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The Indulgence of Professionalization: Adoption Services, Maternity Homes, and Catholic Negotiations in American Society, 1895—1990

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The Indulgence of Professionalization:
Adoption Services, Maternity Homes, and Catholic Negotiations in American Society, 1895—1990

by

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Bachelor of Arts, Nyack College, 2011

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Abstract:

Using the case study of single mothers in the United States between 1945 and 1990, I examine the power wielded by a network of authoritative charity and social service institutions and how they systematically denied agency to the single mothers in their care while establishing their own influence in American society. I contend that this occurred in four instances of lenience and discipline, as described theoretically by Maya Mayblin and Michel Foucault. The first mechanism of lenience formed in response to massive immigration of European Catholics to the United States between 1820 and 1920. Catholic hierarchy created opportunity for laity to take on leadership through Catholic charity work in order to create institutions that would support their burgeoning, and impoverished population. Catholic leadership emphasized *Rerum Novarum*’s commands to provide charity as a priority for laity. Catholic laity took advantage of this and established their authority in charity institutions, and set the stage for the two following mechanisms of lenience. The second mechanism is one in which the American government responded to Catholics’ strong charity-building tendencies by allowing them a voice in American social welfare policy creation, evidenced clearly in the New Deal. In the third mechanism of lenience, the Catholic hierarchy and women who performed charity work saw that they would benefit form co-opting the authority of social work ideas and principles. They invited social workers and their practices in to Catholic maternity homes, and their policy of encouraging single mothers to keep their infants changed into one of coercing mothers to surrender their infants for adoption against their will. The final mechanism is one of discipline as it is described by Michel Foucault, in which the “right to punish” is framed as a necessary measure to protect the public. Through my interviews with single mothers who have spent time in Catholic maternity homes, I examine how single mothers became targets of such discipline for the benefit of Catholic charitable institutions.
and social work. Social workers infiltrated and influenced religious charity agencies and collected information about the single mothers who passed through their care. Eventually, social workers used this information to develop their own expertise in the realm of single motherhood. By examining the historical context of each party involved, this study presents one case study of how institutional vulnerabilities and ambitions can cause institutions to abuse those who they claim to serve for their own benefit.
Acknowledgements

Throughout the course of writing this dissertation, I have been encouraged and assisted by a great number of friends, professors, and colleagues. I would like to thank Dr. Carol B. Duncan, first and foremost, for all of her incredible support for this project and for me as a person. I would not have finished this without your unwavering support and tenacious belief in this work. Dr. Ashley Lebner, Dr. Dana Sawchuck, and Dr. Cynthia Comacchio, thank you for your thorough read-throughs of every iteration, and for shaping this dissertation into the finished product. Thank you for making time for me to meet despite how busy you were. Zabeen Khamisa, thank you for your endless graciousness with me in the early years. Our talks made this possible. Jessica Sanchez, you keep me from giving up and remind me of who I am when I forget. Jessica Pietryszyn, thank you for your support and perspective through the writing process and always. Dr. Shobhana Xavier, you have always provided inspiration to go beyond what I think I can do and who I’ve boxed myself into being. Sarah Vandenberk, thank you for your endless encouragement and excitement. Thank you Dr. Ryan Anningson, for many tedious read-throughs and calming my anxiety at any hour of the day or night. Thank you Dr. Laura Morlock, for critical conversation, assistance, and emotional support. Dr. Kayleigh Abbott, thank you for your endless kindness and your perpetual challenge to press on and persevere. Catherine Lundy, your intellectual gymnastic abilities coupled with your compassion have sharpened me as a person and a writer and kept me sane. Jeremy Rigotti, everything is for you.
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Statement of Originality

This document is written by Elizabeth Patricia Rigotti who declares to take full responsibility for the contents of this document. I declare that the text and the work presented in this document are original and that no sources other than those mentioned in the text and its references have been used in creating it. The Faculty of Arts is responsible solely for the supervision of completion of the work, not for the contents.
Introduction

Relationships, Vulnerabilities and Goals as a Matrix for Power
Numerous personal and academic paths have led me to this project. Ten years before I was born, my mother had been a frightened, pregnant, single young woman who was implicated in the power dynamics caused by the intersecting discourses and disciplines of the Catholic Church, of which she was a member, social workers, moral proscriptions, her mother, and the law. She ultimately felt that she was coerced into surrendering her son, John, for adoption, even though that was never what she wanted to do. She had no other choice, and she was told that she would be giving him an opportunity to have a more privileged life with two married parents, and that it would be not only irresponsible, but selfish and detrimental to the baby’s well-being if she kept him and raised him as a single parent. When John was twenty-two years old, he searched for my mother and found her. Within a couple of weeks of the reunion he came to live with us. During this time, we learned that with his adoptive parents, John had not had the “better life” that my mother had been promised. He had experienced abuse and developed profound mental health struggles as a result. Days after his twenty-seventh birthday in 2006, John died by suicide.

In this dissertation, coerced adoptions such as John’s are the nucleus of a much larger system of religious charity, social work, and Catholic institutional survival. I argue that the Catholic Church in the United States created an opportunity for laity to lead charity work in response to large numbers of European Catholic immigrants arriving in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and that the laity used their new authority in charity work to contribute to a change in American perceptions of Catholics. As Catholics gained influence in American society through providing charity services, Catholic hierarchy influenced American welfare to ensure that service to the poor and single mothers would be left in the private sector, where they could dominate it. As Catholic Charities gained importance by addressing privatized welfare issues, women took the lead in services to unmarried mothers and leveraged the growing influence of
secular social work to amplify their own authority. Social work narratives about the mental infirmity, moral depravity, and psychological instability of single motherhood caused Catholics working in maternity homes to switch from encouraging single mothers to keep their infants to coercing mothers to surrender them for adoption, and then benefitting from it as they collected information on each mother. This collected information formed a body of knowledge and expertise that gave social workers and Catholics who worked with single mothers cultural authority over the condition of illegitimacy, and shifted the choice of infant surrender away from single mothers and into the hands of Catholic social workers and volunteers.

John’s death is a profound and complex reality that I will never understand in its fullness. However, the social, political, and institutional contexts that shaped the circumstances of John’s life were also determining factors in the agony of his life and the violent nature of his death, and although their stories may not have ended the same way, thousands of other biological mothers and adopted people have been affected by the same social and institutional dynamics. Single mothers today face very different moral and institutional environments, but in the United States, the inadequacy of the social assistance to which they have access is heir to the same policies that my mother faced in 1979.

I am not a single mother. However, as a twelve-year-old I witnessed firsthand my mother’s experiences of meeting John after having lost him, and of coming to terms with the reality that her son did not benefit from having two married parents the way her church, social workers, and mother told her he would. In my teen years, I looked on helplessly as my brother was ravaged with mental illnesses that developed as a result of negligence in childhood, and I was my mother’s shoulder as she witnessed the same. At seventeen, I drove around our town with my mother when John went missing. We reported him as a missing person together and we
tracked his credit card purchases as a way to see where he last was. I stood by her as we both lost him again when we found out that he died by suicide. I can never possibly fully understand without having directly experienced the loss of a child in this way, but I am aware of the devastating duo of sustained grief compounded with deep shame that many women share who have given birth and had their babies adopted into other families under the influence of coercive narratives about single motherhood, social workers, and religious institutions.

My personal story captures what this dissertation is about: the human costs of the institutional policies of Catholic Charities and the development of social work as a discipline, a profession, and a body of knowledge. In the case of single mothers, the power wielded by a network of institutions produced a new reality for them, in which multiple disciplines and institutions transformed them from active agents to submissive subjects around which social work and religious charity built bodies of knowledge. These bodies of knowledge granted social work and religious charities scientific authority for the first time. New social influence and authority for social work and religious charities followed, resulting in professional respect and leadership in the battle against the perceived social ill of unwed motherhood.

**Theoretical Framework**

The two major theoretical apparatuses that inform each chapter progressively are the theories of lenience by Maya Mayblin, and those of discipline by Michel Foucault. I also draw on other ideas within individual chapters, including Robert Orsi’s profound understanding of Catholic history in the United States, and Regina Kunzel’s accounts of narratives about single motherhood and the discipline and power they lent to the growing field and profession of social work.
In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault describes penal reform as it developed in Europe from the eighteenth through the early twentieth century. Foucault outlines a process in which the “right to punish” shifts from the vengeance of a sovereign power to the protection of the public through the subtle introduction and circulation of signs and symbols in the minds of each member of society. These signs and symbols ensure that every crime is inextricably linked with a specific punishment, so that to imagine the commission of the crime is to have already accepted that one will receive the accompanying punishment, which strips the punishment of any sense of arbitrariness and renders it “natural.” As individuals are punished, their bodies become objects and targets of power, and details about crimes are used as footholds for power and punishments. As these details are studied and information is collected, those in power create bodies of knowledge around the bodies of those receiving punishment through “examinations,” and “expertise” emerges, which is accompanied by authority. At this point, power begins to produce reality. Newly minted experts define what is “normal” and “abnormal,” and nonconformity becomes punishable. Once this is accomplished, the “experts” will have collected enough information about those receiving punishment to be able to craft narratives about them, such that experts can offer a “biography” of the offender, and offenders are often assumed to have been guilty even before their crime. By the twentieth century, the power to punish has shifted com-

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2 Foucault, “Discipline,” 90-104.
3 Foucault, “Discipline,” 104.
7 Foucault, “Discipline,” 178, 199.
8 Foucault, “Discipline,” 254.
pletely into the hands of the new experts, who have created specific categories of “crime” or “pathology,” thereby making punishment function as a treatment for a social or mental illness. This process creates submissive subjects, and experts continue to build a body of knowledge around them: the delinquency they define is an institutional product that legitimizes and naturalizes the experts’ power to punish. As the experts’ legitimacy and scientific authority grows, their network with other institutions extends and the power to punish is spread throughout what Foucault calls a “carceral system,” which gives legal sanction to disciplinary mechanisms.

I contend that a similar process occurred as social workers infiltrated and influenced religious charity agencies, and as social workers and religious agencies collected information about the single mothers who passed through their care. Eventually, social workers used this information to develop their own expertise on the topic of single motherhood. They extended that expertise to establish the power to make decisions on behalf of single mothers as to whether they would surrender their infants to adoption agencies, regardless of what the mothers wanted. It is tempting to view Foucault’s idea that subjects are entirely constructed by power dynamics as reductionist. However, I have recognized Foucault’s “social constructionism,” or his claim that disciplinary power creates individuals, in light of Robert Orsi’s observation that projecting identity fantasies onto victims, rather than seeing them for the humans that they are, is one important aspect of abuse within religious institutions. I use Foucault's claim that subjects are reduced to their power dynamics as a metaphor that illustrates one dynamic of Orsi’s more nuanced description of how abusive religious leaders project humanity-erasing identities onto victims. This enabled me to view social work narratives about single motherhood (i.e. denying their agency by

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9 Foucault, “Discipline,” 256.
11 Foucault, “Discipline,” 301.
12 Orsi, Between Heaven and Earth, 4.
pronouncing them feebleminded, delinquent, or neurotic) as part of Foucault’s process of imposing discipline, which helped me to understand the anguish that was apparent in all of the mothers’ interviews. Orsi’s theory contextualizes dynamics of abuse in terms of vulnerabilities and needs that abusers experience, and how both victims and abusers can mobilize religious imagery, saints, theology, and cultural ideas to oppress or subvert the system in which they exist. Foucault’s compelling account of the power pressed upon a subject within a disciplinary system helps to explain the nature of the subtle but all-encompassing coercion that influenced mothers internalize the desires and goals of their authorities and then act against their own interest in instances of signing surrender papers. I have compared and contrasted mothers’ accounts of their experiences to aspects of Foucault’s disciplinary system to give a theoretical framework to the coercion the mothers shared, and to illuminate its short and long term effects on these mothers. Foucault’s theory provided a structured pattern to categorize the coercion that underwrote many of the mothers’ actions that are difficult to understand for anyone who has not been subject to the same system of discipline. Although the church and social work were growing institutionally, they were doing so by using their institutions to deny the humanity and agency to those they promised to help.

Mayblin describes lenience within a Catholic context as a phenomenon that emerges, especially within a Catholic context, in the division of labor between clergy and laity. She views lenience as the flipside to Foucault's discipline. She observes that “Catholicism is ordered by a priestly caste, an ordained elite who preside over the sacraments, and a caste of followers, who

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worship and receive those sacraments.”¹⁴ There are religion-makers, or holiness-makers (hierarchy members), and religion/holiness-receivers (laity). Mayblin also astutely notes that the ordination of a priest or member of the holy castes is understood to effect a deep, ontological change in a person in which his soul and body are forever changed, and which also validates his authority in the realm of the sacraments.¹⁵ Through this conferred authority, the priestly caste mediates the laity’s interactions with the sacred, and this spiritual mediation is considered difficult work.¹⁶ Mayblin captures the Catholic sense of ritual labour as a serious, time-consuming profession, and suggests that this understanding within Catholic thought is accompanied by the sense that the priesthood isn’t for everyone, and that type of strenuous, spiritual heavy-lifting isn’t for everyone.¹⁷ What follows is the understanding that since the priests undertake this work, the laity doesn’t have to, though they can still reap the benefits of membership within the Catholic community.¹⁸ As Mayblin explains, “[I]t is in this fundamental division of the visible church into the ordained and the laity that a certain absolution from the performance of spiritual and theological tasks is justified on one side”¹⁹ This sense of absolution is what lies behind the dynamics of lenience. Mayblin enlists the ideas of Andreas Bandak and Tom Boylston, who suggest that, “the division of spiritual labour between priests, lay, and other religious virtuosi distributes the burden of piety and religious knowledge, and one of the key points about this deferral is that it affords some individuals a more passive role in religious practice.”²⁰ She suggests that this “ethos of

commutation” or deferral, is key, because it allows for an affordance to open up, which enables individuals to distance themselves from Christianity’s most deeply-held injunctions yet still claim religious membership.\textsuperscript{21} In short, lenience allows laity to maintain their membership in the religious community, as well as their sense of the benefits of their membership, while delegating some of their religious “work” to the experts, or priestly caste.

Mayblin presents examples of this dynamic, including Hillary Kaell’s study of North American grandparents’ use of holy objects such as souvenirs to “envelope” their grandchildren within an “economy of divine materiality and spiritual salvation.”\textsuperscript{22} Mayblin identifies this type of practice as a “technology of lenience,” in that it allows some people to act and live in ways that are at a distance from God, habitually neglect the traditional religious practices and beliefs that are believed to draw one closer to God, but still be beneficiaries of the potential blessings and protections that He grants.\textsuperscript{23} These technologies of lenience create an economy of holiness in which the intentional sacred engagements of the elite are harnessed to encompass others who are less pious.\textsuperscript{24} Among her examples is the Catholic tradition of granting indulgences, which are official documents which allow the bearer full or partial absolution of their punishment for sin.\textsuperscript{25} Indulgences are based on the concept of a Treasury of Merit, or an eternal tank of grace and forgiveness built up by Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and all the saints, the benefits of which only office-bearers can access and bestow upon non-office-bearers who are appropriately “confessed and contrite” and willing to perform “good works.”\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{23} Mayblin, “The lapsed,” 510.
\textsuperscript{24} Mayblin, “The lapsed,” 510.
\textsuperscript{25} Mayblin, “The lapsed,” 511.
\textsuperscript{26} Mayblin, “The lapsed,” 512.
Here, Mayblin focuses on the principle of commutation, which is crucial to the exercise of lenience granting and receiving, but I suggest that it is also equally important to understand that the non-office-holding indulgence-seeker had to perform some kind of duty in exchange for the spiritual benefit, whether building a cathedral, fighting a crusade, or donating money. The commutation is not a magical granting of forgiveness and time out of purgatory based on nothing—the non-office-holder must perform some kind of work to receive the benefit. The task of commutation is usually chosen by the office-holder granting the indulgence, whether it is reciting a set number of Hail Marys or donating money to a particular cause. It is intentional. In this dissertation, I apply aspects of Mayblin’s argument to a smaller swath of Catholic history, and rather than understanding the non-religious, or secularized cultural edges as the territory for a passive “lapse” in religious practice, I view them as active resources which Catholics strategically engaged with, made holy, and incorporated into their religious practices and beliefs in order to gain influence and build their national identity as an American religion.

In short, to study Catholicism in twentieth century America is to study institution building. To understand abuse in Catholic contexts, it is crucial to look at what Catholic institutions are doing at the time of the abuse, how they are motivated, and how they are vulnerable. I have used Orsi, Foucault, and Mayblin to focus my analysis of Catholic maternity homes as they represented part of a larger Catholic movement towards institutional growth aimed at taking care of the poor, needy, and under-cared for of society, but also attempting to improve their reputation. Orsi provides the theoretical jumping point from which I understand that instead of perceiving real single mothers as they were, church authorities and social workers engaged “fallen women” and “problem girls” as projections of their own needs and desires, or “clients” as extensions of adult professional fantasies, or ideas about single mothers’ innocence, depravity, or intellectual
disability. Foucault extends this point by lending structure to my examination of the institutional support that such narrative projections received. As Catholics benefitted from providing charity, social work presented an opportunity to add authority and professionalization to that authority, and in turn, Catholic maternity homes presented perfect case studies and research data collection fields to social workers. Mayblin’s theory of lenience explains the strategic concessions that Catholics made in this process as they changed their rules, empowered their laity, redefined what it meant to be a “good Catholic” in twentieth century America, and embraced the secular professional field of social work, and benefitted from all of those choices.

**Scope and Method:**

This considers the layered historical processes of the American Catholic Church’s social services and early maternity homes in the 19th century, the development of social work in the 1920s, the effects of the New Deal in 1933, and the early Cold War years starting in 1947. However, the focus of this dissertation is limited to the years of 1950 to 1990. 1950 is particularly important because, by that time, the Cold War idea that communism was a great American enemy had solidified piety and parenthood as entwined patriotic duties. This resulted in a major change in Catholic maternity homes in the United States. Before the Cold War, mothers in homes were encouraged to keep their infants as a way of “redeeming” themselves for their perceived transgression.²⁷

1990 is an appropriate end date for this study because although demand for infants still existed, most homes had become defunct by that time because abortion had been legalized with *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, and single mothers began to feel less stigma, to the effect that many either sought abortions or kept their infants rather than seeking maternity homes. It would require a

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new study to treat the post-1990 adoption era in appropriate detail. After conducting initial research and reading secondary sources such as Ann Fessler’s *The Girls who Went Away* and Regina Kunzel’s *Fallen Women, Problem Girls: Unmarried Mothers and the Professionalization of Social Work 1890-1945*, I chose the years between 1950 and 1990 because of the timing of the historical processes listed above. And while Kunzel’s study from 1890 to 1945 clarifies the origins of these processes, the Cold War and Counterculture dynamics are factors that later influenced the change from nineteenth and early-twentieth-century practices of encouraging mothers to keep their infants to the post-1945 practice of pushing mothers to surrender their infants to adoption.

As the Cold War began, the development of religious charities and social work, hospitals, a lack of government funding, and the absence of uniform laws surrounding adoption practices compounded with an unprecedented demand for healthy, white babies. This demand was a middle-class one, and desperate, infertile couples paid handsomely for their chance at parenthood. The result was that Catholic charity workers changed their practices within maternity homes as their incentive switched from a religious motivation to redeem mothers by keeping them with their infants, to benefitting their organizations financially and socially by capitalizing upon the authority of social work, the desperation of infertile couples, and the vulnerability of young, pregnant, unmarried women in dire straits. The institutional consequences of this shift led to a new discipline/knowledge/power complex. In this complex, single mothers formed a nucleus as social work began to leverage scientific authority and infiltrated religious charity home operations, social workers, religious maternity home workers, and healthcare workers subjected single mothers in maternity homes to disciplinary practices. As a result, bodies of knowledge sprang up around such mothers and their perceived “illegitimacy.” These continuously growing bodies of
knowledge, extracted from and articulated upon the bodies and minds of unmarried mothers in maternity homes, were largely responsible for religious charities’ and social work’s establishment as institutional cornerstones in twenty-first century American society.

This is a general study of private sector/religious social service and charity organizations in the absence of government funding, and the dynamics that can result due to a lack of uniform state or federal policies. Catholic maternity homes in the United States from 1950 to 1990 present a case study for the larger institutional matrix that developed bodies of knowledge and structures of power around the government-funding vacuum for social service to unmarried mothers following the New Deal in 1933. Catholic maternity homes and adoption services present a particularly useful case study to illuminate the dynamics of unregulated private sector service providers because government service providers neglected single mothers. Historian Marian Morton finds that the sexual delinquency often associated with single mothers has historically differentiated them from other social groups requiring assistance.²⁸

Methods

The twentieth century nature of the research focus has allowed me to use primary sources, such as journals, conference proceedings, guides, and research collections by the National Conference of Catholic Charities, as well as reports on Adoption services and services to unmarried parents by the Child Welfare League of America and the World Health Organization, and to combine these sources with ethnographic accounts from those who actually spent time receiving these services. My evidence base relies primarily on a close reading of the St. Vincent de Paul Quarterly and Catholic Charities Review. Specifically, I searched for the key words, “illegitimate,” “illegitimacy,” “unwed,” “pregnancy,” “motherhood,” “infant,” “infants,” “maternity

home(s),” and “adoption(s).” From these sources I was able to ascertain the goals and institutional discourse occurring at the forefront of Catholic charity work in the United States in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These conversations among Catholics addressed anti-Catholic nativism in 1903, a clear trajectory of how the impulse to help destitute children led organically to the desire to serve unmarried mothers. The information and analyses of these sources are in Chapter 2.

I have also conducted ethnographic interviews. This is not a study of any particular state—all interviews are scattered across various states and are from 1959-1977. I did not purposely exclude interviews from before and after those dates. It happened by coincidence that the interview participants who approached me happened to have experiences concentrated primarily in the late 1950s, throughout the 1960s, and into the 1970s. A reason for this could be that I recruited interview participants by contacting internet support groups for natural mothers, as well as from these mothers personally, and conducted these interviews between 2015 and 2017. By this time, many of the women I interviewed, who had given birth between 1957 and 1977, were between 50 and 70 years in age. Women who had given birth in earlier years were most likely more advanced in age and less likely to be as active on internet forums. I completed ten interviews in total. I have included my interview questions in an appendix, but they served as more of a loose guide. Participants often had their own important aspects of stories to include, and I welcomed additional information that was not addressed in my questions. My goal was to understand how mothers experienced their interactions with social workers and maternity home volun-

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teers, so to insist that our conversations remain within the bounds of my questions would be inefficient. Many mothers shared important information that shaped the way I understood the entire maternity home complex. Our conversations often lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. I collected a total of ten interviews.

My analysis of these interviews is mostly qualitative, and more accurately understood as part of a mixed methods approach as described by Cresswell et al: “research questions that call for real-life contextual understandings, multi-level perspectives, and cultural influences.”31 To address the aspect of questions that require “real-life contextual understandings,” I ask about the parties involved: the single mothers, social workers, Catholic leadership, and Catholic laity who volunteered to create and operate Catholic charities. These parties exist in a network of relationships. I sift the ethnographic material through these relationships and situate them within American and international history established in Chapter 2, where I excavate the national context in which Catholic charitable institutions arise and take on unprecedented significance in the United States, and the rise of social work addressed in Chapter 3. I address the “multi-level perspectives” by exploring sources written by Catholic church authorities and social workers, and including mothers’ voices is also necessary to address the perspectives of all of the key players in the maternity home complex. Understanding the maternity home complex as a network of relationships between parties and individuals with vulnerabilities and goals who make tactical survival decisions lends to a deeper exploration of the context and circumstances of the agents involved. The collection of ethnographic interviews from mothers who existed at the nexus of American history, Catholic Charities, and social work development serves to fill a gap in existing historical accounts of these institutions. The analysis has included the systematic comparison and

contrast of mother’s descriptions of various aspects of their experiences in maternity homes with works of social theory and history by Michel Foucault and Regina Kunzel. I argue that Michel Foucault’s descriptions and qualifications for the development of what he calls a carceral system, or the development of a system of punishment for a particular social offense that eventually receives government approval, help to describe the buried history of single mothers’ experiences and roles within the institutional development of both Catholic charity initiatives and the rise of the profession of social work.

I argue that Catholic maternity home workers, social workers, American social dynamics, and a federal resource vacuum cornered unmarried mothers into the role of docile bodies to be organized and observed within the disciplines of religious charity and social work. These disciplines consequently built bodies of knowledge around such unmarried mothers, and gained a legacy of power and financial and social benefits from it.

**Historical/Historiographical Contexts**

The history of Catholic maternity homes constitutes one part of my ongoing interest in religion, sexuality, and social services. There is not much in the way of scholarly analysis of Catholic maternity homes, and what does exist are glowing accounts entirely from the perspective of maternity home directors written in the 1970s. Much of the other work is conducted by and for Catholic institutions, and I use it as primary source material. These accounts have been tremendously helpful in developing conversations around the relationship of social work and Catholic social services, and in developing interview questions that I was able to ask numerous mothers who spent time in Catholic maternity homes. A focus on the mothers’ perspectives allows for the critical interrogation of previously unstudied relationships between social work,

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Catholic institutional workers, and unmarried mothers. This project, then, aims to add a missing piece to the analysis of these religious social services by shifting our attention to what the mothers actually experienced and the intricate web of social and institutional forces that resulted in such an outcome.

In the United States, adoption laws are not based on English common law, the way most other laws are. American adoption law is a collection of statues enacted since the mid-nineteenth century. In the initial half of the nineteenth century, existing methods of care for dependent children included a period in which children stayed in asylums or institutions and then entered indentured labor or apprenticeships. Adoption laws in the United States emerged at the end of the nineteenth century out of the unprecedented number of parentless children in pre-existing childcare institutions. The reasons for such high numbers of children without parents varied regionally. In New York, massive waves of Irish immigrants arrived, following the potato famine in 1846. The infrastructure of the city was not ready for an influx of such magnitude, and Irish tenement housing could barely keep their infants alive. In other areas, the industrial revolution led to changing economic conditions for many families who could no longer support their own children.

Protestant Child welfare reformers, motivated by religious intentions, pushed for dependent children’s adoptions into families, where they believed that the children's spiritual well-being would be tended. Children’s adoptions into homes became so common that there was increased pressure not only to pass laws regulating and insuring the legal relations between adopted children and their natural and adopted parents, but also to guarantee that some benefits of heirship

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33 Sokoloff, Burton Z., “Antecedents of American Adoption,” The Future of Children 3 no 1, Adoption (Spring, 1993) pg. 17
were conferred on the adopted child. This pressure, which originated with the activities of the charitable associations working in child welfare, led to the passage of the general adoption statutes in the third quarter of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{35} The new legislation was a response to the need to give legal status to children in transferred care and to enable superior care for dependent children.\textsuperscript{36}

The industrial revolution and massive Irish and European immigration led to the Placing Out movement founded by the New York-based Protestant Reverend Charles Luring Brace in 1853, as well as the creating of foundling homes and the placement of children with urban foster families. Reverend Brace developed the Children’s Aid Society, which facilitated a system in which wandering children were rounded up and sent to western farms where they could live and learn to work in the countryside rather than in the ostensibly morally deficient urban environment.\textsuperscript{37} Historian Ellen Herman has indicated that adoptions in the United States in the early twentieth-century were strongly influenced by eugenics, in that human science researchers tried to make each adoption appear as natural as possible by only allowing adoptions that appeared biologically feasible, in physical, mental, and moral terms, a process that was fundamentally racially selective and class-defined.\textsuperscript{38}

No legal regulations were in place to monitor or control the wholesale distribution of children to unvetted homes where they were put to work and rarely paid.\textsuperscript{39} Thus, religious adoption services began with uninvestigated homes into which children were haphazardly placed for

\textsuperscript{35} Sokoloff, “Antecedents,” 19.
\textsuperscript{36} Sokoloff, “Antecedents,” 19.
\textsuperscript{39} Howe, “Adoption Practice,” 175.
the purpose of performing cheap labor. At this point, there were no laws governing adoption practices aside from the Massachusetts statute of 1851. The 1851 Massachusetts statute set the United States apart from preindustrial societies, where adoption practices were one of numerous possible solutions to a need for labor, religious practice, or heirship.\(^40\) The Massachusetts Act became a model for legislation in most other American states. It developed the “best interest” concept as a hallmark for how to conduct adoptions, and it placed this decision squarely in the power of courts.\(^41\)

The expansion of the practice of placing children into family homes prompted child welfare reformers to push for adoption legislation resembling the Massachusetts statute of 1851.\(^42\) Over 22 years, 16 states passed similar acts, which required judicial supervision over adoption, and all states had enacted various forms of adoption legislation by 1929.\(^43\) Adoption law in the United States was not federal— it happened state by state over many decades. Each state handled it differently, and at different points in time.

By 1929, each of the United States had enacted some form of adoption legislation, but the laws varied from state to state and they were enacted at different times. Some states responded to the problem of rampant and unregulated private adoptions by outlawing private adoptions altogether, while others placed limits on the fees that could be collected by facilitators.\(^44\) However, the country was not unified in this effort, and couples who found it difficult to complete adoptions in one state could easily cross state lines and accomplish their goal in states and jurisdictions with less stringent laws. The availability or (or lack) of “ideal,” readily-adoptable infants,


\(^{41}\) Ibid., 177.

\(^{42}\) Sokoloff, “Antecedents,” 21.

\(^{43}\) Sokoloff, “Antecedents,” 19.

\(^{44}\) Howe, “Adoption Practice,” 192.
compounded with a response to established agency practices, seems to have been the most influential factor in whether or not couples procured their adoptions legally or through a black or gray-market broker.

By the mid-1950s, public and private adoption agencies still greatly limited adoptions to those babies and couples whom they believed were as close as possible to “perfect.” Through strict intake policies and procedures, agencies limited the ability of adoption practices to such an extent that it was very difficult to be selected. This dynamic, combined with the decline in birth rates during the Second World War, resulted in a rise in independent adoptions in which ‘black market’ brokers capitalized on the desperation of infertile couples. In 1955, U. S. Senate hearings exposed many sordid black-market incidents, and the existence and nature of black market adoptions became public and notorious for the first time. Yet in 1978, Senator Harrison A. Williams, Jr. publicly stated that the practice of treating children as commodities to be bought and sold in a black market was allowed to flourish in every area of the nation, and the economics of baby selling had opened avenues of trafficking which extended across state, and even national, boundaries. In her own investigation into the subject in 1980, journalist Lynne McTaggart concluded that ”suitable couples are not sought for homeless children; couples shop for suitable children—those of the best stock, with the best physical and mental characteristics and the least likelihood of being defective. These days, the only criterion for a couple’s suitability is ability to pay.”

45 Howe, “Adoption Practice,” 180.
46 Howe, “Adoption Practice,” 180.
During the late 1950s and 1960s, the availability of adoptable babies increased; rather than experiencing agonizingly long wait periods, couples were now actively sought out by adoption agencies and could quickly proceed with the adoptions. Independent, or black and gray market adoptions resurged in the 1970s with the drop in adoptable infants due to a declining birth rate, contraceptives and abortion, and the fact that many single parents choosing to keep their infants because of a reduced stigma surrounding having children out of wedlock.49

Efforts to reform laws to regulate adoptions were not uniform, and reforms and were not enacted uniformly. In 1953, the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws first promulgated a Uniform Adoptions Act. It was passed in Montana and Oklahoma, and nowhere else.50 The National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws (NCCUSL) continued to revise the Act and in 1971 three additional states passed it: New Mexico, North Dakota, and Ohio.51 The Uniform Adoption Act was still far from uniform. The NCCUSL appointed a designated drafting committee in February 1980 to review the federal model and elucidate what changes would render the Act relevant to current problems, conditions, and schools of thought.52 The president of the NCCUSL, John C. Deacon, deemed the model “unworkable in its present concept and form,” and the committee took no action to revise or amend the act.53

The next effort to codify a uniform state legal model for adoption occurred in 1980 when Family Law Section Chairman Thomas D. Cochrane appointed executive officers of the Section Adoption Committee and then requested that they work on the development of a model state

49 Howe, “Adoption Practice,” 181.
50 Howe, “Adoption Practice,” 193.
51 Howe, “Adoption Practice,” 193.
52 Howe, “Adoption Practice,” 193.
adoption act that might be more acceptable than the federal model that they had opposed.\textsuperscript{54} The Model Act for the Adoption of Children with Special Needs was published in Volume 46, Number 195 of the \textit{Federal Register} of October 8, 1981.\textsuperscript{55} This model encouraged and facilitated adoptions of children with special needs and provided financial assistance to adoptive families of such children. The resulting drafts inspired harsh criticism from the rest of the Council, to whom they were presented in January and August of 1982.\textsuperscript{56} The Council viewed them as being too “pro-agency” and “anti-private.”\textsuperscript{57}

The second half of the twentieth century marked further changes in adoption policies and practices. By this time, adoption had ceased to be primarily concerned with placing needy children in homes where they could receive proper care, which was the major concern and the premise of the adoption legislation enacted state by state since the Second World War. Agencies’ emphasis shifted to the contentment of the adoptive parents: whether or not the baby was of a satisfactory background and health.\textsuperscript{58} The new, vast selection of potential parents developed criteria designed to discern who would be the “best” parent for each child. The demand for healthy, white infants became so large that by 1975, many agencies informed applicants that the wait for an infant would possibly take 3 to 5 years.\textsuperscript{59} This resulted in a widespread uprising of independent, or “black market,” non-agency adoptions. One important element of adoptions in the second half of the twentieth-century was the turn toward transracial and international adoptions, which

\textsuperscript{54} Howe, “Adoption Practice,” 193.
\textsuperscript{55} Howe, “Adoption Practice,” 193.
\textsuperscript{56} Howe, “Adoption Practice,” 193.
\textsuperscript{57} Howe, “Adoption Practice,” 193.
\textsuperscript{58} Sokoloff, Burton Z., “Antecedents of American Adoption,” \textit{The Future of Children} 3 no 1, Adoption (Spring, 1993) pg. 23.
\textsuperscript{59} Sokoloff, Burton Z., “Antecedents of American Adoption,” \textit{The Future of Children} 3 no. 1, Adoption (Spring, 1993) pg. 23.
occurred partially as a result of the lack of availability of white infants. Historically, as noted, while most couples were desperately looking to adopt white infants, numerous older children, children of color, and children with physical, mental, and emotional challenges in need of permanent homes continued to rise.

Between 1950 and 1950, adoption became enmeshed between its status as a legal process and a child welfare service sanctioned by state laws. By the time the Section of Family Law in the United States was founded, private adoptions had been taking place for almost a century. These adoption trends and developments, as well as the lack of the uniform laws, form the backdrop of the mechanisms of lenience that I address in the following chapters.

Change in adoption secrecy policies were also not uniform, occurring state by state as activist groups petitioned for access rights. As the first generations of adoptees came of age and wanted to know about their backgrounds, they formed activist groups to challenge the sealed record statutes and fight for their rights to access their own background information. Jena Patton formed the first adoptee’s rights group in 1954, but the most significant group was the Adoptees Liberty Movement Association founded by Florence Fisher in 1971. Adoptee’s Rights groups inspired biological mother’s rights groups, as well, such as Concerned Birthparents United. Such mothers' groups inspired alarm on the part of adoptive parents, who feared that their children would no longer be theirs if they could find their biological parents. Associations such as

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60 Sokoloff, “Antecedents,” 23
61 Sokoloff, “Antecedents,” 23
63 Howe, “Adoption Practice,” 175.
the Association for the Protection of the Adoptive Triangle formed to lobby for the continuation of sealed birth certificates and adoption records.\textsuperscript{67}

In 1976, Baran, Pannor, and Sorosky proposed the concept of “open adoption placement,” in which birthparents and perspective adoptive families arrange for a degree of continued relationship throughout the upbringing of the child, possibly including regular contact between the biological parents and the child.\textsuperscript{68} The downfall with open adoptions is that there have never been any kind of state laws requiring open adoptions to remain open— meaning that biological parents may agree to an adoption only with the condition and belief that it will allow them to have a limited yet consistent relationship with their child, and the adoptive parents can close it completely at any time.\textsuperscript{69} By 1993, 25 states allowed access to confidential records with the mutual consent of the adoptee and birthparents.\textsuperscript{70} At this point, 17 states had created search and consent practices through confidential intermediary services, and 3 states allowed access to birth certificates upon adult adoptees’ request.\textsuperscript{71} At the end of the twentieth century, professionals within agency-facilitated adoptions and within private or independent adoptions condemned each other’s practices fiercely.\textsuperscript{72}

To summarize the main historical trends, adoption laws in the United States came about state-by-state, rather than federally. Such laws only came about when there were desperate needs to meet, as in the case of the complete saturation of state-created homes for needy children in the early nineteenth century, or when reformers fought for such laws, as exemplified by

\textsuperscript{67} Sokoloff, “Antecedents,” 24.
\textsuperscript{68} Sokoloff, “Antecedents,” 22
\textsuperscript{69} open adoption laws
\textsuperscript{70} Sokoloff, “Antecedents,” 24.
\textsuperscript{71} Sokoloff, “Antecedents,” 24.
\textsuperscript{72} L. Jean Emery and Marc T. McDermott present arguments on both sides.
Charles Loring Brace’s influence over the formation of the Children’s Aid Society in 1853 and the consequent proliferation of the “placing out” system. Rights for adoptees and biological parents entered public discourses when activist groups fought for them, and these rights were unevenly secured across some states between the 1970s and 1990s.73 The legal history of adoption is mostly measured in statutes and laws passed across states, but lawyer Amanda C. Pustilnik explores the private aspect of the development of adoption practices in the United States and also in Britain.74 She examines how the laws came about, how they were handled, and what parties shaped them. However, many of the actual practices that shaped the adoption landscape in the United States happened outside of the gradual and staggered state laws. These adoption laws, outlined above, changed over time in relation to the availability of infants, and the demand for them.

The hurdles of this wait time and rigorous background checks by social workers led many couples to eschew the official, legal methods for adoption and pursue private adoptions, which had less intense, if any, screening processes for potential parents and happened much more quickly. Pustilnik notes that standard accounts of adoption history present adoption as a pure construct of law, invented by legislatures in the mid-nineteenth century, which is not necessarily the case, and which has steep implications for many seeking adoptions in contemporary society.75 Pustilnik presents an alternate history of adoption law, in which it is non-statutory, and rooted in private-ordering enabled by contract law.76

The American Catholic Church did not influence adoption laws in the United States in the nineteenth century because it was not yet in a position to do so. The Church was still negotiating how to deal with its members, among them the famine Irish, who were arriving to the United States in droves and came to solidify an image of Catholics as poverty-stricken, delinquent, tenement crowds in the American collective consciousness. After the First World War, The National Catholic Welfare Conference blossomed into the single most important national organization in the American Catholic Church in the twentieth century, becoming the primary lobbying venue for the church with the federal government. From 1935 to 1950, the National Conference of Catholic Charities maintained an active presence in the hearings on Social Security Amendments, child welfare programs, and housing bills. Although American Catholics began to have a greater presence in American policymaking decisions regarding charity, especially surrounding the New Deal, they were not present in the creation of American adoption laws. However, although there is little evidence of Catholic officials’ presence in the official legislation of states’ writing and passage of adoption legislation, they influenced such laws indirectly by facilitating adoptions.

Three Mechanisms of Lenience

I suggest that three different mechanisms of lenience emerged in which church leaders and office-holders determined the “work” that needed to be done in order to receive a blessing of some sort, but the blessing was often power both in and out of the church. The impetus for these mechanisms of lenience was in large part due to mass immigration of Catholics to the United States between 1840 and 1940 (33.5 million Catholics arrived on American shores between these

77 http://archives.lib.cua.edu/findingaid/newcogs.cfm
78 Ibid., 186.
years). The first mechanism of lenience that formed in response to this immigration was one in which the Catholic hierarchy created additional opportunity for laity—including women—to take on leadership though Catholic charity work, the particular indulgence granted to laity. Catholic Charities emerged as a response to overwhelming immigration, and as Catholics realized that they could gain public esteem, status, and influence and rewrite their negative reputation in American society through charity work, their leadership emphasized Rerum Novarum and positioned its commands to provide charity as a command to the laity. Catholic laity made the most of this command, which established the foundation for the two following mechanisms of lenience. The second mechanism is one in which the American government provided a foothold, or “indulgence,” to Catholics: the indulgence of charity. The government and American society in general informally presented Catholics with a situation in which they could receive public esteem, status, and influence in exchange for performing charity work. Performing charity was already institutionally rooted because of an earlier Catholic shift toward encouraging laity to lead and perform charity work. What Catholics received, as a result of this indulgence of charity, was a voice in American policy creation and courtrooms, which shaped New Deal policies in the 1930s. The third and final mechanism of lenience was the indulgence of professionalization. The Catholic hierarchy and women who performed charity work met with great success on a volunteer level. As social work grew in authority and esteem, Catholic charity volunteers knew that they would benefit from co-opting the authority of social work ideas and principles. They invited social workers, their narratives about single motherhood, and their practices into Catholic maternity homes, and their practices regarding single mothers were changed forever, although they received the social influence, authority, and esteem that they had hoped.
Religious Studies scholar Robert A. Orsi proposes an approach to scholarship regarding instances of abuse that takes into account the nuances and negotiations of relationships within and between religious communities and the societies in which they exist. Orsi suggests that a narrative of resistance and submission is too simplistic, and it is more accurate to ask how religious ideas and figures functioned and were used in negotiations and compromises within that network of relationships. He explores the ways in which children, women, the elderly, and the disabled were vulnerable and exposed to the fantasies of adults, male church officials, and the able-bodied who often took care of them. He examines how religious figures and ideas could be mobilized to endorse and deepen discrepancies of agency and power, but also emphasizes how the disabled could also call on these religious figures and ideas to resist. Orsi focuses on the saints, and how holy figures can be implicated in struggles on earth, but suggests that once religion is understood as a web of relationships between heaven and earth, scholars of religion are also positioned within these networks. He highlights the fact that scholars’ relationships with their interviewees are also bound within the same relational network, and both parties’ experiences and histories form the context for understanding.

84 Orsi, “Between Heaven and Earth,” 5.
In Orsi’s view, a “braided history” alerts scholars to “improbable intersections, incommensurable ways of living, discrepant imaginings, unexpected movements of influence, and inspiration, existing side by side.”\(^8^6\) Rather than attempting to force history into a limiting, simplistic narrative of religion giving way to secularization, Orsi champions theories of alternative modernities and varying patterns of negotiation in the encounter of inherited religions with the social, political, and economic circumstances of modernity.\(^8^7\) Perhaps the most important of Orsi’s contributions for this dissertation is his articulation of the vulnerability of children in the Catholic church in the twentieth century. Orsi holds that the crisis of abuse of children by Catholic priests in the American Catholic Church was about children’s vulnerability to adult power and fantasy.\(^8^8\) Instead of perceiving real children as they were, church authorities operated on “children” as projections of their own needs and desires, or “children” as extensions of adult religious interiority, or ideas about children’s innocence or depravity.\(^8^9\) It became possible to abuse children because Catholic leadership saw only their own narratives about children, rather than the actual children in front of them. Priests could force adults and children to internalize the pressure they experienced, which made them keep silent about the abuse because of historical realities of the moment: disclosure would legitimize the enemies of the church.\(^9^0\) Orsi understands boundaries as the “necessary but socially and historically variable ways that relations among people are structured in a culture, the possibilities and limits of what people can do, feel, say, or imagine in relation to others.”\(^9^1\) He also understands these boundaries to be fluid creations of humans, indicating agency and power.

\(^8^7\) Orsi, “Between Heaven and Earth,” 12.  
\(^8^8\) Orsi, “Between Heaven and Earth,” 15.  
\(^8^9\) Orsi, “Between Heaven and Earth,” 15.  
\(^9^0\) Orsi, “Between Heaven and Earth,” 16.  
\(^9^1\) Orsi, “Between Heaven and Earth,” 16.
The mechanisms of lenience and discipline that I describe and examine throughout this dissertation inform my interpretation of the enduring engagement and negotiation of a distinctly Catholic imagination with the changing circumstances of life in twentieth century North America. Drawing from Orsi, I find that Catholics embraced charity and the scientific authority of social work to fulfill their own holy commands set out in *Rerum Novarum*, and negotiated cultural and social circumstances by rooting contemporary scientific ideas in scriptural commands.

**Chapter Organization**

This dissertation presents a story of strategic compromises in the face of vulnerabilities. It’s a story of innovation in times of need and of rewriting “normal” for the sake of institutional survival. It’s also a story of abuse which resulted when the recipients of charitable care fell through the cracks as their caretaking parties negotiated with each other and with rapidly changing circumstances of life while they compromised their leverage and lenience. I’m going to tell four stories of compromise and consequences. In Chapter 2, The Indulgence of Public Voice, I address the first two instances lenience and negotiation. The first mechanism of lenience formed in response to mass Catholic immigration to the United States from 1820 to 1920. In response to widespread Catholic poverty, Catholic hierarchy created additional opportunity for laity and women to take on leadership though Catholic charity work: this represents the indulgence of laity and women. Catholic Charities emerged to address overwhelming immigration, and as Catholics realized that they could gain social influence, esteem, and authority and rewrite their negative reputation in American society through charity, Catholic leadership emphasized *Rerum Novarum* and its commands to provide charity as an instruction to all laity. Catholic laity took advantage of this command and set the stage for the two subsequent mechanisms of lenience. The second mechanism is one in which the American government provided a “grace” or “indulgence” to
Catholics: the indulgence of political voice. The government and American society in general informally presented Catholics with a situation in which they could receive public esteem, status, and influence in exchange for performing charity work for Americans. The tendency of American Catholics to perform charity was already strongly institutionally rooted because of the previous Catholic shift toward encouraging laity and women to lead and perform charity work. What Catholics received, as a result of this indulgence of charity, was a voice in American policy creation and courtrooms, which shaped New Deal policies in the 1930s.

Chapter 3: The Indulgence of Professionalization, addresses a new mechanism in which the Church at all levels: hierarchy, laity, charity workers, and ordained women— had to make a choice about whether or not to embrace social work. The third and final mechanism of lenience was one in which Catholics took a different path from their Evangelical contemporaries, who staunchly rejected social work. Catholics welcomed social work and adjusted themselves to its methods and practices, in exchange for the ability to share in its social authority and influence: the indulgence of professionalization. The Catholic hierarchy and women who performed charity work saw that they would benefit from co-opting the authority of social work ideas and principles. They invited social workers, their narratives about single motherhood, and their practices into Catholic maternity homes, and their practices regarding single mothers were changed forever, although they received the social influence and esteem that they had hoped for.

Chapter 4: Discipline and Punish examines the consequences of fifty years of tactical decision making on the part of social workers, the Church, and the American government. As social workers infiltrated and influenced religious charity agencies, and as they and the religious agencies within which they operated collected information about the single mothers who passed through their care, social workers used this information to develop their own expertise in the
topic of single motherhood. They extended that authority to establish the power to make decisions on behalf of single mothers about whether or not they would surrender their infants to adoption agencies, regardless of what the mothers wanted. The final result was a culture of human rights abuses against single mothers perpetuated by social workers and religious charity workers, who had established a culture of therapeutic decision making which silenced mothers and rendered them invisible and inhuman.

The specific mechanisms of lenience and discipline that I describe throughout this dissertation set the stage for each that follows, and they support an understanding of an enduring engagement and negotiation of Catholic identity with the changing circumstances of life in twentieth century America. My approach presents an uncovered history of the Catholic Church and social work, of the roles of ordained and lay women within those institutions. Ultimately, my work contributes to an understanding of how systemic human rights abuses against single mothers were the pinnacle of three different histories of vulnerabilities and compromises, and of a culture of projected narratives about single motherhood which eclipsed the possibility of much-needed human connection or compassion for vulnerable, often young, women who often had nowhere else to turn.
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L. Jean Emery and Marc T. McDermott


http://archives.lib.cua.edufindingaid/newcogs.cfm
Chapter 2

The Indulgence of Public Voice:

Catholic Mobilization of Charity as Leverage in American Society
In a search for a photo of Catholic officials proudly standing in front of a freshly built maternity home, I failed. I found only photos of dingy, stone fences and dark buildings attached to scandalized articles about European Catholic maternity homes and their historic abuse. While the misbehavior in the European context is widely publicized and memorialized in movies such as *Philomena* (2013), I wanted a more complex understanding of the American context. Existing accounts of Catholic maternity homes, or any maternity homes in general, typically only address their history of human rights abuses.

My goal is to identify the social factors that built upon each other to eventually arrive at a fever pitch of widespread systemic abuse of single mothers. The theory reflected in this chapter is anthropologist Maya Mayblin’s theory of lenience. Mayblin suggests that “technologies of lenience,” are integral parts of an institution-building formula which, in Catholic tradition, are represented by “a carefully managed division of labour between clergy and laity, as well as upon a battery of legal commutations and practical avoidances aimed at minimizing the effort and pain of the ascetic approach.”

Mayblin applies this theory to Catholic elements such as confession, indulgences, The Crusades, and Saints’ cults. The dynamic of lenience includes an allowance for those who strive for a “lack of incorrectness” rather than for correctness. In other words, lenience represents an interplay between institutional authorities who make allowances, and their subjects who take advantage of such allowances, resulting in the broadening of an “institutional umbrella” of structure and support over those who may have previously not been pious enough to qualify for such benefits.

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I argue that the magnitude, diversity, and poverty of Catholic immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries required American Catholic church leaders to create a mechanism of lenience that empowered Catholic laity. Clergy responded by declaring that laity had a new responsibility to provide charity services, and by this, they would earn their title as “good Catholics.” As a result, Catholic laity took on responsibilities and claimed rewards that they would not have previously been eligible for. I contend that technologies of lenience also came about as a result of broader American vulnerabilities, specifically the same mass immigration that shook the American Catholic church. As bureaucracies within the church and American government shuffled and openings arose, American Catholic men and women, girls, professionals, and clergy used their agency to increase their status and institutional network. Catholic institutional growth succeeded, but the single mothers who sought refuge with Catholic maternity homes faced the discipline dynamic that their caretakers had recently escaped.

I apply the dynamics of lenience to Catholic history as discussed below by prominent Catholic studies scholars including J. P. Dolan and Robert A. Orsi, starting with immense, diverse immigration and American anti-Catholicism. Using material from the St. Vincent de Paul Society, this chapter explores how American Catholic laity took on new leadership roles in charity work which eventually set the stage for Catholic women to claim issues surrounding single motherhood as their own. The St. Vincent de Paul Society is also important in that it provides insight into how Catholics began to gain importance in American society as charity providers, thereby securing a voice for themselves in the 1930 creation of New Deal American welfare policies. This chapter explores the New Deal as a milestone for Catholic political involvement, and the reshaping of Catholic theology in terms of promoting charity work as a priority for laity.

**Catholic maternity homes as a manifestation of general institution building**
The story of Catholic maternity homes is the story of one minor, auxiliary branch of a broader, “era of consolidation,” aptly named by historian Thomas Tweed. Catholic maternity homes came together at a time when the clerical concern to build institutions—shrines, as well as parish churches, rectories, monasteries, convents, seminaries, hospitals, parochial schools, and colleges, shaped U.S. Catholicism. Instead of approaching Catholic maternity homes at their pinnacle of abuse, I aim to identify the historical, social, and religious factors that allowed the homes to eventually reach that point. Ultimately, questions and matters regarding ethnicity were pressing issues in the late-nineteenth and for the whole twentieth century. This resulted in shifts in power within both the American Catholic Church and the American government. The existing power structures within both the American government and the American Catholic Church were tenuous and constantly-shifting, and this instability led to bureaucratic blind spots.

By their recognition of institutional needs and goals and their identification of bureaucratic loopholes within the American government, creative Catholic clergy, laity, and women participated in technologies of lenience within the Church to gain agency and authority in the context of assuming leadership of Catholic charity work. The St. Vincent de Paul Society represents a powerful example of institutional consolidation, organization, and empowerment of the laity. This work extended to “special works,” which concerned women and children. Ultimately, Catholics negotiated with American political powers, and positioned themselves in civic space and American decision-making. Similarly, Catholic clergy took advantage of such bureaucratic loopholes in the United States government to gain presence and influence in political decision-

94 Tweed, “America’s Church,” 22.
making. Both dynamics resulted in the institutional growth of the American Catholic Church, and set the stage for Catholic maternity homes.

**Charity work as a response to American anti-Catholicism**

Many historians of Catholicism have documented the intensity, diversity, and magnitude of Catholic immigration to the United States in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Jay P. Dolan outlines in detail the comprehensive history of Catholic arrival to the United States from the Colonial Period, through the Church’s attempts to form a Catholicism that was at once American and Roman, through the “Immigrant Church,” from 1820 to 1920. Dolan identifies ten major immigrant groups, their patterns of settlement, their work patterns, and their economic mobility. Chester Gillis also addresses Catholic immigration to the United States in Roman Catholicism in America, noting that between 1820 and 1920, 33.6 million European Catholics arrived in the United States during the first great pattern of immigration. In America’s Church: The National Shrine and Catholic Presence in the Nation’s Capital, Thomas Tweed observes that the American government responded to Catholics’ increasing presence with alarm in 1920. The Emergency Immigration act of 1921 and the National Origins Act of 1924 reflected anxiety about Catholic presence in the United States on the part of those in charge of immigration policy. Historian Stephen Kenney describes American anxiety against Catholics as a widespread social phenomenon that changes in depth and nature, and the extent of its virulence, but never

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95 J. P. Dolan’s *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present* is recognized by many as an authoritative scholarly text regarding the arrival of Catholicism to America and its development and growth as an institution and a social presence.


99 Tweed, “America’s Church,” 132-133.
goes away.\textsuperscript{100} He notes that historically, there exist thoughtful criticism of the church but also “hoary prejudice.”\textsuperscript{101} Even as late as the 1960s, Catholics’ association with a Roman Pope caused the Reverend Doctor Norman Vincent Peale to publicly question whether a Catholic President (JFK) could withstand the pressure of the American Catholic hierarchy whose goal was to “break the wall of the separation of the church and state.”\textsuperscript{102} Issues related to mass immigration and confrontations with diverse, recently-arrived ethnicities were a locus around which the American government and the American Catholic Church built power relations in the 20th century. Dr. Kyle E. Haden also identifies the Reformation as the source of a particularly American aspect of anti-Catholic sentiments rooted in national consciousness.\textsuperscript{103}

I suggest that the dramatic increase of Catholic immigrants in the United States caused the American Catholic Church to renegotiate their bureaucratic structuring over the course of the 20th century. The resulting increase in agency of Catholic laity, including Catholic lay women, represented a “lenience.” Massive, unprecedented confrontation with the poverty of their own immigrant members created footholds and gaps in rules where women, laity, and the marginalized could take hold and make a case for their own importance. This loosening of bureaucratic tradition resulted in the institutional growth that eventually led to the formation of Catholic maternity homes as women-run Catholic institutions, and to negotiations between the Church and State in which Catholics’ voices became influential in the creation of the New Deal policies of the 1930s.

**Laity Mobilized in Charity Work— Importance of St. Vincent de Paul Society**


\textsuperscript{101} Kenny, “A Prejudice,” 640.

\textsuperscript{102} Kenny, “A Prejudice,” 640.

\textsuperscript{103} Kyle E. Haden, “Anti-Catholicism in U.S. History: A Proposal for a New Methodology” in *American Catholic Studies*, (Winter 2013) Vol. 124, No. 4, pg. 27.
The St. Vincent de Paul Society is important to this study in three ways. The first is that it represents organization efforts of Catholic laity. These efforts were successful, and the Society spread throughout the United States and gained support from clergy. The second reason for its importance is its unique focus on “special works”— work on behalf of women and children—which evolved into women’s work. A society founded by Catholic lay men created a foothold for Catholic women to assume unprecedented responsibility in charity work, thereby contributing to women’s agency and their perfect positioning to operate Catholic homes for unwed mothers. And finally, the Society’s successful growth, organization, and social initiatives strategically positioned Catholic men to gain legitimacy, presence, and a voice in American government decisions.

Lay Catholics organized the St. Vincent de Paul Society, which eventually became the springboard for many other lay charity institutions and networks, and for women to become involved in Catholic charity work and professionalization. In order to fully understand how Catholic laity mobilized charity work for immigrants and women to gain status and rights in the American Catholic church, I reviewed issues of the St. Vincent de Paul Quarterly from 1895 to 1945, and included segments from whichever issues contained key words about immigrant work, children’s work, or work with women. The following section illustrates the ways in which devout lay Catholics worked to establish their own importance and authority on charity matters despite conflicts of authority within the American Catholic church through the early-twentieth century.

**Origins of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in the United States**

Although the St. Vincent de Paul Society originated in France, it emerged in the United States where it revolutionized charity work. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul originated in Paris in 1833 as an association of Catholic laymen and was named for the seventeenth century

105 *St. Vincent de Paul Quarterly*, Vol. 8 no. 4 (Nov. 1903).


110 *St. Vincent de Paul Quarterly*, Vol. 8 no. 4 (Nov. 1903).
States which gave comprehensive information regarding the Society’s actions at home and internationally, as well as stories, instructions, and other matter intended to edify members of the Society and other interested lay people. These publications reveal that some lay Catholics were motivated to organize, build charity institutions, and record their efforts, which would harmonize with the later the social work requirement of “casefiles” and record keeping.

The St. Vincent de Paul Society came into being as an organization that addressed perceived social needs both within and also outside of the Catholic Church, but it quickly became instrumental in securing spaces for Catholic workers to create presences in civic state and city contexts, such as courtrooms and political offices. Leo XIII’s 1891 encyclical, Rerum Novarum, or “On the Condition of the Working Classes,” radically changed the Roman Catholic church’s understanding of social justice in the context of labor and capital.\(^{111}\) The principles of Rerum Novarum tasked the church with teaching Christian principles on the dignity of work and the crucial need to protect and improve the lives of the working classes.\(^ {112}\) This encyclical provided momentum and grounding for the social justice movement in American Catholicism at the same time as non-Catholic reform efforts were taking place.\(^ {113}\) The St. Vincent de Paul Quarterly, which Kerby edited, the Catholic Charities Review, and the Proceedings of the National Conference of Catholic Charities represent attempts to build Catholic scholarly literature about social work for those interested in reform work.\(^ {114}\)


\(^ {114}\) Hartmann-Ting, “Redefining Catholic Womanhood,” 102.
Accounts of the actual meetings of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul indicate that the Society created a magnetizing community and sense of purpose for many young Catholic lay men. Thich was crucial for many who experienced immigration or economic hardships:

"Those who have never seen a meeting of the Conference presided over by M. Le Prévost cannot form an idea of such, for never was a Conference presided over like this one. It never lasted more than an hour though a great many affairs were treated; the deliberations were short; the necessary time only was given to material help... the confreres conversed very freely, but moderately with each other, the greatest intimacy existed among all... The account of general works for the poor, established or in design, was always new and interesting at the meeting... During this hour, which always seemed too short, all were captured by an undefinable charm, and would leave with hearth filled and overflowing with fraternal affection. Mostly all the members remained together after the meeting; and would leave in groups, seemingly loth to separate; they walked about for some time and in all seasons before returning home. Not one of the confreres of that time has forgotten these splendid meetings, and this incomparable friendship; for no friendship, in fact, could ever equal that which is cemented with good works."\(^{115}\)

The passionate friendship and sense of community was reinforced by intricate mentorship and discipleship, as M. Le Prévost regularly walked and met with young men interested in the Society’s work.\(^ {116}\) He gave them books and discussed the content, which was usually about religious service, at length.\(^ {117}\)

The impulse to serve first manifested as service to children in need. In 1866, when the Boston Council had received a generous contribution from honorary members but had no clear use for the funds, one council member who was an agent for the Catholic Home for Children proposed that he would take a few homeless infants and provide for them with this donation.\(^ {118}\)

The Council consented, and ten infants were kept with families in Boston at a cost of about

\(^{115}\) *St. Vincent de Paul Quarterly*, Vol. 8 no. 4 (Nov. 1903), 259.

