

ORPHANAGE EDUCATION

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David Maunders¹,
Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology.

Building Capital

This paper is based on interviews with 81 people who spent all or part of their childhood in an orphanage or other institution of care in Victoria between 1914 and 1985. It deals with their subjective experience of formal education in relation to four questions:

- what sort of schooling was offered and what level of schooling were the children able to reach?
- to what extent were children encouraged to have ambition and achieve their potential?
- were they treated differently to other children not in institutional care?
- did experiences differ between types of institution (particularly between religious denominations)?

The histories have been arbitrarily divided into four groups:
those who entered the institution between 1914 and left by 1935 (13 persons)
those who entered by 1928 and left by 1953 (22 persons)
those who entered by 1942 and left by 1965 (21 persons)
those who entered by 1956 and left by 1985 (25 persons).

In a recent study of orphanages in Baltimore in the Progressive Era, Nurith Zmora argues that institutionalisation could in some cases actually advantage children educationally, for instance, the Hebrew Orphan Asylum and the Samuel Ready School provided greater opportunities for children in their care than intact families struggling to make ends meet could offer. (Zmora, 1994) In Australia at this time, institutional managers and their staff were loosely guided by general societal expectations about education in terms of social class and aspirations. Many respondents saw their opportunities as limited, perhaps interpreting their experience through the expectations of subsequent generations without appreciating the institutional poverty, ethos, external employment climate and class expectations of their period in care.

The earliest Victorian orphanages, founded between 1850 and 1865, were understood on two levels: as places of refuge in a dangerous world and as establishments which prepared children to enter society and make their own way in life with only themselves as capital. (Jaggs, 1991:26) This capital included classroom education and practical 'training' which was intended to provide children with literacy, sound morals and competence to enter the workforce. The Melbourne Orphanage clearly

enunciated a principle of making children less vulnerable on leaving the institution by ensuring that they would become valuable employees. (Jaggs, 1991: 43) This recognition of the value of formal education, even to a low level by today's standards, as an element of personal capital is all the more striking when it is remembered that it antedated the introduction of compulsory state education. Similarly the establishment of government industrial and reformatory schools in 1864 demonstrated an acceptance of education/training as essential elements of the capital of deprived children. In his analysis of child welfare policy in England, Harry Hendrick points out that a deprived child is both victim and threat. Expenditure on education can therefore be seen as an investment. Education is an investment in the child and in the national future. (Hendrick, 1994:7) Our research suggests that

the concept of education as capital had been eroded by the time our oldest interviewees came into care. The number of institutions was greatly increased between 1885 and 1930, periods which covered severe depressions. Institutions dependent on charitable donations consequently became underfunded and understaffed and uncongenial to the idea of extended education. Furthermore, government policy in respect of wards of state resulted in the termination of payments for their upkeep at the age of 14. It appears therefore, that the idea of education as capital ceased to have a significant currency for much of this century but reappeared in the 1960s to become a major policy determinant.

Education after the Great War

In the decades following the Great War, most of the large Protestant orphanages had on-site schools provided by the State Education Department. Catholic institutions tended to use religious orders for care duties and teaching. Schools were often attended by children from outside as in the case of the Melbourne Orphanage school (Brighton Beach Primary) and at St Vincent's in South Melbourne. During this period, our data suggests that institutions typically had working class aspirations for their children with farm work for boys or domestic or child care work for girls the preferred options. However it is also clear that there was little in the way of fixed policy : decisions seem to have been made on an ad hoc basis. Children in care typically left school at 14. It was common for them to work for year within the orphanage, the boys growing vegetables, looking after cattle or other farming jobs to feed the orphanage, the girls looking after younger children or performing domestic tasks.

