

FARMED-OUT: A CASE STUDY OF DIFFERENTIAL OPPRESSION THEORY AND FEMALE CHILD FARM LABOR IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the experiences of rural, female orphans in early 20th century United States. A content analysis was conducted and oral histories collected from which the following themes about rural, female, orphan's lives emerged: non-agency, consummate caretaker, martyrdom, and strength. Regoli and Hewitt's *theory of differential oppression* was utilized in the analysis. Differential oppression posits that *all* children are oppressed, that female children are doubly-oppressed based on their status as child and female, and that to adapt to this oppression children employ one or more of four modes of adaptations: passive acceptance of their circumstances, exercise of illegitimate coercive power, manipulation of one's peers, or retaliation. This paper concludes that rural female orphans most commonly utilized the mode of passive acceptance.

The hardships faced by children in early American history have been well documented (e.g., deMause 1974; O'Conner 2001; Platt 1969; Youcha 1995). Few social safety nets existed for children in the late 19th and early 20th century—especially children who resided in the isolation of rural Western America. The programs, shelters, schools or other assistance that were offered to children existed mainly in Chicago and the large cities of the East. A guiding principle of these programs was that in order to “save” these unfortunate souls from a life of sin and degradation, they must be reared away from the wicked influences of the city. The developmental needs of these children would be best met by embracing the Protestant Ethic, hard work and fresh air—none of which could be found in the urban environment, nor within the walls of the institutions and houses of refuge that had developed under the auspices of Christian charity. The task of transforming urban orphans into productive citizens was thought best left to the farmer because a life on the farm was a life of virtue. A 1910 annual report of the New York Children's Aid Society noted that “for bringing the child into normal, healthy, and practical relations with the world, there is no asylum equal to the farmer's home” (Youcha 1995 193).

The mass exportation of orphaned, destitute, homeless or otherwise undesirable children¹ in the early 20th century from the Eastern United States to the Western (now Midwestern) United States has been well documented and described within many mediums ranging from academic journals and

best-selling popular culture books to made-for-television movies and grassroots websites, whose readers and viewers have been desperate to learn more about a loved one's lonely journey west as a child. The “orphan trains,” which carried some 200,000 children² from the mythical belly of the beast (city life) to what was thought to be a pastoral promised-land (family-farm life), have provided many scholars with social phenomenon about which to theorize. No such body of work, however, exists on the experience of children who, too, were orphaned, destitute, or considered undesirable (either because of their sex, ethnicity, race, physical or mental disability, etc.) but who were *already* living in rural America. If these orphans were already living in the agrarian utopia, where were they to go? Who would take in these children?

Little research has studied the unique experiences of rural orphans. Even less research has been dedicated to the experience of rural female orphans. What is known about the rearing of orphans in the country comes mainly from documentation of urban children being “placed out”³ in the Midwest via the orphan trains or by other charitable organizations and then, usually only stories of how well boys fared in their new homes.⁴ This is due in part to the lack of formally organized, rural child welfare programs in existence during this era and in this region of the country. It might also be assumed that as a result of sexual social stratification, female children were considered to be of less value than male children and, therefore, stories of their lives

and experiences seemed unimportant to document. Moreover, in farming-country male labor may have been valued over the labor that was produced by girls, as stereotypically boy-chores (planting, plowing, harvesting) were held in higher esteem and of greater necessity than were stereotypically girl-chores (cooking, cleaning, fetching water).

Not all needy orphans came on trains from Eastern cities. Midwestern and western areas also had large numbers of orphaned, rural children in need of homes, and due to the limited state intervention in the welfare of rural children at the time, an informal (and common) system of intervention necessarily existed. This system came to be known as "farming-out."⁵ As this system was informal, few official records were kept and there is little documentation about this population or their experiences as orphans. Because there was no governmental or religious institutional oversight of the farming-out of rural orphans, there were no ledgers or field notes documenting these children's lives. There were no field workers—precursors to modern-day social workers—visiting the children to ensure their well-being and enforcing the limited child labor laws in existence at the time.⁶ What is known about these children and their experiences with being farmed-out is usually only what has been shared in family stories and life histories passed down through generations.

This paper examines the lives of farmed-out orphans; specifically, female, farmed-out orphans. It provides a content analysis of Wisconsin state records kept of orphaned children whose lives were overseen through a formal system of child-welfare, as well as a case study of one family of rural orphaned children whose assistance came via the informal system of "farming-out." More importantly, this paper applies the *theory of differential oppression* (Kingston, Regoli & Hewitt 2003; Regoli & Hewitt 2006) to rural, female, orphans in an effort to explore the dual nature of the oppression they experienced due to their status as both children and as females.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Child labor was a familiar concept in Colonial America. In keeping with the European tradition, children were frequently bound-out as indentured servants and/or as apprentices in Puritan New England. Childhood dur-

ing this era was thought to be a time best used for moral instruction. Labor provided children with opportunities for moral instruction by strictly organizing their time; time that otherwise might have been spent exploring the evil temptations thought inherent in every child's soul (Illick 1974), leaving them "useless and depraved" (Youcha 1995). Families also required every able-bodied person work in order to maintain the family's livelihood.

Parent-child relations were sterile and familial ties were fluid during this era, due in large part to high infant mortality rates. Parents in Colonial America were not indifferent to a child's untimely death but accepted childhood death as an inescapable fact of life, mourning their passing in restrained manner (Zelizer 1985; Skolnick 1973). Social convention established the belief that until age 7 a child was something of an incomplete being. After age 7 children were considered miniature adults, ready to assume adult-like responsibilities. Therefore, if a child were to leave the home to work and live with another family, it did not necessarily cause the emotional angst that would undoubtedly be experienced in contemporary society. Indentured service "...constituted the central educational institution...during the colonial years ..." (Dolgin 1997 1124). It was believed that parental affection would develop for a child who lived with her or his parents after a certain age and that this relationship would impair educational and vocational instruction of the child. Therefore, it was best to send the child to live with a master who would instruct her or him without emotional tenderness (Youcha 1995).

Most children were involved in organized labor, as it served as society's main system of education and instruction. There existed a participant hierarchy within child labor. Children from wealthy families usually assumed apprenticeships in fields with high social prestige, whereas the poorest child was indentured into any position available. Usually this job was highly undesirable with a master who provided particularly harsh living conditions (Youcha 1995). Boys typically performed physically demanding, low skill-jobs, while girls generally provided domestic labor or needlework. This training served to prepare them for stations in life with little hope for upward mobility (Liazos 1974). Girls were paid less than boys by 50 percent or more, even when performing identical or

comparable work and were provided less access to formal education, as it was considered less important to educate females (Schob 1975). Poverty experienced by men, women, and children was considered evidence of weak character and moral failure. Charity and relief was offered on the basis of a person's perceived worthiness (Crannell 2003). Poor children were not generally treated with any more compassion than were poor adults. If a poor family sought assistance in an almshouse, the mother, father, and children were separated from one another and referred to as "inmates" (Crannell 2003).