\(^{116}\) *St. Vincent de Paul Quarterly*, Vol. 8 no 4 (Nov 1903), 261.

\(^{117}\) *St. Vincent de Paul Quarterly*, Vol. 8 no 4 (Nov 1903), 262.

\(^{118}\) Thomas F. Ring, "Children as Special Work," *St. Vincent de Paul Quarterly*, Vol 1., No. 1 (Nov. 1895), 50—54.
In 1868, the Council desired to increase this work, and made an arrangement with the Sisters of Carney Hospital for infants to be taken at $6.00 per month. The Council donated $500 to furnish a separate ward in the hospital, and continued making yearly donations of $1000 to the Carney Hospital for eleven years, until 1879, when the newly established St. Ann’s Infant Asylum took complete control over the children and infants’ care branch. When St. Ann’s did not receive the support that it needed, St. Mary’s Infant Asylum took over this work until at least 1895.

Catholic print culture has documented these efforts, at some times more meticulously than others, and recalled them with a sense of pride, as suggested by this 1903 article entitled, “Albany’s Golden Jubilee: Fifty Years of Good Work” in the St. Vincent de Paul Quarterly:

The fundamental work of the Society is the visiting of poor families in their homes... the Conference of the Immaculate Conception... have relieved 2,275 families, and have made 38,574 visits... many a poor widow, under Divine Providence, and with the assistance of this Conference, has been enabled to bring up her children in the love and fear of God. One of its marked characteristics, from its very inception, has been the interest shown by its members in the welfare of our Catholic youth.

Keeping Catholic children out of state and city institutions, and especially out of Protestant homes and institutions, was a powerful source of motivation behind the establishment of offices that would create a steady place for Catholic service officials in civil courts. In a lecture delivered under the auspices of the Charity Organization Society in 1894, Joseph A. Kernan stated: “We look upon the Catholic child’s faith as an inalienable heritage, and we cannot stand by with

119 Ring, “Children as Special Work,” 50.
120 Ring, “Children as Special Work,” 50.
121 Ring, “Children as Special Work,” 50.
122 Ring, “Children as Special Work,” 50.
indifference and see this birthright insidiously taken from him, or see him deliberately placed where he will lose it.\textsuperscript{124}

**The St. Vincent de Paul Society and public influence through children’s work**

Efforts by the St. Vincent de Paul Society focused on the care of this critical mass of unclaimed children, which required Catholic members to establish the ability to lobby for legal decisions that benefitted them in the American courtrooms. This represents American courtrooms’ development of a systematic allowance for Catholics and their children, a lenience, which Catholics took advantage of. In the first issue, published in 1895, of the *St. Vincent de Paul Quarterly*, Thomas F. Ring explains how between 1879 to 1888, the Particular Council of Boston sought work that would serve to connect the Conferences. Upon the suggestion of the Superintendent of the Home for Destitute Catholic Children, the Council opened an office in the common center of the Boston Charities in March 1888, the purpose of which was to have a Catholic society agent in the courts to protect the interests of children of Catholic baptism against “state or city institutions, or to societies of Protestant philanthropists.”\textsuperscript{125} In 1895, The State of Massachusetts did not contribute financially to private charities because it had its own institutions who fulfilled the same functions. Catholic charity workers viewed this as a risk in which they would not only lose children to Protestant and secular institutions, but children’s souls, as well. Ring notes, “The danger in placing Catholic infants or older children with City or State institutions, is, that besides the almost absolute loss of such little ones to the faith of their baptism, very few pass into Catholic families, not so much by design but because there is a lack of agencies operating to procure


\textsuperscript{125} Thomas F. Ring, "Children as Special Work," *St. Vincent de Paul Quarterly*, Vol 1., No. 1 (Nov. 1895), 51.
Catholic homes for them."\textsuperscript{126} The Conferences donated about five percent of their total donations to the purpose of creating mechanisms in courtrooms that would direct Catholic children into Catholic institutions and homes.\textsuperscript{127} Concern for the souls of their own children led Catholics to start to successfully establish presence in American civil contexts, such as courtrooms.

Catholic institution building also resulted from perceived discrimination. In the beginning of the twentieth century, authors of the St. Vincent de Paul Quarterly described Catholic persecution by the Know-Nothing party and indicated what they perceived to be a virulent anti-Catholic spirit to be the inspiration behind non-Catholic schools: “This same spirit [Know-nothing anti-Catholic prejudice] seemed to actuate our separated brethren in their efforts to ensnare our Catholic children. One of their favorite means of so doing was in the establishment of what was known as “ragged schools” in the poorer sections of the city.”\textsuperscript{128} The Know-Nothing party established itself as an American political party outside of the bipartisan system in 1854.\textsuperscript{129} It was a minor party that sponsored the nativist cause and championed hostility to any influence or object perceived as un-American, or threatening to American customs.\textsuperscript{130} The overwhelming sentiment was that America was to be for Americans only.\textsuperscript{131} The Know Nothing order existed as a political party between 1854 and 1857, although Charles B. Allen founded the Know Nothing organization in New York in 1850.\textsuperscript{132} Its primary goal was to prevent foreigners and Catholics from taking political offices, and to make strenuous efforts to change the naturalization laws so that an

\textsuperscript{126} Ring, “Children as Special Work,” 51.
\textsuperscript{127} Ring, “Children as Special Work,” 51.
\textsuperscript{130} Hewitt, “The Know Nothing Party,” 69.
\textsuperscript{131} Hewitt, “The Know Nothing Party,” 69.
\textsuperscript{132} Hewitt, “The Know Nothing Party,” 69.
immigrant would not become a citizen until a twenty-one year residence period. The primary goals of the Know Nothing party hinged on the anxiety that anyone whose ideas or interests lay outside of America could not possibly be sympathetic to American goals, and if they were allowed to infiltrate the American political system, they would endanger it.

This type of American anti-Catholic vitriol only strengthened and honed Catholic resolve and helped Catholics to structure their own institutions. In response to the “ragged school,” Catholic Charity Conference members rescued twenty children, clothed them, and paid for their tuition in Catholic schools. The Conference then took a more aggressive approach and opened their own Catholic Sunday school and evening school on Van Zandt St., Albany, New York, less than one mile away from the “ragged school” on Hamilton St., Albany. This caused the “ragged school” to quickly go out of business. The preexisting institutions in the United States for childcare and welfare played an important role in determining the shapes that Catholic institutions would take as they formed in response.

The Particular Council of Boston viewed their office of Special Work for Children as a type of social currency, which bridged divisions between Catholics and Protestants, and helped to establish Catholics’ reputation as reputable charity workers in American society. In 1895, Thomas F. Ring has called the office a “Catholic Charitable Intelligence bureau.” He noted that Catholics and Protestants alike use it,” and that “Protestant societies, at times unfriendly, have even come to observe the watchfulness of the office, and act with us. And we know that

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they would not take much trouble to make inquiries concerning Catholic individuals if some of-
face like ours were not in the field.” The constant and unwavering presence of a Catholic ser-
vice worker in the city courts, as well as the usefulness and efficiency of the office itself, contrib-
uted to the reputation of Catholic service workers in Boston as service providers to be taken seri-
ously and as a resource for service providers of other religions and of the state and the city.

Organizations such as the Particular Council of Boston, the Charity Organization Society, and
the St. Vincent de Paul Society emerged in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in
the United States and actively contributed to the institutional “era of consolidation” described
by Thomas Tweed. The Charity Organization Society had emerged in London in the late 1860s,
and its mission was to coordinate the numerous social service organizations which worked side-
by-side but often not in cooperation. The Organization continued to coordinate the work of
service providers, but also enabled the investigation of entreaties for assistance and worked to
identify fraudulent requests among those wishing for aid in urban contexts, where people were
less familiar with each other and human need was congested and magnified. The Charity Or-
ganization also worked to eliminate the unnecessary reproduction of efforts to remedy the same
problems by numerous organizations who were close in proximity but failed to communicate.
Charity Organization Societies began to partner with the St. Vincent de Paul Society in the early

137 Ring, “Children as Special Work,” 53.
138 Carol A. Sukitz, “A Study of Parish Social Ministry and the Delivery of Social Services in the Neighbor-
hood/Community.” PhD diss., Marywood University, 2000, 10.
In an American context, the Charity Organization Society movement and other programs that aimed to relieve and prevent difficulties in society had gained a presence in nearly every major city by 1910.

The unification and order achieved within Catholic institution-building efforts led to an official, national structure for Catholic charities: The National Conference of Catholic Charities, in 1910. The experience of partnering with the Charity Organization Society alerted the St. Vincent de Paul Society to the fact that they needed full-time workers as well as their volunteers in order to maximize efficiency. Vincentians also became aware of their lack of central coordination. These two insights were a major impetus to the creation of the National Conference of Catholic Charities (NCCC). Brother Barnabus, a social worker from New York who was affiliated with the St. Vincent de Paul Society, wrote a letter to Bishop Shahan suggesting the establishment of a National Conference of Catholic Charities in 1909. Bishop Shahan responded by contacting Monsignor Kerby to call a meeting of Catholic charity service providers from different cities in the United States. At this meeting, members produced the following statement of their purpose:

The National Conference has been created to meet a definite situation. It aims to preserve the organic spiritual character of Catholic Charity. It aims to seek out and understand causes of dependency. It aims to take advantage of the ripest wisdom in relief and preventive work to which persons have anywhere attained, and to serve as

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a bond of union for the unnumbered organizations in the United States which are doing the work of Charity. It aims to become, finally, the attorney for the Poor in Modern Society, to present their point of view and defend them unto the days when social justice may secure to them their rights.148

This original statement of the NCCC’s purpose, codified at the meeting, first appeared in the Proceedings of the first yearly meeting of the Conference (September 25-28, 2910).149 The meeting successfully codified a structure for the National Conference with venues through which they could regularly share information, develop and publish their research, and prevail over the provincialism that had previously characterized and hindered Catholic service in the United States.150

Although the American Catholic church originally formed social services to care for their own, the NCCC enabled American Catholics to serve a much greater number of those in need, including non-Catholics, which broadened their reach institutionally. Gillis observes that through the National Conference of Catholic Charities, the Church brought organization to a welfare system that cared for its own but also for those outside of the Catholic community.151

The St. Vincent de Paul Society and Women’s mobilization through social work

Another technology of lenience came into play as Catholic male hierarchy carefully negotiated a new division of labor between clergy and laity, but also between men and women. As Catholic leaders in social service institutions expanded their reach and influence in American society, Catholic women mobilized perceptions of social work and a distinct need for charity


workers and professionals to achieve independence and authority. Male hierarchy encouraged them to do so as they faced the realities of providing social services for vast communities with a limited number of volunteers. Prevailing perceptions of social work as a women’s field allowed Catholic women to maintain respect for Catholic male hierarchy, yet cultivate their own authority over the fields of charity and illegitimacy at the same time.\footnote{Hartmann-Ting, L. E. “The National Catholic School of Social Service: Redefining Catholic Womanhood through the Professionalization of Social Work During the Interwar Years.” \textit{U. S. Catholic Historian} 26 no. 1 (Winter 2008): 103.} Before 1930, social work had not yet clearly defined its function in society, and therefore had difficulty clearly articulating its purpose. Overwhelming public perceptions of social workers painted them as either “sentimental ‘sob-sisters’ or . . . as hatchet-faced, flat-heeled, brief-case carrying women, who go about poking their long noses into other people’s business— never with the interest of the client at heart.”\footnote{Gavin, Donald P. \textit{The National Conference of Catholic Charities: 1910-1960}. Milwaukee, Catholic Life Publications, Bruce Press: 1962, 60.} Social work was viewed as overwhelmingly feminine, and although its stereotypes were negative, Catholic women were able to appeal to its feminine status when Church leaders and members questioned whether or not women should be involved.

Catholic women took advantage of Catholic charity organizations’ need for professional authorities to participate in the process of professionalization while still embodying traditional Catholic gender expectations, which required women to defer to men. If we return to a primary source, Ring downplays the roles of women in this work in his 1985 article, “Children as a Special Work.” In four pages detailing the advent of the new Boston Charity office and the successful function of entering courts to claim children into Catholic systems, Ring sets aside the end of one sentence, which starts with a description of men’s work, to deliver a surprisingly brief description of the enormous responsibility carried by the Catholic working woman in the office: “A
man now attends the courts daily, while a woman remains in the office for the purpose of keeping the accounts of the work, and of doing the details of the meetings of the Central Council, besides making herself useful in cases of girls and women.”  

Anthony Giddens’s concept of “front and back regions” comes into play here, as back regions present an escape from the exercise of power, or even an opportunity to orchestrate a power play. Giddens suggests that the importance of centralized surveillance in modern societies means that holding part of oneself back from the “front region,” from exposure in public spaces, can become an important part of a power dialectic. Ring’s description of women’s work indicates that in this instance, the woman fell squarely within this “back region.” and exercised power there. While a man was constantly in the public sphere, appearing in the courts every day in order to direct Catholic children into Catholic homes and institutions rather than allowing them to be placed in city or state institutions or Protestant organizations, a woman did all of the “back region work.” A woman fulfilled all of the administrative duties— this was 1895, and a woman kept records even before the social work discipline had indicated the staggering importance of record keeping in building legitimacy as a scientific and professional practice. A woman attended the details of the meetings of the Central Council, which probably allowed her to be present at such meetings at a time when women were struggling to be involved in Church operations. And finally, this woman “made herself useful in the cases of girls and women.”

Although this article in the St. Vincent de Paul Quarterly was primarily about children and children’s work, this statement indicates that adult women and girls still constituted a significant proportion of those receiving care from Catholic service organizations, even when those organizations were geared towards children’s care. This

155 Ian Craib, Reader in Sociology (Routledge, 2011), 47.  
156 Craib, “Reader in Sociology,” 47.  
is one example in one article, but it is representative of the broader trend discovered by Catholic service workers in which children’s work comes to include service to mothers and infants as well.

As Catholic women continued to organize and carry out Catholic charity work, they further expanded their influence as they formed auxiliaries, produced funding for their own organizations, and claimed service to impoverished women as their own domain. Ring’s article reveals this element of women’s work in the “back region” — women came to provide crucial funding for the St. Mary’s Infant Asylum. Numerous branches of a ladies’ society which were spread throughout different parishes worked to provide this funding. As the projects of Society increased, Catholic print culture indicates that laywomen activated with the approval of members of the male Church hierarchy to form auxiliaries, and claimed homeless women as their purpose:

At the suggestion of the Right Rev. Bishop McDonnell, a society of ladies has been formed, under the title of the Ladies’ Auxiliary of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, with the Rev. W. J. White, D. D., Supervisor of Catholic Charities, as President. This organization has already proved of the very greatest assistance to the Society. A home for friendless women, called the Ozanam Home, has been established under the care of the Society, and a lady is employed to visit the police courts daily to look after the interests of such unfortunates.

Catholic women's establishment of auxiliaries, cooperation with male church leaders, and claims to the service of distressed women situated them perfectly to accept social work professionalization.

When Catholics seized upon social work, they inherited social work’s claims to expertise on addressing single motherhood in American society. Social workers and those in charge of maternity homes began to speak about single mothers in moral terms. Subsequently, Catholic lay women who were also involved with social work and maternity homes were able to employ the

\[158\] Ring, “Children as Special Work,” 52.
newly identified “problem” of single mothers to achieve particular goals. The Church had been providing services to mothers in the United States through the St. Vincent de Paul Society and other service organizations since the mid-nineteenth century and could position itself as an expert in the area.160

Male Catholic leadership provided another technology of lenience to laity and women performing Catholic charity work in public, which manifested as the spiritual aspect of their work. This was a stark change from a culture of authority in which only male clergy could perform spiritual work. By giving them such power, Catholic clergy amplified laity and women’s responsibility, but also their sense of power and ability to leverage for even more power and leadership. This is a clear theme in the twentieth century, starting with the St. Vincent de Paul Society, who understood their work to be spiritual as well as material. They believed that spiritually transforming the individuals within their institutions was a critical element of their work.161 Those who published in St. Vincent de Paul Quarterly viewed themselves and their fellow Society members as apostles who fulfilled a present-day ministry to look after the “indigent” by serving poor families and relieving the parochial clergy of that responsibility.162 In an article entitled “The Spiritual Character of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul” in 1903, F. A. Rouse of Baltimore, Maryland states:

The duty performed by a member of the Society is verily an apostolic one, and in order to enter into the apostolic spirit of the work, it is necessary that much attention be paid to the spiritual as well as the temporal welfare of those seeking assistance, because Christ, the Divine Teacher, has said, ‘not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God.’163

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161 Hartmann-Ting, “Redefining Catholic Womanhood,” 267.
This bespeaks issues of boundary marking and role confusion between the laity and the clerical.

Rouse goes on to state:

This is an age of laicizing. The time has not long passed when the line of demarcation between the duties of the priest and those of his people, was considered by the latter to be sharply drawn. But times have changed, a new order of things now prevails. The functions of priest and people are now so closely united, so intimately interwove, that we find in this country, lay societies in every parish performing those corporal works of mercy, which, in former years, fell to the lot of the priest, alone and unaided.\footnote{Rouse, “The Spiritual Character,” 267.}

Rouse’s statements indicate that the help of laity in performing material acts of charity in the name of the Church was a welcome change. American Catholic print culture contained articles that emphasized the grave spiritual duty that all Catholics—laity and religious—were called to perform as part of their charity, in emotionally charged language, exemplified by the statements below, from the St. Vincent de Paul Quarterly:

There is possibly no stronger influence that can be brought to bear to elevate the minds and hearts of the poor than Charity, and there is certainly no more opportune time for exerting influence in this direction, than when engaged in a charitable enterprise. The application of this great virtue by members of this Society, should be but the means of clearing the way to salvation, of obstructions which poverty had laid, and the visitor to the indigent when thoroughly imbued with the spirit of this “lay apostleship,” will never be at a loss as to how to proceed to accomplish this end.\footnote{Rouse, “The Spiritual Character,” 268.}

Laity and women took their new command to minister through charity work seriously, and the mechanism of lenience that allowed them such spiritual authority led to institutional growth which manifested in mother care services.

The development of some sort of institutional support for unmarried mothers was a logical progression for Catholic welfare services, which were rooted in childcare from their advent.
Such care organizations were operated primarily by religious women’s groups, both lay women and women religious, and these child-caring institutions became the face of Catholic social service care in broader American culture. Thomas J. Ring noted above that as Catholic institutions grew to take care of infants, the institutional bodies that performed this care changed in their shape and size. In Boston, the institutions grew from a separate, furnished ward in the Sisters of Carney hospital, to the underfunded St. Ann’s Infant Asylum, to the more secure St. Mary’s Infant Asylum. Catholics formed a number of other service organizations which enabled them to gain further recognition and a louder voice in the public sphere.

The St. Vincent de Paul Society and Catholic influence in American welfare policy

As American Catholics negotiated with immigration, urbanization, and industrialization in different ways, they continued to stretch and grow their institutional network and lobby successfully for influence in American society and policymaking. This became clear with the Vatican’s codification of ecclesiastical law and the development of the National Catholic War Conference in 1917, which exemplified the American Catholic Church’s development of a more unified and centralized institutional network Catholic leaders formed as they recognized government’s growing role in the provision of social welfare. In his introduction to American Catholics in the War: The National Catholic War Council, 1917-1921, Cardinal James Gibbons attributed the War Council with the numerous achievements that fostered previously unprecedented unity within the Church, as well as a greater Catholic presence in many spheres of American public life:

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The National Catholic War Council united in patriotic effort all Catholic organizations: it aided the government by immediate contact in Washington: it explained and it defended Catholic rights. Its beneficial work was extended to all soldiers and sailors: its employment and reconstruction work was not, and is not, confined to Catholics: its community welfare work is for the entire community. It has brought into national expression the Catholic principles of justice and of fraternal service that bespeak the continued prosperity and happiness of America as a nation. It has opened the way for its successor—the National Catholic Welfare Council—to win still greater achievements in the days of peace for God and for country.  

Through the First World War and the National Catholic War Council, Catholics extended their services to non-Catholics and gained a stake in American social welfare to an unprecedented extent.

In attempts to enhance Catholics’ active participation and influence in the American government’s process of social welfare provisions, the bishops created organizations through which Catholics could represent themselves in public policy discussions. In 1919, the bishops developed the National Catholic Welfare Council (NCWC) as a project of the War Council that would serve to coordinate the Church’s work in social service at the national level. It would also coordinate, promote, and defend Catholic participation and interests in the public sphere in America. Support for the NCWC, however, was not without division on an elite level. Cardinal William O’Connell of Boston and other like-minded conservative bishops viewed the NCWC as an extension of the Americanism which the Vatican had worked to suppress, and subsequently refused to provide financial support for the NCWC. Although the organization had difficulties

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171 Gillis, “Roman Catholicism in America,” 104.

172 The Americanist controversy within the Catholic Church emerged as Americans began to suspect that Catholics in the United States would defer to Rome rather than United States leadership, and the Pope began to fear that some would want to introduce democracy into the Church. Some among the American hierarchy (the Americanists) believed that the church should be separate from the state. Other conservatives within the American hierarchy, led by
meeting its budget, the NCWC established a Washington office, thereby making it possible for them to interact with secular national entities responsible for the creation of American policy. Gillis notes that this provided a mechanism through which the bishops could speak as a national body and hold weight in public debates. Similar to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, the National Catholic Welfare Conference enabled Catholics to have a presence and a voice in the nation’s capital. A major difference between the BNSIC and the NCWC’s Washington office is that the Shrine allowed a diverse group of Catholics to have a presence—clerics, and many types of lay followers including women, children, and immigrants. In the case of the NCWC, the office afforded immediate presence to only bishops and other high-profile leaders such as Cardinal Gibbons.

The empowerment of Catholic bishops and leaders within American society inspired them to provide additional mechanisms of lenience and power for laity and women. A clear example of this is the bishops’ formation of the Department of Lay Affairs, which was comprised of the National Council of Catholic Men and the National Council of Catholic Women (NCCW). The NCCW made it their purpose to sponsor the National Catholic School of Social Service (NCSSS), which gave Catholic lay women a chance to shape their field of service in the Church and prepare their own women to engage more fully and have a greater influence in

Bishop Bernard McQuaid of Rochester, believed that the American church should not stray far from Rome. For more information about the Americanist controversy, please see Chester Gillis’s *Roman Catholicism in America*. New York, Columbia University: 1999, 70.

Gillis, “Roman Catholicism in America,” 70.

Gillis, “Roman Catholicism in America,” 70.

For an in-depth discussion about the importance of the concept of presence in the study of American Catholicism, as well as for ways in which diverse groups indicate their presence at the BNSIC, please read Thomas Tweed’s *America's Church: The National Shrine and Catholic Presence in the Nation's Capital*.


American life.\textsuperscript{178} The bishops’ endorsement of lay and women’s empowerment represents another lenience that led to institutional professionalization and growth.

It is important to note that by the mid-twentieth century, American Catholics were recognizing and utilizing their capacity as an effective political interest group. This is evidenced in their leveraging of their own hard-won Catholic charity institutional network built between 1900 and 1933, which culminated in the Catholic demands in the New Deal. By 1933, Catholics had already played a crucial yet mostly unrecorded role in the development of twentieth-century American welfare. Charity had become a hallmark of American Catholic identity and the primary way through which the church gained a public presence and voice. Historians Dorothy M. Brown and Elizabeth McKeown have noted that during the New Deal debates over social security, Bishop Aloysious Muench stood and loudly claimed, “The poor belong to us. We will not let them be taken from us!”\textsuperscript{179} Muench’s significance as a Catholic representative in state welfare policy formation, as well as his bold claim, are indicative of the significant Catholic influence and presence integral to shaping local and state welfare policy by the 1930s. By 1935, Catholics were situated to wield significant influence over social legislation for families and children.\textsuperscript{180} Brown and McKeown have also found that as the responsibility for welfare was placed in the jurisdiction of the state by the New Deal and Great Society programs, Catholic Charities maintained roles as both a partner in government programs, as well as a tireless advocate for those experiencing poverty.\textsuperscript{181} Within the first 100 days of the New Deal, the National Conference of

\textsuperscript{178} Hartmann-Ting, “Redefining Catholic Womanhood,” 104.
\textsuperscript{180} Brown and McKeown, “The Poor Belong to Us,” 1.
\textsuperscript{181} Brown and McKeown, “The Poor Belong to Us,” 1.
Catholic Charities held its 1933 convention in New York. President Roosevelt delivered an address in person, high-profile social work pioneers such as William Hodson, Linton B. Swift, and Mary K Simkhovitch were in attendance, and Catholics understood that this Conference signified “the place of Catholic Charities in the realm of human welfare as an agency of extraordinary force.”

Mechanisms of lenience up to this point, such as the allowance of laity and women to perform charity work and to understand this as a spiritual duty, had led to the development of another, different mechanism of lenience, one in which the American government would allow Catholics to have power. This manifested in the National Conference of Catholic Charities 1933 Convention.

The practical effect of the NCCC 1933 Convention was that the Roosevelt administration had stakes in the growing importance of a large demographic of Catholic voters. Once these politicians, who were also New Deal administrators, were present, they used the NCCC platform to promote their federal relief and recovery initiatives. Catholic speakers responded by pushing the goals of Quadragesimo Anno, the 1931 papal encyclical, on the New Deal policies. When Catholics gained greater acceptance as a legitimate thread in the imagined American religious tapestry, they were more easily able to establish their own social service institutions which extended outward beyond serving their own community. Members of the diocese met separately at the convention and produced “A Charter of Catholic Charities” to elucidate roles and responsibilities, and called on the government for funding, but ultimately refused to turn over their entire responsibility for charity work to the government. The New Deal struggled to provide relief,

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182 Brown and McKeown, “The Poor Belong to Us,” 151.
183 Brown and McKeown, “The Poor Belong to Us,” 151.
184 Brown and McKeown, “The Poor Belong to Us,” 151.
185 Brown and McKeown, “The Poor Belong to Us,” 151.
and at this point Catholic Charities had positioned itself to fill the government’s lack, as it had more agencies and institutions committed to charity than any other religious institution.\(^{186}\) The Roosevelt administration needed Catholic votes, and Catholics were finally in a position to state conditions before agreeing.

**American Catholics and The New Deal**

During the New Deal negotiations, American Catholics mobilized their own to take full advantage of their new political leverage as social service providers. Brown and McKeown identify three campaigns that Catholic Charities mobilized during the Depression and New Deal which solidified their place in the emerging American welfare system.\(^ {187}\) First, Catholic Charities called for local, state, and federal public funding to aid with the immensity of the economic disaster wrought by the Great Depression. The campaign was to continue Catholic Charities’ role in providing essential relief, although the onus for funding would switch to the government.\(^ {188}\) The goal of the second campaign was to limit federal provisions such as the Aid to Dependent Children and Child Welfare Services in order to safeguard the role of Catholic Charities in children’s charity work.\(^ {189}\) The third campaign organized Catholic voters to pressure local, state, and federal agencies and legislatures to maintain Catholic Charities’ role in welfare for Catholic children and families.\(^ {190}\) Catholic males engaged in high-profile, public discourse that secured Catholic presence and importance in American society, the establishment and carrying out of legislation, and as recipients of federal financial aid to private charity organizations. Women worked behind

\(^{186}\) Brown and McKeown, “The Poor Belong to Us,” 151.  
\(^{187}\) Brown and McKeown, “The Poor Belong to Us,” 151.  
\(^{188}\) Brown and McKeown, “The Poor Belong to Us,” 151.  
\(^{189}\) Brown and McKeown, “The Poor Belong to Us,” 151.  
\(^{190}\) Brown and McKeown, “The Poor Belong to Us,” 151.
the scenes in many of these organizations, and I suggest that the Catholic social platform established by participation in the New Deal is the jump-off point from which Catholic women eventually used maternity homes to leverage power within the Catholic Church, and also in local, state, and federal contexts.

**Catholic advocacy for social work professionalization and women’s growing role**

By the 1930s, Catholic leadership recognized the growing authority of social work and their previous encouragement of women to shape their field of service positioned Catholics and Catholic women to incorporate and grow alongside the social work movement. In the 1930s, social work started to acquire recognition. Pius XI reverenced and advanced the ideas of *Rerum Novarum* in his 1931 encyclical, *Quadragesimo Anno* (On the Reconstruction of the Social Order).\(^{191}\) In 1931, Bishop Shahan wrote that Christ’s description of service in the book of Matthew was “the Magna Carta of Catholic charity.”\(^{192}\) The Proceedings of the National Conference of Catholic Charities, the Catholic Charities Review (dubbed the official organ of Catholic social work), and the St. Vincent de Paul Quarterly (edited by Monsignor William J. Kerby, founder of the National Conference of Catholic Charities and Chairman of the Department of Sociology at the Catholic University of America) represent attempts to build Catholic scholarly literature on social work for those interested in reform work.\(^{193}\) Historian L. E. Hartmann-Ting has observed


\(^{192}\) In this passage, Jesus tells his disciples, “‘For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; naked and you covered me; sick and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to me . . . Amen I say to you as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me.’ (Matt. XXV, 35-40).” O’Grady, John. *Poverty, U. S. A.: The Historical Record: Catholic Charities in the United States*. Reprint ed. New York Arno Press & The New York Times: 1971. Original ed. by Randsell, Inc. 1930, v.

that advocacy for the professionalization of Catholic social workers, and for their presence in and outside of Catholic charities, became a crucial part of the Church’s answer to the challenges presented by industrialization, immigration and urbanization in society as it negotiated its pluralism. Catholic clergy such as Monsignor W. J. Kerby, Rt. Rev. John A. Ryan, Rt. Rev. John O’Grady, and Bishop Shahan worked to bring an awareness of social work to Catholicism. They were key figures in the Church’s organization of social services along national lines. As many leaders within the American Church embraced and promoted social work, social workers became a valuable resource.

Social and economic crises and the expansion of women’s roles in mainstream society alerted the Church to recognize lay Catholic women as a powerful but underutilized resource who could work towards fulfilling the Church’s social mission. Hartmann-Ting suggests that Catholic laywomen involved in the development of professional social work assumed broadened roles, but they were “faced with the challenge of cultivating professional authority and the ability to exercise influence in an effort to preserve an ideal to which their own lives stood in contrast.” Catholic emphasis on their femininity in a field that was already feminized only worked to place social work in a subordinate position in a professional hierarchy. However, Catholic laywomen found a way to trail-blaze their developing professional and public roles by accepting hierarchical authority to showcase the fact that their Catholic values were a priority. Historian

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Regina G. Kunzel has found that women in social work fulfilled nineteenth century gender norms despite the fact that they were becoming professionals.\textsuperscript{199}

The government’s neglect combined with public perceptions of single mothers as delinquent, fallen “sinners” rendered Catholic maternity homes the perfect venue through which Catholic laywomen could take over professional provision of social services where the government was largely absent. In so doing, they embodied Catholic theological values and fulfilled the biblical injunctions to care for one’s disadvantaged neighbors and share with them the gospel and Christian values. One way in which Catholic maternity home workers demonstrated their Catholic values in their workplace was by maintaining the nineteenth-century belief that “fallen women” must be spiritually reclaimed. The lenience represented by broadened roles for Catholic laity, led, ironically, to the heightened disciplining of single mothers whom they claimed to care for.

\textbf{Catholic mobilization of theological commands for charity work}

A recognition of the theological motivations for Catholic social service that partially underwrote Catholic advocacy for social work and formation of social service organizations helps to reveal the ways in which Catholic lay women mobilized elements of their religion that were available to them, in this case, biblical commands, to empower themselves and gain presence in their church. These theological injunctions were upheld as supreme in Catholic service, and women used the authority of such commands with church leadership in order to attain the status of important agents in private service organizations that worked to fulfill these theological Catholic commands. This also successfully made Catholic service organizations an important part of

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the public sphere. An investigation of statements made by the leading clerical figures who pioneered and developed the field of Catholic social work in both academic and practical ways provides an adequate understanding of Catholics’ theological motivations for providing social services. In a 1955 book entitled Catholic Social Work, Rudolph Villeneuve cites Christ’s John 13:34 command to “love one another as I have loved you” as the ultimate “rule governing man’s relations with his fellow man.”

Villeneuve translates the commandment to love one’s neighbor as one’s self as a social command, and continues to state that the theological virtue of charity provides a practical venue through which to observe the biblical commandment of love.

Villeneuve distinguishes charity from philanthropy by clarifying that philanthropy is dedicated to helping man “for his own sake and his own natural ends,” whereas charity is the love of God from which all actions towards fellow humans originate. The author’s distinction between philanthropy and charity is part of a larger discussion of the era in which Catholic charities felt that they had to prove their distinct value in a society in which the government was increasingly providing social services.

The American Catholic church’s goal of gaining power and influence in American culture, as well as their layers of historical struggles starting with mass immigration, and attempts to integrate immigrants into American society, led to Catholic leadership reinterpreting theological commands that had always existed in order to prioritize their twentieth-century goal of the institutional expansion of Catholic charities. Global tensions between the secular and ecclesiastical resulted in Pope John XXIII’s 1959 declaration of the Second Vatican Council, which sought to reconcile tension between the impulse to maintain the conservative, Thomistic worldview that

resisted assimilation to American culture or secular social ideas, and the “progressives,” who wished to rework Catholic tradition in light of undeniable global changes toward modernity and religious pluralism. The Second Vatican Council also sent the American Catholic church into a clerical authority tailspin. One response to the crisis of authority was to redefine what was sacred, and mobilize laity to reclaim public space as holy space. They accomplished this largely through laity-run Catholic charities.

The renewed holiness of charity work to promote institutional growth and survival

Another mechanism of lenience appeared as Catholic leadership in the United States used their capacity to imbue previously profane objects and acts with new sacredness in order to pronounce charity work as holy work, and to make laity primarily responsible for it. While this represented tremendous responsibility, it also gave laity greater power. Catholics in the early to mid-twentieth century had to fight for their space, which they viewed as a holy mission. Colleen McDannell identifies one of the results of this renegotiation of the sacred by studying religious objects. McDannell explores how people activate or suffuse objects with religious meaning—how do objects participate in and express changing notions of power? Regarding religious objects, McDannell has suggested that objects become powerful because other authorities have declared them to be so:

Through their writing and preaching, a select group of Christians interprets sacred scriptures and gives meaning to biblical and philosophical statements. A part of the group’s theological reflections is an analysis of how and why the sacred can come into contact with the profane. Those interpretations influence the actions and faith of the believers. . .

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While McDannell is concerned with Catholic sacramentals, her observation of this American Catholic process of the creation of the “holy” is relevant to an analysis of Catholics’ negotiation of power and purpose following the massive changes of Vatican II.

I suggest that Catholic leadership’s pronouncement of charity work as the laity’s sacred duty to extend holiness into a secular society is a similar process of sacred meaning-making to what McDannell has described regarding sacred objects. This is one way in which the Second Vatican Council had a tremendous impact on the expanding role of the laity in the American Catholic Church. In a 1960 publication entitled, “Laity, Church, and World,” by Yves Congar of the Order of Preachers, Congar distinguishes between Christian life in the church and that in the world.207 Congar saw a profound need for faithful lay Catholics in society:

A Christendom that is going to renew itself and live in the present cannot, apart from rare survivals, start from a basis of regulations, social set-ups, the favor of public authority, social pressure, as was the case in the past. It has to start from personal conviction, from the witness and glowing influence of Christians who are such from their very depths.208

Congar also cited Cardinal Stritch, archbishop of Chicago, to remind his audience that laypeople have the right to protest against the shortcomings of members of the clergy, thereby granting the lay faithful with a right that many had previously been aware of.209 In another public address, Congar identified an important aspect of precisely what the Church needed to renegotiate in the twentieth century when he states that lay people occupy the frontier where “Church meets world,” and that their mission is to “bring Christian influence to bear on secular life.”210

For the first time in many centuries, Catholic leadership saw a line between the “sacred” and the

210 Congar, “Laity, Church, and World,” 42.
“secular,” and perceived it as a grievous problem. They also viewed laity as a vast, untapped resource to correct the issue. The Vatican II Apostolicam Actuositatem Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (November 18, 1965) addresses the role of lay Catholics, and this is one of many documents in which Catholics attempted to clarify the role of the laity. In his introduction to the 1967 edited volume, Catholic Social Work: A Contemporary Overview, Peter C. McCabe holds that the Catholic community has an unquestionable responsibility “to share Christ’s Redemptive design and restore His work of Creation.”

McCabe’s statement exemplifies the Church’s understanding of itself as a community and its responsibility to symbolically recreate the myths of Christ’s redemption and the creation of the world through social service. McCabe goes on to argue that an understanding of Catholic social work in terms of these Christian myths “form the basis for a proper understanding of the Church and Catholic Charities.” McCabe’s assertion that any service, “if provided officially in the Name of the Church, are prolongations of the charity of Christ,” is consistent with Villeneuve’s earlier description of Catholic motivations for social work.

The establishment of charity work as the sacred duty of the laity had an enduring impact through the twentieth century. As late as 1978, David Power, a professor of systematic theology and liturgy at the Catholic University of America, cites a conference document which states that the primary duty of the lay person in service of the church is the evangelization of the “temporal sphere.” Conference members strongly believed that “it is chiefly by their work in secular af-

fairs that Christian laity act out their ministerial character as baptized members of Christ.” Catholics felt alarm at what they perceived to be their lack of influence in the public sector, and emphasized that it was the laity’s task to bring Christ into the secular sphere. They cautioned against the tendency for lay people to become too involved in church affairs at the expense of their secular ministry. Catholic lay women’s logical response to this was to continue to dominate work regarding women, especially single mothers. As we will explore in the following chapter, social workers had constructed single mothers as the perfect socially ill victim in need of their own professional expertise, and Catholic women had embraced their feminized women’s roles to also claim needy women as their own within the landscape of charity territory.

The Church’s theologically-justified motivations for providing services allowed it to view and present itself as a savior figure for the needy, and the newly unfolding characterizations of single mothers as delinquents in need of moral rescue positioned them as perfect subjects for Church aid. Through this particular venue, Catholic lay women were able to assert their moral mission while simultaneously professionalizing themselves in social work fields, thus establishing female presence in service organizations where they had previously been absent. Furthermore, Catholic women’s work in private maternity homes filled a gap in social service which the government had failed to provide, thereby elevating the Church’s importance in the social service sector.

Many of the institutions created and sustained by churches and church-related organizations throughout the twentieth century, such as the NCCC and the institutions mentioned by O’Grady, embraced social work and professionalization, thereby creating new features of Catholic womanhood and continuously providing more power footholds for Catholic women while

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simultaneously upholding the older concepts of Catholic womanhood. Lay Catholic women’s participation in Church functions had previously been limited to women’s auxiliaries of national organizations or parish activities. While the United States government had taken a larger role in the provision of social services in general, it neglected to organize or provide care for single mothers. Such mothers were considered delinquent, which distinguished them from other disadvantaged groups in society and constructed them as less worthy of public aid. American Studies scholar Marian J. Morton concludes that “the slow professionalization of maternity homes is further evidence of the low status of the clientele, a status confirmed by the lack of public subsidy and dwindling interest on the part of the Federation during the 1960s.”

As Catholics continued to develop institutions for the provision of social services, they attempted to unify and professionalize their operations, although primary sources indicate that they did not succeed, which further proves Morton’s argument that single mothers held low value in American society. Catholics wrote books and held conferences which chronicled their efforts, the challenges they faced in the process, and the ideas and practices which they found to be most useful as they worked to reach their goals, although they never seemed to arrive. In a return to primary source material, even as late as 1968, a survey of homes for unmarried mothers opens with an acknowledgment of the lack of coordination and knowledge surrounding what work is actually being done: “Many different organizations provide Mother and Baby Homes but

as each runs quite independently of the others there has been no means of knowing how far they meet the need.\textsuperscript{220} Conference proceedings from the 1975 Institute on Services to Unmarried Parents (run by the National Conference of Catholic Charities), a guide to Catholic maternity home services, and books about Catholic social services authored by Catholics throughout the nineteenth century cling to statements about what they understand to be their God-given commands to care for the disadvantaged in their communities and share the gospel. This indicates that despite their struggles to unify, their religious mission to make the secular realm holy through their charity work provided a justification to keep working in the face of relative failures.

Catholic charity institutions benefitted from the American government’s twentieth century lack of social provisions for single mothers, as well as their own women’s claim on work with women, and social work’s claim to diagnostic categories for single mothers. In her study of social policy and single mothers, Morton reveals that the image of the unmarried mother as a sinful, “fallen woman” has symbolized American social policy regarding unwed motherhood from the mid-nineteenth century until today. Ann Fessler identifies Protestant homes associated with the Salvation Army or the Florence Crittenton Mission as the primary groups who understood single mothers as “fallen women” in need of redemption.\textsuperscript{221} However, evidence from Catholic maternity home personnel, as well as the accounts of their clients, demonstrates that workers in Catholic-run maternity homes also subscribed to the idea that single mothers were fallen and in need of redemption. The introduction of a guide for Catholic maternity home services published


by the NCCC in 1967 understands single motherhood to be “an isolating experience because it . . . disrupts to some degree the unmarried mother’s relationship to God.” The guide established that the “Catholic maternity home is dedicated to helping the unmarried mother achieve a truly human life permeated with Christian ideals.” While my interviews indicated that there were indeed some religious practices in Catholic maternity homes, the goal of the homes that most clearly defined mothers’ experiences was to force them to surrender their infants by any means necessary.

Religious ideals about proper womanhood, social stigma, and social work narratives combined to make single mothers even more vulnerable. Morton finds that the sexual delinquency frequently associated with single mothers, designated as sin by dominant organized religions, delineates them from other dependent members of society. The single mother’s pregnancy indicates that she has not remained within her home, been subordinate to a male provider, or confined her sexuality to the boundaries of a heterosexual marriage— all of which were part of an accepted social construction of proper womanhood and motherhood sanctioned by custom and law. Morton argues that the American government had intentionally provided single mothers with the least residential care, the smallest amount of relief, and the fewest medical services. It is not surprising, then, that O’Grady’s account reveals that no hospitals provided care for mothers before or after childbirth, and that the default assumption was that mothers would

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223 Catholic Charities, “Guides for Catholic Maternity Homes,” 2.  
surrender their infants for adoption. Unwed mothers were low on the priority list of government-run hospitals. One result of the government’s failure to provide such support has been that the private sector became unusually significant. Catholic women took a prominent role in providing such support.

Conclusion

The impetus for starting social services was uniform: to avoid exacerbating anti-Catholic and nativist sentiments in American culture, to streamline Catholic-baptized children into Catholic homes and care institutions rather than “losing” them to Protestant and state or city institutions, to address the rampant poverty and crime within their own communities, and to establish Catholic presence in American welfare policy and society at large. Maternity homes built by American Catholics are situated within these concerns, and they emerge with other Catholic institutions within the larger national encounter with unprecedented ethnic diversity. Clerical concern about lack of Catholic influence in society led to a renegotiation of what could be made sacred, and elevated the importance of the laity as interlocutors. The laity-run St. Vincent de Paul Society served as a springboard and a major consolidating force in an era of institutional growth and a fresh, important mission for laity and women. The St. Vincent de Paul Society also set the stage for maternity homes in three ways: by focusing on “special works,” or work regarding women and children, by providing opportunities and structures for laity to organize and participate in Catholic charity work, and as St. Vincent de Paul and its associated charities and institutional network grew in size and utilization, their existence positioned Catholics in America to be influential in welfare policy creation. This influence is exemplified in the New Deal, in which

Catholics called for federal aid to support the fallout that resulted from the Great Depression, called for limited federal provisions for welfare to ensure continued importance of Catholic charity services, and organized Catholic voters to maintain Catholic Charities’ role in welfare. Catholic organization and institution building strengthened, leading to the Catholic School of Social Service. The following chapter will explore the ways in which Catholic women and authorities mobilized secular social work, and the impact this had on the single mothers who gave them all a reason to exist.
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Chapter 3

The Indulgence of Professionalization:

Catholic Charities’ Negotiations with Social Work
In the previous chapter, I explored the mechanisms of lenience that were created as American government and the American Catholic Church responded to massive, diverse immigration to the United States between 1840 and 1940. This chapter explores a third mechanism of lenience that built on the previous two: the indulgence of professionalization.

This chapter’s argument centers on the observation that twentieth century social workers were carried by Christian institutional structures, especially maternity homes, and the Catholic hierarchy and female devotees were likewise carried by social work’s burgeoning authority in the field of illegitimacy. I argue that in this process, social workers benefitted from the ability to use single mothers in religious maternity homes as subjects for their own knowledge-production process, and Catholics benefitted from more legitimate professionalization and recognition of the quality of their social services. This mechanism of lenience is one in which American Catholic leaders and women sought to leverage the growing authority of social work to advance their status as charity experts in American society at large. In their acceptance and promotion of social work, American Catholic hierarchy and women ceded important ground to social workers, and the practices inside of their maternity homes changed significantly as a result. Before the introduction of social work, mothers in homes were expected to keep their infants and raise them to redeem themselves through the holy, motherly, act of raising a Catholic child. Afterward, surrendering the infant to social workers to be placed in another home and never seen again by their natural mother was perceived as the only redemption for the sin of premarital sex. Social workers gained countless single mothers on which to build their ever-growing body of knowledge and expertise on “illegitimacy.” The American Catholic Church was able to claim this expertise for themselves, as well, and continue the legacy of social service that they had built in the first half of the twentieth century. However, despite diverse groups of women mobilizing and promoting
their own institutional growth, Catholic workers and social workers leveraged the argument that women biologically have different roles than men, rather than upending this theory altogether. Catholic women and social workers also achieved their institutional growth by developing an entire field around the disenfranchisement of another group of women: single mothers.

The trajectory of this chapter begins with a note on my use of the term “professionalization” and its particular theoretical nuances as they apply to this chapter. I situate early twentieth century Catholic women according to official Church writings about their role in the church, and explore how this role changed over time, as did their own self-perceptions as Catholics. I provide a brief history of the process by which social workers took control of religious maternity homes by creating standards, enforcing inspections, and gaining control of funding through Community Chests. I explore the diverging responses of evangelical maternity home workers, who generally resisted social workers and viewed them as wrong-headed, and Catholic maternity home workers, who prided themselves on achieving social work standards within their institutions. The chapter then identifies three dominant narratives used by social workers to describe single mothers: feebleminded, sex delinquents, and neurotic. I observe a transfer of ideas as social workers influenced Catholic maternity home workers, consequently, Catholic practices within their maternity homes changed dramatically. These dynamics illustrate the mutual benefit that social workers and Catholic maternity home workers gained as they traded some of their hard-won principles for institutional growth.

In this chapter, I use the idea of “professionalization” as Regina Kunzel has explained it in her book, “Fallen Women, Problem Girls: Unmarried Mothers and the Professionalization of Social Work 1890-1945.” Kunzel explains that in the late eighteenth century, social workers battled against characterizations that cast them as philanthropists, religious or moral guardians, or
altruists. Until the 1910s, evangelical women had claimed authority over the care of single mothers. Social workers sought to take over this territory and change its association completely from an authority granted by gender differences and religious beliefs to an authority granted by professional expertise. This required social workers to completely revamp their image. Kunzel notes that social workers revealed their status and professional anxieties by endlessly comparing themselves with established high-status professional such as doctors or engineers, claiming that they were the doctors and engineers of society. Social workers parlayed this nominal claim into practice by leveraging “science,” which functioned by granting legitimacy to social work as well as draw tighter boundaries around it: only those trained in it could practice it. This also delegitimized religious charity workers who had traditionally claimed illegitimacy as their own charitable field. Social workers invented casework as a trained practice of their field that marked them as scientific experts and also gave them a methodology and an esoteric language that set them apart from the untrained religious women who had dominated the field of illegitimacy in previous decades. Through casework, social workers effectively transferred authority over the field of single motherhood, or “illegitimacy,” away from religious women and made it their own by virtue of their mastery of a professional discipline they created. I use “professionalization” in this sense— one in which it grants influence and authority to those who attempt to gain it, although aspiring professionals must be aware of cultural influences and incorporate them adequately into their practices in order to do so. I contend that just as social workers created the

“science” of casework and then mobilized it to gain their own authority and influence professionally, Catholic charity workers saw this dynamic at work and embraced social work in an attempt to share in the exact same influence and authority in American society. However, since it was largely women who sought to gain this power and authority, Catholic hierarchy had to make the concession of allowing a secular field to influence their institutions and members.

Mayblin’s theory of lenience focuses on religious community members who dwell within religion’s “softer, secularized edges,” and further, those who do not put as much earnest, conscious, self-cultivating work but are institutionally, doubtfully, or indifferently religious. She suggests that the scholarly community would benefit from a better understanding of subjects who “carry their Christianity lightly and who, in turn, are carried lightly from the cradle to the grave by Christian structures and traditions.” I argue that Catholic hierarchy extended mechanisms of lenience in which hierarchy members chose to grant holiness and religious meaning to charity work serving non-Catholics. Subsequently, they invited the openly secular institution of social work into their religious institutional structure in exchange for elevated social influence, authority, and esteem for all parties involved. Similarly, I contend that this lenience was mutual between Catholics and social workers: Catholics allowed secular social workers into their homes, where they could benefit from the information they gained there, and when social workers gained near-complete control of the maternity homes, they allowed religious workers to continue to identify the maternity homes and services as religious while gaining the public authority and esteem that came with social work’s hard-won secular, scientific identification.

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As American Catholics gained a voice in American policymaking, and as American Catholic laity took on unprecedented responsibility and power within social service organizations, American Catholic hierarchy recognized two things: the growing influence of social work as a professional field of expertise in social service, and the untapped capacity of Catholic women to professionalize through social work and thereby leverage the authority and prestige of the burgeoning field of social work. Members of the American Catholic hierarchy encouraged Catholic women to become social workers, and as they did, Catholic women inherited the narratives about single motherhood upon which social workers built their field. This caused Catholic professional women to comply with practices regarding the treatment of single mothers that were previously not common practice in Catholic social services to such mothers.

**Women’s roles within Catholicism**

Although the church has maintained a conservative expectation for women’s behavior and role, women have negotiated within this framework and taken advantage of any license afforded to them, or to laity in general. My first primary source to illustrate early twentieth century Catholic women’s roles in the United States is a published chronicle of the September 27-28, 1922 meeting of the Catholic hierarchy at the Catholic University in Washington, D. C., recorded in *The Catholic Historical Review*. Sixty Bishops and Archbishops attended this meeting. The anonymous chronicler recorded praises of the work done by the National Council of Catholic Men and the National Council of Catholic Women, which demonstrates the success of laity-composed organizations discussed in the previous chapter. The chronicle includes Archbishop Hanna, who was the Chairman of the Administrative Committee. He addresses the proposed
Women's Right's bill and the endeavors to have it enacted as a federal constitutional amendment. Hanna criticizes it as "extremely radical and dangerous to public morality." In 1922, Catholic hierarchy were threatened by women's right to vote. The church fought this potential federal bill. However, they praised women's mobilization within the confines of the church. The chronicle outlines Catholic women's tremendous mobilization through organizations and institution-building:

In dealing with the Women's Council, Bishop Schrembs dwelt upon the remarkable evidences of the readiness of Catholic Women to cooperate in the national program of the Welfare Council as manifested by the accredited delegates of more than 300 Catholic women's organizations who met in Washington last October. Aside from the accredited delegates, representing twenty-nine states and 114 cities and towns, over 400 individual members were registered at the various sessions of the convention. Subjects especially considered during the convention were: the immigration problem; care and welfare of girls; need of training Catholic workers in the widening field of social service. The convention officially promised its support to the National Catholic Service School for Women, the establishment of which had been previously approved at a general meeting of the bishops. Suitable buildings for the Service School were secured in Washington and the school, which is the only resident, standard school of its kind in the country, is now in its second year of operation. During the year 1921-22 the school numbered twenty-two pupils. About the same number have registered for the present scholastic term.

Catholic women had a strong presence, and the charity initiatives of the NCWC are clearly cited as the cause for such participation.

Women's advances through such mechanisms of lenience seemed to coincide at times with major national emergencies. In 1947, in response to the International Union of Catholic Women's Leagues, Pope Pius XII published a statement entitled *Papal Directives for the Woman of Today*. In the document, he perceives a great change in women's roles from those situated

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within the confines of the home to new duties “abroad.”²³⁸ He presents World War II as a catalyst for changes in women’s duties:

The year of World War II and the post-war years have presented and continue to present to woman . . a tragic picture without precedent. Never. . . in the course of history of humanity have events required on the part of woman so much initiative and daring, so much sense of responsibility, so much fidelity, moral strength, spirit of sacrifice and endurance of all kinds of sufferings— in a word, so much heroism. . . in the course of these awful years, women, old and young, have been forced to practice more than manly virtues, and to practice them to a degree required of men only in extraordinary measures.²³⁹

Pope Pius XII goes on to note that there is a place for some but not all women in political life.²⁴⁰ He describes women’s role in the home as one that still contributes greatly to the social and national economy, but makes an allowance for women with “more leisure time” to “take up the burden of public life” as representatives.²⁴¹ Even though this view still mostly relegates women to their work in the home, the fact that the Pope himself has allowed for some women to assume positions in public organizations represents a significant shift from the previous source, in which Catholic hierarchy opposed women's suffrage.

Catholic women also mobilized Cold War paranoia about the destruction of the nuclear family to position themselves as those best suited to solve the problem of “illegitimacy.” Theologian Mary E. Hunt has noted that Catholicism, particularly, has a well-earned reputation for being “antibody, antiwoman, and antisex through centuries of dogmas, doctrines, and dealings.”²⁴²

²³⁹ Pope Pius XII, “Papal Directives”
²⁴⁰ Pope Pius XII, “Papal Directives”
²⁴¹ Pope Pius XII, “Papal Directives”
She observes that Catholic pronouncements about female sexuality stem from Biblical instructions that urge wives to subject themselves to their husbands, and progress through patristic views of women’s nature ("woman is the devil’s gateway," writes Tertullian), and give way to a sexual ethical tradition built on prohibitions.\textsuperscript{243} These prohibitions materialize as bans on certain behaviors, such as intercourse or pregnancy outside of heterosexual marriage, and result in the erasure of women’s basic rights to health, choice, and well-being. The prohibitions usually hinge upon a woman’s marriage to a man. Hunt further notes that Christian images and symbols of women’s sexuality are distinctly domestic, as if what is at stake were the home itself.\textsuperscript{244} Hunt argues that what was viewed as being at stake in the home was unconnected to anything larger, but I contend, however, that in the context of single mothers who interacted with Catholic charity agencies, especially during the first half of the twentieth century, a threat to the nuclear family was the most profound and universe-destroying type of threat, connecting to everything outside of the home. This was caused in part by the leftover prewar influence of eugenics, combined with Cold War emphasis on religion and morality as foils to the “evil communists,” and the subsequent renewed importance of the Victorian sexual mores which were both deeply connected with Christianity, and deeply western in tradition, and forbade extramarital pregnancy. The smallest unit of civilization as they knew it was the nuclear family. They believed that the disruption of such a family could result in consequences of apocalyptic proportions.

The government’s neglect combined with public perceptions of unwed mothers as delinquent, fallen “sinners” rendered Catholic maternity homes the perfect venue through which Catholic laywomen could take over professional provision of social services where the government

\textsuperscript{243} Hunt, “Good Sex,” 160.
\textsuperscript{244} Hunt, “Good Sex,” 162.
was largely absent. In so doing, they embodied Catholic theological values and fulfilled the biblical injunctions to care for one’s disadvantaged neighbors and share with them the gospel and Christian values. One way in which Catholic maternity home workers demonstrated their Catholic values in their workplace was by maintaining the nineteenth-century belief that “fallen women” must be spiritually reclaimed.

Historian Regina Kunzel has noted that the professionalization surrounding the field of illegitimacy reveals that evangelical women and social workers underwrote their narratives of single motherhood with their own anxieties and those of their time.245 I offer that Catholic women participated in this process as well. However, their deeply American-Catholic impulse to establish themselves as charity providers differentiated their mobilization of illegitimacy and single motherhood from that of their evangelical peers. Kunzel also argues that the contest between evangelical women and social workers over unmarried motherhood, maternity home practices, and their purpose, exposes the ways in which gender was a powerful factor in the process through which evangelical women and social workers competed for authorship of popular understandings and authority over the issue of out-of-wedlock pregnancy.246 I suggest that Catholic women were active agents in this process, as well. However, I posit that institution-building also had an important role in a process in which social workers and Catholic women related to one another through back-and-forth adaptations as they came into contact in daily life through their work, and struggled to make meaning from their work with illegitimacy and single mothers, and of what that meant for their own identities as charity workers, professionals, and women. This is the mechanism of lenience— for every surrender, the fundamental makeup and structure of the

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surrendering party is changed. In this case, I will demonstrate how surrendering to social work may have led to institutional growth for the Catholic church, but it fundamentally changed their practices.

Evangelical and Catholic women who worked with single mothers in early-twentieth century America responded to the same stimuli—abandoned children and single mothers with no resources, and the burgeoning influence of social work—with different impulses. Evangelicals frequently opposed social workers, denied their competency, and rejected their perceived intrusion and dehumanizing treatment of the single mothers whom they wanted to redeem. Evangelicals perceived social work as an affront to their own authority in the network of maternity homes that they had worked so hard to establish. On the other hand, Catholics engaged in charity work viewed social work as a stepping stone for success rather than a threat. This is exemplified by Msgr. William J. Kerby, the chair of Catholic University’s Department of Sociology and founder of the National Conference of Catholic Charities, who was an important figure committed to changing Catholic perceptions of poverty. He presented poverty as a result of larger systemic problems resulting from the current economic system, and believed that material relief was no longer enough without social change. Historian L. E. Hartmann-Ting has observed that advocacy for social work professionals to work in and outside of Catholic charities, was a crucial part of the Church’s response to the hardships of industrialization, immigration, and urbanization in an increasingly diverse society. Catholics embraced social work and formed a symbiotic relationship of mutual benefit with it, in which Catholics grew institutionally. This is evidenced by

250 Hartmann-Ting, “Redefining Catholic Womanhood,” 102.
Msgr. William J. Kerby’s devoted establishment of the National Catholic School of Social Service in 1921, which he designed to be modeled after the American Association of Schools of Social Work. Catholics fully engaged the professionalizing, and therefore, legitimizing, power of social work.

