the work of Dr. Margaret Patterson. One of Ontario's first medical graduates, Dr. Patterson served on many boards and committees including the National Council of Women of Canada (NCWC), the Committee on Equal Moral Standards, the Canadian Purity Education Association, and the Moral and Social Reform Council of Canada (later renamed the Social Service Council of Canada). Dr. Patterson also lectured across Canada for the YWCA and NCWC advocating for harsher punishments for prostitutes and for a "moral hospital" to which those who were "morally sick" might be sent for indeterminate sentences and punishments, including sterilization. As an "expert", Dr. Patterson appealed to both religion and science to justify her morality. Valverde explains that:

Patterson takes the idea of a rescue home, combines it with a modern lay hospital, and adds the coercive force of the correctional system: the result is a Kafkaesque "moral hospital" in which those deemed to be "naturally vicious" will be operated on to rid them of their viciousness (Valverde, 2008:48).

Helen MacMurchy<sup>73</sup> was another influential Canadian woman who defended the elimination of "mental defectives" through sterilization. Among other high ranking appointments, Dr. MacMurchy was the Inspector of the Feeble-minded in Ontario from 1906 to 1916. MacMurchy firmly believed that feeble-mindedness was the cause of venereal disease, illegitimacy and infant mortality. In 1918 MacMurchy stated that:

in the cure of the so-called Social Evil or in Venereal Disease knows that it is the cause, not the symptoms that we should attack, and no one cause of these great evils can be

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<sup>73</sup> MacMurchy earned her M.D. at University of Toronto in 1901, was the first woman in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Toronto General Hospital, and the first woman to be accepted by the John Hopkins University Medical School for post-graduate study. See McLaren (1990), *Our Own Master Race: Eugenics in Canada 1885-1945*, pp.30-35.

more completely proved than the Mental Defect (McLaren, 1990:40).

MacMurchy referred to unmarried mothers as “illegitimate mothers” and deemed them to be feeble-minded simply by virtue of the fact that they had borne a child outside of wedlock (Valverde, 2008:108). Her reports on the feeble-minded carried weight with medical and political leaders. While she argued that the “subnormal” deserved “justice and a fair chance,” she also concluded that they could not be treated as normal because they were the “waste products of humanity” (McLaren, 1990:39). It was MacMurchy’s contention that segregation in institutions would ultimately pay for itself as even greater expenses would be incurred if the feeble-minded were allowed to roam free in society where they would reproduce. In 1908, MacMurchy asserted that 80% of feeble-mindedness could be eliminated within a generation through segregation and sterilization (McLaren, 1990:42).

The unmarried mother, through her diagnosis and categorization as feeble-minded, was not only seen as a major cause of societal ills, but, within the context of eugenics, as a person to be controlled, incarcerated, and sterilized to eliminate the reproduction of her kind. Cast as feeble-minded, the unmarried mother was no longer “one of our own who fell”, or simply a danger to normative families, she was now a biological other, subject to differentiated social and medical treatment. Regina Kunzel articulates this new reality for unmarried mothers:

Although feeble-minded women were understood to be victims of a sort, these new victims were no longer blameless; the victims of defective genetics rather than the guiles of a villain were not met with sympathy, but with fear and punishment. Social workers generally concurred that no solution short of close supervision, permanent institutionalization, and in some cases, sterilization would suffice (Kunzel, 1993:53)

## Venereal Disease (VD)

Simultaneous with Canada's societal preoccupation with feeble-mindedness, venereal disease<sup>74</sup> became a major concern in the early twentieth century. I will turn briefly to the effect of venereal disease (VD) in the context of the increasing tide of moral regulation and harsh treatment of women which emerged later in the interwar period.

VD, like illegitimacy, became a metaphor for larger societal concerns. It was a flashpoint for the regulation of immorality, sex, and vice. During WWI, societal apprehension over the disease intensified as high rates of VD were reported within the ranks of Canadian soldiers; their imminent return from the war caused moral panic (Mawani, 2006). Doctors and other experts believed that sexual immorality was the root cause of VD and thus it was a social problem. Medically endorsed government sponsorship of anti-VD programs sprung up around the country, fuelled by the usual organizations such as the YMCA, YWCA, and NCW, which created a hybrid "medico-moral regulatory regime" (Mawani, 2006:149). A Nova Scotia pamphlet issued in 1917 concluded that, "all extra-marital sex was abnormal and unsafe, and virtually guaranteed exposure to VD" (Mawani, 2006:155).

An article entitled "Mental Deficiency in Relation to Venereal Disease" by London physician, A.F. Tredgold was published in *The Canadian Journal of Mental Hygiene* of July 1919. In this report Dr. Tredgold relates that:

The feeble-minded are the most numerous of all defectives, and as a class, stand on a decidedly higher plane than the imbeciles...the moral imbecile differ from the feeble-minded in two important respects....it is obvious that these two classes of the feeble-minded and morally defective are characterized by certain defects and tendencies which

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<sup>74</sup> Now referred to as sexually transmitted diseases or STDs.

will result in their readily contracting and spreading venereal disease, should the opportunity occur (Tredgold, *The Canadian Journal of Mental Hygiene*, 1919).

It was thought that the feeble-minded, morally defective girl, wilfully and unashamedly contracted and spread the disease, and thereby was an agent of immorality and social degradation. In the same article, Dr. Tredgold explains how the immoral, female, feeble-minded agent endangers society:

...in my opinion the contraction of a venereal disease by the normal girl is relatively a more or less exceptional incident, but the contraction and spread of venereal disease by the moral imbecile is the rule, and, so long as she is free, a result which is almost inevitable (Tredgold, *The Canadian Journal of Mental Hygiene*, 1919).

Defending Canada from the ravages of VD meant forcing soldiers to undergo treatment, but it also meant subjecting women, particularly poor ones, to various forms of moral regulation (Strange, 1997:93). In 1918, the Ontario Royal Commission on Venereal Disease and Feeble-Mindedness recommended that free treatment clinics be established along with the imposition of fines for those who refused treatment. It should be noted that it was only women who were targeted with these regulations. Several provinces enacted such measures into law,<sup>75</sup> which led to the forced medical treatment and incarceration of women suffering from VD or labelled feeble-minded (Strange, 1997:94). Fears over venereal disease also re-surfaced during World War II. Educational material during that period either portrayed women as innocent victims or as “promiscuous predators” (Sangster, 2001:89).

In effect, the unmarried mother and venereal disease were inextricably linked; she was

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<sup>75</sup> See Mawani (2006), “Regulating the Respectable Classes: Venereal Disease, Gender, and Public Health Initiatives in Canada 1914-1935”. By the post First World War period, venereal disease prevention acts were implemented in all provinces except Prince Edward Island.

recast as a serious threat to society because of her biology, her body, and her defective mind. Unmarried mothers would continue to be routinely tested for venereal disease while pregnant well into the 1960s.<sup>76</sup>

### **Unmarried Mothers as Sex Delinquents**

*“Who ever heard of a fallen boy?”* (Kunzel, 1993:55).

During the interwar period, unmarried motherhood was thought to be a result of “the poisonous interaction between environmental conditions and moral degeneracy” (Solinger, 1992:17). Illegitimacy during this period was attributed to broken homes, poverty, poor education, domestic occupation, and even the pattern of life in certain sub-cultures<sup>77</sup> (Josie, 1955:247). Moral regulation of women increased due to the rising moral panic surrounding venereal disease, sexual promiscuity, illegitimate pregnancy, and women deemed “out of sexual control” (Sangster, 2006:190). In the article “Incarcerating ‘Bad Girls’,” Joan Sangster defines moral regulation as “the processes whereby some behaviours, ideals, and values were marginalized and proscribed while others were legitimised and naturalized” (Sangster, 2006:191). Voluntary and involuntary incarceration continued to be a means to control the sexuality and moral behaviour of unmarried mothers during the interwar period. As in the nineteenth century, it was not only women deemed to be fallen, but young women *likely* to go astray who were ending up in reform type institutions (Strange, 1995:132).

In the larger context of heightened public interest in delinquency and moral regulation, unmarried mothers were recast in the new category of “sex delinquent” (Kunzel 1993:55). The concept of delinquency had been previously associated with boys. However, with emergent theories of adolescence, and fear over the deterioration of moral values, social purity reformers

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<sup>76</sup> See Victor Home Admission Requirements.

<sup>77</sup> Sub-culture in this context meant Black, Indigenous, Chinese, or any other non-white, non-European culture.

became interested in ‘female delinquency’ (Kunzel, 1993:55). Like feeble-mindedness, delinquency was gendered; boys were considered criminals, while girls were sexual deviants. The definition of female delinquency was also circular in that “female delinquents were, almost by definition ‘immoral’, and sex delinquency was perceived to be, also by definition, female” (Kunzel, 1993:55). Delinquency reproduced Magdelanism in that it entailed behaviour that undermined societal expectations of women to be passive and sexually innocent (Chambers, 2007:58).

Medical and psychiatric experts played a key role in the discursive construction of female sex delinquency. They invented labels for women such as “delinquent”, “morally degenerate”, “psychopathic”, “sex-crazed”, and “hypersexual” (Strange, 1995:127). Moreover, they arrived at “no male corollary to the female sex delinquent”, therefore, “sexual delinquency was female delinquency” (Strange, 1995:127). Evangelicals and other rescue workers had worked tirelessly in the nineteenth century to separate criminals and unmarried mothers, lest delinquents should contaminate and influence the fallen. However, in the twentieth century those distinctions blurred, and boundaries collapsed between unmarried mothers and criminals/delinquents until they were seen as synonymous (Kunzel, 1993:55). Sex delinquents were construed to have agency and a wilful agenda. Kunzel states that:

Whereas unmarried mothers were marked in evangelical narratives by their vulnerability and victimization, and feeble-minded women by ‘their incapacity for self-direction’, female sex delinquents were distinguished by their aggressive self-direction. (Kunzel, 1993:56).

The characterization of sexual misbehaviour as delinquency for women led to various forms of incarceration (Chambers, 2007:58). In Ontario, The Refuges Act, enacted in 1897,

allowed a sentence of up to five years; it was amended in 1919 to two years less a day (Sangster, 1996). This Act gave police powers to arrest women in a pre-emptive fashion *before* they committed an act of delinquency. The Female Refuges Act targeted women: who were considered promiscuous, with illegitimate children, suspected of venereal disease, or who engaged in relationships with Asian or Black men (Sangster, 2001). Judges in Ontario<sup>78</sup> were authorized to commit to an institution any girl through a sworn statement by parents, a social worker, or the police (Backhouse, 1991:243). This broad statute allowed for young girls to be institutionalized for long periods of time, sometimes for very little reason. Vague charges such as incorrigibility, vagrancy, and immorality were laid with little foundation or explanation (Strange, 1995:133). In the early twentieth century, Toronto's Magdalene Asylum and The Haven<sup>79</sup> continued to admit young women deemed incorrigible by the courts. However, by the late 1920s, in the aftermath of the social purity campaign, Ontario magistrates were giving younger women longer, and indeterminate sentences in the Mercer Reformatory for Women. As an example, after 1913, Magistrates were "permitted to sentence women to indeterminate sentences for up to two years less a day for any offence, no matter how trivial" (Strange, 1995:134). From 1914 to 1927 the average age of those incarcerated in the Mercer Reformatory dropped significantly, close to 43% of inmates were under twenty years of age (Strange, 1995:132). During the interwar period, the Mercer<sup>80</sup> became a key site for the incarceration of unmarried mothers, prostitutes, wayward women, and those with VD (Sangster, 2001:103). Joan Sangster's

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<sup>78</sup> See Backhouse, *Petticoats and Prejudice* (1991:243). Similar statutes were enacted in Nova Scotia (1884) and Manitoba (1898).

<sup>79</sup> YWCA Home for Unmarried Mothers

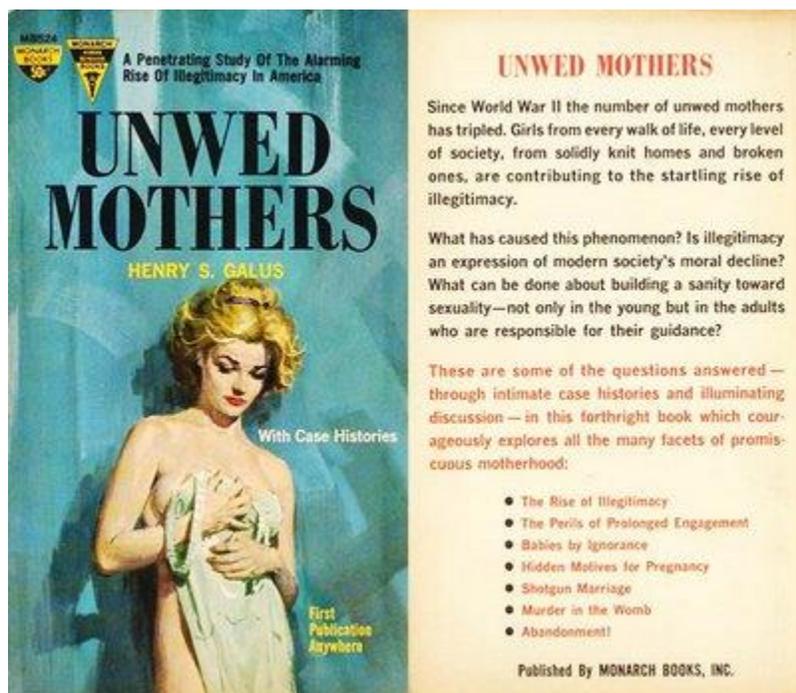
<sup>80</sup> See Demerson, *Incorrigible*. In her memoir *Velma Demerson*, who was sent to the Mercer Reformatory in 1939 for being pregnant with the child of a Chinese man not her husband, describes how she and other women were tortured with experimental treatments for VD including being operated on without the use of anaesthetic, held in solitary confinement, and kept from their babies in the nursery there.

research on the Mercer case files indicates that:

next to sexual promiscuity, the two most significant factors in women's files are illegitimate children and venereal disease. Some officials literally used the Mercer as a home for unwed, poor mothers (Sangster, 2006:201).

The usual experts including social workers, psychologists, and medical doctors became increasingly involved in the correctional system (Sangster, 2006:194). Parents also took an active role in the incarceration of their daughters. Parents of delinquent daughters routinely sent them to maternity homes or brought them before the courts for defiance, disobedience, promiscuity, and illegitimate pregnancies. As pointed out by Sangster, "in assessing the incarceration of these young women, one also has to take into account parents' active participation in the process and thus the broader question of how consent to the law was organized" (Sangster, 2006:198).

With the development of the category of sex delinquent in the interwar period, unmarried mothers were viewed as criminal elements in society. The legal system, as evangelism and philanthropy had in the past, became a site to reproduce and regulate Magdalenism, proscribing women's sexuality through patriarchal definitions, and the Mary/Magdalen binary. Up to and after WWII, pregnant girls were still being described in social work literature as delinquent, and girls whose pregnancy was perceived to be the consequence of promiscuity might still come under the purview of the court (Sangster, 2002:80). Unwed motherhood was recast as an "emblem of delinquency" (Sangster, 2002:154). Incarceration, cures, and harsh treatment for unmarried mothers became normalized in a "process that took away women's most basic liberties, encouraged their sterilization, and discouraged them from keeping their children" (Sangster, 2006:210).



Illus. 5. *Unwed Mothers*, 1962. Henry Galus. Book Cover.

### The Unmarried Mother – Psychoanalytic Theories

*Clearly, the girl's wish to have a baby without a husband is neither an adult or normal desire...the child is clearly not a part of her unconscious fantasy and hence is of little real concern to her* (Leontine Young, *Out of Wedlock*, 1954:36)

Although early psychiatry had diagnosed the unmarried mother as feeble-minded, psychoanalytic theories emerging in the interwar period fueled a renewed interest in the psychoanalysis of unwed motherhood. During the 1940s and immediate postwar decades there became a major preoccupation with what was now being called the *unwed mother* and unmarried motherhood was re-defined once again.<sup>81</sup> This re-characterization, which led directly to the

<sup>81</sup> See Young, *Out of Wedlock* (1954:11). Nonetheless, characterizations of the unmarried mother as feeble-minded, fallen, and delinquent continued into the late twentieth century. Young writes, "the tendency to regard all unmarried mothers as sex delinquents lingers, and is only slowly modified and diluted."

adoption mandate, constructed the unmarried mother as having a treatable mental disorder.

Rickie Solinger clarifies:

The postwar, modern alternative claimed that illegitimacy reflected a mental not environmental or biological disorder, and was, in general a symptom of individual, treatable neuroses... since society reserved deeply punitive responses for unwed mothers, a single girl who flew in the face of certain and severe censure and became pregnant had to be sick. She had, in fact, to be pregnant on purpose. Only a truly sick person could deny reality so radically” (Solinger, 1992:16, 88)

and, Svanhuit Josie,

So what is commonly called the unmarried mother problem continues to be studied and analysed; one theory succeeds another as to its root cause. We have recently turned the corner from blaming moral and social reasons to explain the whole thing in psychiatric terms (Canadian Welfare, December 1955:246)

As an example of shifting characterizations from sex delinquent to mentally ill in this period, a study by Lori Chambers, which includes a review of the Ontario Children’s Aid Society (CAS) social work case files entitled *Misconceptions: Unmarried Motherhood and the Ontario Children of Unmarried Parents Act 1921-1969*), found that:

In total 1,404 of 1,992 (70.5%) non-cohabiting women were described as ‘delinquent’, ‘immature’, ‘neurotic’, ‘unstable’, ‘promiscuous’ and ‘dishonest’. Interestingly, the percentage of women described as ‘delinquent’ declined steadily after the war, while the use of terms like ‘neurotic’ and ‘unstable’ increased, reflecting the changing social work paradigm of the etiology of unwed pregnancy (Chambers, 2007:61)

Psychoanalytic theories of illegitimate motherhood were granted credibility, promoted and

upheld by the usual experts including social workers, psychiatrists, doctors, and the clergy. Social workers played a major role in re-defining the white *unwed mother* as neurotic.

Lori Chambers reiterates this:

In the psychiatric, sociological, and social work literature, women pregnant out of wedlock were no longer described primarily as delinquents or as organically flawed.

Instead, under a growing influence of Freudian analysis, social workers described unwed mothers as very young, overly sexual, and psychologically disturbed.

(Chambers, 2007:59)

Psychiatric explanations for out-of-wedlock pregnancy in postwar Canada were an extension of the early twentieth century practice of drawing upon science to manage “illegitimate motherhood” (Solinger, 1992). Using psychiatric theory as an approach to out-of-wedlock pregnancy legitimized the use of science to regulate and punish women for their illicit pregnancy (Solinger, 1992:102).

Popular psychoanalytic theories explaining out of wedlock pregnancy during the 1940s and immediate postwar decades characterized the unmarried mother as purposeful by nature, with emotional problems stemming from childhood, various fantasies, and unconscious desires. Diagnoses of neuroses, personality disorders, or schizophrenia were commonly conferred. In general, unmarried mothers were thought to be suffering from an underlying emotional problem (Daniels, 1960). Often, the role of dysfunctional families was invoked, in particular, the role of dominating mothers and fathers.

The mother theory asserted that an unmarried mother, dominated by her own mother, consciously became pregnant as she was thought to exhibit an overwhelming drive to “give the baby to the mother” (Young, 1954:58). This theory claimed that the unwed mother bore the

baby for the mother, that it is the mother's child, and that the unwed mother acquires a deep sense of fulfillment through the completion of this act. Young describes this process:

she gives the baby to the mother; the child is no concern of hers because she does not belong to her...in a sense having this baby concerns primarily the relationship between the girl and her mother, is a gift of love as well as an instrument of revenge (Young, 1954:58)

In the book *Psychology of Women* published in 1945, Helene Deutsch, a prominent figure who wrote extensively about the psychology of women and motherhood asserted that:

A hateful protest against the mother often contains revenge tendencies and that promiscuity, prostitution or illegitimate motherhood often fulfills both a fantasy and a need for self-punishment (Deutsch, 1945:349)

and, Dr. Michael Khlentzos of the Neuropsychiatric Institute in California,

She is searching for a nurturance from a mother figure symbolized in the sexual act as a forbidden kind of erotized nurturing provided by the alleged father (Khlentzos, 1965:780)

Ner Littner writes that,

it seems as though the unmarried mother is unconsciously acting out in her pregnancy a very early childhood fantasy about her own mother, namely, of having a baby by and for her mother (Littner, Presentation at Child Welfare Conference, Chicago, 1955)

and Heiman and Levitt,

we are not dealing with a mother-daughter relationship that is threatened, but rather with a relationship between mother and daughter which is already very severely disturbed. We believe that in actuality, the unmarried mother has experienced the loss of her

mother, either physically or emotionally, and as Young has said, is “seeking for her mother who has deserted her at birth (Heiman & Levitt, 1960:167)

Fathers were also cited as causes of illegitimate motherhood. Although it was contended that unmarried mothers whose fathers dominated the home were fewer in numbers than those coming from mother-dominated homes, Young argued that overly strict, unsympathetic, perhaps abusive fathers were responsible for their daughter’s pregnancy (Young, 1954:60); whereas Dr. James Cattell asserted that fathers in these homes were usually passive and ineffectual (Cattell, 1966:98). Solinger suggests that a combination of mother and father traits were often used as reasons for out-of-wedlock pregnancy, “the most frequent appeared to be a weak father and a hypochondriacal mother, or a strong but neglectful father and a frustrated mother (Solinger, 1991:29).

Other theories advanced by experts included illegitimate maternity as a result of the exaggeration of adolescent psychological conflicts including a masochistic gratification resulting from penis envy, or fantasies of rape, incest, or prostitution. A McGill University social work thesis by Dorothy Begg entitled *Psychiatric Problems of Unmarried Mothers* is an example of work that reproduces these themes:

She regards her mother, who like herself is castrated, as being also inferior and blames her for having equipped her so poorly....her passive masochistic development is strengthened by identification with her mother, her wish to be loved by her father as her mother is, and to have a baby by him...maternity brings with it supreme masochistic gratification, as well as fulfillment of the long-felt wish for a child (Begg, 1951:15)

Helene Deutsch writes,

Any excessive charge of puberal conflicts can operate as such as motive [to become

pregnant out of wedlock]. The motive may be that of flight from incest fantasies...it may arise from an unfavourable identification (e.g. with a pregnant mother, sister, friend, etc.), from vengefulness toward family, from a tendency to self-punishment...the numerous cases I have encountered have always involved a weakness of the ego that made it unable to resist the strong psychic dangers otherwise than by transference of them to the outside world (Deutsch, 1945:335, 340)

Clothier writes that:

Some girls act out the fantasy of rape by placing themselves in situations in which they will provoke assault and if this results in pregnancy they obtain masochistic gratification.” (Clothier, 1943:543)

Some psychiatrists asserted that the out of wedlock pregnancy and resulting baby were symbols of unsatisfactory completion of the oral stage:

Regressively, with the help of the genital apparatus, most probably on the basis of oral fantasies, a woman re-creates for herself an object. Since these objects fundamentally are a substitute for mother and since the woman has undergone a regression in order to create out of herself this object, it becomes clear that in those instances the mother is not the mother and the baby is not a baby. The very reverse is the case because the person who has regressively created the baby is the child herself, while the baby that has been created is a replacement for the mother; thus the mother is the baby, and the baby is the mother. (Heiman & Levitt, 1960:172)

Psychiatric diagnoses were routinely conferred on unmarried mothers in the pre and postwar decades and cited by the medical profession as the cause of out-of-wedlock pregnancy. Although some in the medical community found a connection between depression and out of

wedlock pregnancy, most of these diagnoses were based on residence in maternity homes, or depression following surrender. However, one study found that depression was indeed the cause of out-of-wedlock pregnancy, that it existed prenatally, and was one of the prime forces motivating the pregnancy (Heiman & Levitt, 1960). Another study of fifty-four unmarried mothers residing in a maternity home in 1954 conducted by James P. Cattell, M.D. states that:

The following distribution of diagnoses were found: character disorder, 30; neurotic reaction, 7 (anxiety, depressive, and conversion); schizophrenia, 17 (pseudoneurotic, 7; other types, 10 (Cattell, 1954:339)

It is interesting to note that Dr. Cattell finds that out of the fifty-four unmarried mothers studied, thirty-two per cent appear to suffer from schizophrenia when it is unlikely that even one person in such a small group would merit this diagnosis.<sup>82</sup>

Some in the medical community went so far as to consider the pregnancies and deliveries of unmarried mothers to be different from those of married mothers. Unmarried mothers were purported to become pregnant more quickly, rarely experienced miscarriage or nausea, delivered their babies with fewer than average complications or difficulty, and that the ratio of fetal deaths was lower than that in married women. Even unmarried mothers having their first child in their thirties or forties were considered to have no special difficulty and to regain their strength faster than married women (Young, 1954:34). These erroneous claims furthered the notion of a biological difference between unmarried mothers and married mothers.

The psychiatric perspective was not simply a theoretical or conjectural construct, and service providers including social workers and maternity home matrons would structure their programs and services based on the theories advanced by the psychiatric community in

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<sup>82</sup> See Public Health Agency of Canada. Approximately 1% of Canadians suffer from this debilitating condition.

prominent medical journals such as the *International Journal of Psychiatry*, *American Journal of Psychiatry*, and the *Journal of Orthopsychiatry* (Solinger, 1992). Solinger writes that, “There is no public evidence that colleagues objected to their formulations or found them out of concert with mainstream psychiatric theory and practice” (Solinger, 1992:88).

### **Unmarried Mothers as “Girls” and “Non-Mothers”**

The construction of the white unmarried mother as girls and non-mothers was integral to the success of the adoption mandate. As the teen years emerged as a separate and quantifiable stage of life in the early 1940s, the unmarried mother was not only characterized as unintelligent, maladjusted, delinquent, and neurotic, but also as too young and immature to mother her child.<sup>83</sup> Unmarried mothers were often referred to as *girls* irrespective of age.<sup>84</sup> The tendency to generalize the “teenage experience” and concepts of “teenagehood” contributed to the notion of unmarried mothers as being *too young* to be mothers (Wall, 2014:65).

To put their experience into broader historical perspective, whether girls were 13, 16, or 18, by postwar years they were rarely the semi-independent, already employed youth who had elicited worries of the ‘girl problem’ in turn of the century Canadian cities. They more than likely attended high school, still lived with, and were intimately (if not always happily) tied to their family of origin. For these very reasons, teenage girls were considered by many to be ‘more children than adult’ When such girls became pregnant they were now not simply contradicting society’s moral codes, they were transgressing the boundaries of childhood itself, a modern kind of ‘sin’ for which they continue to pay (Wall, 2014:65)

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<sup>83</sup> This continues in adoption practice today. Young mothers continue to be characterized as “too young”, “not ready”, or “incapable” of mothering.

<sup>84</sup> Particularly in Canada’s Maternity Homes. Unmarried mothers in their 30s continued to be referred to as ‘girls’.

The psychiatric explanation for unmarried motherhood served the depiction of unmarried mothers as “childlike”. The unmarried mother was constructed as not being responsible for her pregnancy but instead overtaken by something larger than herself, that is, a pathology (Solinger, 1992:88). Unmarried mothers were cast as *children having children*, or *child mothers*, and as unable, unfit, or not ready, to mother their own children. This, in an era where 76.7% of women in Canada married between the ages of 15 and 24<sup>85</sup> (Canada. Statistics Canada, Canada Year Book, 1967).

Married women were often teen mothers, although their marital status exempted them from being an object of state gaze, research, and psychoanalytic theories. It was the ‘unmarried mother’ which became, and continues to be, an object of intense inquiry (Andrews, 2015:3)

Cast as girls, the unmarried mother could be subjected to authority and processes that severely modified her right to autonomy and self-definition, which transformed her into a child (Solinger, 1992:88).

An example of the characterization of unmarried mothers as girls is the CBC television program *Take 30*, which aired in 1964 and featured a segment entitled *Talking Teen Pregnancy*. An interview was conducted with “Little Betty”, an unmarried mother residing in a Calgary maternity home. Little Betty appears with her back to the camera wearing a veil to ensure her identity is shielded from the audience. Although about to become a mother, she is referred to directly as “Little Betty” by the commentators throughout the program<sup>86</sup> (CBC Archives, *Take 30, Talking Teen Pregnancy*, December 8, 1964).

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<sup>85</sup> See Statistics Canada, Canada Year Book, 1967, Brides and bridegrooms, by Age and Marital status, 1964.

<sup>86</sup> Although unmarried mothers were characterized as “too young”, they were not considered too young to sign termination of parental rights at the age of 13 in Canada without legal advice.

A Vancouver study in 1969 entitled “Reaction of Unmarried Girls to Pregnancy” looked at 316 unmarried pregnant women. Although the study notes that almost 50% of the women were between the ages of 21-36, they are referred to as “girls” not only in the title, but throughout the study (Claman et al, 1969). Maternity homes also referred to inmates as girls, even those in their thirties. Anne Petrie recalls how unmarried mothers were cast as girls in Canada’s maternity homes:

even the oldest of us became girls in the homes. Not only were we called girls, we were not allowed to be anything else but girls. Although we were all having babies, the most obvious marker of womanhood, because we were not pregnant in the sanctioned manner we could not enter that secret sisterhood. We were girls, and we would stay girls (Petrie, 1998:11).

Characterizing unmarried mothers as girls, regardless of age, not only subjected them to institutional authority and systemic processes, but also contributed to the notion that unmarried mothers were unable, not ready, and unfit to mother their own children.

Unmarried mothers were denied the right of passage into womanhood and motherhood that was afforded to married mothers. After birth, they continued to be viewed as girls and non-mothers and, as Petrie suggests, would remain so. As a mother/non-mother, the unmarried mother did not fit into any category. She became a “transitional object” (Pietsch, 2012:36) residing in the borderlands (Anzaldúa, 1987). Pietsch suggests that, “In dominant adoption discourse the birthmother remains constructed as, physically and politically, *occupying an ambiguous, intermediate place* [sic] of motherhood and not motherhood (Pietsch, 2012:36) No social rituals were passed either at the birth or the loss of her child. The birth, which was treated as a secret non-event, placed the unmarried mother in conflict with reality. Her

motherhood was outwardly invisible, but her body remembered. As one mother relates, “I was a mother who wasn’t allowed to be a mother, but my body knew I was a mother” (Alward, 2015). Although the mothers of the mandate continued to be categorized as “girls,” they would never really be girls again.

## **Conclusion**

As the various characterizations of unmarried mothers evolved, the characterization of the unmarried mother as “ill” and in need of “rehabilitation” became entrenched in postwar dominant discourse for practitioners. There were few critics of the characterizations and diagnoses being advanced for unmarried mothers in postwar Canada. However, in the article “An Assessment of Research Knowledge Concerning the Unmarried Mother”, Jane Kronick states that “very little of the writing is based on knowledge derived from research” (Kronick, 1966:232). In this article, Kronick outlines deficiencies in writings and publications pertaining to unmarried mothers including: hegemonic narratives, inconsistent sampling methods, research bias, lack of thesis or research question, and studies conducted not in accordance with standard research methods (Kronick, 1966:247). Another researcher, Clark E. Vincent, in an attempt to more accurately portray unmarried mothers and to raise questions for future research, conducted a study that proved sampling bias by studying mothers attending private medical practices, rather than those associated with social institutions. Other works of Vincent dispel the notion of a hegemonic group by attempting to study mothers intersectionally (Vincent, 1964). Social Worker Svanhuit Josie suggested that if an unmarried mother were to marry, even the day before delivery, that no questions would arise about her psychological inner conflicts or impaired abilities to raise her offspring, which suggests marital status was the central pivot of these theories, and nothing more (Josie, 1955). In the article “Are we Still Stereotyping the Unmarried

Mother”, social worker Rose Bernstein suggests that some unmarried mothers may have had pre-existing problems, but that others may simply be experiencing problems due to the current crisis. Bernstein also asserts that social workers need to think in terms of hypotheses, rather than “closed systems of explanation for which we are impelled to find substantiating evidence” (Bernstein, *Social Work*, Vol.5:117, 1960).

Kronick, Vincent, Josie, and Bernstein may have been voices of reason in the wilderness, but ones that were mostly unheeded in a prolific sea of literature that cast the *unwed mother* as mentally ill. Many studies occurred across disciplines, throwing up articles in *Social Work*, *Medicine*, *Psychology*, *Psychiatry*, *Sociology*, and *Nursing* journals such as *Canadian Family Physician*, *Canada Medical Association Journal*, *Canadian Nurse*, *American Journal of Psychiatry*, and *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, to name a few. Various Canadian theses and scholarly works also subscribed to and circulated the major psychoanalytic theories of illegitimate motherhood. Although less material was published in Canada, Canadian professionals and experts nonetheless subscribed to, and acted on these theories.

## Chapter Three

### The Profession of Social Work and the Influence of Sociological Theories in Postwar

#### Adoption Practice

*In removing unmarried mothers from the evangelical narrative and placing them within the scientific scripts of feeble-mindedness and sex delinquency, social workers had gone a considerable distance toward achieving recognition in the field of illegitimacy...the task of inventing their own, modern, professional identities led social workers to contribute to new sexual discourses that stigmatized working-class women's sexuality as pathological and criminal (Kunzel, 1993:63,64).*

#### Introduction

Social workers played a vital role in the adoption mandate. Section I of this chapter will track the progression of the “professionalism of benevolence” (Kunzel, 1993:3) and the rise of the scientific “expert” in the early twentieth century. It will set forth how social workers created a profession for themselves using scientific casework to approach social problems, in particular, those pertaining to the unmarried mother.

Section II explores a body of sociological theories such as the sociological and psychoanalytical theories of the clean slate<sup>87</sup> (tabula rasa), attachment, and imprinting advanced by scholars Sigmund and Anna Freud, John Bowlby, Harry Harlow and Konrad Lorenz. These emerging ideas were key factors that informed and influenced changes in postwar adoption

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<sup>87</sup> The concept of the Latin tabula rasa or ‘unsubscribed slate’ can be traced back to Aristotle. However, the modern use of the concept is attributed to John Locke (1690), as a result of his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. A resurgence of the concept in postwar Canada was due to the Freuds who asserted that children were solely a product of their environment.

practice leading to the “clean break”,<sup>88</sup> which will be explored as a form of violence against women and the maternal body. In addition, the idea of complete break, or, the practice of sealing of adoption records in Canada is reviewed.

This chapter will also reveal how unmarried mothers in postwar Canada were subject to draconian practices by social workers, and within Canada’s hospitals, some of which have been constituted as illegal, unethical, and human rights abuses by adoption activists. Through the use of secondary sources, the voices of mothers are heard, and the violence, disempowerment, and unethical practices that they experienced becomes visible. In conclusion, I will turn briefly to the topic of baby formula, which, due to advances in both baby formula and food preservation, became a contributing element to the mandate.

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<sup>88</sup> The practice of removing babies from unmarried mothers immediately following delivery.

## Section I

### The Profession of Social Work



Illus. 6. “With Case Worker” at a Salvation Army Home, *Life Magazine*.