Children, Labor and the Cult of Womanhood in Victorian America

In contrast to the Colonial era, Victorian America saw a change in the conceptualization of the family and, in particular, childhood. Industrialization impacted the construct of family, at least for middle and upper class households. Industrialization changed the means by which families supported themselves. Prior to industrialization, men, women, and their children operated as an interdependent economic unit. Later, labor (that is, paid labor) increasingly took place away from the home and farm, with a family's economic well-being becoming dependent on the conditions of the labor market (Pogrebin 1983). Upper and middle class men worked away from the home, creating instability in the family. This instability of the family meant that "the desirable role for [middle to upper class] women [became] an enhancing, rather than sustaining one," (Cott 1972 10). Wives and children were now seen as supporting the efforts of the husbands' "expansive entrepreneurship" (Cott 1972 12). Women and children of the upper and middle classes were to create and sustain a home that would serve as a refuge for the husband-father from the increasing pressures for economic advancement under industrialization (Cott 1972). Children became seen as innocent, empty vessels in need of nurturance and guidance in contrast to the Puritan construction of them as inherently evil beings in need of strict correction, or as only a source of income. They were precious gifts, valuable not according to the income they could produce but, rather, according to the joy and entertainment they brought their parents. This change in family economics also contributed to the

creation of the "economically-superfluous" housewife, and the economically useless, but priceless child (Zelizer 1985; O'Connor 2001).

Women, previously a source of economically valuable production, became seen as "inadequate by nature to act in the marketplace" (Dolgin 1997 1162). This change in familial economic structure marked the onset of a gendered division of labor (Rubin 1997), and thus, facilitated the creation of a "cult of true womanhood" (Cott 1972; Dolgin 1997; Holt 1992; Pogrebin 1983), which dictated the new feminine ideal: chaste, pure, submissive, and perhaps most importantly, mistress of all things domestic (Cott 1972). While this new social role was only financially attainable for upper and middle class women, all classes of women were judged against its standards.

For most families, however, children still provided much needed economic support. Critics of the rapid growth of industrialization during this period argue that its expansion of wage labor fueled poverty. This poverty, in turn, created a bifurcated system of treatment for children. Children from financially stable families enjoyed their new found role as "objects of sentiment," rather than "objects of utility" (Zelizer 1985), whereas children of the poor were still required to work to help support their family, leaving their value as human beings to be gauged according to their ability to produce income.

The Child Savers

There was conspicuous disparity in socio-economic status—and legal protections—between classes of children, as industrialization both created extreme wealth and contributed to extreme poverty. This disparity did not go unnoticed by the well-intentioned, more affluent, new breed of stay-at-home-mothers. Their interest in alleviating some of the ills of urban child poverty (homelessness, chronic illness, hunger, etc.), compounded by the unsightly nuisance of "street Arabs" begging and otherwise loitering in the streets, led them—a long with their wealthy, well-connected male counterparts—to begin to organize efforts around assisting destitute or orphaned children from not only the current poverty they were experiencing, but the inevitable poverty they would face as adults if they were not "saved" from becoming a member of the "dangerous class"

(Brace 1872). It was the change in the perception of the appropriate roles for women and children that was the catalyst for the creation of "child savers" (Platt 1969)—those charged with overseeing that children were raised according to the dictates of the newly prescribed child role.

Orphaned or destitute children were not only an urban social fact. Hard living in the expanding American territory left many urban and rural children in need of homes. So common was orphaning, abandonment and child destitution in rural America that states codified procedures for handling this population. The rural child savers, too, felt compelled to systematically address the needs of the orphaned, destitute, and/or lower-class child.

FORMAL SYSTEMS OF CHILD WELFARE INTERVENTION

Urban and rural child savers alike saw as their chief responsibility the task of providing poor youth with a certain minimal standard of living, while providing them with "the tools for religious living" (Holt 1992 28). Early efforts to provide children with relief from the ills of poverty included the work of urban organizations such as the House of Refuge (1825), Children's Aid Society (1853), the New York Foundling Hospital (1869) and rural organizations such as the Wisconsin Child Center and Farm (1886). These were places where homeless, orphaned youth could find food and shelter (sometimes for a small price) and where destitute women could deliver and adopt-out their babies. These organizations relied on volunteers from religious orders and from the classes of women whose social status made improper female participation in a money economy but who were, instead, expected to attend to the domestic role of caretaking.

With increasing poverty, these organizations found themselves overburdened with orphaned children in need of assistance. Urban child savers were frustrated at their limited "success" with helping children, confident that their best efforts were thwarted by urban corruption. At the same time, the American Midwest was in need of able-bodied laborers to help with its maintenance and expansion. This region of the country was losing its population to the city, drawn away by the need for labor in factories, trades, and shops. Many were leaving the Midwest because they were unable to sustain their fam-

ily farms. The Midwest was also in need of women and girls, as both domestic help and as potential brides. Many Midwestern females had left seeking out wage labor in the garment industry or mills. They did not command the same wages as did men, and therefore, filled a demand for cheap labor in a growing industrial complex (Dolgin 1997; Holt 1992). Despite the difficulties faced by those living in the Midwest, it retained its image as an idyllic, agrarian utopia, and the perfect place to raise children. Life on the farm was promoted as, "...an ideal place in which to build up the lives of growing young boys and girls" (McKeever 1913 26). Since it was still socially acceptable for urban poor children to work (not having had their status elevated as was the case for upper and middle class children) and since child savers saw little redeeming qualities in city living, a plan to "place-out" Eastern, urban, orphans in the homes of farmers and other Midwestern families was devised.

"Placing-out" was the practice of placing orphaned and/or destitute children with farmers or other Midwestern families, through benevolent societies. These agencies would take children in, teach them skills thought appropriate for their gender and then, if they were from an urban area, send them to the Midwest to find homes where they would use their new skills to earn their keep. Once these children were placed with new families, they would work on the family farms, businesses, or in the homes in exchange for room and board until they reached adulthood or were sent to work for another family. Placing-out appeared to offer a solution to two problems: a shortage of rural labor and an ever-growing population of urban, orphaned children. Marilyn Holt notes that

in the short term, such placements would alleviate Eastern cities of costly institutional care and in the long term it would remove those who may have become discontented, threatening urban areas with crime and violence. (1992 28)

Children ranged from infants to older teens were sent to the Midwest via trains in search of new families that would teach them the Protestant ethic and transform them into productive, middle-class citizens.⁷

Similarly, the rural orphan was not viewed as an object of sentiment but, rather, as a

potential laborer who, while under the guardianship of the state or county was legally considered an indentured servant.⁸ For example, under the State of Wisconsin's "Poor Laws," orphaned or poor children would be sent to an almshouse, commonly referred to as the "Poor House" or "Poor Farm." They would also be sent to the "State School" where they would be taught skills in a trade, such as farming or, if they were female, the skills of "housewifery," (Chesney-Lind & Shelden 2004; Liazos 1974) that they would be required to use once they were placed with a family. It was thought that the development of a familial relationship, as opposed to a strictly employment-based one, was best for the child but if that did not develop at least the child would become a productive citizen.

