

Thy Children Own Their Birth

Diasporic genealogies and the descendants
of Canada's Home Children

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The title for this thesis is taken from an early version of what is now Canada's national anthem, *Oh Canada*. The version in question was written by Dr Thomas Bedford Richardson in 1906 (Department of Canadian Heritage website, accessed 21/06/2006).

Abstract

My research explores the cultural practices and identities of the descendants of an estimated 100,000 children who were despatched to Canada, unaccompanied by their parents, and under the auspices of a number of British charities, between 1869 and the late 1940s. It investigates the relationship between the descendants' individual and collective projects of recovery and commemoration and wider issues of postcolonial nationhood, ethnicity, and culture. It also focuses on the relationships between personal, family, national, and transnational identities, and on the ways in which the so called Home Children are being commemorated in contemporary Canada amongst competing cultural and political agendas.

During two extended trips to Canada, I conducted fifty nine in-depth interviews and two group interviews that allowed me to obtain an insight into the identities, experiences and attitudes of the descendants of Home Children. In this thesis I will discuss the findings of this research. I will report on the ways in which personal and wider senses of identity, ethnicity, and nationhood are produced and expressed through the activities of descendants who are attempting to research and recover unknown family histories and places of origin of ancestors.

KEYWORDS: Home Children; child migration; Canada; diaspora; genealogy; memory; identity

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Introduction

In 1976, Alex Haley's *Roots* was first published. A novel based on the author's search for his family origins, it took the reader through six generations of Haley's family, from eighteenth century West Africa to North America two hundred years later. The book was an enormous success – it saw Haley being awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1977 and spawned a television mini series, the final instalment of which became one of the most watched shows in US television history (Wikipedia online encyclopedia, accessed 31/05/2006). It has been argued that *Roots* also sparked the great interest in family history that characterises so many in North America today and, consequently, some have even described Haley as the “father of popular genealogy” (Kunta Kinte – Alex Haley Foundation website, accessed 01/06/2006). Thirty years on from the publication of *Roots*, it seems that genealogy is more popular than ever, with the Internet, in particular, responsible for attracting more and more to conduct family history research. And, it is within this context that my research subjects – the descendants of Canada's Home Children – are to be found. This thesis explores the cultural practices and identities of those descendants who are researching this particular aspect of their family history. It considers the relationships between their individual and collective projects of recovery and commemoration and wider issues of postcolonial nationhood, ethnicity, culture and belonging in Canada.

‘Home Children’ is the name given to the 100,000 child migrants who were transported from Britain to Canada, unaccompanied by parents and under the auspices of dozens of charitable organisations between 1869 and the late 1940s.¹ Contrary to

¹ Given that these children had often been homeless on the streets of Britain's cities and were then placed thousands of miles away from their home nation when they were sent to Canada, it is ironic that they were given the collective label of ‘Home Children.’ However, it is the various institutions where the children were placed before they were sent over to Canada, that are the ‘Homes’ being referred to here.

popular belief, only around one third of the children were orphans, while most were under the age of fourteen (Parr, 2000, p. 11). Child migration was seen as a way of 'saving' children from the 'immorality' of city life and of dealing with child poverty in the newly industrialised cities of Britain, while, at the same time, providing cheap farm labourers and domestic helpers in the Dominion. The contributions of the sending organisations varied, from that of Barnardo's, which sent approximately thirty thousand children, to the part played by much smaller, localised charities which may have sent only a handful of children. The British Government was also involved, and children were sent by various Poor Law Unions, as well as by Reformatories, Industrial Schools and Ragged Schools, while the Canadian Government provided incentives in the form of subsidies in order to encourage the immigration of children who were viewed as 'good British racial stock' (Kohli, 2003; Parr, 2000; Wagner, 1982).

While the majority of the Home Children are no longer living, it is estimated that as many as 11.5% of the Canadian population are their descendants (Home Children Canada website, 2005a, accessed 05/04/2006). Many of these descendants now address long-standing questions of identity and belonging through an interest in family history and genealogical research. What is more, while the experiences of the Home Children were overlooked for many years, the publication of personal accounts by the likes of Bagnell (1980, republished 2001) and Harrison (1979, republished 2003) and the subsequent establishment of a number of voluntary organisations such as Home Children Canada and Quarriers Canadian Family mark a relatively recent shift towards addressing, acknowledging, and commemorating the over-looked histories of child migration, child labour and social marginalisation.² Organisations such as those mentioned above challenge the stigma of being a Home Child, record the experiences of Home Children, re-value and affirm their contribution to national history, help their

² Quarriers, a Scottish charity, sent approximately seven thousand children to Canada.

descendants access records of their family history and origins, hold reunions, and involve themselves in web-based networks which link the descendants of Home Children to each other. Furthermore, the charities that were involved in child migration, as well as the British and Canadian Governments, after many years of ignoring the issue, have begun to take more proactive roles in supporting Home Children and their descendants as they try to locate their roots and trace living relatives in Canada and Great Britain.

My thesis is concerned with those descendants of the child migrants who have an interest in their Home Child roots, whether individually or collectively as part of certain identifiable descendants' groups. More specifically, they are those descendants of Home Children who I was able to meet during two extended stays in Canada between November 2003 and August 2005. As I will go on to discuss in Chapter Two, I utilised a variety of techniques to recruit these people, although the majority of my meetings were facilitated by four Canadian gatekeepers. These gatekeepers were not only descendants of Home Children themselves, but they also played an active role in what I term the descendants' community. As such, I saw them as the best means of access to the descendants that I wished to speak to. Three of my gatekeepers were founders of what can be viewed as some of the key descendants' groups that exist in Canada today – Home Children Canada, the Hazelbrae Barnardo Home Memorial Group and the web-based British Home Children Mailing List – while the fourth was heavily involved in researching the Home Children and sharing her expertise in this regard.

My research is underpinned by a detailed analysis of a number of academic theories. Central is my examination of debates surrounding the complex notion of diaspora. This term has received a great deal of attention in the social sciences in recent years. Much research has focused on the production of diasporic identities and the ways

in which memories, traditions and cultural practices are reproduced and reworked within distinct ethnic communities. I utilise my discussion of this term as a means of situating my research subjects in the context of contemporary Canada and Britain. I also consider the importance of individual and collective memory in shaping identity and highlight the ways in which society seems increasingly preoccupied with its attempts to remember the past. Of course, this is particularly evident when one considers the fascination that so many now have with genealogical research, and debates surrounding this line of enquiry are also pivotal to my research. In terms of the peculiarities of my own research subjects, it could be argued that they are far from unique when placed in the context of the many diaspora groups that exist and a society that is obsessed with commemoration. However, while that may be true to a certain extent, the descendants of the Home Children still exhibit many distinctive characteristics that are worthy of consideration. I draw attention to these by means of a detailed analysis of their personal, family, national and transnational identities. I not only look at how descendants conduct their own family history research – I have described this in my title as diasporic genealogies – but I also address the ways in which they attempt to commemorate the Home Children more generally amongst the competing cultural and political agendas that exist in contemporary Canada.

The Canada of today is far removed from the ‘white settler society’ that the Home Children landed at in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Canada, at that time, was a British Dominion in which the ‘two founding nations’ of Great Britain and France loomed large. Little thought was given to the welfare of immigrant groups from elsewhere – many of whom were unofficially labelled as ‘non-preferred’ from the moment they entered the country – far less the country’s Aboriginal people (Knowles, 1997; Osborne, 1991; Stasiulis and Jhappan, 1995). The descendants of the Home Children, on the other hand, now find themselves in a country where it appears that

little cultural capital is to be gained from any association with Great Britain. Rather, it would seem that any celebration of Britishness may, in some quarters at least, be just as likely to generate feelings of shame concerning past ills brought on the country by a colonising power, as to foster any sense of pride in British roots.

It must, of course, be emphasised that national identity, irrespective of the country under discussion, is highly complex in nature. In Canada, such complexities were highlighted for me during two extended stays between 2003 and 2005. I had already been aware of the historical tensions that existed in the country between English and French-speaking Canada; tensions, incidentally, that show few signs of abating. However, I was also alerted to issues surrounding increased immigration from “non-traditional source countries in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America” (Bourne and Rose, 2001, p. 109). It would seem that the result of this has been an increase in inter-ethnic residential segregation and the “cultural avoidance of immigrant visible minorities” (Ley and Hiebert, 2001, p. 122) by the country’s ‘traditional’ white populations. This is particularly pronounced in larger urban conurbations such as Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal, which have witnessed the largest influx of immigrants in recent years. Allied to the problems of segregation, exclusion and racism caused by this influx, the country also has to face up to longer-standing issues generated by the continued discrimination that is suffered by many of Canada’s First Nations people (Peters, 2001; Rossiter and Wood, 2005). These, then, are just some examples of the difficulties faced in a country that is struggling to live up to the values of tolerance and justice that supposedly underpin the national psyche and that frame the official policy of multiculturalism that has been espoused by successive Canadian governments.³

³ For more on this subject see, for instance, Eva Mackey’s seminal text *The House of Difference: Cultural Politics and National Identity in Canada* (2002). Erin Manning’s *Ephemeral Territories: Representing Nation, Home, and Identity in Canada* (2003) provides further insight in this regard.

This contrast between ideal and experience was also illustrated, for me, when I visited the country's national museum: the Canadian Museum of Civilization, in Ottawa. Its website states that the museum is "committed to fostering in all Canadians a sense of their common identity and their shared past." Furthermore, it also "hopes to promote understanding between the various cultural groups that are part of Canadian society" (Canadian Museum of Civilization website, accessed 18/10/2006). And, in many ways, the museum achieves exactly this: it allows the visitor to walk through thousands of years of Canadian history and revel in the diversity that undoubtedly exists in the country. However, most strikingly, it also places great emphasis on the role that Canada's First Nations people have played in its history; so much so, in fact, that the hugely impressive Grand Hall of the museum, together with the First Peoples Hall, are dedicated to the enormous contribution that they have made in this regard. Yet these same First Nations people continue to be marginalised from Canadian society at large. They still find themselves alienated, socially and economically, from the rest of the country, just as they did when the Home Children arrived in the country one hundred years ago and more. And, it is wider truths such as these which must be acknowledged when one comes to consider another marginalised group in Canadian history such as the Home Children. While the often tragic story of these children should certainly be documented, and the multifarious effects on their descendants considered, one must still place the experiences of both within their context. The discrimination that the Home Children had to face, and the stigma that their descendants have often struggled to shake off, are not comparable with the ongoing struggles that many Canadians continue to face today because of their ethnic origins and the colour of their skin. This observation must be emphasised at the outset.

While wider debates about Canadian identity boil beneath the surface of much that is written in this thesis, my research focuses, more specifically, on the (newly

discovered) familial connections and identifications with Britain (or, more specifically, with its constituent nations) that exist for my interviewees. It also highlights how these often problematise perceptions with regard to personal and national identities. Given its focus on the complexities of identity that exist over time and space, I would suggest that my research is of particular relevance to human geographers. However, it will also be of interest to surviving Home Children, their descendants, government and non-governmental organisations.

Thesis Structure

The first chapter of my thesis provides the context for the substantive chapters that follow. *Child migration and the 'diasporan imagination'* begins with a discussion of the history of child migration that places it in the context of nineteenth and twentieth century Britain and Canada. It then goes on to provide a detailed analysis of the concept of diaspora and suggests that both the Home Children and their descendants can be studied within such a framework. It also focuses on debates surrounding ideas of individual and collective memory and these lead into a discussion of the importance of genealogical research in society today. Chapter Two, as its title suggests, outlines and assesses the various methods that I used to conduct my research, both here in Britain and in 'the field' in Canada.

Chapters Three to Five discuss my own particular research findings and are largely based on a detailed analysis of transcripts from interviews and group meetings conducted in the UK and Canada. *Being bitten by the bug* looks at how descendants of child migrants are drawn to conduct genealogical research in the first place. It discusses the various reasons that my interviewees give for carrying out their research and highlights the enthusiasm that many show for the task. It also analyses what I describe

as the descendants' community and considers the powerful effect that this has in generating interest in Home Child roots.

Through adversity to the stars delves deeper into the personal stories of my interviewees and attempts to provide a sense of the conflicting opinions that descendants have with regard to their family backgrounds. It discusses how many of my interviewees celebrate their ancestors' ability to succeed despite the long odds that they faced as children, but goes on to temper this with an analysis of the many negative consequences of child migration, both on the migrants themselves and also on their descendants. It also considers the varied reactions of descendants to what happened to their Home Child ancestors, from those who argue for some form of reparative justice, to those who wish to celebrate the achievements of the Home Children and redress a balance that, in their opinion, air brushes their ancestors out of Canadian history.

While Chapters Three and Four concentrate on the personal, family and group identities of my research subjects, Chapter Five – *Imagining Britain* – widens the focus and shifts attention to issues surrounding national and transnational identity. More specifically, this chapter consider the ways in which my interviewees situate themselves in contemporary Canada and Britain. It discusses the trips 'home' to Britain that descendants often make and examines the relationships that are (re)established with relatives in the 'Old Country.'

My conclusion brings together my thoughts on how descendants feel – both individually and collectively – about how they have been affected by what happened to their Home Child ancestors. It also focuses on the complexities of identity that I believe are reflected in my research subjects and comments, more generally, on issues of personal and national identity that affect society at large. Finally, some of the wider debates that can be informed by my research are considered and a number of ideas for future research are explored.

CHAPTER ONE

Child migration and the ‘diasporan imagination’

The Atlantic Ocean has, for centuries, been a space that has supported the flow of countless millions of people between Europe and the Americas. The personal and group identities that have subsequently been created as a consequence of such flows have been, and still are, highly complex in nature. In this chapter I shall study some of the theoretical arguments surrounding the identities of displaced peoples and their descendants as I attempt to gain a better understanding of my study group, the descendants of Home Children in Canada. However, before tackling some of the more abstract academic literature that is relevant to research of this nature, I will start by providing a relatively brief history of the child migration movement, thus providing a context for what follows. This will draw on a number of key texts that have been written in this regard, including Kohli (2003), Parr (2000) and Pinchbeck and Hewitt (1973). I will also place child migration in the context of the prevailing attitudes of the era in which it took place, and will reflect on how children were viewed by those in authority. In this way, I will show why such a policy was deemed an acceptable solution to the social and economic problems of the time.

As much historical research has already been conducted with regard to the lives of the child migrants, and as the main focus of my thesis is on the lives of their descendants, I do not wish to spend undue time dwelling on the history of child migration. Thus, in the second part of this chapter I will provide a theoretical framework for studying the descendants of the Home Children. More specifically, I will place my research subjects in the context of literature on diaspora. I will provide a detailed analysis of this complex notion, focussing on definitions of the term provided

by William Safran and Robin Cohen – as well as on more general commentaries from a number of academics including James Clifford (1997) and Paul Basu (2002) – and will apply such theoretical material to my research subjects as I attempt to highlight the unique aspects of their identities.

Having suggested that the descendants of the Home Children can be viewed as a diaspora, I will then go on to suggest that the interest in family history that characterises many of my interviewees is not peculiar to them. Rather, it seems that many people, whatever their background, are preoccupied with the world as it once was. Thus, I will consider some of the theoretical arguments that explain this interest in the past. I will introduce such ideas by means of an analysis of the Scottish Highland diaspora that Paul Basu studies in his research. This will then allow me to focus, more generally, on the importance of memory and commemoration in identity formation. I will also discuss the effects of modernity on society and will pay particular attention to the compelling argument that it is actually society, as it is presently constituted, that creates the preoccupation with the past that seems to consume so many today. In the final part of the chapter, I will focus on the work of Catherine Nash, and her 2002 paper ‘Genealogical Identities’ in particular, and will consider the burgeoning interest in genealogy that has become more apparent in recent years. Given the centrality of family history research to the lives of many of my research subjects, this will provide an appropriate platform from which to commence my more detailed study of the descendants of Home Children in the substantive chapters that follow.

Perspectives on the child

To many people, childhood is a clearly defined stage in life through which every human being passes. As Holloway and Valentine explain in their edited volume, *Children’s Geographies* (2000):

Like many social identities, child appears at first sight to be a biologically defined category, marked...by chronological age. Children, it is commonly assumed, are those subjects who have yet to reach biological and social maturity – quite simply they are younger than adults, and have yet to develop the full range of competencies adults possess (p. 2).

However, Holloway and Valentine go on to point out that this is not actually the case. Through the use of Philippe Ariès' 1962 study, *Centuries of Childhood*, they show us that “the child, far from being a biological category, is [actually] a socially constructed identity” (Holloway and Valentine, 2000, p. 4). The historian Colin Heywood (2001) expands on this idea, stating that childhood must be seen as a variable that is understood in different ways in different societies, and also that it must be considered in conjunction with such factors as class, gender and ethnicity. As he puts it, “an age category such as childhood can hardly be explored without reference to other forms of social differentiation which cut across it” (Heywood, 2001, p. 4). Bearing such factors in mind, it is perhaps useful to consider how children – or, more specifically, the children of the poor – were viewed during the period in which the child migrants were sent to Canada.⁴

Pinchbeck and Hewitt (1969) tell us that there was “a fierce conflict of opinion between *laissez faire* philosophers and philanthropic reformers” (Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1969, p. 312) with regard to how the children of the poor should be treated in the nineteenth century. Those in the *laissez faire* camp believed, quite simply, that the state should not intervene to provide support for them, while reformers, on the other hand,

⁴ A great deal has been written about the emergence of childhood as a distinct stage in life prior to the period with which I am concerned. For more in this regard, see, for instance, Ariès (1962), Cunningham (1991), de Mause (1976), Hendrick (1994), Heywood (2001), Pinchbeck and Hewitt (1969 and 1973) and Pollock (1983).

believed that state intervention was essential. However, whether or not the motivation for this latter perspective was entirely honourable is subject to some considerable debate. Indeed, it seems that any concern for the welfare of these children that existed was borne out of equal measures of both fear and pity. As Cunningham (1991) puts it:

The fear was that the children, represented as disorderly and dirty, were a threat to the future of the race unless something was done about them. Sympathy could be evoked if the condition of the children of the poor was perceived to be a denial of what was thought of...as a proper childhood (Cunningham, 1991, p. 4).

Hendrick (1994) makes a similar point. He states that while children were seen, on the one hand, as victims – of cruelty, neglect, hunger, homelessness, illness, indifference and so on – they were, on the other hand, viewed as threats as well:

The child victim was nearly always seen as harbouring the possibility of another condition, one that was sensed to be threatening: to moral fibre, sexual propriety, the sanctity of the family, the preservation of the race, law and order, and the wider reaches of citizenship. (Hendrick, 1994, p. 8).

Thus, the belief emerged that poor children *had* to be rescued from the negative influences of their class; failure to act in this respect could have disastrous consequences for the nation and its citizens.

Although the state began to treat the children of the poor as distinct from adults in the early nineteenth century – this was first reflected in the Factory Act of 1802 which restricted their working hours, improved their working conditions and increased their schooling – such progress was made in the face of considerable opposition.

Indeed, as Cunningham (1996) points out, many were incredibly resistant to calls for the ending of child labour:

With hindsight we may come to think that the eventual abolition of child labour was inevitable; in fact, it was entirely unpredictable. Industrialization was seen not as an assault on childhood itself, but as offering the opportunity of finding jobs for children who might otherwise be without them. By the 1830s it had come to be thought that the more industrialized a country was, the more it would make use of child labour (pp. 41-42).

Therefore, campaigns against child labour, when they began, were actually unexpected. Nevertheless, this was soon to change and there was one man in particular who became the major instigator of such calls for reform. The Tory social reformer, Lord Ashley (later to become the Earl of Shaftesbury), campaigned tirelessly, and against much opposition, to limit the hours children worked in factories. He met with limited success with the 1833 Factory Act, which only dealt with the textile industry, but, for years afterwards, he continued to push for the limiting of working hours to ten a day for all those under eighteen. This was finally achieved with the 1847 Factory Act (Pollock, 2000). Thus, children had become the focus of state legislation, even although there were many more battles to be fought for their welfare in the coming years. As Hendrick (1994, p. 26) puts it, “[t]he campaign to reclaim the factory child for civilisation was one of the first steps in what might be described as the creation of a universal childhood.” Society was beginning to recognise that children – whether rich or poor – deserved to be treated differently from adults. They needed to be nurtured and trained in order to fulfil their potential as adults.

However, as well as protecting children, the new universal definition of childhood also meant that the child had to adhere to very strict notions of how children should behave. Of course, such standards were set by the ruling classes and, as a consequence, often proved to be far removed from how the children of the poor actually behaved. In particular, the many children who scraped together a living on the streets – Shaftesbury estimated that there were 30,000 in London alone (Pollock, 2000) – acted in a way which the rich found totally unacceptable. Indeed, they were seen as perhaps *the* greatest threat to society and, consequently, were seen to be most in need of reform. As one official in Birmingham put it:

[the street child] is a little stunted man already – he knows much and a great deal too much of what is called life – he can take care of his own immediate interests. He is self-reliant, he has so long directed or mis-directed his own actions and has so little trust in those about him, that he submits to no control and asks for no protection. *He has consequently much to unlearn – he has to be turned again into a child* (quoted in Hendrick, 1994, p. 27; emphasis added).

Only by transforming the street child into the image that the rich found acceptable could this threat to society be removed.

While it is true that many street children earned their living through petty crime, the rich did not tend to distinguish between those who earned an honest living and those who did not. As Davin (1996) explains:

All were lumped together, condemned by appearance and behaviour alike. They were arabs, urchins, scaramouches, guttersnipes; ‘a wild race,’ ‘nomadic,’ ‘a multitude of untutored savages,’ even ‘English Kaffirs’ and ‘Hottentots’. The labels tagged them as heathen and uncivilized, alien to order and progress (p. 162).

Thus, the sort of racist language that was used to describe British subjects in the Empire was transported back home in order to describe the deprived and depraved masses of children in the cities of what was described as 'Darkest England' (Booth, 1890). Furthermore, pauper children found themselves being punished in a manner that was often disproportionate to what was deserved for the misdemeanours that they may have committed. Even minor offences were punishable by incarceration. And, rather than allaying the fears of the middle classes, such a policy caused even greater concern, as more and more children were labelled delinquent.

There was another key element to the rhetoric used to describe poverty stricken children, and that was to differentiate between males and females. In many ways, the female was to be pitied to an even greater extent than the male. Davin's (1996) account of Henry Mayhew's encounter with a young girl selling watercress on the streets of London is particularly enlightening in this respect:

although only eight years of age [the young girl] had entirely lost all childish ways, and was, indeed, in thoughts and manner, a woman... There was something cruelly pathetic in hearing this infant, so young that her features had scarcely formed themselves, talking of the bitterest struggles of life, with the calm earnestness of one who had endured them all. I did not know how to talk with her. At first I treated her as a child, speaking on childish subjects; so that I might, by being familiar with her, remove all shyness, and get her to narrate her life freely. I asked her about her toys and her games with her companions; but the look of amazement that answered me soon put an end to any attempt at fun on my part (Davin, 1996, p. 160; quoting Mayhew, 1861, pp. 151-152).

A girl who, according to middle and upper class conventions, should have been dependent, vulnerable and free from adult concerns, dangers and corruption was, in actual fact, strong, self sufficient and living a life which Mayhew viewed as being wholly inappropriate for a child and particularly a girl. However, such girls living on the streets were also to be feared, perhaps to an even greater extent than their male counterparts. This was because they were often viewed as temptresses, leading astray both boys and men alike. And, even although the large numbers of girls that turned to prostitution did so to survive, it was the men that paid for their services who were seen as the innocent parties – they were being led astray by the irresistible charms of these young sirens. Thus, as Horn (1997) concludes, “a delinquent girl was far more offensive than a miscreant lad” (p. 181; quoting Rimmer, 1986, p. 47).

Although the sex of the children of the poor affected how they were viewed by society at large, philanthropists such as Thomas Barnardo were united in their campaigns to free children from the shackles of sin and deprivation, whether they were male or female. While working class adults were often seen as being so deeply immersed in their sin that they were beyond redemption, children could be ‘turned’ and ‘rescued’ from poverty and its consequences if only they could be removed from the influence of their ungodly parents or from the streets where they had to fend for themselves. For those who had been labelled as delinquents, this often meant incarceration in reformatories (Ploszajska, 1994), while others found themselves in institutions run either by the local government or by the child rescuers. However, for many government workers and philanthropists alike, child migration was seen to be the perfect solution.

Child migration

Although there is evidence of child migration from Britain taking place in the early seventeenth century, when a parish in London is said to have sent as many as 1500 children to Virginia (Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1969; Hadley, 1990; Harris, 1994), it was not until the nineteenth century that the practice really took hold of the imagination of philanthropists. By the 1830s, Hadley (1990) tells us that those in authority had become “obsessively concerned” (p. 416) with population growth and, particularly, with the increasing number of children living in squalor on city streets. As one London magistrate put it to a Select Committee on emigration, “I conceive that London has got too full of children” (quoted in Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1973, p. 553). Thus, in 1830, the Society for the Suppression of Juvenile Vagrancy – later to become the Children’s Friend Society – was set up with the express purpose of “clearing the streets of unemployed children, who swell the daily catalogue of juvenile offenders” (Hadley, 1990, p. 411; quoting London’s *Morning Herald*, 14th March 1830). According to Kohli (2003), the Society sent its first party of children to Canada in 1833, while Pinchbeck and Hewitt (1973) tell us that, by 1840, around 440 children had been sent to the Cape Colony in what is now South Africa.⁵ However, the charity ran into trouble in 1840 when “rumours began to spread in England that the apprentices were being ill-treated, and a lurid account of their lives appeared in the press” (Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1973, pp. 549-550). An official enquiry was called for but the effect of this was to damage the reputation of the Society irreparably – “[s]ubscriptions fell off, patrons withdrew their support, and the Society ceased to function on the death of its founder, Captain Brenton, the following year, 1841” (Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1973, p. 552).

In 1844, Lord Ashley set up his Ragged Schools as a means by which children could climb out of the gutter and, just as importantly, come to faith in God. He too

⁵ Interestingly Hadley, 1990, suggests that far more – approximately 1300 – were sent to the south of Africa by the Society.

was to embrace emigration, believing it to be the best way in which his Ragged School graduates could succeed into adulthood. As he proposed to the Commons in June 1848,

the government should agree to take every year from these schools a number of children; say 500 or 1,000 boys and the same number of girls – and transplant them at the public expense to Her Majesty’s colonies. If you will hold out to these children, as a reward of good conduct, that which they desire – a removal from scenes which it is too painful to contemplate, to others where they can enjoy their existence – you will make the children eager by good conduct to obtain such a boon (Pollock, 2000, p. 79).

And, initially, the Government was willing to give financial support for such a scheme. However, constant criticism of the policy meant that it was soon abandoned:

while most philanthropists believed that emigration prevented both criminal behaviour and the ensuing transportation by employing the child elsewhere in honest labor, there were always critics available who wondered whether such schemes were merely the same old wolves in sheep’s clothing – transportation and slavery disguised as emigration (Hadley, 1990, p. 414).

Although migration schemes continued on a small scale after the failure of Ashley’s venture – for example, between 1842 and 1853, nearly 1,500 boys were sent from Parkhurst (an institute for young offenders) to work as apprentices in the southern colonies, while others were sent from Red Hill Reformatory by the Philanthropic Society (Neff, 2000; Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1973) – it was not until the late 1860s that child migration took hold once more. However, this time it was adopted by a number of charities and it became a popular form of social policy until well into the twentieth

century. During this period, most children were sent to Canada, although others were shipped to Australia, New Zealand, Rhodesia and other British dominions and colonies (United Kingdom Parliament Report, 1998a, Line 11).

Of the 100,000 or so sent to Canada, the majority were sent by a small number of British rescue and emigration societies, the largest of these being Barnardo's. It sent approximately one third of all child migrants to Canada – around thirty thousand – even although it did not commence its scheme until 1882 (United Kingdom Parliament Minutes of Evidence, 1998b, Paragraph 2.2). Numerous much smaller charities were also involved. For instance, Harris (1994) has studied Shrewsbury School's Liverpool Mission which, between 1907 and 1914, sent twenty-one boys to various locations in Canada. Similarly, McClelland (1989) has looked at the work of the Reverend Thomas Seddon, who sent relatively small numbers of children to the Dominion from the Catholic Diocese of Westminster in London. However, it is Marjorie Kohli's book, *The Golden Bridge* (2003), that is particularly useful in this regard. It provides the most comprehensive account of all of the agencies that were involved in child migration to Canada, from all of the 'major players' down to those organisations that may have sent only a handful of children. And it is important that the contribution of these smaller organisations is not forgotten because, together, they sent a considerable proportion of the child migrants to Canada.

Perhaps the key characters that inspired the emergence of child migration as a viable policy in the second half of the nineteenth century were Annie Macpherson and Maria Rye. Macpherson, a devout evangelical Christian, started her work amongst the poor in London's East End in 1866. She opened a 'House of Industry' where children could be fed and educated and, by 1869, she operated four such homes. However, by that time she also became convinced that emigration was *the* answer to the East End's problems. She produced a circular – *Emigration, the only remedy for chronic pauperism in the*

East of London – and started a fund which allowed 500 people to be sent to Canada that same year. And although her first emigrants were largely families, by 1870 she was sending out groups of boys from not only her own Homes, but also from those run by other philanthropists up and down the country (including Barnardo's Homes, and other Homes in Manchester, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dublin) (Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1973). Rye, on the other hand, had been sending parties of young women to work as domestic servants in Australia during the late 1860s. However, when, in 1868, she was told that they were no longer welcome there, she turned her attention to Canada and then towards the thousands of pauper children that she now saw as potential emigrants (Diamond, 1999; Parr, 2000). Thus, between 1869 and 1875, Rye took 902 children to Ontario, while Macpherson, between 1870 and 1875, took 350 (Parr, 2000, p. 31).⁶ Further, their work was legitimised when, in 1870, the London Poor Law Board gave official sanction to the emigration of children under their care (Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1973).

However, as with those who had engaged in child migration in previous years, the motives and methods of Macpherson and Rye began to be questioned in the early 1870s. It may be that there was an element of discrimination in this. Indeed, Girard (1999) suggests that the child rescue movement was “a site of gender struggle” (p. 223) – female philanthropists were often labelled as difficult and overzealous, as ‘loose cannons’ who should not be left to their own devices. Notwithstanding the reasons, the Local Government Board, which had replaced the Poor Law Board in 1871, decided that an inspector should be sent out to Canada to assess the scheme. And, in 1874, Andrew Doyle was dispatched to do just that. His 1875 Report certainly made for some

⁶ Kohli (2003) provides us with statistics on the number of children sent by Macpherson that differ significantly from those provided by Parr. She reproduces details from a report submitted by Macpherson to a Canadian government select committee that stated that she had emigrated 2513 children between 1870 and 1875. While that figure included 133 children who had been sent to Canada with their parents, as well as some who were no longer under her control, it still left 1764 who were either in one of her Receiving Homes in Canada or had been placed with a family in the Dominion (p. 99).

interesting reading. He was rather critical of Macpherson and Rye's methods, suggesting that children from different backgrounds were mixed together indiscriminately and inappropriately:

There is absolutely no distinction made by Miss Rye and Miss Macpherson between the 'arab' and the pauper children. The 'arab' children are often depraved whereas the pauper child has been more carefully brought up. The impression given in Canada is that all of these children have been picked up, starving from the streets and that therefore the general feeling is that [they] should be grateful for anything they get (quoted in Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1973, p. 566).

Doyle also commented on the poor travelling conditions that the children had to suffer; the lack of training they received in their Canadian reception centres (the children were placed in these Receiving Homes before being allocated to a family); and, perhaps worst of all, the terrible treatment and conditions that the children often suffered in their adoptive homes, where many were overworked and underpaid (or in many cases, not paid at all). This was perhaps best summed up by one young girl, who told Doyle, "Doption, sir, is when folks get a girl to work without wages" (quoted in Parr, 2000, p. 82).

As a consequence of his findings, Doyle advised that child migration be severely curtailed, with only very young children being sent if any were to be sent at all. Further, he advised that a far better training scheme be put in place for the children and that the homes they were to be sent to should be vetted with far greater care than before. And, it seems that the Local Government Board certainly listened to what Doyle had to say – there was an immediate and sharp decrease in the numbers of children sent to Canada, particularly Poor Law children. Nevertheless, Macpherson and Rye continued to send

their 'arabs' to the Dominion and, by the time Barnardo commenced his emigration work in 1882, the number of children being sent was increasing once more.

Thomas Barnardo, like Annie Macpherson, was an evangelical 'city missionary' who began his work amongst the London poor in the mid-1860s. However, while Macpherson was sending children to Canada, Barnardo was setting his heart on establishing the foremost charity in Britain, and this he had done within ten years of commencing his work. And when he eventually turned his attention to migration, he had the advantage of having learned from the mistakes of others. He also had the advantage of having thousands of children from his Homes to choose from, so there was probably an element of truth in his claim that he chose only the 'flower of the flock' to go to Canada (Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1973). However, whether this validated his rather dubious but oft repeated claim that ninety-eight per cent of his emigrants succeeded in the colony is certainly debateable. Indeed, Parr (2000) provides us with a completely different account of the success, or otherwise, of his emigrants. She points out, for instance, that for nine per cent of the boys and fifteen per cent of the girls in a sample of emigrants that she took, there was evidence in the files of excessive abuse being meted out by adoptive parents. She also comments that "reported and substantiated cases of abuse must certainly have been much fewer than the incidents of ill-treatment" (Parr, 2000, p. 106). Surely, then, children subjected to such ill treatment would not have counted their new lives as successes? Bagnell (2001), too, tells us that even if children did 'succeed' according to Barnardo, this success was undoubtedly at a price. As one of Barnardo's 'old boys' put it when discussing his experiences on an Ontario farm, "[t]he great flaw was that most of us were denied affection entirely. There was no such thing. You were the hired boy and you were treated that way. We weren't supposed to need affection" (Bagnell, 2001, p. 219). It would be interesting to

find out how many of the 'successful' ninety-eight per cent had similar experiences to this man.

Nevertheless, it does seem that Barnardo's emigration scheme was far better organised than many others (this was reflected in an 1896 Report for the Local Government Board which commended his scheme as the model on which others should be based). He did, for instance, insist on homes being inspected prior to child placements; each child had received a certain amount of training both in his Homes back in Britain and in his Receiving Homes in Canada; he had at least the principle of inspection of children in their adoptive homes in place (although, in reality, his staff were only able to make a fraction of the necessary visits to the thousands of children placed all over Canada); he undertook to be each child's legal guardian until they were eighteen; and each adoptive parent had to sign a legal document promising to pay their child a lump sum at the age of eighteen, giving each child at least the opportunity to succeed in adult life (Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1973).⁷ Thus, in many ways, it is hard to be unimpressed by the zeal of a man who, by the time he died in 1905, had trained, equipped and placed over 18,000 children in Canada (Wagner, 1982).

However, at the same time, one must not ignore what many saw as the darker side of Barnardo's character. Unlike many of the other evangelical 'city missionaries,' Barnardo was ambitious and a skilled self-publicist. Whilst contemporaries such as Annie Macpherson and William Quarrier would only utilise the power of prayer to raise funds, Barnardo was more than willing to appeal directly to the general population for money. And, while there was no crime in resorting to such tactics, his methods certainly did not appeal to all; rather, they were often deemed to be un-Christian. What is more, his work was dogged by rumours of financial irregularities (which proved

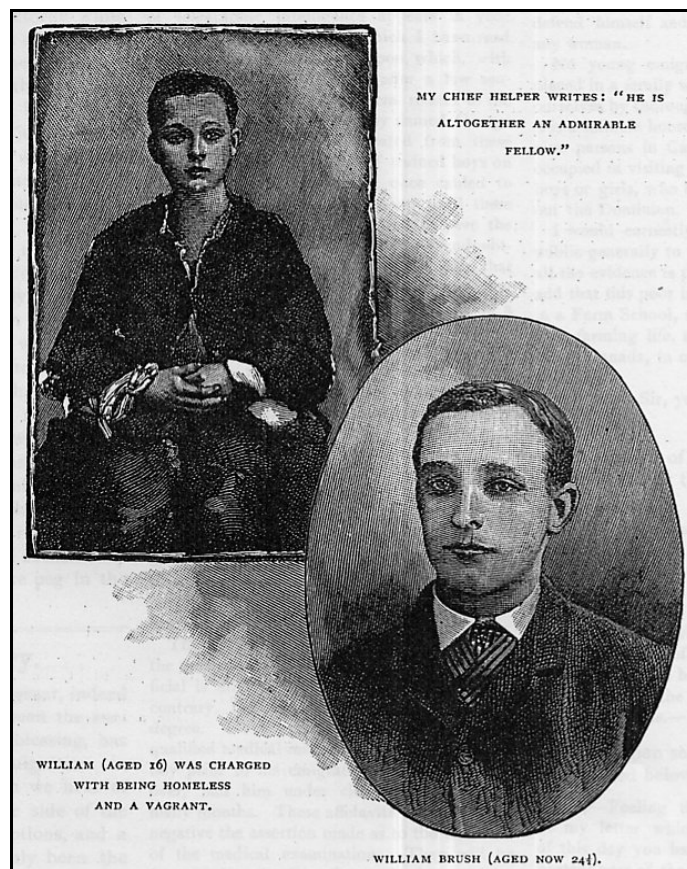
⁷ Sadly, it seems that a significant number of children never received the remuneration that they were due. Indeed, a number of my interviewees mentioned that their Home Child ancestor left their placement with literally nothing to show for their years of hard work.

unfounded); by accusations that he was not even the Doctor that he claimed to be (this was true – he was using the title long before he was qualified to do so); by court appearances for what he termed philanthropic abduction (again, this was true, although Barnardo was happy to admit that he did this, claiming that it was done in the interests of the children’s physical and spiritual well-being); and by claims that ‘before and after’ publicity photographs of children in his care were staged (this, too, was true, and Barnardo was forced to end this deceptive manipulation of the public’s conscience as he tried to gain their financial support) (Morrison, 1995; Wagner 1979 and 1982). Nevertheless, Barnardo *did* continue to use images to publicise his emigration work, and his in-house magazine, *Night and Day*, frequently contained photographs and sketches that illustrated the supposedly remarkable transformation of his charges from vagrants and beggars in Britain’s cities, to respectable young men in rural Canada (Figure 1).

Notwithstanding the controversies that often surrounded Barnardo’s work, by the late nineteenth century it seems that Britain was ideally placed to accept the principle of child migration. There was now an increased focus on national efficiency which allowed supporters of the scheme to provide further justification for their actions. As Hendrick (1994) puts it:

Social policy moved from a concern with the rescue, reclamation and reform of children, mainly through philanthropic and Poor Law action, to the involvement of children in a consciously designed pursuit of the national interest, which included all-round efficiency, public health, education, racial hygiene, responsible parenthood, and social purity. These children were given a new social and political identity as belonging to ‘the nation’ (p. 41).

Figure 1: Examples of Barnardo's 'before and after' images



Source: Barnardo's *Night and Day* magazine, April 1895 (top) and December 1895 (bottom)

Thus, philanthropists were no longer merely working for the benefit of the children; they were also working for the good of the nation. With British imperialism now at its peak, children came to be viewed as vital building blocks for the future strength of the Empire. Indeed, they were now “no longer merely to be rescued and given new opportunities, they were seen as the bricks with which the Empire would be built” (Wagner, 1982, p. xv). And what better way to make use of them than to send them out to the Dominions in order that they could further the cause of the mother country and “root British values” (Stasiulis and Jhappan, 1995, p. 108) in foreign soil. Child migrants were therefore seen as *exports* in this new ‘discourse of imperialism’ (Hadley, 1990), and they would hopefully, in time, become the *consumers* that would expand the colonial market for British trade. And although objections concerned with the cruelty of the policy would still rear their heads from time to time, these were easily ignored, especially as this was also an era characterised by cyclical depression and worsening conditions for the poor (Stedman Jones, 1984). It seemed that migration provided all the answers that the ruling classes were looking for: it would ease overcrowding in British cities; it would remove children from the hopeless cycle of poverty and immorality that they were trapped in; it would give these same children the opportunity to obtain eternal life in the ‘promised land’ of the dominions; and it would expand British interests overseas.

Thus, aside from the renewed impetus provided by imperialism, child migration was still justified on the same grounds that were used earlier on in the century. It still allowed for the salvation of pauper children from dirty and overcrowded city environments that were thought to be the major cause of immorality and degeneracy. Wagner (1982) suggests that “more than three-quarters of the agencies involved in voluntary charitable work in the second half of the nineteenth century were evangelical in outlook” (p. 108). Salvation of the children’s souls was their *raison d’être*. However, if

in saving souls, they were also going to solve Britain's urban crisis, then all the better. As Harris (1994) puts it,

emigration [was] seen as a solution to what was perceived as an urban crisis. It was widely held that, in the pioneering rural society of the dominions, emigrants would find an escape from the evils which beset the poor of industrial towns. The colonies would heal and strengthen, reviving ancient virtues and qualities of life which seemed to be severely threatened in Britain's increasingly urbanised society. The emigrants' voyage across the sea offered as it were a new baptism, a regeneration of body and spirit (p. 403).

Or, to put it another way, migration was touted as "both a safety-valve for internal disorder and a path to salvation" (Parr, 2000, p. 27).

The idea of the rural environment as a purifying one was one that was widely accepted in the nineteenth century. This was contrasted with views on the city, which was portrayed as a place of darkness, with moral and physical salvation only being found outwith its environs – it was "nothing less than a cancer within the imperial organism, a place of degeneration offering a pathetic contrast to the glamour of British enterprise overseas" (Driver, 2001, p. 194). And it was William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, who was perhaps the greatest propagator of such a view. He talked of overcrowded cities forming what he termed 'Darkest England' – a deprived and depraved environment in which, he estimated, three million people were living (Booth, 1890). To deal with this problem, he proposed that first, there should be the creation of colonies in cities, then in the countryside and then, finally, over-seas. The city colonies would be seen as the first step on the road to better social conditions and reformed lifestyles, the culmination of which would be emigration out of the degenerating cities to colonies abroad. However, while Booth's grand ideas of the 1890s never really

materialised, Barnardo, along with a number of other evangelical philanthropists, continued their emigration programmes, focusing on the agricultural environment of Canada – the ideal place for relocation.

In the eyes of Barnardo, Canada was undoubtedly the best place to send his young charges. Not only was its rural environment seen as the most suitable place to send Britain's poor city children, but Barnardo also believed that the Canadian population were of stronger moral fibre than their British counterparts. On his travels to Canada, he claimed that he had never seen beer or wine being drunk in the family home – temperance was the cornerstone of the Christian mission to the poor – while family worship, another important facet of moral living, was also, according to Barnardo, undertaken more often. Parr, accepts that this was probably the case:

In many respects the British evangelicals' view of the agricultural society their young wards entered was correct. Rural Ontario [where most youngsters were placed] did have a strong puritanical streak. Farm families did tend to be pious abstainers... In the 1890s more than forty thousand Ontario residents belonged to temperance organisations. The churches were the most important institutions in rural communities. And although they were not as likely as the British child-savers to be evangelicals, Ontarians did take their religion seriously (Parr, 2000, p. 50).

Thus, when Barnardo sent his first party of boys to Canada, it was with much optimism that they were sent on their way. And, if Barnardo's magazine of the time is to be believed, this was not unfounded. The Reverend Fielder, who was accompanying the boys on the journey, was quick to report that, almost immediately on their arrival, "the purity and buoyancy of the air increased spirits wonderfully" (Barnardo, 1882, p. 102). And, he went on,

When one thinks...of the vastness of the country...an almost boundless field for the surplus population of our own overcrowded cities starts to view. Here they may find a beautiful and healthy climate, an almost absolute immunity from the vices and want which imperil their lives in the old country, and facilities for acquiring happy, peaceful homes, and even wealth. Mansion after mansion was pointed out to us as being occupied by people who entered Canada as poor and friendless as any of the boys we have taken out, and as proof of what might be done by integrity, industry, and perseverance (Barnardo, 1882, p. 102).

It seemed that Canada was indeed the ‘promised land’ that Barnardo and his colleagues had been looking for!

Once in Canada, the boys and girls were sent to Receiving Homes, before being placed with families in rural areas, mostly in Ontario. The boys were put to work as farm labourers, while the girls were utilised as domestic servants. In the case of Barnardo’s ‘model’ scheme, he established legally binding apprenticeship indentures for his charges, a practice that was adopted by a number of the sending agencies (Figure 2). On the one hand, these tied the children to their ‘masters’ while, on the other, they were also supposed to protect the young migrants from abuse. In actual fact, due to the number of children involved, it was virtually impossible to police the scheme and, as I have already stated, there is evidence that significant numbers of children were abused. Girls, in particular, seemed to suffer hardship at the hands of their ‘masters.’ Many of them had to face up to sexual, as well as physical, abuse. As Parr (2000) tells us, “hired girls lived inside the household but outside the incest taboo” (p. 114). Consequently, a blind eye was frequently turned to such behaviour; Parr reports one instance, in 1907, of a man being arrested for the rape of a twelve year old Home Child but, rather than condemning the man for such despicable behaviour, “the judge remarked that the girl was only low English and that it was not a very important matter” (p. 115).

Figure 2: Example of contract between sending agency and farmer

⁴⁷
Contract

Made this 15 day of September 1920

Entered into between

The Liverpool, England, Sheltering Homes (Incorporated) and the Manchester Boys' and Girls' Homes, England, of which the Canadian Branch is

THE MARCHMONT HOME, BELLEVILLE
Province of Ontario

and [redacted]

of West Huntingdon P.O.

County of Hastings

who hires [redacted]

with Board and Lodging, Washing and Mending, and Wages for ~~schooling~~ and pocket money
for one year from date

To increase yearly thereafter according to ability.

Child to attend Day School according to the Act.

The clothing to be provided out of the child's wages and an account kept of the value of clothing provided. Account to be made up and balance of wages to be paid monthly or yearly, and any balance deposited in the P. O. or other Savings Bank in child's name. A statement must be sent to the Home yearly.

The employer also undertakes to see that the child attends Church and Sunday School regularly and writes occasionally to the Home; also to communicate with the Home in the event of sickness and not to remove the child into another Province or State without consent from the Home. In no case must the child be transferred into another family without permission from the Home.

Should it be necessary, in any case, for the child to be returned to the Home, notice must be sent a fortnight beforehand. The clothes must be sent back in good condition and equal in number to those supplied with the child.

The Home reserves to itself or its Agents the right to remove the child if they see fit, or on these conditions not being fulfilled. The employers will be held liable for any legal or other expenses incurred if child is not sent back when requested.

All persons receiving children pay a Home fee of three dollars.

Employers must pay child's rail fare back to the Home when returned. See paragraphs over page.

IMPORTANT—Notify "Home" by telephone or telegram in event of child's sudden or serious illness. Bell Telephone No. 10.

Signed by EMPLOYER. [redacted]

Signed by SUPERINTENDENT [signature]

For the Liverpool, England, Sheltering Homes (Incorporated), and the Manchester England, Boys' and Girls' Homes.

FOR EMPLOYER TO KEEP

[Note that "and wages" has been scored out and has been replaced with "and pocket money"]

Source: anonymous interviewee

Notwithstanding the fairly widespread abuse that took place, Britain's child rescuers could still rely on their Canadian counterparts to support their ventures. Unsurprisingly for one of Britain's colonies, Canadians viewed the child in much the same way as their British counterparts.⁸ McIntosh (1999) explains how evangelical reformers were also very active in Canada, attempting to 'save' children from poverty and depravity, while trying to maintain order in the face of the supposed threat posed by the burgeoning working class in the country's cities. Similarly, the child migrants from Britain were welcomed by many, although Sutherland (2000) suggests that there may have been more than an element of self interest in this respect:

It must be emphasized...that Canadian good will towards the [child migrants] was more than a matter of humanitarianism or Christian charity, although both were often present. From Confederation on, a constant refrain in the reports of the officials responsible for immigration was that Canada had a desperate need for farm labourers and domestic servants (p. 9).

Thus, when Andrew Doyle submitted his report criticising the work of Annie Macpherson and Maria Rye, Sutherland suggests that he was heavily criticised in Canada because the children were viewed as vital to what was still a largely rural economy. However, as I shall go on to discuss, this attitude was soon to change. Indeed, within fifteen years of Doyle's report, Canadians were complaining that "the immigrants, as England's refuse, posed a threat to other youngsters...[and] to the well-being of Canadian society generally" (Sutherland, 2000, p. 7).

By the late 1880s the wisdom of child migration was increasingly being questioned. Many rural Canadians were concerned about the deleterious effects of

⁸ See, for instance, Chen (2005) on 'child saving' in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Toronto.

Britain's urban environment on the children that were appearing in their townships and they were particularly wary of the moral and medical threat offered by children from the slums of Britain's cities. Similarly, Canadian city dwellers saw the new immigrants as a threat to them in the labour market. And, as it turned out, this fear was not unfounded – many of the children who the philanthropists hoped would spend their lives in the countryside, moved to the cities once they were of age and their indentures were completed. Thus, it was common, by the mid-1890s, for Canadians to speak out against the child migrants. And, as Rooke and Schnell (1983), point out, the nation's daily newspapers were particularly keen to jump on the bandwagon:

The *Montreal Gazette*, 25 July 1895, published remarks on the emigrants by Ontario farmers which included epithets such as “the scum of Europe,” “little better than brutes,” a “curse to the country,” “good for nothing pauper and criminal classes,” and “a contaminating influence on native born Canadians.” As one dour observer commented, “they cannot help it; it is in their blood and it will tell.” The *Toronto Evening Star* demanded that England look after its own “syphilitic paupers” and not continue the practice which lent itself to “the physical corruption of a pure blooded people.” Three years later the *Ottawa Citizen*, September 1899, said that they were the “physiological offscourings of the Old World dumped on [Canada's] shores” and archly added that the least the philanthropists could do was to give them a bath before they left home (p. 70).

Nevertheless, antagonism towards the migrants still took a number of years to manifest itself in any meaningful way and the practice was allowed to continue well into the twentieth century with little serious or sustained opposition.

While many Canadians were not particularly approving of the British slum children, it seems that the children, too, were often far from happy with the situation.

This is perhaps unsurprising given that they had to make such a major transition at a young age, from life in the urban institutions they had been placed in back in Britain, to domestic life in rural Canada. Many of them simply could not cope and consequently,

their years in Canada were [often] filled with uncertainty and isolation. The two worlds were so different that their time behind walls inevitably left children unprepared both practically and emotionally for their Canadian roles, dashed their spirits and made them disappoint their Canadian masters and mistresses (Parr, 2000, p. 101).

Children were frequently sent back to the Canadian Receiving Homes as a result of their guardians' dissatisfaction, and, while the philanthropists would only publicise the success stories, there are a number of accounts of not only abuse but also the suicides of children who simply could not carry on in their new lives. However, even those children who fared better would suffer too – the stigma of being a Home Child, so clearly illustrated by the newspaper reports cited above, remained with each of them for the rest of their lives (Bagnell 2001; Corbett 2002; Harrison 2003).

Notwithstanding the increasing opposition to child migration, the number of children being sent to Canada did not actually peak until the early years of the twentieth century. What is more, it was World War One, rather than any widespread opposition, that caused the scheme to falter in the second decade of the century. However, by the 1920s, child migration was no longer palatable for either the British establishment or the general public who, in 1923 and 1924, read in their newspapers of the suicides of three Home Children. There was a growing moral argument against the policy and the almost total disregard for the feelings of the children involved – the definition of childhood was still evolving, and practices accepted a few short years before, were no longer acceptable. There was also the suggestion that the policy was merely distracting

attention from inequalities back in Britain – it was not dealing with the structural problems that were causing children to fall into such dreadful poverty in the first place (Parr, 2000).

Similarly, in Canada, a growing number of influential people were railing against the policy of child migration. One of the key figures in this respect was Charlotte Whitton, director of the Canadian Welfare Council. She argued that Canada had to stem the tide of supposedly inferior children being sent from Britain. As she put it,

If the encouragement of juvenile immigration, which must be recruited largely from the underprivileged groups of the Old Land, is to continue...Canada cannot insist too strongly and emphatically on the most stringent, precautionary measures to guard the mental, moral and physical fibre of her own being (quoted in Bagnell, 2001, pp. 189-190).

Reflecting the eugenicist theories that were underpinning much social research at the time, she also utilised dubious evidence provided by the psychiatrist Eric Clarke, “who claimed...that a huge proportion of the mental defectives of Canada were child immigrants or their offspring” (Bagnell, 2001, p. 190).⁹ And, while this research was wholly discredited, by the time its faults had been exposed, the damage to the child migration movement had already been done (Bagnell, 2001, pp. 219-220). Thus, in 1925, the Dominion Immigration Branch ruled that no children under fourteen, unaccompanied by parents, would be admitted to Canada for the next three years. And, in 1928, the ban was finally made permanent (Dunae, 2001; Parr, 2000). However, a couple of charities continued to send children to Canada, although this was on a much smaller scale than before. Barnardo’s continued to migrate children over fourteen until

⁹ For more on the eugenics movement in Canada, see Angus McLaren’s text, *Our Own Master Race* (1990).

the start of the Second World War in 1939, while, between the mid-1930s and the early 1950s, the Fairbridge Society managed to circumvent Government regulations and operated a residential training centre for underprivileged British children on Vancouver Island (Dunae, 2001).

Remarkably, the Barnardo and Fairbridge schemes were not the end of Britain's child migration story though. Indeed, its most controversial chapter was still to be written when, between 1947 and 1967, an estimated three thousand boys and girls were sent from Britain to Australia.¹⁰ Even more astonishing is the fact that, although the last party of children was not sent out until 1967, it was not government policy that stopped more from being sent. The Empire Settlement Act – which was originally instituted in 1922 and which provided assistance for charities engaging in child migration – had never been repealed and was, in fact, extended in 1937, 1957 and 1967. Thus, as Constantine (2002) puts it,

It is abundantly clear that the termination of such programmes owed nothing to official British obstruction. The Commonwealth Settlement Act, which sanctioned government financial support for child migration, ran on until 1972 (p. 123).

What is more, the Australian government did not object to the policy of child migration either, and it seems that the only reason it ceased was because the voluntary organisations involved ran out of potential migrants. Child welfare provision had changed significantly in the post war years and voluntary organisations were finding themselves increasingly redundant, with adoption and fostering largely taking over from

¹⁰ Humphreys (1995) suggests that up to 10,000 children may have been sent, although others put that figure much lower, at closer to 3,000 (see, for instance, Coldrey, 2001; Constantine, 2002; Paul, 2001; and Sherington, 2001). The children were sent under the auspices of a number of agencies, with the Fairbridge Society, Catholic religious orders and Barnardo's perhaps most heavily involved (fuller data on numbers sent can be found in *Lost Innocents: Righting the Record*, a report on child migration by Australia's Senate Community Affairs References Committee (August 2001)).

institutional care (this reassessment of childcare practices was enshrined in the Children's Act of 1948). Furthermore, as Constantine goes on to point out, "it is clear that after 1945 child migration as a child welfare practice was considered by most childcare professionals in Britain as at best unnecessary and more likely...damaging" (p. 124). However, the British government continued to support the initiative because, on the one hand, it was politically expedient to remain in favour with the voluntary organisations whose patrons were often very powerful people – the President of the Fairbridge Society, for example, was the Duke of Gloucester – and, on the other, they seemed to be sympathetic to calls from Australia for children to boost their population with 'good white stock.'

The failure of the British and Australian governments to act in the face of increasing pressure to end child migration in the post war years has caused considerable embarrassment for both governments in the present day. This has been accentuated by numerous accounts of abuse that many of the Australian migrants were subjected to. One organisation in particular, the Child Migrants Trust, has been proactive in bringing such abuses to the attention of both the British and Australian governments, to the charities involved in migration, and to the population at large. Indeed, the founder of the Trust, Margaret Humphreys, has ensured that this issue continues to remain in the public domain with the publication of her account of how she has assisted the former child migrants in Australia. *Empty Cradles* (1995) details some of the horrific abuses – both physical and sexual – that some children endured. It also tells of how children were often sent to Australia without the knowledge of parents and that the children themselves were often told that their parents back in Britain were dead (it is debateable how common this was though – McVeigh (1995) suggests that the charities usually made every attempt to track down absentee parents and that, when they did not, legal precedent actually allowed them to migrate the children without parental consent).