Evangelical resistance to social workers in maternity homes in the early twentieth century led social workers to focus more heavily on claiming illegitimacy as their field of expertise, as it was easier for them to control than resistant evangelical women or the single mothers in their care. Evangelical women had cornered the market on maternity homes and boasted formidable networks across the United States, including fifteen Salvation Army maternity homes by 1894 and seventy-eight Florence Crittenton maternity homes by 1909. However, when power within evangelical maternity homes transferred from evangelical women to social workers, evangelicals struggled against social workers at every turn. Although they professionalized in some ways, they still fought to maintain organizational autonomy and ultimately denied social workers’ authority in care work. Social workers found that they could not gain authority over evangelicals in maternity homes, and therefore turned to narratives about illegitimacy to convince the professional world of their expertise. In this way, evangelicals indirectly contributed to the rise of both social work and Catholic charities, who both used illegitimacy as a domain for their expertise. Evangelicals saw a threat in the rise of social work, where Catholic hierarchy, women, and laity saw the potential for professionalization and upward social mobility. I argue that Catholic women competed with evangelical women in forming maternity homes in the beginning of the

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20th century, but relied more heavily on the Catholic institutional network geared towards orphans, medical care, and schools for their authority in the early years. Rather than fighting with social workers, like many evangelical women, American Catholic women co-opted the scientific authority and success of social work as it found its stride after 1945.

Funding from Community Chests illustrates the difference in response to social work requirements between evangelical and Catholic maternity home workers. Regina Kunzel outlines how a switch to funding from independent fund-raising to Community Chest systems transferred power away from evangelical women who worked in maternity homes.256 Starting in 1920 and gaining traction and momentum in the 1930s, Community Chests appeared in many cities and they became the default funding sources for charity organizations.257 The purpose of Community Chests was to coordinate and organize local welfare machinery by centralizing charitable donating and financing.258 Community chests performed all fund-raising community-wide, and distributed the funds to member agencies.259 By 1929, most cities operated on the Community Chest system.260 To receive membership and funding from a Chest, each member agency was required to submit its entire program and budget for approval and funding, and the Chest heavily regulated each expense.261 Such Chest systems gave social workers unprecedented power, as the system enabled them to force professionalization through budgetary decisions, and allowed them to base their funding on their own evaluations of the homes.262 Kunzel notes that social workers

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256 Kunzel, “Fallen Women, Problem Girls,” 118.
257 Kunzel, “Fallen Women, Problem Girls,” 118.
258 Kunzel, “Fallen Women, Problem Girls,” 118.
262 Kunzel, “Fallen Women, Problem Girls,” 120.
who operated Chests used budgets as “bargaining chips” to require member organizations to either cooperate with casework agencies or hire caseworkers. During the funding cuts occasioned by the Great Depression in 1929, many maternity homes which had held out and done their own fund-raising until that point finally had to surrender to the demands of Community Chests, which allowed social workers to shut down homes that refused to obey the standards set forth by social workers.

With this knowledge, it becomes increasingly significant that social workers almost completely controlled Community Chests, and Catholic adoption agencies and maternity homes were almost entirely funded by them, indicating the influence and control of social work on the Catholic homes. The 1957 report titled Adoption Practices in Catholic Agencies mentioned above reveals that 83% of the agencies included in the study received funds from Community Chests, and among the smaller agencies, about 23% received 100% of their funding from Community Chests. The remaining 17% of Catholic adoption and maternity agencies that did not receive Community Chest funds still received public funds. The author also notes the deep integration of Catholic Charities’ agencies with Community Chest drives, which were operated primarily by social workers:

. . . Since these agencies are all Catholic agencies, one would expect that a high proportion of them would be receiving financing from the Catholic Charities. less than half of the agencies reported, however, that they are receiving Catholic Charities funds. This reflects the extent to which the Catholic agencies are integrated in the community planning and Community Chest drives. . .

263 Kunzel, “Fallen Women, Problem Girls,” 120.
Where evangelical maternity home workers had fought against social work principles and standards, Catholics had gone out of their way to adopt and align themselves with them.

Although most Catholic maternity homes prided themselves on their achievement of public funding, proceedings from the 1975 Institute of Services to Unmarried Parents indicate that maternity home workers and social workers did not use those funds to help economically disadvantaged single mothers. In a Detroit, 1975 presentation on an outreach program for single parents, Willow V. Reilly, supervisor of the Catholic Charities of Cambridge-Somerville, stated that Catholic agencies rarely provided services to poor mothers:

In Boston, up until the late 1960s, private family service and child welfare agencies, for the most part, provided services only to upper and middle class unmarried mothers. The mothers were financially solvent, were in most cases planning for the adoption of their child, and were motivated enough to come to the agency looking for help with a problem pregnancy. The major reason for this particular selection of clientele was that only a limited amount of funding was provided by the community United Fund for services to unmarried parents. Consequently, almost no services were being provided by private agencies to poor, unwed mothers and/or girls planning to keep their child.²⁶⁸

This source notes that few private agencies were providing services to poor mothers, but there was a conspicuous lack of public services to single mothers, as well. The perceived sexual transgression of single mothers transformed them from typical dependents in American society to a special kind of delinquent, one who deserved punishment. The idea that women should remain within their homes and maintain subordination to a husband is codified in secular law.²⁶⁹ This manifested in an American welfare system in which unmarried mothers had the least possible

support, the least residential care, the least relief, and the fewest medical services.\textsuperscript{270} The result was that the private sector—religious maternity homes—played an unusually significant role, especially as their workers claimed that work with single mothers and infants was “women’s work.”

Although Catholic women fought for additional agency and power within their church throughout the twentieth century, they failed to supersede biologically-rooted perceptions of women’s roles, because they still depended on the biological argument about women’s difference to support their own authority. Catholic women themselves have been divided about their own roles in their church and society. Theologian of Catholicism Maureen K. Day has argued that there was a fissure in female identity among American Catholics, and that this coincided with a political divide in the United States more generally.\textsuperscript{271} Day cites J. P. Dolan to suggest that although views of womanhood have changed in the Catholic imagination, they changed mostly collectively among American Catholics for the first half of the 20th century.\textsuperscript{272} Day credits the cultural revolution of the 1960s, the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights Movement, the feminist movement, and the Second Vatican Council with the cultural fissure between opposing views of appropriate womanhood among American Catholics.\textsuperscript{273} I contend that the Catholic women discussed in this chapter mobilized the needs created by social emergencies, and although they took advantage of mechanisms of lenience that granted them additional power and responsibility, they still couched their work, their accomplishments, and their capabilities within a traditional gender perspective in which women have particular duties determined by biology.

\textsuperscript{270} Morton, “And Sin No More,” 1-2.
\textsuperscript{272} Day, “From Consensus to Division,” 129.
\textsuperscript{273} Day, “From Consensus to Division,” 129.
American Catholic women and social workers mobilized these biological ideas to empower themselves, but they never completely freed themselves of such ideas. The consequences of this were threefold. Social workers had used professionalization to undermine the status of obstinate evangelical maternity home workers and to ply Catholic maternity home workers into submission. However, they were forced to submit to new professionals by 1950, essentially, getting a “taste of their own medicine.” Catholic women who understood their roles collectively until the 1950s were ultimately divided by broader political disputes because they had never really defeated the question of biology, which was brought into public consciousness with the proliferation of feminist ideas in the mid-twentieth century. And finally, the single mothers who became the subjects of their knowledge creation faced additional disciplining, and ultimately, punishment.

Catholic perceptions of single mothers and adoption

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, workers in Catholic maternity homes took great measures to try to convince single mothers to keep and raise their infants. The first mention of single mothers is indirect, but indicates that the Catholic author believes that infants’ well-being and chances at survival are much higher if they remain with their natural parents. In the first issue of the *St. Vincent de Paul Quarterly*, in 1985, Thomas F. Ring noted that the death rate of infants who were placed in homes, possibly with their own biological mothers, nearby his charity’s office was about twenty-five percent yearly.\(^{274}\) He compared this with the death rate in “foundling hospitals,” where infants were taken without their mothers, which was seventy-five percent in the first year, and very few of these infants lived to two years old.\(^{275}\) This author did


\(^{275}\) Ring, “Children as Special Work,” 50.
not make a value-judgment on whether mothers were redeemed by keeping or surrendering their infants, but presented it as fact that infants survived better in homes (not necessarily adoptive) than they did in foundling homes.

The expectation that the mother would immediately surrender her child was the default solution of public institutions in the 1930s. In a 1930 publication, John O’Grady outlined strategic attempts on the part of diocesan workers to reduce the instances of mothers’ surrender of infants for adoption. O’Grady placed a negative value judgment on unnecessary separations of mothers with their infants. In the text, O’Grady states that numerous smaller dioceses had connected with public hospitals.276 In these interactions, the dioceses sent mothers to the general hospitals’ special department for unwed mothers. While many hospitals had designated sections for unmarried mothers, none of the public hospitals had any provision for the care of infants and mothers after birth. “The general plan,” O’Grady states, “is to have the child surrendered immediately and sent to the diocesan orphanage which endeavors to find a free home for the child.”277 O’Grady identifies this arrangement as a problem, but notes that only one diocese actually made any kind of effort to change it by sending a caseworker from the diocese to promptly establish contact with the mother the instant she was admitted into the hospital.278 According to O’Grady, caseworkers would speak with mothers about the future of their children, making sure mothers were aware that the diocese could arrange for mothers to nurse their children if they wished.279 O’Grady’s account also states that caseworkers often made arrangements with the mothers’ relatives for the care of the child.280 O’Grady’s 1930 account presents the separation of infants from

their mothers as a problem. He regards the work of diocesan caseworkers as a positive force because their involvement in the interactions between mothers, their infants, dioceses, and hospitals was expected to decrease the number of mothers surrendering their infants for adoption. He even indicates that in cases where the natural mother could not be convinced to keep her infant, caseworkers attempted to keep the infant within the family by placing it with the next of kin. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century, women were generally scorned for surrendering their babies, and religious institutions often encouraged mothers to keep their babies, as they viewed family preservation as a form of redemption for mothers.281

Social work narratives about single mothers: 1910-1930

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, evangelical and Catholic women shared the idea that women and girls who became pregnant out of wedlock were victims in a vicious scheme of seduction and abandonment. The early-twentieth-century anti-prostitution crusade and the First World War brought national focus onto illegitimacy, which resulted in a confidence boost for evangelicals, and widespread American cultural support for maternity homes.282 Evangelical reform women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were among the first to emphasize single motherhood and the “fallen” women who fell prey to it as subjects for redemption through sisterly, womanly care.283 In the 1910s and 1920s, the issue of illegitimacy became synonymous with welfare work. Social workers quickly became the most influential in determining American perceptions of single motherhood and “illegitimacy.”

282 Herman, “Kinship by Design,” 36.
283 Herman, “Kinship by Design,” 1.
In her study of evangelical maternity homes run by female evangelical reformers and social workers, Kunzel finds that in order to claim the field as their own, social workers had to redefine illegitimacy and the “problem” of the unwed mother. The image that resulted from social workers’ reconceptualization of single motherhood were joint discourses of feeblemindedness and sexual delinquency. The 1911 Senate Report stated that feebleminded women, “left unrestricted, will inevitably become mothers of illegitimate children.” Kunzel identifies circular reasoning at work: feebleminded women were “in constant danger of becoming pregnant,” and most unmarried mothers were feebleminded. Feeblemindedness was a cause of illegitimacy, but could also be an assumed trait of mothers who conceived out of wedlock. The discourses of feeblemindedness and sex delinquency represented the extent and the boundaries of the social work establishment’s concept of single motherhood between 1910 and the 1930s. I suggest that this process through which social workers created narratives and diagnostics for single mothers that held up simply by virtue of their single motherhood exemplifies part of Foucault’s mechanism of discipline. Specifically, Foucault describes a dynamic in which power produces reality, and a whole set of techniques and institutions is set up to measure, supervise, and correct the new category of the “abnormal.”

Social work narratives about single mothers: Post-WWII (1945) to Roe v. Wade (1973)

Historian Lori Chambers draws on studies of adoption practices in both the United States and Canada, and primarily from case files from the Children’s Aid Society in Ontario, to gain an

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understanding of the ways in which social workers and maternity homes shifted their perceptions of single mothers over time. At the beginning of the twentieth century, in their written depictions of mothers, Chambers finds, social workers reveal that they believed that most of the mothers were incapable of furnishing a proper environment in which to raise their children. Social workers used “diagnostic labels” and “the language of clinical blaming” as socially acceptable ways to speak disparagingly about mothers. This method supported social workers’ attempts to appear to use scientific terms and techniques while simultaneously wrestling agency from single mothers who came to them for help. Terms that appeared repeatedly and were broadly accepted and expected in descriptions of unwed mothers came to include, “delinquent,” “immature,” “neurotic,” “unstable,” or “promiscuous.” Before the Second World War, social work, medicine, psychology, and religious sectors had constructed single mothers as overwhelmingly delinquent. Catholic women who worked in maternity homes used the culturally accepted delinquency of unwed mothers to present themselves as important agents in the redemption of the unwed mothers, the rescue of their babies, and the preservation of society. Chambers’ observation about social workers’ and religious charity workers’ development of narratives about single motherhood also demonstrates a tendency within Foucault’s mechanism of discipline. In this mechanism, individuals are fabricated in by institutional language, given that they are pronounced “criminals before their crime” by preexisting narratives that identify subjects solely by

293 Chambers, “Adoption,” 170.
their crime. The Second World War and shifting methods and intellectual trends in psychology, social work, and medicine transformed the way religious maternity homes viewed and treated single mothers. By the 1950s, Catholic social service had adopted more of a psychological understanding of the “problem” of unwed motherhood, but they placed importance on the spirituality of the mother as well as her child. The Sisters of Charity stated with pride how many of the unmarried mothers with whom they had worked had “returned to the sacraments.”

The Second World War and shifting methods and intellectual trends in psychology, social work, and medicine transformed the way religious maternity homes viewed and treated single mothers.

In their interviews with historian Ann Fessler, single mothers who had stayed in maternity homes run by Catholic Charities and staffed with Catholic social workers confirmed that social workers and other staff in the maternity homes doubted their moral and financial integrity. In Ann Fessler’s interviews of mothers who surrendered a newborn for adoption between the end of World War II, in 1945, and the passage of Roe v. Wade in 1973, one mother remembers, “Those social workers kept telling me I wasn’t good enough to parent my son, and made me believe I wasn’t good enough to parent anybody… Social workers made the decision that I wasn’t good enough to parent my son.” Fessler’s interview material add further confirmation that social work narratives and practices reflected a change from encouraging mothers to keep their infants, to undermining that desire and reinforcing the idea that single mothers were both unable and unworthy of keeping their infants. Another mother remembers her weekly meetings with her social

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worker: “it was always, ‘What are you going to do? How are you going to support this kid? What makes you think that you could possibly be fit to raise a baby?’ And this was week after week.”

Many social workers went as far as telling unwed mothers that they did not have the right to be a mother, what they did was wrong, and they were not worthy or capable of keeping their children or providing for its needs.

The Catholic stance on single motherhood and adoption remained mostly the same with the introduction of social work principles, but changed greatly at the start of the Cold War in 1945. By this time, social work narratives about single mothers had developed into three diagnostic categories (feeblemindedness, sex delinquence, and neurosis) that Catholic Charities workers then adopted and mobilized to pressure single mothers into surrendering their infants to adoption. Kunzel has noted that in 1947, National Florence Crittenton Mission surrendered its policy of keeping mother and child together, which indicated the ultimate victory of social work ideals and practices. Some Catholic women were social workers, and some were non-professional workers in maternity homes. Non-professional Catholic women often embraced the view of unmarried mothers as delinquent or feebleminded as it enabled them to position themselves as agents performing the Church’s moral and charitable work to an appropriate recipient. Catholic female social workers accepted the feeblemindedness or delinquency of unwed mothers inasmuch as it came with the territory of social work.

Social work narratives about single mothers: split camps and “neurosis” (post-1945)

Historian Ellen Herman confirms that a shift took place before the second half of the twentieth century. Herman distinguishes between a “first generation” of adoption professionals

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who believed that unmarried mothers were most likely feebleminded, sexually victimized against their will as a result of their feeblemindedness, or too immoral to follow society’s rules, and a new mid-century view in which non-marital pregnancy signaled a mother’s emotional issues which sprang from her own immaturity and failure to adjust. After World War II, there was a dramatic rise in unmarried births, especially among middle-class women. Subsequently, social workers had difficulty labeling all of these women (who closely resembled them demographically) as feebleminded or delinquent, and they turned to the increasingly popular field of psychiatry to find an answer. As social work paradigms shifted after the Second World War, those describing single mothers began to favor terms such as “neurotic” and “unstable” as opposed to the previously favored “feebleminded” and “delinquent.” Freudian analysis was a major influence in post-World War II social work descriptions of young pregnant women, who were often characterized as “very young, overly sexual, and psychologically disturbed.” Social workers also factored home conditions, family life, and education into evaluations of potential causes of unwed pregnancy. By the mid-twentieth century, some social workers had stopped viewing unwed mothers as weak, helpless, or bad, and simply assumed that they were neurotic. This new diagnostic category took away the genetic condemnation that feeblemindedness carried; in-

305 Chambers, “Adoption,” 171.
fants born of a neurotic woman were not bound to share her condition, the way feebleminded infants were imagined to. This enabled those pronouncing neurosis to still claim the infant as a perfect “product” for adoption.

One of the outcomes of the switch to psychology was that applying pressure to mothers to consent to surrendering their infants to adoption, and the separation of mothers and their children, was justified. 308 Although it did not happen uniformly, religious maternity homes that chose to embrace professionalization and social work also accepted a new adoption-positive policy in which mothers were viewed as unstable and incapable of making choices for themselves, much less raising a child. 309 This new shift created a new space in which Catholic women working in maternity homes could gain public presence as they became critical elements in a new social “solution” to single motherhood.

As neurosis and mental instability had come into vogue as lenses through which to view single mothers, social workers assumed that pregnancy was “an unconsciously planned act,” something that the women had purposely done because their home life was less than ideal and they wished to spite their families and secure for themselves an infant, who would be a source of affection. 310 Social workers’ records acknowledge that many single mothers wanted to keep their

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309 Another reason for a change in attitudes toward adoption was a dramatic increase in the demand for babies following World War II. Fessler finds that the number of adoptions per year that were between non-related families went from approximately 8,000 in 1937 to over 70,000 by 1965. Fessler, Ann. *The Girls Who Went Away: The Hidden History of Women Who Surrendered Children for Adoption in the Decades before Roe v. Wade*. New York, Penguin Press: 2006, 148.

babies, but the workers read this desire as a symptom of sickness in itself. At the 1975 Institute on Services to Unmarried Mothers, participant Willow Reilly indicated that Catholics who worked with single mothers adopted this line of thought as well:

The pregnancy is an attempt to meet psychological needs. Many are looking for a . . . way of escaping an unhappy family situation and gaining independence through the establishment of one’s own household. For many, the child is the first and only thing that they feel really belongs to them. Many, who have had unhappy lives up until this time, see the baby as giving them a purpose for living. Many had had both knowledge and access to birth control devices and have not used them.

As keeping the child was now perceived as a signal of mental infirmity, social workers and religious charity workers promoted surrendering the child for adoption as the responsible thing to do. Previously, religious institutions that provided services to single mothers had done all in their power to encourage mothers to keep their babies. The new understanding of unmarried mothers as neurotic inspired acceptance of the idea of surrender. Maternity homes run by Catholic Charities joined others run by the Florence Crittenton Association of America and the Salvation Army in order to form a national network of maternity homes, which understood itself to be a facilitator of a process in which adoption would allow white middle-class women and babies to return to “normal life,” by which they meant a life in which the baby had never existed.

Catholic maternity home guides as evidence for the influence of secular social work

311 Chambers, “Adoption,” 172.
The following discussion is based on primary sources, which consist of Catholic maternity home guides from 1951 to 1975. I have also included non-Catholic sources such as guidebooks for adoption service by the Child Welfare League of America and reports by the World Health Organization about illegitimacy to gauge where Catholics stood in comparison to non-religious or social work standards and practices. I apply Foucault's description of the dynamic in which “normal” must be established for “abnormal” diagnostic categories to exist, and for subsequent bodies of knowledge and authority emerge to perform correction. I contend that these maternity home guides demonstrate a mid-century shift in the economy of the power to punish. The mechanism of lenience in which Catholic hierarchy and women allowed social workers, their practices, and their narratives to reshape their maternity homes gave social workers unprecedented leverage. This influence can be traced through primary sources in six ways: by ascertaining the presence of social workers and caseworkers in maternity homes, by the sharp increase in adoptions that coincided with their presence, by the changes in sources of funding for maternity homes, how the Catholic women who worked with single mothers promoted their own professionalization, how they praised infant surrender as a “responsible choice,” and how they presented casework as a resource to single mothers. Social workers used these advantages to create narratives about single motherhood that reshaped public “common sense" and codified scientific diagnostic categories throughout numerous medical, scientific, and social disciplines, and as it spread through religious maternity homes, it became moralized. The result was that the power to punish single mothers was distributed throughout the social body in homogenous circuits operating everywhere. I suggest that Foucault’s theory illuminates how social workers turned maternity homes and illegitimacy into apparatuses of knowledge creation, and leveraged the bodies and

minds of single mothers in order to generate power for themselves while simultaneously taking it away from those mothers.

A 1951 report by the World Health Organization compiled by John Bowlby clarifies social workers’ ideas, their sources of information gathering, and the extent of their influence. John Bowlby, an influential British psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, contended that mother love is a biological need for a child.316 His idea added moral weight to the necessity for a mother to stay at home with her child, and positioned working motherhood as a negligent form of parenting. The implications of this for unmarried mothers was that even if they could find a job, to have it while being a single parent would be negligent for her child. The tone and argument of the World Health Organization Report, which is composed of data taken from numerous different countries, are shaped almost entirely by the position of American social workers on illegitimacy, single mothers, and what they considered to be “redemptive” or socially responsible behavior on the part of a single mother who had to make a decision about the future welfare of her child. Furthermore, American social work ideas dominate and conclude this study, which is a “world” study based in at least six countries. The report indicates that until that point, illegitimacy was not a widespread social concern. Rather,

... the fact that some girls became pregnant illicitly was looked upon somewhat fatally and dismissed as just human nature. Apart from moral exhortation, little attention was given to prevention. Studies carried out in America make clear, however, that the girl who has a socially unacceptable illegitimate baby often comes from an unsatisfactory family background and has developed a neurotic character, the illegitimate baby being in the nature of a symptom of her neurosis.317

This characterization reflects Kunzel’s argument that following World War II, the “problem” of single motherhood broke into several “problems,” divided along race and class lines.\(^{318}\) By 1951, when this guide was published, the narrative of neurosis was fully operational to delegitimize white single mothers’ desires to keep their infants while simultaneously offering them the privilege of social rehabilitation (contingent upon their cooperation with social workers’ demands of infant surrender) that was unavailable to their black counterparts, since their infants were not valued as highly in the adoption market.

Although Bowlby had conducted his study throughout France, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom, the United States was the only country in which pregnancy out of wedlock automatically determined social workers’ expert diagnoses of a small battery of social or mental problems that rendered the mother unfit to keep her infant. In one study cited by Bowlby, the researcher determined that all 100 study participants—“girls” between the ages of 18 and 40—were “unhappy and driven by unconscious needs” and “had blindly sought a way out of their emotional dilemma by having an out-of-wedlock child.”\(^{319}\) The tone of this study on single motherhood is condemnatory and its conclusions depend on assumptions and shame-inducing descriptive terms rather than on demonstrated proof. However, such terms and judgments still made their way into official publications such as this one, which is published by the World Health Organization. Social workers’ newfound authority combined with their methodical use of narrative diagnostics such as “neurotic” or “feebleminded” led researchers in other fields, as well as the general public, to adopt and proliferate these terms and ideas. In this

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way, single motherhood went from a broadly perceived inevitability of society to a punishable, shameful social illness.

A booklet published by the Children’s Bureau of the US Department of Labor is further evidence of this proliferation. The booklet, which Bowlby cites in his own report, indicates that between 1941 and 1951, adoption had become much more commonplace.320 Bowlby heralds this as “progressive policy” and places a positive value judgment on it. This is evidence of not only the accelerated influence and presence of social workers in agencies and institutions that addressed single motherhood, but it also represents a sharp increase in adoptions coinciding with that influence.

The author goes on to state that social workers in the United States understand their duties to be the work of helping single mothers to face the “real situation,” in which she is “an immature girl, on bad terms with her family, with no financial security, having to undertake with little or no help the care of an infant for whom she has mixed feelings, over a period of many years.”321 Bowlby suggests that the U. S. policy at the time, which required single mothers to “make realistic long-term plans to provide care themselves, or else permit others to do so— by arranging adoption,” is superior to the policies active in Great Britain, in which single mothers were encouraged to care for their infants and permitted to indefinitely refuse consent for adoption.322 Although Bowlby was famous for his work on maternal loss, he cites studies by others who argue that adoption is in the best interest of children. Perhaps the implication is that if a mother was unmarried and required to work, she would not be able to spend enough time fostering the important connection between herself and her child, thereby making a married adoptive

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322 Bowlby, “Maternal Care and Mental Health,” 99-100.
couple a better fit for parenthood. This affirms a change in the authoritative professional prescription for the “responsible” solution to single motherhood, which, at this point in 1951, was established as adoption.

Bowlby's argument hinges upon the assumption that encouraging a single mother to take responsibility for her baby will inevitably lead to the child’s condemnation to “an endless succession of foster-homes or to be brought up in an institution when there are long waiting lists of suitable parents wishing to adopt children.”323 This assumption is a result of the social work idea that single mothers are incapable of raising a child properly simply by virtue of her single motherhood.

Policies regarding the encouragement or prohibition of single mothers to bond with their infants and care for them immediately following birth is a direct indicator of the influence of social work in any organization. In Bowlby’s report, he claims,

... it is in the mother’s interest to make the decision to keep or part with her baby early rather than late. ... it is no kindness to permit her to become attached to him; parting is then all the more heart-breaking. ... Rigid policies that all unmarried mothers must care for their babies for three or six months and must breast feed them can have no place in a service designed to help illegitimate babies and their unmarried mothers to live happy and useful lives.324

By 1951, the World Health Organization had accepted social workers’ claims that single mothers must be urged to make the decision to surrender their infants as quickly as possible and that their interaction with her infants should be limited.

Social Work influence and presence is clear in Catholic studies regarding adoption practices. In 1957 the National Conference of Catholic Charities published a study entitled “Adoption Practices in Catholic Agencies,” the author notes that the “process of adoption must necessarily

323 Bowlby, “Maternal Care and Mental Health,” 100.
324 Bowlby, “Maternal Care and Mental Health,” 102.
involve representatives of many specialties—doctors, priests, lawyers, social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, anthropologists, geneticists and others." In an outline of the study methods, social workers are credited with having helped write the questionnaire questions that were the primary source of data for the study. The authors identify the influence of social work right away, as well as other scientific fields from which Catholic Charities drew authority and looked to for professional guidance and collaboration.

This report also indicates that the increase in case workers’ engagement with single mothers in Catholic maternity homes resulted in a far greater rate of infant surrender. One of the findings in a 1954 report by the National Conference of Catholic Charities was that the majority of unmarried mothers were “anxious and willing to accept casework and other services in order to assume the responsibility of planning thoughtfully for the future of their children.” The majority of unmarried mothers, it was noted, decided to release their children for adoption. The author credits the decision of the single mothers to surrender their infants to adoption to their desire to act as responsibly as possible in the interests of their unborn children. This report makes clear that an increase in the growing social work presence and influence on single mothers resulted in a dramatic increase in adoptions resulting from this reframing of adoption as the best and only “responsible” solution to single motherhood. The study also indicates that three times as many children were adopted in 1944 as had been in 1934; between 1944 and 1953 there was an 80% increase in adoptions in which the number of adopted children grew from 50,000 to 90,000.

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Furthermore, all Catholic services to unmarried mothers were offered jointly with adoption services. A mother would not have been able to seek help without social workers confronting her with adoption as her best choice.

Despite the strong influence of social workers in Catholic adoptions and single mother services, Catholics still narrated the plight of the single mother as a moral, spiritual issue. In a 1966 study of Catholic agencies serving unmarried parents, the Very Rev. Msgr. Lawrence J. Corcoran, who as the Secretary of the National Conference of Catholic Charities, suggests that the basic problem of illegitimacy is “the growing indulgence in sexual activity outside of marriage” and that “the problem of illegitimacy not only has implications for social service programs, but also relates to the question of the ethical standards to which Americans adhere.” The moralized nature of Catholic charity workers’ narratives about single motherhood indicates that the “power to punish” single mothers had spread to religious charity agencies, who had previously not imagined single motherhood as a punishable offense.

Further evidence of social work’s growing influence and presence in Catholic maternity home operations is this statement from a review of policies and contracts in the same NCCC-issued maternity home guide: “Frequently, maternity homes will utilize the services of allied agencies and organizations, doing so under formal contractual agreement.” By 1967 maternity homes and social workers had established a network that extended through social service organi-
izations, hospitals, and courtrooms. This is a significant part of Foucault's "discipline-mechanism."\(^{332}\) The first element of this mechanism includes the "functional inversion of disciplines," a process through which an institution that had originally emerged to solve a problem now shifts its function from problem-solving to skill-sharpening.\(^{333}\) The goal here is to "increase aptitudes, speeds, output and therefore profits. . ."\(^{334}\) Although this mechanism still exerts a moral force over people's choices and behavior, it mostly values results over actions and introduces people into a machinery, or "forces an economy."\(^{335}\) An example of this is the change in maternity home functions, which emerged out of attempts on the part of Catholics in late-nineteenth century America to "care for their own," who were impoverished and perceived to be causing chaos in tenement housing and in city streets.\(^{336}\) This chapter has also established that in their early-twentieth century operations, catholic maternity home workers put great effort into encouraging natural mothers to keep their infants.\(^{337}\) However, this changed as social workers took control of maternity home practices and the beliefs that informed them, which transformed maternity homes into mechanisms for efficient and nearly inevitable adoptions.

The second aspect of Foucault's "discipline-mechanism" is what he calls "the swarming of disciplinary mechanisms."\(^{338}\) This indicates that established disciplinary functions of particu-

\(^{338}\) Foucault, "Discipline and Punish," 211.
lar institutions become “de-institutionalized,” that is, the elements of discipline used in a particular institution are broken down into smaller, more flexible methods of control.\textsuperscript{339} This enables additional surveillance. Foucault presents the example of Christian schools moving beyond training docile children and extending surveillance to the parents of those children in order to gain information about their way of life, their resources, their piety, etc.\textsuperscript{340} In the case of Catholic maternity homes, a subtle extension of disciplinary power is evident in social workers’ ever-growing arsenal of questions for single mothers about how they spent their time, how they earned their living, what they did as a hobby, and their relationship with the baby’s father. Social workers recorded each answer and came to view recreational activities and autonomous employment as a shorthand for sexual impropriety.\textsuperscript{341} From this, social workers developed an entire diagnostic category, “sex delinquency,” that moralized and pathologized any kind of social or economic agency on the part of unmarried women. In this way, they extended their own disciplinary mechanism to society at large, who became aware of the narrative and could also pronounce judgment upon women’s recreative social and employment activities. Single mothers represented a particularly poignant embodiment of the “girl problem” that social workers identified in young women who tended “to live without a sense of ethic, and what is worse, without a desire for one.”\textsuperscript{342} As Kunzel has observed, “[w]orking-class women pioneered this new sexuality in the dance halls, movie theaters, and amusement parks springing up in the early twentieth century.”\textsuperscript{343} Modern recreation became synonymous with sexual delinquency to social workers.\textsuperscript{344} Such delinquency

\textsuperscript{339} Foucault, “Discipline and Punish,” 211.
\textsuperscript{340} Foucault, “Discipline and Punish,” 211.
\textsuperscript{342} Kunzel, “Fallen Women, Problem Girls,” 57.
\textsuperscript{343} Kunzel, “Fallen Women, Problem Girls,” 58.
\textsuperscript{344} Kunzel, “Fallen Women, Problem Girls,” 58.
was broadly used as a descriptor, but only shakily defined as behavior that compromised young women’s expected sexual innocence and passivity.\textsuperscript{345}

Another evidence of the “swarming of disciplinary mechanisms” is the diversity of professional personnel who were required to operate a home. In an NCCC maternity home guide from 1966 lists the following as required personnel for any maternity home: executive director, chaplain, caseworker, group worker, housemother, physician, psychologist, nurse, teacher, dietitian, secretary and receptionist, housekeeping, and volunteers.\textsuperscript{346} By the 1960s, maternity homes had become the locus of disciplinary authority, power, and knowledge production across the multiple disciplines listed above. Representatives from each professional discipline converged in maternity homes to examine, construct, and articulate power on and through the bodies of the single mothers who resided there.

The third element of the process of subtle observation is the state-control of the mechanisms of discipline.\textsuperscript{347} Foucault’s example is that of the history of English criminal law: private religious groups which had carried out the functions of social discipline for many years were replaced by a police apparatus.\textsuperscript{348} The police began to take over pre-existing functions (finding criminals, urban, economic, and political surveillance), which solidified all power and authority within the auspices of a central government force.\textsuperscript{349} A similar process can be observed in social workers’ takeover of religious maternity homes, where they held a similar role as the police in


\textsuperscript{346} National Conference of Catholic Charities, Guides for Catholic Maternity Home Services 1967, library of Congress Catalog Card no 67-30367, 8-13.

\textsuperscript{347} Foucault, “Discipline and Punish,” 213.

\textsuperscript{348} Foucault, “Discipline and Punish,” 213.

\textsuperscript{349} Foucault, “Discipline and Punish,” 213.
Foucault’s example. Catholic maternity home workers boasted about their almost compete funding from Community Chests, which were controlled by social workers, and the implication that Catholic maternity homes had become essential, public institutions.\textsuperscript{350} An NCCC maternity home guide names caseworkers as integral among the personnel of Catholic maternity homes.\textsuperscript{351} Catholic hierarchy even built the National Catholic School of Service in 1921 which trained social workers in its own Church community. Each step forward by social workers into the world of religious charity to single mothers, and each embrace of it by Catholics, facilitated the next.

It would not be accurate to say that maternity homes themselves were the culmination of methods of discipline. Maternity homes predated social work, and general services to single mothers and “foundlings” have a long-standing history among Catholics in the United States. Maternity homes existed in the second half of the nineteenth and throughout the beginning and middle of the twentieth centuries, in which they were governed by the ideals of evangelical and catholic maternity home workers who had to fight for leverage in their own churches as women, and in American society generally. I suggest that social workers’ takeover of religious maternity homes demonstrates a stage in Foucault’s process of discipline in which prison-like establishments become the locus of efforts by disciplinary mechanisms to leverage the law.\textsuperscript{352} In this chapter, I have established ways in which social workers and religious charity workers defined and gained control over single mothers through narratives and professionalization. I have shown how these actions represent stages of a process of organized discipline, in which institutions gradually create subjects to examine and thereby produce bodies of knowledge and expertise,

\textsuperscript{351} National Conference of Catholic Charities, Guides for Catholic Maternity Home Services 1967, library of Congress Catalog Card no 67-30367, 1.
\textsuperscript{352} Foucault, “Discipline and Punish,” 231.
which leads to authority. The following chapter explores further extensions of disciplinary institution-building and the implications of such authority in the hands of social workers and religious charity workers, and raises the voices of the single mothers who turned to Catholic Charities agencies, Catholic maternity homes, or social workers for help.
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Chapter 4

“Discipline and Punish:"

The Development of a Culture of Therapeutic Decision-Making
The argument of this chapter is that those who worked in maternity homes, removed single mothers’ agency by narrating infant surrender and adoption as a therapeutic treatment for the perceived social and psychological ill of illegitimacy. In the previous chapters, I have outlined the concept of lenience, as well as some specific manifestations of that dynamic between Catholics and the American government, and between American Catholic hierarchy, laity, and women in the twentieth century. I have also described how Catholic charity agencies invited social workers into maternity homes and adoption agencies in exchange for increased social influence, esteem, and authority. In this chapter, I build on that information by presenting two types of evidence: Catholic documents including bits of their vast data collection about single mothers, Catholic maternity home guides, and Catholic adoption services documents, as well as my own transcribed interviews with single mothers who spent time in Catholic maternity homes or surrendered infants to Catholic adoption agencies. I analyze this information in terms of Foucault’s description of discipline as institution-building.

In this chapter, I begin with a discussion of the concept of “therapeutic decision making” on behalf of single mothers. I revisit Foucault’s idea of the “right to punish” as something granted for the protection of society, and how that can lead to connections between different institutions for the purpose of that punishment, or protection. Theoretically, Rickie Solinger’s definition of reproductive politics understood as a “social problem” undergirds this chapter, and Robert Orsi’s consideration of bonds and relationships as the space of religion helps to illuminate how Catholic maternity home workers used their spirituality to deepen power differentials that existed between themselves and the single mothers that they cared for. With these theories, I examine how social workers and religious maternity home workers positioned punitive treatment of

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single mothers as something of therapeutic value. Using Catholic maternity home guides and authoritative social work texts, I ascertain what professionals defined as the best practices for adoption. I then contrast these social work texts with ethnographic materials, which reveals that professionals in Catholic maternity homes did not adhere to the best practices as prescribed in their own professional guidelines. They pressured mothers to sign away infants before their birth or without sufficient time to process their own childbirth experiences, they did not ensure that mothers were aware of all of their options and resources before promoting adoption, and in fact, they often refused to allow mothers to learn about resources that would allow them to keep their infants. They also strategically isolated mothers within homes to serve the double purpose of preventing access to outside influence and allowing social workers to monitor every detail of the mothers’ lives. The latter end of this chapter returns to Foucault’s description of the panopticon, especially its aspects of projecting identities onto its subjects and thereby forming power relations which subjects internalize and enact upon themselves.\(^{354}\) I suggest that this is part of the reason for why mothers entered homes and surrendered infants. I explore evidence that social workers came to view mothers as a means of production for the adoptions that they depended on: mothers became commodified. Ultimately, I explore similarities between Foucault’s carceral system and Catholic maternity homes to demonstrate that the use of the “social problem” perspective regarding reproductive politics allowed social workers and Catholics to position adoption as a therapeutic “cure” for single motherhood, and to mobilize other academic disciplines and institutions in the development of a system in which single mothers were always subjected to practices, ideas, and institutions which pressured them to surrender their infants to adoption.

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I contend that the first three instances of lenience demonstrated in the previous chapters culminated in a widespread culture of therapeutic decision-making in favor of adoption in which charity and social workers made decisions on behalf of single mothers in the name of protecting American society. This disciplining was the culmination of the mutual yet uneven development of two different products of a religiously diverse society: Catholic charity institutions, and ethics regarding medical decisions and research involving humans. By the 1950s to 1970s, ethical considerations were reserved for privileged members of society, and although single mothers’ race determined the fact that white mothers would be more strongly pressured to surrender their infants for adoption, their perceived sexual transgression caused them to be viewed as unworthy of ethical considerations that would have prevented social workers and religious charity workers from using undue influence and coercion to induce mothers to sign surrender papers. Furthermore, I argue that an analysis of Catholic workers’ actions and changing beliefs in terms of a theory of discipline helps to illuminate another era of Catholic engagement and negotiation between their morphing Catholic identity and the changing circumstances of mid-twentieth century American society.

These case studies do not stand for thousands of stories, but they give insight into many of the reasons why so many mothers eventually gave in to the pressure to enter maternity homes and surrender their infants for adoption. These accounts enable mothers to say now what they could not say at the time, and illuminates many of the dynamics that undergirded the decisions they were forced to make in the past. Foucault outlines a process in which the “right to punish” shifts its goal from the vengeance of a sovereign power to the protection of the public. As individuals are punished, their bodies become objects and targets of power, and details about their

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crimes are used as footholds for power and punishments.\textsuperscript{356} As those in power collect and study these details, they create bodies of knowledge around those receiving punishment through “examinations,” and “expertise” emerges, which is accompanied by authority.\textsuperscript{357} At this point, power begins to produce reality.\textsuperscript{358} Newly minted experts define what is “normal” and “abnormal,” and nonconformity becomes punishable.\textsuperscript{359} Once this is accomplished, the “experts” will have collected enough information about those receiving punishment to be able to craft narratives about them, such that these experts can offer a “biography” of the offender, and offenders are often assumed to have been guilty or suspect even before their crime.\textsuperscript{360} Through this process, power to punish shifts thoroughly into the hands of the new experts, who have created a “crime” or “pathology,” thereby causing punishment to appear to function as a treatment for a social or mental illness.\textsuperscript{361} This process creates submissive subjects, and experts continue to build a body of knowledge around them so that the delinquency that they define is an institutional product that legitimizes and naturalizes the experts’ power to punish.\textsuperscript{362} As the experts’ legitimacy and scientific authority grows, their network with other institutions extends and the power to punish is spread throughout what Foucault calls a “carceral system,” which is differentiated from a penitentiary (which claims to aim to rehabilitate) in that a carceral system gives legal sanction to disciplinary mechanisms.\textsuperscript{363}

\textbf{The development of a culture of therapeutic decision making and “social problem” politics

\textsuperscript{356} Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 136-9.  
\textsuperscript{357} Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 187.  
\textsuperscript{358} Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 193.  
\textsuperscript{359} Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 178, 199.  
\textsuperscript{360} Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 254.  
\textsuperscript{361} Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 256.  
\textsuperscript{362} Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 295-7.  
\textsuperscript{363} Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 301.
Social workers constructed pregnancy out of wedlock as a behavior that threatened the fabric of American society as they fought for professional status. Social workers increasingly influenced religious agencies (especially Catholic) in the service of single mothers and their infants. Consequently, religious charity workers inherited social work’s data-collection and record-keeping practices, resulting in profound advances in surveillance on single mothers. This chapter explores how this data-collection and surveillance became part of a larger institutional matrix that formed between Catholic maternity homes, American courts, adoption and childcare institutions, social work, hospitals, and many maternity homes of other religious institutions. This institutional matrix shifted and spread the power to make authoritative decisions on behalf of single, pregnant mothers about whether or not they would keep their infants or surrender them for adoption. This is equivalent to Foucault’s “power to punish” spreading throughout a society in a continuous way, in that the decisions made for single mothers were usually to force her to surrender her infant against her will, which I contend is a punishment for the perceived transgressive behavior of becoming pregnant while unmarried. This process was aided by social workers’ creation of narratives about single mothers’ intellectual incapacity, or “feeblemindedness,” neurosis, delinquency, and general incompetence. Eventually, such punitive adoptions and the maternity home experiences that facilitated them came to be viewed as natural, therapeutic “treatment” for the ostensible mental health problems associated with white single motherhood. However, the strong push toward adoption was also motivated in part by the perceived social value of white infants, who could garner the highest profits in the well-established adoption industry.

Male lawmakers set the precedent for excluding women from discussions about their own fertility and social workers and religious charity workers—many of them women—mobilized
this precedent against single mothers in the twentieth century. Historian Rickie Solinger has defined reproductive politics to refer to the question of who has power over matters of pregnancy and its consequences. Although most discussions of reproductive politics have to do with Roe v. Wade and disputes about the legalization of abortion, matters of adoption are equally salient to this question. Most official discussions about reproductive politics lack input from the women whose reproduction is in question. Frequently, such discourses about reproductive politics are shaped by notions about how to solve pressing social problems, rather than about women’s experiences and needs. The social, political, and economic issues that have shaped the “social problem” approach to reproductive politics have shifted over time, but this approach to female fertility has remained the primary guiding force of policymaking and public narratives about women, fertility, morality, and sexuality.

Catholic Charity institutions, social workers, and adoption agencies all depended on the “social problem” approach to women’s fertility in order to gain support and legitimacy in American society in the twentieth century. The history of the “social problem approach” to women’s reproductive rights and its use by religious charity workers and social workers can be understood as an element of the case study of American Catholic adoption services which exemplifies Foucault’s process of disciplining and institution building. This can help scholars to understand the sense of coercion that the single mothers in this study express in their interviews. The disciplining of single mothers occurred in stages that laid the groundwork for those that followed. The first step in this process is one in which authorities reframe the function of punishment from the vengeance of a sovereign power to the defense of society as a whole. Foucault further explains this process:

364 Solinger, Pregnancy and Power, 4.
365 Solinger, Pregnancy and Power, 4.
The offense opposes an individual to the entire social body; in order to punish him [her], society has the right to oppose him in its entirety. It is an unequal struggle: on one side are all the forces, all the power, all the rights. And this is how it should be, since the defense of each individual is involved. Thus a formidable right to punish is established, since the offender becomes the common enemy.\textsuperscript{366}

The narratives that social workers set forth to reclaim illegitimacy as their own domain set the stage for numerous institutions and the general public to perceive and treat single motherhood as a threat and a trespass for them to collectively punish. Evidence of this process can be seen in the effects of each narrative. Feeblemindedness, sex delinquency, and neurosis each allowed a different set of experts to make pronouncements about single mothers based on race and class that impacted whether or not a mother was allowed to keep her infant or declared unfit for parenthood. Social work experts presented each diagnosis as a different type threat to society at large, and the general public, including lawmakers, accepted it. Feeblemindedness, sex delinquency, and neurosis existed in a hierarchy and performed functions that resemble Foucault’s description of the prison as an apparatus of knowledge and power. Foucault uses the example of a Philadelphia prison opened in 1790 to describe the division of prisoners into four classes in which their perceived level of threat to society coincided with the type of imprisonment they were subjected to: the more dangerous they were to society, and the more evidence the prison officials had to confirm that the prisoner was likely to be a repeat offender, the more time they were likely to spend in solitary confinement.\textsuperscript{367} The most important issue here is that institutional directors in the Walnut Street Prison created a typology of prisoners that brought forth an entire body of knowledge with a different frame of reference: instead of focusing on the actual crimes

\textsuperscript{366} Foucault, \textit{Discipline and Punish}, 90.

\textsuperscript{367} Foucault, \textit{Discipline and Punish}, 126.
committed, the “the potentiality of danger that lies hidden in an individual and which is manifested in his observed everyday conduct” became the priority.\textsuperscript{368} The prison therefore functioned as an apparatus of knowledge in this situation. I suggest that maternity homes also functioned this way. Once social work and charity workers had established their therapeutic value, maternity homes became centers in which single mothers were diagnosed with different “disorders” depending on how “dangerous” to society they were pronounced to be by those, who systematically gathered information on them.

Social workers and religious charity workers actively created, proliferated, and used diagnostic categories, religious ideas about proper sexuality and womanhood, and political anxieties to promote the "social problem” approach to single motherhood, thereby contributing to the development of the maternity home as an apparatus of knowledge and power. Theologian Mary E. Hunt has noted that Christian images and symbols of women’s sexuality have a distinctly domestic flavor, as if what is at stake were something usually at home.\textsuperscript{369} In the context of single mothers who interacted with Catholic Charity agencies, especially during the Cold War years, a threat to the nuclear family was the most profound and universe-destroying type of threat, which connected to everything outside of the home. This was caused in part by vestiges of the prewar influence of eugenics, the renewed emphasis on Christianity and morality as foils to the “evil communists,” and the subsequent promotion of repressive sexual mores that prohibited premarital sex and unwed pregnancy. A Cold War-era American cultural assumption that the nuclear family was the foundation of social stability meant that the disruption of such a family could result in

\textsuperscript{368} Foucault, \textit{Discipline and Punish}, 126.
\textsuperscript{369} Mary E. Hunt, \textit{Good Sex: Feminist Perspectives from the World’s Religions}. Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London. 2005, 162.
apocalyptic consequences. This aligns with Foucault’s description of the power to punish recon-
stituting itself as a measure taken to protect society at large.

Social work narratives functioned to pathologize single motherhood so that the maternity homes they controlled could be positioned as therapeutic remedies for these perceived social sicknesses. Despite the general postwar disavowal of eugenics, the narrative of “feebleminded-
ness” continued to suggest the perpetuation of genetic flaws throughout society. Intellectual inca-
pacity was equated with moral weakness, which, where sexuality was concerned, was applied to women, who were still believed to be “normally” not sexual, unlike men. Sexualized women were “weak,” intellectually incapacitated, and deviant. The narrative of sex delinquency recalled images of stubborn, sinister homewreckers who threatened the stability of any nuclear family: whose husband would she target next? The 1971 United Nations Report of the Secretary General described anxieties about family destruction at the hands of an immoral single mother and took comfort in declaring that “strong religious or ethical feelings are prevailing, which entail strict standards of behavior and a deeply rooted belief in the sanctity of the family as the fundamental unit of society.” Finally, the narrative of neurosis indicated that women diagnosed as such needed expert attention and therapy. Through these intertwined narratives of intellectual incapacity, sex delinquency, and neurosis, social workers got their foot in the door of evangelical ma-
ternity homes, which they eventually wrestled completely from evangelical women’s hands through regulation and controlling their funding from community chests. Catholics welcomed their own Catholic social workers into their maternity homes, and social workers and Catholic charity workers presented their services as both charity and rehabilitative therapy.

370 United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, Report of the Secretary-General, The Status of the Unmar-
The role of social work and data collection in the development of “expertise”

Once the narratives of feeblemindedness, sex delinquency, and neurosis were firmly solidified in social work, charity work, the medical fields, and the minds of the American public, social workers collected copious amounts of information from the single mothers for whom they cared. This is an instance of Foucault’s knowledge creation through “examinations.” I contend that social workers’ meticulous questions about single mothers’ lifestyles were part of a process in which they collected data from single mothers in order to build their own “expertise,” to position single motherhood more firmly as a social and mental pathology, and to present their own work as the therapeutic solution to this problem. The process of information gathering on the part of social workers and religious maternity home and adoption agency employees is exemplified in countless calls for data collection, and questionnaires collected by Catholic maternity home workers, as well as social workers themselves. As early as 1921, J. Prentice Murphy called for additional research through casework and indicated the intention to ensure that unmarried mother work would be fully in possession of social workers:

The Federal Children’s Bureau’s study of illegitimacy in Boston shows how great is the need for more light, and that this light can come only through a knowledge of the personal histories of many others, gained in actual thoroughgoing social case work contacts. We can strive for such a standard that generally over the country no one will be placed in a position of power or responsibility in a society or institution doing work for unmarried mothers, who is not a trained social case worker.372

Regina Kunzel outlines the intense interest of social workers in single mothers’ stories: the circumstances that led to her pregnancy, how long she had known the “putative father,” and “how many times they had had sex.”373 Social workers asked about many details of the mothers’ lives,

373 Kunzel, Fallen Women, Problem Girls, 116.
including her occupation, her hobbies, whether she smoked or drank, and her parents’ names and addresses.\(^{374}\) This is exemplified in the “Unmarried Parents Data Collection Report” completed in 1966 by the National Conference of Catholic Charities, which documents the development of a statistical data collection survey. Social workers gave the questionnaires to every mother in Florence Crittenton homes, homes operated by the National Conference of Catholic Charities (NCCC), all agencies for childcare operated by the NCCC, and Salvation Army maternity homes in 1966.\(^{375}\) The author introduces the data-collection survey cards as tools to collect information about “the characteristics of those served.”\(^{376}\) The survey collected information about four broad categories regarding the unmarried parents: “the unwed mother, her parental background and her social characteristics, the unwed father, and services received.”\(^{377}\) This study presented 24 charts with statistics about the single mothers who were affected by Catholic charity workers and social workers.\(^{378}\) These charts document the single mothers’ backgrounds, ages, birth range (i.e. if they were a youngest, middle, or oldest child), their religions affiliation, whether or not the single mothers received services out of state, their education completed, and income, among other factors.\(^{379}\) The survey also meticulously recorded information about the unmarried, or “putative” fathers.\(^{380}\) A mother’s account from 1959 also supports the fact that charity workers and social workers constantly gleaned information from the mothers who they claimed to serve:

I had an interview with sister Shawn Marie probably every other week, and she never really talked to me about options. The unspoken message was, “you’re


\(^{375}\) Unmarried parents data collection report, 1.

\(^{376}\) Unmarried parents data collection report 1.

\(^{377}\) Ibid., 1.

\(^{378}\) See appendix


here, you’re going to place this child for adoption.” Well I wasn’t there when I went there. I was in medical care. So even though it was never directly stated, she would never say to me, things like “oh you’re here, you want to place your baby for adoption.” well, she just really wanted to hear my story. She wanted my back-ground, she wanted to know all about my lover. She wanted information that I knew, which I gave her. (1959, Philadelphia, PA)

In attempts to identify the causes of illegitimacy, social workers took inventory of unwed mothers’ occupations and analyzed them for possible clues. According to Kunzel, social workers cast suspicion of promiscuous behaviors over every occupation open to women. Suspicion of such sexual aggressiveness is evident in the questions social workers asked the women with whom they worked. Social workers at Children’s Aid Societies interviewed each mother. Through questionnaires, social workers collected basic demographic information including “age, employment status, place of residence, religious affiliation and sometimes ethnicity,” but the questionnaire also required information about whether mothers smoked, consumed alcohol, attended dance halls, or went to movie theaters. Catholic social workers responded to films and dance halls by warning their attendees and sometimes having them arrested, often citing their infraction as “speaking to strange men.” Although this was not a legal charge, it still indicates their repudiation of most forms of socialization or entertainment that included mixed company. Catholic female volunteers’ most organized response was the Big Sisters, in which case workers were assigned “little sisters” who had been sent to court or arrested. This research conducted

384 Chambers, “Adoption,” 166.
386 Brown and McKeown, “The Poor Belong to Us,” 141.
by social workers and Catholic agency workers is evidence of one stage of the dynamic described by Michel Foucault, in which authority figures use details about “crimes” as footholds for power and punishment, and also for knowledge production. In this case, social workers and religious charity workers were the “experts” who had redefined “normal” and “abnormal” and turned the bodies of single mothers into objects through which branches of knowledge could be built. The fact that Catholic social workers could have girls arrested for “speaking to strange men” speaks to their ability to pronounce offenders as “guilty” before a crime had even occurred.

**Punishment as therapeutic value**

Once single motherhood was firmly within the realm of social and mental illness, social workers and religious charity workers presented casework and maternity home practices as both a solution to a social problem, and an element of therapeutic value. This perpetuates the dynamic of the “social problem,” in which debate and discussions about reproductive politics are shaped by notions about how to solve perceived social problems, rather than about women’s experiences and needs. In this case, social workers and religious charity workers defined the social problem and positioned themselves as the most qualified experts to solve it. In a Guide for Maternity Home Services published by the NCCC in 1967, the author acknowledges immense changes in maternity homes and their practices from their inception in the mid nineteenth-century to 1967. They credit this to changes in women’s status and the development of social services

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The fact of adoption is couched in the language of providing the best possible outcome to child and mother:

Today, the Catholic maternity home attempts to offer a broad, flexible program to meet the unmarried mother’s spiritual, physical, emotional, social, educational, and recreational needs. As far as practical, the home must further extend its concern to the welfare of the illegitimate child, the unmarried mother’s parents, and to the unmarried father and his family.  

This is an example of the stage of Foucault’s system of discipline in which the power to punish single mothers, which, by 1967, had been completely transferred to social workers and then spread down through religious charity workers, creates a sense of objectivity in which the punishment (i.e. strongly suggesting that mothers surrender infants for adoption and failing to alert them to any of their other options) appears as a natural, positive, “treatment,” and the only acceptable choice. The authors use language of rehabilitation and welfare. Evidence of the mutual technologies of lenience between Catholic workers and social workers is also clear here, as the language shifts seamlessly between the social work concepts of public welfare, indicated above, and claims to religious identity:

. . . there is a common Christian philosophy giving rise to and permeating each of the programs. . . The Catholic maternity homes, specifically established to perform works of mercy, give witness to the Church’s concern that all men be brought to Christ. . . Through the group living experience provided in a maternity home, the unmarried mother has an opportunity to re-establish a sense of community as she experiences mutual assistance, support, and love.

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Catholics also positioned their spirituality as a therapeutic value. Social workers supported this, as exemplified in the 1972 study, “Unmarried Mothers: A Study of the Spiritual Aspects in Catholic Maternity Homes” by Huguette Beauchamp.\(^{394}\) In this study, Huguette interviewed directors of 46 Catholic maternity homes in North America about the spiritual elements of their settings.\(^{395}\) She concluded that directors are usually either “professionally-minded” or “religiously-minded,” but the latter is more common and their spiritual values tend to be inseparable in their minds from the total life and situation of the client.\(^ {396}\)

Social workers, by 1972, had established their secular, scientific authority and mostly taken control of religious maternity homes, but saw the value in allowing religious charity workers to reframe their spiritual and religious care as therapeutic, which was on-brand with the social-work claims of therapeutic value. This is evidence of the mutually beneficial relationship between Catholic maternity home workers and social workers. They have both made allowances, or permitted mechanisms of lenience for the other: Catholic hierarchy and laywomen have allowed social workers into their homes as professionals and guides, and social workers have allowed Catholic workers to maintain their religious identification despite benefitting from the secular, scientific legitimacy of social work.

Catholic charity workers used their claims to spirituality in order to present their work, which was largely shaped by social work policies and principles, as having therapeutic value. To position their practices as therapeutic, Catholic workers drew upon their claims to provide spiritual benefit to single mothers who, by virtue of their single motherhood, needed it. However, they positioned their spiritual therapeutic value within social work terms. This allowed Catholic workers to maintain their allegiance to the Church who had allowed them to create these service


\(^{395}\) Beauchamp, “Unmarried Mothers,” 126.

\(^{396}\) Beauchamp, “Unmarried Mothers,” 126.
institutions to begin with while still benefitting from the professional authority of social work’s language of therapy. It also naturalized maternity home practices as a natural, “cure,” or solution, to the “problem” of single motherhood. Catholic maternity home guides and conference proceedings present evidence of how social workers and Catholic maternity home workers framed their provisions of therapeutic value. Catholic maternity home guides often addressed numerous types of therapeutic resources that they could provide to single mothers in their care. One Guide for Catholic Maternity Home Services, published in 1967, lists some requirements of the Housemother, who was to work closely with the social worker:

She maintains a harmonious therapeutic atmosphere by assuring a happy, secure, group living situation. . . She works with the girls individually and in groups to help them accept the responsibility of their own actions. . . She observes and reports to appropriate staff members behavior manifestations which are important in helping the resident to resolve her problem.  

The same guide dictates that particular services must be provided to the single mothers:

A sound treatment plan is directed toward helping the unmarried mother achieve increased self awareness and personal growth and toward assisting her in formulating a suitable plan for her child. . . a well-rounded program will make provision for psychological and psychiatric services for the unmarried mothers under care. . . Every home should also make provision for a formal educational program which offers fully accredited high school courses conducted under the auspices of the local Catholic School System or the Public Board of Education.