In the 1910s, the newly created profession of social work claimed illegitimacy as one of its areas of expertise. This development became one of the major contributing factors to the adoption mandate in Canada.<sup>89</sup> Until the end of WWI, child welfare, social work, rescue work,

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<sup>89</sup> See Andrews (2011). *The Collective Consciousness of Society: Crimes Against the Unmarried Mother 1945-1985*. The Adoption mandate also occurred in the United States, UK, Australia, New Zealand and some European countries.

and moral reformation schemes remained mostly outside of the state, organized and managed by an extensive network of philanthropic groups and individuals that Canadian governments had acknowledged as experts in their respective fields (Valverde, 2008:52). However, with the rise and acceptance of Darwinism and the social purity movement, more emphasis was placed on science to solve social problems. In *The Search for Order 1877-1920*, Robert Wiebe asserts that a fundamental shift took place between 1877 and 1920 wherein the new urban middle class embraced science as a way to create order in unruly and expanding urban environments (Wiebe, 1980). These new reformers were instrumental in “extolling the virtues of bureaucracy, efficiency, rationality, and scientific management all of which would help bring order to the chaos of a developing urban-industrial society” (Irving 1992:11). The view of many in the emerging field of social work at that time was that, unless a scientific basis for social work was firmly established, social work as a profession would not thrive (Irving, 1992:14).

After a meeting of the Social Workers Club and the Social Science Study Club in 1913, a resolution in support of formalising social work training was presented to the Board of Governors of the University of Toronto,<sup>90</sup> and the first school of social work in Canada was established a year later. McGill University followed in 1918 and courses were introduced at the University of British Columbia in 1928. On March 20, 1926, approximately 60 social workers from Winnipeg, Montreal, Ottawa, Halifax and Toronto met in Montreal and subsequently formed The Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW) with 197 charter members from across Canada. The Canadian Conference of Social work met for the first time during April 24-27, 1928 with 710 social workers in attendance. The Association Journal, *The Social*

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<sup>90</sup> The University of Toronto calendar for 1915-16 listed a course entitled *Statistics and Social Research – methods of analysis; collection and interpretation of data* (Irving, 1992:14).

*Worker* was published for the first time in October 1932 (Jennissen & Lundy, 2008). The Depression of the 1930s, and two World Wars also played a vital role in the expansion of both the social work profession (Hick, 2006). It was not until 1941 that the Maritime School of Social Work opened its doors with six students (Smith, 1949:77). In 1943, the Laval School of Social Work opened in Quebec City, followed by the School of Social Work at the University of Manitoba (Smith, 1949:77). Canadian social workers continued to rely on American social work conferences and associations for professional growth and Canadian education and research was influenced greatly by developments south of the border until after the cold war (Irving, 1992:10).

The early twentieth century was an initial period of growth for social work as early social work practitioners working with unmarried mothers sought, not only to distance themselves from nineteenth century philanthropy, but also to create a new scientific profession. Regina Kunzel explains,

Few social workers considered unmarried mothers as their ‘unfortunate sisters’, and few still harboured any missionary impulse to ‘save’ them. Turning from the nineteenth century tradition of female reform to the legitimizing rhetoric of science, they cast themselves not as social housekeepers, moral guardians, or home missionaries, but as experts. Their attempt to professionalize social welfare would significantly reshape ideas about illegitimacy and attitudes towards single mothers (Kunzel, 1993:37).

Social work leaders, while extolling the virtues of scientific method, found the values of nineteenth century reformers to be unprofessional, outdated, and overly sentimental (Kunzel, 1993:44). While evangelical and other Christian women continued to claim authority over unmarried mothers, their proficiency was questioned by those in the emerging social science community and beginning in the late 1910s, social work practitioners began to claim illegitimacy

as part of their expanding domain (Kunzel, 1993:50). In contrast to the Protestant Evangelical or Catholic social reformers, who believed in redemption through moral rescue, social workers opposed these ideas by constructing themselves as experts and enlisting and developing scientific methods such as “differential casework” (Friedlander, 1976:71).<sup>91</sup>

The use of differential casework as a method resulted in the introduction of the case file. The case file included the documentation of interviews and record keeping of client contact in order to provide social diagnosis and treatment. Extensive and detailed instruction as to how to achieve this was outlined in *Social Diagnosis*, written by Mary Richmond in 1917. A chapter in this volume devoted to “Unmarried Mothers” includes a lengthy sample interview for social workers to use when interviewing unmarried mothers. The interview included questions about family background of the unmarried mother and father, school achievement, employment, paternity, sexual morality, community, attitude of parents, and plans for pregnancy, delivery and care of the child (See Appendix B). As an example:

39. If this is the girl's or woman's first child, does she appreciate the seriousness of her act and its consequences? Did she leave her home to hide her shame? To give the baby to strangers so that her misconduct might remain unsuspected at home? Does she love her baby? Does she want to keep it? (Richmond, 1917:414-419)

The unmarried mother interview was to remain virtually unchanged for the next fifty years or more.<sup>92</sup> Social workers asserted that the objective of the case file was to collect all information including personal and family history that might indicate the nature of a given client's difficulties

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<sup>91</sup> See Friedlander (1976:71). Differential casework is a social work practice based on the premise that under certain conditions, certain casework goals and techniques are appropriate; and under other conditions other goals and techniques may be appropriate.

<sup>92</sup> See Chambers, L. (2007). Children's Aid Society of Ontario records show similar detailed interviewing of unmarried mothers much later in the century.

in order to illuminate the means to a solution (Chambers 2007:58). The goal was no longer to provide short term solutions for illegitimacy, but to uncover the underlying causes of out-of-wedlock pregnancy so that the problem might be resolved permanently (Weinberg, 2004).

Through intensive casework during the 1920s and 1930s unmarried mothers were re-invented as unstable, neurotic, hysterical, narcissistic, and even psychotic (Herman, 2008:97).

Prior to the introduction of social work, unmarried fathers had been portrayed as predators, seducers, and irresponsible cads. However, by the 1940s the social worker had shifted the responsibility for unwed pregnancy away from unmarried fathers. Social workers argued that viewing all men as seducers and betrayers was unfair and that saddling a man with the support of a child that he may not have fathered could possibly endanger his marriage prospects (Crawford, 1997:134). Social workers reversed the narrative surrounding unmarried mothers, and with that reversal shifted the burden of responsibility and guilt for illegitimacy away from men to women. Solinger states that, “the girl or woman who ‘got herself pregnant’ was the locus of blame, the target of treatment programs and punishments” (Solinger, 1997:36). This narrative further stigmatized and vilified unmarried mothers. In the article “Public Attitudes in Canada Toward Unmarried Mothers: 1950-1956”, Susan Crawford refers to a Maclean’s article in 1949 entitled “The Forgotten Fathers”, which asserted that the public viewed the unmarried father as a ‘low scoundrel’ with no sense of responsibility toward either the ‘unfortunate woman’ or ‘hapless infant’, while social workers viewed the unmarried father as a normal, personable youth who was extremely worried about his situation (Crawford, 1997:113). Social workers stated that often the father remains unknown; alluding to moral laxity on the part of the woman, and that women were manipulative in naming fathers who might not actually be fathers. This characterization of men as victims of predatory scheming women highlights a change in perceptions of unmarried

mothers engineered by social workers (Crawford, 1997:113).

A review of the Canadian Association of Social Work journal *The Social Worker* from 1936 to 1970 reveals interesting developments in the field pertaining to work with unmarried mothers. Apart from a review of a study in Manitoba on unmarried mothers, the journals of the 1930s mostly reflect an organization establishing itself with nominations, financial reports, its first general meeting and similar activities. The Manitoba report on unmarried mothers released in 1937 identifies possible causes of unmarried motherhood as a lack of moral training, idleness, misuse of leisure time, lack of wholesome recreation, moving pictures, immoderate use of alcohol and drugs, increased opportunity due to more social freedom, and financial difficulties (The Social Worker, 1937:7). The report also identifies a need for comprehensive services for unmarried mothers to be provided by one organization:

the great weakness at the present time is that about every social agency is giving some specialized form of assistance to the unmarried mother, but that there is no one agency organized to render a full and complete case work service (The Social Worker, 1937:7).

The Manitoba report recommended that only agencies with the highest level of training and skill should be charged with the responsibility of case work with unmarried mothers, and suggests that either Family Agencies or Children's Aid Societies might be well placed to do so. In this report, we are offered a rare glimpse at the beginnings of how the adoption mandate came to be administered by social agencies and Children's Aid Societies with the powers of adoption in Canada:

Although a somewhat irregular one, the Unmarried Mother and her child constitute a family unit, and might be handled by a family agency....there is an advantage in that a Children's Aid Society has the machinery for court action...in addition the Children's

Aid Society has powers of adoption which a Family Agency has not (The Social Worker, 1937:Vol.5, No. 9:7).

the report continues,

Since the Children's Aid Society movement has extended throughout the Province of Manitoba, and Family Agencies are largely restricted to urban centres, the Children's Aid Societies would appear to be the logical media for the provision of service on a provincial wide basis (The Social Worker, 1937, Vol.5, No.9:7).

By 1943, a sample advertisement in the Canadian Association of Social Work journal shows *Services for Unmarried Mothers* directing women to contact their local Children's Aid Society if they are single and pregnant (The Social Worker, 1943, Vol II, No.4).

During the war years the journal mostly concentrates on topics pertaining to the war effort such as safety, emergency plans, overseas efforts, child health, and women war workers, among others. In the February 1948 issue an article entitled "Case Work and Adoption" appears. In this article by Mary Speers, the Supervisor of the Adoption Department at the Children's Aid Society of Toronto, the writer expressed that:

good adoption practices began with good case work done with the unmarried mother who is usually a sick girl. Her pregnancy is a symptom, not the cause of her condition. Her illness might be of a neurotic, psychotic or pre-psychotic origin, springing from maladjustments in her own home, deprivations and frustrations which interfered with her psycho-social development...the healthy girl protected herself (Speers, 1948:18).

In this article Speers reproduces the major postwar psychoanalytic theories of unmarried motherhood espousing that to the sick unmarried mother, the child is not real, or is used unconsciously as a weapon to punish her parents, and that through good case work the unmarried

mother is able to reach a more mature adjustment toward life (Speers, 1948).

An article which appeared in the October 1948 issue of *The Social Worker* authored by Betty Isserman, the Chief Medical Social Worker at St. Anne's Hospital in Montreal, and entitled "The Casework Relationship in work with Unmarried Mothers" states that:

The social worker does not *persuade* (sic) the unmarried mother either way. Today we say that unmarried mothers need real assistance in making a decision to give up or keep their children, and this help is offered by a social agency through the casework relationship....we believe in adoption as a good solution in many situations. We might say adoption is best in all cases where the mother chooses a more normal life for her child (Isserman, 1948).

Although limited articles pertaining to unmarried mothers appeared in *The Social Worker* during the 1930s and 1940s, more articles appeared in the 1950s along with an increasing number of advertisements for Social Workers to work in Children's Aid Societies. By 1953, there were approximately six pages of advertisements. It is interesting to note that although adoptions from unmarried mothers in Canada reached their highest level in Canada during the 1960s, the publication was unusually silent on the subject with only one article pertaining to unmarried motherhood published during the entire decade. However, simultaneously, the number of pages advertising for employment for social workers at Children's Aid Societies increased to twenty-five pages by 1963.

As the century progressed, social workers used adoption as the casework "treatment" for unmarried mothers. Social workers were more likely to favour adoption as the prevailing thought was that being unmarried equated to being "unfit" (Kunzel, 1993:129). By the 1950s, social workers were entrenched in adoption work with unmarried mothers in Canada. Relinquishment

of the child was considered to be the solution to the casework problem identified, which was “unmarried motherhood”. Casework was used to assist mothers in arriving at a “realistic plan,” a trade euphemism for relinquishment, found in many social work journals, books, and practicums. This term was used profusely in social work practice as the following exemplify:

The more healthy unmarried mother, on the other hand, usually has faced her situation *realistically*, [my emphasis] has a plan in mind, usually adoption (Speers, 1948:19).

and,

She may find herself ill-prepared to make *realistic plans* [my emphasis].

(The Canadian Welfare Council, Report of Committee on Services to Unmarried Mothers, 1955)

and,

A consultant psychiatrist with a Salvation Army maternity home writes:

Each of the girls spends on average at least one hour a week in a formal counselling or therapeutic relationship, with opportunity to assess her past and to make *realistic plans* [my emphasis] for the future (Drew, 1965:126).

and,

Counselling services to unmarried mothers were extended with the wish to contact all unmarried mothers prior to confinement and to assist the unwed mother to face her dilemma *realistically* [my emphasis] and by doing so to bring about her re-establishment into society on a sound basis; also to protect the interest of the child and afford it maximum security (Department of Public Welfare, Fifteenth Annual Report, Ontario, 1958-1959:32).

and,

Social workers and others serving unmarried mothers have arrived, as a result of experience, at the conviction that adoption is the best plan for most illegitimate children as well as for most unmarried mothers. This does not disregard the unmarried mother's right of choice, but with more understanding of the complications of the problem, the caseworker is able to approach the situation more objectively and to help the unmarried mother arrive at a *realistic* [my emphasis] decision" (Review of Policies, Maternity Homes, Metropolitan Toronto as cited in Petrie, 1998:147).

During the postwar mandate, social workers worked closely with maternity homes and hospitals to effect adoption outcomes. Social workers often visited unmarried mothers in maternity homes and hospitals prior to and after delivery of babies. In some cases, a written agreement existed between the parties. As an example, Gwen Davenport, Director of Armagh maternity home, reports in 1961 that, "The relationship with Peel County CAS and Armagh is different than that of other Children's Aid Societies. There is a written agreement covering ways of working together" (Armagh, Report of Director, 1961, PA).

Many mothers of the mandate report coercive means used by social workers to extract consents in hospitals and afterwards, including the use of falsehoods, threats, and trickery. Lori Chambers found that, "young women were subjected to unrelenting pressure to conform to the adoption mandate...the high pressure, and at times unsavoury tactics that CAS workers could use are well illustrated in a case that came before the court in Toronto" (Chambers, 2007:95). Most unmarried mothers signed consents with only themselves and a social worker or two present. Unmarried mothers were not given, nor offered, legal advice in the majority of cases. One mother reports, "I was 17 years old, and alone in a room with three social workers. I was very reluctant to sign. They said sign, it will be better for him and so on. It took a while, but I ended

up signing.”<sup>93</sup> Another mother recalls,

I cried, I begged, I screamed, I threw furniture around. They tried to put a pen in my hand and tried to make me sign. I threw the pen away. I tried so hard. Then they threatened to call the police...and so I signed (Goldhar, 2011).

Mothers of the mandate assert that, “we did not give up our babies, we “gave up” because of the coercion, and the pressure and the lack of support. We just surrendered.” (Alton & Parks, 2009).

Mothers were described a bleak life as a sole parent by social workers. Many were told that no one would give them housing or a job, that their children would be called “bastards”, or that they would fail the mothering task and end up bringing their child back when it was older and unadoptable. Mothers report being told that unless they signed consents for their newborn, their child would languish in an institution. Lori Chambers elaborates:

Mothers were pressured into the necessity of adoption by social workers, social workers had a responsibility to ensure that mothers were aware of the financial difficulties that they would inevitably confront raising children alone, but lurid descriptions of abject poverty were used to dissuade mothers from keeping their infants (Chambers, 2007:96).

Mothers of the mandate were told that no one would marry them, and their prospects for the future would be ruined unless they surrendered. Social workers routinely warned that unmarried mothers would have many difficulties, “that ‘men don’t want used goods’, meaning that their marriage prospects would be bleak, and that society would not be accepting of the mother or the child” (Chambers, 2006:161). As one mother puts it aptly, “We were put to the challenge to prove we loved them by letting them go” (Alward, 2013).

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<sup>93</sup> Experience of the writer in Toronto, Ontario, 1970 as recounted at Origins Canada, Adoption Experience Conference, October, 2012.

Most mothers were told they would forget about their baby and go on with their lives. One mother recalls, “I was told repeatedly of the mature woman who longed for a child and could give my baby what I couldn’t. And, I was assured that giving up my child was an unselfish act of love...I was told I would get over my loss and move on” (Walton, 2012). In the film *The Forty Year Secret*, social worker Cathy Basilie states that, “the message was, get over it, you made a mistake, get on with your life. You will have other children who will replace the child that you placed up for adoption ...you won’t even remember that child” (Alton & Parks, 2009). One mother reports “I was told I would forget this baby and that I would be a “real” mother later.”<sup>94</sup> Another, referring to social worker narratives given to unmarried mothers states that mothers were told, “Don’t worry dear, you’ll go home and forget about this and go on with your life” (Alton & Parks, 2009). One mother recalls:

I couldn’t figure out why I wasn’t forgetting him because the nuns told me I would forget him and I was raised Catholic... I thought there was something wrong with me because I wasn’t forgetting....I didn’t forget him, I never forgot him (Alward, 2015)

The regulation of social work is a provincial matter. Although various “voluntary” associations had been in existence prior to regulation, social workers remained an unregulated body in Canada during the postwar decades; resulting in the fact that their conduct was not subject to any disciplinary or regulatory body.<sup>95</sup> When examining the dates across the provinces wherein a formal regulatory body for social work was instituted, a surprising disparity is uncovered. As an example, whereas British Columbia instituted a regulatory body for social

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<sup>94</sup> Told to the writer by a social worker in 1969

<sup>95</sup> As an example see The New Brunswick Association of Social Workers which was formed as a voluntary body in 1965, and only became a regulated body in 1988.

workers in 1969,<sup>96</sup> Manitoba did not do so until 2014 when the Social Work Act of 2009 was proclaimed into law. In fact, Manitoba was the last jurisdiction in Canada to obtain legislation to regulate social workers (CBC News, April 6, 2015). In Alberta, registration of social workers became mandatory in 1995. However, it should be noted that the Alberta Department of Children's Services and social workers employed by First Nations were exempt from this registration until the Alberta Health Professions Act of 2003. Ontario fully proclaimed the Social Work and Social Service Act in 1998, and instituted it on August 15, 2000, at which time social work became a regulated profession in that province (Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers). Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick established regulatory bodies in 1988 and 1989 respectively and Saskatchewan introduced regulation of the profession in 1995.

Unregulated social workers during the mandate operated within a conflict of interest<sup>97</sup> since they controlled not only the processes for access to support from putative fathers, but counselled unmarried mothers, counselled prospective adopters, organized adoption matching, and processed adoption transactions, while at the same time being the source of newborn babies for adoption. Judges relied on the recommendations of social workers in adoption matters, "this ensured that the CAS was largely unsupervised and indirectly awarded the agency enormous discretionary power" (Chambers, 2007:87).

Social worker Svanhuit Josie was one of the few critics of her profession during the

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<sup>96</sup> See Social Workers Act, BC, and Board of Registration for Social Workers, 1969, See Social Work and Social Services Work Act, Ontario, received Royal Assent in 1998, Social Workers Act, Saskatchewan, April 1, 1995, Manitoba College of Social Workers, April 1, 2015, New Brunswick Association of Social Workers, 1988, Prince Edward Island Registration Board, 1988, Alberta Health Professions Act, April 1, 2003.

<sup>97</sup> See also Chambers, 2007:91. "They [social workers] did not recognize that simultaneous control over adoption and affiliation proceedings placed child welfare workers themselves in a position of conflict of interest."

mandate. Josie states:

One of the basic principles of casework is self-determination. Yet today it seems to me that casework with the unmarried mother has come to mean the process of convincing her that it is impossible, if not absolutely immoral for her to plan to keep her own child. She must be made to face the **reality** [my emphasis] of her situation which means to give it up for adoption. Things are made so difficult for her that in the end she has no choice (Josie, 1955:248-9).

However, Josie's statement was not well received, since, a statement placed directly below hers in the same issue of *Canadian Welfare* written by the Superintendent of the Unmarried Parent's Department strongly rejected Josie's assertions.

Social workers became a major factor in the postwar adoption mandate in Canada by: creating a profession for themselves based on scientific theory and casework which "claimed the field of illegitimacy as their proper domain" (Kunzel, 1993:50); contributing significantly to the various re-characterizations of unmarried mothers throughout the twentieth century; advancing and acting on psychoanalytic theories of the unmarried mother as pathological and unfit; promoting adoption through a network of Children's Aid Societies connected to provincial courts, a position that was clearly a conflict of interest; taking the public position that babies of unmarried mothers should be placed for adoption; and, through the use of social work casework which employed unethical, and to some, illegal tactics in order to ensure outcomes of a *realistic plan*.<sup>98</sup> The profession remained unregulated during the heyday of the mandate and had huge discretionary powers over unmarried mothers and their babies, thereby providing little recourse directly to the social work profession for mothers impacted by illegal, unethical, and human

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<sup>98</sup> Usually firstborn

rights abuses perpetrated by social workers during the period.

## **Section II**

### **The Impact of Sociological Theories on the Adoption Mandate**

#### **Clean Slate Theory**

The concept of the Latin “tabula rasa” or unsubscribed or clean slate, can be traced back to Aristotle (Duschinsky, 2012:511). The clean slate theory was re-introduced in modern times by John Locke, a seventeenth century philosopher. Locke asserted that the human mind is a blank slate and that all forms of thought processing and development in the human mind is experiential.<sup>99</sup> During the 1940s, there was a resurgence of this concept due to the work of Sigmund and Anna Freud in the developmental psychology of children, which raised environment as a factor in normal child development.<sup>100</sup> The Australian Senate Committee Report (ASCR) on former forced adoption policies and practices published in February 2012 reports that:

following the atrocities of WWII, eugenics fell out of favour... This shift in focus was developed in part from the scholarship of Sigmund and Anna Freud. Freudian developmental theory encouraged adoptions and argued for the early separation of [unmarried] mothers from their babies. (ASCR, 2012:22)

Earlier in the twentieth century the popularity of eugenics<sup>101</sup> had contributed to the idea that children for adoption were tainted with the moral, mental, and physical impediments of their parents. In addition, genetic concerns resulted in delays in adoption finalizations so that adopting parents could be “assured of the genetic quality of their adopted children” (ASCR 2012:20).

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<sup>99</sup> See Locke, 1690, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*

<sup>100</sup> See Mayes, L.C. and Cohen D.J. (1996). *Anna Freud and developmental psychoanalytic psychology*

<sup>101</sup> See more about the connections of eugenics and adoption in Chapter 2.

Prior to the 1950s, adoption practice considered not only the intelligence of the unmarried mother, but also the baby to be adopted. Newborn infants to be adopted in Canada were routinely given ‘psychometric’ examinations (Speers, 1948:19). As concluded by Lillian Romkey in a 1951 Masters Thesis at the University of Toronto entitled, *The Disposition of Children of Unmarried Mothers with Limited Intelligence*, “young infants placed for adoption are selected on the basis of known and hereditary factors. Children cannot be placed for early adoption if there is knowledge of poor background” (Romkey, 1951:15). New practices that separated mother and baby much earlier were “in stark contrast to earlier theories and eugenic practices of ‘scientifically’ nursing babies for at least the first year of their lives” (ASCR, 2012:22).

By the 1950s, contrary to eugenic theories, ideas related to clean slate theory were applied in adoption practice. Intelligence testing for newborns or intellectual matching, which had been prominent in adoption in the 1930s and 1940s, “diminished notably in the case records of the 1950s and 1960s...as the predictive value of intelligence testing was challenged by social scientists who emphasized the influence of environment” (Melosh, 2002:75). One of those challengers was British psychiatrist John Bowlby, who in 1951 asserted that the various tests used on infants to predict intelligence had little or no value (Bowlby, 1951:103).

With the application of clean slate theory, perceived inherited intellectual impediments in an infant to be adopted were now understood to be erased. By the late 1950s, it became common for babies of unmarried mothers to be placed in adoptive homes much earlier in life than had been the former practice. At a University of Toronto seminar about adoption practices in 1948, prominent social worker, Dorothy Hutchinson, from the New York School of Social Work stated that “the most progressive American agencies were now placing a number of babies under six months of age, and even from hospital” (Speers, 1948:19). The Thirteenth Annual Report of the

Department of Public Welfare, Alberta, for 1956-1957 states that, “it is gratifying to note that most infants who are accepted as wards by this method [application to surrender], are placed for adoption at the age of a few weeks” (Department of Public Welfare, Alberta, Thirteenth Annual Report, 1956-1957).

### **Clean Break**

Following WWII, concerns in the global north extended to the impact of war on children, including those displaced, orphaned, or otherwise affected. This was in addition to studies that had been made during the 1930s of hospitalized infants that documented the effects of institutionalized care, limited physical contact, and changing caregivers (Melosh, 2002:75). In this climate, psychologists and social scientists began work on studies that focussed on the mother-child dyad, and the importance of the presence of the mother in early development (Vicedo, 2009:272). Anna Freud argued that the child develops an attachment to the mother early in life, and that “the mother child attachment was thus the cradle of the emotional self” (Vicedo, 2009:272). A number of influential analysts in the United States came to the conclusion that “maternal care and love are vital necessities for a child’s psychic and even physical development” (Vicedo, 2009:272). It is interesting to note that studies about mother love and the importance of mothering for child development came at a time when there was a growing concern about the rising number of women working outside the home (Vicedo, 2009).

Springing from these and other prominent studies, the “clean break” was instituted in adoption practice. The clean break was the practice of removing babies from white unmarried mothers immediately at birth so as to prevent bonding<sup>102</sup> and to promote attachment to a

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<sup>102</sup> This is despite that the mother had most likely bonded with her child in utero for nine months.

surrogate as early in life as possible.<sup>103</sup> Social worker Mary Iwanek writes, “clean break theory exercised a considerable influence on adoption legislation and practice” (Iwanek, 1998:14). The manifestation of clean break was partly based on Bowlby’s attachment theory published in a World Health Organization (WHO) report in 1951 that suggested children are biologically pre-programmed to form attachments for survival very early in life. Jill Goldson articulates that:

The assumption that a single mother would want to make a fresh start, without her baby and free of stigma, was fuelled by theorists such as John Bowlby whose work on attachment theory and its implications for early bonding reinforced the ‘clean break’ theory (Goldson, 2003:246).

Influential studies by Bowlby promoted early infant bonding, in that a child should be attached to a mother figure as early as possible as a key determinant in parenting success (Welbourne, 2003:60). Bowlby introduced the idea that the mother of origin was of little to no importance to the child as long as the infant could be introduced to a surrogate early after birth. Bowlby also advocated for the unmarried mother to make a “realistic” plan sooner rather than later. In the 1951 WHO report, Bowlby writes,

Moreover, it is in the mother’s interest to make the decision to keep or part with her rather than late...if the mother has sought care reasonably early it should be possible for the experienced case-worker to help her reach a **realistic decision** [my emphasis] either before the baby is born or soon after (Bowlby, 1951:102).

Bowlby was a strong supporter of early adoption and suggested that it was not only in the interests of the unmarried mother, but also clearly in the interests of adoptive parents. Ontario

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<sup>103</sup> See Sinclair (2007:66) *Identity Lost and Found: Lessons from the sixties scoop*. Indigenous mothers also lost their newly born children soon after birth, “it was common practice in BC in the mid-sixties to ‘scoop’ from their mothers on reserves almost all newly born children”.

adoption practice strongly echoed Bowlby's ideas regarding adoption. The contents of the *Adoption Policy Guide of 1966* states that:

The earlier a child is placed, the more favourable are his chances of healthy emotional development and the greater the satisfaction for the adopting parents (Ontario. Department of Public Welfare, 1966)

Bowlby was a proponent of the earlier work of scientist Konrad Lorenz.<sup>104</sup> Lorenz's work concentrated on "social imprinting", the process by which some animals form attachments during a critical period early in life for survival (Hess, 1973:72). Lorenz's method was to remove the mother of newly hatched ducklings, and note how they followed him soon after hatching, illustrating that within the first few days of life that imprinting with a mother figure occurs. Lorenz allied himself with child analysts who emphasized the importance of the mother-child dyad and the consequences of its disruption (Vicedo, 2009:265).

Also contributing to sociological studies surrounding clean break adoption practice was the work of American psychologist Harry Harlow, who conducted a study entitled "The Nature of Love" in 1958.<sup>105</sup> Harlow compared infant monkeys raised by their own mothers with those introduced to surrogate mothers, in this case, a "wire mother" and a "cloth mother". Harlow concluded that the control monkeys developed affection or love for the cloth mother, but that the interval of delay in exposing the infant monkey to the surrogate, "depresses the intensity of the affectional response to below that of the infant monkeys that were surrogate-mothered from birth onward" (Harlow, 1958:684). Harlow concluded that:

as far as we can observe, the infant monkey's affection for the real mother is strong, but

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<sup>104</sup> Lorenz was a zoologist, ethologist, and ornithologist

<sup>105</sup> See Harlow, *The Nature of Love*, *American Psychologist* (1958), Vol. 13:673-685

no stronger than that of the experimental monkey for the surrogate cloth mother, and the security the infant gains from the real mother is no greater than the security it gains from a cloth surrogate (Harlow, 1958:684).

Harlow's experiments, which were widely distributed and popular at the time, contributed to the justification of adoption practice by "substantiating the adoption-friendly theory that 'nurture' was a far more contributing factor in healthy psychological development than 'nature', and that infants should be introduced to a surrogate as soon as possible after birth" (Adoption History Project).

Bowlby's WHO report came to be the authoritative document of the consensus within this field of research (Vicedo, 2011:408). The work of Bowlby and other attachment theorists created a major shift in adoption practice that survives today. Environmental and psychodynamic concerns became more prominent, instead of hereditary and genetic determinants that had been the major concerns prior to the adoption of Bowlby's ideas (Iwanek, M. 1997:15). Mary Iwanek explains,

The work of Bowlby influenced the use of psychodynamic theory of personality, particularly Freudian theory, in social work practice....Bowlby's work also provided the social work profession with an opportunity to lay claim to an area of work which they could truly call their own, thereby increasing their status as a legitimate professional body (Iwanek, M. 1997:15).

Another important factor influencing clean break was the drive to achieve normative gender roles and families in the immediate postwar decades. Adopters wanted newborns, and they were in demand. As Bowlby alluded, one of the driving forces influencing clean break practice was the increasing market demand for newborn infants for adoption, in particular, white

newborn babies. In the article, “Attachment Theory and Children’s Rights”, Penelope Welbourne notes that, “Thoburn (1995) argues that it was responsiveness to the needs of adopters that motivated the ‘clean break’ approach to adoption” (Welbourne, 2003:66). Further, in the work, “Silenced, Denigrated and Rendered Invisible: Mothers who Lost their Babies to Adoption in the 1960s and 1970s”, Sandra Jarvie refers to the Report of the Committee on Adoption in Alberta (1965) which summarized the results of questionnaires sent to 2,167 couples who had adopted. This questionnaire not only illustrates the demand for white newborns by adopters, but also alludes to the social work practice of removing babies from their mothers directly from hospital. The report is also suggestive of the desirability of newborns being one of the central reasons this practice was instituted:

most adoptive parents...wanted a newborn to 2 months old...virtually none wanted a child over 4 years, indicating, of course, the desirability of placing a child as soon as possible after birth. Ideally, perhaps the child should be placed by the time it leaves hospital (Jarvie, 2006:76 as cited in Schissel, Ed.).

### **Clean Break: Operating as a Form of Violence Against Women and the Maternal Body**

The hospital experiences of Canada’s “unwed mothers” are characterized by systemic disempowerment. The assumption that the babies of unmarried mothers would be adopted was reinforced by hospital protocols. The identification of the unmarried mother upon arrival in Canadian hospitals prompted processes and procedures that were in contrast to that of married mothers. From the accounts of Canadian mothers and hospital files obtained, it appears that the identification of Canada’s unmarried mothers in hospital mirror those which took place in Australia. The Australian Senate Committee Report of 2012 (ASCR:45) found that unmarried mothers were identified by their files being flagged with BFA, or, Baby for Adoption and

UB-, meaning Unmarried, Baby negative. Others were marked with MISS very prominently to indicate an unmarried mother. While this may have occurred in cases where mothers had explicitly stated that they did want to have their child adopted, it was concluded by the committee that these types of acronyms appeared on the files of most unmarried women. Mothers arriving on a regular basis from local maternity homes were readily identified as unmarried mothers.

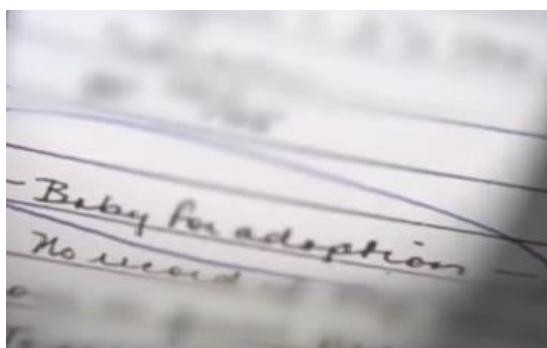


Figure 1. This image shows the notation “baby for adoption” on the hospital file of an unmarried mother in Canada who asserts that she had no plan to have her child adopted (Sheldon, 2012).

23007-64	<b>Toronto East General and Orthopaedic Hospital</b>
1102 BROADVIEW AV EY 15 OPD DR RM PILKEY FS UC HO 1-2439 XYES OBS SC PREGNANCY VICTOR HOME SNE SNE -- NOV 7-64 3 30PM SCCRSC 19524917 OHSC	SUMMARY SHEET DISCHARGE DATE (PLEASE COMPLETE) <i>Nov. 12/64</i> Paediatric Admission <i>(baby stays)</i>
	<i>B60635</i>

Figure 2. This image shows the hospital file of an unmarried mother in 1964 indicating clearly that she is from the Victor Home (United Church Maternity Home) and noting that, “baby stays”. (Provided by mother to the writer, with permission).

In the postwar decades, and upon admission to hospital, unmarried mothers were not routinely consulted by nursing or medical staff as to their wishes pertaining to their babies. Adoption was the assumed protocol for the majority of unmarried mothers, particularly for those arriving from maternity homes. By the late 1950s, early 1960s, the arrival of an unmarried mother at a Canadian hospital activated hospital protocols that included the isolation of unmarried mothers in labour wards, the routine removal of babies directly from the delivery table prior to the completion of all stages of birth, the denial of access to babies, and the suppression of lactation, all without consent, and prior to the signing of legal adoption consents. This occurred most frequently in hospitals with religious associations with maternity homes, such as Miséricordia Hospitals and Salvation Army Hospitals, although most hospitals in Canada had similar protocols.

Social workers, working closely in conjunction with hospitals were at the forefront of these policies. Policies at the Mt. Sinai Hospital in Toronto stated that all mothers contemplating adoption “be referred to the Social Service Department of the hospital” (Brock, 1957:126). The contents of the *Adoption Policy Guide of 1966* offers insight into the close relationship that was maintained between social workers and hospitals regarding adoptions. This guide documents the protocols of various Toronto area hospitals on direct adoptions, or, adoptions made directly from hospital, and instructs social workers in detail such as nursery protocols. As an example, “very informal hospital, no pass needed. Nurses aren’t too aware of confidentiality re/baby’s surname; no bottle needed, but one day’s formula is given to adoptive couple” (Ontario. Department of Public Welfare, Child Welfare Branch, 1966).

