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DOCTOR OF SOCIAL WORK

A Study of Care Leavers Lived Experiences of Social Orphanhood in Latvia

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A Study of Care Leavers Lived Experiences of Social Orphanhood in Latvia

Zoë Kessler

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
University of Dundee for the degree of Doctor of Social Work.

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Declaration

I, Zoë B. Kessler am the author of the thesis. All references cited have been consulted by me.

The work, of which the thesis is a record, has been completed by me, and it has not previously been accepted for a higher degree.

Signature:

Date: August 23rd, 2021

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Abstract

This study set out to investigate social orphanhood through narratives of young people with experiences of growing up in care in Latvia. The study uses the life histories of participants to explore the phenomenon of social orphans. To date, narratives about the lived experiences of social orphans in Latvia have been told in the third person as most studies have used methodologies that kept participants passive rather than active. In this study the research process chronicled 19 care leavers' life experiences in detailing three main life phases: 1.) Prior to living in care; 2.) During care; 3.) Life after care. The researcher engaged in several approaches in creating meaning out of the narratives. The first strategy was reporting the contextual life story of the participant in their own words. The second was 'collaboration' where there was agreement by each participant on the content of the narrative and critical events were further agreed on and developed using information from the transcribed data. The third was tracing acts of resistance using the participant's stories. The fourth was a thematic analysis and an inclusion of artwork and writing that was completed by the participants to express their journeys. Participants' experiences revealed some commonalities: factors that preceded children entering care, occurrences from care and life trajectories post-care. The findings also supported a deconstructing of stereotypes and dominant assumptions about orphanage care and provides alternative narratives to what it means to grow up as a social orphan in Latvia. Notable were the strategies of self-reliance and resistance to adversity, as well as a preference for group care and a summation of what care leavers would like from professionals during care. Recommendations for policy and practice are introduced, these emerged from the study findings and the positioning of the participants as 'knowers of their experience.' This rich knowledge base can be used to support and inform practice of children moving through the care system in Latvia as well as in other contexts.

Key Words: Social orphan, care leavers, life history, narratives, Latvia.

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces this PhD thesis on the lived experiences of social orphans in Latvia. While the focus on the empirical literature is based in Latvia, where the study was conducted, some literature on children in care and care leavers has been used to inform the study. This chapter provides an overview of the research problem, a definition of the term social orphan, briefly discusses my interest in the study, defines the research aims and objectives, and then charts the structure of the thesis. It concludes with a discussion on key areas of the literature relevant to the thesis.

1.2 What are Social Orphans?

Children defined as social orphans have biological parents who live but are not able or willing to provide parental care and guidance. The current Children's Protection Law in Latvia (1998) refers to children in this position as “a child whose parents are not known, are lost, or due to long term illness are not able to ensure custody, or whose parents are deprived of custody rights, or whose parental rights are suspended” (Article 1.2). The term *social orphans* began as an idiom, which was initially used to differentiate and identify why the child was in an orphaned state.

However, the term *social orphan* is linked to a more substantial societal and socially based problem (Rockhill, 2010). The Social Science Research Center in Latvia and various universities in Latvia support using the term *social orphan* in the current research of the issue. These institutions concur that using this term to define the children involved can provide further insight into the social challenges of this group of children. Theoretically, the University of Latvia's identification of the social orphan helped target a range of specific issues and remedies affecting the youth. In turn, Latvian educators and social service providers' differentiation of the social orphan group is encouraged to facilitate and clarify the term and provide a backdrop to recognise these children as a separate and distinct group from those defined as biological orphans (Trapenciere, 2014).

Latvia, Ukraine, Bashkirstan, Poland, and Russia now apply the term social orphan using the same definition (Dillon, 2015; Rockhill, 2010). These countries differ in how the governments, social service providers, legislatures, and various judicial systems apply the term. *Children without parental care* is the term most government agencies use to define the children in the category *social orphan*.

1.3 The Research Problem

Given the privileging in social policy over the past twenty years of family care over group care (Wollins, 2017), an outcome has been the prevailing view that residential care is a last resort that will undoubtedly cause extensive psychological and physical damage (Emond, 2003). This perpetuates negative stereotypes and stigmatisation of children who need to use these social services. Academic research has then been predominantly evaluative, and as Emond pronounces, “the voices of children and young people in residential care have been somewhat muted. Few studies have been conducted with young people as the sole providers of data” (2003, p.322). This study sought to fill this gap in knowledge that Emond states in 2003 and persists today, in 2018, according to leading Latvian researcher on social orphans (Trapenciere, 2018). According to her research data in Latvia, “children and youths at institutional care are not asked to comment on their institutional care trajectories, they have not ever practised using their voice on matters related to their life” (Trapenciere, 2018., p.8).

1.4 My Interest in the Study

In Finlay's (2002) discussion of applying reflexivity, introspection into the researcher's own story is a good practice. To practise reflexivity through introspection, in this section I will discuss areas of my personal life that brought me to this research. This requires me to reflect on my childhood and adolescence briefly and then move onto my introduction to the subject of social orphans in Latvia. As a young person, I experienced adverse family experiences that were followed by the sudden loss of both my parents in an automobile accident. This happened developmentally at a time when I was trying to finish secondary school and take steps towards adulthood. This abrupt interruption of relationships, support and guidance caused me to experience a loss of identity and uncertainty about my future. Although it is a different experience from growing up in care there are echoes of my experience in the stories, I heard doing this research. I encountered one participant who challenged me by asking why she should tell me her story. At first, I stayed put in my position as a researcher and reviewed the ethical agreement she signed stating she was under no obligation and could leave at any time. She sat, not moving, seemingly wanting to talk and tell her story yet unsure. I took a chance and moved my position from a researcher to a person and shared with her a small bit of my lived experiences that I share here. Her entire demeanor changed, she softened and said, “well you get it then.” From there she went on to talk for close to three hours. This research experience taught me the importance of situating myself in the research, when necessary, but sharing personal experiences also. My experiences sent me in the direction of a career as a social worker. Much of the 20 years in the field was spent in what I think of as frontline social work, meaning: sitting for long hours in

emergency rooms being quiet support for sexual assault survivors; running groups where most of the young women could not afford to pay the small fee; and working at a children's home where we took on every task a parent might, from helping brush teeth to reading bedtime stories and then to monitoring home visits. My first shift away from this frontline social work was completing a master's degree in Social Work in 2012. While pursuing my master's degree, we hosted a twelve-year-old girl from Latvia after looking for a service project our family could do together. At this time, we had no interest in adopting a child as we already had a full house. Instead, as we were both social workers, my husband and I saw an opportunity to have our children experience someone from a different culture than us and offer a holiday to a child in need. The photograph 1.1 was sent to us from the hosting company in the United States and was used with permission. The information on it was somewhat accurate, except she found it humorous as she had never read the bible. She was flown to the U.S. with a group of children, and one Latvian chaperone who stayed approximately five hours away from us in New York City. The chaperone was responsible for overseeing the visits between the children and the host families and checked in regularly via telephone as well as negotiated language, general communication or other disputes if needed.



Photograph 1 Viktorija

Simple, we thought it was one month out of our lives. We could not have been more naïve, and of course, our lives were altered permanently, as were those of our entire family from her visit. She arrived for a month stay with nothing but the clothes she was wearing and an empty backpack, but otherwise, she was healthy and seemed well adjusted. She spoke Russian and Latvian and some English that she had learnt from television shows and two earlier hosting experiences. Through a little English and Google translate, she told us stories of her life in Latvia, from when she lived with her family and the years she lived in the orphanage. At the end of the month, saying farewell was very

emotional all around, and when she left, I decided I had to understand more about her circumstances. Two months later I took my first visit to Riga, the capital of Latvia, and spent two weeks in the orphanage, getting to know all the children in her group and the social workers and other staff. This visit only brought up more questions; having been told that there was little to no hope for the children's futures, I went to bookstores in Riga and found the only English book on the subject I could locate. On the aeroplane home, I read the book; *Lost to the State* by Rockhill (2010), which explored Russia's social orphan problem and its connection to unrealistic expectations for motherhood. We decided to go forward with the adoption and the following year was engulfed with the adoption process, parenting the children we already had and social work. Our family put our life at home on hold through the adoption process and took up a short residency in Riga. We became comfortable in Riga and made good friends with some of the orphanage staff; many of our days were filled with our children playing with the children who lived at the orphanage and my husband and I having coffee with the staff.

I knew then how significant this topic was for me. Keeping our daughter close to her culture continues to be a priority. Thus, annual visits to Latvia have ensued, multiple visits from staff members and friends from the orphanage to our home, as well as the development of a relationship between me and her biological mother. These experiences were the impetus for completing this thesis. I asked the staff at the orphanage; "What will happen to the children in the orphanage after they leave at 18?" I wrote her reply down immediately after as it felt quite powerful to me. "*Some of them will live on the street, some go to jail, some sell themselves or beg on the street, have babies who end up here, and a few will be okay.*" Researching this myself through a PhD in Social Work was conclusively the next step for me to take and a university in Scotland a natural choice for me. Having family in the area, some with degrees from the University of Dundee, I knew it to be an excellent institution. I was attracted to the ability to study virtually and the chance to spend time in Scotland.

1.5 Research Aims and Objectives

According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003), good qualitative research has a defined purpose of the study and coherence between the research questions and the methods to generate reliable and valid data. This research aims to explore the lived experiences of people positioned as social orphans in Latvia from the first-hand perspective of social orphans. To understand and illuminate the current debate regarding the efficacy of residential care or more commonly known in Eastern Europe as social care homes or orphanages, there are several objectives to this study.

1. To summarise the existing literature on social orphans in Latvia in order to identify core themes.
2. To explore the lived experiences of social orphans at three distinct periods in their life: before, during and after care.
3. To examine what has supported social orphans throughout their care experience, and as a care leaver to use this knowledge in practice.
4. To explore how social orphans evaluate the care experiences they have had.
5. To appraise the impact on the research experience of intentional positioning of the research participants as “knowers or experts of their experience”.

The empirical basis of this qualitative study was life history research, executed through narrative, life story interviews of care leavers in Latvia. I contend that we need to understand who social orphans and care leavers are, their experiences, viewpoints and how they perceive themselves if we are to learn from them and make the most appropriate choices going forward about care. The study hopes to contribute to the dialogue around children without parental care, children in care in general, and the future direction of social work's working with children in care.

1.6 Research Questions

This research seeks to promote an understanding of the lived experiences of young adults (18-25 years) with care experiences in Latvia. The research questions used to explore this topic in this study are as follows:

Question One: What are the circumstances that bring children into care as social orphans in Latvia?

Question Two: What are the children in Latvia's experience of being in orphanage care?

Question Three: What are the lived experiences of young people in Latvia after they leave orphanage care?

1.7 The Key Areas of Literature Relevant to this Thesis

This section briefly explores critical areas of literature that are relevant to the thesis. These include the two broad categories of socio-emotional literature regarding children in care, a brief overview of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and its expectations for the treatment of all children.

1.7.1 A Brief Introduction to Literature on Orphans

According to UNICEF (2018), there are over 153 million registered orphans worldwide. It is widely accepted that the primary cause of being orphaned, for many children globally, is poverty (Agyarko et al., 2000). The academic literature that informs on orphans worldwide tends to fall into two categories: Orphans and Vulnerable Children, (OVC) literature and children that grow up in institutional care. The OVC literature focuses heavily on the impact of A-I-Ds and the decimation of traditional social structures, and often focuses on Africa (Stover et al., 2007). The latter category, children who grow up in institutional care, is more commonly associated with countries that make up Eastern Europe, and generally, has examined the impact of institutionalisation on children's development. Included in these investigations are issues related to traumatic experiences, language acquisition, the child's ability to bond with others, attachment success and failures, and academic performance (Tarullo & Gunnar, 2009). Most research on orphans focuses on the physical, psychological, and social well-being of the child. According to Marsh et al. (2011), children who grow up in institutions experience significant psychological challenges, impaired cognitive development, and misguided social functioning. Discussions that focus on the loss of parental care and the child's placement identify that they are highly vulnerable to physical and psychological damage. The psychological risks reported for children residing outside of parental care can often include traumatic disorders, attachment-related symptomatology, developmental delays that can consist of cognitive and behavioural presentations, and issues related to socio-emotional problems (Tarullo & Gunnar, 2009). Discourse from this perspective carries the strength of many scientists and, in many ways, paints a disheartening social and political picture of children in care that “if not troubled then certainly are troublesome” (Emond, 2003, p.321). Not to disagree with the substantial ramifications of the state of orphanhood, some social scientists focus their conclusions on other directions that perhaps offer up a more hopeful picture.

1.7.2 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

The importance of an understanding of the UNCRC when discussing children without parental care is two-fold. First, it is the most significant policy, in countries that have signed up to ratify the convention, that informs practice on children's rights. Secondly, the focus in much of the academic and political discourse surrounding children in care is “a discussion of the needs and vulnerability of youth” (Munro, 2019) instead of discussing the *rights* they are afforded and entitled to. This sets the focus askew and privileges the discussion and narrative of *vulnerability* and the need for protective measures on account of their vulnerability over the *rights* they were afforded and thus deserve

outright. That is not to say protective measures are not vitally important. Yes, they are, however, the all-encompassing discourse on the protection of children, overshadows the discussion which at times lets those responsible for providing those rights off the hook. Not in an over washing manner where complexities are ignored but in a specialised way, they are intended to protect children within their cultural context.

The UNCRC and the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (General Assembly of the United Nations, 2010) includes a full range of rights for children and young people, including social rights, civil, cultural, and economic. With the fundamental principles including non-discrimination (Article 2), the primary concern in all actions taken is the child's best interests (Article 3), the child's right to survival and development (Article 6), and the child's right to be included in the decision-making process on any matter affecting them (Article 12). Additionally, any child separated from their biological families has the right to special care and protection to recover physically and psychologically (Articles 20 & 21). The UNCRC demands a comprehensive approach to children in care known as the 3 P's: Provision, Protection and Participation.

Provision of services to support a satisfactory living standard, such as education, healthcare, and counselling (Munro 2019).

Protection from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Participation in expressing views and be taken seriously by those in charge (Reynaert et al., 2012).

The General Assembly of the United Nations (2010) that is meant to encourage the implementation of these rights conveys that the following are significant:

- Preparation of the life skills needed to “assume self-reliance and to integrate fully into the community.”
- Transition into the community takes into consideration particular circumstances, including gender, maturity, ability, and support.
- Ongoing support includes educational, vocational opportunities and access to health services, legal and social services when needed (General Assembly for the United Nations, 2009, p.19).

The significance of considering the child's rights when framing research regarding children in care is the clarity of the lens used to do this research. These fundamental rights are the bottom line 'so to speak' as all children should have afforded them. This is strengthened by neo-liberalist thought that the primary concern is for the individual's rights (Harvey, 2005). The fight for rights of the child was

taken up by NGO's contributing to discord between those who work with children and those groups advocating for children's rights (Smith et al., 2013). This inexplicably seems counter-productive to guidelines themselves which to accomplish would require collaboration specifically with the workers that are engaging with the policies, practices, and the children on a regular basis.

1.7.3 Does the Western Lens fit the Eastern Experience?

Policymakers in Latvia are currently moving towards closing group care settings due to the predominant view that placing children in foster families, which replicates more of the traditional family, provides a more positive experience for children. This is initially a Western perspective and strongly suggests that the longer a child resides in the care system, the more their development can be delayed (Browne, 2009). A robust condemnation of group care suggests that this context for care impedes the child's ability to transition to adulthood successfully (Browne, 2009). Large settings such as orphanages that have traditionally and are currently located in Latvia are reported to be the least beneficial type of placement when reviewing and assessing the cohesive development of a child (Browne, 2009). When this Western lens is applied in research to Latvian orphanages, studies often conclude that outcomes related to the institutional placement of children is harmful and does not leave space for any other viewpoint. Research in Latvia about children in care has been most often based on the views of "experts" who represent the powerful NGOs as well as institutional staff, social workers, teachers, and others who encounter the children.

Additionally, included studies focused on the transition of young adults from the orphanage into the community as independent citizens at 18 years of age. Children in care are not typically positioned to share their lived experiences in the 'expert' role, which is the title given to others who work with children in care, thus, leaving a possible gap in knowledge regarding the lived experiences of social orphans in Latvia. Considering this knowledge gap, it is unclear if the Western lens should be applied to the social orphans of Latvia, and this inquiry sought to address this gap through an exploration of the lived experiences using a life history methodology.

Throughout Latvia and Eastern Europe, children identified in the category of social orphans have generated considerable interest from policymakers (Trapenciere, 2018). Latvia has shown a commitment to resolve and transform social policies related to child welfare, including children in this category. Whilst there have been many changes through political reform, there are still challenges facing the children of Eastern European origin. Aidukaite (2005) pointed out that significant scale transitions in a society's ability to care for its children in need cannot happen without substantial

social and policy-minded transformation. Latvia's post-independence legacy from the Soviet State included economic instability and social reorganisation. Only after the country stabilised and began to adopt a free-market economy did the development of child welfare policy begin to focus on these changes. Latvian social policy reform had to wait until the Latvian identity as a country was strengthened and a clear identity of an independent Latvia was complete. Many of Latvia's social issues were hidden under the communist regime, and the process of identifying dealing with them takes time and finances. The research problem identifies a lack of understanding of the lived experiences of social orphans and care leavers from Latvia. Decisions that have a profound impact on children's lives are continuing without a complete knowledge base. The discourses that strongly influence policies on looked after children in Latvia are primarily three important ones that will be briefly discussed below: deinstitutionalisation underscored by attachment perspectives and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). What is not included in this discussion often is cultural context and what works within Latvia.

1.7.4 Deinstitutionalisation

The subject of deinstitutionalising institutions, is a prominent topic in the literature of children in care and according to Davidson et al. (2017) there is a centralised focus on it when it could possibly be detrimental: "...policy-making has had a central pre-occupation on de-institutionalism- stopping the use of large-scale institutions, which in some countries may be the only form of childcare resource for separated children" (Davidson et al., 2017, p. 3). Decreasing the number of children living in institutions, regardless of the reason, is now considered the socially conscious strategy for community health. According to Laksevic et al., (2018), the reason for deinstitutionalisation comes from several forces. These include supporting efforts to decrease the costs of long-term care, to progress and enhance the level of care residents receive and improving future well-being outcomes. This is important as often professional justifications offer legitimacy to cost-cutting measures. According to other sources the push for de-institutionalism may partly be due to the above reasons but is primarily driven by the "cross-cultural implementation of international guidelines" on the care of children without concern for context. The United Nations General Assembly (2010) international guidelines discourages institutional care of children and strongly supports family-based care options. In addition to the support by the United Nations, National Governmental Organisations (NGO's), whose mission is to support human rights, have an extremely centralised voice for the stable, loving forever family. This narrative dominates the child welfare field and the attachment discourse, contributes significantly to the evidence for favouring foster family' placement and deinstitutionalisation. These

ideals are reflected in the core tenets of the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Included in its preamble is the recognition that the child should grow up in a family environment that is characterised by happiness, love, and understanding, to ensure the full and harmonious development of his or her personality (UNCRC, 2010). The family environment identified in the preamble represents an ideal version of a family, but the reality is more complex than that version. The United Nations General Assembly, adopted a resolution based on the guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, section (123), which states that “[f]acilities providing residential care should be small enough and organised around the rights and needs of the child, in a setting as close as possible to a family or small group situation” (1995, p32). This framework focuses governments and caregivers on providing the family experiences that children need when placed in an institutional orphanage. The guidelines provide that the institution should shape the children’s identities in alignment with those of the families of origin, the culture, and the society. This is potentially a challenging and complicated goal as it relates to diverse cultural populations. In Latvia for example there are children from Latvian, Russian and Roma cultures living in care. Additionally, staff members working with the children will undoubtedly be from a Latvian or Russian heritage which will naturally prioritise one or the other. In this study participants reported the complexity of the culture in both directions; one male participant who identified culturally as Latvian was sent to an all-Russian orphanage near the border where the staff and children only spoke Russian. He only spoke Latvian and initially felt extreme culture shock. Another participant who came from an only Russian speaking family was sent to an orphanage in the capital and although there were some Russian speakers, she reported that she learned Latvian and is now bi-lingual. Neither participant reflected on these cultural experiences negatively and at the time of the interview reported appreciation for it. As exemplified by this statement: “I am very happy I can read, write and speak Latvian now it will make it easier to get a job.” The Stockholm Declaration, by the United Nations Conference on Human Environment in 1972, acknowledges the rights of each person to a healthy environment through a twenty-six principled guide which informs, identifies, and supports each country’s responsibilities. With Latvia’s independence in 1991 and the separation from Russia, the natural course when Latvia joined the European Union, was to look to the West and neo-liberalism to assist in constructing social policies and a welfare system that paralleled the West’s methodology. A further attempt to move Latvia away from Russia’s communist policies dictated the role of the state in the affairs of the family and the orphan population for decades (Rockhill, 2014). This is discussed further in Chapter 2. According to Berens and Nelson (2015), many of the Western world viewpoints on institutional care for children have been formulated from a theoretical base of child development and through theories which discuss the concept of attachment. A significant contributor to the discourse that privileges

placement in foster families over placement in orphanages versus other institutions has been influenced by Bowlby's (1984) 'attachment theory'. Thus, the globalising agenda on the rights of the child make a complex argument that institutional care cannot meet this. The complexity of different contexts is made invisible by this argument which could be problematic in post-communist countries which have been working hard to develop social services: child protection and alternatives to orphanages since the early 1990's, versus Western countries with a long history with social services (Davidson et al., 2018).

Countries such as Latvia, post-Soviet bloc, traditionally looked at institutional placement for children more positively than the values present in the United Kingdom and the United States. Currently, however, the spread of individualizing discourses of neo-liberalism influence this and lead to questions about the contextual alignment of this push for de-institutionalism in Latvia. Harris et al. (2017) argues that the proposed knowledge of 'Institutions are not good for children' does not automatically transfer from one context to the next. Harris et al. (2017) states; "Two key propositions of neo-institutionalism are, first, that there is a strong tendency within a field of organizations to adopt similar forms and, secondly, that this similarity is less a function of adaptation and more a function of seeking legitimacy by conforming to fundamental and powerful assumptions" (p. 485). Latvia prioritizing family care over group care on account of the Western world's priorities pushes this tenet. However, the assumption is that the utilization of orphanages as a method of childcare is outdated. The rhetoric of de-institutionalism is quite appealing as it supports these sought-after ideas of modernity and is politically based as much as it is evidence-based. Focus from the outside world on orphans and orphanages in Latvia has never been popular with the government or society. Thus, the closing of large, soviet style orphanages became equated with the disappearance of the 'problem' itself and represented keeping up with the future. According to Laksevis et al., (2018), the reason for deinstitutionalisation comes from several forces. These include supporting efforts to decrease long-term care costs, progress and enhance the level of care children receive. This is important as often professional justifications offer legitimacy to cost-cutting measures. The forces that support these ideas are endorsed by the United Nations and other Non- Governmental Organizations (NGO's) whose mission is to defend human rights. The centrality of a stable, loving, forever family dominates the child welfare discourse. This contributes significantly to the evidence for favouring foster families by assuming that healthy and well-adjusted children can only be developed in a traditional family setting.

1.7.5 Attachment

Attachment is not a new focus of enquiry for investigations regarding the institutional care of children. According to Bilson (2005), research regarding the social and behavioural development of children reveals that out of seventeen studies only one claimed that there was no evidential support for the relationship between the age of the child and the impact of placement in institutional care and their development. Research studies on the cognitive development of children placed in care often acknowledged that institutional care contributed to a child's poor cognitive ability (Bilson, 2005). Bilson's research also assessed institutional settings that qualified as providing 'good' quality care for children. Their study demonstrated that compared to foster family placement, these 'good' institutions were considered unsuccessful in providing for the orphans in their care (Bilson, 2009). Johnson argues that "the evidence indicates that institutional care does not support the optimal development of children" (Johnson, 2006, p. 23). What these studies do not clarify, however, is the rates of these behaviours and abuses in children in care versus the general population. Furthermore, without a clear definition of what exactly constitutes the general population, the incidents of traumatic experiences are compromised as that does not provide an accurate assessment of the population being considered.

In research where the children who showed strong attachment disorders were then placed with nurturing caregivers at the age of two, they showed significant improvements in caregiver relationships and other social abilities by the age of four (Berlin et al., 2008). By age eight, their electroencephalogram (EEG), a test that is used to diagnose conditions such as brain tumors, brain damage and brain dysfunction, showed brain patterns that were "indistinguishable from those of typical eight-year-olds" (p.76). One limitation of studies such as these is selection bias. It is plausible that more competent children have a higher likelihood of adoption than lower functioning children, thus overestimating the capacity for resilience.

Bowlby's framework recognises that healthy attachment is derived from an infant/child's opportunity to form a connection to their parental or caregiver figure. This includes not only the physical distance between the child and figure but also the emotional and psychological quality of that connection. Further, Bowlby identifies that unsuccessful or inconsistent bonding can later become core elements in the development of mental health issues and foreshadow problems in interpersonal relationships (Bowlby, 1984). Under Bowlby's framework of attachment, infants developing under normative circumstances typically differ in the quality of their attachments. In the earliest period of child development, the infant universally will develop clear attachments to specific, 'preferred' caregivers (Bowlby, 1984). These attachments are predicated based on the responsiveness or lack thereof of the

parental object meeting the child's needs for security, food, comfort, and core levels of physical care. These developmental tasks are challenging for any caregiver/parent regardless of setting.

What is claimed but not necessarily always the case is that often the typical conditions for institutional care make it less likely and more difficult for children to develop clear, classifiable healthy attachments due to a separation between the child and their parent or parental figure. The child subsequently can be limited in their ability to engage in and meet age-appropriate physical, behavioural, and physiological self-regulation. Bowlby's framework was pivotal in providing concrete, reliable, scientific, evidenced based documentation of the stages of attachment and its impact on the development of the human being. Using this perspective as a backdrop, Bowlby provided a convincing argument for governments to apply these individual concepts to the development of protocols for the care of institutionalized children. The value placed on a warm, intimate and continuous relationship with his mother meant that if a child had to be separated from its parents, then the best remedy was not an institution, but an adoptive or foster home, where the optimum conditions for his mental health would prevail" (Packman, 2003 p.22). Packman also states that, "[t]here is no doubt Bowlby exerted a profound influence over foster care being promoted as the best place for children requiring public care" (Packman, 2003, p.22).

Two critical reports were written in the UK by Sir William Utting and published by the Government: Utting exposed the institutional abuses in the articles *Children in the Public and People Like Us* (Utting 1997). A series of journalistic inquiries followed these articles and then the exposure of the conditions in Romanian orphanages in 1989 (Nelson et al., 2007). Photographs of children in the Romanian orphanages showed infants, babies and young children being left in cribs for extended periods, having minimal human contact, and documented clear indicators and evidence of the physical abuse and neglect of the children. These young people exhibited extremely primitive behaviour which had only been documented and seen in "feral" cases. The reports and images of the children in the Romanian orphanages provided many countries with incentives to review and explore their systems of care. As a result, the exposure and criticism of institutions where children were in care across Eastern Europe came under scrutiny.

Latvia joined the legislative commitment to deinstitutionalising orphanages in 2015 when regulations were developed to reform the child welfare institutional system. The Latvian legislature's targeted goal is to decrease the number of children living in institutional care by 40- 60% by 2023 ([www.opening doors](#). EU, 2018). Their ambitious plan is to transition to a model that provides community-

based care and initiates a professional foster care system. The participating foster parents are compensated monthly for providing appropriate supervision for the child in foster care.

Deinstitutionalism, although well represented in the literature as the answer to a multitude of child welfare issues, does not identify how to deal with the diverse needs of the population of children in the system. There are opposing opinions voiced in research by Ismayilova & Huseynli (2014), who argue that there is evidence that post-Soviet bloc countries are resistant to deinstitutionalisation of orphanages. Although this thesis does not focus on children in care with specific disabilities, it is noteworthy that a good deal of the movement against deinstitutionalisation in Latvia comes from advocates for disabled children. Laksevics et al. (2018) conclude that closing group care specifically for children with disabilities would be disastrous. They argue that the services the children require are not available in mainstream schools. The existing inclusion model in Latvian schools is problematic due to the demands these children might place on unprepared or untrained teachers. Thus, arguing that sending children home from residential care, where they receive specialised services, to families and schools without the skill sets to address their needs is for some problem ridden.

Berens and Nelson's (2015) review of empirical studies highlights the importance of deinstitutionalisation due to the sizable number of negative consequences noted in the social orphans' experiences. They argue that these include negative cognitive functioning, attachment disorders, socio-emotional issues, psychological damage, and delayed physical growth. However, given that this was a review, not empirical research, it is difficult to know the accuracy of the conclusions. It was included on account of the scarcity of empirical research, and it offers readers a discussion of empirical studies not available in English. Due to exclusionary factors, these were not included in Berens and Nelson's review.

In contrast to these studies, Novelle and Gonyea (2017) argue against the other studies' evidence on attachment while applying Bowlby's paradigm. These authors put forward the argument that attachment theory is not the appropriate argument against putting children in group care. Accordingly, despite the discourse that highlights family bonds, these relationships can be substituted. Novelle and Gonyea (2017) strongly imply that the staff-child relationships that can exist within institutional life can provide what is necessary to 'mimic' the bond between the biological parent and their child. Initially, this vibrant relationship was only thought to be created through foster family placement; however, Novelle and Gonyea (2017) argue that these relationships, typically seen as between parent and child, can be replicated in out of home care. Staff connected emotionally to the children were able

to mitigate potentially negative outcomes and instil in the youth a belief in the future” (p.56). Smith and Reimer (2017) offer support to this view by cautioning against the overuse and dependence of placement while singularly depending on the formulation of attachment theory.

It seems necessary to recognise that countries within Eastern Europe have traditionally viewed institutional care for children without parental care more positively than the West. The spread of individualising discourses of neo-liberalism influenced this and led to questions arising as to the contextual alignment of this push for deinstitutionalisation in Latvia. Harris et al. (2017) argues that the perceptions that “[i]nstitutions are not good for children’ does not automatically transfer from one context to the next within social services”. Harris et al. (2017) states; “[t]wo key propositions of neo-institutionalism are, first, that there is a strong tendency within a field of organisations to adopt similar forms and, secondly, that this similarity is less a function of adaptation and more a function of seeking legitimacy by conforming to fundamental and powerful assumptions” (p. 485). Latvia prioritising deinstitutionalisation on account of the Western world’s priorities is pushing this tenet. However, the belief that the utilisation of orphanages as a method of childcare is outdated is still under scrutiny. The rhetoric of deinstitutionalisation is quite appealing as it supports these sought-after ideas of modernity and is politically based as much as it is evidence-based. Focus from the outside world on orphans and orphanages in Latvia has never been popular with the Latvian government and society. Thus, the closing of large, Soviet-style orphanages becomes equated with the disappearance of the problem itself. However, despite the presumed desirability of deinstitutionalisation, there is a question of whether this idea transfers to Western countries to countries such as Latvia.

1.7.6 The overarching question: What is good care for children without parental care in Latvia?

What is considered good care for children who can no longer be cared for at home? As can be gathered from this chapter, this question inspires questions that will not be easily or quickly resolved. There is a large camp that believes that only another family can substitute for the absence of a biological family, which, as discussed previously, is strengthened through the discourse of de-institutionalism. There is another smaller side that offers the possibility that there might be multiple ways to achieve successful care, including in groups or residential care (Wollins, 2017; Smith, 2017; Steckley & Smith, 2011). In exploring the literature on the experiences of care in Latvia, the issue of *good* care has emerged as an area of interest. What constitutes *good* care in Latvia, and is it the same as other contexts worldwide?

1.8 Limitations of current studies

Many of the studies about children in care in Latvia and elsewhere worldwide focus on an argument supported by attachment theory as a central reason for the sole support for home-based care as the only choice for children. Some studies dispute the appropriateness of this use of attachment theory. Smith et al. state, "...concern is the overuse or misuse of attachment theory. The current prominence given to it risks "biologising, individualising and politicising the culture and practical aspects of bringing up children" (Smith & Reimer 2017., p. 1619). In contrast, they state there are multiple ways of conceptualizing children's experience of growing up and having meaningful relationships besides attachment. Specifically, these scholars look to social scientist Axel Honneth's ideas of recognition. They considered factors such as stability of the placement, the importance of the relationships between staff and children in forming meaningful, supportive, and loving relationships as providing the necessary connections for healthy development and resilience. Thus, I am looking to contribute research that includes a more accurate representation of the lived experiences of social orphans in Latvia that does not replicate stigmatising discourses about them as individuals or a group.

