The Children of Fairbridge

Insights for Child Welfare Practice

by

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Abstract

The Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School was a residential child care center located near the town of Duncan, British Columbia. This program was in operation from 1935 to 1951 and was home to 329 British children who immigrated to become its residents. The author’s father was one of Fairbridge’s residents, which gives this thesis a personal component.

Past residents of Fairbridge have formed the Fairbridge Canada Association. Through this association, they keep in contact with each other through semiannual reunions at the old Fairbridge site and a quarterly newsletter. The existence of this association, coupled with stories the author grew up hearing from her father, suggested that Fairbridge was a unique and successful residential child care center. This is in sharp contrast to the negative connotations that are often associated with residential child care programs. The aim of this research was to explore the Fairbridge Program and to assess the extent to which its practices can be used as guides for current child welfare initiatives.

Using a phenomenological approach, this study explores 'the experiences of individuals, who as children, resided at Fairbridge'. The data came from in-depth conversations or self-recordings of eight former residents of Fairbridge. To put this topic into context, the literature review looks at the development of child welfare in relation to political changes regarding residential child care. The Fairbridge program, from its conception to its closing, is also reviewed.

The experiences of participants are presented in summative themes, which are illustrated in a visual model. These themes give insights into considerations when raising children in a residential child care environment. Three important summative themes are
attachment, self-identity and well being. These illuminated the importance of consistency in residence and house mates when in residential care and give insights to the role adults can play in the lives of children being raised without family.
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Dedication

For Dad

It is also for the memory of my dad’s brother Robert and those who shared their journey, and for my dad’s brother John, and those who stayed behind.
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Conception of Study

It was August 23, 1995 when I boarded the plane from my residence in Prince George, British Columbia, to Vancouver. My parents had flown from Calgary, Alberta the previous day, and we were to meet my two brothers in the Vancouver area, where they resided. Unfortunately, my sister could not join us from her Calgary home. Together we were traveling to the town of Duncan, on Vancouver Island, to attend a 60th anniversary reunion. This was the second such reunion I was to attend with my father. Ten years earlier we had attended the 50th anniversary reunion. I marveled, as I had many times, at the nature of this reunion and the ones that had been held before. The participants of this reunion call themselves the ‘Old Fairbridgians’. My family was accompanying my father to take his place among them. His connection with them had begun many years earlier, when they shared the same childhood home at the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School.

‘Fairbridge’ was located on one thousand acres outside the town of Duncan, BC, and was home to 329 children between 1935 and 1951. Despite its name, Fairbridge was not a boarding school. Fairbridge was a residential child care center or orphanage. All of its residents were sent over from Great Britain due to being orphaned, or were sent by parents who felt they could no longer provide adequately for their children.

I had always known my father was a Fairbridgian. I had grown up hearing stories about his childhood at Fairbridge, where he had resided from the age of ten. He has always spoken highly of the founder Kingsley Fairbridge, the Fairbridge Farm School, and the men, women, and
children who lived there with him. As a child, and as an adult, my father’s stories have fascinated me. I was amazed that a child of ten could be sent from his homeland, raised in an orphanage, and grow up to be a person of such high quality as my father. Today, he is a sensitive family man, who has taught me much about how one should be a caring and contributing member of society. I was intrigued that my father, along with many of his fellow Fairbridgians, had a sense of identity with Fairbridge and each other, and expressed positive feelings regarding their experiences at Fairbridge. This was evident in their self appointed title of ‘Old Fairbridgians’ or ‘Fairbridgians’ and in their development of the ‘Fairbridge Canada Association’ (formerly the Old Fairbridgian Alumni Association’). Through this association, Fairbridgians maintain contact with each other through a quarterly newsletter, semi-annual reunions at the original Fairbridge site, and casual contact. Together they share memories, photos and friendships.

As an adult, I entered the profession of social work. My involvement in my profession began to guide my curiosity of my father’s experience with Fairbridge. As a social worker, I was all too familiar with the negative connotations that were usually attached to residential children’s homes. Why then, did Fairbridge appear to be different? With the coming of the 60th reunion, I realized that the tie to Fairbridge was for some, 60 years old. For my father it was 44 years. A tie of longevity must also be a tie of strength. What was it about Fairbridge that offered its residents such a sense of connectedness? Was Fairbridge successful in providing children with a caring, stable place to call home? If so, current child welfare practices could benefit from knowing how that was accomplished. I therefore wanted to know what it was like to be a child at Fairbridge. Perhaps through this knowledge, I could answer the questions about Fairbridge that intrigued me. Now through the research for my Master of Social work thesis, I hoped to do just that.

As I traveled to the reunion, I had a sense of being privileged to again witness a unique
phenomenon. I was reminded of the words of the 1985 president of the Old Fairbridgian Alumni Association, which invited the membership to the 1985 reunion:

The Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School was our childhood home, and the staff and classmates our family. This jubilee anniversary is therefore more a family gathering than a school reunion. It is a time to renew family ties and to celebrate. (Old Fairbridgian Association, 1985, p. 1)

I was to attend the reunion as the daughter of a Fairbridgian, but also as a researcher. I would meet men and woman who shared my father’s boyhood home. Some of them would participate in my thesis research, as it was to the former children of Fairbridge themselves, where I would go to find the answers to my questions.

This research is the result of an amalgamation of my personal family background and my professional self. Its topic and participants are close to me, as they are part of my heritage and my family. I entered into this research with the utmost respect and sensitivity for the people I was to include and write about in this study. I know that for all those who lived the Fairbridge experience, that which is my 'research' is based on a very personal aspect of their lives.

Research Goal

Significance and Timeliness

The purpose of this research was to explore the experiences of individuals, who as children, resided at the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School. It was my opinion that a phenomenological inquiry into these experiences could best capture the essence of what being a child at Fairbridge was like. Such an inquiry may offer insights into current child welfare practices, particularly in the area of caring for children who are long-term wards of the government.

In June of 1997, there were 8,673 children who were in the care of the British Columbia
Government (Morton, 1998). These children are reliant on child welfare policies and practices for the handling of their lives. For many of these children, this arrangement is temporary and they are reunited with their families after a short period of time. Other children however, must remain in the care of the government for longer periods and as a result, receive primary support from persons other than family members. As of June 1997, 3,047 or 35% of all children in care in British Columbia were under “continuing” or “permanent” custody of the government (Morton, 1998). These children can expect to spend a lengthy time, perhaps the remainder of their childhood, in care. The June, 1995 Ministry of Social Services statistics reveal that of a total of 7,016 children in care and 2,473 of children under permanent care status, 1,509 or 21.5% of children, had been in care for 25 months to five years, 918 or 13.1% of children for 61 months to ten years, and 330 or 4.7% of children had been in care for over ten years (Blades, 1995).

Although services to children in care have been improved and modified over the years, there is still room for improvement. The Gove Inquiry: A Commissioned Report Into Child Protection (1995) amplifies through the specific case of Matthew Vaudreuil, that our child welfare services do not always work in the best interests of children. For this reason, child welfare policies and practices need to be critically analyzed and modified on an ongoing basis. Our responsibilities to children in care include not only providing basic food and shelter, but also promoting the overall well-being of the child. To achieve this we must be aware of those factors that provide the child with the best experience possible while in care. Our current child welfare administrators are attempting to identify and improve upon these areas (Schaffer, 1993).

The issue of permanency is an area of concern regarding children in care. In some cases where children spend several years in care, they can experience a large number of placement moves (Cliffe & Berridge, 1991; O' Brian, 1991; Schaffer, 1993; Morton, 1998). Such instability,
particularly when coupled with whatever hardships the child endured that initially led to being placed in care, cannot be in the best interests of a child. In 1993, British Columbia's Ministry of Social Services conducted a study where former permanent wards of the government, now adults, were interviewed. The issue of frequent placement changes was one issue explored. The findings of the study revealed that 42.3% of the participants had a placement change more than once per year while in care. The study also showed that 48% of participants felt they had been moved too often (Schaffer, 1993).

The placement of First Nation's children in care is another area of concern in British Columbia. According to 1997 statistics 1132 or 37% of children in continuing custody were First Nations (Morton, 1998). Recent research and popular opinion stresses the importance of placing First Nations children in First Nations homes (Herbert, 1995). Unfortunately, there is a shortage of First Nations foster homes, and child welfare workers are often forced to place these children in non-First Nations homes (Personal conversation with Charlett Diston, June 9, 1997).

The Children of Fairbridge looks at a residential child care program that is no longer in operation. An examination of this program may offer viable options to some of today's child welfare problems. One example involves the notion of permanency in care. The children at Fairbridge remained with the same group of children, usually in the same cottage, from the day they were placed at Fairbridge until they entered independent living as young adults (with the exception of children who were sent to foster homes when Fairbridge closed down in 1951). They did not experience the large numbers of placement moves that almost half of children in long-term care experience today.

Living with one's own family, or even a surrogate family, if it is a place of love, safety and stability, is the best place for a child to be. However, one's own family is not always able to
provide that care, and surrogate families cannot always provide long term care. In the case of residential child care, paid staff are not necessarily going to remain on the job for long periods. Former children of Fairbridge seem to identify with each other, and the physical site of Fairbridge, decades after they left the home. This suggests that long-term stability was found for these children, not necessarily through adult care givers, but through each other and identification with a place, an entity they call ‘Fairbridge’.

It is not the purpose of this research to criticize current child welfare practices, nor is it to advocate for a massive return of residential child care programs. It is instead an inquiry into the experiences of a group of people who participated in a unique program. Their experiences may offer ideas and options to current child welfare practices.

Organization of the Chapters

This paper is organized into six chapters and appendices. This chapter outlined the birth of this research, the research goal, and the significance of the study. Chapter two provides a literature review of child welfare for the purpose of placing the topic of this thesis in the context of historical and current child welfare practices. It will explore the political climate and models of welfare, which have guided child welfare practices over the last century. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the present state of child welfare.

Chapter three will continue with a literature review and will narrow the child welfare focus by examining the Fairbridge Farm School program. The chapter takes a journey through the history of the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School from the conception to the closing of the School. This includes a discussion of Kingsley Fairbridge, the man who founded Fairbridge. This chapter includes a look at the physical structure of Fairbridge and the program itself.

The research methodology and methods of this research are described in chapter four.
Chapter five presents the research findings which are based on the information gathered from the eight people who participated in this study.

The thesis concludes with Chapter six, which reflects on the findings and suggests ways they can be used. The findings are compared to other findings from similar studies. Areas for further research are also suggested. The appendices given at the end of the paper include all letters and forms used throughout this research.
CHAPTER TWO


Introduction

The small child takes his wooden bowl in his hands and walks slowly toward the front of
the hall. He passes his wide-eyed fellow orphans who are seated on hard wooden benches in front
of long wooden tables. The child, whose hands are shaking, holds his empty bowl up to the stern
head master and pathetically asks ‘Please sir, may I have some more?’ This scene from Dickens’s
Oliver Twist is the picture many of us have in our minds when we think of orphanage style child
care institutions (Smith & Merkel-Holguin, 1996). This probably was, in fact, an accurate
description of the first orphanages.

Society’s view of children has undergone considerable change in the past several hundred
years. The very nature of the meaning of ‘child’ or ‘childhood’ came into debate in the 1600’s and
continued into the nineteenth century (Hendrick, 1994). Prior to this time, children were not
given any special consideration, rights or protection. Although the Prince of Wales Fairbridge
Farm School’s date of founding was not until 1935, its roots should be considered in relation to
historical developments in child welfare. Fairbridge’s founder conceived of the idea at the
beginning of this century and was influenced, no doubt, by ideologies of the time. This chapter’s
purpose is to place Fairbridge within this historical context in hopes that by doing so, the
information that follows this chapter is more easily understood.

The development of the British and North American welfare states are briefly explored in
this chapter as the prelude to the development of child welfare. The chapter concludes with an
overview of the history of child welfare itself including a look at current practice in British
Columbia.
Britain and North America: 1600- Present day

The development of child welfare and models of caring for children dependent on the state in Britain and North America, evolved around child related ideology (Hendrick, 1994; Smith & Merkel-Holguin, 1996). Child welfare concerns were part of a larger political and social climate, which in its infancy, developed an increasing consciousness for the care of all needy society members, and brought about the emergence of the welfare state (Hodson, 1990).

The debate surrounding the concept of childhood, which came about in the 1600’s, can be viewed on a continuum. At one end of the spectrum, was the notion that the child was innately innocent, deserving of society’s care. Evangelical teachings were largely responsible for the belief on the other end of the continuum, that children were inheritors of ‘Original Sin’ and needed to be brought to God and goodness through strict handling (Hendrick, 1994). Such were the initial beliefs that spurred debates, which helped entrench the opinion that children needed special consideration by society. This was followed by theories, advocacy, and laws specifically designed for children (Hendrick, 1994; Rooke & Schnell, 1983).

Rooke & Schnell (1983) discuss how children had previously been grouped together with their adult counterparts and therefore only received assistance through the same programs available to adults. For example, the Elizabethan Poor Laws of the seventeenth century provided minimal assistance to the destitute. The poor laws saw individuals as falling into only one of two categories, the undeserving and the deserving poor. Undeserving poor were those individuals who were seen as being responsible for their own hardships and were therefore not deserving of assistance. Less fortunate children were included along with the elderly, the infirm, and “properly unemployed” as members of the deserving poor (Rooke & Schnell, 1983, p. 34). Although given the classification of deserving poor, these individuals were still seen as a burden on society. This
residual view of welfare, operating from within a dominant political ideology of anti-collectivism, saw the role of the state as minimal. The deserving poor were reluctantly given assistance only when absolutely necessary. The assistance was harsh to discourage the individual from relying on the state (Williams, 1989). It was from within this model that workhouses and orphanages operated. Charles Dickens’s story of Oliver Twist depicts workhouses and orphanages in the 1820’s (Smith & Merkel-Holguin, 1996).

It was mainly through the efforts of philanthropic societies and individuals, that formal regulations for the specific protection of children were enacted. In England, for example, the Factory Acts, the first of which was implemented in 1802, were to protect children who were put to work in mines, workshops and factories. These children had been subjected to poor working conditions, cruel treatment and long hours. The acts ensured that children under the age of eight did not work in these areas, and reduced the number of hours children aged 9-13 could work. Later in the century, in 1870, mandatory and free education for children was made possible through the Elementary Education Act (Hendrick, 1994). Concern for children sparked even more invasive practices through the movement known as child rescue or child saving.

Child saving, which has roots in the seventeenth century, was well developed by the nineteenth century in England (Rooke & Schnell, 1983). During this period children were largely seen as innocent beings. Popular thought was that they needed to be protected from poor environments and adults of negative influence. This involved the widespread removal of children from lives of poverty and homelessness to place them in the care of one of the children’s organizations in operation at the time. This care would be provided in industrial homes, schools, and orphanages (Hendrick, 1994; Rooke & Schnell, 1983).

Part of the child saving movement of England involved sending children to the colonies of
North America. The British Juvenile Emigration Movement, occurring mainly from 1869 to the early 1930's, highlights this practice (Hendrick, 1994; Rooke & Schnell, 1983). Advocates of this practice thought that once these children were removed from their negative environments in England, they were given the opportunity to flourish. There existed the belief that “the severance of the child from any connection with its natural family was regarded as crucial for the success of the policy” (Hendrick, 1994, p. 75). These children were boarded out with North American families or were placed in orphanages or group homes, usually run by private organizations (Rooke & Schnell, 1983).

At the same time, North America was progressing in its own child welfare and social reform movements. Parts of North America adopted the British Poor Law system in 1791 which, as in Britain, dictated harsh practices regarding the poor and needy (Hodson, 1990). Concerns specifically for the welfare of children spurred Canada's own child rescue movement. Ontario led the country in taking responsibility for the welfare of children. The Ontario Orphans Act of 1799, was the first formal move to claim responsibility in Canada for the care of orphaned or deserted children (Hodson, 1990; Rooke & Schnell, 1983). In 1887, the Toronto Humane Society was established for the protection of children and animals. Some of its founders were instrumental in the passing of the Act for the Protection and Reformation of Neglected Children of 1888, which lent itself as a template for child protection legislature across Canada (Gove, 1995). J.J. Kelso was a man who was involved in the establishment of both of these important Canadian child welfare milestones, and in 1893 was given the position in Ontario of provincial superintendent of child welfare. This position, the first of its kind, was established to oversee the protection and welfare of dependent and neglected children. Kelso went on to assist in the establishment of Children's Aid Societies across Canada. The United States Children's Bureau established in
1912, was followed by Canada’s own establishment of a national government funded voluntary organization for the welfare of children. This was the Canadian Council on Child Welfare (CCCW) which was established in 1920. According to Hodson (1990) “the establishment of the CCCW in 1920 was a watershed in the history of child welfare reform in Canada” (p. 4).

The years that followed saw further developments for child welfare as significant shifts in the interrelated areas of political and social climates occurred. The pre 1920’s political ideology of anti-collectivism can be seen, as mentioned earlier, in the way in which the less fortunate were viewed and assisted. This residual model of welfare gave assistance reluctantly. It was not until the 1930’s that the reluctant collectivism ideology of social welfare gained a foothold in Canada (Mullaly, 1993; Williams, 1989). With it came an institutional model of welfare. The reluctant collectivists agreed with the anti-collectivists that a capitalist society is the best system, but that the welfare state should be improved upon and the state should assume a more active role in protecting the citizens (George & Wilding, 1976). Social problems were seen as being caused by both individual failure and the effects of a capitalist society. The state should therefore compensate people for its dysfunction by providing a medium amount of social services (Williams, 1989). These views of the role of the welfare state were influential in the development and implementation of child welfare policy and practice.

Children in Care

Partially due to the child rescue movement, large numbers of children found themselves residing in religious, private, and government funded facilities in the early part of this century. The use of children’s institutions increased in response to the number of children in need of care. Widespread debate occurred over institutional versus foster care in the mid 1800’s in England. The turn of this century saw a decline in residential care in England, as support for foster care
gained momentum in the debate. During this time when Britain was questioning the suitability of placing children in institutional settings and was beginning to favor foster care arrangements, North American children’s homes were gaining in popularity (Rooke & Schnell, 1983).

Orphanages in North America were virtually non-existent in the pre 1800 era. Only five orphanages existed in this period. By 1933 there were 1,613 orphanages in North America (Smith & Merkel-Holguin, 1996). Religious organizations or philanthropists ran the majority of these homes, while a few were government run. The majority of pre 1920 orphanages, products of a residual view of the role of the state, are documented as being regimented and harsh, with little care taken to provide for the emotional well-being of the children. Corporal punishment, sexual abuse, marginally acceptable basic care, and a lack of responding to educational needs, are documented elements of these institutions (Smith & Merkel-Holguin, 1996). Eventually, like Britain, North America shifted away from residential care and moved toward foster care although, orphanage use was not reduced significantly until the 1950’s (Smith & Merkel-Holguin, 1996).

There are several factors that contributed to the shift away from the orphanage style setting. Cliffe & Berridge (1991) give three major reasons for this. First was the “historical legacy” of children’s homes, which was unfavorable due to the less than humanistic model of welfare on which they were developed. Secondly, research has contributed to the move away from children’s homes. For example, the research of Bowlby had a significant influence on the shift towards foster care. Bowlby’s Attachment Theory explores the negative effects of children who were without a mother or mother substitute, and led to a belief that care should be given in a foster family (Holmes, 1993). A final major contributing factor was the perception that institutional care was expensive.
Child Care Today

Today the majority of Canadian children in care reside in the home of a foster family. Small numbers of children reside in small group living situations but the orphanage style of care no longer exists. The thought that once encouraged the severing of a child’s ties with its impoverished or negative environment has been reversed. Modern child welfare policy holds that contact with families of origin should be maintained (Ministry of Social Services, 1994). Experience, research and critical analyses have contributed to these changes in child welfare policy and practice over the years. This process continues today.

Where once only children’s basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter were of concern, we now look towards a more holistic sense of child “welfare”. Part of this quest addresses the overall concept of a child’s “well-being”. The University of Victoria, for example, is involved with research into the concept of well-being. The University’s Child, Family & Community Research Program, which is funded by the Ministry of Social Services, has as its primary goal: “To engage in research activities that enhance the well-being of children, youth, families and communities. By well-being, we refer to those characteristics that contribute to the social, psychological, economic, cultural, political, and environmental life of people and their communities” (University of Victoria, School of Social Work, 1995, inside front cover).

Permanency in care is an example of an area that affects a child’s state of well-being. British Columbia’s Ministry of Children and Family Services has dedicated a department to this issue. Permanency planning emerged in the 1970’s as a response to concerns over the many children in care who were drifting from placement to placement, thus causing children to experience instability and the absence of long term relationships (Carman & Small, 1988). Permanency planning is defined by Carmen and Small (1988) as “the systematic process of
carrying out, within a brief time-limited period, a set of goal directed activities designed to help children live in families that offer continuity of relationships with nurturing parents or caretakers and the opportunity to establish lifetime relationships” (p. 16). Although permanency planning strives for stability in care of all children who are involved with the child welfare system, it is particularly concerned with children who are in the long term care of the state.