...You finished school at 14 irrespective of whether you were a whiz kid or a dumb klutz, you put one year growing the vegies for the staff and the children , milking the 5 or 6 cows or whatever it was.
(Raymond, Melbourne Orphanage, 1914-21)

Norman (St Nicholas, 1921-30) had the same experience: 'the bloke at the home, he'd say, "right, out to work" it did not matter what the teacher at school said.' Gerald (St Nicholas, 1921-1930) was made to leave as soon as he was 14 and was not allowed to sit the merit certificate examination. 'I think they could have given me another few weeks'. Rick (Salvation Army, Box Hill, 1928-32) also had to leave the day after he reached 14 and was put in the gang with the workers.

Some young people went straight out. Harry (Melbourne Orphanage, 1921-7) left school at thirteen and a half to work at the gas company. He did accountancy at night school at Footscray Tech but did not have enough money to continue. Ben (Kildonan, Kilmany, 1923-1936) also avoided the farm work and left to go to a factory.

Jane (Wilson Street (Anglican) Convent, Brighton, 1924-30) had the chance of a year at a domestic college in South Melbourne but had to leave at 14.

I didn't want to leave school, I was good at school, I loved it, I loved to study. It nearly broke my heart.

Some children were successful at school. For Janice (Sutherland Homes, 1927-34) it was a way of gaining attention. "I just wanted to be up there, top." Gerald got the highest marks each year and remembered that the home kids got most of the prizes. 'I think this was resented because the parents outside worked for it, to supply money to buy the prizes but the Home kids got them all.' Gerald won a game of snakes and

ladders for being the best child in the school. In spite of having to leave himself, he recalled some boys being allowed to continue education at Essendon High or West Melbourne Tech. Beryl knew one girl who was given the opportunity to go to Stotts Business College in Glenferrie Road. Sid's (Gordon Institute, 1930-1935) brother finally managed to study medicine though he only completed fourth form. After serving in the RAAF in the Second World War, he was able to take advantage of the Postwar Reconstruction Training Scheme.

There was a sense that, if children did develop ambitions, they were not supported in trying to achieve them. Beryl (Salvation Army, Kew, 1919-35) would have loved to be a nurse but was not prepared for the interview and was too timid to be selected. Raymond (Melbourne Orphanage, 1914-21) was "a bit artistic" and got hold of an advert for a commercial art school (a picture of an old man) which invited "copy me for free criticism". He smuggled a letter out through his sister but the response got him into "a heck of a blue". How could he pay for lessons in art? His ambition was squashed there and then. Rick (Salvation Army, Box Hill, 1928-32) wanted to be a chemist. He made a cabinet for little bottles and tins but his dream was quashed by his foster mother as "bloody rubbish". Norman (St Nicholas 1921-30) would

have liked to have been a teacher but spent his life farming.

If I'd had a good education, I would not be on the farm, I'd be well up... I missed out on the good education, other blokes went on to high school and university some of them.

Views about the quality of education varied. Colin (Gordon Institute, 1924-6) felt that he had a very poor education in the on-campus school. and outside. Sid who was there a few years later had a 'marvellous teacher'. Rick felt that he had good teachers at Box Hill. Some teachers imposed harsh punishment but the home children had much the same education as working class children with families. At the Melbourne Orphanage with Brighton Beach State School on its grounds, the general consensus was that all were treated equally.

Education from the Depression to the Second World War

In the period from the middle 1930s to the mid 1950s a few children experienced secondary education but most were given little encouragement to advance beyond the elementary grades. Learning difficulties and higher potential both appear to have received erratic, if any, attention.

Four subjects were cared for by the Melbourne Orphanage in these years. Leo (1933-1940) felt that one teacher at least, was biased against the orphanage children but Ed (1941-52) disagreed. Jack (1942-6) recalled that the local children were called outsiders and a certain camaraderie existed among the orphanage children. The teachers did encourage anyone who showed promise and there was no distinction between insiders and outsiders. In Ed's time, outsiders brought in cakes and sandwiches for a party and he was invited to their homes on occasions. However, even bright children did not aspire beyond going into a trade, although Liz (1935-42) remembered a few going on to Hampton High or Brighton Tech. The majority, like her brothers, were sent to farms at 14 or 15. Nick (Glastonbury Orphanage, Geelong, 1933-41) had a similar experience: he left school at 14 and worked around the orphanage gardening, milking and driving for a year, then went to an outside job.