1.9 The Structure of the Thesis

1.9.1 Chapter Two: A Brief Overview of the current context of social orphans in Latvia.

Chapter two sets out to give a brief overview of Latvia's child social welfare history and current system to offer a context for a better understanding of the experience of the social orphan.

1.9.2 Chapter Three: The Literature Review of Social Orphans in Latvia

This chapter provides a narrative literature review and critique of the empirical literature regarding social orphans in Latvia.

1.9.3 Chapter Four: Methodology and Methods

This chapter will cover the research aims, research paradigm, epistemological and ontological stances underpinning the inquiry. A justification of the methodological choices, an outline of the analysis framework proposed, an overview of the ethical considerations, and reliability and validity are presented. The methods chapter seeks to justify the methods adopted to conduct the life history research of care leavers in Latvia. It includes overviews of all the pragmatic aspects of the inquiry, including aims and objectives, research questions, the narrative interview, piloting the interview

questions, recruiting interview participants, conducting the interviews, and the transcription process: A thematic analysis is undertaken using Braun and Clark's (2017) model.

1.9.4 Chapter Five: Life History Findings

The following chapter presents the life history narratives that the research participants developed during the interviews. Each participant's narrative is analyzed through the lens of Critical Events Theory and Resistance Theory.

1.9.5 Chapter Six: Thematic Findings

Thematic findings will be explored under primary themes and subthemes that emerged through a thematic analysis. Art based contributions are included under themes.

1.9.6 Chapter Seven: General Discussion of Findings

This general discussion of findings chapter brings together the results from the participants.

1.9.7 Chapter Eight: Conclusion

This summary chapter will summarise the preceding chapters and look forward to implications and recommendations from the study for further research and social work practice and policy change.

2 Background and Context of Social Orphanhood

2.1 Introduction

This chapter continues the discussion from Chapter one regarding children in care. Chapter one discussed the United Nations guidelines, the strong push to close all institutions and the current impacts on Latvia. This chapter offers a contextual view by taking a step back to give a brief background of Latvia's child welfare history to provide a context of a current understanding of the

child welfare system in Latvia, the role of orphanages and foster families in the care system. The role of the social worker in Latvia is looked at as a more recent profession and its impact on the welfare system. This brings the reader to current statistics on children in care in Latvia and then, more specifically, shows photographs from a social care centre, floorplans, and an example of a daily schedule.

2.2 Background of Child Welfare

Latvia's child welfare history was intertwined with Russia's until Latvia's independence in 1991. I will give a brief background here; however, significant in-depth analyses have been undertaken by scholars using other sources such as work by Nechaeva (1993) and Belyakov (1993) and can be pursued there. Latvia is a relatively small Baltic country in the European Union with approximately 1.8 million people. It was under the regime of the Soviet Union throughout much of the twentieth century, losing its independence in 1940 and not regaining it until 1991. Like other post-communist countries, Latvia inherited its social-care system (Kubalčíková & Havlíková, 2016). During Soviet rule, social problems were denied following communist ideology (Kiik & Sirotkina, 2005). Institutions that served those in need were kept out of public view (Toros et al., 2018). The residents were kept within the walls, as in Goffman's concept of *The Total Institution* (1961). Those employed in the welfare sector were educated and instructed to advocate for residential care as a solution for families struggling with social issues, even relatively manageable ones such as childcare, which supported the concept of institutionalisation as the answer. This ideology was based on the idea that the collective, in this case, the State, was better than the individual in raising children, managing problems, and generally all aspects of life (Rasell & Iarskaia-Smirnova, 2013).

2.3 Brief Historical Informational

This section includes a brief historical overview and two maps of Latvia, a political timeline, and a brief history of Latvia's political and child welfare state. Russia ruled Latvia until 1918 when Russia acknowledged the country as an independent entity.

In 1944 Nazi Germany invaded and killed 75,000 Latvian Jews and sent thousands more to prison camps. After World War II, in 1940, Russia reoccupied Latvia until 1991. In the same year, Russia pulled back their borders, and Latvia became an independent country again.

In September of 1991, Latvia joined the United Nations, and in March 1992, Russian troops vacated Latvia. In 2002 Latvia joined the European Union, and in 2004 it became a full member of the North

Atlantic Treaty Organization, more commonly known as NATO. Map 1 makes visible Latvia's location in Eastern Europe. Map 2 makes visible cities and towns in Latvia.

Maps of Latvia

Figure 2-1 Map: Latvia shown situated within Eastern Europe



Figure 2-2 Latvia including cities and towns



2.4 A Brief Look Back at the Development of Child Welfare

This section will look at several key areas of development in the child welfare system in Latvia and the part Russia's child welfare system played in this. The section begins with looking at the critical stages of the historical development of child welfare, the crossover between Russian and Latvian systems, the issue of family discontinuity, the end of the occupation and language conflicts.

2.4.1 Critical Stages of the Historical Development of Child Welfare

Until 1991 Latvia's child welfare state mirrored that of Russia's. Based on the scarcity of historical versions of this period from Latvia, it is appropriate to draw from Russian history to round out the Latvian social welfare experience (Rockhill, 2010). Latvia and the other Baltic states (Estonia and Lithuania) have been vulnerable to more extensive and more formidable countries since the early 1600s. In the history of European Wars going back to the 16th century, these territories were used as a battlefield for larger nations to contest political power and ideologies. Russia first occupied Latvia in 1710. The people of Latvia suffered under this occupation. The more primitive lifestyle of the Baltic regions was eliminated, and thousands of Latvians were sent to Siberia or killed. In 1918 with Latvian independence, this nationalism continued; however, it was not long-lived. Shortly after World War II, Latvia became a pawn that was used strategically between Russia and Germany. Latvia was first seized again by Russia in 1940 and then by Nazi Germany in 1941. During the rule of Nazi Germany, 90,000 Latvian people were put to death who were identified as either Roma or having a Russian background. Additionally, tens of thousands were also sent to concentration camps, and their fate was unsure.

After World War II, Latvia was weakened economically, politically, and spiritually, yet there were hopes to rebound as a Baltic state. Unfortunately, the country's vulnerabilities were too overwhelming, and in 1944, the Soviet Union regained control of Latvia until 1991 (Rockhill, 2010). During these forty-plus years of occupation, there remained an active group of nationalists with Scandinavian ties who protested and worked towards Latvian independence. A proposition to declare Russian as a second national language in 2015 was voted down and is another mark in the people's desire to distance the country from Russia (CSBL, 2016). As soon as it was possible after 1991, Latvia joined the United Nations, North Atlantic Trade Organization (NATO), and the European Union (EU) and established itself as a member of the Baltic states once again.

2.4.2 The Crossover Between Latvia and Russia's Child Welfare History

As this is a brief overview of the history of child institutions, a more in-depth analysis has been undertaken using other sources, such as work by Nechaeva (1994) and Belyakov (1993). These sources provide a timeline of Russian child and family policy beginning with pre-revolutionary Russia. These authors explore and provide the backdrop for the State's use of shelters that assist low-income families in caring for their children. While shelters would care for the children from families, this provided time for parents to work and gain some income which benefitted both the parents and the children. Shelters were believed to raise the children better than the parents could. Shelters attempted to teach moral frameworks, religious values, everyday skills, work ethics, and obedience to those in authority, thus improving the child's understanding of right and wrong and the commitment to the families in society (Rockhill, 2010).

2.4.3 Family Discontinuity

In 1917 the views of family and children changed. The country was primarily Christian with influences from Judaism, but Judaism was considered a small enclave compared to the Russian Orthodox and Protestant religious presence. The traditional view of love and generosity towards family shifted to a Soviet view. The family was to be of service to the country. This public statement, endorsed by the government in 1924, epitomised the time's general discourse and social policy. "Waifs, sickly and abandoned children, should become our own, beloved children of the Soviet Republic," and "It is not pity that should move us to children, it is awareness of the fact that those street urchins are valuable elements for modern Soviet Russia. If we do not build Children's Homes

for them, we shall be compelled to build prisons” (Children After the Famine, 1924, p2). Based on this change of focus, building state-run institutions for children was prioritised.

Within the Russian ideology, there was a distrust of the Christian ideal of the family, and thus Soviet federal legislation supported the institutionalisation of all Soviet children. From 1918-1926 the first Bolshevik policy was to destroy the patriarchal family and create the new Soviet family. This was to support the development of the socialist-communist society (Kharchev, 1994). Alexandra Kollontai, a Marxist, and a Bolshevik was also a pioneer as the only woman viewed alongside Trotsky as a Russian revolutionary speaker (Rockhill, 2010). Kollontai pioneered innovative ideas for women and children, including the concept of free love. She suggested that all children be brought up in a communal environment and raised to belong to society. She recognised that the value of children to Russia was in their role as the future workforce (Rybinsky,1998).

Two clear examples of Soviet policies towards raising children are found when one looks at the historical rights of parents. First, fathers were detached from their children legally. The second example can be found in Article 154 of the Family Code of 1918. This document recognised children as belonging to the State first and their parents second. Individualised adoption and individual or family inheritances were not acknowledged, and with this, the traditional understanding of family was shattered. With this framework, the number of street children increased, as did criminal activity perpetrated by young people living on the street. These child survivors preyed on those who were vulnerable in a socialist society (Rockhill, 2010). The family legislation created a tremendous amount of family and child-related problems in Soviet society, such as an increase in crimes perpetrated and a disengagement from society by children; in 1936, a new family policy attempted to rectify the conditions associated with the Bolshevik Party (Goldman,1993).

This policy tried to bring back the independent family unit and individualised parental authority. This legislation allowed parents to take a more significant role in the upbringing of their children. Though the ultimate power to make decisions and the control of Soviet children's work choices, military service remained in and with the State, parents became identified as an essential part of their children's development. Parents, especially mothers, became recognised as a part of the process. Fathers were still seen as less critical and necessary, as the mothers were identified as childcare providers (Goldman 1993, Rockhill, 2010).

The State's pedagogical influence remained significant as families were continuously educated by “specialists.” “Parents were instructed to interact with their children and teach them how to be proper communist citizens” (Rockhill, 2010, p 53). Although parents now had a more significant role in raising their children, Government regulations and supervision were increased to maintain control over family behaviours and meeting State expectations. Workplaces were encouraged to watch for absences and other indicators that parents were not fulfilling their parental duties. Further, employers were required to report parents to the State if there was any question over the family's commitment to ideology and social obligation to the State. Employers knew that their businesses or their own families were at risk if they missed a reportable situation. It was standard for employers to over-report an employee's child-rearing failings to protect their own interests. “The problem of unsupervised children was seen not rooted in poverty but in poor work of Soviets” (Goldman, 1993, p324).

The State reserved the right to punish children for minor crimes against society, such as stealing a loaf of bread from the market. Children as young as twelve years old were punished equally alongside adults. They were viewed not as children who might be educated away from their mistakes but instead as young party members in need of punishment. Fathers who had children out of wedlock were denied what little authority they had over their children. At the same time, mothers became partnered with the State and raised their children to serve the State. A State fostered assumption made explicitly was that single mothers could not raise children on their own 'properly' but were required to be overseen by State-run programs. (Rabzhaeva, 2004. Rockhill, 2010). This put an end to what the State considered unhealthy family relationships. This legislation provided complete State protection for single mothers and their children. A new group of adults committed to the State ideals could be moulded to carry on the doctrine of socialist society. The State's priority was to encourage mothers, old and young, to have more children and raise a generation “devoted to the motherland” (Kodeks, 1969, p5).

According to Lotko, et al., (2014), social orphans were identified and studied in Latvia as a part of the Soviet Union in 1913. The focus of the study by Lotko et al. (2014) targeted illiteracy, and the results indicated that 78% of the 100 children studied were functionally illiterate. In 1919, when the study was repeated, Latvia and Russia were at peace, and the number of illiterate orphans dropped to 75%. In the 1920s, 60% of Latvian children in the general population did not attend school, and within the orphan population, nearly 90% of these children were not formally educated.

The Children's Aid Union, which began in Geneva in 1920, stepped into the Latvian educational crisis by increasing the numbers of street children and orphans attending school. The Red Cross, Women's

Aid, and missionary organisations began corralling street children and herding them off the street and school each morning. In 1928 the Baltic Child Protection Office opened its doors to assist orphans who are homeless.

2.4.4 End of the Occupation

With the end of the Soviet occupation in 1991, Latvia found itself a free, independent country for the first time in half a century. Although consensus was reached by the people of Latvia in 1991, the actual transition proved to be extremely difficult. Since Latvia had been annexed and occupied by The Soviet Union, multiple areas of Latvian cultural identity had been subsumed by the Russian takeover. There was an undeniable 'semi-integration' of cultures and stereotypes as many Russians who were born and had lived for two or three generations as Russians in Latvia now found themselves in a country where some Latvians considered them to be invaders. Some were treated as second class citizens. Examples of this type of societal presentation included not providing accessible forms to Russian speaking people to be eligible for employment unless they spoke fluent Latvian (Lotko et al., 2014).

Latvian independence from the Soviet Union left a post-annexed country that lacked the resources needed to deal with the country's social and economic problems. Part of the fabric of the Latvian-Soviet system was the discourse that social issues were nonexistent and social ills were regarded as negative marks on society. These precepts were carried on by a core faction of Latvians who did not want to stray politically from the traditional ways of the Soviet/communist society in which they were raised. Their denial of social maladies left the issues of child abuse, neglect, violence against women, children, and poverty unacknowledged and denied. As a part of the transition from Soviet Latvia to Latvian independence, families that had not experienced issues such as poverty and unemployment suddenly were unable to have an income and feed their children. Rates of child abandonment, begging, and petty crime perpetrated by children became rampant. To combat this, children were taken off the street into the large orphanages left from the Soviet era (Lotko et al., 2014). Low wages, unemployment and a massive shortage of low-income housing were all part of Latvia's challenges from an occupied socialist country (with a restricted and highly planned economy) to an independent and free-market economy. Approximately 20% of young adults aged 16-24 did not continue past primary school. As a result of this, these youth were unprepared for employment opportunities and to take on the social responsibility of being a Latvian citizen (Bebriša et al., 2007).

Due to the challenges presented by these young people, Latvia initiated a Child Welfare System in 1992. It was hoped that it would engage the many disadvantaged children who remained in institutions left over from the Soviet occupation. Unlike other countries such as the United States of America and the United Kingdom, where child welfare systems are over a hundred years old, Latvia's initiatives for children were required to be developed, constructed, and implemented expeditiously. The policies attempted to handle high numbers of children housed in State-run orphanages and surviving on the street. Shelters assisted low-income families in caring for their children.

During the Soviet era, Central and Eastern European countries provided extensive social benefits and services to their citizens, thus ensuring that families had their basic needs met. The transition from Soviet rule to Latvian independence resulted in a shift towards a minimalist state. This change meant a total abandonment of the Soviet system to an enterprise-based welfare support system for workers and their families (Hantrais, 2004). Policies aligned with neo-liberal supported the family as the centre and shifted away from the State (Liebenberg, et al., 2013). Support systems for families in these countries were comparatively underfunded, unreliable, and often rhetorical rather than practical. Social policies tended to be pronatalist, semi-legitimised and transitional (Hantrais, 2004). In 1999, twenty-eight international NGOs came together in an attempt to clear the streets of Latvia of orphans and reintegrate them fully into society. This goal was never achieved through services, such as the mentorship program, which were implemented during this time. These trends did not begin nor end with Latvia; the 1980s and 1990s social experiment was primarily defined by the western world, specifically the U.S., with entities such as the World Bank pushing neoliberal ideologies on developing countries worldwide. The shrinking of the welfare state, the expansion of the free market, and the emphasis on individualism are all hallmarks of neoliberalism (Harvey, 2005). Yurchak (2006) discusses how Soviet socialism was experienced by the Soviet people in their everyday lives. In doing so, Yurchak (2006) ignores the research biased by the historical Western antagonism and the perception of the Soviet Union as oppressive. Yurchak (2006) and reconsiders the experiences of those who leave care. There is an attempt to consider participants' experiences beyond any limitations of institutional childhood, and alternatively explore ways care leavers experience their everyday lives.

There were internalised cultural norms that have been carried over from the Russian occupation of Latvia. One such norm was a fear-based reaction from Latvian citizens of involvement by law enforcement, specifically in family matters. Historically, the presence of law enforcement brought a possible immersion in what was considered a corrupt institution. As a result of this belief, requesting assistance was feared, and contact with the authorities was seen to bring more damage to the family

(Rajevska, 2006). Current Latvian policies are trying to alter some of these fears through media campaigns. The Latvian government has implemented public service announcements emphasising the importance of reporting at-risk children to child welfare services. People are encouraged to contact social services to provide safe, protective, and nurturing placements to the child. Latvian child welfare advocates are dedicated and adamant in confronting and challenging the ingrained cultural fear that children will be removed, or other disciplinary actions will be imposed on the parent. This is still a struggle for some in Latvia today. Family policy consists of social services for families in need, family legislation and social benefits in the form of financial compensation and assistance (Wennemo 1994). During the Soviet Union occupation, the Baltic states and the rest of the Soviet-occupied countries maintained identical family support. Since 1991, each Baltic country has formed some type of family welfare system, some stemming from the Soviet period while other organisations are still evolving. Aidukaite (2005) carried out a study evaluating the reforming of family policies in the Baltic States since 1991 following the collapse of the Soviet Union. In Latvia, The Convention of the Rights of the Child contends that “State parties recognise the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development” (Article 27, p. 25). This forms the foundation of social welfare practice. This document also addresses concerns related to the adoption of Latvian children by both domestic and international parties. Latvia implemented the Hague Adoption Convention on the Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption (Hague Adoption Convention) in the United States in April 2008. The Hague Adoption Convention is primarily a procedural document to ensure the child's eligibility for adoption and prevent abuses such as child exploitation.

2.4.5 Language Conflicts

During the Soviet occupation of Latvia, the Latvian language and the people who spoke it were marginalised and persecuted by the government. This included in the education of children who came from families who spoke Latvian. As often happens in colonisation, the government attempts to eliminate the native language. In the case of Latvia, when occupied by Russia, the population was forced to adopt Russian as its primary language. After Latvian independence, the language base was converted quickly. Within the political leadership, there was strong guidance to assert the return of a Latvian identity, and the use of Latvian as the national language was strongly promoted (Schmid, 2008). Since the 1990's this has caused some division between Russian and Latvian speakers that has affected the societal framework, families and especially the social orphans of Latvia.

2.4.6 The Situation Now

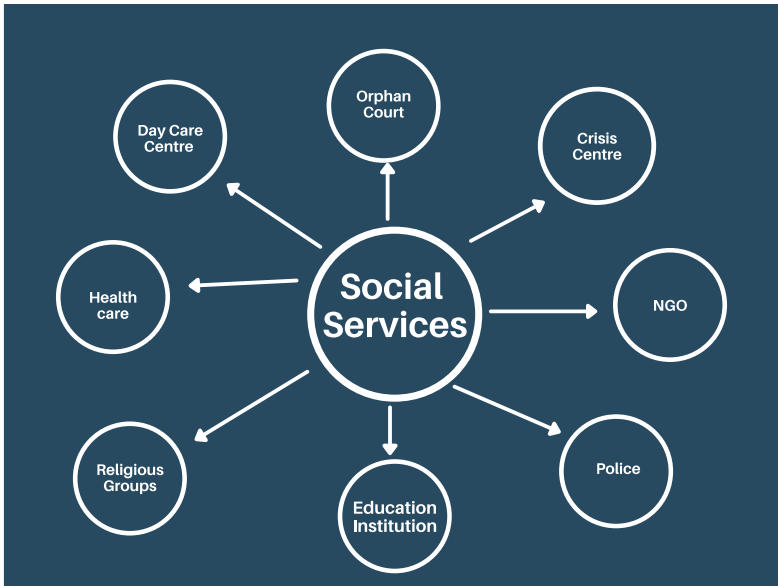
The previous brief introduction to the history of Latvian child social welfare briefly identified how the Soviet bloc occupations of Latvia influenced the past and current child welfare programs in the country. With this contextual understanding, the challenges in dealing with child welfare that Latvia is faced with are clear. This next section will address social work as a profession that has a direct impact on social orphans. I will define the categories of orphans Latvia sees, explore the topic of social orphans being hosted internationally, including the role religion plays, and present a breakdown of some statistics of children in care in Latvia. The last section of this chapter will introduce you to a typical orphanage or Social Care Centre in Latvia through shared photographs, floor plans and a daily schedule.

2.5 Social Work in Latvia

Social work as a profession did not exist under the Soviet system, thus not until 1991. “Although a method for identifying and monitoring social problems existed, previous ideology did not encourage professional training and organisation of social workers” (Lough, 2003 p. 58). In 1991, the Latvian government quickly recognised the vast need for social policies to handle the pervasiveness of families struggling with social issues. The definition of social work in Latvia is under the Social Services and Social Assistance Law. It defines social work as “a professional activity that helps persons, families, groups of persons and society as a whole to promote or renew the ability thereof to function socially, as well as to create favourable circumstances for such functioning” (Lotko et al., 2021., p.179).

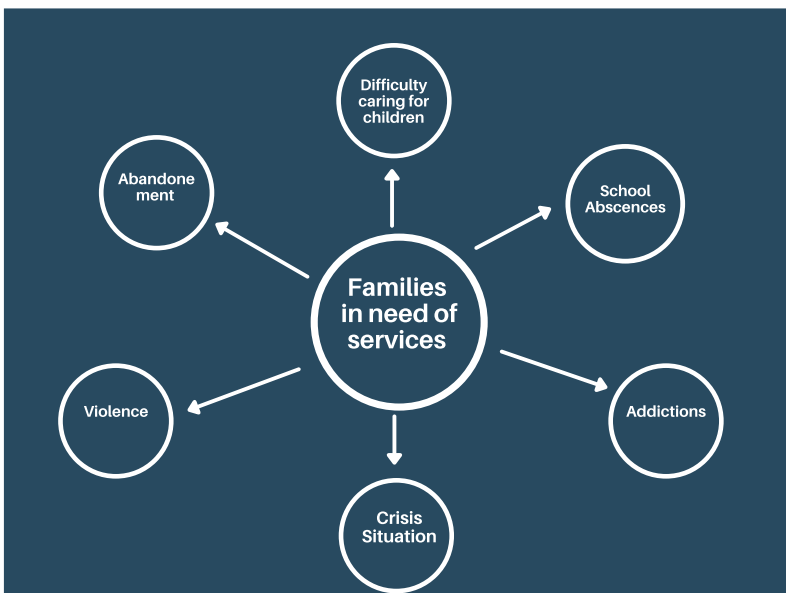
Social work as a profession was initially developed in higher education in 1991 when the first social workers’ course created (Lotko et al., 2021). In 1996 the Social Work profession gained legal status in Latvia, and in 2001 earned a Social Work Code of Ethics, and in 2002 the Social Work Specialists Professional Standards were determined. The first students to study social work in Latvia at both the Bachelor and Master levels entered Riga Stradins University in 2005/2006. The policies developed for professional social work consider the social issues facing Latvians in the 1990s and the current situation (Professional Social Work Development Guidelines, 2020; Lotko et al., 2021). Latvia's various social service agencies that serve Latvian individuals and families are from the following areas presented in Figure 1 and based on a resource map from the Riga City Council Welfare Department in 2016 (Lotko et al., 2021).

Figure 2-3 Social Service Resource Map



The types of issues families have most often when needing social services in Latvia according to Riga City Council Welfare Department, Social and Health Care in Riga in 2016.

Figure 2-4 Families in Need Map



(Based on Lotko et al., 2021).

2.6 Definitions of the most typical categories of children without parental care

The following sections define the additional categories of children in care in Latvia primarily from the literature. There is an awareness that the word *orphan* is outdated, and other choices are used, such as *care experienced*. The intentional choice to use the specific term *social orphan*, which is defined below and used throughout the thesis, is to stay close in a respectful manner to the local language in Latvia and not to overtake their terminology with a Western choice.

2.6.1 Biological Orphans

Children in this category of orphan are under the age of 18 years and parents are deceased due to accidents or illness. They can be adopted, placed in the custody of an interested and appropriate individual, or placed in care (Trapenciere, 2014). The incidence of biological orphans in Latvia is typically relatively low, and this can be seen in relation to other categories of children in Table 1 of this chapter.

2.6.2 Euro-orphans

Euro-orphans, not to be confused with social orphans, may also be without parental care but typically have varied reasons for this State. Their stories have vastly different endings. According to Latvian legislation, Euro-orphans are identified as children whose parents are absent due to economic emigration requiring a minimum of a six-month absence from the child (<http://csb.gov.lv>). Loosely defined, financial emigration applies to those adult parents who leave the child to engage in some economic enterprise requiring their absence from the child or family. This group is also noted to demonstrate some elements of family dysfunction (Trapenciere, 2012). One notable difference between the groups identified as euro-orphans and social orphans suggests that euro-orphan parents support their children emotionally and financially from a distance.

Euro-orphans are often left with a relative, friend or, in the case of some adolescents, by themselves. In 2012, it was reported that seven to eight thousand euro-orphans in Latvia, a higher number than social orphans, were identified in this population and were vulnerable to various social issues. In these circumstances, older children and adolescents are often recognised and then reported to childcare services as living on the street or living alone for extended periods. They would then be approached and placed in State care. Additionally, children involved in criminal activities and arrested would often be placed in care to get them off the city's streets (Trapenciere, 2012). Most

euro-orphans, however, do end up back with families and parents at some point. This might happen, whether by the euro-orphans joining the parents in another country or the parents returning to Latvia.

2.7 Legal Categories of Children in Care

What follows are the legal categories of children in care according to the Ministry of Welfare (2020).

- **Orphan** - a child whose parents have died or have been declared dead in accordance with the procedures laid down in law.
- **A child left without parental care** - a child whose parents are not known, are missing, or due to a long-term illness are not able to exercise protection or whose parents have had the custody rights discontinued or removed.
- **Foster family** - a family or a person who ensures care for a child who has been temporarily or permanently removed from his or her family environment or in whose interests remaining in his or her family is not permitted until the moment when the child may return to his or her family or, if that is not possible, is adopted, guardianship has been established or the child has been placed in a childcare institution.
- **Specialised foster family** - a foster family which ensures care for a child of a certain target group to whom special care is necessary.
- **Support family** - a family that provides support in the care of a child to another family on the basis of an evaluation performed by the local government social service office on the necessity for support.
- **Trusted person** - a person who provides support to a child in a family, based on an evaluation conducted by the local government social service office regarding the necessity of the support.
- **Out-of-family care** - care, which is ensured with a guardian, foster family, childcare institution for orphans and children who have been left without parental care;
- **Childcare institution** - an institution in which social care and social rehabilitation for orphans and children left without parental care, and also children for whom social rehabilitation is necessary or special care due to their state of health, is ensured;
- **Street children** - children who have insufficient connection with family and who spend t
- **Guest family** - spouses or a person who temporarily admit a child placed in a childcare institution at their place of residence or have connection with a child in a childcare institution he or she is placed.
- **Large family** - a family which cares for three or more children, including children placed in a foster family and children under guardianship. An adult person who has not attained 24 years of age shall be also deemed to be a child of a large family if he or she is studying to acquire general, professional, or higher education.
- **Child supervision service** - a qualified supervision and care service the purpose of which is to ensure that an adult is present with the child and to ensure safe, informative, and useful spending of time for a child, contributing to his or her comprehensive development.

2.8 Hosting children from the Latvian care system

Although unheard of in many countries, Hosting holds a key place within the culture of the orphanages in Latvia. Hosting is devised to provide the children in the orphanages of Eastern Europe, including Latvia, an opportunity for families from the United States and other countries to host children from orphanages. There are two times when children can be hosted for an extended period in a foreign country during the calendar year.

The children are hosted during December for a month during the summer season. Hosting originated primarily through Christian non-profit organisations (NGO'S) that offer this service through their network of parishioners. It is considered to be an act of service, supported through many churches' missions. Recently, with the advent of the internet and social media, though the first contact may be made through a church website, the programme has expanded to all cultures and denominations.

Due to the predominance of Christian churches in the Southern United States, many of the children are hosted by those locals. Hosting companies who organise the hosting websites, engage with Latvian officials, promote the hosting opportunities, regularly visit the orphanages, take photographs of the children, conduct interviews with the youth, and then list them on the agencies hosting site. Once posted on the website, those hosts can scroll through the photos and brief biographies to select the child they are interested in hosting for the upcoming visiting period.

Primarily, Christian church-based organisations present the orphanages with donations and offer a better life for the children. The assumption that the United States can provide a 'better life for the children' in the orphanage is subtly stated. However, according to this, the ideal is acknowledged by both the staff and older children. Hosting families often choose to host a single child over sibling groups. Presumably, hosting multiple children of the same family group is more expensive and can present a more complicated situation. To host a single, Latvian child cost, upwards of 3,500 USD for four weeks and is often a trial run to assess the child for permanent adoption and to see how the child may fit into the existing family structure. The children understand they are hosted to see a new place and have a holiday. What is not clearly explained, and they do not understand, is they are being evaluated for future adoption into the family. I enquired about where the money paid by hosting families goes. Given the lack of written information regarding this, and through anecdotal enquiry, I concluded that the orphanages that cooperate with the hosting agencies do not receive any financial gain.

This practice of hosting is potentially problematic in a multitude of ways. Language issues, difficulties respecting the cultural norms and differences in social rules can also cause conflict for both the host family and the children. In addition, many of the children have experienced adverse life situations, which may cause them a variety of psychological challenges when visiting their host family. Inadvertently, previous psychological challenges can be triggered by transitioning to another environment. Currently no research has been completed regarding the experiences of hosting Latvian children from either the children's or the host family's perspectives. The chance to visit the United States or another country can be a desirable opportunity. In the orphanage, most older children and adolescents are aware of the American culture they may encounter however the exposure to this culture is primarily through social media, music videos, films, and television but may be a representation that is far from accurate when compared to strict Christian homes. This discrepancy can represent a difficult challenge for the hosted children when certain expectations are not met. Next, the discussion will cover the statistics available from the Latvian Ministry of Welfare in 2020 regarding the children in care.

2.9 Statistics from the Latvian Ministry of Welfare 2020

The following tables are presented here to give the reader an understanding of the number of children in care since 2010, where they have been living and how many orphanages have existed since 2010.

Table 2-1 Numbers of children in Latvia recorded without parental care from 2010 to 2020.

Children without parental care	2010	2018	2020
Total before breakdown	1,268	645	532
Traditional orphans	57	32	29
Children left without parental care.	1,211	613	503
Custody rights deprived by judgement of the Orphan and Custody Courts.	535	195	101
Custody rights deprived by a court judgement	610	291	310
Other reasons	25	27	12

(Latvian Ministry of Welfare, 2020).

The reasons listed by the State for the children placed in care settings between 2010 and 2020 are presented in Table 1. The number of children in Latvia living in care decreased between 2010 and 2020 due to efforts to reduce numbers in institutional care. However, we are unaware of the ramifications of the global pandemic Covid 19 will have on the social orphan population and the statistics.

Table 2-2 Totals of Social Care Centres (orphanages) in Latvia

Year	Number of orphanages	Number of children placed in orphanages
2010	17	602
2018	29	1,268
2020	21	532

(Latvian Ministry of Welfare, 2020).

In Table 2, you can see the Ministry of Welfare reported in 2020 that there were twenty-one orphanages and 532 children in those homes. It was not declared in this chart; however, seventy-one of those children are considered to have a disability. Children in foster care are not counted in these statistics, which increases the number of total children without parental care.

Table 2-3 Data giving totals of age groups of children in social care homes.

Year	Under 4 years	4-6 years	7-14 years	15-17 years
2010	93	146	605	424
2018	30	52	305	248
2020	16	37	250	229

(Latvian Ministry of Welfare, 2020).

As Table 3 shows, children in social care homes are more extensive in the 7-14 and 15-17 range. This is thanks to the efforts by the child welfare system to place babies and younger children with foster families given their sensitive ages. The numbers have decreased in all age ranges since 2010; however, from 2018 to 2020, there have been more gradual decreases, and as noted previously in Table 2, the effects of the pandemic, Covid 19, are unrecorded at this time. Moving from statistics to the physical make-up of typical social care homes or orphanages in Latvia, we will look below at a floor plan and then photographs from that orphanage.

2.10 Social Care Homes or Orphanages

Most social care homes, or orphanages as they are most referred to in Latvia, are designed to be as close to a family home as possible. There are groups of children divided by age and developmental stages from age four to six, seven to fourteen and fifteen to seventeen, depending on the specific institution. Siblings are typically kept together. This might lead to a much younger sibling being brought into a group of older children than would otherwise be expected. The layout of the orphanage is also designed to address the demands of the children.