Catholic workers' religiosity therefore tied into social work’s larger picture that it presented of its complete array of services. They presented their services as resources which addressed every aspect of an unwed mother's life in order to rehabilitate her for life in the general public as an improved moral being and member of society.

In the previously-cited conference proceedings from the 1975 Institute on Services to Unmarried Parents sponsored by the Commission on Services to Unmarried Parents by the National

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Conference of Catholic Charities, Willow V. Reilley noted that “it was our hope in offering services to these single parents that we were not only designing a program for restoration and rehabilitation, but could as well be geared for prevention.” These sources heavily emphasize that ideally, numerous types of counseling and therapy would be available to single mothers. By the late 1960s, social workers' goal was achieved, and the common assumption was that maternity homes and their practices (predominantly adoptions) held therapeutic, rehabilitative value for the problem of single motherhood.

Social work agencies and religious agencies for adoption and single parent services were able to promote their therapeutic value and colonize the entire issue of illegitimacy partially because the American government purposely sought to provide unmarried mothers with the least possible support: the least residential care, the least relief, and the fewest medical services. As a result, religious and private service providers of adoption and single parent services became abnormally significant. The 1971 United Nations Report of the Secretary-General from the Commission on the Status of Women observed that in the United States, state departments of welfare have the specific duty to see that basic social services are available to unmarried parents. However,

The supply of services to unmarried mothers has in the past however proved to be unsatisfactory, especially with regard to medical services, especially prenatal care, and social services to underprivileged women. An important share of the burden has been carried by various voluntary agencies which, in 1960, served as many unmarried mothers as did the public child welfare agencies.

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400 Marian J. Morton, And Sin No More; Social Policy and Unwed Mothers in Cleveland, 1855—1990, Columbus, Ohio State, 1993, 2.

Following the American government’s failure to adequately provide care for single parents and Catholic charity workers’ and social workers’ subsequent establishment of the therapeutic value of their services, other institutions funneled single mothers into Catholic maternity homes and casework arrangements. Referrals demonstrate social workers’ ability to strongly influence the number of adoptions and the systemic network of institutional efforts to facilitate adoptions. In a report about adoption practices in 1955 published by the National Conference of Catholic Charities, Catholic adoption agencies responding to the questionnaire distributed in 1954 were asked to identify the sources which referred adoptable children to them that year.\textsuperscript{402} Options for sources listed on the questionnaire were the natural mother, the natural father, both natural parents, public agencies, private agencies, clergy, and interested people in the community.\textsuperscript{403} Two agencies did not list the natural mother as a source of referral, 42 agencies did not list the natural father, and eighteen agencies did not receive children from both natural parents.\textsuperscript{404} It is important to consider what it could mean that two Catholic agencies had no natural mothers come forward with their infants. Adoptions still took place, but the infants were referred by others. It is impossible to find these mothers now and ask whether or not adoption was their first choice in their decision to do what was best for their infants. The second part of this chapter will address the experiences of a group of interviewed mothers about their own goals regarding adoption.

Some referral sources indicate the development of a strong institutional matrix that directed the infants of single mothers towards adoption services. Other “write-in” referral sources that appeared significantly include physicians, hospitals, courts, lawyers, and clergy.\textsuperscript{405} In many

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\item[\textsuperscript{403}] Catholic Charities, “Adoption Practices in Catholic Agencies,” 22-23.
\item[\textsuperscript{404}] Catholic Charities, “Adoption Practices in Catholic Agencies,” 23.
\end{itemize}
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cases, priests were often the first people that single mothers or their alarmed parents would turn to at the news of an unmarried pregnancy. It is significant that the Catholic adoption agency workers filling out these research questionnaires noted these other professionals as important referral sources because it indicates that all of these different professional fields and institutions—the medical field and its various workers, courts, and religious hierarchy—all worked together to direct single mothers toward social workers and adoptions. Furthermore, the source notes, “In a considerable number of agencies, notably one fourth of the large agencies, public agencies and courts are the primary source of referral. The clergy and physicians much more frequently than other individuals in the community serve as referral sources.”

The institutions of social work and Catholic maternity homes had achieved the status of Foucault’s “carceral system,” which gives legal sanction to disciplinary mechanisms. The lenience afforded to social workers which allowed them to gain control of religious maternity homes allowed them to leverage all of these other professional fields to support their goals of exercising authority over the facilitation of adoptions.

The same source narrates the referral process as one in which mothers request adoption services. The source states, “in three fifths of the agencies the natural mother is the preponderant seeker of this service for her child, [and] in two fifths she uses another public or private community agency as an intermediary in requesting this service.” Some mothers may have requested adoptions, but interviews later in this chapter indicate that many did not.

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Other factors that may have led social workers and Catholic maternity home workers to strongly suggest adoption as a first-choice option to single mothers is the overwhelming out numerical gap between adoptable infants and white couples hoping to adopt. The 1957 study notes:

In the United States, at least in recent years, the number of aspiring adoptive parents in the white group has far exceeded the number of children available for adoption. . . it demands also tact and understanding in dealing with the many splendid couples whose eager willingness to share their homes and opportunities frequently leads to impatience with delay and “red tape.”

Evidence of court officials directing single mothers to maternity homes and social workers supports the argument that social workers and Catholic maternity home workers had successfully achieved a disciplinary institutional system in which social workers and religious maternity home workers restructured the problem of “illegitimacy.” They invented and proliferated narratives about single motherhood and drew upon the legacy of reproductive politics as a “social problem” to do so. As they treated and provided services to single mothers, they also collected data on them and advanced their own expertise, knowledge, and power. Social workers and Catholic charity workers connected with hospitals, lawyers, courts, and other professionals and institutions to create a referral system that directed single mothers and their infants directly to maternity homes, since adoption and other maternity home practices were now publicly understood to have therapeutic value.

Maternity home operations resembled Foucault’s description of the utilitarian rationalization of detail in the creation of docile subjects. Social workers restructured the idea of illegitimacy in American society, creating narratives about single motherhood, and framing reproductive politics within the “social problem” paradigm. They meticulously collected data about single

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mothers, their circumstances, and characteristics. Social workers then established a complex referral system in which other institutions of authority referred single mothers into maternity homes. Foucault describes the creation of docile subjects as a process in which details and data collection provide footholds for power and control over those to whom the details pertain:

The meticulousness of the regulations, the fussiness of the inspections, the supervision of the smallest fragment of live and of the body will soon provide, in the context of the school, the barracks, the hospital or the workshop, a laicized content, an economic or technical rationality for this mystical calculus of the infinitesimal and the infinite. . . A meticulous observation of detail, and at the same time a political awareness of these small things, for the control and use of [wo]men, emerge through the classical age bearing with them a whole set of techniques, a whole corpus of methods and knowledge, descriptions, plans, and data.⁴¹¹

The following single mother’s assessment of her situation in a Catholic maternity home in 1966 exemplifies many of the traits described above by Foucault, namely, regulations, supervision of every detail of life and the physical body for the purpose of control:

You were not allowed to have contact with anyone outside. You weren’t allowed to have a camera. . . They made sure that your mobility was very limited, your visitors were very limited, your information was beyond very limited. Because this is their way of controlling you. This is their way of ensuring that no matter how much you wanted that baby, you were not going to keep it. . . we could have taken our babies. But they didn’t tell us that. (1966)

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how the primary sources from various maternity home guides and studies about adoption as well as services to single parents, published by the National Conference of Catholic Charities and by the World Health Organization, support a possible connection to Foucault’s dynamics of discipline and institution building. My purpose is not to impose one theoretical grid onto data that can be explained in a variety of ways, so at this analytical moment, I turn to Robert Orsi. Orsi outlines various types of intersubjectivity involved in

⁴¹¹ Foucault, “Discipline and Punish,” 140-141.
research of religious subjects. Here, I turn to his description of the intersubjective nature of particular social, cultural, and religious identities, and of understanding the bonds of emotion and connection within which religious actors make their lives.\footnote{Robert A. Orsi, \textit{Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them} (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2005), 3.} I have focused on the dynamic changes within the bonds between American society and American Catholics as a whole, between Catholic hierarchy and Catholic laity, and between Catholic women and professional social workers. However, single mothers are the group around which all of these other bonds took shape. Although many Catholics doubtlessly had positive impacts and intentions as they formed their influential network of charity services throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the success of Catholic women religious and laywomen in creating maternity homes that gained professional respect and networked with other professional institutions such as hospitals, social work agencies, courts, and regional government funding initiatives such as Community Chests is due in large part to the single mothers through whom all of this was justified. The next part of this chapter addresses the single mothers upon whom these structures of power and knowledge emerged and grew. I explore what their relationships to social workers and religious charity workers looked like by turning to interviews with single mothers who spent time in Catholic maternity homes or interacted with Catholic Charities or other Catholic adoption services.

**Interviews: my approach**

I had originally sought to introduce myself in person as a researcher at support groups for single mothers, but I quickly realized that many single mothers who had to surrender infants to adoption perceive that event as one of the most painful and shameful in their entire lives, so very few attend support groups in person. Rather, many mothers have strong advocate communities
online, where they share their stories, bond together to fight injustice in adoption law and practice, and organize conferences and publications. I sent messages to many of these online communities and groups introducing myself. Some agreed to post my contact information and research intent, and others said that they only allowed mothers into their groups to preserve the safety of the environment. One particular mother is a formidable activist, a well-published author, and an international voice of solidarity and leadership with mothers’ rights groups for those who have surrendered infants and subsequently live with trauma symptoms and loss. I emailed her and introduced myself as a researcher, but also told her the story of my mother and older brother, who she had actually met. When she understood the parameters and purpose of my research, she distributed my contact information and research to her personal contacts, and those who were interested in giving interviews contacted me via email. Once we had exchanged ethics consent forms that I created and had approved by Wilfrid Laurier University, we would arrange a time and date, and meet over Skype or through regular phone calls. This is the context through which my interviews emerged. Usually each participant would want to know more about me as a person, as well as my research, and I would answer their questions for some time. Each participant shared her story solemnly and with the hope of exposing injustice and abuse. I will not claim that every religious charity worker in Catholic maternity homes, or every social worker, promoted abuse or injustice. If the data in this study had been restricted to written materials, I would be concerned that extensive application of a Foucaultian framework would represent a narrow-minded, linear interpretation of it. However, the interview data so strongly confirms elements of such a process that it is beneficial to continue with the analysis. I suggest that Foucault’s dynamics of slow-building data collection on particular subjects, and the creation of an authoritative body of
knowledge and expertise based on that information, as well as institutional structures such as isolated spaces in which such data could be collected and enacted in uninterrupted privacy, can provide additional dimensions of analysis and consideration to the sense of coercion and injustice that the mothers express in their interviews. In previous chapters and the beginning of this one, I have dissected what many other parties have said about single mothers, and at this point it is important to let them speak for themselves.

My desire for this chapter is not to accuse social workers and all Catholic maternity home workers of abusive practices, but to analyze how particular mechanisms of lenience that allowed social workers and Catholic maternity home workers to gain agency and power over the course of the twentieth century in the United States hinged upon the development of increasingly constraining treatment of another community of women, the single mothers. In the second and third chapters, I attempt to demonstrate the dynamic relationships between the American Catholic Church and American society at large, its hierarchy and laity and women, Catholic maternity home workers and their hierarchy, and those same workers and the social workers who offered them professionalization. I attempt to situate each party within the realities of power dynamics that they were leveraging, fighting, or negotiating with, the complexities of a changing society and the roles and titles they hoped to hold in it, and the individual histories that shaped each party’s vulnerabilities, desires, and goals. I have identified the mechanisms of lenience that granted Catholic women authority over charity work, and conferred authority over all adoption and unmarried parent care practices to social workers. I suggest that these mechanisms represented negotiations and compromises of vulnerable groups trying to survive and make history, but in the pursuit of their disparate goals, social workers and Catholic maternity homes rendered
single mothers, who were a crucial element of the formula, invisible as real people, and as a result, those mothers lost the most.

The relationships between single mothers, social workers, and religious charity workers are crucially important for understanding and analyzing the accounts of single mothers set out below. Robert Orsi emphasizes the lens of relationship as the best way to understand particular historical moments within American Catholicism. For Orsi, this meant that he had to understand children, women, and those living with disabilities as particularly vulnerable and exposed to the fantasies of adults, male church officials, and those without similar disabilities. In this study, I suggest that single mothers were particularly vulnerable to the fantasies of social workers, Catholic women working in maternity homes, and Catholic male hierarchy members. In earlier parts of this study, I have demonstrated the narrative constructions of single motherhood, including the “seduction and abandonment” narrative, feeblemindedness, sex delinquency, and neurosis. Here, I suggest that social workers and Catholic maternity home workers failed to see single mothers as individuals with desires and needs, and started to collectively project these narratives onto them instead, rendering genuine, mutually-beneficial connections between mothers and workers impossible. Instead, social workers and religious maternity home workers used religion and social responsibility to endorse and deepen power differentials in which single mothers were already denied everything in their lives outside of the maternity home: fired from their jobs, expelled from their schools, and disowned by their families. If the single mother had been financially independent before, there was no way she could continue to be after the loss of employment compounded with denial of family or partner support.

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413 Orsi, Between Heaven and Earth, ” 4.  
414 Orsi, Between Heaven and Earth, ” 4.
In the remainder of this chapter, I explore the consequences that single mothers experienced and the power dynamics that led to them. I also try to contextualize the parties involved and illuminate each struggle as a strand of a braided history in which social workers, religious maternity home workers, and single mothers weaved around one another, leveraged one another, faced oppression from different angles and responded in the best ways they knew. My goal is neither to eradicate guilt from the parties involved nor to sensationalize deeply traumatic information and events, but to understand the complex dynamic of oppression and tactical decision-making in which each party was an agent.

In previous chapters, I have established that Catholic charitable institutions and agencies arose out of multiple needs and impulses within American society, including a new context of religious and ethnic pluralism. Foucault describes how discipline is almost always adopted in response to particular needs, and then they become inscribed with mechanisms that remove power from subjects and give it to authorities. In this case, Catholic charity agencies generally, and Catholic maternity and adoption services, developed when the American Catholic Church needed to care for its own during a particularly vulnerable time of nativism, a culture of Protestant majority, and extensive immigration in American society. Over time, Catholics who worked in maternity homes and for Catholic adoption agencies, as well as social workers, saw the potential in the institution of adoption and unmarried parent care for their own professionalization, or as a path to greater authority and influence in American society. Through their various steps toward professionalization, they removed decision-making power from single mothers and placed it within their own jurisdiction.

In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century as Catholic charities were forming in the United States, universities were also negotiating a moral position from which to assert academic authority in the context of Christian diversity in America. Orsi has observed,

Ethics came to stand for Christianity in American university culture but ethics defined in a broad, universal, non-dogmatic, nonsectarian, and non-denominational way designed to appeal to a broad clientele. A modern and liberal creed. . . the emphasis on moral learning of a sort that all Protestant Americans could have access to as the crown of their education was also congruent with the understanding among American educators of the role of the academy in the turbulent and pluralist democracy the United States was proving itself to be.416

Ideas about what was “ethical” in academic study were broadly formed out of a “domesticated” Protestantism tempered by respect for the scientific method and held civic responsibility as its most weighted moral guide. It developed part and parcel with notions of what was “professional.” Orsi has illustrated a dynamic in which university education was perceived as “civilization,” while “outside the walls of the academy, the winds of religious “madness” howled,”417 and Roman Catholics were outside in those winds. Social workers sought to position themselves unquestionably within “civilized” university walls. Regina Kunzel reports that social work’s professionalization has its roots in the charity organization movement (COS), which began in the 1870s and drew on ideas about scientific philanthropy to rationalize and systematize benevolence.418 Early charity organizers sought to differentiate themselves from what they perceived to be sentimental, morality-laden, and indiscriminate relief provided by the religious charity groups that had preceded them.419 Their main goal was not to provide as much relief as possible, but to

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417 Orsi, Between Heaven and Earth,” 186.
coordinate the philanthropic resources already in existence and to determine which applicants were “deserving” of care and refer them to the resources they needed—if they proved worthy.\textsuperscript{420} While some of the motivations for this work were undoubtedly positive (i.e. the prevention of duplication of services, the prevention of applicants from receiving aid from multiple agencies at once), other goals were moralized (i.e. to rein in the material aid that COS workers perceived to be a cause of dependency).\textsuperscript{421} The COS movement promoted secular rational, and scientific charity and condemned the “sentimental benevolence” of religious charity agencies and institutions.\textsuperscript{422} I suggest that the same impulse toward respect for the scientific method that underwrote American universities influenced the development of social work as a profession and as an academic discipline. Furthermore, I contend that although research and medical ethics developed the twentieth century alongside the discipline of social work, the progress was too late to be applied to social work and charity research. Despite this, there still existed agencies that defined the Best Practices in adoption and unmarried parent services, and single mothers treated by social workers and religious charities lost their infants because social workers and the religious charity workers they influenced considered them “unworthy” of the agency recommended by best practices, and in ethical considerations that Americans were working to elucidate to apply to research.

As American Catholic charity workers built institutions from the ground up and developed operations and networks in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, ethics developed in American universities, first to appeal to a broad spectrum of various denominations of Christians, but also to as a marker of class, morality, and education in contrast to fundamentalist religious groups. Thomas Jefferson declared that higher education, informed by such ethics, was to

\textsuperscript{420} Kunzel, “Fallen Women, Problem Girls,” 37.
\textsuperscript{421} Kunzel, “Fallen Women, Problem Girls,” 37.
\textsuperscript{422} Kunzel, “Fallen Women, Problem Girls,” 37.
produce “an aristocracy of talent and virtue.” Moral philosophy was traditionally taught by the president of a university to its senior class, and it had a central role in the curriculum: to preserve the unity of the curriculum, which would ensure the existence of a unified and intelligible universe of discourse. While Catholic charities developed and adopted professionalization in the ways that I have described in previous chapters, ethics also changed and developed in the twentieth century. The first major change occurred following World War II. the Nuremberg Code was established in 1948 after an American military tribunal opened criminal proceedings against 23 leading German physicians and administrators in 1946 for their willing participation in war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Nuremberg Code stated that “The voluntary consent of the human subject is absolutely essential,” and emphasized that the benefits of the proposed research must outweigh the risks. However, the Nuremberg Code was more of a suggestion and was not codified into federal or state law in the United States. There were ongoing refinements through the 20th century which culminated in the Belmont Report in 1979.

The Belmont Report provides three basic ethical principles and their corresponding applications: Respect for persons and informed consent; Beneficence and the systematic assessment of risks and benefits; and Justice and the fair procedures and outcomes in the selection of research subjects. Where research ethics stand currently is determined by the 1981 decision by

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425 http://ors.umkc.edu/research-compliance-(iacuc-ibc-irb-rsc)/institutional-review-board-(irb)/history-of-research-ethics
426 http://ors.umkc.edu/research-compliance-(iacuc-ibc-irb-rsc)/institutional-review-board-(irb)/history-of-research-ethics
427 http://ors.umkc.edu/research-compliance-(iacuc-ibc-irb-rsc)/institutional-review-board-(irb)/history-of-research-ethics
the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to issue their Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Title 45 (public welfare), part 46 (protection of human subjects), and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) which issued the CFR Title 21 (food and drugs), Parts 50 (protection of human subjects) and 56 (Institutional Review Boards). In 1991, more than a dozen other Departments and Agencies that conduct or fund research involving human subjects adopted the core DHHS regulations (45 CFR Part 46, Subpart A) and it became the Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects, or Common Rule." Currently, the 1991 Federal Policy is shared by 17 Departments and Agencies, representing most, but not all, of the federal Departments and Agencies sponsoring human-subjects research. From 1948 to 1979, the United States committed numerous human rights abuses in the name of medicine and research, and through this trial and error, formed ethical guidelines for behavioral and biomedical research including human beings that have been widely accepted as Federal requirements, but not by all agencies conducting such research. So although those ethical requirements apply to many authoritative federal and state agencies, at the time that my particular interview participants were interacting with social workers and religious charity workers (1957-1977), these principles were not set in legal stone.

Although research ethics regarding research did not exist in the 1950s to the early 1990s as it does today, the years between 1979 and 1991 saw ethics become inextricably tied to best practices regarding professional research. In addition, the Child Welfare League of America and the National Conference of Catholic Charities (the authoritative bodies that determined the best
practices of adoption service and service to unmarried parents) did set out clear recommendations for how mothers and infants were to be treated, and what rights and agency single mothers were to have in their choice to surrender their infants to adoption or not. A guide from 1959 entitled, *Standards for Adoption Service*, and published by the Child Welfare League of America, give instructions such as the following:

The services for natural parents should include not only help in planning for the child but casework concerned with them as individuals, as well as other services required to meet their physical, emotional, and material needs, and to protect their rights and interests. . . Natural parents should be helped to reach a decision, without undue delay, regarding their ability to fulfill their parental responsibilities. Such a decision should be regarded as the right of the parents. It should be made without pressure and with full consideration of alternative plans and with recognition by the agency of the emotional problems and conflicts involved in the process.\(^{431}\)

The experiences that most of the mothers recounted contain many similar themes that differ significantly from guides for adoption services and guides for services to unmarried parents published at the same time by Catholic service agencies and secular authoritative agencies.

The same source goes on to recommend:

Parents should have a clear statement regarding their legal rights, obligations, and responsibilities; they should also receive help in considering what their decision will mean to them and to their child. They should have an opportunity to consider resources that would help them to fulfill their parental responsibilities. If they decide to keep their child and services needed by them are not available within the agency, they should be referred to appropriate community services. These may include family counseling, psychiatric services, temporary foster family care, and financial assistance, as indicated.\(^{432}\)

A 1970 publication by Ruth I. Pierce which outlines all rights and available resources for single mothers confirms that nobody can force mothers to surrender their infants for adoption, and even


in instances of “temporary” mental health struggles, the court is instructed to wait until she is well before demanding a decision:

For your protection, these [adoption] papers can never be signed until after the baby is born. As the natural mother of a baby, you are absolutely the only person who can decide to give your baby up. Other people can threaten you and put pressure on you, but legally the baby is yours until you sign papers stating otherwise. . . no one can sign your baby away without your consent. . . If the court feels that the woman is only temporarily incompetent to make the decision, it will allow a reasonable time for her to recover, so that if at all possible the decision will be hers and not someone else’s.  

However, in this 1966 account, a mother recalls that she was pressured to sign surrender papers while she was still pregnant, which directly contradicts the previous statement:

They sat there and got my signature while I was in the home before I gave up the baby. Before I had the baby. But you know, when you’re still pregnant you’re not totally aware of the full reality of the child. You know? You’re just pregnant. . . my friends have had that happen, too, where they were pregnant and they still had their doubts a little bit because it was unplanned and then as soon as they had the baby everything changed immediately and they were just in love. So it’s really manipulative to ask a woman to make a decision like that before the childbirth experience. (1966, Chicago, IL)

The following is an account from 1977 in which a mother recalls that a social worker told her that she would be starting a job, but there was no job. It was actually a staged display in which potential adoptive parents could assess her, despite the fact that she had not agreed to adoption:

I was given no information and was very afraid. Another woman came over to the maternity home and got me one day. She had me to sit with the front desk receptionist and I thought I was going to get a job and a way to help my situation. She told me to put on a dress (it was very plain, didn't fit me at all and was sort of dowdy). The receptionist left me there and I tried to answer the phone. All of a sudden a whole bunch of fancy dressed couples poured into the door and through the entry way and into a room adjacent to me. I tried to greet them and answer the phone. It was a switchboard phone and I was having trouble doing that with no help as to how to do it (just a 10 second explanation). As fast as that happened it was over and I was instructed to go change and go back to the maternity home. (1977, Houston, TX)

Additional authoritative bodies have made recommendations regarding the rights of single mothers. For example, in a United Nations Report of the Secretary-General released in 1971 from the Commission on the Status of Women states:

The laws of a large group of countries (including the United States) reflect a widely accepted doctrine: namely that the mother is the natural guardian of her child born out of wedlock and, as such, has a prima facie legal right to custody and guardianship of the child superior to the right of the father, or any other person.\footnote{United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, Report of the Secretary-General, \textit{The Status of the Unmarried Mother, Law and Practice}, New York, 1971, 28.}

Perhaps social workers and Catholic Charities workers associated with my interview subjects interpreted these recommendations differently in light of widely-held beliefs about single motherhood in the 1950s and 1960s. The mothers’ experiences were not what one would expect after having read the standards mentioned above. The following is a mother's account of a social worker outright denying the existence of any resources outside of adoption:

The final professional I talked to was the woman at the agency in charge of adoptions. When I met with her I told her that I didn't want to give my son up for adoption but that I needed help. I specifically asked her if there was help there or if she knew of anywhere or anyone who could help me. She said, “NO.” (1977, Houston, TX)

A mother whose pregnancy in 1959 led her to seek refuge with Catholic Charities gives an account of what a Catholic maternity home worker said to her when the attempted to express her desire to keep her infant:

‘you know, your son, or your child, will always be called a bastard on the playground.’ And that was the one that really got to me.

‘You won’t be able to rest anywhere. You won’t be able to do anything. You can’t teach.’ (1959, Philadelphia, PA)

Social workers and Catholic Charities workers repeated similar ideas to other mothers, as well:

‘Your child will be called a bastard on the playground. You’re doing the only thing you can to give your child a good life, if you really love your child, you will give them to a couple who is prepared and able to raise them. If you love them, you
won’t be an idiot, and take the child out, and ruin your life and the child’s life.’
(1966, Kansas City, MO)

My interview subjects felt that they were targeted by a well-oiled machine aimed at taking their infants from them:

They were trained in this. They had to have been, because it was so rampant and widespread, the things they said to us. You know,

‘Where are you going to go? Where are you going to live? You can’t provide for that baby and clothe that baby, and feed that baby. You can’t even rent a place to live, and if you take that baby home, your mother will end up raising that baby and you won’t even be the mother. You can’t get married because this will ruin your marriage. You have to go back and pretend this never happened.’ (1966)

... we were told that ‘we would not be good parents. Every child needs a two-parent home. And where would you get a job? And no decent man will marry you.’ (1968, Bronx, NY)

You signed the papers and they told you you had two weeks to change your mind. I found out that that wasn’t true. In the state of Virginia, you have six months from when the petition is filed by the couple that wants to adopt your child, to get the child back if the adoption was done under any coercion, which mine was. If we had known we could get him back, we would have just gotten married and done that. But they were scared because they knew that. (1972, Bethesda, MD)

What do these interviews tell scholars about the relationships between social workers, Catholic maternity home workers, and the single mothers under their care? What do they tell us about the relationships between the care practitioners working face-to-face with single mothers and the Catholic hierarchy from whom they were bureaucratically distanced, and from the social workers and Catholic leadership who wrote guidebooks for adoption services and services to unmarried mothers? It is clear that religious charity workers and social workers did not respect the recommendations to recognize the decision to surrender an infant for adoption as the decision of the parent. They did not follow the recommendation to ensure that the decisions were made without pressure, and to ensure that the parents were informed of all possible alternatives to adoption be-
fore they were allowed to make the decision. I contend that despite the authoritative recommendations to safeguard the agency of unmarried parents in adoption negotiations and single parent care, social workers and the religious charity workers who they influenced considered single mothers to be unworthy candidates for agency in decision-making regarding infant surrender by virtue of their perceived sexual transgression.

The very aspects of single mothers’ situations that caused them to need help were the same aspects that the agencies designed to aid them mobilized to deny them agency and help. Historian Marian J. Morton has proved that the plight of a homeless outcast is an apt symbol of American social policy toward unwed motherhood from the mid-nineteenth century until the 1990s. She notes that although single mothers have shared some experiences of others who depend on public or private aid, the mothers’ sexual delinquency has distinguished them from other dependents. Morton argues that the religious notion that sexuality should remain within heterosexual marriage has received secular sanction in custom and law, and this construction of womanhood is the foundation of the American social welfare system, which differentiates between policies regarding men and women, and between policies for married and unmarried women. By the 1970s, adoption agencies relied primarily on government funding, and the funding they received was contingent upon the services they provided. One of the services for which adoption agencies received no governmental subsidy was prenatal living and medical expenses for

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unwed mothers. The 1971 United Nations Report of the Secretary General also confirmed that in the United States, the general approach to single mothers and their children was one of social discrimination against the unmarried mother. The author elaborated that socially punitive milieu caused mothers to respond by making unsafe choices for her health and well-being:

... a fairly common attitude of the expectant unmarried mother would be to resort to abortion, sometimes under disastrous conditions for her health—let alone her life. If she decides against abortion she will no doubt try to hide her condition, as long as possible, thus denying herself the pre-natal care necessary for her physical well-being, and that of her child. If she is still of school age she may be suspended. If she has a job she may lose it and may encounter great difficulties in finding another, precisely at a time when she is in greatest need of moral and financial help. She may decide to leave her home community in order to avoid criticism or pity from her family and friends, and will find herself facing alone, in a strange environment, the hardship of her situation. After the birth of her child she will have to take the important decision of whether to raise her child and thus take her responsibilities in her own hands with whatever help and assistance is provided by the authorities... or give it away for adoption.

This quote that describes the position of single mothers in the United States is crucial to keep in mind in the consideration of single mothers’ answers to the question of whether or not they chose to enter maternity homes of their own will, or whether they wanted to surrender their infants for adoption or not. There were significant penalties to unmarried pregnancy that made life as a single mother nearly impossible in any condition other than homelessness.

Given such widespread, punitive customs regarding single motherhood in American society, I argue that in the United States between 1945 and 1990, social workers had established punitive measures against single mothers that had spread across disciplines and attained what Fou-
cault has described as Panopticism. Foucault enlisted Jeremy Bentham’s theory of the Panopticon, in which a panopticon is achieved when real subjection comes to pass by way of fictitious relations.\textsuperscript{443} The false relationships here are those between maternity home workers and their fantasies and narratives about who single mothers were.\textsuperscript{444} Interview material indicates that those who worked in maternity homes had already made up their minds about the sinfulness and unworthiness of the single mothers.\textsuperscript{445} When asked if there were any ideas or thoughts that were emphasized repeatedly to her by maternity home professionals, on mother responded:

Oh yeah. Over and over: how unworthy I was, and how I didn’t have anything to offer, and that ‘anybody would do a better job than I could.’ (1964, St. Paul, MD)

In the following account, the mother notes how social workers deliberately imposed their narrative of sexual promiscuity onto her and codified it into the birth certificate by making false claims on the birth certificate:

\ldots they sent me a copy of the baptism, and on there for father it says, “Pater ignotus” which means father unknown. And yet, everyone knew who the father was. It’s even on her medical records, “father of baby is twin.” They knew his name, they knew his brother, they knew his family, everybody knew. Everybody at the home, all the social workers, everybody knew. Can you believe that? Slut shaming. What a shaming by the church to do that. They knew. So the Catholics were very much involved in my experience. (1966)

In this case, despite the fact that the social and maternity home workers knew who the father of this mother’s baby was, and that the mother knew who he was, the Catholic workers in charge of the baptism record insisted on painting the mother in a light that made her seem inaccurately prolific sexually. The panopticon is enacted here because Catholic workers chose to exert power over the mother by disregarding the actual facts of her identity, character, and pregnancy, and


\textsuperscript{444} Foucault, \textit{Discipline and Punish},” 202.

\textsuperscript{445} My questions are italicized.
imposing a narrative of who they decided she was, and then subjecting this mother to the punishment that was therapeutically indicated for that particular imposed identity. Another instance of the work of the panopticon is a mother’s 1969 account of religious requirements in her Catholic home:

we had to go to mass every morning. You know, of course, go to confession every week. Living with the nuns. It was very, very strict about, “You’ve committed this major sin and you have to beg for mercy.” (1969-70, Tennessee)

This mother had to subject herself to additional surveillance (through confession to a priest) and was constantly told that she had committed a major sin. Another element of Foucault’s panopticon is a dynamic in which those subjected to surveillance often make the constraints of power play out upon themselves: they impose the perceived desires of those in power upon themselves. This dynamic is evident in the case of the following mother’s account of signing her surrender papers:

I was never offered an option, ever. In fact, I would not find any papers. I wanted to visit with my son, and I did it twice. And the second time, his father came, too. And the worker, her name was Ms. Hartnett. . . she was a big woman, very tall, she was intimidating. She said,

‘do you want to keep your son?’ And I said,

‘Oh yeah, more than anything, but I would be selfish if I did, because I’m so young, and you’ve all been telling me that he would have a better life with somebody else. “She said,

‘Sign the papers.’ She stood up and asked that question. I think she legally had to ask that question, but that’s how it was asked. (1972, Bethesda, MD)

In this case, there were numerous constraints of power for this mother: the perpetual narrative that she would be an inadequate parent and that keeping her infant would therefore be maltreatment; the authority and number of the people who repeatedly subjected her to that narrative; the

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446 Foucault, Discipline and Punish,” 202.
intimidating manner of the worker asking her to sign surrender papers; isolation from her family, friends, and the father of her child. She took the narrative and applied it to herself under the gaze of the worker. This is also an example of Foucault’s description of the feature of the panopticon in which pressure acts before an offense.\textsuperscript{447} In this case, the pressure that the mother felt influenced her to avoid what would have been the “offense” of daring to refuse to sign the adoption surrender forms.

**The commodification of single mothers**

The widespread Catholic maternity home practice of pressuring mothers to surrender their infants is an example of Foucault’s concept of “the functional inversion of the disciplines,” in which an institution that was once formed to neutralize a danger or fix a particular problem becomes normalized and begins to play a positive role.\textsuperscript{448} Kathryn Joyce articulates a dynamic within evangelical international adoptions in the twenty-first century that I contend also existed in American Catholic maternity homes from 1945 to the 1990s: the urge to push adoption on women with unplanned pregnancies often amounts to coercion that treats single mothers as the source of a product.\textsuperscript{449} The following accounts support the argument that although Catholic maternity homes and social workers claimed to provide a variety of resources to single mothers, they prioritized adoptions above all else and often did not follow the recommendations set out in authoritative texts for adoption and unmarried parent services. The mother in the following account from 1968 recalls that those responsible for her surrender papers were willing to cut legal corners in order to possess her signature as quickly as possible:

\begin{quote}
I remember signing, and I said,
\end{quote}

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{447} Foucault, Discipline and Punish,” 206.
\item \textsuperscript{448} Foucault, Discipline and Punish,” 210.
\end{itemize}
‘well, these have to be witnessed by a notary.’ And she said,

‘well she’s out for lunch. But she’ll do it when she comes back.’ I said,

‘Well isn’t she supposed to notarize my signature?’ She said,

‘Don’t worry about it.’ (1968, Bronx NY)

Such an account indicates that maternity homes had shifted their focus from solving the crisis of unmarried parenthood through means and resources that mothers freely chose to securing adoptions. The following accounts are similar:

My entire pregnancy all I thought was, ‘they don’t care about me, they only care about my baby.’ And after I delivered, it was the same thing. They just wanted to steal my baby from me. They didn’t care at all about what was going to happen to me. I was just a pod that carried a child and gave it to them. (1969-70, Tennessee)

I received no counseling. No counseling at all. Just go, be quiet, don’t talk about it, don’t admit to anything, this never happened, but of course your body doesn’t lie. . . I’ve suffered from depression ever since. (1964, St. Paul, MD)

Additionally, these accounts contrast with the following 1962 monograph presented at the Child Welfare League’s National Conference on Social Welfare in New York City, in which the author explains how important it is for social workers to support single mothers after their infant surrender to prevent another pregnancy:

The caseworker may be so concerned with the child’s welfare that she may encourage relinquishment precipitously, thereby inviting another pregnancy. The unmarried mother must have a period of mourning, and the caseworker must show that she recognizes the extent and meaning of the loss. This loss, with the resurgence of previously suffered deprivations and desertions that it brings about, must be worked through in the casework process.450

The following mother recalls her life immediately following release from her maternity home.

She describes the different coping mechanisms of single mothers with whom she kept in touch

after they left the home. It is clear that they did not receive counseling in any manner, and did
not consider the maternity home a safe place to return for emotional or medical support.

... after I got out of there I ran around with four other girls [from the home]. One
of them got married, one got a back-alley abortion, and another one nearly killed
herself with a coat hanger. ... after she left the home she became a go-go dancer and
the rest of us would go to this go-go bar and watch her in this cage dancing. ... And
she behaved like that, I think, because she was just traumatized from losing her
child. (1966, Chicago, IL)

The same mother also gives an account of her post-delivery medical care:

Afterward, I had an infection. I was living in like a girls’ hotel, and I was in the
basement of this hotel, when it started, and I almost bled to death. The other people
in the hotel, these girls, these people just backed away. And I crawled up the stairs
and called the ambulance. (1966, Chicago, IL)

One mother experienced significant feelings of betrayal after she realized that she had been de-
nied the chance to see her uncle before he died because maternity home workers feared that the
grief would would impact the health of her pregnancy:

While I was pregnant, my favorite uncle was dying. My mother’s other brother.
And I had tried to get a hold of him at his house just to talk to him because he didn’t
live probably within four miles of the hospital and I did want to see him. ... So now
it’s a week after I have my daughter. My mother comes down, sits down, and says,

‘Your uncle Joe died.’ And I said,

‘what happened?’ She said,

‘Well, he had cancer.’ I said,

‘why didn’t you call me?’ And I will never forget what she said.

‘I was told by the agency not to tell you because they were afraid you might lose
the baby.’ So, the money that they would make from my daughter was more im-
portant than my feelings for my uncle. (1968, Bronx, NY)

The Child Welfare League’s 1958 recommendation for the follow-up with unmarried par-
ents after an adoption are as follows:

The relinquishment of a child should be accepted only when parents have had an
opportunity to make a decision that they can feel is best for both themselves and
the child ad that they recognize to be final. This final step should not be taken until
the parents are considered to be ready emotionally to give up their rights, as well
as their responsibilities, to the child. . . Even after parental rights are terminated and
adoption is consummated legally through court action, adequate social work ser-
VICES and other help to both the mother and father can best ensure both the protec-
tion of their rights and the finality and legality of the relinquishment.451

The common theme running through these accounts is that the mothers felt that the social
workers and religious charity workers only cared about them inasmuch as they could provide an
infant, and outside of that, the workers had no regard for their well-being whatsoever. The expe-
riences of my interview subjects suggest that despite the Child Welfare League recommenda-
tions, social workers and Catholic Charities workers did not wait until mothers felt that they had
chosen adoption of their own accord, nor did they provide care to mothers or direct them to addi-
tional resources following their adoptions.

A study conducted by the National Conference of Catholic Charities, published in 1968,
states that although the homes had goals of providing counseling services for many aspects of
their lives, they only succeeded in providing casework and adoption counseling, at the expense
of everything else:

Different counseling services provided by the agencies included casework, adop-
tion counseling, psychiatric treatment, financial counseling, psychological testing,
group therapy, legal counseling, religious counseling, and educational courses.
Though the agencies were rather successful in providing medical service and resi-
dential care to a large group of the unmarried mothers, with regard to different
counseling services the angles were not so successful except in very few instances.
The only two services which reached any sizable number of unmarried mothers
were casework and adoption counseling. Services such as psychological testing,
educational courses, etc., with considerable influence on prevention of recidivism
and rehabilitation of unmarried mothers, were received only by very few unmarried
mothers. While the importance of casework on prevention of recidivism and the
rehabilitation of those in need may not be questioned, it may not be accurate to

attribute such an importance also to adoption counseling, the one service the agencies were able to provide to the largest number of unmarried mothers.\textsuperscript{452}

The prioritization of adoption services above any other resource to single mothers supports the mothers’ claims that they received very little care or guidance for their own well-being, and that most of the maternity home operations were structured to enforce an adoption regardless of the mothers’ desires. Mothers felt that the ultimate goal of workers in Catholic adoption services was to secure an adoption above all else, which one mother articulates:

The end game was to not let you leave with your baby. That is why they got so many mothers to sign release papers in the hospital, which is illegal, because you are under medication. When you’re emotionally distraught. (1966)

Forcing mothers to sign before childbirth, or under the influence of drugs in the middle of the childbirth experience, is one example of the behaviors that mothers felt were unfairly manipulative ways to secure surrender signatures. Another method was the use of temporary facilities for newborns, which indicate that social workers and Catholic maternity home workers were anxious to separate mothers from their infants to keep them from fighting surrender. In the 1957 study conducted by the National Conference of Catholic Charities, the researcher found that every agency surveyed utilized temporary placements prior to adoption.\textsuperscript{453}

Numerous first-hand accounts on the part of the mothers detail their childbirth experiences. The visitor policies varied between accounts, with some mothers recalling that they were not allowed to have any visitors during their childbirth and other supported by their mothers. However, all accounts indicate that the mothers were strategically positioned to foster their own mental and physical isolation from other people, and from their own experiences and infants:

\textsuperscript{452} Reverend Antony Cheripurnam, Miss Mary Ann Discenza, Sister Damian Linitski, FCSP, miss Genevieve Sansoucy, \textit{A Summary of Four Theses Which Make Up A Study of Unmarried Parents Served by Forty-One Catholic Social Agencies} (National Catholic School of Social Service, Catholic University of America, 1968), 14.

“My mom wasn't allowed to be with me or anything like that. I was to be alone. The psychological, ‘repent for your sins.’” (1969, Tennessee)

A mother’s mother appears in this 1959 account, but the physical restrictions are more severe:

absolutely no preparation for anything— I had no idea what the birth entailed, and the doctor said ‘You'll never remember, I'm going to knock you out.’ I had the labour out in the hallway, in the hospital, because I couldn’t be in the room with the married women. . . I was in this— crib— with the sides up all around me. It was like an adult baby crib, and I was fastened down. . . this young nurse walked into the door. She had the baby. And she said to me, ‘do you want to see your baby.’ And before I could get words out of my mouth, this nun came swooping from somewhere, and she yelled, ‘SHE CAN’T HAVE THAT BABY!’ (1959, Philadelphia, PA)

In this account, the nun's behavior supports the argument that adoption service workers worked hard to minimize contact between single mothers and their infants, even before mothers had signed surrender forms. Social workers and religious charity workers also continued to view mothers, and cause mothers to view themselves, through narratives of criminality and guilt even in their childbirth experiences.

I felt like a criminal. . . I was called an inmate. . . after the delivery, the baby was put in a corner. Never showed to me, or anything. And I remember trying to sit up to see her in that corner, and they just kind of huddled around her, I was shackled down. They just whisked her away and that was that. (1964, St. Paul, MD)

In the previous account as well as the next, mothers are purposely prevented from seeing their infants, after birth as well as during:

They left me on my back for hours in pain, no one explaining anything or giving me any comfort whatsoever. . . They wrapped a sheet around my legs so I couldn't witness my son’s birth. (1977, Houston, TX)

This account is in keeping with the following, in which workers used numerous practices to reduce the time mothers spent with their infants.

I didn’t even know my baby went to foster care. I was told that my baby was going straight to her new home. Yet my baby was in foster care for four months. (1966)
In a 1968 pamphlet for unmarried pregnant women, the author, Helen E. Terkelsen ensures the mother that if she chooses adoption,

The [adoption] agency will see to it that the adoptive parents are just right for your baby. They will have healthy reasons for adopting your baby, and they will provide a good home, lots of love, and perhaps brothers and sisters. They will be the kind of people you could respect and, very important to you, the kind of people who would respect you, if they knew you.\footnote{Helen E. Terkelsen, \textit{I'm going to have a baby and I'm not married}, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1968, 32.}

Despite this promise, which echoed the promises made to many mothers, the promise of a perfect life for their infants turned out quite differently for the mothers who gave interviews:

I was told that I would not be a good mother, that my child would be better off in a two-parent family. . . her parents were divorced shortly after the adoption became legal. The mother was married five times. The father has been married twice. The mother took my daughter out of school in the second or third grade, and they went bar-hopping all over Florida. My daughter used to sit in the front seat of the car while her mother was in the back having sex or smoking pot. . . So, yes. They did a much better job picking parents. You know how they picked my child’s parents? They went in and counted the number of crucifixes on the wall. . . The mother’s second husband used to take showers with my daughter. (1968, Bronx, NY)

What happened that rendered actual events in maternity homes so different from the recommended courses of action? In order to avoid misattributing guilt to the authoritative parties through presentist applications of ethical standards that did not exist at the time, or glossing over possible guilt by failing to properly analyze and categorize the practices identified in guide books and interviews with mothers, it is necessary to define coercion and persuasion, or influence, and to understand the historical and social contexts in which these definitions came about. In an article in the \textit{Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal}, J. S. Blumenthal-Barby clarifies that even as late as 2012, categorizations between rational persuasion (influence by reason and argument), Coercion (influence by irresistible threats or offers), and manipulation (anything in-between) have
been loosely defined, and the middle-area of undue influence, or manipulation, has not been defined at all.\textsuperscript{455} In the healthcare field, the standard ethical position has been that rational persuasion is always permissible, and coercion is almost always impermissible, except for cases in which there exists an imminent threat to one’s self or others.\textsuperscript{456} Despite somewhat clear parameters for rational influence, the middle ground of “manipulation” is completely undefined. Penny Powers critically reviews philosophical and empirical approaches to coercion and influence to similarly conclude that even outside of the medical field, the difference between persuasion based on reason and coercion is not precise or self-evident, and that definitions differ depending on their historical context, place, language, participants, and culture.\textsuperscript{457} Using the definition of coercion as “influence by irresistible threats or offers,”\textsuperscript{458} the following mother’s 1977 account indicates that she was coerced into surrendering her infant to adoption out of fear that she would not receive prenatal medical care if she did not appear compliant:

Another professional that met with me was the ‘counselor’. I had one private meeting and one group meeting. That was it and it was highly directed towards what she wanted me to say. I was afraid that if I didn't go along with what they wanted that I wouldn't get medical care for my situation. (1977, Houston, TX)

The threats were not always quite as straightforward as a denial of care. The threat that most mothers who gave interviews articulated to me, and the one that convinced all of them to surrender, was that their child would have a terrible life if raised by a single mother. A mother who had been under the auspices of Catholic Charities during her pregnancy in 1966 remembers the following:

\begin{footnotes}
\item[456] Blumenthal-Barby, “Between Reason and Coercion,” 345.
\end{footnotes}
They take you away from your comfort, from your support, from everything familiar, so that you’re properly in a state of terror, and then they work on you every day and they feed you the same mantra. You know, ‘you’re unworthy. You’ve made a mistake that you need to correct.’ And for Catholics, ‘You’ve sinned and you need to make it right. You need to make amends. You can’t possibly raise THE baby.’ Never YOUR baby. And that was intentional, because they didn’t want you to mentally or emotionally view your growing stomach as your child. (1966, Interview 5)

This mother felt that the manifold forces of isolation, negative messages about her capacity for motherhood, atonement from a mortal sin, and a constant denial of ownership over her own pregnancy amounted to coercion in the “irresistible threat” that if she kept her infant, she would be denying them the chance to enjoy a quality life, and a life of dignity. This was compounded with the endless offer of wealthy, married, families who wanted to give their infant a life replete with every benefit and opportunity.

The overwhelming sense that emerges from a review of the maternity home guides and adoption service guides is that social and charity workers truly believed their own narratives about single mothers, and that therefore, every adoption represented saving an infant’s life. Many of them were doing the best they knew, which included utilizing academic and “scientific” data collection methods on mothers, creating group-living situations to regulate and control mothers’ behavior, networking with other authoritative institutions to spread control over illegitimacy and adoption, and positioning their various methods to pressure mothers into surrender as therapeutic. By prioritizing the infant and hinging their care on assumptions about single mothers’ inadequacy, defectiveness, immorality, and lack of values, social workers’ and religious charity workers’ solutions harmed both mothers and infants.
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Cheripurnam, Antony, Miss Mary Ann Discenza, Sister Damian Linitski, FCSP, Miss Genevieve Sansoucy, *A Summary of Four Theses Which Make Up A Study of Unmarried Parents Served by Forty-One Catholic Social Agencies* (National Catholic School of Social Service, Catholic University of America, 1968)


http://ors.umkc.edu/research-compliance-(iacuc-ibc-irb-rsc)/institutional-review-board-(irb)/history-of-research-ethics
Conclusion
The passage of *Roe v. Wade* in 1973 compounded with a growing acceptance of single motherhood in the 1980s and 1990s so that by 1990, most maternity homes struggled to maintain inhabitants. Many had to change their function to outpatient adoption services or resource centers for single mothers, or close their doors altogether. Adoption continues to be a robust industry. Ultimately, this dissertation has attempted to illustrate the human costs of the institutional development of both Catholic charities in America and social work as a discipline and profession by examining the case study of social work’s involvement in Catholic adoption and unmarried parent services. I have focused on the years between 1920 and 1980, as the earlier decades were crucial in the formation of social work as a discipline and profession, and the latter decades saw the systemic development of a multi-institutional system of production for infants for adoption. The latest instance of adoption among my interviews was in 1977, and the passage of *Roe v. Wade* presented challenges that rendered most religious maternity homes irrelevant, causing changes in function by the 1980s. I argue that four specific mechanisms of lenience set the stage for a system of discipline towards single mothers that spanned numerous institutions, academic fields, religious groups, and social causes, and that adoption was positioned as a therapeutic “cure” for the constructed social sickness of illegitimacy. My principal evidence has been gathered from Catholic journals such as the *St. Vincent de Paul Quarterly* and *Catholic Charities Review* and from social work studies and maternity home guides compiled by the World Health Organization, the National Conference of Catholic Charities, and the Child Welfare League of America. To provide another perspective, I have collected ethnographic interviews from single mothers who spent time in Catholic maternity homes and were unhappy with the pressure they feel ultimately caused them to surrender their infants for adoption. I have presented each chapter as a new strand
of a braided history in which numerous beleaguered minorities have struggled to survive by compromising and negotiating, while also ceding important ground that would eventually render positive, innovative solutions to problems into machineries of exploitation.

Summary

In the introduction, I described the history of adoption laws in the United States, starting from the mid-nineteenth century, when they emerged in response to the growing need to grant legal status to adopted children and enable dependent children to receive better care. In the United States, adoption laws are not based on English common law, the way most of its other laws are. Rather, American adoption law has been a collection of statues enacted since the mid-nineteenth century. During the nineteenth century, adoption laws emerged in response to the need to give legal status to children in transferred care and to enable superior care for dependent children. In the initial half of the nineteenth century, existing methods of care for dependent children included a period in which children stayed in asylums or institutions and then entered indentured labor or apprenticeships. The institutions could not support the quantity of dependent children. Protestant Child welfare reformers, motivated by religious intentions, pushed for dependent children’s adoptions into families, where they believed that the children's spiritual well-being would be tended. Children’s adoptions into homes became so common that there was increased pressure not only to pass laws regulating and insuring the legal relations between adopted children and their natural and adopted parents, but also to guarantee that some benefits

459 Sokoloff, Burton Z., “Antecedents of American Adoption,” The Future of Children 3 no 1, Adoption (Spring, 1993) pg. 17
460 Sokoloff, Burton Z., “Antecedents of American Adoption,” The Future of Children 3 no 1, Adoption (Spring, 1993) pg. 19
461 Sokoloff, Burton Z., “Antecedents of American Adoption,” The Future of Children 3 no 1, Adoption (Spring, 1993) pg. 19
of heirship were conferred on the adopted child. This pressure, which originated with the activities of the charitable associations working in child welfare, led to the passage of the general adoption statutes in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. Adoption laws in the United States emerged at the end of the nineteenth century out of the unprecedented number of parentless children in pre-existing childcare institutions.

The industrial revolution and massive Irish and European immigration led to the Placing Out movement founded by the Protestant Reverend Charles Loring Brace in 1853, and the creating of foundling homes and the placement of children with urban foster families. Reverend Brace of New York developed a system in which wandering children were rounded up and placed onto western farms where they could learn to work and exist in the country rather than the morally-loaded urban environment. No legal regulations were in place to monitor or control the wholesale distribution of children to unvetted homes where they were put to work and rarely paid. Thus, religious adoption services begin with a legacy of uninvestigated homes into which children were haphazardly placed for the purpose of performing cheap labor. At this point, there were no laws governing adoption practices aside from the Massachusetts statute of 1851. The 1851 Massachusetts statute was a formal code that set the United States apart from preindustrial societies, where adoption practices were one of numerous possible solutions to a need for labor, religious practice, or heirship. The Massachusetts Act became a model for legislation in most

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462 Sokoloff, Burton Z., “Antecedents of American Adoption,” The Future of Children 3 no 1, Adoption (Spring, 1993) pg. 19
464 Howe, “Adoption Practice,” 175.
other U. S. states, it developed the “best interest” concept as a hallmark for how to conduct adoptions, and it placed this decision squarely in the power of courts.\textsuperscript{466} The availability of adoptable babies increased in the late 1950s and 1960s and rather than experiencing agonizingly long wait periods, couples were actively sought out by adoption agencies and could quickly proceed with the adoptions. Independent, or black and gray market adoptions increased again in the 1970s when the availability of infants decreased due to a declining birth rate, contraceptives and abortion, and many single parents choosing to keep their infants because of a reduced stigma surrounding having children out of wedlock.\textsuperscript{467}

In Chapter 2: The Indulgence of Public Voice, the focus moves from adoption law to Catholic Charity. I contend that the enormity, diversity, and impoverished nature of the Catholic Church’s arriving immigrants between 1820 and 1920 required American Catholic leaders to apply innovative thinking and utilize their lay members by exhorting them to perform charity work. This charity work would take care of their own foreign members arriving in poverty and in hordes, and would build Catholics’ new reputation as valuable service providers in American society. In response, Catholic laity took on unprecedented leadership roles and built a formidable network of Catholic charities from the ground across the United States.

I suggest that another technology of lenience also came about as a result of broader American vulnerabilities, specifically issues of ethnicity and the same mass immigration that shook the American Catholic church. The United States reeled from WWI and then the Great Depression and the Catholic Church assumed a greater public role in providing welfare service. The Catholic Church leveraged this to increase their role even further, using the New Deal of

\textsuperscript{466} Herman, \textit{Kinship by Design}, 177.
\textsuperscript{467} Herman, \textit{Kinship by Design}, 181.
1933 to demand a voice in American policy writing, and a continued role as an important social service provider in American society.

In Chapter 3: The Indulgence of Professionalization, a third mechanism of lenience emerges: Catholic hierarchy extended mechanisms of lenience in which hierarchy members granted religious approval to charity work serving non-Catholics, and invite the openly, militantly secular institution of social work into its religious institutional structure in exchange for elevated social esteem, authority, and influence for all parties involved. Similarly, I contend that this lenience was mutual between Catholics and social workers: Catholics allowed secular social workers into their homes, where they could benefit from the information they gained there, and when social workers gained near-complete control of the homes, they allowed religious workers to continue to identifying the home and services as religious while gaining the authority and esteem that came with social work’s hard-won secular, scientific identification. This compromise occasioned a major change in Catholic adoption service practices, in which the initial policy of working to convince mothers to keep their infants was eschewed in favor of various strategic measures that social workers and religious charity workers took to pressure mothers to surrender their infants to adoption.

Chapter 4: "Discipline and Punish," uncovers the dynamics explored by the previous three chapters using Foucault’s theory in which those in power collect information on their subjects, and use it to establish expertise and authority, which then allows them to position punishment, or any actions taken on the subject without their consent, as therapeutic. I argue that using this dynamic, social workers and religious charity workers established widespread culture of therapeutic decision-making in which they chose adoption on behalf of single mothers in the

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name of protecting American society. In this chapter, I bring mothers’ voices to light and estab-
lish them as one of the strands in this braided history. I suggest that social workers and religious charity workers used “social problem” rationalization to reposition illegitimacy and single motherhood as a severe problem in American society. Most official discussions about reproductive politics lack input from the women whose reproduction is in question. Frequently, debate and discussions about reproductive politics are shaped by notions about how to solve pressing social problems, rather than about women’s experiences and needs.469 Adoption authorities overwrote single mothers’ voices, desires, needs, and identities with their own preconceived notions of the threats and dangers of single mothers, and treated the mothers as problems that needed to be cor-
rected. Social work narratives functioned to pathologize single motherhood so that the maternity homes they controlled could be positioned as therapeutic remedies for these perceived social sicknesses.

This chapter explores authoritative recommendations for adoption practices from the Children’s Aid Society, Child Welfare League of America, United Nations, National Conference of Catholic Charities, and contrasts these suggestions of Best Practices with mothers’ first-hand accounts of their experiences in Catholic maternity homes and adoption services. I argue that de-
spite the authoritative recommendations to safeguard the agency of unmarried parents in adop-
tion negotiations and single parent care, social workers and the religious charity workers who they influenced considered single mothers to be unworthy candidates for agency in decision-
making regarding infant surrender by virtue of their perceived sexual transgression. Ultimately, I find that these mechanisms of lenience represented negotiations and compromises of vulnerable

groups trying to survive and make history, but in the pursuit of their disparate goals, social workers and Catholic maternity homes rendered single mothers, who were a crucial element of the formula, invisible as real people. By hinging their care on assumptions about single mothers’ inadequacy, defectiveness, immorality, and lack of values, social workers’ and religious charity workers’ solutions harmed both mothers and infants. Although the American Catholic Church and social work have become huge cornerstones in providing charity and social welfare in American society through their 20th century negotiations, the mothers who they claimed to serve lost everything.

Contributions

Maya Mayblin’s theory of lenience has lent structure as my argument has built from issues of late nineteenth-century Catholic immigration, to the mobilization of laity for charity work, to social work as a transformative force within that charity. Mayblin argues that discipline and lenience have worked together to constitute Christian subjectivities over hundreds of years.\(^{470}\) For Mayblin, the development of a Christian identity, institutional presence, power, and survival depended not only upon the development of disciplined bodies and cultural expectations, but also upon the division of labor between clergy and laity, and upon numerous legal “commutations” and practical avoidances that functioned to allow laity to receive the benefits of the religious community without committing to an ascetic lifestyle.\(^{471}\) Mayblin asks to what extent the “lapsed” Catholic is already contained within Catholicism as a dynamic form, rather than an indication towards secularizing.\(^{472}\) In this dissertation, I apply aspects of Mayblin’s argument


to a smaller swath of Catholic history, and rather than understanding the non-religious, or secularized cultural edges as the territory for a passive “lapse” in religious practice, I view them as active resources which Catholics strategically engaged with, made holy, and incorporated into their religious practices and beliefs in order to gain influence and build their national identity as an American religion. The jumping-off point for each chapter has hinged on Robert Orsi’s important observation that scholarship regarding religious groups and abuse must take into account the intricate nuances and negotiations of relationships within and between religious communities and the societies within which they exist. With this in mind, I have sought to elucidate the vulnerabilities and historical and social contexts of the members of the relationships constituted within each instance of lenience granted, or each measure of discipline imposed. As members of the American Catholic church attempted to overcome barriers to their institutional development and goals, or tried to leverage the influence of external, non-religious ideas and people, they demonstrated the various dynamics of lenience and discipline described by Mayblin. Where Mayblin described and understood characteristics of a changing Catholic subjectivity, I have extended her theory to understand one aspect of the development of a uniquely American, twentieth-century Catholicism. Mayblin insightfully commented on ways in which those who associate with Catholicism more casually can still be carefully accounted for in the delicate spiritual ecosystem of commutation and commitment. Instead of studying the “lapsedness” or “lukewarm” passivity of less enthusiastic religious members, I have explored Catholics’ active engagement with several aspects of secular American culture and reality that Catholics enveloped within their own tradition, and the way this dynamic resulted in institutional growth and new understandings of what it meant to be an American Catholic. Mayblin’s theory helped me to extend

past the parameters of what is “Catholic,” and explore the process of how cultural items become Catholic, through moments of need and ingenuity. This is exemplified by the Catholic embrace and leverage of the self-professed secular, scientific field of social work in the 1920s and 1930s. Social work represented a way to improve the already-established Catholic brand of charity, and Catholics found a way to engage with the secular field and turn it into a Catholic tradition. The downside of this Catholic ingenuity is that it has led to instances of abuse, which Foucault’s theory of discipline illuminates.