As noted above on page 4, as of June 1997, 3,047 or 35% of all children in care in B.C. were permanent wards of the government (Morton, 1998). A child is given permanent ward status when the child has little or no chance of being reunited into his/her family home in the foreseeable future (Ministry of Social Services, 1994). A 1993 report by the Ministry of Social Services on the quality of service of former permanent wards presents data, which indicate that the 26 participants of this particular study had between 1 and 31 placement homes. Only half of the participants had changed homes less than 5 times and 42.3% changed homes more than once per year while in care (Schaffer, 1993).

As part of the permanency planning efforts, the Ministry struck a Permanent Ward Review Advisory Committee in May of 1993. This committee was given the responsibility of evaluating Ministry services to permanent wards and began with a pilot project of a permanent ward review in region J (see figure 1). The results of this review have since been compiled and published (Cunnigham, Holmes, & Sullivan, 1994).

The findings of the study include the following recommendations from the children/youth interviewed for improvements in service (Cunningham, et al, 1994):

1. Maintain sibling and family connections.
Figure 1

Map of Region "J"

(Cunningham, Holmes, & Sullivan, 1994, p. 36)
2. Listen to children/youth and involve them in decisions that affect their lives.

3. Reduce the number of placements for permanent wards.


5. Increase follow-up visits after placement.

6. Increase contact between permanent wards and their social workers.

7. Increase flexibility throughout the system.

8. Help permanent wards connect with other children in care.

9. Increase financial assistance for clothing and programs. (p. 24-26)

The above list clearly implies that children have the desire and ability to contribute to a critical analysis of the child welfare system. These children expressed a desire for more consistency in placements, social workers, and connections with other children in care. In its infancy, the child welfare system would not have gone to its recipients for feedback. This very fact illuminates the degree of its evolution.

Summary

Child welfare practices, as part of an overall emergence of the welfare state, continue to evolve. Concerned individuals, researchers, religious organizations, private organizations, political parties, and governments have all played a part in this evolution. Residential child care was a practice, which evolved at a time in history when the popular opinion held that children should be ‘rescued’ and separated from their poor environments. The political climate of the time dictated that care of these children should be harsh so that they would learn to be independent. Only basic needs were provided.

Orphanage style residential child care has been phased out over the years due to its relation to the harsh ideology in which it was developed, and the changing opinion that children
should be nurtured in single family homes or small group homes. Foster care is now the favored alternative. A major concern with foster care however, is the large number of placement moves and the general lack of consistency children in care experience. These issues have become a part of a more global approach to the care of children in the child welfare system. This approach, which considers more abstract issues of a child’s care such as happiness and security, is termed child ‘well-being’.
CHAPTER THREE

Literature Review-Part Two: The Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School

Introduction

The founding of the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School is a fascinating story of a dream that began with one man, Kingsley Ogilvie Fairbridge. His story is one of challenge, perseverance, and a very personal struggle. His idealistic and caring nature lent itself to a philosophy that led to the creation of the Fairbridge Farm Schools. Kingsley’s plan for the farm schools was conceived and implemented in the early 1900’s, during the child saving era in Great Britain (Fairbridge, 1936; Hendrick, 1994). As discussed in the previous chapter, most children’s homes of this time were operated from within a residual approach for welfare. They were harsh and provided only a minimal amount of care. Kingsley however, seemed to subscribe to an alternate ideology which is reflected in his ideals regarding raising children in a group setting. This chapter explores the available literature on Kingsley Fairbridge in an attempt to understand why this is so.

The Fairbridge Farm School in Canada was established several years after the first of Fairbridge’s schools. It faced struggles from the beginning due to fiscal restraint and changing social and political climates, which impacted child welfare and child immigration policies. As a result, the Canadian Fairbridge Farm School had a relatively short existence of sixteen years. This chapter explores the rise and fall of the school and sets the context for the stories of former residents, which you will hear, in chapter five of this thesis. This chapter concludes with an update of ‘Fairbridge’ and its ‘children’.

Kingsley Fairbridge

Kingsley Fairbridge was born in 1885 in Grahamstown, South Africa. He was of English
and Scottish descent and was the third generation to be born in South Africa. As the son of a land
surveyor to the Cape government, Kingsley’s boyhood days were spent living and traveling in
remote areas. When Kingsley was eleven years of age, his father’s work took the family to
Rhodesia. It was shortly thereafter that Kingsley contracted malaria, an illness that was to plague
him for the rest of his life, and take him to an early grave. The writings of Kingsley Fairbridge, as
well of those who wrote about him, paint a picture of a passionate man who was a poet, an
idealist, and at the same time, an imperialist (Fairbridge, 1936; Rhodesia Reprint Library, 1974;
Terpsma, 1979). Kingsley’s life long struggle to develop the farm schools is described by him as
something that was born out of an inner sense of drive that took on a mysterious life of its own.
This is a thing that is pursued only by the passionate.

The seed for the Farm Schools was planted into Kingsley’s mind by what he described as
‘a vision’ (Fairbridge, 1936). At the age of twelve, Kingsley and a companion were hired by
Kingsley’s father to travel on foot to a remote area to build two small huts. After several days,
the boys ran out of food and on the third day of their fast, they had finished the work and began
the difficult journey home. Kingsley Fairbridge (1936) describes the ‘vision’ that came to him on
that return walk:

I felt dreamy and far away; my body felt light but I breathed heavily as we breasted
the great slopes. Suddenly the thought came to me, ‘Why are there no farms?
Why are there no people?’ It came to me again and again.... I would look into the
deep valleys, where the grass was six feet high, and wish that I could see a farm. I
imagined smoke coming out of the chimney, and the grass all cropped down by
cattle. So the vision came to me, when I was starved and miserable: I spoke it out
loud: ‘Some day I will bring farmers here’. (p. 29-30)

Kingsley did not speak immediately about his vision, but he never forgot it. Later, in 1903
at the age of seventeen, a trip to England to visit his grandmother caused his original vision to be
joined by another. It was after he returned home to Rhodesia that memories of what he had seen
in England returned to him (Fairbridge, 1936):

When you close your eyes on a hot day you may see things that have remained half hidden at the back of your brain. That day I saw a street in the east end of London. It was a street crowded with children - dirty children yet lovable, exhausted with the heat. No decent air, not enough food. The waste of it all! Children’s lives wasting away while the Empire cried aloud for men. There are workhouses full, orphanages full and no farmers.

‘Farmers-children, farmers-children...’: the words ran in my head as I pushed my bicycle along the dusty road. And then I saw it quite clearly: Train the children to be farmers! Not in England. Teach them their farming in the land where they will farm. Give them gentlemen and women for their mentors and guides, and give them a farm of their own where they may grow up among gentle farm animals, proud of the former, understanding of the later... I saw great Colleges of Agriculture (not workhouses) springing up in every man-hungry corner of the Empire. I saw little children shedding the bondage of bitter circumstances, and stretching their legs and minds amid the thousand interests of the farm. (p. 142-143)

According to Kingsley, his growing thoughts about child emigration took on a life of their own. He wrote of struggling with the ‘message’ he had been given, and how his growing scheme infiltrated his daily thoughts, “I had been given a message, and the great difficulties began to present themselves. Always I shrank back, sick and appalled, and fear sat in my soul like a live thing. Always I comforted myself, thinking of the children who would be happier, of the bare acres that would bloom” (Fairbridge, 1936, p.143). Shortly after his second vision, a leopard started to follow him at night. He took it to be connected to his visions, and to the task that lay ahead of him, should he choose to attempt to make his vision into reality. He thought perhaps the leopard was a sign of the need to be brave, and at other times thought it was a bad omen. For four months the leopard followed him during which time he began to formulate a plan for carrying out his scheme. At the age of twenty-one, he received a small amount of money that he used to travel to England, New Zealand and Canada to explore the possibility of creating his farm schools. A cousin suggested that an education may help Kingsley to realize his scheme, and so he applied
for, and was awarded, a Rhodes Scholarship to attend Oxford University. With a plan in place, Kingsley prepared to leave his home. He had done his preparatory work and was to be granted audiences with influential people in the countries he was to visit. He would then travel to England to begin his university career at Oxford (Fairbridge, 1936).

Although the scheme had occupied much of his thoughts and seemed to be dictating his life’s path, he had spoken of it only to a few people. Up until the day he left his home, he had not confided in his father the reasons for his departure, “I loved my father, but I hated laying bare the dream of my boyhood. But I had known that he would ask me, and I meant to tell him” (Fairbridge, 1936). Kingsley told his father of his plan and was met with approval, pride, and a father’s concern:

‘But it will be a hard job,’ he said; ‘you will not find the right people at first. It will take you two or three years.’...
‘I don’t know how long I’ll be,’ I answered, ‘perhaps only two years. Perhaps it will take me all my life.’

My father’s face turned suddenly very serious. After a while he spoke again very quietly, and with a little laugh. ‘These people,’ he said, ‘all these people you are working for, they may never know what you have done, they may never thank you.’

I remembered my dark hours. ‘I know.’ I said. (Fairbridge, 1936, p. 150)

That was to be the last time Kingsley ever saw his father. His efforts to realize the first farm school did take him the rest of his life, and his road did not take him home again before his father died.

**Fairbridge Farm Schools**

After beginning his education at Oxford University, Kingsley’s original plan did not fade as plans so often do with time. Kingsley’s trip abroad was successful in that his presentations were well received. However, despite interest in the receiving colonies, he still had to figure out a way to implement the plan. While at Oxford, he told his classmates of the scheme, and began to
write on the subject of child immigration to spread interest. A classmate arranged for Kingsley to speak to the Oxford Colonial Club in efforts to get support for his idea.

On October 19, 1909, Kingsley gave an inspirational speech which resulted in the unanimous support of his plan (Fairbridge, 1936). He told this gathering of his scheme, which by now was a well thought out plan. Farming, of course, was to be central to the farm schools and, in Kingsley’s mind, had many benefits. He was of the opinion that farming was a great teacher of life and had a wholesome environment very suitable for children. Fairbridge (1936) stated “Farming is in itself a wonderful educator; moreover, there is a homeliness about farm-life which makes it the antithesis of existence in an institution” (p. 174-175).

In addition to promoting a wholesome environment, training children to be farmers would provide previously orphaned children with a livelihood. A believer in imperial unity, Kingsley advocated that his plan could be instrumental in Great Britain and her colonies assisting each other; the colonies would be developed and farmed by some of the over sixty thousand children who were living homeless and orphaned in England. In addition to an agricultural education, the children would receive a basic academic education. Although he focused on educating boys as farmers, Kingsley’s plan was inclusive of girls, who would be trained to be farmers’ wives or domestic servants (Dunae, 1988). As for funding of the farms, the yields of the farm could help support the operation of the program. Housing for the children would consist of cottage style homes, a form of housing used previously in English children’s homes to promote a family atmosphere. This setting was preferred by Kingsley to avoid an “institutional atmosphere” (Terpsma, 1979, p. 15). Only educated and cultured men and women would be hired to care for the children (Dunae, 1988).

The children, once trained at the age of fifteen or sixteen, were to be placed with families
or businesses to practice their skills. Although supporting themselves by this time, the farm school administration would remain the legal guardian of the children until they reached the age of twenty-one. The farm school was to remain their home, even after they entered independent living, and they were always welcome to return (Terpsma, 1979).

At the conclusion of Kingsley’s speech at Oxford, every one of the fifty men in attendance committed themselves to forming the Society for the Furtherance of Child Emigration to the Colonies, which was incorporated as the Child Emigration Society (Dunae, 1988; Fairbridge, 1936). And so began a new chapter for Kingsley’s scheme. He recalled his thoughts after the acceptance of his plan at Oxford, “I was instructed to ‘carry on’, to collect money, to find the way.... ‘The Way’, I thought, ‘that is it. I am still to find the way. But we are on it. We-that’s it-[sic] fifty of us now...My child emigration thought is spoken-it is [sic] become part of the world’” (Fairbridge, 1936, p.176).

Kingsley and his group of fifty, many who were to become influential members in business and political communities, set out to secure support for the farm school plan. Kingsley was also assisted by Ruby, who in 1911, became his wife. Rhodesia turned down the Child Emigration Society, stating that that country was too young for child emigration, a development that disappointed Kingsley, as it was in Rhodesia that he always imagined his plan to be realized. Instead the first farm school was opened in Pinjara, Western Australia in 1912, with funds from the British public and the Rhodes Trustees. Kingsley and Ruby personally operated this farm school and welcomed the first group of thirteen British children between the ages of 7 to 13 (Fairbridge, 1936; Terpsma, 1979). In the years that followed, Kingsley worked hard to maintain support for his farm school, and this, along with the difficult work on the farm, contributed to his failing health.
Kingsley Fairbridge died on July 19, 1924 at the age of thirty-nine. He had fathered four children and parented a great many more. In an epilogue to his book, his wife Ruby wrote, “He saw two hundred children from many a back street, brimful of happiness, enjoying the ever-varied interest of a farm. He saw his old boys returning, men now-and some of them owning their own land; these, one and all, said: ‘We thank you’” (Fairbridge, 1936, p.182).

The Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School

The Child Emigration Society continued to function after Kingsley’s death and gained additional influential members and support. The Prince of Wales became personally interested in Fairbridge Farm Schools and began advocating for schools to be established in Canada, New Zealand, and Queensland, Australia (Wharton, 1977). In Canada, child emigration had been brought to a halt after a policy was passed in 1924, disallowing children under 14 who were dependent on the state, from entering the country (Dunae, 1988). Canada was no longer willing to care for out of country children when it had so many needy children of its own. There was also concern that ill treatment of immigrant children existed in the programs operating at the time (Dunae, 1988; Terpsma, 1979). Patrick Dunae (1988) credits the Child Emigration Society’s imperial philosophy and influential supporters, which included members of royalty and the academic and political communities, with assisting this “remarkable organization” in achieving the “extraordinary” of negating these circumstances and opening a Canadian farm school (p. 226).

In 1931, the Child Emigration Society made a request to Canada for the establishment of a Fairbridge Farm School. The Society was promptly turned down under the 1924 federal policy (Terpsma, 1979). Kingsley had long favored southern British Columbia as a suitable area for a farm school due to its mild weather and rich farmland. The Society therefore attempted to gain provincial support for a school, but again was turned down by the Conservative government in
power in British Columbia at the time. Nevertheless, the Society continued making its case to the
Canadian and British Columbia governments, enlisting the support of influential members of both
the Canadian and English communities.

A change in provincial political leadership led to the support, and the eventual
establishment, of the farm school. The Liberal party took office in British Columbia in 1933
under the leadership of T.D. Pattullo, an optimist and a child welfare supporter. The premier was
lobbied by Fairbridge supporters and soon became an advocate for the scheme. With a similar
philosophy to Kingsley himself, Pattullo was of the opinion that the farm school could offer
underprivileged children a better start at life, while stimulating the economy once the children
graduated from the school. An additional attractive factor was that the Child Emigration Society
was not seeking funds from this side of the Atlantic. Pattullo’s support of the farm school proved
to be invaluable when in 1934 he recommended to the federal Minister of Immigration and
Colonialization that the Fairbridge plan be implemented (Dunae, 1988; Terpsma, 1979).

The Child Emigration Society was granted reluctant permission by the federal government
to establish a Fairbridge Farm School in British Columbia on March 12, 1934 (Terpsma, 1979).
The Society agreed that it would be financially responsible for the Immigrant children until they
reached the age of 18. They would send back any children who proved to be problematic in any
way, although screening of the children by both the Society and Canadian Immigration authorities
was expected to prevent such instances (Dunae, 1988).

Because the federal government was uncomfortable with approving the child immigration
scheme, they had hoped for as little publicity as possible. They were unimpressed therefore, when
a major fundraising campaign was launched in England, led by persons who were sure to cause
major publicity, Prime Minister Baldwin and the Prince of Wales (Dunae, 1988; Terpsma, 1979).
As the Canadian government feared, publicity sparked opposition to the government's decision. The Canadian Daughter's League, the Native Sons of Canada, and Charlotte Whitton, on behalf of the Canadian Council on Child and Family Welfare, all questioned the government's decision although they were not successful in reversing it (Dunae, 1988). However, many citizens in the Duncan area, where the site for the school was eventually chosen, welcomed the farm school proposal. Popular opinion was that an organization with such prominent support would bring exposure and prestige to the area, in addition to bringing employment, business, and other economic benefits. The Society continued with its plans to open the farm school.

The Child Emigration Society purchased the 1028 acre Pemberlea Farm Estate located outside the town of Duncan, near Cowichan Station on Vancouver Island (Terpsma, 1979). Several prominent people were to make up the farm school's local advisory committee, which gave the Society and the farm school "immense prestige" (Dunae, 1988, p. 233). Despite indications to the contrary, the British Columbia government granted $25,000, and an additional ten dollar annual maintenance payment per child to the farm school. During this time period, the Child Emigration Society changed its name to Fairbridge Farms Schools, Inc., later to become The Fairbridge Society. Construction on the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School began in the spring of 1935 (Dunae, 1988).

The Fairbridge Farm School, nestled within the beautiful southern Vancouver Island countryside, took on the look of a quaint village. When construction at the farm school was complete, there were seven duplex dormitories (housing up to 14 children and 1 cottage mother per side), four single cottages (housing up to fourteen children each and one cottage mother each), a 250 seat dining hall and kitchen, a school with gymnasium, a 300 person chapel, a hospital, library, and the principal's residence. There were also several outbuildings to
accommodate the farm's electrical and sewage needs. Nearby grounds included spacious playing fields (Old Fairbridgians Association, 1985).

The first group of children, consisting of 14 girls and 27 boys, began life at the farm school on September 25, 1935 (Old Fairbridgians Association, 1985; Terpsma, 1979). Children were selected by the Fairbridge Society for immigration through existing child care organizations in Great Britain and through advertisements to the general public. Selected children were then submitted to the Canadian Immigration authority for approval. The Canadian government proved to be extremely particular regarding its selection process, and any child with a physical or mental deficit was rejected (Dunae, 1988). Interestingly, only five percent of the children sent to Fairbridge Canada were true orphans. Canadian Immigration and The Fairbridge Society were of the opinion that institutionalized children would have little chance of success in adjusting to the family environment at Fairbridge. In the end, of the 329 children who lived at the Fairbridge Farm School in Canada, forty five percent of the children came from single family homes and fifty percent from two parent family homes. Poverty was the main reason for the majority of children's involvement with Fairbridge (Dunae, 1988).

The farm school's program closely followed Kingsley Fairbridge's original ideas regarding how his farm schools should be run. The on site academic school was run like any other provincial school with mandatory attendance of all school age children. Daily farm school education occurred outside of classroom time. After the age of 15, boys entered full time agricultural education, while the girls were trained in domestic. At 16, the trainee year was over and some children continued their education while the majority entered into the work force. Fifty percent of their wages were banked for them until the age of 18 when they were no longer under the care of the Fairbridge Society (Dunae, 1988).
According to Dunae (1988), Fairbridge implemented a Godparent Program, which proved to be very successful. A person or organization could adopt a Fairbridge child by giving $150 dollars to the Society and by taking a special interest in the 'adopted child'. The adoptive godparents would be encouraged to correspond with the child and take him or her out on a regular basis.

The Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School enjoyed several years of success and was supported by many prominent people who visited the site. Fairbridge was a high profile operation in that it was often reported on in the media (Dunae, 1988; Old Fairbridgians Association, 1985). It was perhaps inevitable that Fairbridge would collide with modern social workers and public policy that would lead to the closing of the farm school. Some of these details are outlined below.

**Fairbridge Closes**

Due to financial difficulties, Fairbridge was forced to turn to the provincial and federal governments for financial support. This required that it be subjected to more rigorous government scrutiny. In 1944, B.C.'s Superintendent of Neglected Children conducted an inquiry of Fairbridge (Dunae, 1988). The report suggested that Fairbridge was based on an outdated philosophy of child care practice. Social workers were advocating for keeping families together except in cases of abuse or neglect and if removal was necessary, foster care was favored over institutional care. The existence of Fairbridge directly contradicted these beliefs. Fairbridge, the report indicated, employed some unfit child care staff and sexual misconduct was a problem, evident in high rates of illegitimate pregnancy among graduates of the school. In addition, Fairbridge was charged with producing children with low academic ability, high rates of physical illness, and social ineptness (Dunae, 1988).
Fairbridge hastily submitted a rebuttal giving convincing evidence that several allegations in this report were unfounded, citing research statistics, including some from McGill University, which showed that Fairbridge children were at least equal in physical and mental status to their non-child care facility counterparts.