As shown in Figure 3 below, a group of bedrooms is designed in proximity to the staff offices, bathrooms, and the group living space or family room. The kitchen, art room, large playroom and nurses' office are on the bottom floor. There is a door separating the different age groupings; however, siblings and friends can spend time together during outdoor play and other relaxed playtimes. Age groups that are typically separated and infants and toddlers, are housed in baby centres. Older children aged sixteen to eighteen who are preparing to transition out of care can live in a transitional home that is often separated by specific gender groups. The intention of this is to meet the needs of the individual peer groups. According to Henry Maier (1982), the spaces that people live in have an

influence on their behaviour. Smith et al., (2017) expanded on this statement of Maier's to discuss the intentionality of staff in residential settings to consider the spaces children live in. It appears as if the floor plans below in Figures 1 and 2 were created with some intentionality. There are three distinct groups: one, two, and three designed to feel like a home in that bedrooms surround a common or family room with bathrooms on each floor. The kitchen, dining room and a large playroom are located on the ground floor. Staff have spaces on both floors as well as specialty rooms such as art and medical spaces. Photograph 1 shows the outside of this home.

Figure 3: Orphanage Floor Plan

The following two-floor plans show the ground and second floors of the orphanage.

Figure 2-5 The ground floor of Orphanage in Riga, Latvia

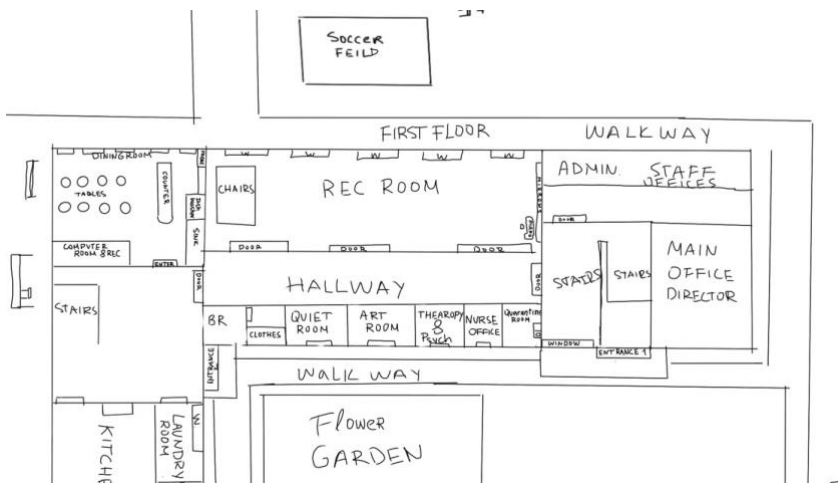


Figure 2-6 Second Floor of the Orphanage



Example of a Daily Schedule

The following schedule was supplied by a Latvian social care home purely as an example for this thesis and is typical of what is seen in most residential settings in Latvia. This is the schedule intended for the younger group of children who are aged six to twelve. The older children aged 12-18 generally have the same schedule except for later bedtimes and extended freedom. Free time on the schedule includes outdoor and indoor play, sports, games, and art activities.

Weekday Schedule

07:00 Wake-up

07:30 Breakfast

07:50 Leave for school on the bus

15:00 Return home on the bus

Free time

16:00 Snack

Homework

18:00 Dinner

Free time, watch television, read, play games.

20:00 Shower, get ready for bed, check in with staff.

21:30 Bedtime

Weekend Schedule

Saturday/Sunday morning- often including attending a church service.

09:00 Wake-up

09:30 Breakfast

10:00 Free time

14:00 Lunch

Free time

16:00 Snack

Free time

18:00 Dinner time

Free time

20:00 Snack

22:30 Bedtime

Photos of social care homes in Latvia

The photos below show examples of the different settings the children live in while in group care in Latvia. These photos were used with permission from the orphanage director and were previously published on their social media page in 2017.

Photograph 2 Outdoor view of the care home

Vita orphanage appears large on the exterior. Internally, as shown in Figure 1, Internal space of the building is broken into three small groups based on age and development but may be altered by sibling groups.



Photograph 3 Outdoor Play Areas

The outside space around the building is fully utilised for play. There is a playground in one section, a sports field, space to ride bikes and engage in general play in whatever capacity the children are interested in.



Photograph 4 Outdoor Play



Photograph 5 Indoor planned art activities

Staff keep the children busy with art and cooking activities throughout the weekend. Weekday schedules, as can be seen above, are centred more on school and homework.



Photograph 6 Spontaneous play

This space is available for indoor play that is spontaneous and can range from building activities, art and dress up.



Photograph 7 Children's music concert

Below is an example of the many children's performers who donate their time in Latvia to visit the orphanages, entertain the children, and expose them to the Arts.



Photograph 8 Holiday decorations

Orphanages are decorated with store-bought and handmade ornaments for the traditional holidays on the Latvian calendar.



Photograph 9 Weekend outings

Weekends are reserved for outings to many activities in Latvia, including the beach like this photo below. The children are also taken regularly to parks, the zoo, petting zoo, nature walks, ice skating, sporting events such as professional hockey games, and movie theatres.



These photos tell a story of the lives of children in care in Latvia. Although they are not intended as a homogenised story of all children in group care, they reveal some aspects of a complex situation and hopefully challenges negative stereotypes about orphanages in Latvia.

Table 2-4 Endpoints for Children Leaving Care in Latvia

Location	2010	2018	2020
Returned to parents	149	118	80
Placed under guardianship	51	61	22
Placed in foster family	79	122	92
Started independent life	209	77	87
Transferred to municipal care for children	150	46	25
Social care system	9	40	18
Specialised Educational care system	4	3	3
Died	2	0	0

(Latvian Ministry of Social Welfare, 2020).

To summarise the table, the children leaving orphanages are primarily placed in foster families, returned to families, or start an independent life from social care when reaching the age of majority which is 18. Placement in foster families is increasingly common in Latvia. Social policy increasingly leans towards foster care over more extensive group care settings. This policy preference is often due to the multiple pressures by global NGO's. Returning to families of origin happens only when parents have cooperated with social welfare services and have met the requirements put forth by the agency. Returning the youth to their families is not always a permanent measure, though there is no data regarding families with repeated involvement with social services. The return of children to the social care system is often caused by an inability to resolve the State's requirement. Care leavers starting an independent life receive financial support to establish their new lives (m. Likumi.lv., 2020). There are cabinet regulations regarding social guaranteed for a social orphan who is in out of family care as well as after termination of out of family care (2005), which were amended in 2021. Cabinet Regulation No. 857 determines an amount of more than 800 Euro to be used to set up a independent life (m. Likumi.lv., 2020).

2.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter took a step back to give a brief background to Latvia's child welfare history to offer a context for a current understanding of the child welfare system. The reader also gained a more current perspective through recent statistics, floor plans, schedules, and photographs from a typical orphanage in Latvia. Chapter 3 turns to the empirical literature written about Latvia's social orphan issue from Latvian scholars and international research.

3 A Review of Literature on Social Orphanhood in Latvia

3.1 Introduction

This literature review explores the empirical literature regarding social orphans in Latvia and discusses what is known and understood about this phenomenon and population. Worldwide there is a broad aggregate of literature on children without parental care; however, in former Soviet Union (FSU) countries such as Latvia, there is less scholarly literature. Moreover, within the assemblage of FSU countries, some of which include Estonia, Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine, Latvia's neighbours in Eastern Europe, there are vastly different political and social compositions creating a vast and complex scope of literature. Thus, this narrative literature review is focused on Latvia. Other categories, although all very worthy, such as adoption, Euro-orphans, and children with disabilities, were not included for the following reasons:

1. The research is based on the country of Latvia.
2. The literature search based on the country of Latvia, although narrow in scope, generated enough literature to review without extending the range to other geographic areas.
3. Euro-orphans are considered temporary orphans as parents are overseas for employment opportunities. This population faces unique challenges connected with a prolonged absence of parents and the struggle with family poverty.
4. Children transitioning from institutional life to adoptive families have different and unique challenges.
5. Disabilities is a vast topic that includes unique and different issues.

3.2 Points covered in the main body of the report

The next section of the review will outline the methodology employed, considering the parameters of the search strategy and inclusion/exclusion criteria. Then, the results and discussion section are structured around the research questions as outlined in the introduction by drawing together the key themes that have informed the review. Implications for policy and practice and possible areas for future research are then outlined. Finally, some of the limitations of the review process are considered.

Initial questions which the review addressed

1. What are the issues faced by the children in Latvia who become social orphans?
2. What is the Latvian social orphan experience of institutional life?
3. What support can social orphans draw upon after reaching the age of maturity (18) and leaving the orphanage?

In Chapter 1-2 the background of Latvia's social services and social orphans was discussed. This literature review aims to explore the empirical research done about social orphans in Latvia to understand what is known from an academic literature standpoint about the topic before constructing a research study to explore further social orphans' lived experiences. My review, narrative in nature, has a broad scope of interrelated themes which emerged from the literature: 1. The issues connected to social orphans; 2. The transition period from care to independent living. The next section of the review will outline the methodology employed to carry out the literature review utilized, considering the parameters of the search strategy and inclusion and exclusion criteria. Next, the discussion sections are structured around the research questions by pulling together the key themes that have informed the review. Several possible areas for future research are outlined. Finally, some of the limitations of the review process are considered.

3.3 Methodology of literature review

3.3.1 Search Strategy

A narrative literature review was undertaken as informed by Ferrari (2015) using the preferred format for a thorough search in a narrative literature review, which is the identification and explanation of the following parts: Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion (IMRaD). Since there is no unanimity regarding the narrative review format, Ferrari (2015) argues this is the preferred choice and is used in scientific peer-reviewed literature.

Narrative reviews synthesize previously written literature as well as identifying new study areas. They also can be continuously updated, which is a significant limitation to the systematic review (Misra and Agarwal, 2018). This approach ensures that a broader scope of research is used to identify the critical development of themes and concepts that otherwise might be lost in a systematic review (Ferrari, 2015). Subjectivity in the selection of article inclusion is the main weakness ascribed to narrative reviews as it may lead to biases in the selection process. As shown in Table 3.8 a strict screening process was employed for literature inclusion. Ferrari (2015) says there is a potential for

weaknesses in a narrative review that can be offset by using the methodological rigour of a systematic review in the narrative review and can be accomplished through the process bulleted below:

- Confine the focus to a straightforward issue.
- Establish explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria.
- Apply a methodological approach.
- Establish relevance of criteria.

Tables illustrate the method of literature review.

Table 3-1: Narrative Reviews

This informs on narrative reviews and is taken from (Ferrari, 2015, p.231).

Narrative Reviews

Main Features	Describe and appraise published articles; the methods used to select the articles may not be described. (“Writing narrative style literature reviews”)
Uses/Applications	“General debates, appraisal of previous studies and the current lack of knowledge.” (“Writing narrative style literature reviews”) Rationales for future research. Speculate new types of interventions available.
Limitations	The assumptions and the planning are not often known. Selection and evaluation biases not known. Not reproducible.

Table 3-2 Scoping the Review

Scoping the review	Inclusion and exclusion criteria
	Searching for studies and literature
	Screening studies and literature for relevance to inclusion criteria

Table 3-3 Criterion for inclusion in the review

Criterion type	Reason for Inclusion
Topic	Literature should relate directly to one of the research questions on children in care.
Age-range	Literature should relate to birth to age eighteen living in care and post-care experiences until the approximate age of 25.
Geographical Spread	Literature should relate to studies in Latvia.
Research base	Literature must be based on empirical research (either qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods).
Transparency	The research method must be explicit.
Date of publication: 2001-2021	A longer-term context was appropriate for the nature of the study.
Reliability/Validity	As far as can be determined, the findings upon which the literature is based must be valid and reliable, considering the type of study.

Table 3-4 Exclusion criteria

Criterion Type	Reason for Exclusion
Literature not written/translated in English.	Difficulties in translation and professional context.
Grey literature, reports.	Literature must be based on academically peer reviewed empirical research.
Broad-based studies on adoption and Euro-orphans.	This field is too broad, and such groups have diverse and unique experiences from social orphans.

3.3.2 Selection of Databases

Several databases of high relevance were searched electronically. In alphabetical order, these were:

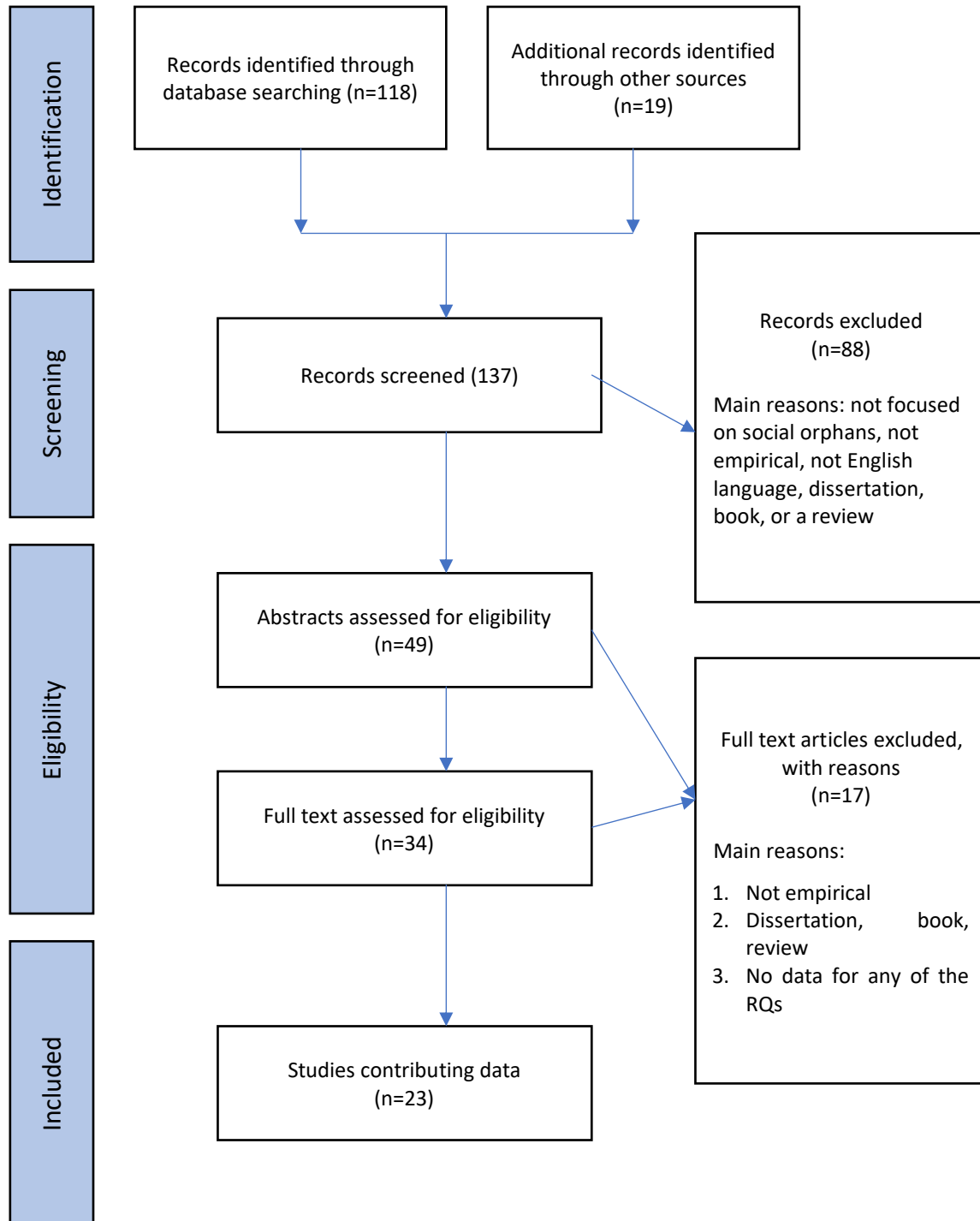
- ACADEMIC One File
- Academic Search Complete
- Arts and Humanities Index
- CINAHL Complete
- Complementary Index
- Directory of Open Access Journals
- ERIC
- General One File
- International Journal of Social Work
- JSTOR Journal
- Project Muse
- Psych Info
- Pub Med
- Science Direct
- Scopus
- SOC Index

These databases were selected as they publish relevant literature and research on populations that face issues focused on social issues, marginalized populations, and orphans. To further refine the search categories, 'Boolean operators' were applied and were found to help eliminate literature unrelated to the search. The search focused on all literature covering social orphans in Latvia: children in the orphanage, young adults transitioning out of the orphanage and living in the community afterwards

Table 3-5 Literature search parameters

Keyword 1	Keyword 2	Keyword 3	Keyword 4
Social orphan	Latvia	Institution	Future
Orphan	Eastern Europe	Orphanage	Trajectory
Child	Baltic States	Crisis Centre	Transition
Youth	The former Soviet Union	Care	Experience
Teen	Soviet Bloc	Care home	Voice
Adolescent		Foster	De-institutionalism
Young adult		Without a home	Resilience
Young		Street	Employment
Care experienced		Homeless	Education
Care leaver		Left behind	Independent
		Without parents/parental care	Hosting/hosted/host
<i>Combined all terms with</i> OR	<i>Combined all terms with</i> OR	<i>Combined all terms with</i> OR	<i>Combined all terms with</i> OR
	AND	AND	AND

Figure 3-1 Flow chart of the literature selection process



3.3.3 Quality and relevance appraisal

Each study was evaluated by the appropriateness of the focus of the research for topic relevance and the judgement of the overall weight of evidence (Gough, 2007) based on the assessments for each above criterion (Table 10).

Table 3-6 Selection of databases and journals

Type of literature	How sourced
Journal articles	Searching the online databases Scanning the contents of key journals in the field Contacting eminent researchers in the field
Books or Chapters	On the theme of Latvian/Eastern-bloc social orphans/orphans, Institutions in the title Library catalogue and information services at the University of Dundee.
Other non-academic sites	United Kingdom, United States, Latvian and European government websites.

Davies et al., (2013).

3.3.4 Synthesise findings

This involved bringing the studies together under thematic headings, where key messages were identified and synthesised.

Table 3-7 Synthesising Findings

Level/Criterion	Methodological Quality	Methodological Topic Relevance
1. Excellent research design justifying all decisions taken: e.g., sample, instruments, analysis. (“Thinking Skills and Creativity - Research Space”)	Research questions are clearly stated. Excellent research design justifies research decisions made such as clear evidence and measures taken to maximise validity and reliability.	Research questions are implicit but appear to be broadly matched by the research design and the study findings.
2. Good research design clearly stated evidence of sensible decisions taken to provide valid and reliable findings.	Research design clearly stated with evidence and decisions taken to provide reliable and valid findings.	The study is very closely aligned to one of the key review questions and provides solid points on which to conduct future policy, or practice on.
3. Satisfactory research design may be implicit and likely to yield valuable data.	Research design implicit and makes sense and study is likely to yield useful data.	At least part of the study findings is relevant to one of the key questions under investigation.

Davies et al., (2013).

The initial search yielded 137 research articles focused on social orphans, policy, and professional literature, published between 2001 and 2020. Through the elimination process shown in Figure 1 the ending aggregate total of studies was 22. The literature review revealed a significant gap in the research concerning the first-hand views and lived experiences of social orphans. Studies that identified factors which facilitate a successful experience of living independently after institutional life were also minimal.

3.4 Results and Discussion

As illustrated in Figure 3.8, 22 publications were deemed to meet the criteria for inclusion and contained findings relating first to social orphans in Latvia, the issues facing them and the experiences

they encounter. Second, the trajectories for their future lives after leaving the institution and what supports and hinders this trajectory.

There were qualitative studies, six mixed methods studies, one purely quantitative study. Nine studies focused on social policies and services for social orphans. Eleven studies focused on the negative consequences of institutional life, while one study focused on the school careers of social orphans and two studies focused on why children become social orphans in Latvia. There are twenty-two studies altogether, which highlights the dearth of literature available and the gaps in research. It is important to note that none of the studies included in this review related to all three review questions.

3.4.1 What are the issues faced by children in Latvia that lead to them becoming social orphans?

There were twelve studies and articles that addressed the first question and the themes that fall under:

- How children become social orphans
- Number of social orphans
- Vulnerability
- Deinstitutionalism of orphanages

3.4.1.1 *How children become social orphans*

According to the literature, children are most often placed in orphanages and other institutions in countries such as Latvia when the “countries [are] in transition, [and] children were placed in institutional care mainly because of abandonment and disability” (Browne et al., 2009, p.30). Besides, family dysfunction is noted to be a contributing factor to child abuse, neglect, truancy, and drug use, and one of the causes the child welfare system becomes involved with the family. In Trapenciere’s empirical study (2014) of Latvian at-risk families it says that “The main reason for the rise in social orphanhood is the prevalence of family problems and the inadequate policy mechanisms to identify families at risk at an early stage and a lack of effective policy to prevent the problem (2014, p.1). The author goes on to argue that the identification of social orphans exists at such high rates due to the dysfunction of the family, the ineffective social policies of the country and the lack of child protection reforms (Trapenciere, 2014).

According to an empirical study by Praulina (2011) done in Valierma, the largest city in the historic district of Vidzeme, Latvia, the vast majority of social orphans in the child welfare system are abandoned by both parents and extended family such as grandparents. Additionally, Praulina (2011) states that one-third of the children abandoned by their parents are placed in care. Besides parental

abandonment, these children have also been victims of either physical or sexual trauma. Praulina concludes that “abandonment is related to leaving a child behind when going to work, lack of interest towards a child, abomination towards a child, and lack of childcare knowledge and skills” (2011, p.12).

According to Zumente-Steele (2018), lack of employment opportunities in Latvia, specifically for Russian only speakers have a significant effect on child abandonment. According to their study, international emigration out of Latvia over the past 30 years has increased by 60%. The highest numbers recorded of emigration were between 2000-2010. Poverty and unemployment are the cause of this exodus as travel to other European Union countries is not difficult and Russian and Latvian speakers have an easier time finding seasonal work. In the years between 2014-2016, the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (2018) identified a troubling trend. Upon both parents emigrated from Latvia, up to 31.6% of children left behind became social orphans, entering the orphanage. There is evidence that initially most children are left under unofficial guardianship of friends or family, but within 6-9 months, if there is no parental return, children will end up permanently in state care.

Jurgena and Mikainis’ (2005) qualitative study included interviewing experts in the field of social orphans within Latvia. Their evidence suggests that children are removed from families and placed in care due to abuse perpetrated by parents, stepparents, and significant others. This abuse frequently takes the form of physical, sexual, and emotional violence against children and adolescents. Further reasons for placement include families increasing in distress due to economic, social, and psychological factors. Ismayilova et al. (2014) who also agrees with Jurgena, and Mikainis’ (2005) results adds that parental abandonment on account of imprisonment is additionally a significant factor. Single mothers are specifically vulnerable, given the difficulties they encounter with childcare and financial stability; therefore, children from single-mother homes have an increased risk of becoming social orphans.

3.4.1.2 Statistics on Social Orphans

Vascheko (2014) argues that the most accurate statistics regarding the social orphan population are recorded by the Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia (2013). In the year 2012, the Bureau notes there were 8,152 children not living in family homes in Latvia, and there were 5,000 with some form of guardianship maintained by the State. One thousand five-hundred children were placed in foster families. Five hundred and forty-four children were in social care centres for children under two years of age, children with disabilities under the age of four and any children with physical disabilities

under the age of eighteen. Lastly, one-thousand four hundred children were considered social orphans and placed in generalized orphanages.

Dobelniece et al. (2014) researched at-risk families in Latvia to explore the social orphan problem. They studied families who were at elevated risk of losing children in guardianship cases, thus contributing to an increasing number of social orphans. Dobelniece et al. (2014) states that at-risk families in Latvia are assessed primarily on the capabilities of the families to meet the basic needs of the child and that families who fall into the at-risk category are those who cannot provide for these basic needs. Dobelniece et al. goes on to state that these families are characterized by unemployment, housing issues, excessive use of alcohol, physical and emotional violence. Therefore, better, and earlier interventions for these families could lower the risk of losing guardianship of their children (2014)

3.4.1.3 Vulnerability

Vulnerability also discussed in Chapter 1 emerged as a theme from multiple studies. Ismayilova et al., (2014) argue that social orphans in former Soviet Union (FSU) countries such as Latvia are a part of the most vulnerable groups of orphans worldwide. The theme of vulnerability appears in the literature to be due partly to the low standard of care for social orphans versus other European countries' childcare. Jurgena and Mikainis (2005) agree with the categorization of high vulnerability of social orphans in Latvia. They argue that although attitudes in Latvia towards social orphans should be based on the tenets of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), that is not the case. From the outcomes of their research, the authors claim that children growing up in orphanage care have much higher rates of traumatic experiences, criminal behaviour, and drug addiction than the general population. However, it is unclear from their research if these rates of traumatic and other incidents are attributed to the children's life experiences prior to being in care or after. The impact of their statements would shift in this case as rates of trauma etc., attributed to care prior to life in the orphanage is a vastly different societal concern than a child experiencing these rates of trauma etc., while in state care. A strong negative discourse regarding children that grow up in care contributes to vulnerabilities in society, according to research by Zumente-Steele (2019). This negative discourse strengthens the stigmatization of this population, thus contributing to difficulties in socialization in all facets of life, including education, employment, and relationships (Vasecheko, 2014). Taking the impact of vulnerability further, Lotko et al. argue that vulnerable youth have an increased chance in Latvia of involving themselves in using drugs and alcohol and sex work (2016). Lin et al. (2005) agreed that vulnerability caused poor choices that often are manifested in behavioural and academic problems. Browne et al. argued that vulnerability was most often manifested in institutional care and

thus that children instead should be only cared for in group settings very briefly and then be moved to family care settings as quickly as possible (2006). The manifestation of vulnerability in group settings led to physical and cognitive delays that could be overcome in a family setting if exposure to group care was minimal (Browne et al., 2009). Anspoka et al. (2013) made similar findings regarding social orphans as highly vulnerable to abuse. Trapenciere additionally agreed with vulnerability as a central theme in the lives of social orphans, given the adverse childhoods they enter care with (2012).

In several studies researchers interviewed social workers with experience working in the area of social service, and vulnerability presented as a theme in those studies as well. Broka (2011); Ratkeviciene (2018) came to conclusions that agreed on vulnerability as a key factor in how the social workers and staff viewed the children in care. These three studies also agreed that social workers and other staff did not feel well enough prepared to handle the situations they were often presented with from the children and families. They reported experiencing secondary stress symptoms from their work with the children, they found it difficult to observe the lives of the children. This is pointing to the possibility of a need to create training for staff working with this population, so they are not experiencing their vulnerability.

The last theme of vulnerability that arose was in three studies focused on the transition out of care and to independence. Mencil (2014); and Trapenciere (2012) concluded that vulnerability was present and a concern for social orphans as they transitioned out of care. Trapenciere found that care leavers themselves identified vulnerability as a primary concern and this experience of vulnerability was partly responsible for lack of readiness to leave care. The care leavers also recognized that an increase in readiness skills might decrease the experience of vulnerability. Mencil also concluded that an increase of readiness training would help alleviate some of the incidents in care leavers' vulnerability, which causes an inability to make good decisions and become independent from state care.

3.4.1.4 Deinstitutionalism of Orphanages

In Latvia, the literature favours deinstitutionalisation and privileging the placement of children in foster family settings. Most studies support the argument that children placed in orphanages have an increased number of attachment disorders and developmental delays as well as an array of other issues. What is for the most part not evident in these studies is whether the same children arrived in care with the same disorders, delays, and issues?

3.4.2 What is the Latvia social orphan's experience of care?

There are several empirical studies that speak to the Latvian social orphan experience of living in the orphanage. The themes that emerged from these studies under review question 2 of my study is categorized under:

- Maltreatment
- Sensory Integration
- Attachment
- Social workers

3.4.2.1 *Maltreatment*

The maltreatment of orphans while living in care is a historical discourse; however, only one research study explored this focus. Springe's (2017) study identified experiences of violence against children in orphanages. Several case studies highlighted how and when children suffered from violence. These events were often perpetrated by the same adults caring for the children at the orphanage. These youngsters were already traumatized by being placed within the child welfare system and these abuses made their circumstances even more critical. Evidence shows that the violence occurred in settings such as orphanages and crisis centres, while in the custody of police and in other settings provided by the Latvian Orphan Court. This violence included the lack of responsiveness of specialists, poor boundaries by trained professionals, confidentiality leaks, as well as physical, emotional, and sexual abuse (Springe, 2017).

3.4.2.2 *Sensory Integration*

The more typical study, when exploring the phenomenon of the social orphan living in care explores the adverse effects of living in an orphanage and away from one's biological family. Lin et al. (2005) studied the relationship between the length of time living in the orphanage to sensory integration in social orphans. They found that the longer the youth lived in care the more atypical sensory discrimination, praxis, and sensory modulation increased. This seems to be based on the child's vulnerability to deprivation in the environment and in human relationships which allows for sensory integration. This study did not include children over 11 years of age; therefore, it does not consider much of the social orphan population in Latvia. Additionally, the study's participant pool was not randomly selected but instead put forward by staff identified explicitly for the research; thus,

conclusions may favour those children who were stipulated as best suited for the study. Browne et al. (2009) appear to agree with Lin et al. (2005) regarding sensory integration and length of time living in the orphanage. Additionally, both authors note that severe attachment disorders, behavioural, neural, and social delays are the consequences of institutional life. This study, though slightly dated, has a significant limitation. Data from surveys were averaged, and rates were calculated for areas of Latvia where data was not available. Given the date of publication it is very possible that Browne et al., (2009) is picking up on the anti-institutional literature following the Romanian orphanage revelations in the late 1990's.

3.4.2.3 Attachment

In Chapter 1, there was a discussion on attachment theory and how it has influenced research and the discourse on children in care worldwide. This is the case as well in Latvia; attachment theory maintains a strong influence on the inquiry regarding social orphans.

Vascheko (2014), Browne et al. (2009), Lin et al. (2005) all included attachment as an argument against group care. They stated, among others, that a lack of attachment leaves children at elevated risk, as a need for connection can overshadow their ability to assess safety and danger, leaving them open for victimization.

3.4.2.4 Social Workers

In three studies, researchers interviewed social workers and orphan court personnel and found that a high percentage of the workers felt frustrated and profoundly helpless in their attempts to help the youth in their caseloads. Financial compensation for social workers in Latvia is relatively low, and Skrodele-Dubrovskā (2012) argue that in addition to poor salaries and the high stress, the total number of credentialed experienced social workers in Latvia is low. Social work as a profession emerged post-1991. Ratkeviciene's research (2018) found that social workers experienced both "shake" and "shock" in regularity as they heard the reports from social orphans about their lives (p. 130). Broka (2011) additionally found that social workers are overwhelmed and experience "helplessness" in meeting state regulations for social orphans. Broka (2011) argues the political agenda minimizes services in childcare, and child protection is taking power away from social workers to address the needs of the youth. Alternatively, Broka argues that some social workers are responding to these conditions by becoming more creative in ways they meet the needs of social orphans and youth who are at considerable risk. This is particularly true when state regulatory factions continue to decrease services as part of the political agenda (2011). Although there are some

positive outcomes from this, court social work is not regulated nor evaluated for effectiveness, and this ‘cut and paste’ method seems to be a holdover from Latvia’s earlier social work paradigm after 1991. In Chapter 1, Social Work as a profession in Latvia is discussed and more fully addressed. This includes other scholarly sources such as (Vilka, 2021) which is not included here.

3.4.3 What supports and hinders social orphans and care leavers in Latvia?

In answering this research question three, the empirical research available offers limited insight. It is additionally quite complex to explore what supports and hinders the future trajectory of the social orphan as what might be recognized as support by one set of evidence is simultaneously recognized as a hindrance by another. What is put forth as evidence in answering this question is:

- Transition Experience
- Social Services
- School
- Autonomy

3.4.3.1 *Transition Experience*

There was one empirical study regarding the transition experience by Trapenciere (2018), which states Latvian social orphans are expected to transition to independence without the supports needed for success. The study found that some participants had distrust for the interview process, expressing concern that if they shared certain feelings or incidents, there would be repercussions within the orphanage (Trapenciere, 2018). Additionally, the participants did not want to transition out of care overall and most often did not feel prepared. Instead, they reported feeling unprepared, afraid of living alone and thus would prolong their time at the orphanage if possible. Additionally, Trapenciere argued that social orphans were not typically asked to express viewpoints, thus participants found the interviews to be a new experience.