I have applied Foucault’s theory of discipline to help make sense of the interviews I collected from single mothers who were recipients of Catholic social work and adoption services, and were devastated and disenfranchised by their experiences. Foucault’s theory of discipline defines the processes in which the “right to punish” becomes justified by the protection of the general public through the redefinition of what constitutes a threat. As threats to society are more specifically defined, a punishment becomes linked to it, stripping it of any sense of arbitrariness and causing the punishment to appear “natural,” or even therapeutic. As individuals are subjected to punishment or therapy, they become objects and targets of power, and experts on their conditions collect information from them to build bodies of knowledge and expertise. As these experts’ legitimacy and authority grows, they network with other institutions, and the power to punish is spread throughout a “carceral system,” which gives legal sanction to disciplinary mechanisms. This is an oversimplification of the full scale of the system of discipline that Foucault lays out. However, these are the aspects of his argument that have clarified the most prominent themes that arose in my interviews with single mothers who sought help from social workers in

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474 Foucault, “Discipline,” 90-104.  
475 Foucault, “Discipline,” 104.  
477 Foucault, “Discipline,” 301.
Catholic institutions, and with the interviews of similar women conducted by Ann Fessler. Foucault suggests that disciplinary power can become so omniscient and overpowering that it “creates,” or “produces” individuals. Rather than viewing this as reductionist, I have recognized Foucault’s “social constructionism,” or his claim that disciplinary power creates individuals, in light of Robert Orsi’s observation that projecting identity fantasies onto victims, rather than seeing them for the humans that they are, is one important aspect of abuse within religious institutions. This enabled me to view social work narratives about single motherhood (i.e. denying their agency by pronouncing them feebleminded, delinquent, or neurotic) as part of Foucault’s process of imposing discipline, which helped me to underline the anguish that was apparent in all of the mothers’ interviews. I have compared and contrasted mothers’ accounts of their experiences to aspects of Foucault’s disciplinary system to give a theoretical framework to the coercion the mothers shared, and to illuminate its short and long term effects on these mothers. Foucault’s compelling account of the power pressed upon a subject within a disciplinary system helps to explain the nature of the subtle but all-encompassing coercion that influenced mothers internalize the desires and goals of their authorities and then act against their own interest, for example, instances of signing surrender papers. Foucault’s theory provided a structured pattern to categorize the coercion within many of the mothers’ responses that are difficult to understand for anyone who has not been subject to the same system of discipline. Although the church and social work were growing institutionally, they were doing so by using their institutions to deny the humanity and agency to those they promised to help.

This work unearths a buried Catholic aspect of the history of adoption services and social work. In her book, *Fallen Women, Problem Girls*, Kunzel traces the professionalization of social work from 1890 to 1945 by analyzing how women reformers in evangelical traditions used the
rhetoric of maternity and domesticity to define and justify their role in benevolent work, and then moves beyond to the new, more secular ideology of professional social work.⁴⁷⁸ There is an academic precedent for studies of social work’s development, its engagement with religious women, and its differentiation against them. However, after searching Catholic primary sources such as maternity home guides published by the National Conference of Catholic Charities, I was able to discern that Catholic women responded very differently to social workers than did their Protestant contemporaries, and it had the significant effect of dramatically bolstering their institutional development.

The word “charity” usually elicits a sympathetic approval, however, this equates to social influence, and it is important to discern who is the most significant beneficiary in any charity. In this case, the charity providers benefitted much more than those who supposedly received care. Care was not structured around the needs of the care recipients, but around a desire for research and experimentation with social work protocols and principles. This work is a cautionary tale for any scholar to interrogate privatized charity providers and ostensible philanthropists to ascertain what strategic benefits emerge in addition to services rendered, as well as what neglect or abuse may have been overlooked or narrated over.

This work presents a new case study to the field of religious diversity in North America. This dissertation contributes to literature on the history of the Catholic Church in North America, and the history of Catholic social services by bringing the experiences of those who were “served” into broader historical accounts and incorporating their perspectives. It adds a new case study of a North American immigrant religion and the influence of its history in society on the

doctrines, practices, and institutions that it chose to influence over time—in this case, the Catholic church made three particular innovative choices to survive institutionally. This work connects to broader discussions of religion and social services, and demonstrates how privatized welfare can provide tremendous footholds for struggling religious traditions, but have detrimental effects on those in the care of religious services. This work fits with works such as Robert Orsi’s Between Heaven and Earth, which holds the Catholic Church accountable for abuses within its services to children, women, and the disabled, yet lifts those very subjects up as humans rather than presenting them as mere victims. Orsi illustrates charity recipients’ subversion of Catholic imagery and saints, and demonstrates the ways in which those saints and images can work to reinforce dangerous power differentials, or circumvent them. My goal has been to illuminate my subject matter and interview participants with the same stubborn, devastated, triumphant humanity.

**Recommendations**

The practical implications of this work include possible application of Foucault’s discipline and Mayblin’s lenience as a pair to other case studies within religious studies or other cultures, communities, and institutions. Perhaps scholars will even find yet another aspect to discipline and lenience that I have missed. I found Foucault’s panopticon dynamics to lend nuance to my understanding of maternity home institutions, and I imagine that many other aspects of Discipline and Punish can illuminate other communities and professions yet to be studied, as well. Mayblin’s concept of lenience highlighted dimensions of American Catholics’ negotiations as they contended with rapid changes in American society that I would have previously missed, and rendered visible many of the strategic accommodations that ultimately led to tremendous institutional development of the American Catholic Church. An application of a theory of lenience in
which laity can be lightly carried through their lives through the principle of commutation would lend great nuance to many other ongoing case studies within religion.

Processing my own grief and my mother’s and brother’s experiences has been ongoing for me. My studies have involved explorations of the dynamics of institution-building, Victorian sexual ethics, and religious communities’ stakes in controlling adherents’ sexualities and the bearing and raising of their children. My work has involved the history of religions in North America, the history of adoption in North America, and the history of religious studies, psychology, and social work as academic disciplines, because all of these things illuminate some part of the larger context that determined the nature of the particular adversities that John and my mother faced. Part of my grief processing has been to try to understand what happened that positioned my mother and brother in society, religion, and institutional matrices of power that caused their tragedy to play out the way it did. I often choose to study institutions and dynamics that allow me to gain more nuanced understandings of the context of their story as a case study. Conversely, by keeping my mother’s and brother’s experiences in mind, I have been able to ask productive questions about institutional development and operation and its engagement with those presented as “needy.” This is how I arrived at my dissertation topic, and the questions that have emerged from this process will continue to guide my work beyond the PhD. By examining numerous moments in the intersections of social services and welfare, sexuality, and religions, I have developed a deep engagement with the dynamics at play and I have done my best to use the principles of academic scholarship to better understand what happened.
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Appendix 1: Interview Transcripts
Participant: Well you know I guess my main concern is, I’m anxious to help. I want to help people understand the problem, but my main concern is that I don’t want to contribute to something that is gonna like diss the Catholic church. I’m an active Catholic myself. And I, kind of the way I see it is what happened to me and what happened to a lot of people is pretty awful. But, um, we’re not going to change it unless we have them on board. It’s not going—I mean I’ve noticed that a lot of Catholic women that have been through it—they quit the Catholic church, I mean, they’re gone.

Oh, no.

So it just leaves the situation to the people who want to perpetuate the problem. And there are a lot of people there who have been through this, who say, “hey, this really isn’t Christian teaching at all.” And at this particular point in time in society, we have a great pope. I mean he’s wonderful. He’s open to changing things that are wrong with the way things have been.

Have you seen the movie Philomena?

Yes, I have.

That place was pretty awful. But the fact that she didn’t leave the Catholic church has had an impact. I mean the pope gave her an audience. They’re listening. And I know from around here they’re listening and they’re willing to look at how it was wrong in the past and the way it was done was wrong, and they don’t want that to continue. But if everybody just leaves and says, “oh, I had a bad experience, and so the Catholic church is terrible.” It’s not going to change it.

Exactly. And that’s not my goal either. I don’t want to create a smear campaign, I’m not interested in doing that because for me, there are some books that may be of great interest to you as a Catholic, they’re beautiful. They’re by a man named Robert Orsi. He is a religious studies scholar but he focuses a lot on Catholicism and the history of Catholicism, and so he goes really in-depth about the history of immigration of the Catholic church, and how they overcame such difficulties, and how what started out as a tiny, kind of immigrant church in the United States with twenty-eight different languages being spoken from Ireland, Poland, Germany, Ukraine, all over Europe, Mexico, all of these places, and they still manage to organize and work together and create some of the most amazing social services in the United States. They created schools that worked towards civil rights. Even before the civil rights movement, Catholic nuns were giving black children in Chicago brilliant, quality educations and setting them up for social mobility, and having good careers, and enabling them to fully live their lives. They’ve done a lot of fantastic, beautiful work. So my goal is not to just interrogate the Catholic church and put a bad name on it or anything like that because I respect a tremendous amount of the work that they’ve done. And I guess my main research question is about how not only the church but how so many different churches, social work as a profession and an academic discipline, how the government and policy, how hospitals, how psychology as a profession and an academic discipline, all worked together to create one era of adoption about forty years, between the 1940s and the 1980s where so many mothers had their human rights violated. So not just the church that was in on it.
The church was misguided, and it had its own goals because it was trying to create these social services to take care of its own and to take care of society at large. Ultimately I believe that their impulse behind their work was really benevolent and admirable. Um, but my question is, if we’re moving forward with social services in the future, if we’re creating social services either for mothers, for the homeless, for immigrants, how can we do it in such a way that we don’t accidentally harm them in the process? This is one case study of how that went wrong. So that’s where I’m coming from.

That’s excellent. I think doing some kind of research into, “okay you had a good motive, but what happened? How did you screw up?” is going to be helpful. I’m totally on board with that kind of thing.

Okay! I will email you, just about those books, because I think you would just love them and they might even help you with your own work. Because one thing he does is just, he talks about things that the Catholic church has done and how they’ve created these social services but they’ve also made a lot of mistakes. Except he doesn’t simply leave it at condemning the church, or heroizing the, he makes them human. He identifies, “okay these are the struggles they were up against in society. These were the financial problems, the political problems, the inter-denominational problems. This is what they were up against, and this is why it makes sense that they did what they did, and why it was completely human, but here’s a mistake that they made as well.

I would like to read that. I’ve been studying this for forty years.

Wow, so you probably have a lot of great insights then.

I have some ideas about it. I don’t know how many people would agree with me or not. It was not just the Catholic church. It was pervasive. There were lots of other unwed mother homes. There were Salvation Army homes, Florence Crittenton homes. There were lots of independent ones, too. Just in the city this happened to me in, there were a couple of other unwed mother homes: an independent one, and I don’t know if there was a Salvation Army home, but mine certainly wasn’t the only one there. But there was some degree of similarity. But my theory behind it, I don’t know, maybe we should just answer your questions first and then I can give you my theories behind everything. And another thing, I was thinking about your questions before you called, and maybe 20 years ago I gave a little talk at a group, and I found what I wrote, and it really addresses your questions, all of them. At the time, I was really struggling with the emotions of what was going on. My perception of it and how it was so screwed up. Like why I was perceiving that they cared about me and then this awful experience. It’s like didn’t you know? And the article kind of psychoanalyzes them you know. Amateur psychoanalysis. But, you know, if you want I could send it to you because it’s like five pages of what I wrote maybe 20 years ago on what I thought motivated it, what happened there, how I felt about it, I’ll tell you all this stuff, the ramblings of what was going on in their head, I thought.

If you would be comfortable sending that I would really appreciate it.

It’s typed on an electric typewriter, so it’s like, pretty old.
Oh wow!

I’ll go ahead and answer your questions about the situation and what happened and then I’ll give you some of my theories of the whole thing which may be true, maybe not. Who knows.

I’m sure you’ve got some valuable insights and you have lived experience too, so I really appreciate any of your input, and your experiences, and all of your theories!

So my first question was, did you enter the home of your own free will? Or did you feel that you were coerced into it or forced to go there?

I went there of my own free will, and I think how I perceived it was um, what was going on before was so awful that it seemed like they just cared about me. You know? Like they, when I went to the adoption agency, and they said, “we’re your best friends.” And they were so nice to me, trying to be best friends. What happened before, was I was estranged from my family at the time that it happened. I was kind of alone in the world when this happened, and the father of this baby was like, awful. He was the first guy, it happened like the third time I did this, and then he went around telling everybody he wasn’t the father and there were all these other guys, and then he got a girlfriend and he married a woman in the middle of my pregnancy. I mean he was just rotten. The way I was being treated was just horrendous. So it just seemed soothing how they [maternity home workers] were, you know, they were just nice, and kind, and took care of you, and said “this is going to be alright, just let us take care of you, let us help you and the whole problem will be gone.” So, I guess I was wanting to, where I was screwing up was wanting to buy into the idea that there was a way out of this problem. Like, you’re telling me what you’re going to do, and if I do what you tell me, everything’s going to be fine, it’s going to be like it was before, I can just forget about it. It’s going to be gone, somebody cares about me, they’re going to take care of me. You know, I was kind of helpless in the situation. I mean this guy was humiliating me, my parents wouldn’t help me, there wasn’t anybody to help me. So I chose to go there, because what was I going to do? As soon as I started looking pregnant, I’d lose my job, I’d probably get kicked out of were I was living, that’s how it was in that era. They were just really mean to people. But where I went wrong, was not thinking it through a little more and asking, why are these people being so nice to me. Do they have an ulterior motive? Was there some way I could have just given away from him and away from the situation and gone to another place where nobody knew me and I could have nobody know what was going on, I could fabricate some lies, my husband’s in Vietnam or something. I just didn’t think.

Considering the amount of adversity you were facing, being alienated from two core sources of strength, your family and this partner who you trusted, it sounds like you did a great job, you did the best you could. I don’t think the fault’s yours at all.

It happened to millions of people just like me. Some people were coerced by their parents. I think I was just feeling so much shame over the whole thing, too. I just wanted the whole thing to go away, and I wanted to believe that it would go away. So, that’s what happened.

What home was it? What city were you in?
Kansas City, Missouri.

And what year was it?

1966. Um, I was from Chicago, actually. And he was from Chicago, too. I knew him from Chicago. He was in the Air Force. And when I got pregnant, I went down there, and that’s when I found out he had another girlfriend. So anyway, I stayed there. In a way my parents were just happy that I stayed there because I would be an embarrassment if I was home. But. It was not a happy moment in my life.

In the home in Kansas City, were there different types of workers? Like religious workers, social workers, like who were all the different people you would end up being in contact with over that time?

Okay. Well, when I first contacted them, I talked to a priest, father Patrick Tobin, who is still in Kansas City. Well I think he’s in St. Joseph, Missouri now. He’s still alive and gotten a lot of recognition for all his charity work. There was a social worker in the agency that was kind of talking to me about “you need to get a job for a little while before you go in the home.” When I contacted him it was like a month or so or a month and a half, maybe two months before I went in there. So it was like May and I went there in August. And I don’t remember her name. I didn’t see her after I went into the home. And then in the home there were a couple of old nuns. It was a good place for an old, retired nun. You know? The unwed mothers. There was one young nun who was in charge of the business and I don’t remember her name. And then there was Sister Catherine, who was, who mainly worked with the girls. And she was a real motherly sort of woman. And then there was Sister Mathilde who was the person that was um in charge of getting money and managing the home. She was the administrator. And then there was a social worker, oh what was her name. I remember her name but I can’t remember right this minute. But anyway, she was the one that got the people to sign— that got the signatures for the relinquishment. And like I said, the retired nuns in charge of the chapel. And all they thought about was altar calls and stuff like that. However to “fix it up nice for Father.” Just the way nuns are, you know. Not very bright. And that was pretty much it. And the were about 20 to 30 girls at the time there.

Did you, did you have relationships with the other women who were in the home as mothers? Or did you, did you have relationships and friendships with the employees and workers there, or was it more like power relations?

Well, um, the girls we were all kind of, there was kind of a pecking order among the girls. The doctor’s daughter who was there got to be Sister Mathilde’s assistant, and then right down at the bottom like me, I worked in the laundry and I cleaned the bathtub. Well, yeah, we did all the laundry for the nuns and they didn’t do anything. We were the peons in there. Um, and I didn’t make friends with— they were in charge. We had nothing to say. There wasn’t— they weren’t like in that movie Philomena. They weren’t mean.

I’ve read stories about a lot of homes where nuns were awful, but also a lot about how the mothers and staff got really attached and formed deep friendships, so it seems like it really varies and I know that’s not the case all the time.
Well people were in and out of there in 3-4 months, there were kind of people going in and out. The girls that were there while I was there I got to know pretty well, and we, but we weren’t supposed to know each other. We were encouraged to used different names. I didn’t want to use a different name but several of the other girls used a different first name, and we weren’t allowed to ask their last name, or their address, we weren’t supposed to see them ever again, if we saw them on the street we were supposed to pretend like we didn’t know them. Yeah, it was all supposed to be anonymous. Completely anonymous. This was supposedly to protect us from, you know like if we’re walking in the street, and some girl recognizes us, and someone knows about them, the other person might think we’d been in the home or something. It was just filled with lies. Lie about this, lie about who you are, and why you’re, what you’re doing here. You weren’t allowed to go out of the home without somebody, without another person. But that was kind of practical because it was in a kind of dangerous part of town. It was in a ghetto neighborhood, which was kind of a good place to be, because you know all these girls were middle-class girls and they weren’t going to run into their schoolmates in there. And also they didn’t want us to, incase anybody hurt us, either. We weren’t allowed to go out by ourselves. They looked at our mail, made sure that there was no mail from the boyfriend, no boys in there, no fathers. I never saw a father show up. Never. They weren’t allowed. They really had to approve the person if somebody came to visit you. They wouldn’t let you go with just anyone. But some of the girls were forced to go there. There were a lot of girls that were in there because their fathers, their parents put them there. We didn’t obey afterward rule. Because after I got out of there I ran around with four other girls [from the home]. It was a terrible memory, because three of them got pregnant again, and all of them, not one of them, all of them, went back there. One of them got married, one got a back-alley abortion, and another one stuck a coat-hanger up herself and nearly killed herself with a coat hanger. I mean that’s how much people didn’t want to go back there.

That is awful. Was she okay afterwards?

She lived through it. She got rid of it. She lived. But she was, she was a mess before that happened. I think losing her child— she became— after she left the home she became a go-go dancer and the rest of us would go to this go-go bar and watch her in this cage dancing. And I thought, you know, are you really this much of a slut? But the thing is, I think she was trying to escape what happened to her. So um, you know she wasn’t a bad person. I just think that it’s like, it’s just pretty bad, I didn’t get pregnant again. I was one of the five who didn’t.

Yeah. People process trauma in very different ways.

Yeah. And she behaved like that, I think, because she was just traumatized from losing her child.

That is a huge trauma. Um. When you were in the homes did the workers talk to you about your babies at all? What was the nature of the way they would talk to you and how they would, did they tell you what you were going to do or did they give you a choice? Did they, how did that look?

Nobody discussed it. It was assumed that you were going to give up your baby and you had no choice. And it was not discussed. They occupied their time talking about— they had a program
in there to try to fix us, to make us “proper ladies.” We all had to wear robes to go to the bathroom, and they would talk about, “you know, you shouldn’t be sitting out there.” I got in trouble because I didn’t want to crochet doilies for the missions. She told me I was selfish. I’m going to give my BABY to somebody and I was selfish—I mean, that was not discussable, but because I didn’t want to crochet doilies for the missions, I was selfish. The girls didn’t talk to each other. If somebody had a gripe about someone, they didn’t talk to that person, nor were they encouraged to. They talked to Sister Catherine, and Sister Catherine talked to them and didn’t tell them who said it. So it was like, “Who’s down on me here.” There was a certain amount of, you know like she was, I can’t explain it but like, if I have a gripe with somebody now, I will talk to that person.”

It’s direct. You talk to that person without triangulating.

Right. Okay so you’re leaving your toothpaste out there, you know, this bothers me. Could you leave it there? But nobody did that. Everybody talked to her.

That sounds like a toxic environment.

It wasn’t a healthy kind of communication. It was like, I don’t know. It fostered suspicion. But, you know I had my friends in there, though. If somebody isn’t doing their work duties, someone’s not folding the sheets straight enough, they go to Sister Catherine and gripe about it. And that’s what it was. It was kind of, maybe it was to keep the people separate and not connected to one another because they wanted them to be out of there and not connected.

So it sounds like the communication wasn’t very direct. So were there, was there a daily routine, and did the workers talk to you during that routine?

Well yeah, there was a routine. You know you got up and went to breakfast and then you did your work duties, and you pretty much had to work for six hours a day or more. The girls that were still going to high school had high school classes in there. So they didn’t have to work quite as much. But if you were an adult you had to work pretty much all day, and some of it was just make-work. They just, because, well we would have gone crazy with nothing to do in there. It probably was better to have work in there. And then they had birthday parties. I talked to them, I talked mainly to Sister Catherine and that was about it. The other ones were like the woman in the business office, she just did business in the business office. The nuns, some of the nuns, the girls that worked in the chapel talked to the nuns there. Then, they had a shrink come to visit us once or twice to evaluate what kind of social deviation was causing our problem. And so we all had to be interviewed by the psychiatrist. And then they had um, the doctor. I’ll tell you about that. Apparently the doctor was not well paid by them, kind of volunteering his duties, somewhat. But the adoptive parents were pretty much footing the bill for this. But the last two months I was there I did not see the doctor once. And I was like a month overdue. And when I finally went to the hospital, I was in labor for sixty-five hours. And they just left me in labor for sixty-five hours. And afterwards, I thought I was wrong, but I got my hospital records not too long ago. They had it written down, sixty-five hours. And the nurse would sit next to me and tell me to shut up, and afterwards, when I’m having the baby the doctor’s in the next room, and I
say, “where’s the doctor, where’s the doctor?” And they say, “He’s over there, he’s here, don’t worry, he’s over there.” Yeah, right, the baby’s going to come out, where’s the doctor.

Afterward, I had an infection. I didn’t realize it was an infection. . . I went back home, and I hemorrhaged every month. And the third time this happened, I was living in like a girls’ hotel, and I was in the basement of this hotel, when it started, and I almost bled to death. The other people in the hotel, these girls, these people just backed away. And I crawled up the stairs and called the ambulance, and after that I don’t remember anything after that, I must have passed out. I nearly died. I nearly died from that. And it could have been prevented if I had decent medical care. And it’s a miracle that the baby didn’t die, too, because going way overdue like that, you can have meconium staining and you can damage the child’s brain. It’s a miracle I didn’t die in childbirth.

It’s really unbelievable that they put you in conditions that that wasn’t even caught.

The medical care was HORRIBLE and it was malpractice. But you know, I have an illegitimate child and I’m going to be able to sue for malpractice? Nobody in that era would care. So what? We just got the child, we don’t care about you. That’s how I feel it was treated. My welfare did not matter in this issue at all. If I died the other girls in the home would get scared so they probably figured, make sure she doesn’t But I could have easily died. Especially when I hemorrhaged afterwards.

I’m sorry that the medical care was so, so unforgivably poor!

It was awful! It’s just awful. I can’t imagine it happening anywhere except in a third-world country. These days. Like that.

Well I’m glad you survived that.

I’m glad I didn’t know what was going on because it might have freaked me out worse.

It sounds like you handled it really well when you, when it all came to a head. In the whole process when were you approached about actually signing consent papers to actually sign over the baby?

Oh, about six to eight weeks before I had it. And they sat there and got my signature while I was in the home before I gave up the baby. Before I had the baby. But you know, when you’re still pregnant you’re not totally aware of the full reality of the child. You know? You’re just pregnant.

Yes, my friends have had that happen, too, where they were pregnant and they still had their doubts a little bit because it was unplanned and then as soon as they had the baby everything changed immediately and they were just in love. So it’s really manipulative to ask a woman to make a decision like that before the childbirth experience.
They had the thing lined up slick as a whistle. They did not discuss it. That’s just what you were gonna do. When they got the signature I thought, can’t they try maybe um foster care for a little while so I can get on my feet? Can they help me? [They said] No, it’s just better for the baby if they’re adopted right away because they’re going to get confused, if you have the baby and then keep the baby for even a day or two it starts to get attached to you and it won’t bond with the adoptive mother and it’s better for the baby to do it that way and that’s what we have to do. And so there was no— I mean they just discouraged it. I talked to that nun, Sister Catherine, I said, “I can’t do this. I just can’t do this.” She said, “Yes you can. You can do it.” “I don’t want to.” “Well, you can do it. I know you can do this. This is the right thing to do, it’s the right thing for the baby. And it’s the best thing for you, too, Barbara. You’ll be okay. It’ll be fine. You’ll get over this and you’ll have other children and it’s going to be okay. You know it’s the right thing to do, you have to do it.” This was the thinking at the time. It was our thinking, too, unfortunately. I believed them. I believed what they told me. It was the Church, and all these grown-ups, and I wasn’t very old, and I was scared, and I didn’t know what I was going to do. Nobody ever said to me, “If you want to keep the baby, here’s the options. You know, you can get these things, and we’ll help you with this baby.” No. The only help I got was, “Give us the kid. It’s the right thing to do. It’s heroic.” Well, how heroic is it? Let me answer the rest of your questions and I’ll tell you how heroic I this is.”

I think you did the best you could at the time and it’s brave that you’re talking about it.

Oh. I will talk. There’s so many women really are in the closet and it really disturbs me.

You recognize that you were taught to be ashamed but you recognize that that was something people taught you, not something that was really right. But I think a lot of people never really moved past the shame and a lot of people never become convinced within themselves that this is not something to be ashamed of, this is something that the institutions should be ashamed of for making people feel that way and mistreating them that way. I hope that the work that you’re doing, and hopefully the work that I’m doing, will help convince a lot of mothers who are still “in the closet” who are still kind of silent and feel like they have to carry these things on their own that they don’t have to.

Maybe about a year ago, well, back in Seattle, when I lived in Seattle, there were groups all over for birthmothers. And they had group meetings, they had people being really out in the open about this, and I was talking to our parish administrator and I was telling her what happened to me, and how much it helped me to be in one of these groups, and she asked, “well how did you get started in a group?” and I said, “well, I went to this birthmothers’ day and there were like 40 people there and I couldn’t believe it, and that’s how I got started in it.” Well, one thing led to another and we decided, we’re going to sponsor a birthmothers’ day. So she went to the neighborhood church administrators’ meeting and I mean there were other churches in our neighborhood, not just Catholic but the other churches, too. And she found out one of the pastors at one of the other churches is a birthmother. So I said, “well, that’s great, and if we’re going to have a birthmothers’ day, we should have a young birthmother as well as me.” Because, you know, I’m an older birthmother from the old days when all the adoptions were closed. We need a younger one with an open adoption.
So we planned this birthmother day and the whole thing blocked. We did. We advertised it in the paper, not one person showed up. It was really upsetting. And I thought about it and thought about it and I thought two things. First of all, it was held in a Catholic church, and some of the women are so hostile to the Catholic church as a result of this. They’re not going to darken the door. And the other thing is, there are so many people here who are in the closet. I’m being kind of conservative, and there’s probably—I know there’s a lot of women here because there’s two places that were former unwed mother homes. Not all these women have left. There were enough women in this situation here to fill two homes. There’s one of these things is quite big and they’re using it as counseling now but it used to be an unwed mothers’ home. And there’s people here I’m sure. They’re everywhere. And they didn’t show up and I thought about it and thought about it and I mean, what can we do? How can we get these women to get out of the closet and find a little peace in their life? It worked in Seattle but it didn’t work here.

But anyway. What were we talking about?

Oh we were just talking about what they told you regarding your options. My only final question is just that I was wondering if employees or workers in the home encouraged you to do any kind of religious activities.

Oh yeah. I mean everybody had to show up for a mass when a person left. And they had—you didn’t have to show up every day for mass but you had to go to mass pretty much every week. They, I think you said something about a saint, were we supposed to pray to any saint. We were supposed to pray for the canonization of Mother Seton. Mother Elizabeth Seton, I guess she’s a saint now. She had some connection to their order. They were The Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul, the ones with the great big hats, but it was past the time of the hats.

But I will say too, I’ve got to tell you something else about this home. They had this thing iron-clad. Because after we had our babies, some people I heard had to sign their babies away on the delivery table but that wasn’t the case. We did the relinquishment weeks before. But they reinforced it. When we had to go to a court, and I don’t know too many places that had this, but we went to the court after the birth, like two or three weeks after the birth. We went to the court, and they interviewed us, and when I went to the court, they kind of had it set where it was kind of almost like a ritual where the girls focused on having a nice outfit they were going to wear to reflect the idea that they were going to go out into the world and forget about all this because now we’re dressed in normal clothes and we’re going to look beautiful and just get this over with. But anyway, we went to the court, and my attorney, what he said to me, was, “If somebody says anything I will probably tell them I never had any contact with you.” That was all he told me. He never told me, “Look, you have rights and you have five minutes to get out of this.” No. That wasn’t the case. It’s like, “I’m just going to protect your confidentiality.” But not your rights. That was it. So you just went in there, and they listen to you say you’re going to do it, and that’s when I realized that I’d been played for a sucker later. I just never thought I could undo this because I didn’t have—I actually did have a leg to stand on but I didn’t realize it. The father, they did not include the father in any way. He did not sign anything. And they didn’t contact him. They didn’t. I didn’t realize this was a leg I could stand on. I could have later contacted him later and said he didn’t sign for anything. I mean even now a father who doesn’t sign for anything is deprived of his rights immediately. I mean they’re trying to change that but it’s not working.
They’re—if a guy is not married—I tell my sons this, I say don’t get anybody pregnant because if you’re not married to them, you will lose that kid if that woman falls into the hands of somebody who wants it. You have no rights. But anyway, they had it so smooth that we didn’t think. We just did what they wanted because they were the grown-ups and they told us it was going to be okay and we would forget about it and this was the worst part and everything would be fine, and they had these god-like adoptive parents. They were just these gods coming there to save us from our sins. And then I find out later that this perfect adoptive family got a divorce when she was sixteen. It’s like, how perfect were they? So anyway, is what I’m telling you like a lot of other stories?

There’s a book called *The Girls who Went Away* by Ann Fessler

I have the book. I can’t read it.

There are a lot of similarities in it.

This thing I’ll send you, it kind of wrestles with—I felt like I was loved and cared for when I was in there, I didn’t feel like I was being bullied. I felt like, to an extent, and here’s where I’m going to give you some of my ideas. In the first place, I feel like, I think that they were affected by the mores of society the same way we were, and they thought they were doing a good deed. And I think a lot of non-Christian ideas were part of what caused this. It’s like, the idea—I don’t know anyone else who says or thinks this—I think they wanted to put the child up right away because the child was a blank slate. But, is that a Christian idea? Nn. This is David Hume. Who is not a Christian. The Christian idea is that the person has value as an individual. The blank slate idea does not come out of Christianity. And that was the basis. It was the basis for adoption right after birth. It’s like the child has no connection to you. It only has connection to you after the birth. And that’s not true. And they found this in lots of research studies that the child is totally connected to you. The child is not separated from you at all, and the longer you have the child, the more healthy they’re going to be, if they are separated. To separate a child right at birth, the child isn’t even aware of their separation from the mother, and all of a sudden their mother’s gone and this other woman who they can tell isn’t their mother. So this is why I don’t say that this is Catholic religion that’s doing this, I think that it’s the Catholic religion picking up other ideas, and the other churches, too. Picking up ideas that fostered this. And another thing I think about this, is that there was a big movement in the beginning of the century for um, eugenics. And the idea was that some women didn’t deserve babies. Some women were, um, I don’t know how your feelings are about Margaret Sanger but she’s saying there’s all these, this trash of people coming into the country and they’re just trash and coming into the country and how can we prevent this flummox from existing, and this thing led, this whole eugenics idea, led to um, that figures in somehow too.

“Out of Wedlock” by Leah T Holmes (Young?)

I found my daughter, more than 20 years ago, and it’s. I did this thing because I thought I was doing this heroic thing and I thought she was going to have this perfect life. At the time I found her she had, she was living in Seattle. I gave her up in Kansas City, Missouri. She grew up in Michigan, and New York, and Indiana. If found her living six miles from me in Seattle. She
had—it’s a huge story—just the incredible coincidences of the story—but what I discovered was that um she was really damaged by it and she still is. She has—she’s so damaged. I don’t think she’ll ever be quite right. Now she’s working on her fourth husband. Her daughter’s been in and out of jail, and she won’t listen to anybody. She actually, I don’t know if it’s true or not, but what she’d do was with her husbands, she’d leave them. They would come home and all her stuff would be home. One guy had a nervous breakdown because of this. I think the real cause of this was that she had no bonding. She never bonded to the adoptive mother. She was traumatized by losing me and never bonded to her adoptive mother. And all of this is causing all of her problems. It’s just tragic. This other mother than I know found her daughter, and her daughter committed suicide. There’s far more trouble coming from adoption than from a mother who doesn’t have any money trying to raise her own kid. It’s like, It’s just. I can see adoption in the cases of a truly abandoned child, but most of us were being pushed into doing something we didn’t want to do and they were making artificial orphans. They weren’t really orphans; they were artificial orphans because they [church] did this to us. They weren’t getting the perfect life. They were being separated from their mother and there’s so much more trauma and tragedy that you can find so many adoptees. There’s so many of them that become criminals. It’s just not—I don’t know. I don’t think it should be done unless it has to be done. So that’s all for now.

Thank you very much for sharing! Please let me know if I can be of any help in your own work.
Interview 2: 1959, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

So you’re okay with me just going through the questions?

That’s up to you, you sent me a copy of the questions, you know, more or less.

Okay, We'll see how the conversation goes, but I actually wanted to ask, what year were you in and what city were you in?

Okay. This is Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and the year was 1959, from September to December of ’59.

Okay, and so how did you find out about the home? did you get sent there against your will or did you go of your own free will?

Well, when I realized I was pregnant in the Summer of ’59 I connected with my lover, and he came down to my— well he didn’t live in Philadelphia— he came down in August and uh, we talked about my situation, and he was married and separated from his wife when we met, so we couldn’t get married, because he was in the process of a divorce, and at the time, I realized much later, the only grounds for divorce in Pennsylvania was adultery, and his wife had committed adultery. Therefore, he was the one filing for divorce but here I was, pregnant, therefore he might have lost his case so, you know, he wasn’t going to be in the picture, and I realized that in August, and so then I had to get medical care, and that was my concern. I mean I know I was like five, six months pregnant, and so I said, you know my parents were always very supportive but I know they didn’t want this to get out. And, you know, I had a nine-year-old sister, so I looked in the phone book, and I called, um, I guess it was family services in Philadelphia, and I guess the woman on the phone said, “what religion are you?”

And I found out later, you could go to different homes, you could go to a Jewish home, you could go to a Christian home, and I said, “Catholic,” and she said oh, here’s the number you want, you want to talk to Catherine Cherry, and they said “okay, we have to have an interview, we’ll interview you,” so they did, and they found a place for me, and well, it was called St. Vincent’s Orphanage.

What was the interview like?"

“It was St. Vincent’s Hospital, for Women and Children. Well, I interviewed with a nun, she ended up being my case worker, I told her my story, I told her you know that I wanted medical care, she said “well—” I don't remember if she asked me for money, and I was very proud and independent at the time, and I said, “I can pay what I can pay, and it was like, my summer job money that was about $300, and she said, “Okay, good, and we can give you room and board,” and she didn’t put anything about adoption, let me put it that way. And just by going to this place, I was saying yes to adoption but I really wasn’t saying yes to adoption, then. Because I was convinced that my lover’s divorce was gonna be taken care of and that he would come and
save me. And, I know that this sounds really stupid, but I’ve been a romantic twenty-year-old. So I was convinced, and I was in love, and I was convinced that that’s what was the scenario that was gonna happen and all I had to do now was just have his baby. and the rest would be happily ever after.

So, in September, I went in and it was probably, oh, I’m guessing, you know maybe mid-September, I had been working at my, I went in at about the time, it would have been when I would have been going back to college and I was very glad to get in there because I couldn’t hold my— I was wearing a girdle all summer, I had prickly feet all over my body— it was humid, if you didn’t know that, and it was very uncomfortable, this was before air conditioning. But anyway, so that summer, well, I ended up getting there, and the sister’s name was Sister Shawn Marie. She ended up being a case worker for me.

“When you were in the home, who were the different professionals that you came into contact with, who worked with you during your pregnancy and before and after the baby was born?”

Well, they were all nuns.

“Oh, every single one?”

Saint Vincent’s, was a home that in West Philadelphia, the address was 70th street and woodland avenue, and it was an orphanage and it was the nuns lived there, and they had chapel, people could come in and there were, you know, people like us, unwed mothers. And the nuns lived with us, with the babies there, and, um the professionals, well the nuns were medical missionaries and they were a branch that actually went to the third world, or Africa, and they were nurses. I don’t know if any of them were doctors, but I'm guessing some of them were.

And there was a Mother Superior of the nuns, and the Catholic Charities of Philadelphia was the city organization that kind of oversaw, I guess, you know who was in St. Vincent’s, so then I’m assuming that Sister Shawn Marie was some kind of social worker. How they trained her, I really don’t know.

I’m thinking you, know, whatever her training was, it was not medicine. When you got into the hospital end of the home, those ones were medical missionaries. I can’t remember the Mother Superior’s name, but the one, the youngest one who seemed like she interacted with the women and girls there, her name was Sister Lagori, and she also drove. at that time nuns generally didn’t drive, but she did. So if you had to get out for some reason— well, she took us to the hospital at the end— but she was the one who was more affable. She was very friendly and nice. And other than that, professional people, the nuns who worked around there, the Mother Superior, and they would have— let me think— every Wednesday, they would have a clonic, and Babies could be born at St. Vincent if necessary, if there was an emergency. But in general, most normal births were done as Misericordia hospital, about five blocks away. And the intern doctors from Misericordia came every Wednesday for a clonic, where they weighed you, they checked your urine, you’d be checked out to make sure your pregnancy was okay. So they were the only other pro-
essionals and you never saw the same ones, you have these anonymous interns from Misericordia who came and examined you. This was a man, anyway you were in a horrible situation and I can’t remember anything about them except for their voices.

Oh wow.

You know, it was just that the nun was always in the room anyway, and all I cared about was that I was okay, that the baby was okay, that the tests all came out the way they were supposed to, so that was the routine. Then they had people who came in and I don’t think they were nutritionists, they were just cooks from the neighborhood that prepared our food, and everybody ate the same food. I know the nuns’ cooks were the same people because sometimes we would eat together, sometimes the nuns would eat with us and sometimes the nuns would be in their little own area of the building. The only other professional, they had a priest that came in every day at Saint Vincent’s.

What were your relationships like? Was there a lot of communication between the nuns and the mothers? Or was it more quiet?

It was more quiet. There was very little communication between the nuns and the mothers. As for the women and girls there, nobody, I can’t remember anyone discouraging communication, but at the time I was there, the room where I was, was the main hall, you walked off the main hall and the first room that was there was my room and it was like a nuns’ cell. It had a bed, it had a skinny dresser, I had a closet, and I had a window that overlooked the courtyard. And then the next room was empty. And then the room at the end of the hall had two women in it, and one girl, and another woman my age, I got to know very, very well. They were not young. Then I got to know another 16-year-old girl. They would have crafts. They brought teachers in from the school system for the girls that were young, and they also tried to get you to do crafts to keep busy. And I did crafts, I learned how to knit, I learned how to crochet, but I was a junior in college, and so we were, I was older, and we were kind of separated just because these girls had assigned duties and classes and I didn’t. So we kind of read and wandered around and found people to talk to.

I did talk to this little girl, and then the two other people on my wing and then right before I went to the hospital a girl came for the empty room and she was a stewardess, she was my age, maybe even a little older. So I was really able to communicate with her. I mean we delivered about the same time.

Were you encouraged to make friends with other mothers or were you more encouraged to kind of change your name and not talk to people?

Not really. You were encouraged to wear a wedding ring if you went out. That was one thing. And I went out as much as I could. In Philadelphia you walked down “the avenue” if you walked down the main drag there were little stores, little grocery stores, a 5 and 10, you know, things like that. And I walked every day that the weather was good. It was good for me. It also got me out of there. There were, all you had to do was like college for me, you just signed in and signed out, and nobody interfered with my walking. I don’t know how to put it, I was 20, I spent my
20th year being pregnant. And I don’t know, I didn’t, sometimes the nuns could be very strict with younger girls and women, but they kind of left me alone. And so if I wanted to go walking, I went walking, and if anyone wanted to go with me, that was great too, but it was mostly me, and I did it as long as I could. And so when I think about “can you remember what went on during the day,” I tried to avoid what went on during the day.

I mean they would wake you up very early in the morning because we were all supposed to go to mass if we could. I did, most of the time. They also had vespers in the afternoon. You were supposed to be there for that. So as far as getting to know people, it wasn’t discouraged, but it wasn’t encouraged. And I think most of the older women who I knew were there really didn’t want to make friends. I mean this was a time where you maybe were acquaintances, but you just had a few people who you wanted to be truthful with, if that makes sense. There were just a few.

When, what kind of options did professionals tell you about in the home about keeping your baby or did they just automatically tell you that you’re giving it up? Did they tell you what your options were? How did that work? And when did you sign?

There were no options except for adoption. Well, I was still operating under the old delusion that my lover was going to come and save me from all this. And some of the women were saying, I loved to say that to people, and that made the other women avoid me if they were more in touch with reality, I don't know, but I remember them talking about if you could get him to um sign what was it called, sign a certificate that he was the father, then he would be obliged to support you, then you could keep your baby. Well, I wrote letters to my lover every day and he never responded to any of them but I was convinced that this would occur and that he truly loved me, and, you know, would support me and um I would be able to keep my baby. Because they never— we— I had an interview with sister Shawn Marie probably every other week, and she never really talked to me about options. The unspoken message was, “you’re here, you’re going to place this child for adoption.” Well I wasn’t there when I went there. I was in medical care. So even though it was never directly stated, she would never say to me, things like “oh you’re here, you want to place your baby for adoption.” well, she just really wanted to hear my story. She wanted my background, she wanted to know all about my lover. She wanted information that I knew, which I gave her. And I had the feeling, and Lizzie, you’re gonna think I’m nuts, but I always had the feeling that this young nun, and she was fairly young, I’m guessing in her thirties, really got excited about my story. She thought it was so romantic and all that. She didn’t help me make any particular decisions, but I always had this feeling about her. It was a very odd feeling. But anyway.

Adoptions were not discussed until toward the end of my pregnancy, and then I said to her, “I heard from the girls that if you could get him to agree that he was the father, then he would be liable, he would have to support me, and I would be able to keep my baby.” And she jumped out of her chair, “OH NO, OH NO, WE DON’T DO THAT” she said and I really became very upset, well why not? And after he gets his divorce, we can get married! And he is going to get a divorce. He’s in the process, and we can get married, and we’ll have our child, and we’ll live happily ever after, just like my fantasy. “Oh no, oh no,” she said. You can’t trust him. And then she said, you know, your son, or your child, will always be called a bastard on the playground.” And that was the one that really got to me. “You won’t be able to rest anywhere. You won’t be able to
do anything. You can’t teach.” Which was what my certificate ended up being in, because they had a moral clause, and she was right, they did. And I was stuck. Well, on the other side, my parents, as I said, were very supportive of what I wanted to do. and they did not ever tell me what I should do, except, one of them came to visit me every Sunday. My mother didn’t drive, so she took public transportation and got there. My dad drove and he would take me out to dinner on the Sundays that he came. I had a nine-year-old sister so one of them always had to stay home. Anyway, my mother must have come that time, and we were sitting in that place that had a courtyard that had trees, like a little park, and we were sitting there, it must have been still warm enough, so I’m guessing even maybe October, and I told her about my discussion with the women there and getting Charlie to admit paternity, and you know all this. And she said to me, “you’re not planning to keep this baby, are you?” Just like that. And in my family, that was the message: “Oh please, don’t keep it.” Because then it would have impacted my sister, it would have impacted them. City neighborhoods, well you probably know, are like little towns were people talk. And then she didn’t say another word. but I knew that they didn’t want me to keep the child. Which meant that I had to re-think, even in my romantic haze, that I wouldn’t— what would I do until Charlie married me? Then I really had to actually get down to concrete thinking for what would I do. So then the next time I had my interview with the case worker we talked about adoption. And she told me— this baby was due in December— and she said, “you know you have three months to change your mind.” And I thought, I told her exactly what I wanted. I said if my baby is adopted— I didn’t know it was a boy yet— I want the same home with the same heritage that Charlie and I had. I’m Italian and Irish, and I wanted a family of college graduates. I wanted college graduates. Charlie— his father was a lawyer. A family of lawyers related to all kinds of politicos in northeastern Pennsylvania where he came from. My mother was a teacher; my father was a college professor. He worked for the city but he was a building inspector. They were fairly well-educated people. And I said, I want— Charlie was a college grad, I was a junior— I want people who are educated and I want the Irish-Italian ethnic mixture. Because it was very common in Catholics in that time period. At that time, it was the most common Catholic ethnic mixture you could have.

And my family, we were a very close family. So [with their approval] it was “oh yes, oh yes, oh yes.” so now I’m in this kind of adoption track, okay. And I started— I guess my haze was fading and I was listening to other people and other girls’ stories and so forth and so that was probably the only conversation that I ever had specifically concerning surrendering my son, and it probably was in the wimber. And that’s pretty much it. And I was pretty much now half-way through the pregnancy at this point, and I decided I would be the good girl and do everything you want me to do. So I did.

What was your childbirth experience like?

Horrible. It was just horrible. Well, okay. I used to go to the clonic every Wednesday. And my child was due December 10th. And I was um doing okay but at that time I was much smaller than I am today and I probably started off weighing about 118 pounds and I gained about 30 pounds. I could barely walk. It was not comfortable, I’ll put it that way. So I’m waiting for December 10th, and December 10th came and went and nothing happened. And my son was finally born on the 18th, but he came I believe it was a Friday. So the 16th would have been clonic day. So I waddle over to the clinic and the doctor looks at me and the doctor said, “two more weeks.”
and I FREAKED. I remember freaking. Because I had—remember, I was in the home for Thanksgiving. Not my own home. Christmas is coming up. My twenty-first birthday was December 24th, 1959. And I had to be home for Christmas. This is the 16th of December. And he’s telling me I’m gonna have two more weeks. And I freaked out. I said, “I have to be home for my birthday. I have to be home December 24th. I am literally creating a disturbance. “I cannot be here for Christmas. I cannot be here for Christmas.” And they get me out of there, get me back to my room, and I am visibly upset. And later on that night, Sister Lagori comes to me and she said, “if you don’t go into labor tomorrow, on Friday, I’ll take you to Misericordia, they will break your waters, and you’ll go into labour.” Okay. Well I didn’t go into labor on Thursday. Friday morning, 8:00, she came and got me and we drove to Misericordia and I was probably being prepped for labor, and at that time they shaved you, they gave you the enema, all the awful, terrible things that they don’t do anymore. And I was in a labour room by probably 9:00. And what I remember was, we all— I learned to knit and crochet in there and all the girls would knit—we’d all be knitting scarves for “Father.” I don’t know if Father, whoever he was, ever got all these scarves or anything about him, they were all these black scarves and we would all knit and I took my black scarf and I was knitting probably until about 11:00 and then they broke my water, doctor came, and he said, “this is going to make this happen,” it was probably about 9:30. And I started getting contractions. By 11:00 or 11:30 I was getting serious contractions. I could no longer knit. I remember seeing the clock, and putting the knitting away, and I don’t remember much after that except that this was my—one of my first experiences on one of those—I’m one of those people that anesthesia doesn’t work real well on, I turn into a maniac, is what I’m talking about. And they can’t give you more because they’re afraid they’re going to kill you. In ’59, they didn’t have the anesthesia that they have today. So what I remember, is waking up in incredible pain in the labor room and saying Hail Mary’s. I mean literally screaming Hail Mary’s. And they come in, and put, I don’t know if I passed out or they gave me something else, I don’t know. Then I go blank. And then I remember being in the delivery room and the same thing. I did a mass, and then I would be removed, and then I would hear people talk about me. And they were talking about me. I knew they were talking about me. “What a shame,” you know. “Isn’t this too bad for her.” And I was ready to yell, “No! No! Don’t pity me!” I remember all this like pictures now and again. And then when I woke up, I was in the recovery, well I was in the ward that they saved for the St. Vincent girls. I was in this—crib—with the sides up all around me. It was like an adult baby crib, and I was fastened down. I had—my arms were fastened to the sides of the crib. And my mother was looking at me through the bars. And I’m assuming, I never asked her—to be honest, Lizzie, we never talked about it—but I think they must have called her because of the reaction that I had and she came and she’s looking at me through the bars and she said to somebody, maybe a nurse in the room, “You can, okay you can unfasten her.” And so they unfastened my hands. And my mother was there so she could reach in and she said, I said—I don’t even remember what I said. I was so weak. But she was there, and she was comforting me, and this young nurse or candy striper walked into the door. She had the baby. And she said to me, “do you want to see your baby.” And before I could get words out of my mouth, this nun came swooping from somewhere, and she said, she yelled, “SHE CAN’T HAVE THAT BABY!” and she shooed this woman out and then I freaked again. And I literally freaked because I immediately thought there was something wrong with him. “What’s wrong with my baby!” And my mother, god bless her, she said, “I will find out about this.” My mother had been a teacher for 40 years. So she got up, and she walked into the nursery. And while I’m there, lying there, my mother went into the nursery and the had them undress him. They didn’t tell me that I
had a boy or a girl. My mother did. She had them, she checked him out. Let’s put it that way. She came back about 20 or 25 minutes later and she said, “It’s a little boy. He weights 8 pounds, 4 ounces.” I will never forget that. “And he has red hair like my brother Charles.” She said. And she told me how long he was but I forgot. He was a big baby. And she said, “now you go to sleep because you have to rest.” And I did because by this time, well I was covered in blood, I mean I was a mess. This was labor, and I had been torn, and I got an infection in my breast, and I was in the hospital for six days. I did manage though— and I want to tell you this part— I did manage at night, after my mother left— it was like midnight. I wanted to see my baby. I managed to get out of the crib because they still had these sides and I had to climb out of it. It was a little lower on the bottom so I was able to climb out of this thing. And I went out of this ward, and the nursery was right across the hall, and it was like the main nursery was out across the hall. Our babies were in this nursery in the back. And I looked through the window, and they put my name on his little thing, and he was huge, he looked like a cherub in a church. Big, red, and red-haired. And he was just absolutely gorgeous. And I immediately thought of, you know I always thought of him, when I thought about him I called him “Big Rick” because that’s what he looked like. This baby. He did.

And I’m standing there looking at him, and these women came walking down, and the one says, “why are these babies here?” And the other one whispered in her ear, and I knew she said “These are the babies with unwed mothers” because they immediately turned around and the next day they took him back to St. Vincent’s. The next day he was gone, but I was there for six days. They had to dry up my breast, and that’s the stuff that caused the breast infection, and I kept saying “I’ve got to be out of here by the 24th. I’ve got to be out of here by the 24th.” And my dad came and they released me on the 24th and I went home. And my mother took care of me. And that’s the way it was. And um then it was over. And then they started, as soon as the holiday was over, calling me about going to court for the surrender papers. As soon as I got on my feet. I knew I could go visit him, and I did. I went to visit him every day I could get there and I was allowed to see him behind glass, and one of the days— you weren’t supposed to— but one of the days I took his picture. I got three pictures of him. And one of them I sent to his father. And I wrote the date, his date of birth, as a birth announcement. And I don’t know if the man ever kept it, but I had three pictures of him and they were all pretty much the same. I went to visit him until I signed the papers. And they called me every other day to make arrangements to sign the papers. I couldn’t do it at first because I was so sick through Christmas. I had an infection and I had to heal. And then you know I think sometime in January I got to court.

Because that’s the other thing. Lizzie, I had no medical records whatsoever, I had no papers I signed. Nothing. It’s like, it really was erased. Like I didn’t exist. And I had written to everybody, including Philadelphia’s Orphan Support— “These papers are all sealed, these papers are all sealed.” I had, I should have had medical records because when my daughter was born two years later I had the same reaction and apparently scared everybody at the hospital. So I should have known what it was that I shouldn’t have been able to take. But. Anyway. He was literally gone. And I was gone from him in that I have no records that would indicate that I was ever there.

And then like I said, my parents never, ever spoke of it. Right before she died, my mother, I had to move her from North Carolina up to where I lived into a retirement home where she would get
care at the end of her life, and I used to meet her for lunch every Saturday and one Saturday, probably one of the last Saturdays of her life, it was raining. I pulled up to the canopy at the entrance and as she got out of the car, my mother said to me—now I was by that time 52 or 53—“whatever happened to that man?” And of course I knew exactly what she meant. But I said, “What man?” She said, “Oh, you know that man. Why didn’t you marry him?” Because I went home and told them [my parents] “I didn’t want to marry him, I didn’t want to marry him.” I did not tell them that he was married. And that even though I was pregnant I didn’t want to marry him. Because I kept dreaming that he was going to come and save me. But anyway, I said, “Well, he was an alcoholic, Mom.” Which he probably was, but. Well I never told her that he was married. And that was the only time we ever discussed anything.

And I always think about it because I figure she’s in heaven and she knows everything and she put a bug in my son’s ear. I don’t know. Because we’ve been reunited since then.

Does he still have red hair?

Yes, auburn. It’s just brown, but it’s reddish brown. So does his daughter. His daughter has red hair so that auburn color. So there’s definitely red hair in his genetic makeup. My mother did. But anyway.

And I’m looking down at your questions, “were you encouraged to pray to any particular saint.” Well, I did learn to pray. You were encouraged to go to mass every day. And most of the time I did. If I’d gotten enough sleep, ‘cause they would come around and knock on your door to wake you. And if you didn’t get up, somebody would definitely, I mean you couldn’t lock the doors anyway, but somebody would definitely come in if you didn’t appear because you needed to eat all your meals, anyway. And one thing I do have to say, I didn’t gain too much but I was a healthy rascal, my husband always laughs because I was in college so I was used to dorm food. And these women were motherly to most of the girls if they liked you. And they were neighborhood women, and they were not at all unkind, and they were, you know, good cooks. I can’t remember anything I didn’t like. And if you liked something in particular and you said something, you got an extra helping of it. So I mean these ladies, they must’ve hired them, they were not in any way negative or mean. A lot of girls were ashamed. I wasn’t. I don’t know anyone else who really was. The couple of girls who I talked to were not. But. I think somehow some them maybe had a different attitude. I think medical missionaries—it’s funny because when my son searched for me and he did, he says off-and-on for over 20 years, well it turns out anyway that he had his adoptive mother’s aunt was a nun. She was either a nun at St. Vincent’s, or a nun that worked in Catholic Charities. And when I had a boy, they wanted a boy. And I think—he told me—they picked me, the adoptive parents. They picked him. And I thought afterwards that they had ignored everything that I had asked for. Which I do want you to kind of note. Because I was still had a right to ask. Until I signed his papers, I was his mother. What I wanted for him, I should have had. Because this woman—I think she was probably in Catholic Charities, I think she was a social worker—I think they placed him with a relative and his adoptive family was not educated beyond high school, they were first-generation Irish people, and they were prejudiced against Italians. Italians and Jews. In fact, he told me early on that his father had lost a job because he said negative things about Jews. And I thought, “Dear God in heaven.” So he grew up in a family which had values that I never, ever, if it were today and I got to choose I wouldn’t
have chosen them if they were the last people on the face of the earth. So our reunion was really rather—it was difficult in a lot of ways. I never said that thing out loud, but my family knows, it’s difficult in a lot of ways. I kept my mouth shut an awful lot. Still, we conflicted. So we had a very rocky reunion early on and only by the grace of god do we still have a relationship fourteen years in. Because I couldn’t accept some of the things that he said. It was very very very difficult. And when I look back I think, “Dear Lord.” I mean, well, you just don’t—I’m glad you’re writing about it. I’m glad so many people are. Because people in the street can’t understand the ties that bind the way they really do. That even meeting this 40-year-old man, by now, and talking on the phone and having him say some things that my heart feels like it’s being squeezed when you say things. Because the values that I was taught were so much different than what he was taught and then when my, you know, my children were reunited with him—I have three other children—and they’re such nice people! And I’m thinking, he’s mellowed a lot, in the fourteen years. He really has. I think, I don’t know how to explain it, from his point of view I try to understand it, why he searched for so long because he’s a very, very smart man. And I think that’s part of it. I mean I don’t think they [his adoptive family] understood him at all. But, you’re hearing my opinion now, not facts for your paper.

This is really why I want to interview mothers. I want your opinions and points of view, because those opinions and those points of views and perspectives are often left out. So this is exactly where the value lies here.

Well you know one of the other things that I did want to tell you, I don’t know if I told you or not, I’m going to go to the American Adoption Congress, somebody asked me to be on a panel, people that—two adoptees and I guess two mothers, who are in long term reunions, and our reunion has gone on now for fourteen years. And I said I do, that’s in Cambridge at the end of this month. and I’m going to do that. And also, another woman called me last year, she was a medical researcher, because after I left, St. Vincent, apparently St. Vincent was in a study when they were trying to create the polio vaccine, and they experimented on the babies and toddlers. That was her project. Yes. My son was no longer there, he was adopted. It happened in the early sixties. I was floored. and she was asking me a lot of what I remembered about how the place was organized, the food we ate and all that, but she wanted background for how they managed to experiment on these babies! And you know the polio vaccine didn’t come out until like 1960-something, and they used human specimens because they didn’t have mothers! They didn’t have to ask permission except from the church!

When I went to court—two things.