If girls succeeded in education it was still in the context of traditional work roles such as child care, nursing, secretarial work or the clothing trade. Even in taking up these roles, girls from

Protestant orphanages were given little support. Doris (St Agnes 1939-49) felt that children were never praised or encouraged. She did complete two years at Flemington Girls High (where they were taken in the back of a truck like sheep) and later entered Berry Street to qualify as a mothercraft nurse. Wilson Street gave prizes for citizenship. Veronica (Wilson Street Anglican Convent, 1934-48) was the first to go to Brighton Tech and stayed there until she was 17

riding there on a bicycle provided by the convent. She also became a mothercraft nurse. Millie (St Agnes 1936-52) agreed with Doris that in general teachers did not offer much encouragement. She did win a prize in grade two. She returned to her mother for a short time in grade six but could not return to St Agnes when the relationship broke down and lived in hostels. She got a scholarship to business college to learn dress making and secretarial skills, but her poor spelling limited her prospects in shorthand and typing and she focused on bookkeeping.

A similarly diverse range of perspectives was reported by four subjects who were in catholic homes and attended on-campus catholic schools. Adam (St Augustines, 1939-42) completed the intermediate certificate. The school was strict but got results and Adam felt positively about it.

They had their own way of dealing with kids that were defiant or refused to learn: they would throw them out of the window. I've seen a kid thrown out of the window because he could not see it as very simple, whatever it was. You'd get whacked around the legs, on the hands, if you could not cope because they knew your mentality. They were very clever at being able to read kids. They knew when a kid was being mentally lazy and they would take appropriate action. The action in those days was called discipline. But I don't recall one kid not responding.

When he completed the intermediate, Adam returned to his family and an apprenticeship in bricklaying.

Catholic girls had similar experiences. Lucy (St Katherines 1928-44) loved school but also had to leave in the eighth grade and was found a position as a companion housemaid to a family. After a couple of years she was sent to a Melbourne convent to complete secondary school and train as a primary school teacher. Sue (St Vincents 1935-40) also succeeded at school; she left the home in the eighth grade and managed to top the grade in the school to which she transferred.

On the other hand, Liza (St Aidans, Bendigo, 1929-49) left school at 13

because I was hopeless. I was not hopeless, I just wanted them to notice me and I regret it now because I used to know it but would not do it.

St Aidans had boarders other than the orphanage children and these had better meals, the same food as the nuns. Alice (Good Shepherd Convent 1945-9) had a waste paper basket put over her head for not being able to answer a question. She did not feel that the school offered encouragement and looked forward to returning to her family.

Similar reports came from Salvation Army institutions. Rick (Box Hill 1939-41) was a "bit backwards in spelling" and was sent off to sieve dirt once or twice a week as an alternative. Rick and his brother Bob

(1934) considered that the on-campus school was much the same as those outside. They were soon fostered and finished grade eight in a Bendigo state school. The Salvation Army did not cope well with bright children either. John (1939-53) unlike the many orphanage children, developed an ambition - to enter the Navy. The officer in charge of his institution

promised that he could attend Box Hill High School to get the entrance requirements and had a bicycle repaired for him to be able to get there. Unfortunately the arrangement were in the hands of Major J. Salvation Army policy was (and still is) for officers to be frequently transferred. Major J was sent to Western Australia before John started at high school and his replacement, Major S knew nothing. John was ahead of other students and was transferred to grade eight early and "twiddled his thumbs for an extra year" and ran the library. He maintained resentment about being denied high school for the rest of his life.

Barry (Tally Ho, 1946-8) had trouble in spelling and the headmaster set him on to practical tasks, weaving and making toys, which he really enjoyed. Leslie, at nearby Burwood Boys home (1930-43) recalled that others went to Swinburne Tech or Box Hill High but by the time he completed merit, the money had run out and he was unable to go. Joe (St John's 1935-46) went to an off-campus school but was the "brightest kid there" and became a de facto pupil teacher, teaching reading and writing to small but difficult group. However, the managers of the home were studying to enter the church so had little energy to help with his homework and encourage him. He left at 14 to work at Myers and then enrolled at night school to enter the building trade. His teachers encouragement led him into building and health surveying and employment in local government.