There has been a recent change where the age of maturity was raised from age sixteen to age eighteen. It was noted that at sixteen, living independently was too challenging for youth leaving the institutions. Trapenciere’s (2018) findings suggest that preparation and support for the transition out of the orphanage could begin six months before the individual is expected to leave. One of the most significant factors of this transition is often the complicated and complex presence of parents, siblings, and relatives who were removed from the orphan’s lives. While the youth were in care, these

family members were often not a part of their lives, which is similar in other countries. As they approach termination from the orphanage, the young people find themselves frequently returning to problematic familial relationships after leaving the institution. In Latvia, poverty and a lack of external supports often force these relationships to be renewed even after a long absence. Care leavers often reconnect with their families of origin for a multitude of reasons, primarily that they are family, and many children are removed as children or adolescents in Latvia and have already formed relationships with their families. In addition, families often offer support, a place to live, a home, even if temporarily.

In Latvia, the local government is responsible for assisting young people with the transition into the community. This includes assistance with locating housing, education and granting them an allowance. However, evidence shows this assistance is not always well utilized. Zumente-Steele (2018) argues that there is a lack of trust in government assistance, and regardless of what social services are offered, it is often underutilized. Additionally, those changes in child welfare have been influenced by society's views about the meaning of childhood, adulthood, and what the transitional journey from adolescence to adulthood should involve. Nevertheless, it is well documented that care leavers, in general, frequently experience a difficult and arduous journey to adulthood and independence (2018).

3.4.3.2 Social Services

Social services were discussed in Chapter 1. However, in the literature search, slightly different themes emerged. Social services are available for all families in Latvia; however, the scope and implementation of these supports are provided at the discretion of each region of the country. The services provided, however, are intricately linked to each family's yearly income. Currently, there are some innovative approaches to social services which have been introduced as pilot programs for social orphans (Trapenciere, 2014). Since 2015, family assistants have been offered as a preventative measure in some regions of Latvia. Their role is to support at-risk families in meeting children's physical and psychosocial needs. Families are offered practical support within the family home. The objective is to avoid further the need for further interventions. Promotion of child and family well-being is supported through family and individual counselling, providing the child with rides to and from school, increasing school attendance, assistance with making and attending medical appointments and, assisting parents in filling out paperwork.

In some cases, the family assistant will attend court appearances for the parents, do food shops and even make meals for the family. However, Aidukaite (2005) argues that the level and amount of state assistance offered to at-risk families does not make a difference on account of the distrust of the state by the parents. Many parents of social orphans do not take advantage of assistance on offer out of fear of the power it holds to remove children and break up families. This phenomenon was discussed in the previous Background section regarding the history of child welfare in Latvia.

3.4.3.3 Education

The school experience of social orphans presents a variety of complications. It is unclear if it hinders or supports their future trajectory. School, if attended and completed, is believed to support future trajectories of social orphans. The assumption is that the more the education, the higher the success rate employment-wise, offering financial stability. Therefore, keeping social orphans in school is a goal, though it is a challenge to achieve (Anspoka et al., 2013). To encourage independent social orphans to continue educating themselves, there is a policy connecting continued schooling with an allowance from the State. Care leavers receive additional monies monthly if attending vocational or academic institutions. Although this is a progressive practice, it does not prove to be as beneficial as it seems at first glance. According to Anspoka et al., it is not taken advantage of by most care leavers (2013). Trapenciere (2018) agreed with this finding as in her study; she interviewed staff from the orphanages with young adults about to leave the orphanage. From this evidence, she noted that most of the children had poor school attendance and performance; thus, the connection between attending school and receiving the financial allowance was not typically successful.

Bebriša et al. (2007) surmise that the future trajectories of social orphans are greatly affected by a lack of school attendance and high drop-out rates. In surveying adolescent social orphans to explore the reasons for the results, it is reported that 10-14 % of social orphans found the curriculum too complicated. They appear to be overly challenged and do not receive individual support. Further, the authors suggest that the results indicate there are frequent conflicts with teachers who 'do not understand them' and that teachers dislike the children because they are from the orphanage. Bebrisa et al. (2007) argue that school policies are considered unfair to children that attend school from low-income families or the orphanage. They point out students not being admitted to the class because

they have a high absence record or cannot afford specific educational materials as examples of this type of discrimination.

Furthermore, teachers find the social orphan's clothing or hairstyles do not meet stated school policies or standards, and thus, they refuse to admit the children to classes. This evidence gives support to the notion that schools frequently avoid working with social orphans in order to preserve their educator/school status, which is measured through students having high scores on their performance exams. The study concluded that this then contributes to further inhibition of these children from attending school and becoming active members of Latvian society. Bebrisa et al. furthermore argue that stereotypes and biases amongst educators contribute to not only a lack of socialization but contributes to perpetuating the intergenerational cycle of the child-at-risk (2007). Anspoka et al. (2013) found that Latvian families of origin that had regained contact with their children after independence did not offer their encouragement or support for the youth to continue attending school.

Additional reasons cited for the newly independent youth leaving school after leaving the orphanage included: drug use and other addictions, learning issues, low self-confidence, low organizational skills, poor socialization skills, being part of a minority family that did not learn Latvian. Further challenges facing the socially challenged orphan also include the lack of career guidance prior to being dismissed from the institution. By not offering them direction for employment or further education, they have few options for a holistically successful adult life experience. Anspoka et al. argue that without a direction of interest, young adults experience confusion after leaving the orphanage (2013). Ratkeviciene (2018) agreed with these findings that inadequate, or no school attendance is typical after leaving the orphanage. Further, evidence suggests that although it initially appeared that poor school attendance was due to a lack of care on the part of the youth, there were typically more specified reasons. This included the examples of having to take care of an alcoholic parent or sibling, a lack of childcare for their own baby, not having proper supplies or enough food. These all contributed to a lack of motivation to attend school.

3.4.3.4 Autonomy

Three studies offered evidence which demonstrated a lack of ability for independent social orphans to act and behave autonomously. According to Trapenciere (2018), within the orphanage, there is a type of "consumerism" for the older social orphans. They are the first ones that are given new goods and all goods they require. Though these items are given to the community and all goods are communal,

there is minimal need to develop practical skills as an autonomous individual. Razeva and Silova's (2014) findings agree, and additionally, they enquired into the youth's personal sense of responsibility which comes into play. It was noted that the lack of independent living skills being developed in the orphanage hinders the trajectory of the social orphan becoming independent. They argue that without autonomy, one cannot have a responsibility, and without these skills, the future trajectory of independent social orphans is gravely hindered (Mencel, 2014).

3.4.3.5 Conclusions

The literature pertaining to social orphans in Latvia was the focus of this literature review. Here, the significant findings are summarised and discussed, considering the aforementioned research literature and peer-reviewed articles. From this review of papers, it is apparent that the issues facing social orphans in Latvia are considerable. Much of the literature suggests that information regarding social orphans is almost exclusively reported from the opinions of others and not directly from the adult social orphans.

Concerning the second review question (what is the Latvian social orphan experience?), many studies focused on the deficits that may occur due to children living away from their families in orphanages, and these studies, therefore, held a negative discourse. These included maltreatment in the orphanage, and sensory integration issues and attachment problems. There was a paucity of data regarding life experiences for social orphans in group care in Latvia. Social workers' experiences gave us some more insight as they reported experiencing mostly helplessness and frustration over their attempts to help the children. Additionally, they acknowledged being overwhelmed at the tasks which they needed to accomplish in order to make a change for the children.

Addressing the third review question (what supports the social orphan's successful experience living independently after the orphanage?), focused on the schooling (attendance and educational success) and independent transition experience, including developing life skills and autonomy. It seems as if the previous research has not addressed what a successful living experience after the orphanage would be, nor is there an acknowledgement that the definition of 'successes' would vary with the stakeholders. The papers reviewed did identify independent living supports and hindrances, including educational opportunity, which assists with employment experience, and continued financial assistance from the government. However, as the literature discusses, school is only supportive if

youth continue to engage in the educational experience while in care and unfortunately, most care leavers, for multiple reasons, do not continue with any education after leaving care. Autonomy and independent decision making were brought to the forefront as a potentially important research question; however, this question was an unexpected result of the research review and not the focus. There is a lack of research into this question, specifically when reported from the young adults experiencing it first-hand. As recognized by Trapenciere (2018), the most significant gap in the research on social orphans in Latvia is their voices. As the political agenda is pushing de-institutionalism, the importance of this line of enquiry continues to grow. Annually, more social orphans are transitioned out of care in order to meet the social agenda. Having more unambiguous evidence to identify what a good care experience looks like from the inside perspective of care leavers seems significant, and thus, another research question will be added as an overarching question. What do care leavers consider is a good care experience? This question went unanswered as few studies on Latvian social orphans have sought the lived experiences and views of children or young adults with direct experiences in care, as pointed out by Trapenciere (2018). Instead, there is a body of information drawn from secondary or indirect viewpoints where the conclusions are considered to originate from experts in the field. These studies are informational and simultaneously problematic in my view as they do not position social orphans and care leavers' contributions as central to the knowledge base. Additionally, they may not be an accurate representation of views and may advance the stigmatizing narratives about group care and the young people that use it.

3.5 Limitations of this review

Although this review strived to synthesize evidence from a broad spectrum of available literature, it has limitations. First, it is possible that important studies may have been missed in searches due to the inclusion criteria of English. There may be additional studies written in Latvian that have not been translated into English. There is also a possibility that relevant studies were missed using the chosen search terms, which is always the case as decisions must be made as to the scope of the study.

3.6 Chapter summary

The literature review focused on literature pertaining to children in care as social orphans in Latvia. This focus was pursued intentionally to gain knowledge specifically about Latvia versus a larger spectrum of care systems operating worldwide. The literature was examined in a narrative format. Initial review questions were utilized to thematically group the literature around themes that matched up with the literature pertaining to each question. These review questions will assumedly evolve into research questions for the study. Through the process of the review, a fourth overarching question emerged as significant and unanswered from the current literature. That question is (What do care

leavers consider is a good care experience?) This question emerged through the process of investigating, researching, and reading the literature of Chapters 1 and 2 and the literature review. The following chapter will address the theoretical lenses informing the study post literature review. From the search process and extensive reading about children in care in Latvia and worldwide emerged some questioning about theoretical lenses, which will be addressed in Chapter 4.

4 Methodology and Methods

4.1 Introduction

This chapter covers both the theoretical thinking that underpins the study and the pragmatic aspects of how the study was carried out. It begins with a brief discussion of the importance of reflexivity and situating myself within the research which is a continuation from Chapter 1. The following section describes the theoretical underpinnings of this research and explains how and why the research was conducted. Following this, the focus turns to the methods section where there will be an overview of the pragmatic aspects of the inquiry. This includes the Aims and Objectives, Research Questions, and the choices of Narrative and Life History Methodology as well as the rationale for the approaches of Resistance and Critical Event Theory. Then, the focus will turn to the piloting of the interview questions, the recruitment of participants, conducting the interviews and the transcription process. Following this, the chapter will address the ethical considerations and the analysis procedures. Lastly, the approaches to the analysis and the use of both NVivo and manual analysis will be detailed.

Reflexivity

Vivat (2002) argues that knowledge is inevitably and unavoidably produced within a social and cultural context, given that the investigator brings knowledge to the study obtained through their particular social and cultural context. Thus, separating oneself from personal knowledge is an impossibility. The best the researcher can achieve is to acknowledge the context, history, and knowledge they bring to the research subject (Creswell, 2013). Pennington (2017) recognises and privileges the researcher's subjectivity to the research. Oakley (1981), in her critique of traditional research methodologies, argues that to accomplish productive collection of data researchers must first make transparent their personal, professional, and political values in the subject they are researching. Anderson (2020) supports the researcher's position as needing to be as close to the population they

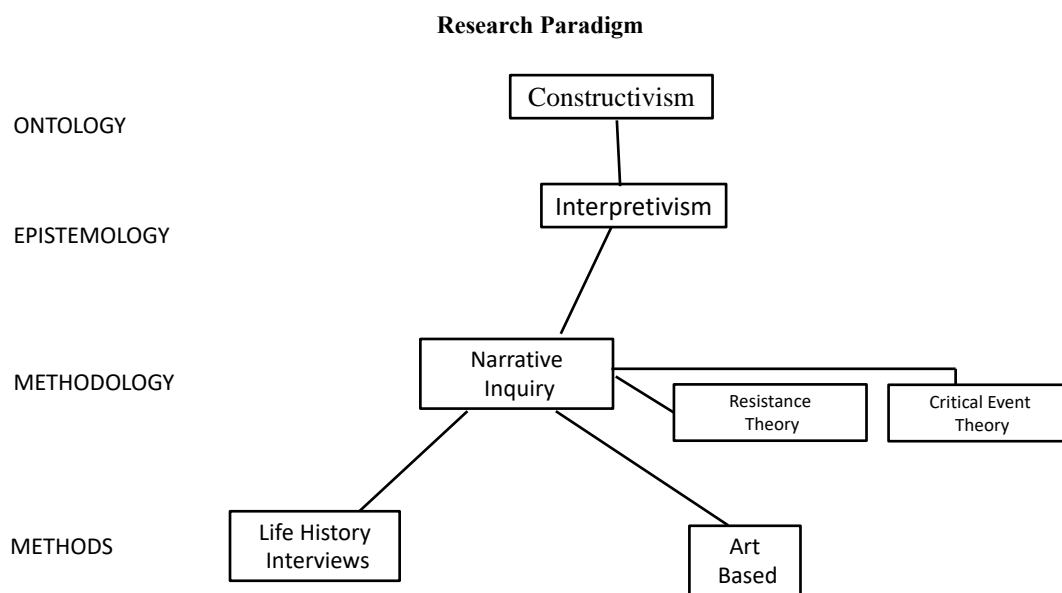
study as possible. For Finlay (2002), reflexivity is found partly in disciplined self-reflection. It involves an ability to notice responses to the world, stories, and other people and use that knowledge to inform and direct actions, communications, and understandings. Rooted in feminist theory, which is concerned with promoting equality and challenging power imbalances, reflexivity urges researchers to be transparent about their values and beliefs and any issues of power between the researcher and the researched.

For this study, a reflexive lens was used at each stage of the research process: the literature review, selecting participants, sampling, interviewing, transcribing, analysis and writing up the findings, as discussed throughout the thesis (Finlay, 2002). The first stage in this reflexive process was to reflect on my biography and attraction to the research study. Life histories of research participants are mediated through the life histories of the person that is interpreting, analysing, and representing them. Thus, it is increasingly common for researchers to discuss their own experience in their research (Ellis and Berger, 2003). In the introduction chapter, some background information is provided about my interest in this research subject. In the interests of reflexivity, this section considers what reflexivity means in the academic literature before reflecting further on my connection to the issue and its potential impact on my research. The myth of a completely objective inquiry has been contested in social science. Instead of calling for researchers to acknowledge their personal, political, and professional interests in the research subject they are called on to reflect on the research with respect to personal experience (Ngunjiri et al., 2010).

4.2 Theoretical frameworks of this study

This section will discuss the research approach that underpins this study. It will discuss ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods and the corresponding approaches. To begin with ontology will be discussed including an explanation first of what ontology is and how a constructivist approach fits well within it. Then epistemology will be discussed and how interpretivism fits well within it. Next, the methodology is discussed which is a narrative inquiry which is underpinned by the theoretical lenses of resistance theory and critical event theory. Finally, the methods of life history methods and an arts-based component are discussed.

Figure 4-1 Research Paradigm



4.2.1 Ontology

Ontology refers to the nature of reality. According to Lincoln and Guba (2000), an ontological position is required when approaching the research questions regarding the nature of the world. A positivist paradigm suggests that one truth, or one reality, is the only one that exists. In turn, then, the researcher's role is to discover that one existing truth (Mertens, 2005). Guba and Lincoln (1994) describe this more as naïve realism and suggest that reality and people cannot ever be completely and ever fully known. Constructivism maintains that one's reality is socially constructed, creating an absence of one actual reality as realities are subject to social change (Gergen, 2012). Using this approach, research strives to understand the multiple constructions of reality from the participants' sense of reality (Schwandt, 2000). A position of interpretivism begins with the premise that objective research is impossible because the researcher inevitably is a part of the world and responds to the context of the research subject. This suggests then that research is co-constructed as researcher and

participant influence each other; thus, objectivity is not the goal (Lincoln and Guba, 2000). According to Gergen and Gergen (1998), constructivism is perceived as valuable in understanding the construction of complex experiences. It is a good fit for this inquiry as the acknowledgement of multiple truths serves as a central practice in validating the complexity of the lived experiences of marginalised populations.

4.2.2 Epistemology

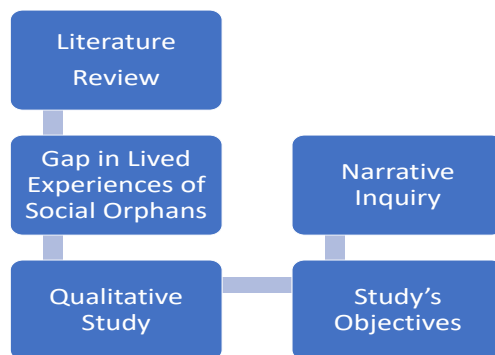
Epistemology refers to the nature of knowledge, how knowledge is gained (or what is understood as knowledge) and describes the interplay between the knower and what is known (Lincoln and Guba., 2000). The epistemology underpinning this study is interpretivism, and the study sought to position social orphans as key informants of the social orphan experience. The study focused on highlighting how events were interpreted, and the meaning given by the participants to these experiences.

Interpretivism positions the participants to be at the centre of meaning-making. The participants in the data collection process get to determine and prioritise what are most important aspects of their life history to narrate. The researcher holds the position of intentionally attempting not to influence this prioritisation of the unfolding narrative (Denzin, 1989). Simultaneously, there is an acknowledgement that the researcher will influence the story when the interpretation of this data is analysed and written into conclusions. Interpretivism is based on the idea that the content shared is continually interpreted on several levels. First, the participant continually interprets both the experience and the meaning of events through the process of sharing them. Second, the researcher interprets the shared narratives with the theoretical stance they bring to the study (Denzin, 1989). This includes the interpretation of the data by including empirical diversity, incorporating subjects' worldviews and the integration of practices of diverse groups. The assumption is that there are multiple truths that will come from the data, and it assumes that the interpretation of the stories is subjective.

4.2.3 Methodology

This section on the methodology of this study will first take the reader through the process of deciding on a narrative inquiry with the underpinning of the critical event theory and the resistance theory.

Figure 4-2 Decision Process of a Narrative Inquiry



The findings of the literature review influenced the choice of methodology for this study. The literature review found a gap in the depth of understanding of the social orphans' lived experience in Latvia. Thus, a qualitative study that seeks to understand the meaning that individuals or groups give to social experiences or social problems was decided on and supported the study's objectives discussed in the Methods section. Given the over-arching rationale for this study, to explore the lived experiences of social orphans in Latvia, a narrative inquiry provided the best approach.

4.2.4 Narrative Enquiry

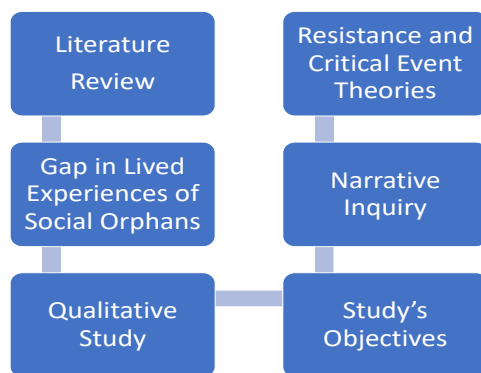
In qualitative research, narrative enquiry has been increasing in popularity, and numerous scholars have given descriptions of the meaning they attach to the narrative. Narrative enquiry is a broad area of research and according to Tierney & Clemens there is an overlapping nature to narrative research in its broad categories of "autoethnography, biography, cultural biography, life story, oral history, and testimony" (2012, p. 266). Stephens & Trahar (2012) have comprehensively defined narrative to include significant components of one's relationships in content, structure, audience, and context and state "narrative is the relationship between what is told and how it is told" (p.54). Similarly, Bruner (1990) defines narrative as "an organising principle by which people organise their experience in, knowledge about, and transactions with the social world" (p.35). Simply stated, individuals make

sense of the world and themselves through stories, both by telling them and listening to them. Polkinghorne (1988) sees narrative as “the primary scheme by which human existence is rendered meaningful” (p.1). Therefore, in narrative research, meaning is made by shaping or ordering participants’ experiences (Mupenzi, 2018). Riessman (2008) suggests meaning is continually changing, and the researcher takes the position that the focus of the research is on how individuals construct past experiences and what meaning is given to these stories.

In this study, narrative research was the best method to capture the detailed lives and the narrative stories of the care leavers. Additionally, Riessman & Quinney (2005) believe that telling stories from and about our life experiences can be a transformative experience for both tellers and the audience. This then is further evidence for the increasing use of the narrative research method in social science enquiry. It offers a significant contribution to multiple areas of investigation by providing rich and complex data which explores the meaning participants assign to their own subjective experiences (Riessman, 2008, Clandinin, 2013). Narrative research exploring lived experiences aims to make no assumptions regarding the meaning or importance of specific stories.

In this study, the word “story” means a narrative that organises events through time, and the participant always constructs it. According to Goodson et al. (2010), “... we exist and live our lives in and through stories.... the stories of our parents, our generation, our culture, our nation” (p.1). According to Clandinin & Connelly (2013), telling a story is what gives meaning to experience. The most significant reason for this study's methodology prefacing narratives or stories is Kramp's (2004) commentary that “stories preserve our memories, prompt our reflections, connect us with our past and present, and assist us in envisioning our future” (p.107). This aligns perfectly with the choice of the study's methodology. That is to say that the sharing of the subjects' life history narrative highlights the critical life experiences of research participants and the meaning and impact their experiences had on them. Bold (2012) emphasises the affirmative aspects of telling life stories, “storytelling may increase the storyteller's capacity to make important life-changing choices through re-representing a past event and speculating about future development” (p. 23). This suggests the telling of their stories may impact participants’ lives. This may also be true for the reader. In this study, participants told stories of their lives: what they could remember before being placed in care, throughout their care and since leaving care. Thus, narrative fits with an interpretivist epistemology as the social world exists primarily through the meaning people attach to it as relayed through their stories.

Figure 4-3 Underpinning Theories



The decision to add two underpinning theories to the understanding of narrative inquiry was based on several factors. The first is that Riessman argues that using critical event theory guides the narrative, and “participants are likely to find it easier to talk about specific times and places” (Riessman 2008, p.24). Representing critical events in the participant's life is relevant to a narrative enquiry and life history methods, according to Riessman, as stories are better understood when critical events are underscored (2008). Additionally, narrative inquiry creates an environment where the possibility of making acts of resistance more visible opens opportunities for groups to speak their truths. Many will not have had this opportunity which highlights the significance of the researcher’s choice to make this opportunity possible if one cares about positioning marginalized groups to speak their truth (Riessman, 2008). Thus, the decision to incorporate these two theories into the study using an inductive process through the research was made. A fuller discussion of the two theories and how they were utilized follows.

4.3 Theoretical Underpinnings

It is evident in the academic literature, media, and government publications from Latvia that social orphans are facing numerous challenges. The two theories discussed in this chapter provide multiple

viewpoints on the lives of care leavers. These various perspectives reflect the need to see both care leavers' limitations as well as their strengths. Participant's moments of resistance and critical events are not just theories to be applied but identify how these experiences served participants in their survival. These theories show the social worldviews which have impacted social orphans throughout their lives. These theoretical perspectives will be discussed.

4.3.1 Critical Event Theory

Critical Event Theory was used in organising the narratives of the study. Participants' journeys from childhood with biological parents, through the care system and as care leavers required a way to highlight their defining moments of transition. Tyson (2001) notes how critical theories challenge stigmas, stereotypes, and other limitations. As a result, Critical Event theory is a versatile learning tool for interpreting research questions in diverse ways. The life history narratives in this study have demonstrated specific events in the participants' lives that they have identified as critical or significant to their life history. Critical events are life-changing and may have multiple consequences. These may include changes in life direction or purpose and can be positive or negative (Woods, 1993).

According to Webster and Mertova (2007), a critical event can fall under one of these categories.

1. It has an impact on the storyteller in a work-related role.
2. It has a traumatic component.
3. It attracts the interest of others around them.
4. It introduces risks to the individual in the form of personal consequences.

However, it is impossible to predict, define or even observe a critical event in another individual. Each person is the only one who can determine the meaning of an event. Often one does not define these moments for themselves at the incident and requires time to reflect on the circumstances to then label it as critical (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

Dentith et al. argues that there are three distinct types of critical events in an individual's life story: "extrinsic, intrinsic and personal" (2012, p. 61). Extrinsic critical events are often viewed as historical or political events. Intrinsic critical events are viewed as a natural progression of life circumstances, while personal critical events are those of a person or family-oriented event (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Lee (2012) links the critical events in an individual's life to transitional points and understanding life trajectories as a series of critical events. Critical event theory has assisted in ordering experiences in the participants' lives into critical and other supporting events. These types of experiences are often disregarded through traditional empirical methods. Lee argues that critical

events are “a valuable and insightful tool for getting at the core of what is important” (2012, p.56). In this study, quintessential critical events reported during life history were recorded and, through analysis, contributed to the research. The current research has benefitted from a theoretical framework that considers a more extended period in a participant's life. The studies intend to explore and order experiences across the journey of care and conceptualise events through multiple transitions. Critical event theory allows for the expression of various experiences in the participants' lives that may include relational interactions, mind-altering events, an increase of awareness or questioning of values. In the findings chapter (Chapter 5) critical events are shown to have steered the direction of every participant. This focus then captures the intentions of the participant as they reflect on the significance of an event. They are responsible for how much importance should be given to these moments. In the life history interview, the participant presents personal storylines by reflecting on their past lived experiences and later evaluating which stories are seen as critical events and thus categorise the importance of the events. Using critical event theory to analyse the stories as is done in this study captures the participants' intention as they reflect on the significance of various events. It assists in ensuring a collaborative approach.

4.3.2 Resistance Theory

There exist many definitions, ideas, and theories about the concept of resistance. In this brief overview, the choice for the use of everyday resistance will be discussed. In this enquiry regarding social orphans and care leavers of the Latvian social welfare system, the idea of “everyday resistance” developed by James Scott (1989) can be applied to this population. The resistances the study wanted to make more apparent were not those resistances of an organised or significant political nature but a part of the youth's daily existence. Since introducing the concept of resistance in 1989, research on resistance has expanded and included intersections between feminist, cultural, post-structural studies, and other theories. This then necessitates the clarification of the concept/definition of everyday resistance.

It would be remiss in a conversation about resistance to not include Michel Foucault's most well-known claims that “Where there is power, there is resistance” (1978, pp. 95–96). A simultaneous truth that is stated by Lila Abu-Lughod, an American anthropologist (1990) “Where there is resistance, there is power” (p. 42). Foucault (1978) thoroughly explored the ideas of power, but he did not, however, appear to have spent as much time on the exploration of resistance. Since there seems to be a connection between power and resistance, it will be assumed that through the process of

exploring acts of resistance in the participants' life histories in this study, the subject of power will need to be addressed as well. Specifically, in identifying and analysing who or what the act of resistance is in opposition to in the participants' narratives.

This overview of resistance theory explores the concept of “everyday resistance explicitly”. It can refer to how people act in everyday life in ways that might address circumstances of adversity. Individual and or personal actions of resistance such as these can be easily overlooked when one compares these acts to organised or political acts of resistance. This is one of the pivotal justifications for the use of this theory in this study. Scott developed everyday resistance to cover these various kinds of resistances, everyday resistance is not as dramatic or necessarily visible as a rebellion (Scott 1990). Everyday resistance is quiet, disguised or otherwise seemingly invisible (Scott, 1990). These theoretical ideas have become one way of understanding marginalised groups differently. Examples of this framework from research are plentiful, for example: Women in an abusive relationship (Holmberg & Ehnander 2007); Low-skilled workers in Indonesia and childless women in South India (Riessman, 2000). Another aspect of everyday resistance that pertains to this research is participants telling stories that include their acts of resistance. However, they do not always consider them resistance acts but instead view these as times of defiance, misbehaving as a child, or a negative response to a situation.

Riessman's (2000) study of childless women in India who resist stigma regarding their childlessness concludes that while resistant thinking and avoidance actions do not confront stigma and discrimination directly, they are “tactically necessary” (Riessman 2000, p.124). They might be a type of groundwork for later, more prominent acts of resistance. It is possible that coping strategies could be interpreted as acts of resistance as well. What might appear to be an act of resistance can instead be an act of exercising personal power. Resistance is in response to something or someone and, the power is not derived from the resistor (Vinthagen & Johansen, 2019). There are “specific actions in specific contexts, and resistance does not originate within the subject but is something that arises in the combination of subjectivity, context and interaction” (p.36). Consequently, resistance in this research is viewed as a matter of intermittent actions with the potential to undermine power without being labelled necessarily as resistance. Resistance is often misunderstood or invisible to one in the position of the resistor and those around them, including the person or situation resisted against. Critical event theory has been used to organise and articulate the progressive events that have defined the challenges in Latvia particularly, through the life histories of my research participants. Critical

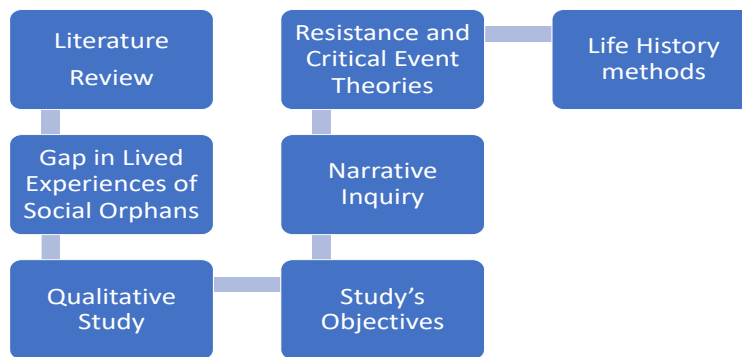
event theory and resistance theory served as effective tools to explore the lived experiences of social orphans in Latvia.

Applying a theoretical lens to the critical events in participant's lives and their acts of resistance helped examine the situations and relationships that Latvian care leavers had encountered in their lived experiences. Employing multiple lenses addresses different components of the life history narratives of the research participants.

4.4 Methods

The rest of the chapter will move towards the pragmatic aspects of the study. The choice of life history methods and the decision to include an arts-based option will be discussed first and then the section will turn to the aims of the research, the research questions and ethical approval. Further, the reader will be provided with a detailed description of the data collection process, an overview of the analysis and interpretation of data collected, and an explanation of this study's issues. The life history approach does not require these narratives to go in any specific or rigid progression. This method allows participants to conceptualise their own life experience and their development over time. The experience of exploring life histories is an ongoing process that changes over time, with increased reflection, and one's current understanding. The process of telling can often bring new meaning to one's experience. Through this process, Goodson et al. (2010, p. 2) state that: "the stories we construct about ourselves, and our lives can help us to find meaning and new direction or can support us in coming to terms with the way things are and with who we are". Again, this new understanding is not at the forefront of the objectives for this enquiry, so whether new meaning is created or not it was not a driving force in this enquiry. The outcome of the individual interviews and the subjects' personal experience or interpretation of their life history is unknown.

Figure 4-4 Decision for Life History Methods



4.4.1 Life History Methods

The decision to move forward with life history methods again was a natural choice given the overall choices in the research approach made thus far. One's life history addresses the life of an individual study subject to include the social and historical context and experiences that have impacted them. Life history enables analysis at multiple levels and recognises that an individual story is always intertwined with more significant stories and themes. Riessman (2001) states that “individuals' narratives are works of history as much as they are about individuals, the social spaces they inhabit, and the societies they live in” (2000, p. 698). Goodson (2013) concludes that “the historical context of life stories needs to be further elucidated, and they need to be understood concerning time and periodisation” (p. 31). In this study, the social and historical contexts are reviewed in Chapter 2. Therefore, the three terms: narrative, story, and life history, are interrelated and used interchangeably. Whereas narrative is much broader, the story is sometimes defined as a narrative while life history articulates specific times and events, bringing out the cause and effects. Thus, life history as applied in the current research focuses on the lived experiences of social orphans and care leavers in Latvia as the objects of study. In the following section, the justification for utilising the life history methodology for this study is addressed. Life history narratives in this study articulate turning points called critical events. These events appear in many ways that include interactions with another person, organization or a moment that had an impact or influenced them to change their way of thinking about something or the trajectory of their life experience. Participant's life history narratives are organized into three sections that correlate to the research questions and the interview questions regarding life stories namely: before, during and after care. Within each of these sections the stories will be looked at through the lenses of the participant's context, critical events, and acts of resistance. The portions of stories that are highlighted for the reader were chosen based on Riessman's (2009)

criteria of choosing interviews to highlight based on richness of story and emphasis by participant (p. 60). The context section introduces the participants and offers a view of the larger picture of historical events and pressures that shaped their stories from their perspective in their words. The critical events section identifies the turning points highlighted by the participants as significant to their life trajectories. The acts of resistance section highlight the stories that were identified as resistance within the context.