Under a system of formal intervention in the lives of orphans local field agents, hired by both urban and rural child welfare agencies, were expected to visit the children they had placed to ensure that they were receiving proper care, though the frequency and quality of the visits varied from county to county, agent to agent.

THE GIRL ORPHAN

The stated objective of the practice of placing-out was to enrich a family's life, while helping a child who was less fortunate, but who had been determined to be "worthy" of charity. However, there was a good deal of ambivalence around offering assistance to girls—a sub-group of orphans thought to be inherently more problematic.

Although approximately 39 percent of those placed-out via orphan trains were female, Charles Loring Brace of the Children's Aid Society referred to his passengers almost exclusively as "lads." Female orphan train riders were treated decidedly different than were the boys, in part because Brace thought street-girls were less likely to benefit from the virtue of the agrarian lifestyle because they had become worldly. Brace thought that his female charges were "hopeless" after age 14 because he perceived them to be "weak in flesh," pre-maturely "womanly," promiscuous, and therefore, a danger to society. Some questioned whether orphaned girls were even worthy of being helped. Urban and rural child savers did, however, continue to place out girls in the undeveloped Midwest, in large part to provide relief for overworked farm wives (Mc-

Keever 1913). Placed out urban and rural orphaned girls were often treated harshly by their host families and considered cheap domestic help as opposed to as a new family member. It was thought that the best that could be expected of the female orphans was that they would eventually get married (Holt 1992; O'Connor 2001).

Domestic help was in short supply and several areas of the newly expanding country were in need of females not only to serve as domestics, but as potential brides. Both urban and rural girls in need of a home had the option to become a domestic, or, if of an appropriate age, to become a wife. The cult of womanhood was not merely a social expectation within certain urban social circles; it had become the dominant gender ideology for the country. As such, it hobbled orphaned girls by limiting their socially acceptable options in life (Holt 1992). Often, girls had to conform to gender norms and passively accept their roles in the domestic sphere and/or as wives and mothers. Girls who did not follow the appropriate social script for feminine behavior, goals, and desires, faced stigma and ostracism. McKeever suggests that the greatest problem for the late 19th century generation was that

...girls are choosing an independent calling for themselves...this fatal choice of an independent vocation. (1913 193)

Because this was seen as a threat to a social order built on sexual stratification, girls who were the least likely to be selected for formal assistance were those who showed "independence" by their continual attempts to secure non-domestic labor positions (O'Connor 2001).

INFORMAL SYSTEMS OF CHILD WELFARE INTERVENTION

Equally common to the formal system of placing-out orphaned children, was the informal placing of such children by what became known in the Midwest as "farming-out." It was referred to as "farming-out" because it was used more-or-less exclusively in rural areas as a means to secure farmhands and/or farmers wives, whereas children who had been "placed-out" could be sent to live with non-farming families living in small towns or cities. Informally placing children, that is, without state or charity intervention, was not un-

common (deMause 1974; Dolgin 1997). For centuries in Europe and in America, children were sent to live and work with other families or relatives on a temporary basis. What is remarkable is that little is known about what became of rural orphans once informally farmed-out, as they often had no extended family to which to return or from whom they could expect protection, no *parens patriae*-type oversight from the government, or field agents overseeing their new home. Formal child welfare organizations were charged with the responsibility of overseeing the orphaned child's placement, albeit the quality and regularity of such oversight varied greatly. But because the farmed-out placement was informal, no one was responsible for making note of the conditions under which the orphan now lived; no one made sure that the child was being fed, attended school, or was in good health.

THE THEORY OF DIFFERENTIAL OPPRESSION AND FARMING-OUT

This paper examines the experiences of the rural, female orphan, while attempting to give particular attention to the informally farmed-out female rural orphan. *Differential oppression theory* provides an unusually useful framework from which to examine the phenomenon of the farming-out of rural children. According to differential oppression theory (Kingston et al 2003; Regoli & Hewitt 2006; Hewitt & Regoli 2003), children experience oppression because of their status as a child. Differential oppression theory asserts that *all* children are oppressed. The amount of oppression children experience falls on a continuum, ranging from simple demands for obedience to rules designed for the convenience of adults to the physical, sexual, and emotional abuse of children. Moreover, differential oppression theory posits that *girls are doubly oppressed* because of their dual status as both child and female. Traditional patterns of age and gender socialization lead to particularized gender oppression (Hewitt & Regoli 2003). They contend that children's problem behaviors including crime and delinquency, drug and alcohol abuse, and mental disorders can be understood as adaptive reactions to oppressive social situations that are created by adults.

Adult conceptions of the *girl as child* (inferior, subordinate, troublemaker) lead to oppressive acts by adults that alienate the girl

and lead her into adaptive reactions as she attempts to become a "subject" instead of an "object" (Hewitt & Regoli 2003). Regoli and Hewitt further argue that children adapt to their oppression as a survival mechanism. This adaptation to oppression may manifest itself in one of four ways: through passive acceptance of ones' situation, through the exercise of illegitimate power, through the manipulation of ones' peers, or through retaliation against ones' oppressor (Regoli & Hewitt 2006). Each of these adaptations involves a degree of conscious resistance by children (Rogers & Buffalo 1974) as they attempt to negotiate their status.

Passive Acceptance

As most people adapt via conformity to strain produced by a disjuncture between culturally defined goals emphasizing success and institutionalized means available to achieve that success (Merton 1957), most children adapt to oppression through *passive acceptance* of their subordinate and inferior status. This acceptance, or conformity, produces subsequent obedience to their oppressors—obedience built upon fear, which derives from implied threats and intimidation. Due to the higher status generally afforded to males and the low levels of female involvement in delinquency, conformity seems to be a more common adaptation among females (Belknap 2001; Hannon & Dufour 1998; Steffensmeier 1993 & 1996). Since young girls are inundated by adult domination, they quickly learn that obedience is expected. Such adaptations among children are similar to the passive acceptance of the slave role, adaptations of prison inmates, and immersion in the cycle of violence for battered women.