Humphreys' work with the migrants, tracking down 'long lost' relatives, has inspired frequent press reports, while the children's stories have also been the stimuli for the Domino Films documentary, *Lost Children of the Empire*, as well as the television drama *The Leaving of Liverpool*, co-produced by the BBC and their Australian counterparts ABC. And it seems that publicity such as this has been at least partially responsible for motivating some of the former migrants to bring lawsuits against those organisations that were involved. Consequently, the Australian Senate's committee report on child migration tells us that "[i]n August 1993, legal action was begun in the Supreme Court of New South Wales against 21 respondents including the Commonwealth and Western Australian Government and Catholic Church defendants" (p. 223). However, in the end, proceedings were discontinued against all except the Catholic religious order, the Christian Brothers. This resulted in an out of court settlement being reached in 1996, in which the Christian Brothers paid out \$5 million to cover the cost of legal fees, direct payments to plaintiffs and the provision of a range of support services, such as counselling, for those who had suffered at their hands. Furthermore, a formal apology was also issued by the Christian Brothers, while the Queensland Government and Churches, the Government of South Australia and the Catholic Church's Joint Liaison Group on Child Migration subsequently issued their own apologies for their involvement in the scheme (Senate Community Affairs References Committee, 2001).

Diaspora

While the number of children sent to Australia may not have had a major effect on the structure of the population in that country, the 100,000 who were sent to Canada certainly did. As I stated in my introductory chapter, more than one in ten Canadians are said to be the descendants of these Home Children – a quite staggering figure! What is more, my research indicates that the Home Children are directly responsible for the

emergence of a population that is rather distinct in its constitution. Indeed, I would suggest that child migration has led to the creation of a group that can be labelled as a diaspora. However, before discussing why this might be the case, it is surely useful to consider what diasporas are and how they are constituted. In that way, the reader may gain a better understanding of why the descendants of Home Children – or, more specifically, the descendants of Home Children that I interviewed – may be placed within such a framework.

The Oxford English Dictionary (accessed online, 05/06/2006) states that the origins of the term diaspora are in the Old Testament of the Bible. Indeed, it quotes the Book of Deuteronomy (Chapter 28, verse 25) as proof of this: “thou shalt be a diaspora (or dispersion) in all kingdoms of the earth.” On further analysis, it seems that the term was initially used to refer to Jews who had been dispersed amongst the Gentiles after the Babylonian and Roman conquests (The Times English Dictionary, 2000). Today, it is a term that is used far more liberally; indeed it now seems to be used to refer to any people or population that are dispersed away from their homeland. However, as I shall go on to discuss, it is a far more complex concept than many would think.

Alison Blunt (2005) tells us that the term diaspora is inherently geographical. As she puts it, diaspora implies

a scattering of people over space and transnational connections between people and places. Geography clearly lies at the heart of diaspora both as a concept and as a lived experience, encompassing the contested interplay of place, home, culture and identity through migration and resettlement (p. 10).

She also emphasises the complexity of diasporic identity, concerned, as it is, with the “entanglements of ‘roots’ and ‘routes’” (p. 10):

while the term 'roots' might imply an original homeland from which people have scattered, and to which they might seek to return, the term 'routes' complicates such ideas by focussing on more mobile and transcultural geographies of home (p. 10).

Such ideas are central to the definitions of the term that a number of academics have set out in recent years. Perhaps one of the best analyses of the term, and of its conflicting meanings, is provided by James Clifford in his 1997 book, *Routes*. He begins his 'tracking' of diaspora by discussing the inaugural issue of the journal of the same name, published in 1991. In this, the editor describes diasporas as "the exemplary communities of the transnational movement" before going on to state that the term also "shares meanings with a larger semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest-worker, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community" (Clifford, 1997, p. 245; quoting Tölölian, 1991, pp. 4-5). Clifford then proceeds to assess the similarities between another term, 'border,' and diaspora. Utilising the example of the US-Mexican border he illustrates how "borderlands are distinct in that they presuppose a territory defined by a geopolitical line...[while] [d]iasporas usually presuppose longer distances and a separation more like exile" (p. 246). However, in recent years there has been an overlapping of these phenomena – 'border relations' with the 'Old Country' have been extended to those who may live thousands of miles away from their actual borders "thanks to a to-and-fro made possible by modern technologies of transport, communication, and labour migration. Airplanes, telephones, tape cassettes, camcorders, and mobile job markets reduce distances and facilitate two-way traffic, legal and illegal, between the world's places" (Clifford, 1997, p. 247). Thus, as Clifford points out, today's borderland could as easily

be some Mexican American neighbourhood in Chicago as the actual US-Mexican border.

The first issue of the journal *Diaspora* includes another detailed analysis of the term, this time provided by William Safran, and this is also discussed in Clifford's book. Safran describes diasporas as "expatriate minority communities" (Clifford, 1997, p. 247) which exhibit the following characteristics:

- (1) They are dispersed from an original 'centre' to at least two 'peripheral' places,
- (2) They maintain memories, visions and myths about their original homeland,
- (3) They feel alienated and believe that they are not, and possibly cannot be, fully accepted by their host country,
- (4) They see themselves as eventually returning home when the time is right,
- (5) They are committed to provide ongoing support to maintain or restore their homeland, and
- (6) They have a collective identity as a group which is defined by their relationship with the homeland.

Safran goes on to state that the Jews would be the 'ideal type' in fulfilling his criteria. However, while Clifford agrees that diasporic groups do exhibit some of these characteristics, he points out that diasporas are hybrid groupings which "wax and wane in diasporism" (p. 249). One group may exhibit different characteristics from another, but such characteristics may well change over time: "[w]hatever the working list of diasporic features, no society can be expected to qualify on all counts, throughout its history" (Clifford, 1997, p. 250). Clifford continues,

Safran is right to focus attention on defining “diaspora”...but we should be wary of constructing our working definition of a term like “diaspora” by recourse to an “ideal type,” with the consequence that groups become identified as more or less diasporic, having only two, or three, or four of the basic six features. Even the “pure” forms [of diaspora]...are ambivalent, even embattled, over basic features (p. 249).

Thus, Clifford is suggesting that it is being over-prescriptive to suggest that all diasporas must exhibit all six characteristics at any given time. And, furthermore, he debates whether the Jews are an ‘ideal’ type at all, suggesting a lack of evidence to back up their adherence to the last three of Safran's criteria. For example, many Jewish communities would not be considered diasporas by this definition since they do not meet the fourth condition (a return home) – in some cases, they have had no connection to the ‘homeland’ for many centuries.

Instead of stating what a diaspora is, Clifford prefers to define the term by saying what it is not: “[r]ather than locating essential features, we might focus on diaspora’s borders, on what it defines itself against” (Clifford, 1997, p. 250). Diasporas then, according to Clifford, are defined against the norms of the nation-state and also against indigenous claims by ‘tribal’ peoples. Being defined against the norms of the nation-state, diasporas are different from immigrant groups. Immigrants are, to a greater or lesser extent, assimilated into their new ‘home,’ but you cannot assimilate those who “maintain important allegiances and practical connections to a homeland or a dispersed community located elsewhere” (p. 250). Similarly, diasporic cultures are never exclusively nationalist, but involve transnational networks which may both accommodate and resist host countries and their norms. Further, Clifford states that diaspora cultures are not separatist:

The history of the Jewish diaspora communities shows selective accommodation with the political, cultural, commercial, and everyday life forms of 'host' societies. And the black diaspora culture being articulated in postcolonial Britain is concerned to struggle for different ways to be 'British' – ways to stay and to be different, to be British and something else complexly related to Africa and the Americas (pp. 251-252).

In terms of diasporas being defined against indigenous peoples, Clifford comments that "it is clear that the claims to political legitimacy made by peoples who have inhabited a territory since before recorded history and those who arrived by steamboat or airplane will be founded on very different principles" (p. 253). In saying that, he does question how one can be classified as an 'original' inhabitant – how long does it take to become 'indigenous' for instance?

Clifford also attempts to deal with some of the positive and negative facets of diaspora. Some of the negatives include experiences of discrimination and exclusion, as well as socio-economic constraints, which lead to low wages and limited opportunities for advancement. More positively, diaspora can be about "feeling global" (Clifford, 1997, p. 257), giving people a sense of attachment elsewhere. It can also give people a sense of togetherness and of hope. However, such characteristics are all relative and fail to take into account differentials of class, race, gender, and so on, within diasporas. Taking gender, for instance, being a member of a diaspora can lead to renegotiation of gender relations and a possibility of increased independence. On the other hand, "[l]ife for women in diasporic situations can be doubly painful – struggling with the material and spiritual insecurities of exile, with the demands of family and work, and with the claims of old and new patriarchies" (Clifford, 1997, p. 259). Thus, the "problems of defining [this] traveling term, in changing global conditions" (Clifford, 1997, p. 244) are indeed manifold.

Another useful analysis of the complex politics of diaspora is provided in Paul Gilroy's book *The Black Atlantic* (1993). In this, Gilroy discusses the black diaspora in Britain and how, for that group, "[s]triving to be both European and black requires some specific forms of double consciousness" – they must combine what are, in effect, "unfinished [European and black] identities" (Gilroy, 1993, p. 1). He shows how the diaspora culture of black, and particularly Afro-Caribbean, settler communities in Britain articulates a specific set of local and global attachments, both through expressive forms such as music, and also through networks of transnational connection. And, in describing this phenomenon, Gilroy utilises the phrase the 'Black Atlantic.' According to Gilroy, recognising such a phenomenon challenges racist, nationalist and ethnically absolutist discourses, and the rhetoric of what he terms 'cultural insiderism.' However, he makes it clear that such negative traits are not exclusive to Britain's white population. Although the 'native' British population tends to use crude and reductive notions of culture, resulting in any calls for multiculturalism and cultural pluralism being regarded as nothing more than 'political correctness,' black cultural politics is also dominated by a similar 'ethnic absolutism' which fails to challenge such antagonism. Thus, he argues for a Britain where cultural hybridity can challenge and transcend potentially dangerous notions of ethnic purity.¹¹ As Clifford states, Gilroy "counters reactionary discourses such as those of Enoch Powell (and a growing chorus) that invoke a 'pure' national space recently invaded by threatening aliens" (Clifford, 1997, p. 262).¹²

In a similar vein, Stuart Hall (1990) also notes how identity is *not* a transparent and unproblematic concept, and, in so doing, he challenges essentialist notions of

¹¹ Similarly, Katharine Tyler (2005), in a recent paper on interracial identities in Leicester, highlights the complexities of race and challenges notions of fixity that exist amongst both white and ethnic minority groups in that city.

¹² Enoch Powell was a Conservative Party MP who, in 1968, made a now infamous anti-immigration speech. In what became known as his 'Rivers of Blood' speech, he warned that Britain was being overrun by immigrants and, referring to the Latin poet Virgil, he suggested that their numbers had reached such a dangerous level that he saw "the River Tiber foaming with much blood" (English Timeline, BBC website, accessed 06/02/2006).

identity and place. He suggests that identity is actually something that is always changing; it will never be 'complete':

Cultural identity...is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being.' It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in a mere 'recovery' of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past (Hall, 1990, p. 225).

And, using the example of Caribbean, Hall gives us a practical example of this. He states that the Caribbean is influenced by at least three different cultural 'presences': African, European and American. The Caribbean's African culture appeared as a result of repression and slavery, and remains to this day. As Hall comments:

Africa, the signified which could not be represented directly in slavery, remained and remains the unspoken, the unspeakable 'presence' in Caribbean culture. It is 'hiding' behind every verbal inflection, every narrative twist of Caribbean cultural life. It is the secret code with which every Western text was 're-read.' It is the grand-bass of every rhythm and bodily movement. This was – is – the 'Africa' that 'is alive and well in the diaspora' (Hall, 1990, p. 230).

Similarly, the Caribbean's European culture is also as a result of slavery, but this time the culture is a reflection of the power of the European masters and their culture over the islands and their population. However, although Europe is reflected in everyday life, this is not only about the power of the European master but also reflects the resistance to, and appropriation of, that same culture by the slaves and their descendants. Finally, Caribbean culture is American in terms of its geographical location in the 'New World':

[i]t is the space where the creolisations and assimilations and syncretisms were negotiated. The New World is the third term – the primal scene – where the fateful / fatal encounter was staged between Africa and the West (Hall, 1990, p. 234).

Thus, Hall successfully explains how and why the Caribbean culture is a hybrid one – it is both heterogeneous and diverse. And, as he concludes, Caribbean identities are, as a consequence, diasporic identities:

Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference. One can only think here of what is uniquely – 'essentially' – Caribbean: precisely the mixes of colour, pigmentation, physiognomic type; the 'blends' of taste that is Caribbean cuisine; the aesthetics of the 'cross-overs'...which is at the heart and soul of black music (Hall, 1990, pp. 235-236).

While Hall highlights the fusion of influences that create Caribbean identities, Paul Basu (2002) introduces us to a rather different diaspora group; one which may not be as ready to recognise the many influences that are at the foundation of their individual and group identities. Basu's research subjects are descendants of Scottish

Highland settlers in Britain's former colonies; a group that could be described as an 'imperial diaspora' (Basu, 2002, p. 22). And, while I will return to focus on this group in greater detail later in this chapter, at this point I merely wish to consider the definition of diaspora on which Basu bases his research. He draws heavily on the definition of the term provided by the sociologist Robin Cohen in his 1997 text *Global Diasporas*. Unlike William Safran, Cohen suggests that there are actually nine common features of a diaspora:

- (1) Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions;
- (2) Alternatively, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions;
- (3) A collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history and achievements;
- (4) An idealization of the putative ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation;
- (5) The development of a return movement that gains collective approbation;
- (6) A strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history and the belief in a common fate;
- (7) A troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance at the least or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group;
- (8) A sense of empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement; and
- (9) The possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism (Basu, 2002, p. 22; quoting Cohen, 1997, p. 26).

Basu takes each of these criteria and applies them to his study group, noting whether or not, or to what extent, his subjects meet these. For instance, he questions whether Scottish migrants were traumatically dispersed abroad or whether they had a choice in the matter: were they exiles banished from ‘ancient’ homelands or pioneer settlers civilising ‘savage’ places; were they unwittingly acting as agents of British imperialism or were they deliberate perpetrators of displacement in the homelands of others? By interviewing the descendants of these Scottish migrants, and by using Cohen’s framework for defining diasporas, Basu attempts to understand their complex notions of place and identity.

Bearing Basu’s analysis of the Scottish Highland diaspora in mind, it is perhaps useful to follow his lead and consider whether or not the Home Children and their descendants can be viewed as a diaspora. To do this, I will engage with the definitions of the term provided by both Safran and Cohen, while bearing in mind Clifford’s wariness of taking such definitions as being absolutes. Rather, I note that there is not necessarily an ‘ideal type’ when it comes to defining diasporas; because a group only exhibits three or four of Safran or Cohen’s key characteristics, this does not necessarily deny their status as such.

Starting with Safran, we may be inclined to think that the first characteristic of diasporas that he mentions – dispersal from an original ‘centre’ to *at least* two ‘peripheral’ places – is not fulfilled by Canada’s Home Children. However, this is not necessarily the case given that the Home Children and their descendants can also identify with the thousands of other children who were shipped from Britain to Australia, New Zealand and South Africa under similar schemes. And, although bonds are probably strongest within rather than between the different receiving countries, there is still a sense of connection and shared experience with child migrants and their

descendants living elsewhere.¹³ This is certainly evident on mailing lists on the Internet, where people living thousands of miles apart join ‘virtual communities’ because of their shared background.¹⁴ Thus, it could be said that the Home Children and their descendants *do* actually meet the first of Safran’s six criteria.

The second characteristic of diasporas that Safran mentions is their maintenance of a ‘memory, vision or myth’ about the original homeland. As I shall discuss in greater detail in Chapter Five, this can also be applied to the descendants of Home Children that I interviewed: my research subjects frequently discussed their feelings about the ‘Old Country.’ In some cases they reminisced about what their parents and grandparents remembered of home, while, more often, they attempted to imagine what life was like for their forebears back in Britain (as I mentioned earlier, their Home Child relatives often said nothing about their background). The influence of the print media must not be underestimated in this regard. A number of books tell the stories of individual child migrants in their own words (see, for example, Bagnell, 2001 and Harrison, 2003), while many other accounts abound detailing the plight of children in nineteenth century Britain. One interesting example of this is the fiction of Charles Dickens who, even although he was writing some years before the period of migration with which I am concerned, still affected the perceptions of a number of the descendants that I interviewed. It is often literature such as this that fills in gaps left by reticent relatives.

Safran suggests that the third characteristic of diasporas is that they “believe they are not – and perhaps cannot be – fully accepted by their host country” (quoted in Clifford, 1997, p. 247). It is perhaps more difficult to assign such a feature to the Home

¹³ What is more, in some cases siblings were split up back in Britain and one child ended up being sent to the Southern Hemisphere while a brother or sister was shipped to Canada. In such instances, ties between the countries will obviously be even stronger.

¹⁴ Examples of these include the British Home Children Mailing List hosted by RootsWeb.com – a forum that I shall discuss in greater detail in the chapters that follow – and the Former Child Migrants Group hosted by MSN.com.

Children and their descendants. In terms of the Home Children themselves, there is certainly evidence that they were not fully accepted in their new Canadian homes. Indeed, studies such as Parr's (2000) have discussed in great detail the traumatic experiences that many of them suffered; as she put it, they were often "only tolerated, not welcomed" (Parr, 2000, p. 99). However, they were still advantaged in that their 'whiteness' and 'Britishness' put them higher up the social hierarchy than the indigenous population, or even non-British immigrants such as the Chinese, would have been. Thus, their chances of succeeding in Canada – albeit with the stigma that was attached to the tag 'Home Child' – were actually far higher than if they had remained in Britain (Parr, 2000, p. 137, 139). With regard to the descendants of Home Children, it would be rather more difficult to argue that they are not fully accepted in Canada. What Basu (2002) says of the Scottish Highland diaspora could, at least to a certain extent, be applied to my study group in that those found discussing their Home Child background on the Internet tend to be relatively affluent, having sufficient leisure time available to study their 'roots' and maybe even make a trip back 'home.' Furthermore, they no longer feel the stigma that their parents and grandparents suffered. Rather, as I will go on to discuss in Chapter Four, their traumatic heritage is often a source of great pride to them.¹⁵

I would suggest that neither the fourth nor the fifth of Safran's criteria can be applied to the subjects of my research. I found little evidence that they see their ancestral home as a place to which they will eventually return, although it is true that a significant number have visited – or at least plan to visit – in order to conduct genealogical research; an issue that I shall deal with in greater detail in Chapter Five. As

¹⁵ So much so that, as Novick (in Basu, 2002) would have it, their background may even allow them to absolve themselves of any guilt with regard to past wrongs inflicted by the British; alongside the indigenous population, the French and every other race present in Canada, the descendants of the Home Children are able to 'boast' that their parents and grandparents were also ill-treated by their British masters! This is a rather controversial point that I shall deal with in greater detail in Chapter Three when I discuss an article by Stephen Constantine (2003) and the reaction of one descendant to it.

for Safran's fifth point – a commitment to the maintenance or restoration of the homeland – this does not seem to be applicable to the descendants of the Home Children either. Although many of the people that I interviewed did feel a strong emotional attachment to Britain and the institutions that they associated with Britain, there was no sense that such feelings reflected a concrete desire to affect change in their 'homeland.'

Safran's final characteristic – that the consciousness and solidarity of the group is defined by a continuing relationship with the homeland – is certainly one that does apply to my research subjects. The links that descendants maintain with the homeland are often very powerful ones, even if they are often only emotional rather than physical in their nature. Indeed, as I have just hinted, many feel such a strong connection with Britain that their greatest ambition is to visit the country of their ancestors' birth. However, while the consciousness of the group is certainly defined to a large extent by their connection with Great Britain, it is also characterised by a relationship with each other in the 'host' country and by a sense of pride in what their forebears achieved given the disadvantages which many of them suffered. And it seems that descendants' organisations and web-based communities such as the British Home Children Mailing List are instrumental in fostering a group identity that results in at least some feeling a special bond not only with the 'homeland,' but also with each other.

It seems, then, that of Safran's six criteria, the Home Children and their descendants can meet three of them. However, as Clifford (1997) points out, Safran's characteristics are perhaps overly prescriptive, and few so called diaspora groups would meet all six. What then of the nine criteria set out by Cohen and utilised by Basu (2002) in his study? Of course, there is bound to be a certain amount of overlap between the work of Cohen and Safran. Indeed, Cohen also recognises that diaspora communities are dispersed from an original homeland, but he suggests two reasons for this. Either

they were forced out by some traumatic event (Cohen's first feature) or they left home of their own accord in order to improve their lives (his second feature). In the case of the Home Children, both features are of relevance. The children supposedly 'signed up' for migration of their own accord, while it seems that both they and their senders believed that they were going to Canada to improve their chances of success. However, in actual fact, the children often had little say with regard to whether they went to Canada or not and, furthermore, it was traumatic circumstances such as poverty, homelessness and the lack of a family that caused them to be considered as potential migrants in the first place.

Cohen's next characteristic – a collective memory and myth about the homeland – has been covered already, as have questions of commitment to the ancestral home (the fourth feature he mentions), questions of returning home (fifth) and the idea of a troubled relationship with the host country (seventh). Similarly, factor number six – a strong ethnic group consciousness based on a sense of distinctiveness and a common history – could certainly be applied to the descendants given their forebears' unique experiences of removal from their homeland. So, too, could factor eight – “a sense of empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement” (quoted in Basu, 2002, p. 22) – as I have already discussed. Finally, Cohen suggests that diasporas allow for “the possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism” (quoted in Basu, 2002, p. 22). Canada, as I will discuss in Chapter Five, has an official multiculturalism policy which, it is argued, allows it to celebrate and embrace many different cultures. What is more, I have already pointed out that the ethnic background of the Home Children and their descendants has, historically, made them more welcome than most in Canada. Consequently, it seems that the descendants would certainly fit in to this category, notwithstanding the discrimination that the Home Children themselves may have suffered.

With pluralism in mind, it is also interesting to consider the attitudes of the members of a diaspora with regard to other minority groups in their midst. While I did not find any substantive evidence to suggest otherwise with my study group, a pluralistic attitude cannot be taken for granted. For instance, Basu indicates that some within his Scottish Highland diaspora were not as tolerant as one would hope, especially given the supposedly traumatic history of exclusion and removal that their ancestors suffered. Indeed, he cites one person who, when asked for his views on the Aboriginal population of Australia, made the following comment:

As to my thoughts regarding the aboriginals, etc. I don't have any sympathy for them or their so called cause. The recent land rights grants has done nothing but further bugger up this country (quoted in Basu, 2002, p. 195).

Thus, the 'rhetoric of equivalence' (Basu, 2002, p. 190) in terms of the Highlanders relationship with the 'natives' seems, in this case at least, to have been superseded by a great deal of animosity towards them. Furthermore, there is evidence, in Australia at least, that the Highlanders were very quick to assert their dominance over the Aboriginal population, the most horrific instance of this being the so called Warrigal Creek Massacre when scores of 'natives' were slaughtered by a 'Highland Brigade' (Basu, 2002). And, in Canada too, there is no doubt that Highlanders were loyal to the imperial cause, with their army regiments particularly renowned for their fearless subduing of the country (Hunter, 1994). However, I am not making any such claims with regard to the Home Children, or their descendants for that matter. Nevertheless, compliance with Cohen's final characteristic should not be assumed and there is certainly room for further investigation in this regard.

Cohen's definition of diaspora seems to be far more inclusive than Safran's version and, as a result, the Home Children and their descendants meet as many as six of his criteria, thus making a strong case for identifying them as a diaspora. However, as Clifford (1997) suggests, it may also be useful to consider who or what the Home Children and their descendants should be defined against. For instance, they may be defined against the norms of the nation state in that the child migrants themselves were perhaps never fully integrated and assimilated into the country, while their descendants may not feel fully at home in Canada – a part of them may still yearn for the 'homeland' back in Britain. The diaspora can also be defined against the First Nations population of Canada because the attachment of the Home Children to Canada has been incredibly short in comparison. Nevertheless, some common ground may be found between the two in terms of shared exile and oppression, although this should not be over-emphasised, as I shall now discuss in relation to Paul Basu's Scottish Highland diaspora.

Diaspora, genealogy and memory

Paul Basu (2002) suggests that his research subjects, a group that he describes as the Scottish Highland diaspora, have an essentialist view of their 'homeland'; that is, they see Scotland as "a fact, a given, something unmovable and unequivocal" (p. 72). Basu, however, draws on Salman Rushdie's 1982 essay, *Imaginary Homelands*, in order to problematise such a perspective on the country of origins. Rushdie sees the homeland as "a product of the diasporan imagination, a mythic place, a virtual as much as a material reality, a manifestation of the homeless mind" (Basu, 2002, pp. 72-73). And one way in which the 'diasporan imagination' of his research subjects is particularly evident is with regard to the discourse of exile that characterises much of what they believe about their 'homeland.' The Scottish Highland diaspora often see themselves as being the descendants of exiles and, in particular, of those who were banished from

their homes during the Highland Clearances. They base such a view on the popular literature that abounds (see, for example, Prebble, 1963), which tells of the banishment of thousands from the Highlands of Scotland to make way for rich landowners and their sheep. However, Basu suggests that this is far too simplistic an account of why so many thousands of Scots emigrated to the 'New World':

in popular Scottish diasporan discourse, and according to Robin Cohen's heuristic framework, the Highland Clearances come to constitute the traumatic event which caused the dispersal of their ancestors from an original centre and which provides the diaspora with a 'folk memory' – albeit an 'acquired' one – of the great historic injustice which binds the group together *as* a diaspora. The strength of this narrative displaces Cohen's second proposition, which, in fact, accounts for the vast majority of emigration from Scotland: i.e. 'the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions' (Basu, 2002, p. 188; quoting Cohen, 1997).

Thus, the Scottish diaspora are often unable – or perhaps even refuse – to recognise that, for many of their forefathers, emigration to the colonies was not simply about banishment from their homes, but was also a reflection of the 'pull factors' (plentiful land, opportunity, the prospect of wealth and so on) that the 'New World' had to offer.

Harper and Vance (1999) make a similar point in the introduction to their excellent edited volume, *Myth, Migration and the Making of Memory*. They note that Highlanders' overseas migration, in this case to Nova Scotia, was actually far more complex than is often acknowledged and state that "[s]implistic models highlighting landlord oppression or demographic and economic forces cannot account for the complexity of this international movement" (p. 21). They go on to suggest that the

‘Scottish Romantics,’ of the nineteenth century in particular, were responsible for such ‘simplistic models’:

On both sides of the Atlantic...[the standard account of migration] first entailed cultivation of powerful victim imagery which highlighted the plight of exiled Highlanders and obscured the contributions of Scottish labourers, artisans, farmers and even business elites; later this was reduced to a sentimentalized “Kailyard” celebration of the virtues of the rural life from which many Scottish emigrants had apparently been drawn and had recreated in Nova Scotia (p. 29).

Furthermore, they comment on how the reading of folklore regarding Highlanders migrating to Canada is actually highly selective. While, “on balance the majority of Maritime Gaelic songs celebrate the emigration from Scotland rather than lament it,” “[e]ssentially, only those songs which confirmed the romantic interpretation of the Highland emigrants *as victims* were selected, translated and incorporated into the dominant English language tradition” (pp. 30-31; emphasis added).

Interestingly, this portrayal of Highlanders as victims of ancient wrongs is not peculiar to Scotland and its emigrants. For instance, Roy Foster (2001) notes how the Irish, both at home and as members of the diaspora abroad, have “a sneaking nostalgia...for the old victim-culture” (p. xv), and “possess an endless appetite for reassurance about the verities of times past” (p. 164), perhaps best reflected in the way that so many hold Frank McCourt’s supposedly autobiographical work, *Angela’s Ashes*, so close to their hearts. Similarly, Paul Basu (2002) cites the work of Peter Novick who has identified a ‘culture of victimization’ amongst many groups in North America. Novick “describes a state of ‘Holocaust envy’ in which different groups, each with its own atrocity to commemorate, compete to be ‘America’s number one victim

community” (Basu, 2002, p. 189; quoting Novick, 1999, p. 190). And Basu attempts to provide possible reasons for this seemingly strange phenomenon:

One explanation for this may be found in the desire to maintain a positive or moral self-image in which it is more acceptable for the self to consciously or unconsciously identify with the oppressed rather than with the oppressors. However, it is also tempting to find some analogy between this social phenomenon and the psychological phenomenon of false memory syndrome, where an *identifiable* – even though imagined – traumatic episode is believed to account for the symptoms of trauma, the true causes of which remain obscure. Thus, perhaps [the] sense of exile [amongst the Scottish Highland diaspora]...is less a result of any historical trauma than that consequence of modernity described by Berger *et al* as ‘a metaphysical loss of “home”’ (Basu, 2002, p. 189; quoting Berger, Berger and Kellner, 1973, p. 82).

It seems that Basu is making two points here. The first is perhaps quite an obvious one – it is preferable to be identified with those who have been wronged than to be identified with the wrongdoer. This is especially the case in the former colonies where great injustices were wrought against the ‘native’ populations by the colonists. In such situations, as Nash (2002) comments with regard to the Irish diaspora, it is therefore convenient to join in the postcolonial rejection of English imperial connections by turning to specific non-English roots. Similarly, by identifying yourself as being descended from Scottish Highlanders, you can perhaps even claim some common ground with native populations given that ‘white settlers’ also wronged your ‘indigenous’ Scottish family. And Basu suggests that there is a great deal of rhetoric which places the Scottish Highlander as the ‘noble savage’ who, when he arrived in the ‘New World,’ lived peaceably with his indigenous ‘kinsfolk.’ Using such an argument, Scottish

Highlanders and their descendants cannot therefore be implicated in the worst injustices associated with colonialism (Basu, 2002, p. 191).

The other point that Basu makes is slightly more complex and deserves more attention. He suggests that the discourse of exile and Novick's 'victim culture' are actually consequences of modernity. The modern world is one in which feelings of loss and 'homelessness' are common place. Consequently, people yearn for 'home' and 'the past' and they are often in need of the comfort that 'the past' seems to afford. Utilising Berger, Berger and Kellner's *The Homeless Mind*, Basu also comments on how modernity, through increased migration, has caused people to be dislocated from both their physical and their social home. This has, in turn, led to the loss, or at least the perceived loss, of 'traditional society' and its associated collective beliefs, values and experiences. Thus, "modern man [sic] is afflicted with a *permanent identity crisis*" (Basu, 2002, p. 18; quoting Berger, Berger and Kellner, 1973, p. 78). Or, as Basu puts it:

Alienated from the place and corresponding social structures which hitherto conferred an externally determined and 'given' identity, the individual is forced to search inwardly for some coherent sense of self in a life-world which is increasingly fragmented, plural and shifting (Basu, 2002, p. 18).

Svetlana Boym (2001) makes a similar point when she discusses how nostalgia – "a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed" (p. xiii) – is an "incurable modern condition" (p. xiv). She continues,

Th[is] ambivalent sentiment permeates twentieth-century popular culture, where technological advances and special effects are frequently used to recreate visions of the past, from the sinking *Titanic* to dying gladiators and extinct dinosaurs. Somehow progress didn't cure nostalgia but exacerbated it. Similarly, globalization encouraged

stronger local attachments. In counterpoint to our fascination with cyberspace and the virtual global village, there is a no less global epidemic of nostalgia, an affective yearning for a community with a collective memory, a longing for continuity in a fragmented world. Nostalgia inevitably reappears as a defense mechanism in a time of accelerated rhythms of life and historical upheavals (Boym, 2001, p. xiv).

Thus, it seems that people are determined to *create* memories of “a past that was unchanging, incorruptible, and harmonious” (Thelen, 1989, p. 1125).

According to Brett (1996), the tendency to look back is, in fact, integral to our society today: “[a] modern culture...is always Janus-faced, looking both backward and forward, never fully settled in the present” (Brett, 1996, p. 26). However, although one may imagine that such a longing for ‘the past’ is a relatively recent phenomenon, Brett is at pains to point out that this is *not* actually the case. Rather, he suggests that it was industrialisation, particularly as it reached its zenith in the nineteenth century, which inspired the preoccupation with, and even idealisation of, the past that has continued to this day. As he explains:

I propose that the preoccupation with the past is created out of the experience of continual change; it comes into being as its dialectical counterpart, born of the stress experienced when one social ‘habitus’ is being replaced by another. Far from being a symptom of a supposed ‘post-modernity,’ the preoccupation with the past, and the typical means for evoking it, lie in the very foundations of modernity (p. 15).

And he provides a great deal of evidence to back up this claim. He points to the enthusiasm for all things medieval in nineteenth century architecture – with the prime example of this probably being the Houses of Parliament – while he also draws on

nineteenth century literature – the work of Sir Walter Scott in Scotland, for example – to show how it, too, was complicit in the construction of heritage.¹⁶

In a similar vein, Patrick Hutton (1993) draws our attention to Philippe Ariès' work on commemoration and provides further evidence of the long-standing nature of this phenomenon. According to Hutton, Ariès' study of attitudes towards death and dying – *L'Homme devant la mort* – uncovered an “unprecedented interest in commemoration” (Hutton, 1993, p. 2) as early as the nineteenth century. Hutton also provides us with a useful analysis of the work of Eric Hobsbawm and, in particular, his chapter on ‘mass-producing traditions’ in the anthology that he co-edited with Terrence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*. In this essay, Hobsbawm discusses commemorative practices in the nineteenth century and explains how a passion for commemoration emerged out of the newly industrialised nation-states of Western Europe. As Hutton puts it:

this society, self-conscious about the new culture that it was creating, also needed a new past with which it might identify. People felt the need for stability in such a rapidly changing world, where customs were being abandoned or marginalized. That is why tradition had to be invented for this modern world. Tradition provided imaginary places immune to the process of change, even if its images of stability were themselves little more than representations of present-minded notions about the past (Hutton, 1993, pp. 4-5).

Thus, Hobsbawm emphasises “the constructed nature of the commemorative traditions of the modern age” (Hutton, 1993, p. 5); traditions that are contrived in order to create an illusion of continuity with the past.

¹⁶ For more on the construction of heritage in Scotland see, for instance, Harvie (1989); Pittock (1991) and Trevor-Roper (1983).

Taking Hobsbawm's argument a step further, Benedict Anderson (1991) argues that all nations have been 'imagined' into being. And, in his view, it was 'print capitalism' that had the greatest impact in this regard – the printing press unified people under the languages that had become politically and culturally dominant as a result of its advent. Thus, by the nineteenth century, 'imagined communities' were emerging, uniting people even although the majority of them would never meet. Similarly, today, Anderson suggests that national 'communities' are still imagined because "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson, 1991, p. 6).

Aside from the printing press, other authors comment on the importance of historic landmarks in uniting people. As Maurice Halbwachs puts it, "[a] society first of all needs to find landmarks" (Halbwachs, 1992, p. 222). These are not only physical sites of significance, but also dates and periods of time "that acquire an extraordinary salience" (p. 223). And perhaps no-one makes a clearer case for the significance of such landmarks – both physical and cultural – than Pierre Nora. In the introduction to his three-volume study of the construction of the French past (*Realms of Memory*, 1996), Nora mirrors issues raised earlier in this chapter by noting the unprecedented societal change that has taken place in recent history. He suggests that globalisation and democratisation, together with the advent of mass culture and media, have all resulted in what he terms the 'acceleration of history.' As he puts it:

Things tumble with increasing rapidity into an irretrievable past. They vanish from sight, or so it is generally believed. The equilibrium between the present and the past is disrupted. What was left of experience, still lived in the warmth of tradition, in the silence of custom, in the repetition of the ancestral, has been swept away by a surge of

deeply historical sensibility. Our consciousness is shaped by a sense that everything is over and done with, that something long since begun is now complete. Memory is constantly on our lips because it no longer exists (Nora, 1996, p. 1).

And, he continues:

Societies based on memory are no more: the institutions that once transmitted values from generation to generation – churches, schools, families, governments – have ceased to function as they once did (p. 2).

The ‘acceleration of history’ has, therefore, sounded the death knell for memory and has, according to Nora, replaced memory with history; as Samuel (1994) puts it, “[h]istory began when memory faded” (p. ix). So, history, by Nora’s definition, is “how modern societies organize a past they are condemned to forget because they are driven by change” (p. 2). And, with history come what Nora terms *lieux de mémoire* – sites “in which a residual sense of continuity remains” (p. 1).

For Nora, *lieux de mémoire* exist because modern societies no longer remember as they once did. *Lieux de mémoire* are vestiges – visible signs of things that may once have existed but are no longer available. They are “the ultimate embodiments of a commemorative consciousness that survives in a history which, having renounced memory, cries out for it” (p. 6). To list a number of examples given by Nora, *lieux de mémoire* can be any of the following: museums, archives, cemeteries, collections, festivals, anniversaries, treaties, depositions, monuments, sanctuaries, private associations. Or, to give some actual examples (as suggested by Hoelscher and Alderman, 2004), *lieux de mémoire* can be geographical places such as New York’s World Trade Centre site or Hiroshima; they can be monuments and buildings such as San Antonio’s Alamo or

Auschwitz; they can be historical figures such as Lincoln or Lenin; they can be public displays and commemorations such as Emancipation Day for freed slaves in the American south.¹⁷

Modern societies feel that they need *lieux de mémoire* in order to preserve what they believe is being lost – there is a “fear that everything is on the verge of disappearing” (p. 8). As Nora explains:

Lieux de mémoire arise out of a sense that there is no such thing as spontaneous memory, hence that we must create archives, mark anniversaries, organize celebrations, pronounce eulogies, and authenticate documents because such things no longer happen as a matter of course. When certain minorities create protected enclaves as preserves of memory to be jealously safeguarded, they reveal what is true of all *lieux de mémoire*: that without commemorative vigilance, history would soon sweep them away. These bastions buttress our identities, but if what they defended were not threatened, there would be no need for them. If the remembrances they protect were truly living presences in our lives, they would be useless (1996, p. 7).

Thus, people feel the need to constantly remember in order that they maintain what they sees as their sense of identity. Consequently, as Gillis (1994) puts it, “everyone is obsessed with recording, preserving, and remembering” (p. 6). Gillis goes on:

As global markets work around the clock and the speed of communications shrinks our sense of distance, there is both more memory work to do and less time and space to do it in. As the world implodes upon us, we feel an even greater pressure as individuals to record, preserve, and collect (Gillis, 1994, p. 14).

¹⁷ In a similar vein, Delanty (2003) suggests that community – a concept that I shall discuss in greater detail in Chapter Three – is a further “expression of the search for something destroyed by modernity, a quest for an irretrievable past which is irrecoverable because it may have never existed in the first place” (p. 186).

However, Nora believes that what people are actually storing by doing this archival work is not memory, but merely “memory of memory itself” (p. 11).

Notwithstanding such complex arguments, it is undoubtedly the case that memory, however it may be constituted, is a vital tool for all those who are attempting to cling on to the past. And, with this in mind, Maurice Halbwachs (1992) discusses the extent to which memories depend on social environment and suggests that “if we examine a little more closely how we recollect things, we will surely realise that the greatest number of memories come back to us when our parents, our friends, or other persons recall them to us” (p. 38).¹⁸ Thus, it seems that memories need a social context to survive – without the support of society, memories just “wither away” (Hutton, 1993, p. 6). However, it is also true that different settings can create different memories of the same historical episode. As Halbwachs puts it: “just as people are members of many different groups at the same time, so the memory of the same fact can be placed within many frameworks, which result from distinct collective memories” (Halbwachs, 1992, p. 52). Thus, he argues that “the past is not preserved but is reconstructed on the basis of the present” (pp. 39-40). Memories can therefore be seen as social constructions – reconstructed images of the past which are “in accord, in each epoch, with the predominant thoughts of the society” (Halbwachs, 1992, p. 40). As Samuel (1994) puts it, “memory is historically conditioned, changing colour and shape according to the emergencies of the moment; ...so far from being handed down in the timeless form of ‘tradition’ it is progressively altered from generation to generation” (p. x). Consequently, “[w]e can understand each memory as it occurs in individual thought

¹⁸ I am using Lewis Coser’s edited translation of Halbwachs writing here. Coser’s book is actually a translation of two of Halbwachs’ key texts on the subject of collective memory: *The Social Frameworks of Memory* and *The Legendary Topography of the Gospels in the Holy Land*.

only if we locate each within the thought of the corresponding group” (Halbwachs, 1992, p. 53).

While it is important to acknowledge the importance of society in creating memories, it is equally important that the role of the individual is not forgotten. And this is something that Fentress and Wickham (1992) emphasise in their text, *Social Memory*. Indeed, they differ from Halbwachs in that they place more emphasis on the role of individual agency when it comes to remembering, and they use the term ‘social memory’ as opposed to ‘collective memory’ to highlight this point. However, Halbwachs does not neglect the effect of individual consciousness on groups either. As he puts it, “[o]ne may say that the individual remembers by placing himself [sic] in the perspective of the group, but one may also affirm that the memory of the group realizes and manifests itself in individual memories” (Halbwachs, 1992, p. 40).

Of particular interest for my research is Halbwachs’ analysis of why the elderly often find the past more interesting than their younger counterparts – something that certainly seems to be the case when one notes the age of the majority of my interviewees (see Appendix A, Table 1). As he puts it, “old people are much more interested in the past than are adults” (p. 48). But, as he goes on to say,

it does not follow from this that the old person can evoke more memories of the past than when he was [younger]. Above all, it does not follow that old images, buried in the unconscious since childhood, “regain the power to cross the threshold of consciousness” only in the state of old age (p. 48).

Rather, one explanation for the fascination with the past which seems to be a characteristic of many elderly people is, quite simply, that they have more time on their hands as they find themselves “liberated from the constraints imposed by profession,

family, and active existence in society in general” (p. 47). Further, society sees the elderly as “guardians of traditions” (p. 48) and, as such, they are seen as experts when it comes to the recollection of memories: “Society, by giving old people the function of preserving the traces of its past, encourages them to devote whatever spiritual energy they may still possess to the act of recollection” (p. 48).

Of course, an interest in the past is not the sole domain of the elderly though. This can be illustrated by considering recent studies into the age of people conducting genealogical research which suggest that more and more young people are getting involved in this pursuit. For instance, Basu (2002) found that the highest percentage of his respondents in the Scottish Highland diaspora were in the fifty to fifty-four age range, thus demonstrating that “an interest in family history research and roots-tourism is not limited to individuals of retirement age as is sometimes assumed” (p. 49). Similarly, a recent news article indicated that half of Britain’s amateur genealogists are now between the ages of thirty and fifty, while a “sizeable minority” are in the eighteen to twenty-nine age bracket (BBC News website, accessed 30/04/2004). Again, Halbwachs offers an explanation for this seemingly more widespread interest in the past:

Not only the old, but all people (depending, of course on their age, temperament, etc.) instinctively adopt in regard to times past the attitude of the Greek philosophers who put the golden age not at the end of the world but at its beginning. Although there are periods of our existence that we might willingly cut off – although we might not be sure that we would like to relive our life in its totality – there is a kind of retrospective mirage by which a great number of us persuade ourselves that the world of today has less color and is less interesting than it was in the past, in particular regarding our childhood and youth (Halbwachs, 1992, p. 48).

Thus, remembering the past can free people of all ages from the constraints imposed by society in the present – they can remember what they like, when they like (although, in the case of the elderly, they tend to have much more time for this than their younger counterparts).

However, it must also be acknowledged that the act of remembering is imbued with power relations, with those who wield most power in society having the greatest effect on what is remembered, as well as what is forgotten. And this is perhaps most evident on the national stage: as Fentress and Wickham (1992) suggest, the articulation of national memory “belongs essentially to political elites” (p. 127), or, as Hoelscher and Alderman (2004) put it, the “[r]epresentatives of dominant social classes have been most adept at using memory as an instrument of rule” (p. 349). Nevertheless, such control can just as easily be exerted in the smallest of groups and, perhaps especially, in the home, where, historically, women have struggled to articulate their memories without the intervention of their male counterparts. Fentress and Wickham (1992) highlight this when they suggest that “it is notoriously difficult even to tape-record women remembering in the presence of their husbands: most men interrupt, devalue their wives’ memories, take over the interview, tell their own stories instead, or even, most bizarrely, themselves recount their wives’ life stories” (p. 140).¹⁹ Thus, the most powerful – from the nation to the home – undoubtedly use memory as a means of control over their weaker counterparts. As Samuel (1994) puts it, memory is “stamped with the ruling passions of its time” (p. x). On the other hand, it must also be acknowledged that all use memory to their benefit, at least to a certain extent – people

¹⁹ While I would not like to dismiss this observation, I would suggest that it is a generalisation that is not necessarily borne out in my research. In my interviews, there were more instances of wives interrupting and correcting their husbands with regard to their husband’s family history than husbands interrupting their wives concerning their past. However, rather than reflecting any major shift in marital power relations, I would suggest that this may simply have been because these female partners were the ones with the greatest interest in conducting genealogical research, even when it was their husbands’ ancestors who were the Home Children. Thus, in such instances, their knowledge was greater than that of their husbands (see Appendix A, Table 2 for statistics concerning the gender of my interviewees).

remember, and forget, in a way that best suits their interests. Hoelscher and Alderman recognise this when they comment that “individuals and groups recall the past not for its own sake, but as a tool to bolster different aims and agendas” (Hoelscher and Alderman, 2004, p. 349), while Samuel (1994) makes a similar point:

memory is historically conditioned, changing colour and shape according to the emergencies of the moment... [It is] inherently revisionist and never more chameleon than when it appears to stay the same (p. x).

Remaining with Samuel’s idea that memory is revisionist, and returning to the work of Maurice Halbwachs, another point that he makes with regard to memory is that people, when they remember, often reconstruct the past and give events “a prestige that reality did not possess” (1992, p. 51). Even bad memories are frequently recalled with a certain amount of pleasure:

When it comes to the most somber aspects of our existence...it seems they are enveloped by clouds that half cover them. That faraway world where we remember that we suffered nevertheless exercises an incomprehensible attraction on the person who has survived it and who seems to think he has left there the best part of himself, which he tries to recapture. This is why, given a few exceptions, it is the case that the great majority of people more or less frequently are given to what one might call nostalgia for the past (Halbwachs, 1992, pp. 48-49).

Nostalgia allows people to ‘escape’ from the present, even if only for a short time. And it is to this idea of nostalgia for the past that I now turn.

Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer’s essay on what they term ‘generations of nostalgia’ (2003) is concerned with the return of a Jewish couple to the Ukrainian city of

Chernivtsi – a city from which they fled during World War Two and had not been back to in over fifty years – together with their daughter and son-in-law. Hirsch and Spitzer, the couple's daughter and son-in-law, are co-authors of this paper. The authors point out that the word nostalgia is “from the Greek *nostos*, to return home, and *algia*, a painful feeling” (Hirsch and Spitzer, 2003, p. 82). And they go on to tell us that nostalgia

was considered a debilitating, sometimes fatal, medical affliction for almost two centuries after first being named and described in a 1688 Swiss medical thesis. Initially identified in exiles and displaced soldiers languishing for home, physicians had observed that the symptoms of nostalgia could be triggered in its victims through sights, sounds, smells, tastes – any number of associations that might influence them to recall the home and environments they had unwillingly left behind. Returning the ‘homesick,’ the ‘nostalgic,’ to their origins, it was believed, was the potential cure for the ‘disease’ – its restorative ending (p. 82).

Although nostalgia is no longer viewed as a medical problem, it is still associated with “absence or removal from homeland” (p. 82). However, its meaning has also “broadened over the years to encompass ‘loss’ of a more general and abstract type, including the yearning for a ‘lost childhood,’ for ‘irretrievable youth,’ for a vanished ‘world of yesterday’” (p. 82). Further, the present is often contrasted with a past that is “valued as somehow better, simpler, less fragmented, more comprehensible, than its existent alternative in the present” (p. 82).

Hirsch and Spitzer also point out that the concept of nostalgia is one that has come in for a great deal of criticism. They tell us that it has “engendered vitriolic denunciations” and has been described as “‘reactionary,’ ‘sentimental,’ ‘elitist,’ ‘escapist,’ ‘inauthentic’ – as a ‘retrospective mirage’ that ‘greatly simplifies, if not falsifies, the past’” (p. 83; quoting Spitzer, 1998, p. 145; Hewison in Lowenthal, 1989, p. 20;

Williams, 1974). However, on the other hand, nostalgia can also be viewed in a positive manner. It has been seen by some as “a ‘critical utopianism’ that envisions a better future” (p. 83). Further, it can also “serve as a creative inspiration...‘called upon to provide what the present lacks’” (p. 83, quoting Bal, 1999, p. 72).

Returning to Hirsch and Spitzer’s Ukrainian example, while one clearly cannot compare this case of displacement, that took place as a result of the Holocaust, with the child migration that I am studying, it may be possible to draw parallels between how Holocaust survivors express themselves with regard to their homeland and how Home Children and their descendants talk about the ‘Old Country.’ For both the Holocaust survivors and the Home Children, the place they used to live in was “home in a way, but...also hostile territory” (p. 81; quoting Hoffman, 1989, p. 84). Thus, there is a feeling of ambivalence about the place that has been left behind. And, as a consequence, “[s]urvivors transmit to their children layered memories of ‘home’ – nostalgic longing, negative and critical reflections” (p. 81).

The generations that follow the original exiles are affected by a similar sense of ambivalence to that of their ancestors: “In a profound sense, nostalgic yearning in combination with negative and traumatic memory – pleasure and affection, layered with bitterness, anger and aversion – are internalized by the children of the exiles and refugees” (p. 85). However, this nostalgia that descendants experience clearly differs from what their ancestors experienced because they were not born ‘there,’ they did not live ‘there,’ they did not suffer what their ancestors suffered. Consequently, Hirsch and Spitzer refer to what descendants feel as ‘rootless nostalgia.’ Furthermore, they suggest that what descendants experience is what they term ‘postmemory’: “a secondary, belated memory mediated by [the] stories, images and behaviours” (p. 85) among which they have grown up.

Reflecting on their visit to their parents' homeland, Hirsch and Spitzer suggest that, in a way, their hope of finding roots will never be completely realised:

Having inherited shards of memory, positive and negative, we could not hope to reunite the fragments. Instead, our journey remained a process of searching – a creative vehicle of contact and transmission enabling an encounter between nostalgic and negative memory. Its force derived precisely from its irresolution, the simultaneity of promise and disappointment (p. 86).

Thus, it seems that their 'rootless nostalgia' does not allow them to resolve deep-seated questions about their identity. This may be because their diasporic roots, to extend the metaphor, "do not go underground. They are not attached to any particular land or soil" (p. 86; quoting Henri Raczymow). However, by travelling 'home' and witnessing the sites associated with their ancestors, they can construct "a deeper and more nuanced understanding of history and of memory" (p. 85). Indeed, notwithstanding the inability to 'reunite the fragments,' trips 'home' can still be highly significant in the lives of descendants. As Hirsch and Spitzer put it, "[t]he location authenticates the narrative, embodies it, makes it real" (p. 92). Thus, for them – and for a number of my research subjects, as I shall discuss in Chapter Five – their presence in their parents' hometown "gave a substance and concreteness...that no stone plaque memorial could possibly evoke" (p. 92).

Trips back to the 'homeland,' such as those carried out by Hirsch and Spitzer (2003), are just one aspect of the growing trend for people to search out their roots today. Indeed, family history research is now thought to be one of the most popular leisure pursuits in the world: both Basu (2002) and Nash (2002) claim that only pornographic websites are more popular than genealogical ones in terms of Internet

usage – a sure sign of genealogy’s popularity! Similarly, Nora (1996) provides figures from the French National Archives that show that more and more people are going there to conduct genealogical research; so much so, in fact, that the Archives are now used more for personal genealogical than for academic research. So, it seems that, even although ‘memory work’ has, on the one hand, become a global phenomenon – as illustrated by the continued significance of events and places with international meaning such as Hiroshima, Chernobyl and, more recently, ‘9/11’ – it has become increasingly local and personal too. As Gillis (1994) puts it, citing the example provided by Nora, “[t]he fact that family genealogists now outnumber professional historians in the archives of France and elsewhere is yet further evidence of the...tendency toward the personalization of memory” (Gillis, 1994, p. 14).

Of course, it must be noted that genealogy has become a great deal easier to ‘do’ in recent years. The past has never been more accessible than it is at present, whether it is in traditional archives or in modern formats such as on film, on tape, in mass-produced images or, most spectacularly, on the Internet. Further, unprecedented societal change has provided further impetus for all this genealogical research to take place. Multiple identities – home, work, leisure, peer group – now compete with each other, and people have multiple memories to uncover: “everyone has now as many pasts as he or she has different jobs, spouses, parents, children, or residences” (Gillis, 1994, pp. 15-16). So, it would seem that genealogy is now something that people of all backgrounds wish to dabble in. What is more, Lowenthal (1994) notes that it is no longer just people in the ‘New World’ that have this fascination. Utilising a personal example, he suggests why this may be the case:

Among my academic colleagues [in the UK] in the early 1960s most had no notion who their great-grandparents were; many did not even know the names of

grandparents. Told that most Americans had a pretty good idea of all their forebears back to their arrival in the New World, they responded, “Well, we don’t need genealogical fetishes; we have a secure *national* identity.” Subsequently diminished pride in nationhood may partly explain why so many British now emulate Americans in searching out forebears (Lowenthal, 1994, p. 50).

Thus, it seems that genealogy provides guarantees of truth about identity that many people, ‘rootless’ or not, crave in what is often seen as our post national world. Furthermore, as Nash continues,

Genealogy promises a neat and satisfying pregiven and predetermined collective identity – such as ‘Irishness’ – guaranteed by descent. At the same time, however, it offers the potential pleasures of choosing an ‘authentic’ identity...in identifying, for example, with one surname, clan, or ethnicity amongst the range in a family tree (Nash, 2002, p. 28).

Supposedly distinctive ‘roots’ therefore provide people with a heritage that they often believe is unique. As Lowenthal (1994) puts it, “[h]eritage distinguishes us from others; it gets passed on only to descendants, to our own flesh and blood; newcomers, outsiders, foreigners all erode or debase it” (p. 47). Consequently, empirical evidence from the archive combined, in some instances, with scientific techniques such as genetic testing and a few imaginative stories from the past can be, for some, sufficient proof that they do actually have a place that they can truly call home.²⁰

²⁰ Genetic testing is becoming an increasingly popular mode of research for amateur genealogists. Indeed, a quick Internet search provided me with details of a number of organisations that do DNA testing specifically for genealogical purposes. For instance, the British company Oxford Ancestors will conduct a test for around £180. This provides customers with details on their own DNA sequence and gives them access to a database that allows them to search for people with matching results (Oxford Ancestors website, accessed 07/02/2006). For more on this, see also recent articles from the BBC News website

Unfortunately, genealogy and the search for ‘roots’ is a far more complicated issue than many would like to believe. ‘Finding oneself’ and one’s ‘true identity’ can never be fully achieved because one’s identity cannot be merely about similarity and continuity. Rather, it must also be about the difference and rupture that characterises the world in which we live, even although many family history researchers may fail to recognise this. For instance, although Basu’s (2002) subjects may identify themselves as a Scottish Highland diaspora, the fact is that most could probably track down their ‘roots’ to a number of different nations; they just happen to choose ‘Scottishness’ for a variety of reasons which they often cannot even explain themselves. They, and many others with them, have “become compulsive consumers of the past, shopping for that which best suits their particular sense of self at the moment, constructing out of a bewildering variety of materials, times, and places the multiple identities that are demanded of them in the post national era” (Gillis, 1994, pp. 17-18).