Mothers in Canada report hospital treatment that was draconian in nature.<sup>106</sup> Hospital

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<sup>106</sup> See Editorial, Unwed Mothers, Unknown Choices. The Globe and Mail, October 30, 2013.

staff were often unsympathetic, judgmental, and harsh. Unmarried mothers, particularly those from maternity homes, were usually dropped off at hospital and left to labour alone. One Canadian mother reports “I was left alone in labour, they came maybe twice...the nurses were very judgemental...as soon as he was born I asked to see my baby and the doctor said no” (Alward, 2015).<sup>107</sup> Another states that “my labour was on my own in a dark room, I cried for help many times. A nurse came in and shut the door.” (Humewood House 100 Years, 2012). In the book *Gone to An Aunt's*, Anne Petrie recalls that “I was put in a room alone on the gynecological ward, as was the practice for unwed mothers” (Petrie, 1998:182). Another mother recalls that, “I was left alone for most of my labour...it was pure fear and abandonment and a pathetic ignorance of what was happening to my body” (Petrie, 1998:185).

Mothers report verbal abuse by nurses, “I told the nurse I hurt, and she told me it was a good lesson for me” (Alward, 2015). Another mother who was in the Salvation Army Grace Hospital in Toronto in 1970 reported that when she complained of being shaved roughly and hurting, the nurse responded “it’s less than you deserve.”<sup>108</sup> Yet another, referring to hospital staff, confirms that “the looks and the tone of voice that they gave you told you that you were bad and that this is your punishment” (Alward, 2015). The general principle appears to have been to make the experience so traumatic that it would not be repeated, since repeaters were not readily tolerated.

Clean break was routine protocol for unmarried mothers in most Canadian hospitals. In the article, “They’re “More Children Than Adults”: Teens, Unmarried Pregnancy, and the Canadian Medical Profession, 1945-1961”, Sharon Wall suggests that:

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<sup>107</sup> See Alward, S. *Exiled Mothers*, a film in which Alward documents the accounts of several mothers of the mandate.

<sup>108</sup> The author experienced this at the Salvation Army Grace Hospital in Toronto.

Evidence clearly shows that some women were not permitted to see their babies even once, whether as a matter of policy or due to individual circumstances. Ramona B. explained, “I wasn’t allowed to go to the nursery. I wasn’t allowed to go see her or hold her.” Likewise, in the case of one Burnaby Home resident in 1948, with a girl deemed ‘suicidal,’ the superintendent recorded that, “it was tho’t [sic] best that she...not see her baby at all” (Wall, 2014:62).

Mothers report having their faces covered with sheets, pillows, or having their heads restrained in order to block the view of their baby in the delivery room. Delivery room mirrors were averted. Mothers report that they were either given no medication, or medicated to the point where they could recall little about birth and delivery (Petrie, 1998). One mother reports that, “I was drugged for the first and kept drugged for three days. I was tied to the bedrail when I came to” (Sheldon, 2012).

Mothers from the postwar adoption era are speaking out about their experiences in Canada’s delivery rooms.<sup>109</sup> One mother in Canada reports seeing “a little mop of dark hair poking out of the blanket”<sup>110</sup> as her child was whisked away from the delivery room never to be seen again. In an article celebrating 100 years of Humewood House<sup>111</sup>, one mother stated “I was not allowed to see my infant son after he was born...when other babies were wheeled into the ward for feeding, I sat alone and watched. Eventually I became hysterical with grief” (Ferenc, 2012). Another mother who gave birth in 1964 wrote, “my head was restrained when I begged to see my baby...I never had the chance” (Humewood House 100 Years, 2012). Sue states that:

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<sup>109</sup> The writer was prevented from seeing her baby in the delivery room and later told “you can’t see that baby, that baby is for adoption” at the Salvation Army Grace Hospital in Toronto, 1970.

<sup>110</sup> Origins Canada, Past Adoption Policies and Practices: Non-Indigenous and Indigenous Contexts. Conference with MPs and Senators, Parliament Hill, May 17, 2016.

<sup>111</sup> See Ferenc, Leslie, Toronto Star, April 10, 2012:G2/56. Turning Shame to Empowerment for 100 Years.

it wasn't a surrender, it was more like having my baby torn from me...after the baby was born the ache in my body was so horrible...I wanted to hold my child, my milk was there to feed her and I was supposed to "act like none of this happened" and go back to my "normal" life. (Origins Canada, Sue).

Another mother of the mandate corroborates this, articulating that, "removing a child from a mother, under any circumstance, is an act of violence...it is violent because it feels like its 'ripped away' physically...you feel it physically" (Alward, 2015). One mother reports yelling "Bring me my baby! I want to hold my baby!" as her baby was quickly taken away from her following birth (Sheldon, 2012). Another mother who delivered twins reports that "all I could see were little dark heads" as her babies were removed from the delivery room (Alward, 2015). Some mother accounts include statements of being restrained on delivery tables, while others describe being put on different hospital floors from that of their babies.

A few mothers of the mandate in Canada have come forward having been told their babies died, when in fact they were adopted,<sup>112</sup> "my mother was told that I passed away overnight" (Sheldon, 2012). Lise Pageau, Regional Director at Mouvement Retrouvailles, a non-profit Quebec agency supporting those separated by adoption states that:

In those days, it was just said the child was dead because that way the mother wouldn't look for it... [Nurses and doctors] would show the mother a very, very, sick baby and say the child would not pull through the night. Sometimes the child was already promised to a couple (Carlson, National Post, March 24, 2012:1).

Although it is impossible to determine the number of cases like this in Canada, it raises concerns, particularly with those unmarried mothers who were told their babies died. Did my baby really

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<sup>112</sup> See National Post, Carlson, K. B., March 24, 2012:1, Your Baby is Dead: Mothers say their Supposedly Stillborn Babies were Stolen from Them.

die, or, was my baby adopted? Should I be looking for my child, or is my child really dead?

There are women in Canada today who continue to grapple with these kinds of questions.

Preventing lactation was routine treatment for unmarried mothers. Mothers were given lactation suppressant medications in most cases, without consent, thereby assuming adoption. Some mothers believe that they were given the cancer causing drug Diethylstilbestrol (DES)<sup>113</sup> and although it was used as a lactation suppressant, I was unable to find evidence to support this in Canada.<sup>114</sup> DES was developed in 1938 and used for “symptom relief from estrogen-deficiency states, postpartum lactation suppression, and treatment of prostate and breast cancer.” (Goodman et al, 2011:2083).

Many mothers report being bound tightly with breast binders. Singer Joni Mitchell, who gave birth to her daughter in a Toronto hospital states that “one of the barbaric things they did was they bound the breasts of unwed mothers to keep the milk from coming” (Johnson, 1997, Maclean’s). Another mother recalls her experience of being back at school after her child’s birth, “sitting there with bound up breasts, still recovering from a birth in every physical way, no child in your arms, and you are sitting in a math class... with not even a minute of counselling” (Alward 2015). Although many unmarried mothers in Canada report the use of breast binders, and hospital documents corroborate this, it is unclear whether breast binders were also used on married women who were not breastfeeding. In any case, married women were most likely given

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<sup>113</sup> See Goodman, A, Schorge, and Greene, F., 2011, New England Journal of Medicine, Long Term Effect of In Utero Exposure: The DES Story See Submission to the Australian Senate Inquiry, Australia by DES Action Australia. Diethylstilbestrol (DES) was approved for medical use in 1941 to treat vaginitis, gonorrhoea, menopausal symptoms, and to suppress lactation. Doctors confirmed the link between DES and a rare vaginal cancer, Clear Cell Adenocarcinoma (CCA) in 1971. See New England Journal of Medicine, April 22, 1971. Effects of DES exposure include structural damage in reproductive organs of DES sons and daughters, high risk pregnancies and miscarriage for DES daughters, increased risk of CCA in DES daughters, increased risk for infertility in DES sons and daughters, increased risk of breast cancer in DES mothers and DES daughters over 40 years of age.

<sup>114</sup> However, this does not preclude the possibility as DES was used as a lactation suppressant on unmarried mothers as Crown St. Hospital and

the choice to breastfeed their babies, whereas in the majority of cases, unmarried mothers were not.

Mothers who were victims of these practices have reported it as a trauma from which they have never recovered, and studies corroborate this. Mothers of the mandate are more likely to suffer mental health issues such as Disenfranchised Grief, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Anxiety, and Depression.<sup>115</sup> In effect, these inhumane and harsh adoption practices were a form of violence against women and the maternal body resulting in lifelong psychological impact. There is evidence that social workers knew at the time that mothers would be impacted for the rest of their lives. An article that appeared in the *Globe & Mail* in 1966 with the headline, “Unwed who gives up child may Mourn lifetime, Group Told” referred to the annual conference of the Ontario Association of Children’s Aid Societies in 1966, where a social worker told the group that, “unwed mothers who give up their children go through at least three years, and perhaps a lifetime of mourning” (Kirkwood, *Globe and Mail*, May 11, 1966). In an edition of “Your CAS” published by the Ontario Association of Children’s Aid Societies it is clearly stated that, “if she gives up the baby she may go through years of grieving for it” (OCAS, 1966:13).

The clean break theory survives and its expression in modern domestic adoption is no less traumatic. In current practice, adopters are often present in delivery rooms, cutting the cord, holding, and bonding with the prospective adoptive infant while the mother continues the final

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<sup>115</sup> See Commonwealth of Australia (2012), *Past Adoption Experiences: National Research Study on the Service Response to Past Adoption Practices*. Also see, Askren, H., & Bloom, K. (1999) *Post-adoptive reactions of the relinquishing mother: A review*, Blanton, T, & Deschner J, (1990), *Biological mother’s grief*, Carr, M.J. (2000) *Birthmothers and Subsequent Children*, Condon, J. (1986), *Psychological Disability in Women Who Relinquish a baby for Adoption*, Kelly, J. (1999), *The Trauma of Relinquishment: the long term impact on birthmothers who lost their infants to adoption during the years 1965-1972*, Lake, B.E.B. (2009) *Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Natural Mothers*, Pengilley, H. (2003) *Hidden Voices: the Language and Losses of Birthmothers*, Wells, S. (1993) *Post-traumatic stress disorder in birthmothers among others*.

stage of birth<sup>116</sup> (Andrews, 2014). This practice has been normalized in the current climate of adoption culture. Since the 1950s, attachment theory has remained a cornerstone of birthing and adoption practice. The study of attachment in adopted children continues to be a focus of research and assessment in contemporary adoption practice.<sup>117</sup> In addition, theories of birth bonding and attachment continue with the “skin to skin”<sup>118</sup> practices of today. Raylene Phillips articulates that, “being skin to skin with mother protects the newborn from the well documented negative side effects of separation, supports optimal brain development, and facilitates attachment” (Phillips, 2013:1).

Today, many adoption activists claim that the taking of babies from their legal mothers in hospital delivery rooms prior to the signing of legal consents was not only violent and unethical, but also illegal. Australian adoption activist Dian Wellfare writes:

In having introduced de-humanising labour ward procedures of violently snatching newborns from their mothers wombs during birth, at a time when still in labour, a mother was bound by stirrups, awaiting the expulsion of the placenta; by introducing policies forbidding eye contact between mother and child to prevent bonding (culminating in a violent trauma to the female psyche from which no mother is ever able to recover). In preventing lactation by the use of drugs or breast binding prior to a consent being taken; by sedating mothers postnatally with hypnotic barbiturates: by hiding babies from their own mothers therefore denying mothers free access to their own babies; by separating

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<sup>116</sup> The birth process has three main stages, contractions resulting in the dilation of the cervix, delivery of baby, and the expulsion of the placenta.

<sup>117</sup> There is a wide range of scholarship and studies on attachment in adoption. As examples, see Johnson, D & Fein, E., (1991). *The Concept of Attachment: Applications to Adoption*. See also Houlihan, L. (2010) *Child Attachment at Adoption and Three Months*.

<sup>118</sup> The current practice of mothers and fathers holding babies bare chest to bare chest for the first few days after birth.

and transporting mothers without their babies to distant locations - all without due consultation, permission or written consent from the mother...I contend - were all violations of the law (Wellfare, 1997).<sup>119</sup>

### **Complete Break – Closed Adoption Records**

Not only did the practice of the clean break become entrenched in adoption practice in postwar Canada, but in addition, the practice of “complete break” also emerged. This entailed the sealing of adoption records. The “ties between the child and his or her natural parents were irrevocably severed and the relinquishing parent had no right to information about the child” (Chambers, 2016:64). This paternalistic practice spread, and by the 1940s, most provinces had implemented laws to maintain secrecy in adoption records. Mothers were routinely encouraged by social workers not to tell anyone about the illicit pregnancy and to “begin a new life and to forget about the child” (Iwanek, 1997:8:16).

The closed adoption system in Canada meant that original birth registrations were sealed, and adoptees were re-issued new birth certificates showing the adopters as their only parents; reference to the original mother and father was omitted. Indeed, any identifying information pertaining to the child’s original family was removed, sealed, and kept secret by provincial governments.<sup>120</sup> According to Dukette, this practice had many advantages in that complete break served to:

disrupt any interference by a natural parent; leaves parties free to make their own lives;

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<sup>119</sup> See Commonwealth of Australia. These policies were acknowledged as being illegal in Australia. The Apology for Forced Adoption given by then Prime Minister Julia Gillard on March 21, 2013 states, “you were forced to endure the coercion and brutality of practices that were unethical, dishonest, and in many cases illegal”

<sup>120</sup> Although the current trend in adoption practice is to openness, as of this writing, adoption records continue to be sealed in PEI, Nova Scotia, and Quebec; and only semi-open in BC, Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Newfoundland and Yukon Territory. New Brunswick is poised to semi-open records in April 2018.

cuts off any immoral or unpleasant background; provides class security; provides greater sense of entitlement or possession of the child to adopters; ensures privacy and autonomy of the family which are essential to the survival of adoption as an institution (Dukette, 1975, *Child Welfare*, 54 (8):551, as cited in Griffith, 1991).

Griffith concurs with this analysis stating that the theory of the complete break played three main roles: “protective role for adoptive family; constructive role emphasizing formation of new relationships; and a destructive role to destroy any connection with the past” (Griffith, 1991, Sec.12:6). Original families were viewed as suspect while adoptive families are viewed as being in need of protection from them. This is alluded to in a statement made by the British Columbia government in 1967:

Inspection of the documents filed regarding an adoption is only allowed to officials of the Crown in discharge of their official duties or to a person authorized by the Provincial Secretary in writing, or to a person authorized by a Judge of the Court presiding in Chambers. Thus every effort is made to protect the interest of the adopted child and his adopted parents (British Columbia, *Vital Statistics, Ninety-Sixth Report*, 1967).

Many unmarried mothers from postwar Canada assert that they were not promised secrecy, nor did they ask for it, although there are still many unmarried mothers from the postwar mandate that continue to keep the secret<sup>121</sup> mostly due to shame and the ideology of secrecy with which they were indoctrinated by maternity home matrons, social workers, clergy, family, and others. Notwithstanding any assurances that may have been given by individual social workers acting upon their own authority, there are no legal documents known to the writer in Canada given to any unmarried mother that guaranteed privacy. Recently, Joanne Bernard, Minister of

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<sup>121</sup> Many unmarried mothers who lost their children to adoption during the adoption mandate era are forming support groups and sharing their accounts on social media.

Social Services in Nova Scotia has stated “I have absolutely no intention of opening up the adoption act in this province” (CBC News, March 30, 2015).<sup>122</sup> Bernard cites unmarried mother privacy as the reason although adoption records are semi-open<sup>123</sup> in six provinces, and I was unable to find evidence to support negative consequences to unmarried mothers as a result of opening adoption records. A recent citizen engagement on the topic of open adoption records was held by the provincial government in New Brunswick in the spring of 2014.<sup>124</sup> Eight regional public sessions were held to determine public sentiment for the opening of adoption records in that province. The study found that 85% of all respondents were in favour of opening the records.

### **Baby Formula as a Factor in the Separation of Mother and Child**

The development of baby formula was an important factor in separating mothers and babies during the adoption mandate due to the ability to nourish infants safely away from their mothers. The historical evolution of infant feeding practices and norms includes breastfeeding, wet-nursing, the feeding bottle, and formula use (Stevens, Patrick, Pickler, 2009). As discussed in Chapter 1, wet-nursing was the practice of a newly delivered mother suckling other babies along with her own and was often employed by unmarried mothers as a way to support their illegitimate child during the nineteenth century. However, wet-nursing quickly declined to extinction with advancement in the bottle and availability of animal milk. Not all physicians were in favour of using artificial methods to sustain infants, since infant mortality remained high for those not fed by mother’s milk as exemplified by this physician statement in 1907:

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<sup>122</sup> See CBC News, March 30, 2015. Nova Scotia Again Urged to Open Adoption Records.

<sup>123</sup> Semi-open refers to adoption records being subject to a veto by either party to prevent the other from receiving identifying information. Vetoes remain controversial as many adoption reformers seek to remove them entirely from existing and newly drafted legislation.

<sup>124</sup> See Province of New Brunswick, Public Response Paper, Opening of Sealed Adoption Records, August 2014.

What (sic) more suitable to its delicate digestive apparatus than its mother's milk, the food elaborated by nature for its use! Yet, breast feeding is not fashionable either among rich or poor. A mother has no option but to nourish her unborn child, but, too often, alas, the moment her own free will can be exercised she denies her infant's right to look to her as the source of its food, and condemns it to the miseries and dangers of artificial feeding (Budin, *The Nursling*, 1907).

Although alternative feeding methods were evolving, they still fell short of mother's milk, and infant mortality remained high in the nineteenth century. The use of animal milk was often employed depending on the type of animal available and cow's milk was the most prevalent. In 1865, Justus von Liebeg developed, patented and marketed an infant food. Liebeg's formula consisted of cow's milk, wheat and malt flour, and potassium bicarbonate. This was followed by condensed milk, which was often recommended in the 1930s and 1940s by pediatricians. In the 1930s in Canada, mothers were urged to breastfeed their babies for at least nine months to ensure a healthy, thriving baby (Miller, 2011). The evolution of baby formula and food preservation led to increased replacement of breastfeeding by formulas, and a decline in infant breastfeeding worldwide between the 1930s and the 1970s, the very timeframe in which the adoption mandate took place. Indeed, "by the 1940s, breastfeeding was no longer considered the norm for infant feeding" (Nathoo & Ostry, 2008:12).

The fact that infant breastfeeding had severely declined and bottle feeding became the norm for infant feeding during the period in which the adoption mandate took place was not a cause of the mandate itself. However, the fact that safe bottle feeding was now possible, and that it had become the established and recommended norm for infant feeding made the physical separation of mothers and infants at birth possible; an outcome which served the mandate well.

This makes baby formula an important contributing factor to the mandate; particularly when breastfeeding had been one of the main reasons used to keep the unmarried mother and her child together postnatally in the past.

### **Conclusion**

Sociological theories in postwar Canada contributed to the important shift in adoption practice introduced by the profession of social work during the 1950s of the clean break, or, babies being taken from their mothers immediately following delivery. This shift was in contrast to the previous practice of having unmarried mothers nurture their babies in hospital or in maternity home settings, in some cases up to six months. The practice of clean break as a form of violence against women and the maternal body emerges through the voices of the mothers who experienced the violence of these practices. The enormous increase in market demand by adopters for newborns also impacted this paradigm shift in adoption practice, and the ability to separate mother and child effectively due to advances in baby formula served the mandate well. The adoption records of the postwar mandate remain sealed and semi-sealed in all provinces in Canada despite discursive myths of “openness” in contemporary adoption practice.

## Chapter Four

### Maternity Homes in Canada

*The world of maternity homes in postwar America was a gothic attic obscured from the community by the closed curtains of gentility and high spiked fences. The girls and women sent inside were dreamwalkers serving time, pregnant dreamwalkers taking the cure. Part criminal, part patient, the unwed mother arrived on the doorstep with her valise and, moving inside, found herself enclosed within an idea (Solinger, 1992:103)*

### Introduction

By the 1890s the rescue movement and accompanying institutions to house the fallen were changing, giving rise to the maternity home movement in Australia, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States. At the turn of the century, most Magdalen institutions in the west were either closing or changing their mission.<sup>125</sup> The Magdalen movement, which previously had as its patrons royalty and aristocrats, gave way to the middle-class influence of the social purity movement now driven by white Protestant social reformers in the new Dominion of Canada (Valverde, 2008); this movement is described by Mariana Valverde as:

a loose network of organizations and individuals, mostly church people, educators, doctors and those who we would now describe as community or social workers, who engaged in a sporadic but vigorous campaign to ‘raise the moral tone’ of Canadian society (Valverde, 2008:17)

By the 1910s, maternity homes were on the rise in Canada. Maternity homes were settings of quasi-incarceration settings where unmarried mothers resided during pregnancy and

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<sup>125</sup> Exceptions are noted in Chapter 1

post-partum, although this latter use of homes decreased as the twentieth century progressed. Often referred to as “Homes for Unwed Mothers”, “Maternity Homes”, “Girl’s Homes”, or “Homes for Unmarried Mothers”, these facilities were usually located in inner city neighbourhoods or in hidden rural settings and often employed the use of Victorian mansions to house internees.

Maternity homes in the twentieth century continued to be rooted in Magdalenism; the theory that a woman could be redeemed to some degree for the sin of out-wedlock-pregnancy through remorse, penance, religious improvement, and training and occupation in domestic work. These elements remained the cornerstone of maternity homes until at least the 1970s and were reflected in the daily schedules. The rules, regulations, and daily routines in maternity homes in postwar Canada were virtually identical to those of Magdalen Asylums, Homes of the Friendless, and other institutions set up to house the fallen one hundred years earlier.

In the article “Not by Choice”, Karen Wilson-Buterbaugh refers to the work of Margaret Thaler-Singer (Thaler-Singer, 2003:64), psychologist and expert on psychological coercive persuasion.<sup>126</sup> Thaler-Singer indicates that six systemic practices are required for the success of coercive psychological systems: create a sense of powerlessness, control environment and time, keep person unaware, use rewards and punishment to inhibit behaviour reflecting former identity, use rewards and punishments to promote group’s beliefs or behaviours, use logic and authority which permits no feedback (Wilson-Buterbaugh, 2001). Wilson-Buterbaugh suggests that the elements required for a coercive psychological system as identified by

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<sup>126</sup> See R. Lifton and M. Thaler-Singer. This was formerly known as “brainwashing”, “thought control”, “thought reform”. Now referred to by experts as coercive persuasion, coercive psychological systems or coercive influence.

Thaler-Singer can be applied to the maternity home experience.<sup>127</sup>

In this chapter, using the theory of Magdalenism, I attempt to illustrate the “smooth system” (Landsberg, 1963:9) that operated in the maternity homes of postwar Canada that led to the separation of mothers and babies through adoption. As well, drawing upon the concept advanced by Wilson-Buterbaugh, I expand on the coercive psychological systems that were intrinsic to these institutions. In addition, I have created a list of, and compiled a collection of images of maternity homes that operated in Canada during the twentieth century, a collection which is not previously published anywhere in Canada, and is therefore original in scope<sup>128</sup> (See Appendix D). Although many unmarried mothers across Canada in the postwar years spent their pregnancies, and gave birth without the public or social assistance, this chapter concentrates on unmarried mothers who were residents in Canada’s maternity homes.

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<sup>127</sup> See Marshall & MacDonald, 2001:4. Not all unmarried mothers were sent to maternity homes. Some were sequestered within the homes of their families for the duration of their pregnancy or were sent to live with relatives. A few lived independently, and others were sent to Wage Homes by Social Service agencies.

<sup>128</sup> This work attempts to identify all church run maternity homes in postwar Canada, and although this list, to the best of this writer’s knowledge, is the most comprehensive in Canada to date, there may be errors or omissions.

## Maternity Homes in Canada



Illus.7. Humewood House, Toronto, Residents Doing Laundry, circa 1950s.

### Charitable Incarceration

By the 1940s, mainstream churches in Canada were enmeshed in the maternity home movement; the confinement of unmarried mothers within maternity homes, including the Catholic, Salvation Army, United<sup>129</sup>, Anglican, Presbyterian, and Evangelical churches. The YWCA ran at least one facility. Those with the largest number of facilities in Canada were the Catholic Miséricordia Sisters and The Salvation Army.<sup>130</sup> In addition, many homes operated outside of the church as private enterprises such as the Ideal Maternity Home in Nova Scotia, Molly Breen's Boarding House in Newfoundland, The Strathcona in Toronto, Annie

<sup>129</sup> Previously mostly Methodist which later merged with and became The United Church of Canada.

<sup>130</sup> Also, UK, United States, Australia, and New Zealand

Montgomery's on Cecil St. in Toronto, or the Beulah Home on 101<sup>st</sup> St. in Edmonton operated by Mary Finlay.<sup>131</sup> Due to high birthrates in the immediate postwar decades many homes were renovated to increase capacity, or new homes were built. Most facilities remained in operation until the early to mid-1970s, when many closed down altogether, while others changed their mission to assist teen parents.<sup>132</sup>

Early Salvation Army facilities were known as “rescue homes”, but as the twentieth century progressed they were often identified by Booth, Bethany, or Haven i.e. Grace Haven or Faith Haven. The name “Booth”, was for William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, was often used for Salvation Army maternity homes and hospitals. The Evangeline Home in Saint John, New Brunswick was named after his daughter. The term “Bethany”<sup>133</sup> was often used in reference to unmarried mothers. Many Salvation Army homes were called Bethany Home for Girls, Bethany Home, or other derivatives. The use of the word “Bethany” for homes for unmarried mothers is notable as its roots lay in Magdalenism. It is argued by biblical scholars that Bethany is the location where Mary Magdalen anointed Jesus with oil and wiped his feet with her hair (The Holy Bible, King James Version, John 12, 1-8). The use of the term “Haven” implies a safe haven from society for unmarried mothers.

The first officially organized women's social work by the Canadian Salvation Army

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<sup>131</sup>It would be impossible to accurately identify every private home that took in unmarried mothers in a non-official capacity across Canada in the twentieth century. See Nova Scotia, Department of Child Welfare, Forty-First Annual Report of the Director for the Fiscal Year Ending March 31, 1954:21 which states that the Nova Scotia government granted eight licences for the operation of maternity homes. These include Mrs. Harry Burrell, Yarmouth, Mrs. K. O'Donnell, Enfield, Miss Sylvia Kinsman, Caledonia, Mrs. Amy S. Nickerson, Doctors Cove, Mrs. Evangeline Townsend, Crowell's P.O. in addition to the religious mainstream homes operating in Nova Scotia. Also see Petrie, 1998:48 Molly Breen's Boarding House, Petrie also names a Moncton widow, and a couple in Calgary who took in unmarried mothers as more examples of non-official homes.

<sup>132</sup> Examples are Victor Home/Toronto (now the Massey Centre), United Church, Humewood House/Toronto, Anglican Church, and Bethesda Home in London (recently closed), Salvation Army.

<sup>133</sup> Note that the term “Bethany” is still used in reference to unmarried mothers. One of the largest adoption agencies in the United States is Bethany Christian Services.

began in 1886 with a rescue home for fallen girls at 270 Farley Avenue<sup>134</sup> in “an unpretentious wooden cottage in Toronto”, which purported to be a haven of protection and security for needy girls (Our Army on the March 1865-1965, 1965, SAA). A 1965 report by the Salvation Army boasts sixteen Girl’s Homes across Canada with facilities in Vancouver, Calgary, Regina, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Fort William, Windsor, London, Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa, Montreal, Sydney, Halifax, Saint John, and St. John’s. This report states that accommodation is available for 567 girls, and that during the year 1965, the Army received 3,782 and that 3,727 “passed out satisfactory” (Our Army on the March 1896-1965, 1965, SAA).<sup>135</sup>

Along with the Salvation Army, the Catholic Church operated the largest number of maternity homes in Canada. The organization of the Catholic Church is that of a Diocese. A diocese is a geographic area of parish churches presided over by a Bishop. Most Catholic maternity homes were not operated directly by the local Diocese, although a few were, but by nuns such as the Sisters of Miséricordia, Ursuline Nuns, or Sisters of Good Shepherd all who conduct business under separate incorporations.<sup>136</sup> A few homes were operated by Catholic Charities.

The United Church of Canada was formed as a union of the Methodist Church, the Congregational Union of Canada and 70 per cent of the Presbyterian Church of Canada in 1925. Some maternity homes existing prior to that date were taken over by the United Church and one remained with the Presbyterian Church. The United Church was responsible both solely and jointly for five homes for unmarried mothers, one postnatal care facility, and other institutions that may have housed unmarried mothers from time to time (UCMF, 2013:5, UCCA). The

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<sup>134</sup> Now Richmond St.

<sup>135</sup> The remaining 55 were most likely still in residence awaiting the birth of their child

<sup>136</sup> The archives of the various orders of Sisters are private and closed, and the author was unable to obtain access.

flagship Fred Victor Mission took in an unmarried mother in 1900, and at that time the mission reserved two rooms especially for unmarried mothers and their babies (UCMF, 2013:5, UCCA). A year later, the Victor Mission opened the Door of Hope at 295 Jarvis St. in Toronto which relocated to a building at 266 Jarvis St. donated by Chester Massey in 1904. After several more relocations, the home now known as Victor Home, moved to 1102 Broadview Avenue in Toronto in 1947, where it continues to operate today as the Massey Centre, a teen parenting centre. In 1926, the Victor Home began facilitating adoptions directly from the home for children born to residents and this continued until the Children's Aid Society took over in 1958 (UCMF, 2013:6, UCCA).

A pamphlet issued by an Anglican committee formed in 1911 stated that there was no maternity home in Canada operated by the Church of England, which was “a great and serious reproach to us all” (Humewood House, 1912-1962, ACCA). After consultations with social workers, the Anglican committee was convinced that there was a real need for a home for unmarried mothers and Humewood House<sup>137</sup> in Toronto was formally opened on April 23, 1912 with one girl in residence (Humewood House, 1912-1962, ACCA). Most Anglican Church homes were run by individual diocese, or in collaboration with other churches. Elizabeth House in Montreal was a joint effort of the Anglican, United and Presbyterian churches while the Church Home for Girls in British Columbia was a joint effort with the United Church. The Marion Hilliard House<sup>138</sup> opened in Kamloops, British Columbia in 1965, followed by St. Monica House in Kitchener (1968). St. Monica House was a \$300,000 project of the Huron

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<sup>137</sup> The flagship Humewood House in Toronto is now a residential facility for parenting teens offering transitional housing, childcare, education and training for pregnant and parenting women ages 13-21. Records from 1912 to present continue to be located at 40 Humewood Drive and are accessible to former residents.

<sup>138</sup> Named after Dr. Marion Hilliard of Women's College Hospital.

Diocese (Canadian Churchman, March 1969, ACCA). Other homes were operated by Anglican or lay sisters, including Bishops Messengers of Faith in Manitoba, and St. John's House in Alberta.

By 1910 the Presbyterian Church operated seven homes in urban centres across Canada. However, after church union in 1925, only the Toronto home remained (Presbyterian Record, November 1964, PA). The Presbyterian Home for Girls employed Miss Ratte as Superintendent from 1925 until her retirement in 1930. Requirements at that time were that unmarried mothers remain in the home and look after their babies. In 1930, Miss Myrtle McKinnon succeeded Miss Ratte until the home closed in 1953, when the Board of the Presbyterian Church authorized the sale of the Yorkville property. Plans were made for a new building located outside of the city of Toronto in what was then a rural setting in Clarkson, Ontario (The Presbyterian Record, May 1953, PA). Armagh opened in 1955 with accommodation for eight residents. After a new wing was built in 1957, capacity was increased to twenty-two. The Armagh Home was supported by grants from the Board of Missions, the Province of Ontario and the United Appeal of Metropolitan Toronto.

Similar to the Magdalen Asylums and other "homes" of the nineteenth century, maternity homes were female bastions "with women simultaneously serving and regulating other women" (Morton, 2005:133). The generally accepted purpose of a maternity home was to offer shelter and assistance and, increasingly, a place to hide for unmarried mothers from the social stigma of out-of-wedlock pregnancy. The United Church stated their purpose as:

To protect unwed mothers from the intense social stigma and poverty that could result from having a child outside of marriage, and... to offer a safe retreat from the curiosity, criticism, and condemnation of neighbours and townspeople and all those with whom the

girl has been associated (UCMF, 2013:3, UCCA)

An Anglican Church publication suggested that residences for unmarried mothers were not only a refuge from a “hostile” community and overwrought family, but also acted as a means to keep the problem secret (Anglican Church of Canada, *The One Parent Family*, 1969, ACCA).

Most homes kept a record of resident demographics including employment status, age, religion, and average stay. A presentation made at a joint Anglican and United Church conference in 1965 describes the residents of Canada’s maternity homes:

Age 17 appears to remain the time most vulnerable for pregnancies to occur – and 11th grade...most of the girls are in the normal and slightly superior intelligence range. Most come from a middle-class situation, are physically attractive and mature looking, are well-nourished and have better than average health (Anglican Church of Canada, *Out of Wedlock*, ACCA)

Also in 1965, a report for Armagh, a Presbyterian maternity home outside of Toronto, shows 126 of the 141 residents were between the ages of 16 and 22, with nine age 15, and fourteen between 23 and 34 years of age (Armagh, *Annual Report 1966*, PA).

Although most of the homes claimed to offer a place with “no distinction made to race, colour, nationality, language, or creed” (UCMF, 2013:7, UCCA), it was predominantly white unmarried mothers who resided in Canada’s maternity homes. This is not overtly stated in maternity home demographic reports. Women of colour were rarely, if ever, accommodated in these homes during the immediate postwar decades; not because they weren’t allowed entry,<sup>139</sup> but because these homes, in reality, catered to the “rehabilitation” of the white, middle-class unmarried mother, a covert vs. overt exclusion.

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<sup>139</sup> According to the rules of admittance for most homes, all races, denominations, or ethnic groups were welcome.