A second investigation was therefore launched, this time by the federal supervisor of Juvenile Immigration, who found the majority of complaints in the previous report to be unfounded. A compromise was met by Fairbridge and the province’s Child Welfare Branch which required changes to be made at Fairbridge. These changes involved removing unfit staff, introducing a sex education program, and improving the aftercare program (Dunae, 1988).

Despite addressing these problems, the farm school’s future was bleak. It continued to experience financial difficulties and was met by continuous opposition from child welfare workers who criticized institutional care. The Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School closed in 1951 after sixteen years of existence (Dunae, 1988). The children who resided at Fairbridge at this time were sent to foster care.

Although reference to the Prince of Wales Fairbridge program in the literature is scarce, there are a few comments on it. In his book ‘The Little Immigrants’, Kenneth Bagnell (1980) wrote about the over eighty thousand children who came to Canada as part of the child emigration movement. In reference to Fairbridge he stated “...One of the most unique of all the programs, the Fairbridge Society, founded by Kingsley Fairbridge, had a village home in the serene setting of Duncan on Vancouver Island in British Columbia” (Bagnell, 1980, p. 226). He says the Fairbridge scheme was the “most imaginative” of all the child immigration schemes, and that it managed to “introduce children to Canada in a way that avoided the lonely terrors that accompanied the children of so many of their earlier counterparts” (Bagnell, 1980, p. 230).
As a student at the University of Victoria, Carole Wharton (1977) studied the history of the Fairbridge Farm School. Wharton’s main source of data collection was from secondary sources, although she did communicate with some former staff of Fairbridge. She concluded her paper with the following positive comment on the program, “And so, the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School is, sadly, a service of the past...An overview of this very effective and enterprising child care facility provides some enlightening thoughts and suggestions for the child care discipline... Fairbridge Farm School’s success, however brief, is deserving of credit and praise” (Wharton, 1977, p. 24).

**Fairbridge Lives On**

The Fairbridge site was left relatively untouched from 1951 until it was developed into a small community strata estate in the 1970’s (Dunae, 1988). I have had the opportunity to visit the site prior to, and since its modern development. Today, ‘Fairbridge’ is a very attractive small country community in the original living area of the Fairbridge Farm School site. ‘Fairbridge Drive’ is lined by estate homes, most of which are renovated Fairbridge cottages. The chapel, the only remaining public building on the site, has been maintained by the Fairbridge Canada Society. I learnt through casual discussions at the sixtieth anniversary Fairbridge reunion, that the church is in operation with regular services. Over the years, the wedding and funeral services of Old Fairbridgians have been conducted there. Some of the homeowners at Fairbridge have attempted to maintain the look of the cottage homes in their renovations. One home I visited preserved children’s names above clothing hooks down in what was the washing room, while another’s entrance hall was decorated with framed newspaper clippings of Fairbridge’s significant events.

Like the Fairbridge site, the children of Fairbridge have maintained their Fairbridge
identity. The Fairbridge Canada Association, was founded by former children of the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School. The association’s members, who refer to themselves as ‘Old Fairbridgians’ or “Fairbridgians” have chosen to remain in contact with each other, and with the entity they call ‘Fairbridge’. Through the Association they share friendship and memories of their Fairbridge days. The Association sends out a quarterly newsletter to the membership. The Fairbridge Alumni Bursary Foundation, administered by Fairbridge members, helps offspring of Old Fairbridgians with educational expenses. Reunions are held every two years in Duncan, with visits to the Fairbridge site and a service at the Fairbridge church. The residents of the modern ‘Fairbridge’ welcome the Old Fairbridgians for every reunion and host a tea in the common area of the Fairbridge strata. They also open their homes, the former cottage homes of the Fairbridgians, for the membership to look through. The Association’s membership now includes family members of Old Fairbridgians and any other interested persons.

**Summary**

Kingsley Fairbridge conceived the idea for farm schools at a time when child saving was popular. His conception of caring for children was one that reflected his personality of a kind and gentle man, and contradicted practices of harsh treatment which many residential child care facilities were based on. A central concept to his child care plan was that of raising children in the country, a place of wholesome learning, while training them in the vocation of farming.

The Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School was perhaps doomed before its doors were opened. Popular opinion of the time no longer favored residential child care and funding for the program was scarce. During its existence, 329 children attended the school. Today, many of these children still feel a sense of connectedness to Fairbridge and to each other. They have
formed an association through which Fairbridge lives on.
CHAPTER FOUR

Research Design

Research Question

From the conception of this research I have asked, 'What was it like to be a child at the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School'? This remained the primary question throughout this study. This question was central to my inquiry and essential for understanding other aspects of Fairbridge and Fairbridgians such as, 'Why does this group of people appear to have a long standing connection to Fairbridge, evident by the Fairbridge association and the fact that they call themselves Fairbridgians?' We know that any group of people may relate to an organization or place simply out of their association with it regardless of whether it was a positive or negative experience. It was my opinion however, that many Fairbridgians seemed to express more than this; there seemed to be a positive, emotional attachment and sense of belonging to Fairbridge ('Fairbridge' meaning all that is connected to it including the other former residents). It seemed reasonable then, that an inquiry into the original experience itself, of what it was like to be a child at Fairbridge, should be central to my research. Such an inquiry could be undertaken only with the people who had the experience, the children of Fairbridge.

This chapter outlines and discusses the methodology and methods I chose to use for this research. Issues of ethics and quality of the research are discussed in the conclusion of the chapter.
Research Design

Methodology

A research design that best complimented the nature of this study was needed to assist me in exploring the primary question. Rubin and Babbie (1993) define research designs simply as “all the decisions made about how a research study is to be conducted” (p. 330). These decisions are guided by the nature of the inquiry. It was of primary importance to me that the experiences of the participants of this research be told by the participants as directly as possible. I felt that by giving them the ‘loudest voice’ in the text of this study, the true essences of their experiences could be captured.

My first decision was to choose an overall methodology from within which I would explore my questions. Rubin & Babbie (1993) state that qualitative inquiry is chosen over quantitative when the researcher hopes results will “emphasize depth of understanding, that attempt to tap the deeper meanings of human experience, and that intend to generate theoretically richer observations which are not easily reduced to numbers” (p. 30). It was immediately clear to me that my research would be of a qualitative nature.

Underneath the umbrella of qualitative research there exists a variety of methodologies and methods, which I found myself swimming, or perhaps drowning in, at times. I thought of qualitative research as being both the beauty and the beast, as I tried to understand the various tools and theories available. I found that in the end the beast was that there was no overall, clearly directed script for me to follow (although steps were provided by various authors dictating their specific approach), and the ‘beauty’ was that qualitative methods offered flexibility in their potential to merge and compliment each other. Finally, from within this warehouse of qualitative
research tools, I was able to locate those, which I felt could best support the particular uniqueness of my research.

The overall concept of phenomenology provided me with a methodology that helped guide me. I found however, that even with this specific area, there existed a range of interpretation and options. Patton (1990) describes what I too discovered while exploring the concept of phenomenology:

The term phenomenology has become so widely used that its meaning has become confused. Sometimes phenomenology is viewed as a paradigm, sometimes as philosophy or as a perspective, and it is sometimes even viewed as synonymous with qualitative methods or naturalistic inquiry. (p. 68)

Van Manen (1990) does not appear to share this general description and gives a very specific meaning to phenomenology. He describes it as a philosophy and a methodology that guides the researcher through the use of specific methods for data collection, analysis, and writing. Rubin & Babbie (1993) on the other hand explain phenomenology in a more general sense:

Sometimes the more philosophical term, phenomenology is used to emphasize a focus on people’s subjective experiences and interpretations of the world. This type of focus tends to apply to all qualitative inquiry, and therefore the term ‘phenomenology’ might also be used to convey the philosophical assumptions underlying ethnography, ethnomethodology, or other terms for qualitative inquiry (p. 362).

I found this range of meaning to be somewhat confusing at first. However, two words I came across in the literature discussing phenomenology captured my attention. These are essence and verstehen (Rubin & Babbie, 1993; Van Manen, 1990). According to Van Manen (1990) “phenomenology is the study of essences” (p. 10). Webster’s Dictionary defines essence as “basic nature”, “essential quality”, and “core and substance” (Guralnik, 1982). To me, these words spoke of the deep descriptions I wanted to capture of the Fairbridge experience. Rubin & Babbie
(1993) define Verstehen as “understanding” and they state that this is a guiding principle in phenomenology. Verstehen means that phenomenological inquiry helps the researcher to understand the experience from the participant’s point of view, to “understand their feelings, their views of reality...” (p.362). Through this specific methodology, I would attempt to capture the essence of the experience of Fairbridgians. I chose then to closely follow Van Mannen’s (1990) concept of phenomenology and use it as a methodology, allowing it to guide my research.

It was clear that I would go directly to former residents of Fairbridge for the data I required. I would meet them and hear their stories. According to Van Manen (1990) it is through stories that essence is captured: “A universal or essence may only be intuitied or grasped through a study of the particulars or instances as they are encountered in lived experiences” (p. 10). My research question led me to the methodology I chose; the methodology then led me to the specific tools I needed to implement the study.

The Tools

Sampling.

The population available for this study was very specific. There were a total of 329 children who had resided at the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School. However, due to mortality of this aging population, this number has been reduced. I did not know what the current statistics were. The Fairbridge Canada Association reported in their spring 1995 membership newsletter, The Fairbridge Gazette, that 157 Fairbridgians were on the mailing list for the newsletter. Not all living Fairbridgians were on the mailing list. However, I knew there were at least 157 possible participants.

Literature suggests that a sample of six to eight people is sufficient for qualitative inquiry (Crabtree & Millar, 1992). Qualitative research can also be done with only one participant as in a
single case study (Rubin & Babbie, 1993). I felt that for the purpose of my research, more than one participant would offer a variety of experiences to be explored yet, the sampling had to be small enough to conduct in-depth inquiries. I set out searching for a sample of four to six participants.

Due to the very personal and sensitive nature of the study, I wanted to approach potential participants in a very non-threatening and non-pressuring manner. Inclusion in this study would be completely voluntary. The Fairbridge Canada Association was very helpful in assisting me in recruiting participants, when they advertised my study in their spring, 1995 newsletter, The Fairbridge Gazette. Snowball sampling had already been started through my father who had spoken to some of his fellow Fairbridgians of the study and generated interest among them. Snowball sampling is a form of non-probability sampling where potential participants refer other potential participants to a researcher (Rubin & Babbie, 1993). This process continued as interested individuals contacted me and provided me with information regarding additional interested people. Either I contacted them or they me, depending on their preference.

I prepared a series of form letters, which were sent to potential participants providing information about the study. An Initial Letter to Potential Participants (see appendix B) was sent out along with a Mail Back Form (see appendix C). Once individuals indicated they wanted to participate, usually by sending back the Mail Back Form, I forwarded a Thank You and Research Information Letter (see appendix D), a Pre-interview Questionnaire (see appendix E), an Information for Informed Consent document (see appendix F), an Informed Consent Form (see appendix G), and an Interview Guide (see appendix H).

The reasons for use of these forms are self explanatory with perhaps the exception of the 'Pre-interview Questionnaire' and the 'Sample Interview Guide'. The purpose of the pre-
interview questionnaire was to assist me in acquiring information about participants prior to the interviews. I wanted to make an attempt to have a representation from a variety of time periods of Fairbridge’s existence. Also, I felt it would be useful to be prepared to inquire about those things that may have been important to a participant’s experience such as if they came to Fairbridge alone or with a sibling. I chose to include a sample copy of the interview guide to alleviate any anxiety participants had over the type of information I was seeking, and to help the participant prepare for the interview.

In the end, 8 individuals, 6 men and 2 women, participated in the study. This ratio of men and women was expected as there were 232 boys and 97 girls in the original Fairbridge number (Old Fairbridgian’s Association, 1985). The participants’ age at time of immigration with Fairbridge, ranged from 5 to 12. There was one 5 year old, one 8 year old, one 9 year old, two 10 year olds, two 11 year olds, and one 12 year old. All were placed with the Fairbridge Society by immediate family members, one such family member being an adoptive father. Six of the eight participants were placed into Fairbridge with at least one sibling. The year the participants immigrated with Fairbridge ranged from 1935 to 1947, with a strong representation in the first three years of Fairbridge’s existence in Canada (four during 1935 to 1937) to five years prior to its closing (four participants in 1947).

Data collection.

I had intended on conducting personal in-depth conversations with all participants. However, the eight participants were spread across three provinces. Due to fiscal restraint, I could not travel to all of their homes. I was able to meet and talk with seven of the eight participants in person (mainly at the reunion), but interviewed only four in person. The remaining participants tape-recorded or type wrote their stories for me. I followed these submissions up
with telephone calls and written correspondence when necessary. According to Van Manen (1990) personal interviews, observation, and written descriptions are all useful data gathering tools in phenomenology. Although he does not mention self tape recordings as an alternative to written recordings, I felt this method was acceptable and in fact may have alleviated some of the pitfalls associated with written recordings such as Van Manen discussed. He argued that, "Most people find writing difficult. They will talk with much more ease and eloquence and with much less reserve than they will put their thoughts on paper" (p. 64). All interviews and data collection correspondence took place between June, 1995 and November 1995.

Each participant was given a sample interview guide. I referred to this guide during personal conversations and asked those participants doing their own recording to use it as a guide also. Patton (1990) states that an interview guide assists the researcher to conduct interviews that fall between an informal conversation and a structured interview. It allows flexibility while providing needed focus for the limited time of the interview. I chose to use an interview guide as I wanted to maintain a casual conversation approach to encourage participants to tell their own stories yet, I wanted to ensure I was covering a wide variety of areas with every participant. I made it clear that the interview guide was only a guide and that participants or I could explore areas as they arose. I found that as I talked with people, these conversations suggested other areas for me to explore in subsequent interviews. I had the flexibility to explore original questions as well as new questions.

All personal conversations were tape recorded with the permission of the participants. All these tape recordings, and personal tape recordings, were transcribed verbatim onto a computer disk. Written submissions were also typed into the computer. Transcriptions were then sent by mail to the corresponding participant. I asked these individuals to read through the data and make
any corrections necessary. I also asked that the participants send me any additional comments or information that they may have wanted to include. This information was then added to the data.

**Data Analysis.**

The typed data resulting from the transcriptions and field observations yielded a large amount of text. I had been made aware through preparation for this research that unless one had a plan on how to organize and present the data, it can be an overwhelming task. In keeping with the beauty of qualitative research, data analysis strategies offer a structure with much flexibility. According to Patton (1987), qualitative data analysis strategies give “basic direction of qualitative analysis rather than rigid rules and procedures” (p. 146). Patton goes on to state, “The analysis of qualitative data is a creative process. There are no formulas, as in statistics” (p. 146). Hence I was again faced with the beast.

The strategy I chose to analyze the data had to, as did the other research tools I used, fit with the nature of the research. There are several strategies one can use to accomplish this task. After exploring these, I decided to stay close to the tools outlined by Van Manen (1990) for use with phenomenology, as it was this methodology which I was using. He calls his particular method **thematic analysis** and describes it as “the process of recovering the theme or themes that are embodied and dramatized in the evolving meanings and imagery of the work” (p. 78).

After all the data were collected and transcribed, I implemented this process of thematic analysis by reading through the text and making notes in the margin that summarized a statement or group of statements. I then went back through the text highlighting those statements that illuminated recurring similar statements. I used colored felt pens to correspond to a particular observation or emerging theme. For example, any piece of text that referred to a Fairbridgian’s “Family of Origin” was highlighted with brown felt. My units of analysis were variable in size, in
that they consisted of one or more sentences or paragraphs. I went back and forth through the material several times comparing statements to themes and emerging themes to themes. Once I felt I had exhausted the text, I transferred all the highlighted text into thematic collections in the word processor. I went through this collection several more times to ensure that all of the text belonged in a specific collection and that it had been assigned an appropriate theme title.

During this process I saw how themes were connected to each other. I used diagrams to map out their relationships and found how some of the themes were higher, or overall summative themes. I have included this diagram as a visual aid to assist the reader in following my conceptualization process in theme development (see Figure Two). I felt that connecting the themes together and using a model were appropriate for phenomenological research. Van Manen states that “Theme gives control and order to our research and writing” (p. 79). Boss, Dahl, & Kaplin (1996) also discuss data generated through phenomenological research,

The researcher must attempt to connect the data with useful ideas about the data. Although phenomenological researchers attempt not to impose realities on those of the participants, they definitely impose a structure on them, one that incorporates ideas that may be useful in accurately understanding them (p. 97).

**Issues of Quality**

The extent to which a piece of research is considered sound or valuable is dependent on issues of quality. These issues are ethics, reliability, and validity (Miles & Hubberman, 1994; Neuman, 1994; Rothe, 1993).

**Ethics**

The meaning of the word 'ethics' in research refers to a set of moral standards researchers should be aware of and make provisions for, while conducting a study. It becomes an issue of paramount importance when, as in social research, human beings are the subject of study (Rubin
& Babbie, 1993). In research such as mine, the issue of ethics comes to the forefront due to the sensitive nature of the subject.

According to Rubin & Babbie (1993) ethical research assures the voluntary inclusion, informed consent, and confidentiality of participants. A participant’s inclusion into this study was a very personal choice and was completely voluntary. Potential participants were given the information required to assist them with making an informed choice regarding their participation in this study. Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. All participants were asked to sign an informed consent form (see Appendices B to G). All participants were given a code and a pseudonym, which appears in this final document.

In addition to issues of informed consent and confidentiality, research ethics also refers to my awareness and sensitivity to my participants. Potential participants would reveal parts of their lives to me as they related to Fairbridge. For all of the participants, their involvement with Fairbridge meant that they were separated from their families and homeland. Memories and feelings associated with their experiences might have been sad or painful. For reasons of comfort, participants could choose the location for the interview to take place, and they were welcome to invite a family member or friend to be present if they so chose. All transcriptions were sent back to participants, as was the ‘findings’ chapter. This procedure not only assisted with issues of validity, but also allowed individuals to feel comfortable with the document prior to it being made available to the public. At this time individuals could voice any concerns they had. Should participants wish to withdraw from the study, they were free to do so at any time and were informed of this choice (see appendix F). The entire research proposal for this study was submitted to the University of Northern British Columbia for ethical approval prior to commencing the research to ensure ethical procedures were adhered to (see appendix A).
Reliability & Validity

Miles & Huberman (1994) separate issues of reliability and validity into four categories. These are external and internal reliability and; external and internal validity.

**External reliability.**

External reliability refers to objectivity and confirmability. The conventional notion of researcher objectivity means that a study is not influenced one's personal feelings or bias. According to Neuman (1994) qualitative researchers feel it is impossible to eliminate all researcher bias. Due to this, bias should be explicitly recognized and measures should be taken to reduce its effect on the research findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Neuman, 1994). If the researcher has been able to be reasonably objective in acknowledging bias, then others should be able to confirm research findings based on the original data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This was an area to which I felt I needed to pay particular attention. I acknowledged my personal connection to the subject of study from the beginning of this research. As the daughter of a Fairbridgian, I had preconceived ideas regarding Fairbridge. It was necessary that I hear the opinions of others with reasonable objectivity. Fairbridge was my father’s childhood home; therefore I needed to be aware of my emotional reaction to information that may suggest his home was negative in any way. All data I gathered needed to be seen by me as objectively as possible. To help me do this, all transcribed interviews and written information were used verbatim during the data analysis stage of the study and appear as such in the findings chapter of this study (Neuman, 1994). I sent all transcriptions back to participants to ensure their accuracy. The process I used to arrive at the findings, can be traced back to the original data thus showing that the findings are “true to the data” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 20). The eight participants have read and approved the 'findings' chapter, thus suggesting that they are satisfied with its content.
Providing these issues of external reliability have been sufficiently addressed, it is my opinion that a personal connection with a research topic can be positive. It was my personal interest in Fairbridge that spurred my passion for this research, something that I feel added to the study.

**Internal Reliability.**

Issues of dependability and auditability are addressed in the area of internal reliability (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The questions are: Can others replicate this research; and would similar conclusions be found over time? It is my opinion that there is enough information available to replicate the processes of this study. However, because the main source of information was based on the experiences and opinions of eight individuals, the data itself cannot be precisely replicated with other participants.

**Internal Validity.**

The area of internal validity includes issues of credibility and authenticity (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Do the findings of the study make sense? Do they truly represent the participants? I addressed this issue by going back to the source. All participants were given a copy of the findings along with a request that they provide feedback to me.