As well as the inherent complexity of genealogical research, Nash also presents a number of dangers associated with it. Firstly, genealogy is essentially masculinist and sexist. Not only does it privilege the patrilineal line of descent – the surname, passed on by the male, is the key element of research – but it also privileges heterosexual and reproductive partnerships. Secondly, genealogy leads to a focus on ‘race’ and then, perhaps most dangerously, to a possible focus on the purity, in terms of racial composition, of the nation. Genealogy can therefore be used as the basis for racist rhetoric, with its worst manifestation being ‘ethnic cleansing.’ Indeed, such is its potential danger that Haraway (1997) suggests that it should be avoided altogether:

I am sick to death of bonding through kinship and ‘the family,’ and I long for models of solidarity and human unity and difference rooted in friendship, work, partially

(*Extreme Genealogy*, accessed 06/03/2005) and *The Guardian* newspaper (‘New Roots’). For an academic perspective, see Nash (2004).

shared purposes, intractable collective pain, inescapable mortality, and persistent hope. It is time to theorize an 'unfamiliar' unconscious, a different primal scene, where everything does not stem from the dramas of identity and reproduction. *Ties through blood...have been bloody enough already.* I believe that there will be no racial or sexual peace, no liveable nature, until we learn to produce humanity through something more and less than kinship (Nash, 2002, p. 31; quoting Haraway, 1997, p. 265. Emphasis added).

Nash is less condemning, but still comments that "any engagement with genealogy must confront its own shadowy implications in dangerous versions of 'race,' sexuality, gender, and nation" (Nash, 2002, p. 31).

Nash also argues that relationships by blood can be used for good, as a basis for solidarity and affinity as well as for division and conflict. She attempts to show this in the context of Northern Ireland where genealogy is being used as a tool to fight the bitterness, sectarianism and absolute opposites that have been key characteristics of 'The Troubles' in the province. This is because once people start 'doing' genealogy in Ireland, they often find that their background is not as simple and as 'pure' as they first thought.²¹ For the Roman Catholic nationalist population, this may mean that they find out their background is not merely about oppression from Scottish Protestant settlers or "a homogenous peasant population against uniformly rapacious English landlords" (p. 38). And, for Protestants, who often feel culturally disconnected from the island, genealogy can give them a sense of belonging as they trace ancestors who arrived in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, most importantly, genealogy challenges the absolute and antagonistic differences that exist in Northern Ireland. It uncovers

²¹ Nash also emphasises this point in her 2003 paper "They're Family!': Cultural Geographies of Relatedness in Popular Genealogy.' Focusing on genealogical tourists to Ireland, she discusses the ways in which genealogy can, for some, "dispel ideas of cultural purity" (p. 186). She tackles some of the more complex theoretical arguments surrounding issues of kinship in her 2005 paper 'Geographies of relatedness.'

stories of intermarriage and denominational change – stories which prove, as one genealogist put it, that “there is no pure blood existing in this country” (quoted on p. 44). Thus, genealogy can bring communities together in Northern Ireland – Nash cites the example of the *Education for Mutual Understanding Programme* as evidence of this – and can allow for the celebration of both cultural diversity and cultural interconnections on a local scale.

The example of genealogical research in Northern Ireland therefore allows Nash to conclude her 2002 essay, ‘Genealogical Identities,’ on a rather positive note. She does recognise that the implications of genealogy are both contradictory and ambiguous: although it can be “used to rework the nation as hybrid and heterogeneous”, calling “the naturalness of the nation into question”, it can also “serve to anchor and protect exclusive national cultures” (Nash, 2002, pp. 47-48). However, she believes that, notwithstanding the risks, genealogy can still be viewed in a positive light. Indeed, it “may be a starting point for a more subtle and critical historical understanding of identity, one that is more historically informed, but also more aware of the limits of historical knowledge and more sceptical about historical, as well as biological, determination” (Nash, 2002, p. 48). And in this respect she is in agreement with Michel Foucault:

The search for descent...is not the erecting of foundations: on the contrary, it disturbs what was previously considered immobile; it fragments what was thought unified; it shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself (Foucault, 1977, p. 147; quoted in Nash, 2002, p. 49).

Conclusion

Historical context is vital when considering the effects of child migration on the descendants of these migrants. Consequently, in this chapter, I began by exploring the prevailing attitudes in nineteenth century Britain that resulted, first, in a focus on the child in both government legislation and philanthropic activity and, second, in the policy of child migration itself. I then provided a relatively brief history of child migration and showed that this policy was, in the eyes of many in authority, the perfect solution to a number of the problems that Britain faced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. On the one hand, it was viewed as a means of easing the combined crises of overcrowding, poverty and crime that were seen to be a blight on the country's cities while, on the other, it was thought that it would provide Canada with the type of population that would allow that part of the Empire to flourish; a population that would, in the words of Stasiulis and Jhappan, (1995, p. 108) "root British values into Canadian soil." Furthermore, there was a strong Christian ethos at the centre of the movement – indeed, Wagner (1982, p. 108) tells us that more than three quarters of the agencies involved in all voluntary charitable work in the late nineteenth century were evangelical in outlook – and, as such, many also viewed migration as a path to salvation for children who had little hope of redemption were they to remain in Britain. Unfortunately, life in Canada did not always live up to expectations: although the children that were sent there were touted as being of 'superior' British stock, they continued, in many cases, to be viewed as exiles and outcasts in their new homes, just as they had been in the 'Old Country.' Thus, while migration may have allowed Britain to rid itself of a problem population, it provided no guarantees of a better life for the children involved.

Having reviewed the history of child migration, I proceeded, in the second half of this chapter, to consider how the Home Children and, more importantly, their

descendants are situated in contemporary Canada. I did this by suggesting that they can be viewed as a diaspora and provided a detailed analysis of this term that allows me to place them within such a framework. And, while my research subjects do not necessarily meet all of the criteria as set out in the definitions of diaspora that I discussed, I argued that this does not necessarily exclude them; after all, as Clifford (1997) makes clear, what constitutes a diaspora does not allow for simple generalisations. Thus, while the descendants of the Home Children may not have been traumatically displaced in the way that their parents and grandparents were, and while many of my interviewees may have only developed ties with Britain in recent years, that does not diminish the strength of the connection that they now feel with the land of their forebears' birth. Furthermore, it must be acknowledged that the family background of my research subjects is rather unique in that the ties that they have with Britain are based, in many cases, on their relationships with people who only spent a few short years there as children. And, due to the difficulties that descendants face tracing their roots beyond their Home Child ancestors – an issue that I shall cover in greater detail in Chapter Three – the child migrants can sometimes be the only link that these people have with Britain. Thus, the Home Children can, in some instances at least, be considered the sole agents of the descendants' diaspora that I am studying here; it is the lives of the Home Children, *as children*, that define them as such.

I also used this chapter to emphasise the fact that the descendants of the Home Children are not alone when it comes to the fascination that many of them have with the lives of their ancestors. Indeed, genealogical research has become a pastime for many, regardless of their background, and this is a point that I highlighted with reference to Nash's 2002 article 'Genealogical Identities.' She suggests that genealogy gives people the opportunity to obtain an 'authentic' identity that differentiates them from 'others.' And, it seems that this is vital for many in a rapidly changing world that is

characterised by increased mobility and the loss of the ‘traditional’ family networks that supposedly bolstered society in the past. However, far from being a completely new phenomenon, there is evidence to suggest that the preoccupation with the past that now exists is actually a long standing one. For instance, Brett (1996) suggests that it was the wholesale societal changes brought about by industrialisation that caused many to feel a sense of nostalgia for the world as it once was, while Halbwachs (1992) comments that even ancient Greek philosophers privileged the past over the present. Notwithstanding such perspectives, there seems to be little doubt that the privileging of the past has become increasingly important in the present, particularly as society moves into what Gillis (1994) describes as the ‘post national era.’ And, as a consequence of this, the descendants of the Home Children can, at least to a certain extent, be viewed as members of a far larger body whose attempts to find their roots are an important means of providing them with a “home in the maelstrom” (Basu, 2002, p. 96; quoting Berman) that is the world around them. However, at the same time, it is important to acknowledge the specific characteristics of my research subjects that provide them with their own particular reasons for researching their roots. While there are many abstract academic theories that hint at why people find themselves drawn to the past it is only in speaking to these same people that one can discover what *they* believe motivates them in this regard. Thus, my focus now shifts to the research that I carried out with the descendants of the Home Children in Canada. I begin, in the chapter that follows, by discussing the methods that I used to conduct my research, before providing a detailed analysis of the data gleaned from that research in the remainder of the thesis.

CHAPTER TWO

Research Methodology

In recent years, human geographers have increasingly turned away from quantitative methods and have looked, instead, towards the construction and analysis of qualitative data in their research. While it is clear that quantitative techniques can also be used in a socially relevant way, Longhurst (1996) notes that there has been a growing body of literature critiquing so called ‘scientific’ and ‘objective’ modes of research; this perhaps stems from the shift towards what was seen as a more socially relevant geography that followed the ‘quantitative revolution’ of over thirty years ago. It would seem that the use of qualitative methods also reflects a greater recognition of the complexity of human behaviour. As Susan Smith (2000) puts it,

[qualitative methods] are concerned with how the world is viewed, experienced and constructed by social actors. They provide access to the motives, aspirations and power relationships that account for how places, people, and events are made and represented (p. 660).

Techniques utilised in what can also be described as ethnographic research, range from participant observation and in-depth interviews to the interpretation of ‘texts’ in the form of literature, maps and visual images. My research involved the use of a number of these methods. Whilst doing my ‘fieldwork’ in Canada, I used a combination of individual and group interviews in order to discover how descendants of Home Children cope with their unique position in Canadian society. I also studied and attempted to interpret relevant ‘texts’ that related to the Home Children and their

descendants. In this chapter, I will conduct a review of the relevant literature relating to the research methods that I used during my research and will discuss the ‘best practice’ techniques that the experts suggest should be adopted. I will also discuss how I fared whilst carrying out my primary research and will highlight not only my successes in this regard, but also the various pitfalls that I encountered as a result of the decisions that I made.

Some general theoretical issues

The ethnographic techniques that I employed in Canada were all, as Hoggart *et al* (2002) put it, intensive methods of research in which the researcher ‘gets closer’ to the lived experiences of those that he or she is studying. With these methods, the researcher explores “beliefs and actions in terms used by those under investigation” (Hoggart *et al*, 2002, p. 202). And, in this way, he or she gains a “more nuanced understanding of the meanings of social acts, as well as a greater appreciation of interacting and contextualized rationalities that impact on behaviour” (p. 202). Given the close relationship that these research methods have with each other, it is perhaps useful for me to look at the common traits and problems associated with them, before I go on to look at each of them individually.

The research methods that I used in Canada are certainly not without their critics. For instance, a positivist critique of interviews and focus groups would suggest that, because researchers are unable to remain objective and detached, they have an undue influence on how respondents answer questions and discuss issues. However, humanists and post-structuralists would counter this argument by pointing out that there is no such thing as objectivity in social science research. Rather, as Valentine (1997) points out, “all research work is explicitly or implicitly informed by the

experiences, aims and interpretations of the researcher” (p. 112). And she goes on, this time quoting from Stanley and Wise (1993, p. 157):

Whether we like it or not, researchers remain human beings complete with all the usual assembly of feelings, failings and moods. And all of these things influence how we feel and understand what is going on. Our consciousness is always the medium through which the research occurs; there is no method or technique of doing research other than through the medium of the researcher (quoted in Valentine, 1997, p. 112).

Nevertheless, while objectivity may be impossible to achieve, it is still vital that researchers recognise and highlight the ways in which they, and others, influence their research.

Valentine (1997) is at pains to point out that researchers must recognise their own ‘positionality’ and the effect that it has on their research. They must acknowledge, as far as possible, how their social and cultural location in the world affects their studies. Rose (1997) also points this out when she suggests that all knowledge is situated – that is to say, “all knowledge is produced in specific circumstances and...these circumstances shape it in some way” (Rose, 1997, p. 305). She applies this not only to researchers, but also to the researched, and argues that researchers should therefore reflexively examine themselves, both in terms of how they situate themselves and how they interpret their findings. This reflexivity is perhaps best described by England as “self-critical sympathetic introspection and the self conscious analytical scrutiny of the self as researcher” (England, 1994, p. 82; in Hoggart *et al*, 2002, p. 224). And this is certainly something that I tried to achieve when conducting my research. I was particularly aware of the effect that my identity – and perhaps my national identity in particular – had on my research findings: the fact that I was from Britain or, more specifically, from

Scotland, surely affected how my research subjects related to me as they talked about the 'Old Country.' Aside from the influence that I had on proceedings, it was also important to consider the many other factors that affected how my interviewees responded to me. For example, some may have been heavily influenced by the opinions of family members, while others may have formed opinions by means of external sources such as the literature they had read on the subject. Still others may have been influenced by key individuals in what I have termed the descendants' community, and the role of such people cannot be underestimated either. I have tried to recognise the influence of such factors throughout my research and, while it may be impossible to fully acknowledge everything that impacts on research of this nature, attempting to do so is still a "crucial goal for all critical geographies" (Rose, 1997, p. 306).

Another issue which often crops up when ethnographic research is being discussed is the role that power relations play in forming results. Of course, it is inevitable that power relations will exist between the researcher and his or her informants. These may be related to factors such as gender, sexuality, age, class and race and, in general, it seems that the informants tend to be in the subordinate position. However, this may not always *seem* to be the case. For instance, inexperienced researchers may often *feel* that they are very much the subordinates of those who they are researching. Yvonne McKenna (2003) found this to be the case when she interviewed middle aged and elderly nuns for her research. She assumed, as the textbooks may have told her, that she would be the person in the position of power. However, as a young, inexperienced researcher she *felt* quite different. Similarly, Valentine notes that, in some cases, the research subjects may seem to have the upper hand:

if you are interviewing elites and business people, it is they who often have the upper hand, by controlling access to knowledge, information and informants. Indeed, they often want to have some influence on the research process, refusing to allow interviews to be tape-recorded or demanding the right to vet interview transcripts and influencing the way that research findings are presented (Valentine, 1997, p. 114).

Nevertheless, even if the researcher does *feel* the subordinate of his or her respondents, the fact remains that it is the respondents who are answering questions and discussing their lives – the researcher is in a position of power because he or she needs to reveal little about him or herself. Further, as McKenna discovered when she analysed her transcripts, the nuns she interviewed did not see themselves as having power over her. Indeed, they often seemed to seek her endorsement by asking her if their answers were OK. They also talked down their qualifications, perhaps feeling intimidated by the young academic they were speaking to. Thus, *felt* experiences of power exist alongside more subtle *structural* relations of power that the researcher may not initially be aware of.

It is important that the effects of skewed power relations should be minimized if at all possible. This may mean adopting an approach in which a closer relationship develops between the researcher and his or her subjects. So, in interviews, for example, Fontana and Frey (2000) tell us that researchers can “minimize status differences” and do away with “the traditional hierarchical situation in interviewing” by involving themselves in more authentic conversations in which their respondents are not the only ones to ‘bare their souls’ – the interviewers, too, “can show their human side and answer questions and express feelings” (p. 658). And Portelli seems to make a similar point with regard to oral history research:

The less [that researchers] reveal about their identity and thoughts, the more likely informants are to couch their testimony in the broadest and safest terms, and to stick to the more superficial layers of their conscience and the more public and official aspects of their culture... On the other hand, a critical, challenging, even a (respectfully) antagonistic interviewer may induce the narrator to open up and reveal less easily accessible layers of personal knowledge, belief and experience (Portelli, 1997, p. 12; quoted in Feld, 2003, p. 33).

However, this is a strategy that is not without its dangers. Certainly, few would be in favour of arguing with their subjects:

The interviewer must not succumb to the temptation to hijack the interview as a platform for their own ideas. You should not argue with the respondent, attempt to convert them to your own opinion or monopolise the interview with your own life story or assertions. To put it baldly, the interview is not about the interviewer (Miller, 2000, p. 89; quoted in Feld, 2003, p. 33).

Furthermore, many researchers actually think it best to reveal little about themselves to their subjects. Rena Feld (2003) certainly used this strategy during interviews that she undertook with female conscientious objectors:

I took the role of a friendly, sympathetic but personally distanced interviewer. I said little or nothing about myself...I felt that in this way I would get a 'truer' picture of the [interviewee's] own thoughts and experiences (pp. 32-33).

And, she also quotes Lummis in this respect:

If interviewers start by ensuring...that the informant knows about them there is the danger that the interviewer's background will be perceived as important and reacted to by the informant. The less strongly the interviewer's personal views and background are in evidence the less there will be to bias the informant (Lummis, 1987, p. 57; quoted in Feld, 2003, p. 33).

Thus, there exist contradictory views on how the researcher should deal with his or her relationship with the researched. Some would suggest being open and revealing personal feelings in order that the researched reciprocate with theirs, while others are of the opinion that self-revelation will prejudice results. But, although the choice to be made is clearly a difficult one, if the researcher recognises the biases that his or her chosen persona brings, it will be possible to justify the results that have been obtained.

Overall then, as Fontana and Frey (2000) note, it has become increasingly important for researchers to highlight the problems that they have encountered in their work, whether these be in relation to biases that they are aware of, failures in terms of techniques that have been chosen and so on. They suggest that this "confessional style," although overdone on occasions, can be valuable as it makes the reader aware of the many problems associated with research, while also lending "a tone of realism and veracity to studies" (Fontana and Frey, 2000, p. 661). Indeed, they suggest that it is better to do this than to present data as being perfect and totally non-contradictory. Further, this method also shows the human side of the researcher, bringing under scrutiny the influence that the researcher has had on his or her research. Thus, they conclude,

the text created by the researcher's rendition of events is "deconstructed;" the author's biases and taken-for-granted notions are exposed, and, at times, alternative ways to look at the data are introduced (Fontana and Frey, 2000, p. 661).

Interviewing

Fontana and Frey (2000) provide a very detailed analysis of the interview as a form of social research. They present a number of different interview techniques ranging from the structured interview – in which the interviewer asks all respondents a series of pre-established questions which have limited response possibilities – through to the unstructured interview in which the interviewer perhaps only has a vague list of questions to be covered. This latter technique is more qualitative in nature than the structured interview. As Fontana and Frey put it:

The former aims at capturing precise data of a codable nature in order to explain behaviour within preestablished categories, whereas the latter attempts to understand the complex behaviour of members of society without imposing any a priori categorization that may limit the field of inquiry (2000, p. 653).

Or, to put it even more simply, the unstructured interview is perhaps more about understanding than about explaining. And it is for this reason that I decided to use less structured interviews in my research. However, rather than adopting the unstructured option, I utilised semi-structured interviews as I believed that they were most suitable for my purposes. Semi-structured interviews are discussions based on broad parameters set by both the researcher and his or her participants (Cook and Crang, 1995). The fairly loose structure of such a research technique allowed me to have some control over the type of information that I gleaned from my respondents, but, at the same time, it allowed my interviewees to shape their interviews, at least to a certain extent, because

they were able to discuss what *they* saw as important within the confines of my research topic.

Cook and Crang (1995) are at pains to point out how the arrangements that are made for an interview are crucial to a successful outcome. Similarly, Fontana and Frey (2000) highlight the ethical issues that cannot be ignored when carrying out such research. For instance, there must be informed consent from research subjects – they must be adequately informed of the purpose of the research and the role that they will be playing in it, before they agree to be involved. They must also have the right to privacy and total anonymity if they so desire. Indeed, their interests must always come first and the researcher must act responsibly and with common sense in order that this can be achieved. So, with such advice in mind, I attempted to adopt a number of the ‘best practice’ strategies suggested in the literature. Whenever possible, I contacted my interviewees in advance – usually by email – requesting a meeting with them, providing some details on my research and confirming that their responses would be treated in the strictest of confidence if that was what they desired. However, because a significant number of my interviews were actually arranged for me – an issue I shall go on to discuss later in this chapter – this was not always possible. But, even with those interviews that I was not directly involved in arranging – as well as with those that I did arrange myself – I still spent a few minutes at the start of each meeting explaining what my research was about and confirming that my interviewees were comfortable with what I was doing. With all of the interviews that I conducted in Canada, I also asked my research subjects to complete a consent form. This confirmed whether or not they were willing to be recorded and also whether or not they were willing to be named in

my study (Appendix B). However, with respect to this latter point, in the end I decided that all names would remain confidential, even although most had agreed to be named.²²

Cook and Crang (1995) also suggest that a great deal of background research should be undertaken in order that a suitable checklist of interview questions can be prepared. With that in mind, I conducted much of the research included in the first chapter of this thesis before I started making contact with my interviewees. In that way, I had developed a good understanding of the issues that were to be discussed at the interviews. I was also able to spot key issues during the meetings and could therefore ask pertinent follow-up questions to points raised by my interviewees. However, even with this significant background knowledge, it was still important that I dealt with my interviewees and the subject matter in a sensitive manner, and I attempted to steer away from questions that would have made my interviewees feel uncomfortable or that would have further skewed the power relations that existed. This was particularly important at the start of my interviews while my relationship with my subjects was perhaps at its most fragile, and, with this in mind, I paid heed to the advice given in Cook and Crang's *Doing Ethnographies*:

Whatever is actually said in the opening few minutes of the interview, it must be demonstrated that the interviewer is a benign, accepting, curious (but not inquisitive) individual who is prepared and eager to listen to virtually any testimony with interest... It is better here to appear slightly dim and too agreeable than to give any sign of a critical or sardonic attitude (McCracken, 1988, p. 38; in Cook and Crang, 1995, p. 43).

²² The only interviewees that I named in my study were the gatekeepers who not only facilitated a large number of my interviews, but, as descendants of Home Children, also agreed to be interviewed themselves. However, while I named them in my research, I only did so when discussing the role that they played in my research as well as their role in the Home Child community as a whole; their personal stories, as with those of all my interviewees, remained confidential.

Similarly, follow-up questions were used as a form of encouragement, allowing my interviewees to open up and to critically engage with topics in their own words. And, in this respect, it was often better to allow my subjects to carry on talking, even when it seemed that they were digressing; doing so often actually lead to “unexpectedly interesting insights” (Cook and Crang, 1995, p. 44).

Godfrey (2003) suggests that the interviewer should try to have an element of sympathy for the standpoints that the interviewee takes and, again, this was something that I attempted to foster during my interviews. As he explains,

Putting oneself in the interviewee’s position can be extremely illuminating. Simple recognition of the moral and contextual standpoints referenced by interviewees greatly assists researchers to understand the social and individual factors that affected their lives. Without empathy, analysis is still possible, but it is likely to be sterile, prone to essentialism, and lacking in insight (p. 56).

However, he goes on to suggest that too close an identification with the researched can lead to a loss of the professional detachment that is an essential element of critical research. Thus, I attempted to find a happy medium that combined a certain amount of empathy with an equal measure of professionalism. As Jamieson and Grounds put it, “[t]he research relationship must be based on the interviewer’s empathic neutrality and respect for the respondent” (quoted in Godfrey, 2003, p. 56).

Fontana and Frey (2000) stress that the language used by interviewers is another important tool which can affect the responses of interviewees; quite simply, it is vital that the interviewee understands the context of the questions being asked. However, one must also be aware of the nonverbal techniques utilised by interviewers and interviewees alike:

Proxemic communication is the use of interpersonal space to communicate attitudes, *chronemics* communication is the use of pacing of speech and length of silence in conversation [something that Cook and Crang (1995) also emphasise the importance of], *kinesic* communication includes any body movements or postures, and *paralinguistic* communication includes all the variations in volume, pitch and quality of voice (Gorden, 1980, p. 335; in Fontana and Frey, 2000, pp. 660-661).

Thus, it is vital to realise that interviews are not just verbal. Indeed, as Holstein and Gubrium (cited in Fontana and Frey, 2000) comment, interviewing is not just about the ‘whats’ – the substantive findings – of the interview, but is also about the ‘hows’ of the interview in terms of contexts, nuances, manners and so on. And, it is for this reason that it is vital that note taking supplements the recording and subsequent transcribing of interviews. Otherwise, a great deal will be missed. Thus, while I recorded and transcribed all of my interviews, I also took notes that I wrote up after each interview had ended. These provided me with interesting insights that would have been lost forever if I had relied only on my tape recordings; even noting a simple facial expression, for instance, can be a vital means of interpreting the words that follow. On a more practical level, such notes also gave me a focus during interviews and helped me think of supplementary questions that could be asked. Furthermore, they acted as vital back-up on the very few occasions when my subjects requested that the tape recorder be turned off, on the odd occasion when my tape ran out and even on the two occasions when I forgot to press record!

In terms of the format of interviews, it seems to be common practice to start with ice breaking questions, before gradually moving towards more specific ones (Fontana and Frey, 2000). As I mentioned above, I actually started by confirming who I

was, what I was researching, why I was conducting the interview and why I had asked that particular interviewee to speak to me. And, with such issues in mind, I gave each interviewee an information sheet and my business card by way of confirming my credentials (Appendix C). These identifiers proved to be particularly useful for reassuring interviewees, especially those who were elderly and living on their own. It was at this point that I also discussed ethical issues of anonymity with my interviewees and asked if they would let me record the interview. In this respect, I emphasised that note taking was slow and distracting and that tape recording avoided the possibility of the respondent being misquoted. Gladly, the large majority of my subjects were more than happy to allow this. However, the recording of an interview does bring a number of logistical issues with it. For instance, I needed to ensure that I had good equipment that recorded interviews in a way that allowed for their subsequent transcription. Further, I needed to ensure that the acoustic environment was conducive to recording a conversation, although, as Cook and Crang (1995) put it, “the ideal acoustic environment to record a conversation may not be the same as the ideal social environment” (p. 55). Fortunately, most of my interviews were held in the homes of my interviewees; spaces that tended to be free from too much background noise and perhaps the places where most would be happiest to share their experiences. Unfortunately, as I shall go on to discuss, I did not have the same luxury when I was conducting my group meetings.

Having covered the formalities at the start of my interviews, I went on to ask my interviewees about what they knew about their Home Child background and about why their ancestor had been sent to Canada. Such questions allowed them to discuss something which they frequently knew a great deal about – or at least something that they were passionate about researching – and I believe this eased them into the interview and made them feel comfortable with the whole process. While answering

these questions usually took some considerable time, it often raised a number of issues that allowed me to ask related questions. For instance, I could ask for my interviewees' opinions on what happened to their ancestor and on how the charities dealt with the problems that were being faced in nineteenth and early twentieth century Britain. Having dealt with the specifics of my interviewees' family history, I went on to ask them about their genealogical research, about its significance in their own lives and about the descendants' community that is so important to some. I did actually take a question sheet with me to interviews and I developed and amended this during my time in Canada (Appendix D). However, I did not follow the rigid line of questions that this sheet set out – although I tried to cover the same basic themes from interview to interview, the specific questions that I asked and the order in which I asked them often changed depending on how my questions were being answered. What is more, as I became more experienced and comfortable with the interview procedure, the question sheet became less and less important so that, by the end of my time in Canada, I was comfortable conducting my interviews with little or no reference to it at all.

During the course of my research, I conducted a total of sixty-two interviews and, on average, each would last between an hour and an hour and a half. Three of these were completed before I travelled to Canada, when I interviewed representatives of three of the charities that were involved in the migration of children to Canada. I conducted the remaining fifty-nine interviews in Canada. At these, I met with three former Home Children; the wife of a now deceased former Home Child; seventy-two descendants of Home Children; and twenty people who were not direct descendants but had some other connection to a Home Child.²³ Thus, at these fifty-nine interviews, I interviewed a total of ninety-six people (Appendix A, Table 3; Appendix E). This was actually a significantly greater number of interviews than I had planned. Indeed, my

²³ Of these twenty 'others,' seventeen were married to a descendant, two were descendants of a farmer that had 'adopted' a Home Child, and one was a friend of a now deceased former Home Child.

research proposal was that I conduct approximately forty in-depth interviews. However, such was the interest in my research topic, and so keen were my gatekeepers to assist me with my research, that I ended up having to call a halt to that aspect of my research for fear that I would be overwhelmed with the amount of data that I had collected.

I utilised a number of methods to recruit descendants of Home Children to interview. In this way I hoped to obtain a wide range of perspectives from as many descendants as possible. As I mentioned above, I met with representatives from some of the charities that were involved in child migration early on in my research. I wished to find out how they dealt with enquiries from descendants and, in so doing, I hoped that I would get an idea of the number of potential interviewees that were actually ‘out there.’ And, having written to a number of charities, three gave me a favourable response and agreed to an interview – the Catholic Children’s Society (Westminster), Fegans and Quarriers.²⁴ These meetings, while not particularly influential in terms of recruiting descendants to interview, certainly were beneficial as, for the first time, they gave me an idea of the importance that descendants place on tracing their roots. What is more, my meeting with the representatives of Quarriers did help me to make contact with a number of descendants in Canada. Quarriers sent approximately 7,000 children to Canada and they have taken a particularly proactive stance with regard to their relationship with migrants and their descendants. Indeed, they held their fourth reunion of what is called Quarriers Canadian Family in Kingston, Ontario, just a few weeks before I arrived in Canada. Although I was unable to attend the reunion, representatives of Quarriers who did attend kindly agreed to help me recruit

²⁴ Disappointingly, Barnardo’s – the charity that sent by far the most children to Canada and that also holds records for a number of the other agencies that are no longer in existence – refused my requests for an interview. Indeed, the head of their ‘Aftercare’ department proved to be rather hostile to my request. However, as I will go on to discuss in Chapter Four, they were facing a multi-million dollar class action lawsuit raised by a former Home Child at the time, so their wariness was perhaps understandable.

interviewees. I produced some posters and flyers for them to distribute (Figure 3) and I designed a website for them to advertise (Figure 4), which resulted in me establishing a number of contacts in the Kingston area.

Figure 3: Flyer produced for Quarriers Reunion

ARE YOU
A DESCENDANT OF
A CHILD MIGRANT?

WOULD YOU LIKE TO TALK ABOUT
YOUR SEARCH FOR YOUR ROOTS?

IF SO, PLEASE CONTACT ME:

ANDREW MORRISON

DOCTORAL RESEARCHER

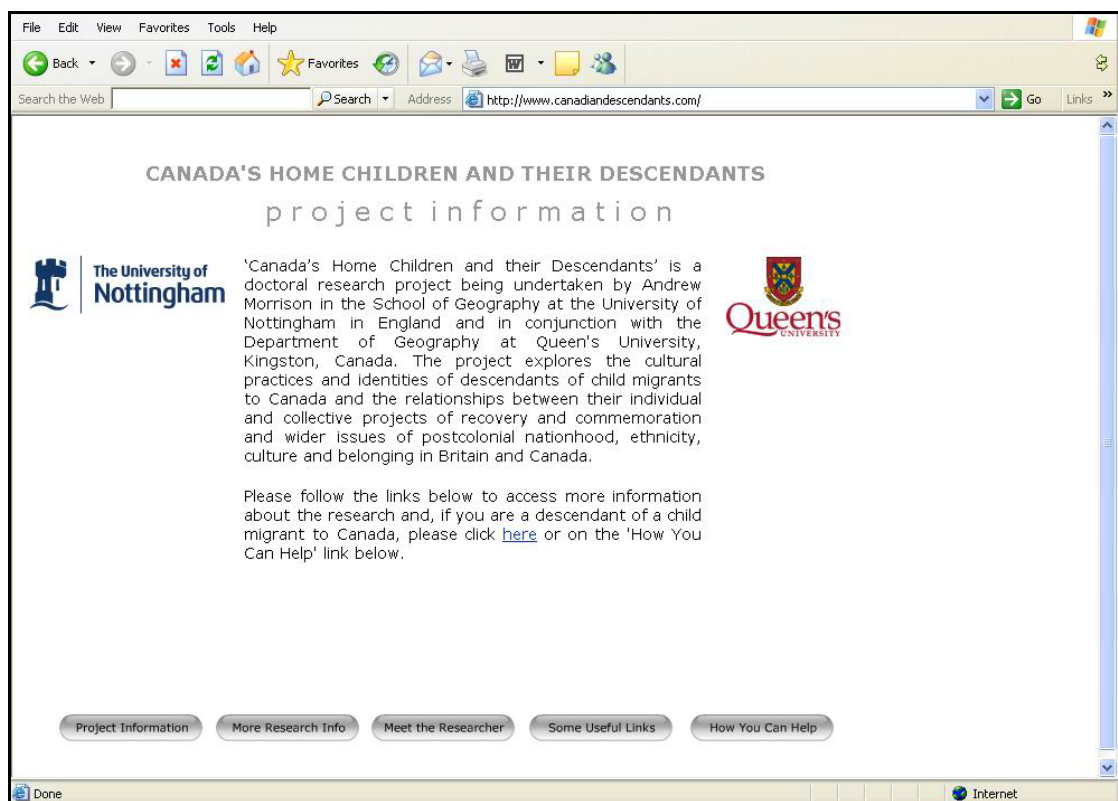
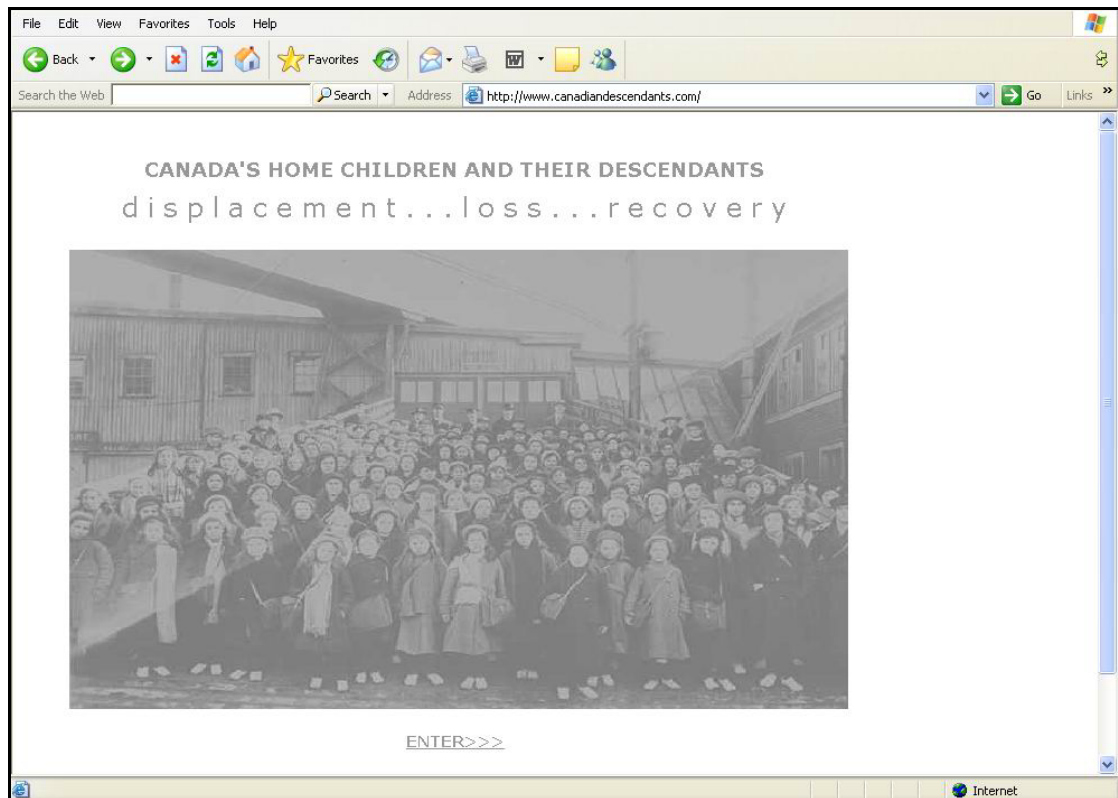
C/O DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY
QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY, KINGSTON

E-MAIL: canadiandescendants@hotmail.com
WEB: www.geog.nottingham.ac.uk/~lgxanm
(WWW.CANADIANDESCENDANTS.COM FROM EARLY NOVEMBER)

I'LL BE SPENDING 6 MONTHS IN CANADA,
BETWEEN DECEMBER 2003 & MAY/JUNE 2004.

I'D LOVE TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY
TO SPEAK TO YOU!

Figure 4: Website advertising my research



The website that I designed proved to be a useful means of advertising my research throughout my time in Canada. While I got very few ‘hits’ from people who just happened to find the site, the address did appear in the other forms of media that I used to advertise my research and, in that way, interested parties were able to find out more about my project and contact me via the links that were provided on the site. Between November 2003 and May 2004 – the period when I carried out the bulk of my primary research – my research was advertised on an Internet mailing list, in local newspapers, and in historical and genealogical society newsletters, while I was also interviewed on local television and on two separate radio shows. However, much of this publicity was actually organised by my gatekeepers who enthusiastically took to organising interviews for me. Gatekeepers tend to be leaders or key figures in communities and organisations being studied and they are often crucial to gaining access to such groups. As Hoggart *et al* (2002) explain, “[i]n terms of persuading people to take part [in your ethnographic research], leaders of clubs and organizations or respected members of the community can be useful for making contacts” (p. 216). This certainly proved to be the case with my research and my gatekeepers were involved in organising a significant percentage of my interviews. However, with that in mind, it is important to consider whether they were selective in terms of the people they chose for me to speak to. After all, Hoggart *et al* (2002, p. 216) tell us that gatekeepers might “screen participants according to their own agendas, or because of what they see as your agenda.” However, I found little evidence of this in my research. While their selections could not have been entirely objective – after all, it is impossible to achieve complete objectivity – the stories told and opinions expressed by the different interviewees that my gatekeepers chose or put me in contact with were a fair reflection of the wide range of accounts that I heard from my interviewees as a whole.

I had a total of four gatekeepers who assisted me in making contact with the majority of my interviewees in Canada. The first and most influential of these was Dave Lorente. Dave is the son of a Home Child and, along with his wife Kay, is the founder of Home Children Canada, an organisation set up to help Home Children and their descendants with their family history research. As such, he is without doubt the world authority on all issues relating to Canada's Home Children. What is more, I would suggest that Home Children Canada is the most important descendants' organisation in existence given that it was set up to serve *all* Home Children and their descendants: unlike groups like Quarriers Canadian Family and the Hazelbrae Barnardo Home Memorial Group – an organisation that I shall introduce later in this chapter – Home Children Canada's interests are not restricted to any particular sending organisation. I first made contact with Dave in 2002 when I was formulating my PhD proposal and enquiring about Canadian funding sources, and I have remained in contact with him throughout my research. I visited him for the first time shortly after arriving in Canada in 2003 and he gave me contact details for a number of descendants at that time. He also placed an advert in the newsletter that he produces for Home Children Canada and this resulted in a number of people contacting me. Then, in April 2004, I spent five days with Dave and Kay at their home in Renfrew, Ontario and, during that time, Dave organised eleven interviews for me to conduct, both in Renfrew itself and in the surrounding area. He had advertised my visit in local newspapers (Figure 5) and arranged for me to be interviewed on local television as a means of recruiting people for both my individual interviews and the group meeting that was held on the last night of my stay in Renfrew.

Figure 5: Renfrew Newspaper Article

The Home Child Story: Telling it like it is

The founders of Home Children Canada (HCC), a committee of Heritage Renfrew have felt, over the years, that the story of Canada's child migrants has not been told in full. There has been much attention, especially in the media, to the abuse that occurred, little to the good things that happened and virtually nothing to the effects of child migration on successive generations — the inherited or secondary effects on family and descendants. To address this last concern, Heritage Renfrew and HCC have imported, in a manner of speaking, a guest speaker from Scotland, the latest of a series of scholars from the Canada, the States and UK who have sought their aid and visited them.

Enter Andrew Morrison, a Glaswegian scholar who has studied child migration to Canada while working on his Bachelor and Master's

degrees in the UK. He is now compiling data for his doctoral thesis at Nottingham University. He has a special interest in the residual effects on family and descendants and is anxious to meet during his stay with as many descendants in the Ottawa Valley as possible. Andrew will operate out of Renfrew the week of Monday, April 19. He wishes to interview as many individuals or families as possible and to set up contacts with others who would like to be in touch by phone during his stay in Canada or correspond with him by e-mail or post when he returns to the UK in late or mid-May.

After a week of Upper Ottawa Valley interviews with individuals and families at Heritage Renfrew Archives in the National Archives Building in Renfrew (adjacent to the Renfrew Inn) or in their family homes, Andrew will

address a gathering and conduct a group interview which will help him and those who participate to better understand the group dynamics that occur when the subject is discussed in public.

The group session will occur Friday evening, April 23 at 7 p.m. in the Atrium of the National Archives building. As with all Heritage Renfrew and Home Children Canada meetings, it is open to all comers, there is no admission and there are free refreshments.

To book an appointment contact Dave Lorente, phone (613) 432-2486 or e-mail lorente@sympatico.ca or get in touch with Andrew Morrison at Queen's University (613) 553-6000, Ext 78541 or e-mail lgxanm@nottingham.ac.uk. Andrew is also anxious to meet or hear from families who took in Home Children.

Cutting provided by Dave Lorente (publication details unknown)

While the time that I spent in Renfrew was most enjoyable, there were a couple of issues which cannot go unmentioned. The interviews took place in Dave's home, in the homes of the individuals concerned and in a room in Renfrew's National Archives building that Dave had booked for that purpose. However, what differed from all of the other interviews that I conducted in Canada was that Dave joined me in the majority of these meetings. While I had a hire car for the duration of my visit, Dave drove me to the various locations where the interviews took place and, because he was a close friend of many of the people that I was interviewing, he joined in with proceedings. This did not adhere to the confidentiality stipulations that I had set out in my consent forms but, because Dave was in attendance and had introduced me to these people, I did not feel that it would be appropriate to ask him to leave. In addition, he made lengthy contributions to the discussions in some of my interviews, interjecting to provide historical information at points in the conversation when others' knowledge – including

my own – may have been lacking. What is more, my interviewees were often turning to him while they were discussing certain issues. Of course, this was not surprising given the close relationship that he had with many of them and the fact that he was *the* expert on the issues that were being discussed. However, I did feel that, at times, he was imposing his opinion on the proceedings. He frequently emphasised the positives of child migration – something that, as I shall discuss in a later chapter, he admits to doing in order to counteract the negative publicity that often abounds in the press – and I sensed that this was done in order to influence not only my interviewees but, ultimately, my research findings.

Notwithstanding the issues that I had with the interviews that were held in Renfrew, I would still suggest that my time there was highly successful. What is more, while I may have been uncomfortable with Dave's presence in my interviews, there was undoubtedly a benefit to his being there. For instance, he was able to clarify issues which I was unclear on and answer questions that interviewees raised and, in so doing, he was frequently able to assist them with their research. His friendship with them also allowed them to open up and discuss issues that would probably never have been discussed had he not been in attendance; they tended to be very comfortable in his presence and, as such, the interviews that I conducted with him were amongst my most enjoyable.

It was Dave's publicity concerning my research that also put me in contact with my second and third gatekeepers, Ivy Sucee and Lynn Gainer.²⁵ Ivy Sucee is the daughter of a Home Child and lives in Peterborough, Ontario. She runs the Hazelbrae Barnardo Home Memorial Group, an organisation that meets regularly in Peterborough to assist descendants with their research and to commemorate the work conducted by

²⁵ In a sense, it could be said that Ivy and Lynn were secondary gatekeepers given that my contact with them was made, albeit indirectly, through Dave. However, they were still distinct 'points of access' to the interviewees that I met through them and, as a consequence, I refer to them as gatekeepers in their own right here.

Barnardo's in that town.²⁶ Unlike the situation in Renfrew, Ivy gave me the contact phone numbers for a number of the people who attend her group meetings. She had contacted them in advance to ask whether they would be willing to speak to me, and then I made follow up calls to arrange times when I could go and meet them. And, during the course of a week travelling between my base in Kingston and the Peterborough area, I conducted a total of twelve interviews with descendants of Home Children. Lynn Gainer is the granddaughter of a Home Child who lives in Sudbury, Ontario. She has had a long standing interest in researching her Home Child roots and is also actively involved in her local genealogical society. She invited me to stay with her in Sudbury for a week and arranged eleven interviews with local descendants of Home Children. These took place in individual homes – including Lynn's – and also in a room in a local Anglican Church that Lynn had booked for such a purpose. As with Dave Lorente, she also arranged publicity for my trip in the form of a newspaper article (Figure 6) and two interviews on CBC Radio, and my visit culminated in a group meeting held in conjunction with the Sudbury District Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society (Figure 7).

My final gatekeeper was Perry Snow, the son of a Home Child from Calgary, Alberta. His role in my research was rather different from the 'hands on' approach adopted by the three people mentioned above. Indeed, I would describe Perry as a 'virtual gatekeeper' because he facilitated my search for interviewees through the web-based British Home Children Mailing List that he administers. I emailed Perry about my research during my first trip to Canada and he posted my message on his mailing list (Appendix F). The result of this was that a large number of people contacted me from all over Canada and beyond. And, while I was unable to meet with the majority of these

²⁶ Hazelbrae was the name of the Receiving Home for girls that Barnardo set up in Peterborough. Sucee estimates that ten thousand Barnardo children passed through this Home between 1884, when it opened, and 1922, when it finally closed (Interview 3.3, p. 17 & 22).

Figure 6: Sudbury Newspaper Article

MATTRESS LIQUIDATORS
NEW • FUTONS • BEDS • MATTRESSES
VALLEY EAST INDUSTRIAL PARK
Cash & Carry 897-3645

The Sudbury Star

The Good Life

Editor: Kennedy Gordon (674-5271, ext. 233, fax: 674-6834, e-mail: editorial@thesudburystar.com)

Waifs and strays

From origins in misery to strong futures in Canada

Home children, sent from England to work in Canada, sparked a long legacy that thrives to this day

By Lara Bradley
THE SUDBURY STAR

It's more than the shaved heads and rough dresses that "break your heart," says Lynn Gainer. Look at the expressions on the Foster girls' faces — Rose, 14, Alice, 12, Ada, nine, and Margaret, seven. There's a fearful graveness that makes them look older than their years.

The photos were taken while they were in the care of the Barnardo's Girl's Village Home, just before they boarded a ship for Canada in 1901. The girls were among an estimated 100,000 "home children" sent to Canada between 1868 and the late 1940s.

While about 10 per cent of Canadians are descendants of home children, few may know of their ancestors' unique past.

Gainer picks up the photo of her grandmother, Alice Foster, in her home in Sudbury overlooking Ramsey Lake. Although they were close — her grandmother lived with her family while Gainer was growing up — she never told her granddaughter or her daughter, Doreen Scott, that she was a home child. In fact she died, with her secret.

It was only later, when Gainer began to take an interest in genealogy that she discovered how her grandmother had come to Canada and spent her teenage years.

Home children, even those who were placed with kind families in Canada as opposed to abusive ones, had it hard — stigmatized by even the press. While the "little immigrants" for the most part hid their pasts, their descendants are now embracing it.

Most are proud of the courage and sheer will it took their mothers, fathers or grandparents to build a life in a foreign land without help of friends or family at such a young age.

"They had such strength," says Gainer.

While some 25 charities sent these children to work in Canada's farms and lumber yards, and even in matchbox factories, Thomas Barnardo's "schools" were the largest.

The children, some as young as five years old, came from England's orphanages, workhouses and other institutions dealing with "waifs and strays," as they were called.

Canada, with its empty lands, was viewed as the solution.

"Such schemes were seen as a way of 'saving' children from the 'immorality' of city life, of dealing with child poverty in the newly industrialized cities of Britain and of providing a source of cheap labour in the Dominion," says Andrew Morrison, a doctoral student from the University of Nottingham in England.

He will be in Sudbury May 5-8 to interview the descendants of home children, culminating in a mini-conference to be held May 8 at the Church of Latter Day Saints on Cambrian Heights Drive.



Lara Bradley/THE SUDBURY STAR

Lynn Gainer looks through microfiche records in the genealogical research room at the Greater Sudbury Public Library's MacKenzie Street branch. While researching her family tree, Gainer discovered her grandmother, Alice Foster (inset top) and three sisters, including Margaret (middle) and Rose (bottom) were home children — shipped off to Canada from England to work while still children.

Of the descendants Morrison has spoken with, two themes have emerged so far.

Some of the descendants are angry at the way both the Canadian and British governments treated the children. A few have reported that their parents, who had grown up without a mother or father, had no clue how to give affection and consequently felt their families were affected by it.

But most are simply "very proud" of their ancestors for surviving and thriving in Canada, he says.

The descendants

Morrison is currently gathering stories from descendants in Renfrew. He's staying at the house of David Lorente, who founded Home Children Canada about 14 years ago after learning his father was one.

Since then, Lorente has organized reunions for the home children, some now in their 50s and even over 100.

Gainer knew her grandmother came to Canada at the age of 12, without parents, but never thought to ask why. It was the missing pieces that prompted her to consider whether her grandmother may have been a home child.

She did have one clue. Her grandmother said that on the way to the

ship "the streets were all decked out in black." It turned out the country was in mourning for Queen Victoria, who died in 1901.

"So that's where I started. There are all kinds of clues people don't realize are there," she said.

Alice belonged to a family of 10 children. Gainer found a newspaper clipping about a house fire that explained why the family had fallen upon such hard times.

Their mother, Suzanne Foster, was in the process of lifting a tea kettle from the open hearth when the handle broke and the pot fell into the fire.

"The flames came out and onto her petticoats," Gainer said. "She ran to the back of the kitchen and was engulfed in fire. She was taken to the infirmary and given a drink of brandy. She was found dead in the morning."

Eventually the father, without permanent employment, moved into a boarding house, run by his sister, with the remaining children. But it was deemed not a good place for the girls' morals, so they were sent to Barnardo's home for girls, and then on to Canada.

After arriving in Canada, the four sisters were separated. Alice's records show she bounced through several families. The children did earn a small wage, which their families placed in an account at Barnardo's. However, any expenses the children incurred were drawn from that account.

One year, Alice asked if she could buy a winter coat with her wages. That request was turned down. When she left care, \$4 was all that was left in her account.

She married at the age of 22 and eventually moved to Sudbury.

It's hard to know what Alice went through during her time as a home child. "My grandmother was the quietest, softest-spoken person. She never said a bad word about anyone," Gainer says.

"She was widowed young. But despite that, her two sons grew up to be engineers. They turned out well. My mother turned out well."

THOMAS BARNARDO

A timeline of the home children movement:

- 1868: Barnardo set up a ragged-school for girls and boys in London.
- 1868: Annie McPherson takes over an empty warehouse and installs hundreds of "matchbox makers" taken from the streets, attics and cellars of London.
- 1869: McPherson sends 500 to Montreal.
- 1869: Maria Rye starts distributing children to the Maritimes and Niagara on the Lake. The first group, 77 in all were between five and 10 years. Rye sent 5,000 in all.
- 1882: Barnardo begins his own emigration scheme.
- 1897-1914: Barnardo sends about 1,000 children a year to Canada.
- 1905: Barnardo dies at 60, leaving his charity 249,000 pounds in debt. But it continues.
- 1925: New Canadian law requires that no children younger than 16 can emigrate alone. Emigration of young children ceases.
- 1920s: There were increasing concerns about the ethics of the child migration programs, with accounts of physical and sexual abuse abounding in the British and Canadian press. As a consequence, the popularity of the practice waned. It did continue on a smaller scale, though, until 1949.

Cutting provided by Lynn Gainer (Source: *Sudbury Star*, Monday 26th April 2004, p. A8)

Figure 7: Group meeting, Sudbury, Saturday 8th May 2004



Source: author

people due to financial constraints and the distances involved, the publicity on this forum did result in a number of interviews.

Overall, my four gatekeepers were either directly or indirectly responsible for facilitating forty-five of the fifty-nine interviews that I conducted in Canada (Figure 8). Other interviews were as a result of speculative emails that I sent out early on in my research; the ‘snowball’ effect of interviewees putting me in touch with other descendants that they knew of; the flyers that I produced for the Quarriers reunion; an article that I posted in the Kingston Historical Society newsletter (Figure 9); and a talk on my research that I gave to the Kingston Genealogical Society. And, such was the combined success of these recruitment methods that I ended up having to turn away a significant number of interviewees. Indeed, I only conducted a fraction of the interviews that could have been held and, aside from two interviews conducted in Alberta and Quebec during my second visit to Canada in 2005, all were held in the province of Ontario in the early months of 2004. However, given that the majority of the Home Children were migrated to Ontario, combined with the fact that the majority of Canada’s population are to be found there, it is perhaps not surprising that it became the hub for my research (Figure 10).

Figure 8: Facilitators for my interviews

Interview Facilitator	Number of Interviews
Dave Lorente	19
Ivy Sucee	11
Lynn Gainer	10
Perry Snow	5
Kingston Historical Society Newsletter	3
Kingston Genealogical Society Talk	2
Quarriers Reunion Flyer	2
Speculative Email	2
Snowballing	3
Unknown	2
Total	59

Figure 9: Kingston Historical Society newsletter advert

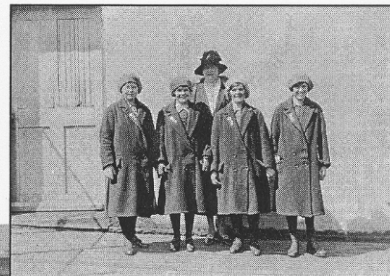
Canada's Home Children

Between 1869 and the late 1940s, approximately 100,000 children were sent to Canada under the auspices of a number of British charities. The latter included Barnardo's (who sent some 30,000 - about a third of the total), Quarriers, Fegans, Middlemore, Church of England, National Children's Homes, Annie Macpherson, and Maria Rye. With the blessing of the British Government, these philanthropic organisations were encouraged to remove children from orphanages, workhouses, and other institutions and settle them in Canada. Such schemes were seen as a way of 'saving' children from the 'immorality' of city life, of dealing with child poverty in the newly industrialised cities of Britain, and of providing a source of cheap labour in the Dominion. By the 1920s, however, there were increasing concerns about the ethics of the child migration programmes, with accounts of physical and sexual abuse abounding

in the British and Canadian press. As a consequence, the popularity of the practice waned. However, it did continue on a smaller scale until 1949.

Today, it is estimated that ten per cent of Canadians are descendants of these 'Home Children'. Many engage in genealogical research as they attempt to trace their family roots and discover why their ancestors were removed from Britain and placed in Canada. If you are a descendant and would like to discuss your family background, then please contact Andrew Morrison, a doctoral student from Scotland carrying out research on the Home Children at Queen's University. He is particularly interested in learning about descendants' searches for roots and about how they have been affected by their family backgrounds. More information about his research can be found at <http://www.canadiandescendants.com>.