When I went to court, finally, in January, and I had to get myself back into school, first of all, because I had withdrawn for a semester. So I was working on that. And at that time, I lived here at Penn State, in the community, because Lou and I graduated from here over 50 years ago. But when I wanted to come back for spring semester, at that time, which would have been 1960 now, they were having a lot of suicides and emotional issues, and kids were jumping off buildings and killing themselves. It became the collegiate, politically-incorrect joke, I mean kids were actually painting parking lots with splatters, because you know how kids do. Anyway. So, emotional issues were really big issues for people on campus. Well I’m trying to get back on campus, and doctors up here want to know, had I had any emotional issues. I got my certificate from my home
doctor, that now I’m not suffering from any mental confusions or anything, but they really didn’t want to take any risks on me, so I kept having to call the doctor up here, to convince him that I was not about to jump off a building, that I was not crazy, without telling him that I had been having a baby during this time period. You know. So I’m working on this with the doctors up here, long-distance calling. So I finally got permission to come back, and in the meantime, Catholic Charities is calling me, trying to get me in there to court. Well, I finally got to court, and I first went to visit him [my baby] to say goodbye. And I did. And then I went to court and I remember standing there, looking at the Judge, the court reporter, Sister Shawn Marie, and me. There was nobody else there. I had nobody that if I had rights, was there to check out that they didn’t, you know, usurp them. But what I remember, was being told by the Judge and by Sister Shawn Marie, was “You are not signing your baby to an adoptive family. You’re signing your baby to Catholic Charities, and we will find the adoptive family.” And I remember saying to them, “will he be out of the orphanage immediately? As soon as you go back will you take him and place him?” Because I didn’t want him in that orphanage anymore! I just didn’t. And this is January. And they said, “oh yes, oh yes, oh yes.” But the other thing they said to me was, “if you ever try to look for him, try to find him, you will be prosecuted. If you ever try to find him.” And they told me that several times. Now at that time, even then, I was thinking, “how would I ever find him?” I thought about that years later, how would I ever find him? I signed him off to Catholic Charities. They’re the only ones. How would I ever even begin to locate my son? But anyway, I said I understood, but I remember being told I would be prosecuted. And I thought about it, how would I ever even begin to even look.

That was over forty years ago that that thought even entered my mind, and what I did was try to block it out. When my son connected with me I realized that I had literally blocked out that whole experience because I visualized my mind was an attic, and there was a trunk, and it was locked and everything that happened to me during that time period was there. So the point is, I guess it’s called distancing, I don’t know. But the point is that I literally would not discuss adoption. Ever. With anybody. We had friends who adopted two children and my husband— one of them was my husband’s best friend. And I literally dropped them. We’re in contact with them now, but when they had these first babies, we were friends. We lived in the same town. We sent Christmas cards, and all that, and I didn’t send Christmas cards back. And my husband said, “Whatever happened to so-and-so?” and I said, “Oh, I don’t know, I guess they dropped off” Because I didn’t want to deal with adoption. I mean literally there was a couple that he worked with, and I didn’t like her, well, they adopted. I didn’t really want to have anything to do with it. And I managed to avoid the subject. Nobody in my family adopted anybody. I didn’t know anybody in my close friends who did. And I managed to get through forty years without even really dealing with my issue. Even to the point that my kids, you know, I had seniors in high school and one little girl wanted to her project on searching for her mother. I gave her to another teacher. Her name was Melanie or something and I said “I don’t know anything about this so I really can’t help you with sources or anything.” And I gave her to another teacher, because I didn’t want to deal. Although in the newspaper, oh my gosh. My youngest son graduated high school in 1990 and my daughter graduated high school around about 1980, between them, somewhere around 1990, I thought, I read a newspaper about a man that had been searching, and I thought, I wonder if he’s searching. I would be found, but I wouldn’t even know where to begin to look. But if somebody was searching I wouldn’t say no. And so I sent away to Pennsylvania Adoption
Connection which was in Pittsburgh. And they sent me all these papers and they all had to be notarized. And I looked at them all, and I still had his picture, so I had this envelope in my drawer, and I looked at all these, which all and to be notarized except one, which was ISSR. I filled out the one, and I even went to the library, and the library had the addresses of different towns about, and I got what was my Lover’s address back there. and I filled this ISSR thing out and I sent it away. And I had told my daughter when she was about sixteen. About my son. She’s the only one outside my parents who knew. So I told her that I sent this away. But she says now it was in one ear and out the other. She forgot it. So anyway, I sent it away, and then I didn’t send any of the things that had to be notarized, because I was teaching in a local high school, and I knew everybody, anyone who could notarize anything I knew who they were and I didn’t want to do that so I just put them away with my pictures of him and went my merry way until he connected with me.

And I always think about that. Because I guess it was in the process of happening on a heavenly scale, more than me, because those were the only two times that I paid attention to adoption. By that time, Oprah is having things on, and I’m walking out of the room for any of these stories because I don’t want to hear them. They trigger too much so I’m gone. You know it’s not something I want to deal with.

So is there anything else, Lizzie that you want to know?

No, that’s really it. And thank you so much for sharing your story, especially after not having wanted to talk about it for so long. I really appreciate it and I think it’s brave. I’m really thankful for you being willing to participate.

Well I’m glad you’re writing about it. And I think one of the reasons people don’t want to talk about it is because they’re still feeling guilty or ashamed. I kind of passed that point. Why, I don’t know. Only because, probably, I’ve raised the other kids and they always do perfect things. I also don’t think I ever— I don’t think shame was ever a whole huge part of my makeup. I think I do a really good job rationalizing and it took me a long time. I would have walked on water if this man had asked me. I was so stupid. And I look back and think, “why was I so in love?” I guess you have to have it happen once. But my son, we have lots of interesting things. Just meeting and we identified each other. And he writes to me, “Do you know who my father is.” And if you think about that phrasing, you’ll realize what he probably was thinking. You know, a one-night-stand in the back of a bar. Of course I knew. I gave him all the information that I had looked up, and he ended up living in the next town over from where his father lived. And he met him before he met me. Because my son is a ballsy kind of guy. That’s the only way to put it. He drove to his house, he parked in the driveway, he called him on the phone, he gave him my name and asked if he knew who I was. He said no. But I had my son baptized, remember I told you, so he [Charlie] had the birth announcement. So he had [my son’s] name. Of course he knew what I named him. and my lover said to him, “where are you?” And my son said to him, “at the end of your driveway.” That must have given him quite a shock. But they had a relationship before the man died. The man was very, very ill. He had a terrible life. He had a good work life, but he didn’t have a good personal life. And I feel bad about that. I don’t have to feel guilty but I do. They say it’s karma.
Anyway, Lizzie, good talking to you. If you have anymore questions, you’ve got my number.
Interview 3: 1966, Chicago, Illinois

Hello! It’s so nice to finally talk to you!

It’s nice to talk to you, too! So tell me what the focus of your paper is.

So, my paper is my dissertation, I’m a doctoral student at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario. And my paper is basically it focuses on Catholic Maternity homes from 1940 to 1980 because, I guess, from my own personal experience my mom is a mother and she lost her son, my older brother, and so I kind of saw that happen and when I was a bit older and he came back into our lives, it affected all of our lives very deeply. I did a lot of research to kind of figure out what exactly allowed this to happen. I realized my mother is not the only one. There were many, many women who had their babies taken from them in inhumane ways and it was this huge, widespread human rights abuse. So my paper explores that dynamic. What happened, what were all of the systems and institutions and ideas involved in allowing such a huge system of human rights violations to not only exist, but to receive state funding and continue for so many years so that it became this huge epidemic. So my main question is what happens when a social service organization benefits its workers more than, and at the expense of, those whom it claims to serve.

Got ya. Now that you’ve said what your parameters are, I was there in ’66. Does that matter?

I’ve spoken to people as late as ’79. The historical portion of what I’m studying is more in the beginning of the history of maternity homes and what made them switch from helping mothers to keep and encouraging them to take them home as kind of a redemption to aggressively taking them away.

Yes. And I have studied this too, so that’s why I was laughing when you said, “having them take them home as a redemption.” One of my things, Lizzie, is that in the 20’s and the 30’s, is that we had homes for the feebleminded. And that’s where women went who were pregnant, you know, my goodness, if you were pregnant, and you weren’t married, my goodness, you must be feebleminded! And so they didn’t want you to leave your children there, they wanted you to take them. And then 20 years later, when people were needing children, then they were fine to help themselves to your child! I have some of those old books, Lizzie, I’ve ordered them. I’m a social worker, too, So textbooks and stuff, and it’s like—oh. It just makes your blood curdle when you read what they said about us. Yeah. Anyway. Well, you fire away. You just ask me whatever you want to know.

Okay. I have a set of questions here that I ask most mothers but you’re also a social worker so that’s amazing. Did you ever work in a home?

Oh no. Oh, no no. I stayed away from it, Lizzie, as far as I could. And then when my son found me in the late 90s and 2000s, I have two sons, then I really started studying this. I tell people I have a degree in adoption, I just don’t have a sheepskin to prove it. But I know more about it than I know about anything else in my life. Now I specialize in it in my practice, to help the folks who’ve been hurt by this horrible system.
As you know, most of the books and information about maternity homes and especially Catholic maternity homes, is written by the people who worked in the homes, and Catholic Church officials, and it’s very praising and the voices of the mothers are completely left out. So even though it’s far too late I still want to hear from mothers and add their voices back in and say, “wait a minute, these homes were not so great even though they lent power to Catholic women trying to gain position and power in their religious communities, that was all at the expense of other women who mattered and who were put into deep pain and lifelong trauma because of it.

Mhm. Well I’m all for you doing this. I’m in the book, The Girls Who Went Away,

Oh really? I read that whole thing. I had to stop and cry.

If you go back and read, you’ll see I’m in there, and Ann Fessler is a good friend of mine, and we’ve been talking for years about how to get this in Women’s Studies, Lizzie. Because when my daughter went to college a couple of years ago, she wrote a paper on it, and the Women’s Studies professor was like, “huh? I’ve never heard of this.

It’s amazing how many people haven't heard of it. People are always surprised when they hear about my research, too.

Well you fire away and ask your questions.

Okay. So did you spend time in a maternity home?

Yes, I did. I spent from mid-December of 1965 to the end of May of 1966.

Was it a Catholic home?

Yes, it was.

Did you enter of your own home, or were you coerced, or pushed into it by family?

That is such a hard one to answer. I entered of my own free will, I guess you could say, I don’t blame my family, I blame society. They were doing the best they could, they were as traumatized as I was, Lizzie. And trying to save the family name and my name an all of the above. So yes, I entered under free will, but under huge duress from society.

Of course. And I realize that that question is wrongly worded and I won’t say it that way again. But you were kind of in distress and ended up there as a last-ditch resource, then.

Yes.

What were some of the factors that influenced your decision to go into the home? Was it financial, social pressure…?
Hiding, hiding. Nothing but hiding and getting me out of town so that hopefully everybody wouldn’t know. My family had at first tried to put me with some family friends in another state but when that didn’t work out, um, then my mother went to talk to the priest, and he said, “Oh! We have this wonderful place.”

There was almost a system for bumping girls into the home when they didn’t want to go.

Oh yeah.

Who were some of the different professionals with whom you were in contact during your pregnancy?

The nuns— the home I was in was a huge, three-story building and the bottom floor was a nunnery, and the middle floor was the girls, and the top floor was an elder home. So the only professionals were the sisters who were there for our daily care, and once a week or maybe less than that, but periodically, there was a social worker nun who came and spoke with us. We called her Sam, her name was Sister Antony Marie. She was really cute. She’s why I became a social worker, actually.

Oh wow! Well it’s awesome that you did have at least one kind person in that whole complex and in that terrible time.

The truth is, in my home, while there were some practices that I will tell you about, everyone was kind. The nuns were kind. They were like the nuns at school, only not the mean kind. They were kind, they were generous, and being in the home was like being in a college dorm. I was with however many, sixty, I guess, other girls who were all in the same situation, and they were all very nice girls.

When you were in the home, were there any ideas or thoughts that were emphasized to you you repeatedly to you by the Catholic workers or volunteers? Did anyone tell you things repeatedly that you had not thought before?

Mhm. Yes. Um, in fact, after I started meeting other birthmothers in the nineties, I thought, “there must have been a script.” Because they said the same things to us: “Your child will be called a bastard on the playground. You’re doing the only thing you can to give your child a good life, if you really love your child, you will give them to a couple who is prepared and able to raise them.” Of course my child’s couple divorced. So that was brilliant. Those were kind of the themes. Just, You’ve got to do the right thing, and if you really love your child you will. Oh, and the others were, “You’ll go on with your life, this will all seem like a bad dream. You’ll have other children,” and everything, you know. “You’ll forget this ever happened.”

But of course that wasn’t the case.

It was not the truth. And a classic was, what my OB GYN said on my six-week check-up. He said, “Now don’t ever tell the man you’re going to marry about this. No man wants damaged goods.”
Oh wow.

They were those things that just kind of burn in your brain.

Did you, when you first entered the home, did you know that you were going to be coerced into— was adoption even on your mind at all? Did you think you’d be able to carry out the pregnancy and have the baby?

There was no thought of that. Adoption was the only thing on my mind, and adoption was the only goal in the home. They hid you there ‘till you had your baby and you placed it for adoption. One of the things that they did do, was if a woman wavered towards the end— there was one woman in my setting who gave birth to twins and of course at that time she didn’t know she was going to give birth to twins because we didn’t have all this technology. And so when she did, she really came undone. And I recall she was about 25, she was older than us, and a young working woman, and she started to wobble. And what they did if you started to get weak knees about giving up, was they put you on another wing of the building. In other words, they separated you from the flock, so that your thinking wouldn’t influence other girls’ thinking. And we just basically never saw those girls again, and never knew what happened. I presume maybe one or two kept them and maybe one or two didn’t, but they weren’t about to let us know.

Did any of the workers in the home— nuns, social workers, priests— did they inform you of your option and you right to keep the baby or did they say that adoption was your only option?

Adoption was the only option. I guess when they said “If you love them, you won’t be an idiot, and take the child out, and ruin your life and the child’s life.” That was just sort of implied. What really got me later was finding out that I had— it was either 30 or 60 days— in which to change my mind. They did forget to tell me that. I had no idea. And what was the other thing? OH. I never got not one copy of any of the paperwork that I signed. And I think that’s really interesting. When I go up and buy a dress I get a copy of the paperwork. But I have nothing and I remember asking my mother years later, “did you get anything?” and she said, “Nuh-uh. Nobody gave us anything.” So. Mhm. And I just recently, a few years ago, got a copy of the papers of when I was in the home and I had to really, I just, I bothered them for ten years, and then I said to them, “I’m sorry but there’s a law that I can have my medical record. That’s a law in the state, that you can have any record that pertains to you.” I wasn’t asking for my child’s record, I was asking for my record in the home and they said, “Oh no, honey, we’re protecting you. We don’t give those out.” And I said, “Well, I don’t need protection, because I’m already out.” And um, they still wouldn’t give them up until finally looked up Alabama law, and quoted a statute, which they then took to their attorney and they released my records to me.

Wow. So you had to go through all of that.

Yes. Yup.

What were your relationships like in the home? Were you encouraged to make friends with other pregnant women?
Uh, not really. I mean, yes, we were all friendly together but we were discouraged from having any contact afterwards because we were supposed to forget it ever happened and there was no need for us to keep in touch and the implication was, “why would you ever want to keep in touch with these other bad girls?” Which, then you go, “oh, wait a minute, that would be me, too.” Haha. So um, they really really discouraged you, they gave us fake names, and they encouraged us—

Fake names?!

Yes! I was (name redacted for anonymity), so I was called Lisa Palmer, and the reason for that was, it was the era of, everything was monogramed, we were going through a monogram phase, so if we had clothing they would keep the same initial, but they would, um, they discouraged everyone from keeping in touch or sharing your real name. I did keep in touch for a short time with two women that I just remember that were there with me, girls. But we were hiding the fact that we were staying in touch.

Did you have relationships with any of the nuns? Or any of the workers?

Um, yeah. The main sister was— man I just went blank on her name; I’ve known her name all my life. It’ll come to me in a minute. But anyway the main nun was really a sweetheart she was a great big old tomboy. She was real friendly to us and would take us out occasionally for a ride somewhere. So yes.

Okay. So you felt generally very warmly, and you felt that the nuns were very kind, and generous, and gracious, except they still told you— they still didn’t tell you your options about your sixty-day grace period.

Right. And other women have different feelings about that. I had chores, I had to scrub the floor, everyone had chores. But the truth for me was that wasn’t all that different from all I had at home, so it wasn’t like slave labor or anything. We had chores, had to keep the rooms clean, had to clean the bathrooms, and then like a day or two a week we had some little job around. Like we were the receptionist for the building, sometimes we’d go down to Catholic Charities and have to work in the office, but it was all very minor. It wasn’t anything awful.

And were there religious practices in the home? Were you encouraged to pray to any saint or did they tell you things?

There was a chapel. And um, no they didn’t push religion at all. And I feel, I’m positive not all the girls were Catholic, but they were not pushing religion. I will say that. Although I was groping for the name of the Chapel because it’s something really interesting. Anyway, what I was going to say was I had my son christened there, and yeah. The name of the chapel was like, “For Lost Souls” or something like that. (laughs) It was very— “For You Who Have Lost Your Way.” But I can’t remember the exact name of it right this second, it may come to me.
Okay. And immediately following, and even your lingering effects, what have the effects been in your life?

Massive, massive depression, lifelong. Substance abuse. I’m in recovery, been in recovery 20 years but that was the first thing that made me feel better. Um, isolation. And I would say a lack of trust. It really impacted me later when I had my children that I raised, as I’m sure you feel.

Yeah.

Yeah. It’s lifelong, never goes away. And I am one of those people, my motto is: “When life gives you lemons, make lemonade.” Because I refuse to be bitter and horrified all my life. I just decided to do something about it.

That’s great. And so you became a researcher and an activist in that community of mothers.

Yes. Once I finally came out of the closet— one of the worst things I think for us women, Lizzie, is that we, I got lit into, I was one person, I was very good in school and I focused on my career for a long time and I did very well there, but it was always with that, “If everybody knew the other side of me, they wouldn’t care for me. They wouldn’t like me.” So I had a split life until my boys found me, and then I say I became one person again when I finally got honest about who I was and the sting of it.

Okay. And so I guess I’m done with my questions here but I’m wondering, are there any really important things that I haven’t asked and that you want to share? Any angles that I haven’t hit?

Sure, let me think for just a second. Hm. I remember when I was going to the home and I was so terrified. Because I’d never been sent away from home either, but I was seventeen and I was being sent off with all these “bad girls.” And you know, in my mind, they probably all a switchblade in their socks and cigarettes rolled up in their sleeves and when I got there and it was a bunch of giggly high school and college girls, I was stunned. Because, as we did at the time, we put all of our, you know they were the bad ones, and they were us. That didn’t dawn on us until we got there. I’ve had people say later that it actually was the nicest and most naive girls who got pregnant, because who knew how not to? It never had been discussed, we never had known. I had no idea. So. I think that was a big surprise, how nice and sweet and wonderful everybody was, and I presumed they were going to just be, you know, harlots and tramps and hookers. But I remember being terrified when my mother took me there. But that didn’t last long once I saw who was inside. Hm. What else.

For me, I guess I’m not like everyone else, but it was kind of a wonderful, nesting, loving time. I just, it was my off time, I sewed, I crocheted, I did all sorts of nesting things and was just prepared to do what I knew I had to do. Um, and then when I saw my son’s face, I was just blown away. Because I was looking at me, and the birth father, and I was just so stunned by the fact, and I mean I knew nothing about having a baby or what that was like, so that’s when the depression set in. Until then I felt like I was just kind of serving my time. And getting on with what I needed to do, but the minute I saw him everything turned around. Um.

And, absolutely of course no preparation for anything— I had no idea what the birth entailed, and they um, the doctor said “You’ll never remember, I’m going to knock you out.” This
is in the book. I had the labour out in the hallway, in the hospital, because I couldn’t be in the room with the married women. Um, I guess I would taint them somehow. So yeah, I had to labour in the hallway and then they came and said, “Oop! You’re about to deliver.” And I remember nothing after that. Oh! I remember what the other thing was.

In the home, our little kind of very small rec room, it was actually called “The Smoker,” because that’s where girls sat to smoke, was right next to the nursery, as in there was a closed door in between it. And here I thought, “Oh great, all this smoke was going under the door to the infants.” But what I’m trying to say, too, is that during my whole stay there I had this, I didn’t sit in there very often because I didn’t smoke, but you could listen to the infants cry, while you were waiting your time to go. Mhm. And that, that’s about all I can think of.

Well thank you so much for making time to talk to me!

You are most welcome and if any other questions come up just shoot me an email, I’m glad to help. I’m glad for anybody, Lizzie, like you getting the word out. because this is a time in women’s history and we’re all really foolish, those of us who came out of there and started fighting for women’s choice, know that it can all be pulled out from under you in an eye-blink, and guess what? It’s white males who are doing it. So we don’t have all the freedom that we think we do. We’re standing on ice. Yup. Anything you can do to help the cause, I’m all in support of.

Sure. I’m doing the best I can.

Absolutely

Again, thank you so much

You’re very welcome. You take care.
Interview 4: 1969, Tennessee

Was it a Catholic home that you were in?

Yes, it was.

And what year was that?

‘69, ‘70.

Okay. And when you went, did your family kind of put you in, or

Yeah. Yes. I didn’t have much of a choice on the deal.

It sounds like a lot of people didn’t. What were some of the factors that influenced your decision? Who were the people who were talking to you at that time? Was there a social worker?

Um, from the home?

Yes.

This is what’s really weird. Because I am sure that at some point, I talked to a social worker, but I don’t remember talking to a social worker because I was pretty much kept out of the loop.

Wow. So you felt like the whole situation and decisions about you and your future— you were a passive observer.

Yes. I was given no options. I went in knowing that I was not going to keep the child. So they didn’t discuss any options with me or tell me that there were options. There was no counseling, there were no social workers who saw me on a regular basis.

Who were the different professionals who you were in contact with while you were in the home?

It was mostly just the nuns.

Okay. Do you remember any of them?

I remember on in particular. She was like a, argh. A house guardian? I don’t know what you would call her. There were a lot of nuns. Probably ten or fifteen of them.

That is a lot.

The home that I was in was also an orphanage. We just had a half of a floor. It was a like a four or five story building and we had one half of one floor was dedicated to the teenagers that were pregnant.
While you were in the home were there any ideas or thoughts that were emphasized to you repeatedly by catholic professionals? By the nuns and everybody?

No.

No? Nothing?

There was nothing. This is my biggest gripe, is that there was NOTHING. Because I felt—NOW I feel, like they provided me with no emotional or psychological help whatsoever, and even after I delivered, when I was going through the depression, there was nothing, there was nothing there. I remember talking to the social worker at the Catholic Charities offices, and I remember telling her that I needed to talk to someone and she basically told me just to go see a shrink.

Okay. So you really didn’t feel supported at all before, during, or after the experience.

No. My entire pregnancy all I thought was, “they don’t care about me, they only care about my baby.” And after I delivered, it was the same thing. They just wanted to steal my baby from me. They didn’t care at all about what was going to happen to me. I was just a pod that carried a child and gave it to them.

That must have been very lonely and difficult.

It was for a very long time, yes.

So nobody told you about your option to keep the baby, at all.

No. As far as I was concerned, there was no option. I knew going into it that I wasn’t going to keep it so they didn’t discuss it with me.

Who had told you— who made you believe before you even went in that you couldn’t keep her?

My parents.

Okay.

Let's put it this way: going into the maternity home was the last resort. I tried several things to miscarry. I went for an abortion. This was the last resort. Nothing else worked to terminate the pregnancy, so now I have to be hidden.

Did you have a lot of conversations with Catholic workers in the home?

Not really. We were pretty much segregated. They don’t want you be friendly with any of the other girls. They assigned each of a job so that we didn’t spend a lot of time together during the day, and in the evening, the one nun that was there made sure that we weren’t congregating in groups discussing things. And after you delivered, you came back but you were segregated again
from the pregnant girls who were in a different area. They didn’t want to see any kind of girls going into cahoots and sharing notes. There was no maternity education or post-maternity education. There was nothing to prepare you for what was going to happen when you went into labour and delivery, you know, or after. It was just, “you’re pregnant, and one of these days you’re going to go into labour and have a baby and then we’re going to take you here for a couple more days and then we’re going to kick you out.”

Okay. So they did not educate you in any way or tell you what to expect.

No. We had “clinic days” where we saw the doctor but there was no— no lamaze or anything like that. They just checked your blood pressure, checked your urine— “okay fine there’s nothing wrong with you, see you next month.” That was a big thing, that after girls had delivered and come back they segregated them because they didn’t want the girls who had delivered to talk to the girls that were still pregnant.

Do you think they were afraid of girls demanding to know their rights, or something like that?

That, or just basically being educated, or the possibility of someone changing their mind and not placing the child for adoption.

Did you know anyone who tried to change their mind?

There was one girl that we heard a rumor, that— she had twins— and we heard a rumor that she decided to keep them. We weren’t sure but we thought she kept her babies.

Okay.

I don’t even know if she knew that she was having twins because they didn’t tell us anything. When we went into deliver— they didn’t tell us— I found out later— they didn’t tell us gender, weight, healthy, unhealthy. You basically just spit out this child and they took it and that was the end of it.

Did you— what was your birth and delivery experience like?

Um, I— I wasn’t sure I was in labour because I was early. I went to take the cab ride to the hospital, and they never said anything about keeping me or anything like that. I found out they were keeping me because back then they shaved you. So I was like “okay, fine, they must be keeping me, it must be real labour.” And they just threw me in this private room, and once in a while someone came in and checked on me, and I had the baby, and there was nobody there with me. I was alone.

Nobody delivered your baby?

Well no, they came when they checked me, they put me into delivery. But there was nobody with me when I was in labor. They just left me alone when I was in labor.
That’s really difficult.

I didn’t get to see my parents until after I delivered.

Did your parents come?

They came not for the delivery; they came after the delivery. My mom wasn't allowed to be with me or anything like that. I was to be alone. The psychological, “repent for your sins.”

What kind of messages were there? The “repenting” issue— they gave you that during childbirth?

Well we, we had to go to mass every morning. You know, of course, go to confession every week. Living with the nuns. It was very, very strict about, “You’ve committed this major sin and you have to beg for mercy.”

Wow. So that basically underscored all of your activities while you were pregnant and during your childbirth?

Yes. So we each had our little jobs, and that kept us away from each other.

So you must have felt very isolated.

Oh yeah.

When you needed emotional support was there anyone who you could talk to?

No. It was a very “I don’t care bout you” atmosphere. It was a long time ago, and that’s all it was.

Did you ever try to get your paperwork?

(laughs) Yes! It was right across the table from me, but they wouldn’t let me look at it. When my daughter went to Catholic Charities for information, medical information, and she was told there was a release in the file, that she could contact me. They had their hands all over the reunion. The first meeting was held there at the Catholic Charities office, and my files were like three feet from me. I asked them if I could look at it, and they said, “no,” and I asked if I could ask them a couple of questions, and they said, “What kind of questions?” And I said, “Well, let’s start off with how much did this cost my parents?” “Oh well, it was nominal, don’t worry about that.” You know they would never let me put my hands on the file. and things in the file mysteriously disappeared because when she had initially contacted them— throughout her life, I would send cards and letters, and pictures, to be put in my file. Okay, and when she contacted them they told her that those were there, that there were birthday cards, and letters, and photos, and they read her some of the letters over the phone, and when we got to the initial meeting, all of that stuff had disappeared. It was nowhere to be found.
Do you think that they lied about those?

Oh, absolutely, they lied about a lot of stuff.

What else do you think they lied about?

Umm, the brutality of it all. I found out about it all later. Telling me that I had no rights, I had no choices. I was forced to sign the surrender papers with a week, which now I know is illegal, because you’re supposed to have a six-month “change your mind” period. But they never told me about that. I just signed these papers and that was it. I even asked them at the initial meeting if I could see those and they said no. And I said, “Well I know I must have signed something,” and they said, “well, you did.” And I said, “Well if I can’t see the ones that I signed,” which, privacy is broken at this point, but “If I can’t see that, can I at least see a blank one, so I can see what I even agreed to!” “Nope.” I vaguely remember signing something in an office, you know, after she was born because I remember having to go back down town having to sign these papers. But they probably just shoved something in front of me and said, “Here, sign this.”

Were the nuns very— backtracking a little bit, but when you were in the home, did you have an intake experience where they asked you about your story and how you got pregnant?

No, they didn’t care about that at all.

They just didn’t want to hear about it?

No. They asked the basic questions, you know, physical attributes about the father, if I knew any of his family background or whatever.

Did they ask about what kind of person you were at all? Like what kind of activities or hobbies you enjoyed?

Um, yeah. I remember that. You know asking me what kind of interests I had and stuff like that. They also, again before the reunion, they sent her a letter that “deb likes this, deb likes that,” that kind of a thing. So I’m sure they pulled that out of the records. You know they nailed it on the things I used to do back then, so.

So they must have had some kind of interview.

The information they gave her was 24 years old. She showed me the information they gave to her. They put her through the ringer for about six months before they even contacted me. They wanted to make sure she was psychologically sound for a reunion. And again it was all about her because they put her through all of this but they didn’t put me through any of it.

So they did not prioritize or show concern for your well-being in any way.

No, not at all. I was just an incubator. And I still feel that way. I’ve turned away from the Catholic church because of the way that I was treated in a time of need.
Did they make a big deal to the girls in the home about making sure you knew they were extending a service or a mercy to you?

No. No, because the impression was “we’re taking care of you because you’re bad girls and you have to hide so we’re hiding you.”

Okay. How, what were some other small and big ways that they basically drove home that message?

Well, the whole idea of being institutionalized—everything was regimented. You got up at a certain time, you had to be there for roll call, you ate breakfast as a group, then you split up and did your jobs and then you came back and you had to eat lunch as a group and there was no talking during these meal breaks. It had no traces of what you were going to eat, it was whatever was put in front of you. It was very institutionalized.

Okay. And impersonal, and there was no human warmth.

No. No. Depending on what your name was, I was lucky at the time, I was lucky to keep the Debbie S. But if there would have been another Debbie there, they would have changed my name to something else because there couldn’t be more than one Debbie there. They literally took away your identity.

So they changed girls’ names but they didn’t do it to everyone, thought?

No. It depended on if there was someone there with the same name. So if a Mary came in and there was already a Mary, the second Mary would have to pick a different name to be called by. Because you could only have one of each name. So a lot of them literally had their identity taken away.

Did they give you any kind of message about how you would be an unfit mother, or that giving the baby away was a repentance?

We never even discussed the possibility of me being a mother.

Did they, did you get the feeling that they believed that by surrendering your baby, or having your baby taken from you and given to a Catholic family, that you were making your sin right in some way?

No. It was more of a “you don't deserve this child.” And the only discussion about the adoptive family, it wasn’t even about the family. I was told that, after I had her, I was told that she had already been placed and she would be leaving there [the institution] in three days; and that was another lie because it was six or seven weeks when they finally placed her.

Wow, so they just didn’t even, they were dishonest about that. So they didn’t even give you any chance to ask about her.
No. Here’s an example. So you have this child. Like I said, they don’t tell you sex, they don’t tell you weight, they don’t tell you anything. You just have the child. End of story. And so, when you’re in the hospital, and this was back in the day when you would stay in the hospital for two or three days, for a natural birth, when you were in the hospital you weren’t allowed to see the child. They definitely brought her in. The nurse brought her in and said, “Mrs. Ford, it’s time for you to feed your baby.” And again, if I was supposed to feed the baby, there was nobody there to teach me how to nurse a child. And I knew this was wrong and I wasn’t supposed to see her. And I was like, “Play the game, play the game because this is the only way you’re ever going to get to see her or find out that it was a girl.” So she was with me for about ten minutes before someone came in, a nun, because it was a Catholic hospital, she came running in and ripped her out of my arms and said, “you know you’re not supposed to see the child.” And took her away.

Okay.

And they said, “YOU know you’re not supposed to see the child.” As if it were my fault that someone had brought her in and made a mistake. And if you walked down to the nursery there were no names yet. It didn’t say “Baby Ford” or anything like that. It just said “baby girl.” So you didn’t know for sure which one was yours. Except all the rest of them had names.

Babies with unmarried moms were in the same nursery as babies from married families?

Yes. All the babies were in the same nursery.

Were you on the same floor in the hospital in the delivery section as the married mothers?

Yes. But we had private rooms. We weren’t allowed to have a roommate.

Do you believe that your particular location in the city and state that you were in determined the way you were treated and the structure of the institution or hospital? Do you think things would have been less strict, or nuns would have been warmer, if you were in a different city or state?

You know, I don’t know. That’s hard to say. It might depend on which kind of nuns it was. I was with the Daughters of Charity, which are known to be the really strict nuns. So I’m basing this on the second home that I was in. I was in another home at first for about a month that was, um, it was still a Catholic-run home but it wasn’t an institution. It was just a single family home that had like four or five bedrooms and had four or five rooms and just had a woman there that was taking care of us, she wasn’t a nun. So I was there for a month before I was transferred into the other one.

What made you transfer? Did they tell you why?

A couple of things. Um, I went in very early. Usually they don’t take you until your third trimester. I was eight weeks when I went into the first one, because my parents wanted to get rid of me very quickly. And so, and we were in Tennessee, we were not in Illinois, and there was this place in Tennessee that could take me right away, that early, so the home in Illinois said that they
could take me, but not that early. They made arrangements to take me in a month, and before
that, I went into the home in Tennessee. I went into the big one when I was about three months. I
was incarcerated for a total of about seven months. And that is extremely long, because usually
it’s just about three months. It’s an unusually long time for someone to be in that care.

Did you see a lot of differences between the nuns and how things were handled between the two
homes?

Well, the first one was just a little single-family home with no nuns involved. It was just a Catho-
lic home. Just a little house in the suburbs of Memphis. And we were able to walk around, you
know, go to the grocery store. We had some freedoms there. It wasn’t as rigid. But once I got
into the big home in Chicago, that stopped. We were literally locked behind gates. We couldn’t
go anywhere without permission. It was like being in prison. We weren’t allowed outside of our
dorm area unless we were working.

What did you do to get through? How did you emotionally survive? What did you tell yourself?

I detached. I held everything inside. I call it my “safe pace.” It’s still there. I can talk about it but
it’s still in its safe place and I don’t think that will ever go away. This is something that has
scarred me for life. And it wasn’t the surrendering, it was the treatment and lack of any kind of
emotional or psychological help when I needed it. And even afterwards I was treated like dirt
when I went back to ask for help. They just don’t care.

I’m sorry that that happened to you.

It’s my fault. I’m the one who was fooling around

But nobody should have treated you that way.

Are there any more details or more important things that I haven’t asked you about that you want
to tell me about?

It’s such a long and involved story, just that the control on their end never stops. Even through
reunion because they had to control the reunions and the way they did control the reunion, and
the censorship. They made us write letters to Catholic Charities, and the letters had to be vetted
by Catholic Charities instead of just to each other. I would get letters from her that she sent to
Catholic Charities that had magic marker scribbles blocking out whole parts because “oh you
can’t tell her that.” And she was getting the same thing, letters that were censored. So we didn’t
get to open up to each other until Catholic Charities were out of the picture.

Okay.

And then like I said, we would be sitting there at the table knowing that all of my questions could
be answered if they just let me have that file and look through it. But no, “it’s private.” but it’s
about me, and I’m an adult. And there’s nothing in there that’s private anymore because she’s
sitting here right next to me, so let me see. “no” I’ve asked for my medical records, my maternity
records. They are nonexistent. I wrote for my delivery and nursery records, because the child’s delivery records would have been under my name, okay? So I wrote to the hospital asking for my medical records, and they wrote back saying, “Sorry, the file is flagged as an adoption.” I wrote to the doctor that treated us at the home. I got the same kind of letter back. “You were on contract, you were an unwed mother, I’m sorry I can’t release the records.” And I’m like “THIS IS MY STUFF! THIS IS ABOUT ME!”

When you went into the home even thought it was against your will and you were not made aware of any other options, did you anticipate giving up your personal agency in such deep ways?

No. I never thought it would be the way that it was, but then I didn’t know what to expect either. I was sixteen, I was a child myself. I am assuming you’ve read Ann Fessler’s book. It’s very accurate.

That was a really tough book. Especially people in my family are in the same boat, and I’ve watched their reunions and it’s just really hard sometimes. There’s a lot there.

Everything that you’ve gone through until you get to the point where you have to go into the home because you’ve tried everything else and you’re still pregnant and you have to hide. You’ve tried every other option NOT to do that but things didn’t work.

Did you go back to your parents’ after you had given birth?

Oh yeah. I was 17 and I needed to finish school. So I went back home.

Was it difficult to be there after what had happened?

It was harder to go back to school. The way that it worked out, was that we were living here in Illinois and I was a freshman. The summer between my freshman and sophomore year, we moved to Tennessee. I got pregnant in Tennessee, my junior year. While I was pregnant and incarcerated, my parents went back to Illinois. So when I got out, I moved back to Illinois and started school again as a Senior, so I was gone for two years. When I went back as a Senior, I found out that the rumor was that we had moved initially because I was pregnant. Which wasn’t true. But it was like okay fine, they just got the months mixed up. But it was hard going back knowing that people thought that about me.

So there were lasting consequences socially.

Oh yeah.

I’m so sorry.

Socially and with the family until the reunion took place, and once the reunion took place, I was like, excuse my language, but “Fuck it, I ain’t lying about this anymore.”
Good for you.

And that’s when I became more aware of not being alone in the world. I looked for a support group for many many years. I went to a couple, but I didn’t fit because, how do I put this. My attitude, versus their attitude. Because most of the mothers there wanted to keep their children and I didn’t. And they couldn’t relate to me saying, “no, I never wanted to keep her.” And that the pregnancy was an inconvenience. And we all had the same thing that we had our children were stolen from us, but for me it made a big difference in the way it was done even though I wanted to not be pregnant anyway.

It made a big difference that it was not done on your terms.

It was on my terms, because I didn’t want her. I expected more support for the child that was having the baby, than the baby. It should have been more about helping me through it, because I had to pick up the pieces. She was going to have a good life. There was no doubt in my mind about the fact that she was going to have a wonderful life. But I had to worry about me growing up, and finishing high school, and getting my life back on track. And there was nobody there to help me with that. Now I had done correspondence courses when I was pregnant, and I went to summer school for two years, and I caught up on all my credits so I could graduate when I was supposed to, to find out that I was six weeks short to graduate in gym class. So they wouldn’t let me graduate with my class. I had to go to summer school to pick up another quarter credit. They wouldn’t let me be a senior because I wasn’t going to graduate when I was supposed to and I wasn’t allowed to graduate with my class, with the people that I grew up with in grade school and junior high. They always rejected from the whole senior year experience. I couldn’t go to senior prom because I wasn’t a senior. I couldn’t graduate because I wasn’t a senior. I couldn’t get a cap and gown because I wasn’t a senior. You don’t get the good pictures because you’re not a senior. I wasn’t a year behind, I was going to graduate only four weeks after everyone else, but I couldn’t do any of the senior things.

Going backwards, when I was in high school in Tennessee, as soon as the school realized that I was pregnant, I was expelled. That day. They called my parents, said “come get her. She’s expelled.” So, you know, bam. You’re thrown out of school.

Do you think that the school’s attitude influenced your parents’ attitude at all?

No. Then you look now and see how much it’s changed.

Did you talk to a priest at all before you went to a home?

Not talked to him. The nuns made me go to a confession. But to sit down and talk about it? No. There was none of that.

Well that is all my questions, unless there is anything else that you want to talk about.

It was a long, involved story, and it is obviously still going on. Reunion was not really successful. She realized that Catholic Charities had lied to both of us, she doesn’t have a problem accepting that. But, she had a problem accepting me. And it finally got to the problem that she shut
me out. It was seventeen years of a reunion, and finally it got to the point that I said to her, “Of all the people in my life who have turned their backs on me, I didn’t expect it to be you. If that’s really the way you feel about me then I don’t want you in my life because you’re making more hurt.” so I haven’t spoken to her in five or six years now.

And I asked her if I could meet her parents to thank them for taking care of her, and she said no. She didn’t want them to know that she was talking to me. And it was her that found me, not the other way around. Then I found her father for her, and she had a reunion with her father, insisted that I be there. I didn’t want to be there. She insisted that I be there to be her emotional support, and I said, “What about MY emotional support?” I really don’t want to see him. And then when the grandchildren came, when she got married, and said, “I want you to come to my wedding but I want you to be someone else.” No. I don’t want be someone else. And when the children came, she wanted me to be in their life but not to be grandma. So I was never allowed to be part of my grandchildren’s lives and be part of their baptism and school plays and birthday parties, and I couldn’t be part of that. She was treating me no better than Catholic Charities did. Treating me like a second-class citizen. Trying to hide me again. And I’m tired of lies!

And I’m sure there’s a lot of women out there that felt that way. I actually wound up meeting someone that was at the Catholic Charities home at the same time as me. We didn’t remember meeting each other, and that was through Karen.

Yes! Karen does so much.

Karen’s like a saint for all of us.

Thank you so much!

If you have any other questions, please give me a call. There’s similarities, and I think it was just the times that we lived in, and then everything changed. These homes, I’m wondering if they’re nonexistent now. They’re more like resource centers now. And they give the women options. If you don’t want to keep the baby, here’s your options. If you do want to keep the baby, here’s resources that will help you. Here’s how you get your formula and your diapers and you can get state aid, or with the adoption process: you can have a closed adoption, you can have an open adoption, you know. They tell you all this. NONE of that stuff was available to us. That was the way it was back then. I get mad when I see things for women’s rights and I say, “I FOUGHT for women’s rights, don’t take that away from us!” It’s the prolifers that make all the fuss. The pro-choicers are quiet. It doesn’t mean that they’re pro-abortion, it means it’s your choice. I get so angry because I know what it was like before. I don’t want to see women going back to crochet hooks and knitting needles and coat hangers. I know what I did. I did the lysol douches and overdosed on quinine and did all kinds of things not to have the child. And then we did have an abortion set up, and we did go through the back alley at ten o’clock at night and we did go through the back door and I was on the table, I was that close. And he started, put me in stirrups, strapped down my legs, which I expected. And then when he strapped down my arms, and I asked, “why, are you strapping down my arms,” and he said “so you don’t move.” I said, “won’t I be asleep?” He said, “No, it’s just me and you. There’s no anesthesia, there’s no nurse.” I said, “There’s no
anesthesia?” He said, “No, we’re not in a hospital. We’re just going to take care of this pregnancy.” And I chickened out.

Who wouldn’t! That’s terrifying! Did your parents know that you were doing this?

They were with me. I don’t want to see anyone going through this again. If you have any more questions about anything, please let me know.

Thank you so much!
Interview 5: 1966

Thank you so much for directing so many people toward me for interviews and things, I am really excited about the project. I really appreciate it and I think that once the project is done a lot of mothers will find comfort in just having another person explain that it was a whole overarch-ing system of human rights violations.

It was a whole system and what they need most is validation and a voice, and you’re aiding in that regard. So don’t thank me, we thank you. So the more people get a voice out there hopefully the mental health community will recognize the PTSD element of this and catalog it and study it and that equals help. Because we didn’t have help then, we still don’t really have educated help when we reunite and find each other, we’re floundering. Any areas that you need me to fill in on, I’m more than happy to help.

Thank you! For now, I’m still pretty early on in the project and I’m still collecting data. As long as you can keep sending people my way, I would like to provide a correctional text to the historical accounts that already exist because a lot of them were written by people who worked in the home and they all had deep stakes in benefitting from the system as it was. Obviously they’re going to write about it differently than someone who was abused in it.

Or the people who aided and abetted it, the social workers. I’m assuming you know about that?

“No Problem Girls, Fallen Women” by Regina Kunzel, have you read that? It speaks in great detail about exactly what you mentioned.

Regina Kunzel? Yes. She’s one of the first books I ever read.

She’s great.

She really outlines professionalism of social worker and how they created their own field of experts and unwed motherhood and experts on infant adoption a how they wormed their way into these maternity homes and changed everything by convincing the public that they were. Didn’t you find it to be very helpful?

Oh, definitely. That was one of my favorite books so far. I still need to read yours, though, and I think that will really help. There’s a lot out there.

There’s also some really good ones like And Sin No More by Marion Morton

I’ve read that one, too, it’s great!

I probably have so many books, out of print books, dissertations.

You live in Atlanta?
I live in Richmond, Virginia now. I’m probably going to donate my collection to the Virginia Commonwealth because they’ve been so helpful to me. I think it’s really important to spread this information out and make it accessible. Ann Fessler is begging me to donate it to Radcliffe because that’s where our oral histories are stored and that’s where CUB has donated their collection, but I don’t want to give a lot of— give my collection to them when much of it might be duplicates. And like I said I want people to have access to this material in different parts of the country and like I said, Rickie Solinger is an expert and Regina Kunzel is an expert. I don’t know if you’ve talked to Rickie, she would be really helpful for sure. Some of these people have kind of moved onto other projects. Well you tell me what you need.

Basically I have some questions, you were not in a Catholic home, correct?

No. My Mother was catholic; my father was protestant so they took me out of Catholic schools but my mom still brought us to church. So when I got pregnant, she turned to the church, who I think led her to Catholic Charities, who then I think directed her to the House of Mercy in DC which is Catholic and my suspicion is, because she doesn’t remember, is that it was probably full. And that may be one reason why I ended up at Florence Crittenton which is more of a Protestant home. Kate Waller Barrett founded the Crittenton homes with Florence Crittenton on the policy of keeping mother and child together. It’s that amazing? When I found that out my mind was just blown. because, you know, oh my god. That could have happened for me, had the social workers not intervened and changed the whole tenet of the policy of Florence Crittenton and I’ve spoken many times. Where are you living?

I’m in New York.

Oooh, you’re close to Joe Soll.

I am. I visited him about a year ago. I went to tell him about this work and ask questions in that regard but it got kind of personal because I had an older brother who reunited with my mother when I was younger, and my brother is no longer living. Joe Soll had been their therapist.

Okay. I think I remember meeting your mother and brother at one of his picnics.

Oh, wow! That’s amazing. It is a really small world.

Anyway, if you need, I have an old Catholic document that I’m going to scan because it’s gong be front and center on my new book, and it says, “Mother Must Surrender.” It was a requirement for admittance into the home. We weren’t told that there were any other options. We didn’t know. It’s a black and white world. We didn’t have access to any of that information or birth control or anything. So I say, in order to make a decision you have to be presented with your options, to make a fully informed decision or a decision of any kind and we were given one and that was an adoption. It was surrender. So it was not a choice.

There were a lot of ethics breaches with the entire situation and I’d like to get into that whole thing with the current understanding of ethics. There’s just a lot to address and I have a lot of writing to do.
Ethics, for sure. It was a major conflict of interest to have their attorneys draw up papers and then for many of us, myself included, we were never provided an attorney or even told to read the information nor asked if we understood it. We were merely given a piece of paper and told to sign it. Never given copies. So yeah that’s not fully informed consent and there were many breaches of legal protections. All breached. They know how to wield it. They know how to get what they want. I have the actual original pages of a magazine that was out in 1999 called, “Talk,” it is now defunct. I imagine it’s because the cover story was how blonde, blue-eyed baby girls were going for $250,000.

Oh my God. I’ve been fascinated with the influence of the Cold War on adoption. Because it seems like after 1945, it seems like parenting became a patriotic and religious duty.

Very much so. We had a social construct then that required you to have children. And if you didn’t, you were stigmatized. So many people adopted who should not have. And I don’t have a source for this, but it’s generally talked about and understood and known that one reason why there were so many people who were infertile and could not have their own children was because their husbands came back from war with STDs.

Oh wow.

Yeah. It was a whole perfect storm that came together for this window of time that we call the Baby Scoop Era, because there were criteria that only pertained to that period of time. And strongly eugenics was part of the situation. Strongly. Because Margaret Sanger was a famous eugenicist, and Hitler learned about eugenics and maternity homes from us. So this is why when you study the baby scoop era, you don’t hear about babies of color, or African American mothers being in maternity homes, it’s because their children were not wanted. They only wanted preferably the blonde children, but preferably, or only, white children. I’m not sure there’s an actual source that is devoted to that topic, but I know because I kept coming across quotes in all my reading that only discussed white adopters, and white babies. I don’t know if there’s anything that is devoted to the white issue, but it’s glaringly obvious.

What were some of the primary sources that you looked at for that? Do you mind sharing?

A chapter on that whole, let me see. It’s called “Ivory snow,” the name of my chapter. Lauren T. Young, in a paper called “Is Money Our Issue,” where she talked about breeding, and then you have, “since the demand was for white babies, the children’s bureau’s work was primarily with these babies. That source is I think her name was Margaret Thornhill. That was in a publication called, “Children.” I think you can get it from the Cornell university archives under adoptions. The name of the article is, “Unprotected Adoptions.” And then there’s one by Jim Reed, “Why You Can’t Adopt the Child You Want.” That was in a magazine called “Women’s Home Companion.” Where does he say, “It must be remembered that few if any of the children in our institutions who might be made available for adoption are the blue-eyed baby girls in so great demand. 95% of couples want a white infant.” And, let’s see here, I think even Clark Vincent mentioned “Censure of White Unwed Mothers is tempered when they represent the largest single source of adoptable infants. White couples in this country would not be too happy if a major
source of adoptable white infants was to disappear.” Okay that was in “The Unmarried Mother and Today’s Culture” by Clark Vincent. Let’s see. Then he has another reference to a demand for white, adoptable infants existing, that’s in his book, “Unmarried Mothers.” 61. Okay. Then we have a reference by Harold Ofoskty, and he was referencing white pregnant teenagers. Let’s see what else he said here. I’m trying to show the volume of references to it being a white issue. This is in his book “The Pregnant Teenager: A Medical, Educational, and Social Analysis.” 68. Those were the kind of comments. Every single book. Every source I have, they talk about white babies, white mothers, white adopters. And even the Florence Crittenton homes for a long time didn’t admit African American mothers. None of the maternity homes did. That was a very slow and late process for them to get to that point.

Wow.

They were rare.

It’s amazing in a terrible way.

Yes, it is, isn’t it. I think it’s one of the few remaining American scandals that hasn’t come to light.

But everyone kind of knows about it.

It affected so many people.

But it’s so shrouded in shame that no one really comes forward and talks about the systemic issues.

And we know why, it’s money. Because we’ve got, I call it the “David and Goliath syndrome.” You’ve got powerful people in legislature, and in law, and in every place, judges, lawyers, doctors, people with money and power are the ones who are adopting. So you’ve got them changing laws to suit their needs, and changing policy to make things easier for them and cheaper for them and faster for them, pushing us down. I even recently submitted a short article to a magazine online called “The Establishment” and they were talking about Margaret Atwood’s book.

The Handmaid’s Tale!

Yes! Anyway, one mother contacted me and said “Oh, they’re writing about The Handmaid’s Tale, why don’t you write an article?” I said “Yeah, I’ve been meaning to do that for a long time.” And I think I called it “The Other Offerings: A Different Kind of Handmaid’s Tale.” If we’re not careful, we’re going to evolve into that. Where people rent, and they are renting wombs. They’re going to start renting, you know, who knows how bizarre this could get. If it could get to the point of, of you know using fertile mothers in person for sex so that they get the babies that they want. It could get that bad. So it’s a very scary thing, and people don’t know that this is happening and they don’t know where it can go and they don’t realize where it’s been! And instead, the industry that’s so very powerful is issuing all this propaganda, for children, our taken children. That we made these choices. that we didn’t want to move forward with out lives
and raise our own kids. That adoption is this wonderful thing, and now they promote this open adoption choice, which is anything but! Because they close them after! These open adoptions aren’t even enforceable by the mother! They’re only enforceable by the adopter and they don’t tell the mother that. So frightening. It’s frightening the power that they have to steal the babies away from mothers and then by the time the mothers realize they’ve been duped, it’s too late. Way too late. And they changed the waiting period. We didn’t even know during the Baby Scoop Era that we had six months to change our minds and in some cases a year!

I know! That kills me because so many people had no idea! They were just harassed to come back and sign the papers days later.

We couldn’t even visit our babies in foster care. We had nowhere to go because nobody was helping us. I didn’t even know my baby went to foster care. I was told that my baby was going straight to her new home. Yet my baby was in foster care for four months. Even when I took her father to see her I was told that the woman who brought her in was her new mother. I wasn’t allowed to have any contact with that woman, only with my baby. But that was what I believed. So it was already a done deal. But they agreed to allow that, and I was surprised that they allowed that. So now, the industry, and the people who work in it, and the people who work in law and legislature make it so that you only have 12, 24, 48 hours, you can get your baby back. And what they’ve done, also, is plant potential adopters in foster care. Because now they use possession as the best interest of the child. And once they’ve got possession of that baby, the judge will rule against you as the mother or father of the child because they’ve had the baby. The baby knows its real parent, especially the mother. And the baby is so young that, given the proper way of transfer, it's not an issue. But they use that against the mother because she’s unprotected and she doesn't have the money for a lawyer, she doesn't have help, she doesn't have support. They always find a way. When they have money, they always find a way. Like Rickie Solinger says, if you don't have money you have no choice. You can't make a decision. It’s all taken away from you. You can't even have birth control. Money equals power, money equals choice. It’s that simple. All the way down the line. America is shameful now. How many times have you watched HG TV and they're screaming at people because they don't have marble in their kitchen? I mean COME ON! We’re sick! And adoption is a societal illness. I mean Joe Soll will tell you that. It’s a mass delusion. We activists talk about how many people drink the cool aid. It’s nothing but a cult! In order to show people the truth about adoption you almost have to de-program them. I mean that's how much our government and the industry and society brainwashes people to believe what they want them to believe. I don't talk to many people who will really listen to what I say when they are so delusional about adoption! They say, “Oh no! I know so many people who have adopted, it's a wonderful thing! They're saints! Such a loving thing!”

It seems like the only way someone can understand is if they’ve seen the other side of it, though.

Or they listen to you. There have been a few who have never been affected, who actually listened, and now they get it. And it’s amazing when I find those people. It really is. It’s amazing. Okay let’s put it this way. Which one of your children would you voluntarily donate for adoption? “Oh none!” Me neither! I mean if I have a broken leg, are you supposed to give me one of yours? No! So we say the eleventh commandment is “Thou Shalt Not Covet Thy Neighbor’s Child!” I mean you will hear that in the community discussed because those are the things we
use to try to get people to understand something that’s so hard to understand. It happened to me and it took me a while to de-program myself.

So many mothers even still cling to their religion and still believe that they somehow have done something wrong.

Oh, absolutely. It’s all that adoption mantra. It’s all that programming that they used when—I talk about this in my article, “Not by Choice,” how thought reform and persuasive coercion methods that were used during war were used on us. This pertains mostly to people in maternity homes, but it also occurred with many mothers who were sent away but counseled by social workers. You know. They take you away from your comfort, from your support, from everything familiar, so that you’re properly in a state of terror, and then they work on you every day and they feed you the same mantra. You know, “you’re unworthy. You’ve made a mistake that you need to correct.” And for Catholics, “You’ve sinned and you need to make it right. You need to make amends. You can’t possible raise THE baby.” Never YOUR baby. And that was intentional. Because they didn’t want you to mentally or emotionally view your growing stomach as your child. Or your daughter or your son. That was very important to them. And when you talk to mothers they’ll say, “Oh yeah, it was always ‘the baby.’” That was all intentional. They were trained in this. They had to have been, because it was so rampant and widespread, the things they said to us. You know, “Where are you going to go? Where are you going to live? You can’t provide for that baby and clothe that baby, and feed that baby. You can’t even rent a place to live, and if you take that baby home, your mother will end up raising that baby and you won’t even be the mother. You can’t get married because this will ruin your marriage. You have to go back and pretend this never happened. So they want to return you to your family home as if virginal. So you’re marriageable material. You’re never to tell anybody. You’re not to have any evidence, which is why it’s been SO hard for us to prove what they did. And this is why they lock up the original birth certificate, too. Because they don’t want you to have even that proof. And yet you were the legal mother of that child until that child was adopted. So that birth certificate should legally be yours. And it’s amazing to me the length to which they went. You know, if you went out, you had to go with another mother. Or another soon to be mother, pregnant, unwed, down the street to the store. You had to wear a fake wedding band. It was the same stuff everywhere, the same setup. Because they wanted to be able to manipulate you to do what they wanted you to do. The end game was to not let you leave with your baby. That is why they got so many mothers to sign release papers in the hospital, which is illegal, because you are under medication. When you’re emotionally distraught. All illegal. This was all illegal. And people say, “Well that’s the way it was done back then.” It was done that way but that doesn't make it right. Yes, they did that, but it was not legal. There were all these legal protections in place during the Baby Scoop Era. I asked about that because I worked with lawyers. It was all intentional. They knew what they were doing. And when they talk with each other about how they wished they had more baby breeders, that clinches it.

That is awful.

So it was a crime of massive proportions. It needs to be exposed. And they’ve done that in Australia. Which is our sister organization, Origins Australia, the first. And then Origins USA I created but I resigned from them and it’s really pretty much defunct now. But now we have Origins
America, Origins Scotland, and Origins Canada. So a united front always helps. This is how we got the attention of Dan Rather to do that program, because the producer was in Australia when the national apology occurred. We need a lot more of that. What’s the next question!

I do have a set of interview questions. I have ethics clearance to interview people who had been in Catholic homes.

I was in a home that was not Catholic, but who worked with a Catholic agency. Those social workers that come in to see you are the ones that arrange the adoptions. So it wouldn’t matter if you were in a Catholic or a Protestant home if you had a Catholic agency. They would hide you, and that was the main purpose of the maternity homes. But the social workers that worked with you were the ones that arranged the adoption. If you couldn’t get into a Catholic home and you had to be put into a Protestant home, it didn’t matter, because the social workers still worked with you. They handled the adoption. They handled the baby, they handled you. This was the baby boom! They didn’t have enough places to put Catholic girls. So many Catholic girls went to Protestant homes. They were associated with Catholic charities. There were girls in the home and there were many different agencies in there. They had Methodist agencies, they had Jewish agencies, they had Lutheran agencies. But Catholic agencies, they were the worst by far as far as coercion goes. But probably they had the most adoptions volume-wise. But every home had different agencies involved. They didn't have just one agency. If they had a bed, and they didn’t have a Catholic girl, they were going to fill it. They needed that money to continue to operate. They weren’t going to leave that bed empty.

Did those Catholic agency workers come in regularly and talk to you?

Yes! More than once a week. Probably twice a week. If not more often. It depended on the girl. It depended on a lot of things. Nothing was ever written in stone. Like, you know, if a girl’s mother said “She’s not cooperating you need to talk to her.” She would go there more often. This was not a “set-in-stone” situation. Every mother who went to any home had a different experience. Some gave birth in the hospital and left directly from the hospital, some gave birth and went back to the home, some gave birth and came back to the home for a day, some for ten days. It was far different. But for them to say that it only pertained to mothers who were in a Catholic home, would be to rule out mothers who had the same experience, they just lived a different home.

Okay.

That’s how I think any mother you will talk to will tell you the same thing. Even if they were in a nondenominational home or an apartment, but worked with Catholic social workers, they’re going to have the same experience that we did in the home.

Okay then that changes everything. Is it okay if I go ahead and keep asking you these questions?

Sure!
Who were all the different professionals who you were in contact with during and before and after you were in the home?

Just the social workers. They didn’t want many people involved outside of them. Um, In the home I was only allowed to see my parents. They had a list of people who were allowed to see you. It was made up by the parents. But, um, I think that only pertained to family members. Because almost every father of the baby was barred.