However, such acquiescence or passive acceptance may be only a facade, presenting to the oppressor the appearance of conformity (Rogers & Buffalo 1974). Girls outwardly appear to accept their inferior positions, but develop a repressed hatred for their oppressors, adapting to the structures of domination in which they are immersed. Once a situation of violence and oppression had been established, it engenders an entire way of life and behavior for those caught up in it—oppressors and oppressed alike. Both are submerged in this situation and both bear marks of oppression. The oppressed are likely to believe they have no purpose in life except that which

the oppressor prescribes for them.

Passive girls do not fully explore personal autonomy and they never become the "authors of their own lives." This repression results in negative self-perceptions that may manifest itself in a wide range of problem behaviors including alcoholism, drug addiction, eating disorders, low self-esteem, and psychiatric disorders (Gecas & Schwalbe 1986; Tosone 1998).

Exercise of Illegitimate Coercive Power

A second adaptation is the *exercise of illegitimate coercive power*. Many girls are attracted to delinquency because it helps them establish a sense of autonomy and control. This anticipatory delinquency is a yearning for adult status (Katz 1988; Matza 1964). Delinquent acts can immediately and demonstratively make things happen. Sexual misbehavior, illicit use of drugs or alcohol, and violations of the criminal law derive greater symbolic importance for the girl to the extent they exert control over her behavior. The "sneaky thrill" that accompanies shoplifting, drug use, or illicit sexual encounters, for example, is not simply a product of the rush of the act, but a consequence of knowing the girl knowing that *she* is controlling the event. In addition, when a young girl perceives that she has little or no control over her own life, that her parents determine all important activities and goals, she may then choose to exert absolute control over what food is taken into or kept in her body (at least until she is force fed).

Manipulation of One's Peers

A third adaptation to an oppressive situation is the *manipulation of one's peers*. This is an attempt by a girl to become empowered. Through manipulation of others within the peer group, girls who have experienced oppression at the hands of adults may acquire a sense of strength and control or a degree of empowerment not otherwise felt (Marwell 1966). Bullying younger or smaller children at school may be a form of displacement of a girl's anger at a parent or teacher. Girls also verbally bully or manipulate peers, especially female peers, in an attempt to establish social hierarchies, eliminate competition for attention, release tensions without violence, or define group membership and friendships (Fleisher 1998).

Additionally, a girl may exclude a peer as

a strategy for controlling her environment. Unfortunately, the mere involvement of a girl with his or her peers leads many adults to view the involvement as problematic in itself. Adults may then react by exercising even greater control over the child's interaction with others.

Retaliation

The fourth adaptation is *retaliation*, which may include delinquent acts ranging from property crimes to violent offenses. It is the least common of the adaptations to oppression, and it is often also the most serious. Girls may engage in *retaliation* or "getting back" at the people or the institutions they believe are the source of their oppression. Some adolescent girls who are severely physically or sexually abused by parents may retaliate by striking directly at their parents, assaulting or killing them (Post 1982; Mones 1985; Paulson, Coombs & Landsverk 1990; Flowers 2002). Not only larger, stronger girls strike back at an abusive parent. Some smaller, physically weaker children may fight back by compensating with speed and choice of weapon. For example, a young girl may wait until her parents are asleep and then torch the home. Or, she may retaliate by striking at a substitute, such as a younger sibling who is viewed as representative of her parents. Finally, many girls retaliate against their parents by turning inward—by becoming chronically depressed or contemplating or committing suicide (Chandy, Blum & Resnick 1996; Plass 1993).

Adult conceptions in patriarchal societies of the *girl as female* (relational, nurturing, and passive) lead to oppression reinforcing her traditional gender role and, subsequently, to the girl's identity as "object." Treated as an "object," a girl may adapt by developing an identity through relationships with boys; she does not have to "prove" her own worth as long as she is "related" to a proven person. Consequently, her delinquencies may be indirect and relational. Being defined as a female "object" may also reinforce the identity of the girl as a "sexual object." In this case, adaptations may take the form of sexual delinquencies and prostitution.

But oppression of girls as females also carries with it a reinforcement of more domestic, passive, relational, and nurturing roles that often exclude them from the outside world of male street-peer groups. Girls

are not only more closely monitored and kept closer to home, they are encouraged to identify with their mothers and to concentrate on building and maintaining relations. In addition, girls learn to anticipate economic dependence and the need to develop intimate interpersonal ties through which a sense of value and self-esteem may be gained. At the same time, they are discouraged from pursuing independent acts and risk-taking activities.

Differential oppression theory, as applied to female delinquency, builds on earlier work stressing differences in socialization patterns of girls and boys and views the role of socialization of adolescent girls within the context of oppression. While male adolescents experience the oppression of being a child, female adolescents experience the double oppression of being a female child. The socialization of girls not only leads to their being less likely to engage in delinquency in general, but also to their likelihood of engaging in particular forms of delinquency.

Positing that female children are dually oppressed, on the basis of their status as both female and child, differential oppression theory offers a unique lens through which to explore the experience of the rural, female, farmed-out orphan.

RESEARCH METHODS

To understand the experiences of the rural, female orphan, a content analysis was performed on a number of documents that address the conditions under which these children lived and were formally placed-out. All documents under examination pertain to orphans in rural Wisconsin and were provided by the Wisconsin Historical Society. To learn about the experiences of children who were informally farmed-out, and therefore, with only marginally enforced government protection and oversight, a case study also was conducted on a Wisconsin family of orphans, two girls and a boy, who were farmed-out in this manner.

Content Analysis

The life experiences of formally placed-out, rural orphans were assessed through analysis of documents from the Wisconsin Child Center and Farm. This center was an orphanage from 1886 until 1976, housing hundreds of children at a time. The docu-

ments examined include the following: "Visiting Record, 1889-1909," "History of Children Capsule," "Outside Placement Application Record," and the "Indenture Record."⁹

These records are ledgers documenting the orphaned children that lived at the Center and by which they were placed-out. Once they were taught a skill or a trade, such as farming or if they were female, the skills of "housewifery," they would be placed-out with a family. Some children were adopted. Others were returned to the Center for unknown reasons. Some ran away, which was referred to in documentation as "escaping" and were never heard from again.¹⁰ Approximately 300 children died at the Center and were buried on its grounds with tombstones that identified them only with a number, instead of by name.¹¹

The children who were formally placed-out by the institutions were expected to be visited by local field agents to ensure that they were receiving proper care. The field agents would record in a ledger the child's name, their case number, name of placement family, town of placement, and date of visit. Because travel throughout Wisconsin was difficult and field agents varied significantly in their availability, interest, and skill, the quality of oversight of these children's placements also varied greatly. According to the records, when a field agent was able to make a visit, there were only three areas of the child's life that were to be reviewed: the child's health, home surroundings, and conduct. Sometimes school attendance would be noted, but as these children had farming responsibilities and schools were sometimes far away and costly, it was not a priority. Very often an agent would record redundant comments for every child on the same page of the ledger: "health, conduct, home surroundings good." How often a child received a visit, or if all children received in-home visits was too difficult to discern from these records.