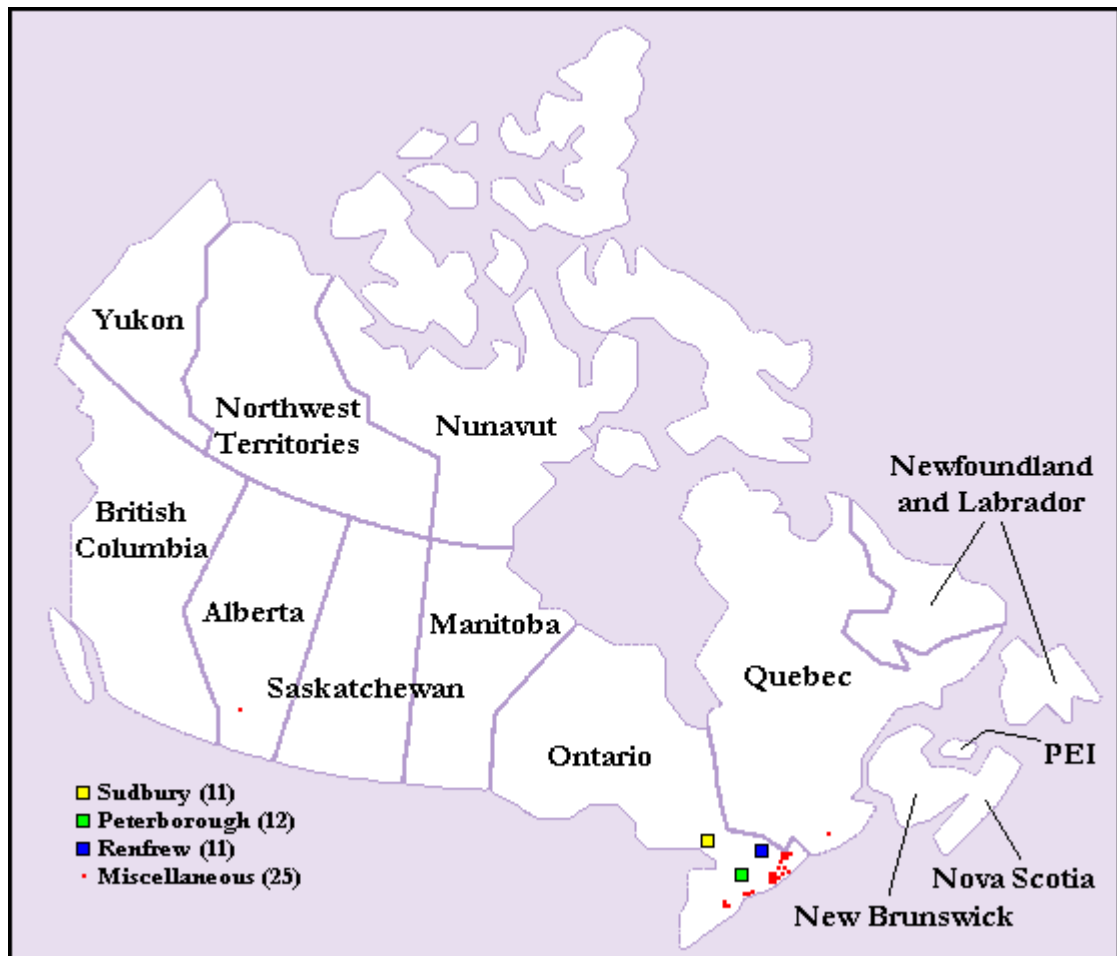
Alternatively, he can be contacted by email at canadiandescendants@hotmail.com or by phone on 613-533-6000 Ext. 78541.



LIMELIGHT 6 (3) 4 March 2004

Source: *Limelight: Newsletter of the Kingston Historical Society*, Volume 6, Number 3, March 2004, p. 4

Figure 10: Interview sites and number of interviews carried out at each



Map adapted from outline obtained at http://www.seiu.org/images/canada_map.gif (accessed 09/05/2006)

Focus Groups

Focus groups are another form of qualitative research in which groups of people discuss with each other topics supplied by a researcher, rather than respond individually to a structured set of questions. They have their roots in sociology and are “the predominant form of qualitative research in marketing” (Morgan, 1988, p. 10). It is believed that they facilitate “the interaction of participants without excessive control from the researcher and [they] can produce novel or unexpected insights which may not be generated via other methodologies” (Holbrook and Jackson, 1996, p. 136). Further,

as Cook and Crang (1995) put it, focus groups are “not just a way of collecting multiple individual statements, but [are] a means to set up a negotiation of meanings through intra- and inter-personal debates” (p. 56). Thus, I hoped that they would provide me with insights into the attitudes of my research subjects which other methods would not have achieved.

As with any form of research, focus groups come with a number of notes of caution. For instance, even although the participants often benefit from the discussions, focus groups are still “engaged explicitly in the social production of knowledge and do not pretend to extract knowledge intact from the research subject” (Goss and Leinbach, 1996, pp. 121-122). As Goss and Leinbach go on to point out:

focus groups do not eliminate the unequal power relationship between researcher and research subjects, because it is still the researcher who initiates the exercise and who determines the selection of participants, the identity of the moderator and the agenda for discussion (p. 122).

And while such issues are inevitable, at least to a certain extent, with any form of research, it is still essential that the researcher is aware of them and that he or she approaches the research with a degree of reflexivity (Rose, 1997). Similarly, once focus groups have commenced, their composition frequently causes problems. It is almost inevitable that hierarchical structures will develop within groups, with conversations being dominated by strong personalities, and some participants purporting to be experts. And, while this issue can certainly be addressed through the use of a strong moderator, the voices of those with weaker personalities and less self-confidence are often blocked out. This, in turn, may cause the conclusions that are reached to fail in accurately reflecting what many believe, even although group members may be afraid to

admit as much. Furthermore, participants may also be relaying what they believe the researcher wants to hear, rather than what they actually believe. Again, this will often be the case when participants do not have the confidence to express their own opinions, although it is more likely that this will happen with individual interviews rather than in a group setting.

It can also be difficult to ascertain whether those in attendance represent a good cross-section of the population that the researcher wishes to reach. To give one example from my research, the majority of those in attendance at the meetings that I held viewed child migration in a positive light: while they recognised that abuses did occur, the general consensus was that the philanthropists involved were well meaning and the children probably ended up in a better situation than they would have faced back in Britain. And, while this was also the majority view amongst my individual interviewees, it is difficult to say whether it is the view of the majority of all descendants of Home Children. However, I can only base my research findings on the small sample of people that I met with. Further, as long as I acknowledge that my small sample may not reflect the feelings of the whole population that I am concerned with, my findings can still provide an interesting insight into the group in question.

In a more practical sense, focus groups are frequently difficult to organise in the first place. Holbrook and Jackson (1996) noted how tricky it was to recruit people to participate in their groups. They placed advertisements in local papers, posters in churches and community centres, and sent letters to local organisations requesting volunteers. None of these methods proved to be fruitful. Further, when they did round up some volunteers, a number did not turn up at the meetings, while others were unwilling to commit to more than one session. Similarly, Longhurst (1996) found that only two people turned up for her meetings, while Cook and Crang (1995), recognising such recruitment issues, suggested that researchers should over-recruit by approximately

twenty per cent to cover for non-attendees. However, as it turned out, the problems that I faced in Canada were quite the opposite!

My initial plan had been to conduct eight one-off focus groups, each comprising eight participants, together with myself and an assistant. Such a plan was based on a detailed reading of relevant literature. I had decided on relatively small groups of eight because I thought larger groups would be more intimidating for some and would restrict how much each person could say. Further, I believed that groups of around eight people would allow me to gain the best insight into a wide range of viewpoints.²⁷ I had also hoped to recruit someone to assist me at my meetings. Much of the literature had suggested that an experienced moderator be used to lead and monitor discussions (Burgess, 1996; Cook and Crang, 1995; Fontana and Frey, 2000; Goss and Leinbach, 1996, Hoggart *et al*, 2002). However, while I had decided that I would moderate discussions – I felt that I would struggle to find someone who was knowledgeable enough about the Home Children to lead a discussion on them – I did hope to recruit someone to assist me at the meetings that I planned to hold. Such a person could have dealt with technical issues such as recording and note taking, thus allowing me to concentrate on leading and participating in discussions.

As it turned out, I ended up conducting only two group meetings and it is debateable whether these could even be classified as focus groups. Rather, it may be better to characterise them as discussion forums. I had planned to hold the focus groups during my stays with the three gatekeepers that I discussed above – Ivy Sucee in Peterborough, Dave Lorente in Renfrew and Lynn Gainer in Sudbury – as these were the sites where the majority of my interviews were being conducted. However, in the case of Ivy Sucee, she felt that it was impractical to hold such meetings given that many

²⁷ In Longhurst's case, mentioned above, she actually produced favourable results with only two attendees. However, the purpose of a focus group is surely to get a larger number of people to interact with each other and it is therefore questionable whether having only two attendees can actually be described as a focus group at all.

of her contacts were elderly and would struggle to travel to a venue of our choosing. What is more, the people who would have attended such meetings were people who I had interviewed already, and, given that they had already spoken to me at length, Ivy suggested that they felt they had nothing further to add. Dave Lorente and Lynn Gainer ended up with a rather different problem on their hands: too many people expressed an interest in attending a group meeting! And, because of this, plans to host two larger one-off meetings began to emerge.

The first of my discussion forums was held in the National Archives building in Renfrew on the last night of my stay in the town. It was attended by twenty-seven people, besides myself, and included a good mix of people I had interviewed already and a number who I was meeting for the first time. I started the meeting by giving a brief introductory presentation on my research. Then the remainder of the evening was given over to discussing child migration and the opinions of those present on a variety of related issues. For instance, we discussed whether those in attendance viewed what happened to their ancestors in a positive or a negative way and how they thought about the lawsuit that one Home Child had brought against Barnardo's. I put a variety of statements up on the overhead projector as a way of stimulating debate and then annotated the acetates with key points being made from the floor. As with my individual interviews, I recorded the meeting, having received the permission of those involved by means of a consent form that I passed round for attendees to sign.

Unfortunately, the meeting was beset by a number of problems and it was difficult for me to glean a great deal of useful data from it. For a start, I found that it was far trickier to generate meaningful discussions than I had first envisaged. This may not have been helped by the way that the meeting – and the room for that matter – had been set up: the large number in attendance dictated that chairs were set up as one would for a lecture. Furthermore, I would suggest that most of those in attendance had

actually come to listen to a talk about Home Children rather than participate in a debate as I had hoped. In addition, while a number of people did make contributions, I found that Dave Lorente tended to dominate proceedings. This was not entirely surprising given that he was *the* authority on Home Children in the room – he was known by most if not all in attendance and they were all aware of the huge amount of research that he had conducted on the Home Children over the past number of years. Thus, not only did the issues raised tend to be directed to him throughout the evening, but he also interjected on a number of occasions, talking at length about a number of historical issues relating to the story of the Home Children. For instance, he discussed the social conditions in Britain that precipitated the move towards child migration as well as other factors that motivated philanthropists to act in the way that they did. And while all such information was useful and interesting, it was not what I had planned for the meeting – I had hoped that individual descendants would express *their* opinions about child migration rather than the evening being a lesson in the history of child migration. However, I do not wish to criticise Dave Lorente in this regard. After all, if it had not been for the work he did organising and advertising the meeting, it would never have taken place in the first place. What is more, the academic literature makes it abundantly clear that strong personalities frequently dominate group meetings, so it was my job to keep a tighter rein on proceedings (Cook and Crang, 1995). Unfortunately, in this instance, I was not entirely successful, not only because of my lack of experience as a moderator, but also because the setting and numbers involved meant that the intimate discussions that I planned for were almost impossible to achieve. After the meeting, I also discovered that the small tape recorder that I had used for my individual interviews had been inadequate for picking up much of what those in attendance had to say. Indeed, the poor sound quality, combined with the overlapping of voices that is a characteristic of any group meeting, meant that it was almost impossible to transcribe

what had been said. However, I did still have my own notes which I wrote up after the meeting – as well as the annotated overheads – and these provided a partial record of what had been said. Thus, I should perhaps be less critical of what was actually achieved given that this was the first meeting of this type that I had been involved in.

The second of my discussion forums took place in Sudbury at the end of the week that I spent with Lynn Gainer. It was held in the city's Mormon Church and, thanks to Lynn's work generating publicity for the event, it was attended by approximately forty-five people.²⁸ As with the meeting in Renfrew, I started by giving a short presentation on the policy of child migration and discussed what I was trying to achieve with my research. Having done that, I again used annotated overheads to generate a discussion on how people felt about what had happened to their ancestors. And, this time, the format proved to be slightly more successful, especially towards the end of the meeting when there was an animated discussion concerning the lawsuit being brought by a former Home Child against Barnardo's.²⁹ What is more, I learned some lessons from the previous meeting. For instance, I set up my tape recorder in the middle of the audience and, consequently, it picked up more of what was being said. I also recruited Lynn to take some notes during the meeting and these proved to be a useful backup for a recording that was still far from perfect. However, once more, the format of the meeting was not one that encouraged a great deal of debate. It seems that most people came to listen to a lecture rather than contribute to a discussion. Further, the fact that so many people turned up, combined with the fact that the meeting was held in a large lecture theatre with chairs set up to face a speaker, probably did not improve the dynamics of the event.

²⁸ Thirty-seven people signed the consent form that I had distributed – an adapted version of the form that I used for my individual interviews – but there were a number in attendance who did not sign the form.

²⁹ I will discuss this lawsuit – along with the exchange that took place at the meeting – in greater detail in Chapter Four.

Supplementary methodologies

Another facet of the methodology that I planned to use in my research was the analysis of visual materials. As Rose (2001) highlights in her book, *Visual Methodologies*, the interpretation of images is a vital means of understanding cultures and how these cultures are constructed. In the case of my research, before I commenced my fieldwork, I envisaged that the analysis of photographs would play a significant role in my research. I thought that the starting point for descendants' research into the lives of the Home Children might well have been photographs handed down by parents and grandparents and, consequently, I thought that I could discuss these in relation to the conversations that I had with the descendants in question. Similarly, I was also interested in considering the material artefacts that descendants kept that related to their Home Child ancestors – I wished to see how important these were to them as they attempted to make connections not only with their ancestors, but also with the land of their ancestors' birth. However, in the end, the studying of such photographs and objects did not form a large part of my research.³⁰ This was largely because my interviewees did not have a great deal to show me in this regard. And, I would suggest that there were two main reasons for this. First, given the poverty in which many of them lived, both in Britain and in Canada, the Home Children simply did not have many material possessions that related to their early lives. Second, because of the way in which the Home Children often viewed their lives, they did not, in many cases, pass on photographs and mementos that related to their time in Britain or, indeed, to their journeys across the Atlantic and their early lives in Canada. Rather, they attempted – often with a great deal of success – to hide all reference to their childhood.

³⁰ This provides an interesting contrast with the work of Kevin Meethan (2004) who discusses the importance of family memorabilia, and photographs in particular, in framing the research of the amateur genealogists that he spoke to.

Consequently, photographs and objects relating to the early lives of the Home Children are often difficult to find. However, this does seem to make the artefacts that *are* in existence particularly precious to descendants, and this is something that I discuss in greater detail in Chapter Three. More specifically, I discuss the importance of the photographs of their ancestors that descendants can sometimes obtain from the sending charities in Britain, the distinctive trunks that the Home Children used on their journey to Canada, and the Bibles that the sending agencies frequently provided their charges as they left for the Dominion.

Another method that I used to supplement the information gleaned from my individual and group interviews was a form of textual analysis on the Internet. Crang, Crang and May (1999) focus on the increased significance of computer mediated communication in the introduction to their edited volume, *Virtual Geographies*. Communication of this nature plays an important role in the lives of many of my subjects and, as such, it was vital that I gave it due consideration in my research. Crang *et al* point out that the virtual world is one that is empowering for many people, and this certainly seems to be the case for the descendants of child migrants. Descendants who would probably never otherwise meet are drawn together through media such as online mailing lists and, as a consequence, their voice as a group is strengthened. Thus, as Crang *et al* conclude, “virtual geographies, far from being a specialised concern of interest only to net nerds, mad modellers or dedicated followers of intellectual fashion, are implicated in much wider questions of human life, human geography and human reality” (p. 20). This point is also emphasised by Nessim Watson (1997) in his study of one virtual community that has developed because of its members’ common love for an American rock group. Using his example – which I will discuss in more detail in Chapter Three – I analysed some of the messages that appeared on a particular Internet forum for descendants of child migrants – the British Home Children Mailing List – as I

attempted to unravel the complex nature of the virtual community that has developed because of its members' shared backgrounds as descendants of child migrants.

I had also hoped to carry out some form of participant observation during my time in Canada, although circumstances did not allow for this aspect of my research to develop as I had wished. According to Cook (1997), participant observation involves living and / or working within particular communities in order to gain an understanding of how they work 'from the inside.' As its name suggests, it is about both participating in the everyday life of a chosen community and about observing what is going on in that community, although as Cook and Crang (1995) suggest, there is a tension implicit in this:

To be a *participant in* a 'culture' implies an immersion of the researcher's self into the everyday rhythms and routines of the community, a development of relationships with people who can show and tell the researcher what is 'going on' there and, through this, an experience of a whole range of relationships and emotional states that such a process must inevitably involve... Conversely, though, to be an *observer of* a 'culture' implies a detached sitting back and watching of activities which unfold in front of the researcher as if s/he wasn't there, a simple recording of these goings-on in fieldnotes, tallies, drawings, photographs and other forms of material evidence and, through this, a striving to maintain some form of dispassionate, 'Scientific' objectivity (p. 21).

Notwithstanding this tension, the subjective and objective components of participant observation allow for the development of "intersubjective understandings" between researchers and researched (Cook and Crang, 1995, p. 21), which can provide the researcher with very useful data.

Participant observation is not always about spending a long period of time living amongst an isolated community in some far off land. Rather, as I had hoped with my

research, it can also be about spending time in ‘communities’ that are spatially dispersed and that meet perhaps only occasionally (Cook and Crang, 1995; Cook, 1997). Thus, I had planned to attend a number of the reunions that are held by different descendant groups from time to time. However, as my research progressed, I discovered that these were not held on as regular a basis as I had initially thought. I arrived in Canada only a matter of weeks after the large Quarriers event that I mentioned earlier in this chapter and, while some smaller reunions did take place over the next year or so, they were held when I was out of the country.

However, while I was unable to attend any organised events, I did get a sense of what takes place at reunions. From what I heard from those descendants that I interviewed who had attended such events in the past, reunions tend to have a guest speaker who discusses a certain aspect of the story of the Home Children. For instance, an author of a book on the Home Children may address the audience, or a genealogy expert may discuss research techniques. The events will also have tables set up where people can buy relevant books, pick up leaflets about the relevant charities, learn how to apply to these organisations for information on their ancestor and so on. They will also be occasions when descendants – together, hopefully, with some surviving child migrants – can discuss their family histories and reminisce about the past. And, in a way, what took place at my two discussion forums was quite similar. I was the guest speaker at both meetings and, in the case of the Sudbury meeting, Lynn Gainer had set up a table with relevant literature, while, in Renfrew, Dave Lorente was able to answer any queries from the floor. What is more, it could well be that some of those in attendance viewed the events in much the same way as they would reunions: they came to listen to a talk on the Home Children, to glean information relating to their family history research and to mingle with people with whom they felt a common bond. Unfortunately, it is only in retrospect that I can draw such conclusions. It could well be

that my focus was too narrow going into these meetings; I was only interested in the interactions that took place during the ‘focus group’ part of the meetings rather than consciously engaging in research while I mingled with descendants before and after the formal proceedings.

In a similar way, I could also have engaged in participant observation on the Internet. For instance, while visiting the British Home Children Mailing List, I could have conducted what Hoggart *et al* (2002) term ‘cyberethnography.’ However, as with the more conventional forms of participant observation, this type of research brings with it a great deal of ethical baggage. Basically, such concerns are encapsulated in the debate over whether the research should be overt or covert. In other words, should the researcher be using e-forums without first asking for the permission of those for whom they are set up? And, having joined such groups, should the researcher then participate as ‘one of them’ or ‘come clean’ and admit their reason for joining? As it turned out, I did not pursue this line of research, so I did not face this ethical dilemma. Although I did have a message posted on the Mailing List as a means of recruiting interviewees, and while I was an observer in that I read the messages that people posted, I would not say that I was a participant. Rather, I elected to focus on the forms of research discussed earlier in the chapter. Participant observation, then, was another layer that could have been added to the approach that I used. However, circumstances – with respect to the lack of reunions taking place, together with a conscious decision to follow other modes of enquiry – meant that it played only a minor role in my research.

Conclusion

Looking back over the plans that I made before I travelled to Canada, the research that I actually carried out when I got there was quite different from what I had intended. For instance, I conducted far more interviews than I had initially planned – fifty-nine

rather than forty – but organised only two of the eight group meetings that I had planned. What is more, my group meetings – or discussion forums as I have labelled them – bore little resemblance to the focus groups that I had read about and planned to hold before I left for Canada. However, I do not view such changes in a negative way. Rather, I believe that my research turned out to be more successful than I had planned: I was able to meet with far more descendants than I could have hoped for and, consequently, I obtained a huge amount of data concerning the descendants of the child migrants. Of course, that does not mean that I view my research with an uncritical eye. As with any research, the methods that I chose were certainly not free from problems and I have attempted to highlight some of these issues in this chapter. For instance, I noted that power relationships – whether between myself and my gatekeepers, between myself and my research subjects, or even between the subjects themselves – certainly affected my findings. However, by acknowledging my position, and by representing the differing positions of gatekeepers and interviewees alike, I believe that I was still able to conduct my research in a way that responsibly represented the views of all those involved.

With regard to my interviews in Renfrew, I did have some issues with Dave Lorente joining me in what were supposed to be confidential meetings. However, he cannot be blamed for this occurring; after all, while I was uncomfortable with him joining me, I did not express such doubts openly to him. What is more, it is quite possible that, had I been on my own, my interviewees would not have opened up to me in the way that they did with Dave present; his close relationship with them made them relax and share stories which I may never have heard otherwise. Similarly, he was also able to remind them of specific details that they had discussed with him in the past and, as such, a number of the interviews that were conducted while he was present proved to be the most memorable and enriching of all.

In terms of the discussion forums that I held, these bore little resemblance to the focus groups that I had initially planned and, as such, they were perhaps less successful than I had hoped. Difficulties associated with a lack of audience participation – perhaps due to the large numbers attending as well as a failure on my part to properly define what I wished to achieve – allied with the poor quality of the sound recordings that I obtained, meant that I did not glean as much information from these events as I did from the individual interviews. On the other hand, the meetings were certainly well attended and I did come away with summary notes as well as the overhead slides that I had annotated during discussions. What is more, as I highlighted earlier in this chapter, ethnography is a type of research that is fraught with many pitfalls, so some problems were to be expected. Indeed, a reading of the relevant literature before I commenced my fieldwork made one thing abundantly clear: research rarely goes exactly to plan and one must be prepared to adapt one's methods 'on the hoof.' Gladly, the way things turned out for me certainly made for some interesting findings that still allowed my research to be successful and rewarding. Indeed, the problems that I encountered along the way gave me a fascinating insight, not only into the group being studied, but also into the research process itself. And, while the findings that I will go on to discuss in the chapters that follow may lead some to suggest that ethnographic research fails to deliver satisfactory 'scientific' results, such an argument certainly does not negate the importance of a study such as this – far from it! As Cook and Crang (1995) conclude:

Ethnographies may lack the apparently 'concrete' results of other methods...but an honest and serious engagement with the world is not a failure because it admits that things are messier than that and tries to think through the various complexities and entanglements involved rather than to deny them (p. 92).

I believe my findings will give the reader an insight into the complex emotions that drive my research subjects to delve into family pasts and it is to these findings that I turn for the remainder of this thesis.

CHAPTER THREE

Being bitten by the bug

“you make a few discoveries, it’s like gold I guess – you find a little gold and you get bitten with the bug and you keep going back for more information”

Grandson of a Home Child, Sudbury, Ontario

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of many of the people that I interviewed was the passion that they showed for their genealogical research. Some of them were literally addicted to tracing their roots; something that others would see as little more than a hobby. In this chapter, I will attempt to highlight some of the reasons behind this often unbounded interest in researching Home Child roots. I will start by discussing the many reasons my interviewees gave for this, before considering what the academic literature has to say in this regard. This will bring me back to the work on diaspora, memory and genealogy that I discussed in Chapter One. It will also allow me to introduce the ideas of Stephen Constantine, an historian, who presents an interesting theory as to why descendants of Home Children find themselves so fascinated by their heritage – he suggests that they may be jumping on a descendants’ bandwagon that privileges certain family lines over others. Having considered such issues, I will go on to look at how my research subjects feel about carrying out their research, and will also discuss the various techniques that they utilise in order to make their discoveries. This will lead on to an analysis of the descendants’ ‘community’ and, indeed, of the literature that surrounds this surprisingly complex notion. For a significant number of my research subjects, their interaction with other descendants has proved to be a crucial

means of discovering more about their Home Child background, and I will attempt to describe and account for the contact that takes place.

Inspiration for research

Many of my interviewees became interested in genealogical research later in life. Indeed, I think it would be fair to say that, for the majority of the people with whom I spoke, it was not until after they retired that their interest in their family history really developed. The reasons for this sometimes sudden growth in interest are as varied as the family histories of my interviewees. However, as I shall go on to discuss, there are certainly a number of common themes that run through the explanations my interviewees gave for their new-found fascination.

The first theme that I shall discuss is one that has affected a large number of my research subjects; that is, a heightened awareness of their own mortality as they grow older. This seems to result in a newfound desire to learn about their family history:

I think realising that we're not here for a long time [laughs], perhaps, while we still have our health, we should try and learn more about our family (3.5, p. 8).

But, perhaps more important, it engenders a need to leave a legacy for loved ones – and their own descendants in particular – before it is ‘too late’:

What I am interested in, is making sure that my children and my grandchildren are aware of this background... I want...my children and grandchildren to, to know this stuff about their roots, where they come from (1.2, p. 29, 30).

all I wanted to do was get some information to leave my children, so my mother had some kind of life, so that they would know her life (2.7, p. 16).

my concern...is to make sure that [I am] able to pass it on to the next generation... So I think that may be an explanation why people, as they mature in life, become more conscious of their roots (Renfrew Discussion Forum, p. 30).

I read this notice on my sister's fridge. It said "There's only two important things that parents should give their children – one is wings and the other is roots." And I thought, well I've given them wings – they all flew the coop [laughs] – but I haven't given them roots; I better do something about it (5.5, pp. 29-20).

Of course, it is not just the awareness that they themselves are ageing that spurs many amateur genealogists into action. It is also as they see their relatives getting older and dying that they find themselves drawn to genealogy. Indeed, with a number of my interviewees, it was the passing of an elderly relative – a link with the past – that was the incentive they needed to commence their research. This time it was the increased awareness of death caused by this loss of a close relative that made them anxious to 'start digging' before it was 'too late':

ANDY: *And so what inspired you to start looking?*

INTERVIEWEE: *I think it was death. I think it was the fact that my father and mother were dead. We started to wonder...isn't it funny how we have to wait till somebody dies before we get curious about this stuff, enough to talk about it?* (1.10, pp. 8-9)

one of my uncles, my favourite uncle died and when they were doing the eulogy and they were doing things like that, certain things just, I thought, I didn't know that. Well, what else is there that I don't know? ... And, I, this started, putting things together (4.10, p. 14).

Death also leaves many with deep regrets that they *did* actually leave their research until it was too late. Older relatives, particularly the actual Home Children, often die before the descendants ever think that they could have asked them about their lives:

I didn't ask my dad questions, and now he's dead and his mother's dead. And, so, I'm actually searching – I've got a bit of a search going, to try and find out (2.3, pp. 17-18).

I regret the fact that I didn't just sit my father down and get him to tell me everything he knew about Barnardo's – that's what I should have done (2.9, p. 31).

I was...thirty-four when my father died and I wasn't smart enough even then to know enough to ask all the questions... You have to wait till you're fifty years old, and smart (3.3, p. 32).

we blame ourselves now for not pushing a bit more while our mother was still alive...because it's a wonderful resource in terms of information, and the same for our father. They both lived to eighty-two and eighty-four respectively, so we had plenty of opportunity but it just, at that time, my brothers and my sister, I guess we had our own family lives to look after and [we were] not that interested in the history (3.5, p. 9).

It's too bad a person doesn't pay attention whenever you're young – all these things you're told... you don't become interested until it's too late... You're too busy with your own life (3.9, pp. 6-7).

In the case of these people, the realisation that they had failed to utilise the best source that they had – their family member – was enough to inspire them to make amends and do the research that they felt they should have done a long time ago.

For other amateur genealogists, rather than being spurred on by the death of a relative, it can be a far more personal brush with death that prompts them to commence

their research. For instance, a serious health scare was enough to inspire one of my interviewees to start her research immediately:

Do you know when it really hit me, was when we had our first daughter... [My husband] and I had infectious hepatitis, yellow jaundice, and we were in bed for five months... Anyways...all of a sudden it seemed to, at that time, hit me – what would happen to that baby if [my husband] and I died. And I thought, well, you know, that's like a Barnardo child. Look what happened to them – they went into the Homes and was [my daughter] going to go into a Home... Who would have taken care of my baby? And that's when I really started and that's when I made my [Home Child] dad start telling me all of his stories all over again. I know it sounds like a weird story, but it is the honest truth Andrew (3.3, p. 14).

And, she went on:

I just simply had to know and I was like that from the time I had the jaundice... Before that, it didn't matter very, it really didn't. He [her father] was a Barnardo Boy – “So what?” was kind of my attitude. There's lots of Barnardo kids in [the area]. I went to school with about three different families and they were Barnardo children, and their parents came to our house. They were just other kids to play with. But after that happened...I just had to know everything I could find (3.3, p. 16).

Thus, realising that she would not be around for ever, far less her father, she was inspired to find out as much as she could about his past before it was too late.

Remaining with issues relating to health, I discovered that some of my interviewees became interested in genealogy not merely as a way of discovering more about their family history, but also as a means of finding out about their medical history. Indeed, for some of my subjects, that is the *raison d'être* for their research:

it's also important, I think, for medical reasons. You know, people want to know what is in their genes (1.4, p. 15).

There's a lot of things in the family I'd like to trace completely, because any illness that us girls have had, we never knew if it was connected in the family or not (3.2, p. 17).

we had no medical records and this was the one thing we wanted. A lot of us have had, of the girls, have all had the same medical problem – we've all had cancer in the same place and we don't know where it comes from. We all have bad arthritis, all the way in the left side of our body, and we don't know where it comes from because we don't know any medical history on either mother or father. So, I thought, if nothing else, could they [the sending agency] give me my dad's medical records (3.3, p. 23).

My health is very bad – I've been on a disability pension for thirteen years – I've got a list of things wrong with me as long as I've got there on the page! So, what I was really interested in, for my mum's family and for my dad's family, is to find out where all this junk comes from in our gene pool... When I first started getting sick, I started asking questions and going to see cousins and great aunts and so forth and saying "What in the world's going on here?" ...I don't want my kids to end up with the same medical problems that I have (4.7, pp. 7-8).

So, rather than having a burning desire to find out about their Home Child roots, these people simply want to get some kind of closure with regard to medical problems that have blighted their own and their families' lives.

Moving away from what could be seen as the more depressing reasons for genealogical research – death and illness – it seems that people have many other motives for getting hooked on family history. In the case of older genealogy aficionados, it is often the free time that retirement brings that allows them to explore avenues of interest

that were previously closed to them. And for some in this group, they cannot necessarily pinpoint the reasons for their newfound and sometimes sudden interest in genealogy, other than that it is something that people do when they get older:

I don't know why I suddenly got the idea of...finding out about it a year or so ago. Oh, I guess I do know – it was because, it often happens that people in their later age get interested in their genealogy. I don't know whether that's common or whether it's a new fad, but I never had any, you know, I had no curiosity at all. I didn't really care who I came from kind of (2.2, p. 21).

you get to an age where you have more time, more time to think about things. Like, there's more time to look into them, you know, and that's why we, you know, why we all become interested (3.9, p. 29).

during the years, it didn't bother me, you know, I wasn't interested, you know – until you get old and then you start to think back (4.8, p. 10).

So, old age often gives people more time to think about the past. And perhaps, in the case of a number of my interviewees, they found themselves drawn into their research because, to put it quite simply, they were looking for something to do to pass the time. Indeed, this is actually reflected in another conversation I had with one descendant:

ANDY: *So how did you, like what was it, why did you decide a couple of years ago to start – what, was there anything that triggered your interest sort of thing?*

INTERVIEWEE: *Yeah, well when, yeah, I retired [chuckles]. I retired in 1991 and I did all the things that I was not able to do, like crafts and this and that and then one day I looked in my cupboards and I realised that I was labelling everything in the cupboard and I thought, I need something else to do [laughs].*

ANDY: *So you'd run out of...*

INTERVIEWEE: *Yeah, I basically had run out of things. So I went and bought a computer... and one day my daughter said to me, she said "Do you know that they have programmes out" she said "for the family tree?" ... And I said no, I didn't know. So we went out and we bought one and she installed it and I started* (5.6, pp. 10-11).

For this lady, genealogy was just another in a long line of hobbies to pass the time with. And, as I shall discuss later, for some, that is all that genealogy is to them – a hobby. However, for others, it is far, far more important than that.

While younger researchers in my study were far less numerous than their older counterparts, they were no less enthusiastic about their research. Indeed, my youngest interviewee, a fourteen year old schoolboy, found his research so exciting that he spent all his spare time doing genealogy: "Free time, that's all I do...that's my focus" (5.2, p. 16). And, what is more, he was even desperately trying to persuade his school friends to start researching their families too (although, when I interviewed him, he had had little luck in that department – "they think I'm weird" (5.2, p. 16) he said, laughing).

The school project that got this boy interested in genealogy actually seems to be a fairly common route into genealogy:

actually it started back in high school. When I was in high school, one of the assignments we had was to do our family research back to when we first came to Canada... So that's where I started getting interested in it (1.11, p. 12).

Originally, well I was in Grade Nine...I had to do a family history project. And so I said to my mum, you know, like "How come we don't know anything?" and "How can we find out?" (3.4, p. 12).

However, while my young interviewee is adamant that he will not lose interest in his research, the others who first got interested in their family history in their childhood, ended up postponing their research for a number of years before returning to it more recently. And although many of my interviewees claimed that they were always interested in their family history – one lady’s assertion that “I’ve always been a history nut and I always wanted to know where I came from, you know, from day one” (3.4, p. 27) was a common sentiment – they did not always have the time to put this interest into practice. Perhaps this should not be too surprising though. As a number of my older interviewees put it, and as they now recognise in their own children, they were too busy living their lives to have any time for genealogy during their working years:

I guess I was too busy coping with, you know, getting my education, launching my career, raising my young family (1.5, pp. 17-18).

I was busy having my own family and, so I never got into any of this (3.7, p. 30).

When you’re younger, you have other things to do. You know, you’ve got your family, and you’re so involved with your family, when your children are small and you’re working, and you’ve got other things on your mind. But when you get older, you have time to think (2.9, pp. 30-31).

When I was growing up, of course, you’re involved in everyday life... But, I suppose as we grew older, then we’d start asking more questions (3.7, p. 10).

Curiosity, then, as another of my interviewees put it, “comes with old age” (4.4, p. 11). Aside from a few notable exceptions – or the one exception in the case of my research – family history research does not seem to be a pursuit of the young, aside, of

course, from the fleeting interest sometimes aroused by enthusiastic school teachers and elderly relatives. As another descendant mused,

I don't think that genealogical interests occur until you have some maturity, until you've grown into yourself...which is a tragedy, because the memories that can be acquired when you're young are the long term memories that you retain (1.6, p. 38).

Furthermore, one descendant even suggested that, although he liked to kid himself that he had always been interested in his family's past, this was not actually the case:

I think we just set those things aside. And I think people pretend, I think a lot of people pretend, or think – and I did it myself – that they were always concerned about it. In retrospect, I don't think that's true. And, you know, that retrospective change comes from the fact that I've had children of my own and we've got grandchildren...and we watch them grow up and we're changing our idea of how we must have reacted (4.4, p. 12).

Notwithstanding this realisation that genealogy is something that you generally leave until you are older, descendants are often desperate to persuade their own families to 'get into their family tree.' However, they frequently realise they are fighting a losing battle – their children and grandchildren are as uninterested in their family heritage as they were when they were their age:

Our kids aren't interested in that... I mean, it's not that they're opposed to it or anything, it just doesn't enter into their concerns, you know. And I think that's fairly normal. I'm always a little surprised by it to tell you the truth – I think they should be more interested, and they will be later on... they're so busy with their lives now, they just haven't got time to think of these other things (4.4, p. 12, 13).

when they're older, I told [my daughter] that; I said "You're going to be sorry you didn't ask me things" (5.1, p. 22).

they listen to me, but they're not [interested]... they're busy raising their families (5.5, p. 30).

Oh I certainly wished I had [asked her Home Child grandmother more about her life]. But I look at my kids now even, you know in their late twenties, they don't ask me about my life – they don't think you have a life [laughs] (5.3, p. 39).

As they see it, their children are making the same mistakes that they made when they were younger. And they are convinced that they will live to regret it.

Notwithstanding the unreceptive attitudes of children to their parents' pleadings, the influence of others is undoubtedly vital in persuading people to take up genealogical research. No one has more enthusiasm for genealogy than the amateur genealogist and, as such, he or she can be very persuasive when attempting to get others involved in such research. Indeed, on more than one occasion, I found myself being chastised by an interviewee for not concerning myself with my own family tree! So, the role of individual descendants in telling others about the Home Children must not be underestimated. Furthermore, there are a number of key individuals who have played a disproportionate role in this regard. Probably the most important of these is Home Children Canada founder, Dave Lorente, who I introduced in the previous chapter. Dave has helped literally thousands of people with their research, providing them with information on how to get records from the Canadian National Archives and, more importantly, from the sending agencies back in Britain.³¹ He has played a vital role in

³¹ According to the Home Children Canada newsletter of January 2001, a record 3035 requests for help were dealt with in 2000, while, by 2001, Dave told me that that number had risen to 4418 (Interview 4.4,

raising awareness about the Home Children and, therefore, it is not surprising that a number of my interviewees credited Dave for getting them involved in their research:³²

I was reading an article by Dave Lorente in a local paper here, in a Valley paper here in Ottawa and it was all about Home Children... And, so I wrote to Dave Lorente and said "hey, I'd like to research my father, he was a Home Child, how do you do it?" He sent me the forms and all, and that was 1991, and that was when I really started to pursue my father's background (1.2, p. 11).

I...read something in the paper about David Lorente and I got in touch with him, and then I joined the organisation and they tell you, like, where you can write to get information and that kind of stuff, and that's when I really started, you know (3.7, p. 31).

Actually, Dave is one of the ones that got me interested in genealogy, because I attended [his] speech there at Chapters [bookstore] several years ago. And that sort of got me interested, because I wasn't into genealogy at that time (4.2, p. 9).

However, while Dave may be the key figure in raising awareness of the Home Children at the national level, there are also a number of individuals who have played an important role on the local level, not least my other gatekeepers that I introduced in Chapter Two.³³ It seems that they have also been involved in 'spreading the word' and getting people 'into' genealogy:

it's since I moved to Peterborough that I got in touch with Ivy [Sucee]. I found out about her group and I got in touch with Ivy and so she told me to get in touch with Barnardo's (2.9, p. 12).

p. 45). However, since June 2003, Dave has delegated much of this work to the British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa (BIFHSGO website, accessed 02/03/2006).

³² Of course, given that Dave recruited a significant number of my interviewees, it is perhaps unsurprising that he has been an influence on at least some of them with regard to their genealogical research. However, he was also cited as a major influence by a number of those who had no such connection with him.

³³ Again, it should not be surprising that my gatekeepers have been influential in this regard.

It was Lynn [Gainer] that got us going. And she's very, like I've talked to Lynn quite a few times – she always gives me good advice. She told me to get a hold of Dave [Lorente] and get a hold of Barnardo's and that, and sent me addresses and people's names (5.2, p. 26).

I went to the Genealogy Society and I met Lynn [Gainer] and I found that we had the Barnardo group and she told me where to write, so I wrote there (5.4, p. 11).

Similarly, there are many other individuals who work behind the scenes, publicising the story of the child migrants and getting others involved in researching their roots. As one lady told me, “I’m locally contributing through the library and putting displays up so other people can see. And I know, personally, I’ve helped at least ten people contact Barnardo’s” (3.4, p. 47). Still others ‘do their bit’ cataloguing details on all the Home Children that came to Canada: “I’m one of the volunteers, and I have gone to the archives looking up shipping lists” (4.2, p. 9).³⁴ In so doing, these people are making research that bit easier for anyone who wishes to start searching for their Home Child roots. And then, of course, there are the family members who, just like the parents I discussed earlier, are desperate for their siblings and relatives to get into genealogy. Their influence cannot be ignored.

Different forms of media are another way in which people are attracted to researching their Home Child roots. In some cases, it is simply the reading of a book on the subject that whets appetites:

The thing that triggered me interestingly enough...there was a book put out by the museum, I think it was the National Museum, on the photographs of Barnardo children. And it stated in the book that

³⁴ Such cataloguing is organised by the British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa and is based at Library and Archives Canada, also in Ottawa.

every Barnardo child had a picture taken of them. So, I thought, why don't I try to get that picture of my dad? Because there were no pictures of him as a child... Anyways, so it was that little booklet that, and it had the address for Barnardo's, and my dad had always told me he was a Barnardo, so I wrote away and that began the process (1.5, p. 18).

I became interested in the Home Children after reading Kenneth Bagnell's 'The Little Immigrants.' And, I didn't really know that much about my grandparents – I was told that they were orphans... But when I read this book by Kenneth Bagnell, he mentioned Quarriers and I thought, well gee, maybe that's where they went. And I wrote Quarriers and I got the personal history of the children (1.8, p. 1).

In the '70s, I found out, there was a book written by Phyllis Harrison and the soft cover of that book had a boy standing, a Barnardo Boy standing with a trunk beside him. And I bought that book for the simple reason that it was telling about orphan boys and of course my father didn't talk about his parents, so I figured maybe he was an orphan boy... But the cover was the thing that really got me, because that trunk was there and my father had a tool box. It was, dad's tool box was a little bit smaller than a Barnardo trunk, and I figured that might have been his... In any case, that's one of the, that's when I started to think that dad was definitely a Home Child (4.4, p. 33).

It wasn't actually until I probably read 'The Little Immigrants.' Yeah, that's probably when I started to think about it (5.6, p. 18).

I started with 'The Little Immigrants' there – that book – and that triggered it (5.7, p. 12).

For others, and particularly for those who have become interested in recent years, it has been modern technology, and the Internet in particular, that has pushed them towards genealogical research:

I enhanced my computer and that's when I got on this Internet course... And it was showing you how to research your family on the Internet. So, that's where I began (1.11, p. 13).

A friend of ours gave us a disc with a genealogy programme on it, and he was a real genealogy nut, and that's what got us started. We started putting in names that we knew – our parents and grandparents – and we just kind of got bitten by the bug then (2.1, p. 11).

Finally, there are those who feel that they cannot pinpoint a good reason for their fascination with genealogy, other than that they feel the need to solve the mystery. One interviewee described her research as a “jigsaw puzzle, crossword puzzle, murder mystery” (5.3, p. 66) all rolled into one. And others had similar sentiments:

To me it's like playing detective (1.8, p. 12).

I'm just the nosey one I guess – I just like to know things (1.11, p. 25).

ANDY: *...is there some overriding reason for an interest in roots? Do you think there's any particular thing that makes you most interested in it?*

INTERVIEWEE: *No, I think the mystery. I think it's just the puzzle solving (5.4, p. 39).*

Well it's like, you know, I like to read detective stories, mysteries, and it's a mystery (6.3, p. 30).³⁵

But, for most of my interviewees, this mystery is far more troublesome than your average crossword puzzle or detective story. Indeed, in some cases it has plagued their family for many years. As I suggested earlier, many of the Home Children – and even the generation that followed them for that matter – were unwilling to talk about the

³⁵ Meethan (2004) reports similar responses from his research subjects in a study that he conducted on the characteristics of those who engage in genealogical research over the Internet.

past. Thus, for the generations growing up after, there is a missing link with the past (and this is accentuated by the fact that connections with the UK have frequently been lost – the only relatives a Home Child would have would be from the family he or she married into in Canada). So, if the Home Children and the older generation refuse to answer even the most basic questions about such missing links, the past becomes even more intriguing to my interviewees. As one person put it, “there was no talk about it in the family and I got curious about it” (1.10, p. 2). Or as another said,

I guess with my mum's family, I had aunts and I had uncles and I had great aunts and I had great uncles... And, I thought...how come my dad's family doesn't have as many people. So I guess that's where my curiosity started... I guess that's where it must have started because I just couldn't understand why I'm related to all these people, why my mum's family has so many family members, whereas my dad's family there's nobody (1.11, pp. 25-26).

Thus, many of my interviewees feel the need to research their family background in order to answer questions that have often lain unanswered for many years. As another person I interviewed put it, “it gives you some sort of closure I guess. So that was sort of why I got into it” (1.12, p. 20).

Of course, this feeling of lost connections with the past is not one that is unique to the descendants of the Home Children; rather, it is a predicament that besets many. Indeed, as was discussed in Chapter One, it could be suggested that it is something that afflicts us all to a certain extent. Modernity has resulted in the radical reorganisation of society and, as Nora (1996) would have it, the ‘acceleration of history’ has caused memory to be replaced by history. Consequently, there exists a yearning for the past and a preoccupation with “recording, preserving, and remembering” (Gillis, 1994, p. 6) as society attempts to salvage what has been lost. And genealogical research seems to

be the classic example of such efforts to fill this void – people feel that genealogy can provide them with the necessary answers in a world where their lives have become increasingly fragmented (see, also, Basu, 2002; Boym, 2001; and Brett, 1996). What is more, this is not something that is only noted in abstract academic texts; it is also reflected in the comments of my research subjects:

We're looking for some security in roots; we need to know who we are. Yeah, I think we are; we're really looking for security. The world is in such a lousy mess, that now we're looking for something to hang on to and that's our history (5.8, p. 23).

And, as another descendant suggested, perhaps the populations of 'young countries' like Canada feel this burden even heavier than most:

I mean, we're a very young country and most, well everybody that came to this country are immigrants and most of their relatives are European and...maybe that's what stirs the interest (3.1, p. 27).

However, one cannot help thinking that there is a unique aspect to the group I am researching. Surely they have a better reason than most for feeling disconnected from their family past. After all, as one descendant put it to me,

you probably have at home, you have a lot of the information from your family, about great grandfather so-and-so, you have a story about him, because there's a direct connection, whereas we don't (1.9, p. 25).

Or, as others commented:

there's a big hole in your genealogical space (1.3, p. 12).

somehow, you just feel kind of lost – I think that’s why I’m just searching for this identity. Sometimes I just feel lost, because there’s no relatives on this side (1.4, p. 12).

So, when the descendants of the Home Children that I interviewed say that they *need* to research their family past – and, as I have suggested in this chapter, they can give a multitude of reasons for having such feelings – their case for saying so is perhaps better than most.

Selective research

While I would certainly accept that the descendants I interviewed genuinely feel the need to research their family history, there is yet another, perhaps more controversial, explanation for this. Stephen Constantine (2003) points out that “there is something more important going on here than curiosity about family roots” (p. 153). Basing his argument on research conducted in the United States, he suggests that people often *choose* to privilege one branch of their family over any other part they could have chosen to focus on. As he puts it:

what seems to occur, according to responses to census questions and in oral testimony, is that respondents often *select* a single ethnic identity out of what, by inheritance, is on offer. One study describes this as ‘dime store ethnicity.’ You buy into the ancestral stock with which you most wish to identify. It is the perceived cultural attributes of that ethnicity which appeal and with which you wish to be associated. Identities, therefore, are chosen and not just inherited (p. 153; citing Waters, 1990, p. 6).³⁶

³⁶ However, such an argument ignores the fact that individuals are often marked in such a way that identifies them visually with one ethnic group more than another. Consequently, choosing one’s identity is perhaps not as simple as is suggested here.

And, of course, this line of thought resonates with what Basu (2002) says about the Scottish Highland diaspora; something I discussed in greater detail in Chapter One. Citing the work of Novick, Basu suggests that one explanation why the people he interviewed celebrate their Highland Scottish roots over any other aspects of their heritage is that they may wish, whether consciously or unconsciously, to “identify with the oppressed rather than with the oppressors” (p. 189).

In the case of the descendants of the Home Children, Constantine tries to explain why they, too, may be happy to ‘buy into’ this ‘culture of victimization’ (Novick, 1999, in Basu, 2002). First of all, he states that the conventional British, and particularly English, identity, once so prevalent in Canadian culture, has become rather unpopular in recent years. This is reflected in the 1996 census figures which show that only two million of the 28.5 million respondents opted for ‘English’ when asked to name their ethnic origins. Furthermore, many Canadians seem to be able to view their background as one framed by oppression, frequently at the hands of the British / English. So, First Nation people, French-Canadians, Chinese-Canadians, as well as immigrants fleeing to Canada from oppression in other parts of the world, can all view themselves as victims. Indeed, even Scottish-Canadians, whose ancestors were often as complicit in the less honourable aspects of colonialism as their English counterparts, have constructed their identity in such a way that, as Constantine puts it, they seem to be “descended, to the last bagpipe, from victims of the Highland Clearances” (p. 154).³⁷ Thus, he hints that perhaps the descendants of the Home Children have decided to jump on this same bandwagon because “it seems that victim status has become for many a desirable cultural attribute” (p. 154).³⁸

³⁷ Similarly, Buckner (2003) discusses the way in which even academic literature has privileged accounts of Scots (and Irish) emigrating to Canada – often feeding the myth that they were always fleeing oppression – over the far more widespread immigration of English people.

³⁸ This ‘victim status’ provides an interesting contrast with the many amateur genealogists who attempt to discover links to royalty and nobility during the course of their research. Such a fascination with

Constantine goes on to suggest that it is not only the oppression that forebears suffered that descendants wish to highlight. As he puts it,

victim status does not have to be just a measure of oppression or an explanation of failure. Descendants want more from their ancestors than a story of inadequacy. Indeed, to counter the notion of inferior genetic engineering, descendants also want to discover and demonstrate achievement, in spite of rough beginnings and lifelong scars. In the histories of oppression, more emphasis is now being placed on the resistance of African slaves and the accomplishments of Afro-Americans, and likewise on the subversion of colonial authority by the colonised (p. 155).

So, in the case of the Home Children, they are now being celebrated, with the stigma they once suffered being replaced by pride in what they achieved.³⁹ This is certainly reflected in what many of the descendants I interviewed had to say – one talked about the “prestige” (5.10, p. 24) of being descended from a Home Child, while another viewed it as a “badge of honour” (1.2, p. 29) – and I shall discuss such views in greater detail in Chapter Four. Thus, the child migrants, once seen as deprived and depraved, both at home and in their adoptive country, now seem to be, in Constantine’s words, “worthy of worship” (p. 156).

While it is unlikely that many of the Home Child descendants that I interviewed are actually aware of the arguments of Constantine, Dave Lorente of Home Children Canada certainly is. He strongly opposes Constantine’s point of view. Indeed, he brought this up with me more than once:

privileged roots is illustrated by the plethora of Internet websites dedicated to research of this nature (see, for instance, the many resources listed on the hugely popular ‘Cyndi’s List’ genealogy website: <http://www.cyndislist.com/royalty.htm>, accessed 01/06/2006).

³⁹ Indeed, the stated aims of Home Children Canada include the desire to “erase the stigma so unfairly attached to the little immigrants and to replace that stigma which caused such a silent shame with justifiable pride” (Home Children Canada website, 2005b, accessed 10/03/2006).

one of the questions, one of the statements that was made recently by an article from England, was that – and I disagree with it – Home Children concentrate on tracing their heritage because they equate themselves with a criminal act of the past – sending kids out and so on – just like people like to equate themselves, if they're native born Canadians, they like to equate themselves with the industrial school abuse and stuff like that, the loss of their culture (speaking in interview 4.2, p. 19).

And, he elaborated on another occasion:

He [Constantine] says that some of the Home Children, some of the descendants of Home Children have got a fixation on that situation [their Home Child background] and not the others, and I think there's a pretty simple answer to that situation – it's the question mark. They don't know anything, they don't know anything about the Home Child, let alone wherever the Home Child came from, and so, there's stonewall, right in front of them. Now it's stonewall to me. And the other relatives in the family, you know, it does extend a lot further back. So, I think it's just natural curiosity (speaking in interview 3.8, p. 23).

For Dave, then, there is a far more simple explanation for his interest in his Home Child roots. It is because there is a “stonewall” obstructing his search for them. So, while he may be able to trace back two or three hundred years in the other parts of his family with relative ease, with his Home Child roots he comes up against obstacles when only going as far back as his father. Thus, he suggests, it is the mystery more than anything else that drives descendants of Home Children to give priority to researching that part of their family.

Of course, it must also be pointed out that not all of my research subjects have an exclusive interest in their Home Child roots. Far from it – many have either already researched other branches of their families or they are certainly planning to do so in the future. Indeed, Dave Lorente himself has done a great deal of research on other aspects

of his family (although it is undoubtedly his Home Child roots that he has publicised more than any others). However, I do not think it would be unfair to suggest that, for the majority of my interviewees at least – and that is saying nothing of the many thousands of descendants that I did not meet – their Home Child roots *are* the priority (although, again, it must be noted that this is more than likely given their volunteering to be interviewed on this subject). Whether or not their reasons for doing so include the bandwagon jumping mentioned by commentators such as Constantine is impossible to say. Certainly, I am sure that few would admit to this and I, for one, would be unwilling to label them as such. However, if nothing else, the possibility should perhaps be acknowledged.

Attitudes concerning genealogical research

As I mentioned earlier, my interviewees expressed a wide range of opinions on the importance of their research. For some, genealogy was no more than an enjoyable hobby, while, for others, it was quite literally a matter of life and death. However, notwithstanding the importance of their research, almost all of my interviewees still got excited by their genealogical discoveries, however large or small these were. As one man commented, as he discussed uncovering details of his Home Child roots, “[i]t was just like finding gold or something” (5.2, p. 15). Or, as another put it, it was “like discovering a Rosetta Stone” (1.1, p. 9).

Speaking from my own experience, I would say that it is in no way surprising that people should react in this way. While I was in Canada, my father emailed me from Scotland to ask if I could look for his father’s immigration papers. My grandfather, like many of his contemporaries from the Western Isles of Scotland, had emigrated to Canada after World War One – although he did return to Scotland a few years later – and my father wondered whether there was a record of this in the National Archives.

Now, strange as this may seem given my area of research, I would say that, up to that point, I had had very little interest in investigating any aspect of my own family history. Nevertheless, as I was working in the Canadian National Archives where the relevant documents were stored, I was able to track down my grandfather's immigration papers, together with details of where he worked in British Columbia, with relative ease.⁴⁰ And, when I found these papers, I must say that I was genuinely excited to read them. So, surely descendants of Home Children have every right to get excited about *their* research. Indeed, while I was merely verifying what my family already knew about my grandfather, for many of the descendants I interviewed, their discoveries are altogether more significant – they are finding information that, in many cases, they knew nothing about until very recently.

Of course, there is another, even more obvious explanation for why my interviewees are all so interested in their genealogical research. The majority of the people I interviewed either approached me themselves to talk to me about their Home Child background, or they were recommended to me by other descendants as people with an interest in their roots. So, it is not very surprising that the great majority of them were very enthusiastic about their research when I spoke to them. Further, I would imagine that those with only a passing interest in their heritage would be unlikely to volunteer to be involved in a project such as mine in the first place. So, in that respect, there is certainly an element of bias in my research that must be acknowledged.

Notwithstanding these caveats, my interviewees' enthusiasm for their research is certainly a lingering memory as I reflect on the time that I spent in Canada. Comments reflecting this are to be found in many of my interview transcripts:

⁴⁰ However, all of the credit for this must go to John Sayers of the British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa. He was helping me in the Archives that day, and it was his encyclopaedic knowledge of the records available that allowed me to track my grandfather's down so easily.

Oh, it's just, it's fascinating – I just love it (1.4, p. 16).

it's very exciting (1.8, p. 43).

I find it very intriguing (3.2, p. 24).

It's exciting. And it's very rewarding (3.5, p. 17).

it's very exciting, it's very interesting (3.8, p. 20).

it's sure interesting, more than I have ever been interested in anything (5.1, p. 21).

However, that is not to say that genealogical research is all 'plain sailing.' For, while the end rewards of doing the research seem to be great, the process of finding the information can often be nothing short of painful. Indeed, my interview transcripts are littered with almost as many adjectives reflecting the difficulties involved with the research as they are with such positive comments as were mentioned above:

it's frustrating, time consuming, lots of dead ends... I mean, you can spend days and find nothing...

You know, like it's...it's very disheartening (2.5, p. 35, 38).

I've come to a brick wall...I have to go and do something else, because I can't go anywhere (3.8, p. 10).

You come to a dead end and you don't know where else to go (5.8, p. 14).

So, it seems that for every ‘rewarding’ there is a ‘disheartening,’ for every ‘fascinating,’ a ‘frustrating.’