Choosing the life history method of inquiry was essential to this research and forms the backdrop to its richness. Life histories offer unique contributions to knowledge. While the use of life stories can be an empowering form of social research, according to Riessman (2008), it often privileges voices that are excluded in other forms of academic and or social science investigations. The reflection of personal and social life this method offers is communicated by the researcher who collects the life stories and acknowledges the subjectivity involved. For example, social orphans and care leavers are often positioned as excluded from conversations regarding decisions about the disposition of their lives. Care leavers' stories provide more nuanced accounts of their aspirations and identities. In reading their stories, different people can comprehend the experiences of care leavers. The life history approach in this case, “serves as the ideal means for understanding how people see their own experiences, their own lives, and their interactions with others” (Atkinson, 2007, p. 235). There are different ideas regarding what constitutes a narrative. The inclusion of life stories, stories of events, or personal narratives can all be a part of a narrative (Riessman, 2008). According to Bruner (1990), narrative research identifies life histories which offer an essential and unprecedented look into a person's life, including patterns of interactions, relationships, and ethics within a period (Riessman, 2008).

Life history narratives evolve from lived experience and are a retelling of one's life in the voice of the teller. This is then shared as it is remembered and understood by that individual. Atkinson (2007) discusses the advantages of the act of telling one's life history:

“Clearer perspective on personal experiences and feelings, greater self-knowledge and a stronger self-image and self-esteem, sharing of cherished experiences and insights with others, joy, satisfaction, and inner peace, purging, or releasing, of burdens and validation of personal experience, for people who have suffered trauma, storytelling can be central to the recovery process, creating a community, showing that we have more in common with others, helping other people see their lives more clearly or differently, and perhaps inspire them to change something in their life, allowing others to know and understand us better, providing a better sense of how we want our story to end, or how we could give it the good ending we want, by understanding our past and present, we also gain a clearer perspective of our goals for the future” (p.235-236).

It is understood that although there are benefits assigned to life history storytelling, not all research participants will experience a life history interview this way. For some, it can be challenging to reflect on experiences that they would rather avoid processing. In this study participants reported enjoying the process of engaging in life history storytelling. Such as Leons who said, “I realise now after this (The interview process) that talking about it (his experiences) makes it feel better although I don't know for how long.” In considering the life history method there were two aspects of the method that contributed to it favourably in being used. It seemed suitable for research participants, and it worked to counteract dominant negative narratives of marginalized populations.

4.4.2 Suitable for research participants

Life history interviews create space for participants who may be unaccustomed to being heard and listened to. It provides the study subjects with an opportunity to be placed in a position of power (Riessman, 2008). To experience and gain a sense of insight and expertise over their lived experiences. This may be a very unfamiliar position to them but could become a critical event in their view of themselves. Stories are constructed in particular contexts and particular contexts can change as context and interpretation changes. Considering context is worth considering as participants tell their stories.

During the interviewing process, an environment that encourages interactive dialogue is created for both the participant and the researcher. The formation that exists in the relationship between researcher and subject now fosters one of more equality where researcher and participant form their iterative and collaborative relationship (Gergen and Gergen, 2012). This meeting of equals is now suitable for research participants (such as care leavers) to share their narratives. Historically these interviewees could experience the power dynamic of a traditional methodology negatively. This inductive study employed information gathering that focused on the individuals being explored. According to Creswell (2019) the process of collecting data can involve interviewing a subject in their setting versus a researcher's setting and adapting the procedures and questions as the answers emerge throughout the research process. Creswell (2019) further adds that inductive research grows from particular to general knowledge as the researcher interprets the data. The inductive process supports inquiry that privileges individual meaning and the complexity of lived experiences and builds from this.

Research participants were positioned as active contributors to this research study. Researchers have often used methods of research that make marginalised groups passive participants as opposed to active participants. Life history narrative methodology maintains a contrary position as participants are the experts of their own experiences, and therefore participants become active contributors to the research study. Bornat and Diamond (2007) identify that “history belongs with people and communities, not experts” (p.29). Thus, life history research should focus on documenting life in consultation with the very members of that specific community. In the current study, this focus should remain on care leavers in Latvia.

To summarise, the life history narrative approach provides the opportunity for self-awareness, personal education, and empowerment. It becomes a source of substantive knowledge and reinforces the relationship-building process through the intersection of firsthand experiences, historical circumstances, and cultural frames with a non-judgmental investigator/observer. Though not in every case, this experience can possibly have a transformation effect on a participant and impact the investigators and readers of the research (Atkinson, 2007). Therefore, the life history research approach is suitable for researching care leavers in Latvia. Participants in this study were comfortable sharing the stories of their lives and took the position of experts of their own experiences. In the process, they contributed to a new understanding and a deeper knowledge base regarding their experiences as care leavers. This deeper investigation and updated knowledge can be useful to other care leavers, researchers, policymakers, and professionals in the field of child welfare and child services.

4.4.3 Counteracts Dominant Narratives

Life history narratives provide more particular, contextualised accounts of history than dominant narratives, which can often disregard or dismiss individual experiences. Dominant narratives seek to establish single overarching facts that can then be applied in every situation without regard for an individualised experience. Life history narratives create the possibility of making visible alternative views and counternarratives, which are alternatives to the dominant themes. As a result of these concepts, life history narrative methodology brings a more comprehensive and broad-based understanding of the story of the participants' experiences. The method helps to define preferred identities and invites subjects to be part of the broader defining conversation by providing an agentic experience through sharing their knowledge. Above all, the life history narrative approach brings out

counternarratives that can inform and challenge pre-existing and long-held dominant narratives. It is this process of understanding where personal, professional, and societal change can be affected.

4.4.4 Research Aims and Objectives

This research sought to promote an understanding of the lived experiences of young adults (18-25 years) with care experiences in Latvia. The following research questions used to explore this topic in this study are as follows:

Question 1: What are the circumstances that bring children into care as social orphans in Latvia?

Question 2: What are the children in Latvia's lived experiences of being in orphanage care?

Question 3: What are the lived experiences of young people in Latvia after they leave orphanage care?

4.5 Ethical Approval

Ethical approval for the study was accomplished and approved through the School of Education and Social Work Ethics processes at the University of Dundee in 2019 (See Appendices 1-7). Ethical considerations are an iterative process reflected on in supervision and the field journal. Given that Latvia is a small country with an even smaller community of care leavers residing in Riga, confidentiality and anonymity were of vital importance. In addition, given the small community and limited age range of participants (18-25 years), there was a high probability that participants would know each other through shared living experiences or other social contacts. Participants were given an information sheet outlining the background, purpose, and nature of the research, along with a consent form and an outline of the interview. These were available in English and Latvian (see Appendices). Participants were invited to sign and return their consent form and were further advised that they could withdraw from the study at any stage in the process; self-selection was a vital component of the study. All documents were stored on the University OneDrive with a password. Lastly, transcripts of the interviews were shared with participants to check the document for accuracy. As discussed in the ethics application and can be seen in the appendices, if participants shared sensitive information and wanted to connect with someone, they each received a phone number from a Latvian and Russian speaking social worker at (Help Latvian Orphans Now is available 24hr./day and there is a walk-in clinic Riga).

4.5.1 Developing and Piloting the Interview

Consistent with the research aim and objectives, the interview was designed to encourage sharing of participants' life histories. This begins with an explanation of the intentions and reasoning of the researcher in collecting life stories. See the interview questions below.

Interview Schedule:

Question 1: What was your life like before you entered care?

Question 2: What was your life like in care?

Question 3: What has your life been like since leaving care?

Question 4: What were the things that supported you throughout your life?

Question 5: If you reflect on your time living in (care) the orphanage what worked well and what did not?

If participants hesitated for a lengthy time or expressed not knowing where to start, a follow-up question asking them to reflect on what brought them to the orphanage, what life was like in the orphanage and what life was like since leaving the orphanage was used as a prompt. The interview schedule was piloted with two participants: my daughter who is a care leaver from Latvia, and a friend of hers. Since leaving care, both interviewees had relocated to the United States. These subjects' feedback allowed the researcher to practise the delivery and refine the questions being used for interview. Feedback received suggested that the researcher simplifies the questions as much as possible without losing the essence of the questions. This allowed for respondents to take the interview questions in whatever direction they chose to go in. This was especially important in the case where respondents used English (their second language) to answer the questions posed in the interview. Piekkari & Reis (2004) conclude in their enquiry on cross-cultural research and interviewing that although the researcher must stay vigilant when interviewing participants in a second language, it is acceptable. They discussed the added complexity with the use of translators and additional researchers. They note that the more people are involved, the higher the chance of inconsistencies and misunderstanding of the participant's meaning. This study worked to combat these inconsistencies and misunderstandings using a single interviewer and a single translator and cross-referencing data, translation, and participant review of the data. The interview was additionally offered in Russian or Latvian to meet the needs of the diverse participant pool by using the language they felt most comfortable using. Translations and transcribing in Latvian and Russian were done by two different people. Feedback was given regarding the need for a break from the interview at the midpoint of the interview, which was implemented as required. Additionally, it was decided to have refreshments available throughout the interview and offer periodic breaks.

4.5.2 The Interviews

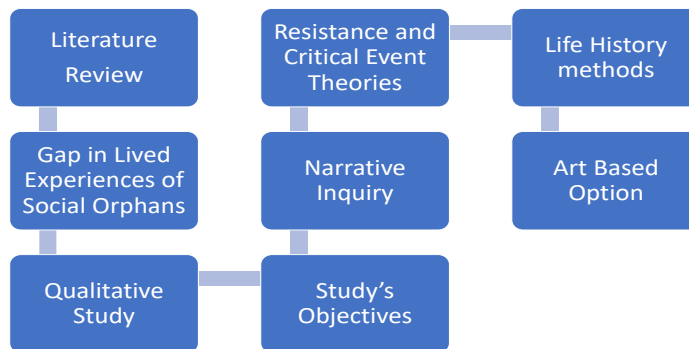
I drew upon my social work clinical practice skills to create a comfortable rapport with the participants before the interview recording began. Participants were each given a written information sheet and consent documentation in Latvian and which they reviewed again. Participants were aware of the researcher's position as an adoptive parent of an older child from a Latvian orphanage. Many participants enquired about this experience. Before beginning the recorded interviews, the confidentiality of their reporting was stressed again, with attention given to the circumstances of the closeness of the social orphan community. None of the participants noted a concern about this dynamic; however, it was essential to the researcher to stress this point. It was explained to participants that life stories reflected the meaning and the construction of their own experience. Less importance was given to the factual representation of their experience in this context.

Throughout the interview, active listening formed the basis of the questioning methods. The researcher allowed the participant to speak about their experiences until there was a natural break. A clarifying or follow-up question was used if needed. Many participants took the information given regarding collecting life stories quite literally and told their stories chronologically. During the interview, active listening, and empathic dialogue (a therapeutic interview technique that can allow a sense of identification and joining between social worker and client) were employed. While intentionally using active listening techniques, the researcher did so without embellishing the relational connection to avoid merging the line between a research interview and a therapeutic interview. As expected, and evidenced in the findings, some participants discussed extremely sensitive experiences in present and personal histories. These included physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, rape, sex trafficking and child neglect. Others inferred or gestured about these types of events but struggled to verbalise them explicitly. The researcher intentionally minimised the exploration of specifically potentially traumatic experiences. These specific events were not a part of the study's objective. In the ethics section there is more detailed information regarding how sensitive information was handled.

The interviews were openly guided conversations, ranging from 50 minutes to three hours and 30 minutes. The researcher intentionally did not complete the interview abruptly after the last question but instead finished the interview gently and then offered more refreshments. The conversation continued casually for 10-20 minutes to establish that the participant was composed and at their emotional baseline. All interviews were digitally recorded using two recording devices; immediately

after the participant left, the researcher recorded notes about the interview. Gertz (2003) stresses the importance in qualitative research of the journal and field notes for reflexivity. Field notes were completed after each interview by me and were handwritten in a field journal using pseudonyms. These notes assisted in the analysis and included impressions and reactions that came up during the interview.

Figure 4-5 Addition of an Art Based Option



4.5.3 Art Based Option in Data Collection

Research participants were invited but not required to participate in using other mediums such as art and writing to express lived experiences. Out of the nineteen participants, several participated in producing art and writing to be included in the data collection. There was some question about how responsive the participants might be to participation in the interviews in the research planning process. This suggested the bricolage approach to offer alternative ways for participants to contribute to the research data that was also cohesive with the rest of the methodologies of the study. According to Lincoln & Guba (2017), the bricolage approach is an epistemological approach that describes how individuals construct and communicate knowledge. The approach does not look for ultimate truths in data collection but instead it seeks meaning from lived experiences through a variety of ways. This was congruent with the current theoretical approach and even supported it. Uncovering meaning through the bricolage approach challenges dominant narratives and reveals the complexities of lived experience.

4.5.3.1 *The Art Based Process*

Several art mediums were supplied outside the interview room on tables including basic paints, coloured pencils, pens, and a variety of paper were made available to participants after the interview. Several participants chose to stay and create a piece to share with the researcher and others dropped it off later in the data collection time-period. Still others, mainly the male participants, declined the invitation to contribute to the data in this way. An explanation of what the piece meant to the participant was offered to the researcher and other times not. Twelve works of art will be shown in the Thematic findings Chapter 6. There is an intentional decision on the researcher's part not to analyse from a therapeutic or any other stance the pieces of art but instead collect them as additional data that offered insight into the participants' lived experiences. Any titles provided by the participants and any explanation that was further shared about the art was reported. If the participant chose not to comment on the art, that position on the part of the participant was respected by the researcher. Creative expression is reflexive in nature as participants use drawings and writing of their choosing to reflect on with researchers. When using a creative or art-based elements researchers enable participants to share their voice in more than one way.

4.5.4 Person on the Ground

From the formation of the study there was a need for a 'person on the ground' as I have labelled her in Latvia. The need for this was due to several reasons including language factors, accessibility, and ethics. In Chapter 1 the relationship between myself and staff members from the orphanage was described. One individual and I, Kristine, stayed connected and Kristine agreed to take on this position in my research. Fluent in Latvian, Russian and English with an educational background in Social Pedagogy and several years of experience working in children's care homes in Latvia she was a natural choice. The responsibilities she took on in this study were 1. Translation of all ethics material into Latvian. 2. Made initial contact with the first five participants. 3. Staying present to help welcome participants at the data collection. 4. Stayed present in the common room where refreshments were located throughout the interviews. 5. She was one of two translators if necessary. These responsibilities were vital to the success of the study, specifically the data collection. Her contribution to lowering the language barriers was significant despite most participants speaking English. This significantly increased the numbers of participants as the initial five contacts she made

turned into 19 participants from the snowball method. Ethically, she also had a significant effect as going into this study I was aware that this was a marginalised population who came from a different culture than my own despite my familiarity with the Latvian culture. I wanted to act in ways that were culturally competent and to accomplish this fully I needed a guide for this which she was.

Additionally, given the marginalised position many of the participants came from I wanted there to be a Latvian connection present that made available a sense of safety. This strategy worked and participants reported things such as: “I felt like I could talk here” and “It was fun to run into everyone here.”

4.5.5 Common Space

Given the relatively small care leaver cohort in Riga (where the study took place) most participants knew each other in some manner. It was not planned for in the study for participants to have contact with each other but for the weeks of data collection and transcription there was often a busy common room. The interview room was a private space upstairs from the common room. Participants brought friends, babies, toddlers, mothers, partners along to sit in the common room and talk with Kristine (the person on the ground) my daughter Viktorija and another young woman who also grew up in the orphanage. By the second day of data collection, we realised we required more food to serve and some toys. There was additionally a large table with creative art supplies that were on offer if participants wanted to express themselves in this way. The common room, although unplanned, emerged as a meaningful community space before and after the interviews.

4.5.6 Participant Recruitment

Beyond selecting a research topic and appropriate research design, obtaining an adequate sample is the most fundamental task in creating credible research (Mason, 2010). Sample size and composition have been the subjects of much discussion within the qualitative interview literature with varying recommendations on the size and makeup of sample participants (Beitin, 2012). Ritchie and Lewis (2003) contend that qualitative research does not require a large sample; because qualitative research is very labour-intensive, analysing a large sample can be time-consuming and impractical. They suggest a diminishing return point; as the study goes on, more data does not necessarily lead to more information. “Within any research area, different participants can have diverse opinions.” (Mason, 2010, p.43). Therefore, qualitative samples must be large enough to ensure that important different perceptions are uncovered, but small enough to avoid becoming repetitive (Mason, 2010). Green and

Thorogood (2018) suggest that in interview studies little new data comes out of transcripts after interviewing 20 or so people. Patton (2015) recommends that sampling designs specify minimum samples based on expected fair coverage of the phenomenon given the purpose of the study. In the end nineteen interviews were conducted for this study. Appendix 3-5 participant information flier was created in Latvian and English and distributed to five care leavers known to the researcher. Additionally, a translator native to Latvia could speak to prospective research participants and offer further information as needed.

4.5.7 Purposive/ Snowball Sampling Approach

A purposive/ snowball sampling approach was used to secure the 19 participants. Participants were referred to the study through the original five who were recruited. Mason (2010) contends that the number of qualitative research participants depends on data saturation, which is redundancy. Additionally, Mason (2016) suggests that sample sizes for qualitative studies must locate themselves between too large a study with redundant data and too small a study where data of diverse discernment is revealed. Participants were drawn from a diverse background of rural and urban locations and gender divisions and cultural backgrounds that occurred naturally. However, Patton (2015) warns researchers that over interviewing the number of participants in attempts to hit saturation can weaken the richness of the data. Nineteen interviews were conducted from the participants that came forward interested in participating in the study. Eight individuals self-identified as fitting the interview criteria; however, upon further exploration were identified as underage thus did not meet the criteria. The researcher had ethical approval for participants exclusively 18 years of age and older. Age was also a consideration in the formulation of the study as the interview guide required the ability to reflect on life experiences. Additionally, there was no discrimination based on race, culture, faith, religion, political or sexual orientation, gender identity and other features.

4.5.8 Research Participants

As extensive travel was required to Riga, the capital of Latvia, for the data collection, there was complex planning included. Data collection is unpredictable. The research took place over three weeks between February 5th and February 26th, 2020. Selection of participants for the study happened organically, as is typical when interviewing transient or marginalised populations. Participants were given a central location at a local hotel conference room to meet at an assigned time. Permission to

record the interview was obtained both verbally and in written form. Most participants did not have access to email or post, so all communication was done via telephone.

Participants arrived, often bringing a friend who heard about the study who was also interested in participating. The person on the ground was always present and served as an interpreter when necessary. All interviews were scheduled during the hours of 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.; however, given the organic nature, interviews often lasted into the evening hours and were unpredictable in length. Physical settings are essential in providing the environment in which people can best feel safe and comfortable articulating their thoughts and feeling free to express their feelings (Goffman, 1961). The interview space was considered a neutral location, a small meeting room at a local Riga hotel with easy public transit access. The hotel area was well-lit, considered a safe part of the city and familiar to the population interviewed. The meeting room cost 12 Euros daily and was small enough to encourage a certain amount of intimacy when speaking; however, not too small as to be considered confining. The room was decorated with comfortable seating spaces and included several items to encourage a sense of safety and comfort—these included items such as tissues, a blanket, and refreshments.

4.5.9 Transcription

The researcher transcribed 17 interviews spoken in English while the two interviews conducted in Russian were translated and transcribed twice by different Russian native speakers. Each interview was saved as a separate document and linked to the adjoining field note. There can always be issues of accuracy when translating and transcribing data. To combat potential inaccuracies, interviews completed in Russian were translated and transcribed by two different research assistants to ensure accuracy. Witcher (2015) contends that participants tell their story while continually re-making the way they present themselves in the story. Since the researcher is familiar with the population being interviewed, there was a risk that assumptions about participants' meanings and interpretations of their story could be compromised and thus framed differently than the participant intended. To ensure against this, each interview transcript was shown to the participant for approval to mitigate this possibility (Atkinson, 1998). With non-English speaking participants, the interview was transcribed into their chosen language and sent to them for approval before transcription in English. Two native speakers also fluent in English checked the transcriptions. Eighteen participants approved their transcript, and one participant was not reachable as he was incarcerated and did not respond to communication.

4.5.10 Thematic Analysis

Following the consideration of the theoretical approach, a thematic analysis utilising Braun and Clark's method (2019) was employed, which will be discussed in Chapter 5. A Thematic Analysis according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) involves breaking down data into categories that become groupings. The thematic analysis in this study was completed through NVivo and a manual analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2017), a thematic analysis can be applied across a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches. It is flexible and universally accessible, especially to first-time researchers. Categories of meaning are derived from the data itself through a process of inductive reasoning which aligns with this study. According to Madhill et al., (2000), thematic analysis can be driven by the researcher's analytical interest in the research question and broader theoretical assumptions when looking at qualitative results. Additionally, the results are easily accessible to the general public. I took great care to ensure the adherence to rigour throughout the analysis. Riessman (2000), a prominent narrative researcher, supports the analysis of narrative research with and qualitative analysis by using the thematic analysis methodology. After reviewing the method of thematic analysis, Braun and Clark's model of Reflexive Thematic Analysis was chosen. In 2006, Braun and Clark published a paper which included a six-part analysis model. Since that time, it has been refined to include an increase in reflexive aspects. Their method identifies analyses and report's themes within data as it relates the data to the broader context of the study (2006, 2019).

In thematic analysis, data generated by the interviews are not grouped according to pre-defined categories, but by categories of meaning and relationships between categories derived from the data itself. Using this method, the researcher applies a process of inductive reasoning. When applied, this method offers the means whereby the researcher can access and analyse the articulated perspectives that can be integrated with a model that seeks to explain the social processes under study (Jackson and Bazeley, 2019).

The thematic analysis method involves breaking down the data into groupings (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) and coding them into study generated categories. The groupings arising from this take two different forms. First, there are those categories which appear from the participants' own experience and language. Second, categories are identified by the researcher as necessary to the project's focus-of-inquiry. The objective of the participant-based groupings "is to reconstruct the categories used by subjects to conceptualise their own experiences and world view" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). For the

researcher-based sorting, the objective is to develop theoretical insights by developing the themes which “the process of comparative analysis stimulates thought that leads to both descriptive and explanatory categories” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

The types of groupings underwent content and definition changes. As words were classified, both the understanding of the categories' meaning and the relationship between the sections were developed and refined throughout the analytical process. According to Taylor and Bogdan (1984) using this method, “the researcher simultaneously codes and analyses data to develop concepts; by continually comparing specific incidents in the data, the researcher refines these concepts, identifies their properties, explores their relationships to one another, and integrates them into a coherent explanatory model” (Jackson and Bazeley, 2019). According to Braun and Clark (2006), the themes which are identified represent significant meaning between the data and the research question.

The Thematic analysis was applied to the selected data according to this six-step approach by Braun and Clarke (2017).

1. **Familiarisation with the data** involves reading and re-reading the data, to become immersed and intimately familiar with its content.
2. **Coding** is the process of generating succinct labels (codes) that identify notable features of the data that might be relevant to answering the research question. It involves coding the entire dataset. After completing the data set all the codes and relevant data extracts were grouped together for later stages of analysis.
3. **Generating initial themes** will be used for examining the codes and collated data to identify significant broader patterns of meaning. It then involves collating data relevant to each theme, so that one can work with the data and review the viability of each candidate theme.
4. **Reviewing themes** implies checking the candidate themes against the dataset, determining that they tell a convincing story of the data, and that answers to the research question have been completed. This study's thematic analysis themes are defined as patterns of shared meaning underpinned by a central concept or idea.
5. **Defining and naming themes** develops a detailed analysis, viewing the scope and focus to determine the 'story' of each theme. Further in this section one decides on an informative name for each theme.
6. **Writing up this** final phase involves combining the analytic narrative and data extracts while also contextualising the analysis concerning existing literature.

The table below shows the links in the stages as previously outlined and conducted in NVivo to the practical guidelines, as described by Braun and Clarke (2017). Their six-step approach to conducting thematic analysis is represented in the first column. The second column displays their corresponding application in NVivo. The third column corresponds to the elements of coding. I moved from initial participant-led descriptive coding to secondary coding which was more interpretivist and participant and researcher-led. The researcher only led the final themes, and the fourth column shows the more iterative nature of the tasks: the coding, analysis, and reporting as one move towards data completion. Appendix 8 shows the initial code book that was produced through the NVivo thematic analysis.

Table 4-1 Six Step Approach to Thematic Analysis

Braun and Clark Reflexive Thematic Analysis (2006, 2019).	Braun and Clark application through NVivo	Strategic Objective	Iterative Process throughout the Analysis
Familiarisation With Data	Phase 1: Reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas. Import data into the NVivo data system.	Data Management- Open and hierarchical coding through NVivo.	Assigning data to refined concepts to portray meaning.
Coding	Phase 2: Open coding- coding features of the data found interesting or important systematically.		
Generating Initial Themes	Phase 3: Categorise codes- collating codes into potential themes, gathering any relevant data to a possible theme.		Refining more abstract concepts.

Reviewing themes	Phase 4: Coding on- Checking that themes work concerning coded extracts and the entire data set. Creating a thematic map of the analysis process.	Descriptive accounts- Re-ordering and annotating through NVivo.	
Defining and naming themes	Phase 5: Data reduction- Analysis as an iterative process. Names and definitions of themes.		Assigning data to themes to portray the meaning.
Writing up findings	Phase 6: Generating analytical memos. Phase 7: Testing and validating Phase 8: Synthesising analytical memos. Final opportunity for analysis. Selection of extract examples, relating analysis to research questions, writing up findings.	Explanatory Accounts- extrapolating deeper meaning, drafting, summary statements through NVivo.	Assigning meaning. Generating themes.

Braun and Clarke (2017).

4.5.11 Validity and Trustworthiness

Validity and trustworthiness in qualitative research are quite different in definition than in quantitative research. Qualitative validity is how the researcher checks the accuracy of the data findings. Although validation of results occurs throughout the research process, it is essential to use specific considerations to accomplish this. Qualitative reliability ensures the researcher's particular approach is consistent with the model and validated by prior researchers and research projects (Creswell, 2014). Traditionally, the privileging of quantitative research methods has created a tendency to assume that the criteria used to judge the validity of quantitative studies can be applied to

qualitative research. Yardley (2015) asserts that this is an inaccurate assumption, and the diverse nature of qualitative research requires the application of its specific criteria. Currently, scholarly literature offers researchers many standards for best practices in qualitative research, beginning with Lincoln and Guba (1985) and is still frequently discussed (Lincoln et al., 2011).

Creswell (2013) argues that validity and trustworthiness are among the many strengths of qualitative research and are based on the accuracy of findings from the perspective of the researcher, participant, and readers. Creswell (2013) offers eight strategies that are incorporated into the research process. These are employed to measure qualitative research quality and that it is comprehensive in its scope. The strategies are suggestions of ways to ensure support for qualitative research by identifying and utilising the rigorous best practice criteria. These eight strategies were employed in the current study and are defined below.

4.5.11.1 Strategy One: Triangulation

Various data sources such as interviews, observations and field notes were examined and converged through the analysis and the development of themes. According to Creswell (2013) the triangulation process builds themes and adds to the study's validity.

4.5.11.2 Strategy Two: Member Checking

The findings were shared with the participants in the form of themes, and stories once they were determined. Participants were then allowed to comment on the findings or dispute them. This practice, according to Creswell (2013), increases the validity of the study.

4.5.11.2.1 Strategy Three: Using Rich, Thick Descriptions

The section highlights the complexity of various themes. Themes can be described as thick or rich, while detailed descriptions are used. Creswell (2013) implies that the study results are more valid and trustworthy when these types of descriptions that show complexity are used.

4.5.11.2.2 Strategy Four: Clarification of Researcher Bias

In Chapter 1 the researcher's bias was explored. Investigator self-reflection creates and provides an open and honest narrative for readers. Reflexivity is a core characteristic of qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). Examiners are encouraged to practice reflexivity while acknowledging how their background could impact their world view. It is often personal background that defines a researcher's interest so it must be considered when performing scientific enquiry. It is often this lens through which investigators construct and conduct research studies. Additionally, one's historical events provide essential links between one's individual experiences and academic curiosity; qualitative researchers are expected to engage in their social worlds.

4.5.11.2.3 Strategy Five: Present discrepant information that runs counter to the themes.

The stories told by the participants at times opposed the themes that emerged from the subject interviews. This data is also represented in the findings. Reflections on the themes opposed by the data collection represented the complexity of the research and offered additional depth to the current findings. Creswell (2013) argues that a discussion of contrary evidence contributes to the validity of research as it is richer and more realistic.

4.5.11.2.4 Strategy Six: Spending Prolonged Time in the Field

The researcher spent the past several years immersed in the Latvian culture. She had multiple stays of varying lengths in the country and became well versed in the day-to-day lives of the people. This researcher's most extended residency lasted approximately five weeks and provided her with an immersive experience. Through these experiences a well-developed and in-depth understanding of the conditions faced by emerging adult social orphans in Latvia was brought to life. Creswell (2013) claims that the more varied the researcher's experience with the population studied in their natural context, the more accurate the findings will be.

4.5.11.2.5 Strategy Seven: Peer Debriefing

The researcher weekly collaborated and debriefed with two peer researchers who attended the University of Dundee. These weekly meetings included opportunities to review and discuss progress on the research, including questioning all aspects and decisions related to organisation and implementation of this study. According to Creswell (2013), this process ensures the process stays focused on its outcomes and resonates with someone other than the researcher and the supervisors. In turn then, this adds validity to the research.

4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter gave a conceptual understanding of the theoretical model applied in this study. Sikes and Goodson (2017) state that research is about “increasing the universal sum of knowledge” (p.66) on the topic under scrutiny. Narrative inquiry, life history methods, an art-based component with the underpinnings of critical event and resistance theory accomplishes this through prioritising stories or narratives of the subjects, lived experiences as the source of knowledge. When researching a marginalised group of people, life history research increases the participant's power and decreases the homogenising effect of having third parties share a story second or third hand. According to Riessman (2016), life history narratives counter-stigmatise discourses and challenge the dominant narratives, which assume that all people in a specific group have the same experiences. The process of someone sharing their life history story can provide learning and growth experiences for the participants. However, this is not the intention or purpose for using this methodology in the current study. Nevertheless, the acknowledgement that this can happen for participants is worthy of noting. Goodson (2010) suggests that storying past events may bring forward new and different meanings for the narrator.

In the Methods section, the pragmatics and outline of the methods used to collect, interpret, and present the data found in this investigation are examined and justified. This included utilising the life history approach and the narrative interview, the art-based option, piloting the interview questions, recruiting interview participants, conducting the interviews, and the transcription process. A description of the choice and process of Braun and Clark's Reflexive Thematic Analysis (2018) was included and the coding strategy utilising NVivo analysis. Appendix 7 shows the initial codebook from NVivo analysis. Having employed this methodology to obtain and organise the raw data, the following Chapters 5 and 6 will address the comprehensive findings as they emerged from the data.

5 Life History Findings

5.1 Introduction

The following chapter presents participants' life history narratives as elicited from the interviews. Each participant's narrative was organized into three sections that correlate with the interview questions regarding their life stories namely: before, during and after care. As discussed in Chapter 4 each narrative will be examined through three lenses which are: the individual context of each participant through a quote, participant identified critical events and acts of resistance. A thematic analysis is discussed in Chapter 6. The portions of stories that are highlighted for the reader were chosen based on Riessman's (2009) criteria of choosing interviews to highlight based on the richness of a story and the emphasis placed on it by the participant (p. 60). The context section introduces the participants and offers a view of the larger picture of events that shaped their stories from their perspective and in their words. The critical events section identifies the turning points highlighted by the participants as significant to their life trajectories. The acts of resistance section highlights, the stories that were identified as resistance within their given context. The chapter begins with Table 5.1 which exhibits the biographical data of all 19 participants.