The following statistical study which appeared in the annual report of Humewood House in 1955 shows that residents were in all likelihood entirely white, predominantly between the 16-23 age range, and primarily office workers, or students:

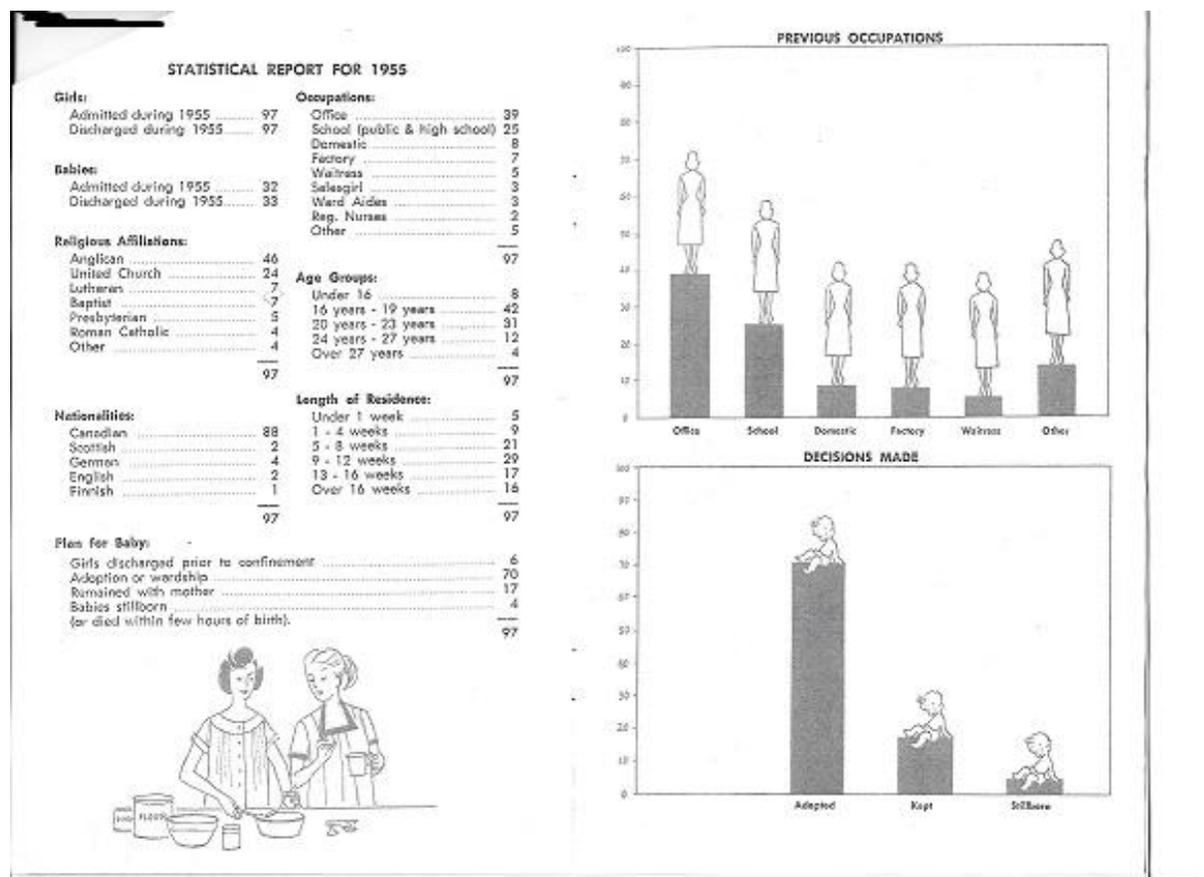


Figure 3. Humewood House, Annual Report, 1955, ACCA.

In addition, in an extensive review of newspapers, magazines, maternity home brochures and church archives I found no images of women of colour in Canada’s postwar maternity homes, but only images of white unmarried mothers.

Expectant mothers were referred to maternity homes by clergy, physicians, social service agencies, social workers, family, or friends.<sup>140</sup> Pregnant women and girls entered these homes

<sup>140</sup> After the 1970s, mothers were also referred through pro-life crisis pregnancy centres (CPCs) and organizations such as Birthright or Planned Parenthood.

anywhere from the fourth to ninth month of pregnancy depending on their situation, and vacancy rate, the average being the sixth month of pregnancy.<sup>141</sup> Most homes required mothers to register with a Children's Aid Society or other social service agency prior to admission to ensure a social worker was assigned to the case.<sup>142</sup> In this way, those entering maternity homes were steered to adoption. As an example, the admission requirements of Humewood House state that, "it is important that all applicants to Humewood contact, prior to admission, a Children's Aid Society" (Humewood House, Information Sheet, ACCA).

Unmarried mothers continued to be targeted as a threat for spreading Venereal Disease.<sup>143</sup> Unmarried mothers were routinely tested for VD. Admission to maternity homes required a positive pregnancy test, and prior testing to screen for VD. Anglican Humewood House required a written report of Wasserman<sup>144</sup> and smear tests prior to admission (Humewood House, Information Sheet, ACCA).

From the onset of the profession of social work early in the century, maternity home matrons, mostly women religious, and secular social workers were in conflict. United Church Minutes of the Executive, Board of Evangelism and Social Services in 1966 illustrates this:

Miss Beatrice Wilson reported that there was a paper written by a student at the School of Social Work which criticised the policies of the Home and the spirit of antagonism shown by staff to professional social workers (Minutes, United Church Executive Board of Evangelism and Social Services, June 10, 1966, UCCA)

As in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, maternity home matrons continued to aspire to

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<sup>141</sup> See Dexter, S., Maternity Home is Shield from Society. *Winnipeg Free Press*, November 1, 1963.

<sup>142</sup> Humewood House, Victor Home, Salvation Army Homes, Armagh, and Catholic facilities all required pre-registration with a Children's Aid Society. Also see *Winnipeg Free Press*, November 1, 1963 stating that all three Winnipeg homes require as a condition of admission, a referral to the Children's Aid Society.

<sup>143</sup> Commonly referred to as VD at the time. Now referred to as Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs).

<sup>144</sup> Test for syphilis, a sexually transmitted disease, named after bacteriologist August Paul von Wasserman.

religiously improve or “save” the unmarried mother in a religious context, while the social worker sought to use scientific methods to socially diagnose and treat the unmarried mother through social work casework. This conflict continued well into the 1960s, the height of the maternity home movement in Canada. However, along with increased provincial funding came requirements for the use of scientific theories, and as new methods of regulating unmarried mothers progressed, more social workers were either employed by, or affiliated with maternity homes.<sup>145</sup> Up until the late 1960s, secular and religious models continued to operate in tandem, although the relationship remained tenuous at best. At the Juvenile and Family Court Judges Association Meeting in 1963, an address by Miss C. Johnson exemplifies the tension between maternity homes and the profession of social work when Johnson poses a series of questions about maternity home processes:

1. Why haven't maternity homes taken the lead and increased proportionately their social services to clients?
  2. Why are they [maternity homes] not staffed with the most skillful of trained persons?
  3. Why is social casework not one of the most important tools of service?
  4. Why do they not offer rehabilitation services to the girl on her own?
- (Juvenile and Family Court Judges Association Spring Seminar, 1963).

Up until the early 1940s, Humewood House managers including Gertrude Hill, the motherly matron of Humewood from 1912 to the early 1940s, criticised the work of social workers (Murray, 2004:269). However, with the appointment of Miss Mary Smedley as Superintendent in 1949, Humewood House hired their first professional social worker followed by Elizabeth McLaughlin, a graduate of McGill University Social Work (Humewood House, 1912-1962, AACA). At Catholic Rosalie Hall in Scarborough, Mrs. Margaret Johnson was hired

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<sup>145</sup> See Petrie, 1998:81

as the first professional social worker in the 1960s, “to help them [the girls] make practical plans for the future” (Miséricordia Sisters, 1989:13, ARCAT); and at Presbyterian Armagh in 1955, the Director Gwen Davenport was a social worker and a prior Children’s Aid caseworker in the Unmarried Parents Department in Toronto. Davenport was succeeded in 1961 by Mrs. Herrig, also a social worker, and former Children’s Aid Society caseworker (PA, Annual Reports). A report entitled, *Casework in a Maternity Home* by Mary K. O’Neil, MSW outlined that the use of a social worker within the maternity home, in this case, Catholic Sundale Manor in Chatham, would provide “needed casework... if diagnostically she [the girl] was able, and if she was to gain from her stay at the home” (O’Neil, 1965:4, ARCAT). At the Home of the Guardian Angel in Halifax 1943, Sister Miriam de Lourdes held a diploma in social work, and had prior experience as a teacher and educational administrator prior to joining the staff at the home. Subsequent sisters at the home would be instrumental in the field of social work and social services, although their counterparts at the Halifax Bethany Home rejected modern social work approaches (Morton, 2005, 124, 127). In Prince Edward Island (PEI), Sister Mary Henry, Executive Director of the Catholic Family Services Bureau held a Masters Degree from St. Patrick’s School of Social Welfare in Ottawa (Turner, 2005:175). Whether religious or secular, moral rescue or casework, both schools of thought promoted their view of rehabilitation. As a result, maternity homes were not simply a place for the girls to hide:

Whether a sinner or a victim, a girl could use her time in the home to find her way back to social acceptance and normalcy. By knowing and following the rules while she was there, she might either repent or come to understand the price of non-conformist individualism. But whichever road she was led down, she had work to do (Petrie, 1998:81)

## A Sense of Powerlessness

Although referred to and propagandised as “homes” along with “motherly matrons” to care for the “girls”, maternity homes were integral to an interrelated institutional power system targeting the unmarried mother and her baby, which included government, churches, social service agencies, hospitals, and medical professionals. Although the name “home” suggested a place where comforts and support might reside, Regina Kunzel elucidates the segregation of unmarried mothers in these facilities, stating that, “attempting to create surrogate homes for the unmarried women both ‘naturalized and disguised’ the relations of power” (Kunzel, 1993:29). The “homelike” atmosphere promoted in newspapers and church publications did indeed naturalize and disguise relational power systems. Maternity homes were not homes *per se*, but quasi-incarceral facilities with an authoritarian power structure, one in which the unmarried mother was confined, powerless, and subjected to punitive, abusive, treatment, similar to that of a jail. Although disguised and promoted as comfortable homelike settings, stratified power relations within maternity homes left expectant mothers powerless, not only over their daily lives, but their future plans. The following excerpt describing St. Monica House in Kitchener illustrates that this “home” is in fact, a penal institution, disguised as a home. As well, it attests to the design of the home, which acts as a kind of camouflage, purposefully created to conceal the true nature of the facility:

Unlike many others, the maternity house is more like a comfortable suburban home than a penal institution. Elaborately broadloomed, cheerily and artistically decorated, it helps to soften the traumatic experience and create an atmosphere of warmth (The Canadian Churchman, 1969, ACCA)

Unmarried mothers in maternity homes occupied a place that was “explicitly disciplinary and

implicitly incarcerational” (Kunzel, 1993:91). Residents were subject to strict rules and regulations. Freedom of movement, speech, and interaction with outsiders by mail, telephone, or visitation was severely restricted. As in the Magdalen Asylums of the nineteenth century, men were mostly prohibited, including the fathers of the babies.<sup>146</sup> At the Halifax Infant’s Home, unmarried mothers were not permitted to leave the premises after their eighth month of pregnancy (Morton, 2005:118), and at the Bethany Home in Halifax putative fathers<sup>147</sup> were received only through arrangements with Children’s Aid Society or Department of Public Welfare (Morton, 2005:123). The experience of many women was that of incarceration for an offence: “I really felt like I was in jail...I looked at it like it was some type of sentence” (Petrie, 1998:55). Loretta, upon arrival at the La Misericorde in Montreal states, “I felt like I was going into jail” (Petrie, 1998:67). This was compounded by the fact that the women were pregnant, resourceless, and fully dependent on the home, not only for their own survival, but that of their unborn child. These facilities epitomized ambiguity with their quasi-voluntary, quasi-coercive nature along with the hierarchical arrangement of power inherent in the structure of such institutions (Kunzel, 1993:91).

Being removed from one’s home family and community, often for the first time, had a significant impact on these women. The isolation of unmarried mothers in maternity homes made them susceptible to authority and processes to which they were now completely dependent. The isolation and restrictions on outside contacts disconnected them from advice, familiar comradery, and social support. Being institutionalized rendered the unmarried mother powerless, and limited her ability to fully evaluate her situation. It also created the need to

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<sup>146</sup> See Carlson, K. “The Father’s Had No Say”, National Post, March 14, 2012.

<sup>147</sup> “Putative father” was the name used widely across Canada by social service agencies for the “alleged” father of the illegitimate child as identified by the unmarried mother.

conform so as to be re-instated as a “good girl”. Being “sent away” by one’s family for committing what appeared to be a socially fatal act was an intensely shameful experience; one that created a need for re-acceptance. Therefore, there was little rebellion on the part of women by the time they were placed in a maternity home. In *Deviant Anonymous*, Andrée Lévesque expands on this reality:

In most cases, even passive resistance was out of the question...most would have internalized the religious, traditional and patriarchal values which justified their punishment. Society’s rules had been transgressed....they, and later, their child, were to pay the price (Lévesque, 1984:181)

Another way to create a sense of powerlessness was the removal of identity. Upon admission to a maternity home, the resident was either assigned a pseudonym as was done in the Magdalen Laundries of the nineteenth century, or was addressed by her first name only<sup>148</sup>. In the book *Gone to an Aunts: Remembering Canada’s Maternity Homes*, Anne Petrie reveals her own experience at the Salvation Army Maywood Home in Vancouver, “I had to give up my last name for the length of my stay. Now I would just be Anne. My only other identifying feature was my due date” (Petrie, 1998:53). Consider further the experience of Loretta with the Miséricordia Sisters in Edmonton in 1956 as revealed by Petrie:

The issue of her name came next, and Loretta was left with of nothing of her own. She had to give up not only her last name - that was standard in every home – but at the Miséricordia the rule in 1956 was no real first names, either. Loretta was told she would be Rose - just Rose - for the rest of her stay (Petrie, 1998:63)

Not only were names either obscured or changed, but rules were also in place

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<sup>148</sup> See *Winnipeg Free Press*, Susan Dexter, November 1, 1963, Behind Locked Doors: Maternity Home a Shield from Society “It is customary for girls to receive an alias on entering homes of this nature.”

surrounding topics of conversation including where one came from, former pursuits, family, or any other personal information about oneself. These topics of conversation were either banned outright, or strongly discouraged. For some women this served as a demeaning and destructive force (Petrie, 1998). “Linda” states:

Nobody made close friends there. It was very much drilled into your head that no close contact was allowed. Anyway, if you did get to know somebody, she would just be going off soon and you’d never see her again. And, of course, you wouldn’t know her real name anyway (Petrie, 1998:109)

Talk among the residents about pregnancy, birth, and babies was usually discouraged. The justification for this was the protection of the privacy of the resident, and to keep the girls calm. However, the result was to isolate them from others and lull the women into a kind of disassociation from their condition, their babies, and the impending trauma. Although it may be difficult to envisage twenty pregnant women together in a room not talking about pregnancy, birth, and babies, this was often the reality in Canada’s maternity homes. Nonetheless, hushed conversations about delivery, labour pains, water breaking, or someone leaving overnight often took place at breakfast or in the smoking room; tidbits of information about pregnancy, stretch marks, toxemia, or ways to bring on labour were passed along in surreptitious conversations. Another form of dissociation was encouraged through the regulation of language when women were referring to their babies. Talk of one’s baby by matrons and social workers, matrons and medical professionals was limited to “that baby” or “the baby”, never “her baby”, “your baby”, or “my baby”.

While pregnant, those residing in maternity homes were entirely dependent on the home for clothing, food, shelter, medical care, recreation, and information. At the same time, women’s

movements, contacts, activities, topics of conversation, and language were restricted. In addition, maternity home matrons, who, by the 1960s were frequently social workers as well, often adopted a mother role in relation to residents, generating disingenuous interactions since residents were often unaware of the social work status of the matron. As a result of their dependence, condition, and restrictions, these young women were indeed disempowered.

### **Control Environment and Time**

Maternity homes ran on schedules that did not vary widely from home to home. Maternity home daily schedules in the postwar years reproduce those of nineteenth century Magdalen Laundries and other institutions to house the fallen (See Appendix A). Chapel was attended in most homes daily, although some did have two mandatory chapel services, once in the morning and once in the evening.<sup>149</sup> After breakfast, the making of beds and cleaning of rooms was followed by work details which might include: food preparation, washing dishes, setting tables, general cleanup or cleanup of Officers Dining Room<sup>150</sup>, washing floors, dusting, vacuuming, bathroom detail, or laundry. An article on Armagh which appeared in the *Presbyterian Record* illustrates the work details operating there:

She took her turn on the kitchen team – got up at 7:30 am, helped with the meals, set tables, did dishes, and kept the dining room and kitchen clean. There were other teams too. One had to wash the sheets and towels, and another had to clean the bathrooms and halls. Of course, the girls had to clean their own rooms (PAA, *Presbyterian Record*, November, 1957:17)

Work details were mandatory. Some of the work was demanding and difficult for heavily

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<sup>149</sup> See *Winnipeg Free Press*, November 1, 1963, Susan Dexter, Behind Locked Doors: Maternity Home Shield from Society, "admission is not subject to religious affiliation... although "morning chapel" is held in each home daily".

<sup>150</sup> In Salvation Army homes

pregnant women. Although maternity homes were paid a per diem rate by the provinces<sup>151</sup>, they continued to use the residents to perform unpaid work as had been done in earlier institutions, only this time, no negative newspaper articles appeared about their unpaid labour.

Pregnant teens continued to be expelled from Canadian high schools well into the 1970s.<sup>152</sup> Students in maternity homes mostly concentrated on independent work sent from their school, supervised by either a maternity home matron or in some instances, a qualified teacher. Teachers were introduced beginning in the 1940s, and by the 1960s most homes had some arrangement for the continuance of studies. A 1969 Armagh newsletter reported that although the teacher, Mrs. Allison Jones, had her doctorate in education she preferred to be addressed as ‘Mrs.’, and that all students who wrote Grade XIII exams at the home successfully passed. (Armagh, Newsletter, May 1969, PA).

The Victor Home in Toronto was happy to report in 1966 that the Board of Education of Metropolitan Toronto had consented to provide teachers from the Home Instruction staff (Victor Home, Annual Report 1966, UCCA). Prior to that, the home had encouraged the continuance of studies, and supplied tutors<sup>153</sup> suggesting that “girls bring their textbooks with them” (Victor Home, Pamphlet, 1962, UCCA). A report from Humewood House, Toronto, in 1967 states that:

The Department of Education has continued to supply teachers for most of the high school subjects and arrangements were made for girls from university to grade IX to write their examinations in house (Humewood House, 1967, ACCA)

School work in most homes was conducted during the morning hours. The physical classroom varied. Some had formal classrooms with desks and chalkboards, while others had a more casual

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<sup>151</sup> See Department of Social Services Reports - all provinces

<sup>152</sup> This date varies across the country.

<sup>153</sup> Reported as early as 1939

Table 1 Daily Maternity Home Schedule

Time	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sat
8:00am	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
9:00am	Chapel	Chapel	Chapel	Chapel	Chapel	Chapel	Chapel
10:00	Modified	Assigned	Work	Duties	Assigned	Work	Modified
11:00	Free	School or Crafts	Free				
12:00	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner
1-2	Free	Pre-Natal Clinic	Lecture	Chaplain Visits	SocWork Visits	Pre-Natal Clinic	Free
2 -3	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest	Rest
4:00	Free	SocWork Visits	Sewing	Crafts	SocWork Visits	Crafts	Free
5:00	Assigned	Laundry	Crafts	Sewing	Crafts	Assigned	Laundry
6:00	Supper	Supper	Supper	Supper	Supper	Supper	Supper
7:00	Chapel	Chapel	Chapel	Chapel	Chapel	Chapel	Chapel
10:00	Lights	Out	Lights	Out	Lights	Out	Lights

(Salvation Army Bethany Home, Toronto, 1969)<sup>154</sup>

<sup>154</sup> As recalled by the author. Also see Armagh, Report of the Director, 1961 which outlines a similar schedule. See Humewood House, Information Sheet which also outlines a similar schedule.

arrangement. Anne Petrie describes her experience with the schoolroom at Maywood, a Salvation Army maternity home in Vancouver:

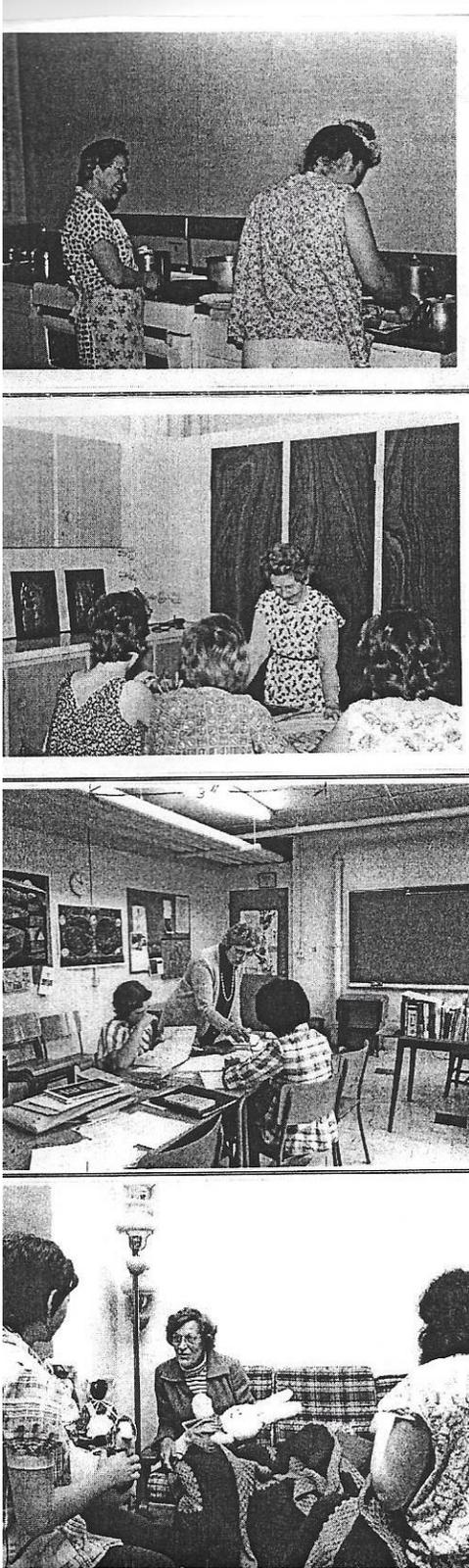
There was a schoolroom but I don't remember anyone but me using it. I'm told there was a teacher that came in regularly, but I don't remember her, either...my professors sent my exams over to the home so I wouldn't lose any courses. One of the Army officers invigilated. In the school room there were rows of wooden desks and chairs. Along the back and sides of the room stood rickety metal typing tables topped with clunky old Underwoods (Petrie, 1998:54,160)

As in the nineteenth century domestic arts such as sewing continued to be a main activity for women. Early in the twentieth century, some of these homes had laundries and a sewing room onsite to produce revenue similar to the Catholic Magdalen Laundries. As an example, in the early twentieth century, the United Church Victor home in Toronto operated a laundry service and a sewing operation where the residents produced aprons (UCMF, 2013:7, UCCA). By the 1960s, sewing and craft rooms continued as a mainstay and residents spent much of their time knitting, making dolls, aprons, paper flowers, or other crafts.<sup>155</sup> A report upon the visit of one Salvation Army Officer to the Glenbrook Maternity Home in St. John's Newfoundland by one states that:

“Do the girls employ themselves at needle-work?” I inquired. In a trice out came a heap of lovely sewing and I was introduced to ‘huck weaving’ and a tasteful selection of towels and cushions done in this colorful manner (Salvation Army War Cry, September 12, 1953:5)

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<sup>155</sup> See Misericordia Sisters, *Choosing the Life Within*, 1989, p.13. At Catholic, Rosalie Hall, Scarborough girls did sewing and crafts such as ceramics. See Petrie, 1998:71 Sherri had no interest in the craft room, but enjoyed sewing with the Singer machines.



Illus. 8. Armagh Maternity Home, Presbyterian, Clarkson, Ontario, circa 1960s

In most homes, creating baby things was strongly discouraged and the “girls” were kept busy several hours a day creating frivolous items unrelated to maternity. In other homes, the opposite was true. Mothers report being encouraged to knit layettes in which to dress their babies for use at hospital discharge.<sup>156</sup> In any case, items lovingly made by an unmarried mother would rarely, if ever, be transferred to adoptive parents.<sup>157</sup> Most of the homes had smoking rooms, and it was here during the 1950s and 1960s that many of the girls congregated.<sup>158</sup> Suzanne Morton explains, “the general importance of smoking in maternity home culture was supported by the evidence of the sister superior at the Home of the Guardian Angel [Halifax], who included a cigarette allowance in the list of expenses a resident might anticipate” (Morton, 2005:118).

Medical appointments were usually held at a prenatal clinic of a nearby hospital. The Salvation Army and Catholic Miséricordia Sisters ran both maternity homes and hospitals across Canada. Women residing in the maternity homes of these churches would receive prenatal care and give birth at one of their hospitals. Other homes had arrangements with independent hospitals. Inmates were either driven or took public transit to prenatal appointments. Some homes had rules that girls must travel in groups on “clinic days”, and some even offered imitation wedding rings for the inmates to wear while on these trips (UCMF, 2013:33, UCCA). Most homes required inmates to use side or back doors, never the front door of the home when leaving or entering the home.<sup>159</sup> Unmarried mothers were routinely used as “teaching tools” in

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<sup>156</sup> Origins Canada – A Way Forward (2012), Meeting with Canada’s Churches that ran Maternity homes. Mother at Humewood House in 1963 reports she was strongly encouraged to knit a layette for her baby.

<sup>157</sup> See Amanda Transue-Woolston, “Something I still Cry About”, Origins Canada Newsletter, Spring 2013.

<sup>158</sup> See Petrie, 1998:101

<sup>159</sup> See Rosalie Hall, Choosing the Life Within, p.8 “symbolic was the fact that everyone entered and left by the back door”. Also see Petrie, 1998:60 at Bethel Home in Toronto once a girl entered the home she was not allowed to use the main door until she left. They would be picked up at the side door for doctor’s appointments. Also see *Winnipeg Free Press*, November 1, 1963, which indicates women used the *back* door only as opposed to the front, in Winnipeg homes.

hospital clinics, with several students probing and checking all in one visit.<sup>160</sup> Others report an inability to ask questions. Kathryn, who stayed in the Victor Home in 1968 reports that she “was troubled by the extreme insensitivity she experienced at Wellesley Hospital....doctors refused to answer even basic questions during their check-ups” (UCMF, 213:32, UCCA).

Those residing in Canada’s maternity homes occupied shared rooms with few exceptions. The more modern ones were semi-private, while others had dormitories. Washrooms were usually shared and institutional in type. An article entitled “Overcrowded Conditions Hamper Work” about overcrowded dormitories and plans for renovations at the Anglican Humewood House in 1958 states:

One of the major problems at the house is the crowded conditions. Cramped dormitories do not offer them any privacy....Sleeping accommodations will be transformed from dormitories to single and double bedrooms. At present the 25 girls at the House are sleeping in two dormitories and four beds are set up each night in the recreation room and other girls are using the sunroom as a bedroom (The Toronto Star, June 12, 1958:57)

A more modern establishment, St. Monica House in Kitchener, boasted about the quality of its accommodations, “bedrooms are private or semi-private and there is no hint of dormitory life” (Canadian Churchman, March 1969, ACCA).

### **Keep person unaware**

Residents met with their assigned social worker two or three times during pregnancy.

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<sup>160</sup> See *Origins Canada – A Way Forward* (2012), Interfaith Meeting with Canada’s Churches that ran Maternity homes. Mother reports being used as a ‘teaching tool’ at Grace Hospital in Toronto while at Salvation Army Bethany Home in Toronto, 1969. Also see Petrie, 1998:183 who reports a steady stream of doctors including a group of eager young students. Also Petrie, 1998:188 wherein it is reported there were three case rooms for unwed mothers at hospital clinic who were subjected to several interns, each giving an internal examination, “I would be so sore afterwards.”

Some homes provided a scheduled time for social work visits, while others such as Armagh in Clarkson, Ontario, drove residents to the offices of social service agencies, “when there are vacancies in the station wagon and appointments can be arranged” (Armagh, Annual Report, 1961, PA). Although there were meetings with social workers, mothers report being kept unaware of their rights and choices concerning their out-of-wedlock pregnancy.<sup>161</sup> Very little information was given to unmarried mothers about labour, delivery, child welfare services, and specifically, resources that would assist them in mothering. A Department of Social and Family Services memorandum sent by Victoria Leach, Adoption Co-ordinator in Ontario to Miss Betty Graham, Director, states:

Yesterday afternoon Helen Allen<sup>162</sup> and I spoke to the girls at Armagh...during our discussions it became very apparent that many of these young ladies have had little casework or even explanation from their social workers. They are unaware of court proceedings, some are unaware they could ask for short term wardship, they were uninformed about the appeal period and had other concerns...I have also visited other maternity homes and found an equal lack of understanding (Correspondence from Victoria Leach to Betty Graham, June 17, 1970, AO)

In this memo Leach goes on to suggest that the Social and Family Services Branch should prepare a booklet, which “would outline in detail some of the avenues open to them in planning for their unborn children” (Correspondence from Victoria Leach to Betty Graham, June 17, 1970, AO). However, an initialled handwritten note at the bottom of the letter, presumably

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<sup>161</sup> See Origins Canada (2012). *A Way Forward, Meeting with Churches that Ran Maternity Homes.*

<sup>162</sup> See Hilborn, R. (2006). Helen Allen, a reporter with the Toronto Telegram launched “Today’s Child”, a newspaper feature advertising children to be adopted which started in the Toronto Telegram in 1964 and expanded to other papers including the Toronto Star. Allen was also instrumental in the launch of a television version in 1968 on CFTO-TV entitled *Family Finder* hosted by Dave Duvall, a program where children were showcased for adoption.

from her superior, states that the CAS should be responsible for such a booklet, and goes on to say, “in any case, if the Branch prepared it, I am sure there would be undue criticism of the contents.”<sup>163</sup> (Correspondence from Victoria Leach to Betty Graham, June 17, 1970, AO). This letter illustrates that keeping mothers within maternity homes uninformed about their rights and choices with respect to their babies appears to have been an intentional policy of the Ontario government (See Appendix C). Families who sent their daughters to Canada’s maternity homes would most likely have no knowledge of the rights of unmarried mothers, although they were most probably aware that adoption was a mandate in these homes.

By the 1960s, some homes offered limited prenatal classes, and others, lessons on reproduction. At Armagh, in 1962, the home purchased the film *Human Reproduction*, and Nurse Anderson was to explain this with the aid of an explanatory chart (Armagh, Annual Report, 1962, PA). Other homes offered limited prenatal lectures such as the Church Home for Girls in Winnipeg where a Public Health Nurse conducted these sessions during the 1960s (UCMF, 2013:16, UCCA). At Humewood House in Toronto, the Victorian Order of Nurses provided a course of prenatal classes (Humewood House, Annual Report, 1967:8, ACCA). Nonetheless, a review of annual reports of many homes show that these types of sessions were often criticised by boards of directors, priests, or others.<sup>164</sup> In general, information regarding reproduction, birth control, labour, and delivery was in scant supply in Canada’s maternity homes in postwar Canada.

### **Rewards and Punishments to Inhibit Behaviour Reflecting former Identity**

Magdalenism continued to inform the religious reform of the inmates. In maternity

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<sup>163</sup> The author is unable to ascertain the author of the handwritten response written directly on the letter. Although it appears to have been written by a superior of Betty Graham, it does not appear to be the signature of John Yaremko, the Ontario Minister of Social and Family Services in 1970.

<sup>164</sup> See Humewood House Annual Reports, Sisters of Miséricordia, Rosalie Hall.

homes, residents attended “chapel” or “bible study” at least once a day. In some homes, ministers or priests would visit periodically to offer communion or meet with the girls. Saving the souls of those who had sinned was an important goal in many of these homes. Evangelical and Salvation Army matrons often reported their joy in the spiritual transformation of girls within their institutions.<sup>165</sup>

As in the nineteenth century, unmarried mothers continued to be cast as sinners in need of penance and repentance. However, penance now took the form of the loss of their child to adoption, a harsh penalty indeed. It was made abundantly clear to young mothers in the maternity home system that the symbolic “punishment” for “the mistake” was the surrender of one’s baby for adoption. In some cases this was overtly stated, in others, intimated. Considered an “expert” on women’s health at the time, Dr. Marion Hilliard, Chief, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Women’s College Hospital from 1947-1956 weighed in on the punishment of unmarried mothers:

When she renounces her child for its own good, the unwed mother has learned a lot. She has learned an important human value. She has learned to pay the price of her misdemeanour and this alone, if punishment is needed is punishment enough (The Telegram, November 22, 1956:35)

In Canada’s maternity homes unmarried mothers were subject to covert and overt punitivism. Harsh treatment has been reported by unmarried mothers who resided in maternity homes in postwar Canada.<sup>166</sup> Women report being verbally, physically, psychologically, and sexually abused<sup>167</sup> in religious based maternity homes and hospitals in Canada. Punishment and

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<sup>165</sup> See Salvation Army War Cry, Vol. 4116, October 1, 1963.

<sup>166</sup> See Editorial, Globe and Mail, Unwed Mother, Unknown Choices, October 31, 2013, Page A14

<sup>167</sup> See Alward, S. Exiled mothers, in which a mother recalls how a priest would fondle the residents when visiting to provide communion.

reward was an integral part of the maternity home program as Magdalenism had been deeply embedded in maternity home theory since the late nineteenth century. In the 1961 work *Unmarried Mothers*, Clark Vincent refers to the covert punishment which surrender might embody:

it is quite possible that in the near future, unwed mothers will be ‘punished’ by having their children taken from them right after birth. A policy like this would not be executed – nor labeled explicitly – as ‘punishment’. Rather, it would be implemented through such pressures and labels as ‘scientific findings’, ‘the best interests of the child’, ‘rehabilitation of the unwed mother’, and ‘the stability of family and society’ (Vincent, 1961:199)

This quote by Muriel Mulligan, a Director in an Ontario Children’s Aid Society, also points to the punitive nature of the encounter: “We get very few repeaters...they seemed to have learned their lesson.” (The Toronto Star, April 6, 1964:40).

Harsh treatment assisted in ensuring that only one mistake took place since “repeaters” were not easily tolerated. One mistake by a white middle-class girl might be overlooked if she was duly repentant and made a “realistic plan”, but “repeaters” were different, as is attested to by a 1953 article that appeared in the *The Toronto Star*:

Rev. A.W. Downer, P.C. Dufferin-Simcoe told the legislature’s special committee on reform institutions yesterday that women who have two or more illegitimate children should be sterilized... (The Toronto Star, November 20, 1953:7)

In 1959, a Timmins welfare officer suggested that “it should be made a criminal offence for unwed mothers to bear more than two children” (The Toronto Star, June 18, 1959:3).

Many maternity homes would not allow “repeaters” as a policy of admission. For

example, the United Church Victor Home in Toronto had strict guidelines concerning repeaters, wherein “repeaters, married women, mental defectives, and venereal disease cases shall not be admitted” (Victor Home Policy Statement on Admissions and Adoptions, Toronto, 1954, UCCA). A report of Armagh, a Presbyterian home, reported that the percentage of “repeaters” among unmarried mothers was high and that some agencies suggested it was around 25%. The report indicated that “repeaters” occurred because the mother was dissatisfied with the plan made for her first child, and would want to make a different plan for a subsequent child; or that she had failed to solve her personal problems at the time of her first pregnancy (Armagh, Report of Director, 1961, PA). In part two of a series by Michelle Landsberg entitled, “Society’s Smooth system for the Disposal of Unwanted Babies”, Landsberg, upon interviewing a maternity home matron, exposed the matron’s attitude toward second offenders, “the Director unwittingly revealed her attitude as quasi-criminal when she said that, second offenders, of course, are not admitted. It would be unfair to have the younger girls exposed to them” (Globe & Mail, September 13, 1963:9). This comment echoes the nineteenth and early twentieth century practice of separating the “innocent” from the “delinquent”.

### **Babies – Then no Babies**

Prior to and during WWII, most maternity homes not only housed unmarried mothers, but cared for their babies in on-site nurseries. Some homes hired nurses and other trained staff. Prior to the 1930s adoption was rarely utilized within Canada’s maternity homes. In the work *Governing Unwed Mothers in Toronto at the Turn of the Twentieth Century*, historian Karen Murray illustrates common practices at Humewood House, the Anglican maternity home in Toronto, “adoptions were rare. In 1917 Humewood managers ‘gladly’ recorded ‘only a few’ adoptions (Murray, 2004:265).