As one of the respondents above mentioned, genealogical research can also be *very* time consuming. So much so, in fact, that for the researcher quoted below, it has almost taken over her life:

I'd like to spend twenty-four hours a day, but unfortunately work cuts into it [laughing] ... I work constantly and when I'm not working, I'm working on my family tree. A good thing my husband loves me [laughing]...with all the phone calls, long distance calls that I make; the hours that I spend on the computer; the hours I spend in graveyards; going to aunts and uncles and family members and constantly asking questions – it's just a wonder my husband hasn't left me [laughing] (1.11, p. 21 & 34).

Thus, for some, genealogy has become an obsession. And, because of this, there are even those who, having faced the reality of how much of their time their genealogical research was taking, have decided they can no longer continue their research at the same pace. For them, genealogy is an addiction that has to be dealt with:

Someday I'll go back into research maybe, but I did get so wound up in the research, that I had to back away from it. It was taking up too much of my...well, too much of my life maybe, because I, you know, I became very obsessed with it after, you know, getting into it originally, I became very obsessed. One thing led to another, and I had to find out more and more and more (2.11, p. 5).

at one point, I had scrapbooks. My husband said "You have to stop!" Because I go over the obits every morning – I would look, "Oh look at that; look at that; look at that." Clip, clip, clip and then I put, you know, put it in that book, or that in that book and, so then he finally said "We're going to

go cold turkey – we’re stopping the paper! We’re just stopping the paper because I can’t stay with the paper clippings; I just can’t do it!” (4.10, p. 15).

However, talking of genealogical research in the same way one would talk of a sickness is commonplace, even for those who are not seeking a cure. As one man put it, laughing, “I think it started out as curiosity. It’s become a sickness now!” (1.10, p. 15).

Lynn Gainer – my gatekeeper in Sudbury – runs a genealogy course in her local college and, as such, it could be said that she is spreading the disease! She explains:

we’re doing a little course at Cambrian College – teaching it [genealogy] for beginners. We don’t get a huge enrolment – maybe eight people or something like that each time – but they just love it. You know, once they start, they get so hooked that we actually do a disclaimer – before we begin the course we say “It’s not our fault” [laughs]. Then afterwards they laugh about that because they continue to email us and tell us what they’ve found. And they’re really quite thankful that you got them off on the right footing. So that’s really nice for my friend and I when that happens, and they just say “Oh, my husband hates you” [laughing], you know, “because we’re just doing this all the time – we can’t stop.” It’s like a sickness (5.3, pp. 57-58).

So, it appears that one person’s drug is another’s poison, although it must be said that most of my interviewees see genealogy as a good addiction to have and are perfectly comfortable with the interest level that they maintain. As one woman put it, “it’s better to be addicted to that than some other things, I figure” (6.3, p. 29). Furthermore, relatively few have had to take drastic steps to avoid seeing their condition deteriorate!

Another problem with genealogical research is that it can be almost never ending, because, no matter how much time someone spends researching their roots, they can always go another generation further back. As one interviewee said, talking about those who are far more involved in their research than she is, “they’d go back to

Adam!” (3.6, p. 18). And this, apparently, is as far as people are willing to go before they are satisfied with the information they have! This is reflected in the following exchanges and quotes:

ANDY: ...*when do you think you'll be satisfied that you've finished* [your research]?

INTERVIEWEE: *I don't think I'll ever be satisfied really* (1.11, p. 19).

ANDY: *So are you still, is there still stuff that you're needing to know – are you still digging deeper?*

INTERVIEWEE: *Oh it's never – until I go back to Adam and Eve! You know, it's just one of those hobbies that you just, you don't stop, right?* (1.12, p. 24).

I don't know where it stops, I really don't (2.5, p. 54).

ANDY: *So have you found out everything, are you still digging for more, or...?*

INTERVIEWEE: *Always.*

ANDY: *Yeah?*

INTERVIEWEE: [Laughs] *I will never stop* (3.4, p. 15).

I'm not certain how far back we can go. But we would like to go back as far as possible (3.5, p. 17).

It's never ending, there's no question about that, because I'll never get to do it all (3.8, p. 21).

In getting started with their family history, many see themselves as having “dug up a real can of worms” (1.11, p. 20). It seems that, once you start conducting family history research, it is almost impossible to stop.

Research Techniques

It should come as no surprise that modern technology has had a huge effect on the growth of genealogical research in recent years. And, as has already been mentioned, the Internet, in particular, has facilitated this growth. However, a number of my respondents use altogether more old fashioned methods to search their roots, while some even avoid using the Internet altogether.

Many of my interviewees talk about how useful the Internet has been to their family history research. And those who started their research many years ago, long before they had even heard of such a tool, are particularly aware of its benefits:

if the computer had have existed, you know, twenty years ago, like when I first started this, I would have had so much of a head start, you know (1.12, p. 29).

You don't have to go and wind through graveyards now, you don't have to go to the source to find out information (1.9, p. 23).

So, having fingertip access to historical records means that amateur genealogists no longer, in the words of one interviewee, have to “run round the cemeteries [like] before those computers came out” (1.12, p. 21). And it is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints’ – commonly referred to as the Mormon Church – family history website *familysearch.org* that has probably proved most useful in this regard. This website claims to hold the “largest collection of free family history, family tree and genealogy records in the world.”⁴¹ And while, in the past, many genealogists would often make the pilgrimage to the Mormons’ Family History Library in Salt Lake City to conduct their

⁴¹ The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 2005a, <http://www.familysearch.org> (accessed 27/10/2005). Mormons believe that deceased family members can receive salvation posthumously and, as such, it is the responsibility of church members to trace their roots in order that these ancestors be identified and ‘saved’ (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 2005b, <http://www.familysearch.org> (accessed 26/04/2006)).

research – as one interviewee who had made that trip put it, “that was the Mecca to go for genealogists” (5.10, p. 16) – this is no longer necessary. Of course, *familysearch.org* is not the only website that is available to genealogists. Rather, there are literally thousands to choose from, although some are certainly more popular than others. Other Internet sources frequently mentioned by my interviewees include the Home Children database on the Library and Archives Canada website, *Ancestry.com*, *Genealogy.com* and *RootsWeb.com*, to name but a few.⁴² There are also numerous message boards and mailing lists that allow genealogists worldwide to connect with each other and share their knowledge. And, as I shall go on to discuss, one such resource – the British Home Children Mailing List – is particularly important as far as the descendants of the Home Children are concerned.

As well as its website, the Mormon Church has, for many years, been running ‘Family History Centers’ at its churches worldwide. A number of my interviewees have utilised these and this enables them to see copies of documents pertaining to their family history first hand. All who mentioned having used them had nothing but praise for their staff and the service that they provide:

they’re very helpful and, being a church organisation you think, well they’re going to be trying to get you to join the church or something, but they were only interested in helping you with your research. So they were very nice (2.11, p. 28).

The staff there were very helpful in trying to pinpoint where we might want to look (3.5, p. 27).

Such Centers are also an incredibly useful resource because, for many, there is a real need to see a tangible ‘hard copy’ of records pertaining to their family history. So much

⁴² While studying these websites for my research, I discovered that *Ancestry.com*, *Genealogy.com* and *RootsWeb.com* are actually all run by the same company, *MyFamily.com, Inc* (2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2006).

so, in fact, that a number of my interviewees are suspicious of *any* data that they find on the Internet:

Sometimes you have to watch – [the Internet is] not always accurate. That's why, whenever I see something, I get the certificate to see if it actually matches up (1.12, p. 29).

anything I find on there, it's a bit suspect, because you don't know how they came to that conclusion (5.3, p. 56).

INTERVIEWEE: *I haven't been doing my research on the Internet... what I've found [on the Internet]...I haven't been able to use really.*

ANDY: *So it's more the traditional methods of, like...*

INTERVIEWEE: *Yeah, because that's...*

ANDY: *...getting old census records and stuff like that?*

INTERVIEWEE: *Yeah, that's right, that's right. But that is a little more concrete. You know, a lot of this stuff [on the Internet] is entered by people, you don't know who and you don't know how authentic it is, so I never really got into Internet research* (5.5, pp. 31-32).

you can't depend on it (5.10, p. 39).

However, on balance, I think it would be fair to say that the Internet has been a tremendous help to most of those that I interviewed. Perhaps the best analogy I was given with regard to its usefulness was by one interviewee in Sudbury, Ontario. As she put it, it's "kind of like the Yellow Pages...it gives you the areas that you want to look in and then, if you really want flowers, then you're going to go to that shop and figure it out" (5.3, p. 56). So, while it undoubtedly has its faults, it has also introduced many

thousands of new recruits to genealogical research. As another interviewee put it, “You can’t believe everything, but it’s a great help” (5.10, p. 41).

Notwithstanding the power of the Internet and the usefulness of the Mormon Church resources, many people still resort to other methods which many would now see as rather primitive. For instance, some resort to painstaking phonebook searches:

as soon as I found out that he was born in Birmingham, I got on the phone, phoned England and phoned any [people with that surname] in the phonebook (1.4, pp. 7-8).

I went through all the...telephone books in the...library and believe me, it took me a long time, looking up [the family name], telephoning them and...finding out which line they were from (6.3, p. 18).

Others write speculative letters to the towns in the UK where their Home Child ancestor was from:

INTERVIEWEE: *...the other thing I did was, in 2000, I wrote a letter to anybody in [the place, albeit a village, in England that her grandmother came from].*

ANDY: *That’s who you addressed it to?*

INTERVIEWEE: *Yes. And I got a response, who knew my grandmother. I just wrote it to anyone, and whoever got it, handed it to somebody else, and they wrote me [laughs] (3.4, p. 13).*

I wrote a letter to the [newspaper in the town where her mother came from] and they published it and some people, I can’t remember how many people contacted me through that (5.9, p. 12).

And still others decide on rather more drastic tactics, which are perhaps not as successful: “I even wrote to the Queen” (1.4, p. 11)! So, while the Internet is clearly the most powerful tool at the disposal of amateur genealogists, it is far from being the only one.

The descendants’ community

Another way in which amateur genealogists progress with their research is by assisting each other as they attempt to dig their way through the huge mine of information that is ‘out there.’ As Nash (2003) puts it in relation to genealogists researching their Irish roots:

Genealogy clearly prioritizes relationships between those who, living or dead, are related through blood. Yet, doing genealogy can also create forms of relatedness that do not necessarily depend on the closeness or even the existence of biological connection. The social relationships that develop may start from a shared interest in a shared surname, in Irish roots in general or in a specific place in Ireland, but they are relationships shaped by a shared interest in ancestry and a shared experience of doing genealogy (p. 195).

In the case of my research subjects, their specific shared interest is in their Home Child roots and, as a result of this, relationships often develop in both formal organisations – such as local genealogical societies and descendants’ groups – and in informal networks like those developed over the Internet. For some, these links are invaluable and they feel a real sense of community with their fellow descendants, while, for others, their journey of discovery is very much a personal one and they attempt to ‘go it alone.’

Before discussing the specifics of any descendants’ community that may exist, it is important to consider the concept of community itself. I must confess that when I

began tackling this issue, I did not believe that the term would require a great deal of analysis. However, it seems that I fell into a common trap in this regard. As Cohen (1985) puts it,

‘Community’ is one of those words – like ‘culture,’ ‘myth,’ ‘ritual,’ ‘symbol’ – bandied around in ordinary, everyday speech, apparently readily intelligible to speaker and listener, which, when imported into the discourse of social science, however, causes immense difficulty (p. 11).

What is more, it seems that people have been struggling to define community for many years. Seymour (2004) tells us that it is a concept that actually dates back to at least the 14th century (p. 215), while Bell and Newby (1971) point out that not only “has [it] been the concern of sociologists for more than two hundred years,” but, also, that “a satisfactory definition of it in sociological terms appears as remote as ever” (p. 21). Consequently, it is important that I focus on some of the relevant literature that is concerned with this “elusive, exploited and somewhat fuzzy concept” (Moseley, 2003, p. 75; in Seymour, 2004, p. 216) before I analyse the descendants’ community in greater detail.

Rather than formulating his own definition of community, Cohen focuses on the *use* of the term. And, in this regard, he suggests that,

A reasonable interpretation of the word’s use would seem to imply two related suggestions: that the members of a group of people (a) have something in common with each other, which (b) distinguishes them in a significant way from the members of other putative groups (Cohen, 1985, p. 12).

He then goes on to consider the term's boundaries and highlights the fact that "the boundary encapsulates the identity of the community" (p. 12); that is, the community defines itself by what it is not, as much as by what it is.⁴³ He also points out that "the boundary may be perceived in rather different terms, not only by people on opposite sides of it, but also by people on the same side" (p. 12). In other words, the community means different things to the different people within the community as well as to those looking in from the outside. And, in order for them to continue to function despite such differences, Cohen suggests that a symbolic bond is required to hold them together – perhaps the classic example of this would be the bond that exists in the 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1991) of the nation; a bond so strong that members of that national community are often willing to die in order to protect it. Thus, while the symbolic unity may not mean the same thing to everyone in the community, the important thing is that it *does* exist:

although [members of a community] recognize important differences among themselves, they also suppose themselves to be more like each other than like the members of other communities. This is precisely because, although the meanings they attach to the symbols may differ, they share the symbols (Cohen, 1985, p. 21).

Aside from the symbols which unite communities, Seymour (2004) highlights a number of the premises around which they can be constructed in the first place. Perhaps the most popular way in which they are defined is by place. Indeed, it is often in small settlements where people interact with their neighbours on a day to day basis that this complex sense of 'community' is said to be strongest. However, as Seymour

⁴³ Cohen's analysis of the boundaries of the term brings to mind the technique used by Clifford (1997) that I discussed in Chapter One: in order to define the equally complex term diaspora, he also focused on the term's borders, explaining what it was not.

points out, how group members define their locality is crucial in terms of how they define their community:

Narrow interpretations of the local result in exclusions of non-residents or those who have recently moved to the area. Place-defined communities may thus have strongly insular agendas (p. 216).

Of course, it is not only place that can define a community. Seymour also tells us that communities can be constructed around such uniting factors as shared social or economic characteristics, shared interests, or a shared commitment to a particular cause. And I would suggest that it is a combination of such factors, together with a number of the 'symbols' that Cohen mentions, that bring the descendants of the Home Children together as a community.

The community of descendants is undoubtedly defined by reference to place. Descendants are united by the fact that their ancestors were sent from the UK to Canada and, consequently, they are bound together by their links with these two countries (and, perhaps to a lesser extent, to the other countries where Home Children were sent). It could also be said that the descendants have shared social characteristics in that they can not only trace their ancestry back to the Home Children, but they can often also relate to the experiences that their families had as a result of this. However, classifying all the descendants of the Home Children as one large community creates a hugely diverse group of people; a group that many of its members do not even realise exists. What is more, while the people in such a group may share social characteristics, it would be foolish to suggest that they all share similar interests and commitments with regard to researching their Home Child roots. So, rather than claiming that all descendants are members of the community, perhaps a narrower definition should be

suggested. That is, while all descendants may *potentially* be members of the community, in reality, it is perhaps only those who are interested in searching their roots *and* relating to their fellow descendants as they do so who may be viewed as constituent members of the descendants' community. However, even within this narrower grouping, there are still those who may not necessarily classify themselves as being part of any such community. Consequently, any attempts to label descendants in this way are clearly fraught with difficulties.

For the descendants of Home Children that I met with, the two most common modes of contact that had the potential to foster any sense of community were the so-called reunions organised by a variety of groups across the country, and the British Home Children Mailing List, hosted on *Rootsweb.com*. Tackling the reunions first, it seems that such events follow similar patterns wherever they are held: surviving Home Children are invited to attend and share stories of their childhood; local genealogists and historians speak on various aspects of the child migration story; stalls with books for sale, memorabilia and research information are set up and manned; and, most important for this discussion, descendants of Home Children mingle and share their own family histories and research experiences. The meetings tend to be organised by localised organisations that are often loosely affiliated with Dave Lorente's umbrella organisation, Home Children Canada. In some cases, they also have links with the relevant charity back in the UK. So, for example, there is Quarriers Canadian Family whose members are to be found scattered across Canada, but who are largely based in south eastern Ontario. Since the group's formation in the 1996, they have tended to organise a reunion roughly every other year and their last one, in 2003, had close to one hundred and fifty people in attendance (Quarriers Canadian Family Website, accessed 07/03/2006; interview 2.1). While Quarriers Canadian Family held a reunion a few weeks before my first visit to Canada in 2003, at least three other groups arranged

reunions in 2004 and 2005, although, again, I was not in the country when these took place. One of these, held in August 2004, was for Fegans Home Children and their descendants, while two other groups held gatherings in Canada's Maritime Provinces in 2005 – the British Home Children and Descendants Association Nova Scotia held their third annual reunion in August, while a reunion for Middlemore Home Children and their descendants was held in New Brunswick in September.⁴⁴

Another organisation that is worthy of mention at this stage is the Hazelbrae Barnardo Home Memorial Group that I introduced in Chapter Two. It is based in Peterborough and is run by one of my four gatekeepers, Ivy Sucee. While this group does not arrange reunions *per se*, the activities that it undertakes seem to mirror many of those that take place at the reunions. Further, unlike the other organisations mentioned above, which tend to only meet for reunions on an *ad hoc* basis, this group meets several times each year. Indeed, the group's website (accessed 07/03/2006) states that it meets every other month throughout the year. Finally, aside from the work of those regional and charity-specific organisations mentioned above, Home Children Canada has also arranged and hosted a large number of reunions across the country. The most noteworthy of these was held in Stratford, Ontario in 2001. This event was held in conjunction with the Government of Canada and, according to a number of my interviewees who were present that day, well over a thousand people attended and witnessed the unveiling of a government plaque commemorating the lives of the Home Children (Figure 11).⁴⁵

⁴⁴ It is estimated that the Middlemore Homes were responsible for sending some 5,000 children to Canada (Kohli, 2003, p. 137), while Fegans sent approximately 3,500, all of whom were boys (Fegans interview, p. 9).

⁴⁵ This plaque is scheduled to be taken down and recast in 2006 after a lengthy campaign by Home Children Canada to alter the dates mentioned on it. At present, it states that the Home Children were sent to Canada between 1869 and 1939, even although the last child was not actually sent until 1948. The recast plaque will recognise this fact (Home Children Canada Newsletter, January 2006, No. 1).

Figure 11: Government of Canada plaque, Stratford, Ontario



Source: anonymous interviewee

In over sixty per cent of my interviews, one or more of those present had attended at least one reunion or group meeting in the past (Appendix A, Table 4). And it seems that a substantial number of my interviewees saw such gatherings as vital information exchanges where they were able to both share and glean information pertaining to their research:

I think they're [reunions] important because you sort of, you maybe get tips from somebody else, or, you know, they ask you what you think, where could I look for this. And, it's kind of helping each other out (1.8, p. 38).

I think you can help each other, because somebody else might have done something else that I haven't done yet. And we're all looking for the same thing, and that's the real connection – we're all looking for the same thing (3.4, p. 46).

And, perhaps because many of those who I spoke to were 'old hands' when it came to such research, they often saw these gatherings as a way of helping others as well as a means of obtaining new information for themselves:

I think you kind of have to pass on what you learn (1.8, p. 38).

you talk to a lot of people [at reunions]. Two or three people were there [at one reunion that this interviewee attended], they didn't even know how to start or what to do, so they asked me "How did you start?" And I kind of explained to them how I started and where I went to find some of the information, and they were very grateful, you know, to anybody to help them get started (1.11, p. 44).

What is more, by helping each other with their research, a sense of unity seemed to emerge:

I think it's good in a community sense, that I can help other people (3.4, p. 46).

Or, as one of the Hazelbrae Group members put it to me,

it's really a great group – really, really friendly group, yeah... I think we have a common bond, and we want to find out all we can about Barnardo Home Children; not just our own family, but the whole Barnardo Home organisation (2.7, p. 29).

Thus, for some descendants at least, the connections that they made and felt at reunions and group meetings were based, quite simply, on the desire to help each other out and find out as much as possible about both their own family history and about child migration more generally. For them, their relationships with other descendants were more about being community-minded than being part of a distinct descendants community.

For others, it seems that the bond that they feel with fellow descendants is stronger than merely having some common goals and interests. Indeed, some feel a far deeper connection with the other descendants that they meet:

We all have the same thing in common. It's like you're in the same...how do I describe it, not in the same army, there's a term for it, I can't think of what it is...we're all feeling the same, we're all in the same boat, we have parents who, you know, have, we're all children of these Home Boys or Girls... oh yes, we're all comrades [laughs at her use of the term], whatever the word is...camaraderie? (1.4, p. 40)

ANDY: *So do you think there's a real bond between descendants...?*

INTERVIEWEE: *Yeah, yeah...it's just like we're all family – we may not be blood related, but we're related (2.1, p. 33).*

ANDY: *So it's [Quarriers Canadian Family] gone on to be an important part of your [life]?*

INTERVIEWEE: *It has, it really has – the friendships that we've made and the connections that we've made. And, again, it's that feeling of family that...there's some sort of common feeling. It's*

like a feeling of a family, that there's somehow, there's a trust there, because of that common start. It's quite interesting, because you don't usually come together with strangers in your life and there's that common bond or history that...

ANDY: *And was it just like that [instantaneous]?*

INTERVIEWEE: *Yeah, yeah it was... our lives have changed because of it in really quite wonderful ways (2.3, pp. 21-22, 23).*

INTERVIEWEE: *...every time I...hear a person speaking of their Barnardo years or their ancestor's Barnardo time, it's like I'm hearing about another member of my family. Even though it's not my family, it's the Barnardo family – it's, because each story is almost, well, it's part of grandpa's story, because he went through the same type of thing. And that's one thing I've always noticed – it felt like I was hearing about a member of my family again in the stories.*

ANDY: *So, when you go to these meetings, it's like meeting, almost like meeting relatives sort of thing?*

INTERVIEWEE: *Oh yes – part of the family sort of, yes (2.11, p. 36).*

So, perhaps the descendants' community helps to fill the void that some of my interviewees seem to feel in their lives. By meeting with others who are in the 'same boat,' it could be said that descendants are able to overcome the feelings of emptiness and loss that characterised their lives in the past; they have a new family that makes up for the one that they may feel they never had. On the other hand, the explanation may be much simpler than that – in every walk of life, people gravitate towards others who they believe they have something in common with. Thus, descendants are also drawn together by their similar backgrounds and their love of genealogical research.

Of course, not all of my interviewees attended group events and developed close relationships with other descendants. In fourteen of my fifty-nine interviews, none of those present had been to reunions with fellow descendants (Appendix A, Table 4).

However, while that statistic includes some who hoped to attend such gatherings in the future, it also accounts for those who either failed to express any interest in attending or who explicitly stated that they did not wish to do so. For some in this category, it was quite simply because they were not ‘into’ joining clubs and societies:

I don't join clubs – I think that's a personal thing, it has nothing to do with my feelings for Home Children (1.3, p. 23).

I'm not at a point in my life now where I feel I need a whole lot of meetings and conferences and stuff like that. I think I'm old enough now where I can avoid some of that [laughing] (1.10, p. 33).

But, for others, it was more than that:

I don't see the value in being involved in that... what would I have in common with people like that, with those folks? (1.6, p. 30)

like what do I have in common with those people? You know, my mother came from the same Home as their grandmother or something, you know – there's no connection... I mean, picture yourself – once you have looked at the pictures or the information...or somebody brings like maybe the picture of which one [ship] their mother came over, or whatever, once you've gone through it, what else do you have [in common] with these people (3.7, p. 49).

Thus, for these interviewees, reunions and group meetings held no attraction whatsoever.

Notwithstanding the exceptions stated above, the great majority of my interviewees who *did* attend reunions and group meetings with other descendants found them to be beneficial. For some, they were useful merely as a means of gaining

information that would assist them with their research, while, for others, such gatherings allowed them to develop an unbreakable bond with their fellow descendants. Thus, I would argue that a sense of community undoubtedly exists amongst those descendants of Home Children who would attend events such as reunions, but the extent to which it exists varies considerably across what is a hugely diverse group of people. For instance, some may feel a sense of community that stretches only as far as the small group that they are members of – members of the Hazelbrae Group or Quarriers Canadian Family may feel a strong bond with fellow group members or, more generally, with Barnardo or Quarriers descendants, but not feel the same connection with other descendants. In that sense, it may be better to talk of a number of descendants' *communities* rather than one discrete *community*. On the other hand, it seems that there are also those who feel a bond with *all* descendants, no matter which organisation or charity they are connected with, and it is Dave Lorente's Home Children Canada that perhaps epitomises such a point of view. For people like Lorente, the community extends across Canada, and perhaps beyond, to cover all child migrants and their descendants. What is more, for those who feel part of this wider community, there is often a strong desire to tell others about the Home Children and to recruit more descendants who have not yet discovered their family history to join the community. This almost evangelical zeal to 'spread the word' is something that I will discuss in greater detail in the chapter that follows.

A virtual community?

The other forum that could be seen to unite descendants is the British Home Children (BHC) Mailing List hosted by *Rootsweb.com*. This is maintained by Perry Snow, another of my gatekeepers that I introduced in Chapter Two. According to a message he posted on October 1st 2005, the List has a total of 521 subscribers. While it would seem that the majority of members are based in Canada, the List also has an international flavour,

with subscribers hailing from all over the world. And while reunions have certainly been used by some as a starting point for their research, the Mailing List is another important first port of call for descendants. Indeed, it is often through the List that people will find out about reunions in the first place, as well as receive more practical information on how to begin researching their Home Child ancestor.

While the power of the Internet may be nothing new, the power of so-called ‘virtual communities’ might be more surprising. Kitchin (1998) tells us that some even believe that “computer-mediated communication represents the opportunity to recover the meanings and experiences of community that are rapidly dissolving from our everyday lives” (p. 396). And he goes on to explain the logic of those who espouse such a view:

The places we used to meet, talk and swap information are being reclaimed for other purposes; the café is replaced by the impersonal mall. Through the Internet, we will be able to form new forms of communities based upon our interests and affinity, rather than coincidence of location (p. 397).

And it seems that Nessim Watson (1997) has discovered one group that reflects exactly this. *Phish.net* is a website that was set up by the fans of the now disbanded American group Phish. In 1997, when Watson wrote his article, the website had 50,000 members. And Watson suggests that such was the strength of this medium that members of the site “formed a community which created not only individual benefits for participants but also a group strength which enabled them to alter the routines of the record industry and to help launch a new category of music in American culture” (p. 102). He also shows us that, while traditional dictionary definitions of the term ‘community’ may suggest that shared proximity is a requirement for its formation, the Internet offers

proof that this need not be the case. Indeed, he believes that communication, rather than proximity, is the central factor in community formation. As he puts it, “[t]he term “community” is clearly related to “communication” as both stem from the Latin root *communus*, meaning common” (p. 103). Therefore, communication is vital to all communities, whether on or offline: “Without ongoing communication among its participants, a community dissolves” (p. 104).

Of course, communication by itself is not enough for community formation. And Watson acknowledges this, suggesting that ‘communion’ is equally important:

Communication creates, re-creates, and maintains community on...online discussion forums through the continued interaction of participating members. However, the technological ability to communicate does not in itself create the conditions of community. Community depends not only upon communication and shared interests, but also upon “communion.” This term is used most in a discourse of religious ritual, but even in non-religious contexts the term is often chosen to describe a spiritual, emotional, or...“human” feeling that comes from the communicative coordination of oneself with others and the environment (p. 104).

And, when it comes to online groups, it could be argued that these feelings of communion are even more important because such groups lack the face-to-face interaction that many would regard as vital for community formation. However, some critics would suggest that, notwithstanding the existence of any such communion, online groups do not fulfil all the criteria necessary for the creation of a community. Watson introduces us to the work of Neil Postman in this regard:

Critics like Postman point more deeply to the roots of the word “community,” pointing out that the Latin root word *communus* or “common” is made up of two other

roots, *cum*, meaning “together,” and *munis*, meaning “obligation.” Postman’s work with the term “community” emphasizes this idea of common obligation as central to applications of the metaphor. He argues that although online collectives...may contain many other aspects of the community metaphor, they lack the essential feature of a common obligation. More accurately, online communities lack the consequences of not meeting, or participating in the common obligation of most communities (p. 122).

So, it seems that Postman argues that ‘virtual communities’ lack the commitment that ‘real’ communities require. Kitchin, too, voices his concern in this respect, and raises some interesting questions which must also be considered:

While some people would claim to be part of a virtual community the vast majority of cyberspace users are transient, moving between different spaces. While some virtual communities seem to have rules and protocols very similar to real communities, they do not possess the same kinds of responsibility. How deep and bonding are virtual relationships in comparison to real-world relationships? What is the nature of the commitment and how strong is the sense of responsibility (Kitchin, 1998, p. 397)?

Similarly, Delanty (2003) questions the commitment involved in ‘virtual communities’:

Because of the strong emphasis on the self in computer-mediated communication, there is a weakening of a commitment to others. Such communities can only be ‘thin’ and it is unlikely they will generate strong forms of engagement and commitment (p. 184).

Thus, for every argument in favour of ascribing a ‘community’ tag to online groups, there are counterarguments which place less weight on their power and significance.

Nevertheless, Watson is convinced that online communities should be regarded as such. He argues that Postman’s ideas are nostalgic – they hark back to forms of community that are no longer applicable in today’s world. Indeed, he suggests that, as sharing physical space becomes less important, with forms of communication continuing to change at a rapid pace, understandings of how communities are created and operate should also be evolving. Citing Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*, which argues that nations were ‘imagined’ into being through the power of print media, Watson suggests that the rise in computer technology represents another “fundamental change in modes of apprehending the world” (p. 122). Consequently, he even regards the term ‘virtual community’ as anomalous, because it seems to suggest that such a community is not real. It is, in his view, a term used “by offline scholars wishing to compare these online communities to “the real thing” in their offline world” (p. 129). But, according to Watson, online communities certainly *are* the real thing.

Returning to the BHC Mailing List, I would suggest that, overall, its influence on the majority of my interviewees is relatively small and, as such, I do not believe that it fosters the same community spirit that is described by those who attend reunions and group meetings. Nevertheless, there are some similarities between the two. For instance, there are those who use it to help others in much the same way as those who help fellow descendants at reunion events:

I had one occasion where I truly was able to help somebody who was floundering with respect to, you know, “how do I...” I felt good about that, somebody who didn’t know where to look for information and I did through my research. And I was quite happy to be able to help out. That was important to me, that’s sort of one of the things that happened that was nice. You know, when you do

this sort of thing and you start out not knowing and you see somebody that's at where you were when you started, to be able to help them is a good thing (1.1, p. 30).

I've done look ups for people who live in Australia, people who live in British Columbia, people who live in the States – they're not going to come to Canada to go here to the Archives to look up the stuff themselves. And if they're trying to get the [micro]films on interlibrary loan, they'll wait a long time before they get them. So I've, in my own case, I've kept my eye open for situations like that and if I see something that I can pitch in with, then I'll do it (1.7, p. 50).

I help some [people] with research, Canadian research or overseas, because they don't know where to start. And I enjoy it so much, I really do... I just find it really fascinating (6.3, p. 26).

These people recognise the difficulties people often have getting started with their research and, therefore, they seem to relish the opportunity to give others a helping hand.⁴⁶

Furthermore, there are those who believe that the Mailing List is more than a mere forum for passing on helpful tips. By allowing descendants to support each other in their quest for information, it can also draw them closer together:

It's a support group... It's a chance to let some people know that they're not alone – they may, their parents or grandparents may have had a really rough time, but they're not alone, there were other people went through the same things and came out of it, you know, eventually in good shape (1.7, pp. 49-50).

⁴⁶ What is more, the people I spoke to, who had helped others with their research, did so for free or, if they charged at all, it would just be 'at cost.' Indeed, one interviewee told me that she had been reprimanded by a person running a commercial operation because she had been sending people information free of charge and, in so doing, she had been taking custom away from this person who was trying to sell the same material!

Thus, while it may not be a massive influence on the majority of the people that I interviewed – and, again, it is worth reiterating that most of my interviewees had been conducting their research for a number of years and, consequently, they may not have as much need for such a resource – that is not to deny its usefulness for those who are starting out in their research. As the interviewee quoted above put it to me, “without the List, I don’t think a lot of people would know what they could be doing or where to start” (1.7, p. 51). However, for those of my interviewees who use the List, it would probably be more accurate to describe it as a “watching brief” (1.7, p. 52). That is, they simply monitor it to keep up with any new developments with regard to research into the Home Children. Or, as one interviewee put it, “I’m a voyeur. I don’t communicate with anybody; I just look in to see what’s happening” (1.3, p. 22). And it seems that this is actually a common phenomenon on the Internet, with Watson telling us that there is even a term for people who monitor message boards and mailing lists rather than contribute to them: they are known as “lurkers” (Watson, 1997, p. 105).⁴⁷ The existence of such “lurkers” actually provides further ammunition for those who criticise the idea of online communities – for them, it is more evidence that membership of ‘virtual’ groups does not require the commitment that they would claim is essential for community formation.

Although Watson has made a good case in favour of suggesting that communities can exist on the Internet, and while I would certainly not wish to negate the importance of the BHC List to the many people that use it, I did not find a great deal of evidence to prove that it fosters a community spirit amongst descendants. Consequently, I would suggest that reunions and group meetings are more powerful forces for uniting people and creating any sense of community that may exist.

⁴⁷ I must confess that, when it comes to the BHC Mailing List, that is exactly what I am! Although I have subscribed to the site since early on in my research and receive all the messages posted to it by email, I have not posted any messages myself (although, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, Perry Snow did post my request for interviewees on the List when I was conducting my primary research in 2004).

However, for those who are unaware of, or unable to attend the group meetings and reunions that take place, Perry Snow's resource may well be crucial for them as they attempt to not only trace their roots but also, in some cases at least, connect with other people from a similar background.

Symbols uniting the community

The BHC Mailing List actually represents only one part of the website that Perry Snow has set up for descendants of Home Children. He has also created databases of Home Children which, by March 2006, had identified and provided details on over 50,000 of the Home Children (approximately fifty per cent of all the children sent to Canada). Further, his website provides details on how to contact the relevant charities, an anthology of Home Child stories, a variety of relevant articles, and so on. So, all of these resources provide further assistance and information to those researching their Home Child roots. But of more relevance to my discussion of community is the fact that the site also sells 'snowflake' pin badges that allow descendants to identify each other as such, while also giving them the opportunity to 'spread the word' to those unaware of the story of the Home Children. Snow explains the origins of this symbol:

On August 22, 2001, the Federal Government of Canada unveiled a plaque commemorating the passage of British Home Children through a Stratford Distributing Home. Many BHC Mail List subscribers planned to attend and wondered how they would identify each other. The initial suggestion of nametags was replaced with another of wearing homemade paper "snowflakes" in honour of my father's lifelong search for his identity, and acknowledgement of my efforts to help BHC descendants through my book, the BHC Mail List and BHC Website (<http://members.shaw.ca/persnow/pin.htm>; accessed from the British Home

Children website at <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~britishhomechildren>,
08/11/2005).

He also issues a rallying cry, suggesting that, by wearing the snowflake badge, descendants are “publicly declaring” themselves to be proud of their Home Child ancestry (Figure 12).

Figure 12: ‘Snowflake’ pin badge



Source: Perry Snow's website (accessed 08/11/2005)

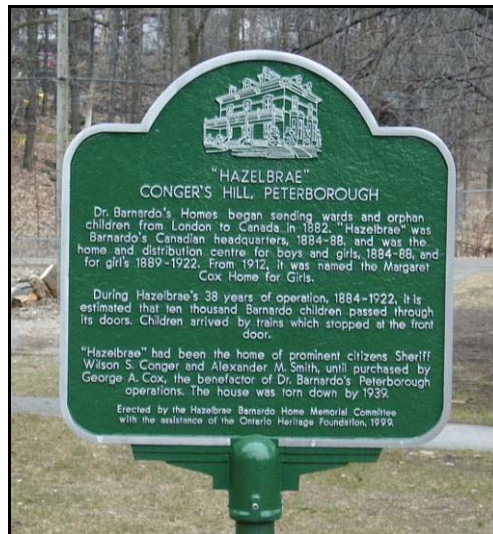
I would suggest that the ‘snowflake’ badge is one of a number of symbols that, as Cohen (1985) would suggest, are required to cement the bond necessary for community formation. It could also be argued that this symbol allows ‘virtual’ community members to make a ‘real’ connection with other pin wearers. However, it is debateable how powerful the ‘snowflake’ actually is. Indeed, I can recall only two interviewees wearing or even mentioning the badge when I interviewed them, even although a significant number attended the Stratford reunion that Snow refers to as being the inspiration for its production. Nevertheless, for some people at least, even something as insignificant as a simple badge may help them to feel a sense of communion with other wearers. As one interviewee told me:

they had a Home Child pin [at the Stratford reunion], and I bought about five of them because I figured...people would want them, sort of maybe people asking for them... and people seemed to want them – something they can hang onto, you know (5.3, p. 52).

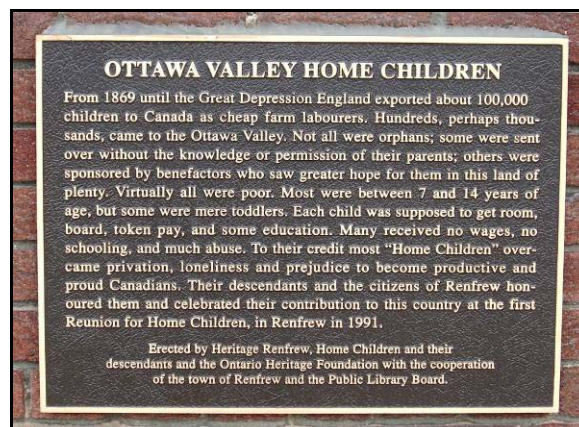
However, there are other items that I would suggest create a rather more powerful bond between descendants than the ‘snowflake’ pins. For instance, there are the plaques and memorials that have been erected in recent years in memory of the Home Children (Figures 13 and 14). These *lieux de mémoire*, as Nora (1996) would have it, not only reflect descendants’ desires to retain memories of what has passed, but also illustrate their attempts to maintain a sense of community. And this is illustrated by the fact that a number of the reunions and meetings that have been held – not least the one in Stratford discussed earlier in this chapter – have been arranged to allow for the collective remembering of the Home Children through the unveiling of such markers.

Items that were owned by Home Child ancestors are also particularly symbolic for descendants. What is more, reunions often have ‘show and tell’ sessions where people proudly display the mementos that their ancestors left behind and I believe that these events, in turn, invest an even greater significance in the objects in question – people may go to a reunion knowing or thinking nothing of the items their parents and grandparents brought with them to Canada, but, having seen others display their items and discuss their significance, they may well leave with a burning desire to locate similar items for themselves. And it is in this respect that the trunk which contained all the worldly possessions that the Home Children brought with them to Canada, seems to have become very important to members of the descendants’ community; so much so, in fact, that Kohli (2003) refers to “[t]he now famous Barnardo trunk” in her history of

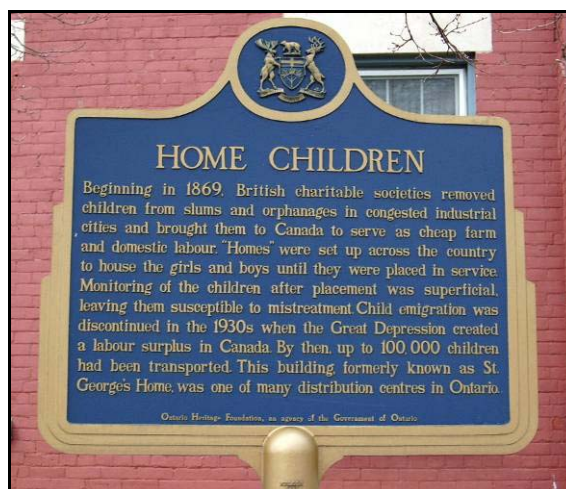
Figure 13: Plaques



Memorial Plaque, Site of Hazelbrae Receiving Home
Peterborough, Ontario (Source: author)



Memorial Plaque, Renfrew Public Library,
Renfrew, Ontario (Source: author)



Memorial Plaque, Site of St George's Receiving Home,
Ottawa, Ontario (Source: author)

Figure 14: Memorials



Barnardo Memorial, Little Brook Cemetery, Peterborough, Ontario (Source: author)



Gibb's Home Memorial, Sherbrooke, Quebec⁴⁸ (Source: anonymous interviewee)



Roadside Quarriers Memorial, Athens, Ontario (Source: author)

⁴⁸ The Gibb's Home in Sherbrooke, Quebec was a Receiving Home for children sent to Canada by the Church of England Waifs and Strays Society (Kohli, 2003, pp. 158-162).

child migration.⁴⁹ Similarly, the Bible that the sending agencies would give the children as they left, and that they also kept in their trunk, is another object that is almost revered by descendants. Consequently, it is of no surprise that both a trunk and a Bible are part of the Parks Canada travelling exhibition on the Home Children, while trunks were also a central feature of a major Home Child exhibition that was held in London, Ontario in 2005 (Figure 15). Thus, those who have these objects hold them precious, while those who do not, are desperate to get their hands on them:

I wish I had dad's Bible (2.9, p. 33).

ANDY: *I was interviewing somebody earlier on today and they had the trunk.*

INTERVIEWEE: *Oh, I wish we had it, but we don't.*

ANDY: *So it would be nice to have something like that?*

INTERVIEWEE: *Oh yes, yes. The closest thing is the Bible – that's the one thing that we do have (2.11, pp. 40-41).*

ANDY: *...have you got anything else that was, like say your mother had when she came over?*

INTERVIEWEE: *No, not a thing, not a thing – don't even have the Bible she would have had, you know. Absolutely nothing – I go to these meetings and they talk about, oh I've got the trunk or I've got this, but I've got nothing, absolutely nothing (3.1, pp. 19-20).*

a lot of people want to see a trunk for some reason. I don't know why they're attracted to seeing a trunk... I've been offered a lot of money for my trunk (3.4, p. 48).

⁴⁹ The trunks tend to be quite distinctive and can often be pinned down to a certain sending agency back in the UK. For instance, the Barnardo trunks were actually made by the boys – many of whom would go on to use them for themselves – in the Barnardo Technical School, and were “constructed of hardwood and covered in imitation alligator skin” (Corbett, 2002).

Figure 15: Trunk and Bible Exhibits



Trunk and Bible, Parks Canada travelling exhibition,
Renfrew, Ontario (Source: author)



Trunk at entrance to *Nobody's Child* Exhibition,
London, Ontario (Source: author)



Trunk display, *Nobody's Child* Exhibition,
London, Ontario (Source: author)

I still have her box that she brought over, her wooden suitcase...her trunk rather, that she brought over. Yeah, I still have that (4.3, p. 3).

What is more, some descendants go further than just collecting memorabilia relating to their own ancestor and attempt to accumulate any objects that they feel are connected with their Home Child or, indeed, with the Home Children in general:

every little memorabilia, I'm just attached to, you know (1.4, p. 22).

INTERVIEWEE: *I've collected, like I have a Barnardo trunk, I have a Barnardo Bible, I have a Barnardo medal, I have all kinds of Barnardo stuff. It became a...*

ANDY: *Was the trunk her trunk and the Bible her Bible?*

INTERVIEWEE: *No, her trunk actually got burnt in a fire in the house, we think... But it's become a collection – I keep buying and buying and buying...*

ANDY: *So where did you get the trunk and the Bible and all that sort of stuff?*

INTERVIEWEE: *The trunk I got here – it was in an antique shop downtown. The Bible and the medal I got off eBay. You know, I search Barnardo [on eBay] almost every day, just to see what's on there. I got some really rare books...*

ANDY: *So you're just trying to collect as many things that relate to...*

INTERVIEWEE: *That relate to my, that's my piece of my grandmother, because that's all I have, because I can't ask her* (3.4, pp. 16-17).

Other important, if slightly more personal, symbols that are worth mentioning are the photographs that people have of their Home Child ancestors. Some of the charities held detailed records on each of the children under their charge and Barnardo's, in particular, tended to take pictures of each of their children while they

stayed in their Homes in the UK. And, when descendants write to the relevant charities for information, they are sometimes lucky enough to receive copies of whichever pictures happen to be on file. Not surprisingly, these prove to be precious mementos for those who receive them, while those who do not, long to have them:

when I saw the picture of my father for the first time, when he was a little young lad of six, oh I just cried (1.4, p. 12).

Wouldn't that be something, to get a picture of your Home Children? (1.8, p. 29)

That's the hardest thing – there's no baby pictures, there's no school pictures, there's nothing (1.12, p. 24).

I really would love to find a picture of my grandmother – that's really very important to me (5.9, p. 13).

ANDY: *...would mementos, like maybe the photos, are these really precious to you?*

INTERVIEWEE: *Oh are they ever! They're the most precious things that I have, possessions, yeah, yeah* (6.3, p. 43).

Thus, photographs of Home Child relatives are clearly very important to descendants; indeed, along with the trunks and Bibles, they were the objects that were most frequently discussed by my interviewees. And, as people in the descendants' community hear of others who have managed to obtain photographs, they seem to become more and more important to those who do not have them. What is more, while I would suggest that photographs are perhaps even more personal than the objects mentioned above, they are still proudly displayed by their owners: the exhibition that was held in

London featured a ‘wall of fame’ that showed pictures of Home Children that descendants had obtained during the course of their research (Figure 16). Consequently, photographs, too, can reinforce the bond that exists between descendants and, as such, they can be viewed as the types of symbols that are necessary for community formation.

Figure 16: Home Child pictures, *Nobody’s Child* exhibition, London, Ontario, April 17th – July 24th 2005





Source: author

Conclusion

The descendants' community cannot be seen as a discrete or homogenous group. It is made up of a number of small and sometimes independent groups that are scattered across Canada, although these are often united in some way to Dave Lorente's umbrella organisation, Home Children Canada. The main manifestation of any community spirit is to be found in the reunions and group meetings that are held periodically by such organisations and, for many, these gatherings prove to be a vital lifeline as they attempt to piece together their confusing and painful backgrounds. I would argue that the community is further reinforced by the public display of symbolic objects, from simple badges through to the trunks and Bibles that belonged to the Home Children, as well as the old photographs that descendants have obtained during the course of their research. However, it is important to remember that such symbols can mean different things to

different people, although as Cohen (1985) tells us, this does not negate the existence of any community; the fact that people share these symbols is more important than the meaning that they may invest in them. A sense of community may also be found in the virtual space of the Internet, although I have suggested that, for my research subjects at least, this is not its main function – the Internet is utilised more for research than communion. However, not all of my research subjects would claim to be members of the descendants' community, whether virtual or face-to-face. Indeed, for a number of my interviewees – albeit a relatively small minority – there is no such thing: they believe that any gatherings of the ancestors of Home Children are wholly contrived and utterly pointless. Similarly, while the symbols that I have mentioned may be vital for some, and while some may place a great deal of weight on owning a certain trunk or photograph, others do not see their significance at all, and may not even be aware that such objects exist.

When it comes to descendants' inspiration for their research, it would seem that a primary motivation is to pass a legacy on to their own descendants. Time and again, I was told by my interviewees that they regretted not having found out more about their family heritage while their older relatives – and the Home Children in particular – were still alive. And such regret seems to spur them on – they are determined that their own children and grandchildren shall not grow old with similar sized holes in their genealogical space. However, by no means all of my interviewees feel this burden. For some, it is simply the excitement of the chase that drives them to the archives, while, for others, it is the enthusiasm and persuasiveness of others that inspires them to 'start digging.' And then, of course, the power of modern technology cannot be underestimated, with the ever expanding Internet, in particular, making genealogical information accessible to more and more people.

Genealogical research is certainly a pursuit that captures the imagination of many millions of people across the globe, and it is not only the descendants of the Home Children who are captivated by it. It has been argued that the fascination with the past that now exists is actually a consequence of modernity. And, while it is true that the changing structure of society has certainly created an increased interest in preserving memories of the past, it must also be pointed out that this is far from being an entirely new cultural phenomenon. There is a great deal of evidence to suggest that genealogy has actually played an important part in society for many centuries – one can turn to the Bible, for instance, and see the importance of genealogy to those who wrote of the birth of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew two thousand years ago.⁵⁰ I can also think of its importance to the oral traditions that existed – and continue to exist – in the Western Isles of Scotland, where I have my roots. There, people are still often identified by who their ancestors are, rather than by who they are themselves. Thus, even to this day, my father is known to the older generation as Angus, son of Malcolm, son of Angus, son of Norman, whereas my mother is Bell Ann, the daughter of Roderick, the son of Donald, the son of Donald – rendered in Gaelic as Aonghas Calum Aonghais Thormoid and Bell Ann Ruairidh Dhomhnuill Mhic Dhomhnuill respectively – rather than as simply Angus and Bell Ann Morrison. So, could it be that the genealogy practised today is actually the modern or post-modern reclamation of a pre-modern phenomenon? Is there, in fact, little difference between the historical figure on the Western Isles of Scotland who is immersed in the oral traditions of his or her island, and who can immediately recite genealogical records of friends and relatives back three or four generations, and the descendant of the Home Child in Toronto researching his or her British roots on the Internet? Well, the answer to this question is

⁵⁰ Matthew Chapter One (v. 1-17) provides a “record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham” (New York International Bible Society, 1983, p. 985). Similarly, Chapter Five of the book of Genesis provide the reader with a “written account of Adam’s line” (p. 5).

yes, there certainly is a fundamental difference – while ‘traditional’ genealogy was about oral tradition and face-to-face contact, the forces that drive the new form are actually *a lack* of face-to-face contact, together with the remarkable technological advances that allow individuals to conduct their research without having to move away from their computer screens. So, while genealogy itself may not be new, the genealogy that is practised today certainly is.

Notwithstanding such theoretical issues, in this chapter I have suggested that the descendants of the Home Children actually have more cause than most to find themselves addicted to this activity that seems to consume so many today. As Dave Lorente points out, while most amateur genealogists are able, with relative ease, to trace their family back a number of generations, for many of the descendants of Home Children, it is a struggle to get beyond even their own parents. The initial obstacle, or ‘wall’ as he puts it, that all genealogists face is much closer for descendants of Home Children (Interview 4.4, p. 51) – only by conducting a great deal of research can this wall be broken down to allow access to information from preceding centuries and generations. Consequently, Lorente argues that, for the descendants of child migrants, researching their Home Child roots understandably takes precedence over any other family line. However, one must not ignore the views of Basu (2002) and Boym (2001), amongst others, who would say that feelings of rootlessness are actually a common predicament in society today and, as such, the descendants of Home Children are in no way unusual. Nor should the argument of Stephen Constantine (2003), or the more general points raised by Novick (cited in Basu, 2002), be discounted. Constantine suggests that descendants may also be drawn to their research because the Home Children now represent a more acceptable, even prestigious, family line to be associated with in Canada than conventional British roots. And, as I have discussed briefly, there certainly does now seem to be a certain amount of kudos attached to being related to a

Home Child – an issue that I will tackle in greater detail in the chapter that follows. However, notwithstanding the validity of such an argument, surely this large body of evidence from a variety of perspectives makes one thing clear: for whatever reason, it is easy to see why so many of the descendants of Home Children *do* get ‘bitten by the bug.’

CHAPTER FOUR

Through adversity to the stars

‘I’m prouder to be the granddaughter of a Home Child than I would be to be the granddaughter of a Rockefeller – this man had to do it by himself’

Granddaughter of a Home Child, Kingston, Ontario

Having studied the reasons for my interviewees’ interest in genealogy, as well as the techniques that they employ in order to carry out their research, I now turn to look at how the descendants of Home Children feel about what happened to their ancestors. In this chapter, I will focus not only on those descendants – perhaps the majority of my interviewees – who see their child migrant relatives as having made successful lives for themselves in Canada, despite the tremendous hardships most of them faced, but also on those who are bitter and angry about what they view as nothing other than a despicable episode in both British and Canadian history. Placing the Home Children in the context of other groups that have suffered oppression in the past and are now being celebrated in contemporary Canada, I will also consider the ways in which the Home Children are being acknowledged today and will discuss the views of my research subjects with regard to what is being done to honour them.

Success against all odds

As I attempted to show in Chapter One, many of the child migrants suffered great hardship during their early years in Canada. They were forced to adapt to living conditions that were frequently harsher than those they had experienced back in Britain, and, what is more, they often had to do so while facing hostility from not only the

families with whom they lived, but also from their neighbours and even from Canadian society at large. Thus, it is perhaps all the more surprising that a disproportionate number of them rose above such circumstances and went on to live long and fulfilled lives in Canada. And it is to positive accounts such as these that I now turn.

The title for this chapter is taken from the statement made by one of my interviewees as he attempted to sum up his father's life:

the motto of the Air Force in Britain is Per Ardua Ad Astra – 'Through Adversity to the Stars.'
And I always think that is probably, that could have been a good motto for my dad. You know, he managed to do pretty well in spite of the knock he got as a kid (1.6, p. 22).

And while this man possibly put it better than most, he summed up the feelings of a large number of my research subjects:

You know, it really fits into the immigrant experience as a whole, but it just adds an additional element of poignancy when you know that my great grandfather came here ten years old – not a soul in the world, not a lick of family here to support him – on his own hook, and wound up, you know, a master carpenter. At least while he was living, reasonably affluent, successful, very likely respected. I don't see how anybody could see that as anything other than a triumph (1.1, p. 16).

What strikes me is these...people...grew up with nothing. I mean, they were, you know, they had no money, they were living in slums in terrible conditions, and yet they could adapt to an entirely different environment (5.5, p. 38).

Thus, many descendants take a great deal of pride in what their forebears achieved despite the difficult circumstances they had to endure as children.

One interviewee drew my attention to a poem that he felt summed up all of the Home Children, and his father in particular. Douglas Malloch's poem, *Good Timber*, which compares people to trees, suggests that in the case of both, it is the ones that have had to fight for survival that end up strongest in the end:

***Good Timber* by Douglas Malloch**

The tree that never had to fight
For sun and sky and air and light,
But stood out in the open plain
And always got its share of rain,
Never became a forest king
But lived and died a scrubby thing.

The man who never had to toil
To gain and farm his patch of soil,
Who never had to win his share
Of sun and sky and light and air,
Never became a manly man
But lived and died as he began.

Good timber does not grow with ease:
The stronger wind, the stronger trees;
The further sky, the greater length;
The more the storm, the more the strength.
By sun and cold, by rain and snow,
In trees and men good timbers grow.

Where thickest lies the forest growth,
We find the patriarchs of both.
And they hold counsel with the stars
Whose broken branches show the scars
Of many winds and much of strife.
This is the common law of life.

So, in the case of the Home Children, the argument would be that they were actually strengthened rather than debilitated by their hardships. As another interviewee put it, “[v]icissitudes make you stronger” (3.10, p. 31). Or, tackling the issue from another angle, one of the descendants put it this way: “sometimes being born with a silver spoon in your mouth gets you nowhere” (5.8, p. 46).

There is also the suggestion that the Home Children were successful because they were unwilling to dwell on the past – they did not allow their childhood to get the better of them. This is reflected in comments that were made during the course of my interviews:

I don't think he was one to dwell upon the fact, the fact that he, you know, 'what if' – I never heard that from him, ever. He just got on with it (1.6, p. 39).

I am sharply aware that this lady has not wasted her life dwelling on injustice or self pity (2.8, p. 33;
this comment comes from a newspaper article that was written about one interviewee's Home Child mother).

My father had a saying, and how true it was: "Nobody can help the circumstance of their birth; it's what they do with their life afterwards that counts" (3.3, p. 41).

However, as the man who made the first of these three statements went on to point out, this sort of outlook was not peculiar to the Home Children. Indeed, he suggested that, in his father's case, his positive outlook was "nothing to do with the circumstances," but, rather, it was simply because that was "the kind of guy he was" (1.6, p. 39). Thus, certain qualities cannot simply be ascribed to the Home Children as a group – it is clearly not only child migrants who have been able to rise above their circumstances, and in every generation and society there have been those who have been lauded for succeeding despite the long odds that they faced. What is more, as I shall discuss in greater detail later in this chapter, there were certainly many Home Children who, unfortunately, failed in this regard and were never able to succeed against the odds. Further, it seems that a number of the descendants of such child migrants are still beset by the 'what if' factor mentioned by the interviewee above.