Table 5-1 Participant Biographical Data

Participant	Gender	Language	Age	Host Experience	Foster Placement	Education Level achieved	Current Employment	Legal System	Children
Svetlana	Female	Russian	19	Yes	Yes	Primary	Restaurant Work	No	1
Kristine	Female	Latvian	20	Yes	Yes	Trade School	Veterinary Assistant	Yes	0
Natasha	Female	Russian	18	Yes	Yes	Primary	Babysitter	No	1
Veronika	Female	Russian	19	Yes	No	Secondary/training	Teacher	No	0
Ana	Female	Latvian	22	Yes	yes	Secondary	Cashier	No	2
Galina	Female	Russian	21	Yes	yes	Primary	Tourist Shop	No	1
Kisa	Female	Russian	19	Yes	yes	Primary	N/A	No	1
Irina	Female	Russian	19	No	yes	Primary	N/A	No	2

Mila	Female	Russian	23	Yes	No	Primary	Restaurant Work	No	1
Madara	Female	Latvian	22	Yes	yes	Primary	Waiter in U.K.	No	0
Tania	Female	Russian	21	Yes	No	Primary	Takeaway Shop	No	10
Laura	Female	Russian	22	No	yes	Primary	N/A	No	2
Dima	Male	Russian	22	No	yes	Primary	N/A	Yes	0
Maxim	Male	Russian	22	No	yes	Primary/Training	Tram Driver	Yes	0
Vadim	Male	Russian	20	Yes	Yes	Primary/Training	Mechanic	Yes	0
Leon	Male	Russian	19	No	Yes	Primary	Waiter in U.K.	Yes	0
Christian	Male	Latvian	22	Yes	Yes	Secondary	Pastoral Assistant	No	0
Dmitri	Male	Latvian	23	No	yes	Primary	Dishwasher	Yes	1
Igor	Male	Latvian	23	No	Yes	Primary	Drug Dealer	Yes	0

The Participant biographical data in the table above includes gender, language, age, and whether the participant had experienced hosting, foster placement in addition to group care as well as what education level they reached, what they did for employment if they were employed, had they been involved in the legal system and if they had children and how many. This information was chosen from the data for this table to give a comprehensive overview of the participants, but it was not intended to be used to form generalizations. All the information in the chart is explored in the following two findings' chapters while exploring the narrative analysis.

5.2 Life History Narrative Findings

The following life history narrative findings are analysed one participant at a time and as discussed in the introduction to this chapter they are explored through three lenses following with context, followed by Critical Events and Acts of Resistance.

5.2.1 Participant one: Svetlana

5.2.1.1 *Context: Svetlana's words*

I don't remember much before the orphanage I don't really want to remember. My parents were always drunk and fighting, my dad beat my mom up a lot and beat us when he was drunk. We

had no food most of the time so I stole whatever I could for my sister and I to eat. At school I fought all the time with other kids' boys and girls. Everything always made me angry.

5.2.1.2 Critical Events

- Sisterly bond.
- Moving to the second group.
- Sister adopted.
- Having a baby.

5.2.1.2.1 Sisterly bond

Svetlana's life experiences prior to the orphanage were characterized by hardship. Both parents struggled with addictions, domestic violence, physical and emotional abuse, and poverty was her reality. Simultaneously, Svetlana felt an alliance with her parents and a strong bond with her younger sister. Removal from the home and temporary placement in the Crisis Centre prior to the orphanage added further abuse by an older girl who sexually abused her and her younger sister. This contributed to her anger at the world and her need to protect both her and her sister from outside forces. "I am tough, I fight like a boy and my sister is small and weak. After that bitch abused us, I swore I would never let that happen to me or my sister again even if I have to kill the next person who tries." The two sisters stayed bonded through transfer to a more permanent orphanage and being separated into different bedrooms. They often sneaked into each other's rooms at bedtime so they could share a small bunkbed. The fighting with peers continued and not just when Svetlana was provoked, she often provoked others seemingly out of her own anger.

5.2.1.2.2 Moving to the second group

The orphanage Svetlana lived in was divided into three groups by age although exceptions were made in this division for other considerations. Svetlana was one of these exceptions. She was moved from the youngest group (ages 5-12) into the second group (ages 13-16) at ten years old because she was considered difficult to manage. "When they put me in the 2nd group, I was incredibly sad, I still wanted to play with dolls and my sister. I didn't want to go there. I was too small to go there. They killed my inner child. Teachers were afraid that I will beat the younger

kids because I had to fight to survive.” Six months after this transition to the older group of children, Svetlana was placed in a psychiatric hospital for three months for suicidal ideation and behaviour problems. After returning from the hospital having endured three months of frequent restraints, she acted out on a younger girl in the first group tying her up with cords, locking her in the closet and humiliating her with a group of other girls. She reflects on this experience in the interview as acting out her anger from the lack of control over her entire life, however it was specifically triggered by restraints at the hospital.

5.2.1.2.3 Sister Adopted

Siblings for the most part are kept together in the Latvian care system, however siblings are separated if one child has the chance for adoption and if the legal connection between the siblings is holding them back from this opportunity. To clarify if one child is very adoptable meaning they seem well-adjusted, gets along with others and the other sibling does not the decision may be made to legally separate them. This was the case with Svetlana. Given her history of getting into trouble and her social, emotional, behavioural issues the two sisters were legally separated without their knowledge. The younger sister was offered an opportunity to be adopted to another country and when Svetlana discovered this fact she was devastated. “I felt like dying, I was losing my only lifeline to my family, I felt as if they were ripping off part of my body. I know I should be happy for her, but I was jealous, angry, and sad. I felt betrayed by her for agreeing to go and leave me alone.” After her sister left the orphanage with her adopted family Svetlana entered the darkest period she had experienced in her life. She was brought back to the psychiatric hospital for a few months and was moved to another orphanage that only housed girls. When she transferred to this center at age 14, she became pregnant.

5.2.1.2.4 Having a Baby

Svetlana reflected that she purposefully got pregnant to gain a family connection after she experienced the loss of her younger sister when she was adopted. She hid her pregnancy for as long as possible from the orphanage workers. She knew she would be sent to a different orphanage for pregnant girls. She was in an abusive relationship with the baby’s father. “He beat me while I was pregnant, but I didn’t want him to leave me either as I would be alone. Right

after (the birth), I realized that I was going to be a bad mother. I wanted to be good, but I was crying because I knew I wouldn't be." Her son is five years old now and reflecting, she feels his birth was a pivotal moment in her life. She has since left the orphanage and receives a small monthly allowance from the government to live and provide for her son. For the first two years of his life, she suffered a deep "depression" and struggled to find consistent employment. Since then, she has worked a variety of jobs and regrets that she continues to struggle to care for him. He has been diagnosed with developmental delays in speech and learning and is attending a special needs school. The complete care of her son is hers as the boy's father has not been a part of her son's life since he was two and provides no parental or financial assistance.

5.2.1.3 *Acts of Resistance*

Svetlana told multiple stories that included small acts of resistance against authority. One story highlighted resistance that she stressed meant a lot to her. She was moved to an orphanage for older adolescent girls that had the intention of readying the girls for an independent life. "I realized girls were disappearing at night and coming home in the morning very tired and ragged looking. Then people were talking and saying that a member of the night staff was forcing them to give rich men in cars blowjobs and to fuck businesspeople at the hotel. I knew when that staff member started being nice to me, he wanted me to do this next, but he was only picking pretty, quiet girls who would be afraid of him. I started screaming, swearing at him, and acting terribly when he was around so he would not pick me. He called me crazy and stayed away. One night he came to my room at night to talk to me I kicked him very hard and punched him I fight like a boy, and he swore at me and left."

5.2.2 Participant Two: Kristine

5.2.2.1 *Context: Kristine's words*

My first memory of my life is when I was four years old. My mom had already passed away. I lived with my dad. I was in kindergarten. One day my aunt took me and my older sister and took us to her place in the countryside. She didn't inform my dad. The oldest brother stayed with our dad. We lived at her place like slaves. She was hurting us a lot. Especially me, because I was the youngest kid, and she could do whatever she wanted with me. I still don't know what was wrong

with her because she enjoyed hurting us. Her biological kids were always blaming me and my sister for whatever they did. We lived there till the first grade of school. The school was very far from the house. Whenever we were late for her car, we had to walk a huge distance to get to the school. There was a lady from the local village office, I really liked her, and I was spending time at her place after school, waiting for my aunt. Once she saw that I had a bleeding hole in my head, she questioned me, and I was taken to the hospital. I spent a long time at the hospital. They took in my sister as well because she had been beaten by my aunt. While we were at the hospital, formalities were made. They were looking for our parents, for the place we could live, because we couldn't stay with our aunt any longer. A lady got to know that two girls are at the hospital, who suffered a lot. She came to visit us. She got to know our story, she decided to visit us. She also did the paperwork, so we could spend one month in a Rehabilitation Centre from trauma and abuse.

5.2.2.2 Critical events

- Moving in with Aunt
- Meeting the lady from the village
- Host family

5.2.2.2.1 Moving in with Aunt

Kristine and her younger sister were taken by her aunt from her father as her mother had passed away from a drug overdose earlier in her life. The aunt came when the father wasn't home and took the sisters suddenly without permission from the father or informing him of their whereabouts. This was a critical event as it changed the course of her life according to Kristine. "Perhaps my life would have been different if this hadn't happened, as bad as our dad was as he was drunk all the time, he did not hurt us. My aunt gave us many traumas by beating us."

Kristine reflects, hoping he would find them and return them home, romanticizing her home life a bit as in reality it was a difficult life for a young girl taking care of her father and younger sister. Food was scarce and she would divide what she could find in the garbage or handouts between the three of them. The aunt's house had more abundant food, but the abuse became

unbearable for Kristine and her sister. “When I think back, I’m sure that if we stayed at my aunts, me and my sister would not be alive anymore.”

5.2.2.2.2 Meeting the lady from the village

The lady from the village saved Kristine’s life one day as she was walking to school, bleeding profusely from the head. After a particularly abusive beating by the aunt, she took her to the hospital. “I spent at the hospital a very long time. I never was cared about so well, a clean place to sleep, washing me by the nurses, warm food many times a day. They took in my sister as well because she had been beaten by my aunt. While we were at the hospital, formalities were made. They were looking for a place we could live we couldn’t stay at our aunt any longer.” This lady from the village visited the sisters at the hospital over the month and began forming a relationship with them. She brought sweets and small toys for them such as a book and a small baby doll. The woman and her husband decided to foster the two sisters and made many promises to the girls about possibly adopting them. The foster situation lasted six months and ended quite painfully for Kristine. Initially, after moving in with them her life felt hopeful and happy, and they felt “spoiled” by all the toys they owned for the first time in their lives. She reflected they had never experienced rules from their parents as life was often chaotic and crisis oriented, survival had been their goal both at home and with the aunt. The foster family had expectations, rules, and a schedule to follow and Kristine said they had no understanding of how to live this way. The parents struggled to understand and had limited tools to use to bridge this gap in understanding for the sisters and the situation failed to work. The girls were dropped off at an orphanage and this rejection emotionally hurt. “When foster parents took us to the orphanage, we didn’t communicate for a long time. I felt betrayed.”

5.2.2.2.3 Host Family

Kristine was hosted by two different families in the United States and by one specific family multiple times. Kristine was a young adolescent at the time of the hosting and enjoyed the trips to the United States and said specifically one family that she visited multiple times she became close to, and they inquired if she wished them to adopt her, but she declined not wanting to leave her siblings in Latvia. “They wanted to adopt me, but I was so close to my own siblings and

didn't agree to be adopted alone. We were writing letters to each other and now we communicate through Facebook. With them I saw what a happy family should be like.”

5.2.2.3 Acts of Resistance

When Kristine and her sister lived with her aunt, she told a story of resistance to her aunts' authority that offered the two girls a slight amount of relief from the situation. “My sister and I learned a little bit of English from the television and my aunt knew none. When she would beat us, we would say ‘Your stupid cobra we hate you’ she would slap us harder and ask what we said but we would just tell her we were telling her how pretty she is. Later we would laugh about it because she was like a snake.” Kristine, at the time of the interview was studying to be a veterinary assistant and reflects that the same part of her that taunted her aunt while she was physically abusing her is what gives her the strength to revolt against the stigma she feels and go to university. She is studying to work in Veterinary Medicine and people in school often judge her if they know she was a social orphan. Her school bills are paid by the government and teachers often know this and treat her differently. “I am very independent thanks to the orphanage. I have no feeling that I depend on somebody. I can do everything myself. If I have the aim, I will achieve it. If I want something, I will get it.” Kristine says she will prove them all wrong when she graduates from school.

5.2.3 Participant Three: Natasha

5.2.3.1 *Context: Natasha's words*

Before the orphanage, my mom had a friend that had two younger children. When my dad was drunk, sometimes we stayed with them. Anya (mom's friend) would always beat me. She took down my pants and took her belt and beat me. She would make me eat the gross soup with chicken skins. She hit us with belts and cords. Cords would hurt the most. My sister has scars from that. She would just hit us all the time. I remember one time they got drunk or high and she was playing weird music. She had a vibrator and she said close your eyes and open your mouth and she put it in my mouth. Our dad was drinking all the time. My dad and mom fought a lot. One time my dad called my mom to go over and sleep with him at night and she didn't want to, and I took a belt to protect my mother from him. Once he threw a knife across the room to my

mom. He missed. When he was coming home drunk, me and my sister were hiding under the bed. He always hits my mom, too. One time my mom and her friend wanted to go out and she left me with her two kids. I was watching them, and I hit them. She had a camera on, and she caught me. She beat me for hours for that.

5.2.3.2 Critical Events

- Mom can't help me.
- Crisis Centre
- Best friend

5.2.3.2.1 Mom can't help me.

Natasha reflected that the moment in time when she realized her mom could not help or protect her from Anya's abuse was critical as she felt unprotected by her parents. She reports that the effects of the abuse by the mother's friend felt "more traumatic" for her than anything her parents did because her mother was present but did not defend her, being "often drunk." The abuse was physical, emotional, and crossed over at times into sexual humiliation and abuse. The family suffered from chronic hunger; any monies that were brought home fed the addictions before the needs of the children. Natasha's father was physically abusive to both sisters and the mother beat them and psychologically terrified them about being removed and placed in an orphanage. "Our dad was always scaring us that the people from the social service will come and take us if we don't behave. Every time we heard a car come by, we needed to hide." The family was reported from school and the children were removed one day from class and brought to a crisis centre to be evaluated before more permanent placement.

5.2.3.2.2 Crisis Centre

Natasha identifies the crisis centre as a critical moment as she was sexually abused there by a sixteen-year-old girl who caught her alone in a room. This assault she says altered her way of thinking about herself. She reports this incident began a lifelong struggle with trauma including related symptoms such as hypervigilance, intrusive thoughts, flashbacks, distorted body image and an eating disorder. As the staff were unaware of the incident, she did not receive any

treatment and never told anyone about it for several years until she discovered a friend at the orphanage that endured a similar assault possibly by the same assailant.

5.2.3.2.3 Best friend

Over the rest of her childhood and adolescence Natasha became quite close with several other children at the orphanage but specifically with one girl who became her best friend. “I felt like she was my family, and we are still like this today. Even if we fight, we will always support each other without her I would not get through my life.” Natasha reflected on the fun they “made” for themselves in the orphanage “making plays and concerts, watching old American movies. We had an apple garden behind our school, and we would always climb and sit on the trees and eat green apples.”

5.2.3.3 Acts of Resistance

The friendship discussed above offered Natasha support in navigating difficult circumstances at the orphanage, such as a night teacher that often hit them for numerous offenses such as washing their hair out of turn. “We weren’t allowed to wastewater so my best friend and I would distract the mean teacher. We would put a tiny bit of poop on paper and hide it in the closet of someone’s room and then complain about the smell to the teacher. While she was looking for the smell and getting the kid in trouble, we would quickly wash our hair.” This and other everyday acts of resistance against the inappropriate and often abusive authority of the night teacher offered Natasha a lens of humour to look back on some difficult memories and a reflection on times she experienced a small amount of power.

5.2.4 Participant Four: Veronika

5.2.4.1 Context: Veronika’s words

One day my baby brother was sick, he was eight months old he had asthma. She (mother) had to take him to the hospital. My brother went with his aunt, my sister went with her grandmother and the doctor told my mom I could stay home alone I was eight years old. I stayed home alone, and the lights stopped working. I went upstairs in the middle of the night and knocked at my

grandmother's door. No one answered there were rats all around on the stairs and outside their door. I opened the door myself and went in I was very scared. I woke up my grandmother and they said I couldn't stay with them. She called my sister's grandmother the next day and asked if I could stay with her. She came to get me, and I stayed with her.

5.2.4.2 Critical Events

- Being left alone
- Haircut
- Host Family

5.2.4.2.1 Being left alone

Veronika was left alone often when she lived at home. By the age of eight, she was left alone a lot caring for three younger siblings over night until midday when her mother would return from “partying.” Her mother was seventeen when Veronika was born and had a difficult childhood herself living in poverty with what her mother told her were “terrible parents.” Veronika herself experienced her grandparents differently than the way her mother did, and they lived in the flat upstairs. She felt loved by them and has happy memories of them, “my grandfather was an artist and I used to love to watch him paint.” The self-reported theme of being left alone began the night her youngest brother was born when she was seven. She was left alone in the downstairs flat for two days. Her other two siblings went to their paternal grandparents as each sibling had a different father but as Veronika’s father was considered a “bad” man and much older than her mother there was no contact and no one willing to care for her. Veronika’s grandparents lived upstairs but did not take her in. These two days were “terrifying” and created a self-reported change in her personality. She felt quieter and sad all the time after this event and several months later when her baby brother was sick, and she was left alone again she attempted to get help as described above in the context section. Shortly after the children were removed from the home and all the children went to live with outside families except her. She was placed and remained in the orphanage.

5.2.4.2.2 Haircut

Veronika had never received a haircut before the age of eight years and felt it was a part of her identity. “I had long, beautiful hair all the way to my waist.” When she arrived at the crisis centre the first thing that happened was the women cut her hair off into a very short “boy’s cut.” This experience of the haircut and the way it was carried out was the start of a series of events where she felt herself losing her identity. Even at 19 years old she states she has never been able to grow back her hair as it was before that haircut.

5.2.4.2.3 Host Family

Like many children in Latvia Veronika was asked if she wanted to visit the United States of America for a summer holiday. All she understood about this was it would be, “exciting just like the movies and I thought I might meet Miley Cyrus.” Veronika was at an orphanage in the capital of Riga and her school taught the English language along with Latvian and then Russian which was her native language. Before the orphanage she had attended school sporadically and spoke only Russian at home. She was packed up with a matching shirt and 50 odd other children and flown to Utah to stay for four weeks with a Christian family she had never met. There would be a Latvian orphanage worker in that part of the country that would check on her via telephone once a week. The second day she was there she started to cry because she missed her family and no one understood her, they required her to say prayers she could not pronounce. The host mother chastised her and made her stand in the corner of the kitchen until she stopped crying. This was a critical event for Veronika as once more she felt alone in the world. After this experience she said she never cried again unless she was locked in the bathroom where no one could see her emotions.

5.2.4.3 Acts of Resistance

Veronika’s orphanage had a night teacher that locked their bedroom doors at bedtime and refused to open them when the children called for her to say that they needed a bathroom. No other staff member did this, it was only on this teacher’s shift, and it upset many of the children and they would bang on the doors begging to be let out. “My roommate and me knew in the

morning she would go around and empty the waste bins so we drank a lot of sink water before bed and after we banged on the door, and she refused to let us go to the toilet we peed in the waste bin as many times as we could and then covered up the top with paper. When she emptied the bins, she put her hand in and got covered with our pee. She swore at us and called us names and we ran from her so she couldn't hit us. It felt so good.”

5.2.5 Participant Five: Ana

5.2.5.1 Context: Ana's words

Before the orphanage I was living with my mom, but because my mother was irresponsible, I started to live with my grandmother, she was feeding us and helping with school. My mom was fighting with my stepfather all the time, too. I had to go out with my little brother all the time. I didn't like the stepfather because he didn't take care of me. I remember that I didn't want to talk to him and spend time with him. When my mom started seeing him, she became different. They were drinking and fighting and he was not nice to my mom.

5.2.5.2 Critical Events

- Grandmother's love
- Orphanage is home.

5.2.5.2.1 Grandmother's love

Ana had a special relationship with her grandmother and reflects that this was the person with whom she felt love. “My grandmother lived in the other room, and she was all the time helping me and my brother. My grandmother doesn't show love, but we could feel it. She (mother) became mad when we ate food grandmother had prepared to us.” Her Grandmother also was who alerted the authorities that Ana was abused. “It was wintertime before Christmas. Something happened and we were fighting and they were hitting me badly and my grandmother was in the next room. She tried to help but it didn't work, so she called the police, and they came and took me away. “Ana realizes now that this must have been difficult for her grandmother to do knowing the implications of alerting the authorities but feels it was the best decision as “I might

not be alive if I stayed there.” Ana, who is pregnant at the time of the interview, states that her grandmother is who she wants to emulate as a parent.

5.2.5.2.2 Orphanage is home.

Ana described a positive experience in the orphanage with caring staff members. “When I think back, I think the orphanages were good. They are giving a chance for kids. They are giving much more than families do.” She acknowledged that she is aware of friends who had negative experiences in care and even that her lack of any abusive experiences may be considered uncommon however she felt that it was possible that reports of abusive staff in the orphanages may be exaggerated. Instead, she thinks it is possible that most staff are not trained in how to handle “children such as us” and instead become “frustrated and threaten to punish” the children. Ana reflected that the orphanage taught her to, “save my money, clean up my things and be a good person which my mom did not know how to do.”

5.2.5.3 Acts of Resistance

Ana was hosted with a family in the United States when she was fifteen and sixteen years old. She had a positive experience, and the family began to pursue adoption which is unusual for an adolescent of her age. The orphanage staff and the director met with her and were expressing praise for her. She even felt “special” and was receiving a lot of attention from the other children and the adults as well. “I wanted to be adopted, but I was thinking about my brother. I love him and we are very close. I couldn’t leave my brother and grandmother.”

5.2.6 Participant Six: Galina

5.2.6.1 *Context: Galina’s words*

When I was seven my parents were alcoholics. I didn’t want to live with them. They lost our home, so I had to sleep with dogs in the dog houses. I ate food from the trash. It was dirty with the dogs. My dad was beating me a lot, I have a lot of scars from him. No one reported what was happening to me I live like this until my mother died when I was 10 years old.

5.2.6.2 *Critical Events*

- Mother's death.
- No to adoption.
- The terrible place.

5.2.6.2.1 *Mother's death*

Galina's mother struggled with alcoholism and drug addiction as long as she could remember, however Galina also at times experienced love from her. When her mother was feeling happy, she would dance and sing with Galina. When her mother was feeling down her mother would go into deep depressions and Galina would take care of her. During one of these low periods, she overdosed and passed away. She reflects that this was a critical event in her life as, "my whole life changed now I was completely on my own with my father who was very abusive."

5.2.6.2.2 *No to adoption*

She was hosted at fourteen for a month in the United States and reflects that she enjoyed this time period much like a holiday. She was given new clothing and makeup but after the month she was asked by the family if she wanted them to adopt her as is customary with the hosting organizations. "I have parents in the USA. When I was 14, I had a chance to visit a hosting family through orphanage. I love them and we have a strong connection. When they wanted to adopt me, I said no. Now they don't trust me. They are very religious. I think I was too young when they asked me the first time and I was afraid. Later they offered me a chance to study at the university there. I had a boyfriend (in Latvia) he said no. I thought that he is the love of my life and I stayed in Latvia. We broke up later. It was a big mistake." Galina says she regrets these decisions but also feels it wouldn't have worked for her to be adopted either, she feels Russian and not American and is concerned that she would never have felt like she belonged. Galina also reflected that the system of a child visiting a family in another country for a month and then asked to make the "biggest decision of their life" is "not fair to ask."

5.2.6.2.3 The Terrible Place

At 15 years old Galina was moved to an orphanage in Riga that was exclusively for older girls intended to be more like a dormitory that taught girls independence. They were given the responsibility for cooking, cleaning, and laundry and in addition there were life skills classes. Her experience couldn't have been more of the opposite. Two staff members on the night shift were sex trafficking the "attractive" girls and Galina was one of them. "I realized that I have a very bad life here. They made us go out and have sex with men for money it was very bad. If you don't go you were beaten, and I don't want to live a life like this, but I have no choice all the girls are forced to do this." This went on until she was 17 and the orphanage was shut down. There were no services offered to the girls to recover from this experience and Galina describes "I have bad traumas from this still. Bad dreams, fears, pains it doesn't go away."

5.2.6.3 Acts of Resistance

When Galina was eleven years old her mother had passed away and her father was struggling from alcoholism and acting in physically abusive ways towards her, food was scarce and overall neglect was what she expected from adults. She was sleeping rough on the street and then one day she started experiencing anger at her father for putting her out of the house. "I was very scared, but I was also full of anger, so I went to the police station." Galina reflects that she is not sure where the strength came from to report her father as she learned from an early age that law enforcement was connected to social services and should be avoided.

5.2.7 Participant Seven: Dima

5.2.7.1 Context: Dima's words

When I was little, I lived in Riga with my dad. I loved him very much, we had the best relationship. I had a mother, but she was not meant to be a mother. She was beating me and not taking care of me. I lived with my grandmother till I was 13 years old. It was good there, she was strict, but did her best to take care of me and my brother. I started to go out very often, I didn't spend nights at home, I started to behave badly. I was in bad company, I skipped school. I ended up in an orphanage. The orphan court took me away from my grandmother because they said

she could not control me and could not take care of me, so I was stealing food and spending nights on the street.

5.2.7.2 Critical Events

- Arrest
- Germany

5.2.7.2.1 Arrest

Dima chose to focus on older adolescence, identifying his critical events. From 13 years to 18 he lived at the orphanage however he was considered a “runner” and says he spent as many nights out of the orphanage as he did in it during those years. He never settled into life there and did not feel connected to school or many friends that lived there. His friends lived on couches of other friends or lived “rough” on the street. “I could not be tied down to the orphanage.” He continually had the police looking for him as he was a running away from the orphanage and “I was drunk, and the bus driver called the police because I started a fight with him. They checked all our stuff and found weed in our pockets, there was a big fight and showed the incident on the TV.” He reflected at the time he felt “proud” that people saw him fighting on television and now he feels “embarrassed.”

5.2.7.2.2 Germany

When Dima turned 18, he had to move out of the orphanage and was given financial assistance to purchase the things he needed and several months of rent and food. “Social worker warned me not to spend it, but friends encouraged me to throw a big party and I spent all my money in a few weeks.” After this he travelled to Germany to work in a factory for what he was promised was “good money” and “plenty of parties and whores.” He was there for six months which felt much longer as he was homesick for Latvia, could not speak the language and was paid an exceptionally low wage. He reflected that he felt “like a small child again with no force (power) over my life.” He reflected on “feeling froze(n) and I can’t move.” Dima had this experience several times over his young adult life and attributes it to the abuse he experienced as a child when his father beat him where he responded in this way when feeling small and powerless.

5.2.7.3 *Acts of Resistance*

Dima felt powerless in Germany yet from a place of despair figured out how to return to Latvia.

“I wanted to go home. I had 25 Euros in my pocket. To buy a ticket back I needed 100 euros. I asked and every person from the factory gave me 5 euros and I could buy my ticket to Riga.”

Dima reflected that asking people who could not spare 5 Euros to give 5 Euros to him was one of the most difficult things he had done prior to that time and is unclear where the strength came from.

5.2.8 Participant Eight: Maxim

5.2.8.1 *Context: Maxim’s words*

When I was little, I lived in a small town with my grandparents. I went to kindergarten and school there. My grandparents took great care of me. I don’t remember my dad. Then my mom came and took me to Riga. I had a younger brother. We were all living in a one-room flat. I don’t remember much, I just know the fact that one day people from social services and orphan court came and told my mom that she needs to find a bigger space for us to live, otherwise they will take us away. She didn’t find anything. After some time, police officers came, put me and my brother on their bus and we spent time there sitting and waiting for around 2 hours. We heard gun shots. Later we found out that they shot our dog. I could not believe this happened; I went into shock. I don’t trust people in uniforms again, I am afraid all the time and I want to hide.

5.2.8.2 *Critical Events*

- My dog’s death.
- Closed orphanage.

5.2.8.2.1 Dog’s death

Maxim lived for his initial seven years with his grandparents in the countryside and had no memory of a relationship with either of his parents. “Grandparents took great care of me I loved my life.” At six years old he unexpectedly was introduced to his mother, packed up and taken to Riga, the capital city. His understanding is that his grandparents were not in favour of this choice but did not have a choice but to allow his mother to take him as she was his legal guardian. The transition of moving and leaving the only life he knew was particularly challenging for him, including the city school, which was a major change. They only spoke Latvian at this school whereas before he was attending a Russian school. He felt lost when the teachers gave lessons, and he was identified as “dumb” despite the language barrier. He only lived with his mother nine months when as he describes above in the *Context* section he and his brother were removed from the home and in the process his dog was shot by a law enforcement officer. Maxim reflected that his dog was his “only friend” and the ramifications of his violent death were long standing. He reports that he currently experiences symptoms such as “sweating and shaking” when he sees uniformed officers.

5.2.8.2.2 Closed Orphanage

Maxim reflected that he ran away often from the orphanage and tried to get back to his grandparents. Because of this behaviour he was sent to a “closed orphanage” far from the city. “Authorities closed it later because terrible things were happening there. Kids were beaten badly. We didn’t dare to run away from there like from the other orphanages, because when they caught us, guards were hurting us a lot. We were afraid. Everyone who ever tried to run away, ended up in the hospital.” Maxim reports that the two years he resided there was the most disturbing time of his life. He told a few stories about what happened to him there and later asked that these stories not be included in the interview data, so they were removed. This section on critical events he felt was important to maintain as the effects on his life were severe. “This place hurt me so terribly, I am not the same person I am only part of a man.”

5.2.8.3 Acts of Resistance

Maxim reflects that the day he turned eighteen the “orphanage director celebrated” because he was so difficult to manage. The orphanage helped him find a small flat and he worked several different jobs. His mother was in prison and “everyone thought I would end up in prison as well, but I decided hey I will not be what everyone thinks I will be like my grandfather.” Maxim found a job as a tram driver which took six months of training, and he has a stable income.

“They can call a driver with all the bad names, but we still wish them a good day and smile. I love my job, I love the people around me, I love the stable income I have now. My grandfather lives in Riga now, I see him very often.” The connection with his grandfather who cared for him when he was young and is currently living near him is especially important and the two of them are emotionally quite close.

5.2.9 Participant Nine: Vadim

5.2.9.1 *Context: Vadim’s words*

Till the age of 6 we lived in some garden house near the forest, later my mom rented a flat. She had problems with alcohol and was drunk very often. She worked from time to time. She had a boyfriend from prison. He was trying to make her quit drinking. He was like a dad for me. Unfortunately, he went to work abroad, and I stayed with my mom.

5.2.9.2 *Critical Events*

- Taken to the crisis centre.
- Foster mother.

5.2.9.2.1 Taken to the Crisis Centre

Vadim describes that his mother’s boyfriend, despite what others judged him to be as he served prison time for assault, he was the “best parent I had.” Shortly after the boyfriend left his mother social services were called and they took him to the crisis centre for evaluation. “The next day I

ran away from crisis centre and came back home. I saw police, ambulances and fire department cars near our house. They told me that my mom is dead. I was in shock. I was screaming, I was laying on the ground and crying. I was very angry, and I had a panic attack. I tried to break the door till my hands were bleeding. People around couldn't stop me. I didn't know what to do. I didn't want to go back to crisis centre, but I had nowhere to go." Vadim reflects that it is possible his mother overdosed because he was removed from the home or it may have occurred regardless, but he feels responsible for her death even though friends have told him he is not responsible.

5.2.9.2.2 Foster Mother

Vadim reflects that he did not spend exceedingly long in the orphanage and instead spent more time in foster care perhaps because he was young and had lost his mother, He was offered more compassion than other social orphans, however he felt that he didn't feel any different than they did. He was placed with one foster mother, and he states it changed the trajectory of his life.

"She was very strict, but I appreciate it now. I had a lot of changes in my life, and I was not motivated to look forward. Sometimes I talked back, I behaved very badly. She arranged me sessions with a psychologist. I attended physiotherapy as well. Things changed and became better. She also saw a psychologist to understand me better. We both were trying. We were learning a lot from each other." He stayed with her until he was eighteen years old and at the time of the interview three years later, he had dinner with her every couple of weeks.