Illus. 9. “Babies fill a nursery at Humewood House in an archival photo from the shelter's collection”. Toronto Star, April 9, 2012:56.

In 1921, the Adoption Act was enacted in Ontario.<sup>168</sup> However, adoption was not widely prescribed for unmarried mothers:

Despite the new adoption law, many people were convinced of the ‘naturalness’ of keeping a mother and child together and supported an unwed mothers right to raise her child. Some social workers shared the conviction of managers of religious maternity homes that keeping illegitimate families together would prevent moral relapse (Murray, 2004:273)

The stated ideal of those who ran the earliest maternity homes was to keep mother and child together (Petrie, 1998:139). Encouraging unmarried mothers to keep and mother their babies in

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<sup>168</sup> See Chambers, *Misconceptions* (2007). Until 1921 adoption had only been possible through Private Members Bills in the provincial legislature.

the early twentieth century was known as “redemptive maternity” (Kunzel, 1993:27).

Redemptive maternity was based on the theory that once an unmarried woman became a mother, she would mature, and mend her ways. Now a mother, the unmarried mother would turn her life towards more productive, useful, and morally decent endeavours for the sake of motherhood and her child:

It is a dangerous thing to take an infant away from a mother of this type, asserted Lillian Clarke in 1913. It is saving her reputation at the expense of her character. If deprived of this powerful motive and influence toward an upright life, a daily safeguard from temptation, the empty craving heart is like the house swept and garnished, ready for the evil spirits to come in and take possession (Kunzel, 1993:33)

The Salvation Army and other evangelists encouraged redemptive maternity. During the 1920s and 1930s, when the eugenics campaign was at its height, the Salvation Army in the United States required prospective residents to sign a contract promising to keep their child before being admitted to one of their homes (Kunzel, 1993:33). Redemptive maternity was also encouraged as a way to reduce infant mortality through breastfeeding. Unmarried mothers were encouraged to “take responsibility” for their children, “agencies have advocated mothers keeping their babies on the grounds that the children would be a stabilizing influence if the mothers were forced to take responsibility for them” (Wimperis, 1960:242).

Babies were still cared for in Canadian maternity home nurseries well into the 1950s. As one Salvation Army officer reported upon her visit to Glenbrook Maternity Home in St. John’s, Newfoundland:

The home is beautifully kept. Shiny floors, furniture and windows, but everywhere there are babies, babies, babies! I peeped into a ‘frig’ to find it full of bottles of formula – one

feeding only. Every single inch of space is sure to have a tiny cot there (Salvation Army, War Cry, October 22, 1955:7)

The annual report of Humewood House for 1955 reports that 32 babies were admitted in 1955 with 33 discharged (Humewood House, Annual Report, 1955, ACCA). In 1950, the Ontario Welfare Council reported that in the previous year, 156 girls were admitted to St. Mary's Infant's Home in Toronto, that they lived on the third floor of the home, and that their babies were kept in a large nursery on the second floor (Miséricordia Sisters of Ontario, 1989:10, ARCAT). At the Miséricordia in Edmonton in 1955, babies were kept in a third floor nursery, while the girls were on the second floor, "the babies were kept in the nursery until they were adopted or sent off to an orphanage...the new girls took care of the babies of the girls who had preceded them" (Petrie, 1998:102). In Montreal, in 1932, the *filles-meres* at Hopital de la Miséricorde were required to work off their debt to the nuns with a six month stay after confinement to tend babies in the nursery, including wet-nursing (Lévesque, 1998:176). In a report to the Board of Armagh maternity home in the 1950s, Miss Mohan conveyed that all maternity homes had nurseries, and that babies stayed there for a longer or shorter period of time depending on the plan for the child (Report to Armagh Board on Maternity Home Study, PA). Until the end of WWII, the Catholic Home of the Guardian Angel in Halifax continued with the theory of redemptive maternity, requiring six months compulsory residence after confinement:

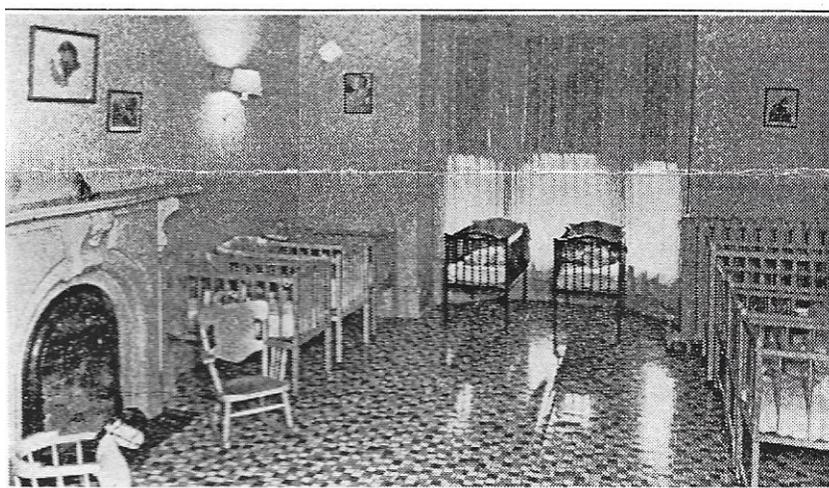
Until 1945 the policy of both the Catholic Home of the Guardian Angel and the Protestant Halifax Infant's Home was based on compulsory residence for mothers for six months after confinement with the purpose of breast feeding infants and cementing a bond between mother and child, which would entrench a sense of responsibility for the infant and redeem the wayward woman through the power of mother love (Morton,

2004:337)

However, this practice changed quickly following WWII and mothers were expected to leave within two weeks of birth (Morton, 2005:112).

Some maternity homes not only cared for babies in their nurseries, but as trends to adoption increased, some also organized and facilitated adoptions directly from their premises such as the Salvation Army Evangeline Home,<sup>169</sup> The Home of the Guardian Angel, Halifax, Nova Scotia,<sup>170</sup> and the United Church Victor Home, Toronto<sup>171</sup> as explained here,

While in previous decades the majority of residents had kept their children, the trend began to reverse in the 1940s, and by the 1950s... Victor Home's adoption service was in full force... preference was given to United Church families (UCMF, 2013:10, UCCA).



Illus. 10. "Faith Haven Outgrows Itself." Windsor, Ontario, Salvation Army War Cry, 1938:13.

<sup>169</sup> Salvation Army, Saint John, New Brunswick. The SA Evangeline Home and Hospital were connected, and adoptions took place directly from these establishments. See New Brunswick Provincial Archives finding tool showing Evangeline Home adoption records held in Salvation Army private collection which remains closed for 100 years.

<sup>170</sup> See, Jones, L., Home of the Guardian Angel ends adoption program after 125 years, *The Chronicle Herald*, June 10, 2012.

<sup>171</sup> See United Church of Canada, *Maternity Facilities UCMF 2013:10*. The United Church Victor Home facilitated adoptions directly from the home until 1958 when the Board of Missions ruled that all adoptions would be arranged by the Children's Aid Society.

Contrary to the Salvation Army's statement that they did not facilitate adoptions, an article in the 1938 *War Cry* describes the nursery at Grace Haven in Windsor as being very attractive with blue and silver paper and furnished with "pretty little nursery furniture", and states that, "at present there are twenty-four girls and twenty-five babies in residence...a number of babies have been adopted into homes where they will receive every advantage in life" (*The War Cry*, October 15, 1938:13). Adoption and medical records for the Evangeline Home in New Brunswick are currently held at the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick and access to those records is restricted for 100 years from the date of the last birth (Salvation Army Evangeline Home, Saint John Records, PANB).

In the immediate postwar decades, a shift took place in maternity homes, influenced by the profession of social work, and psychoanalytic and sociological theories that emerged in postwar Canada. New practices managed and implemented by social service agencies working with the cooperation of hospital authorities and maternity homes, acted as a means to separate the unmarried mother and her baby by adoption. In the United States, the National Florence Crittendon Mission<sup>172</sup> changed its policy of keeping mother and child together, "signalling the end of an era and the victory of the professional ethos of social workers over the founding ideals of evangelical women reformers" (Kunzel, 1993:169). The new practice introduced was that of having infants removed from their mothers immediately at delivery, and either adopted or taken into the care of social services directly from hospital, "the babies themselves were no longer the responsibility of the maternity homes...from 1961 on, the infants were taken directly from the hospital to a foster home 10 days after birth" (Misericordia Sisters, 1989:14).<sup>173</sup> This policy not only increased the number of adoptions taking place, but significantly decreased the number of

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<sup>172</sup> National Florence Crittendon Mission, one of the largest providers of Maternity Homes in the USA

<sup>173</sup> In reference to Catholic Rosalie Hall, Scarborough

babies being cared for in maternity homes. A study undertaken by the United Church<sup>174</sup> in referring to the United Church Home for Girls in Burnaby, BC states:

Adopting directly from the hospital dramatically decreased the number of babies cared for in the home in the 1950s, yet those children who did return to the home were almost always kept by their mothers (UCMF, 2013:14, UCCA)

Maternity homes began to close their nurseries. In 1958 The Board of Missions for the United Church ruled that all adoptions would now be arranged by the Children's Aid Society (UCMF, 2013:10, UCCA). A Canadian Welfare Council report illustrates the trend reversal from maternity home management to that of social service agencies:

It is also relevant that as late as 1946 fully 75% of all legal adoptions in Nova Scotia resulted from private placements made by doctors, lawyers, maternity homes etc. with only 25 per cent made by social agencies; whereas for the current year the figures will be almost reversed with 70 per cent of all legal adoptions resulting from agency placements (New Trends in Adoption Planning, Canadian Welfare Council, 1954, AO)

By the 1960s maternity home matrons routinely dropped off their wards at hospital admitting departments and left them there to labour alone.<sup>175</sup> By this time, mothers were being discouraged from returning to maternity homes after a birth, as it was thought they might reveal their experiences to other inmates, "There are a lot of impressionable girls who become very apprehensive and very frightened as a result of mingling with the girl who has had her baby and wants to come back to the home and tell tales about it" (Report to Armagh Board on Maternity

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<sup>174</sup> See UCMF, 2013. This study was in response to mothers that had resided in maternity homes who approached the church. See Origins Canada, A Way Forward, Interfaith Meeting, 2012.

<sup>175</sup> See UCMF, 2013:34 "sent to the hospital unescorted, as was the home's policy at the time".

Also, the author was accompanied in a taxi by a matron from Salvation Army Bethany Home who, upon arrival at Toronto Grace Hospital, left her alone at Admitting.

Home Study, PA). Many homes no longer offered the service, and those that continued to accommodate mothers after birth did not offer the same hospitality to their babies. At the Armagh Presbyterian home outside Toronto, mothers in 1961 were allowed a maximum post-partum stay of seven days in accordance with an Ontario Government Grant implemented in 1960 (Armagh, Annual Report 1961, PA). A 1961 report shows the number of babies that returned to the home from hospital with their mothers from 1955 to 1961, explains how the babies were cared for:

1955 -0    1956-0    1957-3    1958-2    1959-5    1960 -1    1961 -0

The babies were housed in the mother's room and cared for by her with the help of one girl who wished to do this, under the supervision of the nurse. This service has been of dubious value. Having a baby back at Armagh ... is a profoundly disturbing event for the other twenty-one girls (Armagh, Report of Director, 1961, PA)

When interviewed for an article by *Toronto Star* in 1963, Olivia Langford, the Executive Director at Toronto's Anglican Humewood House, described their policy quite succinctly stating, "at Humewood the girls return to the home for 10 days, but do not bring their babies with them. They are taken for adoption without the mothers seeing them" (*Toronto Star*, September 11, 1963:59). In 1951, the Superintendent of the Burnaby Home for Girls in British Columbia reported that, "...many residents have not returned to the Home after confinement owing to the policy of the Welfare Agencies in placing the baby – in many instances – direct from the hospital for adoption" (United Church Home for Girls, Annual Report, 1951, UCCA). In a United Church study, reports of Elizabeth House, a United Church home opened in 1968 to address the need for a Protestant, English language service in Montreal states that, "although residents were welcome to return to the facility for a period of convalescence following the birth, the home did

not accommodate babies” (UCMF, 2013:19, UCCA).

Babies were no longer provided for in Canada’s maternity homes because unmarried mothers had become subject to the adoption mandate. In this climate, maternity home matrons began to groom mothers for adoption.

At every maternity home and agency one thing is hammered home from the start: the baby must be given up for adoption (Landsberg, Globe and Mail, September 13, 1963:9) and,

We emphasize that they’re doing the right thing for the baby, that it’s the best and unselfish decision. So they start to regain their self-esteem and are buoyed up by the idea that they’re making a wise decision (Maternity Home Director as reported by Landsberg, Globe and Mail, September 13, 1963:9)

and,

Mrs. L.H. Doering, Executive Director of the United Church’s Victor Home for Unmarried Mothers says they are counselling their girls not to keep their babies. (Toronto Daily Star, December 20, 1965)

and,

I think we have moved into the area of adoption slowly with many of us having a good many qualms about it originally and gradually coming to the realization that this is a good plan, so that we can help the unmarried mother accept this plan. We don’t impose the plan on her, but we can guide and direct her in moving towards this (Armagh, Report to Armagh Board on Maternity Home Study, PA)

Mothers from United Church maternity homes were interviewed for a report on maternity homes in 2013, which was initiated by concerns from groups advocating for former residents:

“Sheri”<sup>176</sup> United Church Victor Home, 1963:

She says the message she and other residents received from the home staff, the Chaplain and her social worker was consistent and clear: giving up their babies was best for all concerned; in fact, it was the only option given (UCMF, 2013:29, UCCA)

“Anne P.” United Church Victor Home, 1964:

She says the moment she arrived in her room and met the other residents, she was warned about the strict atmosphere and necessity of following orders... Anne said the staff made it clear that adoption was the only option for resident’s babies (UCMF, 2013:30, UCCA)

“Kathryn B” United Church Victor Home, 1968:

Kathryn says that not only was she given no emotional support from professionals during this time, but she and other residents also were not adequately informed of their options and were led to believe that adoption was the only available choice (UCMF, 2013:32, UCCA)

Although most churches continue to minimize their role, these homes operated as a kind of baby assembly line, and wielded a strong influence on the adoption mandate. In fact, within Canada’s maternity homes in postwar Canada surrender rates were as high as 95% while overall statistics show unmarried mothers released their children for adoption at an average rate of approximately 74% during the 1960s in Ontario alone (See Table 2).<sup>177</sup> Adoption rates are not available for all homes. However, a 1961 report from Armagh states that since its inception in 1955, out of the 391 mothers who bore a live child or did not marry, 358 babies were adopted or 92% (Armagh, Annual Report, 1961, PA). Further statistics for Armagh in 1965, show that all of their babies

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<sup>176</sup> Note: Pseudonyms were used in the report.

<sup>177</sup> See Chapter 5 for a more in depth study of unmarried mothers and adoption statistics

were adopted (95%), except 4 “undecideds” and 3 who “kept baby” (Armagh Statistics, 1965, Annual Meeting, May 24, 1966, PA).

### **Rewards and Punishment Promoting Group’s Beliefs or Behaviours**

By the 1960s talk of “keeping the baby” in maternity homes was heavily discouraged. Those who did talk about “keeping” were often ostracised, chastised, and considered the most pathological by maternity home matrons and social service agencies:

In our experience in the Children’s Aid Society of Metropolitan Toronto over the past few years, we have found that the more emotionally healthy unmarried mothers are the ones likely to relinquish their children (Sutherton, 1959:7, PA) and,

The more emotionally healthy unmarried mother usually gives her child up for adoption as best for him (Gwen Davenport, Director, Armagh, Globe & Mail, March 11, 1963) and,

Most of the girls who are financially and intellectually able to keep their babies decide not to. It’s the “other kind of girl” who is more apt to make the decision to keep her baby (Sister St. Augustine, Director, Rosalie Hall, Toronto Star, December 20, 1965:39) and,

Generally the most unstable want to keep their child, the more stable gives the infant for adoption (Captain Scoville, Booth Hospital. Toronto Daily Star, March 16, 1965:44) and,

Rosalie Hall advises against the girls keeping their babies ‘they think they are taking a doll home to play with’, Sister Tremblay said bluntly’. Some Maternity Home Directors feel that it is the more immature girls who keep their babies, and the more

mature girls who put the children up for adoption. (Toronto Star, June 7, 1972:77)  
and,

the large number of adoptions speaks of both the health and intelligence of the mothers  
(Superintendent, United Church Home for Girls, UCMF, 2013:14, UCCA)

Mothers who expressed a desire to “keep” were often ostracised within the maternity home environment, labelled by matrons as “that kind of girl”, and considered “unintelligent”. As an example, at the United Church Burnaby Home, “a resident who openly decided to keep her baby was moved immediately to a private room and seen only at monitored meal times” (UCMF, 2013:33, UCCA). At the Salvation Amy Bethany Home in Toronto a resident who openly stated she was keeping her baby left the home quietly after only two days in residence.<sup>178</sup>

Not only were mothers who expressed a desire to “keep” constructed as the most pathological, but were also considered “selfish”. In Canada’s maternity homes, mothers were counselled to be “unselfish”:

“Susan” Victor Home, 1967

Throughout her stay, she says, she received the same message repeatedly from home staff and her social worker; that giving up her child was the only option and that keeping her child would be extremely selfish and reckless (UCMF, 2013:31, UCCA)

Teaching selflessness was discussed in the 1962 annual report for Armagh, the Presbyterian home located in the outskirts of Toronto:

We are...most happy that we found ways by which the girls can do something for other

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<sup>178</sup> The writer, upon learning her new roommate was ‘keeping’ her baby, a possibility previously unknown to her, went to Brigadier Davies at Bethany Home to request that she keep her baby too. She was chastised, told she was selfish, and sent back to her room. The new roommate left the home mysteriously two days later. Forty-three years later, the writer received an apology from the Salvation Army for the treatment she received surrounding this incident.

less fortunate people and by doing so lose some of their selfishness (Margarete Herrig, Director, Armagh, Annual Report, 1962, PA)

In maternity homes, being “unselfish” was a euphemism for surrendering your newborn baby as a “gift” to “more worthy” parents. The concept of unmarried mother selfishness stemmed from the idea that bringing a child into a one parent home would be detrimental to the child, therefore a selfish choice. The Executive Director of Origins Canada<sup>179</sup> states that, “only in an adoption context would a mother expressing the desire to nurture and love her newborn baby be considered selfish” (Andrews, 2012). Nonetheless, this characterization of young unmarried mothers continues in contemporary adoption transactions. Surrendering mothers continue to be constructed as “good”, “mature”, “brave”, “selfless”, and “courageous”,<sup>180</sup> a legacy of the adoption mandate, and a powerful tool of coercion for unsupported, resourceless mothers in the twenty-first century (Andrews, 2015). In the study “Reinforcing the Motherhood Ideal: Public Perceptions of Biological Mothers who Make an Adoption Plan”, Karen March and Charlene Miall found that 74% of males and 76% of females considered biological mothers who “chose” adoption as “unselfish”.<sup>181</sup>

Already suffering from eroded self-esteem and shame, most maternity home residents were averse to further notoriety and capitulated to the pressure to conform. The incentive of reinstatement to “good girl” was a powerful influence for a woman isolated in a maternity home in postwar Canada who was stigmatized for non-conformity, and labelled an “unwed mother”. It

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<sup>179</sup> A Canadian federal non-profit organization supporting those separated by adoption.

<sup>180</sup> See Andrews, 2012, *Modern Domestic Adoption*. This rhetoric intensified after the supply of domestic white newborns dried up after the 1970s. Today in domestic adoption culture, “birthmothers” are constructed and groomed to be “brave”, “selfless”, and “courageous”.

<sup>181</sup> See March and Miall (2006), *Reinforcing the Motherhood Ideal: Public Perceptions of Biological Mothers who Make an Adoption Plan*, Graph p. 377. Graph shows 74% of males and 76% of females considered biological mothers who chose adoption as “unselfish” and 72% of males and 80% of females believed they were “responsible”.

was strongly reinforced that the “right kind of girl” would make a “realistic decision”.

Conforming to the adoption mandate was constructed as a path to the return of respectability, and the maternity home system in postwar Canada operated to ensure adoption outcomes. When mothers left these homes they were encouraged to forget their experiences which resulted in mothers keeping their traumatic experiences secret for years, some for the rest of their lives.<sup>182</sup>

When you have completed your stay at Kelman Place, you must sever your connections and not return for visiting. This is for your own good – when you leave, you close the door on your experience (Rains, 1970:222)

## **Conclusion**

By postwar Canada, maternity home practice had capitulated to psychoanalytic and social work theories of unmarried motherhood, and in fact, worked closely and in tandem with social service agencies, and hospitals to create the “smooth system” (Landsberg, 1963) to separate young unmarried mothers and their babies. Social work casework conducted in maternity homes often included counselling mothers not to see or hold their babies in hospital, grooming them for the “clean break”<sup>183</sup>, a violent act of separation of mother and her newborn<sup>184</sup> baby for adoption in Canada’s delivery rooms.

Maternity home matrons were complicit with the prevailing sociological and psychoanalytic theories advanced by social service agencies, and applied them in the controlled environment of maternity homes. Canada’s maternity homes operated as a sort of baby assembly line from admittance to drop off at hospital. Not only did maternity homes serve to emphasize the futility of pursuing motherhood to the unmarried expectant mother, but disempowered her,

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<sup>182</sup> See Alton & Parks, Film, *The Forty Year Secret*, 2009

<sup>183</sup> See Chapter 3 for a more in depth examination of the “clean break”.

<sup>184</sup> Usually firstborn

distorted her reality, controlled her environment, cast her desire to mother her own baby as “selfish”, kept her ignorant of rights and choices and of the lifelong consequences, and pressured her to conform, thereby fulfilling the requirements of a coercive psychological system. An unmarried mother who entered a maternity home in postwar Canada had very little chance of leaving with her baby. Considering the coercive nature of these “charged sites”, and the statistics, it can be reasonably stated that, for the most part, women who resided in Canada’s maternity homes did not make a “choice” or a “decision” for adoption.<sup>185</sup> Some churches operating maternity homes would later insist they had nothing to do with adoption, but simply provided housing for those who needed it. A statement by the Salvation Army which appeared in a *Globe and Mail* following a 2013 meeting with women who had resided in Canada’s maternity homes and Members of Parliament in Ottawa states that, “the Salvation Army finished its probe and said that since it ‘was not involved in the adoption process, the review does not substantiate whether ‘forced adoption’ existed. (Salvation Army Spokesperson, John McAlister, *Globe & Mail*, October 22, 2013).

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<sup>185</sup> This does not preclude those women who assert they made a free and informed decision for adoption and that it was the right choice for them.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Maternalism Ideology, the Postwar Mother Imperative, and the Phenomenon of Mass**

#### **Surrender**

*Healthy white babies were in demand. The CAS was chronically short of money and 'adoption' was the cheapest solution to the 'problem' of unmarried pregnancy. The case files produced under the act disprove the idea that women exercised free and unfettered choice in releasing their infants for adoption (Lori Chambers, 2007:85)*

#### **Introduction**

This chapter sets forth the powerful postwar climate of maternalism and the mother imperative, a period which emphasized the return of “Rosie the Riveter” to the private sphere, reinforced the construction of “good” Canadian women as white stay-at-home mothers, and promoted nuclear families and heteronormativity; all were major influences that contributed to the adoption mandate. This chapter can be approached as a prolongation of the maternalism ideology that prevailed post WWI. Lara Campbell writes, “Maternalism has been defined by Sonya Michel and Seth Kovan as an exaltation of women’s natural capacity to mother applied to state policies concerned with the interests of women and children” (Campbell, 2012:101). This ideology was applied to, and promoted only for white mothers.

Section I of this chapter elaborates on the powerful social construct of the postwar mother imperative which was concerned only with white women, while Section II explores gender and race as it relates to the mandate. Institutional prescriptions for Black and Indigenous unmarried mothers are assessed in contrast to those for white women. Section III illustrates, with statistics, the phenomenon of a mass infant surrender. In addition, a surplus of babies for adoption is identified in the early 1960s, and babies of unmarried mothers crossing borders is also examined.



Illus. 11. “Salvation Army Officers Care Lovingly for the Infants of Unmarried Mothers”. The Unmarried Mother and the Salvation Army, Brochure. SAA.

## Section I

### Postwar Mother Imperative - A Maternalism Ideology for Whites Only Please

In the early twentieth century, the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) viewed its role as essential in preserving and nurturing Canada’s white young women for marriage and motherhood through religious and recreational activities and training. As Diana Pederson notes from the YWCA publication *Outlook* in 1946, the YWCA attempted to gain public support by presenting the white woman as the future mother of the nation:

her tremendous energy and up-to-date training are quite indispensable to our welfare, and that just as her splendid physique is essential to the very production of the next generation, so there is abundant play for all her vision, and scope for her most

magnificent ability in consecrated motherhood and sanctified womanhood

(Pederson, 1986:23)

The theory of “our girls” within the meaning of the YWCA was strictly reserved for young, white, respectable, Protestant, working girls. Women of colour, Indigenous, Catholics, older, sick, indigent, or other marginalized women were not included (Strange, 1995).

The YWCA vision of white Canadian women as “consecrated” and “sanctified” is indicative of a rising maternalism post WWI and the high value placed on certain white women that intensified institutionalized ideals of representations of “good” women and mothers in Canadian society as white. According to Cynthia Comacchio, “maternalism became the central strategy of a politics of regeneration that would uplift both family and nation” (Comacchio, 1999:90). The essentialism inherent in maternalistic ideology posited mothers, particularly white mothers, as morally superior with the ability to effect political change through their “natural” attributes as mothers.

Although Comacchio refers to maternalism as a central political strategy post WWI, a similar strategy was employed after WWII. Ideals of postwar political maternalism, and the high value placed on the middle-class white woman became major factors in the postwar adoption mandate. Elements of post WWII maternalism were expressed through the postwar “mother imperative” described by Nina Leibman as “the dominant social imperative of postwar America with its emphasis on the importance of nuclear family life, the proper role of the sexes, the superiority of suburbia” (Leibman, 1989:173). By 1945, 80,000 Canadian women who had served in the armed forces or worked in the war industry had been discharged (Prentice et al, 1996:350). Women were encouraged to return to the private sphere by governments, authorities and local “experts” (Strong-Boag, 1994:486). Incentives for women to work in the war effort,

such as government day nurseries to care for their children, competitive wages, and access to equal opportunities quickly disappeared. Women were literally “sent home”. Mass media, including advertising, newspapers, magazines, radio, film, and increasingly, television, portrayed the “good” woman as a white stay-at-home wife and mother. By the 1960s, despite their war time experiences, “the majority of women were rarely visible on the public stage” (Strong-Boag, 1994:497), their lives now played out in suburban homes, taken up with child-rearing.

In the postwar social climate, the age of brides decreased and birth rates increased dramatically. As an example, in 1940, the median age for a woman’s first marriage had been 23.2 years, but by 1965 it was 21.1 years (Canada, Statistics Canada, Selected Marriage Statistics 1921-1990). This meant that many married women became teen mothers. However, due to their marital status, the age of these women did not emerge as a major societal concern. The preoccupation with age related only to unmarried mothers, since married teen mothers did not contravene norms. In contrast, the age of unmarried mothers did become a major preoccupation for social workers and others. As pointed out by Sharon Wall, “even a brief glance at the general postwar discourse on unmarried pregnancy reveals a pronounced concern with age” that was absent as it concerned married women (Wall, 2014:51). Wall states that, “Canadian social work students were, likewise, increasingly preoccupied with the experience of ‘adolescent unmarried mothers’, and the phenomenon of ‘child mothers’” (Wall, 2014:51)

The annual number of births in Canada rose from 252,577 in 1940 to over 478,551 in 1960 (GOC, Statistics Canada, Series B1-1, Live Births). This increase in births became known as the postwar “baby boom”<sup>186</sup> (Canada, Statistics Canada, The Baby Boom). Although ex-

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<sup>186</sup> The postwar baby boom describes a period of increased birthrates from 1950-1970

nuptial pregnancy<sup>187</sup> had previously been associated with the lower classes<sup>188</sup>, increasing birth rates in the postwar climate also contributed to escalating rates of illegitimate pregnancies within the white middle-class. During the 1920s illegitimate births accounted for approximately 2.2% of all live births in Canada (Canada, Statistics Canada, Series B1-1, Live Births). In the 1930s, this figure rose to around 4.0%, although Nova Scotia “had the dubious distinction of being the province with the highest illegitimacy rate in Canada...and as yet unexplained demographic phenomenon...ranged from 8% in the mid-1940s to 10% in the late 1960s” (Morton, 2005:110,112). Average rates across Canada remained fairly stable until the 1960s, when illegitimacy rates rose to an average of 9.6% in 1970, the highest national rate of ex-nuptial pregnancy in the immediate postwar decades (Canada, Statistics Canada, Series B1-1, Live Births).

Increasing rates of illegitimacy within the white middle-class contributed to a major shift in the way unmarried mothers were viewed and treated in postwar Canada. According to Rickie Solinger, one of the leading scholars on the adoption mandate in the United States which closely parallels Canada, “it became increasingly difficult for parents and the new service professionals, with middle-class affiliations themselves, to sanction treating ‘our daughters’ as permanently ruined” (Solinger, 1992:15). Although the white unmarried mother had transgressed cultural norms, the intrinsic cultural capital of her whiteness gave her the opportunity, through adoption, to reclaim her standing in the community. Combined with psychoanalytic, sociological, and social work theory and practice, it was mandated that the white unmarried mother would be rehabilitated by keeping her pregnancy secret, the adoption of her child, and the subsequent reclamation of her normative roles through legitimate traditional marriage and child-rearing.

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<sup>187</sup> Pregnancy outside of nuptials or marriage

<sup>188</sup> See Farrar, 2005:53, in *Unbecoming Mothers*, Gustafson (Ed.)

The adoption mandate then, operated as a “‘safety valve’ to release the White single woman from motherhood, thereby restoring her status as a woman of White-defined privilege and performance” (Pietsch, 2012:36).

The postwar mother imperative and its emphasis on the nuclear family were powerful social constructs. Racialized and gendered ideals of normative womanhood and “good” motherhood strongly influenced social policy and practice pertaining to unmarried mothers. Solinger explains:

The postwar recasting of white illegitimate mothers offered these girls and women a remarkable trade-off. In exchange for their babies, they could re-enter normative life. A very high percentage accepted the neo-Faustian deal, suggesting that the postwar female and family ideals were powerful constructs indeed (Solinger, 1992:17)

## **Section II**

### **Race and Gender and the Adoption Mandate**

#### **Black Women - Not Real and Valuable Women**

As both Solinger and Pietsch suggest, the prescription of adoption for unmarried mothers was predominately for “whites only”. Black women and other women of colour were excluded. White supremacist assumptions interpreting and appropriating Black out-of-wedlock pregnancy imposed Eurocentric values on the Black unmarried mother. As Solinger points out, “Black unwed pregnancy was thought to be a product of pathology grounded in race (Solinger, 1992:188). Postwar constructions of race and illegitimacy were used jointly as evidence of “individual pathology on the part of the white woman and cultural pathology on the part of the Black – [ideas that] were developed and articulated by a new set of experts interested in out-of-wedlock pregnancy” (Kunzel, 1993:165). These new experts included psychologists,

psychiatrists, social workers, sociologists, and policy makers. Proponents of this prevailing view of Black unmarried mothers agreed that she should, in most cases, keep her baby (Solinger, 1992:188). Pietsch contends that,

if Black mothers were treated in the same way as white unmarried mothers, then white women would be cast as ideologically the same as Black women; and this coalescing of categories would create a socio-political crisis....dominant adoption discourse from the postwar period separated Black unwed mothers physically, ideologically and politically from White unwed mothers (Pietsch, 2012:35)

As Pietsch suggests, white and Black unmarried mothers were separated physically. Physical separation was exemplified in Canada's maternity home practice. Although maternity home policies professed to be racially and culturally inclusive, the reality was that it was predominantly if not exclusively white unmarried mothers who were "treated" in Canada's maternity homes. In Halifax, the Salvation Army professed to be "open to all 'races and creeds' ...although the specific mention of the presence of a 'coloured girl' in 1953 in the home's minutes suggest this was an unusual occurrence" (Morton, 2004:336). There were a few Black maternity homes organized by Black women's groups in the United States.<sup>189</sup> However, I am not aware of any maternity homes in Canada during this period that specifically catered to Black unmarried mothers.

As Pietsch has pointed out, Black and white unmarried mothers were separated ideologically as well. In postwar Canada, Black women were not considered valuable and did not personify the Canadian ideal of "good" womanhood or motherhood. The ideal of "chastity" had

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<sup>189</sup> See Solinger (1992:66-68) Phillis Wheatley Home in Columbus, Ohio; Talbert Home, Cleveland; Kansas City, Topeka, and Little Rock also supported Black maternity homes. Also see Morton (1993) *And Sin No More: Social Policy and Unwed Mothers in Cleveland, 1855-1990*.

historically separated characterizations of white women from Black women in dominant discourse (Solinger, 2005:52). The prevailing view was that white out-of-wedlock pregnancies were a result of a psychological disturbance, and Black unmarried mothers became pregnant because of their physiology, or their “nature” as “breeders”.

For some analysts white girls were products of complex, cultural patterns, refined community and gender mores, and traditional family structures. Aberrations within any of these entities...could cause psychiatric problems, such as unwed pregnancy. Black girls, on the other hand were, according to this view, products of no such higher-order structures. Their behaviour was unmediated, natural, biological (Solinger, 1992:43) Black unmarried mothers were also idealized as being “natural” mothers in line with the racist idealization of the “Black Mammy”<sup>190</sup>, therefore they did not require redemption or rehabilitation, “by becoming mothers, even unwed mothers, Black women were simply doing what came naturally” (Solinger, 1992:189).

Black unmarried mothers were considered culturally different in their attitudes to out-of-wedlock pregnancy. A 1945 study of Black unmarried mothers found that “for culturally determined reasons, the morality codes of many Negroes do not include a prohibition against illegitimacy” (Kunzel, 1993:157). The argument that Black illegitimacy was culturally accepted in Black communities led social workers to dismiss it as a problem before the 1940s (Kunzel, 1993:157). However, the white interpretation of Black unmarried mothers as accepting of illegitimacy due to a “morality code” negated the fact that mothering and motherhood were, and continue to be valued in African Canadian culture (O’Reilly, 2014:100). Black mothering

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<sup>190</sup> See Harris, 1982:10,13,20, From Mammies to Militants. Also see Pietsch 2012:37. Although the “mammy’s mothering role is to nurture White Children (“good”), but she cannot meet the criterion for “White saintly motherhood (“bad”).

represents a site of power and resistance for Black women wherein, “the African American tradition of motherhood centres upon the recognition that mothering...is a site of power for Black women” (O’Reilly, 2014:100).