It must also be acknowledged that success is a relative concept. While some Home Children may never have attained material success, they still built loving relationships with those around them and were able to live happy and fulfilled lives:

we were always happy – we were poor, but we were clean, we always ate...good food as far as I was concerned. You know, we were all healthy and we all turned out to be...average law-abiding, respectful citizens of society, you know, we all did...we all turned out very good (1.4, p. 20).

But, of course, in other cases, the opposite was true – some may have achieved material success notwithstanding apparent failures in other aspects of their lives. As one woman who I interviewed put it when discussing her Home Child grandfather, "[t]his was a difficult man, and not a wonderful dad or a great grandfather and yet, given all he had to work with, I think he did very well – he was very successful in life" (1.3, p. 23).

Another suggestion made by some of my interviewees was that perhaps those Home Children who *did* succeed were made of ‘sterner stuff.’ Indeed, they were even compared with the young in today’s society, with the suggestion being made that, in the past, people simply ‘got on with it’ despite all that had been thrown at them, while today’s youth do not have the ‘moral fibre’ to do as much.⁵¹

I mean, today, if somebody’s from a broken home or is having a bad time, I mean, that’s their excuse through their whole life, to not do well (5.3, p. 46).

A number of my interviewees also suggested that Canada’s environment actually proved to be ideal for people of such character. As one of them commented, while discussing his Home Child grandfather:

he was such a Canadian type from the start of the twentieth century. He was such [a] Canadian type of person. You know, you just cope, adapt and do (4.11, p. 16).

Or, as another put it, “I think they certainly made good pioneers” (3.10, p. 25). Furthermore, the child migrants themselves often seemed to believe this too:

I think he sort of knew that Canada had provided him with an opportunity (1.5, p. 16).

my dad always said that the beauty of Canada was you could make of yourself whatever it was you wanted to make of yourself. There were no hereditary titles – he didn’t have a lot of time for that kind of stuff. He was happy to be here (1.6, p. 19).

⁵¹ However, it could also be suggested that this is merely a common stereotype that the older generation ascribe to the ‘youth of today.’ Consequently, it may not be an observation that holds a great deal of weight.

I think if you asked my dad, he would say that it was a good opportunity for him (3.7, p. 34).

So, in many cases, the Home Children bought into the ethos of the likes of Barnardo and Quarrier: they truly believed that Canada's rural environment offered them a chance in life that they would never have been afforded back in Britain. As one former Home Child told me, "I can't say that I regret being brought up here, because I'm sure it would have been a lot better than my own home" (2.3, p. 13).

It could be argued that the 'child savers' were, at least to a certain extent, correct to suggest that emigration to Canada offered better prospects for poor children than would have been available in Britain's cities.⁵² And this is something that a number of my interviewees commented on too – while the children may have faced abuse and suffering in Canada, conditions in the 'Old Country' were often far worse:

I think there was hardships [for the children in Canada], and I think things happened that weren't very nice for the children, but I guess I...always weigh in the balance, what would have happened to this child if he had have stayed in England, in the East End of London, or wherever he came from... And I say, the information we had was that a lot of those children would be dead by the time they were five years old [if they had remained in Britain]. So I weigh that against coming to Canada and maybe working hard and suffering some abuses at the hands of taskmasters... I see that as a positive thing in light of what might have happened in their hardship over there. The picture I get of the hardships over there, this was mild here (1.10, p. 19).

And with the hardships that people suffered in Britain in mind, some interviewees were, perhaps unsurprisingly, reminded of the writing of Charles Dickens, notwithstanding

⁵² Indeed, I provided evidence from Parr (2000) and Sutherland (2000) in Chapter One that would back up such a standpoint.

the fact that his most famous novels were written a number of years before the period in which their ancestors lived:⁵³

I think for most of them it probably was a good thing to go to Canada. I don't think they would have had much of a life back there. I mean, we're talking, you know, Dickens' time and orphans weren't treated too favourably (1.12, p. 17).

it minds us of Charles Dickens' era, of when you had the migration from the rural country into the cities with the Industrial Revolution and, there was no 'room in the inn' for the children. So they're on the streets or wherever they are and scrounged for whatever food they could find. If that is the picture of the time, then I think he has to be happy to get away from that and come to another opportunity (3.5, pp. 20-21).

There is also evidence from scholarly texts that migration benefited a significant number of the children. Parr (2000) tells us that even the government delegation that ordered the banning of migration of children under fourteen to Canada in 1925 accepted that, by and large, prospects were better for the children in Canada rather than in the United Kingdom (Parr, 2000, p. 153). And Parr herself agrees with this assessment:

the child immigrants were materially better off in Canada than they would have been in Britain... As sons and daughters of semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers in Britain their prospects were not bright... While upward mobility was characteristic of prosperous Britons in the first half of the twentieth century, less privileged people tended to be drifting downwards rather than gaining ground... By contrast among the

⁵³ Perhaps the Dickens novel that most would think of with regard to the social evils of the nineteenth century would be *Oliver Twist*. It was written in 1838, over thirty years before Annie Macpherson and Maria Rye began sending children to Canada.

Barnardo immigrants, 31 per cent of those reporting adult occupations broke away from unskilled service and labouring work and from military service. Nineteen per cent achieved the relative security of commercial, industrial or agricultural proprietorship or of foreman, artisan or clerk at some time in their working lives (Parr, 2000, pp. 137-139).

Similarly, Sutherland (2000) concludes, “the vast majority of the children made satisfactory additions to the Canadian population.” And, he continues, “[g]iven their origins, early influences, and the minimal standards of child care involved, the record is a good one” (p. 36) – a claim that, as I shall go on to discuss, some would certainly dispute.

My own research has also provided me with evidence that at least some Home Children had favourable experiences with regard to the families that they were placed with. As one Home Child, now in his nineties, told me, “I was part of the family all the way, you know... I was accepted and made a Canadian the day I arrived at the farm” (4.8, p. 13). Or, as he said to me at another point:

since the day I arrived, when I think back, I was made one of the family and one of the community; one of the school children – pretty fortunate from the stories that Dave [Lorente] can tell you that some of the Home Children have gone through, you know, not only mentally, but physically abused (4.8, p. 10).

However, even in those cases where the Home Children *were* treated harshly, many were still grateful for the opportunity they had been afforded in coming to Canada:

INTERVIEWEE 1: *...even if he had it pretty hard on the farm sometimes...you had to do it and he just had that attitude that these were things that had to be done. And he said, he gives credit to*

[Fegans, the sending charity] *for having sent him to Canada to give him a chance in life – that's what he said.*

INTERVIEWEE 2: *"Where else would I be if it hadn't been for Fegan?" – that [was] his view* (6.2, p. 21).

he had very high regards for Dr Barnardo – he wouldn't say a word against him. He had very, very, he had nothing but respect for Dr Barnardo for the better life actually in later years that he had in Canada (2.6, p. 20).

In fact, so high was this last man's opinion of Barnardo that, for as long as his daughters can remember, he kept a picture of him on his bedroom dresser!

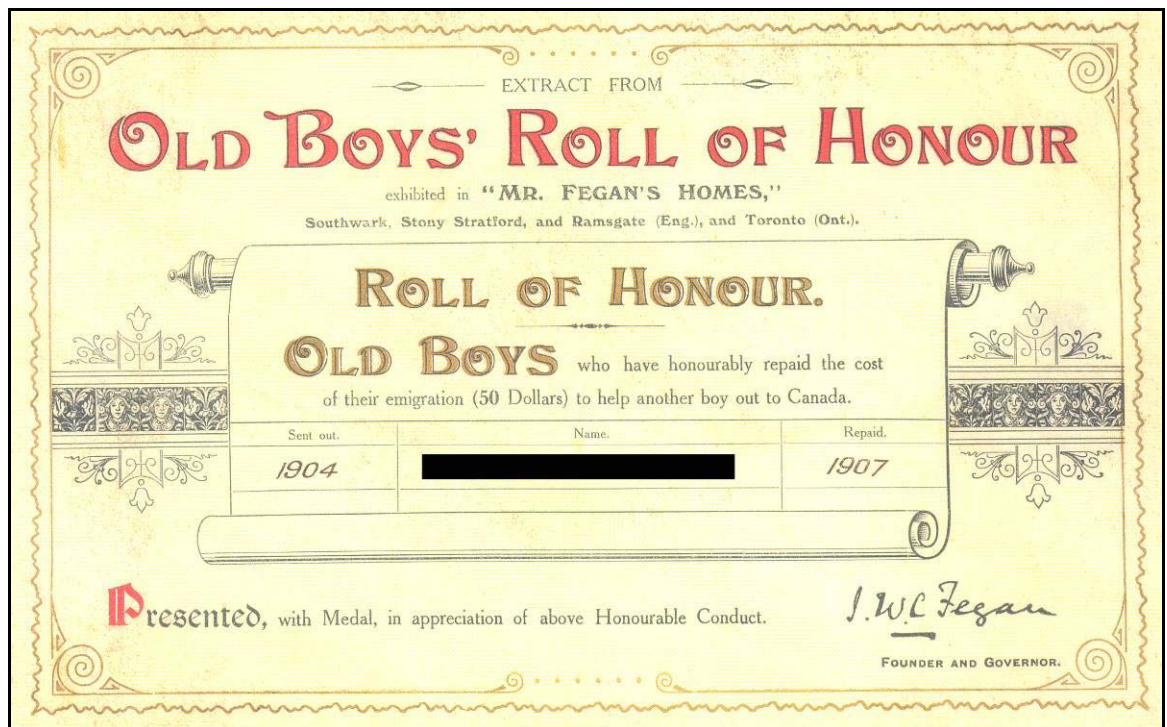
Many others, whose devotion to their British 'saviour' perhaps did not stretch to keeping a photograph of him or her on display, would still send regular donations back to the charity in question. Some would actually pay back the cost of their passage – in some instances receiving a certificate from the sending agency for doing so (Figure 17) – perhaps hoping that this would allow more children like themselves to be sent, while others would just make contributions as and when they were able:

he sent his twenty-five cents all the time, and he used to send little bits of money to Barnardo's as he had it (3.3, p. 11).

he used to give money to Barnardo's every year (6.3, p. 9).

Furthermore, in some cases, if they were ever able to return to Britain, they would even make a point of visiting the Homes where they had been placed to say thank you in person:

Figure 17: Certificate for repaying the cost of passage



Source: anonymous interviewee

he stopped in, it's in Barnardo records, when he went over [to the UK], he stopped in at two of the Homes to make donations. He wouldn't have done that if he had anything against them. He was smart enough to know the alternative (6.3, p. 13).

Thus, it could be said that, in cases such as these, the policy of the philanthropists actually paid off. And, while many of the Home Children themselves were grateful to the charities for their new life in Canada, their descendants, too, are often indebted to these organisations, even although it is often more than a century since their ancestors came to the country. Indeed, a significant number of my interviewees spoke with gratitude about what the sending organisations did for their relatives, with some making the point that they would not be alive today if it was not for child migration:

Well, of course I'm glad they sent him here – I wouldn't be here and I wouldn't have had what I'd say [was] the best father in the world if they hadn't have sent him here to Canada (3.3, p. 19).

we're very pleased that my father was able to come to Canada, otherwise I would not be sitting here talking to you (3.5, p. 18).

We can all look at each other and thank goodness that they [the Home Children] did come here, because we wouldn't be here otherwise [laughs] (Sudbury Discussion Forum, p. 15).

Some go even further and are unstinting in their praise of characters like Barnardo:

this fellow Barnardo and people like him are saints and heroes of a extraordinary character. You know, that's my reaction really, you know, that any human being would take it on himself, to do something about, and have the temerity to think he could make a difference – this impresses the hell out of me (2.2, p. 25).

Finding a balance

While a small number of my research subjects waxed lyrical about the charities, most were less willing to accept that the policy of child migration was beyond reproach. Indeed, even those who had a positive take on child migration generally realised that the scheme was far from perfect. While their relative may have had a successful life in Canada, they recognise that many did not:

from what I've read...I think that some people benefited greatly. Some of the children came over; they were taken in as a daughter or a son. Some of them inherited estates. Some of them, you know, were married well and fell into really good fortune. Others...were treated like animals... so I have mixed feelings...for some people it was the right thing, for others it wasn't (1.2, p. 24).

I think a big part of the problem is that you've got the A's and B's of it. You've got one side of the coin or you've got the other side of the coin. You know, it's just, which side of the coin are you hearing about. Like, as far as my grandfather went, and his whole perception in history about it, is a very positive thing. But then you get the [others] who were – let's see, how would I put this – they're probably the ultimate point of the other side of the coin (4.11, p. 21).

So, as another person concluded, “I think the intentions were good, but sometimes theory outstrips performance, and that probably happened in many cases” (Renfrew Discussion Forum, p. 22).

However, despite such failings, a number of my research subjects were at pains to point out that child migration cannot – or certainly should not – be judged from a twenty-first century perspective. And, in this respect, some interviewees showed a rather sophisticated understanding of the era in which child migration took place. As one man told me:

it was a nineteenth century solution to an age old problem and I don't think it's fair to be critical – I mean overly critical – in spite of all the bad things that happened...I mean, think about [what] they replaced, think about the eighteenth century orphanages and asylums and what happened to people when they were bankrupt – they went to prison and their families went with them. You know, at least it avoided that... The difficulty that we have with history of course, is that we always have a tendency, especially social history, we have a tendency to evaluate everything according to our viewpoints. And of course that's the biggest mistake historians can make. The aboriginal people in North America have a saying that 'for you to understand a man, you have to walk a mile in his moccasins,' or something like [that]. And I think that that's true of all historical figures – you have to think about what happened in the context of the time (1.6, p. 24).

And he went on to argue that modern society often fails to do that: “we demand that history be examined on twenty-first century terms, and we can’t do that – it’s wrong! That’s bad historiography!” (1.6, pp. 28-29). Or, as another interviewee put it,

we live in a society that doesn’t have the faintest idea of what life was like in the days of the Barnardo children...and what a desperate thing they [the charities] were trying to deal with... you know, fact has no meaning outside of its context and, if there’s no context except what people are projecting on it from, you know, today’s world or their experiences, then the conclusions and perceptions they have are totally fallacious (2.2, p. 40).

So, in the case of child migration, these interviewees argued that if you make the mistake of looking at a character like Barnardo from a modern perspective, what he did obviously sounds terribly cruel. However, if you do as they suggest, and study him in the context of the era in which he lived, a totally different picture emerges – one that shows Barnardo in a completely different light, perhaps even as a saviour of many thousands of children.

In a similar vein, a number of my research subjects were critical of those who talk about how badly treated the Home Children were. While not suggesting that the children had it easy on the farms on which they were placed, they made the point that, in some cases at least, they were treated no worse than the children who were born and brought up on such farms. One interviewee discussed his mother – not a Home Child – who was also brought up on a farm. He told of how she grew up in “extraordinarily rough circumstances” (2.2, p. 33) and had to work on the farm from a very young age. So, he concluded,

if a Barnardo child was doing that, they weren't being treated any differently from many other kids. It was a tough, tough, hard existence... That may be one of the problems – that very few people understand what life was like in those days... maybe the people that are angry don't understand that the world was like that... It's just maybe that nowadays, people just do not understand (2.2, pp. 33-34).

And another interviewee made the same point when discussing her relatives: “my father-in-law grew up on a farm and my mother-in-law is telling people that he was a white slave because he had to work on the farm. I said “Welcome to farming!”” (6.3, p. 35). Thus, she suggested that the abuse that some descendants complain about with regard to their Home Child ancestor was not abuse at all, if put in the context of the era in which it took place. Or, if it was abuse, then it certainly was not only the Home Children who were suffering in this regard. She went on,

I mean, kids were mistreated, there's no doubt about it, but you have to put it in context too – they [the farmers] mistreated their own kids. It's not saying that it's right or anything, but they did (6.3, p. 49).

Negative consequences of child migration

Notwithstanding this last respondent's perspective, it is important to look in greater detail at the negative consequences of child migration, both on the Home Children themselves and also on their descendants. It cannot be denied that a significant number of the Home Children *did* have a terrible early life. As I mentioned in my first chapter, Parr's seminal work on child migration tells us that nine per cent of the boys and fifteen per cent of the girls, in a sample of Barnardo children that she took, suffered from some form of abuse that was recorded by the charity while they were in the care of their

Canadian masters (Parr, 2000, p.105).⁵⁴ And that, of course, says nothing of the many children whose abuse surely went unchecked – one of the major flaws of the whole child migration scheme was the failure of the relevant organisations to provide sufficient supervision for their charges once they had been placed in Canadian homes.⁵⁵ As some of my interviewees commented:

it's terribly unfortunate that it wasn't better supervised (1.5, p. 16).

I think, from the reading that I have done, the problem was the lack of supervision – almost anybody could get together a group of children and bring them out and dump them here and not follow up (1.9, p. 9).

there wasn't the follow up care that the kids needed once they got over here (2.1, p. 23).

I think their [the charities'] ideas were well founded. But, in some of the cases, the children weren't followed well enough (2.11, p. 29).

The charities often dreadfully underestimated the magnitude of their task in this regard – not only did their inspectors have to put up with huge travel distances, an inadequate transport infrastructure and often inclement weather, but there were also far too few of them to carry out all the follow-up visits in the first place. So, in the case of Barnardo's, while the charity had promised systematic visitation, in actual fact “many children in isolated areas never saw a Barnardo visitor” (Corbett, 2002, p. 55). What is more, when children *did* receive visits from employees of the relevant Homes, they were often unable to talk to these people in private and, consequently, if they *were* being abused,

⁵⁴ Parr goes on to point out that the figure for boys was lower only because Barnardo's officials “set the threshold of excess much higher for boys than for girls” (p. 105).

⁵⁵ And it is this failing that has led to the lawsuit against Barnardo's that I shall discuss later in this chapter.

they would not feel safe enough to explain what had been happening while the person in question was present. The testimony of a former Home Child who had reportedly been “happy in his home and well treated” (Parr, 2000, p. 106) illustrates this point very clearly:

I went through more than I ever want to go through again...I know myself that I often looked forward to the time for the man from the Homes to come, Mr. White, but when he did come I used to be too scared to say anything for fear that I got more after Mr. White had gone (quoted in Parr, 2000, p. 106).⁵⁶

Thus, for reasons such as these, “reported and substantiated cases of abuse must certainly have been much fewer than the incidents of ill-treatment” (Parr, 2000, p. 106).

Given what many of the children suffered, it is perhaps unsurprising that there were often tragic long term effects. A common thread appearing in many of my transcripts is my interviewees’ comments on how their Home Child parents and grandparents were unable to show affection as would be expected in a ‘normal’ family setting. Indeed, it was suggested by a number of my research subjects that, because their Home Child ancestor had little or no experience of ‘conventional’ family life when they were growing up in orphanages and children’s homes in Britain, and because they were not shown any love and affection in the homes in which they were placed in Canada, they could not treat their own families in the way that would normally be expected. As my interviewees told me:

He was a difficult man, he was a difficult man. His relationship with his family was not even close to warm. He was unable to relate to people (1.3, p. 3).

⁵⁶ Similarly, Harrison (2003) cites a number of instances of children being let down by the whole inspection process, although, on the other hand, Bagnell (2001) comments on the devotion to the task that this “tiny band” of workers often showed (p. 182).

I don't think, my mother didn't know affection, eh. You know, like, kids, I mean, ten years old, shipped out to Canada. First of all, you're taken away from your father, your brothers and sisters, you're put on a big boat, sent to Canada, and you know nobody... But, you know, kids today, if something goes wrong, like, a toothache, and earache or something, run to their mother and get cuddled, eh. Mum – who would she run to? Nobody. Being abused – I think it made her strict. I don't really think she could show affection, the way she would have liked to... She couldn't show love. Even [her husband], he tried to hug her... She just wouldn't accept it (2.5, p. 19 & 56).

She had a hard time, I think, showing her love, because she had never had it shown to her. So maybe she didn't know how (3.4, p. 20).

[He was a] very closed man. I mean, he's not a hugger and a kisser – I don't ever remember going and sitting on his knee (4.7, p. 5).

I grew up thinking my grandfather hated me or something or thought that there was something wrong with us as a family that he didn't want to associate or, you know, even make a joke at the table... So...[the Home Children] didn't know how to raise children, because they weren't really raised themselves... Like, they didn't know how to interact with people very well. And, so now that I know that, I can put him to rest and say well, he didn't know any better (4.10, p. 20).

I think that's probably the biggest thing that was missing for these children – they never had anybody to hold them or show them love (5.3, p. 46).

Another devastating long term effect of child migration was the stigma that many had to endure. A number of my interviewees commented on the shame that their Home Child relative felt with regard to their background. As I was told:

I should tell you Andren, that mother was not a person that wanted to talk of her association with, as being a Home Child – there was a real stigma attached in, in Canada I guess, for children to be called Home Children. It was like you were illegitimate – they frowned on you, they looked down on you, for a number of reasons, one of them being that they thought you were illegitimate and they were just farming the illegitimate children off to Canada, the other one was that they were taking jobs, I guess, away from people in Canada, and it was a bit of a backlash. But, my mother did not confide in our family very, very much... Mother was, I think, really being ashamed at being associated with the name Home Child or Home Girl (3.1, p. 5).

I think Canadians put a tag on them that said, you know, “Home Children are bad.” You know, they couldn’t get jobs and I think there was a real stigma that related to being a Home Child that’s disappearing the more people that find out. You know, I know so many people who have grandparents that are Home Children, you know, that they didn’t know (3.4, p. 25).

So, as both of these quotes illustrate, the Home Children often coped with the stigma that they suffered as children by avoiding talking about their past when they were adults. They frequently attempted to hide the details of their background from all, including those closest to them. As I was told by others:

she would not have voluntarily told you or me anything (1.7, p. 57).

I lived with my grandmother...I stayed with my grandmother quite a bit while I was younger... But she never, ever, ever spoke about being a Home Child – nobody ever knew anything until I found this out (1.11, p. 9).

we’d ask him things, but he wanted to be private. He’d always say “That’s all behind me now,” you know... he kept everything inside (3.10, pp. 6-7).

Or, as one of the surviving Home Children told me:

HOME CHILD: *Andrew, I came to this country in 1923 and until I wrote a letter to Dave [Lorente] about his reunion, I sent him a letter and I said "I was a Home Boy," and that was the first time that I had ever said or written that I was a Home Boy. You just didn't talk about it.*

ANDY: *So you wouldn't talk about it?*

HOME CHILD: *You sort of wanted to put it behind you sort of* (4.8, p. 16).

And yet, this was the same man, quoted earlier in this chapter, who had been part of the family he had been placed with and who, as I shall discuss in Chapter Five, is happy to call Canada his home. Notwithstanding the good fortune he had in being placed with a loving family, it was only relatively recently that he was finally able to admit that he had been a Home Child.

It is clear, then, that many of the Home Children were ashamed of their past – the stigma that they had endured as children meant that they wished to avoid all mention of what they had gone through. What is more, while some certainly stayed in contact with the children they had gone to Canada with, others even attempted to erase these friends from their lives too. As Parr tells us,

Isolated youngsters in households readily internalised community attitudes towards 'British workhouse brats' and 'slum offcasts' and therefore chose to deny their affiliations with the homes. Understanding little about the circumstances which had separated them from their families, many felt shame or resentment toward their own kin and hence animosity toward their own kind. These feelings made public, and even private, recognition of their predicament an unpalatable prospect for many immigrant children long after they outgrew their status as apprentices (Parr, 2000, p. 118).

In a similar vein, Dave Lorente told me that

you run across an occasional [Home Child] who says that...they never did maintain contact with any of the others. If they saw them, they'd put their nose in the air and walk by them on the street, because they didn't want anybody to know (speaking in interview 4.3, pp. 4-5).

In other cases, there were those who, in adulthood, ended up living in the same community as the family they were placed with, and yet their own children were never informed of the connection, even although they often knew the family in question and may have lived no more than a stones-throw away (5.8, p. 2)! Thus, at times, the level of secrecy was quite staggering.

Another secret that seemed to beset many of the Home Children was their illegitimacy. And, while it is certainly true that a significant number of them *were* actually illegitimate, it is perhaps easy for us, in the twenty-first century, to forget what a major stigma this was in nineteenth, as well as in much of the twentieth century. As the daughter-in-law of one Home Child told me:

I think there was a certain amount of shame that she had. Not necessarily about the fact that she had been in Barnardo's, but about what got her there – about the family that she came from, you know, and the behaviour of her mother, the fact that there was no identifiable father. You know, she was Victorian... And, so, those things loomed large, you know, this dismay at the very least about what her background was – oh my goodness, she was illegitimate (1.7, p. 17).

Or, as another man told me, “I don't think he ever resented being a Home Child. It was the illegitimacy that bugged him, I'm sure of it, I'm sure of it” (1.2, p. 22). So, perhaps an additional reason for the child migrants' reticence was that they did not want to

burden their loved ones with accounts of the past which they often believed would actually bring disgrace on the family.

It also seems to be the case that a culture of secrecy existed at the time that meant that refusal to talk about the past was not just peculiar to the Home Children. As I was told by a number of interviewees:

it was a very different culture then, very different. You know, the secrecy piece was very common...that needs to go into context with the times. There are secrets in families that everybody in the community might have known about, but it was never spoken about. So that underground knowledge that people just didn't discuss, but was well known, was pretty common in the 40s, 50s and 60s... That was the culture (1.3, p. 10).

at that time, people didn't tell their kids much. Not like today, where you know, you discuss things with your kids...no, it wasn't, you just, it wasn't done (1.8, p. 21).

Furthermore, it was not the place of the younger generation to ask their elders probing questions. As another descendant put it to me, “my generation, you didn’t ask questions, you know what I mean?” (5.7, p. 6).

Thus, when it comes to discussing the problems that the Home Children suffered when they were adults and had families of their own, it is again important to consider the era in which they lived. It was an era that perhaps was not conducive to dealing with family problems in the open manner that is often the norm today. While the culture now seems to exist where people are supposed to air their feelings and be open with their families, this would not have been the case for many of the Home Children. Consequently, emotions were bottled up and most probably did not feel that they could talk to even – or perhaps especially – their own families. As one interviewee put it to me,

of course the times were so different – I don't think they made anything out of that stuff. Some of these kids I think just kind of suffered alone (1.10, p. 12).

Or, as another told me,

today you would probably go and talk to a psychiatrist, but back then, I guess...who could you talk to...? I mean, you were on your own – you made your bed, you slept in it. That's the way it was (2.5, p. 56).

Similarly, there is also the suggestion that the Home Children, together with many of the descendants that followed them, simply did not have the time to discuss what they regarded as the trivialities of the past. As one descendant put it, “[t]hey were too busy I think, just making a living and they didn’t have time to wallow in their sorrows or anything I don’t think” (1.10, p. 12). Or, to quote my exchange with another interviewee:

INTERVIEWEE: *...there was so much other to life. When you talk about the struggles... in those days, like in the '30s and early '40s, sure, they just survived. You know, they had no time to indulge in any kind of...*

ANDY: *To worry about these sort of things...*

INTERVIEWEE: *That's right – there was no need for that; there were so many other priorities* (4.4, pp. 46-47).

So perhaps the Home Children did not speak about the past and complain about their lot in life because, in their eyes, many people in Canada had it tough living the

pioneering lifestyle; to hark back to the abuses they suffered would have been self-indulgent and unnecessary.

It is undoubtedly the case, then, that a large number of the Home Children – even those who may have ended up living successful lives in many other ways – were unable to talk to those closest to them about their experiences as children. Perhaps this was a consequence of the era in which they lived; perhaps it was because of their terrible experiences as children; or perhaps it was a combination of both. Notwithstanding the reasons, a large portion of these peoples' lives would remain off limits, often until the day they died. As another interviewee concluded,

Isn't it amazing, you know, over the last thousands of years, families all got together around the fire or around the table and told stories, and yet...the thousands of people who came to this country as children...you never hear a story coming from them, you know... It must have been a terrible life not to be able to tell (Renfrew Discussion Forum, p. 13).

However, it must also be pointed out that not all of the Home Children were afraid to talk about what was often viewed as their shameful past. Indeed, a few were quite happy to discuss it:

being a Home Child...he was never shy about telling people that (1.6, p. 13).

he never made it a secret that he was brought up in an orphanage in Scotland (2.1, p. 9).

Nevertheless, it seems that such openness, from the research that I have done, was rather unusual. I would suggest that the vast majority of the Home Children – or, at the very least, the vast majority of my interviewees' ancestors – did not talk about their past. And, even when they did reveal some details to their families, what they told was

frequently the bare bones of the truth and, in some cases, a complete fabrication of it. As one interviewee told me,

actually, she would never talk about it... She never, ever said "I was a Barnardo girl"... And, even on [her] school records, it says that she was born in Canada, which is an outright lie (3.4, p. 9).

Effects on descendants

No matter the way in which the Home Children dealt, or failed to deal, with their troubled past – from the secretive nature of some to the ‘grin and bear it’ mentality of others – it seems that their coping mechanisms often had a knock-on effect on their descendants. Indeed, many of my interviewees discussed the ways in which they have been affected in this regard. For instance, some believe that the inability of their Home Child ancestor to relate to their family has caused similar problems for subsequent generations:

the Home Child piece has affected that whole family I think. I think they're not close, they're very rigid (1.3, p. 15).

in my family, there's an awful lot of people that suffer from depression... And I often wondered, Andrew, if it has anything to do with the attitude that my grandfather had. He didn't trust people particularly. He had a, I think his soul was injured and it never recovered (4.7, p. 16).

He didn't, he couldn't really connect with people... And, so that passes on to my mother's generation and she kind of passes it on to me in her way, and I'm thinking well I have to try and, you know, resolve things (4.10, p. 21).

I remember as a four year old wanting to sit on her knee and her pushing me away. Because she was having tea at somebody's kitchen table and my little friend that I was with went and jumped up on his mum's lap and I remember noticing that as a little, little child, thinking wow, you know, he's on her lap – I'm going to do that. And I went to get on her lap and like the, like oh, you know, you just almost feel her physically pushing me away even without physically doing it. And she just said "Oh, you're too big for that," you know. I was just a little girl, but she wasn't comfortable with that, you know – that just wasn't a part of my upbringing at all... I mean I was emotionally scarred by it...because I hated my mother and didn't have her, you know, in the way that a child needs a mother (5.9, pp. 19-20).

Of course, it is difficult to ascribe, with one hundred per cent certainty, such familial problems to a Home Child background. However, given the circumstances of the child migrants' lives and the severe trauma that many of them suffered, one would surely be on fairly solid ground when suggesting that there is at least some correlation between the two.

It seems that the stigma that many of the Home Children suffered has also been passed on to future generations. Indeed, a number of interviewees told me that, for some of their relatives and contacts, discussion of the Home Child branch of the family tree was still 'off limits':

INTERVIEWEE: *I know one person here...and he won't admit that he's got a Home Child in his background. But I know relatives of his from other areas and found out that way about the Home Child connection.*

ANDY: *So why do you think he's, why will he not admit it do you think?*

INTERVIEWEE: *He was always kind of his nose up in the air kind of person, so it would lower his standing in the community I think...that's kind of the impression that I've gotten (2.1, p. 35).*

I sent the letter off [to Barnardo's] for the information in 1989 and, when one of my aunts found out that I had sent over for the information, she said "What does she want to dig into all that for?" I don't know what she thought I might find out, but, whatever I found out, I knew it was going to be part of my history. And, you know, even when I went over [to England] in 1992, that same aunt came to my mother and said "Why is she snooping around over there; why does she want to go over there?" (2.11, pp. 12-13).

I had one sister who passed away last year and she just, she didn't want to hear anything about the research I was doing at all... "No way, I don't want to hear about the skeletons" (5.4, p. 10).

Dave Lorente, too, talked about how he experienced this in his own family – his own sister opposed the work he was doing organising reunions. As he put it,

when I started at that first reunion...there was an article that appeared in the paper with my father's picture – they asked for it, this was by way of promoting that first reunion in '91. I got a letter from my sister which I still have, and she was writing on behalf of my mother...and herself. And she said "Oh Dave, what are you doing? What would daddy say?" She was dead against it and didn't want that skeleton, didn't want that skeleton out of the closet (speaking in interview 3.9, pp. 23-24).

However, as I shall go on to discuss later in the chapter, this did not stop Lorente in his attempts to alter the perceptions of individual family members, as well as of society at large. And, as he went on to tell me, he certainly succeeded as far as his own family was concerned – his sister now accepts and embraces the work that he does.

Suing Barnardo's

Of course, there are many descendants of the Home Children who still have no desire to dredge up the past, notwithstanding the work of Dave Lorente and like minded

individuals. For some it may be that they simply have no interest in their family past. After all, many of my interviewees even admitted that they used to be apathetic as far as their family history was concerned. But for others, it could well be that the past is too painful to discuss. And it seems that such people may actually comprise a significant proportion of the descendants of the Home Children. Indeed, one of my interviewees who, through her work organising reunions, has come in contact with a large number of descendants, suggests that large numbers fail to see positives when they think about child migration. Her comment that “it’s probably split pretty much down the middle” (2.1, p. 36) between those who, on balance, view child migration in a positive way, and those who are negative about it, came as a bit of a surprise to me as most of those who I spoke to were, at worst, ambivalent about what happened to their forebears. But, there may be a simple explanation for this: as the same interviewee put it to me, “the ones that are bitter about it, you don’t hear from them quite as much, they kind of keep to themselves” (2.1, p. 36). And this certainly does make some sense: it is maybe less likely for someone who is angry about what happened to their ancestor – somebody who views all that their family has suffered over the years as a direct consequence of child migration – to associate themselves with the descendants community, far less speak to me and dredge up issues that may be too painful to talk about. Rather, it is perhaps those who can see some positives that are likely to feel that they can share their story with others.

So, while almost all of my interviewees can see at least some positives emerging from the lives of their ancestors, there is certainly evidence of those who do not feel that way. And perhaps the best example of this is the former Home Child who is suing Barnardo’s for what he alleges is their neglect of him once they sent him over to Canada. Hal Vennell, the claimant at the centre of the lawsuit, argued in his original statement of claim that Barnardo’s had breached ‘fiduciary duty’ by failing to “establish

an adequate system of supervision” when he was placed on a farm in Ontario (<http://www.barnardosclassaction.com> (accessed 31/10/2002 and 12/05/04; no longer available); Figure 18).⁵⁷ And it seems that he does have some support for what he is attempting to do. So much so, in fact, that the other charities that were involved in child migration and that are still in existence, are fearful that they may be caught up in similar litigation. Indeed, when I interviewed the Chief Executive of Quarriers, Phil Robinson, he admitted that this was certainly an issue that concerned him. As he told me:

ANDY: *Barnardo's I know are being sued at the moment... are you worried that somebody might sue Quarriers?*

PHIL: *Well, yeah, well yeah obviously, we have to be. I'd be very foolish if I wasn't, because the class action, if successful in all respects against Barnardo's, would wipe out Barnardo's.*⁵⁸ *And Barnardo's is...amongst charities, it's quite a wealthy organisation, with quite substantial reserves. Quarriers isn't, I mean we have very little in the way of reserves... So, you know, I mean, a class action against Quarriers which was successful would almost certainly wipe out the organisation, there's no two ways about it. So, yeah, it's something I do have to be concerned about, but, you know, I think all we can do is try to model good practice and just keep going along the lines that we've been going since 1996, 'cause there was no thought of a class action or lawsuit in '96, and we decided then well, you know, we've been responsible for child migration, what should we be doing about it now, and hence the reunions and Quarriers Canadian Family and employing someone to deal with enquiries and deal with them in a competent and professional way and all that sort of thing. I think that's all we can do, keep on with that and do the best we can and then, you know, perhaps see what happens. But, yeah, I, if there was a lawsuit...we would be very, very concerned (Quarriers interview, pp. 32-33).*

⁵⁷ The lawsuit began as a class action in June 2002 with a claim for damages amounting to CAN\$600 million. However, this was discontinued in September 2003 and the case is now being pursued on an individual basis by an unspecified number of claimants. While I did not get the chance to interview Hal Vennell, I did meet with his lawyer, Harvey Strosberg QC, at his offices in Windsor, Ontario (15/04/2004).

⁵⁸ The lawsuit was still being pursued as a class action at the time of my interview with Robinson.

Figure 18: Lawsuit newspaper article

A20 THE TORONTO STAR Wednesday, June 19, 2002

Child charity faces suit

British organization sent children to work on Canadian farms

By MELISSA LEONG
STAFF REPORTER

A Windsor man has launched a \$600-million class-action lawsuit against Barnardo's, the largest children's charity in Britain, on behalf of 30,000 people who the suit alleges were abused and mistreated under its care.

Harold Warneford Vennell, 84, is suing Barnardo's over its child migration program, which sent minors to Canada and placed them in Ontario in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Children were put to work on farms and the farmers were expected to care for them. Many children were "assaulted, beaten or otherwise treated inhumanely," according to the statement of claim - allegations that have not been proved in court.

"This is litigation shedding light on a dirty little secret in Ontario's history," said Harvey Strosberg, Vennell's lawyer. "The purpose (of the migration program) was to get cheap labour here and populate the country with an English-speaking population."

Barnardo's issued a statement last night from its head office in England. "Barnardo's is aware of impending legal action relating to a claim from a former service user now living in Canada. We take any complaints of this nature extremely seriously, but as our legal representatives are now handling the matter, we feel unable to comment further at this stage," said spokesperson Yvonne McDonald.

In the late 19th century, Dr. Thomas Barnardo established homes for destitute or homeless children in or near London, England. Barnardo's shipped 30,000 children to Canada between 1882 and 1939 to work for Canadian farmers or employers.

"This happened. It's not something we dreamed up," said Vennell in an interview from his Windsor home. He was admitted to a Barnardo's home when he was 6 because his mother was destitute. At the age of 14, he was sent to a farm in Pakenham, Ont., near Ottawa. In his statement of claim, Vennell said he was forced to perform gruelling work for 18 hours a day.

He slept in an attic, received no education and was not permitted to attend church or school, said the retired real estate agent. He also alleges he was assaulted by his employer and his employer's wife.

"These are painful, painful memories for him," said Strosberg. "He decided that, if it's not now (to launch a suit), it would be never."

The suit alleges Barnardo's breached a fiduciary duty to Vennell and others by failing to maintain a system of inspection to ensure the children were being properly cared for.

Vennell said he wants an apology as well as compensation. The case will be heard in Windsor. Vennell is the only person named in the lawsuit, but Strosberg said other former Barnardo's migrants can join the action.

"We always hear the bad side, but there is a good side; there were children who were actually adopted ... and were treated very well," said Sydney Baker of Home Children Canada, a group that works with Barnardo's.

Source: *The Toronto Star*, Wednesday 19th June 2002, p. A20

And this concern was mirrored by the representatives of the other two charities that I met with – Ken Holland and David Waller of Fegans and Carol Roper of the Catholic Children's Society (Westminster):

ANDY: *Are you concerned that maybe you'll get some – well especially if Barnardo's lost this lawsuit that's going on – are you concerned that that might cause a spate of lawsuits from other people, and one of them might be, you know, might be a Fegans Old Boy?*

KEN: *The reality is that is a possibility. And, because of that, it is a concern rather than a worry I would think.*

DAVID: *It's an awareness of the situation. But we don't know all the circumstances, we don't know who's alive still, and we've no idea whether there's any possibility or not, in some sense, until it happens (KEN: That's right), or doesn't happen hopefully* (Fegans interview, pp. 27-28).

ANDY: *...do you feel, does the organisation feel sort of under threat that somebody might decide to sue the organisation?*

CAROL: *Well I suppose, realistically, if it's happening to a huge organisation like Barnardo's, it could happen to us... Yes, and of course, for a small, we're still a small charity and for us to be sued would mean that we would cease to exist, which would be a great pity in terms of the work that we are still doing these days. But, I don't know, I think it's, I don't think we live in fear of it, you know, I think we hope it wouldn't happen for us. I think we can understand that people who have lost culture, country, family, everything, would be distressed. But, you know, what can we do?* (Catholic Children's Society (Westminster) interview, p. 30)

While, as I shall go on to discuss, most of my interviewees were against any lawsuit, I still got a sense of the other perspective from some of my research subjects. This was particularly evident at one of the two group meetings that I held. At these meetings I had put up statements on the overhead projector in order to stimulate discussion, and one such statement, which I placed in the context of the lawsuit mentioned above, was "Barnardo's should pay for what they did to my father." And, while, out of a total of about seventy people who attended the two meetings, only one person spoke up in favour of this point of view, this person did so quite passionately:

PARTICIPANT: *I agree with this man's statement [that Barnardo's should pay for what they did].*

ANDY: *You agree with the statement, OK.*

PARTICIPANT: *Sure...in this day and age, certain things are not acceptable that perhaps was acceptable a hundred years ago. In this society, abuse in any form, domestic, wife abuse, child abuse, whatever, it's just not, well, the laws in place will not tolerate it any more... I'm sure this man suffered terribly if he had a background that came from any type of neglect or physical or mental or sexual type of trauma. So, yes, in the age of accountability [suing is appropriate]... a human being saying "I will not be treated this way; you can not do this to me"... And there's certain rights and dignities and I feel that it takes a long time to figure out why, as a child, you were totally stripped of that, and it made you feel less than human. You can't have it like that. And kudos to the ones that are able to do it [who have the courage to sue]... You see, this stuff is generational. I don't know if people understand this or not. Trauma does not go away, abuse does not go away. You get a successful life, you can have families, but those things are passed on. The rules and rites of passage of how to live a life and family systems get passed on to the children and the grandchildren (Sudbury Discussion Forum, pp. 21-22).*

While this woman was the only person to make this point, it could be argued that others at the meetings may not have spoken up if they sensed that the general mood would be hostile to such a perspective. And the reaction that this woman got certainly was not positive. Indeed, such was the mood after she spoke that another participant provoked widespread applause when he stood up and made the following comments:

We have to learn to forgive and put it behind us. And it's very, and to me that's more important than to, you know, making somebody pay for what was done. What was done was done to them and it's unfortunate and I mourn for that on behalf of my grandmother, but getting a few pounds or a few dollars out of this situation does not change what did go on (Sudbury Discussion Forum, p. 23).

Similarly, the other group meeting that I held saw an equally passionate response, although in that case, there were no dissenting voices – all seemed to be opposed to action being taken against the sending agencies.

The reaction of respondents in my group meetings seemed to mirror what the large majority of my individual interviewees had to say on the subject of reparative justice. Returning to a point made earlier, there were those who suggested that the past should not be judged by today's standards. Therefore, they argued that present day organisations such as Barnardo's should not be judged for the actions of those who worked for the charity in the past:

I hope that [the lawsuit] fails. You cannot hold the person accountable for the sins, of commission or omission, in the past. People who think that way do so, I'm sure, for the...kindest of reasons perhaps, although I'm of the view that if the courts become involved, there's a mercenary reason... I agree that the sins of the fathers can be visited on the third and fourth generations, but I don't believe that the third and fourth generations have to be held accountable for the father's sins. What happened, happened. Our duty as a society I think is to ensure that this kind of thing never happens again, if it is an evil thing. But I take a very dim view of reparative justice – I think that's a mistake (1.6, p. 25).

I have problems with that [the lawsuit]... I think we're wrong to judge history from a modern perspective, and I think that's what we're doing... I just find it difficult to go back and blame people and complain about what people tried to do. If something happened that was wrong, OK, let's state that, but I don't think we have the right to go back and sue anybody. The people who are involved, for example in Barnardo's now, aren't the people who were involved a hundred years ago, or seventy-five years ago. I don't think we have any right to sue them at all (1.10, p. 22).

With this last quote in mind, there was also the suggestion that charities such as Barnardo's are still doing valuable work today and, as such, they and the people that they serve should not be punished for past errors.

Others disagreed with the lawsuit because they believed that the sending agencies had been making a genuine attempt to improve the lives of the children that were sent across:

I think that's awful [the lawsuit]. Why do that? I don't think those people, I don't think Quarriers and Barnardo's was trying to hurt anybody. I think they were trying to make life better for these kids (1.11, p. 40).

Furthermore, as another interviewee put it, the blame should not lie with organisations such as Barnardo's anyway; rather it is the inadequate welfare system that existed at the time that should be criticised. Barnardo and like minded individuals were simply assisting those who the rest of society – and those in authority in particular – chose to ignore:

Well I think that their anger is probably placed in the wrong direction, because I don't think it should have been placed on Dr Barnardo's shoulders. I think that the anger...should [be] at the welfare system in England, that the Government of England [sic] did not do enough to help the homeless, and that's why you had guys like Dr Barnardo step in and help – he saw kids living in cardboard boxes, in hovels in England and in London and one thing and another, and he saw need, that something had to be done, because certainly the government wasn't doing anything. So, I think that maybe that's misplaced – I think that they should be after the British Government, that if they had, you know, put more effort into it, they could have helped all these children and kept them in the country or did something, you know, a little more constructive than what they did. They just left it to Dr Barnardo and all these other agencies, to raise their own funds and to, to organise this (3.1, p. 30).

Finally, there were those who gave a more straightforward reason for opposing the lawsuit against Barnardo's – they simply did not agree with the 'suing culture' that they felt had emerged in recent years:

everybody sues for everything today – if you get a hot cup of coffee spilled on you at MacDonald's, you sue for a million dollars (2.7, p. 33).

there's too much of this lawsuit business now really (2.11, p. 31).

today I think anybody will try anything out for a lawsuit to get some money – just crazy (3.2, p. 25).

While I have hopefully illustrated that the large majority of my interviewees did not feel that Barnardo's and similar organisations should be punished for past actions, there were those who, while not as adamant as the respondent at the group meeting that I quoted earlier, had at least some sympathy for legal recourse. However, all those who fitted in to this category could be described as somewhat ambivalent in this respect. While they did not feel they had the right to criticise those, like Hal Vennell, who felt the need to sue for what they had suffered in the past, they were still unsure if such a course of action was appropriate:

I guess, if the person involved feels that's the way to go, then that's up to them. But, myself, I think it would be a long, dragged out affair and what are you going to gain? The people running Barnardo's now aren't the ones that started it. Should they be held responsible? I don't know (2.5, p. 31).

And there was one interviewee in particular whose comments encapsulated this uncertainty better than most. As she told me,

it's something that I've thought about over the years, on and off...is there any compensation for any of these people, you know what I mean? ... We live in a society where people sue for anything and, you know, I don't agree with that...it's difficult, it's very difficult. Obviously, people's lives have been profoundly affected by this, hugely, and in many cases as, you know, we said earlier, it hasn't been good... So is it wrong for people to want to be compensated? Well sure, many people are robbed of their education, many people are robbed of their self esteem and so, when that's shot, you know, how are they going to function, how are they going to get by? People deserve to not just merely survive, they deserve, we all deserve this life, you know. And, so in many cases, do I think it's wrong? No, I don't think it's wrong. People's lives have been profoundly affected by this, hugely, and from whatever this gentleman's motivation is, hopefully it's coming from a good place, you know... Yeah, we have the right, you know. This is your body, this is how you are affected, this is what was taken away from you because of it – your ability to function, to like yourself, your self esteem, all of that is affected. And not everybody is, you know, can just go off and get their educations and all of that, because they're so profoundly affected... So, if it's coming from the right place and the right motivation – it's not because I'd like to have a big house...and all of that stuff – then I don't think it's wrong. But if it's a matter of – and there is, there's two ways of looking at it – if it's a matter of just greed – let's see what I can get out of this – then that's wrong, but if you look at it from the other slant and if it's coming from the right place, I don't think it's wrong, you know (5.9, pp. 33-34).

So, the issue of the lawsuit was clearly one that provoked a variety of opinions from my interviewees and, while the majority did not support such a course of action, there *were* those who were able to present a rather compelling case for allowing the courts to become involved.

Spreading the word

Notwithstanding the views of those who would sue the sending agencies, I would suggest that the overwhelming trend amongst my interviewees has been for these people to embrace their Home Child heritage. I hopefully provided a number of reasons for this in the previous chapter – descendants' heightened sense of mortality as they grow older; their desire to leave a legacy for their own descendants; the relative ease of searching one's roots in this Internet age; the newfound prestige of being descended from a Home Child and so on. However, I now wish to focus on another issue that I mentioned briefly in Chapter Three, and that I believe has been instrumental in stimulating interest in child migration; namely, the role played by a relatively small number of descendants who are determined to take the story of the Home Children far beyond the confines of their own homes. For such people, there is a burning desire that all Canadians should know about the Home Children, and by 'spreading the word' these people seem to plant the seed that jolts many descendants into action. And, with this in mind, it seems that there is one person in particular whose evangelical zeal in this regard has won more converts than most: Dave Lorente.

Lorente spoke to me at length about why he embarked on his campaign to tell Canadians about the Home Children. It all started back in 1991 when he was invited to give a talk at his local historical society, Heritage Renfrew. As he told me,

I was asked to give a talk...on the subject of my choice. And, I said, OK, I'll give a talk at the coming meeting and I think I'll talk on Home Children – I've been studying Home Children for years; my father was one; and nobody seems to know about them, anything about them; nobody wants to talk about them if you bring the subject up, nobody wants to talk about them... I couldn't figure out why... And, so, one of my fellow directors [at Heritage Renfrew] said "I wasn't allowed to

play with Home Children when I was a child.” And that was a wonderful moment – it was the moment that I realised that they were stigmatised – that’s why they didn’t talk (4.4, p. 37).

This epiphany not only motivated Lorente to go ahead with his talk, but it became the inspiration for his subsequent campaign to erase the stigma that the Home Children suffered and replace it with pride in what they had achieved. His talk also led to the creation of Home Children Canada. Again, Dave explained how this happened:

a man...stood up [after the talk] and he said “Before we close,” he said, “You seem to know where the records are – will you help me find mine?” And I said “Yes.” And a second man said the same thing – “Will you help me too?” I said “Yes.” And the third one said “How much is it going to cost?” [Laughs] And I said, “Listen, for you guys, I’ll do it for nothing!” I wound up with a couple of hundred by the end of the year, and three years ago I wound up writing 4,418 letters...just involving Home Children (4.4, pp. 44-45).

While much of Lorente’s work has been assisting individual descendants with their research, the role that he has played in publicising the story of the Home Children has certainly been a vital means of increasing general public awareness on this subject too. As one of my interviewees noted:

Oh, there hasn’t been enough [publicity] in Canada... But...I think it’s gained more prominence now in Canada thanks to, and I think Dave Lorente...has been a driving force (1.2, p. 26).

However, as this person hinted, there is undoubtedly a feeling that more needs to be done if this battle for recognition is ever to be won. And this is a sentiment that is common amongst my interviewees:

ANDY: *Do you think enough is being done in terms of publicising the story of the Home Children?*

INTERVIEWEE: *No, I don't think enough is being done, no, I really don't. Because there's so many people that their ancestors are these Home Children, and they don't even know it (1.4, p. 38).*

I think more people should know about it, and there are a lot of people that don't know what Home Children are. To this day there are people that don't know – they look at you as if, you know, you've got two heads on, "What are you talking about?" And I think it's something that more and more people should know about (1.11, p. 39).

I think there's a lot more to find out... I think people should know, you know, what these people went through, to make this country what it is (2.2, p. 25).

Indeed, many bemoan the fact that, even today, a large percentage of the Canadian population have never heard of the Home Children. As one person told me, “[m]ost people don’t know about Home Children – the average person doesn’t know, unless they’re involved somehow” (4.2, p. 28). Or, as others put it:

no matter who I mention it to, they don't, they've never heard of it before. And, yeah, it's time people were aware. We had disgraceful episodes in our country's history – we can't bury them under a barrel and pretend they didn't exist (5.1, p. 18).

INTERVIEWEE 1: *Most people don't know [about the Home Children].*

ANDY: *No, most people don't?*

INTERVIEWEE 2: *I find that too. Most people, if I mention anything, they don't know who I'm talking about.*

INTERVIEWEE 1: *And then when you just even tell them that little bit about a hundred thousand of them and how many years that they were sent, they can't believe it.*

INTERVIEWEE 3: *Somebody even said to me today, "What are Home Children anyway?" She'd seen it in the paper and she said "What is that anyway, that Home Children?"* (5.3, p. 42).

To further illustrate this seeming ignorance concerning the Home Children, one can turn to the example of the town of Peterborough in Ontario – a place with a rich heritage as far as child migration is concerned. Thousands of children passed through the Barnardo Receiving Home in that town. Indeed, one of the main avenues in the town still bears the name of Barnardo. However, I was told that, even there, there are those for whom the name Barnardo – and even the term Home Child – means absolutely nothing. As one elderly lady told me, discussing her contemporaries:

there's so many people my age that have never heard of Dr Barnardo, and I can't believe why they haven't. You know, to me, as I say, I know about him and everything, you know... I'm with a group in the pool over at the Holiday Inn – and I'll say, "Well I can't, I won't be here tomorrow, it's our meeting – I'm going to my Barnardo meeting" [She is referring to Ivy Sucee's Hazelbrae Group that I discussed earlier]. "What kind of a meeting is that?" I mean, they quiz me about it, you know. And I'll say, "Well, my father was a Barnardo Boy." "What's that?" And I have to stop and explain (2.9, p. 32).

And it seems that such ignorance is replicated in the many other areas where the Home Children were sent. As another interviewee told me, this time reflecting on the parts of Ontario where the Quarriers Home Children were sent:

I think the last few years, we've become more aware of Home Children... Unfortunately, I think we have a long way to go... There's thousands and thousands of families in the Brockville area, Smiths Falls, Ottawa area, that have connections to the Home Children and, although Quarriers are doing an excellent job in terms of the reunion and whatever, there's a number of family connections that are

still unaware of the horrific period of history in which relatives of the family came to Canada. So, yeah, I think Quarriers have opened the gate, and have set the tone, and I know they've had their fourth reunion – they had quite a number out – but, I think there is room for further education for those sections of Ontario in which the bulk of the children arrived (3.5, pp. 23-24).

However, while I certainly would not wish to dismiss the views of my interviewees in this regard, I have to say that I left Canada with a rather different impression concerning the awareness that Canadians have of the story of the Home Children. Indeed, in comparison to the UK – where my sense is that few have ever heard of the Home Children – I was surprised at how many people *did* know about child migration. People with whom I spoke – and I am talking here of those who I came in contact with on a day to day basis rather than of my interviewees – often had at least some knowledge of this aspect of their country's history. And while it must be noted that I was living in south eastern Ontario, in what could be described as the heartland as far as child migration to Canada was concerned, that was where the bulk of my interviewees who were bemoaning this lack of awareness lived too.

As a consequence of the apparently widespread ignorance of this aspect of Canadian history, many of the descendants that I interviewed would like to see more done in order that the situation be remedied. And perhaps the key area where most feel action is needed is in Canada's schools. There is a strong feeling that, while many adults may end up never hearing of the Home Children, at least this should not be allowed to happen with the new generation that is growing up:

I think it's an important part of our history that should and must be taught. Understanding comes out of knowledge not out of ignorance (1.1, p. 27).

I think it's important for the kids to know this – this is history, this is part of the settling of this country, every much a part as when the Loyalists came and settled (1.7, p. 54).⁵⁹

I think the Government has to take a role in helping to promote this, and...build it into the curriculum somewhere along the line (3.5, p. 25).

I think it should be a part of the history that is taught in schools (5.10, p. 44).

However, as Dave Lorente told me, something *is* already being done in this respect:

I have written to every Minister of Education in the Provinces and the Territories and asked them to include articles on Home Children. And there are now textbooks in the schools that include a reference – now it's not very large – there is a reference to that... I was in the schools [telling school children about child migration]. It is happening. I've also been in universities, in social science departments. So, there are inroads and there are textbooks that are being used in the schools – 'Home Child' is one of them.⁶⁰ There are three different textbooks that are being used (speaking in interview 4.1, p.60).