An examination of these records shows very little breadth or depth in the documentation of how these children managed in their new environments. Often, the children were not interviewed and if they were it was in the presence of their host family. There were some references to children being overworked, neglected, physically abused, as well as male family members "taking familiarity" with the female orphans (see also Holt

1992; O'Connor 2001; Platt 1969; Youcha 1995). There also were entries identifying times when orphans were removed from the home due to their treatment or the homes' condition, but this was rare. One record indicated that the field worker believed a farmed-out boy to be a hard-worker, intelligent, and respectful, but that the home conditions were in shambles. It also noted that the boy reported being beaten on occasion with a broom and on other occasions with a hammer or "anything they could get their hands on." The field agent documented her concern, and decided that the solution was to "visit more often." Boys were often characterized as "a bad boy," "feeble-minded," "a worthless bum," or ungrateful for his placement. Sometimes he was praised for his "industriousness," or for being "a good boy."

Based on the records in the ledgers, it was determined that girls comprised approximately 50 percent of the rural, formally placed-out orphans, reflecting a larger proportion of rural, female orphans were placed-out in the Midwest than were urban, female orphans. Like their urban counterparts, these girls were often characterized as "saucy," "womanly," "stubborn," or "disobedient." Sometimes the girls were noted as "lady-like." Field workers would document which girls they thought were "marriageable." Some agents recorded that it was "better to never grant the adoption of a child" or to let the child "hear from their own people" but the reasons why they held these opinions were never recorded. Very often field workers only documented that the child had "escaped" from his or her placement.

The Wisconsin Child Center and Farm "History of Children Capsule" provided even less information about these children. It often provided only the child's name, birth parents, date of indenture, date of return, date of death, or the date(s) the child escaped. Sometimes the circumstances that rendered the child an orphan or as destitute were noted. Often the reason was noted as "intemperate" parents. Sometimes the child's ethnicity was noted. In these records the orphans were referred to as "inmates." If an orphan was determined to be epileptic or "feeble-minded" they were sent to the Wisconsin Home for the Feeble-Minded. The first child documented in this ledger dates back to 1886, while the final entry of a child, dated 1913, shows a boy whose indentured ser-

vice was not set to expire until April 2, 1959.¹² According to this ledger the number of orphans received by the state between 1886 and 1930 was 7,786. The number of orphans indentured by the state was 5,264.¹³

Case Study

To collect information on the experiences of informally farmed-out rural female orphans, oral histories were produced from surviving relatives of three siblings who were informally farmed-out in Durand, Wisconsin. These children are identified here only as Emma, Patrick, and Mary, not by their real names.

The respondents from whom oral histories were collected include Emma's two remaining daughters, who will be respectively referred to as Margaret (age 83) and Rebecca (age 73); four granddaughters, who are Thea (age 61), Theresa (age 47), and twins Caroline and Catherine (age 41). Patrick's daughter, who is referred to as Madeline (age 83), and granddaughter, referred to as Jocelyn (age 61). No relatives who could speak to Mary's experience with farming-out could be located. All respondents lived in the same geographic area as their relative and had with them regular, if not daily contact until their relative's death.

The oral histories were collected in October 2003 in Margaret and Thea's home in Maiden Rock, Wisconsin, and in Rebecca's home in Ellsworth, Wisconsin. As a follow-up to the oral histories, questionnaires were sent to the respondents to clarify themes that became evident during the oral history collection.

According to both Margaret and Rebecca, in 1903, when Emma, Patrick, and Mary were seven, six, and four years old respectively, their mother died from Typhoid Fever. Their father, as was customary at the time, remarried shortly thereafter. His new wife was not interested in raising his children and was resentful for having to do so, in part because their father worked long hours in the logging industry. Their stepmother was reportedly physically and emotionally cruel to Emma, Patrick, and Mary providing her own children with clothes and food while neglecting her stepchildren.

After a couple of difficult years, a relative took pity on the children and accepted them into her home. This, and all subsequent placements, was conducted on an informal, unwritten agreement between the children's

father and the relative. The first placement took in all three siblings. It is not known how long they stayed with this family or the conditions under which they lived. At this time Emma, the oldest, stopped attending school and only was able to complete her education to the fourth grade. According to a daughter, Emma had to quit because the only school in the area was Catholic and the family could not afford to send her.

Approximately one year later, the siblings were separated for unknown reasons. It is thought that Mary, the youngest, stayed with this family, while Emma and Patrick went to two separate homes. After this separation, little else is known about what became of Mary. The second placement for Emma lasted approximately one year. Again, it is unknown under what conditions she lived. However, the condition of Patrick's second placement became well known in the family lore according to the respondents because it precipitated life-changing events for both he and Emma.

Patrick's second placement was with a male relative who savagely and regularly beat him. While he was living with this relative, Emma was farmed-out—again, informally—to a man whose wife was terminally ill and in need of a nurse and domestic. Emma's father obtained this placement, as he knew the man through work. Emma, 12 or 13 years old at the time, followed the traditional female role of caregiver and domestic. She nursed the ill woman, cooked, cleaned, washed laundry, helped on the farm, and performed other household chores as needed. In exchange, she was given room and board. She was not considered a daughter to the family but rather hired-help. After the woman's passing, Emma stayed on as domestic and farm help for the man.

During the time Emma was living in her third placement, her brother Patrick was still living with the abusive farmer-relative a few miles away. Because he was being physically abused, he wanted to leave this placement and join Emma, but was not allowed to do so. When he was approximately 14 years old, he ran away from his placement in search of refuge with Emma because the farmer with whom he lived had beaten him with a horsewhip or a horse harness. This beating was so brutal that the fabric from his shirt had become embedded in the lash wounds on his back. Emma soaked his back

in warm water so that she could remove what was left of his shirt and attend to his wounds. She asked the farmer if her younger brother could come and live with them, and he said he would agree to this arrangement only if she would marry him. In order to protect her younger brother, she consented to the marriage. She was 15 and the farmer was 46. Emma was also pregnant by the farmer at the time.¹⁴ The marriage lasted 36 years and produced 10 children.

According to Margaret, her father would on occasion beat her mother. Emma did not fight back and although Emma's father (Margaret's grandfather) knew of the abuse (he lived in the same town or county as did his daughter and son-in-law), he did nothing to stop it. Margaret explained this by saying that her grandfather no longer felt any obligation to oversee the lives of his children now that they were farmed-out; that Emma was no longer under his authority, but the authority of another man.