**External Validity.**

Finally, external validity refers to the issue of transferability (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Although the subject of this research was of a very specific residential child care program, which no longer exists, the issue of caring for children outside of their families is still widely practiced. Based on the nature of the methodology, that of phenomenology in which the experiences of a small sample of people were explored, the findings should not be generalized to the larger population of children in care. However, the findings of this study can be considered in general practices and theories of ‘children in care’.
Summary

The remaining chapters are the result of putting this research design into practice. Of all the paths I could have taken to pursue the questions of this research, I feel that I chose my path well. A phenomenological inquiry seems to have indeed captured the essence of the experiences of the children of Fairbridge. My research design utilized tools that I felt could best explore the essence of the experience of the phenomenon of being a child of Fairbridge.
CHAPTER FIVE

Presentation of Findings: The Children of Fairbridge

Introduction

This research is based on the experiences of eight individuals. The participants shared their stories with me for a variety of personal reasons. The end goal of this study is to present these experiences in an organized, collective manner to academic, professional, and public audiences. I hope to achieve this goal by staying as true to the participants and their words as possible. I found this part of my work difficult, due to the immense responsibility I felt in presenting the essence of the participants' experiences in a way which will honor their valuable and very personal contributions, while organizing and presenting their words for the purpose of research. The participants have seen and commented on this chapter prior to its being presented. Therefore, I can be reasonably sure that they agree with its contents. I hope the reader will accept the research findings, but will hear it through the voices of these people, the children of Fairbridge.

I have used a chart to illustrate the research findings (see figure 2). The chart shows the reoccurring themes that emerged from the data. The chart, begins at the bottom showing the "Raw Data" itself and moves upward, to the themes which developed out of the raw data, from the concrete to the more abstract. I have titled all groupings for ease of discussion. The first thematic grouping, shown in the chart at the level after the "Raw Data", is titled "Before Fairbridge" and represents the individual's experiences prior to and at the time of involvement with the Fairbridge program. The next thematic grouping, "Daily Life at Fairbridge" represents participants' concrete descriptions of their experiences of living at Fairbridge. "Effects of the
Fairbridge Program” is a grouping that contains more abstract themes, which may be seen as results of the concrete experiences. The next thematic grouping of “Attachment and Self Identity” contains higher level abstract themes to which prior themes contributed. The final grouping, ‘well-being’, is an overall summation of the Fairbridge experience. I developed the chart as I felt a visual aid was needed to show the variety of themes that emerged out of the data and their relationship to each other. The chart should not be read as a conventional flow chart where each level contributes directly to the following level. The themes and levels are connected to each other in a more holistic manner. For example, the age of a child when she entered into the Fairbridge program may have impacted how she experiences the structure at Fairbridge. Age may have also had an impact on how one assimilated to Fairbridge.

The discussion that follows presents the data in the thematic structure depicted in the chart beginning with the thematic grouping of “Before Fairbridge”. The reader should be aware that I use direct quotes from the participants throughout this chapter and therefore they have not been corrected grammatically. For reasons of brevity, not all quotes from every theme could be included and so I have chosen quotes from within thematic collections to illustrate specific themes. Names in direct quotes have been altered to protect identity. Participant codes, also used to protect identity, appear after every quote. I will sometimes replace the name of someone included in a direct quote with the person’s title (i.e. cottage mother). Some quotes consist of excerpts of conversations between the participant and myself. Therefore quotes from “Christina” are referring to myself.

What you are about to read are the stories of people’s lives which were generously shared with me. It was a very special experience for me to meet and talk with the participants of this study. I was honored that they felt the research I was undertaking was worth contributing to, and
Figure Two
The Children of Fairbridge

Well-being

Attachment and Self Identity

Effects of the Fairbridge Program

Well-being

Attachment to Peers and Place

Self Identity

Assimilation

Consistency

Self Worth

Significant Adults

Family of Orientation

Country Setting

Structure/ Routine

Fairbridge Mates

Caregivers & Levels of Care

Godparents

Family Contact

Before Fairbridge

Background

Age

Involvement

Daily Life at Fairbridge

Structure/Routine

Fairbridge Mates

Caregivers & Levels of Care

Godparents

Family Contact

Before Fairbridge

Background

Age

Involvement

Raw Data
I was awed to hear stories that involved my family history. I felt through my association with all the participants that I was part of a special group or 'family' due to my personal connection with Fairbridge. I was given the most hospitable treatment and was warmly welcomed into homes and offered glimpses of peoples' personal lives. One family, for example, invited me to spend a memorable night in their beautiful country retreat, "As I said, feel free to bunk in because I do feel, we feel, your sort of an extended family, anybody that went there" (N4-p1). Incidentally, I did spend the night with this family and was treated to a wonderful meal, guitar playing around a campfire, and the most enjoyable, warm company. I met with another participant at his place of business, one at my brother’s Vancouver home, and another participant at his home. The remainder of participants invited me into their memories of Fairbridge through their written or tape recorded words. To all of these people I am eternally grateful for sharing their stories with me. They now share them with you.

**Before Fairbridge**

There were three main background factors that emerged as being part of the Fairbridge experience. These are the participants’ overall background in Britain, how the participant became involved with Fairbridge including how the idea of going to Canada with the Fairbridge Society was viewed by participants and their families, and the age of the participant at the time he/she became involved with the program.

**Background**

At the time of immigration with Fairbridge, at least one parent was living in the case of each of the participants, one such parent being an adoptive parent. Therefore, all participants were placed with Fairbridge by a parent. Seven participants came from single parent homes, two of which experienced the death of one parent and five, parental separation. One individual came
from a two-parent home. All of the families represented here were living in a situation of poverty, and were subjected to the additional hardships caused by war, which the participants understand, were the primary reasons their families placed them with Fairbridge.

Ian recalls the situation in England prior to his placement with Fairbridge. His mother was dead and his father was left to raise four children:

_I was born into slums and poverty and lived that way until I left England.... I suppose the most distinct memory I have is of the smell of bedbugs. I don’t mean singly one or two or even a dozen, I recall the bedroom, just, the walls just moving at night with bedbugs.... These were the depression days in Great Britain and I don’t remember my father working at any time... (V1-tr1)_

Due to a shortage of local employment and war evacuation practices, one of the hardships of the time was that families were forced to live apart for periods of time, as Charles described:

_As far as the situation in England at that particular time or prior to that, it of course, was a situation where I lived mainly with my grandmother. My mother usually worked in another city in England and my father died when I was three months old... We were, of course, poor, it was a time I think, in England just after the great depression, and things weren’t too good. We did live in, you might consider, the slum area of Newcastle. (F6-tr1)_

Richard was only four when his involvement with Fairbridge began. Therefore, he did not remember much about his life in England, but knew that he too was living in poverty:

_I can remember holding onto my pants at only five years of age, four years at that time because we hadn’t set sail yet. I don’t know where the hell I was but I was holding onto my pants. I didn’t have a button on my pants to keep them where my braces could hold my pants up... So I must have been pretty poor. Couldn’t even afford buttons on my pants. (M3-p1)_

**Involvement with Fairbridge**

At some point in the lives of each of the participants, he or she became involved with the Fairbridge Society, which led to their immigration to Canada and life at the Fairbridge Farm School. This theme refers to this point in each of the participants’ experiences.
While living in peacetime in a prosperous country, many of us can only imagine what life would be like struggling to raise a family in a situation of poverty and war. If we could imagine such hardships, we might see that it might appear to be an opportunity to be offered the chance to send children out of a poor situation to a more positive environment. The long-term separation of family members is viewed by most of us as undesirable. However, the concept of children and parents being separated from each other may not have been viewed as being as traumatic then as it is today. It was not uncommon in Britain during the war for families to be separated for reasons of safety and employment. It was also a practice of the upper class to send their children away for educational purposes. Fairbridge advertisements were positive. The society offered children a life not only free of slums and poverty, but a life in a country full of opportunities not available in Britain (F6-tr1; Old Fairbridgian's Association, 1985). Ten year old Charles was told by his mother of the advertisement she had seen on Fairbridge, when she asked him if he would like to go to Canada with the society:

She had seen an ad in a window in a store in Newcastle. It had pictures of children on a farm; they seemed to be enjoying themselves. So she related to me what she had seen and I was told about Fairbridge. It was sort of a positive idea that I had of this place I was asked to go to. (F6-tr1)

All of the participants had some recollection of learning about Fairbridge. Five participants stated specifically that they recalled as children that they or their families viewed Fairbridge as an opportunity or adventure prior to being involved with the society. Seven participants felt this sense of opportunity or adventure at some point before actually arriving at the farm school. Of course, there were also feelings of apprehension. Chris recalled the point in time when his parents decided to send him to Fairbridge:

Of course I didn’t have anything to do with it at that age and I guess collectively my parents determined that this may be some opportunity out, because it was very difficult with the conditions in England at that particular time to bring up kids in
the right kind of atmosphere or the right kind of environment. Ensure that they get a good education. (V5-p1)

Due to his adoptive father's failing health, Greg was placed with Fairbridge, "I recall very little. According to my Fairbridge file, (my parent) explained that I would be going to live on a farm in Canada and I responded positively" (12-M1).

Carol felt that she was very fortunate when she thought of hardships others endured during the war, which she escaped due to her involvement with Fairbridge:

I tried to think of anytime during the war where other people were going very hungry and didn't have anything, had no homes a lot of them. We were very fortunate; we never knew there was a war going on. We had our meals regularly, clothing was issued to us regularly. We didn't have to fend for ourselves, they provided for us. (18-tr11)

Mary described mixed feelings in that she understood that to be sent to live with Fairbridge was seen as some kind of positive thing, yet she felt a sense of abandonment by her mother:

I've got the book 'Kingsley Fairbridge' and I know his group of people in London realized there was a need to help these children in disadvantaged areas and from, you know, broken homes... So anyway, the next thing I knew they said you were going to a new country. We were sailing and my mother came and she brought us, I can remember, Cadbury's chocolate, and we went for a walk in the woods and the 'forget-me-nots' were out and she picked some flowers and said 'forget-me-not', and you know, I guess I never forgot that I had no feelings. (N4-p1)

The feeling of being given an opportunity or being involved with some great adventure remained with many of the participants even after involvement with Fairbridge had begun. Ian described how the feeling of embarking on an exciting adventure remained with him during the journey itself to Canada. The Fairbridge Society seemed to encourage a sense of celebration and excitement by hosting a party for the children prior to departure:

We had a big party, which is always good for kids, of course, to have a party. We met the Lord Mayor of London and all of the dignitaries and we were off to
Canada... Of course this was all a big adventure for us and it didn't enter my mind that I was leaving my family. I had no regrets about going, it was to be a great adventure as far as I was concerned. (V1-tr1)

Jim also viewed his involvement with the society as positive and exciting, "It was just experience and quite an eye opening and wonderful experience" (U7-p1). Charles, who responded positively to the notion of going to Canada with Fairbridge, found he became somewhat apprehensive when he actually left home. He was sent to a holding home in England prior to the journey across the Atlantic:

_I can recall one time this other young fellow and I, he was from Newcastle also, were trying to figure out ways to get back to Newcastle, and of course being on a farm there were horses around. We would figure out a way to get one of these horses and we would get back to Newcastle that way. So obviously there was a bit of homesickness involved once I was actually away from Newcastle. (F6-tr1)_

The way in which Fairbridge was initially presented to the participants seemed to have a lasting effect on them. Seven of the participants recall a sense of Fairbridge being viewed by themselves or their parents as positive in some way. Interestingly, these same seven participants still felt Fairbridge was a positive program at the time I spoke with them for the purpose of this research.

**Age**

A person's recollection of an event, and the way in which they process that event, would be somewhat dependent on their age. An individual of six, for example, would process and remember something differently than someone who is twenty-one. This issue of age became a theme, due to the way in which various participants described their experiences in relation to their ages.

Seven participants were between the ages of eight and twelve at the time of immigration with Fairbridge. Richard was only four when he was placed with Fairbridge, and five when he
immigrated to Canada with the society. According to the Old Fairbridgian Association (1985) children as young as Richard were not generally included in Fairbridge immigration parties. The average age for emigration with Fairbridge was eleven, with the majority of children being between the ages of seven and thirteen.

Richard remembers little about his life prior to Fairbridge, “I can remember holding onto my pants at only five years of age, four years at that time because we hadn’t set sail yet. I don’t know where the hell I was but I was holding onto my pants.” (M3-p1). Interestingly, Richard indicated his Fairbridge experience was largely negative. Due to his young age when his involvement with Fairbridge began, he resided at the farm school for eleven years. He felt this was a long time to be subjected to hard farm work, “We’d be down on our hands and knees weeding this God damned stuff, you know, and you think I’m going to enjoy this? Eleven years of this God damned stuff” (M3-p1).

Ian, however, as a twelve-year-old boy, recalled his enthusiasm for adventure. He first thought he would be going to Australia with Fairbridge:

"I don’t know when the decision was made for us to go into a home; I wasn’t privy to that information. I only recall my dad saying to me one time, ‘how would you like to go to Australia?’ Hey, that was for me! At twelve years old what a big holiday and adventure that would be. (V1-tr1)

Chris enjoyed the companionship and activities he engaged in with the other children his age while on the ship crossing the Atlantic:

The trip was quite pleasant, it was certainly a new experience being aboard a ship for the first time, it was very large, I think it was the largest in the world at that particular time. We had free rein. We would get up and have breakfast, meals, very much like they do now, and then we would be able to do anything we wanted. We would run around a lot. You figure, a bunch of kids as ten to twelve years old or nine to eleven years old or whatever it was, but we had a great time. (V5-p1)

The participants, with the exception of Richard, would have been old enough to
understand at least partially, why they were being sent overseas with the Fairbridge Society. The developmental stages of older children would account for other differences as well. For example, children of twelve are more independent and social, able to find a place among peers and other non-family members. A four-year-old is still largely dependent on a primary care giver. These issues surrounding the developmental stage of the children seem to have made age an important factor in the Fairbridge experience.

**Summary**

The themes “Background”, “Involvement with Fairbridge” and “Age” all describe experiences the participants had prior to residing at Fairbridge. These impacted the later experiences participants had while at Fairbridge. For example, some participants viewed their lives at Fairbridge as prosperous when compared to the life of poverty they experienced in England. Perhaps the parent who told an impressionable ten year old that Fairbridge was a great opportunity and adventure, may have sent that child off to Fairbridge with a positive expectation which affected the experience itself. It seems that the majority of the participants and their parents felt that Fairbridge was a positive opportunity. Of course one would have to be old enough to feel hardship, be without one’s parents, understand opportunity, and enjoy prosperity.

**Daily Life at Fairbridge**

This thematic grouping contains descriptions of the experience of living at Fairbridge. When discussing life at Fairbridge, participants concretely outlined and described the physical structure of Fairbridge, the programs, and the daily routine. They also relayed stories of work and play at Fairbridge.

**Country Setting**

The Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School was designed to raise children on the one
thousand-acre, self-contained farm, until they entered independent or semi-independent living. Children, some arriving at Fairbridge as young as five, spent several years of their childhood there. The Fairbridge program, the men and women who implemented it, fellow children, and the farm itself became central to these young peoples' lives. The country site of Fairbridge was something that many of the participants referred to as having an impact on the overall experience.

Charles remembers his first introduction to the place and the people of his new home:

I remember vividly the bus trip from Duncan to Fairbridge. I can remember it as I described it to one of the other kids, as I was looking out the window; that this was a jungle. You know I had never seen such dense foliage and trees.... It was a beautiful day when we arrived, very warm, as we went through the gates at Fairbridge. The bus went down to the main eating hall and stopped where there were a whole bunch of kids who were waiting, to meet us, I suppose. We got off the bus and we were introduced to various staff and one in particular was a man who made a small speech. I can't recall what his name was but I remember him saying, 'consider me as your cottage father to all the cottages'. As we found out later, when you were assigned to a cottage, there were no cottage fathers but just cottage mothers. As I looked around, getting off the bus and seeing the kids, I was excited about the whole thing, to see how they were dressed. They seemed to be dressed well. I saw one kid with these running shoes on. That was something we had never seen, at least I hadn't seen it, in England, and I thought these were fantastic things to put on your feet. I remember asking 'do we all get a pair of those?', and he said 'yes, of course'. (F6-tr1)

There was a general sense that the country setting helped make Fairbridge a pleasant place to be. Carol describes her opinion of the setting:

Fairbridge wouldn't have been Fairbridge if it didn't have that beautiful farm site and the cattle. We had the finest cattle, real good cattle, good chicken, good sheep. It was something you had to see to believe, how that farm school was run, well, it was kept immaculate ...the school was such a beautiful place in itself. (I8-tr1)

A residence in the country lent itself to many activities the children could not do in the city, which Charles remembers fondly:

They were very lax with us as far as time on our own. We had a thousand-acre farm if you remember. We were allowed to explore this farm. It was a
fascinating experience for kids from a city in Northern England to have this much freedom, this large area and I can recall many a happy time exploring the woods and trying to build log cabins and this type of thing. I remember we had a swimming hole down in the Koksiolah river which we used to dam up every year and we used to go down there and swim and have swimming competitions and we were allowed to build rafts. I can remember building rafts and exploring the river. It was a beautiful time really. (F6-tr1)

Greg sums up his opinion of Fairbridge's country setting, "I think that the other aspect of it too was that it was just such a good outdoor healthy life where children got the chance to learn life skills" (I2-t3).

Richard, although he disliked the work at the farm school, appreciated the country setting of Fairbridge, "You have a chance to think things out on a level playing field and in the city it's such a hum drum, its just terrible" (M3-p1).

The physical setting of Fairbridge stood out as important to several participants. Those who mentioned the country setting indicated that such an environment added positively to their experience. The country was described by some as offering a sense of beauty and peacefulness, while others felt it offered them a variety of activities not available in the city.

Structure/Routine

A main component of the Fairbridge program was to teach the children to farm. This partially dictated the daily routine of the children and the overall goals and structure of the program. This relatively large residential program had a definite structure within which to raise the children, much of which was based on the ideals of the founder, Kingsley Fairbridge. Many memories the participants had of their Fairbridge experience had to do with the physical structure, program structure, and routine of the Fairbridge program.

One overall goal was to train boys to be farmers and girls to be adept at domestic duties. Thus, farming and domestic training were central, along with academic training, to the children's
lives. Due to a reduced need for farmers in the country, then the impending closure of the school, the last parties to arrive at Fairbridge were an exception to this, and were not trained as farmers. They did however participate in the running of the farm.

Fairbridge was completely self contained. When all construction on the site was complete, there were seven duplexes and four single residencies, capable of accommodating up to fourteen children and their cottage mother each, for a total of 252 children. There was also a residence for the principal and his family, a school, a hospital, a church, and a dining hall (Old Fairbridgian Association, 1985). I had the opportunity to visit the Fairbridge site in 1978. It was as it had been left after its closure in 1951. The main buildings of the property were situated in such a way that the main living area of Fairbridge resembled a small community or village. This was surrounded by very beautiful farm lands. The residential buildings were attractive wood shingled structures. Some were two story duplexes, while other were single story houses. They were placed on the wooded property as homes are placed on a residential street, along the Fairbridge lane at a comfortable distance from one another. Ian described the physical structure of his residence, referred to as a cottage:

*Our cottage consisted of a dormitory where the fifteen of us slept and upstairs was a bedroom for the cottage mother and her bathroom and a small sitting room for her, and the dining room and the kitchen. Downstairs were the showers and the toilets and the wash basin and the furnace room and the wood room.* (V1-tr1)

This group residence, which was also a working farm, required a structured routine to ensure its smooth functioning. The participants described Fairbridge as having had a fairly regular routine. Charles describes the meal routine:

*The meals, we had breakfast and lunch in the main dining hall with all of the cottages...each cottage was assigned to a table with the cottage mother at the head. The meals were on the average quite pleasant and of course, like any kid you have dislikes but here that didn't matter. You had to eat what you were given and this was a part of the meal that bothered me because, as it might have*
bothered other kids with certain dislikes, mine was macaroni and cheese. I hated that stuff but I had to eat it...The last meal of the day, supper, was held in the individual cottages. We had a dining room in the cottage and the cottage mother cooked the meal and this gave me a feeling of a regular home, rather than an institution. So I think this was very important. (F6-tr1)

Greg recalls some of the chores the children had as part of the daily routine:

A central part of our lives was the duty roster, which was changed every Saturday. The younger children had duties, chores around the cottage and community, while the older boys had chores on the farm. There was a wide variety of duties, some we liked and some we didn't. But as the duty roster was changed every week we all had our share of the good chores. The duties included working in the central kitchen, tending the furnace at the central laundry, looking after the chapel, tending the furnace at the hospital and cleaning the hospital, doing odd jobs for the Fairbridge principals wife, cottage duties such as looking after the furnace, taking dishes to the dining hall and helping with the evening meal. Farm duties included working at one of the barns (cow, horse, pig and chicken) and working in the kitchen at the bunkhouse. Depending on the type of chores, they were generally done before breakfast and after school. The chores rarely took more than an hour, except the farm chores, which were about two hours. (I2-m1)

Participants recall the school educating children at the primary level at the on site school.

During the later years at Fairbridge, children were given the opportunity to continue their education at the secondary school in the town of Duncan. In Greg's memory both the school and the chapel played a part in his education:

The academic education was the standard curriculum for BC schools at the time. This was, one might say, supplemented by the teachings of the Anglican Church as we had a resident chaplain with regular church services, grace before meals, etc. (G2-m1)

All of the participants remember having ample free time and structured recreational time.