5.2.9.3 Acts of Resistance

Vadim's foster mother encouraged him to attend a hosting program in North America. He went for a month, stayed with a family, and had a positive experience. They wanted to begin adoption proceedings at the end of the month and as is customary in Latvia his social worker asked him if he wanted to be adopted. Vadim refused, saying he would rather stay with his foster mother. He reflected, "Everyone was so angry at me for saying no including my foster mother and the social worker. They told me how I can have a better life in Texas, but I stayed strong because I knew it was not right decision for me." The pressure put on Vadim was ongoing for six months and the

family was told to go ahead and start the process regardless of Vadim's opinion. In many cases the child is convinced to agree to the adoption but in Vadim's case he stayed steadfast in his decision not to be adopted. He reported that he felt "punished" for this by not being allowed to attend another hosting trip.

5.2.10 Participant Ten: Kisa

5.2.11 **Context:** Kisa's words

One day people from the orphan court came to my school and I had to go with them I think because we were poor. I had no choice. I only had my backpack. I went to the orphanage. I lived there for 5 years. I am not sure why because when I was little, my dad took good care of me. More than my mom. When I was 3 years old, she fell from the 5th floor, and she died. I don't really remember her, but I know she fell because she was very drunk and high, wasted. When I was a baby, dad was the one waking up at night, feeding me, and changing my diapers. Before she died my mom was in Germany a lot. She worked as a dancer in the clubs. My dad was always very protective of me. He was drinking a lot, but I always felt safe with him. My mom didn't want to have a child, but my dad wanted me. Mom wanted to have an abortion, but my dad didn't allow her to do it. He wanted me.

5.2.11.1 *Critical Events*

- Leaving father.
- Baby girl.

5.2.11.1.1 Leaving father

Kisa was very bonded with her father although she reflects that "at times we had very little money and the lights might go out for a time until he had money again." She talks about him as a good parent and unlike other fathers and men she heard about and saw with friends. Her removal from her father by social services was a critical event. This was especially difficult for her

because of the closeness she felt with him and thus the loss she experienced was quite large. “The pain I felt in my heart was very strong missing him all the time it became hard to be a good girl.” Kisa reflects on a time at the orphanage when she wanted to follow the rules but the effects of the separation of this bond with her father made that impossible and she used alternative ways such as drinking to numb the pain. She also reported that she used relationships with boys her age to fill the void and by seventeen she was pregnant with a baby girl.

5.2.11.1.2 Baby girl

Kisa was enormously proud of her baby and brought many photos of her to the interview. “Most of the time my daughter is a very calm child. Yesterday when I was putting her to sleep, I snuggled her, and I fed her a little bit and she fell asleep.” She reports that a host family she had currently sends her small amounts of money which assists in helping her pay her rent and buy things she needs for the baby. Her boyfriend also has a full-time job and although he is tired when he gets home from work at night, he helps his daughter like her father. Kisa, reacquainted with her father and her grandmother who she hadn’t seen for many years while she lived in the orphanage, reports joyfully that they both love her baby.

5.2.11.2 Acts of Resistance

Although Kisa reflects that while she was pregnant, she experienced fears that she would not know how to parent she says she made a choice to take care of her baby which is quite different from what she sees in her peer group. “It is easy to not take care of baby because that’s what everyone I know does. They leave it alone and go to a party, but I decide that’s not what I am going to do. I was not sure how to show her my love so I think I will watch YouTube videos about snuggling babies and other young moms with babies. I learn from the videos how to calm her with my voice and my holding her.” Kisa exhibited pride when telling this story and showed me an example of how she handles her child. She put the baby down and walked away. The baby fussed, so Kisa walked back over, comforted her child by picking her up and speaking to her in soft reassuring tones.

5.2.12 Participant Eleven: Irina

5.2.12.1 *Context: Irina's words*

At home, our parents were drinking alcohol and didn't take care of us. They didn't let us out, they were beating us, we didn't have an opportunity to wash ourselves. Sometimes it happened that there was no food at all to eat. I was sent to the orphanage at eight years old. My parents just left us there, they didn't visit or fight for us, I was completely alone. My life just got worse, and I didn't care about myself or other people.

5.2.12.2 *Critical Events*

- Questioning who I am.
- Leaving my baby.

5.2.12.2.1 Questioning who I am

Irina reflected that she went through a period of questioning her identity due to her behaviours and choices at fourteen to hurt another person. *“At 14 I ran away from the orphanage with another weaker girl and then started using this girl in a bad way. I was selling her for sex with old men and I took all money from her to buy drugs for myself. I did it for one year.”* At the time this occurred Irina recalls not feeling any regrets over what she was doing, in fact she was proud of her cleverness to live under the radar of the orphanage and law enforcement and not get caught. When the girl would cry or beg her to stop what she was doing Irina remembered threatening to sell her to a male pimp. As Irina told this story she recognized that she felt embarrassed and wanted me to know *“but lots of people do it to younger girls not just me.”* Irina went back to the orphanage after the drug dealer she worked with died of an overdose and she became fearful for herself. This was a critical event as it caused her to continue to question her choice although she seemed to vacillate between questioning and justifying during her interview.

5.2.12.2.2 Leaving my baby

At fourteen Irina became pregnant and although she hid her pregnancy for as long as possible the orphanage staff realized she was pregnant towards the end of her second trimester. They sent her

to classes for young mothers and she learned healthy behaviours to do and dangerous behaviours not to do. When the classes ended, she reflected that she knew she had already “ruined the baby” by drinking and smoking nicotine and other narcotics during her pregnancy. After having the baby, she slept one night at the hospital and then left the baby with a note in the hospital room signing her over to social services.

5.2.12.3 *Resistance*

Irina chose the same story for her resistance as she did for one of her critical events, however the highlight for resistance is near the end of her critical event story. “Mothers here in Latvia fight for our babies even if they can’t feed them because that is the right thing to do. It looks bad if you don’t. I fought for my baby by not fighting for her because I knew sometimes, they give the baby to another family member and no one in my family knows how to care right for children.” Irina was harshly criticized by friends, family, and officials for immediately signing over her newborn. She was threatened with arrest, but this did not materialize.

5.2.13 Participant Twelve: Lana

5.2.13.1 *Context: Lana’s words*

When I was little, I lived with my mom and dad and his parents on a little farm, a couple of cows, pigs, and chickens. I remember my grandmother taking care of me, playing, hugging, kissing. I think alcohol was always a big part of our family life. My dad had a bike. Once he got in an accident on the road and lost his leg. No one ever told me, but I think he was drunk at that moment. To take away the pain of losing his leg, not able to work and depression, he started to drink. My mom joined him. And then the grandparents. I was still taken care of, they were loving, but with time they ran out of money, because my parents were not working. My other grandmother came to visit us and found me in the barn with pigs and cows eating their food. She took me with her. My parents let me go. My grandmother took me to kindergarten every day. I was spoiled, they were buying me everything I asked for. I think my grandmother was mad at my mom and was trying to prove that she is better. My grandmother was very proud of me, always

telling me that I am the most beautiful and smartest child. My pictures were placed all around the flat.

5.2.13.2 Critical Events

- Flyer for boarding school.
- Disabled.

5.2.13.2.1 Flyer for boarding school

The longer version of Lana's critical event story is included here because it was of such significance to her. Her grandmother was the victim of a scheme to bring poor and orphaned children to a boarding school that was subsidized per child. The advertisements for these orphanages exploited the desire of the families to offer their children the best possible life. "My grandmother saw a flyer for a new boarding school for orphans and poor children founded by Salvation Army and Swedish government. My parents were not visiting me, and my mom had no problem with the fact that she lost her custody rights. The director of the new orphanage visited us, and I remember he was an old man from Sweden, he was traveling with an expensive car, and a translator by his side. When my grandmother was preparing for him, she placed candles, crosses, and pictures of God in the rooms, because he was religious. I remember they were drinking coffee in the kitchen and my grandmother telling him how poor we are, how hard it is to take care of me. Then they came to me and told that I'm going to a beautiful new place with a lot of toys, food, and dolls. I went with him the same day with no time to ready myself. I still have this horrible memory of my grandmother standing on the porch, waving goodbye, and crying. I think it was the biggest mistake of her and my life to send me away." Lana reflects this was the most significant event and changed the trajectory of her life. As an adult she is close again with her grandmother, however for 15 years they had no contact. Her grandmother has shared that she regrets the decision to absolve her legal rights to Lana.

5.2.13.2.2 Disabled

Two years ago, Lana was beaten nearly to death by her boyfriend. She was pregnant and lost the baby. Lana was in a coma and woke up when the medical staff took her off life support. At the

time of the interview Lana considered herself permanently disabled physically and mentally. She suffers chronic pain and severe depression. “I live like an old woman limping and not remembering things. I have no hope for a normal life.” Lana reflects that she wishes she could alter the past and live the last ten years differently.

5.2.13.3 *Acts of Resistance*

Lana did not present with a resistance story that she explored during the interview, however in a follow-up correspondence she said something that was quite powerful. “I can see that people look at me and think I am useless, but I will prove them wrong.” Lana did not articulate her plans any further or whether this was in connection with her disability or something else, but it was a clear statement of resistance against her circumstance.

5.2.14 Participant Thirteen: Madara

5.2.14.1 *Context: Madara’s words*

Before the orphanage I don’t really remember, I went when I was very young. What I do remember was crying a lot. My mom was trying to support the four of us and she couldn’t really provide us with enough food. She worked two jobs and my dad was gone, he left us before I remember. She left us with her sister while she worked, and we were too much for her to take care of. We were taken by the authorities to an orphanage, and I lived there until I was eighteen.

5.2.14.2 *Critical Events*

- Orphanage like a family.
- England.

5.2.14.2.1 Orphanage like a family

Madara smiled as she reflected on the orphanage, she and her three other siblings were taken to, and the “happy memories” are what she remembers. “Food every day and good teachers, kind, they helped us. We did art, homework, movie night. We rode horses! I did everything for the

first time when I was there.” The concerns of her life prior to the orphanage which were regarding food and safety were no longer concerns as they were provided. The four siblings also shared one large bedroom in this orphanage which contributed to their smooth transition and happiness living there. “We each had our own beds but after the lights went out, we got two in a bed, so we all had company.” The orphanage later closed and Madara was distraught. “After five years the orphanage closed, I was so sad it was the best family I ever had.”

5.2.14.2.2 Second Orphanage

The four siblings were transferred to another orphanage together but given that they were a mixture of ages and genders they were separated into various groups in the orphanage. She feels that the wellbeing of all four of them went steadily down over the next seven years. “If we had continued in the other orphanage our lives would have been better. There we felt loved by the staff here we have one teacher at night that hits the kids.” Madara goes on to reflect that her younger brother specifically has had multiple altercations with law enforcement, and she is concerned he will end up in prison. She says, “it is very difficult for boys to stay good they get influenced to be cool but cool is a boy that steals and makes problems.” Madara had a strong perspective on the norms that are expected in adolescent culture of boys and that her brother succumbed to these pressures.

5.2.14.3 Acts of Resistance

Directly after leaving the orphanage, she moved back in with her mother and was drinking a lot and seeing her friends. She struggled to stay employed and was sleeping most of the day and then socializing at night. For a year this became her routine, her mother compared the two of them making a statement that Madara was just like her. Madara reflects that this caused her to be very angry at her mother because she knew it was close to the truth. “After that I woke up, bathed, went out to look for a job and a flat and I started to live my life better. I love my mom, but I don’t want to be a drunk with no job and children in the orphanage.” That was over a year ago now and she has stayed employed and is sharing a flat with a friend. “I am happier and want to be who I am no one else can tell me who I am.”

5.2.15 Participant Fourteen: Tania

5.2.15.1 *Context: Tania's words*

Before I remember I was told that when I was three months old my mom could not take care of me because I had chickenpox and so they took me to the orphanage for babies. Then my mom got me back. We lived in a little shed in someone's yard. Stayed there and she brought us food. At three years old I fell out of a three-story building and survived. It happened because I was left alone with my one-year-old sister. They took us from my mom and sent us back to the baby orphanage. Three years later she got us back but soon after we had no money or food because my mom was drinking every day. We lived at a farm, and I slept with my sister in the dog's house to stay warm. In first grade my mom decided to take me out of school because I could not learn. I never went back until I lived in the orphanage at ten. We went to an orphanage after a neighbor asked how we were because she said I was not looking good. I told her my mom spent her money on alcohol. The woman must have called child services because she gave me 5 lats and told me to get food but when I got home, they came to take us."

5.2.15.2 *Critical Events*

- Mother's assault.
- Hosted to America.

5.2.15.2.1 *Mother's assault*

Tania reflected that one of her critical events was shortly before she was removed from her mother's care permanently in the story above. It was a holiday that initially was joyful that turned tragic. "That year my mom celebrated New Years with no alcohol, and we had fun. She told us stories and put us to bed but then I heard a man's voice and I heard bad noises. I went to check but my mom was on the floor without her pants, and he was on top of her. She looked scared and told me to go back to the bed and in the morning, she was limping." Tania didn't exactly understand what happened to her mother, but she understood "it was very bad" and the assault altered her mother's personality and behaviour. "After that things, got much worse. My

mom was afraid to leave the apartment, but I would sneak out to see my friends and she would beat me with the broom.” The effects on her mother of the assault manifested in fears of leaving the apartment for herself and her daughters. However, in a fleeting time food supply diminished, and the family’s level of functioning unravelled at a rapid rate, the girls were permanently placed at the orphanage.

5.2.15.2.2 Hosted

The two sisters had an opportunity to be hosted in the United States over the following Summer. The first family that hosted them had a baby in the house and Tania’s younger sister endangered the baby and injured the host mother. The sisters were sent home and separated for the next host experience six months later. This second time Tania went to America to be hosted by a family she went with without her sister and to a family without any other children. The host mother and her connected and she reflected on her time there with much enthusiasm. “She put me to bed and read me books and washed my hair.” Tania returned to the same host family for a month every Summer for four consecutive years and although she was never adopted, she refers to them as her American family and even returned there for a family wedding. Regarding her sister, she returned to live with their mother after transitioning out of the orphanage. Tania is living in an apartment with several other young women, and they are all studying cosmetology. When she graduates from this program, she hopes to be able to provide for herself financially as well as help her sister and her mother.

5.2.15.3 *Acts of Resistance*

When Tania was in the orphanage, she experienced challenging relationships with peers on account of the symptoms of her psychological and behavioural diagnoses. She often could not control herself from screaming, scratching, biting herself and banging her head. She was abused by peers several times which included humiliating her, physically hurting her and female peers forcing her to perform sexual acts on male peers. Although extremely vulnerable to others Tania reflected that a small part of her, she “kept locked away safe. When bad things happened to me, I kept her safe so one day she could come out and be me. Now she is with me all the time because I am safe.”

5.2.16 Participant Fifteen: Leon

5.2.16.1 Context: Leon's words

My mom was an alcoholic. Our aunt didn't like my mom drinking, and she informed the police who came to our house and took us. The orphanage we went to was surrounded by forests. There was a river near the place. A lot of nature around. I remember horses. There was a nice playground. We played football often. We would play hide and seek and other games. We got 5 lats every month as our pocket money, and we would ride the bus to closest shop. When the bus opened the door and we got out it was very exciting we could go in and decide what to buy. Usually it was gums, sweets, candies, and chips. It was a paradise for us, and we ate all the sweets the same day.

5.2.16.2 Critical Events

- The forest orphanage.
- Mother returning.

5.2.16.2.1 The forest orphanage

Leon was brought first to a rural orphanage after spending his early years in the city. He found the forest and the open spaces “magic(al).” Several months after arriving there a young friend from the orphanage disappeared, playing in the woods which he reflects sticks out for him as an important event that caused him secondary fear and anxiety. “At wintertime it gets dark very early. I remember one girl was lost in the forest. In a few days we found out that she was dead. She was 6 years old. She was raped and killed. Even at that age we knew what happened was worse than just dying we knew there was a bad man out there.”

5.2.16.2.2 Mother returning

After living in the orphanage for three years Leon was placed with a foster family that he connected well with, and he felt both safe and cared for and established a special relationship with the family's grandmother. Leon's face as he described life at his foster family could be called looking blissful. He described in long detail the animals, sounds, and smells of the farm and reflected on feeling a sense of longing to return to this childhood place. "I was living in a foster family at a farm, they grew roses, and had chickens and cows. I remember drinking milk from cows, and we also sold the milk. The grandmother of the family loved me so much and didn't give me back to my biological family. I remember we were looking for owls because we heard them a lot. They wanted to adopt me. I thought this was going to be my forever family and I was so happy. Instead, our mother won the court and took me back. It was a big surprise for me, I didn't expect to go back home with her. I was too used to the foster family, and I missed the family very much. Mom changed but it wasn't true. Soon after she was drinking all the time and it was bad again."

Latvia's social care system works toward reunification of families if possible and Leon's experience he reflected is one he has heard often where parents are struggling with addictions and after regaining custody of their children have a relapse of the addiction. He never returned to the orphanage, but he legally stayed with his mother. However, he says he feels this should not have been the case. He feels he should not have been returned to care after his mother's relapse, which was one month after custody was returned to her as he was put in danger and lived on the edge of starvation until he was old enough to work himself and support her.

5.2.16.3 Acts of Resistance

After Leon was reunited with his mother, he spent time at a different orphanage in Riga with a friend he met at school. "My best friend from school was living in the orphanage. I visited her often after school. I told her and her social workers about my situation at home. I was telling her that my mom is drinking and that she is angry all the time. She was making me buy her alcohol and illegal drugs whenever she wanted, even at 2 o'clock at night. I didn't like to be at home, so I spent all my free time in my best friend's orphanage. I wanted to live at the orphanage with her it was so lovely." Leon further reflects that although some of the staff would tell him to leave others understood his difficult circumstances and let him stay until lights out many nights which

kept him off the streets and safe. They also fed him most days which was against the rules but prevented him from going without meals.

5.2.17 Participant Sixteen: Christian

5.2.17.1 *Context: Christian's words*

I was placed at the orphanage for babies right after birth. When I was six years old orphanage social workers found me my first foster family. It was in the countryside, and they took me and my sister. We lived there two years. The first year everything was good and calm, lots of love and joy. But later our foster dad started to drink and lots of other problems occurred. He started to beat the mom and after four or five months she ran away from home and left us with the abusive foster dad. He was beating us, and social services found out. We went back to the orphanage, a lot of problems started, I could not concentrate, I had learning disabilities. My mind was broken. I couldn't sit in my seat, I was running around, acting like crazy and they sent me to a special boarding school.

5.2.17.2 *Critical Events*

- Adoptive family.
- France.

5.2.17.2.1 Foster Family

Christian was considered a prime candidate for adoption as he was released legally from his parent's care, and was a young, healthy boy. However, the effects of his early foster family experiences prevented him from bonding. He reports that with any other family even if “my brain told me it was good my body told me to run.” An adoptive family from Italy was found for him without any children. It appeared a perfect situation; the family came to Latvia, courts provided them with a translator. Christian was supposed to spend several trial overnights at the hotel with them but was not able due to the psychological effects he experienced. “I had a trauma

from the first foster family, and I could not let them close to me. I was afraid and I didn't want to spend nights with them, I was shaking and thought they would hurt me like the other foster dad. They went back to Italy and later sent a letter to inform the orphanage that they are not going to take me." Christian reflects on this experience that he felt to blame and knew that the orphanage staff were angry with him for not behaving appropriately.

5.2.17.2.2 France

The following year the orphanage attempted to place Christian with another family from France. "The next year when I was nine years old. I lived with them for 2 months. I realized that I had no choice I must stay with the family. I started to learn French language and things got smoother. When summer was over, I went back to school and the orphanage." Christian reflects that after he settled into this family, he found a religion for himself as well and after being baptized in the family's church and making a commitment he wanted to continue his "faith" at the orphanage while the orphan court was deciding the fate of his adoption. During that year he was the survivor of a sexual assault by several older boys at the orphanage and "lost my will to keep living." He was sent to a psychiatric facility for three months to begin to heal from his assault. The adoption did not go forward. He is not sure if psychiatric admission influenced their decision not to adopt him or not. After that time, he said he was too old, and families no longer considered him for adoption.

5.2.17.3 Acts of Resistance

Christian reflected acts of resistance in many of the parts of his story. There were multiple times he listened to a part of himself when others around him were directing him another way. "The strength I have comes from God." He emphasized that his choices since leaving the orphanage and resistance to what others thought he should do and be, were stronger because of his faith in God. Christian says he is called to perform God's work with other social orphans. He runs a youth group for children who are living on the street or in orphanages. He serves food which is always an attraction he says for "hungry kids." He said, "I teach them about being a good person and not breaking the law or hurting people. They look up to me." Having younger children look up to him reflects Christian, encourages him to be the best version of himself possible.

5.2.17.4 Participant Seventeen: Dmitri

5.2.17.5 **Context:** Dmitris' words

I don't remember my first years of life, but my grandmother told me that my parents drank a lot. My mom was a bad person, she was lying a lot, drinking, stealing from the family members just to buy some alcohol. My dad was just back from the army, and he didn't like her drinking. They had a fight one day and he left us. It was a shock to my mom. She took me and my brothers, packed our belongings and took us to the orphanage. I was one year old. We lived there for a few years. I was told, in that orphanage everything was good for us. I was three years old when I was doing different chores and helping teachers. I was very hard working. After three years my grandmother found out where we were and took us back.

5.2.17.6 Critical Events

- Father's abuse.
- Russian Orphanage.

5.2.17.6.1 Father's abuse

Dmitris' grandmother took custody of him from the orphanage quite easily as the care system in Latvia prefers that extended family take over for parents that are unable to care for their children. His father was also living with his grandmother and was struggling with an alcohol addiction. "In the beginning everything was good, but later my dad started to drink. Every day when he came home from work, he was beating me and my brother very hard, we were screaming and bleeding. Dmitri's grandmother was not able to protect the two brothers from their father's abuse.

5.2.17.6.2 Russian Orphanage

The boys ended up back in an orphanage which he reflects was a relief from living at home but were separated into different orphanages a few weeks later. He was sent to an orphanage on the Russian border that was completely separated from the world he was familiar with. In fact, they only spoke Russian there and Dimitri, a Latvian, did not speak any Russian. Despite this he felt welcomed at this orphanage and he learnt to speak Russian quickly. “After one month I was already speaking Russian. I loved that place. I loved all the teachers. They were very sweet and welcoming. I still think about them, and I will never forget them. They were feeding us very well, and we kids loved to help in the kitchen. We had computers. It was a home for me! I lived there till the age of 17.” Dimitri could not say enough how much this orphanage had a positive influence on him. He says the teachers taught him how to accept and offer love, which is how he cares for his small son now. “Now me and my little son live in our own apartment. Just the two of us. When I just moved into the apartment, I thought that finally I am free from everybody. I was happy and relieved. But the coming months were very hard. It was not easy to pay the bills and earn money. I had to feed the baby, buy him clothes and other things. I had to plan how will I spend every single Euro, so we would survive.” Dimitri also credits the Russian orphanage with teaching him responsibility and finances. When his peer group is spending their earnings on alcohol, he is managing a household budget.

5.2.17.7 Acts of Resistance

Dimitri highlighted that the time period in his life that he was closest to death was when his dad was drinking heavily and physically abusing him. “We couldn’t take it. We were not able to go to kindergarten or school because of it. We were hiding and sleeping on the streets. We were stealing food from the market, so we were not starving. Police saw us on the street one day and took us to their office. We told them that our dad is beating us and an alcoholic and that we don’t want to return home.” There is a strong cultural stigmatization against reporting to law enforcement. “No one wants to go to the police because no one wants to live in the orphanage.” Regardless of these factors Dimitri found the ability to survive on the street as a very young child, care for his brother and report his father to the police to ensure their safety.

5.2.18 Participant Eighteen: Igor

5.2.18.1 *Context Igor's words*

I remember the first orphanage I was in for a few years. My aunt (mother's sister) took me home for a visit from the orphanage. It was Sunday. She told me that next Sunday she would come and take me to visit again, but she never came. I thought something bad had happened or she doesn't want to take me anymore, but she died. Then my grandmother took me to visit her a few times. She died, too. When I was around seven years old, I had a foster family. It was in the countryside. Small town where everyone knew each other. I started school. My foster mom was a teacher. I think the foster family took us for money and for work. I lived there for two years, and it was not a bad life, but it was full of work and no laughter.

5.2.18.2 *Critical Events*

- New family
- Addiction

5.2.18.2.1 New Family

Igor was matched up with several families over the years to support an adoption for him. “A family from Italy wanted to adopt me. They came to visit me and brought a lot of presents. They stayed in Latvia for a few months, and I was visiting them. But they didn’t speak English or Latvian and they didn’t understand me. And I didn’t understand what was happening, who they were and what they wanted from me. I remember we went to the amusement park one day. I needed to go to the bathroom. I was telling them I needed to go, but they didn’t understand me. I started to yell that I needed to go to the bathroom, and she was looking at the dictionary what does it mean. She thought I called them fools and got mad. We went home, they packed my things and brought me back to the orphanage. It was the last time I saw them.” Igor reflected that this experience of attempts to be matched with a family for adoption was very painful as he always ended up feeling that it was his responsibility when it did not work out. The different families had inappropriate expectations for a child’s behavior especially a child with a difficult history.

5.2.18.2.2 Addiction

Igor reflected that he has had addictions to medication since childhood. He blamed the orphanage staff and social workers for dealing with his behavioural issues with sedatives. “I remember one day we went to the (amusement park) with the orphanage, they gave me medicine in the morning and then it made me so tired I didn’t care I missed all the rides. I slept all day long in the bushes on the ground.” By early adolescence street drugs were added to the mixture of psychiatric medications that Igor was taking. “I started to smoke weed when I was 13 years old, but it was something chemical and I became addicted that first time. After that I needed to steal to keep getting the drugs. I was stealing everything and was not afraid anymore. I realized that it is something I can do, and I was proud of myself.”

5.2.18.2.3 Netherlands

At nineteen Igor reflects he “was in a deep hole, lots of criminal charges, debts. I took a loan in a credit company, bought a phone and a ticket and went to the Czech Republic.” Living transiently

for several weeks he met a man who convinced him to work in the Netherlands. He had elevated expectations but was ultimately disappointed as the factory work was difficult and after two weeks he returned to stealing for drugs and survival and living on the street. “Up to this day there are no jobs I would be in for more than a month.” His drug use progressed in the Netherlands to a point where he no longer recognized himself. “I started smoking crack. A lot of it. I was very thin, and I jumped out of the window and broke my arm and both legs. I was screaming for help.” Igor was treated at the hospital and a charitable organization provided him with a ticket back to Latvia. He knew that on arrival at the border he would be arrested on multiple drug charges. He spent just a year and a half in prison.

5.2.18.3 Resistance

As a small boy Igor acted out resistance in small but significant ways.

“My foster family was angry with me that I didn’t stay with the Italian family. I sold all the presents that the Italian family ever gave me.” He further reflects that selling the presents from the family he rejected despite the pressure not to, offered him a feeling of “control” over the situation. As a child in the system, he experienced extraordinarily little control over placements and adults' choices, “everyone always brings me one place then another home and I am supposed to say thank you.” He felt that children in the system were not consulted enough when major decisions were made over their life circumstances. “One time I was sent to a psychiatric hospital for resisting the staff when all I had done was want to pour my own bowl of soup.” Igor was considered a “runner” as he often would leave the orphanage and stay on the street for several nights at a time. This behaviour offered him a sense of control over his situation and reflects that “whenever I felt like I was starting to feel crazy I would run away for a couple nights and then return again.”

5.2.18.4 Participant Nineteen: Mila

5.2.18.5 Context: *Mila’s words*

My family was not bad. But my mom was using alcohol a lot. She was not a good mom for us. For my sisters I had to be the mother for them, and this was hard for me. My father is a simple

man who has had many girlfriends and so he also did not take care of us he was always away partying. When I was 11 years old, I was living with my grandmother, my dad's mother, because my father went to work in England. I was a bad girl then. I started to drink alcohol and smoke weed. I got in trouble with the police, and they put me in the orphanage.

5.2.18.6 Critical Events

- Father taught me to fight.
- First romance.
- Birthday party.

5.2.18.6.1 Father taught me to fight.

Mila experienced her father as protective over her and she reflects that this has been a feeling and a “lesson that helped me survive.” She was “beaten up at school when I was young” she reports by a boy and when her father saw the bruises on her face, he took her outside and taught her how to fight back. The next time the same boy started to bother her she fought back and got in trouble with the school administration. Her father and her had to go and meet with the administration and she were suspended for two days but her father was proud of her for defending herself. This lesson Mila reflects has stayed close with her through many demanding situations and experiences and although her father passed away, she keeps him close to her. Mila does not remember her father spending a lot of time with her, but this one experience was a critical moment in their relationship.

5.2.18.6.2 First romance

At fourteen years old Mila was moved to an older orphanage group and began her first relationship that she recalls as “romance relationship.” They dated for four years and supported each other through very formative experiences yet she identifies a deficit in their ability to be in a relationship with each other. “Problems occurred because our parents didn’t teach us something. We didn’t see normal families and real and loving, healthy relationships.” The ability to recognize that something was missing from her relationship Mila attributes to her host family

experience in America. “I have been hosted by American host families two times during my living at the orphanage. And two times I went by myself. I was always so happy about that. I saw a new way of life. I saw a way to live and love and not to lie. I have been living in lies all the time. When I was in USA, I was a completely different girl.”

5.2.18.6.3 Birthday Party

While Mila was hosted in America the family surprised her with a birthday party and she listed this as a critical event. “I never felt so special I couldn’t believe anyone would do this for me so when they made the announcement I started to cry from happiness. Sometimes when I am very sad, I close my eyes to remember this day.” Mila described suffering with depression after leaving the orphanage and at times was close to suicide yet used this experience as a touch point to feeling cared for.

5.2.18.7 Acts of Resistance

The first family that hosted Mila initially seemed promising but later she started to feel uncomfortable around the father. “I had the feeling that the host father was flirting with me the host mother saw it and was angry at me.” She was not asked back a second time and snuck into the staff office and read her file to find out why. She saw that the host family wrote she was acting provocatively towards the father, and she slapped their young daughter. “I was very sad and angry at these lies but I could do nothing to change what they said about me, it was there forever. I deleted them from my Facebook friends list, and I gave away the clothes they gave me to other girls. I would rather have only ugly clothes to wear than put on anything from them.” Mila’s expression at rejecting the family that betrayed her offered her a way to express resistance to their authority. Although other people did not believe her version it offered her a route to expression and some relief.

5.2.19 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the life histories of the research participants. The narratives in this chapter are compressed and distilled from longer interviews and organized into three sections to

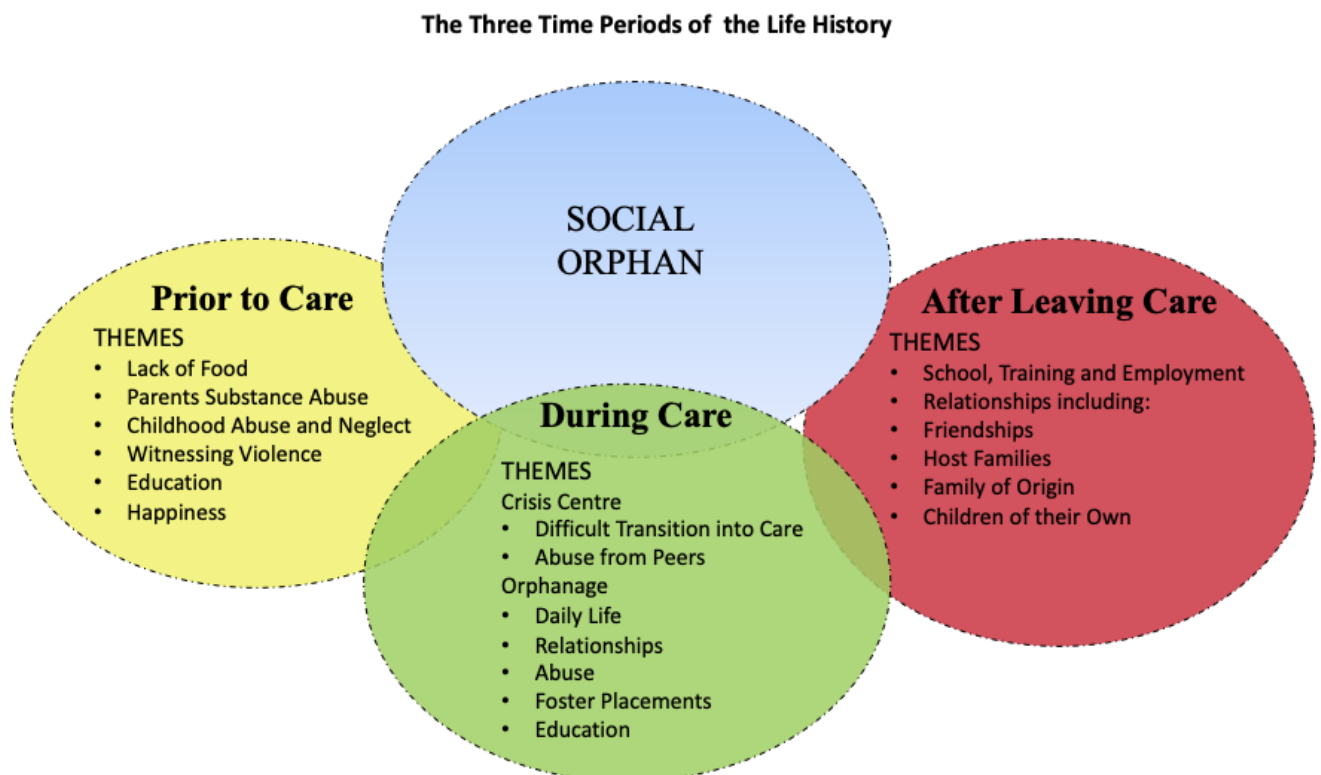
show the complexities of their lives, the obstacles they have had to overcome, the acts of resistance to their circumstances they took and the trajectories they have experienced. The findings showed a keen sense of agency and strength of character, there is a good sense of insight into their circumstances, and they rarely described themselves as victims despite situations of abuse and loss.