Diane (Kildonan, 1939-44) had a wonderful primary school teacher and went to Box Hill Technical School until the age of 15. Kelvin (1946-52) attending the same on-campus school a few years later, felt that it was difficult to learn much and the teachers could not care less. He left the orphanage in grade 4 and was put back to grade 3 in the new school. He could not even tell the time. It took him several years to catch up but he got an apprenticeship on leaving school. His brother ("Matron's pet") was sent to Swinburne Tech at 12 and gained an apprenticeship as an electrician and after service in the RAAF became a flight engineer.

In conclusion, our evidence indicates that individual needs were rarely met in the orphanage schools of this period. Both slow learners and bright children were frustrated. In general, there appeared to be little difference between denominations.

Post-war: secondary education for all?

The immediate postwar period was characterised by a continuing

expectation that the bulk of children would still finish their education at age 14 at a primary school and enter an employment market in which labour shortages ensured a demand for young workers. The 1950s saw the introduction of universal secondary education and all children attended a secondary school but with the expectation that the majority would leave at 14 (later 15) and enter a buoyant labour market. Institutions were still underfunded and ward of state payments did not continue beyond the age of compulsory education giving no incentive for institutions to extend schooling for their charges.

Universal secondary education was slow to come for orphanage children and many of those educated in the early 1950s left school at the minimum age with little capital to face the world. One or two children were offered opportunities to advance but there was little support for the majority. The effect, although it was slow to be recognised, was that a basic educational capital increasingly became inadequate to make a way in the world. At the Melbourne Orphanage, in spite of one student, Maurice Wills, being supported through secondary school into university, (Jaggs, 1991: 99) little changed from the pre-war

experience. Myrtle (1948-56) and Belle (1948-56) left school at 14 and worked 2 years in the orphanage. Belle realised that she was being used as cheap labour and resented the lack of opportunity. Myrtle was encouraged when she wanted to enter nursing, which required the Leaving Certificate. She completed her Intermediate Certificate at Taylors College but despaired of completing Leaving. The orphanage intervened on her behalf and set her IQ tests and selection interviews which she successfully passed and gained entry. Melanie (1953-6) dreamed of being a teacher or a scientist but only got as far as taking shorthand and bookkeeping at Technical School. Valerie (1944-59) was also channelled into secretarial skills but would have preferred to learn music.

In the catholic system, education was impeded by isolation. Kevin (1942-57) was in care almost from birth and from the age of 8 was in St Augustines, Geelong which was run by Christian Brothers. Kevin was not one of the Brothers' successes; illness caused him to fall behind and he was given no help to catch up. He left school without having mastered reading and writing and only became competent in those skills in middle age. Yet it was not only his illness that impeded his education:

...the kids were uneducated because they couldn't relate to what the brothers were talking about, that is on account of the isolation. Some of the Brothers would go off their heads because of the fact that we could not understand them. ...

I did not think it was a very good school simply because of the isolation. I am not saying that the Brothers are not good teachers - they are - but we have got to have (a situation) where kids can see

what is going on in order to relate to what the Brothers are talking about.