And, indeed, one of my interviewees with school age children confirmed as much:

I know in schools, they're teaching Barnardo... I know it's in the books, I know it's in the geography books, because I've looked when they [her kids] brought their books home, I've looked to see if it mentioned Barnardo children, and it did (3.4, p. 50).

⁵⁹ The Loyalists – or United Empire Loyalists to give them their full title – were those people, loyal to the British crown, who fled to British North America as a result of Britain's defeat in the American Revolutionary War. They have long been celebrated in Canadian history and this interviewee believes that the Home Children are just as worthy of recognition.

⁶⁰ Lorente is referring to Barbara Haworth-Attard's children's novel, *Home Child* (1996).

But, on the other hand, it seems that the provision is piecemeal at best – something, I am sure, that Dave Lorente would acknowledge – because others have told me that there is often little or no mention of the Home Children at all. Indeed, this was confirmed by the schoolboy that I mentioned in the previous chapter:

ANDY: *Is there, do any of your friends in school, would they know what a Home Child is...or is it...?*

INTERVIEWEE: *I don't think, they don't teach it at that school, because I would have heard about that...*

ANDY: *So do you think, would you like to see them teaching it in your school then?*

INTERVIEWEE: *Oh yeah – most definitely. Because today I said "Oh I'm going to talk to this guy about Home Children." They said "Oh, what's a Home Child?" I had to explain to them what it was.*

ANDY: *...[It] would be nice if you got to, you should see if your teacher would do a little project on it or something.*

INTERVIEWEE: *I told my teacher about genealogy and she's just not interested either (5.2, p. 34).*

Or, as another interviewee told me:

I know they've started teaching a bit in grade ten history, high school history, but, you know, I'd like to see it a little bit more. And, I don't know what it is they actually teach. My son-in-law teaches grade ten history and he says it's very little, and he enlarges upon it because he knows of my interest in it and has heard of it from me. And he has said that the kids actually find it fascinating. But he said I think, if the normal teacher doesn't really understand it either, they're probably just going to gloss over it – they really don't understand what it is at all (5.3, pp. 43-44).

So, it seems that, as far as educating the younger generation goes, much remains to be done.

In a similar vein to the argument that school children should be taught about child migration, is a widespread view amongst my interviewees that the federal government, rather than just the various provincial education departments, should be doing far more to publicise this important aspect of the country's history.⁶¹ One campaign that a number of descendants have been involved in is an attempt to get the government run postal service, Canada Post, to commission a postage stamp that celebrates the Home Children's contribution to Canadian society. Indeed, Dave Lorente encouraged interested parties to continue writing to Canada Post requesting this in the latest edition of Home Children Canada's newsletter:

For well nigh a decade and a half we have petitioned Canada Post's Stamp Advisory Committee in Ottawa to strike commemorative stamps of home children... Why don't you give it a try? They're at 2701 Riverside Drive, Ottawa, ON, K1A 0B1. And we'll have another go too (Update Newsletter, January 2006, p. C2).

However, as the above quote hints, they have had no success on this front to date, and this has caused no small amount of frustration amongst some descendants:

Dave [Lorente], for one, has been trying to get the Canadian Government to put out a Home Child stamp for years. I mean, I've written to the Post Office constantly, just so they can be recognised (1.8, p. 36).

they will not make a stamp to remember them, and that just boils my rear end! Yet they'll do this Chinese thing – the Year of the Monkey or something (2.5, p. 47).

⁶¹ Education is a provincial rather than federal government responsibility in Canada.

Thus, for some, there is even anger that some sections of the population are, in their eyes at least, pandered to, while the Home Children are completely ignored – a controversial point to which I shall return later in this chapter.

Remaining with the issue of government involvement in publicising the story of the Home Children, there are also those who believe that the Canadian *and* British governments – given the involvement that both had in child migration – have a more specific responsibility to help descendants with their genealogical research. As one interviewee told me, “I think that the [Canadian] government or, over in Britain, should be doing something about this, should be really opening up the files and trying to help us descendants find our ancestors, and they’re not doing anything” (1.4, p. 11). And she went on:

a few years ago, the British Government through the Health Department or something, were offering some money for...the actual Home Child to go back and visit, they were going to pay.⁶² Most of these Home Children are dead now, you know, there’s not that many left. I think something should be done, letting the descendants go back to, to have reunions with their family members, and to go back to the place where their, like say in my case, where my father lived, and where the family tomb is, and to see the old farm house and...you know, it’s just connecting, connecting our roots (1.4, p. 12).

Or, as others suggested to me:

I’m hoping that the government would want to help some of us to find out more and make [information] a little bit more accessible (1.11, p. 46).

⁶² The British Government established a fund that allowed a small number of Home Children who had never met direct relatives in the UK, to travel back in order that they could do so. This scheme ran over a three year period, starting on April 1st 1999, and was administered by International Social Service Canada (ISSC), a non-profit social service agency based in Ottawa, Ontario (Meeting with Agnes Casselman, ISSC, 02/08/2005).

I think the Canadian government has a responsibility...because we are now Canadians paying taxes to this government, right? And I think that there should be a bit of an onus on them to see that, even if it was financially, they supported an organisation in England...that would help to have some background checks. Say they said "OK, we'll go back to your great grandparents" or something, they'll at least give you some kind of background, rather than people trying to run over there and scout out information. And they say, "Well just go to your Internet." Well, that's fine, if you're into the computers, but at my age, you know, I find it hard (3.7, p. 46).

However, not all agree with such arguments. Other interviewees commented that it was rather unfair to suggest that governments should be responsible for individuals' genealogical research. As I was told by one person, "everybody believes the government should do everything for you kind of thing, but I think that people...they have their own obligation to search out their roots themselves" (1.12, p. 41).

Assistance from former sending agencies

Although the British and Canadian governments have been criticised by some for their failure to assist descendants with their genealogical research, it could be argued that it is actually the former sending agencies that have the greatest responsibility in this regard; after all, it is these organisations that tend to hold the bulk of the information pertaining to the lives of the Home Children. Perhaps recognising this fact, a number of the relevant charities have become more active in assisting descendants with their family history research. For example, the Scottish charity Quarriers have developed a relationship with both migrants and descendants alike that is very much 'hands on.' Indeed, they even have a designated employee who assists people with their search for information. What is more, they have also given a place on their Council of Management to Fred Wardle, one of the founding members of Quarriers Canadian

Family – the independent organisation discussed earlier, set up in 1996 “to bring closure to the pain felt by many families and to educate Canadians to the astounding contribution made to the nation by these children” (<http://www.quarrierscanadianfamily.com>, accessed 25/11/2005). In this position, Wardle makes trips over to Scotland for Council meetings and, as such, he can provide a voice for the many descendants of Quarriers Home Children living in Canada. And it is perhaps as a consequence of actions such as these by Quarriers, that those of my interviewees who are descended from Quarriers Home Children truly appreciate the work that the organisation is doing today in order to help them:

I've been impressed in particular with the compassion shown by Quarriers – very, very helpful people, ever mindful of the impact that this sort of thing would have, not only on the migrants themselves, but on their families. I can't say enough good about them – I was very, very impressed (1.1, p. 26).

I wrote to the Quarriers and they have been very good at sending the report to me – they are very, very nice people. I've spoken to them, and they're super, super nice people, and it's nice to know that they're willing to help us find out questions like this (1.11, p. 9).

the Quarrier people were very supportive... Quarriers were just superb (3.5, p. 2 & 16).

Barnardo's have also been involved in helping Home Children and their descendants with their research. Indeed, they have a whole 'Aftercare' team that is dedicated to helping descendants – as well as the thousands of people who have been in their care both in the UK and abroad – with their search for information. And they, too, received a substantial amount of praise from most of the people I spoke to who had been in contact with them:

they gave me all the documents that they had, and I was surprised – I got more than I had ever anticipated from them... And I think...I think they've done a, the Barnardo's Aftercare have done a fantastic job (1.2, p. 18).

when you send to Barnardo's for your records, they will give you everything that they have. They will spend hours and hours searching to make sure that they are sending you everything that they have, even to the photographs [of the Home Child in question] (3.3, p. 34).

I don't have any complaints about Barnardo's at all... I just have no complaints with them. They were very forthcoming... yeah, they were great (6.3, pp. 22-23).

However, while the Quarriers descendants that I interviewed were all positive about the role of the charity in helping them with their research, Barnardo's *did* come in for some criticism.⁶³ For instance, there was a suspicion from some that the charity was not revealing all of the information that they actually had regarding each child migrant. A number of interviewees commented that it had taken persistent letter writing to the London headquarters of the charity before they got a suitable response (although it seems that, in recent years, they *have* become more forthcoming in this regard). As one lady told me,

in the last ten years, a lot of...people have started digging and Barnardo's has had to release a lot of information. But you still have to work for it, to get them to send it out – they will still try to give just the basics and hope that you will go away ... if you can't think up the question, Barnardo's isn't going to volunteer that there's more information (1.7, p. 13 & 25).

⁶³ It must be acknowledged that I did interview significantly more descendants of Barnardo's than Quarriers Home Children though. Twenty seven of my interviewees were descendants of Barnardo's Home Children, while only twelve were descendants of Quarriers Home Children.

In a similar vein, others were suspicious of the information that Barnardo's *did* sent out – as another interviewee put it, “I think they’ve purged files” (2.5, p. 30). There was the suggestion that what *was* sent to descendants may have been sanitised, with more disturbing or controversial details having been removed. Indeed, the interviewees quoted above both commented on one particular document that was not sent out with the other information that they were sent. In their opinion, the so-called ‘Canada Clause’ – the paper that the parents or guardians of the child migrants were supposed to have signed authorising the children to be sent to Canada – was either deliberately removed from the records that they were sent, or it had been destroyed because of its controversial nature (it is said that many relatives did not get to sign this paper until the child in question was already on the boat on their way to Canada!).

Bearing such accusations in mind, it must be pointed out that Barnardo's – and the other charities involved for that matter – *are not* legally bound to give out information to descendants. The files that they hold are their private records and, as such, they can use their discretion when deciding what they wish to reveal (although, under the Data Protection Act, they are obliged to provide the relevant records to those who were under their care). However, no less authority than the British Government has implored the former sending agencies to act positively in this respect and provide access to those with a genuine need, if not a legal right, for such information. As the Select Committee on Health, set up to consider the welfare of former child migrants, put it in their 1998 report,

We recommend that sending and receiving agencies, local authorities and governments should accept the principle that all relevant information held on former child migrants should be passed on, with due sensitivity, to those concerned, their descendants or representatives, on request (United Kingdom Parliament Report, 1998a, Line 82).

Thus, while charities like Barnardo's may not have a legal responsibility to provide information to descendants, there is certainly a moral argument in favour of them doing so.

Another issue which some have with Barnardo's is the fact that the charity now charges people fifty pounds for their ancestors' records.⁶⁴ One interviewee told me that Barnardo's had informed her that their investigation into her father's file had cost them £300 to conduct; a claim she was clearly sceptical about: "I don't believe that it could cost three hundred pounds because I gave the case number, so all you had to do was look it up in a book" (5.4, p. 25). However, most of my interviewees who commented on this charging policy actually supported what Barnardo's were doing in this regard:

[I'd pay] triple, you know, what I paid, just for this information. Or, actually, it's priceless, isn't it? Like, I don't know – I couldn't put a value on it. Your family history – how can you value? So, I would pay no problem... I think...there's a lot of ungrateful people who get the information and don't offer a donation or anything, but [Barnardo's are] still trying to help children (3.4, p. 36).

really, when I look at it...of my grandmother's...four children that she had living that had children of their own, every one of those children could write and ask for that information and have as much right to it as I have. And they'd be putting that out twenty times, you know, [so] I think they should charge for it; it could be very expensive (5.3, p. 34).

I fully agree they should be charging, they're charging fifty pounds now, and I fully agree with that... You can't do it for nothing (6.3, p. 38).

⁶⁴ Quarriers recently announced that they were starting to charge for their service too: "From March 1st 2006 a charge of £25 will be made in respect of all genealogy enquiries" (Quarriers website, accessed 27/04/2006). However, my interviewees were not aware of this when I spoke to them, so I cannot comment on their feelings on this matter.

While the majority of my interviews may have dealt with Barnardo's and Quarriers in their search for information, there are, of course, a number of other organisations still in existence today that hold information on the children that they sent to Canada. Opinions regarding these former sending agencies are mixed. For instance, I interviewed two descendants of Fegans Home Children and both were very positive about that charity. However, other organisations did not come in for such praise. For instance, one woman was very critical of the Anglican Church:

I've always been really upset with the Church of England [sic] here in Canada, because they have certainly not acknowledged to my satisfaction, that they even were connected with bringing Home Children. And, I didn't get any support whatsoever from them – my only information that I got was from the Public Library of Canada (3.7, p. 38).

Similarly, another woman, whose ancestor came through the Middlemore Home in Birmingham, claimed that that organisation did not respond to any of the correspondence that she sent. And then there was the family that had a bad experience with the Catholic institution where their father had lived before he was sent to Canada:

ANDY: *...did you manage to get records back from the, were there records that the...orphanage or anything had kept?*

INTERVIEWEE 1: *Not from the orphanage. We have a lot of, like we have his baptismal certificate, his mother's father's marriage certificate – we've got a lot of that stuff, but not much from the orphanage. They didn't want to talk to us.*

INTERVIEWEE 2: *They didn't want to talk – they hung up on us.*

INTERVIEWEE 1: *They were really, not really nice... And they said they don't have any files and they didn't want to talk to us.*

INTERVIEWEE 2: *I think they destroyed them all. But at the time we went, there was a really big thing in the courts about the abuse of children, so they didn't want to talk to anybody* (4.1, pp. 43-44).

And of course this is perhaps a key issue when it comes to the assistance that such organisations are, or are not, willing to provide. As I mentioned, the orphanage that the interviewees above were talking about was actually run by the Catholic Church and, of course, it has had to deal with a number of well-publicised lawsuits concerning past abuses over the last number of years.⁶⁵ So, it is perhaps unsurprising that the institution in question was not forthcoming with its historical records.

While the charities that I conducted interviews with clearly have been forthcoming in terms of providing descendants with records – so much so, in fact, that their representatives were happy to meet with me to discuss their policy in this regard – there are clearly other organisations that are not so cooperative. And it is with regard to this unwillingness to divulge information concerning the Home Children that Perry Snow – one of my gatekeepers and founder of the British Home Children website and Mailing List that I introduced in Chapter Two – is particularly aggrieved. Indeed, he has written a book about his troubled search for his father's records.⁶⁶ *Neither Waif Nor Stray: The Search For A Stolen Identity* (2000) is Snow's self-published account of his fight for information from the Children's Society (formerly known as the Church of England Waifs and Strays Society). His take on what happened to the Home Children becomes apparent as early as the first page of his introduction when he informs the reader that he prefers to refer to child migration as the 'British Child Deportation Scheme' (Snow, 2000, p. 7). And it is clear that much of Snow's anger has been aroused by the attitude

⁶⁵ Admittedly, most of these lawsuits have been in the United States. For more on these see, for instance, *Pedophiles and Priests: anatomy of a contemporary crisis*, by Philip Jenkins (2001).

⁶⁶ I interviewed Mr Snow during a trip to Calgary in February 2005. Unfortunately, the tape of this interview was lost in transit back to the UK before I had the chance to transcribe it. As a consequence, I am only able to quote from Snow's book here.

of the sending agency to both his Home Child father and himself. For years, his father failed in his attempts to glean information from the charity, and even in recent years, since his father's passing, Snow has continued to struggle to obtain the relevant details regarding his family's past. Thus, his experience with the Children's Society has left him "quite cynical regarding their willingness to help restore severed family relationships" (p. 262). Indeed, he suggests that "[o]nly the child-care organizations [prevent] – and continue to prevent" (p. 261) descendants from finding out 'who they are.' And while this may not be a point that many of my interviewees would agree with – as I said before, most seem to be happy with how they have been dealt with by the present-day representatives of the sending agencies – it is certainly true that they all desire free access to their ancestor's records. As Dave Lorente put it in the motion that was passed at an early Home Child gathering, "[a]ll we want is easier access to our records" (Lorente, 2000, p. 147). Or, as another man told me, "you should have free access to information, not disinformation. Because all you're really doing is closing the loop" (1.1, p. 28).

Child migration in the media

While the majority of the descendants I interviewed feel that there is room for more publicity and recognition for the Home Children, as well as the need for the relevant charities to provide additional information concerning individual cases, there are also those who are happy with the level of publicity that the child migrants have received. And, to a certain extent at least, it is an aspect of Canadian history that *has* gained recognition in recent years; something that I witnessed for myself during my two extended stays in Canada. Not only have there been numerous newspaper articles written on the Home Children over the years – indeed, as I mentioned in Chapter Two, I benefited from the publication of such articles as a means of advertising my research –

but the child migrants have also featured in television documentaries, museum exhibitions and theatrical productions. Recent examples of these include the *Nobody's Child* exhibition – mounted in conjunction with a television documentary of the same name – that was held at Museum London in London, Ontario between April and July 2005, the theatrical production *Doctor Barnardo's Children*, that took place in Millbrook, Ontario in the summer of 2005, and *Homechild*, a play that ran in Toronto, Ontario in January 2006 (Figures 19 and 20).

As a consequence of such publicity, some feel that it is unnecessary to spend undue time dwelling on this episode in Canadian history. As one gentleman told me:


Well I think the story has been told, it's been told. I guess it's one of those stories that's never finished being told because, of course, the descendants go on, life goes on... I think it's important that the story be told, but I'm not sure that we need to dwell on it indefinitely or anything. I'm not sure that it deserves any more attention than any other history story. But I think it's important that it be told (1.10, p. 27).

Or, as another interviewee – a member of Ivy Sucee's Hazelbrae Group – put it:

I think there has been plenty said, especially here in Peterborough. Ivy Sucee is forever on the, you know, in the paper or on television or whatever, you know, and has given a real good account of the Barnardo children in Canada, with all its warts and everything else... Dave Lorente in Ottawa is another guy that has done an enormous amount of work in trying to bring people up to speed as to the Home Children. I don't, I don't think that you need to go beyond that. I mean, what would be the purpose, you know – what would be the purpose of just beating a dead horse because, I mean, this is all water under the bridge, you know, and it's happened. I mean, there's things that happened in the Boer War, you know, in the concentration camps that, you know, they don't keep bringing that up, things like that (3.1, pp. 31-32).

Figure 19: Exhibition publicity

Exhibitions



The Scott Family on entry into the Barnardo Home, 1895
Left to right: Rebecca, John, Walter; Seated: Edward, Christopher
Courtesy, Mrs. Margaret Scott, Tillsonburg, Ontario

Nobody's Child: Canada's Home Children

Until July 24
Lawson Family Gallery

Between 1869 and 1939, more than 100,000 children were sent to Canada from the orphanages, streets and homes of England. Over-population and the excessive poverty that resulted from the industrialization of Britain swelled the many orphanages founded by churches and well-meaning philanthropists. Overburdened, these British agencies, led by the evangelical zeal of Dr. Thomas Barnardo, looked to the colonies as a way to provide their young charges with a new start. In turn, Canada welcomed the Home Children as they helped to alleviate a shortage of farm hands and domestic servants. However, cut off from their homes and what family remained, many of these children suffered mistreatment and abuse. Despite their early difficulties, most of the Home Children survived and thrived as farmers, labourers and entrepreneurs. Today these children and their descendants are said to make up 11% of Canada's population.

Hundreds of Home Children came to Southwestern Ontario where their proud descendants can be found today. Many have loaned prized family treasures to this exhibition including Barnardo trunks, Bibles, photographs, diaries and letters. *Nobody's Child* examines the Home Children experience as well as the contribution they and their descendants made to the building of Canada.


This exhibition is mounted in conjunction with the documentary *Nobody's Child: Canada's Home Children* produced by Lockwood Films, London, Canada.

Guest Curator: Nancy Johnson

RELATED PROGRAMS

Lecture: Margaret McNay
"Your Dad was a Home Child, You Know":
Discovering the Story of Canada's Home Children
Sunday, June 12, 2:00 pm, Museum London Lecture Theatre
Margaret McNay, Professor, Althouse College and Quarrier "Home Boy" descendant, speaks about her personal journey of discovery of her Home Child roots.

Home Children Reunion Tea
Sunday July 10, 1:00 - 4:00 pm, Eldon House
Eldon House welcomes Home Children and descendants to share stories and memories over scones and tea.
Tea: \$6.00 per person
Reservations are available by calling 661-5169



Please join us on **Sunday, April 17, 2005 at 2:00 pm**
for the opening reception and film premiere of

Nobody's Child

Canada's Home Children

April 17 - July 24
Lawson Family Gallery

Guest Curator: Nancy Johnson

This exhibition is mounted in conjunction with the documentary *Nobody's Child: Canada's Home Children* produced by Lockwood Films, London, Canada


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The Scott Family on entry into the Barnardo Home, 1895. Left to right: Rebecca, John, Walter Seated: Edward, Christopher. Courtesy, Mrs. Margaret Scott, Tillsonburg, Ontario

Nobody's Child exhibition, Museum London,
April 17th – July 24th 2005 (London, Ontario)

Figure 20: Publicity for theatre productions



DOCTOR BARNARDO'S CHILDREN

Tuesday to Saturday, July 12 – August 13, and Sunday, August 14 at 6 p.m.

INSPIRED BY TRUE STORIES shared with playwrights Ian McLachlan and Robert Winslow, *Doctor Barnardo's Children* chronicles the struggles of the impoverished British children who were sent to Canada in the late 19th and early 20th centuries by Dr. Thomas Barnardo, a Victorian philanthropist and visionary. The play examines the heartache of separation and conveys the challenges faced by the children in their new homeland. *Doctor Barnardo's Children* explores the physical and emotional contrasts between the children's lives on the streets of London and their more isolated Canadian experiences.

Doctor Barnardo's Children has great local significance. Hazelbrae Home in Peterborough was the distribution centre for more than 10,000 Barnardo girls coming to Canada between 1882 and 1930. The 4th Line Theatre would like to thank Ivy Sucee and the Hazelbrae Barnardo Home Memorial Group members for their generous assistance during the development of the play. This group helps Barnardo children and their descendants acquire family records from England and generally promotes the positive cultural legacy of Barnardo children in Canada.

Doctor Barnardo's Children is dedicated to Barnardo children everywhere living and deceased, and to the Hazelbrae Barnardo Home Memorial Group in Peterborough, which helps Barnardo children and their descendants reclaim the past for present and future generations.

Written by ROBERT WINSLOW & IAN McLACHLAN
Directed by ROBERT WINSLOW*
Musical Direction by JUSTIN HISCOX
Costume Design by ANGELA THOMAS & KIM DOOLEY
Set Design by CHRIS CLIFFORD
Props Creation by MONIQUE STEWART
Choreography by JANETTE WINSLOW

CAST LIST

Walter White	Gary Bryant*	Annie Murphy	Hadley Peacock
Emily	Nora Hickey	Davie Murphy	Sammy Peacock
Billy Fiddler	Geoff Hewison	Mary Murphy	Caro Pomanti
Rose Jacobs	Kim Pomanti	John Murphy	Ray O'Keeffe
Doctor Barnardo	Phil Oakley*	Janet	Baylee Ridder
Young Billy	Griffin Clark	Isabel	Shawna Blackwood
Young Lily	Jade O'Keeffe	Florie	Christina Adams
Young Walter	Jake Vanderham	Edna	Hannah Spasov
Jack Murphy, Reverend Talmadge	Matt Gilbert	Mary	Anika Spasov
Elise, Miss Gamble, Housemaid, Mary Tully, Barnardo		Elizabeth	Emilie Spasov
Representative	Alison Jutzi	Ann	Lauren Murphy
Adult #1, House Mother, Miss Stevens, Mrs. Thompson,		Ruth	Jessica Nelder
Mrs. Talmadge, Waitress	Lesh Foster	Clara	Rachael Harkes
Adult #2, Farmer	Justin Hiscox	Mary	Coltlin Ireland
Miss Bingham, Farm Woman	Radha McAllister	Annie	Hallee Gallant
Attendant, Jamieson	Mark Hiscox	Nancy	Frances Batten
Attendant, Simpson, Farmer	Beau Dixon	Violet	Carly Parks
Supervisor, Mayor	Peter Spasov	Ned	Camilo Cueva-Fischer
Attendant (Cyclops), Mayor	Ian McLachlan	David	David Ireland
Lily	Ruth White	George	Dylan Georges
Matron, Housemaid, Mrs. Vance, Dignitary	Robyn Abbey		
Attendant, Mr. Vance, Dignitary	Chris Nevin		
Hunt	John Stevenson		
Housemaid, Ship Passenger	Shannon Ireland		
Dasher Davis	Greg Beardsmore		
Freddie French	Todd McKie		
Dolly Murphy	Johanna Peacock		

MUSICIANS

Justin Hiscox, Mark Hiscox, Beau Dixon

* Artist appears with the permission of Canadian Actors' Equity Association

Doctor Barnardo's Children, 4th Line Theatre, July 12th – August 14th 2005 (Millbrook, Ontario)

World premiere
HOMECHILD

Written by Governor General's Award-winner Joan MacLeod

January 2 – 28, 2006

Opening Night: January 5, 2006
 CanStage – Bluma

***Joan MacLeod's talent for powerful, dynamic and evocative
 story telling has led to the creation, time and time again,
 of scripts that "are filled with heart."***

Jon Kaplan, NOW Magazine

Governor General Award-winner Joan MacLeod is one of Canada's most gifted playwrights. *Homechild* is an epic, national story but also an evocative and tender tale about family bonds, lineage and the endurance of love. It centres on Alistair MacEachern, a crotchety, funny and fearless farmer. For 70 years he has silently longed for the sister he left behind in Scotland. Joan MacLeod tells a quintessential Canadian story that unearths the secret of the 80,000 Home Children sent to Canada from Britain between 1860 and 1930. Humorous and poignant, *Homechild* is a wonderful, smart, modern story about the absence of love and, ultimately, the power of love.

Commissioned and developed by the CanStage Play Development Program
 Production Sponsor: Scotiabank

Homechild, CanStage, January 2nd – 28th 2006 (Toronto, Ontario)

However, notwithstanding the contributions of the likes of Ivy Sucee and Dave Lorente, as well as the publicity generated elsewhere, many still complain that too little has been done. Indeed, Dave Lorente himself has expressed frustration at the lack of coverage that the Home Children receive in the media and, thus, in Canadian society at large. A particular example of this was the print media's unwillingness to publicise the large government-sponsored reunion held in Stratford in 2001. As Lorente explains:

I sent out over two hundred faxes for our reunion in 2001 in Stratford. And it was picked up by the Toronto Star, and it was picked up [in] Stratford...and it was picked up by one of the London papers – the London Free Press. Only three, and I sent it to every, just about everybody I could think of in Ontario, the major cities – the dailies and a couple of the weeklies – and I sent it to every one of the newspapers across the country. But it just was not deemed important, except by three papers (speaking in interview 3.9, p. 31).

Thus, he feels that he is fighting a losing battle against widespread indifference – even although the reunion saw over a thousand Home Children and their descendants gather together at an event that was also attended by government representatives and that involved the unveiling of an official government plaque, only three papers in the whole of Canada deemed such an event newsworthy. As another interviewee put it, reflecting Lorente's point of view:

What happens in the local media is you ask them to cover a function and they'll say "Oh, we've done enough of that." That's our local media (2.5, p. 26).

Or, to cite a further example that illustrates the media's lack of interest in the subject, I was also informed that a recent documentary series on Canadian history did not even

mention the Home Children: “a couple of years ago, they did a series called ‘Canada: A People’s History’ – no mention of the Home Children in that at all!” (2.1, p. 27).⁶⁷

However, it is not only apathy that descendants must fight against. Dave Lorente also believes that he is struggling against the media’s obsession with publicising only the negative aspects of child migration – when they *do* decide to publish an article or air a documentary on the subject, a one sided, sensationalised account often seems to emerge. And, according to Lorente, the perfect instance of this was when he sent a press release to the *Ottawa Citizen* newspaper in order that they would publicise details on the first reunion that he held. As he told me,

Saturday night, the night before our first reunion, they had put a write-up in the paper about it, and it was much embellished by the person in the Citizen. I had written something about people coming together to, I don’t know, for memories and so on, but they changed the headline to they were going to ‘vent their spleen’ and all that stuff like that. And they quoted, presumably quoted me, but they took the quotes, all the negative quotes of Phyllis Harrison.⁶⁸ And I wrote to the editor, I wrote to the publisher – I was really upset (speaking in interview 4.1, p. 37).

Thus, Lorente is now very careful about how he presents the story of the Home Children. Indeed, he makes sure that he concentrates on providing positive accounts of child migration, in order that the media’s bias is redressed: “I have a tendency now to talk more about the good than the bad, because I have found out that if you mention bad, that’s what the media is going to jump on, because that sells, that attracts... that’s the problem with the media” (Renfrew Discussion Forum, p. 28). And this, of course,

⁶⁷ ‘Canada: A People’s History’ was a seventeen-part documentary series that aired on the government-owned CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) television network between 2000 and 2001.

⁶⁸ He is referring to a book by Phyllis Harrison, mentioned earlier in this thesis, entitled *The Home Children* (1979; republished in 2003). It includes the varied stories – both positive and negative – of dozens of Home Children and their descendants that she received and published following her appeal to some forty Canadian newspapers in the 1970s.

raises an interesting question with respect to how my interviewees responded to my questions: did any of them deliberately (mis)represent their family history in such a way that showed child migration in a positive light? I do not have any evidence to suggest that this was the case. Most, if not all, of my interviewees recognised that child migration was far from being a perfect solution to the particular problems it was trying to deal with. What is more, while Dave Lorente himself may watch what he says to the media, the detailed research that he has conducted on the subject, and on his own family history, still makes him acutely aware of the problems associated with this course of action. As he said to me on another occasion, describing what the Home Children had to go through:

they were ripped away from family, they were ripped away from country, they were ripped away from culture, they were ripped away from urban areas into rural areas... and they had nobody to talk to. That's bound to have an effect (4.4, p. 46).

Surely these are not the comments of one who looks at child migration in an uncritical manner.

Nevertheless, it is not only Dave Lorente who feels that the press manipulate the story of the Home Children for their own ends. Other interviewees commented that they would prefer to read a positive account, rather than the usual ones that seem to highlight all the abuses that took place. As one cynic put it, “it’s going to be death and violence or it doesn’t hit the page” (3.9, p. 32). Or, as others commented,

INTERVIEWEE: *...so many of them* [the stories you read and hear about the Home Children] *are just the same thing – it’s repeat of repeat of horrific event. I mean, I wouldn’t mind*

bearing a really good story, you know... I would like to see another type of story other than just the horrific abuse.

ANDY: *OK, so a good story.*

INTERVIEWEE: *Yeah. Or even one that's, you know, dull – I could even go with dull...*

ANDY: *So do you think almost that there's, lots of stuff that you've read has been, you know, it's all ones about abuse and almost really depressing ones?*

INTERVIEWEE: *Yes, and always someone's trying to instigate some kind of confrontation... they're misguided in their own way...they're giving the story a really bad spin and they don't need to dwell [on the negatives] (4.10, pp. 37-38).*

what I would like to see is more good stories come out, because all you hear is the bad ones, of kids walking in bare feet in the winter time and sleeping in the barn – those kinds of stories (5.5, p. 43).

Indeed, this last respondent also commented that, in his view, ninety-five per cent of the Home Children actually had positive stories to tell. But, again, this brings us back to the question of how do you define a positive experience? Is merely surviving an awful childhood a success, or does success have to incorporate a good career and a happy family life? Whatever the answer to such questions, it is surely only the most optimistic that would suggest that ninety-five per cent of the Home Children did actually have successful lives in Canada.

Because of the perceived dual problems of apathy and sensationalist journalism, a number of my respondents believe that more radical action needs to be taken in order to 'spread the word.' One interviewee was particularly outspoken in this respect, and even suggested that a march on Parliament Hill in Ottawa was required – the odd newspaper article or a public speaking engagement by Dave Lorente was not enough:

you're not going to get anywhere unless you have some politician taking notice, you know... Dave [Lorente]...he goes out and speaks a lot. He certainly has got the message out as far as what people read – in the paper every once in a while, Dave will have an item on a particular person or something. And, so that helps, I mean, it's all news... But then, once that paper's chucked in the bin, nobody thinks of it again. So you need something that's a little more forceful, and I always thought a march on Parliament Hill of Home Children and descendants, just to give like a, kind of a rough view, because I'm sure now there must be in the millions in this country (3.7, p. 48).

And she went on to suggest that a lesson could be learned from the Acadians, who have apparently conducted such marches in order that their history is recognised.⁶⁹ As she told me,

I mean, the Acadians, they were marching and what not and wanted, you know, wanted their story told. And I agree – it should be in Canadian history, but they had to get together and, you know, as a group, to demand it sort of thing (3.7, p. 48).

This woman's discussion of the Acadians perhaps allows a neat transition to a related issue: that, according to some of my interviewees, Canadian society – and indeed the Canadian government – privileges some aspects of the country's history over others. There is the suggestion that, while it is politically correct to celebrate so called 'visible minorities,' minorities from within the white, British population tend to be ignored and their history marginalised. As one interviewee – the granddaughter of a Quarriers migrant – told me,

⁶⁹ The original Acadians were French immigrants who settled in what are now the provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. After refusing to swear loyalty to Britain in the mid-eighteenth century, thousands were banished to Britain's other colonies in North America. Today, many Canadians call themselves Acadian – 71,590 identified themselves as such in the 2001 Census – while a large number of the exiles' descendants remain in the USA, particularly in Louisiana where their influence has given rise to that US State's world-famous 'Cajun' culture (Wikipedia online encyclopedia, accessed 27/04/2006).

right now in Canada, you know, our country is becoming more diverse culturally, but yet we tend to only see visible minorities as kind of the 'other' people – you know we 'other' people – and we need to respect their contribution, but [also] the little invisible Scottish people who you might not suspect, that came with nothing, and their contribution as well. So, I think we need to speak to all the different cultures and make sure we all understand and appreciate, but from my little corner of the world, I spread the word about Quarriers and Home Children all the time (2.3, p. 8).

So, this person is concerned that the Home Children are perhaps being forgotten in favour of groups that are more recognisable as 'others,' and it is this that has spurred her into action.

Bearing such a perspective in mind and returning to the example of the Acadians, it could be suggested that there is an ulterior motive behind those in authority commemorating their history. In 2003, a Royal Proclamation was signed that acknowledged the deportation of Acadians that took place in the eighteenth century. However, while this terrible episode cannot be denied, some suggest that the decision to issue what amounts to a government apology is purely a political one. As Canadian historian Jack Granatstein puts it, "[a]ll I can say is that apologies for historic wrongs are always delivered for present political purposes and have little to do with any deep understanding of history" (*Kingston Whig Standard*, 10/12/2003, p. 14). Therefore, the argument could be made that, because Acadians may be placed in the broader context of Anglo-Canadian oppression of French-Canadians and the subsequent attempts to resolve long-standing tensions between French and English-speaking populations, their history is privileged over accounts of groups such as the Home Children who were, notwithstanding the extreme trauma that they faced, still part of Canada's privileged British majority. In short, then, there is little or no political capital to be gained from

highlighting the history of the Home Children. However, while some may see this as some sort of political conspiracy against British minority groups, it must also be noted – as I did in the opening chapter – that, while the Home Children may have suffered terribly at the hands of their masters, and while they were certainly stigmatised by Canadian society at large, they still did not suffer the same racial discrimination that many others experienced in nineteenth and early twentieth century Canada.⁷⁰

Whatever one's opinion with regard to the priorities of the Canadian government, it could be that the apparent neglect of the story of the Home Children in favour of those of more easily recognisable 'others' – a point that, admittedly, was highlighted by only a small number of my research subjects – is just one more in a long line of factors that actually spur descendants of the Home Children on and inspire an interest they may not otherwise have had. As one of my interviewees put it:

I was just wondering if perhaps with the new immigrant population certainly in southern Ontario...in Toronto and those areas, the people who thought themselves as being here originally – the Europeans and the British – may be saying "Hey, now what's happening to us? Are we going to become obsolete? We'd better get some roots here [laughs]! We'd better find out who we really are!" (5.8, p. 22).

Thus, people of British descent are perhaps seeing their traditional version of Canadian history being superseded by those of previously subordinate groups. What is more, with new immigrant groups continuing to arrive into the country up to the present day, they may feel that their history is being further eroded. Consequently, I would suggest that

⁷⁰ For more on such discrimination, see, for instance, Brian Osborne's 1991 essay that discusses the labelling of supposedly 'less desirable' immigrants to Canada as 'non-preferred.' See also Valerie Knowles' book, *Strangers at Our Gates*, for a more general discussion of the history of immigration and immigration policy in Canada.

some believe there is an ever more urgent need to claim back Canada's British past, 'warts and all.'

Conclusion

In this chapter I attempted to provide a sense of the many differing opinions of my interviewees with regard to the story of the Home Children, from those who celebrated this aspect of Canadian history, to those who would have gone so far as to support litigation against the former sending agencies. However, I think it would be fair to say that most of my research subjects exhibited a certain degree of ambivalence in this respect – the majority may have been positive about what happened, but they certainly tended to recognise the scheme's failings too. I also tried to analyse how and why the story of the Home Children is publicised in Canada today, and discussed some of the conflicts of interest that have arisen out of such publicity.

Returning to opinions on the relative success of child migration, some argue that success or failure is actually determined by individual character – those who succeed do so because they are made of 'sterner stuff.' While the Canada of a hundred years ago may have offered more opportunities when compared to those available in Great Britain at the time, there is the suggestion that there were those who would have done well, no matter where they lived. Others would put this down to a 'lucky break' – it was 'fate' (or perhaps those with religious beliefs would view it as predestination) that allowed some to succeed and others to fail. Still others believe that the Home Children lived in an era when people were more likely, through hard work, to rise above their circumstances. As I was told by one of my research subjects, "at that time there was the old fashioned work ethic, so people did work and they did, you know, did do well if they had the opportunity, for sure" (5.8, p. 11). But, whatever the reasons, it is undoubtedly the case that there were Home Children who rose above their

circumstances and those, from identical backgrounds, who did not. As one interviewee told me, discussing her grandfather and grand uncle, who were both sent to Canada as children:

you've got two brothers that have lived in basically the same circumstances – one became a positive attitude and one became a negative one; one succeeded tremendously, the other lived on a little wee farm and didn't have a pot to piss in (4.7, p. 7).

Or as another person told me, pointing his fingers in opposite directions, “one went that way and one went that way” (4.11, p. 7).

For my interviewees, it perhaps does not matter much if their Home Child ancestors did have a hard life, as long as things turned out well for them in the end. Indeed, as I have also discussed, humble origins often become a source of pride rather than a burden for descendants of Home Children. However, as one descendant told me, ‘what if’ stories would surely have a greater effect if things did *not* turn out well for Home Children or their families in Canada. As this interviewee, the son of a Home Child, put it,

it's a 'what if' story – what if my grandfather hadn't died, what would have become of my dad [if he had remained in the UK]... You know, it doesn't matter. His kids are, my dad's kids are comfortable – I had a really good job the last few years (1.6, p. 21).

So, for this man, what happened to his father is not really an issue because, even although he had a difficult start in life, things worked out for him, and for his children, in the end. But the suggestion is that if this man did not do as well as he did, and if my interviewee did not end up with such a good job, he perhaps would not feel the way he

does. And there is evidence to suggest that this is certainly the case. Indeed, there are those who feel that they have every reason to be angry; so much so, in fact, that in some cases they even feel justified in supporting lawsuits against the former sending agencies.

Of course, as I have already suggested, the great majority of my interviewees do not feel that suing organisations such as Barnardo's is the way to go. Instead, most would rather celebrate the lives of their Home Child ancestors. And, it is in this respect that people like Dave Lorente have played such a large role in influencing opinions on this matter. Lorente's oft repeated mantra that the stigma that the Home Children suffered must be replaced with pride in what they have achieved seems to be a viewpoint that many of my research subjects subscribe to, notwithstanding the negatives that many of them *could* focus on if they so desired. And perhaps such a point of view also allows those who may have little reason to celebrate what happened to their father or mother, grandfather or grandmother – those who may even sympathise with the motives of those who would sue the sending agencies – to alter their perspective on this often tragic episode in Canadian history.

It could also be that simply *doing* genealogical research is another way in which people can find peace when they come to consider the fractured nature of their family lives. This view was summed up by the one interviewee quoted earlier whose family life was so bad when she was growing up that she admitted she used to hate her Home Child mother. It was only through her research that she was able to change this opinion:

everybody's affected by, you know, what's happened before. I mean, we are – that's just how it is.

And so, that's why I think at some level, I needed to start exploring a little bit, so I could come to

peace with who mum is, you know, and see the beautiful side of her and deal with the crap and deal

with the pain of all of that and accept her for who she is. And I have, you know. But that took a long, long time to be able to do that, until I started to understand (5.9, pp. 17-18).

Thus, her genealogical research has actually allowed her to come to terms with what her mother has suffered – she now understands why her mother used to treat her in the way that she did. As she concluded, “[n]ow I can see the brokenness and honour [my mother] in a different way than I could ever before in my life” (5.9, p. 19). So, while this may not be enough to allow her to join another of my interviewees in repeating the old Air Force motto that I have taken as the title for this chapter, at least her research may bring some closure for her and the many others who can relate to her experience.

CHAPTER FIVE

Imagining Britain

“Knowing that I could stand in the same spot as to where my grandmother and my grandfather came from is quite an amazing thing”

Granddaughter of a Home Child, Smiths Falls, Ontario

For many people, the land of their forebears’ birth holds a great deal of significance. And, of course, there is a large amount of literature that analyses this phenomenon. In Chapter One, I looked at literature that suggests that interest in family origins is actually a reflection of society today. Indeed, some believe that it is a consequence of the loss and separation that often characterises the world in which many now find themselves (see, for instance, Boym, 2001 and Brett, 1996). More specifically, Paul Basu’s work on the Scottish Highland diaspora (2002) provides an example of one diaspora community where some of these issues are highlighted. He shows us how people can be drawn back to the birthplace of ancestors, no matter how far away they might live and notwithstanding the seemingly tenuous links that connect them with that ‘homeland.’ I also studied the work of theorists such as Paul Gilroy (1993), Stuart Hall (1990) and Catherine Nash (2002) who, along with Basu, problematise essentialist notions of identity. They point out that people, wherever they are in the world, are characterised by hybridity and difference, rather than by the uniformity and purity of blood ties that many like to believe unites them with, and divides them from, others. And, with such ideas in mind, I also focussed on the writing of Pierre Nora (1989 and 1996) and Maurice Halbwachs (1992), amongst others, in an attempt to highlight the ways in which memory affects identity.

Bearing these theoretical arguments in mind, I now turn to focus on the identities of my interviewees. I would argue that the birthplace of Home Child ancestors has a particularly strong resonance for many of the people that I interviewed, and, in this chapter, I will discuss the various ways in which they express feelings of connectedness with the United Kingdom and its constituent nations. I will focus on the views of my interviewees with regard to their national and transnational identities and will look at the ways in which they attempt to ‘reconnect’ with people and places in the ‘Old Country.’ One way in which they do this is by visiting the country of their ancestor’s birth: a number of my interviewees have been able to visit the UK while many others have a strong desire to do so. I will discuss the differing attitudes that my research subjects have with regard to such visits, from the few who have no desire to go, to those for whom there is an almost spiritual connection with the country in question.

Descendants’ identity

When I asked the descendants that I interviewed about their national identity, it came as little surprise that the large majority regarded themselves as Canadians given that they were all born and brought up in that country. However, what may be slightly surprising is the extent to which many felt a connection with Britain, even if their Home Child ancestor only spent a few short years there as a child. So much so, in fact, that two of my interviewees even discussed their abortive attempts to become British citizens on the strength of their Home Child roots:

because my father was born in England, I contacted the British...what’s it called, it’s sort of like the Embassy, but it’s called something else, in Ottawa.⁷¹ And they said, all I have to do is apply and

⁷¹ This person is referring to the British High Commission in Ottawa.

send about five hundred bucks and I'd automatically be a British Citizen. And all I had to have was two things – my father's birth certificate, and I think my mother's too. And oddly, I couldn't get either of them so I said "Oh to Hell with it, I guess I don't, what's the point in becoming a British citizen anyway," because, you know, I'm too old and it would never have made any difference. But the idea of saying, "Well I'm a citizen of Great Britain" would have been sort of emotionally satisfying, you know, but I had to give it up (2.2, p. 14).

INTERVIEWEE: *...in a lot of ways, we often wonder should we just stay Canadian or try to get the British [citizenship]...*

ANDY: *Oh, of course, you'd be able to apply for it.*

INTERVIEWEE: *Yeah, yes I...keep...thinking, well, why would I want to [apply for British citizenship]? But just, that was my dad, so I'm kind of proud... I thought it'd be interesting. We'd sort of keep a bit of England in the family (3.2, pp. 30-31).*

Yet another interviewee discussed her confusion with regard to her official status. As she put it:

I even phoned the British Embassy to find out – do I have dual citizenship? My father was from England, they sent him over here, did he automatically become a Canadian citizen, is he still a British citizen? Who am I, what am I, you know? (1.4, p. 21)

And such uncertainty is understandable given that Canadian citizenship did not even exist until 1947. Prior to the Canadian Citizenship Act of that year, Canadians were legally defined as British subjects (Citizenship and Immigration Canada website, accessed 17/01/2006). Consequently, only those Home Children who survived past 1947 would have ever become Canadian citizens. What is more, I was told by a number of interviewees that their Home Child relative even struggled to obtain Canadian

citizenship after 1947 because they did not have the necessary documentation to prove their identity (see, for instance, Snow, 2000, p. 7). Thus, it is perhaps unsurprising that, for at least some of my interviewees, questions still arise, not only concerning their personal affiliations with Britain, but also with regard to their legal rights to British citizenship.

While only a very small number of my research subjects actually questioned their official status and considered the possibility of obtaining citizenship in order to cement their affiliation with Britain, most still felt a strong emotional attachment to the place of their ancestors' birth. Indeed, while the majority of my interviewees stated that they were Canadian, they also highlighted the fact that they were of British descent and suggested that this would be something that they would make clear to anyone they discussed their nationality with:

ANDY: *So what's your, how do you, like in terms of your national identity, if somebody asked you what your national identity was, what would you...?*

INTERVIEWEE: *...well I say I'm a Canadian, for sure. But, I, right away I get in to telling them about my British identity, oh right away I tell them "my dad is, was from England, was born in England," you know... Oh I definitely tell them, oh I tell them right away (1.4, pp. 24-25).*

you know, I'm first generation Canadian and so I try to, when other people talk about their immigrant past, I'd say well, you know, "that's me, I'm a first generation Canadian"... But, yeah, I'm very proud to be of, sort of, British stock and...not exclusive or not intolerantly or [laughing], but sure, I am (1.5, p. 15).

I'm a Canadian and I'm proud to be a Canadian. But I'm very proud of where my ancestors came from (1.8, p. 45).

I'm not English, I'm Canadian, which I am – I was born here. But, I think, being Canadian, which I am, I have British roots, and I think they are very strong (5.8, p. 25).

Thus, for many of my interviewees, being Canadian is intimately tied up with their British roots; in their eyes, the historic link between Canada and the 'motherland' remains to this day. As others told me:

Oh yeah – I have a tie to that country [to England]; there's no two ways about it (3.3, p. 43).

I feel a part of me is from England (3.4, p. 53).

And, for at least one of my interviewees, it seems that being Canadian is almost synonymous with being British. As this person put it, "I'm very proud to be a Canadian and part of Britain" (1.11, p. 34). Or, as she went on to say later in the interview,

we're still a part of England, we're still a part of Scotland, we're still a part of Ireland, but we're also Canadians... to me it still is connected – we're still a part of that country over there, even though, you know, Canada's on its own sort of thing, we're still connected to the British Isles (1.11, pp.39-40).

Another way in which some of my research subjects exhibit their affinity towards the countries of their ancestors' birth is by embracing what they see as key elements of British culture. For instance, some talk of their love of British TV, books and magazines:

INTERVIEWEE: *I'm very proud of where my ancestors came from.*

ANDY: *And do you, maybe when you're watching the news or anything, do you feel that you've got more of an, do you feel an affinity towards Britain then, when you're watching stuff?*

INTERVIEWEE: *I watch only British comedy, I only read British mystery books...*

ANDY: *And do you think that's a legacy of your background?*

INTERVIEWEE: *Oh I think it is, yeah I do, I do, absolutely* (1.8, p. 45).

I'm very proud of my heritage really... And I watch Coronation Street [laughs] – I love it, yeah
(2.9, p. 25).

I have a lot of fondness for Britain. I get a number of magazines from Britain, monthly and bimonthly – I get 'In Britain,' I get 'This England,' I get 'Realm Magazine,' all in England. I've got those for years (3.1, p. 40).

However, as this last interviewee hinted with his choice of reading material, perhaps my interviewees' feelings for Britain are best illustrated by the level of affection that a significant minority have towards the Royal Family:

the Queen is our monarch, you know, she still is in Canada, which I'm very proud of (1.4, p. 22).

I'm quite loyal to them – I like the Queen and her family, dysfunctional as they are [laughs] (2.9, p. 25).

ANDY: *...do you feel like an affinity with Britain because of, you know, because your grandmother or your mother was English? Does that make you...?*

DAUGHTER: *It does me. I feel very loyal to the Queen.*

GRANDDAUGHTER: *I'm very loyal to the Queen too* (5.3, p. 58).

Similarly, other symbols of Canada's association with British and its Empire are also revered:

I was brought up to be, I guess a Royalist. Not only a Royalist, but a, my British heritage was the Union Jack and all those good things... 'British Is Best': Royal Navy, Royal Air Force, the Queen, Churchill, all these people – oh yeah (1.2, pp. 21-22).

I'm very fond of the Union Jack (2.6, p. 26).

my one cousin in [England] was just, he received the Queen's honours, New Year's honours, not this year, the year before. He became Member of the British Empire and I was really proud of him and proud that he became a Member of the British Empire type of thing. That meant a lot to me (5.4, p. 38).

Thus, it seems that many of my interviewees are attempting to cling on to Britain's imperial past; perhaps to the Britain that their Home Child ancestors would have known. Indeed, one of the interviewees quoted above even expressed his disappointment at the way in which Canada replaced the Union Jack as its national flag: "it still bothers me that there was no plebiscite in our country when we changed from the Union Jack to the flag we have today" (1.2, p. 21).⁷²

However, it must be pointed out that affection for the Crown and the other indicators of Empire mentioned above is far from universal in Canada, even amongst those of British descent. As one woman told me:

if they [the Royal Family], I mean if they came I would go out to meet them type of thing. I'd wave my little flag [chuckles]. But, you know, a lot of people wouldn't I don't think (5.4, p. 38).

⁷² The Union Jack was Canada's "affirmed national symbol" from 1904 until it was replaced by the red and white maple leaf flag in 1965 (Department of Canadian Heritage website, accessed 18/01/2006). Interestingly, it was the daughter of a Home Child – and one of my interviewees – that sewed the first official Canadian maple leaf flag.

Indeed, it seems to be an ever-shrinking number of people – most of them elderly – who are attempting to hold on to this link with what was once viewed by many as the motherland. And this is reflected in the comments of one middle aged interviewee who is involved with a women’s organisation known as the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE). Members of this group celebrate Canada’s colonial identity and swear loyalty to the Queen.⁷³ However, this woman told me that, even although she is a royalist, she only joined the IODE out of a sense of duty – numbers are dwindling and she was persuaded to lend a hand. As she put it, “most of [the members] are seniors...they’re losing their membership, you know – they’re not bringing in new people because, I mean, I’m not interested in going to all those meetings” (5.3, pp. 63-64). And, perhaps this interviewee’s involvement with the IODE reflects a more widespread shift that is taking place in Canada today; while she feels duty bound to support this organisation, the younger generation may not be as willing to do so. As another interviewee put it, “I’m not sure that my children have the same respect for the Royal Family that I have, but, yeah, I have a great deal of it” (3.3, p. 43).

Whether or not respect for the Royal Family is dying out, it is certainly the case that many Canadians – and not just the descendants of the Home Children – still feel a strong connection with the lands of their own or their ancestors’ birth. Being Canadian is often about being an immigrant or only a generation or two removed from an immigrant. And, as such, Canadians often wish to acknowledge and celebrate these other aspects of their identity. Thus, my interviewees often expressed an affinity towards not only Britain and the cultural markers that they associate with it, but also towards the other nations that they can trace their ancestry to. As they told me:

⁷³ For more information on the IODE, see Catherine Pickles’ 1996 thesis, *Representing Twentieth Century Canadian Colonial Identity: The Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (IODE)*.

INTERVIEWEE: *I'm Canadian because I am English, Irish, Scots, German...*

ANDY: *All these things.*

INTERVIEWEE: *Yes. So that makes me Canadian* (1.3, pp. 15-16).

I'm English, Dutch and Canadian – that's how I say it – English, Dutch and Canadian. Oh yeah, I'm proud of all my heritage (2.7, p. 24).

our roots, as a Canadian, always takes us back to Europe, so we'll never, ever, ever be Canadian in the sense that you always are going to go back to the mother or homeland or wherever, you know (5.8, p. 40).

Of course, the long standing policy of multiculturalism that has been adopted by successive Canadian governments surely has a part to play in this respect. In 1971, Canada became the first country in the world to adopt an official multiculturalism policy (Department of Canadian Heritage, 2005) and, ever since, Canadians have been encouraged to celebrate their different cultures, creating what the Canadian government describes as a 'cultural mosaic' (Statistics Canada website, accessed 18/01/2006). However, while this policy may be lauded by many, it is far from being universally popular, with critics suggesting that it is divisive and hinders social integration.⁷⁴ Indeed, one of my interviewees bemoaned the fact that Canada has not adopted the 'melting pot' ethos that prevails in the United States.⁷⁵ As she put it, "I admire the Americans because they take a lot of pride in their country's history, and we don't seem to, you know; it's like we don't have any history" (1.8, p. 36).⁷⁶ Thus, it could be

⁷⁴ See, for instance, *Mosaic Madness: pluralism without a cause* by Reginald Bibby (1990).

⁷⁵ This encourages people to assimilate into the American 'way of life,' and celebrate their American identity over any other.

⁷⁶ Mackey (2002) comments on how the Canadians that she interviewed about their national identity were also envious of "American patriotism and secure identity" (p. 145).

suggested that focussing on non-Canadian roots and history actually dilutes any specific sense of Canadian identity and divides rather than unites the country's population.

Aside from the debate on the relative merits of multiculturalism, it must also be acknowledged that personal choice plays an important role in the way in which people view their identity: which specific aspects of their identity they choose to privilege, as well as the ways in which their views on it change over time, cannot be taken for granted. Consequently, some of my interviewees may have only developed their affinity with Britain in recent years as a result of their research – and perhaps, as Constantine (2003) suggests, because of the positive way in which the Home Children are now viewed – while others may have felt such a connection for many years. And then there are those who, despite the close affinity that others have with the land of their ancestors' birth, and notwithstanding the links that Canadians as a whole are encouraged to have with other lands and cultures, feel no bond whatsoever:

I don't in any way feel Scottish or English, or, I'm just... I'm first generation Canadian – I never think of myself as British-Canadian. Now, maybe that's because I didn't have any relatives, you know, that you visited and stuff like that back in the 'Old Country' – I don't know if that's got a connection to it... There's nothing there (3.7, p. 41).

ANDY: ...do you feel a part of you that's sort of British in a way or anything?

INTERVIEWEE 1: No.

INTERVIEWEE 2: No, not at all...

ANDY: So Canadian and that's it.

INTERVIEWEE 1: Yeah (4.1, pp. 55-56).

One explanation for such a mindset is illustrated in the first of the quotes above. This interviewee suggests that she does not feel any affinity with Britain because, quite

simply, she has no connection with any relatives there. Any family ties that she may have had were cut off when her father came to Canada as a Home Child and, without these, this woman feels that she has nothing that links her to the country of his birth. Another explanation for feelings of detachment would be that descendants – as with their Home Child ancestors – do not wish to associate themselves with what was often a dreadful episode in their family history. While life in Canada may hold some good memories – the success despite the odds that I discussed in the previous chapter for instance – there may be no good memories that emanate from Britain.