Ian indicated there was an acceptable balance between work and play:

We weren't slaves to the job, we were given a job and we did it. There was lots of recreation, far more recreation than we were ever used to. Soccer, rugby. I think we played cricket too and then when the school was built there was basketball, boxing and tumbling and we could see our brothers and sisters everyday. (V1-tr1)
Richard however, felt the routine of the school and the chores the children were expected to do were inappropriate:

*Me, I turned twelve and I started milking cows day and night, getting up at 5:30 in the morning, you know, and then go to school, and then get this crap from these principals when I fall asleep and sound asleep. How can I concentrate, how can I? It was unbelievable. It was terrible.* (M3-p1)

In addition to having free and organized time to play on the grounds of the farm school, outside programs were also utilized by the Fairbridge children. Charles recalls, *“There were also other things like the Boy Scouts and the Junior Forest Wardens. All this stuff we were encouraged to join.”* Such activities gave Fairbridge children the opportunity to associate with non-Fairbridge children.

All participants indicated that there was a definite structure to the Fairbridge program and a routine around which they functioned. Some felt the amount of chores expected was acceptable while Richard felt that “It was terrible” (M3-p1).

**Fairbridge Mates**

Fairbridge residents soon became accustomed to living with a large group of children. The individual cottages had up to 14 children residing in them, which was part of the larger group of Fairbridge at a maximum of 252 children. Once placed in a cottage, the child was rarely, if ever moved. Therefore, children lived closely with the same group for long periods of time.

*“Fairbridge Mates” refers to the experience participants discussed in relation to living in this group situation.*

One can imagine that there would be both positive and negative aspects to living in large groups. Some positive aspects might be that a child was never alone and always had someone to talk to and play with. A negative aspect may be that privacy would be hard to come by. Charles
recalls one boy who decided he wanted to be alone. “He built himself a little place where he could sleep outside and I remember they allowed him to do that” (F6-t1).

The children of Fairbridge spent several years residing with the same group of children, both within their cottage and on the Fairbridge site as a whole. These relationships were often started in England, prior to being sent across the Atlantic. The children were placed in a Fairbridge holding home while arrangements were being made for them to be sent to the farm school. Familiar faces helped make the arrival at Fairbridge less lonely as Greg recalls:

The arrival at the farm school was like a homecoming because we were then reunited with other children we had known at Bennington and in my case, Compton Martin. I have no clear memories of the first few weeks at the farm school. The transition was certainly not traumatic and I have no recollections of homesickness or of difficulties of adapting to the new environment. (12-m1)

Chris also referred to friendships that developed before the children left England:

When you've lived with people for several months, like we did in London, then of course you travel with them, there is a camaraderie that develops which is quite natural. You are in your own group and most of us moved into the same cottage...probably two cottages, so that we were with friends. (V5-p1)

Chris stated that the friendships he had with the other children helped him to develop a sense of consistency:

Christina: I'm wondering about the connections you had with the other kids?

Chris: That was perhaps a permanent part and I think that, it's one of the things that you even experience today that if you graduate from a high school and you spend five, six, seven years of your life going to school with the same people, you are going to develop bonds with them for the rest of your life. (V5-p1)

Jim also spoke to the consistency of being with the same group of children over a long period of time, from childhood until he finished school:

Christina: So that would mean you stayed with the same group of kids as well?
Jim: Oh yes. We went to school together. Kids that I went to school together in Grade three or four were the kids that I was in school with at grade ten or eleven even. (U7-p1)
Carol made some very good friends with some of the girls she resided with at Fairbridge:

*I made friends with the girls in the cottage...the only time one of them wasn’t there was when they went out for their trainee year and then when I went out I suppose I left some of the younger ones behind. Two of them were bridesmaids at my wedding when I got married. They were girls that I had been in the same cottage with all the time.* (18-tr11)

Carol indicated that participating in Fairbridge activities with other children also helped bonds to develop:

*I think that we all enjoyed that participation bit with each other and especially the competitions. We used to love to compete against each other, that was what it was all about... we thoroughly enjoyed it and as I say the kids would really have a lot of fun with each other. There wasn’t that much bickering and fighting when you consider how many kids there were. You might have got into a spat with one of them, but then again, you had to live with tat person for the next few years and you might as well make the best of the situation and try and get along.* (18-tr11)

Richard found a sense of belonging and comfort in the other children at Fairbridge, “We had a lot of respect, boys for girls, girls for boys and boys to whatever. We were just one big family.... we protected each other” (M3-p1).

Greg, on the other hand did not form strong bonds with other children at Fairbridge, “There was some inter-cottage rivalry and some sense of belonging to the cottage, but it was not a strong bond” (12-t1).

The consistent presence of the other children at Fairbridge seemed to be an important part of the experience for the majority of the participants. It gave them a sense of stability and belonging.

**Caregivers and Level of Care**

The level of care, both physical and emotional, in a residential child care center, would be
dependent upon both the infrastructure of the program and the individual child care givers. As discussed previously, the farm school was fashioned after the ideals of Kingsley Fairbridge, a gentle, educated man whose program would reflect his nature. Each cottage group of children was under the direct care of a cottage mother. This individual was responsible for the day to day care of the children in her charge, within the Fairbridge program. Other adults were involved with the care of the children as their particular area of responsibility dictated. This theme of “Caregivers and Levels of Care” contains sub-themes regarding the issue of care. The sub-themes are “caregivers”, and the level of care that the caregivers provided including “physical care”, “emotional care”, and “discipline”.

Caregivers.

The cottage mothers were extremely important members of the Fairbridge staff as they provided daily care and nurturing to the children. Perhaps less important, but still having the potential to largely influence the children’s experiences, were the adults involved with the children outside of the cottage home. Greg describes his experience with some of the caregivers at Fairbridge:

*I had two cottage mothers. (The first) was a strict dark-haired heavy woman. Not someone you would think of as warm yet I have memories of sitting at the kitchen table with her playing checkers or doing a puzzle. I don’t think I ever confided in her. (The second cottage mother) was a warm motherly person with whom I did form an emotional bond. I maintained limited contact with her for a time after I left Fairbridge. Bonds with other adults at the farm school were somewhat limited. The chaplain...was a gentle, kind person whom I liked and was the person I would most likely would have gone to if I felt the need for a father figure in whom I could confide...I had a lot of respect for (the Fairbridge principal). His wife was a very warm person and I looked forward to working at their house when my turn came up on the duty roster. I also had high regard for (the academic school principal)...he was a gentleperson and an ideal role model. In the latter part of my stay at Fairbridge, I also got along well with the farm hands. (12-m1)*

Mary fondly remembers her cottage mother:
(the cottage mother) was super. She would encourage us to knit and she would spend hours with us showing different things. And then there was (an other cottage mother). She would say, O.K., I have to go down to Victoria come on with me, you know, and she would take me. She was cultured. She had these beautiful Hummels and I used to think, ‘Oh, what a beautiful little figurine’. ‘Yes’ she would say, ‘they are. Look at the beautiful face on that child’. So you knew she loved children. (N4-p1)

Mary also remembers however, one of the staff being inappropriate with some of the female children:

And you know, we were little girls...(he’d say) ‘Oh come back here and I’ll give you a cookie...and so we’d go back there and he’d start, you know, but comings from Newcastle I knew some of the, and I’d just give him the elbow and take off...That was the only bad person that I can truthfully say I encountered, but I was only there two and a half years. (N4-p1)

Jim felt that his cottage mother treated all the boys fair and equally and that she took the time to participate in activities with the boys; this is what made her a good caregiver:

Jim: She looked after us. She herded us around, all of us and there were no favorites, at least it wasn’t really obvious there were no favorites...we were read to one, two or maybe, three evenings a week, we would all go...into the sitting room with a fireplace and she read to us out of the ‘Great Works of Literature’...and she took us on long walks...
We always came back to the cottage, slept at the cottage and got read to, showered, and all our clothes and belongings were at the cottage. That was our home, there was no other home...

She encouraged you and whenever you had a private meeting with her, even though you knew she was not your mother, you respected that was where she was coming from. She gave you that. She was called cottage mother.

Christina: Did you call her mom?

Jim: Well ya, we called her mom, ‘okay mom’, and it went over very good, no big deal but it was there. (U7-p1)

As Carol indicated, not all cottage mothers were liked by the children and some were better caregivers than others:

I believe I had three cottage mothers. One of them being not so good and the other one not so bad and the last one, I must say, was a delight. She was a breath
of fresh air. A beautiful blond woman who really did care for us kids. (I8-tr11)

Richard had some very negative experiences with caregivers at Fairbridge and only a few good experiences. He summed up his opinion of the majority of caregivers of Fairbridge:

These people weren’t qualified to raise me and the other 300 and somewhat kids that went to that school. Yeah, I don’t think they were qualified at all. I don’t...terrible, in fact, some of them used to take personal grudges against you and just degrade you something terrible. (M3-p1)

Richard offered insight into what he felt made one individual a good Caregiver:

Fairness and understanding of people’s potential. Although he was the principal of the school, he was a teacher and so forth, he looked for other qualities other than reading and writing...he could see a lot of good things in people. (M3-p1)

This individual also stands out in Richard’s mind as providing the only time while at the school, that he was helped to feel good about himself. He had won a trophy for cross-country running and was praised “in front of everybody” (M3-p1).

Collectively, participants described a good caregiver as someone that was nurturing, kind, fair, and showed a special interest in each child.

Physical care.

When the children became involved with Fairbridge, the organization took over all aspects of their care. Physical care involved clothing, housing, and feeding the children. Chris remembers being supplied clothing at the Farm school by a woman who ran the clothing supply cottage on the site:

When we got there, they clothed us. Coming from England we had short pants and things like that. So we were given an allotment of clothes...there was a lady looking after handing out clothes and things like that boots and so forth. We were pretty well looked after in that respect. (V5-p1)

Greg spoke of the accommodation at Fairbridge stating that “the space was adequate.

That is to say I have no recollection of being cramped or unable to enjoy one’s space” (G2-m1).
In the vicinity of Fairbridge there were two private boys' boarding schools. Fairbridge used to compete against these schools in soccer and cricket. Greg felt Fairbridge children were as well cared for as these children from the private schools:

*We certainly didn't feel inferior to them in any way. I'm not sure we recognized the difference that those children were the children of the well to do and that we were orphans, but we had no sense of being somehow inferior to them. We played soccer and cricket just as well as they did. Our uniforms, I think, were as good as their uniforms.* (12-t3)

Chris felt that overall, the children were cared for adequately in a physical sense and stated

*"we got lots of clothes, lots of food, the food was okay, although some of the food, I particularly didn’t like, like macaroni, I remember that"* (V5-p1). Mary remembers however that the food was sometimes something to be desired; *"the porridge had meal worms in it and we had an orchard but we weren’t allowed to get apples from it”* (N4-p1).

The physical care was generally described by the participants as being adequate although improvements could have been made.

**Emotional care.**

This sub-theme refers to how well the caregivers attended to the emotional needs of the participants. Attending to feelings of sadness, homesickness, and encouraging feelings of being cared for, are examples of emotional needs. The majority of the participants indicated that attention paid to emotional care did not seem as prominent as that paid to physical care and education. Some felt more emotionally cared for than others. Greg responded to my question regarding the emotional care children received at Fairbridge:

*It is difficult to know how to describe the emotional care at Fairbridge. The cottage mothers were generally regarded as being strict as were some of the other adults, but I don’t regard any of them as mean or nasty. My perception from this distance is that they were fair and they were dedicated to the well-being of the children.* (12-m1)
While at Fairbridge, Chris's family suffered the loss of a family member. He remembers being told about the death by Fairbridge staff:

Chris: emotional care was there...I know that at some point, I had only been there for about a year, word came out that my older sister had died in England and I remember, I think it was one of the gentleman, Sports' Master or the Duties' Master came over with the cottage lady, sat me down and told me that my sister had passed away to appendicitis. So they were concerned about me and I always felt the teachers at the school we attended were very concerned about us.

Christina: So when they told you that, they gave you the opportunity to talk to them and they were emotionally supportive?

Chris: Yes, well what do you say to a 12 or 13 year old boy when you find out somebody in the family passed away, there's not really much, and so as I recall they were very supportive. (V5-p1)

I asked Chris if he remembers the cottage mothers being “motherly and nurturing” on an ongoing basis. He responded “yes, I think so. I think they were sensitive up to a point and certainly in the groups I was involved with they were” (V5-p1).

Jim had much praise for caregivers and the level of emotional care at Fairbridge. He indicated he always felt emotionally supported:

Jim: I found (the principal) to be a wonderful man...you could talk to him and very, very receptive too, any time, any place, anywhere, ‘Come on in (Jim), come on in. How are you?’ He would pat you on the back and put his arm around your shoulder and you would go into his house and ‘Oh, have you met my wife?’ It was all great and you would sit down and talk it out and he would be very helpful. Maybe your problem wasn’t solved but at least it was going in the right direction.

Christina: To have someone listen and talk it out with you?

Jim: Ya. We got all of that there. Anywhere you wanted to go, anywhere you felt like going for one reason or another, there was always a place to go. (U7-p1)

Carol recalls celebrating Christmas at Fairbridge and how the staff promoted the event to give the children an enjoyable time:

Even at Christmas, now this takes me back, we would be about two weeks before
Christmas, and they would send us this Sears' catalogue or Eaton's catalogue and at that time we could pick out one present that we wanted. Most of the girls got the dolls that were called Peggy; they were composition dolls with stuffed bodies. Most of us ended up with them or sewing kits or something. They did allow us, if we had a brother or a sister, to also choose a gift for them and we could give it to them. This was done at the Christmas tree, of course, where we would all meet on Christmas eve and we would be in that dining room. Beautiful big tree, beautiful. Then we would have telegrams read by (the principal) that Santa Claus was so far away, but he would be here very shortly. Then all of a sudden, the suspense was over; Santa Claus was there. We kids didn't know it at the time, but later as we got older, I learned that this was usually (a staff person). Now he made a good Santa Claus. He was, I guess, kind of funny in a lot of ways and would call us each up to get our Christmas presents and then we got our orange, nuts and some candy, like a sock, only it wasn't a sock. (18-tr11)

Charles was of the opinion that the emotional care provided by the adults at Fairbridge was lacking:

As far as the emotional care we received at Fairbridge, I don't recall too many conversations, we'll say, with the cottage mother on an emotional level, if something was bothering you that seemed to be lacking. I remember once in a while, I believe it was the principal, would gather a bunch of us and we'd go for a walk through the Fairbridge paths and he would ask the kids how they were doing and did they have any problems and that type of thing. That is the only part I can remember as far as the staff asking about your emotional health. So I think maybe that was kind of lacking. As a child at Fairbridge you were expected to just do your everyday activities as assigned to you, keep out of trouble. (F6-tr1)

Richard felt that the emotional care he received was negative, "I got nothing but negative, you can't read, you can't write, you can't do anything, you can't add two and two, you don't know a blasted, bloody thing. How can you survive?" (M3-pl).

Experiences and opinions about the level of emotional care received at Fairbridge ranged from the very negative experiences Richard had to Jim's memories of feeling very emotionally supported.

**Discipline.**

The issue of discipline became a sub-theme of “Caregivers and Levels of Care” as a result
of participants' discussions of how caregivers handled the job of controlling a large number of children. Intertwined in their stories about life at Fairbridge were references to behavioral expectations and consequences of misbehavior which, where described by most of the participants as being clearly outlined. The cottage mothers handled most of the day to day lives of the children including the area of discipline. The hierarchy of the staff generally dictated the hierarchy of discipline, in that more severe discipline problems went up the lines of authority. Greg summed up how the discipline was handled at Fairbridge:

_The cottage mother was the most immediate authority figure. The duty master, the principal and the chaplain were also authority figures but there was less contact with them, other than in the context of organized sports. In school, of course, the teachers and the school's principal were the authority figures. Corporal punishment was common in the school but was not used excessively._ (12-tr11)

Carol recalled that the cottage mothers had some very definite and necessary rules that the children were expected to follow. She felt this was necessary:

_There certainly had to be house rules and they were most important, otherwise, we would have just run wild, I guess over these mothers. They did have to have some respect from us, and they did demand it, and most of the time they got it._ (18-tr11)

Chris relayed a story where he experienced the discipline practices at Fairbridge first hand:

_Chris: I got it because I thought the dining hall was a good place to play hockey, ice hockey. I think someone else had polished it that morning and I and a friend of mine, we got hockey sticks for Christmas and we thought it was a fine place. Boy, I got the strap over my backside..._

_Christina: That was a major form of discipline, the strap? it didn't affect me. I remember getting up the next morning, it was a Sunday, bright and early. It had froze that night and the ponds were probably frozen so I went and knocked on the fellow's door and asked for my stick back. Christina: Did you get your stick back?
Chris: Yes. (V5-p1)

Richard felt that the discipline at Fairbridge was very inappropriate. He recalled several times when he or other children were disciplined harshly as he illustrated when he stated, "And then they'd beat the shit out of ya, and if you didn't cry..." (M3-p1). Stories Richard relayed suggested that some of the staff were cruel and held personal dislike for some of the children. He told a story of one of the male staff who snuck into the boy’s dorm before the morning wake up bell rang. Richard believed this man intended on giving an individual the strap before he got out of bed. The boy had avoided this disciplinarian and the strap the day before. The boys, expecting the actions of this staff person, lay in wait and jumped him when he entered the dorm. Richard continues his story with when the cottage mother heard the commotion:

She comes in and starts pulling us guys' aside like this, and she thought it was one of the guys and here it was (the staff person). She says, 'What in the hell are you doing here?', and here he's got the goddamn cowhide still in his hand. She says, 'You bastard', she says, 'you get the hell out of here'. Just like that. He was down the bloody road two days later. (M3-p1)

Fortunately, the cottage mother and an authority at Fairbridge also found this individual’s actions very inappropriate.

Seven of the participants indicated the discipline at Fairbridge was acceptable. They agreed that rules were expected to be followed and that corporal punishment was used, although not excessively.

The caregivers, and the care they provided, were generally remembered well by the participants. Individual participants described the quality of caregivers as poor and uncaring, to very appropriate and nurturing. Some participants had experiences with both poor and very good caregivers. Collectively, good caregivers were described as individuals who recognized each child as unique and special and treated them with fairness, respect, nurturing. The majority of the
participants felt that the physical care received at Fairbridge was adequate. The variety of experiences discussed with regards to emotional care indicated that while some felt there was an acceptable level of care, there was an overall feeling that not enough attention was paid to the emotional well-being of the children. All of the participants agreed that the behavioral expectations and consequences of misbehavior at Fairbridge were clear. While Richard had some very extreme, abusive experiences with disciplinary actions, the majority of the participants experienced what they felt was necessary and appropriate discipline.

**Godparents**

It would be difficult for an individual who is responsible for fourteen children, to provide each of those children with a large amount of individual attention. The godparent program may have been implemented by Fairbridge in an attempt to provide this. A ‘godparent’ could be an individual or a group who committed to take special interest in a child and form a relationship with him or her. The majority of six participants did not mention a godparent. Those participants who did however, found them to be a very supportive addition to their lives in Canada.

Jim once showed a particular couple around Fairbridge, as was apparently common when people were interested in the farm school, who later inquired about the godparent program. This couple became Jim’s godparents. He found his involvement with this family significant: “They took an interest, such an interest in me that they brought me from the school to stay with them over Christmas. They invited me to share into their family” (U7-p1). Jim’s relationship with his godparents continued after he left Fairbridge and he often went to his godfather for advice. His godfather also assisted him financially when he attended University:

*If I needed anything, I went to my godfather. He was my center, my soul source of help and guidance, mostly guidance. I used to go to this home and we’d sit and chat after dinner and then take a walk around the block and he was very, loved to talk and I would listen. Very helpful that way. (U7-P1)*
Carol fondly remembers her godmother taking her on an outing:

I remember one time that my godmother took me out and took me to the Empress Hotel and there I had to show her how much I learned in my swimming and my diving and I must say she was impressed. It was beautiful for me to see her and be with her at that time and I thought it was exceptionally nice of her to take me out of the school for that time. (18-tr11)

Clearly these participants received individual attention from their "godparents". Although a minority, only two participants, discussed the godparent program, their experiences with it appeared to have been particularly significant to them. It is for this reason that I included it as a theme.

Family Contact

Seven of the participants had some biological family in England and one participant had an adoptive father. Five of the participants came to Canada with at least one sibling. This theme refers to the contact participants maintained, or did not maintain, with family members who were in England or were with them at Fairbridge.

Participants who discussed their family in England agreed that Fairbridge encouraged ongoing contact with them through letters. Participants who had siblings at the farm school indicated Fairbridge encouraged relationships with them. The literature states that Fairbridge made an effort to bring sibling groups into the program. "The Society is not desirous of separating brothers and sisters, and consideration is therefore given to members of a family not younger than seven years or older than thirteen years" (Old Fairbridgians Association, 1985).