Okay.

And friends were barred because they didn’t want you to be talked out of the path you were taking so they tried to limit contact with the outside world. Many homes started out not letting you go anywhere or see anybody. But then they gradually started loosening those rules and saying, “Okay, you can see your parents and your older brother. But you can’t see your younger siblings. And no fathers of the baby or boyfriends, and none of your friends can come.” That’s the way it was when I was there in ’66. As far as letters go, you could write letters, but there was an approved list, and they were always censored, whether they went out or they came in. They were read and censored. Some of these letters had to be sent to other cities because the story was that I went to stay with my aunt in St. Louis, I was in DC, let’s say. So you could write a letter to somebody, and it would have to go through St. Louis to be postmarked, and then it would be taken out of the envelope and mailed from there. Can you believe the elaborate messes they went through? It’s amazing, really. They’re very restricted also on what kind of food you could have in the home because they wanted you to be sent back as if it never happened. I fit back into my villager dress that I wore to school the day I left.

So they didn’t even let you eat comfortably and eat properly for your pregnancy.

No. You could only eat the food they gave you and you couldn’t bring anything in. Yeah.

Wow.

As a matter of fact, some of these mothers claim that they had experiments done on them. Like my friend Polly— I’m not saying this sounds really bizarre, it wasn’t like shots or anything, but my friend Polly was asked to use a certain lotion that they provided, and they didn’t know why, but they instructed her how to use it and they said you need to use this every day. It was weird. She said “I don’t know what that was. What that was about.”

That is really weird. When you were in the home, what were the specific ideas and thoughts that were emphasized to you repeatedly by Catholic professionals?

Well, of course it was a given that your child would go to a Catholic family.

Yeah.

So you didn’t get any say in that. Um, the same mantra that pretty much everybody gave you was that you had sinned, and you had to give up this baby to make it right. Um, trying to remember
anything different than what I’ve already told you. What’s amazing to me is that you’re taught your whole life, if you’re Catholic, never to lie, it’s a sin. And they taught us how to lie. How amazing is that? They encouraged lies. But basically they emphasized our sinning, and having to give the baby to a Catholic family, they have more than you do, it has to be raised in the faith, um. You’ve sinned, you’ve got to go back to life like you never had a baby, you can’t tell anybody, you’re not worthy, you’re not smart enough to raise your own child, the things they told every mother everywhere. They used the same pattern of convincing you that you could not parent your own child. It came down to economics, it came down to how you’d sinned, and no Catholic girl ever commits that type of sin and your baby will be tainted forever, and your baby’s not going to be accepted if something happens to your baby, it was a lot. So we [Interviewee and her daughter] had three baptisms. The first one’s the only one that counts. I baptized her, then the social worker baptized her, and then the people who adopted her baptized her.

That’s a lot of baptizing.

It’s a lot of baptizing. They tell you you’re neurotic, that this wouldn't have happened, you made a mistake, you've got to correct it, you're damaged. They used all kinds of adjectives to describe us. I have them all in one chapter. I call them “sticks and stones. “They just couldn’t have enough negative adjectives to describe who we were. Damaged, defective, everything you can think of, they used. Anything you could think of they called us. Made me feel lower than dirt.

So they definitely never informed you of your option to keep the baby.

Oh no. No, nobody ever did. Nobody in the home ever did. The other girls didn’t know. We weren’t even allowed to talk to the other girls! They said, you can talk about the baby, you can talk about your pregnancy and how you’re feeling. But we didn’t even get any education about pregnancy. Nothing about labour or delivery. They wanted us to be really terrified so we wouldn’t be repeaters, so we went by first name last initial, and that was true of any maternity home at that time. If someone had the same first name and initial as you when you came in, you had to assume a fake name.

Okay.

And you couldn’t talk to them about who you were, where you lived, anything personal about yourself.

So you were discouraged from making any kind of significant relationships.

Absolutely. No. You were not allowed to have contact with anyone outside. You weren’t allowed to have a camera. I am probably one of very few mothers who has a picture of my newborn, because when I was released, a girl came up to me and said, “do you want to take pictures?” And she smuggled the camera in it was illegal to have a camera in there. I even stole the card off of my baby’s bassinet. You weren’t even allowed to have that. That’s about the only thing I have except that I wrote for my medical records. They made sure that your movement, your mobility was very limited, your visitors were very limited, your information was beyond very limited. Because this is their way of controlling you. This is their way of ensuring that no
matter how much you wanted that baby, you were not going to keep it. “You can’t care for it. You’re too young, you’re too this, you’re too that. You’re too damaged, you have no money, you can’t get a job.” We could have gotten a job. Totally. And we could have taken our babies. But they didn’t tell us that. They didn’t say, “Go get a job, we’ll keep your baby until you’re ready.” Unlike the Florence Crittentons with Kate Waller Barrett. I mean, those were probably the first daycare centers. That’s where they had young women there called the sisters, who would come visit you if you left your baby and they’d bring you food and money. They made sure you had a job. They placed you in a job like housekeeping so you could live with a family with your baby. Did you know that even the first foster homes were for mothers and babies?

No, I didn’t know that.

And then they went “Oh, no! This isn’t going to work. We have too much of a demand for that baby. We can’t help them and support them in a home where they can keep that baby because we need that baby. Then it evolved into foster homes only for babies. I’ve got a whole chapter devoted to them talking about these foster homes for mothers and babies. I mean, wow, there’s another mind blowing discovery. They used to have to have these foster homes for mom and baby, not just for baby, wow, this is amazing. How many times have I come across situations like that. That could have pertained to me and I could have kept my kid, you know?

When, did you have any other types of conversations with catholic workers? Were they nice to you? Did you have friendships?

The woman who handled the adoption of my baby worked up until a couple of years ago and her name was Patricia Mudd. And her name was Mud to me. When I lived in Springfield Virginia, I lived within probably three miles of that agency. And I can’t tell you how many times I told my husband, if I walked in through those doors there would be blood shed. So I did not— purposely did not— have any contact. The only contact that I had was before I found by daughter, I contacted that office and I did not speak to Patricia Mudd. She was kind of high in the echelon, and I told them, I want to leave a letter in my file, so that if my daughter approaches you, you will tell her I’m looking of her and that I very much welcome contact. And they said, “Okay, write the letter, send it to us. They charged me like $50 to pull my file, and they placed it in there, and they said, “If your daughter shows up, we will tell her.” Well don’t you know that she showed up within five months of that? They told her no activity. When she found out that I had placed that letter in there, she was livid. Livid. Because I’m sure they charged her money for her non-identifying information. Then I called the Richmond City because I was told that they held all the archives, and I wanted to retrieve my files. They said, “We can’t give you a copy of anything in your file but we can give you a summary.

Oh.

It’s amazing. Here I am, their client, that they made money off of, but they won’t give me copies of anything in my file. I said “I’m not asking for anything about who adopted her. Only about her and me.” “No, we have to give you a summary. And not only did you have to get a summary, but you have to get a notarized approval in writing from your daughter. Before we will release it to you.” She was sick. I don’t know if she ever sent it in or not. If she did and she got copies, she
never told me. I never received anything. Then I also wrote a letter to the Catholic Bishop. I pleaded with him to please allow me copies because I had found my daughter and I’m trying to make resolution emotionally and spiritually with my whole past and so it was really crucial to me that I have it. And do you know what he said? “I’ll pray for you.”

Wow. What a dismissal.

“I’ll pray for you.” I wrote back and said, “How spiritual. How loving of you, that would pray for me and that’s the best you can do for my suffering.” I couldn’t believe it. But then again, I haven’t been able to believe any of this. And then, I actually went to the little chapel down the street where I had her baptized, and my mom came, and my aunt, my mom’s younger sister. It’s about a block away from the home. Called Our Lady of Victory. And I went in there and I said, I would like a copy of the baptism of my daughter, and they said, “Do you have proof that you have found your daughter?” And I said, “yes.” So they sent me a copy of the baptism, and on there for father it says, “Pater ignotus” which means father unknown. And yet, everyone knew who the father was. It’s even on her medical records, “father of baby is twin.” They knew his name, they knew his brother, they knew his family, everybody knew. Everybody at the home, all the social workers, everybody knew. Can you believe that? Slut shaming. What a shaming by the church to do that. They knew. So the Catholics were very much involved in my experience.

So you didn’t eventually get a hold of your paperwork.

No! I didn’t get anything! I tried to get a copy of the summary, but when my daughter died I kind of dropped everything and I haven’t gotten back to that.

Yeah.

Because I’ve had so much happening in my life since then. They won’t give me anything. Even though they know I’ve reunited with my daughter they won’t give me anything. No. What’s the point of that? It’s because there are lies in there, there are things in there they don’t want us to know. We’ve already confirmed that from two people who have gotten their files back and dates were changed, names were changed. Events were changed. Everything. There are so many things in there that aren’t true. So they’re hoping that we all die. They just want us to die so that all the truth goes with us.

That’s horrific.

Ann Fessler said the same thing. They just want us to die. But they can’t do anything about me because my oral history is stored at Harvard. So anybody who wants to research can go there and listen to all of that.

A lot of brave people are coming forward and sharing their stories in public ways like that that can at least be accessed.

Yeah but we want validation. We want accountability of what they did. Because there are still so many mothers who are dying, and many of them through suicide. There was a mother recently, I
think it was in America, but it was an open adoption situation. So many mothers are dying and if you don’t leave behind a note, or even if you do, who’s keeping track of those stats? This is killing people. Infant adoption is killing people. Adoptees are killing themselves! Mental health facilities are full of people who were adopted and mothers trying to get help. Our jails and prisons are full of them. Frightening! The industry doesn’t want people to know.

I was going to ask about your birth and delivery experience but we can wait for another time if you don’t have a lot of time!
Interview 6: 1972, Bethesda Maryland

What year were you in a home?

1972.

Okay. And I imagine you probably did not want to go there. How did you end up in the home? Did you feel coerced?

There were no options. My mother was trying to hide me so she went through Catholic Charities. And what Catholic Charities was doing, which you know from talking to Karen, they um, they were putting pregnant girls into Catholic homes to basically be the um, well, babysitter and um housecleaner and all that kind of stuff. It was a way to hide their pregnancy until it was over. I was there from July 5th, 1972 through October 30th.

What city were you in?

I was in Bethesda, Maryland.

Who were some of the different professionals that you were in contact with during your pregnancy and during and after you were admitted into your home?

Only Catholic Charities.

Okay. So did they have social workers?

Yes, yes they did. And I had to go to the house to meet the owner so she could decide, because she had never taken anyone as young as me. So she wanted to meet me so I went there with the Catholic Charities social worker and my mother to meet her, and I didn’t get any counseling at all. Anyway, she accepted me to come. And they waited until I really started showing, which was July 5th. What they did do, was that they recommended that they take us to a place called Birthright. When I got there, I was told I was pregnant, because I didn’t know the results of the test yet, my mother didn’t tell me. But I was having morning sickness, so she kind of suspected something so, anyway, I was told—not asked what I wanted—told, that my baby was eight weeks old, and so he had all his fingers and toes, I was told that I was going to have him and give him up for adoption.

So they never told you about any other options.

No, never spoke of it.

These were Catholic workers and social workers and nuns, and your parents?

I don’t know if they were nuns. The one I had, her name was Ms. Johnson. She dressed normal. They have no record of her, which I find suspicious.
When you were in the home were there any ideas or thoughts that were emphasized to you repeatedly by professionals?

Yes. Once a week, the councilor Ms. Johnson would come just so basically see how I was doing and also to keep reinforcing this wonderful family, or couple, that was waiting for my child and how great they were, and then I was told that if my child turned out to be a girl they didn’t want her. They had another family lined up. And they would tell me things like they were in their thirties, they both worked for the government, and um, by the way I found out that all this wasn’t true, they were in their twenties. That’s what I was told. I was never offered an option, ever. In fact, I would not find any papers. I wanted to visit with my son, and I did it twice. And the second time, his father came, too. And the worker, her name was Ms. Hartnett, she was like, she was a big woman, very tall, she was intimidating. She said, “do you want to keep your son?”

And I said “Oh yeah, more than anything, but I would be selfish if I did, because I’m so young, and you’ve all been telling me that he would have a better life with somebody else, and then she said, “Sign the papers.” She stood up and asked that question. I think she legally had to ask that question, but that’s how it was asked. You sign the papers and they told you you had two weeks to change your mind. I found out that that wasn’t true. In the state of Virginia, you have six months from when the petition is filed by the couple that wants to adopt your child, to get the child back if the adoption was done under any coercion, which mine was. It turned out, I found a copy of his petition which wasn’t done until February, (he was born in October), so then it was six months until then, so I almost had a year to get him back. And his father and I, we wanted to get married. He said, “let’s just get married and have another baby right away.” Because I was so depressed. If we had known we could get him back, we would have just gotten married and done that. But they were scared because they knew that. They made him pay for everything. They had my mother tell him that if he didn’t pay all the hospital bills and whatever else what charged, that he would get arrested for statutory rape. Because he was 19 and I was 16. So they kind of blackmailed him, so here’s this poor kid working three jobs trying to pay them and of course it was THEIR hospital that I had to go to, Holy Cross.

So it was very intimidating and very coercive the whole time.

Oh yeah, absolutely. I was told what I was going to do. I was never given an option. Never. Never even told I had one. My mother said, she came to visit once and we were at the mall, the Bethesda mall, and I remember she said, “Have you thought about wanting to keep the baby?” And I said, “Oh God!” I got all excited and I said, “I would love to! But you told me that if I brought him home, that dad would kill him.” Because my dad was an alcoholic and he didn't know about it. My mother and my aunt kept telling me that if I brought him home, that my father would kill both of us. Which he wouldn’t have. But it scared me enough that I wanted to protect him. So I thought I was saving his life. So that’s how it was all said and done.

So the family support wasn’t really there.

No there was none. He was very involved in it. They were majorly Catholic. Catholic charities ran the show. Now their attitude is, “We thought it was better for you and John both.” My aunt even said that. So I knew she had a big role in the decision. My mother felt guilty and would go to Catholic Charities after my son was eighteen and they said that they would give him a letter
from me, but they weren't telling her, was that they would block out any way he would communicate with me. They wouldn’t allow it. That’s what they do. They tell you that when your child turns eighteen they can find you by calling Catholic Charities. Not true.

When you were in the home did you make friendships with other girls? Were you encouraged to have relationships?

I wasn’t in one of those homes like St. Anne’s. I was in a Catholic house with a family of five kids and two adults. And I was their full time nanny, and I did what they called “light cleaning” and ironing. Basically what you are is, well a “slave” is a bit of a hash thing to say but you’re an in-house worker. You help them with everything. I was kind of smart for sixteen and I asked the lady if she was writing me off for taxes as a deduction, because I’d filed. I’d had jobs since I was fourteen and a half. Her eyes got as big as saucers, and she said, “Yes, I do.” And I said, “then I want a tutor.” Because I knew that if she was doing that, then I would be able to get a free tutor. And if I was back to school in November, then I would be caught up. And um, I don’t think anyone ever did that. She was kind of shocked about it. It turns out, social services told me, when I was actively looking for my son, when I finally found the searcher, that they got in a lot of trouble for that, and evidently, what was happening was that these people were paying Catholic Charities a donation for these girls to come in and to get these servants, which was of course way cheaper than a nanny or any of that. And they paid me ten dollars a week. And that’s what was done. So I basically took care of a house of seven people. They had a little half bath, I was allowed to take a shower once a day upstairs in the master bathroom. That’s how that was arranged. And a tiny bedroom.

When were you allowed to go out?

Um, I didn’t. They would take me to, because they wanted the kids to go swimming, they would take me with them and I would watch the kids while they would go swimming. I got one day off a week, which was Wednesday. Usually, my mother would come with a friend of hers or by herself, to visit, and they would take me out to lunch or something. But um, they didn’t have real restrictions on that.

Did you regularly see any Catholic workers?

The one, Ms. Johnson, came once a week. And the one, I think what it was, was they became my guardians, but I don’t know if they listed me as a foster child or not. I’ve been trying to find that out. But they came once per week and so I’m wondering if they had to do that by law. If I was, in fact, listed in foster care. I don’t know. But she would come for an hour and sit down and make sure that everything was okay in the house and then ask me, or tell me about the family, the people they had lined up. And that there was a nine-year-waiting list. But I found out from two friends that went in the same year to adopt and they were told that because they weren’t Catholic. But the Catholics got them in less than a year.

Okay. Were you required to participate in any religious activities when you were in that home?

No. I had to go to mass. They took me to mass.
Did you ever try to get your paperwork?

They didn’t offer me any copies of it. I was sixteen and a half when my son was born. And I didn’t know that I could. I had my hospital records because I got those twelve years ago. I told them that I was about to have a hysterectomy and I had no other kids and my doctor wanted to see them. So they went into their archives and sent them to me, and sent me $25. But that’s how I got them. Otherwise, no. I got nothing.

What was your birth and delivery experience like?

Absolutely horrible. They didn’t prepare me for anything. They didn't even tell me that labor was painful. I just thought, I thought you go in and pop out the kid and come home. I was so naive. And um, when the pain started and it got really bad, I really started screaming so they put me in like this crib and they were really nasty to me and the doctor kept checking my cervix and I got so mad I took his arm and I shoved it and he went across the room and hit his head against the wall and I thought he was going to kill me. He was so mad. And then they put a mask over my head, my face, when I guess I had dilated, and I thought they were trying to kill me and I kept trying to push it away. So they put me to sleep and I woke up in a hallway and no baby. Then some doctor came by and checked on me. I was in a room, it was interesting because, this um, pastor, I don’t know if he was a Baptist or a Presbyterian, but his wife was my roommate. And they were only in the Catholic hospital because they didn’t have time, she went into labour and they had to get her to the closest one, that’s why they were there. So I wanted to see my son. They brought him to me. There were a couple of really nice nurses and there were a couple of really nasty ones. So I got to see him in the hospital and I had visitors. My mother came twice, and my aunt, and a couple of other people, to visit me. So because of that, they were too scared to say “no you can’t see your child,” like they did to some people.

Okay.

Oh, it was horrible. I was scared to death. I thought they were trying to kill me. Can you imagine not even telling somebody it’s going to be painful, and this is what we’re going to do, but. I don’t know if you’ve had a baby yet but labor is incredibly horrible. It’s so painful you can’t fathom. And they were shooting me up with Demerol, I found in my records, which is very bad, by the way. It’s um, yeah. So I was still, I was drunk, in a way. And I was screaming and it was awful. And they gave me an enema, and put me back in the crib. And after I had the baby, the next morning, a nurse came in and said, “if you don’t get out of the bed and pee on your own I’m going to put a catheter inside of you.” So I was like, “okay,” and went to the bathroom. I was, I just knew it was bad because she was mean. So back then we stayed in the hospital for three days, two nights. But it was absolutely horrible.

I can only imagine.

They did that to all of us, thought. I’m in touch with a ton of mothers over the past few years. On one of our forums I’m the mediator. My experience of them not giving the moms any kind of education as to what birth would be like, I was not alone.
It seems to be an overarching theme with people I’ve spoken with, and it’s really unfortunate. Did you have regular medical checks while you were pregnant?

Yeah. Mother took me to her doctor.

That’s good.

Yeah. Which my son’s father had to pay for.

Oh.

Yeah, he had to pay for everything. I said to them, “look, I’ve been Catholic my whole life, and you guys call yourself Catholic Charities but Catholics don’t do things for free. So who’s getting paid for this?” And she goes, “Well, the people that adopt give us a donation.” But a friend of mine had, he’s unfortunately died, I wish I’d gotten it before he died, um, a couple years ago, he was a professional searcher. He found my— he helped me find my son and we became best friends. He had a price list. The Bishops sends a price list. And based on the race of the child is how they would charge.

Wow. This is in Maryland?

I don’t remember which state. But he had that. I’m so mad I didn’t get him to send that to me, but I wasn’t expecting him to die. And once I found out he had cancer the last thing I wanted to do was say, “I want this and this and this.” I couldn’t do it.

Oh, of course. I’m going to have to go to some archives to find those things.

Yeah, that will be hard to find. The bishops send it to their office. Mine would have been Arlington, in Maryland. And at that time the one he had, I don’t even remember what year it was. But white babies were $30,000, and black babies were $1,000. It was that much difference. So the donations are not what you can afford. They’re pretty set. And a friend of mine told me years ago that his friend bought a child from Catholic Charities and paid $100,000 for him.

Wow.

And this was probably six or seven years ago.

Wow, that’s really not long ago at all. That’s in 2010.

Yeah, it was about then. Yup! Yup.

So it’s still ongoing.

As far as I know. This was in New Jersey. That was the state. And they um, they have laws there in place, they told this couple that the mother had a certain amount of time to get the child back,
and they would um, since they paid their $100,000 they would have to wait for another child that was available.

Okay. Well that is all my questions unless you have other things that you think are important that you would like to share.

No. That’s what you need, if there’s anything else that you need, call me.
Interview 7: 1964, St. Paul, Minnesota

Hello?

Hi there!

So tell me a little bit about what you’re doing.

Okay! My name is Lizzie, I study Religious Diversity in North America, and that is through Wilfrid Laurier University, a Canadian university. My thesis is on maternity homes, and Catholic agencies that had to do with adoptions. Even though they claimed to be a charity service and the church gained a lot of power, and Catholic women gained a lot of power in the church through it, and so I saw that they benefitted a lot but I didn’t think that the mothers benefitted a lot. I do kind of understand adoption from an insider’s perspective in a way because although I’m not adopted, and I’m not a mother, I had an older brother and I lost him through adoption. He came back and found us later. He was ten years older than me. He’s no longer living, unfortunately, and I think even his death was in part, it was part of, it was partially affected by the adoption practice. So I guess this project is my way of trying to understand his life and death but also my mother and what she went through as a natural mother, and the whole, larger scene socially at the time. So I am trying to collect stories from other mothers who have been through the same experiences in order to even out the story about it. A lot of the writing that exists has been done by people who worked in the homes and who viewed it as a good thing when really, the people who the homes were supposed to be all about, many of them had really terrible experiences.

Exactly. Mhm. Well, I’m not an exception there.

I’m sorry to hear that.

Yeah, well.

May I ask what year and where you were in a home?

Ash, yes. It was 1964 and it was in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Okay. And Nancy, did you feel like you were coerced into the home or like you had no other options?

Yes.

And did you know what you were really getting into or did you have no idea?

No. Oh, heavens, no. How could I know? When I got pregnant I was sixteen but then when I went into the home I was seventeen.
If you entered because you felt like it was your only option, please tell me what that was like. What was going on around you? And in your head, in your heart, how your family responded, and if they knew at all?

Well my sister was just graduating with her social work degree from St. Theresa’s College in the same town where we were. And so a lot of it had to do with her social work learning so she knew all the answers.

You’re saying that in a sarcastic way.

Yes. Um, the answers that she knew were the answers from the textbook as to how it was supposed to be.

Right.

And she was doing her internship at Catholic Charities in Winona. So they got me all lined up and I was never given any options as far as what could be done. It was just like, “This is what you’re gonna do, and that’s that.”

And what were some of the specific things that your sister and social work generally believed about you and your situation and what should have been?

Well, they just believed that, you know, I should go away, and have the baby, and do an adoption, and then come back and just pretend that nothing had happened. And that life would go on and I would regain what I had before and of course that didn’t happen. It never did. I still am in that situation of feeling like an outlier.

Who were some of the different professionals with whom you were in contact during your pregnancy and before and after you were admitted into the home?

Well, it was basically the social worker, the director of social work in um, Winona. Winona, Minnesota. So St. Paul is about, oh, 120 miles from Winona from where I lived.

Yeah.

Mhm. So it was basically her and my sister and my mother. I never really did talk to my father about it.

Okay. Were there nuns in the home?

Yes.

And were there social workers in the home, as well?

Well, no, my social worker would come up from Winona and browbeat me.
Did you express desire to keep your child?

Well, yes, in a way, but she thought I was just being sarcastic and said she wouldn’t work with me anymore if that was going to be my attitude.

Oh, my goodness. But you were serious?

Well, yeah! You know I would just say things as I saw them because you know even thought I was young I still had common sense in my head like, “Well this isn’t ever going to work.” I don’t know why they thought it would, I guess because they wanted it to. But, of course, as we know now, it was an experiment and it’s gone bad, and I guess I look at it and think that my life should not have been part of an experiment. My life should have been given all the worthiness of, all the respect, and honor, and, you know, but I guess I was looked at as less than “okay.” I guess, what was the term, I was, not paranoid, what was it. (neurotic)

Did they call you feebleminded?

That was a professional term. it meant kind of the same thing. I think about it all the time.

When you were in the home were there any ideas or thoughts that were emphasized to you repeatedly by Catholic professionals or the nuns?

Oh yeah. Over and over how unworthy I was, and how I didn’t have anything to offer, and that anybody would do a better job than I could, quote on quote.

Did they use any religious terms?

Yes, as far as redemption is concerned, yes.

So they told you that you could receive redemption through surrendering your child to a couple?

That would make them happy because I would be giving them a gift and I would be honoring myself by— this would be— I don’t know. I get upset when I think about it.

You don’t have to think about it! We can stop this question and move on.

You know what I mean?

Yes. Any question, please feel free to skip if it makes you upset or you don’t want to think about it.

Oh, I don’t want to. I don’t really want to. Maybe a little bit at a time would be a good idea. But they stripped me. When I entered they stripped me. And by that I mean when I went in they took away my clothes, they took away my name, my identity, they took away my money, um. You know? And just put me in a dormitory and expected me to feel like I was okay.
They made you go by a fake name?

Yes.

Wow.

Mhm, yeah. And the home was in a ghetto area and I had never seen a ghetto before. And I remember driving through there and feeling scared, because I had never seen anything like that in my life. That was real difficult, and now I think back, how the heck could my mom and dad ever drop me off there. You know? It was, I felt like, and it’s true, the people that I trusted were betraying me by treating me like that, I guess. You know it didn’t make sense to me. It really did not make sense to me.

Of course, if you expect people to stand by you and your rights.

I was stripped of any rights, too. Those were also taken away from me. Any rights that I had.

I’m so sorry.

Mhm. It’s a hard thing.

So they definitely— people in the home, Catholic workers, social workers— they definitely did not inform you of your option to keep the baby at all.

Absolutely not, no. That was never an option. It was always, um, all the reasons why I can’t. Because I can’t do this, and I can’t do that, and I have to live my teenage years, little did they know I never went back to being a teenager. How was that possible. That’s why I felt like an outlier.

I’m so sorry.

Well, I still do. That part’s never changed.

A lot of people, every person I’ve spoken to, and my mother, don’t— there’s a part that’s always wrong.

That’s right.

Did you make friendships with the other girls in the home at all?

Well, a couple, yeah.

Were you discouraged from talking to them outside the home?

Outside of the home?

Yeah. Did the nuns tell you, “don’t be friends afterwards?”
Oh yes. The reason that we had a fake name was that if we saw that person walking down the street and we walked up to them and said, “Oh, are you Lisa?” And they’d say, “No, my name’s Linda.”

Okay.

Because we have to keep the secret. It has to be a secret. And I know now why it was a secret. Because they didn’t want us—it was easier for them. And they could continue the charade. That’s what it was, was a charade.

Did you have conversations with Catholic workers or your social worker regularly in the home?

Well, yeah, you get browbeaten every now and then.

Oh, what do you mean by that?

Well, you know the workers there who were all nuns, I don’t remember anyone there who wasn’t a nun, they were old and decrepit and just following their orders. They would holler at you, and you know, try to contain, or try to put you in your place. So you would know that you were beneath them somewhere. And we’d have to attend meetings where they would tell us that we shouldn’t be on birth control and we shouldn’t do this or that, which never really made sense to me and I thought, “why not?”

Of course.

No, because they looked at children as commodities.

Were you encouraged, or forced to do any particular religious activities when you were in the home?

Oh yes.

What were those like?

Well there was a chapel and we had to go to mass, and if there was any kind of adoration of any kind we had to do that.

Okay. were there any saints that you prayed to particularly, or anything like that?

No.

Okay. And were you Catholic before you went to the home?

Yes.
May I ask about your birth and delivery experience?

Yes, sure.

What was that like?

It was awful. And the reason is that you felt like a cattle call when you went for your exams. You were all lined up and it was never explained to you. There was nothing to really prepare you for delivery. The only thing you knew was what other girls had told you, what had happened to girls in the past. But there was never any preparation of that sort. I remember the day that I went to the hospital my mom and my dad came to visit me and my mom said, you know, “Well, you’ll be coming home, soon. And when you do, just dad is going to come and pick you up.” Which was strange to me because I thought, “why just dad? You always both come.” And she said something like, “oh, I have to work,” or something. And I just kind of left it at that and thought, “Well, that’s peculiar.”

Yeah.

But, you know, what do you do. So then that night, I go into labour and I was shipped away in a taxi by myself, to the hospital in downtown St. Paul, and I was in the hospital and did everything by myself, went into a labour room by myself, but was never ever given any coaching, or any—I was left alone, all alone, like “try to figure this out by yourself” even though I was only seventeen. So that’s what I did, even though I could hear other women howling, and I thought, “There’s no way I’m gonna do that. I’m not going to do that” I was a stubborn little thing. So I didn’t, and then the delivery time came, and they strapped me down, and I looked at her, and I saw her look at me looking at her kind of like “what the heck are you doing that for.” So she said, “Oh, this is for your own safety.”

But that’s scary.

Scary, yeah. Well now I know.

How did you feel?

I felt like a criminal, and I wondered why. Well, I was called an inmate. I’ve looked at written documents from the past at this particular home, which was called the Catholic Infants’ Home, I think, and the women, they called them, “inmates.” So, um, I didn’t know that at the time, but I know that now. I know a lot more now than I did before because I really researched it. Anyway. So then, after the delivery, the baby was put in a corner. Never showed to me, or anything. And I remember trying to sit up to see her in that corner, and they just kind of huddled around her, and of course I really couldn’t do anything because I was shackled down. They just whisked her away and that was that. And then I couldn’t have any visitors.

Oh! So your family didn’t come?
To the hospital? No. They couldn’t. Not even my sister who was a social worker. They wouldn’t allow that. And nobody talked to me during that time that I was in labour, no one said anything. I did that whole thing by myself. Now how are you supposed to go back and be a teenager after that?

What were the rest of your teen years like?

Well, let’s get through this first.

Were you ever successful in getting your paperwork? Was it freely given or did you have to fight?

I had to pay for it.

When did they have you sign papers?

Oh, I’m not done yet with this part!

Oh, please!

Okay. So then, I took a taxi back to the home, and I did get to hold my little baby girl between the taxi ride and the home. And then I of course had to hand her to a nun and I’ll never forget that day. My arms still ache. From my arm down to my fingers, my arms. You know when people ask you, “well where is this affecting you?” And I’m sure that’s what it’s from. So there was a certain time during the day where I could see her through a window. And that was at the home. So then, um, after that, when it was time to go home, my mom and dad came, and I said to my mom, “I thought you weren’t going to come?” And she said, “Oh, I changed my mind” So she came, and my mom and dad both saw the baby, and my boyfriend saw the baby. So he came earlier in the morning and my mom and dad came in the afternoon. And that’s one of the things that haunts me, is, when Skip and I, after we saw the baby together, and he took my hand and we walked away from her. And that is one memory that is just embedded in my mind. I just, I think about that and it’s just so painful.

Oh, Nancy, that is really really hard. That is probably the hardest moment of your life.

Yeah.

Did you ever reunite with her?

Yes. She just sent me a text. We’ll leave that for another time.

Sure.

Yeah. We’ll just get to the, um, maybe this is a good place to end for today, because I have tears coming out of my eyes.
Oh, of course! I’m so sorry, I don’t want to leave you like that.

Oh, no, it’s alright. I cry every day.

Are you doing anything today that makes you feel good?

I’m working on this project for my son. I won’t get into that. I don’t want you to feel bad about it, it’s just the reality of it. This is not unusual. People who’ve had injustices done to them, like internment camps, or various things in our country, they receive an apology but it’s still not okay for me to talk about this and I just don’t understand why. Because now I know about the involvement of the government, and the involvement of the Catholic Church, and I think to myself, pretty soon we’re going to be all dead and then they can wash their hands. That’s a terrible thought.

I hope not. There are a lot of people writing about this and bringing these voices up into the conversation.

It’s a social thing. I don’t know what can be done to change their mind, because people my age, who would be my peers, they don't accept that. They follow the old stereotype. There are people your age, though.

There are. And we usually don’t attach so much stigma to unmarried pregnancy. A lot of times, people keep their babies.

Most times they do.

Right! And there are still some adoptions, and they’re not done in quite the same way that they were. I don’t know as much about adoption today.

(Second call)

Did you want me to go on with questions?

Sure, I did remember two other things, though, to tell you.

Oh sure! Go ahead!

One is, remember what I was trying to tell you, the word as to what I was, and I said it’s a word they don’t use anymore?

Yes.

It’s neurotic.

Oh, okay. That was a big one.
Mhm, I’m neurotic. And then I didn’t tell you about working in the laundry.

Oh yes, please do.

They had us work in a laundry in 100-degree weather, and then all of a sudden in the middle of the summer, it stopped, and we didn’t have to do it anymore. I think somebody complained or something. We were never told that. And it was hot, and it took three to four hours or so it seemed, to fold baby clothes.

You were doing that every day?

No, that was like once a week. But every day we had chores to do. It was regimented. You know, at this time, a bell woke you up, and then you and to do this, and then this. And that’s how you did your chores. People did everything from cleaning toilets to, I don’t know, dusting, to taking care of different rooms, mine was to take care of the teaching and supposed craft room, but we never had any crafts. Well, that’s not true. We could learn how to make rosaries.

Make rosaries.

Mhm. That was it. So I remember my first day there there was a nun that took care of that and overseeing each craft, and she was really mean and crabby to me. I just kind of looked at her and laughed. She was okay to me from then on out, but I suppose she thought, “I’m gonna show her who’s the boss here” but she didn’t scare me.

It’s awful that you had to be treated that way.

It is. But I thought those were two things that I remembered that might be beneficial to you. So, yeah, it was not a fun time. It was humiliating and the treatment was less than humane.

Are there any other standout things that I didn’t ask about?

Well you had to go to bed at a certain time whether or not you were tired, and then you had to get up when they told you to get up. Everything was done as it was said to be done. And there were different little lectures. Little mini ones. Little subliminal messages being sent.

In other ways?

Oh yeah, just in things that were said. I can’t think of anything offhand.

Like offhanded comments?

Yeah, that you had to live with. So where did I end last time? Oh, when I was ready to go home. So life had changed completely. And I wasn’t accepted by anybody. I was kind of hands-off material. My former friends. I don’t know what the deal was there. I never really reconnected.
So they treated you differently?

I didn’t have any after that. I went to Catholic school, so that was not proper. So. Yeah. It wasn’t much fun. And then my parents, because my father’s job, sent me to live with my sister in Illinois to complete my last year in high school. So I went there and did that. That was hard because you know, you had to lie, and sooner or later everybody found out anyway and then you were humiliated there, too. It wasn’t far enough away from home. I went to a Catholic school there too, and even the mother superior let me know that she knew, and wasn’t very pleased with it. “Well, you shouldn’t be going to school here, then.” You were just a total outcast, no matter what you did or where you went. Or what you said. I don’t know. I don’t understand it. I didn’t understand it then and I don’t understand it now.

Have you connected with other mothers?

No, not really. I went to a couple of meetings here recently but the pain is so hard to bear that other people are feeling too that in a group setting I just couldn’t handle it. It just wasn’t for me. I just thought of something and then it slipped my mind. Maybe it will come back to me.

When did you reunite with your daughter?

Oh, that was about four years ago? Maybe five? And I of course had to pay money to have that done.

Do you have a good relationship with her now?

We went through some ups and downs and anger. Oh, I remembered what I was going to tell you. I received no counseling. No counseling at all. Just go, be quiet, don’t talk about it, don’t admit to anything, this never happened, but of course your body doesn’t lie. Your body knows it happened. And I’ve suffered from depression ever since. I was about 23 or so, 22, maybe even sooner than that, I don’t know. I didn’t really recognize it as such but I’ve been putting together the pieces ever since. I was put on anti-depressants at 27 after spending a week in the hospital for a severe headache. And they put me on anti-depressants and that made the headaches better. Manageable, anyway. But I’m sure that’s what it was from. So then when I started the uniting process with my daughter, I reached out to Catholic Charities here in St. Paul, and because the social workers in Winona were terrible. They went right back to how it was such a wonderful gift that I gave a child to parents who couldn’t have babies, and all that. I mean, right back to the ‘60s. So I thought, “That’s enough of that.” But the people in St. Paul were much more understanding. So, I did a little counseling there and then the social worker connected me with a therapist, and I’ve been seeing that therapist ever since. And they did that free of charge, which they should.

Yeah.

And, you know, she’s admitted to the fact that that was wrongly done to me, something that shouldn’t have been done. And the therapist is about my age. But, you know, here’s the interesting part. I had been to at least four psychiatrists before that and maybe six therapists, and they
never heard of women suffering from having to surrender a child. Never heard of it. How do you like that. Talk about insignificant. And look at the millions of people who suffer from that. But I found a good therapist at the University of Minnesota. They are, what do you call it. They’re getting their medical degrees.

Interns?

Yeah. And they’re a lot younger. They’re in their 30s. And my last one said to me, “thank you for educating me.” So I feel like I have to educate everybody. It’s just like, this is backwards. But anyway, they have diagnosed me with PTSD, and that’s what I’m being treated for now.

I’m sure anyone who has gone through what you’ve been through probably has some form of PTSD with lingering effects.

Yes. Exactly.

I don’t think it’s a matter of insignificance that the therapists are not aware of the type of loss that results from surrendering. I think it’s more an indicator of a successful cover-up and a lot of effort put into keeping the public from knowing what’s going on.

Absolutely, so you can keep the adoption wheel turning. I totally agree with you but on the other hand I feel like I’m suffering because of it.

Of course! I didn’t mean that as a justification at all.

Oh I didn’t take it that way. But anyway, it’s been a hard road and I’m not done yet. I’m beginning to understand that it will never be done.

It’s good that you connected with your daughter.

Yes, but what’s happened is that my other daughter is angry with me. My daughter that my husband and I have, she’s not talking to me. So it just keeps going around and around.

There are deep effects on the families that women continue to go on and have afterwards.

But like I say pretty soon we’ll all be dead and then nobody will have to worry about it.

I don’t think that’s the case.

Well I’m 70 years old and look at it now. Something comes out like the Philomena story and people say, “Well, that didn’t happen here.” What’s a person to think after a while? And I started out with a lot of hope but I don’t even talk about it to people anymore. It’s just not worth it. It’s hopeless. That’s how I feel about it. Just damn hopeless.

There are still a lot of people doing a lot of work on it.
Like Karen.

Exactly.

Some people can take it and just say, “oh well!” But I’m not that kind of person. I’m just fortunate that I was an overachiever, because that’s where I put my energy instead of drinking or drugs or anything like that. I constantly went to school until I was about 50. It’s hard. There’s no easy way. What are your words of wisdom to me?

I think you have a lot more wisdom than I do. I know the effects are really hard to deal with and you dealt with a really intense exploitation of many people. I just hope that you can hold out hope and faith in the work that people like Karen are devoting their lives to. I know that nothing will ever, ever make it okay, but I do know that even though there are a lot of people who don’t know, and who aren’t trying to find out, there are a lot who do and who are. And that even though you’ve been mistreated horribly in your life, you still made something of yourself and went to school and did so much. You’re in therapy pursuing treatment, and that takes courage, and hard work. You’ve done a lot.

Well I try. I try not to give up. It’s getting harder not to. You don’t know what it’s like to be in your 70s and feel like this. You want your retired years to be a little more joyful. I guess you have to make your own joy but maybe I’m not at a point where I know how to do that yet.

I don’t know how to do that either.

I guess prayer helps. That’s really what helps me the most. Because I look at it and I think, “This couldn’t have come from God. This came from man! Because otherwise God would just drop babies here, there, and everywhere.” So this has not shaken my faith in God, it’s shaken my faith in the Catholic Church and what they did to people, and not just me, other people who had other difficulties and problems, too. And how they used them for their own good, and the government. The government was in on it, too. They did not want to pay for welfare. Oh! I didn’t tell you another important part. I didn’t tell you about how they leaned on my mother. did I?

No.

I wrote to Karen about that.

What happened there?

Well, you know, through my reading I’ve read different statements that social workers from the ‘50s and the ‘60s said and one of the things was that if the mother wavers then you lean on her mothers as hard as you do the mother of the child. So I’m going to backtrack a little bit. Remember when I was in St. Paul and I told you my mother wasn’t supposed to come? Because she was advised not to? Because I’m sure they thought her maternal instincts would kick in as soon as she saw the baby. And what’s wrong with that picture? They want the baby. But when we got home, that’s exactly what happened. My mother and I talked about keeping my baby girl and my
mother said “the only way you can really do that is if you get married.” And of course I was still seeing Skip at that time, and we talked about it and we talked about it and we went to counseling and of course we were riddled, but we didn’t give in and we were about two or three weeks into the process, and all of a sudden, one day, I was starting to feel happy again. Like, okay, it’s going to be okay anyway. And all of a sudden, one afternoon, my mother got a phone call. She was quiet on her end and the other person was talking and I kind of put two and two together and I thought, “It’s a social worker. They had a social worker from Catholic Charities. She got off the phone and that’s what it was. She started to lean on her. She said, “Okay. We’ve to 24 hours to make this decision. 24 hours. So, I want the two of you to go talk about it.” And there really wasn’t much talking about it. You really don’t sit all night and talk about that. It’s too involved. So then I had to go in and say, there’s no decision. So then within the next day, I was in the Chancellery with paper shoved under my nose, and I bucked at it and I didn’t want to do it, and I asked a lot of questions. And one of the questions that I do remember asking was, “Can this ever be opened again? Can I ever find out?” And the social worker said, and this was the same one, the director, said, “Yes, but that never happens.” So that promise of it remaining sealed? That’s not true. And I remember that distinctly. And you know, I just kept saying, “I don’t want to do this, blah blah blah,” And I thought, “This will stall it.” And I just kept asking questions. And all of a sudden, I don’t know how or when it happened, my name was on that paper. That part right before that is an absolute blank. And I looked at that paper with my name on it, and my heart sank. And of course everyone around me was happy. And then I remember going out to the hallway because it was in this old mansion. The Chancellery was in this old mansion and I remember standing on the landing ready to walk down the stairs and everybody’s laughing and happy, my mom, my dad, the social worker, that’s all that was there. And I’m thinking why are they so happy when I am so sad? What is wrong? And I was always told, “Well, if you think something’s wrong with it, then there’s something wrong with you. Because no-one else feels like that. It’s only you.

What do you think happened in that blank space?

I don't know. I don’t know. I went and got my papers and tried looking at it and I tried thinking, and I don’t know. Isn’t that peculiar? And I remember so many other things so vividly. And I remember looking at it and thinking, “How’d that get there?” But anyway, that was there.

Do you think someone signed it and put it in front of you?

No, it was my handwriting. So I don’t know what was said to me. I mean, I have the paper now. And then within a few hours the adoptive parents were called and they came and picked her up. And, her name is Christina. We’ve compared notes as to what was in the files, that her adoptive father has, so we compared notes, and it was the same day within hours. It was a Saturday. So it was all pre-arranged.

So they prepared for you to surrender on that Saturday? They anticipated it?

Yes, exactly. Because they came and got her. How else would they have known? They couldn’t have made it that fast. I don’t know. I just really don’t know.
Where were the parents coming from?

Well they were from Minnesota but they were from upstate somewhere. I don’t believe they could have made it there that fast. It was all put in order. I’ve just had to bear it all by myself without talking to anybody. I think that’s why my body’s done a number on me with the headaches. Anyway, that’s probably enough for today. I do have one more area that I think is really important especially with the administration that we have in right now. And that is so that it doesn't happen again. I’m so afraid that it will happen again. Maybe not in the same way, but I think right now what we’re open to, is the good old boys’ club, because that’s part of what it was, maybe you could hit on that issue. Because the male didn’t have anything to be sorry for. Really! This was a convenient way for them to just skirt around the issue and not, that was great. If they could do that and get away with it. I don’t want to sound jaded but in reality it was the woman who paid the price and why shouldn’t the male be somewhat responsible, too? I don’t know what that would look like, But I guess after reading Jeb Bush’s, was it Jeb Bush? I don’t know. One of the Bushes. Maybe it was the past president. Opening up maternity homes in Texas, I thought to myself, “Oh my god!” It was on a website and then the website was taken down. Have you ever heard about that?

I haven’t heard about that.

This is recent. It’s within the past, I think ten years. And that’s scary when you think of who is at the helm. Someone who doesn’t get it.

No, not at all.

So that is another aspect that I’m really concerned about. That might happen again because our future president can do what he does to women and get away with it, and the public doesn’t think there’s anything wrong with that? What in the world is wrong with us as people?
Interview 8: 1968, Bronx, New York

Hello?

Hello, I’m here.

You’re in Florida?

I’m in Florida now, I was living in New York when I had my daughter.

Okay. So I do have a few questions here, did you want me to explain one more time what my research is about?

I think I’ve got it.

Okay, so may I ask where you were when you were in the home?

I was in Rosalie Hall, which was affiliated with Misericordia Hospital in the Bronx.

In the Bronx. And did you feel like you were coerced into going into the home when you didn’t really want to? Like a very last option?

Well, I didn’t go in until the last five or six weeks. I was, my mother farmed me out in February, and I wasn’t due until September. She sent me to live with a friend of hers in New Jersey and then it wasn’t working out. It was semi-working out until the women’s granddaughter had a miscarriage.

Oh no.

Okay, so then I was, you know, “You don’t want this baby, you’re not keeping this baby, my granddaughter who wants her baby can’t have it.” So we got me out of there. My mother contacted Catholic Charities and Catholic Home Bureaus, and they sent me out as as a babysitter, a live-in babysitter to take care of five boys. And then I stayed with them and they were very good. But I wasn’t allowed off their property because my mother was neurotic.

Okay. So this was a really rough time for you.

Yes. The only people who knew, well, I had a friend who knew I was pregnant. And she did come down from time to time to see me. My mother came down, though I wish she hadn’t. And the people I stayed with, like I said there were five boys, the mother and the father, and the grandfather, who lived there, and they were very good. So I never had a problem there but it was awful. It was just an uncomfortable situation.

Of course. That’s not your home. Were you in a maternity home at any point?
Yes, the last five or six weeks. I went into Rosalie Hall which was affiliated with Catholic Home Bureau. I had to go down there once a month for a physical for my monthly physical.

Okay. Who were some of the different professionals with whom you were in contact during your pregnancy, and before and after you were in the home?

The social worker. Mrs. Copens, I still remember her.

Did you talk to her a lot?

I talked to her before, briefly I talked to her two or three times, and then I spoke to her, it was probably, after I had my daughter, and then when I went to sign the papers. But other than that I didn’t see any other social worker. There was a psychologist/psychiatrist, I’m not quite sure what his title was, that everyone had to see at least once. And I remember being told that there was something really wrong with us for getting pregnant and not being married, and he advised therapy for all of us, but “don’t tell anyone that you had a baby, not even your psychiatrist. or therapist, should you choose to see one.” So yes, go into therapy, get some help, but don't tell them what the problem is.

So were you repeatedly told that there was something wrong with you?

I only went to one session. I did my fulfilling of my deeds and I said, “I’m not going back here again.”

I don’t blame you.

But we were told that “we would not be good parents. Every child needs a two-parent home. And where would you get a job? And no decent man will marry you. So you shouldn’t tell anybody. Just your immediate family that you have now. Don’t tell anyone.”

Okay. And did you know that you were going to be forced to surrender your child for adoption? Or were you given any other options?

It was 1968. There were no options. There were absolutely no options at all. I mean, first of all, the minute I found out I was pregnant, I knew that was it. I knew I didn’t have a choice. I knew my mother would—I just knew. Back in 1968 you knew. That you just didn’t bring a baby home if you weren’t married. It was the unwritten law. Nobody had to tell you. You just knew. That’s it.

Did you make friendships with any of the professionals or any of the other girls in the home that you stayed in? Were you encouraged to build relationships there? Or did they force you to go by a different name?

I got to keep my first name but you were to tell nobody anything about you but you know, you talked to women, and I did become friendly with one girl, and I was invited to her wedding
which was eighteen months later. And that was the only friend that I really made that I kept in contact with. Because you were encouraged, “just don’t become friends with these women.”

Hm. Were you encouraged or required to do any religious activities while you were in the home?

Well, I was Catholic so I had to go to mass. I think it was like once a week and on holidays and since I played guitar, I used to play for the masses. But we went to church. That was it. And I don’t go to church today, by the way. I used to call myself a “pick and choose Catholic.” I don’t even consider myself a “pick and choose Catholic” now. I have no use for the Church.

What influenced your feelings about that?

Oh, just the fact that I was in a Catholic maternity home, that I was told that I would not be a good mother, that my child would be better off in a two-parent family, which I’ve come to find out, her parents were divorced shortly after the adoption became legal. The mother was married five times. The father has been married twice. The mother took my daughter out of school in the second or third grade, and they went bar-hopping all over Florida. My daughter used to sit in the front seat of the car while her mother was in the back having sex or smoking pot.

Wow.

So, yes. They did a much better job picking parents. You know how they picked my child’s parents? They went in and counted the number of crucifixes on the wall. Talk about being bitter.

I don’t blame you. When did you reunite with your daughter?

When she was fifteen.

Okay. Are you still in contact with her?

I made direct contact with her. Not with her father. The mother had lost custody of her when she was about twelve. She was with the adoptive father. She was the youngest of three. The oldest, the boy, was her natural child. And then they adopted two girls. So they not only screwed up my daughter, they screwed up another one as well.

Does she still keep in touch with her sister?

My daughter became a Jehovah’s Witness. And the sister had become a Jehovah’s Witness but the sister broke away from the religion so now my daughter doesn’t speak to her.

Okay. There’s a lot going on there.

It’s unbelievable. My granddaughter broke away from the religion, so my granddaughter is shunned. But excuse me. I wouldn’t have been a good parents. And I let Catholic Charities know. I said, “I found my daughter and she’s in such a screwed-up situation.” Now this is going
to be off the record okay, just a little bit. The mother’s second husband used to take showers with my daughter. Okay, now I’m back on the record. That part’s off the record.

That is very abusive.

Yes. But I wouldn’t have been a good parent.

So just rewinding back to some of the questions. Did you try to get your paperwork?

Yes, I had joined a support group back in ’84. And I was reading a lot of books, and there was a book, “search.” There was a form letter to use, and I used that form letter asking for copies of the documents I signed, and a copy of the birth certificate. And it took about six weeks but I did get them. So I do have a copy. And I gave them to my daughter.

Okay. What was your birth and delivery experience like?

(Interviewee sighs painfully)

I had one terrific pain about three in the afternoon, and I didn’t say anything until after dinner. I felt fine. I happened to mention it to one of the nuns and she said, “Well, let’s take you over to the hospital anyway.” So I went over to the hospital and I’m in the bedroom by myself, and I have little cramps, but nothing so bad. Then the nurse comes in and checks me, and this is at 12:30, and she said, “Oh Dear, you’re probably going to go back over to the home tomorrow.” She walked out the room and I said, “Oh my god, get back here, here comes the baby.” That’s how fast. They knocked me out. And my daughter was born at about 1:20. So I had probably an hour of labor, at most.

How did the staff and hospital staff, and maternity home staff treat you during that whole process?

MM. I had an RH factor in my blood. I was RH negative. And I remember saying to the nurse, “I’m supposed to get an injection now.” I don’t remember the name of it. It’s 48 years ago. I said, “I’m supposed to get an injection to sort of neutralize the blood so if I have another pregnancy, you know.” She said, “You Charity people want everything.” I said, “I’m not a charity case, I’m paying for this, okay?” Now I told them I wanted to see my daughter. This was the day after I had my daughter. She said, “Well I can’t allow that.” I said, “I haven’t signed anything. You bring my daughter to me or I’m going to start screaming.” So they brought by daughter to me and I stayed with her for the five days. And I told her, when the nurse was talking her from me for the last time, I said “You listen to me, kid, I’m gonna find you some day.” The nurse said, “You’ll never find her.” I said, “Don’t listen to that nasty lady. Listen to your mother. I’m going to find you.” And I remember I was sitting there one evening. And these two gentlemen stood at the door. They were both in suits. I don’t know who they were. I knew nothing. And they said, “Are you Patricia Victor?” And they wrote something in a book and walked out. I never knew who they were. But it was just a very, very strange, whatever it was, I don’t know. When I was
in the maternity home I had a private room. One of the few that actually there were only two private rooms in the whole place. But my uncle happened to know, he was a priest. How did the niece of a priest become pregnant? He knew the head of Catholic Charities and I think it was because of that that I got a private room. So I wasn’t treated badly by the nuns because they knew I had connections to the higher-ups. So my job was cleaning out the ash-trays every day. Which was not—you know, some girls had to go in and clean the toilets, my job was cleaning the ash-trays out. So I sort of lucked out. Well they lucked out. They got my kid and I got to clean ash-trays. Yes.

It definitely didn’t work out well. I hope that you and your relationship with your daughter now is good.

Oh, it’s great! I mean, she had two children, I went when both of them were born, I went to my daughter’s high school graduation, I was there at her wedding with her adoptive mother. I was at my granddaughter and grandson’s high school graduations, I was at my granddaughter’s wedding, I was there for my grandson’s wife’s baby shower. So I have been part of the family. At the last baby shower, I was there and my son-in-law said, “let’s get a picture of the three mothers together.” And I always sort of bite my tongue when he does this. And the father’s second wife said, “Oh, the third mother is always the charmer.” And the second mother, the adoptive mother, said, “But I raised you.” And I looked at them both and I said, “And I’m the real one.”

Good for you.

They used to call me “acid tongue” at work because I gave it right back to people.

Good!

You know what, as you get older, the tongue matures, it’s like a good wine. You have to cultivate it.

(Laugh) That’s amazing! I’m glad you have that, that’s great.

Yes.

Well, I’m just wondering if you can remember anything, any other stories, anything people said to you, how you were generally treated just being pregnant and single in the sixties.

I had to give up my job. Well, that was my mother. Because the minute she found out I was pregnant, she said, “That’s it, you’re quitting your job.” I took a leave of absence, and when I went to get my job back, I called, and they said, “Oh, we don’t have a place for somebody like you.”

Oh wow.

Now that would never happen today. That would never happen today. While I was pregnant, my favorite uncle was dying. My mother’s other brother. And I had tried to get a hold of him at his house just to talk to him because he didn’t live probably within four miles of the hospital and I
did want to see him. Couldn’t get a hold of him, couldn’t get a hold of him. So I figured maybe he moved and never gave me the new phone number. After I had my daughter, I went back to the house that I stayed with. I was going to stay there for like a week and a half, just to get my feet back on the ground, and then go home. So now it’s a week after I have my daughter. My mother comes down, sits down, and says, “Your uncle Joe died.” And I said, “what happened?” She said, “Well, he had cancer.” I said, “why didn’t you call me?” And I will never forget what she said. “I was told by the agency not to tell you because they were afraid you might lose the baby.” So, the money that they would make from my daughter was more important than my feelings for my uncle. That was two years’ therapy. Yeah. My mother sent me away under the premise that I had a nervous breakdown. You see, it was far more acceptable to have a nervous breakdown than to have a child out of wedlock.

Sure.

Nowadays, I see a woman that’s pregnant, I hear of a woman that’s pregnant and not married and keeping her kid and I say, “I wish I had the guts.” But, you see, I never told anybody. Nobody told anybody. and I had read an article. I was up in Cape Cod, this is, has to be in the late ‘70s early ‘80s. And I read it in the Boston Globe, an article by Lee Campell, on how she found her son. And I said, “Oh my god, somebody else has been through this.” And I took the newspaper and folded it up, and my mother says, “Where’s the society section of the paper?” And I said, “It’s probably flying down the beach.” I couldn’t wait to get back to New York to read the article because I was flabbergasted, there was somebody else out there, just like me.

There are so many!

I have met over a thousand women. I joined a support group. I saw an ad, “If you have surrendered a child to adoption and wish to meet others who share this unique experience, call.” And then there was a number. And before I went to the meeting, I wondered, “What kind of people am I going to meet?” And there was a social worker, and a teacher, and a lawyer, and a housewife, and a secretary, and a nurse, and they were all normal people who looked just like me. And after fifteen years of never discussing it, never opening your mouth, never having told someone, that was it. If you told someone, your whole world was going to crumble apart. And that you’ll be stoned. It was an awful time to live in the secrecy. And women today don’t realize what our generation has been through.

It’s much easier to keep a baby. There’s a lot less stigma attached to it.

My mother was always afraid of what the neighbors would say. And you know what the neighbors said when they found out? “How could your mother have done that?” Didn’t she think she would get the support of the neighbors here? What was she thinking? I think that my mother may have surrendered. I have a feeling, a gut feeling that she may have, too. When I joined the support group in White Plains, New York, women sit and talk and everything, and you find out that other women’s aunts, cousins, they had children that they had given up for adoption. I think it’s genetic. I really do. My daughter got pregnant and she married the father. When my granddaughter was going to college, I sent her money for birth control. I said, “you will break the family tradition.” She just laughed.
Aw.

What got you interested in this?

Um, I have a personal connection to it myself. My mother surrendered, actually, against her will, and I had an older brother. We lost him, unfortunately. He found my mother when I was twelve and I got to meet him, he lived with us for a bit, and I basically just, as a young person, I watched my mother kind of go through what happens, and all of the very long-lasting side effects and pain of having your baby, having to have had to surrender a baby when it really was not what she wanted and it wasn’t what was best for him either. I saw her lose him once and I saw her lose him twice when he passed away, and I lost him, too. So basically my entire adult life so far has been kind of a journey to put together the pieces of his life and to figure out what were the social forces and what created this perfect storm whether it was institutional, social, medical, psychological, economic, like what are the forces that came together to create a system in which so many women went through what my mother did. And so I, on part of that journey, I found a lot of information about maternity homes, but a lot of it was written by the people who built and worked in the maternity homes, and the voices of mothers who actually spent time there are really difficult to find. There are a few books but I am hoping to add these voices on a new platform and really kind of equalize the conversation a bit. And ask the question, basically, what happens, when social service benefits those who provide it more than those whom they claim to be serving.

Right. And you know, I had to pay when I went into the maternity home. I was charged! So this wasn’t a freebie. I know a lot of the women who were on social services, and social services was paying. But Catholic Charities did not pay for me. I paid myself. My mother got the bill. And then turned around and paid it and handed it to me and said, “you will pay me back.” So I had to pay for the privilege of giving my daughter away. But it left an ugly scar. It’s 48 years, actually 49 years ago this Friday that I got pregnant. And I just, I still get angry. I still have difficulty between September, when she was born, and New Year’s. I hate the holidays. I hate the holidays. And when I was pregnant, right since I found out, actually, I said, “I’m killing myself.”