Tom (1944-56) was also taught by Brothers at St Vincents in South Melbourne. Unlike Kevin he was a good student being dux of the class in his last year. However, he came to see the school as a weeding out process: only about ten in a hundred went on to the Christian Brothers College. Tom did not get on with his headmaster and was sent out to work at 14. Rose (St Vincent's Girls, 1947-54) found that orphanage children were treated as well as the day girls who also attended but were not encouraged to seek goals beyond reading and writing competence. She also completed the Merit Certificate and had to repeat it until she was 14 as there was nothing else to do. Cheryl (Good Shepherd, 1946-61) felt that there was no interest in education. Children were sent out for talking. She also completed Merit and left at 14. Josie (St Aidans 1948-62) a child migrant, was told she "had no brains to learn" and set to clean out the shoe cupboard or linen cupboard. She completed the third class and from about 11 was set to work. Michelle (Tally Ho and other homes, 1947-55) was a Catholic in a non-Catholic home and her mother insisted on a Catholic education. She was sent to Aquinas Ladies College at Ringwood, but she returned to her mother and went to Pascoe Vale Girls High. Her frequent moves from family to institution led her to five secondary schools with no more than five months in any one. Sarah and her sister Noline spent a couple of periods of several months in Nazareth House in the early 1960s. Sarah does not recall learning anything there: they had religion all morning. Her sisters had a lot of catching up to do after they left. Her older sister quite enjoyed the school and won a scholarship but her father later refused to allow her to take it up. Kylie, who spent longer at Nazareth House, (1956-61) considered that she had an excellent education. At the age of seven she won a prize for reciting The Man from Snowy River from start to finish. She returned to her family at 12 and transferred to a state high school for years 9 and 10.

The freer discipline and example of girls who wore short skirts and make up caused her to run wild and she was placed in the Good Shepherd Convent. Her formal schooling finished at year 10 but left her with good writing skills and correct grammar so that she found little problem when she began a BA as a mature age student over twenty years later and followed it with an MA. Geraldine (Nazareth House 1954-60) was dux of grade five and six and was told that she was too young to be promoted. She acted as assistant teacher hearing other children read. A move to the Ballarat Orphanage gave her the opportunity to develop the piano skills her grandmother had begun to teach. She was awarded a music scholarship by 3DB which should have taken her to matriculation. However, her mother took her home, got her sent to work and ended her studies.

May (Kildonan, 1956-62) felt that like many others with a disrupted

family life, she was backward in school work. Attending a school on the campus created further problems. A gifted teacher who had been to Antarctica, brought fun to learning and encouraged children to think they could do anything they wanted. When she was transferred to foster care, social security would not let her foster parents buy books in the way that other parents did. She had to wait while all others in the class had books; finally she was taken from class to go to the book store, marking her as different from other children. She fell seriously behind, particularly in maths but with her foster parents help, caught up by second form. She completed leaving at year 11 but had no ambition to go further. Carol (Kildonan, 1956-65) was also a slow learner and was put to the back and forgotten about. She too experienced the 'fantastic' teacher. He brought her to the front of the class and gave her extra time at lunch time on spelling and maths. She started to take it in and was awarded a bar of chocolate as the most improved student. In her final year in primary school, Carol was moved to an off-campus cottage and went to John Gardiner Central School. There she encountered a strong disciplinarian who had taught her earlier and sat her in a corner with a dunce's cap. This teacher refused to let her go home when she was concussed from a football in the school yard. She was rescued by the cottage mother and was sick for two weeks.

Some respondents reported that attending a school on the orphanage campus made children less prepared when they finally entered an open secondary school. Irene (Glastonbury, 1957-65) felt an outsider at high school. Home children would stick together. They were not prepared for the outside and did nothing unless they were in a large group. She had to repeat a year and left after Form Three. Wilson Street Convent, on the other hand, remained as positive an environment as when Veronica was there in the 1940s. Tessa and her sister Candice, (1958-64) were encouraged to go as far as they could in school. Candice completed year 11 and the sister sent Tessa to Stotts Business College from which she got a good job. When Brighton Tech offered classes in sex education, the sisters from the home went along and encouraged open discussion of sexuality.

At the Gordon Homes, Adrian (1955-60) got very behind in school work and was considered for a special school but scored high enough on a test to escape it. On returning to his family, he felt very much like a fish out of water at his new school and was bored through the remainder of his primary years and four years of technical school. Paul (1953-61), however, felt that you could go as far as you liked in school, even to university. He went to technical school and into an apprenticeship, very much encouraged by the foster parents who took him at fifteen.