Family contact seemed to give some individuals a sense of connectedness with their families of origin. Charles remembers Fairbridge kept a record of correspondence between Fairbridge children and their families in England. "As far as communication with family or friends
in England, whether it was encouraged or not, yes, it was absolutely encouraged. In fact they used to keep record of all letters received and letters sent by us” (F6-tr1).

Writing home was not however, always comforting as Mary explains:

*I think one of your questions was were you encouraged to write; we were but we had no response you know, and I can remember um, you know, sending them what we needed; soap, and you know we only got cards sent, but I’d send bars of soap or something for their Christmas gifts, and never got anything back. (N4-p1)*

For Carol, having her brother with her at Fairbridge gave her a sense of security. She describes his presence as being invaluable for her:

*I settled into the school, I think, fairly well considering that I had never had as many children or adults around me at that time. My brother was my main reason. He was very good. He used to look out for me and make sure everything was all right with me. I could see him every day especially when we met for our lunches or breakfast at the dinning room. I would meet him on the playgrounds at the school. We had a lot of fun together. He was very, very good and caring and telling me what I should do and what I shouldn’t do...He was actually a really good big brother. (I8-tr1)*

Fairbridge encouraged ongoing contact with family in England and tried to place sibling groups together. Having a continued relationship with family members seems to have contributed to the ease of assimilating to Fairbridge and perhaps to a continued sense of comfort for some children.

**Summary**

The thematic grouping of “Daily Life at Fairbridge” shows that there were many different factors, which contributed to the Fairbridge experience. The background factors of participants, the physical site, the program structure and routine, and the various people, including family members, whom the participants were involved with at Fairbridge, all impacted the overall experience. The experiences described in this grouping were a result of both the specific circumstance of individuals and the planned infrastructure of the Fairbridge program. The
concrete experiences of this grouping gave way to more abstract experiences, which are
discussed, in the context of thematic groupings to follow.

Effects of the Fairbridge Program

Through the participants’ descriptions of their backgrounds and the day to day life at Fairbridge, I began to see an impact of these experiences. That is, as Fairbridgians told their stories. I began to understand the essence of the experience of being a child at Fairbridge. In the previous two groupings, concrete experiences and facts were described. In the three groupings that follow, abstract themes are illustrated, which developed out of the concrete.

Assimilation

Assimilation, in this case, refers to the degree and ease with which the participants adjusted to Fairbridge. There will, in most cases, be a certain amount of trauma associated with an event such as moving away from one’s homeland and family. It would be a responsibility of child care providers to minimize this trauma. Surprisingly, none of the participants described their emigration as a particularly traumatic experience. On the contrary, discussions with the majority of them suggested they adjusted well to the experience and assimilated relatively easily to Fairbridge. Two main factors stand out as being important in having promoted assimilation with a minimal amount of trauma: familiar people and structure. Familiar people refers to siblings and other children who traveled with the participant to Fairbridge and remained with the participant while at Fairbridge, as described within the previous grouping themes of “Fairbridge Mates”, and Family Contact’. Structure refers to the daily program, chores, and the many recreational activities Fairbridge had. This structure kept the children busy and provided consistency. These concrete experiences are described in the themes of “Country Setting”, and “Structure/Routine”. These sub-themes of assimilation are described below.
Familiar People.

Once accepted into the Fairbridge program, participants became part of a constant group and hence they were always with familiar people. They traveled together to Canada and then lived together, often for several years, at the farm school. Chris indicated that he adjusted well to Fairbridge, giving partial credit to the familiarity of children he had known in England, both at a prior institution and at the Fairbridge staging house. He therefore arrived in Canada to meet familiar faces:

The arrival at the farm school was like a homecoming because we were then reunited with other children we had known at Bennington and in my case, a few I had known in Compton Martin. I have no clear memories of the first few weeks at the farm school. The transition was certainly not traumatic and I have no recollections of homesickness or of difficulties adapting to the new environment. (12-m/)

Chris described a camaraderie that developed among the children which for him, assisted with his assimilation to Fairbridge:

Christina: Then on arriving at Fairbridge itself, do you recall what your thoughts and feelings were? What did it look like to you? Were you frightened at the time? Was it exciting for an eleven-year-old boy to come to the place after you had been traveling for so long?

Chris: There is always that anticipation of getting there and of course there is a, when you've lived with people for several months, like we did in London, then of course you travel with them, there is a camaraderie that develops which is quite natural. You are in your own group and we moved into cottages...as a matter of fact, most of us initially, went into two cottages so that we were with friends and of course that made it relatively easy. (V5-p1)

Carol credits her brother with helping her make a smooth transition to Fairbridge, “I settled into the school, I think, fairly well considering that I had never had as many children or adults around me at that time. My brother was my main reason” (18-tr1).

The presence of familiar faces, either of siblings or other children, helped the participants
to assimilate to Fairbridge with a minimal amount of trauma.

**Structure.**

The structure of Fairbridge dictated a consistent routine and a variety of activities. Jim indicated there was comfort in consistency:

*We always came back to the cottage, slept at the cottage, and got ready to, showered, and all our clothes and belongings were at the cottage. That was our home. That cottage was our home, there was no other home.* (U7-p1)

Jim and I discussed his adjustment to Fairbridge, which for him, was exciting and not traumatic, perhaps partially due to the range of experiences he had:

*Christina: How did you find you adjusted when you went to Fairbridge? Did you find it difficult? Where you homesick for a while?*

*Jim: I didn’t consider it an adjustment at all. I considered it a part of growing up. There were no adjustments in my mind, that my life was going through, nothing like that at all. It was just an experience and quite an eye opening and a wonderful experience. I knew I was being looked after, I mean it was obvious to me I was being cared for.* (U7-p1)

After the initial adjustment to a new setting, the degree to which an individual feels a sense of ownership and belonging to that place, would affect long term assimilation. Jim nicely articulated his sense of ownership and belonging with regards to Fairbridge, when he told me how it was so much different from his experience at another child care facility in England, *“You were put in your place over there, over here, we felt this was our place”* (U7-p1).

A smooth transition to the Fairbridge program appears to have been partially dependent on the participants feeling that they were not alone and were with familiar people. It also seems to have been helpful for them to have clear expectations. The act of keeping busy through a regular routine and enjoyable activities is also credited as having helped with assimilation to Fairbridge.
Consistency

The theme of consistency evolved out of participants’ descriptions of the constants they found in their lives while at Fairbridge. This same concept is credited with assisting the children to assimilate to Fairbridge; however, consistency appeared to be an important factor in and of itself in that it promoted ongoing feelings of comfort and well-being. Consistency, as described by the participants, referred to the permanent living situation they experienced, the daily routine of Fairbridge, the variety of activities they engaged in, and predictable expectations they had while living with the same caregivers for a long period of time. These issues are described in the themes of “Structure/Routine” and “Caregivers”. Having consistent housemates, as described in “Fairbridge Mates”, is also credited as having promoted a sense of consistency among the participants.

Greg credited the constancy in his living situation as promoting his well-being:

I do think that, at least in my experience, there was, I don’t know, a sense of reassurance, a sense of well-being that came from the Fairbridge situation which I think was much better than being shifted from pillar to post in a, you know, one foster home to another. (12-t3)

Chris suggested that the consistency he felt while at Fairbridge gave him a sense of stability and a structure he felt he needed at that time of his life. He is concerned for those children who lack this type of stability in their lives:

I think that my sense of kids growing up today is that a lot of them are drifting. They don’t have a sense of what is right or wrong, what responsibility is. It seems to me that that part of the concept of bringing children up with the right framework with which they are going to balance the rest of their lives. I think they have to have some structure and looking back on the school, it gave me a sense of structure. Again, I think there was a sense of permanency, it sort of gave me something to hang onto for that period of my life. (V5-p1)

Chris also noted that living with the same group of people over a long period of time
provided him with a sense of connectedness with others:

That was perhaps the permanent part and I think that it's one of the things that you experience today that if you graduate from a high school and you spend five, six, seven years of your life with the same people, you are going to develop bonds with them for the rest of your life. That is the case, I think, with Fairbridge... Fairbridge was one group which I developed a permanency through friendships. (V5-p1)

Carol indicated that there was a sense of comfort, which came from the consistency of routine, “We were very fortunate, we never knew there was a war going on. We had our meals regularly; clothing was issued to us regularly. We didn't have to fend for ourselves; they provided for us” (18-tr1).

Living within a permanent home with a constant group of people, appears to be the guiding factor of this theme. This consistency lent itself to feelings of stability for the participants. Other constants in their lives were by-products of their stable living arrangements. Had a participant been moved out of Fairbridge to another child care facility, its rules, program, and expectations would also change.

**Individuality of the Child and Feelings of Self Worth**

A concern in any group child care situation would be the ability to provide individual attention to each unique child. Appropriate encouragement, guidance, and praise can assist in the development of a healthy sense of self. The participants alluded to such concepts through their rich descriptions of life at Fairbridge. They remembered vividly a time when they felt special, or a time when they felt put down. Some participants believed that their Fairbridge experiences had long-term, and even lifelong, impacts on their feelings of self worth.

Richard recalls many times when Fairbridge staff criticized him. Although a highly successful adult, he went through much of his childhood and young adulthood believing he was
unintelligent. Now as an adult he recognizes how criticism can negatively affect a person and what the positive effects of praise and encouragement can be:

Being a leader of men for many a year, I know what a pat on the back can do...and if you turn around and tell some individual he's a dumb bastard, he's lazy, he's going to live up to that. (M3-p1)

The sports and recreational program at Fairbridge seemed to provide Ian with a sense of esteem, which often comes with this type of activity:

I got quite proficient at some of the sports. When we were introduced to basketball, I seemed to take a natural thing for it and I was captain of the school basketball team. I was on the rugby team, the soccer team, I boxed for the school, but swimming was my favorite, down at the swimming hole at the Koksilah River. There wasn't anyone could touch me for swimming. (VI-tr1)

Being called upon in front of the other children for winning a cup in swimming was a positive experience for Chris:

Chris: Well I think one of the most fun things was that every Spring they would go and dam the river up and we'd go swimming. I think for one summer, for whatever reason, we had been down there, we had a great time and I think I won the cup.

Christina: A swimming cup?

Chris: Yes, a swimming cup. I can't swim worth...I don't know what I did. I was having so much fun that I didn't keep track of what we were doing and all these activities, but at the end of the day they handed me the cup. All the kids were gathered around and they called my name and I thought 'wow, wasn't that interesting'. So that was a good experience. (V5-p1)

Ian, who enjoyed working in the outdoors, describes how Fairbridge staff attempted to promote this aptitude in both his recreational activities and his employment:

Deep down inside me I was always the outdoors type and whenever the people who worked at Fairbridge did any hunting for ducks or pheasants, I always used to tag along and act as their retriever...
I said I wanted to try cattle ranching. So they got me a job in Hefly creek...I remember (Fairbridge's principal and his wife) took me there, they drove me up. (VI-tr1)
Ian recalls staff giving him unique attention which made him feel special:

_I became quite friendly with (an adult associated with Fairbridge) and he would loan me a horse anytime I wanted to go riding... (a Fairbridge staff) took me under his wing because I do remember one Christmas before I became a trainee, he gave me a Christmas present, of a pair of Football boots and that was my pride and joy, believe me... (My cottage mother), one Christmas, gave me a pair of work socks and that was another pride and joy that I could wear with my football boots._ (VI-tr1)

Greg felt he was treated as a special individual when he developed an interest in pigeons.

He was encouraged to pursue this interest by being permitted to raise pigeons and Bantam hens at Fairbridge:

_I built a loft for my pigeons behind our cottage and later a pen for the bantams in an area some distance from the cottages._ (12-m1)

_I think I was probably the only one, maybe some other boy may have had pigeons. I was certainly the only one who ever had bantams there. And perhaps the only one who ever had pigeons._ (12-t3)

Mary recalls her cottage mother singling her out and taking her to town on more than one occasion:

_She would say, 'Okay (Mary), we’re going down to Victoria, and it was the weekend or something, ‘would you like to come’. So she’d take me down to Victoria and I can remember we’d go to Woolworth’s or something, and she would get me something, you know, for a couple of dollars or something._ (N4-p1)

It seems that within Fairbridge’s relatively rigid infrastructure, there was room for individuality. Charles remembers how one boy exercised his right to individual space:

_I do recall one kid that did have a problem and he no longer wanted to stay in the cottage. He built himself a little place where he could sleep outside and I remember they allowed him to do that._ (F6-tr1)

Fairbridge’s sports and recreational program is credited by several participants as being one vehicle with which Fairbridge promoted a healthy sense of individuality and accomplishment among the children. Caregivers also had a very significant impact on participants’ feelings of
being special, cared about, ridiculed, or disliked. A simple word of praise or recognition in a swimming competition had far reaching positive effects on these individuals. Likewise, harsh criticism, which may not have been said with malice intent, can be very damaging to a young child who does not have loving parents to counter it.

**Significant Adults**

The degree to which a child felt special and was given individual attention was strongly dependent on the individual caregivers or other adults at Fairbridge. Experiences with these adults are described by the participants in the themes of “Caregivers” and Godparents”.

Sometimes, an adult became special or significant in that young person’s life.

Both Mary and Jim had identified their godparents as being significant adults in their lives. Jim’s relationship with his significant adult continued after he left Fairbridge. He stayed in contact with his godparent into his adult life and found him a great source of support through his attendance at university. “If I needed anything, I went to my godfather. He was my center, my soul source of help and guidance, mostly guidance (U7-p1).

A cottage mother and a staff member of the farm school became significant adults in the life of Ian. He too continued these relationships into adulthood:

*(The cottage mother) was a friendly soul but a strict disciplinarian and I hadn’t gotten out of my Newcastle days; I was a tough one to deal with. Many a time I felt the kindling stick across my legs from (the cottage mother), whom I affectionately called Mama (surname) and for many, many years after. I visited her up in Smithers until she died...

Cows being my favorite, I was put into the cow barn with (the staff person), who proved to be, over the many, many years and to this day, while he is in his eighties, is still a very dear friend to us. (V1-tr1)*

Greg credits significant adults who had an influence on him:

*I would be hard put to identify any adult at Fairbridge who significantly influenced my life but collectively, a number of them did through their decency and through their praise for work well done, that I am sure shaped my own work.*
(The Fairbridge principal) stands out in my mind because he allowed me to drive on the farm school car. As far as I know, no other child was given that privilege. I took it as a sign of trust which was, I think important in building my sense of self worth. (F2-m1)

Greg also found a significant adult in Fairbridge's chaplain:

"The chaplain, (name withheld), was a gentle, kind person whom I liked and was the person I would most likely have gone to if I had felt the need for a father figure in whom I could confide. He later married my wife and I" (F2-m1).

These 'significant adults' were credited by participants as making a difference in their Fairbridge experience and in the overall experience of being raised without family. Some participants remained in contact with these adults after they left Fairbridge. Some remained in contact well into their adult lives, some until the death of the significant adult.

Family of Orientation

'Family of Orientation' is defined in The Social Work Dictionary (Barker, 1987) as "A kinship group united not necessarily by blood but by such factors as common residence, shared experiences and backgrounds, mutual affection, and economic dependency" (p. 54). The children of Fairbridge shared with each other common backgrounds and a long-term residence within a 'home' environment. Long term relationships were also shared with significant adults in the participants' lives. It is mainly these factors which promoted a sense of 'family' which several of the participants described.

I experienced this first hand when I was referred to as 'extended family' by Mary, due to the fact that I was the daughter of a Fairbridgian. She invited me to spend the night at her family's summer home, which was a little way out from the nearest town, "feel free to bunk in because I do feel, we feel, you're sort of an extended family, anybody who went there" (N4-p1).

Mary stated that a 'family' connection was made among Fairbridge children as a result of
having similar backgrounds and a common residence:

*Anybody that went to Fairbridge are your half brother and sister. I honestly do feel that you know. As long as we were there Christina, I think most of us felt a sense of security... When we were at Fairbridge we had security because we were all in the same boat. We knew we came from dysfunctional families and were poor. (N4-p1)*

Charles felt that there was a family atmosphere promoted in the way the cottage ‘mother’ was the consistent caregiver for a consistent group of children in his cottage:

*There was a family atmosphere in the cottage, you know, with all the other kids there, like your brothers and the cottage mother, of course, I suppose the closest thing you can get to a mother. But so there was that sense of family and permanency (F6-trl).*

Chris indicated that bonds developed after sharing a common residence for a lengthy period of time, “I think that as time went on you got to be sort of feeling like you were part of a bigger family, part of a bigger group” (V5-p1).

Richard also developed some strong bond with other children from Fairbridge:

*(She) was a Fairbridge girl...she is a very, very close friend of ours. I love (her), and she is respected. We think the world of her. That’s all there is to it...but she just looks at me like a brother. (M3-p1)*

Carol stated that her impression of Fairbridge was that of a large family with a range of ages, which she felt was beneficial, “It was just the whole family idea, I mean we were all, I always thought just like brothers and sisters and we kind of looked after each other, teach the younger ones things” (I8-tr11).

While this sense of ‘family’ was present for the majority of participants, it was not the case with all. Greg described Fairbridge as a “community” rather than a family. Although he developed friendships, he stated they were not strong bonds. He has kept in touch with a few Fairbridgians over the years but “contact is infrequent” (I2-t3).

Charles, who had a positive experience at Fairbridge, also indicated that bonds with others
were not strong for him. He reminds us that the family substitute of Fairbridge falls short of being with real family:

*So even though my stay at Fairbridge was a good experience, something I’ll always remember as being pleasant, there is still that part of my life that seems to have a hole in it. I am quite sure it is because of being dragged away from family at such an early age and there was no bonding as such in an institution such as Fairbridge. The father figures, the mother figures and that is the only negative part about such an institution. If this could be remedied in some way then Fairbridge would certainly be a good option, or a place like Fairbridge would be a good option to poor children that could no longer stay in their own homes for various reasons. (F6-tr1)*

As expressed by Charles, a family of orientation will never replace a family of origin. There will always be a special attachment one has to their birth family members. Some aspects of Fairbridge however, were described as having elements of a family atmosphere that made it an acceptable alternative. Living with the same group of people, particularly other children, both in the individual cottages and on the Fairbridge site as a whole, appears to have contributed most strongly to this.

**Summary**

The information contained in this grouping of themes has attempted to illuminate a deeper essence of the Fairbridge experience based on the participants’ stories and thoughts. Although these themes stand alone, they are also interconnected. For example, “Significant Adults” is a theme describing the importance certain adults had in the experiences of participants. Some of these adults may have contributed to a participant’s positive feelings of self worth, which is also a theme that stands alone.

**Attachment and Self Identity**

The themes of ‘attachment’ and ‘self identity’ in this grouping are a summary of the themes in lower groupings. Some themes in the previous grouping may have contributed to either
of these summary themes more strongly than others; however, it is the collective experience, that is pieces of all the themes, that contributed to these overall themes.

Attachment

It was my intrigue with Fairbridgians’ sense of attachment to, or identification with Fairbridge that drew me to this area of study. Through the stories told by participants, I found that this attachment did exist, and still does exist, in varying degrees. It seems to be an important part of the Fairbridge experience. All participants had some sense of attachment or identification with Fairbridge or other Fairbridgians.

For Chris, his attachment to Fairbridge at the time he resided there, promoted a sense of permanency that was disrupted when the school was closed. He and his friends had to leave each other and Fairbridge. He recalled sadness among his friends at this event. He remembers this last group wrote their names on the wall of the basement in the chapel, as sort of a tribute to this group. During the 1995 Fairbridge reunion, I had the opportunity to see the names of these children, still visible on the basement wall:

Chris: I do know that when they closed the school that there was a great, some sorrow about closing the school and I was one of the last ones there. If you look at, I don’t know if you went down to the basement?

Christina: I did and your name is down there.

Chris: Yes on that thing and so it that was getting close to the end and there was about a dozen of us left and we were sorry to see somebody else move on.

Christina: I read it and it said something like, you have somebody’s name and he was the ‘unlucky one’ because he was leaving. (V5-p1)

Charles described the attachment he had developed for Fairbridge when he recalled his experience with leaving the school. He was answering the question on the interview guide, “What was your worst experience/memory at Fairbridge”: 
I think maybe the worst experience I may have had was when I was told that the school was closing down and that I would be leaving. And I remember the day I left, that was a bad experience, it was like leaving your own home, I suppose. I think I had, as far as I recall, that was a worse experience than when I left England. (F6-tr1)

After leaving Fairbridge, seven participants told me they had returned either for assistance or to visit. Ian returned to Fairbridge as a married man. He returned during a leave from his duties with the armed forces, “I spent the better part of that August at Fairbridge. This was my home. I had no regrets at having gone to Fairbridge. I loved it. I loved the people there, I loved the kids. It was my family (T1-tr1).