He liked to grab her by the hair and drag her outside...he thought she was doing things while he was gone...he was a drinker. Once when I was about 10 years old, Dad dragged Mother outside at night...I was inside the house and could hear what was going on. My oldest brother heard what was going on and went outside. My dad said, 'what are you looking at?' My brother said, 'you, and that's that last time you're ever going to lay on a hand on her.' And it was the last time he ever did. My two oldest brothers stayed with her on the farm for the rest of her life. — Margaret

According to Madeline, a few years after Patrick came to live with Emma and her new husband, he left to join the Army. Afterwards, he married and eventually had 9 children. His wife was reportedly physically abusive to their children, which he did not tolerate because of his own experience with abuse as a child.

'If you don't know how to discipline, you don't get to touch them,' he used to say to Ma...a couple of times he had to pull her off of us...he was a drinker and it was hard on Ma, but he didn't think hitting was the right way to handle a child. — Madeline

DISCUSSION

Considering the information collected by content analysis, oral histories, and follow-up questionnaires, through the lens of differential oppression theory, four themes emerge. They include Non-Agency, Consummate Caretaker, Martyrdom, and Strength.

Non-Agency

A critical read of the documents kept on formally placed-out rural female orphans illustrates the total institution under which they were forced to live. During their placement within a state-run institution, they were employment-tracked according to their gender alone. There is no indication of any consideration being given to the girl's talents, interests, or aptitude. The only mention of "choices" is that of marriage (for the pleasant, attractive, motivated girl) or that of becoming a dress-maker (mentioned as the alternative to marriage; for girls who were deemed unlikely to marry for undisclosed reasons). While boys were employment-tracked according to their gender as well, they appeared to have more options for eventual economic independence than did girls. The residents were referred to as inmates and were clothed, bathed, fed, and housed en masse. When they ran away they were documented as having "escaped." As a child with few legally recognized rights and protections (Gardner 2003), options were incredibly limited for an orphaned child to eek out a life of their own making. Being in a rural area also served to further isolate the orphan and provide them with few if any alternative outlets for career or home. When they did attempt to exercise some agency in their lives they were labeled as independent, or difficult, thereby, making them less likely to be assisted. The only reasonable option was to acquiesce to the total control of their overseers. Boy orphans would eventually age-out of the child-status based oppression under which they lived, but the girl orphan's oppression just moved from that of female-child to female-adult, again, with agency being compromised for the female.

How much agency Emma had to exercise when deciding whether or not to marry a man 31 years her senior is debatable. The choices she had to make in her young life were not made in a vacuum, rather, they were made in a time and place where her role as minor and as female dictated her social and legal

options.

Consummate Caretaker

Per Margaret, Rebecca, Caroline, Catherine, Thea, and Theresa, Emma took on traditionally female responsibilities at a young age. After her mother died she assumed the mother figure for her siblings. As a rural, farmed-out girl she cared for a dying woman, that woman's husband, the house, the farm, and eventually her younger brother. She then took care of her 10 children and later raised a granddaughter after her own daughter died in childbirth. She was reportedly an excellent self-taught midwife, seamstress, cook, canner, bread-baker, and all-around sister, mother, and grandmother. Grandchildren regularly visited and loved to sleep with Emma, because they would fall asleep to her telling stories, often from the Bible. People in the family regularly came to her with their troubles and disappointments because she was understanding and non-judgmental. Thea noted that when she became pregnant out of wedlock the one person she was the most afraid to tell was her Grandmother Emma, for fear of disappointing her, but she also felt that her Grandmother was the one person who would not make her feel like a bad person. The respondent remarked that:

It was important that I told her [about the pregnancy] before she found out from others. I was so scared...I didn't want to disappoint her, but I needed to lay that burden down. When I told her she just said that she already knew and that it didn't matter; she still loved me and told me everything would work out. I felt so relieved. — Thea

From the documents examined, it appears that when a rural female orphan was placed-out, very often she would take on domestic duties for her host family. These duties included cooking, cleaning, and child-care responsibilities. This was to be expected, as the state institutions that placed the orphans trained the children to perform specific tasks according to their gender. A rural, female orphan had little to no training to perform other tasks; tasks that may have served to secure a financially independent future.

Martyrdom

Emma reportedly declared that her "re-

ward was in heaven," "someday the Good Lord will reward me," that "God wouldn't give me more than I can handle." She was described as having the patience of Job. She did not hold ill will against her father for choosing his new wife over his children. She never retaliated against the abuse of her husband.

When I went into therapy after [my husband] stopped drinking, the counselor told me to think of the person who was a mentor to me. Of course, I thought of Grandma. Then she explained that this person was probably the one to teach me to be an enabler. It all made sense! I thought, 'Grandma, you betrayed me!' She was so wonderful, but she taught me to tolerate a lot [of things I shouldn't have].... —Thea

I used to come to her after [my husband] and I fought. She'd say, 'if you'd just keep your mouth shut, you wouldn't have so much trouble.' She always took the side of [our brothers] or [our husbands]. — Margaret

Emma's marriage was described as one of convenience. According to Rebecca, "She married [the farmer] to give her brother a home." Rebecca, Margaret, and Thea agreed that Emma and her husband grew to care for one another, but did not have a marriage based on love.

Strength

Emma was described by each respondent as her favorite aunt, grandparent, etc. She was described as being the center of the family.

She was the glue of the family. She was everyone's rock. When she died, the family's closeness was altered. — Caroline

Emma was portrayed as being able to handle any hardship that came her way. She was able to cope with the loss of her mother, the abandonment of her father, raise her brother, withstand a difficult marriage, birth and raise 10 children, face financial hardships and the death of her children and do so reportedly with grace and courage that she summoned from her unshakable faith. For 40 years after her husbands' death, she ran the family farm with the assistance of her two eldest sons, until her retirement in the

early 1980s. She died in 1989.

It can only be assumed that children sent to live and work with strangers, must have shown extraordinary strength while accepting their situation. Nowhere in the documentation from the formally placed-out orphans is there mention of the children being homesick or missing their family, friends, etc. There is no mention of crying or sadness, no mention of adjusting to a new home or work responsibilities, and very few mentions of overwork or lack of food, clothing, or shelter. In fact, there is little mention of how rural orphans interpreted their experience at all. This lack of documentation, of course, does not mean that the children were not homesick or sad or overworked, but may be interpreted to demonstrate the resolve with which these children met their fates—their determination to survive under difficult circumstances.