Feminist Patricia Collins identifies various concerns of racial ethnic mothers that differ from mothers in the dominant culture<sup>191</sup>, the first of which is, “keeping the children born to you” (cited in O’Reilly, 2014:97). The legacy of slavery in the context of reproduction and mothering cannot be overlooked when discussing the Black unmarried mother and her baby in postwar Canada. During slavery, Black children were considered commodities and were routinely removed from their mothers to be sold as slaves. Prominent feminist Angela Davis points out, “Slave women were *birth mothers* or *genetic mothers* – but they possessed no legal rights as mothers, of any kind.....the children of slave mothers could be sold away by their owners for business reasons or as a result of a strategy of repression (Davis, 1992:212). In view of the Black history of slavery and of babies being removed from their mothers to be sold to whites, why would Black mothers consider surrendering their babies within the white system? I would submit that as an act of resistance, Black unmarried mothers and their babies were mostly accepted into, and cared for within the community through other-mothering and other support systems to resist racist social policies, to protect their children from racism and violence, to reclaim their power as mothers of their own babies, and to preserve the Black community (O’Reilly, 2014:100). A November 1969 study that was entitled, “Negro-White Differences in Decisions Regarding Illegitimate Children,” which measured “Advisors mentioned by Unwed Mothers and the Advice Given Concerning Disposition of Child By Race”, revealed that Black unmarried mothers were overwhelmingly advised by their parents to keep their out-of-wedlock

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<sup>191</sup> Except for the adoption mandate

child; 86% of their mothers and 88% of their fathers advised them to do so (Pope, 1969:760). This was in stark contrast to advice given and action taken by white families.

An additional factor that contributed to Black unmarried mothers keeping their babies was the tradition of the Black matriarchal family structure. Racial oppression was not congruent with the nuclear family, and less strict gender roles were the norm for Black families. Economic and other factors meant that Black women usually worked outside the home, “it was the Black woman who more often chose to raise her child alone...by doing so, these women simultaneously subverted patriarchal, heterosexual, and social mandates” (Pietsch, 2002:96).

Black unmarried mothers in postwar Canada also understood that their devalued social status would transfer to their babies, and, in fact, Black babies in postwar Canada were not considered valuable commodities. Racialized babies were considered “unadoptable”, “difficult to adopt”, and often labelled “special needs” (Guyatt, 1967:14), or even “handicapped” as illustrated in a 1967 article in the *Globe and Mail* which addressed the issue of “unwanted” Black children being shipped abroad for adoption due to a lack of adoption homes in Canada, wherein it is stated that, “The Catholic Children’s Aid Society of Toronto classifies colored babies as handicapped along with children who are mentally or physically abnormal”<sup>192</sup> (Lawson, *Globe and Mail*, October 3, 1967:1). Physiological and race matching was prominent in adoption practice during the postwar decades, and it was thought that “proper matching was key to the cohesion of the adoptive family” (Balcom, 2011:32). This encompassed matching religion, intelligence, hair, skin, and eye colour to ensure an adopted child that could appear “as if born to” the adopters; thus, “care is taken to place the children with parents with characteristics similar to the child” (Alberta, Department of Public Welfare, 1959-1960:24). Due to adoption

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<sup>192</sup>See Unwanted Negro children shipped abroad for adoption, agencies say, *Globe and Mail*, October 3, 1967:1

matching, economic factors, racism contributing to low rates of agency approved non-white adoptive homes, and low Black population rates in general in postwar Canada,<sup>193</sup> there were few Black couples approved for adoption. Furthermore, due to the trend of Black unmarried mothers being advised and opting to mother their children there were few Black babies available for adoption. Although there were a few transracial adoption transactions in postwar Canada, it was considered an anomaly at the time. A 1960 report from Newfoundland reveals that:

some success was achieved during the year with what is sometimes terms the ‘hard to place’ child which usually means predominantly the child of mixed racial background.

Our Division was successful in working out placements for six such children in our care (Newfoundland, Department of Public Welfare Annual Report, 1960)

It was the prevailing view that Black mothers needed no “rehabilitation” to reinstate them as “good mothers” within Canadian society, since, as pointed out by Pietsch, “in order to be a good mother one first must be a real and valuable woman”, and in effect, White (Pietsch, 2012:29). As a result, Black unmarried mothers were not likely to be subject to the same social work coercion, processes, and prescriptions as white unmarried mothers because they did not fit the hegemonic norms of white motherhood in Canadian society.<sup>194</sup> In fact, Black unmarried mothers were “actively discouraged from relinquishing their children for adoption, even during the period when white women were pressured in the opposite direction” (Balcom, 2011:33).

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<sup>193</sup> See Chapter 3 for statistical details

<sup>194</sup> See Roberts, *Killing the Black Body* (1999) and *Shattered Bonds: The Colour of Child Welfare* (2002). Later in the 20th and 21<sup>st</sup> century, Black unmarried mothers would be re-cast once again as “welfare moms”, and constructed as, “the single most destructive social pathology in modern American society”(Roberts, 2007:493). Black women and their children would become increasingly become political targets by governments and social service systems in Canada and the USA. Also see Morton in Eds. Christie, Gavreau, (2004:342) “the moral issue was transformed from a women’s sexual history to her dependency on the taxpayer”.

## The Indigenous Sixties Scoop

The “Sixties Scoop” is a term coined by Patrick Johnston (1983)<sup>195</sup> to describe the widespread “scooping” of Indigenous children in Canada from their homes and reserves by child welfare authorities from the 1960s to the 1980s, and the facilitation of their adoptions into primarily non-Indigenous homes. According to Raven Sinclair, Johnston’s term “Sixties Scoop” is appropriate for two reasons:

first, Johnston observed in the statistics that adoption as the mechanism to address problematic child welfare issues had resulted in notable increases in Aboriginal child apprehensions in the decade of the 1960s. Secondly, in many instances, Aboriginal children were literally apprehended from their homes and communities without the knowledge or consent of families and bands (Sinclair 2007:66)

The actual number of children “scooped” by social service agencies will probably never be known since many status<sup>196</sup> children were never recorded as such, while many other Indigenous children were recorded as “Métis” or “French” in child welfare documents (Sinclair, 2007:20). Inaccurate records often led to the loss of tribal identities in the adoption transaction (Fournier & Crey, 1997; Sinclair, 2007). With reference to the actual number of children taken, Sinclair reports that, “statistics from the Department of Indian Affairs indicate a total of 11,132 status Indian children adopted between the years of 1960 and 1990. However the actual numbers are believed to be much higher” (Sinclair, 2007:20). It is estimated that approximately 70% of Indigenous children taken from their mothers during the Sixties Scoop were eventually adopted

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<sup>195</sup> See Johnston, 1983, *Native Children and the Child Welfare System*

<sup>196</sup> See Government of Canada, *Indigenous and Northern Affairs*, Indian Status “an individual recognized by the federal government as being registered under the Indian Act is referred to as a Registered Indian (commonly referred to as a Status Indian). Status Indians are entitled to a range of programs and services offered by federal agencies and provincial governments.

into non-Aboriginal homes: “Indigenous children were apprehended in disproportionate numbers and adopted primarily into non-Aboriginal homes in Canada, the United States, and overseas” (Sinclair 2007:66).

In the overall context of escalating adoption numbers in Canada during the 1960s, it is unsurprising that Indigenous adoption statistics also increased dramatically during this period. In postwar Canada, the white adoption mandate, fuelled by social workers, had posited adoption as the social response to any pregnancy that fell outside the norms and ideals of white motherhood. Black women were exempt from the mandate due to racialized notions concerning their “culture and biology”. Indigenous women were located in a separate category of non-conformity, and were therefore subject to the effects of increased adoption practices by child welfare agencies. Although there are similarities and connections to the white mandate, the context and purpose of the Sixties Scoop was founded on very different principles.

Targeting kinship and family systems was a strategy used by successive Canadian governments to oppress, destroy, and assimilate Indigenous people, and, by the 1960s, separating Indigenous children from their families through forced assimilation policies already had a long history in Canada. Canada’s residential schools<sup>197</sup> had been removing Indigenous children from their homes since the mid-nineteenth century as a policy to suppress traditional knowledge and language and to “kill the Indian in the child”<sup>198</sup>. Residential schools operated to indoctrinate and assimilate Indigenous children into Christian, Euro-Canadian culture. Suzanne Fournier and Ernie Crey observe,

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<sup>197</sup> See Fournier & Crey (1997) *Stolen from our Embrace: The abduction of First Nations children and the restoration of Aboriginal communities*. Also see Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

<sup>198</sup> This quote is commonly attributed to Duncan Campbell Scott, Department of Indian Affairs. For another viewpoint see Sniderman, Maclean’s, November, 2013 review of Mark Abley’s book, *The man wrongly attributed with uttering “kill the Indian in the child”*.

this deliberate policy to separate and forcibly assimilate aboriginal children into the mainstream has pervaded every era of aboriginal history in Canada and profoundly injured of [sic] First Nations people both historically and today. Each era saw a new reason to take aboriginal children away from home, placing them in residential schools, foster care or non-aboriginal adoptive families (Fournier & Crey, 1997:17)

Indigenous traditional mothering was not based on Eurocentric ideals and values, and therefore viewed as substandard by Euro-Canadian culture. In postwar Canada, Indigenous communities were in disarray, states of poverty, and social chaos due to continuous oppressive and racist government policies over time. As maintained by Sinclair, “living conditions in most reserves in Canada were appalling after decades of government manipulation and mismanagement” (Sinclair, 2007:38). This is further exemplified by Fournier and Crey,

in many cases, children were taken from parents whose only crime was poverty – and being aboriginal. Finding a grandmother caring for several small children in a home without a flush toilet, refrigerator or running water was enough to spur a social worker to seize the children and take them into the care of the state (Fournier & Crey, 1997:85)

Instead of investing in infrastructure and social programs to assist Indigenous people, government policy and practice endorsed removing children for adoption into mostly non-Indigenous families. Fournier and Crey further observe that,

The white social worker, following hard on the heels of the missionary, the priest, and the Indian agent was convinced that the only hope for the salvation of the Indian people lay in the removal of their children (Fournier & Crey, 1997:84)

Indigenous mothers lost their children to adoption in staggering numbers<sup>199</sup> as did the

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<sup>199</sup> Proportionate to Indigenous population.

white unmarried mother during the 1960s, but not because they were considered candidates for rehabilitation to the norms of Canadian motherhood. Instead, the Indigenous mother was deemed “unfit” and her child taken for adoption because of institutionalized racism targeting her community, her family, and her traditional mothering practices. Embedded government policies of cultural genocide and assimilation meant that the Indigenous mother had little if any, opportunity to mother her child, especially in the context of the rise of adoption culture in postwar Canada.

The loss of Indigenous children through residential schools and forced adoptions left an entire generation of Indigenous people, many of whom lost their Indian Status through adoption, with a deep sense of loss and grief. Intergenerational trauma from the Sixties Scoop continues to impact the lives of Indigenous people. Fournier and Crey give an example of how these policies impacted one family, that of Wayne Christian, a former Spallumcheen chief, who was

...taken away as a child along with his younger siblings. They were split up and assigned to separate non-Indian homes. At seventeen Christian returned to Spallumcheen. His mother had almost been destroyed by the removal of her children; although she had not been alcoholic before, she had turned to drinking as a release...one morning Wayne found his beloved younger brother [who had also returned home] dead. He had shot himself in the head (Fournier & Crey, 1997:88)

Although in 1976 the Supreme Court found that Indian Status was not negated by adoption, the adopted “child” could only claim that status upon reaching the age of majority.<sup>200</sup> This was and remains problematic. Lori Chambers explains, “if a child retained his or her status, but had no knowledge of, or contact with, his or her birth parents, or Indigenous community how

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<sup>200</sup> See Lori Chambers (2016), *A Legal History of Adoption in Ontario, 1921-2015*

would this status be recognized?” (Chambers, 2016:122). In other words, an Indigenous adoptee would have to know the name of their family of origin in order to be repatriated. Some may not have been told they were adopted, or that they had Indigenous roots and, to compound matters, adoption records remain sealed and partially sealed in all provinces and territories in Canada thereby limiting full access to original birth registrations or other paperwork that would facilitate status attainment for those reaching the age of majority. Despite the fact that in 2016 the Supreme Court expanded Indian status to include over 600,000 Métis<sup>201</sup> not previously granted status, for Métis adoptees, parentage will be difficult to prove in many cases.

Many Indigenous adoptees remain marginalized, resourceless, and unaware of their rights. This is slowly changing as Indigenous adoptees who suffered loss of family, community, and culture are organizing and coming together to promote a sense of belonging and healing, and to seek justice for the illegal, unethical, and human rights abuses they suffered under Child Welfare assimilation policies.<sup>202</sup> In early 2017, a judge ruled in favour of Sixties Scoop survivors in Ontario for “failing to prevent on-reserve children from losing their Indigenous identity after they were forcibly taken from their homes” (CBC News, February 14, 2017). This ruling has started a discussion between the Federal government and Sixties Scoop survivors across Canada.

### **Section III**

#### **The Phenomenon of Mass Surrender**

Prior to WWII, adoption had been used as a prescription for out-of-wedlock pregnancies

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<sup>201</sup> See Blanchfield, M., ‘Landmark Supreme Court Ruling extends rights to 600,000 Métis, ‘non-status Indians’, April 14, 2016, National Post.

<sup>202</sup> See National Indigenous Survivors of Child Welfare Network; a Canadian activist group of mostly Indigenous Adoptees, seeking justice and acknowledgement for being removed from their Indigenous homes for adoption into Non-Indigenous homes.

on a limited basis as the trend had been toward redemptive maternity. This changed dramatically in the immediate postwar decades when babies from unmarried mothers were adopted in numbers never seen prior to, or since, in Canadian history. This has been referred to as the “phenomenon of mass surrender” (Andrews, 2013).<sup>203</sup> The following statistics are an attempt to illustrate the number of babies from unmarried mothers that were adopted in Canada during the postwar decades; a phenomenon that has not previously been quantified.

Adoptions are facilitated by, and statistics kept, by the provinces. There are few directly comparable adoption statistics available by province as, historically, individual provinces often recorded different data.<sup>204</sup> Some provinces, such as Ontario, Alberta, New Brunswick and Newfoundland kept separate data for unmarried mother adoptions, while others reported only provincial wards and non-wards.<sup>205</sup> Some provinces recorded adoptions by religion, gender, and age of child, while others simply recorded a total number of adoption transactions completed during the year with no category breakdown. In addition, provincial records changed their format over the years so there is little consistency in data collection and reporting for comparison purposes. Nevertheless, by studying adoption statistics reported in provincial government social services reports, some interesting patterns and trends emerge in the data.

By the 1940s adoptions began to escalate and continued to increase until the early 1970s. As an example, in Ontario in 1948 there were 2,536 adoptions whereas in 1968 there were 7,157, almost three times as many (Table 1). In New Brunswick in 1948, 261 children were adopted<sup>206</sup>,

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<sup>203</sup> Inasmuch as I have used the term “surrender” and “surrender rates” in this chapter to denote adoptions from unmarried mothers, it is important to note that it is not assumed that all unmarried mothers “surrendered”, rather than willingly “relinquished”, as there may be mothers who did choose adoption. Further, the use of these terms is not to totalize or regulate alternative unmarried mother narratives.

<sup>204</sup> Adoption statistics are still not standardized by provinces in order to obtain vital national information

<sup>205</sup> A ward is a child of the state

<sup>206</sup> See Department of Health, New Brunswick, Thirty-First Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer to the Minister of Health and Social Services, 1948.

but by 1968 that figure had almost doubled to 545 (Child Welfare Division, Adoption Statistics, 1960-1969, PANB). In British Columbia adoptions completed in 1945 totalled 292, but by 1967 there were 2,183 adoptions (British Columbia, Annual Report of the Social Assistance Branch, Province of British Columbia, 1945, British Columbia, Department of Health Services and Hospital Insurance, Vital Statistics of the Province of British Columbia, 1967).

Babies from unmarried mothers accounted for the majority of adoptions that took place in postwar Canada. As reported in Alberta in 1955:

The total number of births registered out of wedlock is one thousand, three hundred and thirty-two for the fiscal year, and it will be noted that a large percentage of those babies are surrendered by transfer of legal guardianship for adoption purposes (Eleventh Annual Report of the Department of Public Welfare, Alberta, 1954-1955)

and,

In the twentieth century, unwed mothers supplied the outstanding source of youngsters free for adoption (Strong-Boag, 2006:215)

To illustrate this point in the data, total adoptions in Ontario from 1960-1965 inclusive were 32,724, and adoptions from unmarried mothers<sup>207</sup> represented 24,222 of these, or 74.0% (Ontario Report of the Minister of Public Welfare, Ontario 1942-1964; Ontario, Report of the Minister of Social Services, 1965-1971), showing that the vast majority of adoptions were babies from unmarried mothers. Rates of adoption of illegitimate<sup>208</sup> children in New Brunswick expressed as a percentage of total adoptions for the same period in New Brunswick appear to be higher as total adoptions were 2,983 and adoptions of illegitimate children were 2,813, or 81% (PANB, RS571). In the year 1968 alone in New Brunswick, adoption of illegitimate children represented

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<sup>207</sup> Adoptions from unmarried mothers were recorded as a separate category in Ontario

<sup>208</sup> Illegitimate is the language used in the report to denote a child born out of wedlock

87% of total adoptions (PANB, RS571).<sup>209</sup> Reports from British Columbia from 1965 and 1966 show total adoptions of 4,323 with illegitimate adoptions representing 3,193 of these, or 74% (British Columbia, Department of Health Services and Hospital Insurance, Vital Statistics Report, 1965-1966). Alberta government reports for the same period, 1960-1965 inclusive, show that unmarried mother adoptions represented 63.4% of total adoptions (Alberta, Department of Public Welfare Reports 1960-1965).<sup>210</sup> Nova Scotia reports reveal that from 1954 to 1957 inclusive, total adoptions were 1,543, with adoptions from unmarried mothers representing 1,288 of these or, 83.5% (Nova Scotia, Child Welfare, Annual Reports, fiscal years ending, March 31, 1954, March 31, 1955, March 31, 1956 and March 31, 1957).

Although maternity home surrender rates recorded in annual reports are reported to be from 85-95%<sup>211</sup>, surrender rates outside of maternity homes are more difficult to determine. One way to calculate a raw surrender rate by province is to express unmarried mother adoptions as a percentage of the total number of illegitimate births by province. This is only possible in a few provinces as not all provinces recorded unmarried mother adoptions separately. However, some trends do emerge. For example, from 1960-1964 inclusive in Ontario, the total number of illegitimate births were recorded at 29,927,<sup>212</sup> while adoptions from unmarried mothers for the same period were 19,507 (Table 1), representing a surrender rate of 65.1%. In New Brunswick for the same period, total illegitimate births were 3,805 with unmarried mother adoptions

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<sup>209</sup> Information about the 13% not accounted for is unknown.

<sup>210</sup> This lower rate of unmarried mother adoptions as a percentage of total adoptions might be due to the fact that Alberta recorded only those unmarried mothers who surrendered through Surrender and Indenture. Alberta unmarried mother adoption statistics do not include babies that might have been apprehended due to the marital status of the mother; since child apprehensions were recorded separately from surrender cases.

<sup>211</sup> Including Quebec – see Balcom, *The Traffic in Babies*. It is difficult to access Quebec adoption statistics and surrender rates outside of maternity homes since child welfare was enacted by, and records kept primarily by the Catholic Church in that province until the first consolidated Children's Protection Act in 1977.

<sup>212</sup> See État Civil/Vital Statistics, annuaire du québec/Québec yearbook 1966-67, Department of Industry and Commerce, Québec Bureau of Statistics.

recorded as 2,316, or a surrender rate of 61%.

A Department of Social Welfare report from British Columbia is suggestive of a surrender rate of approximately 66%:

Judging from the number of unwed mothers who sought help for themselves and child from a Children's Aid Society or the Department of Social Welfare, and the comparatively small number who placed their baby for adoption through channels other than an authorized agency this year, it would appear that less than one-third of the total 2,484 children born out of wedlock remained with their parent or parents or were placed by them in a home of a blood relative (British Columbia, Department of Social Welfare, Report for the year ended March 31, 1959:50)

Surrender rates in Newfoundland appear to be low in comparison to trends in the rest of the country. Reports from the 1960s show surrender rates from anywhere between 29.1 and 34.9. It is difficult to determine the reason as to why surrender rates appear to be lower in Newfoundland. One hypothesis might be that many unmarried mothers remained in their own homes during pregnancy rather than being sent to maternity homes. As previously discussed, in the mid-1960s, churches across Canada were upgrading their maternity home facilities, building more homes, and increasing capacity, but in St. John's Newfoundland, the Salvation Army Glenbrook home closed its doors at the peak of the adoption mandate in 1965. The Newfoundland Annual Report of the Department of Public Welfare for 1969 states that:

during the year under review 613 unmarried mothers sought the services provided by the Department through the field staff. The majority of those remained in their own homes but for the very limited number who were unable to do this accommodation was available in private boarding homes (Newfoundland, Department of Public Welfare, Annual Report

for the year ended March 31, 1970)

Another explanation with respect to lower surrender rates in Newfoundland might be due to protections of the unique identity and culture of the people of Newfoundland, a province that did not enter Confederation until 1949. Moreover, much of Newfoundland's economy relied on the work of families and fisheries, therefore an illegitimate child might be a welcome addition in a fishing family to assist in carrying on this work.

Another province wherein surrender rates appear to be lower is Saskatchewan. Even though legislation required that illegitimate births be reported by hospitals and that every unmarried mother be interviewed about plans for her child<sup>213</sup>, out of the illegitimate children recorded as being born in Saskatchewan from 1960-1964 inclusive, a total of 7,380, only 2,257 are recorded as being admitted to care from unmarried mothers;<sup>214</sup> an average surrender rate of 30.5%. This rate is similar to that which is found in Newfoundland. This may also be due to the rural nature of the province, and its postwar economic dependence on agriculture, which relies on families to carry on the tradition of working on family farms. The Annual Report of 1965-66 comments on the disparity between Saskatchewan and other jurisdictions with respect to out-of-wedlock births, although no explanation for this difference was offered:

During the fiscal year 1965-66, the number of unmarried mothers in Saskatchewan remained basically the same as in the previous year. This represents a different situation than in some sections of Canada and the United States where Social Agencies are expressing concern bordering on alarm at the increased incidence of out-of-wedlock

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<sup>213</sup> See 1963-1964, Annual Report, Province of Saskatchewan, Department of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation

<sup>214</sup> Unmarried mother statistics recorded separately in the Province of Saskatchewan

Table 2

*Adoptions from Unmarried Mothers 1942-1971 - Province of Ontario*

<u>Year</u>	<u>Total Adoptions</u>	<u>Unmarried Mother</u>	<u>%</u>
1942	1706	1392	81.5
1943	1775	1436	80.9
1944	1744	1459	83.5
1945	2048	1695	82.7
1946	2075	1160	55.9
1947	2136	1646	77.0
1948	2536	1866	73.5
1949	2560	1941	75.8
1950	2598	1943	74.8
1951	3678	2721	74.4
1952	3957	2888	72.9
1953	3319	2402	72.4
1954	3411	2462	72.2
1955	4073	2945	72.0
1956	4085	2869	70.2
1957	4135	3100	75.0
1958	4334	3225	74.4
1959	5278	3837	72.7
1960	5056	3506	69.3
1961	5103	3754	73.6
1962	5109	3900	76.3
1963	5493	4077	74.2
1964	5718	4270	74.7
1965	6245	4715	75.5
1966	6543	4841	74.1
1967	6884	5428	78.8
1968	7157	5242	73.2
1969	7679	5826	75.9
1970	7740	5772	74.6
1971	7126	4049	56.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>131301</b>	<b>96367</b>	<b>73.3</b>

Source: Raw data retrieved from 1942-1964 Inclusive Reports of the Minister of Public Welfare  
Raw data retrieved from 1965-1971 Inclusive Reports Minister of Social and Family Services

births (Saskatchewan, Department of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation, 1965-66)

From 1945 to 1971 inclusive,<sup>215</sup> there were 581,488 illegitimate births recorded in Canada (Canada, Statistics Canada, Series B1-1 Live Births/Illegitimate Births). Using a conservative national surrender rate of 50%<sup>216</sup> it can be reasonably estimated that approximately 300,000 babies were surrendered for adoption across Canada by unmarried mothers during the postwar mandate. This is a rather conservative estimate considering provincial surrender rates varied, and also considering that in Ontario alone, that 92,080 (or approximately one third of the 300,000 estimate) were recorded as being from unmarried mothers for that same period (Table 1). Moreover, these statistics are restricted to the years 1945-1971, whereas adoptions of the babies of unmarried mothers occurred well before and after these dates. In addition, although adoption figures for Quebec<sup>217</sup> are not available, statistics for illegitimate births are available. Based on the number of illegitimate births in Quebec, which closely resemble the number of illegitimate births in Ontario,<sup>218</sup> and considering the number of maternity homes operating in Quebec which relied heavily on Magdalenism given the predominance of the Roman Catholic religion, it can be reasonably estimated that Quebec adoption surrender rates for the period are likely to have equalled or surpassed those of Ontario. Quebec rates may therefore represent another 100,000 and would at least equal those of Ontario, if not higher, accounting

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<sup>215</sup> The period recognized by most scholars as that of the postwar adoption mandate. The year 1973 was the last year that the Federal Government recorded illegitimate births.

<sup>216</sup> See Wolfish, *Canadian Family Physician*, Vol. 30, April 1964 which states that "in Ontario the proportion of single mothers who chose to keep their babies rose from 30% in 1968 to 88% in 1977" suggesting that 70% of unmarried mothers surrendered their babies for adoption in Ontario in 1968 which is consistent with government reports showing an average rate of 74% during the mandate period. Also see Table 1.

<sup>217</sup> See Griffith (1991). *The Right to Know who you Are*, Section 8:8. Adoption records in Quebec were primarily maintained by the Church, private agencies and court systems

<sup>218</sup> 1960-1964 Illegitimate Births Inclusive. See *État Civil/Vital Statistics, annuaire du québec/Québec yearbook 1966-67*, Department of Industry and Commerce, Québec Bureau of Statistics. Québec 26653, Ontario 29927.

## OF EVERY 20 CHILDREN ADOPTED

9 WERE BOYS 

11 WERE GIRLS 

3 BORN IN WEDLOCK 

17 BORN OUT OF WEDLOCK 

6 ROMAN CATHOLIC 

14 PROTESTANT 

8 PLACED BY SOCIAL AGENCIES 

12 PLACED PRIVATELY 

### LET'S LOOK AT THE AVERAGE COMPLETED ADOPTION

*The Child had been in the home for 2 years 6 months and was 3 years 6 months old. The Mother was 38 years old and the Father 39.*

Figure 4. Nova Scotia. Department of Public Welfare. Annual Report, 1956:22.

for approximately another 100,000 of the 300,000 total.

After 1970, adoption rates dropped dramatically (See Table 1). Reasons for this were due to changing norms, better access to abortion, less stigma placed on unmarried motherhood, and women asserting their right to mother as a sole parent. Unmarried mothers or unwed mothers became known as “single parents”, or “single mothers”. Suzanne Morton elucidates this change:

A 1970 study of maternity homes by the newly formed Halifax Women’s Bureau...signalled a change in attitudes towards unmarried mothers...the study, which adopted the term ‘single mother’...represented a departure from past practices and interpretations (Morton, 2005:132)

A report compiled by the Victor Home in 1973 stated that by 1973, 62% of unmarried mothers were now raising their children,<sup>219</sup> a relatively quick flip in statistics since just four years earlier, 74% of unmarried mothers in Ontario surrendered their children to adoption. A report in Canadian Family Physician in 1984 reports that:

more young mothers are keeping their babies today. This trend appears to be world-wide. In Ontario, the proportion of single mothers who chose to keep their babies rose from 30% in 1968 to 88% in 1977 (Wolfish, 1984:904)

Although there is no direct comparable for Canada, data from the United States suggests that by 1988 surrender rates by unmarried mothers had fallen to approximately 2% (Sobol, Daly, 1994:494). In June 1995, a United States think tank, Child Trends Inc. reported that, “currently only about two percent of premarital births are relinquished for adoption” (Moore et al, 1995:vi). In 2005, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, in answer to the question “How Many Women Place Their Children For Adoption?” reported that, “less than 1% of children born

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<sup>219</sup> UCCA, Maternity Homes Association of Canada. Brief by Victor Home, March 8, 1974.

to never-married women were placed for adoption from 1989-1995...the percentage is higher for white never-married women (1.7 percent, than for Black never-married women (near 0 percent)” (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, March 2005:1)

### **Cross Border Babies**

Within a discussion of statistics concerning the adoption of babies of unmarried mothers it would be prudent to include those babies adopted outside of Canada, most notably to the United States. It is difficult, if not impossible to determine the exact number of children adopted from Canada into the United States in the immediate postwar decades as some provinces provided statistics for out of country adoptions, while others did not. In the book *The Traffic in Babies: Cross Border Adoption and Baby Selling Between the United States and Canada, 1932-1972*, Karen Balcom suggests that:

between 1930 and the mid-1970s, several thousand Canadian-born children were adopted by families in the United States. The adoptions originated from every province and territory, and children went to almost every US state. Most of the children were very young infants, the majority of whom were born to unwed mothers (Balcom, 2011:3)

Although cross border adoptions had been taking place since the early twentieth century, including illegal and black market adoptions, most notably from Nova Scotia, Quebec and Alberta,<sup>220</sup> it wasn't until 1966 that a formal network was developed to facilitate cross border adoptions. The Adoption Resource Exchange of North America (ARENA) was an interstate and international network developed to assist in placing “hard to place” children. Children were often placed outside the country due to disability, race, or religion:

The Superintendent is presently encouraging the Catholic Children's Aid Society to

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<sup>220</sup> See Balcom, 2011, *The Traffic in Babies: Cross Border Adoption and Baby Selling between the United States and Canada 1930-1972*; *Ideal Maternity Home*, *Montreal Black Market Babies*, and *Alberta Babies for Export Scandal*.

explore resources for some of their children in the State of Oregon, U.S.A. Citizenship is important, but it is second to a good stable family life (British Columbia, Annual Report of the Department of Social Welfare, 1960:42)

In February 1968, the Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto reaffirmed its policy of placing children only in Catholic homes and defended the practice of placing Catholic children outside Canada. At the 74<sup>th</sup> annual meeting, Ward Markle, Executive Director, confirmed that the society had placed approximately 400 children outside of Canada from 1958-1968 (Globe and Mail, February 28, 1968). It was assumed that the surrender was a "decision" and a "voluntary act", and the Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto appeared to be confident that sending children outside of Canada was a reasonable act on their part. However, I have not found any evidence that unmarried mothers were apprised of the fact that their child might leave the country. Markle states that:

We must be acutely conscious that the decision to surrender a child is a conditional, voluntary act on the part of an unmarried mother and whether it be by law or assumption, we have an implied responsibility in endeavouring to find a home of the same religious faith (Globe and Mail, February 28, 1968)

The province of Alberta recorded 308 adoption placements outside of Canada from 1956 to 1965 and in 1966 reported that:

the number of children placed in the United States has continued to decrease, partly because of legal difficulties in completing the adoption and partly because of the increased availability of children in various States (Alberta, Annual Report of the Department of Public Welfare, 1965-1966:15)

Newfoundland reported that from 1958-1965, court orders for adoption were granted for 315

children to be adopted into the United States. Newfoundland reports show a high number of these were due to the United States Air Force base located in Newfoundland:

Over the past year 41 new applications for adoption of children were received in this office...of these 41 new applications 22 were from the United Air Force personnel. The announcement in January of the phase out of Pepperrell Air Force Base has created a most difficult situation for both our clients and staff (Newfoundland, Annual Report of the Department of Public Welfare, Year Ended March 31, 1960)

A series of articles concerning children being adopted outside the country appeared in the *Globe and Mail* on October 3, 1967. One of them entitled “Quebec babies adopted in France, US” states that, “fewer than 100 per year” have been adopted in the United States and into other countries as far away as France. Another article that appeared on the same day with the headline “Unwanted Negro children shipped abroad for adoption, agencies say” explains that from 1964 to 1967 the Catholic Children’s Aid Society “has shipped out 48 unwanted children to foreign homes and the non-Roman Catholic CAS has done the same with about 25 more” (*Globe and Mail*, October 3, 1967:1). In the same issue of the *Globe*, the editorial was also devoted to this topic with the heading “Babies for Export”. This editorial not only questioned the policy of sending Canadian babies out the country, but also raised questions about the practice.

### **Too Many Babies**

By the mid-1960s articles began to appear nationwide suggesting that prospective adoptive homes were not keeping pace with the number of babies available. There were several reasons for this “surplus” in white newborns available for adoption. Illegitimacy rates during the 1960s were increasing and white unmarried mothers continued to be convinced by social workers, and others that adoption was the “realistic” plan for their child. As well, adopters



Illus. 12. A front page article in the *Winnipeg Free Press* reports that, “an ever increasing ‘crop’ of babies born to unwed mothers in Winnipeg is creating a backlog of babies who have nowhere to go” (*Winnipeg Free Press*, August 31, 1963:1).

were primarily born during the Depression when birth rates were low, whereas unmarried mothers in the 1960s were part of the “baby boom”, causing a disparity in the numbers of adopters versus babies for adoption. In addition, by the 1960s medical advances in fertility treatment allowed for more women who might otherwise have adopted to bear children. Another reason for the surplus, according to the *United Church Observer*, was that potential adopters were scared off by what had been “stiff standards”, “we’ve been a bit snooty in the past”, admits Laurie Charleson, adoption consultant for Ontario” (*United Church Observer*, February 1, 1966:12, UCCA). Conversely, in the same article, Margaret Goodman of the Western Manitoba Children’s Aid Society stated that, “we’re gambling with the lives of these children...we’re putting them in homes we would have rejected ten years ago, but we can’t have them sleeping in

the streets...Miss Goodman calls it a 'crisis'." (United Church Observer, February 1, 1966:12, UCCA).

At a Conference entitled "Out of Wedlock" arranged by United and Anglican Churches in Toronto on November 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>, 1965, which included social workers, superintendents and boards of directors of homes for unmarried mothers, social worker Mary Taylor stated that:

This afternoon we were told there were 600 children born out of wedlock in B.C. for whom there were not adopting homes available....for a generation, social workers, and to a degree, clergymen and parents and other people had been strongly encouraging girls who were pregnant to place their children for adoption...we are faced at this moment with the need to re-evaluate this advice because of the realities that face us....but, until we find some other alternatives, we'd better not separate children from their mothers, with no assurance that we will have any other mother to give them. (Taylor, Out of Wedlock, 1965, UCCA).

In February, 1966 Walter W. Blackburn, the Assistant Director of the Children's Aid Society of Metropolitan Toronto stated that, "adoption has become almost a panacea for unwed mothers...if this trend continues there will not be adoption homes for all our illegitimate babies" (Toronto Daily Star, February 17, 1966). Walter Blackburn's concerns were echoed throughout Canada by various social workers, social service agencies and maternity home directors. However, the "smooth system" for the adoption of babies of unwed mothers continued.