Whilst most orphanage children in this period experienced some secondary schooling, few were supported to complete it and enter the

work force with good qualifications. For some opportunities that were offered in the institution could not be utilised through lack of parental support when they returned to their families. On-campus schools were still maintained by some homes at the primary level which isolated children and made them less able to cope with the larger, open secondary school when they reached it. It is not surprising that children with disrupted family lives experienced learning difficulties. Whilst some found resources to overcome them, many were left with serious literacy or numeracy problems in later life. Many now experienced secondary education but did not necessarily gain from it. We also noted that children were in some instances further disadvantaged by returning to parents who had an economic interest in getting them out to work.

Expanding Opportunities: Education in the 1960s and 1970s.

This is a period of significant change in institutional care which also resulted in an expanded range of educational opportunities. During this period, the last bastions of the traditional orphanage with its dormitories and large dining rooms gave way to family group homes for fewer children, anonymously located in residential streets. State run agencies were established from 1955 and more children were offered foster care or family placements. Funding for charitable institutions increased so that they were able to afford more staff to run developmental or remedial programs. From 1965-6, maintenance payments for state wards could be paid beyond the school leaving age. A strong ethos developed of encouraging a high priority for education, both remedial and higher, as an issue of right and in recognition of the changing labour market demands. The idea of education as capital returned to be given high priority if not the highest priority in institutional aims. Despite all this, we still found some respondents who felt that they had not been encouraged or were somehow stigmatised in educational settings.

With fewer to care for, staff could give more attention to education but, ironically, with greater possibilities of returning to their natural families, children were sometimes too entangled in emotional relationships to take full advantage of educational opportunities. Generally we can find children who took advantage of opportunities, children who were offered them but could not use them and a few who felt they received little support or encouragement. These experiences were not usually related to the religious denominations which administered the homes. Salvation Army children, however, seemed to face more barriers than others.

Kate (St Vincents, 1960-72) spent most of her primary years in the traditional orphanage, attending the on-campus school. Residents gave a hard time to the day girls. She felt that there was not a great deal of encouragement and plenty of discipline. When St Vincents went out of institutional care she came into a family group home. She went to an

off-campus school which was better, but she had a resistance to learning. At 15 she was expelled and Sister A from St Vincents tried hard to get a sense of commitment from her. She was placed in a hostel and found a series of menial jobs, in a hospital, a supermarket and a cake shop. She had stayed with a family for holidays and "Pop" offered to put her through a secretarial course. She said that she did not care but he did so and she succeeded. She later took an associate diploma in business administration majoring in personnel and began a successful career in this field. James was also in the care of St Vincents (1963-75) and like Kate was placed in a cottage. He was determined to

get somewhere. Attending catholic schools, he found the teachers good and enjoyed school. He was also encouraged to take part in little athletics and other sports. He left at the fifth form level and got a job as a draughtsman with the "Public Works" and achieved some success in football playing for Melbourne. He completed an associate diploma in recreation at Footscray Institute of Technology and worked in the recreation field ending up as a consultant. Tina (Antonian Institute, 1969-75) was not so fortunate. Though small, the home was run on traditional lines by Italian nuns who had little knowledge of school needs. Teachers in the high school had little understanding of the home children's background.

I didn't do homework. They would say things like "tonight for homework, you make a record cover." I didn't have any records so I didn't do it. You had to make a model of a village. I did not know how I was supposed to get the materials to make this village and I didn't ask. I think that was part of my problem, I wouldn't ask. So I got stood up in the class one day and called lazy which has really stuck with me and I can still see the teacher's face. The high school wasn't great.

Tina just wanted to get out of the home.