These themes are all reflective of the "passive acceptance" mode of adaptation to an oppressive situation, as posited by differential oppression theory. This mode of adaptation is expressed when a child conforms to the expectations and demands of her oppressor. This is an obedience built upon fear, which derives from implied or overt threats and intimidation. As a child and as a female, Emma had few options but to acquiesce to her situation. Had she decided to leave her final farmed-out destination, she would have had to travel away from everyone and everything she knew at the tender age of 14 or 15 to eek out a living all alone; a living that was certain to be difficult to obtain as she was a young girl during an era where sexual social stratification actively and consciously divided and ranked people by sex and by age. She also would have undoubtedly faced dual-exploitation in the workplace: first as a child and secondly as a female (Dolgin 1997). Despite labor laws designed to protect the working child, she would have earned less than adult laborers. Additionally, as a female, she would have earned even less. Emma would have been hard-pressed to survive without a husband, much less succeed in life. She would have also had to live with the guilt of leaving behind a brother whose physical well-being was in danger. If she had not stayed in her farmed-out placement, her brother may have been brutalized for many more years. Lastly, as she was pregnant by the farmer to whom she had been farmed-out, if she did not marry him she would have

been viewed as unchaste and immoral—all things counter to the ideology of the “cult of womanhood.” As such, she would have been seen as unworthy of assistance.

Because Emma was informally farmed-out, there were no legal protections in place to work on her behalf and no visiting field workers to inquire as to her living conditions and overall well-being. The isolation of rural Wisconsin left her with few, if any, networks from which to draw support. Her changes in status from “orphan” (for all practical purposes) to “farmed-out girl,” to “wife,” were all changes in her life for which she had no agency to assert. She had no choice in where she lived or with whom, no choice in leaving school, being given away by her father, getting pregnant by a man 31 years her senior and consequently marrying him. Passive acceptance as a mode of adaptation to oppression was the only option fathomable for a young, female, rural, orphan. As she had little to no agency to assert, perhaps this mode of adaptation to oppression can only be assigned as a default choice—a choice where none could realistically have been made.

Historically, children have little power to affect their social world because of their social and legal status. Compared to adults, children had almost no choice regarding with whom they associated and had limited resources available to influence others or to support themselves independently of adults. Therefore, they had the least access to resources that could allow them to negotiate changes in their environment (Finkelhor 1997). This lack of agency was intimately associated with the contradictory role of children as objects of sentiment and objects of utility—depending on their class, gender, and race. From a resource standpoint, adults, having superior power in relationship to children, were at a considerable advantage in determining and enforcing rules that controlled the basic lives of children. Compared to parents, teachers, and other adult authority figures, such as the men to whom they were farmed-out, children were relatively powerless and expected to—often required to—submit to the power and authority of these adults. In the formal and informal processes involved with farming-out, this power was exercised to prevent children from attaining access to valued material and psychological resources, (such as a family that valued them as a person instead of as a laborer), it denied children participation and self-determination, and impeded

the orphaned children from developing a sense of competence and self-efficacy, thus making the situation one of oppression. Oppression, thus, restrained, restricted, and prevented orphans from experiencing the essential attributes of human life—such as sentience, mobility, awareness, growth, autonomy, and will.

One consequence of this oppression and control was that the orphans were transformed into objects, which were acted upon by those in power, as opposed to subjects, who would act upon and transform their world. Paulo Friere (1990) has noted that the greater the exercise of control by oppressors over the oppressed, the more they change them into inanimate things or objects, rather than subjects. By objectifying orphans, those who would use them for their labor were able to control the dialogue about the relationship between the two groups; they alone held the authority to establish the rules governing the relationship and processes of farming-out. In this context, the orphan was not treated as an end for him or herself but as a means for the ends of others, with the more powerful group exploiting the less powerful for its own gain. While the social valuation of a child had changed from that as an object of utility to an object of sentiment (Zelizer 1985), this was only true for upper and middle class children. Poor children, immigrant children, orphaned children were still acted upon as objects of utility because, as laborers, they filled a social need. This is evidenced in the child savers belief that while childhood should be a time of leisure and comfort, “role expectations [of children] were adaptable provided the inferior status group filled a social need” (Lerner 1969 10). The social need in the case of farming-out was that of a cheap labor pool.

The images adults commonly used to describe orphaned children offers support to the premise that child savers and other adults oppressed children. Friere describes how oppressors often create images of oppressed groups as dependent and threatening to the social order. Brace wrote about orphaned children as “street Arabs” and members of the “dangerous class,” a clear indication that their mere existence threatened social order and demanded action. When speaking of girls, he referred to them as unworthy, pre-maturely “womanly,” “hopeless” (Holt 1992) and that they were too costly to “save” (even though the organizations that focused on them operated under a smaller budget than did the organiza-

tions dedicated to helping boys) (Holt 1992; O'Connor 2001). Anthony Platt's critique of the child saving movement discerns that its motives were not the welfare of children, but

the maintenance of control by a group of middle and upper class [people] who had been co-opted into securing the existing political and economic order. (as quoted in Empey 1978 93)

Platt further argues that child savers were more concerned with protecting respectable citizens from perceived threats from the dangerous classes and less concerned with championing the rights of the poor against exploitation by the ruling classes (Platt 1969).

Because the identity a person takes on is profoundly shaped by the way others identify and react to her or him (Cooley 1902; Becker 1963), the images and labels related to being farmed-out orphans had detrimental consequences for the children. According to labeling theory, an individual's problem behavior is significantly affected by the labeling experience. Therefore, simply viewing orphaned children through these lenses may have both created and reinforced these behaviors (i.e., "escaping" from The State School). Indeed, orphaned children often fully accepted the socially constructed notion that they were inferior, incompetent, and irresponsible. In turn they stayed in abusive homes because they thought they deserved no better treatment or that the abuse would help them stop being "bad" (Illick 1974). In addition, adults' perceptions of children as inferior, subordinate, and troublemakers allowed adults to rationalize their oppressive acts.

Differential oppression theory posits that female children are doubly oppressed, oppressed as children and oppressed as females. Thus, while male-orphaned children eventually aged-out of their oppressive status as children, female orphaned children merely aged-into the oppression experienced by adult females. The male orphan could eventually leave his placement and join the military, learn a trade that would provide economic self-sufficiency, or seek out a formal education, whereas, the female orphan was "prepared" more-or-less only for domestic service and/or marriage. The orphaned, rural, female child faced particular hardships. Her main options for finding a home were to work as a domestic (and on the farm, this included farm chores) or to be-

come a wife. Jobs were available, but the newly gendered division of labor and the cult of womanhood proscribed work that might earn her a wage and allowed for her independence (Cott 1972; Pogrebin 1983; Rubin 1997). When employment outside a home was obtained it paid her less than her male colleagues precisely because the job was held by a female. Noted by Nancy Cott, "Women's work, by being designated as such, brought lower compensation" (1972 22). Because it was thought that their work was not economically primary to a family, and because of the perception that all females were oriented, ultimately, towards marriage, union organizers ordained female laborers as "un-organizable," and, therefore, offered them no protection or representation in the workplace (Cott 1972). Ironically, the cult of womanhood forced females into "anti-cult of womanhood" behaviors, such as prostitution, so that they could survive under the new edicts of a gendered division of labor. W.I. Thomas (1923) postulated that sex was now the most valuable capital a female had.