Carol returned to Fairbridge as a married woman. She felt welcome to return to Fairbridge and wanted to share her childhood home with her new husband:

I returned there when I got married and had my, I guess, a kind of honey moon there. It was great. The girls thought that was a real good thing, and they prepared breakfast for us and brought us breakfast. I proceeded to show my husband around the farm and he thought that was the greatest place to be, we even went down to the old swimming hole and I reminiscenced there. It was just somewhere that you could always go back to, not just for the weekend. You could go back for a month I guess, if you wanted to or if you were in between jobs. (I8-tr1)

Richard, who had an overall negative experience at Fairbridge, returned to Fairbridge looking for assistance after he had entered into independent living. He did not return because he wanted to, he returned because he felt he had no other choice. Had he had a better experience with Fairbridge, he may have viewed it as a positive support in his life rather than just an attachment born out of familiarity, “I came back because I was a lost soul. You must remember, my entire school life was there” (M3-p1).

The existence of the Fairbridge Canada Association and the Fairbridge reunions every two years, is evidence of the attachment to which most of the participants referred. Mary spoke about
these reunions:

But at the same time the school must have had really been good to us because when you look around, the kids when they go to the reunions, we are still a fine looking group of kids, and still very close to each other even though we don’t see each other that much. Every two years at the reunions seems to be fine. We all seem to look forward to doing that over again. Some don’t, that is their choice. Nobody is pushed into it. (I8-tr11)

All of the participants have returned to Fairbridge, either in their adolescent years or as adults. Five of the participants returned to Fairbridge for the 1995 reunion. One participant was unable to attend the reunion despite a desire to do so. The attachment that participants felt towards the site of Fairbridge and the people whom they knew there, has continued into adulthood. Carol spoke of her attachment and belonging to Fairbridge when she stated “I will always be an Old Fairbridgian and proud to be so” (I8-tr11).
Self-Identity

Self ‘identity’ is defined in The Social Work Dictionary (Barker, 1987) as “an individual’s sense of self and of uniqueness as well as the basic integration and continuity of values, behavior, and thoughts that are maintained in varied circumstances” (p. 75). It is usually in the family home, and through interaction with peers, that most of us construct our self-identities. As a surrogate home, Fairbridge would naturally provide the base for this construction. The subject of self-identity emerged in many forms throughout the data, woven within the participants’ experiences. This is why I have included it here as an overall summative theme.

The separation of a child from his or her parents would be significant in the life of any child, even if they do not remember the event. Participants were sent to Fairbridge by their families. Some participants maintained contact with family in England and others did not. Regardless, some participants expressed feelings that their sense of self was affected due to not knowing parents or not understanding why parents had sent them away.

Jim felt a void due to the lack of information he had about his father:

*I tried unsuccessfully to find out from what family I have, if they have any knowledge of my father, who my father is or was... But anyway I can’t get the information and I’m rather upset about it because my kids keep asking me who is my dad.* (U7-p1)

Mary’s feelings of abandonment by her mother when she was first placed with Fairbridge were amplified due to the ongoing lack of contact she had from her mother. By the time she was an adult, Mary had an absence of emotional connection to her mother:

*When (my husband) and I got married, she wrote us a letter saying ‘I got all the papers and I can emigrate to Canada’ and that, you know, and I wrote back, ‘well thanks very much mum, but when I needed you, you weren’t around and it’s going to be tough enough for (my husband) and I, from what I’ve read about getting to know each other in our first year of marriage, so if you don’t mind you can stay in England’. Well, I had no feeling. I left when I was ten and she never communicated.* (N4-p1)
Charles shared with me the thoughts he has struggled with over the years regarding his mother and her decision to place him and his brother with Fairbridge:

So the decision for a parent to send their children such a distance is one that I have two opinions of; it depends on the reason why they did it. I often wonder in my own case, and my brother’s case, of why my mother would make such a decision. Either she had great hopes for her children, for them to be sent away to a place like Canada, that their situation would be improved and their opportunities would be much better. If she thought that, then it was a brave thing to do. But then we don’t know in our individual situations if that was the case. On the other hand if it was just a way to shun responsibility as a parent and have someone else take over those responsibilities of raising your children, then, that is another story. (F6-tr1)

Once at Fairbridge, a child’s developing sense of self was further affected. Richard stated that constant criticism by caregivers caused him to develop a negative concept of himself and a belief that he was not intelligent. Greg on the other hand found that high moral standards of his caregivers helped him to shape his own values and work ethics:

I would be hard put to identify any one individual who significantly influenced my life, but collectively a number of them did through their decency and through their praise for work well done that I am sure shaped my own work. (I2-m1)

Chris credited the Fairbridge structure itself as assisting him to develop his sense of self identity stating that a stable structure or “framework” can provide the bases on which children can “balance the rest of their lives” (V5-p1).

Like so much of the Fairbridge experience, the feelings of self identity an individual had, were developed as a result of both the structure of the Fairbridge program itself and the individual’s situation, and perhaps their own unique personality. As Chris points out:

I guess it depends on where you are coming from, what emotional state you are in as a child, what kind of baggage, emotional baggage you brought with you. How you assimilated with your peers and your cottages and what kind of mix of kids you had, how easy you roll. (V5-p1)
The participants’ concepts of self had been affected in their early childhood when their parents had chosen to separate with them by sending them into the Fairbridge program. Some participants made reference to this event. They have given much thought to it, either in trying to understand why their parents gave them up, or in trying to trace their families. This is perhaps an unavoidable negative consequence of the separation of children with their birth families. Once at Fairbridge several experiences and individuals continued to shape a participant’s concept of self.

**Summary**

The themes of “Attachment” and “Self Identity” are two summary and abstract themes of the Fairbridge experience. Participants have a sense of attachment to Fairbridge, both the people and the place, evident by the fact that they return there for reunions, identify with being a Fairbridgian, or maintain contact with fellow Fairbridgians. The overall experience seems to have contributed to this.

It is inevitable that individuals would have questions about their families of origin including why their families felt they could no longer raise their children. Even if contact is maintained with the family, being ‘given up’ could negatively affect one’s feelings of self identity. A positive child care program would need to attempt to counter such feelings by making a strong effort to encourage a child’s positive sense of self.

**Well-being**

The Fairbridge experience has been discussed in parts, that is, in themes that developed out of the experiences and feelings described to me by participants. The final theme of well-being, is an overall summation of these parts. Participants discussed not only how well basic needs, such as food and clothing, were met by Fairbridge, but how well emotional needs, such as nurturing, were met by Fairbridge. Additional concepts of belonging, attachment to people and self identity
were also described. This holistic sense of being cared for and feeling comfortable with one's environment and oneself is termed 'well-being' by current researchers and policy makers. Hay (1992) in a report entitled Well-Being: What Is It and Who Is Asking? defines the concept: “Well-being refers to those measurable and intangible characteristics that contribute to the social, psychological, economic, cultural, political, and environmental life of people and their communities” (inside front cover).

This is not to say that all participants described feelings of well-being, for they clearly did not. The concept of well-being is instead something that was described by participants as having had experienced, or as having had a desire to experience, during their childhood at Fairbridge.

Both “measurable and intangible characteristics” of well-being were described by the participants in their discussions of their experiences at Fairbridge. Participants described their situations and living conditions in England as difficult. Living in poverty and during wartime has great potential to hamper the well-being of children. A lack of food or a warm shelter and the dangers of war, are measurable barriers to a child achieving well-being. The participants tell us however, that to be separated from family in efforts to relieve these hardships has its consequences, and can negatively affect a child’s well-being in a more intangible way. The trauma over being separated from family, and negative feelings of self due to being ‘given up’ by parents, was expressed by several participants. For example, Mary’s mother wanted to immigrate to Canada to live with Mary and her new husband, years after Mary had been placed with Fairbridge. Mary however, told her mother to stay at home, feeling that it was far too late for her and her mother to have a relationship so many years after her mother had given her up; “I wrote back. well, ‘Thanks very much mum, but when I needed you, you weren’t around’... Well, I had no feeling. I left when I was 10 and she never communicated until I was 25” (N4-p1).
The majority of the participants indicated that once they were living away from home, at Fairbridge, most of their basic needs were meet. They clearly indicated however that ‘needs’ far exceeded adequate food and a warm shelter. A child also needs nurturing and fair caregivers, clear and consistent routines, stability in the living situation, and the environment to grow up feeling like a valuable and unique individual. Fairbridge met these additional needs in varying degrees, sometimes poorly and sometimes well. As participant Greg stated:

*I do think that, at least in my experience, there was, I don’t know, a sense of reassurance, a sense of well-being that came from the Fairbridge situation which I think was much better than being shifted from pillar to post in a, you know, one foster home to another.* (I2-t3)

The message here seems to be balance. Children should remain with family if possible, but if separation does have to occur, then efforts need to be taken to ensure both the concrete and intangible needs of children are met to promote their well-being.

In their discussions of “Daily Life at Fairbridge”, participants describe the measurable characteristics of their experiences. These include the basic needs such as clothing, food, shelter, and human contact. Less basic, but also somewhat measurable needs, include a variety of activities in a healthy environment as discussed in “country setting” and “structure and routine”.

Intangible characteristics of achieving well-being are described in a variety of themes and are more prominent in the abstract theme groupings. For example, some participants felt that they assimilated to Fairbridge with a minimal amount of trauma if contact was maintained with family members. Carol, for example stated that the presence of her brother at Fairbridge helped her to feel comfortable.

“Consistency” as described by participants, refers to the comfort and stability that comes from living in a situation where one knows what to expect in his or her day to day living. “Family
of Orientation’ is a theme that represents a feeling of belonging to a group of people who are not family members. It is the abstract notion of feelings that is contained in the discussions in the themes of ‘Attachment’ and ‘Self Identity’ as well. Feelings are intangible and individual to each of us. As Hay (1992) states:

*Each one of us knows that we feel best when we have adequate food and shelter, supportive and sustaining human relationships, supportive and sustaining environmental relationships, and the knowledge, freedom, and control necessary to maximize our own identity. We know that well-being is relative – to each one of us individually; to our community; and to our culture. We know that our well-being will be enabled if the social context in which we live provides adequate support in these areas. We know that our potential well-being will be constrained, to a greater or lesser extent, if the social context provides inadequate support in one or more of these areas. (p. 3)*

For the children of Fairbridge their community, the place to which they were entitled to well-being, was The Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School. Holistic well-being was not achieved by all participants at Fairbridge; some areas were better met than others. Through participants’ stories however, they have helped to identify both measurable and intangible needs for well-being when living away from family.

**Summary**

The experiences of the children of Fairbridge were told to me through stories that contained concrete descriptions of life at Fairbridge, yet were rich with abstract concepts of what the experience felt like.

I have tried to present the concrete experiences through the themes of ‘Before Fairbridge’
and ‘Daily Life at Fairbridge’. Here participants discussed how they lived in poverty in England and saw that inclusion into the Fairbridge program was an opportunity for them. They entered into the experience as children, often with the innocent excitement of the young. I presented participants’ descriptions of their day to day life at Fairbridge in themes that developed out of the data. Fairbridge was a working farm, set in the beautiful Vancouver Island countryside. Participants lived in cottages, with up to fourteen children and one cottage mother. The participants rarely, if ever, changed cottages and therefore they lived with the same children for several years. The adults of Fairbridge were remembered by the participants as uncaring to very nurturing. All participants were left with some insights into what makes an individual a good caregiver.

‘Effects of the Fairbridge Program’ is a thematic grouping which attempted to illustrate the more abstract aspect of the Fairbridge experience which participants described through their storytelling. This section discussed how participants felt they adjusted or ‘assimilated’ to Fairbridge and what they felt assisted them with an easy adjustment. Many of the participants described a feeling of ‘consistency’ and how this became an important factor for them. A child’s developing sense of ‘self worth’ is partially dependent on their families and others close to them. For the participants it was the men, women, and children of Fairbridge who partially impacted their feelings of self worth. They give insights into how this was done well and poorly. Some of the adults who crossed the participants’ paths as a result of the Fairbridge program, became special or ‘significant adults’ in the lives of the participants. This was something individuals found important when being raised without family. ‘Family of Orientation’ was a theme which discussed the feeling participants described of being specially connected to the people with whom they shared their childhood home.
The two high level themes of ‘attachment’ and ‘self identity’ are themes which try to summarize several of the themes which had been discussed to that point. The theme of ‘attachment’ refers to the sense of connectedness that participants had to Fairbridge, meaning the site, program, and the people. Every participant described a feeling of attachment in varying degrees, which continues today. A variety of aspects of the experience seems to have contributed to this, as did the experience as a whole.

The goal of any child care program, and in fact of the institution of the family, is to raise children who are physically, socially, and emotional healthy, happy human beings. Participants recognized this when they discussed their concepts of how Fairbridge helped or hindered them in the development of a healthy self identity. Again, many pieces of the whole experience contributed to this.

The overall summative theme of well-being, expresses what underlay the participants’ rich descriptions of life at Fairbridge and what the experience meant for them. They described receiving, or wanting, much more than the basic needs provided in the workhouses and orphanages of yesteryear.
CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

The experiences of the children of Fairbridge were told to me through the memories of adults. These participants, as mature adults, have looked back on their experiences and offered their own reflections on Fairbridge and group child care. I have included the opinions of these ‘experts’ here along with my own reflections. I begin this chapter with a reflection of the main findings of this thesis. I then compare these findings with the findings of similar studies: I then make suggestions of how the findings of this study might be useful in terms of child care practices today. Finally I conclude this chapter with limitations of this research and recommendations for further research.

Reflections of the Experiences of the Children of Fairbridge

This research yields two overall opposing experiences and opinions of Fairbridge. The majority of participants, seven of eight, had an overall positive experience at the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School. One participants had an overall negative experience. It is important to keep in mind that the participants volunteered for this study, hence random sampling was not used. Phenomenological inquiry recognizes the uniqueness of each individual’s experience and cautions against making generalizations to larger populations (Van Manen, 1990). Therefore, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to the rest of the Fairbridge population. It cannot be said that the majority of the entire Fairbridge group had a positive experience, as is the case with this sample. However, at least seven individuals did have some very positive experiences with the Fairbridge program and at least one participant had an overall negative one. I have reflected on some possible explanations for this contrast, which I discuss here.

Age appeared to be a significant variable in this study. Richard was the youngest of the
participants at the time of immigration with Fairbridge. He was five while the other participants were between the ages of eight to twelve. It is possible that the age of the older children contributed to their ability to adjust to a new situation away from their parents. This age group is more equipped, due to their more mature age, to cope with new situations (Lieberman, 1979). Bowlby's Attachment Theory suggests that young children have a strong attachment to their mother or mother substitute (Holmes, 1993). It also suggests that a young child needs the nurturing of a primary caregiver to feel most secure. Richard, at the age of four, was removed from his primary caregiver and placed into group care by the time he was five. This may have had a strong impact on his experience with the Fairbridge program, which he described as largely negative.

Another possible explanation could be the fact that the same seven participants felt as adults, that Fairbridge had offered an opportunity to them. These individuals entered the experience with positive expectations which may have impacted their overall experience. Greg discusses the opportunity Fairbridge represented to him:

I can't really separate the experience of the farm school from the opportunity to come to Canada. As a child in England, it is doubtful I would have had the opportunity to get a University education. The Fairbridge experience taught me how to work, the value and rewards of doing a good job, and a tool kit of skills that have made my life rewarding (12-M1).

Given his situation in England when he was a child, Chris felt Fairbridge offered him and his siblings a more positive start in life than he would have had had he remained in England:

I think looking back, if anything could have happened, probably the best thing that could have happened for me and for the rest of my family, my brothers and sisters, would be to get out of North East England. Looking back on it, I have fairly good memories, I have got fairly good feelings about moving to the West Coast of North America (V5-P1).

The quality of Richard's caregivers is yet another variable. Richard felt very
strongly that caregivers were largely responsible for his negative experience with Fairbridge in that they were "not qualified people" (M3-p1). Three other participants arrived at Fairbridge within two years of Richard. I do not know however, if Richard shared the same cottage and caregiver with any of the other participants. If he did not, then a cottage caregiver could have had much to do with his negative experience, although he indicated several staff at Fairbridge contributed to his negative experience. Caregivers are the ones who ultimately provide nurturing and guidance in any child care program. They are also the ones who have the most power in an adult/child relationship and therefore should be, as Richard stresses "qualified people" (M3-p1).

A fourth variable is the reality that individuals experience the same situation differently; different people have different needs. This is related to that which Chris referred to as "emotional baggage", those experiences a child had prior to entering Fairbridge. Chris stated "I guess it depends on where you are coming from, what emotional state you are in as a child, what kind of baggage you brought with you" (V5-pl). Perhaps several of these factors affected Richard's overall negative experience; a very young child is taken away from a difficult situation and is placed in the care of inappropriate adults.

The country setting of Fairbridge seemed to be an important part of the Fairbridge experience, as the background to which the experience played itself out. The setting of Fairbridge seemed to give the participants a sense of peace in addition to being able to offer many activities not available in the city. As Carol stated "Fairbridge wouldn't have been Fairbridge if it didn't have that beautiful farm site and the cattle...the school was such a beautiful place in itself" (18-tr1).

This research emphasizes the importance of caregivers for a child in the child welfare system. Those who had positive experiences with their caregivers found that the ability of the
caregivers to nurture was important, as was the ability to provide fair and unconditional care. As Greg stated:

*I have thought about what it was about Fairbridge that made it an acceptable substitute for a family setting and why, it seemed to work for children of fairly diverse backgrounds. I think a key ingredient was fairness. We were all treated fairly. We all got our chance to do the ‘good’ chores. As a general rule, if we got punished it was because we had broken the rules. There were no favorites or privileged children.*

It is important to acknowledge that regardless of how good a caregiver is or what the quality of the experience was, it was generally expressed that children should remain with family if at all possible. As Charles reflected:

*I think that the natural home is still the best place for children to be because there is always the tough part of breaking away from that family which will have an emotional effect for the rest of your life, depending of course on the situation of the home the child was taken away from.*

This opinion is echoed in research and in current child welfare practices. It is widely accepted that the biological family is the best place for the child to be and therefore, every effort should be made to keep the child with the family (Cliffe & Berridge, 1991; Holmes, 1993; Ministry of Social Services, 1994). It is also the general opinion and practice however, that children should be placed in a surrogate home when their health and/or well-being are at risk in the natural home (Gove, 1995; Ministry of Social Services, 1994). Some participants agreed that a foster or adoptive family could be a favorable alternative when outside child care is required. Greg, for example, was with one foster family prior to his immigration with Fairbridge. Due to his emotional attachment to this family, he felt that had he remained with them, he would have enjoyed a “very satisfactory arrangement” (I2-t3). Participants stated however that for a substitute family arrangement to be successful, the situation must be stable and consistent (V5-p1: I2-t3). As Greg commented:
I do think that, at least in my experience, there was, I don't know, a sense of reassurance that came from the Fairbridge situation which I think was much better than being shifted from pillar to post in a, you know, one foster home to another. Like there, I think, that one would very quickly decide "well, I'm not going to invest any emotional capital into this foster home because it's not going to last. I think that would be devastating for children to be moved from one foster home to another, even if most of the foster parents were reasonably decent people." (12-t3).

Perhaps the most significant findings of this research surround the issues of consistency and attachment. Fairbridge provided these children with a permanent residence with a constant group of children. The daily routine gave the children the ability to predict the day's events. This coupled with clear rules and expectations, provided stability and consistency. The ongoing contact with family in England or siblings at Fairbridge, may have also helped to provide a constant for some children. Although caregivers did change from time to time, there would have been an overlap in a program the size of Fairbridge; therefore there would always have been caregivers with whom the children were familiar. The godparent program also provided constant significant adults in the lives of some children. Fellow children and the Fairbridge site itself however, seemed to be the greatest and most important constants in the children's lives. Through shared circumstances and long term cohabitation, Fairbridge children developed a sense of camaraderie and even 'family'. As Mary stated, there was a sense of security that came from being with others who were in the same situation as you:

*Anybody who went to Fairbridge were your half brother and sister. I do honestly feel that you know... When we were at Fairbridge we had a sense of security because we were all in the same boat. We knew we came from dysfunctional families and were poor and so you knew, and so we didn't feel any different (N4-p1)*

Richard also expressed fond feelings for the other children and identified them as being what helped make his stay at Fairbridge somewhat bearable:

*Richard: It seems like I’ve painted a negative picture, and really now we had a lot*
of fun. There we a lot of funny things we did, but most of what we did were things we weren't supposed to do”.

Christina: So it was the stuff you did with the other kids?

Richard: Yeah, the other kids. We were a pretty good bunch of kids. (M3-p1)

Today, many years later after the last child left Fairbridge, participants still see themselves as part of the Fairbridge group.