Beyond the Catholic system, several respondents described educational success. Mark (St John's 1968-73) had only two sets of cottage parents after the death of his parents. He completed HSC and was offered a choice of a teaching studentship or a traineeship with the Board of Works. He took the latter and completed a degree in town planning part-time and followed it by a graduate diploma in business administration. Amy (Victorian Children's Aid, 1963-80) completed HSC. She refused an opportunity to return to her family at 16 and was found a family placement. She was admitted to teacher's college but found it too difficult to survive on Tertiary Education Allowance, living in a bungalow. She gave up after a year and took a job with an insurance company and worked her way up in the company. Gilbert (Andrew Kerr Home, 1971-4) found that the staff of the home followed up school work seriously. They did not push or force children to do homework but discussed the best time to do it. Gilbert finished HSC and applied to Melbourne University and was disappointed at being turned down. Stacey

(Glastonbury, 1972-6) found that home staff held education in high esteem and remembered getting praise for getting good marks or achieving well. Her family did not regard education highly and aspirations were limited to factory work or a trade. Stacey felt that to be a typist was a high ambition. At high school during the dismissal of 1975, she began to develop a political and ideological position. Returning to her family stopped her taking school beyond leaving but she later completed an associate diploma of performing arts at James Cook University and later enrolled in a community development degree at VUT.

Doug (Glastonbury, Mercy Family Care, 1974-9) agreed that if you were good at school "they loved you" but things did not work so well for those who did not do well. Children with poor grades were given a tutor but sometimes the tutors (mainly nearby Deakin University students) were not too good. They could not handle children with behavioural problems. In some ways the home had advantages; unlike Tina, he was not denied resources and even went on school trips to Hamilton and Tasmania, which his family would not have funded. At 14 he moved into a cottage run by Mercy with his sister and, with the help of an assertive cottage mother, was offered an apprenticeship in hairdressing. He completed this and in time established his own business.

Karen and Sybil were also in Glastonbury (1976-85) but were not so

successful. Sybil felt that Glastonbury would not always pay for excursions or sport and sometimes home children were left out. By the time they reached high school they were in a cottage home and the cottage parents made them do homework "no matter what" and ran the place like a little army. Both girls reached year 11, Sybil getting a hairdressing apprenticeship which she did not complete and Karen tried to get into sign writing but could not afford the course. She suffered from unfavourable comparisons with her sister. "They used to say 'she's not as smart as she should be' ... I can still remember ... I didn't want to go to school, I didn't want to be around these people (who) thought I was different". Others tried hard and did not succeed. Mary (Sutherland Homes 1969-78) completed year 11 and tried to enter nursing but could only undertake nursing aid work as she did not have a head for the theoretical side of the work. School was great and she was really encouraged but just could not get the marks.

Pirra was a state government home established in the 1960s near Geelong for girls who had proved troublesome in other institutions. Delia (in care 1966-72) completed Leaving. Homework was regarded as a big thing at Pirra. A special study was allocated to the two girls at that level and the staff encouraged them. Delia left to get a job and return to live with her father which had been her wish since her parents had parted and she had been placed in care. She would have liked to take needlework at Emily Macpherson College but could not

afford it. Cath (in care from 1957-71) agreed that Pirra encouraged education but ran into a teacher who did not like 'home kids' at Geelong Tech. She was failed by him but an appeal to the Education Department overturned his grade. She went on to the Gordon Technical College to do art but found it difficult to settle into it. Peg (in care 1962-70) felt that teachers at Matthew Flinders School were prejudiced against Pirra girls and set out to change things. She became house captain and played a leading role in concerts and sport. She completed year 12 and with Pirra's help got a job with the Red Cross. She decided that she wanted to do social work but could not afford to support herself to study, so did the Social Welfare Institute welfare officers course.

Spiros (1966-78) was in a state run family group home in Melbourne. He felt that teachers tried to understand his position and would go out of their way to help. During his high school years he came into conflict with new cottage parents and finally was allowed to live with his older brother. He left school in form 6 in order to get a job, but admitted that he did not have the right attitude to do HSC. "I was always in a bad mood... To forget what happened at home, I'd go to school and act like a clown and crack jokes, get people to laugh." He returned to take HSC at night school and took TAFE courses in computers. Needing to finish more quickly to get a job, he took a condensed course and succeeded in getting a job as a computer operator.