An article published in the *Toronto Star* with the headline "One third of girls now keep babies in future more will have to" reveals how adoption was entrenched as the dominant prescription for out-of-wedlock pregnancy during this period. The article refers to a speech made by Allan Sherlock, head of the unmarried parents department of the Catholic Children's

Aid, wherein Sherlock stated that more unmarried mothers may have to mother their own children due to lack of adoption homes. Sherlock's statements came as a surprise to some, including Sister St. Augustine of the Toronto Catholic Home for Unwed Mothers, Rosalie Hall who, in the same article stated that, "we hope we won't have to resort to encouraging girls to keep their own children" (Sister St. Augustine, *Toronto Star*, December 20, 1965:39). In another article that appeared in the *United Church Observer*, Allan Sherlock lamented the situation:

This is a blow to ministers and social workers who, for a generation, have told girls that giving up their babies was the unselfish thing, best for them, for the babies, and for the childless couples begging for them (Allan Sherlock, Catholic Children's Aid Society of Toronto, *United Church Observer*, February 1, 1966:13, UCCA)

Another maternity home matron, Mary Dale, the President of Humewood House Association in Toronto stated in her 1967 report that:

As a gap between adopting parents and the number of babies available for adoption becomes more evident, it is possible that in the not too distant future, emphasis on the service provided [by maternity homes] may have to change (Humewood House Association, Report, 1967, ACCA)

An inter-office correspondence from the Board of Evangelism and Social Service department of the United Church of Canada regarding the United Church Victor Home in Toronto validates this as well:

Mrs. Doering reported concerning the critical situation developing in the Home owing to the fact that the Children's Aid Society is no longer able to find foster homes for newborn children one baby is still waiting for placement at the age of five months. Mrs. Doering reports that during recent conversations with Children's Aid Workers she

has been advised by them no longer to counsel a girl that the unselfish thing for her to do is place her child in a suitable home as the Society can no longer assure placement (Correspondence, June 7, 1965, UCCA)

However, Mrs. Doering and the overwhelming majority of social workers and maternity home matrons did not tell unmarried mothers there would likely be no homes for their babies. In addition, they did not stop telling unmarried mothers that surrendering their babies for adoption would be “unselfish”. Instead, as evidenced in earlier chapters, maternity homes continued to increase their capacities and Children’s Aid Societies continued to hire and grow based on the number of children in care. Despite the fact that the problem of surplus infants had been flagged by social workers as early as 1963,<sup>221</sup> adoptions from white unmarried mothers in Canada increased at even higher rates in the latter half of the 1960s (See Table 1).

A review of newspaper and other articles during this period reveals information about the babies of unmarried mothers languishing in hospitals, receiving homes, foster homes, and other locations due to the lack of adoptive homes. An article which appeared in the *Winnipeg Free Press* in 1963 illustrates this:

But babies don’t often leave the hospital after 14 days if they are born to unwed mothers. This is because there are not enough foster homes available and more children available than there are people here who wish to adopt them. Brigadier Everett explains “some of the babies we have here now have been in hospital as long as 50 days” (Brigadier Everett, Salvation Army Grace Hospital, *Winnipeg Free Press*, August 31, 1963:1)

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<sup>221</sup> See *Winnipeg Free Press* August 31, 1963

## Conclusion

The ideology of maternalism re-emerged in postwar Canada, a period when heteronormativity and nuclear families were constructed as the norm, “good” womanhood and motherhood were increasingly entrenched as raced and gendered. The postwar mother imperative and its emphasis on the nuclear family were powerful social constructs. By becoming pregnant out-of-wedlock, white unmarried mothers were in contravention of these norms. However, because of their intrinsic social currency as white and increasingly middle-class, the “safety valve” (Pietsch, 2012:36) of adoption was systemically implemented so that white unmarried mothers might return to society to “resume the roles or normative young womanhood – coed, coquette and bride” (Solinger, 1992:14). In contrast, Black and Indigenous unmarried mothers were placed in separate categories with characterization of “bad” motherhood along with separate social prescriptions.

White supremacist assumptions interpreting and appropriating Black out-of-wedlock pregnancy imposed Eurocentric values on the Black unmarried mother, which found her out-of-wedlock pregnancy to be a cultural pathology. Racist notions of Black women as “natural mothers” by nature dismissed the idea that Black women needed rehabilitation to return to normative roles in the community. Considered “not valuable”, Black unmarried mothers were encouraged to keep and mother their babies; also not considered commodities. However, I have proposed that Black unmarried mothers mothered their babies for reasons not identified by white social workers and other experts. They were accepted into, and cared for within the Black community through other-mothering and support systems to resist racist social policies; to protect their children from racism and violence; to reclaim their power as mothers of their own babies after the legacy of slavery; to preserve and further the survival of the Black community;

and because motherhood is a site of power for Black women.

Indigenous mothers experienced systemic isolation, oppression, and poverty as governments continued to target kinship and family systems as they had for generations. The “Sixties Scoop,” the name given to the removal of thousands of Indigenous children for adoption into non-white families continues to reverberate in Indigenous lives today.

In this chapter, the phenomenon of mass surrender by white unmarried mothers, was identified and quantified through government reports. A conservative estimate of 300,000 babies were surrendered for adoption by mostly white unmarried mothers across Canada in the immediate postwar decades. This number not only illustrates the vast number of babies adopted from unmarried mothers during the mandate, but also speaks to the systemic and institutionalized separation of the white unmarried mother and her baby; a phenomenon which continued even after a surplus of babies for adoption had been identified in the mid-1960s.

## CONCLUSION

*Friends, as the time for birth came, these babies would be snatched away before they had even held them in their arms...sometimes consent was achieved by forgery or fraud. Sometimes women signed adoption papers whilst under the influence of medication. Most common of all was the bullying arrogance of a society that presumed to know what was best...the hurt did not simply last for a few days or weeks. This was a wound that would not heal....you were not legally or socially acknowledged as mothers and you yourselves were deprived of care. You were forced to endure the coercion and brutality of practices that were unethical, dishonest and, in many cases, illegal (Commonwealth of Australia, Gillard, J., Prime Minister, National Apology for Forced Adoptions, Canberra, Australia, March 21, 2013)*

The overriding purpose of this work was to define, substantiate, and uncover evidence of the postwar adoption mandate as a social prescription for white unmarried mothers in Canada, and to quantify the attached phenomenon of mass infant adoption. This work is critical to the feminist pursuit of foregrounding subjugated knowledges as it uncovers a previously hidden history for women in Canada. Without this research, the adoption mandate in Canada and related phenomenon of mass surrender would remain a hidden, secreted knowledge that continues to subjugate the women impacted insofar as they are often portrayed as free agents who actively relinquished, rather than surrendered their children to adoption.

Contrary to dominant discourse in feminist scholarship, along with wider public assertions that continue to promote the concept of agency for unmarried mothers, I have argued, and the research indicates, that the vast majority of white unmarried mothers in Canada,

particularly those who resided in maternity homes, had little, if any, choice in the surrender of their newborn infants for adoption in the immediate postwar decades. In addition, the research shows that those mothers who assert that they actively chose adoption would, most likely, also have been impacted by the prevailing unmarried mother characterizations and adoption policies and practices of the period.

A phenomenon is described as “a fact or situation that is observed to exist or happen, especially one whose cause or explanation is in question” (Oxford). In this instance, the situation observed is that approximately 300,000 babies were surrendered for adoption by white unmarried mothers in Canada in the immediate postwar decades. The cause or explanation is the process of interrelated institutional systems of power together with socio-cultural norms, ideals of gender heteronormativity, and emerging sociological and psychoanalytic theories, that produced historically unique conditions in the post WWII decades, wherein white unmarried mothers were systematically and often violently separated from their babies by means of adoption by the hundreds of thousands in Canada. The mandate was a formidable force, particularly as it impacted isolated and marginalized women.

The methodology employed herein entailed an exploration of the key historical, social and political elements that converged, informed, and led to the adoption mandate: to demonstrate that mass infant adoption was the result, and to illustrate the ways in which adoption can operate or effectively function as a form of violence against women and the maternal body. The chapters of this thesis were structured to highlight the key components that led to the mandate in order to uncover and connect the multiple forces at play in its construction. Through the use of primary and secondary sources, I have attempted to identify and contextualize the factors that coalesced into a “perfect storm” to produce a unique set of institutional forces in history.

Despite the fact that the adoption mandate operated post WWII, a period when the social emphasis for women was the mother imperative, the roots of the mandate lay in Magdalenism, a religious theory broadly based on the redemption of Mary Magdalene. This model, brought to Canada by Europeans, manifested itself through the systematic characterization and incarceration of the “fallen woman” in Victorian Canada. The critical importance of the concept and theory of Magdalenism to the mandate was emphasized in this work since, without the previously embedded set of social ideals that supported the separation, incarceration, and rehabilitation of unmarried mothers, it would not have been possible for the mandate to succeed in mainstream mid-twentieth century Canada. Magdalen Laundries and similar institutions, the history of which have largely been forgotten or ignored, not only provided a moral framework, but the foundation of social practices, through daily schedules, rehabilitative structures of penance, religious instruction, and domestic work that facilitated the initiation and operation of the mandate in Canada. These early institutions were the prototypes for Canada’s maternity homes which were later reproduced as “charged sites” that realized the mandate using coercive psychological systems. Appendix D is the most comprehensive list of maternity homes in Canada to date together with images of the mostly Victorian type structures, which illustrate the enormity of the practice nationwide

Through an examination of the evolution of the major re-characterizations of white unmarried mothers during the twentieth century up to 1970, first as a threat to communities, later as feeble minded and then as sex delinquent, I have shown how the white unmarried mother emerges in postwar Canada defined by psychoanalytic theory as a pathological subject in need of a cure. With each new characterization, corresponding prescriptions were imposed on these subjects ranging from “redemptive maternity” to the “clean break”. These prescriptions

exemplify how unmarried mother characterizations and social prescriptions worked interdependently to regulate and subjugate the bodies and offspring of these mothers. In other words, the white unmarried mother was subject to various cures depending on the distinct and popular portrayal of her character as such a woman at the time.

The profession of social work, which currently promotes itself as an anti-oppressive body,<sup>222</sup> was the antithesis of anti-oppression when, entrenched in its own doctrine while attempting to legitimize social work within the emerging social science community, it threatened, lied, tricked, forced, coerced, and counselled unmarried mothers to relinquish their babies as the “unselfish”, “realistic choice”, even when a surplus of babies was identified in the mid-1960s. The postwar adoption policy and practice of “clean break” introduced by social workers and implemented in collusion with maternity home matrons and the medical community, caused trauma and violence against women on delivery tables and in Canadian hospitals, a trauma and material loss from which most never recovered.

Race and gender were integral to the mandate. After making major contributions to the war effort, the powerful postwar climate of maternalism together with the mother imperative relegated white Canadian women back to the private sphere. The “good” woman was increasingly constructed as a homemaker, full time mother, and, white. White unmarried mothers were in contravention of these norms. Black and Indigenous women were constructed and categorized as “bad mothers” due to their race and cultural mothering practices. Corresponding social prescriptions emanating from the distinctive characterizations of white, Black, and Indigenous women, emerged.

Black unmarried mothers were separated physically and ideologically as they did not

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<sup>222</sup> See Baines, D. *Doing Anti-Oppressive Practice: Social Justice Social Work*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed.

personify the Canadian ideal of “good” womanhood or motherhood which was “white”. Black out-of-wedlock pregnancy was characterized as occurring due to physiology, that is, the nature of Black women as “breeders”. Black unmarried mothers were encouraged to keep and mother their babies by social workers and others, since their social status was that of a “not real and valuable” woman. Their babies were deemed unadoptable, and even labelled “handicapped” by social service agencies.

I have also suggested that one of the reasons Black mothers chose to mother their babies was partly due to the legacy of slavery; a time when Black babies were sold away from their mothers. The question was posed, “why would a Black mother surrender her baby to the white system?” Black unmarried mothers and their families chose to keep and mother their babies, not simply because they were encouraged to do so by white social workers, but because Black mothering resisted racist social policies, reclaimed power for Black women, and contributed to the preservation of the Black community. Motherhood then, was and continues to be a locus of power for Black mothers.

Indigenous mothers lost thousands of their children to adoption during the Sixties Scoop, the most intense period of the adoption mandate. However, the context of the adoption of Indigenous children and babies was quite dissimilar from that of white mothers. The Sixties Scoop in the Indigenous context was a form of cultural genocide. Kinship and family systems had been targeted for generations by governments and other institutions. Children were removed from their Indigenous homes and families and adopted into non-Indigenous families mostly because of institutional and systemic poverty imposed upon Indigenous communities; and the denigration by Eurocentric social service agencies of traditional mothering practices. The intergenerational trauma caused by the Sixties Scoop continues to reverberate in the lives of

Indigenous adoptees and their families today.

Empirical data gleaned from maternity home annual reports, provincial government reports and other resources estimates the number of babies of white unmarried mothers surrendered for adoption in Canada post WWII at approximately 300,000. The fact that approximately 98% of white unmarried mothers today choose to mother their children as opposed to 5% of mothers in postwar maternity homes, gives us pause to reflect on what mothers of the mandate might have chosen, given real choice.

As shown from the research, the central factors leading up to and contributing to the mandate that include the roots of Magdalenism and the institutions that evolved therefrom; the rise of social work; the progressing characterizations and associated prescriptions for white unmarried mothers; the role of race; all in the context of postwar maternalism did indeed create a unique locus in time that is the adoption mandate.

### **The Adoption Mandate and Feminism**

This research is original in scope and contributes to the wider discipline of critical adoption studies as an emerging body of work within disciplines such as law, history, social work, and psychology. In addition, this research contributes to the broader theme of locating adoption within feminism. Adoption as a form of violence and gender injustice remains mostly unchallenged by feminist scholars. In the book, *Finding Families, Finding Ourselves*, Veronica Strong-Boag, when referring to the postwar “unwed mother” asserts that:

Women cannot readily escape reminders that they have seemingly failed at one of the major tests of their sex. It would take considerable bravery to admit publicly that maternal sentiments were limited or non-existent.... not surprisingly, most insisted that they were ‘pressured’ and ‘brainwashed’, and ultimately blameless (Strong-Boag,

2006:229)

Although feminists approach critical adoption studies from various perspectives, and while there may be competing narratives, Veronica Strong-Boag is not alone in interpreting “unwed mother” narratives either as essentialist or as a consequence of the social construction of gender. This model of “constructed maternity” is problematic as it oppresses, dispels, effaces, and silences the lived experience and material loss of mothers of the mandate. The “unwed mother” is problematic for feminism because the “unwed mother” experience does not fit into a feminist narrative that dispels genetic essentialism and the problematic tropes of “unnatural” characterizations of adoptive kinship. The narrative of the violence perpetrated against the maternal body and newborn infant is ignored, subjugated, and silenced by depicting the accounts of postwar “unwed mothers” as essentialist and socially constructed motherhood. Further, the categorization and reframing of the lived experience of the postwar “unwed mother” by some feminists is an appropriation of knowledges and creates an environment within which the accounts of mothers of the mandate are silenced once again.

As suggested in the introduction of this work, feminist theoretical debates and literature in critical adoption studies are emerging as various perspectives and arguments surrounding adoption are being advanced. This original research uncovers a history and knowledge about the adoption mandate not currently in existence in Canada. It furthers the discussion of adoption and feminism, and contributes to the development of critical adoption studies as a field of study within academic feminism.

### **Mother Activism**

The timeliness of this work is crucial since many of the women impacted are now in their 60s, 70s and 80s and have yet to be acknowledged in any formal way in Canada. Canadian

mothers and adoptees lobby for adoption reform and for church and government inquiries into the illegal, unethical and human rights abuses in adoption policy and practice during the adoption mandate. Spearheading this activism is Origins Canada, a federal non-profit organization supporting those separated by adoption. Mothers, adoptees and families are “telling” the secrets imposed on them, and, governments and churches are beginning to listen.<sup>223</sup> In 2017, a Motion will be made in the Senate of Canada requesting parliament to investigate these issues. This is the result of several years of lobbying efforts including an instrumental meeting organized by Origins Canada in May 2016 entitled “Adoption Policies and Practices in Non-Indigenous and Indigenous Contexts”. This meeting, held on Parliament Hill was attended by over fifty Members of Parliament and Senators along with a representative from the Prime Minister’s Office.

The inquiries sought in Canada are modelled on the inquiry that was held in Australia. *The Senate Inquiry into Forced Adoptions*<sup>224</sup> in that country resulted in several recommendations, including a national apology to those separated by adoption, which was given by then Prime Minister Julia Gillard<sup>225</sup> in 2013. The Australian Inquiry also resulted in an avalanche of apologies from every Australian state government<sup>226</sup>, and various Australian

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<sup>223</sup> See Editorial, *Globe and Mail*, October 31, 2013:A14, Unwed mothers, Unknown Choices. Also see Galloway, G. *Globe and Mail*, May 17, 2016, Former ‘unwed mothers’ call for public inquiry into forced adoptions. Also see Andrews, V., *Toronto Star*, May 23, 2016:A11, Inquiry into past adoption practices can start healing process.

<sup>224</sup> See The Commonwealth of Australia, Senate Committee Report, Community Affairs Reference Committee, Commonwealth Contribution to Former Forced Adoption policies and practices, February 2012.

<sup>225</sup> See Commonwealth of Australia. On March 21, 2013, Prime Minister Julia Gillard apologized on behalf of the Australian Government to people affected by forced adoption or removal policies and practices. The national apology was delivered in the Great Hall of Parliament House, Canberra, Australia.

<sup>226</sup> Australian states are similar to Canada’s provinces. All six Australian states apologised for forced adoptions include New South Wales (NSW), September 2012, Western Australia (WA), South Australia (SA), June 2012, Victoria (VIC), October 2012, Queensland (QLD), November, 2012, Tasmania (TAS), October, 2012.

churches and hospitals<sup>227</sup>, including the Sisters of the Good Shepherd<sup>228</sup>, Sisters of Mercy, Perth,<sup>229</sup> The Roman Catholic Church<sup>230</sup>, the Uniting Church,<sup>231</sup> The Salvation Army,<sup>232</sup> The Australian Nursing Federation, Victoria Branch, Benevolent Society, Royal Hospital for Women, Brisbane, St. Anne's Hospital, Perth, Catholic Health Australia, all of which apologized for the role each played in the policy of forced adoptions and the impact those policies had on the lives of those affected.

A statement from the Salvation Army in the United States still defends maternity homes, while The Salvation Army in Canada states that since they “were not involved in the adoption process” an internal review did not substantiate whether forced adoption existed.<sup>233</sup> Recently in the UK, the Catholic Church<sup>234</sup> apologized to those impacted following the airing of a documentary on BBC entitled *Britain's Adoption Scandal: Breaking the Silence* which related the accounts of women impacted by the adoption mandate in the UK. Mothers in the United States, Ireland, Scotland, and New Zealand are also speaking out.

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<sup>227</sup> See Rosenbaum, A, January 24, 2012, Hospital Sorry for forced adoptions, in which the Royal Women's Hospital apologizes for their role in forced adoptions. The Age, Victoria, Australia. See also apologies of St. Anne's Hospital, Perth, Royal Brisbane Hospital, Catholic Health Australia, and the Australian Nursing Federation.

<sup>228</sup> See Sisters of the Good Shepherd Australia. Upon the 150<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Good Shepherd Sisters in Australia, Sister Anne Manning, Province Leader of Australia/New Zealand stated that ...”girls and women were placed with Good Shepherd through various sources: courts, government agencies, child welfare organizations, parents or guardians. Some stayed for very short periods of time and others for longer. In relatively few cases, women chose to remain for many years...we acknowledge, however, that for numbers of women, memories of their time with Good Shepherd are painful. We are deeply sorry for acts of verbal or physical cruelty that occurred: such things should never have taken place in a Good Shepherd facility. The understanding that we have been the cause of suffering is our deep regret as we look back over our history.”

<sup>229</sup> See Emerson, D. Nuns Sorry for Forced Adoption.

<sup>230</sup> See Malkin, B. July 25, 2011, Australia's Roman Catholic Church Apologises for forced adoptions, The Telegraph

<sup>231</sup> See Rosenbaum, A. February 28, 2012, Church Adoption Apology. Sydney Morning Herald. Apology given by the Moderator of the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania.

<sup>232</sup> Salvation Army, Australia, September 19, 2012. The Salvation Army Apologises to People Affected by Forced Adoption. Communications and Public Relations Department, Sydney.

<sup>233</sup> See Carlson, K. October 22, 2013, Women coerced into surrendering babies years ago find support in Ottawa. The Globe and Mail.

<sup>234</sup> See Sherwood. H., November 3, 2016, Catholic Church apologises for role in 'forced adoptions' over 30-year period. The Guardian.

## Epilogue

One of the shortcomings of this paper is the limited amount of research I was able to uncover from the province of Quebec due to language and barriers to information access through Catholic institutions including the Sisters of Miséricordia; which may become available later. There is still work to do in researching Canada's Magdalen Laundries, and an in depth study of Canada's maternity homes is an area for future examination since, due to the limitations of this work, only one chapter was devoted to those facilities here. Another topic for future research might attend to deconstructing contemporary domestic adoption, the development of which is premised on the adoption mandate. In addition, an interest for future study might include contemporary "adoption culture" (Andrews, 2016); how contemporary adoption culture reproduces the themes policies and practices of the mandate; and how the separation of the unmarried mother-child dyad through adoption has become embedded in society as a "choice" for teen pregnancy. Further, as reproductive technologies evolve, reproductive exploitation and reproductive rights remain a concern for feminists.

Article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>235</sup> gives the right to "found a family." I would suggest that there is a competing right, one that is often overlooked in the adoption transaction, a right denied to the mothers of the mandate and those of the Sixties Scoop, and one that continues to be denied to contemporary mothers through the institution of modern domestic adoption, that is, the fundamental right of mothering advanced by Black feminist Patricia Collins, "the right to keep and mother the children born to you."<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> See United Nations, General Assembly, 10 December 1948.

<sup>236</sup> See O'Reilly, 2014:97

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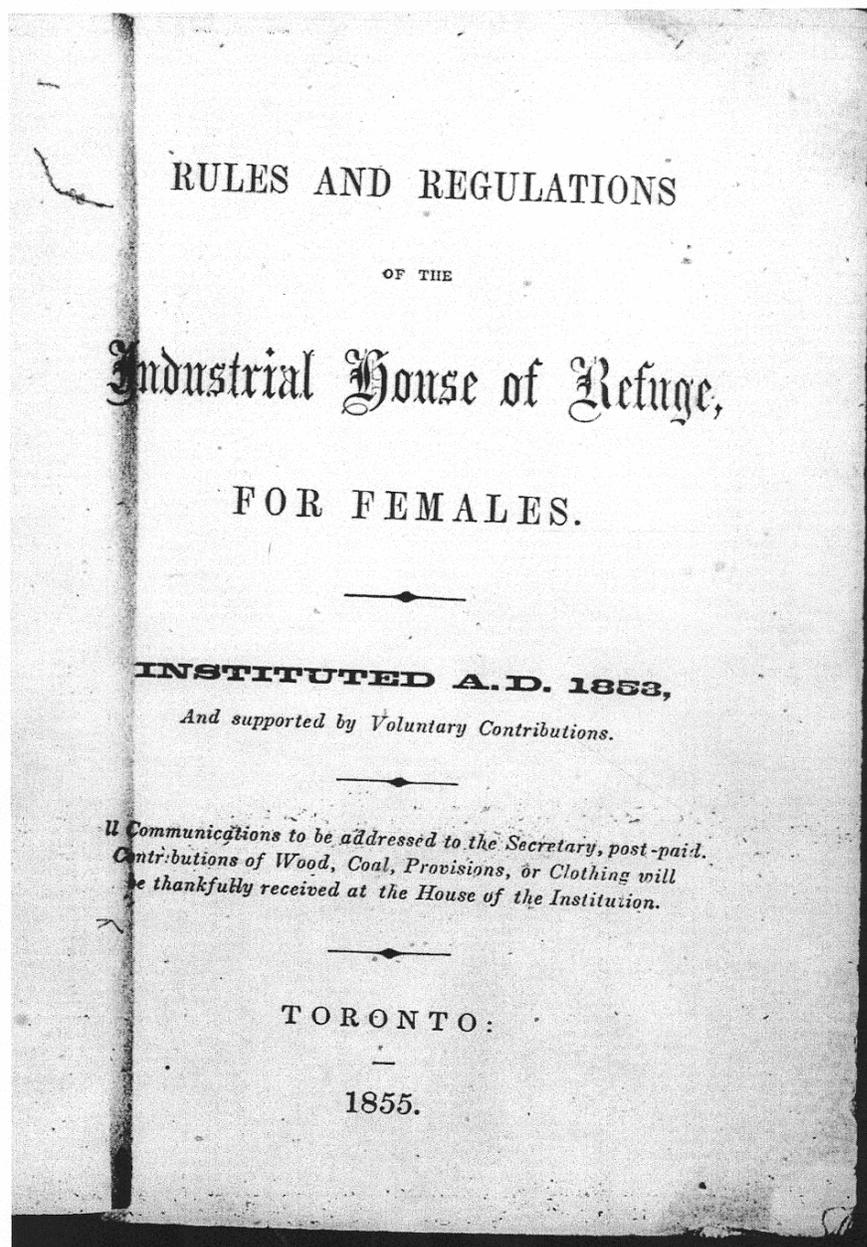
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## Appendix A

## Rules and Regulations of the Industrial House of Refuge for Females (Magdalen Laundry)



who have been previously approved; but shall be kept carefully separated from them, till the Committee shall have been fully satisfied of their fitness to continue in the Institution.

2. All the inmates who are in health shall rise at five a.m. in summer, and half-past six in winter. Half-an-hour shall be allowed for dressing, private reading, and prayer. Before leaving their room, they shall open the windows, and spread out the bed-clothes; after that they shall assemble for family worship and breakfast, for which one hour shall be given; then return to their rooms, and make their beds; that done, they shall go to their daily work, and continue at it until 12 o'clock, when they shall dine; and, having dined, they shall rest, or take exercise and recreation, until one o'clock: at that hour they shall return to their occupation, and remain at it until five p.m., when they shall assemble for tea and recreation until six: from six to eight they shall work at their several tasks. At eight there shall be family worship; after which the inmates shall retire to rest, and every one shall be in bed at ten o'clock.

3. While engaged in the morning and evening worship, due decorum and attention shall be maintained; and during the hours of work, peace and good order shall be preserved. Gossip, exciting or insulting language, and any allusion to past character (except in the way of humiliation and thankfulness) shall be most strictly prohibited.

4. Implicit obedience to the Matron, and due respect to visitors, shall be invariably required of all the inmates of the Asylum; and every phrase and gesture, and their whole conduct, whether towards each other or those who may come into their presence, shall be regulated by kindness and propriety.

5. None of the inmates shall hold any intercourse with their friends, or former associates and acquaintances, either by conversation or writing, except through the Matron, who shall hear or read all communications that may be necessary.

6. No one shall be re-admitted who may have been previously expelled the House, or convicted of having left it to return to former habits, except under very special circumstances.

#### SECTION IV.

##### OF EXPULSION AND DISCHARGE.

1. The inmates shall not be permitted to leave the Asylum

## Appendix B

Social Diagnosis - Mary Richmond -The Unmarried Mother, 1917

**SOCIAL DIAGNOSIS**

BY

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AUTHOR OF  
"THE GOOD NEIGHBOR," ETC.



NEW YORK  
RUSSELL SAGE FOUNDATION  
1917

## CHAPTER XXIV

## THE UNMARRIED MOTHER

WE HAVE seen earlier that the affixing of a label—even of a correct label—has no practical bearing upon prognosis and treatment, and that a classification of this sort is not a social diagnosis. This truth has been illustrated in the dealings of social agencies with the mother of an illegitimate child. There are few tasks requiring more individualization, and there are few in which there has been so little.

Mrs. Sheffield, in the questionnaire regarding an Unmarried Mother which follows, aims to bring out first, under the captions The Mother and The Father, certain facts of environment and early influence together with the outstanding traits of these two people which may throw light on their standards of conduct and habits of thought. Although, in our treatment of an unmarried woman or girl in this situation, we are liable to overlook her father, it is obvious that his characteristics and what went to mould them are quite as significant socially as those of her mother. The information may point the way not only to effective treatment in the particular case, but also to measures for mass betterment in the community.

The last part of the questionnaire calls for the more immediate explanation of the girl's or woman's situation and for facts bearing on the identity and responsibility of the man. For various reasons the child's father only too frequently escapes responsibility. Evidence of paternity may not be convincing, the man may disappear, or the social agency—occupied with many other tasks—may feel that the small amount which the mother would be likely to receive does not warrant the labor of establishing the man's whereabouts and of bringing him to trial. The question has other aspects, however. Even small sums, if required whenever paternity can be established, will have an influence in modifying

### SOCIAL DIAGNOSIS

public opinion, will lead it to hold a man as well as a woman answerable for the support of offspring.

In making final arrangements for mother and child, their physical welfare, including the mother's fitness for giving the baby proper care, is of course of primary concern. The need of facts that bear on the choice of work and surroundings for the mother herself is indicated by earlier questions. And it should not be necessary to emphasize an unmarried mother's need for wise supervision—whether she keeps her infant with her or not.

#### QUESTIONNAIRE REGARDING AN UNMARRIED MOTHER<sup>1</sup>

This is not a schedule to be filled out nor a set of queries to be answered by a social agency's client or clients. For an explanation of the purpose of these questionnaires see p. 373 sq.

A star (\*) indicates that the answer to the question may be found in, or confirmed by, public records.

The preliminary social questions regarding the husband and wife contained in the questionnaire regarding Any Family, p. 378—those regarding names, ages, nationality, religion, language spoken, length of residence in city, state, and country—may be assumed to apply to the Unmarried Mother, and (in cases in which she is sure who he is) to the father of her child.

#### I The Mother

##### *Her family and home*

1. Did or does she live with her own parents? Is she legitimate? Adopted? Did she ever live in an institution, and if so, when, how long, and why? What is the standing of parents in the community? Are they self-supporting, self-respecting people? Is the home clean and respectable looking? Was her parents' marriage forced? Did her mother or sisters have illegitimate children? Were these children kept with their mothers, or what became of them?
2. Are (or were) parents fond of children? Even-tempered or irritable? Faithful to church? Earnest or indifferent as to moral standards? Lax or firm in control (for instance, are they conscientious in overseeing their daughters' recreations; did the mother teach her daughters housework, instruct them in sex hygiene)? Or oversevere (for instance, are they reasonable in allowing pleasures and part of earnings)?

##### *Her community*

3. What is the character of the city quarter or town in which the girl or woman grew up—in size, race, religion, general moral standards, faithfulness to church, predominating occupation, if any, recreations and social life? Is it a factory town, farming region, or what is its industrial character? Has it distinct foreign colonies?

<sup>1</sup> Prepared for this volume by Mrs. Ada Eliot Sheffield.

## THE UNMARRIED MOTHER

4. If she came from a small town or village is it within easy distance of a large city? Do her companions have local amusements or do they go to the city for them? Are their pleasures supervised?
5. Are the schools good from academic, vocational, and social standpoints?
6. Are the local police alert towards loose behavior on the streets? Are saloons, dance halls, etc., regulated well? Are they numerous in proportion to the population? Is the judge in the local police court interested in the welfare of boys and girls?
7. What is the proportion of illegitimate births in the girl's or woman's native town or country? Does custom there treat the offense as a slight one, or is ostracism relentless? Do pregnant girls frequently leave to hide their condition and dispose of the child elsewhere? Is this region equipped to care for such girls? If not, why? If it is, what co-operative understanding has been established with local agencies?
8. Are the local doctors and clergymen (if a small community) awake to the problem? What attitude do they take in regard to young unmarried mothers keeping their babies?

*The mother herself*

9. What was her health as a child? At what age did she mature? Has she any physical peculiarity or deformity? Is there any evidence that she is mentally deficient or abnormal?
10. Did her parents say that she was troublesome as a child? If so, how? Did she disobey her parents, fail to heed their advice, was she disrespectful to them? Did she frequent candy, ice cream, or fruit stores for diversion? What sort of associates did she have while she was growing up? How have they turned out? Can her parents throw light on the reasons for her behavior, if loose? Of what sort are her present girl or women friends?
11. When her parents learned she was pregnant, what, if any, plans did they make for her?
12. What grade in school did she reach? What do the teachers who knew her best think of her? In what studies did she excel? What vocational training, if any, did she receive?
13. What do her employers say of her work? How long has she held her positions? If she was employed in a factory, how much judgment did her work call for? Was it mechanical? If as a domestic, what are the things that she does well, what ill? For instance, can she make good bread, season vegetables? Is she neat and clean about her person and her work? Can she wash and iron? Does she wait on table smoothly and quietly? Has she done ordering for her mistress? How much did she know when her mistress took her? Does she improve—rapidly or slowly? Does she remember directions, or do they have to be repeated? What does she do best, heavy work or light? Is she good with children? Is she capable enough to hold a place with her child?

## SOCIAL DIAGNOSIS

14. What do her employers say of her character? Is she honest, of a good disposition, industrious? If a domestic, has she been discreet with tradesmen who come to the house? Has she had men callers, one or many? Have they been accustomed to go at a proper hour? Has she been given to staying out very late? Does she dress conspicuously?
15. When did girl's or woman's sexual experience begin? Under what circumstances—was it with a relative, an employer, an older man, a school boy? Has she accepted money from any man or men for unchastity, or has she received only a good time—theaters, dinners, etc.—or board? Has she lived for any period as the wife of any man or men? Has she supplemented her income through men, or has she made her whole livelihood in this way? If so, for how long and when? Has she been a common prostitute, has she had a succession of "friends," or has she been intimate with but the one man? Has she a court record?<sup>2</sup> From what she, her relatives, friends, and employers say, does she seem to seek wrongdoing, or does she merely yield when evil approaches her?
16. Has she had another child or other children by a different man or men? When were the children born and where? How long did she nurse them? If they did not live, at what age and of what disease did they die? If they are alive, where are they—with her, with her family, with the man's family, boarded out, or adopted? If the latter, through whom was the adoption brought about? What does she know of the character and circumstances of the adoptive parents of her child or children? Has she any child in charge of a society or institution? Was it placed out in a family? How often has its mother seen it? Is it under supervision? If she separated from her child, what has seemed to be the effect upon her character? If she kept it with her, what?
17. Has she ever been under treatment for syphilis or gonorrhoea? When and by whom?

**II The Father<sup>1</sup>***His family*

18. What is or was the standing of the man's parents in the community? Did the father instruct his sons in sex hygiene? Did his influence in this direction tend towards high-mindedness, towards cautiousness in pleasure, or towards unabashed laxity in morals? Did the mother and sisters take a double standard for granted? (See in addition same topic under The Mother for questions that apply.)

*His community*

19. What is the character of the community in which the man grew up? (See same topic under The Mother for questions that apply.)

*The man himself*

20. Was he troublesome to his parents as a boy? Respectful and obedient, or the reverse? What sort of associates did he have while he was growing up? How have they turned out morally? Have any of them got girls into trouble? If so,

<sup>1</sup> To be used only in cases where the mother is sure who is the father of her child.

### THE UNMARRIED MOTHER

do they boast of it, or have they the average moral scruples? Where do they draw the line as to the things "a fellow can't do"?

21. Did he spend any part of his childhood in an institution? If so, how long was he there, at what age, and why? What was his record while there?
22. What grade in school did he reach? Why did he leave, and at what age? What have his teachers to say of his character and ability? In what studies did he excel? Has he attended a trade school or a night school?
23. Is he single or married? Is he still living at home? If not, at what age and for what reason did he leave? How has he lived since? What type of associates has he chosen?
24. At what age did he first go to work? With what employer and at what occupation has he worked longest? Where is he now working and how long has he held this place? What do his employers say of the quality of his work? How much judgment does it call for?
25. Does he drink to the point of intemperance? Use drugs? Gamble? Is there any evidence that he has been dishonest?
26. What is his record as to sexual morality? Has he been known as a loose liver? Involved in scandals? Or has he, on the other hand, borne a good reputation, and is this the first affair with a woman in which he has been involved?
27. Has he ever been arrested? At what age and for what offense? If imprisoned, for how long? What was his record at reform school or prison?\*
28. Is he of the same social status as the mother of his child?