A Comparison to Other Child Care Program Studies

Some of the main findings of the Children of Fairbridge study, are consistent with findings in other studies of children who experienced long term child care placements. The merit of having relationships with other children in care was identified in a study of a foster parent program conducted by Fanshel, Finch, & Grundy (1990). In this study 180 adults, who as children were placed in foster care through the Casey Family Program, were interviewed. One significant finding of this research was the desire of children in care to meet with other children in care to share experiences. As one interviewee recommended, “Get a group where foster kids can share their experiences in care (a rap group) so they can find out that they are not alone in the situation they are in” (p. 191). This connection with other children was credited by all The Children of Fairbridge participants as an important positive factor of the Fairbridge experience.

Some of the Fairbridge study participants suggested there was merit in having contact with family, both in England and with siblings at Fairbridge. Family contact is identified as an important factor to a child’s well-being while in group care in a study by Weiner & Weiner (1990). The authors state, “We found the role of the absentee parent to be critical for the well-being of these young people...Our broadest finding was that when siblings were kept together or when contact with family was maintained, children did not necessarily fair badly in group care
The issue of consistency, an important finding of the Fairbridge study, is similar to other studies. Zmora (1994) in his book entitled “Orphanages Reconsidered” identifies the benefits of having consistency in residence and in companions for children who are in group child care. He states:

*The professional foster parent may change from time to time, but the children would remain...the children would not need to adjust to a new school, new friends, and a new environment. This arrangement, like orphanages, would allow siblings to be placed together and would thus help to preserve family ties.* (Zmora, 1994: 195)

Weiner & Weiner (1990) examined the well-being of children in the care of the country of Israel in a fourteen year longitudinal study. The study looked at a variety of child care arrangements including adoption, foster care, and residential group care from 1973 to 1987, in an effort to determine which type of child care option is best for children. They had expected that their findings would support a move away from residential group care. Instead findings of Weiner & Weiner’s study support those of The Children of Fairbridge. Their study shows that long term residential care can provide a stable, successful child care option. Weiner & Wiener (1990) discussed their findings with which they were surprised:

The fifty-one adopted children were functioning the best according to all our measures of well-being; this was not surprising. However, the group that functioned second best was totally unexpected. The young people functioning second only to the adopted were those who had spent their entire childhood in residential group care. The aim of our original permanency planning project in 1973 had been to prevent just such a situation. Few were convinced then that long-term institutionalization harmed children. We have since found that those young people in residential group care who had at least a minimal support system from home were performing second only to the adopted children cognitively, socially and behaviorally. (p.xvi)

Stability in the lives of children appears to affect them positively. Important constants in
the lives of the Fairbridge program participants were the other children, the Fairbridge site, and perhaps even the entity of "Fairbridge" itself. Considering the beauty of Vancouver Island, it is understandable how the country setting of Fairbridge was a place to which children could become attached. There may not be a tangible explanation as to why this is so, but a residence in the country does seem to lend itself to feelings of well-being. Some sixty years later, former residents are drawn back to the site of Fairbridge as they are drawn toward each other. These feelings of attachment and belonging to Fairbridge outlasted their childhood. This same sense of belonging was expressed in the Casey Program Study by Fanshel, Finch, & Grundy (1990). The Casey Program oversaw the placement of children into foster care. In this study former participants of the program were interviewed. A participant responded to a question asking him what he found positive about the Casey Family Program:

That I finally belonged SOMEWHERE. I went through many homes before coming to Casey and after. What was most important to me is that no matter where I went, I knew I was a Casey Family Program kid. It gave me a positive identity. No matter whom I was living with, on my birthday and on Christmas, I got a card from the program...Casey did a lot for me but this simple fact, that I belonged, was the most healing. It may not sound like much but when one grows up in a state of continual crisis and disorganization, it means everything. (p. 202)

Jim continues to feel very positive about his involvement with Fairbridge. So much so that he would like to see it work today for the benefit of other children:

There are a lot of things that I think are important about Fairbridge and it is one of my goals, if I live long enough and become wealthy enough, I would like to perpetuate it. The system, the name, the whole business...the system itself is fantastic...It is irrefutably the best, or one of the best systems for looking after kids that can't possibly look after themselves... (U7-p1)

Carol reconfirmed her attachment and belonging to Fairbridge when she stated "I will always be an Old Fairbridgian and proud to be so" (18-tr11).
The constant for the majority of children who find themselves in the care of the government, is their families. This majority return to their families after a relatively short period of time. It is for the minority of children in care, the group that remains in care for several years, for whom the findings of this study are most useful. These ‘permanent wards’ could benefit from many of the concepts discussed in this thesis including “consistency”, “attachment”, and information about what makes a quality “caregiver” that the children of Fairbridge felt was so important to their sense of well-being.

At the very least, the findings here support current attempts to reduce the number of placement moves for children in care, and encourage stability in case management. Findings also give insight into what a child needs from caregivers. The findings appear to shed light on subtle things that help a child feel a sense of being cared for and of developing positive self worth.

On a larger scale, the findings of this study could be used to implement a residential child care option for children who are in long term care. A model utilizing the positive aspects of Fairbridge could provide these children with an option. I agree that a family home that is caring and stable is the best option for a child. Unfortunately adoption of older children and a single foster home placement for long term care, are often not available. I firmly believe that the majority of institutional programs born out of the Elizabethan poor laws created unsuitable places to raise children. Furthermore, government and religious organizations that operated the native residential schools are still apologizing for their fateful mistake in scarring First Nations people. This type of institutional care no longer exists. However, the Fairbridge study suggests that group care can provide older children with a positive and stable place to call home. Consider British Columbia’s First Nations people. As of June 1997, 37% or 1,132 of children in
continuing custody in B.C. were First Nations. There is a significant lack of First Nations foster homes available to First Nations children in central and Northern British Columbia (personal interview with Charlett Diston, March, 1997). A group care facility modeled after the Fairbridge program could provide First Nations children, who are in long term care, with a permanent childhood residence on reserve. These children could experience stability through a permanent physical residence, as well as through the constant group of other First Nations children with whom they would live. Ongoing contact with family, even though a return to family is unlikely, and placement with siblings, might encourage stability and well-being for these children. A grandparent program with elders from the native community could provide additional stability. Such a model could promote a connection between these children and their culture and community.

The children of Fairbridge have offered insights to what they found important for children living in long term care based on their own experiences. Their experiences are derived from a particular period of history at a very specific child care facility. However, the needs for a child’s well-being are timeless.

Limitations of Research and Recommendations for Further Study

This research used phenomenological research methodology to explore the experiences of a small sample of eight individuals. In this respect, the results of this research cannot be generalized and can only be considered as exploratory. As an exploratory study it leads to further questions and areas that suggest additional research.

Eight individuals gave some very interesting insights regarding their experiences with long term child care. It would therefore be interesting to conduct a study on a larger sample of Fairbridge participants. Major findings of this study could be transferred to a questionnaire to be
sent to all living prior Fairbridge residents. A study utilizing a larger sample could further explore, support or refute the findings of this study.

Fairbridge was a very specific child care program. A study on a variety of long term residential child care programs may help further explore main findings of this study. Charles, as a participant of the Fairbridge study, saw merit in conducting research of a large sampling of a variety of residential child care programs:

"It would be interesting if an in-depth study was done on all of the members of the institutions such as Fairbridge, particularly now that everyone is in the later years of life, to be interviewed to see what problems did arise from the situation. In particular to see if it has affected their lives in a negative manner. (F6-tr1)"

Continued research, both of former child care practices as well as current ones, is a responsibility we have to ensure the best care possible for those young members of society who rely on the child welfare system for their care and well-being.

Summary

The Children of Fairbridge offered some interesting insights into life at a residential children’s home as experienced by individuals at the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School. The essence of their experiences were illuminated through the use of phenomenological research.

An overall important factor for children in care, according to the children of Fairbridge, is that the well-being of a child should be the main guiding goal. Well-being was affected by several factors. A child’s background prior to entering care will affect a child’s experience. Once in care, factors of the experience as a whole, beginning with the country setting of the residential center, to the Fairbridge program itself and the people of the program, were identified by participants as important. These concrete factors shaped the abstract aspects of their experiences such as the sense of consistency a participant felt while at Fairbridge, or the negative sense of self worth.
another participant felt due to living at Fairbridge. Through their stories, the children of Fairbridge have assisted me in finding the answer to my research question by giving me a glimpse into what it was like to be a child at the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School.

**Epilogue**

I looked around me as I stood to join in the toast. There stood my father bearing a name tag with the title “Old Fairbridgian” and a date of involvement printed on it. Many of the others standing had the same title on their nametags. With them stood their spouses, their children and their grandchildren. Sixty years after it first opened its doors, the children of Fairbridge have returned with their families to see each other, the Fairbridge site, and to take their places among their fellow Fairbridgians.

Earlier that day I had attended the annual general meeting of the Fairbridge Canada Association. I was told that the entity of Fairbridge should not be left to die with its aging members. Children and grandchildren of Fairbridgians were being called upon to join the association and the board of directors. Also, the Fairbridge scholarship program needed people to continue to allocate scholarships to descendants of Fairbridgians. Fairbridge, I was told, was part of my family history and it was my right and my duty to continue its legacy. “Fairbridge” I had come to realize, was a part of me, as it was a part of my father. It was also a place of belonging for the many people who were gathered there in that room. An idea that began with one man will not end with the last child of Fairbridge. As I raised my wine glass, I recalled the words of that man as he shared with his father, his plans for a farm school:

"But it will be a hard job," he said; 'you will not find the right people at first. It will take you two or three years'...
'I don't know how long I'll be,' I answered, 'perhaps only two years. Perhaps it will take me all my life.'

My father’s face turned suddenly very serious. After a while he spoke again very quietly, and with a little laugh. 'These people,' he said, 'all these people you are working for,
they may never know what you have done, they may never thank you.’
I remembered my dark hours. ‘I know’. I said”. (Fairbridge. 1936. p. 150)

I joined in the toast with this roomful of people. “To Kingsley Fairbridge”.
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Press.


Appendix A

Ethics Approval
May 26, 1995

Ms. Tina Brazzoni
c/o Social Work Program
UNBC

Dear Ms. Brazzoni:

The Ethics Committee met on May 24, 1995 to discuss your research proposal titled “The Children of Fairbridge: Insights for Child Welfare Practices”.

I am happy to tell you that the Committee has granted you ethics approval and you may proceed with your research.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

William R. Morrison
Dean of Research and Graduate Studies

WM:dk
Appendix B

Initial Letter to Potential Participants

APRIL 15, 1995

Christina Dobson Brazzoni
RR1 Site 19 Comp. 18
Prince George, B.C.
V2N 2H8
(604) 963-9412

Dear Fairbridgian,

I am currently a graduate student at the University of Northern British Columbia in the Social Work Program. The subject for my thesis is the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School. As the daughter of a Fairbridgian, I grew up hearing stories about the Fairbridge Farm School, which I was always interested in. Now, as a professional social worker, I have often thought about Fairbridge in the context of my profession. This led me to look at Fairbridge as the topic for my thesis.

It is my opinion that Fairbridge was a unique residential child care facility. I have three main reasons for doing my thesis on Fairbridge. Fairbridge is part of my heritage and I am therefore interested in it. Secondly, I feel that the “children” of the Fairbridge Farm School have unique and interesting stories to tell. Lastly, the former residents of Fairbridge, and the Farm School’s model of child care, may offer the profession of social work insight for practice in the area of child care and clinical work.

For my research I will be searching for existing literature on Fairbridge. For the main part of my thesis however, I hope to interview approximately six individuals who were children at the Fairbridge Farm School on Vancouver Island. It is my intent that these individuals have the “loudest voice” in the study. I hope to explore what it was like to be a child at Fairbridge and how this experience affected the lives of these individuals. I also hope to explore participants’ opinions of what an effective form of permanent child care might look like given their experiences.

The interview process will consist of four steps. Once people consent to participate by signing a consent form, they will be asked to complete a brief pre-interview questionnaire. The actual interviews will occur in a private setting chosen by the participants. I will be traveling to the
participants’ area of residence for the interviews. The interviews will last approximately two hours. An interview guide will be prepared, however, participants may discuss whatever they desire with regards to the Farm School. All interviews will be completely confidential. Participants may however, have a friend or family member present if they so choose. I would like to tape record all interviews for purpose of accuracy however, after the thesis is completed all tapes will be destroyed. Interviews will be transcribed in preparation for writing the thesis. All transcribed documents will be sent to the respective participants to check for accuracy and to allow participants to review their interviews. Participants’ identity will not be revealed at any time during the research process or in the final document.

After the interviews have been completed, I will be preparing a post-interview questionnaire to be filled out by participants. The purpose of this questionnaire is to further explore specific areas with participants to ensure any conclusions made are supported with further impute by participants. Both the pre and post-interview questionnaire can be handled by mail.

The thesis will exist in the form of a bound document. It will be presented to a panel of four at the University for the purposes of completing my degree. The document may be published and will be available to the public.

If you are interested in being a participant in this research, or would like more information, please return the response sheet included with this letter. If you prefer you may contact me by telephone. If you do not wish to participate but would like to contribute any information, i.e. Fairbridge literature, please contact me. I hope to begin the interviews in the last week of June, 1995 and to complete the interview process by mid August. Also, please feel free to pass on this information to fellow Fairbridgians.

I am very excited about this project, and hope to produce a piece of work worthy of the children of Fairbridge. Thank you for your time and any interest or involvement you can offer.

Sincerely,

Christina Dobson Brazzoni, BSW
Appendix C

Mail back form

Christina Dobson Brazzoni
RR1 Site 19 Comp 18
Prince George, BC
V2N 2H8
Fax # (604) 960-

Name: ________________________________

Address: ______________________________

____________________________________

Phone #(_____)________________________

Fax # (if applicable)____________________

____ I would like to participate in the study: The Children of Fairbridge: Insight for Social Work Policy and Practice.

____ I would like to receive more information about the study.
Appendix D
Thank you and Research Information Letter

Christina Dobson Brazzoni
RR1 Site 19 Comp18
Prince George, BC
V2N 2H8
Phone: (604) 963-9412
E-Mail: Brazzoni@unbc.edu.ugrad
Fax: (604)

(Participant’s address)

Dear

Thank you for your willingness to participate in my thesis research. I have included some documents and information to begin the research process with you.

In this package you will find the following documents:

1) Information for informed consent
2) Informed consent form
3) Pre-interview questionnaire
4) Interview Guide

Please review these documents. If you wish to proceed with the study, please complete the informed consent form and pre-interview questionnaire. Please return both of these documents to me, by fax or mail, at your earliest convenience.

The pre-interview questionnaire is the first step of the research process that you will be involved in. This questionnaire will assist me in having an overview of the representation of Fairbridgians that are included in the study.

The actual interview between you and myself is the second, and most extensive step of the research process. The interview guide that I have included in this package is a draft of the actual guide that will be used during the interviews. I have provided the guide to give you an idea of possible content for the interview. As I stated in the “information for informed consent” however, you do not have to answer any questions you feel uncomfortable with, and can discuss items that are not listed on the guide. I will be contacting you after June 19 to make final arrangements for the actual interview.

After interviews are completed, I will be transcribing them onto a word processor. I will then
send this document to you so that you can check that your information has been recorded accurately. At this point I will begin looking at the interviews and draw some general themes from that information. As themes emerge, I will most likely have certain areas that I would like to explore more extensively. I will then draft a post-interview questionnaire based on these themes. This document will be sent to you within six weeks of the interview, with a request that you fill it out. The reason for this step is to ensure that I am not making assumptions based on interview information. By asking you to fill out a questionnaire that addresses certain areas, I can be more confident in defending final conclusions.

I recognize that this is a long process and that I am asking you to commit valuable time to this research. The process is necessary however, to ensure that the research is done properly, and that it accurately explores your experiences and opinions with regards to Fairbridge. The pre interview questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes to fill out, the interview will take approximately 2 hours, the proof reading of the transcriptions will take 1-1.5 hours, and the final questionnaire should take no more than 1 hour. The final time should not exceed five hours.

I hope you will find this process interesting. Thank you for your participation. I look forward to meeting with you.

Sincerely,

Christina Dobson Brazzoni
Appendix E
Pre-Interview Questionnaire

Participant Code___

Instructions:
Please fill out this questionnaire and return to me, along with the consent form, in the stamped envelope provided at your earliest convenience. Please do not include your name on this form.

Questionnaire:
1. What is your gender? Male___ Female___ (please check one)

2. How old were you when you became involved with the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School?_____.

3. Did any brothers or sisters emigrate with you to Canada through the Fairbridge society? Yes____ No____

If so how old were they and what was their gender?

______________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________

4. At the time of emigration what was your family status?

If your parents were living, were you living with your: Mother____ Father____
If your parents were deceased, were you living with an extended family member?:

Yes __  No___ Relationship of member you lived with: ________________

If you did not reside with family members, where did you reside?: __________

_____________________________________________________________________

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire,

Christina.
Appendix F
Information for Informed Consent
(to be read by participant)

As a graduate student in the Social Work Programme at the University of Northern British Columbia, I am conducting research on the Prince of Wales Fairbridge Farm School for my thesis. This research is designed to explore the experiences of individuals who resided at the Farm School as children. Through the process of in-depth interviews with former children of Fairbridge, I hope to explore both positive and negative effects of residential child care. It is my hope that such information will offer insight to current child welfare and social work policy and practice; my profession continues to search for ways to improve child care practices.

The interview process involves a brief pre-interview questionnaire, a personal interview, and a post-interview questionnaire. Both the pre and post-interview questionnaires will be done by mail and will take a total of one hour and fifteen minutes to complete. Personal interviews will last approximately two hours in length. Although I have prepared an interview guide, you may discuss anything you feel is relevant to the study and you may choose not to answer any questions you are uncomfortable with. With your consent, I will be tape recording the interview for the purpose of accurately recording the information, however, all tapes will be destroyed after the study is complete. After the interviews, all tapes will be transcribed for the purpose of analysis. At this point the transcriptions will be sent to you to check for accuracy. After the Data is analyzed, it will be presented in the form of a academic document. Throughout this process, your complete confidentiality will be maintained. I will be the only person who knows your identity.
At your request, at any time during this process, your involvement in this research can be discontinued.

Please feel free to contact me at (604) 963-9412 or my academic advisor, Dr. Gordon Ternowetsky at (604) 960-6620 if you have any questions or concerns throughout this process.

Please sign attached form if you consent to be involved in this study.

Thank you,

Christina Dobson Brazzoni
Appendix G

Informed Consent Form

(to be signed by participant)

I have read the attached form and consent to participate in the study to be conducted by Christina Dobson Brazzoni as partial fulfillment for her degree of Master of Social Work at the University of Northern British Columbia. I have read the "information for informed consent" form and understand the nature of this study. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time. I also understand that my identity will be kept in strict confidence throughout the research process, and in the final research document.

I, ____________________(please print) hereby give my consent to participate in the study discussed above.

Signed:

____________________________________
Participant

____________________________________
Researcher
Appendix H

Interview Guide

1. How did you come to be involved with the Fairbridge Farm School?
   . What was your situation in England?
   . How/What were you told about Fairbridge and Canada?
   . Did a sibling come with you?
   . How did you feel about being sent to Canada?
   . Did you have any other child care experiences other than Fairbridge? If so, please describe them.
   . (Get the interviewee to describe the trip to Canada and their first sights, thoughts, and feelings of the Farm School, the other children and the caregivers. This may assist them in recalling thoughts and feeling they had at the time.)

2. What was your perception of the physical level of care at Fairbridge?
   . (Description may be helpful here. Ask the Fairbridgian to describe the cottages, meals, and day to day activities of life at Fairbridge.)
   . What, if any, sports or recreational activities were encouraged.

3. How was discipline handled at the Farm School?
   . Who were authority figures?
4. What is your perception of the level of emotional care received at Fairbridge?
   . What was expected of you as a child at Fairbridge?
   . Do you remember your cottage mother? If so what do you remember about her?
   . Was communication with family/friends in England encouraged and if so, did you maintain contact?
   . How were emotional crisis (i.e. Homesickness, loneliness) handled by staff?
   . How often and with what degree did such crisis occur?

5. Did you experience a sense of family and/or permanency at the Farm School?
   . After you left the Farm School, did you ever return and how were you received?
   . Do you recall any significant adults who influenced your life?
   . Were there any friendships that stand out or that exist today?

6. What is your best experience/memory at Fairbridge?

7. What is your worst experience/memory of Fairbridge?

8. What academic and life skills education was taught at Fairbridge?
   . (Discuss formal and practical education.)
   . Do you feel you were properly prepared to enter independent living when you left Fairbridge?
9. As an adult looking back over the experience, how has being raised at the Farm School affected your life?

Where do you think of as ‘home’? Canada? England?

Have there been any emotional difficulties that resulted from the experience?

10. What is your opinion of children being raised in such a situation when they can no longer remain with family members?

11. Do you have anything else that you would like to tell me about?