Some had no more opportunities than children of the 1940s. Sally (Allambie, Ballarat Children's Home 1964-79) was put back a year at Allambie and another year at Ballarat. She was nearly 15 by the time she got to grade 7 and then just wanted to go home. Sylvia (Ballarat 1970-75) fell behind in primary but with help caught up. She returned to her family and completed to form 3 of high school and left after being heavily put down by a teacher. She returned later and completed form 4 and part of form 5 but did not get a leaving certificate. Nita (Ballarat 1966-72) felt that the home girls' reputation protected them from other students and teachers. She was never taught that education was important, it was just something you had to do. "As soon as I did not have to, well, I didn't do it any more and that was that worst luck. I wish I had have finished my education." She left at form 2.

The Gordon Homes also provided little encouragement for Ted (1954-70) He had to repeat third form and developed a nervous rash which made him unable to sit still. Some teachers were heavily down on him, telling him to get out before he had time to do anything wrong. Gordon boys could not remain anonymous at school.

When they brought our lunch up, they had a Kombi van and it used to have Gordon Boys Home written right across the side, 1149 Nepean Highway, Hightett, and over the announcement they would say "Gordon

Boys, your lunch is here,” and everyone used to yell out “Ted isn’t that you? You’ve got to go.”

He left school and started work at 14 and later studied printing at RMIT at night and finished an apprenticeship. He eventually rose to take charge of the printing room of a tobacco company. Salvation Army children found it difficult to achieve educational success. Roger (Box Hill 1962-70) recalled that kids ganged up against them as everyone knew who they were because they were picked up by a truck each day after school. He later went to Tally Ho where the school was on campus. He went to third form but they were willing to allow boys to focus on sport if they wished. He used to swim for six hours a day, with just a little maths and English. He made up his mind to get out at 16. He went to Moorabbin Tech for a couple of years after that and found it very difficult. Eleanor (Allambie, Kardinia, 1961-74) found too many changes in life to concentrate on school before high school. In grade 5 and 6 Kardinia children were ostracised and teachers were sometimes patronising. To prevent children from climbing trees on the way to and from school, they were taken in pairs walking behind the matron. It was made clear to her that she had to leave at 16 unless she won a scholarship as government payments stopped at 16. Only three girls in the school got the scholarships. Her sister Cicely was moved to a cottage in Camberwell but only completed third form. If she had stayed at Geelong she might have kept going but the move dampened her interest.

Summary.

By the 1980s, considerable changes had been made in the education of children in care. No longer was schooling rigidly terminated at 14; most were at least encouraged to finish secondary education and many to go further. Yet in the 1970s many children continued to face barriers to extended education. Some were limited by finance: the need to win scholarships or to survive below the poverty line on tertiary allowance. Others had emotional conflicts which prevented them from making school a priority or from developing realisable ambition or personal goals. Some tried and just could not make the grade. Smaller residential units gave home staff the opportunity to offer out of school support and encouragement to do homework. Other barriers resulted from often inadvertent discrimination or in some cases from bias on the part of teachers. Teachers were often sympathetic but prejudice was found in the 1970s as well as in the 1920s. Where home children were present in sufficient numbers in school, they were prone to discrimination, more so when they had to walk home in a crocodile or had a special lunch distribution.

The 19th century concept was to develop capital through education, which could compensate for the lack of family support and ensure the child’s economic survival. In the 20th century this concept became eroded by through financial stringency and many gained more to the

benefactors they met after their orphanage education was complete. The concept of education as a prime element of personal capital has

returned but the handicaps of a disrupted or uncaring early childhood are not easily overcome. Individuals overcome the barriers, through determination, strong will, sponsorship or luck. Though a system of child care and education may provide the opportunity for the development of educational capital, the individual needs to be able and willing to take advantage of it. Personal qualities and variables play a significant part in individual outcomes and individuals respond very differently to the experience of substitute care.

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- 1 I am grateful for the assistance of my research collaborator, Donna Jaggs, in editing this paper.