### III The Situation, Past and Present

#### *Man and woman*

29. What is the girl's or woman's explanation of her going wrong? Was she engaged to the man? Was she in love with him? If not, was it loneliness, drink, ignorance, force, that led to her shame? Where and when did she meet the man? Was she living at home at the time? With relatives, friends, in a lodging house, or at service? Had she known the man steadily or was he a passing acquaintance? Did she live with him for any time as his wife? Did he promise marriage? Do her family or friends know of his seeing her often at about the time of conception? Had they been expecting that he would marry her? Has she letters from him that go to show his probable paternity? Has the man known her family, called at her home? Does she know his family?
30. Does the man acknowledge paternity? Does he acknowledge having had relations with her? Does he claim that others had also? If so, who? Did she live in a lodging house, or were there men lodgers in the same house or tenement? Is there any evidence that she was intimate with any other man at about the time of conception? Any evidence (such as that of the physician who confined her, regarding earlier abortions, miscarriages, or births) to prove her previous unchastity?

## SOCIAL DIAGNOSIS

31. What is the man's opinion of the girl's character? What suggestions, if any, has he made to her regarding her plans? Did he suggest her consulting any illegal practitioner? Did she follow his advice? Name of the practitioner?
32. Do the man and the girl wish to marry? If so, why have they not done it before? Are they both such human material as to make marriage advisable? What are the man's health and habits? Has he had a medical examination? By whom? Was it clinical only or with laboratory tests? Does marriage in the mother's home state legitimize a child, or must its parents adopt it?
33. Have the couple lived together for several years and had more than one child? (Consult, as circumstances of the case demand, the questionnaires regarding Any Family, a Deserted Family, or a Neglected Child, pp. 378, 395, and 405.)
34. If the man is married, does his wife know of his relations with the girl or woman? Has he legitimate children to support? If unmarried, has he relatives whom he must help?
35. Has the man property? Has he a steady place? What is his income? Would his employers bring pressure on him to help his baby, or would they abet him in eluding his responsibility? Is he a man who would readily leave for another state if prosecuted? (See Deserted Family Questionnaire, p. 395.) How much should he pay?
36. Is there evidence beyond a reasonable doubt as to man's paternity? Has he a lawyer? If so, who? Will the man settle out of court? Is it desirable that he do so? Why? Can he get bonds? If not, is he likely to keep up weekly payments, or is he so unreliable that a lump sum is wiser? Would his family do anything for the baby? Has his father property?
37. Has the mother a lawyer? If so, who? Has she taken out a warrant, started or completed proceedings? If the latter, what was the settlement? Has the man paid her anything towards the expenses of confinement, etc.? Did she sign a release paper? Is it legally valid? If she has taken no steps against the man, does she wish to prosecute? If not, is this a case in which it is advisable for an outside party to bring suit, supposing state law permits?
38. Is it better that the man pay the money to the girl, or to a trustee who would hold it for the child? In your opinion, is the purpose of payment in this case to punish the man, to help the girl, or to provide for the baby's future?

*Mother and child*

39. If this is the girl's or woman's first child, does she appreciate the seriousness of her act and of its consequences? Did she leave her home to hide her shame? To give her baby to strangers so that her misconduct might remain unsuspected at home? Does she love her baby? Does she want to keep it?
40. What preparations did she make for the child? How long before confinement did she stop work? What sort of work was she doing during the previous months? What was her physical condition at this time? Did she have instruction in prenatal care and did she follow it?

## THE UNMARRIED MOTHER

41. Was she confined in a hospital? How long did she stay? Did she receive after-care? If not confined in a hospital, where? Was she attended by a physician or by a midwife? (Name and address of either.) How soon after confinement did she go to work?
42. Is the child's birth correctly recorded?# Has the child been baptized?
43. Have the mother and her baby been examined by a physician? What is his name and address? How soon after confinement did the examination take place? Was it clinical only or was it accompanied by laboratory tests? Is the mother or her child under treatment? What is the physician's report of her health and of the child's, and what is his advice?
44. Does she nurse the baby? If not, is it by a doctor's advice? Can she get pure milk? Does she understand the preparation of food? Has she had instruction in the general care of an infant? Is she capable of profiting by such instruction? Can she easily get a nurse's visits, or take the baby to a clinic?
45. Do her parents know of her situation? Are they so circumstanced that they can help her by taking her home with the baby, by tending the baby while she goes to work, by adopting the child, or by showing their sense of responsibility in any other way? Do they feel that their younger children should be kept in ignorance of her story?
46. What are the unmarried mother's plans for herself and child?

## Appendix C

## Correspondence from Betty Graham to Victoria Leach

*file in UP services*



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND FAMILY SERVICES  
DEPARTMENTAL MEMORANDUM

Date June 17th, 1970.

TO Miss Betty C. Graham, Director.	FROM Mrs. Victoria Leach, Adoption Co-ordinator.
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RE: Possible Pamphlet outlining services for Unmarried Parents.

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Yesterday afternoon Helen Allen and I spoke to the girls at Armagh at the request of the Director.

During our discussions it became very apparent that many of these young ladies have had very little casework or even explanation from their social workers. They seem to be quite unaware of Court proceedings, some are unaware that they could ask for short-term wardship, they were uninformed about the appeal period and had other concerns. Some of them told me they had had two or three sessions with their social worker before coming to the maternity home.

I wonder if it would be appropriate for this Branch to prepare a booklet not unlike our "Adoption Procedure in Ontario" booklet which we could suggest to agencies they give to the unmarried parent clients which would outline in detail some of the avenues open to them in planning for their unborn children and would form a basis for discussion with their workers.

I had things said to me yesterday like "My worker is quite young, she didn't seem to know" and "My social worker never mentioned that to me". My sister tells me that she sees any resident who has specific questions but feels, as Director, that the casework should be handled by the worker from the agency the girl has had contact with previous to her coming to Armagh.

It seems to me that this booklet would be of real value to the parents of some of these young unmarried parents, who send their daughters away for reasons of confidentiality and must also have some real concerns around the plans for their unwanted or unexpected grandchildren.

Continued...

*Betty: Since this service is supposed to be given by the CAS's it would be more appropriate for the Association to prepare it. In any case if the Branch prepared it I am sure there would be undue criticism of the contents.*

*SL*

10-07-0 13

TO: Miss Betty C. Graham

- 2 -

June 17, 1970.

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For your information, I have also visited other maternity homes and found an equal lack of understanding. I don't want to suggest that I am blaming the case workers. I think it is sometimes due to the fact that the girl is too disturbed to absorb all that is told to her, but might appreciate a reference book she can refer to in a more relaxed atmosphere.

The Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies has a little booklet called "Where do I turn?" but as you know, it only skims the surface and simply refers the girl to her local Children's Aid Society.

I mentioned this to Mr. Magder who agrees that such a booklet might be useful.



(Mrs) Victoria Leach,  
Adoption Co-ordinator.

VL:dj

✓ c.c. to Mr. Magder

## Appendix D

## Maternity Homes in Canada – List and Images

**SALVATION ARMY**

Maternity Homes

**NEWFOUNDLAND****The Anchorage**

26 Cook St.

St. John's, Newfoundland

**Glenbrook Girls Home**

Torbay Road, St. John Brigadier Agnes Morton (1964)

St. John's Newfoundland

**NOVA SCOTIA****Grace Haven/called Parkdale House after 1975**

47 Byng Avenue

Sydney, Nova Scotia Major Eva Burton (1964)

**Salvation Army Home for Girls, later named Bethany Home**

From 1955 at Seymour Street, then in 1960 at 980 Tower Road, former location of Halifax Infant's Home

Halifax, Nova Scotia Brigadier Agnes Wright (1964)

**Grace Haven**

72 Seymour St. Halifax, Nova Scotia circa 1955

**NEW BRUNSWICK****Evangeline Home**

36 St. James St. (Est. 1898)

moved to 260 Princess St. (Rathbone House circa.1916)

Saint John, N.B.

**QUEBEC****Grace Haven**

6690 Monkland Ave.

Montreal, PQ

**ONTARIO****Grace Haven**

245 James St. South Brigadier Minnie Strickland (1964)  
 after 1973 moved to  
 138 Herkimer St.  
 Hamilton, Ontario

**Bethany Home**

450 Pape Avenue Major Hazel Waterston (1964)  
 Toronto, Ontario Brigadier Doris Davies (1969)  
 (Births from this home took place at Grace Hospital, Toronto)

**Bethany Home**

1140 Wellington St.  
 Ottawa, Ontario Brigadier Olive Cameron (1964)

**Bethesda Home & Hospital**

54 Riverview Avenue  
 London, Ontario Major Dorothy Davis (1964)

**Faith Haven**

461 Crawford St.  
 Windsor, Ontario Major Gladys Doer (1964)

**Grace Haven/Lakehead Florence Booth Home**

497 N. Lillie St.  
 Thunder Bay, Ontario

**Florence Booth Home**

497A Lillie Street  
 Fort William, Ontario Major Nessie McBride (1964)

**MANITOBA****Grace Haven**

Box 2907  
 Steinbach, Manitoba

**Bethany Home**

205 Arlington St. 1956-1974  
 Winnipeg, Manitoba  
 Changed to **Lindenview Place** 1974-1993  
 205 Booth Drive, Winnipeg, Manitoba

**SASKATCHEWAN****Grace Haven**

2929 26th Avenue

Regina, Saskatchewan Major Edmunds (1964)

alternate addresses also found: 2301-15th Avenue, Regina  
: 3302 Dewdney Avenue**Bethany Home & Hospital**

802 Queen St.

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

**ALBERTA****Hill Haven/Parkwood House**

1402 8th Avenue N.W.

Calgary, Alberta Brigadier Cross (1964)

**VANCOUVER****Salvation Army Home**

Home for unmarried mothers (1920)

**Maywood Home**

In Kitsilano from 1909 (address unknown)

then to 7250 Oak St. (New premises May, 1959)

Vancouver, B.C. Brigadier Mae Taylor (1964)  
Captain Jolly (1967)



Fig. 1: Evangeline Home, St. John, NB

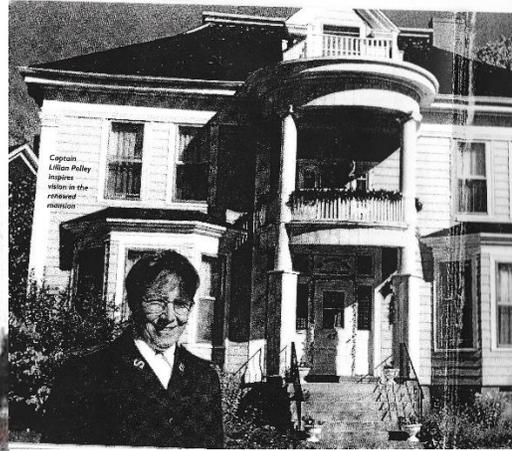


Fig. 2: Grace Haven, Sydney, NS



Fig. 3: Halifax Infant's Home, later Bethany Home, Halifax, NS



Fig. 4: Bethany Home, Toronto, ON



Fig. 5: Bethany House, Ottawa, ON



Fig. 6: Bethesda Centre, London, ON



Fig. 7: Florence Booth Home, Thunder Bay, ON

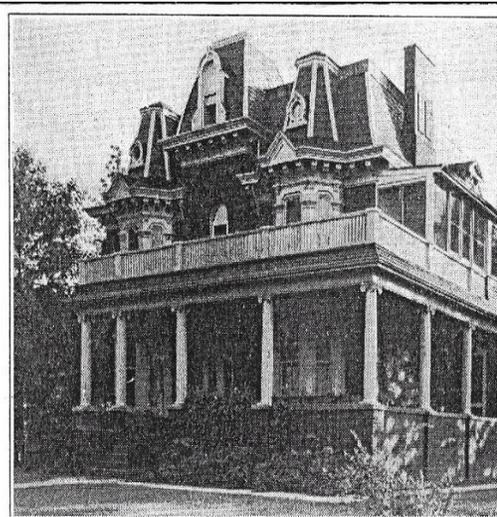


Fig. 8: Faith Haven, Windsor, ON



Fig. 9: Grace Haven, Hamilton, ON



Fig. 10: Bethany Home, Saskatoon, SASK



Fig. 11: Grace Haven, Regina, ON

Fig. 12: Park Wood House, Calgary, AB

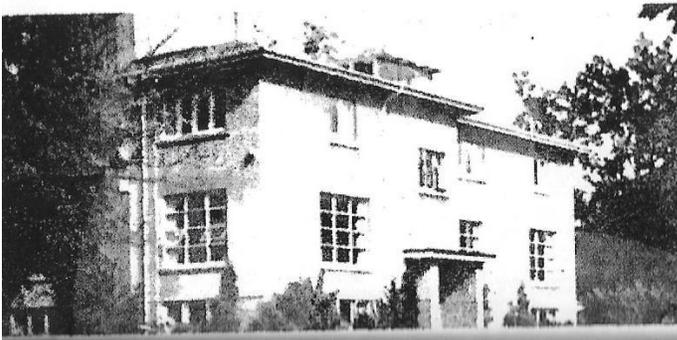
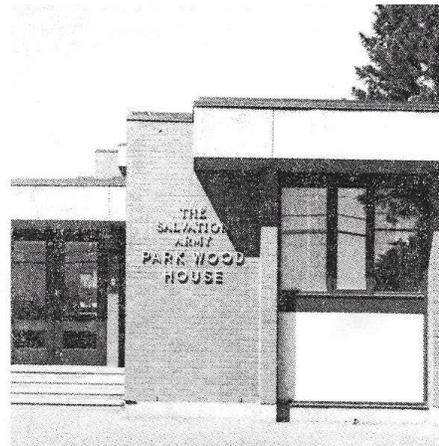


Fig. 13: Maywood Home, Vancouver, BC

**ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH****Maternity Homes****PEI****St. Gerard's Home for Unwed Mothers/Catholic Family Services/**

69 Pownal Street

Charlottetown, P.E.I.

(Catholic Family Services on first floor and "unwed mothers" were housed on top floor)

**NOVA SCOTIA****Home of the Guardian Angel**

6109 Quinpool Road/also 395 Brunswick St.

Halifax, Nova Scotia                      Sister John Elizabeth (1964)

**QUEBEC****Centre Rosalie-Jette** (Sisters of Miséricordia) 1955-1969

1801 Boulevard Goin East

Montreal, Quebec (Sault-au-Recollet)

**Villa St.-Michel** (Sisters of Miséricordia) 1957-1971

7400 Boulevard Saint-Michel

Montreal, PQ

**Foyer Joly** (Sisters of Miséricordia) 1958-1970

105 Rue Joly

Trois Riverieres West, PQ      Sister Margaret Maria (1964)

Known as Villa Joly 1970-1976

**Foyer Sainte-Dorothee** (Sister of Miséricordia) 1957-1968

Laval, PQ

**Carrefour Bethesda** (Sisters of Miséricordia) 1980-1985

355 rue Laviolette

Gatineau, PQ

**Villa Marie-Claire** (Sisters of Miséricordia) 1967-1974

225, rue Belvedere nord

Sherbrooke, PQ

**Pavillon Jette: Foyer Marie-Lucie et Foyer Marguerite** (Sisters of Miséricordia) 1948-1971

850, Boulevard Dorchester

Montreal, PQ

**L'Hopital de la Miséricorde** (Sisters of Miséricordia)

St. Hubert &amp; Rene Levesque Blvd/address also found at 897 Lagauchetiere est,

Montreal, PQ                      Sister St. Raymond (1964)

**Creche St.-Vincent de Paul** (Sisters of the Good Shepherd)

1210 Chemin

Ste-Foy, PQ

Sister Marie de Jeffé

**Creche D'Youville** (The Grey Nuns of Montreal/Soeurs Grises de Montreal)

5705 Cote de Liesse

Montreal

Sister Guyon

**ONTARIO****St. Mary's Infants Home** (Sisters of Miséricordia) 1920-1956

550 Jarvis St., Toronto (closed and moved to Scarborough Rosalie Hall)

**Rosalie Hall** (Sisters of Miséricorde) 1956- Present

3020 Lawrence Avenue East

Scarborough, Ontario

Sister Saint Augustine (1964)

Still operating as Centre for Parenting Teens

**Sundale Manor 1960-1976/Mercy Shelter 1953-1960** (Miséricordia)

140 Park Avenue East

Chatham, Ontario

Sister Madelaine of the Cross (1964)

**St. Mary's Home** (Sisters of Providence)

Daly Avenue 1933-1972

Mrs. M.F. Gania (1964)

Ottawa, Ontario then moved to:

1081 Cadboro Road in Gloucester 1972-1987 then moved to:

659 Church St., Ottawa, Ontario and taken over by Les Filles de La Sagesse d'Ontario

**Rideau Terrace** (in Rockcliffe)

Ottawa, Ontario

**St. Martin's Manor**

Catholic Home for Girls

Mohawk Rd. West

Hamilton, Ontario

**Miséricordia Hospital Home** (Sisters of Miséricordia) 1959-1971

Georgina Avenue, Haileybury (urgencies only)

**St. Monica House**

231 Herbert St.

Kitchener/Waterloo, Ontario

**Centre Maria**

Hawkesbury, Ontario

**MANITOBA**

**Villa Rosa** (Sisters of Miséricorde) 1965-1993

784 Wolseley Avenue/also 99 Cornish

Winnipeg, Manitoba (formerly Rosalie Hall on Sherbrooke)

(Have archival records going back to 1898 and can conduct searches upon written request subject to privacy legislation)

Sister Cecile de Roune

**SASKATCHEWAN**

**Martha House/Mercy Hospital** est 1936 (Sisters of St. Martha/Sisters of St. Joseph)

1855 2nd Avenue North

Regina Saskatchewan S4R 1Y1 (now home for retired priests)

(Founded by the Sisters of St. Martha in the old Mercy Hospital at the corner of Victoria Ave and Smith St. at 2416 Victoria Avenue. Home relocated several times Sisters of St. Joseph carried on the services from 1984 until June 1994.)

Sister Annunciata (1964)

**ALBERTA**

**Providence Creche** (Sisters of Charity of Providence)

5232 – 4<sup>th</sup> St. S.W. Sister Celestine (1964)

Calgary, Alberta

**The Pineview Home for Unmarried Mothers** (Sisters of Miséricordia) 1963-1969

9830, 165th Street/address also found at 8770, 165th

Jasper Place, West Edmonton, Alberta Sister St. Francis Cabrini (1964)

**BRITISH COLUMBIA**

**Our Lady of Mercy** (Catholic Charities)

1050 West 54<sup>th</sup>

Vancouver, B.C. Sister Superior



Fig. 14: Home of the Guardian Angel, Halifax, NS



Fig. 15: L'Hopital de la Miséricorde, Montreal PQ



Fig. 16: Creche St. Vincent de Paul, Ste-Foy PQ



Fig. 17: St. Gerard's/Catholic Family Services, Charlottetown, PEI



Fig. 18: St. Martin's Manor, Hamilton, ON



Fig. 19: Sundale Manor, Chatham, ON

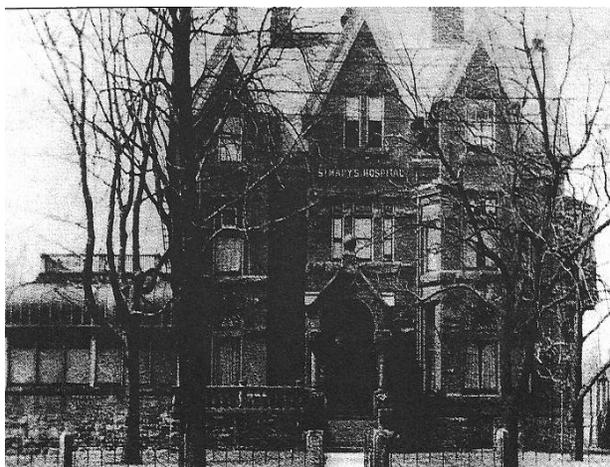


Fig. 20 St. Mary's Infants Home, Toronto, ON  
Moved to Modern Rosalie Hall, Scarborough,  
1956

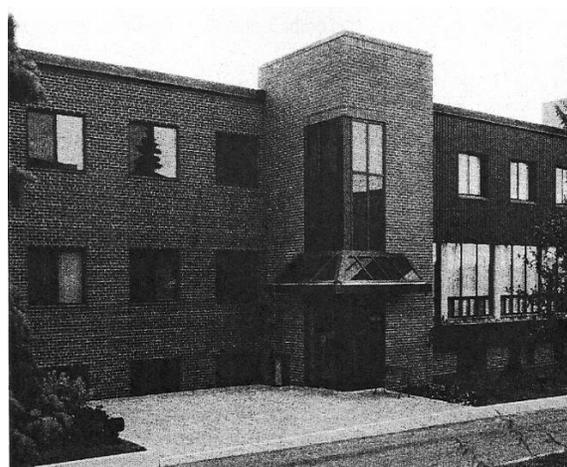


Fig. 21: Rosalie Hall, Scarborough, ON



Fig. 22: Rosalie Hall, Winnipeg, MAN, Moved to modern Villa Rosa 1965



Fig. 23: Villa Rosa, Winnipeg, MAN



Fig. 24: St. Monica House, Kitchener/Waterloo, ON



Fig. 25: Martha House/Mercy Hospital, Regina, SASK

**UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA**  
**Maternity Homes**

**ONTARIO**

**Victor Home for Women** 1900-1989 - **Massey Centre** 1989-Present<sup>237</sup>

Also Known as **Door of Hope** 1901/Methodist Church/295 Jarvis St., Toronto

Victor Home for Women 1904

341 Jarvis St.

Toronto, Ontario

Moved in 1947 to

1102 Broadview Avenue Mrs. Norma Doering (1964)

Toronto, Ontario

Re-named **Massey Centre**<sup>238</sup>

**Cedarvale Home for Unwed Mothers** (Previously Ontario Home for Girls)

Georgetown, Ontario

**QUEBEC**

**Elizabeth House**, Montreal, (co-sponsored with Anglican Church as above) 1968-1973

1973 transferred from church community to Ministry of Social Affairs

2131 Marlowe Avenue

Montreal, PQ

**Bethany House** 1912-1942

Montreal, Quebec

**MANITOBA**

**Church Home for Girls** , Winnipeg (Kildonan) 1911-1974 (co-sponsored with Anglican Church as above)

2594 Henderson Highway

Winnipeg, Manitoba

new home constructed in 1962 - inmates 1962-42

also associated with:

**McMillan House Project** (1972-1976)

824 McMillan Avenue

Winnipeg, Manitoba

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<sup>237</sup> Many mothers from this home delivered at Burnside Hospital or Mayfair Hospital. These records have not survived. Massey Centre still holds records of Victor Home residents from 1904 onwards.

<sup>238</sup> Victor Home re-named Massey Centre in 1989. Still operating at 1102 Broadview assisting parenting teens

## BRITISH COLUMBIA

**United Church Home for Girls** (1913-1973) (co-sponsored, Presbyterian, Anglican, Baptist)

1750 Sussex Avenue (1923-1967)

7401 Sussex Avenue (1967-1973) Mrs. Ethel Packham (1964)

also known as: **Burnaby Home for Girls**

7401 Sussex Avenue

South Burnaby, British Columbia

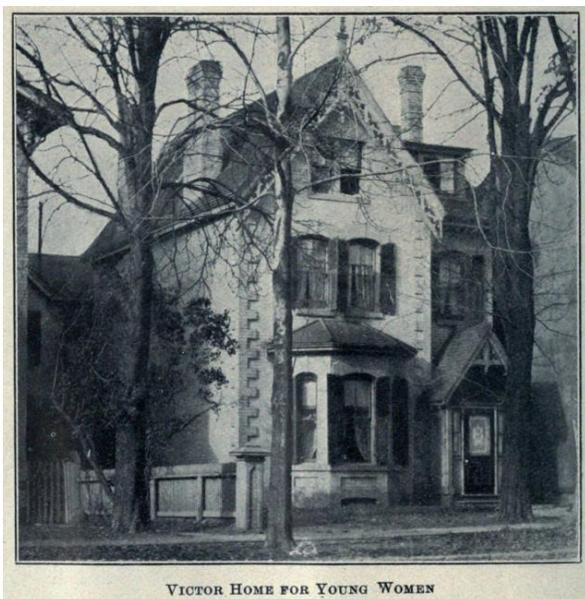
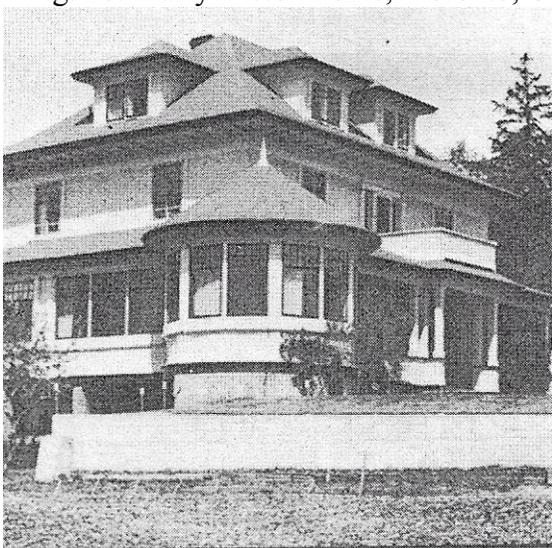


Fig. 26: Early Victor Home, Toronto, ON



Fig. 27: Victor Home, Toronto, ON



United Church Home for Girls, Burnaby, BC  
Fig. 28

**ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA****Maternity Homes****ONTARIO****Humewood House**

40 Humewood Drive

Toronto, Ontario Mrs. Olivia Langford (1964)

(As of 2016 -operating as Centre for Parenting Teens at 40 Humewood)

**St. Monica House** (Huron Diocese) (Opened May 1968)

30 Sycamore Place Barbara Evans (1969)

Kitchener, Ontario

**QUEBEC****Elizabeth House** (Co-sponsored with Presbyterian & United Church) 1968-Present

1973 transferred from church community to Ministry of Social Affairs

2131 Marlowe Avenue

Montreal, PQ

**MANITOBA****Church Home For Girls** (Co-sponsored with United Church)

2594 Henderson Hwy

Winnipeg, Manitoba

**Bishops Messengers of St. Faith's** At least in 1969

The Messengers -Anglican Parish run by lay Anglican women

The Pas, Manitoba - also home for unwed mothers

Serving Pasandena and Little Indian Birch Reserves

**ALBERTA****St. John's House** Anglican Diocese of Edmonton11714 – 92<sup>nd</sup> St. Sisterhood of St. John The Divine

Edmonton, Alberta Sister Thelma (1964)

**B.C.****Marion Hilliard House**

Serle Road, RR#1 1967-2002

Kamloops, B.C.

## PRESBYTERIAN

### Door of Hope

Sydney, Nova Scotia (circa 1910s)

### Presbyterian Home for Girls

123 Yorkville Avenue, Toronto, 1910-1955

### Armagh

927 Meadow Wood Road

Clarkson, Ontario (Mrs. Gwen Davenport 1955-1961, Mrs. Margaret Herrig, 1961-)

### Elizabeth House (co-sponsored with Anglican Church)

Montreal, Quebec



Fig. 29 Humewood House, Toronto, ON

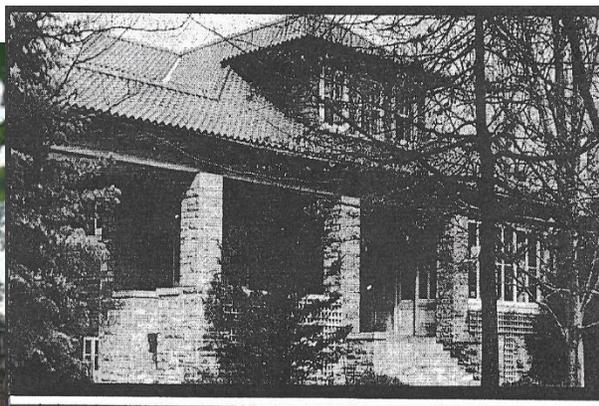


Fig. 30 Armagh, Clarkson, ON

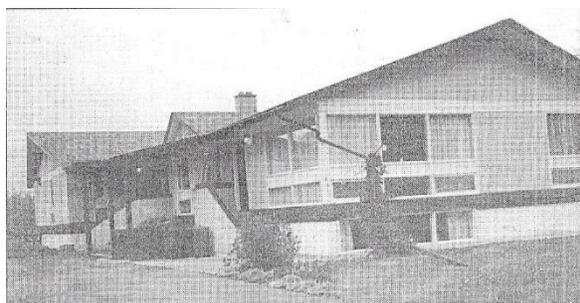


Fig. 31 Marion Hilliard Home,  
Kamloops, BC

## EVANGELICAL

**Bethel Home** (sponsored by the Pentecostal Benevolent Assoc of Ontario)  
115 Bonis Avenue/3762 Sheppard Ave East/Kennedy Road, Scarborough  
Agincourt, Ontario  
Built in 1926, new facility late 1950's      Mrs David Hutchison (1964)

**Friendly Home** - Associated with, but not a facility of the United Church  
5867 Cote St. Antoine Rd.  
Montreal, PQ

### **Beulah Home/Woodside Home**

13340 101st St.  
Edmonton, Alberta      Reverend A.E. King  
Est 1909 to aid newly arrived women – later unwed mothers  
Mary Finlay – Superintendent from 1921-1964 when province took over the home.

**Spruce Cliff Home**, Calgary (1968-)

### **Jewels for Jesus Mission**

2110 Argentia Road  
Mississauga, Ontario

### **YWCA**

The Haven (at least 1878 to at least 1913)  
Toronto, Ontario

## ECUMENICAL

### **Northern Ecumenical Maternity Homes**

P.O. Box 955  
Sudbury, Ontario

## PRIVATE

(Note: It is not possible to identify all the private homes which may have housed unmarried mothers during the twentieth century.)

### **Molly Breens Boarding House**

18 Wood St.  
St. John's, Newfoundland

### **Ideal Maternity Home**<sup>239</sup>

East Chester, Nova Scotia

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<sup>239</sup> See Butterbox Babies

**The Strathcona**  
32 Gothic Avenue  
Toronto, Ontario



Fig. 32: Ideal Maternity Home, East Chester, NS



Fig. 33: Friendly Home, Montreal, QC

Fig. 1 The Telegraph Journal, February 4, 2014. *A Daughter's Search reaches into a Darker Past*, p. C-1. Fredericton Library Reference Services.

Fig. 2 The War Cry, February 14, 1998, *The Grand Old Mansion on Lover's Lane*, p.11

Fig. 3 Retrieved from:  
<http://halifaxbloggers.ca/builthalifax/2013/09/halifax-infants-home/>

Fig. 4 Kim, P., Global News, August 22, 2016. *Filming of Stephen King's Horror Classic 'It' Becoming a Nightmare for some Residents*.

Retrieved from:  
<http://globalnews.ca/news/2896739/filming-of-stephen-kings-horror-classic-it-becoming-nightmare-for-some-residents/>

Fig. 5 The Ottawa Citizen, May 8, 2012. *Bethany House Heritage Decision Delayed*.

Fig. 6 London Free Press, October 11, 2012, *Bethesda Land on Selling Block*.

Fig. 7 Brochure for Florence Booth Home, Thunder Bay, SAA.

Fig. 8 The War Cry, October 15, 1938, *Faith Haven Outgrows Itself*, p.13

Fig. 9 Article. *Sally Ann Will Grace New Home*. SAA

- Fig. 10 Schnarr, N. Curatorial Research Assistant, Canadian Clay & Glass Gallery. *Nowhere Else to Go – Homes for Unwed Mothers in Canada during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*  
Retrieved from:  
<http://www.theclayandglass.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/Unwed-Mothers-research-Nancy-Final.pdf-FOR-WEBSITE-PROVIDE-PDF-PG2.pdf>
- Fig. 11 Brochure for Grace Haven, Regina, SAA.
- Fig. 12 Brochure for Park Wood House, Calgary, SAA
- Fig. 13 The War Cry, June 19, 1965, *Women’s Auxiliary Raises Funds for Vancouver Home*, p.14.
- Fig. 14 Retrieved from:  
<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~patwatson/stjoes.htm>
- Fig. 15 Retrieved from:  
Google Maps, Musée Bon Pasteur
- Fig. 16 Retrieved from:  
<http://wikimapia.org/19515732/fr/Centre-hospitalier-Jacques-Viger#/photo/1627184>
- Fig. 17 Provided through Facebook to the writer by a mother who resided in the home
- Fig. 18 Unknown source
- Fig. 19 Robinet, D. (2015, June 1). Francis and Martha Moore’s Contributions Remembered. *Chatham This Week*.
- Fig. 20 Sisters of the Miséricordia. *Choosing the Life Within: An Informal History* Rosalie Hall, Brochure, p. 6, ARCAT.
- Fig. 21 Sisters of the Miséricordia. *Choosing the Life Within: An Informal History* Rosalie Hall, Brochure, p. 12 ARCAT.
- Fig. 22 Image provided from Villa Rosa Director of Communications with permission in an email to Valerie Andrews, December 13, 2016.
- Fig. 23 Image provided from Villa Rosa Director of Communications with permission in an email to Valerie Andrews, December 13, 2016.
- Fig. 24 Retrieved from:  
<https://www.google.com/maps/contrib/100768358994821790926/photos/@43.460509,-80.515221,17z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m3!8m2!3m1!1e1>

- Fig. 25 Courtesy of Rick Williams. City of Regina Archives. Image posted in Facebook Group *Vintage Regina*. Retrieved from: <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10151405805955519&set=o.328788113887256&type+3&theater>
- Fig. 26 *Twenty-one Years of Mission Work in Toronto, 1886-1907. The Story of the Fred Victor Mission*. Brochure. p. 20. Retrieved from: <http://uccdeaconesshistory.ca/wp-content/uploads/biopics/Twenty-One-Years-of-Mission-Work-in-Toronto-Fred-Victor-Mission-1907.pdf>
- Fig. 27 United Church of Canada, Victor Home, Brochure. UCCA.
- Fig. 28 United Church of Canada, Homes and Institutions. Brochure, p. 2, UCCA.
- Fig. 29 Retrieved from: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/15205252@N00/4911234122>
- Fig. 30 Presbyterian Church in Canada. Armagh. Brochure. PA.
- Fig. 31 Anglican Church of Canada. Article. Marion Hilliard House to Close its Doors, *The Central Interior Link*, September 2002. p.8, ACCA.
- Fig. 32 Schnarr, N. Curatorial Research Assistant, Canadian Clay & Glass Gallery. *Nowhere Else to Go – Homes for Unwed Mothers in Canada during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* Retrieved from: <http://www.theclayandglass.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/Unwed-Mothers-research-Nancy-Final.pdf-FOR-WEBSITE-PROVIDE-PDF-PG2.pdf>
- Fig. 33 Retrieved from: [www.originscanada.org](http://www.originscanada.org)