Still other descendants may find it difficult to associate themselves with Britain because, quite simply, their Home Child relative never provided them with information – whether concrete or anecdotal – concerning the ‘Old Country.’ As I mentioned earlier, many Home Children simply had no desire to discuss their lives before they came to Canada and, as such, their descendants often have nothing to ‘go on.’ And this is perhaps best illustrated in the following discussion that a grandson of a Home Child, together with his wife, had concerning their roots. While both of this man’s grandparents were from Britain, it was only his non-Home Child grandmother, together with her family, that he viewed as British. His Home Child grandfather, on the other hand, was Canadian and only Canadian:

WIFE: ...[you] *look at [your] British roots more from your grandmother and your mother... that’s where the English comes from, not from the dad’s side. The dad’s side is Canadian – the grandfather’s side is Canadian... The British part of it comes from his mother being English and his grandmother being English; that’s where the English comes from... All the English stories in his family are from the females, the mother and the grandmother, not from...the males are Canadian, period. The grandfather and dad are Canadian... your dad would talk about his dad going over as though visiting England during the war was the first time. That’s how he would talk about it.*

HUSBAND: *Yeah – that’s exactly what he would do.*

WIFE: *It was as though it was the first time [visiting Britain], even though [he was born there]...he was Canadian* (4.11, pp. 30-31).

Thus, any feelings of connectedness with Britain that this man may feel certainly do not come from his Home Child relative. And this is a point that another interviewee makes too. He bemoans the fact that he does not feel a stronger connection with Scotland – his father came to Canada as a Quarriers Home Child – and suggests that this is because his father did not encourage it:

ANDY: *...you said your father didn't really talk about Scotland, so did you never really have a sense of having a Scottish heritage sort of thing, Scottish background?*

INTERVIEWEE: *That's a fair assumption... I sort of miss that connection – it's there, but it's not there. We have friends, Scottish friends, and of course, into the dancing and they love getting together and singing, you know, reflecting the Scottish heritage... We like the music, the Scottish music – I love the military bands and bagpipes, I always go to military tattoos and I love that type of music – but I don't feel a strong connection, mainly because, when growing up, my father did not promote it* (3.5, pp. 28-29).

While he has developed a taste for Scottish cultural indicators, this man clearly wishes he felt more of a link with the homeland of his ancestors, to the extent that he hints at being jealous of those who *do* feel such a connection. It is almost as if he wishes he could feel more Scottish than he does. However, by the time he discovered that aspect of his identity it was too late; his Canadian identity had already been formed and his ability to 'feel' Scottish was diminished.

I obtained a further insight into the mindset of those who feel little or no connection with Britain when I interviewed an actual Home Child – the man that I mentioned in the previous chapter who was accepted as one of the family on the farm

to which he was sent. When I asked him how he viewed his national identity, he replied “I’m a Canadian” (4.8, p. 5). Then, when I asked him how he felt when he went ‘home’ to Britain – he made a trip back to England as part of the British Government’s scheme to allow former Home Children to visit relatives ‘back home’ – he replied “When I was coming back [to Canada], I was coming home” (4.8, p. 6). For him, Canada, rather than Britain, was home. Visiting his relatives in Britain was as much a trip abroad as it would be for one who was born and raised in Canada. Consequently, if a former Home Child sees Canada as home, it is not surprising that many descendants feel the same way. And surely this is something that should be celebrated: it can be viewed as proof that at least some of the Home Children were able to fully assimilate when they settled in Canada.

Visiting the ‘Old Country’

Another way in which my research subjects strengthened their ties with the place of their ancestors’ birth was by actually visiting Britain. At over half of my interviews, one or more of those in attendance had travelled to Britain (Appendix A, Table 5). For some, this was said to be largely for recreational purposes and had little link to the fact that they could trace roots to that part of the world. At the other end of the spectrum were those whose visits to Britain were solely for their genealogical research. However, as I shall go on to discuss in this section, the emotional fallout that people experienced as a result of their trips – whether they had been for ‘business’ or pleasure – did not seem to be dependent on what they had hoped to get out of their visits in the first place. That is, all of my interviewees were affected by the experience to a greater or lesser extent, whether they had viewed their visit as little more than a holiday or if they had travelled to Britain as so-called ‘roots tourists.’

Turning briefly to a general discussion of those people who visit Britain for genealogical purposes, while it is clear that they do not tend to fit in to the traditional

tourist bracket, they undoubtedly represent a growing proportion of the travellers that come to the UK on holiday. For instance, it is said that “the majority of foreign visitors to Scotland [give] family roots and ancestry as their main reason for visiting” (Scotland’s People website, accessed 02/12/2004).⁷⁷ And, such is the importance to the Scottish economy of attracting these tourists that the industry is placing more and more emphasis on catering for them. The official website of Scotland’s National Tourist Board – <http://www.visitscotland.com> (accessed 19/01/2006) – has a link on its ‘What to see and do’ page that gives information on how to ‘trace your roots.’ This, in turn, directs the web surfer to a site specifically for ‘roots tourists’: <http://www.ancestralscotland.com> (accessed 19/01/2006). Similarly, the Scotland’s People website also has a prominent link to the Ancestral Scotland website. As it puts it:

Don't just learn about your Scottish heritage, live it! Try on the kilt of your clan, touch the walls of your family castle, explore the fields and farms your ancestors once worked and see the very documents that chronicled their lives. Come walk in the footsteps of your ancestors – www.ancestralscotland.com can help you make it happen (Scotland’s People website, accessed 19/01/2006).

And, while the government is certainly convinced of the value of attracting these genealogical tourists to the country, it seems that there are a number of statistics that back up their faith in the massive potential of this market. Indeed, the following points listed by one newspaper surely provide ample evidence:

⁷⁷ The Scotland’s People website is the official government source for people who wish to research their Scottish roots.

- According to VisitScotland [the official website of Scotland's National Tourist Board mentioned above], it is estimated that more than 50 million people all over the world can claim Scottish ancestry, with the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand among the leaders...
- Research undertaken by DTZ Peda in 2003 found visitors undertaking genealogy activities spend at least 10% more per day than the average tourist to Scotland.
- In the future, the number of ancestral tourists to Scotland could increase to as many as 800,000 trips annually (*The Herald*, June 30th 2005).

While the tourist boards of the other nations in the United Kingdom may not place as much emphasis on 'roots tourism' in their advertising campaigns – at the time of writing it seems that only the Northern Ireland Tourist Board website has a specific link for genealogy – it is surely the case, given the huge number of people that emigrated from all over the British Isles, that the statistics on the value of genealogy that apply to Scotland can be replicated across these islands. And, notwithstanding the lack of advertising in some quarters, it seems that my research subjects often need little encouragement in this regard. Even those of my interviewees who have not visited Britain often speak of their strong desire to do so, with financial constraints being the main stumbling block preventing them from travelling. Indeed, looking back over all of my interview transcripts, those who speak most passionately about travelling to Britain are frequently those interviewees who have yet to make the trip across the Atlantic. As one man put it, it is a "drawing, like a magnet" (1.12, p. 39) that pulls him towards the land of his mother's birth. Or, as another woman told me,

I feel the need to go there; I have to go there at some point. I really want that to happen... It's just, it's just a calling, you know, it's just a desire to go and walk the walk, walk the journey, you know, experience it (5.9, pp. 12-13).

She then went on to explain why she feels that way:

The way I describe it is I want my feet to be on that ground, you know, over there, you know. There's a sense of...a piece of me that's gone home for the first time, you know. And that's how I feel. I really need to experience that (5.9, p. 28).

And while others may have not expressed themselves so vividly, the feelings of this interviewee were certainly reflected in many other comments made by descendants, as the sample reproduced below illustrates:

Oh, I would love to go. I have a feeling that, somehow, it would feel right to be there (1.3, p. 17).

I'd like to see where they came from. I imagine most of the houses that they lived in at that time are probably not there, but I would love to see the countryside. Everybody says it's rainy over there – I don't care if it's raining or snowing or blowing or what, I just, I would love to go! ... I know if I went to Scotland or England or Ireland, I wouldn't take the grin off my face – I would be so excited to be there! (1.11, p. 36).

I think really to visit there is what I'd like to do – actually see it. You know, it's one thing to read about it, look at it, but it's another to actually go there and say you actually walked on the same ground kind of thing (1.12, p. 44).

you know, I would just like to go there to know that I was in the same spot as her, where she started... I think I need to do that in my lifetime. And I don't know why – I just know I need to do that. Just to say that I've been where she was born and been on the same land as her (3.4, p. 32; 54).

ANDY: *Would you like to go back [to the UK]?*

INTERVIEWEE: *Oh, I'd love to. Yeah, I would like to. Oh, I would long for that, I would long for that* (4.3, pp. 22-23).

it would be incredible to see where she was from... I'm drawn to want to go over there, you know... it is part of my ancestry, it is part of who I am (4.6, p. 13; 19).

While it may be those who have yet to visit Britain who speak with the most passion about their plans for visiting, those who have already been are often just as enthusiastic about the trips that they made. So much so, in fact, that some have made multiple journeys across the Atlantic, with their research being the main purpose for such visits. For instance, one woman told me that she has made several trips to the UK and Ireland and each time it has been solely for genealogical purposes:

ANDY: *...is [it] for your research that you go to Britain or is it just you happen to be there on holiday?*

INTERVIEWEE: [Laughing] *No, that's why...*

ANDY: OK.

INTERVIEWEE: *I mean I have cousins still in Ireland and I do see them. But, no, I'm hitting the record offices* (6.3, p. 30).

And, while others may not be quite as single-minded when it comes to conducting their research, their passion for the country of their ancestor's birth is still undiminished:

ANDY: *Now you said that you visited Britain, or visited Scotland – was the sole reason for your visit part of your genealogical research, is that why you went?*

INTERVIEWEE: *The first time in '93, I went by myself, and that was just, I had to go, I had to see where he [her Home Child father] was raised and go see where he was born, and that was the purpose of that trip.*

ANDY: *But you've been back there...*

INTERVIEWEE: *Four times after that.*

ANDY: *Wow. And again, has that been to find more information?*

INTERVIEWEE: *Eh, partially, but I just fell in love with the place, so I had to go back (2.1, p. 22).*

Interestingly, even although many of my interviewees are fulfilling a real yearning when they visit Britain, sometimes it is only very specific places and landmarks that they are actually interested in seeing. While the person quoted at the end of the last paragraph developed a passion for all things Scottish, others have far more specific interests that have a more direct link to their Home Child ancestor. As one interviewee who has yet to make the 'pilgrimage' back told me,

if I go to England, it'll be only for the personal reasons that I'd go there. Like, I have no desire to go to England, like to see Buckingham Palace or, I have no desire. But I would like to go to England only for that purpose – to see the orphanage where she was as a girl and to see, like where she left in the boat (4.6, p. 22).

So, it seems that such interviewees do not wish to visit Britain as tourists, or certainly not as conventional tourists. Rather, they must visit the places that relate to their own family history. Consequently, a street sign, or maybe even a piece of waste land where a row of terraced houses or an orphanage once stood, is likely to have more significance than the landmark architecture of London or the spectacular scenery of the Scottish Highlands. And this is certainly backed up by the statements made by a number of my

research subjects, both of those who have visited Britain and those who are still planning their trips:

going there [to Quarriers Village] was really important (1.8, p. 11).

I'd like to visit the grave where [the Home Child's father] is buried (3.1, p. 20).

I would love to go to Cottage Nineteen [at the orphanage where the Home Child was placed], because I know that's where she was (3.4, p. 54).

if I was to go, my main purpose would be to go and see what is left of this facility that she was at (5.9, p. 14).

Given the sites that they wish to visit, it should come as little surprise that, for a significant number of my interviewees, their trips to Britain tend to be emotionally charged experiences. To be able to visit the country and the place where forebears lived would surely have an effect on many people. However, if many months and years have been spent carrying out research on a family history that was previously a mystery, and if, in the process, heartrending details of how ancestors lived have been discovered, this could well make any visit to the relevant sites all the more poignant. And this certainly seems to be the case with the descendants that I interviewed. For instance, one woman discussed her feelings as she visited the church where previous generations of her family had worshipped:

I was looking around the church...and I know that some of my relatives did go to that church because some of the children were christened in that church, and I, well, it just kind of got to me – I had to get

out... I was very close to tears – it just came, you know, I felt so overcome by going in that church in particular (2.11, p. 20).

This same interviewee then went on to discuss seeing her great grandfather's signature on a document she was able to view at a local registry office. As she told me:

I couldn't believe it – I never expected to see, you know, the original, and how I wished I had my camera so I could have taken a picture of that page, you know. But, it was another kind of unnerving thing that just came at me sort of, that I wasn't expecting. And quite, yeah, it was quite, not emotional so much as the fact that well, an ancestor of mine actually touched that page to write that signature. Little bits and pieces that, really, I suppose a lot of people, it wouldn't matter, but, yeah, there were things that just made a little difference (2.11, pp. 22-23).

For another interviewee, it was a visit to the orphan home where her father had been placed as a baby that really got to her. So much so, in fact, that hers was an almost supernatural experience:

when I was at [the Home], I thought my father was there – it was the only time it caught up to me. I just felt like he was smothering me – if I had turned around and my father had been standing there, I wouldn't have even been afraid... I just felt like my dad was just, I just felt him all around me, just like he was suffocating me (3.3, p. 43).

Consequently, it seems that there may even be a spiritual dimension to what some descendants experience when they visit Britain. And this was illustrated in yet another interview, this time when my research subject talked about her experience when she visited her father's birthplace in England:

I felt as if I was, as if I belonged. It was strange, it was really strange... I couldn't believe it, there was just something about that place – it was a part of me, and that's how I felt... And I just felt as if I had gone home. And yet, he [her Home Child father] never had told me anything – I knew nothing about England... It was unbelievable... And, you know, it was funny too – I felt as if I was closer to God (6.4, pp. 25-26).

Thus, for these three interviewees at least, visiting Britain had a far more powerful impact on them than they could ever have imagined.

Notwithstanding the deeply moving experiences mentioned in the previous paragraph, many other interviewees were still affected by their visits to the 'Old Country,' although perhaps not to the extent mentioned above. For instance, the assertion by a number of my research subjects that their visit to Britain was like "going home" provided a common thread that ran through my transcripts:⁷⁸

I had been to Scotland before and I never went as a tourist. I actually...I approached it as going home. Even when I went before, before I knew all of the particulars, I still approached it as going home (1.1, p. 22).

I love going over there to visit, love it. And yeah, I feel that I'm more than a tourist – I feel I'm one of the children coming home, really, yeah (3.1, p. 41).

I certainly feel different when I go over – I just feel like I'm coming home (6.3, p. 51).

Consequently, although Canada may be the place of their birth and although they may call themselves Canadian, the country of their parents' and grandparents' birth is clearly their 'second home,' or, in some cases at least, their 'spiritual home.' And it would seem

⁷⁸ This also provides an interesting contrast with the perspective of the former Home Child, mentioned earlier in this chapter, who viewed returning to Canada after a trip to England as "going home."

that the feelings of attachment that I encountered are not peculiar to the amateur genealogists that I interviewed. For instance, Nash (2003) highlights similar emotions amongst the roots tourists visiting Ireland that she spoke to. As she puts it:

Standing on the land that ancestors knew produces a sense of genealogical connection that is sometimes explained through physical inheritance and blood, sometimes as an inexpressible sense of spiritual affinity, and often experienced bodily in ‘shivers down the spine’ and ‘goosebumps’ (pp. 188-189).

Similarly, Meethan (2004) comments that, for the amateur genealogists he contacted, the ability to say “I was there” (p. 147) is a crucial means of cementing relationships with ancestors’ homelands.

Of course, there are also those who have little or no desire to visit the ‘Old Country’ – as one lady joked “I’d rather go to Florida or somewhere else in the wintertime” (5.6, p. 33) – in much the same way as there are those, discussed earlier, who feel no loyalty to the Queen or who do not embrace British culture in the way that many of my interviewees do. For them, Britain is no different from any other foreign country, notwithstanding the familial ties or, indeed, the strong ties that the two countries have enjoyed over the years. And, again, this should not necessarily be a surprise. After all, the Home Children themselves often wished that their lives back in Britain could be forgotten and, consequently, they avoided sharing their experiences of ‘home’ with their children and grandchildren. And this reticence certainly had the desired result with the family of one woman that I interviewed. Her grandfather was a Home Child, but one of the many who failed to talk to his offspring about his childhood in England. Her mother, on the other hand, was a Scot who had emigrated

with family and who always reminded her family of where she came from. So, when this interviewee visited Britain, she described her feelings in the following manner:

when we were in England, that's fine, it was interesting...I went to Wales, that's fine; I went to the Lake District, that was fine; crossed the border into Scotland, and I don't know whether it was from what my mother had said all my life or osmosis or what, but I remember telling somebody after, it was like going home... and still to this day, I would love to, I have no interest in going to England whatsoever, but I would like to go back to Scotland, yeah. And I think with my grandfather, because he was a Home Child and there was no talk, to the best of my knowledge, about where he came from – at least I never heard it, and I was a nosey child – those people [his descendants] have no desire to go to their roots, and I've never heard them talk about going to Britain, ever... I think it stopped with my grandfather because there was no talk of where he came from (5.8, pp. 42-43).

Thus, this woman feels a strong connection with Scotland, but it is certainly not as a result of her being a descendant of a Home Child; any affinity that she has with the British Isles is as a result of the stories told by her mother. However, what is fascinating is that some of those who *do* feel a strong connection with the British Isles because of their Home Child links have often had similar experiences to those of this woman. Many of my interviewees were given no encouragement at all by their Home Child ancestors and yet, through their research, they have still grown to love Britain. They still celebrate their British roots and they still, in some cases at least, view Britain as 'home from home.'

Re-establishing family ties

Looking back over my interview transcripts, there is a particular aspect of my research subjects' relationship with Britain that I find slightly surprising: notwithstanding the amount of research that they have carried out, it seems that relatively few have actually

managed to ‘reconnect’ with relatives in the ‘Old Country.’ It is certainly true that some have always maintained contact with relatives ‘across the water.’ Indeed, while many Home Children cut off all ties with Britain, there were undoubtedly others who did not. However, of those who did lose touch with relatives, not many of the descendants that I interviewed have been able to re-establish contact. What is more, relatively few even mentioned attempting to track down such ‘long lost’ relations. Nevertheless, some accounts of reunions did emerge and it is to these that I now turn.

Perhaps the most memorable account of a family reunion that I heard of during my research was the story of the Home Child who was reunited with his sister over sixty years after he had seen or heard from her last. And, what is more remarkable about this case is not that this man’s sister was also a Home Child, but that she had been sent to Australia! As his widow and son told me:

WIDOW: *He often spoke of his sister – he knew his sister and he remembered her. And we went over to England in ’87, and there was a couple on the tour with us and they knew of a lady in England that found lost people... So [he]...gave her what information – the stepfather’s name and that, and his mother’s name. And when we came home about two weeks later, [the lady] phoned us and asked for [him] how to spell the stepfather’s name. And he said... “that’s all, how I would spell it.” Anyway, she said “I think I [have found] your sister.” So she phoned the [family in question] in England and the stepbrother, no the half brother rather, he knew exactly where the sister was in Australia, and he had been corresponding with her all the time... And, we got a telegram saying then that they had found her. And they came up and seen us in ’89.*

SON: *Yeab, they phoned, they phoned about a day later, after the woman had phoned, that they’d found his sister. His sister phoned from Australia, the next day I guess, because they’d contacted her and told her they’d found her brother.*

ANDY: *So he hadn’t spoken to her in sixty years or...*

WIDOW: *Sixty-four years.*

ANDY: *Wow! And he had no idea that she had been in Australia?*

SON: *No, he'd been told on an earlier attempt, back after the war, he attempted to get word of his family, and he'd been told then that the area where they had lived had been bombed pretty heavy during the war, and one of the buildings that contained the records had been totally demolished and there was no way of tracking them down. So he figured that, all these years he thought that his entire family had been wiped out. It was quite a jolt to get a phone call from his sister.*

WIDOW: *And his mother, if she had have got that letter, because she was trying to find [him] and they told, then there was word that a boat had sunk and the boatload of boys had been drowned, so she finally figured [he] was in the boat (3.10, pp. 9-10).*

So, these siblings, separated as children and sent to Australia and Canada as child migrants, were finally reunited even though, for many years, both thought that the other was dead. What is more, although both are now deceased, their children continue to correspond by email and the family ties that were broken all these years ago have finally been re-established.

While the reunion cited above was perhaps the most dramatic, others were no less important to the families in question. Indeed, there were some that were almost as remarkable. For instance, the daughter of one Home Child wrote a speculative letter to an old address that she found and, as a result, was able to make contact with cousins for the first time:

I wrote a letter to the address and I thought, well, I've got nothing to lose – I mean, it's forty years, but you never know. And within two weeks I had an answer back saying that "I'm your dad's first cousin, da da da da da da," so then it just snowballed from there... So, now we're, and I'm telling you, we got along like a house on fire. The relatives, we just love each other so much (4.1, p. 30).

Unfortunately, not all of the stories that my interviewees told had such happy endings. For each account of a bridge being rebuilt there is one of frustration that no progress had been made on that front. In some cases searches for family have been going on for many years but, sadly, re-establishing contact can often be more difficult than one would imagine, especially if the Home Child in question did not even want to find relatives (or be found by them for that matter). As one interviewee told me:

it was very much a case of, when my grandfather came over, it was a cut and slice. It was just, everything over there was just cut off, period. Here, it's a new start... And that's the way he viewed it, and that's the way it became (4.11, p. 33).

It could also be suggested that, for some at least, there is actually a fear of making a step into the unknown; a fear of finding that 'long lost' relative. Carrying out research in the unthreatening environment of the home or the local library – or the archive in Britain for that matter – is one thing, but to actually knock on a door or pick up the phone and contact a complete stranger is quite another. Furthermore, there are people who *have* made contact with relatives but who perhaps wish that they never did so, such was the negative response they received.⁷⁹ And, while none of my interviewees fell into this category, I did come across a couple of the members of the British Home Children Mailing List discussing the bad experiences that they had. One made the following comments about relatives – descendants of the same Home Child – that she had located in Canada:

⁷⁹ Nash (2003) discusses this in the context of roots tourists to Ireland who are often disappointed by the apparent disinterest of newly discovered Irish relatives in their family history.

Dear List:

I just wanted the list to know about my most recent experience in trying to help find family. This past week I drove six hours to Windsor [Ontario] spent two nights in a hotel and trips to library, cemetery and an old neighborhood taking pictures. I finally located some children of one of our BHC [British Home Child]. I decided to call on the phone and what a rude and uncaring person I had the unfortunate [sic] task of talking to. I was just so SHOCKED that someone would not be interested in helping find their own family members. I still can't get over the whole experience and just wanted the list to know how lucky we are on the BHC site, where there are members helping each other, and on the other end there are people that would hang up on you.

Thank You to each and every one of you that are always there to help (Message posted Thursday 8th September 2005, accessed from British Home Children Mailing List Archives, 19/01/2006).

Another person responded, expressing sadness at what had happened. She then went on to discuss how she, too, had had bad experiences with her relatives:

I'm so sorry you had that awful experience. If it makes you feel any better, here's an experience of mine. I have relatives (real live ones that I didn't have to search for) who have photographs of many family members from Scotland, who won't share them. These relatives came from the same poor, but strong, stock that many of us descend from, but they act as though they are somehow better than us, and choose to keep what they have to themselves. My mom has always told me that they may not pay for it in this life time but, God willing, they will in the next! (Message posted Saturday 10th September 2005, accessed from British Home Children Mailing List Archives, 19/01/2006).

Of course, it should not be surprising that family disputes occur between descendants of the Home Children; after all, no family is immune from conflict. But perhaps it is the fear of this happening that puts some off reconnecting with relatives. Perhaps there is a fear that doing so will ruin the mystique that has been built up around the character of those relatives that are descended from “the same poor, but strong, stock” on the other side of the Atlantic. Thus, perhaps this is a risk that some are just unwilling to take.

I would suggest that this point can be further illustrated by considering the comments of one descendant that I interviewed. When I asked her if she would like to meet relatives on the Home Child side of the family, her answer was a resounding yes: “Oh my goodness, yes, yes. Oh yes – I’d love that” (2.11, p. 42). And yet, when she actually visited Britain to carry out her research, she stopped short of doing just that; as she explained, “I didn’t go over there with the idea to meddle” (2.11, p. 42). Consequently, when she almost bumped into a woman that bore a striking family resemblance in the town where her Home Child relative was born, she stopped short of introducing herself. Could it be that descendants such as this lady fear being rejected by such relatives? Do they worry – with justification given the examples cited above – that these people will want nothing to do with them, in the same way that their ancestors in Britain may have wanted nothing to do with the Home Child that was shipped off to Canada, or in the way that the Home Child often cut off all ties too? This is pure speculation on my part; there could be a far simpler explanation for this. For instance, in the case mentioned above, it would have taken a great deal of nerve for this woman to introduce herself to a complete stranger in the middle of the street; perhaps most would stop short of doing so. In other cases, as I have already stated, it could be that attempts *have* been made to get in touch – perhaps even by family members on both sides of the Atlantic – but such attempts have ended in failure. However, notwithstanding the explanation for this, one thing is for sure – there are still many

thousands of people in both Britain and Canada who have never made contact with their 'long lost' relatives on the other side of the Atlantic, and there are many more who are not even aware that such relatives exist.

Conclusion

It is clear that identity, for the descendants of Home Children, is not something that allows for easy generalisations. Rather, the way in which my interviewees discussed their identities confirmed what the likes of Nash (2002 and 2003) point out in their work on this subject: there are no absolutes when it comes to defining identity, no matter the group that is being studied. No surprise, then, that the descendants that I interviewed, given their complex family histories, often found it difficult to articulate their feelings of belonging, whether to Canada, to Britain, or, indeed, to one of the nations within Britain. Furthermore, any comments that they did make in this regard were inevitably affected by the cultural 'baggage' that surrounded their discussions with me on this topic. It was in this chapter in particular that I was most aware of the possibility that my background was influencing how my research subjects responded to me: my national identity – both British and Scottish – surely had an effect on how people discussed their feelings with regard to their relationships with both Britain and Scotland.⁸⁰ However, by utilising semi-structured interviews that allowed my interviewees to dictate the tone of our conversations, albeit within the parameters that I had set, I would like to think that such effects were minimised.

Notwithstanding such issues, it is still important to try and tease out some trends with regard to the identities of my interviewees. In terms of their links with Canada, given that the large majority of the descendants that I interviewed were born in Canada,

⁸⁰ Of course, it was not only my national identity that would have affected discussions in this way. As I pointed out when I dealt with my research methods in Chapter Two, all research is affected by the 'positionality' of both the researcher and the researched (Valentine, 1997; Rose, 1997).

it is of little surprise that most view themselves as Canadians.⁸¹ However, for a significant number of them, being Canadian is also about having links with the countries from which their ancestors emigrated; something that the country's official multiculturalism policy undoubtedly encourages. And, while that means they may well feel ties to a number of different countries, it is obviously their ties with Britain that I am concerned with here. Interestingly, the bonds that the descendants often feel with Britain are in spite of their Home Child ancestors: because they wished to bury their past lives, the Home Children often discouraged their children and grandchildren from making any connections with the 'Old Country.' Nevertheless, a large number of my research subjects still feel a powerful connection with Britain and this is often cemented by means of a variety of cultural markers that include British television, literature and, perhaps most important, indicators of Empire such as the Royal Family and the Union Jack. However, there is a definite sense that such historic links with Britain and its Empire are steadily being eroded in Canada today. This is, according to some of my research subjects, reflected in the lack of affinity that their own descendants feel towards the 'motherland,' although it could be suggested that it is also reflected in a much broader shift away from links with Britain in Canada more generally.

When it comes to further cementing their relationship with the land of their forebears' birth, it seems that nothing has more power for my interviewees than a trip to the country in question; something that the tourist industry has certainly latched on to as it attempts to capitalise on the insatiable appetite of amateur genealogists for trips to the UK. Thus, a significant majority of my research subjects have either visited Britain or have a strong desire to do so. Whilst there, it is of little surprise that the places they are drawn to visit are the ones which they have researched over the years or, if they are

⁸¹ One of the descendants that I interviewed was actually born in Britain (his Home Child father had returned to Britain after fighting in Europe in World War One). This interviewee lived in Britain for many years before emigrating to Canada in the 1960s and, consequently, he is perhaps less sure about his Canadian identity than those who have spent their whole lives in that country.

lucky, that their Home Child ancestor told them about. These are often unconventional tourist sites – the highlight of a trip may be walking the street that a grandfather grew up on or visiting the orphan home where a grandmother spent the first few years of her life – but they are hugely significant to my interviewees. Many are filled with emotion as they go to see these places and, for a small number, their visits even take on a spiritual dimension: they become more of a pilgrimage than a holiday. Interestingly though, most stop short of reconnecting with relatives in the ‘Old Country.’ Rather, they seem content, literally, with their walk down memory lane, reinforcing their connections with Britain as it was rather than as it is today. And while this may simply be due to difficulties in re-establishing contact after years – and sometimes generations – of separation, I have suggested that, in some cases at least, it may be because there is a fear of what might be discovered. Although the people that I interviewed are happy to research their roots in the archives in Canada or on the streets of Britain – something that they do with a great deal of enthusiasm – not all of them are so keen to commit themselves to relationships where their feelings of affection may not be reciprocated.

My interviewees still have many unanswered questions about their ties to Britain and how these affect their national identity. As one interviewee put it, “what are we, you know, because of our parents coming from England?” (1.4, p. 22). Or, as another put it to me while struggling to contain his laughter, “My national identity is a bit confused” (1.1, p. 21). However, as this second interviewee went on to explain, he still believes that his family history research has at least brought some closure in this respect:

It certainly [uncovering his Home Child background], in an almost unexpected way, gave me a very real connection to this country's history, but also a very, very tangible connection to the history of Scotland. So...to know all of this, for me at least, was a relief... for me it explains a lot of almost inarticulate questions about identity – how we came to be, you know, where we are, why do we do the

things we do, that sort of thing. And maybe I'm not doing it justice, but it settled a lot of issues for me
(1.1, p. 21).

So, while this interviewee admitted to having some difficulty articulating his feelings with regard to his identity, at least his research brought him that bit closer to some answers. And I would suggest that this is true for the majority of people that I interviewed in Canada: while they may not be able to fully explain how their identities have been affected by their Home Child roots, their research has not only helped them develop what is often a detailed knowledge of their family history, but, perhaps more importantly, it has also given them a rather sophisticated understanding of the complexities inherent in their personal and national identities.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have been concerned with studying the cultural practices and identities of those descendants of child migrants who have a particular interest in researching their Home Child roots. In order to do this, I have drawn upon theoretical literature in relation to diaspora and genealogy in particular, hence the use of the term diasporic genealogies in the title of my thesis. However, while this academic context has been a vital means of structuring my arguments throughout the thesis, I have been most concerned with discussing the distinctive characteristics of my research subjects. Thus, I have attempted to account for the interest that they have in their Home Child roots and have considered the ways in which they express this interest, whether they do so on an individual basis or collectively as members of what I describe as a descendants' community. Where they carry out their research has also been of interest to me and I have discussed their practices both at home in Canada and during the trips to Britain that they make as so-called 'roots tourists.' By focusing on their experiences and attitudes with regard to their genealogical research, I have gained an insight into their personal, family, national and transnational identities.

In terms of the specifics of my research, a number of key points are worth re-emphasising. First, the great majority of the descendants of Home Children with whom I spoke during the course of my research have been profoundly affected by what happened to their forebears. The influence of their background on their lives has manifested itself in a number of ways. For instance, some have gained strength and inspiration from the fact that their parents and grandparents managed to make successful lives for themselves in Canada despite the difficult start in life that they had, while others recognise the negative impact that their background has had on them and

are saddened when they think of how their families still suffer because of what happened to their Home Child ancestors. Then there are those who celebrate the contribution that the Home Children made to the development of modern day Canada – these people often use every opportunity possible to ‘spread the word’ about what these child migrants achieved – while, on the other hand, there are people who do not believe that this is necessary at all; although they may recognise the significance of what happened to their ancestors, they do not believe that they should spend undue time dwelling on past events. Of course, the feelings of my research subjects often overlap on such issues – few uncritically celebrate and proclaim their family history, while even fewer merely lament it. However, the paucity of people bemoaning their past may well be a reflection of the small group of people that I spoke to and, indeed, of the recruitment techniques that I utilised.

Clearly my research does not account for the feelings of all those descendants with an interest in their Home Child history, far less the many thousands of descendants who have neither knowledge nor interest in their Home Child roots. Consequently, any conclusions that I have drawn must not be ascribed to all descendants of child migrants. However, one obvious way in which my research could be furthered in this respect would be to contact even more descendants who are researching their Home Child roots – while the fifty-nine interviews that I conducted was a significant number for a project of this size, it was small when one considers the number of potential interviewees that are actually ‘out there.’ There is also the potential for shifting the focus of the research in terms of the types of descendants that are targeted. For instance, it would be interesting to speak to more people who have little or no interest in their family history although, as I mentioned earlier, tracking down such people may prove to be tricky; as far as I know, there are no descendants groups that exist which celebrate the fact that they have no interest in tracing their roots! However, if such

people could be found – one possibility could be to make contact via friends and family who *do* have an interest – their thoughts with regard to their identity would surely provide an interesting comparison with those of the people that I spoke to.

Another group that would be interesting to compare with my research subjects would be descendants of Home Children living outside Canada. Such research could include not only those descendants living in the other countries to which the child migrants were sent (Australia would be the obvious example here, although, given the era in which most children were sent there, it would be the migrants themselves who would be the more likely research subjects), but also relatives who are living in Britain – the Home Children, aside from those who had no family at all when they left for Canada, will have a significant number of descendants living in Britain today. However, other than those with an interest in their family history, these people may also be difficult to track down. Indeed, given that they will not tend to be direct descendants of the Home Children, they are probably even less likely to have an awareness of, or interest in, this aspect of their family history. Thus, there is perhaps even less chance for a researcher to have the opportunity to speak to them, although, again, contact could be made via relatives in Canada, as well as through relevant Internet message boards and mailing lists.

It is clear that the Internet is hugely influential in attracting more and more people to genealogical research. However, while the spread of technology has undoubtedly played a huge role in improving the accessibility of historical records, I would suggest that it is more than technology that drives today's fascination with the past. Indeed, Chapter One argues that there are deeper social and cultural forces at work here. For instance Basu (2002) suggests that modernity has caused many to seek comfort from 'the past' in an era characterised by loss and dislocation, while Brett (1996) comments that such tendencies are as a consequence of industrialisation. Thus

people often seem to feel the need to look back in order to “reaffirm ties” (Hutton, 1993, p. 2) with the world as it once was. And, as the world continues to change – and, indeed, as it does so at an ever increasing pace – so this need to commemorate becomes even greater. Furthermore, as the nuclear family that was once the norm begins to disintegrate – both due to ever increasing mobility and ever changing values – and as personal and national identities become increasingly malleable, such shifts cause even more to attempt to grasp on to their families as they once were. However, Nora (1996) highlights what he sees as the futility of such a pursuit; rather than being able to retain and reclaim memories, people are only able to hold onto vestiges – *lieux de mémoire* – of a world that is tumbling “with increasing rapidity into an irretrievable past” (Nora, 1996, p. 1).

Today’s genealogy is also about making choices concerning which aspects of the family history will be researched. As Nash (2003) puts it,

In family histories which are seldom characterized by marriage within only one ethnic group, and in a genealogical tradition in which kinship and ethnicity can be reckoned through paternal and maternal descent, doing genealogy involves choices about which line or lines to follow and which ancestors matter” (p. 183).

In the case of the descendants of the Home Children that I interviewed, their choice is often to privilege their Home Child roots over other aspects of their family history. Why they do this is difficult to say. Constantine (2003) suggests that they may be jumping on a bandwagon of sorts; choosing to focus on that part of their background because of the cultural capital that can be gained from doing so, particularly in an era in which the Home Children are lauded for what they achieved despite their background. And this mirrors the argument of Novick (cited in Basu, 2002), who suggests that many

amateur genealogists compete to be associated with those people in history that have suffered the most, almost as a form of reverse snobbery from those who desperately seek some royal blood in their background. However, such an argument fails to account for the possibility that descendants of Home Children may simply be most interested in that aspect of their history because it is in that branch of their family tree that the greatest mystery lies. What is more, it fails to acknowledge the huge impact – both positive and negative – that the Home Children have often had on the lives of their descendants and the possibility that this has motivated their children and grandchildren to learn as much as they can about them. I would suggest that these are the more likely explanations for the privileging of Home Child roots that occurs: while it may well be fashionable to be labelled as a descendant of a Home Child in Canada today and while some, on a subconscious level at least, might choose to focus on their Home Child background for this reason, I would argue that their overriding reasons for doing so differ from those suggested by the likes of Constantine and Novick.

Notwithstanding any debate with regard to the conscious and unconscious decisions descendants make with regard to their identity, it is still the case that many of them find themselves unsure of their place in the world, both in terms of the country in which they live and with regard to the country – or countries – that they can trace their family to. As is the case with diaspora communities the world over, they feel “both at home and not at home” (Blunt, 2005, p. 4) whether they are in their ‘host’ country or in the land of their forebears. Thus, they often long for a home that perhaps has not been their immediate family’s physical home for generations – and, curiously, a land that, more often than not, held awful memories for their Home Child ancestors – but, at the same time, they cannot ignore the many ties that they have to the country in which they normally reside. They are defined, therefore, by the connections that they have to both places, even although they are separated, spatially and temporally, from their country of

origin. However, it seems that many of my research subjects are not necessarily interested in Britain as it is today; rather, they are drawn to the country as it was and, more specifically, to particular sites relating to the lives of ancestors. Similarly, they do not necessarily feel the need to make connections with ‘long lost’ relatives that continue to live there and, even if they do, that does not mean that they will immediately find a common bond with these people – a point that I raised towards the end of the preceding chapter. Consequently, the link that they have with the ‘Old Country’ is exactly that: a link with the country of old rather than with the country as it is today. However, again, such a generalisation cannot be made for all descendants and, while some of my interviewees may be content with their knowledge of Britain as it was, others *have* forged new links with it as it is today.

There are, of course, wider questions about identity that are also alluded to in this thesis. And I would suggest that the legal action raised against Barnardo’s that was discussed in detail in Chapter Four, is, to a certain extent, indicative of some of these questions. One gets the sense that, for many of my interviewees, this lawsuit is viewed as a slight on the memories of their Home Child ancestors – in their eyes, such a course of action would have been anathema to the pioneering and, dare I say it, quintessentially British spirit of their forebears. Or, to put it another way, and to return to the metaphor at the centre of the Douglas Malloch poem cited in Chapter Four, ‘good timber’ does not sue! However, such sentiments perhaps have wider implications when one considers the deeper questions about contemporary Canadian identity and culture that were raised in the introduction to the thesis. One can think, for instance, of the redress being sought by the country’s First Nations peoples in the form of land claims against the state. What do my interviewees think of such forms of reparative justice? Is there a sense, in such instances, that the Aboriginal population should, like the Home Children, be able to rise above the discrimination that they suffer rather than turn to the courts?

Alternatively, what are my interviewees' views on those recent immigrant groups who are marginalised, socially and economically, in present-day Canada, and who, arguably, suffer as much hardship as the Home Children did in preceding centuries? Are they the 'good timber' of the twenty-first century, despite their colour or their ethnicity? Such questions are perhaps for another thesis, but they are important to consider nonetheless.

On the other hand, there is also a sense that the descendants of the Home Children who were interviewed for this research, do not fit neatly into the discourse of multiculturalism espoused by many – but by no means all – in Canada today. Indeed, the way in which some of my interviewees celebrate their Britishness could well be viewed as outdated by a wider population which has, to a large extent, moved away from defining itself in relation to the 'mother country.' And this may at least partially explain their sometimes fruitless struggle for recognition and their inability to convince national bodies such as Canada Post to commemorate their ancestors in any significant way. Similarly, the interest of descendants of Home Children in their British connection also coincides with debates about Britishness that have emerged in the 'Old Country' in recent years in response to internal processes of devolution, cultural change and European integration. Thus, what it means to be British for people in Britain could also be very different from the British identities that my research subjects celebrate.

Notions of the Home Children and their descendants as diaspora are another important theme running through the thesis. While I have argued that they may be viewed as such in their own right, they are, in many ways, indistinguishable from all those other Canadians who are descended from British immigrants and who still take pride in their roots. Consequently, the poverty that forebears experienced in the 'Old Country,' the pioneering spirit, the success despite the odds and all such narratives undoubtedly have a familiar ring to them. And yet, I have argued that the descendants of the Home Children *are* different. This distinctiveness stems not only from the story

of their ancestors – similar as the general themes may be to other accounts of migration from Britain – but also from the way in which they have united to celebrate the contribution that these children made to Canadian history. It is this unity of purpose, both in terms of their research and their commemorative practices, which differentiates them from others and adds a further layer of meaning to their identities. In some ways, then, they may be part of a wider British diaspora – perhaps they could even be described as a diaspora within a diaspora – but they are a diaspora none the less.

It is clear, then, that research on the descendants of Canada's Home Children can make a useful contribution to debates not only on family history but also, more broadly, on complex issues concerning individual and collective identity. And, while I have alluded to a number of the ways in which research on these descendants can be expanded in this regard, there is also a great deal of potential for comparative research to be conducted in this field. For instance, my work can be informed by a study of similar groups and individuals whose personal, national and transnational identities have been affected by displacement. One obvious example in this regard would be the so-called 'Orphan Train Riders' whose experiences in the USA closely mirrored those of the Home Children. The Orphan Train Riders were pauper children, usually from cities on the eastern seaboard of the United States, who were placed on trains, sent out to the country's western states and 'adopted' by families that lived along the routes that the trains would take. It is estimated that, between 1854 and the 1930s, over 150,000 children were sent west in this manner (Orphan Train Heritage Society of America website, accessed 24/04/2006) and, as such, the parallels with the Home Children are obvious.⁸²

⁸² Interestingly, it is said that both Maria Rye and Annie Macpherson were heavily influenced by the work of the founding father of this movement, Charles Loring Brace of the New York Children's Aid Society. Indeed, both visited Brace shortly before commencing their work with the Home Children in Canada (Parr, 2000). For more on the Orphan Train Riders, see, for instance, *The Orphan Trains: Leaving the Cities behind*, edited by Jeanne Munn Bracken (1997).

Back in Canada, another group that would provide some interesting contrasts with the Home Children would be those First Nations children who, up until relatively recently, were taken from their homes and placed in residential schools that were run by the Canadian Government and a variety of religious organisations. Remarkably, the last federally-run school did not actually close its doors until 1996, and it is estimated that there are 80,000 people alive today who attended one of the schools in question.⁸³ In Australia, a similar scheme saw thousands of Aboriginal children being forcibly removed from parents and family and placed in institutions, mission dormitories, foster and adoption homes.⁸⁴ Viewing the official government reports that have been produced in reaction to these controversial chapters in Canadian and Australian history, one can see many parallels between the experiences of these children and the child migrants that I have been studying (although the case of the Home Children is undoubtedly different given that neither they, nor their descendants, suffered, or continue to suffer, from the same level of racial discrimination that still besets the native populations of Canada and Australia). However, an analysis of the similarities, and differences, between marginalised groups such as those discussed – as well as a study of how their respective descendants have been affected by their traumatic experiences – would certainly make for some fascinating research.

I end my thesis by turning, once more, to the example of Alex Haley's *Roots*. It could be argued that his novel, when it was written, reflected a particular desire amongst African Americans to discover more about their ethnic background; for them, genealogical research had become an empowering pursuit that allowed them to assert a

⁸³ This information is detailed on the official Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada website (accessed 13/04/2006). More on this subject can also be found in John Milloy's 1999 text, *A National Crime: the Canadian government and the residential school system, 1879 – 1986*.

⁸⁴ More on this topic can be found in Shurlee Swain's 2001 article, 'Child Rescue: The Emigration of an Idea,' and on the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission website (accessed 13/04/2006). Both discuss the 'Stolen Children' National Inquiry report, *Bringing Them Home*, that was tabled in Federal Parliament in 1997 and that resulted in an official apology being issued by Parliament in 1999. The plight of the children involved was also highlighted, more recently, in the 2002 movie *Rabbit-Proof Fence*.

particular sense of black identity in the face of continued oppression and racism. Similarly, I have suggested that the descendants of the Home Children who are interested in their roots have also been involved in reclaiming the lives of their ancestors in order to celebrate what they achieved in spite of their circumstances. However, while family history research can certainly empower and be used as a tool to highlight the ability of forebears to overcome hardship and succeed in life, it is much more than that. Genealogy reflects the desperate attempts that many make to maintain links with ‘the past’ in a present that seems to lack the certainty and continuity that previous generations supposedly enjoyed. And I would suggest that this nostalgia for a bygone era is encapsulated in the increased interest in genealogy that now exists in the UK. It would seem that, until recently, many in Britain tended to accept the myth that their roots were deeply embedded in British soil: presuming they could tick all the right boxes – in terms of skin colour, accent and so on – British people did not tend to show as much interest in their family history as their counterparts across the Atlantic. And yet, a pastime that ‘we’ used to joke about as being the crutch of those living in the former settler colonies of the British Empire has now become a preoccupation for ‘us’ too (Lowenthal, 1994).⁸⁵ The emergence of genealogy as a popular pursuit in Britain thus emphasises the fact that family history research can no longer be seen as a pursuit for the ‘old,’ the ‘oppressed,’ the ‘lonely’ or the ‘rootless.’ Rather, it is, as Nora puts it, a line of enquiry that people of all backgrounds wish to dabble in:

Those who have long been marginalized in traditional history are not the only ones haunted by the need to recover their buried pasts. Following the example of ethnic

⁸⁵ This is perhaps best illustrated by the ever increasing interest that the British media is showing in this pursuit. The BBC, for example, are in the process of filming the third series of their hugely popular documentary programme, *Who do you think you are?* (Guardian Unlimited, accessed 29/06/2006), that follows a variety of British celebrities as they attempt to trace their roots. Similarly, numerous newspaper articles have also been written on the subject (see, for instance, the recent article in *The Guardian* – ‘Births. Marriages. Deaths. Lives.’ – by Sabine Durrant).

groups and social minorities, every established group, intellectual or not, learned or not, has felt the need to go in search of its own origins and identity (Nora, 1989, p. 15)

While, in many ways, the interest that the descendants of the Home Children have in their family history is certainly unique, it is, on the other hand, merely a reflection of a far more widespread desire to obtain guarantees about individual and collective identity in a rapidly changing world.

Appendix A: Interview Statistics

Table 1: Estimated Age of Interviewees

ESTIMATED AGE	TOTAL	%
Under 50	16	16.7
50 – 65	19	19.8
Over 65	61	63.5
TOTAL NO. INTERVIEWEES	96	100

Table 2: Sex of Interviewees

SEX	TOTAL	%
Male	39	40.6
Female	57	59.4
TOTAL NO. INTERVIEWEES	96	100

Table 3: Interview Details

INTERVIEWEE	NO. INTERVIEWED
Home Child	3
Home Child's Spouse	1
Son	22
Daughter	24
Grandson	5
Grand Daughter	15
Great Grandson	1
Great Granddaughter	1
Great Great Grandson	1
Nephew	1
Niece	2
Other	20
TOTAL NO. INTERVIEWEES	96

(Note: A more detailed breakdown of interview details can be found in Appendix E)

Table 4: Reunion Attendance

REUNION ATTENDANCE	NUMBER	%
Have attended at least one reunion	36	61.0
Have not attended but wish to do so	6	10.2
Have not attended and no desire to do so	4	6.8
Have not attended and no opinion on attending	4	6.8
Attendance not discussed	9	15.3
TOTAL NO. INTERVIEWS	59	100

Table 5: Trips to Britain

TRIPS TO BRITAIN	NUMBER	%
Have visited the UK at least once	32	54.2
Have not visited but wish to do so	17	28.8
Have not visited but expressed no desire to do so	6	10.2
Trips to the UK not discussed	4	6.8
TOTAL NO. INTERVIEWS	59	100

Appendix B: Interviewee Consent Form

Project Title: Canadian Home Children and their Descendants

I, _____ (the participant), have read the Information Sheet provided by the researcher, Andrew Morrison, and have had the opportunity to have any questions concerning the research addressed. I understand that I will be participating in the study entitled *Canadian Home Children and their Descendants*, and that this participation involves one interview of approximately one hour in length.

- I agree to permit a tape recorder to be used in the interview YES ____ NO ____
- I agree that quotations from the interview **may** be used in written work arising from this study and that they may be attributed directly to me YES ____ NO ____

OR

- I agree that quotations from this interview may be used in written work arising from this study but these **may not** be attributed to me or to a title that could be attributed to me YES ____ NO ____

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time. I understand that I will have access to the tape and transcript associated with my interview, if I so desire. I understand that the only other person who will have access to the tape and transcript of this interview will be the researcher. I understand that I will be contacted for further permission if the researcher wishes to utilise the information that I provide in any way other than has been stated above.

NAME: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

Appendix C: Information Sheet and Business Card

Research Information Sheet

Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario

April 2004

My name is Andrew Morrison. I am a PhD student from the University of Nottingham in England. The title of my research is *Canadian Home Children and their Descendants*. I am undertaking this research under the supervision of Professor Mike Heffernan and Doctor Susanne Seymour, both from the School of Geography at the University of Nottingham. During my stay in Canada, I will be based at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. My academic host at Queen's is Professor Brian Osborne from the Department of Geography. If you wish to verify my credentials, he can be contacted at (613) 533-6042, or by email at osborneb@qsilver.queensu.ca.

My research explores the cultural practices and identities of the descendants of an estimated 100,000 children who were despatched to Canada, unaccompanied by their parents, and under the auspices of several British charities, between 1869 and the late 1940s. It investigates the relationship between the descendants' individual and collective projects of recovery and commemoration, and wider issues of postcolonial nationhood, ethnicity, and culture. It also focuses on the relationships between personal, family, national, and transnational identities, and on the ways in which the Home Children are being commemorated in contemporary Canada amongst competing cultural and political agendas.

I am requesting your participation in this project as an interview participant. In total, I hope to conduct approximately forty individual interviews with descendants of Home Children, as well as a number of group interviews, also with descendants. Your participation in this process will be crucial to my research and will enable me to draw conclusions about the consequences of the child migration phenomenon.

All interviews will remain confidential unless permission is otherwise given. With this in mind, I have created a consent form which I ask you to complete, stating the level of involvement you are willing to have in my research.

If you have any questions concerning my research that arise after this interview, you can contact me at (613) 533 6000 ext. 78541 (until May 2004), or by email at canadiandescendants@hotmail.com. You can also read more about my research at <http://www.canadiandescendants.com>.

Thank you for your participation. Your support in this project is greatly appreciated and will enable me to produce a thesis that will hopefully make an important contribution to research concerning the effect that displacement has on individuals and families.



Appendix D: Question Sheet

Interview Procedure

1. Identity self – show Nottingham University ID.
2. Explain the purpose of my research.
3. Explain the role of the subject and the interview process.
4. Ask for permission to tape-record the interview. Confirm that they can receive a transcript of this if they so desire.
5. Explain that I will be giving them a permission slip which, if they sign it, will authorise me to use the information gleaned from the interview for my research. However, if they have stipulations regarding how this information is to be used, I will be willing to adhere to such requests.
6. Commence interview.

Questions

BACKGROUND

Perhaps you could tell me what your relationship to a Home Child or Home Children is / was?

Could you tell me what you know about your Home Child ancestor (e.g. about their life in Britain, their journey to Canada, the Receiving Home they went to in Canada, the family homes they stayed in, their lives after they left these homes, etc.)?

How would you gauge the success, or otherwise, of what happened to your ancestor?

How do you feel about what happened to your ancestor?

Do you have a sense of how they felt about what happened to them?

Can you comment on how significant their experiences were in terms of “who they were”?

How did they feel about Britain? Did they want to return?

RESEARCH

Is your Home Child background something that you’ve known about for a long time? When did you find out about this?

How did you find out? Do you know if the Home Child in question ever talked about this himself / herself?

Are you still researching your Home Child background? What does this research entail?

Is there a lot more you wish to know?

Could you describe your feelings about the research process? Was information easy to access?

IMPORTANCE

When did researching your Home Child ancestry become important to you or has it always been important? If it was not always important, why did the change of heart take place?

Why is this research important to you? Why do you conduct this research?

What are your feelings about talking about your Home Child heritage?

Are certain objects important to you with regard to your Home Child heritage?

Are you researching your non Home Child roots too? Are these just as important to you?

Are the rest of your family as interested in their 'roots' as you are? If not, why the different priorities?

IDENTITY

Are you proud of your family background? Has this always been the case?

How significant is your Home Child background in terms of "who you are"?

How has your Home Child background affected your national identity?

Do you feel an 'affinity' with Britain?

Do you have any relatives back in Britain? Have you always known about them or have you discovered them through your research?

Have you visited Britain in order to trace your 'roots'?

Did you see yourself as more than a tourist when you were there? If so, how / why?

CHILD MIGRATION IN GENERAL

What is your opinion of child migration?

What is your opinion of the charities and persons who were involved in child migration?

What is your opinion of the British and Canadian Governments who were involved in child migration?

THE SITUATION TODAY

Is enough being done to publicise what happened with regard to child migration?

Are the British and Canadian Governments active enough in this?

Is there anything more that you'd like to see being done in this respect?

You may be aware that Barnardo's are being sued by a former child migrant. Do you have an opinion on this course of action?

COMMUNITY

Do you feel a bond with other descendants?

If so, how has this bond developed?

Is the BHC Mailing List important to you in this respect?

Do you attend reunions? Are these important to you?

Appendix F: Message posted on the British Home Children Mailing List

Date: Fri, 23 Jan 2004 20:08:29 -0700
From: Perry Snow
Subject: [bhc] PHD Dissertation BHC Descendants

Hello

Received this message and since Andrew is not a subscriber, have forwarded it to the BHC Mail List. Wish him all the best with his research.

Perry Snow: Chartered Clinical Psychologist

Author: Neither Waif Nor Stray: <http://www.upublish.com/books/snow.htm>

BHC Mail List Administrator: <http://lists.rootsweb.com/index/intl/can/britishhomechildren.html>

BHC Website: <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~britishhomechildren>

++++
(PLEASE REPLY TO ANDREW MORRISON AT canadiandescendants@hotmail.com)

Dear BHC List Members,

My name is Andrew Morrison. I'm a PhD student from Scotland, studying the effect that child migration has had on the descendants of the Home Children. I'm staying in Kingston, Ontario at the moment, and am based at Queen's University. I hope to be in Canada until the end of May / early June.

If any of you are willing, I'd like to carry out interviews with those of you who are descendants of Home Children, and speak to you about your search for roots, your family background and how it has shaped your identity. And, while I'll be based in the Kingston area for much of my time in Canada, I will be travelling around the country to carry out interviews elsewhere, so I'd like to hear from you wherever you are. Depending on the level of interest shown in my research, I may not be able to meet up with all who get in touch with me in the time that I have. However, I will certainly respond to all correspondence and, if possible, I'll try to meet up with you.

If you want more information about my research, please go to my website at:

<http://www.canadiandescendants.com>

I was having some problems setting that site up, but these should now have been resolved. However, if you are having difficulties accessing the site, please try my old address:

<http://www.geog.nottingham.ac.uk/%7elgxanm>

If you'd like to email me, please use the following address:

canadiandescendants@hotmail.com (please note the spelling of my address - descendants, rather than descendents).

I know some people who access this board have been in touch with me already. I will be in touch with you again over the next few weeks to see if I can arrange to meet up with you - please bear with me as I try to sort out the logistics of my research.

Thanks and best regards,

Andrew Morrison

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