Oh no.

Oh no, no. That would be easier than facing my mother. Trust me. And I remember going down this very steep hill I had stayed at work late and the hill was sort of icy. And I figured “well, if I go down this a breakneck speed, and then put on my brakes at the end, the car will spin and go into the Hudson and I’ll be killed.” So I went down the hill at breakneck speed, put the brakes on when I got to the bottom, the car went into a spin, and on the radio, it played, “To everything there is a season, turn, turn, turn. A time to be born, a time to die.” And that’s what they played. And I was sitting facing in the direction that I was supposed to be going, without so much as a scratch on me or the car. And I said, “You know what? That’s a sign.” So every time I hear that song I think, “Oh, yes, they played that when you were pregnant.”

Oh my goodness.
It was, you know, the girls would sit around, and I’m probably jumping around, that’s okay. The girls would sit around and knit. And make slippers. That’s all I did, was make slippers. Read books, smoke, listen to the radio, listen to television, some of the girls were allowed to go out. I was forbidden to go out because somebody from my uncle’s parish might see me. Now, nobody knew me in his parish. But, as I said, my mother was neurotic. My mother had this horrible neurosis and I was just not allowed out. I sat out on the back patio. When she found out, she said, “You can’t do that. You can’t sit out on the patio.” I said, “I need some kind of fresh air. I can’t stay cooped up all the time.” And she said, “Well sit with your back to the hospital so if somebody looks at the hospital, they won’t recognize you.”

The goal was very much to hide you.

They wanted to hide their shame. I came back, went to work, got a call, had to sign my surrender papers, I got a call that was November 7th, a week before my birthday, two months and one day after my daughter was born. I walked over on my lunch hour, and I remember signing, and I said, “well, these have to be witnessed by a notary.” And she said, “well she’s out for lunch. But she’ll do it when she comes back.” I said, “Well isn’t she supposed to notarize my signature?” She said, “Don’t worry about it.” I mean they just did whatever they wanted to do! Also, something I just noticed maybe two or three months ago, I was looking at my daughter’s birth certificate. And it was mailed to me, though I never got it at the maternity home. And they opened up my mail, and took it. Isn’t that a federal offense? Opening somebody else’s mail? And not only mine but everybody’s!

So they claimed to send it to you and then they never did?

New York City mails out the birth certificate to the address. My address was listed as the hospital. So New York City mailed my daughter’s birth certificate to the maternity home. The maternity home knew where I lived. They never forwarded it on. Because they wanted the birth certificate. And that was it. And they opened my mail. A federal offense.

Oh wow.

I just realized it. And nobody every said anything. So it wasn’t only my birth certificate that wasn’t delivered, it was every other woman’s who passed through that door for how many years. And we were never told we could have an original copy. I mean, I signed a lot of papers. I just got copies of my surrender papers, but I don’t know what else I signed, because I was always signing papers. So somewhere out there maybe I know who those two men are, maybe they have some records. I don’t know, I don’t know. So how many interviews have you done?

This is my eighth one.

Oh my goodness! And how long is your dissertation?

It will be about six chapters, I think, so, um, I don’t know. Maybe two or three hundred pages?

Oh good for you! Good for you!
I’m not quite done with that part yet. But it’s alright. There’s some historical work to be done. But yeah, it’s important, it matters, it matters to me, it matters to a lot of people, and it’s not well known. So if I can do something to bring in voices that have been silenced up until this point to the conversation, and for people to know that they’re not alone and there are other people who have had experiences with this and there’s nothing to be ashamed of, um, even in hindsight, I would be really glad to do that.

Well I hope you do. Probably not the women in my age group, and I have to be very honest. When I was in the support group, there were women who had wonderful relationships with their children, and they were still ashamed. And they would say, “I’m so ashamed when I go to introduce him. Because of what I did.” And I think, “wow.” People say to me, “How many kids do you have” and I say “two” and they say, “oh really, well where do they live,” and I say, “well my daughter lives over, and I tell people. Because the only way you can bring knowledge to other people is to tell them. Somebody said, “That was such a wonderful thing that you did.” I said, “No it wasn’t.” I said, “It was the easy way out.” I said, “Had I stood my ground and said, ‘I’m going to raise my daughter,’ it would have been a lot harder.” “Oh but you gave some wonderful couple a baby.” I said “What makes you think that? What makes you think they’re so wonderful? What makes you think adoptive parents are wonderful?” They can’t deal with their own infertility. Anyway. Boy. I need to get off my soapbox. And you can use my name, by the way, I don’t have a problem.

Well I think you should stay on your soapbox. There’s a lot of misinformation.

I just wish there was a support group. The support group I was in in New York was from ’84 to, I was in it for like twenty years. And it finally broke up because we weren’t getting new women in. IT was open adoption, which is another whole— it’s probably worse than the closed adoption.

Sure.

Because these people close them any time they want! And they dangle your child in front of you and they go, “be a nice birthmother,” which is another term I hate. It’s First mother. Anyway. Is there anything else you would like to know?

Um no, that’s all I’ve got for now, but thank you so much for giving your time, and your story!

Very good, I wish you luck!
Interview 9: 1977, Houston, Texas

I became pregnant when I was 17 (February 1977) but my parents found out when I was 18 (April) but I was in my Junior year in high school. I was supposed to be in my Senior year but for several reasons (one of which was a father with increasing alcoholism and the family life was dysfunctional) I was having trouble in school. When my mother found out she was angry and she made the decision as to exactly what I would do. I had no idea what or why she was telling me this as if it was not my choice and I was essentially, in hindsight, dumped off at the maternity home by her. I was put there so it wasn't like it was an option at all. It was done to me. The experience was very demoralizing to say the least. In my head and my heart, I was heartbroken and hurt that this was happening to me. During my time at the home I happened to talk to another mother who had given birth and had come back to the home to speak to the intake nurse. She was waiting to talk to her and we started talking. She told me that her mother and father refused to allow her to bring her child home. She was weeping and beside herself. That was when I began to plan actively to fight my situation. I got my few belongings and walked, partially hitch-hiking home. My mother tried to make me go back but I refused. The professionals I saw from the time I was brought there. Intake: an administrative person(woman); intake nurse; doctors that checked me (we were herded around like cattle, we never were allowed to ask questions or had anything explained to us about our medical situation); an older woman (I believe she may have been a nun without the habit) would bring us into a room individually and talk to us about what little we had to offer our children. This happened several times; the administrative person met with me to discuss the father. She told me that they were going to send him papers to sign to relinquish his rights. I was very upset and worried and snuck off several times to try to call him. Since we were penniless I had to ask for a quarter to call from strangers as there was no phone available there for us to call out. I tried several times but gave up. When the father did sign the papers the admin met with me again and seemed to get great joy in waving it in my face as if a prize. Another professional that met with me was the "counselor". I had one private meeting and one group meeting. That was it and it was highly directed towards what she wanted me to say. I was afraid that if I didn't go along with what they wanted that I wouldn't get medical care for my situation. It wasn't openly spoken but implied. I was given no information and was very afraid. Another professional was a woman who came over to the maternity home and got me one day. She had me to sit with the front desk receptionist and I thought I was going to get a job and a way to help my situation. She told me to put on a dress (it was very plain, didn't fit me at all and was sort of dowdy). I put it on and the receptionist left me there and I tried to answer the phone. All of a sudden a whole bunch of fancy dressed couples poured into the door and through the entry way and into a room adjacent to me. I tried to greet them and answer the phone. I was a switchboard phone and I was having trouble doing that with no help as to how to do it (just a 10 second explanation). As fast as that happened it was over and I was instructed to go change and go back to the maternity home. As far as I know, there were no volunteers there. I never ever wanted to give my child up for adoption. The workers there never discussed anything but giving my child up for adoption. There was no other option offered to us. After I went back home I was worried about what was going to happen after I gave birth. My mother even didn't prepare me for what was going to happen to me. When the time came, she again dumped me off at the hospital (the one that the Catholic Charities planned to bring me to if I had stayed at the home). They left me on my back for hours in pain, no one explaining anything or giving me any
comfort whatsoever. When (I guess the doctor was ready) they wheeled me through and I de-
manded some pain relief of some sort and the woman (anesthesiologist) gave me a saddle block
very shortly before the birth. They wrapped a sheet around my legs so I couldn't witness my
sons birth. I did manage to see him being born despite them doing that and when they saw that I
wanted to see him both the doctor, anesthesiologist and nurse attending the doctor do the deliv-
ery scowled at me in complete anger and I was petrified and recoiled in fear! At that moment I
wanted nothing more than to hold my son but the nurse carried him off and I was terrified to do
anything to reach out for him. It didn't matter as they had given me a bunch of medicine to
knock me out again and I quickly was removed and put into a room to recover. I didn't know
what was going on until the next day. I never knew where my son was or when or if I could see
him. I cried for days and finally when I went to leave I told them I was taking him with me. My
parents luckily didn't fight me although I knew my mother was angry. My father supported my
decision whatever it was. Over the months that ensued my mother fought me relentlessly and
finally told me she wouldn't help me at all and my back was against the wall. My parents did
have the money to help me and in hindsight if I had the courage of my conviction to keep
fighting I would have won in the end but I couldn't see that. It was that and that the brainwash-
ing about how I'm doing my child wrong by not having the preparation to care for him that made
me feel like I was holding my son back and doing wrong by him. The final professional I talked
to was the woman at the agency in charge of adoptions. Her name was Deb and I believe she
was the person that began the adoption proceedings. When I met with her I told her that I didn't
want to give me son up for adoption but that I needed help. I specifically asked her if there was
help there or if she knew of anywhere or anyone who could help me. She said "NO". That was
when I gave up. For years, the Catholic brainwashing of me was that I was the bad one. I felt
isolated and had really no one but close friends and my sisters to talk to about it. At reunion, I
found out that this was a technique that they used to get our children and that they used to do
much worse to women. I discovered the damage that adoption does to our kids. So many things
about life were revealed to me at reunion that I believe that it didn't have anything to do with my
specific area "Maternity Home for Un-Wed Mothers" run by Catholic Charities in Houston, TX
1977/78. These religious charities were subsidized by the State/Federal government to do this
and it was helping the taxpayer and helping them to spread their religious/political power over
us. I never walked into another Catholic Church after that and never will again. The way they
treated us worldwide is nothing short of human rights abuses, racketeering and human traffick-
ing. There is no amount of apology or money damages that could ever suffice. Nothing can give
me back my son or the years we lost. The worst of it was finding out the damage emotionally
that it did to my son even though his adoptive parents loved him and tried to raise him right. I
believe I missed two questions ref: prayer during my stay. We only had mass on Sunday. There
was no requirement to pray to any specific saint or such. When the papers were signed I was
not given any paperwork. I was told I could contest up until six months but I was not given any
paperwork with information on where to even start the process. I was pretty much a basket case
emotionally after the loss so trying to do that was hopeless even if I had the paperwork. Every-
thing they did was done to exact the most pain, facilitate the loss and never give us any comfort
or information to assist us. I did some research on my own later and found out that they paid
Catholic Charities $27,000 at the time for my son. At that time that was 3/4 of what a home cost
in a middle class area. That was why they did what they did, for the money. It was never about
helping us at all. It was about helping themselves to our children.
Interview 10: 1993, 1995, Florida

Hello, mine didn’t involve a maternity home of any kind.

Okay, that’s still fine, I still want to hear about any agencies, or your experience.

Okay. Okay. Um, I had actually two relinquishments, one was fairly voluntary but I was coerced by a family member and the second was under duress and coercion.

I’m so sorry.

Thank you. The first one involved the Children’s Home Society of Florida but the second one had to do with a religious agency called, it’s now called Adoption by Shepherd Care. It was called Shepherd Care Ministries back then in the 1990s.

Okay, Shepherd Care Ministries.

That’s what it was called at the time, yeah.

Okay. May I ask about the whole story? How everything kind of played out from the beginning?

Well, I’ll give a summary first. I think the reason I was targeted in this situation was because I was a single mother with a neurological disability, and um, I um, I guess I’ll just talk about the second one, since the first one didn’t have to do with anything religious. But, um, although it kind of all built on the second one. In other words, once you’ve already given up a child, it was harder to— I mean I had kind of blocked out the first one. And kind of, just, well, I was married at the time and my husband didn’t want a child, and I was kind of forced by him to do it.

By you husband?

Yeah. Basically, it was him or the baby. You know I was young, I was only nineteen, and I didn’t think I could raise him on my own, so, I just told my husband that— he wanted me to abort, and I said I wouldn’t do that. And, so I said “Well I’ll just give him up for adoption.” So I just kind of set my mind on that from the get-go. I called Children’s Home Society Florida from the Yellow Pages. I knew nothing about adoption, it was just kind of I went through the motions and did what I had to do to try to put it out of our mind at that point but once you’ve done something like that, you kind of, you don’t have a lot of feelings left.

No.

Um, I was divorced in ’95, and my son was born in ’93. I had the same husband when my son was born and we got divorced in ’95. But, after the divorce is kind of leading up to the second one. After the divorce I got involved with somebody too quickly, became pregnant. And he proposed to me when he found out I was pregnant and I said, “Wait.” I said, “I didn’t say ‘no,’ I
said, ‘wait.’” Because I wasn’t really sure that he really cared for me that much. And I guess I was right about that. But anyway, even though we kind of stuck together as friends for the past 20 years, but he hasn’t wanted to marry me since then. But anyway, I knew— after my son was born, I had a history of Tourette’s Syndrome, I don’t know if you know what that is.

Yes.

I have chronic, lifelong depression starting when I was pretty young. OCD, ADD, these disorders, I’ve had them all my life. So when I had Chris, my first baby, my son, I became very, very ill afterwards. Um, they said it was depression but, I’ve had other episodes since then, and it goes way beyond that. It’s kind of like my whole body shuts down. You can’t eat, you can’t sleep. It’s just really awful. So I had that happen after he was born. I don’t know if it was a combination of postpartum depression and what happened with him and everything, but it was really bad and I was hospitalized and I got put on a bunch of medication. I still didn’t know that I had Tourette’s, though. There were a couple of things that I didn’t know I had. And I didn’t find that out until many years later. And back then they didn’t know about stuff like that. They knew very little about anything. But anyway, when the next time rolled around and I became pregnant, I knew that I had had these episodes. Whatever they were, brain-body shutdown. You know. And I was concerned, and I didn’t know if my boyfriend would support me in the pregnancy and raising her, it was a little girl. I was concerned that I would get sick again and I wouldn’t be able to take care of her, and I really didn’t know at that point what would happen. So I contacted an agency, and at that time, I don’t know, I guess I was thinking that Christians are supposed to be “good.” I don’t know. I haven’t seen that since. Anyway, I um, contacted this agency that called themselves Shepherd Care Ministries at the time, now they’re called Adoption by Shepherd Care, which is really more like it. But anyway, so I contact this agency and during the time I think I became more depressed during the pregnancy but I was on medication. I had still been on medication but I was on a very, very low dose, because I didn’t want to raise the bills because you know, being pregnant, I just had a neurologist, I didn’t have a psychiatrist. Because you see the thing is, when you have Tourette’s and then you have other things, you kind of have to have both a psychologist and a neurologist. It’s very hard to get anyone who’s quality in that area. But anyway, at the time I just had a neurologist. He was prescribing the medicine. And he knew I was pregnant and I wasn’t comfortable raising the dose because I was pregnant.

So anyway, I guess um, I’m not really sure when all this happened but, at one point I was having a sonogram, and the technician that was doing it was concerned because apparently when the baby is gestating there’s a certain point during the last trimester when they have like, um. Sample breaths, I’m not sure what they’re breathing but they’re trying out their lungs before they’re born. I had never heard of this before. Because when my son was born we didn’t have sonograms and stuff. But the technician was concerned because she wasn’t doing the breathing. My daughter wasn’t doing the breathing, and she was small for gestational age, which, looking back, her biological father is only about 5 foot 1. His whole family is small, they’re Sicilian. She probably was just genetically small. She is still small, she’s a small young woman. But, anyway, to back up, I didn’t put all this together at the time. I didn’t know this about his family. But they were concerned about this and the doctor came in and he said, “Well, she could die.” And I said, I was just really frustrated, and I was confused, and I said, “Well at least she’ll go to heaven.” Which, I would never say that I was going to heaven, because I’ve had some very bad religious experiences, so I would never say that. But I’m saying this, when I get further in the story you’ll
see how it’s significant. But apparently, they decided that they wanted to induce labour because she was actually due on April 26th of ’96, but they decided to induce labour on the 12th, which is a couple of weeks early because they kept saying, “Oh she’s losing weight.” Which, it turns out, she wasn’t. I don’t know what was going on there but they were saying they wanted that. So I went to induce labour. I went in on a Friday. Big mistake, you can’t get anything done on a weekend. So they did I guess the next day I was supposed to go home with her and a very nasty asshole of a doctor, forgive my French, comes in and I guess he was a neonatologist or pediatrician or whatever. He walks in—this is really hard, because I really hate this guy. I want to kill him, to be honest with you. I really want to kill this guy. Anyway, he comes in with this um, some other guy. He doesn’t introduce himself. Well, he introduces himself, but he doesn’t introduce the other guy. So I still don’t know who this is. I kind of got the gist that he was some kind of nurse or assistant or something. So this other guy just kind of waits in the corner and crosses his arms and leans against the wall to watch. And I had my daughter in my arms. This guy comes in accusing all sorts of things. He says, “You haven’t held your baby, or diapered her, or fed her,” and he starts saying all kind of weird things. He says, “I could call HRS right now.” Back then, that would be like today’s CPS. HRS was what they called it back in the ‘90s. I was really confused. I didn’t know why he was talking like this. First of all, she hadn’t been in my room that much, but it seemed like every time I tried to get her, they seemed reluctant to tell me anything, or show me anything. I don’t know. They just acted kind of weird. I figured I would just take her and go home and that would be it.

So at this point you had not even talked about adoption at all.

Um, actually, no. I’m sorry. During the pregnancy I had spoken with the people form Shepherd’s Care.

No binding commitments, or anything.

No, I didn’t sign anything saying I was going to give her up or anything like that. It’s hard to remember everything. I don’t know. It was just weird. He just kept threatening and everything and he said, “I have to call HRS right now!” and I said, “Why!” He just kind of stomped out of the room and it turns out that they had already put an HRS hold on her. And, I wasn’t even out of the hospital yet. Then, I called the caseworker woman from Shepherd Care, and she kind of made an odd statement. She said, “Oh, so they’re going to play hardball with us.” I thought that was kind of an odd statement and the lawyer I got said it was odd too, but then she denied ever saying it so I don’t know what that was all about. So she said, “Would it help if I talked to the person from HRS?” and I’m trusting her and everything. So they made me go home without my daughter. So the next day the HRS guy was there and he asked me all kinds of questions. He told me I was in a group home, which i was not. Um, and then he said, did you ever say, “me and my child go to heaven?” And I said, “No!” Because I didn’t say that. In the context. I said that if she died, she would go to heaven. That’s all I said. Anyway, so I didn’t know what he was getting after, and then he talked to this “Sue,” from the agency, and when she came out, I just heard them laughing in there. I don’t know what they were laughing at. But she came out, and she said, “With what he heard, he’s not going to let you take your baby home.” And I still didn’t know what was going on. And by the way, while my boyfriend had come to the hospital. This is backing up a day or so. He had come in while my daughter and I were still in the hospital, and he overheard a nurse say
to a patient, so this was really wrong. I guess the nurse was with another patient in the nursery, and like I said, my boyfriend overheard this, but the other woman looked at my baby and said, “well, what happened there?” Because I don’t know, maybe they had something on her crib or something. But the nurse goes, “Oh, she said she wanted to kill her baby.” Which, you know, where did that come from? And, um, so anyway, long story short, because of HRS and everything, and everything I had heard about them, in a panic, I signed my daughter over to Shepherd’s care. I call them “Shepherd Scare.” So I signed her over to them. And in Florida, unfortunately, once you sign on the dotted line, that’s it. No recourse, you have no revocation period, and you pretty much have to prove that someone held a gun to your head, because I’ve learned that even though they say that they take into account third-party duress, they won’t. I experienced duress from HRS and from that doctor. We went to court to try to get her back, but it took a long time to try to figure out. Shepherd’s Care is down in Hollywood, and we’re a few hours away. I didn’t realize, because Shepherd’s Care has a branch in Orlando, and that's how I got a hold of the other woman. So anyway, after about a month of trying to figure out what to do, it wasn’t because we weren’t trying, it was because we were confused and nobody would give us an answer. We finally found a lawyer down in Ft. Lauderdale area, and they helped us go to court. After about eight months of court, they ruled against us. The weird thing was, when the judge put the judgment out, and we got a copy of it, it says, “no fault could be found, however,” I forget how it’s worded, but basically, if I were to judge according to what’s best for the child, this decision would not have been reached. In other words, he thought it sucked, too, but he was bound by the law. Um, so the agency had given her to a family that I would never have wanted her to go to. Um, I have found her since then, I’ve also found out that her adoptive father molested her.

Oh my goodness.

Definitely not a family I would have wanted.

No.

Um, to back up a little bit, as to what was going on, we found out. Sue, from Shepherd’s Care, was the one that I had been in contact with all that time. One of the things she said when I was talking to her and asked, “Well, what would happen if my sister adopted her?” This was before they had even found a family. She was already signed over to them, but they had not found a family. And I was saying, what would happen if my sister or family member adopted? And she said, “You must realize that if the family member adopts your daughter then HRS would forbid you from ever seeing your family again.” So she deliberately lied to me and this was from a supposedly Christian agency. She also, supposedly, um, well, apparently there were some other things she said about me that weren’t true. In court she lied about ever having talked to me that night after the doctor had come in with his bullshit. So I still don’t really know what she was doing. She may have engineered the whole thing. But supposedly, the um, ultrasound tech, whatever that was, told someone that I was suicidal.

Oh.
But I had never said anything like that. Apparently they, I don’t know. Maybe they targeted me because I had a history of depression and maybe they didn’t want, you know. I don’t know. To this day I’m not really sure what all went on. It was like a big, hospitalized conspiracy to take her, plus HRS, plus that woman from Shepherd’s Care, and I’ve tried to get my records from them, but it’s been over twenty years, and they said they only store the records from ten years ago. So I don’t really have any way of knowing what went on. All I know is what people said in court. And it doesn’t make a lot of sense. I have found her since. I knew the family’s name. It was supposed to be a closed adoption and I knew the parents’ first names and I kind of accidentally found out what the last name of the family was so I kind of knew who they were all along and I started looking on the internet and saw the father’s mug shot. I kin of put two and two together when I saw what it was he— what his conviction was and I realized he had molested his daughter. When I found her she confirmed it, that he did do that. She’s not in contact with her father anymore. Her adoptive father. She apparently inherited some of the illnesses that I have. Not Tourette’s, but depression. And she’s had other things happen to her. So. Her adoptive mother doesn’t understand any of those illnesses and thinks she can just “snap out of it.” So she doesn’t really get along with her, either.

Do you talk to her often?

Well, we started talking on the phone last year but, um, unfortunately since the election there was, her name is Hannah. She um, she had some very strong political ideas and and they didn’t match with mine. Not that I intended to discuss that with her. I didn’t. She kind of demanded that everyone tell her who they voted for. And since I didn’t tell her, she figured that it was opposite of who she voted for and anyway, she got really angry and she’s not really speaking to me. I never intended to talk about politics with her, I just wanted to get to know her. She’s very idealistic and very stubborn, so that’s what’s happened.

This election has been very volatile. Hopefully she will be willing to talk to you again and you two can iron it out.

We’re friends on Facebook and she hasn’t unfriended me on there, yet. So at least I can go on there and look at pictures and see what she’s up to. My son, I'm in contact with his stepmother. He’s 33 years old. He’s up in north Florida, working for a college. But his um, his original adoptive parents divorced, and the father remarried, and anyway, I’m in contact with the stepmother. He doesn’t want to meet us because his adoptive mother told him that if he ever contacted us she would disown him.

Wow.

And, I don’t know how she would have to know that, but I guess he feels that somehow she would find out, so he won’t contact us. Um, even though he’s in his 30s and to me it’s like, why would have to worry about what your mother thinks. But anyway, so that’s how it stands. Sometimes when people ask me if I have any children I say “well, they died.” And I’ll tell you one other thing. That’s actually what it’s kind of like. Because you don’t— it would have been easier for me— I don’t begrudge them their lives— but it would have been easier for me if they had died because there would be closure and you would be forced to move on, but you never move
on this way. You can’t. You just can’t. And um, I think my health has gotten a lot worse since all this, since twenty years ago. I’m a lot more disabled than I was then. And people say, “Oh well, in ten years maybe he’ll search.” But if he waits until his adoptive mom says yes, or until she passes away, I think she’ll probably outlive me. I don’t think that's going to happen. He would have to want to. And I guess he just doesn’t want to badly enough.

I’m sorry you had to deal with all of this.

Yeah, well, as far as I’m concerned, there isn’t much life left. This is what it does to you, and this is what lies and Christian assholes who pretend to be so self-righteous do to you.

Can you tell me more about that agency? Did they ask for any specific things or information from you? Or did they mostly just let you talk, or did they just mostly talk to you? Like, what happened around that agency?

I don’t know that I can even answer that. I don’t remember a lot, but now I’m learning that that statement that they made to HRS about letting me talk to my family is totally false. Um, so she made that up to keep me from, you know, finding somebody else. Basically, it looks like she lied about a lot of things. She apparently colluded with HRS. I don’t know what she thought she was gaining by that. Maybe she thought I would sign her over to that agency in order to keep HRS from having anything to do with it. Um, I had some contact mostly with her. I didn’t really meet anyone else in the agency. Just her. She brought over some [potential adoptive parents] and some people from time to time and I would look at them. I can’t say for sure that she said, “you must give your child up.” It’s like she kind of plotted to make it so that I would have to.

In what specific ways did she plot that? She took advantage of any offhand comment you might have made, or anything about your life situation or anything like that.

Well, I don’t really know. It’s just the statements that she made afterward, and the way she acted. I know that she did say things— I didn’t hear much from her. By the time we were in court she was making statements like, in court, when the judge would ask her something and she would say, “She was just a typical birthmother.” First of all, you’re not a fucking birthmother until you’ve given birth. So she was already, I don’t know. That’s all I can really say.

She had just decided long before the birth that you had fit a certain role and she was going to put you in it despite the fact that it was not what you wanted and not what you agreed to.

Apparently.

Do you live in Florida, now?

Yes.

Where does your daughter live?
She lives on the other side of the state she lives on the west Coast, and I live on the east. On the day that I signed her away, it was run by these two Baptist, this couple, this older couple out of Hollywood. I don't know who founded it. Who founded Shepherd’s Care. But they came up, and Sue, the caseworker, were all in the house that I was living in, and they all sat down and they said, they didn’t hold a gun to my head. Basically at that point the duress was from the doctor, and from HRS. I didn’t really see it at that point coming from them, but looking back at it, I think there’s something. I don’t know what they did. This Sue, she’s really sketchy to me. I wouldn’t doubt it if she was colluding with the doctors. Um, you know, taking a situation like depression and saying, “She’s unfit,” Or something. And that supposed statement by the ultrasound tech. That maybe she took that. The thing is, in Florida, I don’t know if it was the same thing twenty years ago but I deal with a therapist and she said, you know, “if somebody is actually suicidal you’re not supposed to just go and whisper behind their back, you’re supposed to call somebody about it. Maybe 911 or something. You’re not supposed to go behind their back and plot to take their kid.”

Exactly. Were you in contact with Shepherd’s Care when they were doing the sonogram and you made the comment?

Yeah. I had already been in contact with them at that point. So I don’t know if maybe somehow maybe that woman at Shepherd’s Care talked to the doctors or did something Unless she did something, she called the doctor and did something about it. I can’t get any records about it. Because it’s been too long, I think the doctors that practice is no longer in practice anymore.

They definitely didn’t give you your records when it happened.

No, you know everything went on with the court case. Everything went on for almost a year. I was just in a daze. I was still angry and confused about why the doctor acted that way. I mean I wish there was something I could do about him. As far as I know he still works there, but it never occurred to me to try to get my records. You’re just full of fear, you’re full of anger. You just don’t think. I don’t even know if I would have had any kind of case against him. It was his word against mine. So what can you really do against people like that? And when he was doing his whole tirade in the room, I said, “I want to speak to your supervisor.” He said, “There’s no one higher than me. I am it.” And, you know, surely he had a boss. I’m sure he didn’t run the whole damn hospital. But I suppose these days they have patient advocates and stuff but I didn’t know anything about that. They take advantage of people who just don’t know their rights. The only thing I can say about the agency is that I’m, I don’t know, I do know that recently, they were nearly shut down by the state of Florida because of something they did that I saw on the internet. They’re still in practice, they’re still running. But supposedly there was a point in time several years ago where they were investigated by the state. Something about not having a proper translator for a Hispanic birthmother. From what I read, she signed away her kid but she didn’t understand what she was doing. And they were under investigation for it. Why they got cleared of that, I don’t know. I think the charges were dropped. They don’t have a spotless record by any means. And Hannah was eighteen, that was almost three years ago now. She sent a letter through the agency. The family, or the mother, the adoptive mother, had occasionally been sending me a little note and a picture through the agency. They had to go through the agency because I wasn’t supposed to know who they were and everything. But it was very difficult to get anythin
through because you had to call them, then you had to send the postage for anything that you wanted to send through the family, because, as they said, “We’re not a post office.” Real nasty. So um, anyway, I hadn’t heard from the mother for years and years. I had not heard from her since Hannah was about seven. So at eighteen, I hadn’t heard anything. At eighteen, Hannah sent a letter to me. When I tried to send a letter back, they said, “We don’t have a return address.” I thought, “what the hell, you just go something from her.” They said, “We don’t have a current address.” Well at that point, I kind of gave up and I thought, “Well, I’m going to have to find her. She’s eighteen so I’m going to have to find her.” And I tried for several years. I finally found her older, adopted sister, and I ended up writing a letter to her sister, and her sister gave her the letter, and then that’s how we got in touch. I was glad that the sister did that. But I guess she has been through a lot, and she waited like a year to write back when she got the letter from her sister. She was suffering from depression and stuff so she didn’t write right away. But that’s how, and in the meantime I had found out about her father and everything. I pretty much found out a lot about the family. Anyway, I guess, I don’t know if there’s anything you wanted to hear about the first one.

That was in your marriage?

In ’83 when I was married, yeah.

When you went into the hospital did you know that you were going to surrender?

Yeah, I knew that, yeah. Pretty much, pretty early on, I said to my husband, “I won’t abort but I’ll give him up for adoption if you want.” Because I was very afraid to be on my own when I was eighteen or nineteen. I grew up in the upper Midwest and then moved down, got married at eighteen and moved down to Florida to the military base. I didn’t want to go back to Wisconsin by myself and try to raise a kid. I didn’t get along with my family much. I didn’t want to go back and I didn’t think I could, I had nobody down her except Mark, so I didn’t feel like I could raise my son by myself in Florida. I just decided right on that I was going to give him up for adoption and you just kind of turn off your mind at that point. “I’m going to do this, I’m just doing to go through it.” I kind of have a dissociative disorder. Not full-blown, but it’s to the point where I have different compartments in my mind, and I can’t always access them. I can put myself in certain boxes and just not feel anything. So it was— that’s how I went about it with Chris, my son. Like a robot.

Did you mostly do that with social workers and hospital workers?

I only saw, during my pregnancy I only saw one woman from Children’s Home Society. She would come out to my house once and while and just get an update. She wasn’t pressuring me or anything. I think because I was married they didn’t really understand why I would do that. She had me write some things, non-identityfing information to give about you and your family to give to the new family. They said, and this was kind of strange, write what you want him to see when he’s eighteen if he were to go look in your file. I remember writing something, I asked about it later and they said, “Oh I don’t know, I don’t know what happened to it.” I don’t know if they threw it away. Anyway, um, as far as the hospital, when they found out I was relinquishing they
were really nasty to me. The nurses were really nasty. It was a long waiver, and he ended up being taken by forceps because I couldn’t push.

Did they let you see him?

At first, not really. But later they put me on a different floor, where he was. I remember I went down to see him and to look through the glass of the nursery but I was so committed to what I was doing that someone asked if I wanted to see him and I said, “I’d better not.” And I regret that. I thought that was what I had to do. I just dutifully went through with what I had to do, and my husband would never talk about it after that. He’s remarried now, and we both met the adoptive father and the stepmother. We’ve both met them and have spoken with them and we all seem to get along okay.

With my daughter, it was not voluntary for me. I was backed into a corner. I did not want her to get into the HRS system, Because I had heard a lot of stories about children being abused and killed in foster care and stuff like that. I felt like I didn’t, I had a lot against me, and I didn’t think they would let me have her back. And I had heard of people from these CPS agencies stealing children. I didn’t think they would let me have her back. Then she ended up going to people that abused her. It really was not good. The whole thing was not good at all. Well thank you for calling, I wish you the best of luck with your dissertation.

Thank you so much!
Appendix 2: Demonstration of Catholic Social Work Data Collection
Adoption Practices in Catholic Agencies

National Conference of Catholic Charities
1346 Connecticut Avenue N.W.
Washington D.C.
1957
PRELIMINARY INFORMATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Name of Agency: __________________________ Address: __________________________

Telephone Number: _______________________

1. Number of children placed in adoption in the following years:
   1951 _______ 1952 _______ 1953 _______

2. Number of adoptions legally completed in the following years:
   1951 _______ 1952 _______ 1953 _______

3. Does your agency or institution provide any other child care services besides placement of children in adoption? Please specify.

4. What is the size of your staff handling adoption work?
   1. Number of Professional Social Work Staff _______
   2. Number of Untrained Social Work Staff _______

5. How is your agency financed? If you have an adoption fee, on what basis was it fixed?

6. What are the main problems that you face in connection with adoption work?
   1. In your agency?
   2. In your community?

7. Is there any other Catholic agency or institution handling adoptions in your diocese? If so, please list name and address.

Date completed: __________ Signature: __________
ADOPTION STUDY SCHEDULE

SECTION I: GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Agency Name: ________________________________

2. Address: __________________________ City: __________ State: __________

3. We accept children from: (Check ✓ as many as apply)
   a. Diocese
   b. Several Dioceses
   c. Entire city
   d. County
   e. Interstate
   f. Statewide
   g. Other (Specify) ________________________________

4. In addition to adoption services we provide services to:
   (Check ✓)
   a. Unmarried mother
   b. Children in own or relatives home
   c. Children in foster homes
   d. Children in institutions
   e. Temporary shelter care to children
   f. All families needing case work
   g. Other services (specify) __________________________

5. Our agency is financed by: (Check ✓ as many as apply)
   a. Community Chest
   b. Individual contributions
   c. Special funds
   d. Catholic Charities Drive
   e. Public funds (Directly or reimbursed)
   f. Other (Specify) __________________________

6. These sources referred children to us in 1954. (Check ✓ as many answers as are applicable)
   a. Natural mother
   b. Natural father
   c. Both natural parents
   d. Public agencies
   e. Private agencies
   f. Interested people in community
   g. Clergy
   h. Other (specify) __________________________

7. Our greatest number of referrals of children in 1954 came from:
   (Check ✓ only one answer)
   a. Natural mother
   b. Natural father
   c. Both natural parents
   d. Public agencies
   e. Private agencies
   f. Interested people in community
   g. Clergy
   h. Other (specify) __________________________

8. These sources referred adoptive parents to us: (Check ✓ as many answers as are applicable)
   a. Public agencies
   b. Private agencies
   c. Interested people in community
   d. Physicians
   e. Clergy
   f. Lawyers
   g. Natural parents
   h. Other (Specify) __________________________

VOLUME OF SERVICE

Services to Adoptive Child

1. Number of children referred to us for adoption in:
   1951  1952  1953  1954

2. Number of children placed in adoptive homes by us:
   1951  1952  1953  1954

3. Number of adoptions legally completed in:
   1951  1952  1953  1954

4. Number of children replaced in new adoptive homes in 1954

Volume of Services to Adoptive Applicants

1. Number of Adoption Inquiries in 1954

2. Number of intake studies (no home studies) completed in 1954

3. Number of couples rejected on basis of intake study (without home study) 1954

4. Number of couples accepted for home study after intake study, 1954

5. Number of intake studies plus home studies completed in 1954

6. Number of couples rejected as adoptive parents on basis of home study, 1954

7. Number of couples approved as adoptive parents, 1954

8. Number of intake studies pending at the end of 1954

9. Number of Home Studies pending at the end of 1954
SECTION III: AGENCY SERVICES TO CHILD

Requirements for Adoptive Services

Agency requirements for adoptive services vary. Would you please check (✓) each statement in the following list either "Yes," or "No," Where further information is requested of you, please fill in the blank space.

1. We have a minimum age (child) for adoption.  Yes  No
   This age is ____________

2. We have a maximum age (child) for adoption.  Yes  No
   This age is ____________

3. We place only children of certain races.  Yes  No
   These races are ____________________________

4. We place:  Yes  No
   - Negro children
   - Puerto Rican children
   - Mexican children
   - Indian children
   - Oriental children
   - Children of mixed races

5. We place only children of Catholic parents.  Yes  No

6. We place the children of:  Yes  No
   - unmarried mothers
   - married parents
   - separated and divorced parents

7. We place only children that are physically fit.  Yes  No
   Our decision on physical fitness is based on ________________________

8. We place only children of average intelligence or better.  Yes  No
   Our decision on mental condition is based on ________________________

9. We consider children for adoption even though the family background includes:
   - History of mental illness  Yes  No
   - History of mental deficiency  Yes  No
   - Neurological defects  Yes  No
   - Incest  Yes  No
   - Epilepsy  Yes  No
   - Tuberculosis  Yes  No
   - Venereal diseases  Yes  No
   - Other negative factors  Yes  No

10. We try to place all children for adoption without any restrictive requirements.  Yes  No

11. We have some comments on the questions in this section which we would like to make:

Agency Practices

Here is a list of some Agency Practices. Would you please check (✓) each statement in accordance with what your agency does in such cases. Where further information is requested of you, please fill in the blank space.

1. Prior to adoption we place children temporarily in
   Foster Home  Yes  No
   Nursery  Yes  No
   Dependent children's institution  Yes  No
   Hospital  Yes  No
   Infant Home  Yes  No

2. Children of the same family are always placed together in the same adoptive home.  Yes  No

3. We never place a child for adoption before the age of ____________ days ____________ weeks ____________ months.  Yes  No

4. We sometimes refuse to accept children for adoption services.
   The reason is ________________________  Yes  No

5. Children who are removed from adoption homes are placed temporarily in:
   Foster Home  Yes  No
   Dependent children's institution  Yes  No
   Other (What?)  Yes  No

6. Children are always given psychological tests before adoptive placement.  Yes  No

7. Children testing below average but not mentally deficient are considered for adoptive placement with similarly limited parents.  Yes  No

8. Our agency has a minimum age for testing babies.  Yes  No
   This age is ____________
9. Our psychologist is asked to make a recommendation in regard to the child's placeability.

(Have you checked "Yes" or "No" for every statement in Section III? Thank you.)

SECTION IV: AGENCY SERVICES TO ADOPTIVE PARENTS

Method of Study

Would you please check (✓) each statement in this list either "Yes" or "No" in accordance with what your agency does. Where further information is requested of you, please fill in the blank space.

1. Our intake (beginning) interviews are conducted with: woman alone man alone both together Yes No

2. The usual number of intake interviews per case at our agency is

3. Most of our rejections take place in the intake study of the applicants.

4. We notify the referring source what disposition we have made of the application of prospective adoptive parents

5. Our home study interviews are conducted in: our offices the home both places

6. We contact all references.

7. Our method of contacting references is usually by: letter phone a combination of these

8. Our agency holds group meetings with applicants.

These group meetings are usually held when

9. We keep waiting lists of applicants for a fixed period only. This period is

Requirements for Adoptive Applicants

Agency requirements for adoptive applicants vary. Would you please check (✓) each statement in this list either "Yes" or "No". Where further information is requested of you, please fill in the blank space.

1. We have a minimum age for adoptive mothers. Yes No
   This age is: mother father

2. We have a maximum age for adoptive mothers. Yes No
   This age is: mother father

3. Sometimes we place a child in families of a mixed marriage. This is done when

4. We place children only in the homes of practicing Catholic couples. Yes No
   To determine Catholicity we

5. We accept adoptive parents who are: single married separated divorced remarried widow

6. We never accept couples who have their own children.

7. If a couple is childless, a medical report on the infertility is required.

8. We require that our adoptive families have some financial stability. Yes No
   We usually require

9. We only accept adoptive parents, both of whom are in good physical health.

10. We accept only parents who can offer adequate housing. Yes No
    Our definition of adequate housing is
11. We have a geographical limitation on adoptive parents.  
   We take only residents of _____________.

12. We accept only parents who are American born or naturalized citizens.

13. We only accept adoptive parents who have been married for a certain number of years or more.  
   They must be married at least ______ years.

14. We have some requirements for adoptive parents that haven’t been listed here.  
   Our requirements include _____________.

**Agency Policies**

Here is a list of some agency practices. Would you please check (✓) each statement: “Yes” or “No” in accordance with what your agency does. Where further information is requested of you, please fill in the blank space.

1. We allow prospective adoptive parents to choose among several children.  
   Yes  No

2. We ask prospective adoptive parents whether they will tell the child he is adopted.

3. In our agency we require that adoptive parents tell the child he is adopted.

4. If the prospective parents have children of their own, these are included in our agency study.

5. We give adoptive parents a complete background history of the child.  
   Explain _____________.

6. We contact other agencies for information about prospective parents.

7. When we reject an applicant we always explain our reasons.

8. We refer rejected applicants to other adoption agencies.

9. Psychological tests are always given to prospective parents.

10. We consider the following factors important when we select adoptive parents for a child:
   - Physical resemblance to child
   - Level of intelligence
   - Cultural background
   - Educational background
   - Religious practices
   - Temperamental needs
   - Racial needs
   - Nationality background
   - Geographic separation from natural parents
   - Physical characteristics of the child’s family

11. The final decision as to whether to approve the adoptive home is made by:
   - Worker
   - Supervisor
   - Worker and supervisor
   - Board of Directors
   - Advisory Committee
   - Other (who?) _____________.

12. We limit the number of children to be placed in a family.  
   Our limit is _____________.

13. We have an adoption fee for families.  
   It is based upon _____________.

**Agency Criteria of Suitability of Adoptive Parents**

Here is a list of items that various agencies consider important in choosing adoptive parents. Would you place a “1” before the item you consider most important, a “2” after the second most important item, and so on through “5”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employment stability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional stability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital stability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge and practice of Catholic faith</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjustment to childlessness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire of both parents to adopt child</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to love a child</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfactory previous experience with children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence to provide physical needs of child</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (what?)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Legal Aspects of Agency Policy

Would you please check (✓) each statement in the following list either "Yes" or "No". If further information is requested of you, please fill in the blank space.

1. We take legal custody of the child before adoption. 

2. A public agency takes legal custody of the child. 

3. We pay the attorney's fees at time of adoption. 

4. We issue corrected baptismal certificates after legal adoption. 

5. We give a copy of the corrected birth certificate to the adoptive parents. 

6. We permit the adoptive parents to change the child's baptismal name. 

7. We have a fixed period of supervision after the child is placed in the adoptive home. This time period is 

8. The legal period of supervision is 

(Have you completed every statement in Section IV? Thank you.)

SOME GENERAL QUESTIONS

Here are some items many agencies are interested in. Would you please check (✓) "Yes" or "No" after each statement, and give any further information which you may have.

1. We are making a special effort to place children of minority groups. Some of the ways we do this are 

2. We think that there is extensive adoption of children in our area without agency supervision. Our guess would be that of all children adopted in this area last year were placed independently.

3. We have a public relations program. Some of the groups we try to reach are 

APPENDIX B

Letter Requesting Preliminary Information for Adoption Study

Letter to Agencies Selected to Test Schedule

Letter to Agencies Selected to Participate in Study
LETTER TO AGENCIES SELECTED FOR PARTICIPATION IN STUDY

NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC CHARITIES
1346 Connecticut Avenue, N.W. Washington 6, D.C.

July 18, 1955

Your agency has been selected by methods of scientific sampling to participate in the study of adoption practices. The Adoption Committee has been working since late in February on the enclosed schedule which they feel will produce the kind of information about adoption that our Catholic Charities agencies have been seeking during the past few years. The schedule has been tested by about a dozen agencies. They found that it was comprehensive and also quite easy to answer.

We are hoping that you will be able to complete this schedule within two weeks so that it can be returned to our office by August 1. We are enclosing an extra copy of the schedule which you may want to keep in your agency files.

The results of this important study, the first of its kind in the Catholic field, depends upon the care and accuracy with which you complete the schedule. Since we are anxious to develop a useful report on adoption in Catholic agencies we are counting on you to give us full data as it is requested regarding the practices of your agency. If you have any questions or if you wish to elaborate upon some of your replies you may do so on an extra page at the top of which you might identify your agency by name.

We are deeply grateful to you for cooperating with us in this important study, the results of which will be shared with you both in workshops and in a published report.

Sincerely yours,

/\ (Rev.) Joseph P. Springob
Chairman, Director of Catholic Charities
Member, Adoption Committee

APPENDIX C

Tables A-1 Through A-30
### Table A-1a

**SOURCE OF FINANCES OF 111 AGENCIES RECEIVING FUNDS FROM COMMUNITY CHEST**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Finances</th>
<th>Number of Agencies</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
<th>Large</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Small</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total*</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Chest only</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Chest and individual contributions</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Chest and special funds</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Chest and Catholic Charities Drive</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Chest and public funds</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Chest, individual contributions, special funds</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Chest, Catholic Charities Drive, public funds</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Chest, Catholic Charities Drive, public funds and other sources</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Chest, Catholic Charities Drive and other sources except public funds</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Chest, public funds and other sources except Catholic Charities Drive</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Data for medium and small agencies based on a 50 percent sample.

### Table A-1b

**SOURCE OF FINANCES OF 23 AGENCIES RECEIVING NO COMMUNITY CHEST FUNDS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Finances</th>
<th>Number of Agencies</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
<th>Large</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Small</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total*</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual contributions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special funds</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Charities Drive</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual contributions, Catholic Charities Drive</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual contributions, public funds</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual contributions, special funds, public funds</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual contributions, Catholic Charities, public funds, special funds</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual contributions, Catholic Charities, public funds</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special funds, public funds</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Charities, public funds</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Data for medium and small agencies based on a 50 percent sample.

### Table A-2

**VOLUME OF SERVICE TO ADOPTIVE CHILDREN IN LARGE ADOPTIVE AGENCIES—1952-1954**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Referrals 75-99</th>
<th>100-199</th>
<th>200 or more</th>
<th>No Reply</th>
<th>Placements 75-99</th>
<th>100-199</th>
<th>200 or more</th>
<th>No Reply</th>
<th>Adoptions Completed 75-99</th>
<th>100-199</th>
<th>200 or more</th>
<th>No Reply</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE A-3
**VOLUME OF SERVICE TO ADOPTIVE CHILDREN IN MEDIUM SIZE ADOPTIVE AGENCIES, 1952-1954**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Referrals</th>
<th>Placements</th>
<th>Adoptions Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0-24</td>
<td>25-74</td>
<td>75-149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Based on 50 percent sample.

### TABLE A-4
**VOLUME OF SERVICE TO ADOPTIVE CHILDREN IN SMALL AGENCIES, 1952-1954**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Referrals</th>
<th>Placements</th>
<th>Adoptions Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Based on 50 percent sample.

### TABLE A-5
**SOURCES REFERRING CHILDREN, 1954**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Referral</th>
<th>Number of Agencies</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
<th>Large</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Small</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>60*</td>
<td>62*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All sources listed</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All sources listed except natural father or both natural parents</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested persons</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural mother, public agencies</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All sources listed except natural father, public and private agencies, interested persons</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All sources listed except public or private agencies</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural mother, public and private agencies</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (to be specified)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy and private agencies only</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Data from medium size and small agencies based on a 50 percent sample.

* Questionnaire listed as possible sources of referral:
  - Natural mother
  - Public agencies
  - Clergy and private agencies only
  - Interested persons of community
  - Both natural parents
  - Other (to be specified)
### TABLE A-6

**PRIMARY SOURCE OF REFERRALS OF CHILDREN, 1954**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Referral</th>
<th>Number of Agencies</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
<th>Large</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Small</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural mother</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both natural parents</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public agencies and courts</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private agencies and INS</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested people in community</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No reply</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data from medium-size and small agencies based on a 50 percent sample. Includes Diocesan Adoption Pools and other diocesan offices.

### TABLE A-7

**ADOPTION INQUIRIES RECEIVED, 1954**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Inquiries</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Large</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Small</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0—24</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25—49</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50—99</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100—149</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150—199</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200—249</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250—299</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300—399</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400—499</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 or more</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No reply</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data from medium-size and small agencies based on a 50 percent sample.

### TABLE A-8

**SERVICE ON ADOPTIVE APPLICATIONS IN LARGE AGENCIES, 1954**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Applications</th>
<th>Intake Studies Completed</th>
<th>Rejections on Basis of Intake Study</th>
<th>Acceptances for Home Study</th>
<th>Rejections on basis of Home Study</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0—9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10—24</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25—49</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50—74</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75—99</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>100—149</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150—199</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200—249</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250—299</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300—399</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400—499</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 or more</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>No reply</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE A-9

**ADOPTIVE APPLICATION STUDIES PENDING IN LARGE AGENCIES, END OF 1954**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Agencies</th>
<th>Intake Studies</th>
<th>Home Studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0—9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10—24</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25—49</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50—74</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75—99</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100—149</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150—199</td>
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<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200—249</td>
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<tr>
<td>No reply</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data from medium-size and small agencies based on a 50 percent sample.*
### TABLE A-10
SERVICE ON ADOPTIVE APPLICATIONS IN MEDIUM SIZE AGENCIES, 1954

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Applications</th>
<th>Intake Studies Completed</th>
<th>Rejections on Basis of Intake Study</th>
<th>Acceptances on Basis of Home Study</th>
<th>Rejections on Basis of Home Study</th>
<th>Approvals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>60 100</td>
<td>60 100</td>
<td>60 100</td>
<td>60 100</td>
<td>60 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0—9</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10—24</td>
<td>4 7</td>
<td>12 20</td>
<td>6 10</td>
<td>14 23</td>
<td>14 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25—49</td>
<td>8 13</td>
<td>12 19</td>
<td>12 19</td>
<td>10 17</td>
<td>10 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50—74</td>
<td>2 3</td>
<td>2 3</td>
<td>2 3</td>
<td>2 3</td>
<td>2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75—99</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100—149</td>
<td>4 7</td>
<td>6 10</td>
<td>6 10</td>
<td>6 10</td>
<td>6 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150—199</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200—249</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250—299</td>
<td>2 3</td>
<td>2 3</td>
<td>2 3</td>
<td>2 3</td>
<td>2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 or more</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No reply</td>
<td>6 10</td>
<td>8 13</td>
<td>8 13</td>
<td>8 13</td>
<td>8 13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Based on 50 percent sample.

### TABLE A-12
SERVICE ON ADOPTIVE APPLICATIONS IN SMALL AGENCIES, 1954

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Applications</th>
<th>Intake Studies Completed</th>
<th>Rejections on Basis of Intake Study</th>
<th>Acceptances on Basis of Home Study</th>
<th>Rejections on Basis of Home Study</th>
<th>Approvals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>62 100</td>
<td>62 100</td>
<td>62 100</td>
<td>62 100</td>
<td>62 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0—9</td>
<td>9 15</td>
<td>12 19</td>
<td>12 19</td>
<td>10 17</td>
<td>10 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25—49</td>
<td>4 6</td>
<td>4 6</td>
<td>4 6</td>
<td>4 6</td>
<td>4 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50—74</td>
<td>9 15</td>
<td>9 15</td>
<td>9 15</td>
<td>9 15</td>
<td>9 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75—99</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100—149</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150—199</td>
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<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
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<td>200—249</td>
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<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250—299</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 or more</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No reply</td>
<td>28 45</td>
<td>28 45</td>
<td>28 45</td>
<td>28 45</td>
<td>28 45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Based on 50 percent sample.

### TABLE A-11
ADOPTIVE APPLICATION STUDIES PENDING IN MEDIUM SIZE AGENCIES, END OF 1954

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Agencies</th>
<th>Intake Studies</th>
<th>Home Studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. %</td>
<td>No. %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>60 100</td>
<td>60 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0—9</td>
<td>22 37</td>
<td>10 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10—24</td>
<td>8 13</td>
<td>8 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25—49</td>
<td>19 17</td>
<td>8 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50—74</td>
<td>4 7</td>
<td>4 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75—99</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100—149</td>
<td>4 7</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150—199</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200—249</td>
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<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>250—299</td>
<td>0 0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 or more</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No reply</td>
<td>22 37</td>
<td>10 17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Based on 50 percent sample.

### TABLE A-13
ADOPTIVE APPLICATION STUDIES PENDING IN SMALL AGENCIES, END OF 1954

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Agencies</th>
<th>Intake Studies</th>
<th>Home Studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. %</td>
<td>No. %</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>62 100</td>
<td>62 100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0—9</td>
<td>24 39</td>
<td>34 53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10—24</td>
<td>4 6</td>
<td>10 17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25—49</td>
<td>4 6</td>
<td>4 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50—74</td>
<td>9 15</td>
<td>9 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75—99</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
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<tr>
<td>100—149</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
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<tr>
<td>150—199</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
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<tr>
<td>200—249</td>
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<tr>
<td>250—299</td>
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<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 or more</td>
<td>0 0</td>
<td>0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No reply</td>
<td>22 37</td>
<td>28 45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Based on 50 percent sample.
### TABLE A-14
MINIMUM AGE AT WHICH CHILD CAN BE PLACED FOR ADOPTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum Age Required</th>
<th>Agencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Reply</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Age</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 weeks to 1 month</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 months to 6 months</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 months to 3 months</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 months to 4 months</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Data for medium size and small agencies based on a 50 percent sample.

### TABLE A-15
MAXIMUM AGE AT WHICH CHILD CAN BE PLACED FOR ADOPTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maximum Age Established</th>
<th>Agencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Reply</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Age</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years or less</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years, less than 10</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 years, less than 15</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 15 years</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Data for medium size and small agencies based on a 50 percent sample.
### TABLE A-17
**Placement of Children by Physical Fitness by Catholic Adoption Agencies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement of Physical Fitness</th>
<th>Agencies</th>
<th>Total*</th>
<th>Large</th>
<th>Medium*</th>
<th>Small*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Required</td>
<td></td>
<td>58</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Required</td>
<td></td>
<td>78</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Data for medium and small agencies based on a 50 percent sample.

### TABLE A-18
**Basis for Decision on Physical Fitness by Catholic Adoption Agencies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basis for Decision</th>
<th>Number of Agencies Reporting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical opinion</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical opinion, ability of adoptive parents to cope with problem</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Ideal Norms&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical opinion, availability of adoptive parents</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical and psychiatric opinion</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Data for medium and small agencies based on a 50 percent sample.
### TABLE A-22
**Minimum Age of Placement for Adoption by Catholic Adoption Agencies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minimum Age of Placement</th>
<th>Number of Agencies*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 10 days</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ten days, less than 20 days</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twenty days, less than 30 days</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One month, less than 2 months</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two months, less than 3 months</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three months, less than 6 months</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No reply</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Data for medium size and small agencies based on a 50 percent sample.

### TABLE A-21
**Background Factors Which Preclude Adoptive Placement by Catholic Adoption Agencies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Background Factor</th>
<th>Large</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Small</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Epilepsy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incest</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Mental Deficiency</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neurological Defect</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of Mental Illness</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veneral Disease</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuberculosis</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Negative Factor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Data for medium size and small agencies based on a 50 percent sample.

### TABLE A-13
**Reasons for Refusal of Catholic Agencies to Accept Children for Adoption Service**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason for Refusal</th>
<th>Number Total</th>
<th>Number Large</th>
<th>Number Medium</th>
<th>Number Small</th>
<th>Number Small</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Severe physical or mental handicap</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child reported as not compatible with family or religion</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incest</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent alcoholism</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent drug addiction</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent criminal</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other negative factor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Data for medium size and small agencies based on a 50 percent sample.

**Note:** Data for large and small agencies based on a 50 percent sample.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Large</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Small</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>68</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Table A.34**

**Psychological testing of all children before adoption:**

- Psychological testing of all children before adoption was reported.
- Psychological testing was performed by professionals.

**Recommendations for Psychological Testing:**

- Psychoeducational testing is recommended for children with intellectual disabilities.
- A psychological evaluation is recommended for children with special needs.

**Agency Position:**

- Total: 124
- No. of agencies reporting: 100
- No. of agencies reporting total: 90
- No. of agencies reporting medium: 60
- No. of agencies reporting small: 40
- No. of agencies reporting large: 20
### TABLE A-27
MAXIMUM AGE STIPULATED FOR ADOPTIVE MOTHERS AND FATHERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maximum Age</th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Father</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of Agencies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30–37</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38–39</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40–44</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 and over</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 and over</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Data for medium and small agencies based on a 50 percent sample.

** Mothers—50 years of age

Fathers—32 years of age

### TABLE A-28
FIVE MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS IN DETERMINING SUITABILITY OF ADOPTIVE PARENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Number of Agencies Selecting these Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1st Choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge and practice of Catholic Faith</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire of both parents to adopt child</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital stability</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proven ability to rear child</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Data from medium size and small agencies based on a 50 percent sample.

** One large and one medium size agency selected only a first choice—knowledge and practice of the Catholic faith.

* Seventeen agencies gave as third choice "adjustment to childlessness."

* Employment stability was named as fourth choice by 10 agencies, fifth by 3.

* Ten agencies are not represented; this item not having being completed by three medium size and two small agencies.
### TABLE A-30
Factors Considered Important in Selecting Adoptive Parents by Catholic Adoption Agencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Number of Agencies</th>
<th>Per cent of all agencies considering factor important</th>
<th>&quot;Other factors&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;None of these&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of intelligence</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious practice</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>96</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical resemblance of child</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>96</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social needs</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>84</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographical separation from</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>93</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>cultural parent</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>91</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational background*</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>91</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temperamental needs*</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>89</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationality background</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>88</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical characteristics of</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>83</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>child's family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Data for medium size and small agencies based on a 50 percent sample.

** 104 agencies (85%) list all factors as important.

* 2 large agencies do not consider these factors important.

+ Considered important by every one of the large and 18 medium size agencies. Of the small agencies two do not consider the item important; 10 failed to reply.

### TABLE A-30
Requirements for Adoptive Applicants of Catholic Adoption Agencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirements</th>
<th>Percentage of Total</th>
<th>Number of Agencies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimum age for mother</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum age for father</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum age for mother</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum age for father</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous Catholic marriage</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married couple</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good physical health</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial stability</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate housing</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residency</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States citizenship</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage for minimum number of years</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other requirements</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Data for medium size and small agencies based on a 50 percent sample.