According to differential oppression theory, rural, female orphans had to adapt to their dual oppression as a survival mechanism. It is evident from the content analyses and from the collection of oral histories that a prevalent mode of adaptation was that of "passive acceptance."

CONCLUSION

According to differential oppression theory, children experience oppression at the hands of adults because of their status as a child. But whereas boys eventually grow to the age of majority and take their place as an adult, enjoying all of the rights included in such a status, girls still experience oppression upon reaching adulthood based on their gender. No longer facing the oppression a child has imposed upon her by adults, the adult female in the late 19th/early 20th century did not "grow into" rights awaiting her male counterparts. She could not vote, own property; take an inheritance or the like. She was still the property of another, without dominion over her choices and, therefore, life chances.

This lack of recognized and cultivated agency left female orphans with few options for improving their lot in life, with the rural, female orphan left particularly vulnerable due to their geographical isolation. Some authors

of the day recognized the stifling effect this had on farmed-out girls noting,

Oh, the girls on the farm have minds and pride and ambition just as big as their brothers, too; and in many cases they are not given half a chance to realize one iota of this ambition. (McKeever 1913 238)

However, this was countered by the ideology of the cult of womanhood that was so prevalent during this era. So prevalent was this thinking that the same author offered, "good parents make sure girls do girls work—not men's work," (1913 291); regarding schooling, "don't let her work too hard; her best asserts are a good personality...[it will] help refine her for marriage" (1913 263); and, "practically her only stock-in-trade consists of her personal charm..." (1913 292).

With so few options in life, and no recognizable status, rural, female, orphans who were farmed-out (either formally or informally) stood little chance of enjoying the many pleasures and basic rights afforded those with the good fortune of being born into a higher social status, being born male, or having an intact, supportive family. As such, the "passive acceptance" mode of adaptation to this dual oppression appears to have been logically the most feasible mechanism by which to survive her circumstances.

There are clearly some limitations to this study. Given the nature of the subject matter, our methodology was limited. The use of a case study approach and content analysis of localized historical documents does not permit empirical tests of differential oppression theory. Even the use of equivalent or parallel case studies, possibly allowing for a limited quasi-experimental design, would not be appropriate when looking at the lived lives of rural female orphans of nearly a century ago. The official records of the lives of these children are, at best, rather limited. Records from the state, county, "adoptive" parents, or organizations such as the Children's Aid Society are often incomplete, missing, or simply inaccurate. Few of the young girls and boys were literate. Consequently, few of the children wrote diaries to reflect their experiences. The present case study used interviews with family members who had direct and personal knowledge of some of the girls and boys who had been farmed out. These interviews establish a link to these

children and permit this initial exploration of the causes and nature of the oppression in their lives.

This study is an attempt to acknowledge and address an under-researched population. We hope that it may inspire other research on the experiences of the rural, female orphan. In addition, this study contributes to the theoretical development of differential oppression. It is recommended that future surveys, content analyses, and/or interviews be undertaken so as to better understand the formal and informal mechanisms of social control (within both an historical and contemporary context) utilized within the milieu of child welfare.

END NOTES

- ¹ Homeless children in the city were commonly referred to as "street Arabs" (Brace 1872; Riis 1890).
- ² No one knows for certain how many children were transported on the orphan trains, but estimates from O'Connor (2001) and Holt (1992) put the number between 150,000 to 200,000.
- ³ "Placing-out" was a formal system of taking homeless or destitute children from the city and moving them to a rural area, or an area less affected by crime, and placing them with what would today be considered a foster family. The concept of "placing-out" will be discussed later in this paper.
- ⁴ The orphan trains carried two future governors, one future Supreme Court justice, and others who would become mayors, congressmen, or local representatives.
- ⁵ "Farming-out," similar to "placing-out" was an informal system of farm families taking in orphaned or destitute children to work as farm laborers in exchange for room and board. The finer differences between "farming-out" and "placing-out" will be discussed later in this paper.
- ⁶ Children "placed" by a charity or by a government entity were required to be visited regularly by a field agent. The regularity and quality of these visits varied greatly, depending upon the assigned agent and the region of the country to which the agent had to travel for the visit.
- ⁷ Some adults also traveled to the Midwest on the same trains in search for a better life, marriage, or work.
- ⁸ In the first year of Wisconsin's statehood, its legislature codified assistance for indigent children and adults through a system of county-based Almshouses or through "indentured service," used synonymously with the term "apprenticeship." See Wisconsin statute, 1849, chapter 28, section 19 and chapter 81, sections 1-30.

- ⁹ Wisconsin has a long history of indenturing destitute and/or orphaned children, codifying the procedures in its first legislative session. In the state's Poor Law statutes, by which they were referred, the legal identification for children being placed-out was as "indentured servant," a term used synonymously and interchangeably with the term "apprentice." In 1911 the United States Supreme Court ruled that indentured servitude was unconstitutional. That same year, Wisconsin was the only state to adopt a formal "apprenticeship" system that was sustained by the State for a period of time. It is unknown whether this formal system of apprenticeship improved the working conditions for those who were previously identified as "indentured servants." Out of this system of youth labor came a long running professional journal entitled, *Wisconsin Apprentice*.
- ¹⁰ Ledgers reviewed showed a dated entry with only the word "escaped" next to it with no other details.
- ¹¹ In 1999 a group of concerned citizens, led by former Wisconsin Child Center and Farm counselor June Laxton, raised funds to provide a monument memorializing the deceased children and listing the names of those who could be identified by cross-referencing their tombstone numbers with old ledgers. All but about 20 children could be identified by name.
- ¹² It is assumed that this is a mistake in ledger, as the boy's original indentured date was 1913. The U. S. Supreme Court ruled indentured service unconstitutional in 1911, so referring to it in 1913 may indicate just how synonymously "indentured servant" and "apprentice" were used. Conversely, it may indicate that the State of Wisconsin ignored the Supreme Court decision and continued to indenture children as laborers.
- ¹³ This ledger may or may not have been the only one for the State of Wisconsin, as other records of this era may not have been salvaged or otherwise made available for maintenance by the Wisconsin Historical Society.
- ¹⁴ Thea alluded to the fact that she did not know if the pre-marital sex was consensual, but seemed confident that a girl of Emma's age did not have much authority to say no to sexual advances. As Emma was a devout Roman Catholic, pre-marital sex was considered a shocking and shameful activity.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank Janet Jacobs for her assistance. We also thank Henry Miller of the Wisconsin Historical Society and Kevin Thorie of the University of Wisconsin-Stout. Their invaluable contributions are greatly appreciated. We also are appreciative for the partial funding for the project provided by the Department of Sociology at the University of Colorado. Address communications to Robert M. Regoli at Robertregoli@comcast.net.

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