6 Thematic Findings

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter on thematic findings the content from participant's stories emerged using a thematic analysis. Multiple themes emerged and are discussed under each time-period of the participant's life history. The time periods are as follows: *Prior to Care*, *During Care* and *After Leaving Care*. The themes that emerged under each time-period are listed in Figure 6.1 and will be discussed in this chapter under three written sections based on the same time periods. Art based contributions from the participants will also be included throughout the chapter as they are connected to the themes.

Figure 6-1 Thematic Map: Themes are listed under each time-period from the life histories.



6.2 Time Period One: Prior to Care

The time-period: *Prior to Care*, includes the discussion and findings gained from participants' experiences before being placed into the care system. The themes which were identified under this heading of *Prior to Care* included a lack of food, substance abuse by parents, childhood abuse and neglect, times of happiness, education and witnessing violence between parents.

All research participants identified their lack of food as a key theme of their lives prior to care. As discussed in Chapter 2 the population of Latvia, since establishing itself as independent country, has parts of the population who have experienced poverty. This has included a lack of food resources which is grounded in the Latvian history of economic instability especially at the time of its independence in 1991 (Aidukaite 2005). Several participants reported that they were aware that their parents also grew up in impoverished circumstances. Participants reported stories of how the lack of food underscored their day-to-day existence as well as how they survived. Their actions included stealing food and/or money to buy food. Seeking food waste from other people or people's pet and/or animal food. These examples demonstrate how the study subjects had moments of personal agency and resilience to combat their own moments of misery, scarcity, and desperation.

There are many other examples of how personal survival required participants to act. Galina reported sleeping outside in the doghouse and eating food from rubbish bin cans. Lana reported "I survived for an entire year eating pig slop the neighbour when he was feeding his pigs." Dima reported stealing food from small stores when there was nothing to eat at home. Svetlana and Madara separately recalled stealing any food they could locate from the school kitchen and bringing it home for her and her sister to eat. Natasha reported, "We were always hungry, but my sister and I noticed that in our neighbourhood, people always fed the stray cats. We started sneaking a spoon outside with us. We went down the street scraping whatever was left of the cat food out of each bowl we saw and drinking the milk that was left."

A theme that emerged from discussions with many of the participants on the reasons why they did not have enough food to eat as children related to parents' issues with unemployment.

Several participants made references to their parents working to support the family and/or relied on government aid. It was a common occurrence for the participants' parents to receive government aid; however, all the subjects acknowledged that what was given was not sufficient to support their families. Parental employment was reported to be unstable and irregular, and since most of the parents were not trained for a particular profession and worked performing menial labour, their income did not allow parents to provide for their families. There was also a noted trend that pointed out the difference between those who spoke Russian or Latvian as their primary language.

Many participants were Russian descendants and had never learned the Latvian language. This was noted to become a significant factor related to personal and parental employability by several participants. Trapenciere's (2014) study on social orphanhood in Latvia found that many families struggled to feed themselves due to a lack of financial capital. Additionally, there are situations when the problem is a lack of knowledge regarding how to take care of children. Many of these parents themselves did not have appropriate care as children and are limited in knowledge and practice on what children require. More specifically, parental substance abuse often contributed to a lack of food in the home which was a significant reason for entering the child welfare system (p.3). After studying the literature and before data collection, it was predicted that participants lacking food could emerge as a central theme in the study. What was not predicted, however, and what emerged as representative of the children's tenacity to survive, was the lengths study participants went to ensure that they were able to address their hunger. Participants that reported a lack of food also told of the actions they took as children to feed themselves showing an immense amount of resilience. The life stories told of the great lengths the participants took as children to feed themselves through at times brave actions such as eating food intended for pets and livestock or stealing food to survive.

6.2.1 Parental Substance Abuse

Research participants recognized their parents' substance use/abuse/addiction as a key theme from the sub-themes identified within Prior to Care. Excessive use of alcohol by parents was commented on in Trapenciere's (2016) study on social orphanhood. The author noted that substance use is a significant contributing factor in Latvian parents losing custody of their

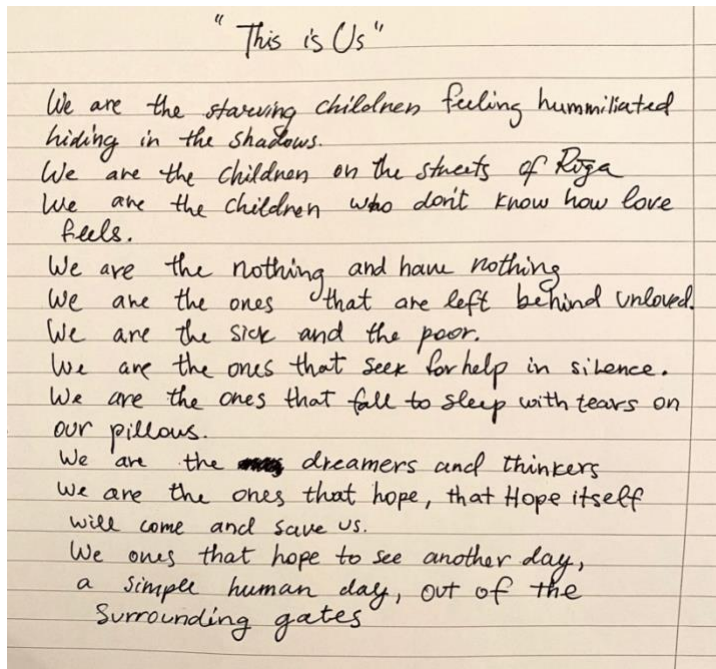
children in Latvia. In the current study, parents' substance abuse Prior to Care was recognized as a prevalent theme in several participants' stories. Many of the participants identified that substance use/abuse by parents was a significant factor which led to their removal from their homes and intervention by the state. Svetlana reported, "both of my parents were often drunk, and no money was spent on food. This was why I could not live with them; they could not care for me." Veronika told the story of her mother's boyfriend, and the father of her younger brother and sister. She reported that all those figures struggled with alcoholism and drug addiction. When she was seven, the boyfriend overdosed and died in front of her and her siblings. She shared that this experience impacted her then and still causes her "anxiety from watching him die; it was terrible." Galina, Vadim, Kisa, Lana, Tania, Dmitri, and Leon, all reported that one or both of their parents abused substances, and their use negatively impacted the participants' lives before care.

When Christian's foster father began abusing alcohol it negatively affected Christian. He was removed from this foster home and returned to the larger institutional setting. Mila reported that her mother struggled with abusing alcohol. When Mila was twelve, she also began abusing drugs and alcohol. Both factors contributed to removal from her home and placement in care. Lana reported that her father lost his leg after an accident while he was driving intoxicated. Kisa reported that her mother fell from a high balcony and died when she was "high on coke."

Springe (2017), who has completed extensive health care research on children in Latvia, found a strong correlation between parental substance abuse and violence against children. This was confirmed in the current study as well. Study participants repeatedly identified that parents abusing alcohol and drugs led to violence and abusive behaviour in the home. Alcoholism and drug addiction are explicitly identified as one of the leading factors for families losing parental rights (Dobeliniece et al., 2014; Skrodele-Dubrovska, 2012; Ssewamala and Huseynli, 2014). Although this study is not utilising the data to form generalisations regarding social orphans entering care, the participants' narratives support other conclusions from other studies about the influence substance use/abuse/addiction has on child welfare in Latvia.

Art Based Contribution | Art based contribution: "This is Us"

This poem was written by a participant about their experience *Prior to Care*. It explores difficult emotions about a time in her life she felt no hope. She considered herself on her own at seven years old living on the street and sleeping on different friend's floors until she was taken into care.



6.2.2 Childhood Abuse and Neglect

Research participants identified childhood abuse and neglect as central experiences before care. Kristine reported childhood physical and emotional abuse, and neglect by an aunt who was her caretaker, as a primary reason for her removal. Kristine reported her abuse felt life-threatening for both herself and her sister. She stated, "I thought my sister and I might die from the beatings". On reflection, Kristine reported that the effects of the abuse might have been different had her parents perpetrated the abuse. "If it had been my mom or dad that treated us that way I might not have wanted to keep living. My aunt, I hated, and it made me fight to survive and leave there." The complexity of children who experience their own parents abusing them was

not present with Kristine. This provided her with a protective emotional factor as she rationalized her abuse. Praulina's (2011) study on social orphans in Latvia supports these findings of abuse. The study found that social orphans that had been survivors of childhood trauma, including physical and sexual abuse are at an increased risk of subsequent traumatic experiences.

Art Based Contribution 2 Untitled



Art piece 2 was reported as a story. “When I was a girl before the orphanage whenever I was sad or scared, I would run outside and there would be street dogs. They were like me. I gave love to them, gave them small bits of food, and played with them, and they were my friends. I told them all my secrets. I want to have a big place someday and rescue all the street dogs. I still feed them; I gave one my whole food the other day because he looked starved.”

6.2.3 Substance Misuse and Violence

Many of the participants reported a connection between parental substance misuse and violence. The subject’s narratives often included a parent or parents who used alcohol or drugs, which seemed to lead to violence towards the children meaning participants reported that violence did not occur if parents were not drunk or high first. Svetlana reported childhood abuse and lack of

care being a cornerstone in her life story. She recognizes that her abuse correlates to times when her parents were abusing alcohol. Natasha additionally commented that her father's physical abuse of her always occurred when he was abusing alcohol. She goes on to suggest that physical and sexual abuse perpetrated by a friend of her mother, also correlated with the use of drugs and alcohol. Natasha acknowledged that a total lack of protection from her mother allowed her perpetrators three years of ongoing abuse of her by the mother's best friend. Natasha stated, "the three of them would party, and that's when things would get bad for us." The three of them would watch while Natasha was getting abused. Natasha was angry at her parents specifically her mother for not protecting her. Natasha's mother had herself grown up in the orphanage and married her father, twenty years her senior, when she was eighteen. He appeared at the orphanage and asked her to be his wife. She married him a month after leaving care. As is discussed in the following sub-theme of Witnessing Violence between Parents, Natasha's mother experienced interpersonal violence perpetrated against her by her father. Her mother had little power in the marital relationship. This may have been a result of her being a product of the social welfare state and her own experience as a social orphan, even though there was a twenty-year age gap between Natasha and her mother. A lack of literacy and education is also evident in Natasha's mother. Her mother never progressed past grade five in school, did not speak Latvian, and was illiterate in her primary language of Russian. Orphan illiteracy in the 1990's in Latvia was not uncommon. Historically this was a time of wide identity confusion and particularly in the social care system of the time. This dynamic existed due to the immediate challenges faced by Latvia in the post-soviet era. Large orphanages and institutions were merely carryovers from the Russian system (Rockhill, 2010).

Other participants, Ana and Galina reported a lack of care for their safety by parents especially during episodes of their substance use. As young children both participants reported repeatedly being sent out alone at night, to go to the store in Riga to purchase cigarettes and alcohol. Galina reported being cajoled into consuming alcohol herself at a noticeably early age by the adults who were "partying" in her home. Ana reported that she would be on her own the day after her parents had a night of drugs and alcohol. Typically, her parents were asleep and hungover from the night before. She was left to change her baby brother, feed, and take care of him, even though

she was only two years older than him. Both participants reported strong negative emotional responses to these events and a complete sense of disgust when parents used alcohol and drugs.

Study participants classified these behaviours and actions as a lack of caring. The traditional understanding of neglect as a failure to care for something or someone properly does not seem to take in the fullness of the participants' situations. The traditional understanding of neglect that infers the word 'failed' or 'failure' implies that a person tried to do something but was somehow unable to address the situation.

In the other version of 'lack of care' the attempt to care is absent completely. In this case the person or child somehow is even less cared for and there is a total absence of even trying to provide for the child's needs. The statements offered by Ana and Galina had a hollow sense about them. This also parallels how Ana and Galina appeared when telling these parts of their stories. Hollow disconnected and almost dissociated. When considering this Riessman (2008) shares insight into this when discussing the construction of narratives with childless mothers.

Normative culture tells us that parents care for their children. What happens when there is a breach in that normative story of childhood? How do people make meaning and interpret their experiences? Nevertheless, study participants found it easier to explain their own contrast to normative experiences using a more personal rationale of their parents not caring for them. This simple framework then offers an alternative dissonant narrative to integrating their parents' lack of caring. Clearly the complexity that goes into why a parent might care for their child yet fail to keep them safe or misuse the relationship results in a variety of rationalizations. It appears that many of the participants' parents were very aware they needed assistance but did not access it. Due to a mistrust for social services by most participants and the notion that the system would not assist families but instead act punitively (Zumente-Steele 2018).

Art Based Contribution 3 My Broken Heart



Art piece 3 came from a participant that described her heart being “broken” by a family member that she had always loved and trusted but she witnessed” beating up my mom when he was drunk”. She stated, “I could never look at him again I couldn’t believe he was like the rest of them not the good person I thought he was.”

6.2.4 Witnessing Violence Between Parents

Research participants included observing violent behaviour between parents or caretakers as a central and ongoing experience before entering care. Research by Dobelniece et al., addressing families in Latvia document how unemployment, lack of housing, substance abuse, physical and emotional violence, are the most common factors of parents whose children are placed into state care (2014). However, interestingly the witnessing of interpersonal familial violence is not identified in any of the literature as a significant factor in the placement and creation of social orphans in Latvia.

One study participant reported that his foster father would abuse alcohol and then physically assault the stepmother. Participants did not tell the stories of witnessing violence with the same level of emotion or expressiveness as when sharing issues related to childhood abuse and Lack of

Care. It appears that witnessing violence between parents may be part of the normative culture with this population. Christian intimated this when he said, "It [interpersonal violence] is not good, but it happens a lot here between men and women there is nothing to do kids see it all the time." One significant point in this sub-theme is that participants reported that the violence they witnessed paralleled the parental use of alcohol and substance abuse by the perpetrating parent.

An important theme which emerged from the participant interviews was the desire of the participants to rescue/save one of the parents. In the following two examples the participants described wanting to protect their mother from their father's violence. Natasha reports attempting to protect her mother from her father's physical and sexual assaults by brandishing a knife and threatening him. Tania reports her own awareness that her mother was sexually assaulted while she and her sister slept in the next room. She states, "I knew what was happening. I saw! She motioned me away quickly before he saw me." Both participants reported wanting to prevent the violence, and both attempted to take some action albeit differently.

Tania remained quiet and followed her mother's instructions as her mother wanted. She reflected that she did this to protect herself and her sister. It is unclear what the danger would be to them and their mother if they had not followed her directive. She expressed regret at not being able to stop the attack. Natasha was positioned quite differently; this was her father, and she witnessed, and was a victim of his frequent attacks. She reported feeling pushed to the point of action when she took the knife and began screaming at him to stop. "He was beating her and then he called her to the bed to lay down for him. That is when I lost it and grabbed the knife." The reaction to Natasha's violence is noteworthy as on the surface all the participants' situations appear quite similar, yet her reaction stood out. She positioned herself to act in a protective manner which may be connected to the positioning of her relationship with her mother. Natasha's mother was an adolescent child when she had Natasha who had herself grown up in a state-run care orphanage. Natasha reported knowing on some level that her mother required protecting and knew she was vulnerable. Natasha felt more like her mother was another child rather than a mother.

Art Based Contribution 2 Super Woman



Art piece 4 by a participant who reported that although she had “never seen a gun in real life I like to imagine it not to hurt anyone but to help people who are being hurt”. She went on to say she has a lot of experience growing up trying to protect her mother and younger sister and at various times when she had no control of a situation this fantasy would bring her a sense of power, as an act of resistance that helped her cope with her situation.

6.2.5 Times of Happiness

In this study, several participants reported experiencing multiple times of happiness in their lives before the orphanage. This suggests how in analyzing life histories there is never one single storyline. If there is familial dysfunction, there are often counter moments of functionality as well. Discussions on happiness or the positive aspects of family life from social orphans are not included in most literature regarding Latvia. In a study by Stasova and Vilka (2018) on Family Life in Latvia the significance of times of happiness was proven to be one of the most important aspects of contentedness in life. Seemingly small aspects of life can bring on feelings of happiness such as playing with siblings or laughing with a parent. These was seen in this study and had important impacts and were highlighted by participants.

Several study participants reported experiencing feelings of happiness or happy times in their homes, with their families and friends before state intervention. Veronika reported feeling happy when playing with her siblings, spending time with her grandparents, and playing with children in her neighbourhood. Veronika said, “I played with the other kids in my neighbourhood in a pack. We had so much fun; sometimes we snuck into a house that was abandoned and pretended it was ours.” Veronika's cohort contained mixed ages and genders and functioned as a protective unit for each other. There was a time when another group of children approached her pack. Being from a different neighbourhood, threats were made. Veronika recalls that the older children protected the younger children, including Veronika. This served to strengthen her identity within the group. “After they stuck up for us, we all felt very close, and I was proud that I had such good friends.”

Ana reported that early on in her life, before her mother started a relationship with a boyfriend, there were times of happiness when she experienced love from her mother. Ana's relationship with her mother changed once her mother began dating seriously. “My mom and I were more like friends. She was not very old when I was born, so she is still young, but once that boyfriend moved in it all changed.” Ana reported that the boyfriend assumed control over her mother as well as behaving abusively to her. Ana felt that she lost her relationship with her mother on account of her mother's relationship with her boyfriend. When this occurred Ana's grandmother, who lived with them, stepped into the role of parent for Ana and she valued this relationship. It served as a protective factor for Ana and offset other negative relationships. Ana said, “No matter what other people call me, I remember my grandmother loves me.” Dima reported a sense of happiness when he lived with his father and grandmother for a few years.

Maxim reflected his own sense of happiness when he lived with his grandparents before his mother took custody of him. “I loved my grandparents and was very upset when my mom came and took me away from them and the forest to the city.” Often in Latvia, grandparents or other extended families will help by taking the child for a struggling parent. Frequently this is done unofficially. As an example, Maxim's biological parents had the legal right to return and take him at any point of their choosing despite whether the choice was in the child's best interest. In

Maxim's situation, his life with his grandparents was stable, functional, and happy. When his mother reappeared and took him to live with her, hours away from his grandparents, was when eventually child services became involved, and he was placed into the care of the State.

Kisa reported experiencing being happy when her father took care of her before the orphanage. “We had fun together; playing games, watching movies, he loved me, and I was very happy.” Kisa reported that even as an adult, when she reflects on this time, she is angry that she was taken away from her father. “I know he was an alcoholic, but otherwise, he took good care of me.” Kisa was the only participant who related this view. Whether this is a result of her developmentally understanding her experience, she maintains the belief that her removal was not warranted. The Latvian social welfare system suggests that reunification with biological parents is the priority however Kisa was not reunited with her father for thirteen years while living in the orphanage.

6.2.6 Education

Study participants reported various degrees of school attendance and experiences before care. Tania, Natasha, Svetlana, Veronika, Kristine, Kisa, Galina and Maxim reported they attended school while living with parents although it was intermittent. The remaining participants, primarily boys, did not acknowledge school being significant prior to state custody. Ratkeviciene's (2018) study with social workers found that families they worked with often had erratic or minimal school attendance. Staff often assigned blame for a lack of school attendance on absent mothers. This is not surprising as the construction of motherhood is often closely tied to mother-blame viewpoints (Azzopardi, 2018). Instead, it seems more meaningful to examine the broader context for why these children did not attend school regularly. One could suggest that perhaps the youth may have potentially found sanctuary from disadvantaged or distressing households by attending school.

Rockhill (2010) suggests that there is often a disconnection from teachers and school administration for students from lower-income or challenged families in Latvia. Although not ideal if the teachers are unprepared, it is not surprising that these students present some extra challenges and with their inconsistent attendance create an environment where there is a lack of

connection between child and teacher. The challenges related to the life stories of these children include children that often require extra attention from teachers. Children can present with varied behavioral issues and learning abilities. This included study participants Maxim, Galina, and Svetlana. They reported that concentrating in school was always a challenge, repeated failures on tests and exams, and they believed that their teachers thought they could not be successful in school.

Additional challenges faced by the youth include children who had to walk long distances to attend school. For them money for public transportation was not available. Kristine and Galina reported having to walk several miles to school. During inclement weather (which happens frequently in Latvia) they would choose to stay at home rather than brave the elements. Additionally, behavioural issues (related to the unmet needs of the children) were often punished at school. Svetlana and Natasha both report stealing food and money from school regularly. Each time they were caught, no one asked them why they were stealing. Natasha reported, "I stole all the time because I was hungry and every time I was caught and punished two more times, I could buy a roll and eat because I was not caught."

Teachers often are the front-line in reporting families to social services. Like anyone reporting a family to social services, this role can create complex relationships for both the reporter and the child. Well-intended reporting can break alliances for the child who does not understand the reporter's extensive responsibilities. Veronika, Natasha, and Svetlana report a sense of betrayal and suspect that their teachers might have been the ones that contacted authorities to alert social services of the situations in their homes.

Anspoka et al., (2013) study of the educational progression of social orphans in Latvia found that children from families involved with child services were often not successful in school. They suggest that the negative outcomes are due to the elevated levels of frustration of the teachers. There is clearly a strong suggestion that teachers who are working with these children need more support in handling children and families with more complex socio-emotional issues. Often, teachers have so much to accomplish with their students' educational goals, to ask them to then manage the social/emotional needs of impoverished children is a monumental task. These

concerns would be better served by those in the social work/counselling fields but in Latvia this may not be possible.

Participants' emphasis on school as a whole in this sub-theme focused primarily on the challenges they experienced. There were no reports of educational successes nor were there any reports of study participants finding sanctuary in the schools as was anticipated. Out of all the sub-themes noted in *Prior to care* the theme of the school was the least highlighted by the participants. This then seems to indicate that a lack of connection between the participants and their school experiences pre-dated their entry into the care of the state. There could be many reasons, some of which have already been discussed.

These youth did not seem to have parents or other caretakers who maintained a strong commitment to education and or communal activities; thus, their subject may not have felt any sense of connection or inclusion in their school or community. Why did the parents or caretakers not find value in a connection to the school or community? This was not the focus of this study. However, some assumptions might be considered from the participants' narratives. In his seminal paper Maslow (1954), postulated the hierarchy of human developmental needs. His paradigm clearly could be applied to this theme. Without basic physiological and safety needs met, parents could not be expected to make school a priority of their day-to-day focus. Perhaps there are assumptions being suggested whereby families of social orphans are not capable of meeting development needs other than the basic physiological and safety needs of their children.

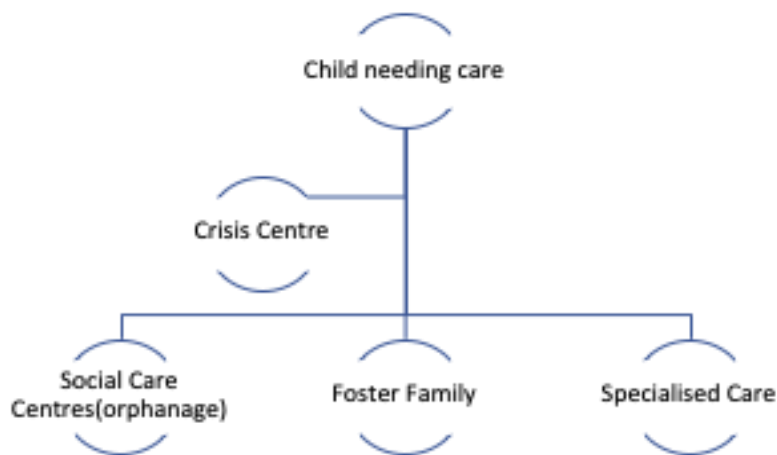
6.2.7 Summary of Time Period One: Prior to Care

In closing the discussion of these themes, many of the themes that emerged from the time period *Prior to Care* were connected to reasons why the participants were in care, such as parental substance use and situations of abuse. Other themes that emerged centred around times when they experienced happiness and when they saw the significance of relationships. Research by prominent social orphan researcher in Latvia, Trapenciene (2014) claims a lack of family resources preceded removal of the children from homes in most cases. This was confirmed by this study through the theme of Lack of Food which across the board affected every participant at some significant point throughout their childhood before entering care.

6.3 Themes from Time Period Two: During care

This section includes the themes that emerged from the time period of the participants' life histories throughout living in care. These included: Difficult transitions into care, Relationships, Abuse, Foster families, and Education. When entering care children typically enter through a Crisis Centre and then are placed accordingly. Figure 6.2 shows that the Crisis Centre is the first placement after identifying that a child is in need of care out of the home. The Crisis Centre handles the immediate needs of the child and then an appropriate placement is decided upon and the child is moved to that location. The choices typically are a Social Care Centre or more commonly known as an orphanage, a foster family or specialized care situation including hospitalization or special needs. As an example, when Veronika was placed at the Crisis Centre the staff recognized she was under-nourished and dehydrated. She was hospitalized for several weeks to stabilize her medically before than being placed in the orphanage. The first two themes emerged from the Crisis Centre and the following themes emerged from placements in the orphanage and foster families.

Figure 6-2 Placement Flow Chart



6.3.1 Entering Care through the Crisis Centre

As discussed in more depth in Chapter 2, the Crisis Centre is used for transitional housing and assessment. Youth are placed here during the period between removal from the home and longer-

term placement. Most participants reported living at the Crisis Centre for several weeks during the transition between removal from home and awaiting the next most appropriate placement. The themes reported from time spent in the Crisis Centre are Difficult Transitions into Care and Abuse from Peers.

6.3.2 Difficult Transition into Care

Vadim, Svetlana, Natasha, Veronika, Ana, Galina, Dima, Maxim, and Kisa all report entering the Crisis Centre directly after removal from their homes. They stated that they experienced “shock” due to the suddenness of the removal. They described how there was a lack of any kind of explanation or shared knowledge by the people performing the removal. No one explained what exactly was happening or why. Kisa described, “the woman who took me from my home to the Crisis Centre told me I was going to play at a park, and I would see my family again soon. I went willingly, and then my heart filled with pain, and I could not breathe when I realised, I was not going back home.” Veronika reported, “I was told I was going to a fun camp and that this was a good thing that was happening. Then I saw my grandmother crying out the car window and I knew I had been tricked.”

Ana and Kisa both reported that now looking back they understand that children are not informed during the transition to ease the emotionality for everyone involved. These two subjects believe that as children they would have preferred to know the truth rather than feel and be deceived. It appears that childcare workers responsible for removing children were attempting to ease the experience for the children and to diminish the removal's negative impact. However, it appears that this backfired for the participants in this study.

A recent large-scale survey in the United Kingdom by Staines and Selwyn (2020) explored children's subjective wellbeing in care. A significant factor in their wellbeing was having the knowledge and understanding of why they were removed from their homes. This could suggest that the shock described by participants could be due to the seemingly impulsive action of the state workers. The children had no ability to integrate or understand why they were being removed nor did they have any sense of predicable control for their future. It appears that a

child's experience of removal would yield overwhelming vulnerability, confusion, fear, and self-blame.

6.3.3 Abuse From Peers

While living in care, the maltreatment of orphans is an historical discourse most social workers and educators are aware of. Current literature continues to address the issue of maltreatment while in care. Springe (2017) explored violent experiences against children in Latvia. They argue that children have much higher odds of experiencing violence by other children when placed in social care settings. Dobeliniece et al., (2014) situational analysis focusing on social orphans agrees that children in care have a higher risk of exposure to violence in their study, several participants in this study reported experiencing violence at the Crisis Centre by other children. Interestingly these children did not suggest that they were victims of violence perpetrated by staff with any degree of frequency, even though historical discourse tends to focus on staff as the primary aggressor. Several case studies noted however that there are still incidents of violence perpetrated by caregivers. Evidence showed that violent situations occurred across many settings. The type of violence experienced included the unresponsiveness of specialists to provide both medical and psychological first aid, poor boundaries by trained professionals, leaks of confidential information, physical, emotional, and sexual abuse (Springe, 2017).

Natasha, Veronika, and Svetlana reported experiencing sexual violence. Natasha identified that this sexual violence shaped her identity. Each of these three participants describe a similar act of violence. Each found themselves separated from others in a room and with an adolescent girl who locked the door. The other teen would then threaten them and force them to touch her sexually. The reports share the following similarities. All three girls resided in Riga and all incidents happened when the subjects were approximately seven years old.

Older children who were considered more powerful both physically and/or emotionally often took advantage of new arrivals and younger children. Thus, abuse by other children while in care is identified by several participants as common. Maxim, Vadim, and Igor report physical assaults by other older boys as more than the typical 'roughhousing' they described between boys their age. Dima stated, "When I got there, I did not understand what was going on, but I got used to it.

In the beginning, I was very silent. I did everything that I was asked for from teachers and social workers. The only thing I did not like about the Crisis Centre was the abuse of older kids. They were not treating well the younger ones and did all kinds of bad stuff there.” The children had different violent experiences while they were at the Crisis Centre. Their experiences validate common statistics where girls reported sexual violence as more common, while boys reported emotional and physical abuse as more frequent. The gender narratives that emerged from the current research will be more fully discussed in later sections of the thesis.

6.4 Orphanage

After leaving the Crisis Centre participants mostly reported placement at various orphanages. From the questions related to the orphanage experience, several themes emerged. These included food and food practices, scheduling, foster placements, hosting, parental visits, and school.

6.4.1 Food

In the section, *Prior to the Orphanage*, a significant finding regarding the subject of lack of food emerged. The second related theme noted how issues related to food and hunger during care expanded the subject into other areas. Current literature regarding the lives of social orphans in Latvia does not address food other than its relationship to the overall experience of poverty in social orphan families. In the current study, a clear emphasis on food and hunger emerged. This includes the children using their state given allowances to procure additional food for themselves. Food and food practices can be an area through which children can have a visceral sense of safety and security. Further food choices also offer the youth some personal agency regarding their daily choices. Specifically, when children have experienced a lack of food previously, their own food choices can conflict with the adults' responsibilities to care and provide for them (Punch et al., 2012).

Ana, Natasha, Svetlana, Veronika, Galina, Dima, Kisa, Irina, Madara, Tania, Leon and Dmitri reported that the sudden change in the amount of food offered to them (three meals a day plus a snack) was a positive change and was radically different from what they had previously experienced. Leon stated, “I couldn't believe all the food, I was so happy.” Several participants, including Leon, experienced many years of intermittent hunger. Suddenly having a healthy

abundance of food available was quite a change. Initially he was a bit overwhelmed and intimidated by the availability and variety of food. After experiencing a lack of food for so long, several participants feared that the abundance of food in the orphanage might disappear; thus, they reported saving food from mealtimes and hiding it in their rooms. Irina stated, “I was scared I would wake up, and the food would all be gone so I put bread in my drawer every day until one day a teacher found it and I had to throw it out.”

Practices surrounding food were additionally commented on by several participants. This includes sharing rules and prayers before eating. Irina, Madara and Tania did not like or were not accustomed to the food served and disagreed with the rule requesting them to finish what they were served. Natasha, Veronika, and Svetlana reported that staff requested a recitation of prayers before commencing the meal. This was experienced as entirely “foreign” as their families did not practice any religion and instead celebrated holidays in a more secular way. This is an area that demonstrates the lack of choice or control they experienced in care.

As discussed in Chapter 5 the participant, Igor reported a struggle with mealtimes in the orphanage. Igor wanted to serve himself his food when the customary practice was to be served your portion of food. When he was not allowed to serve his food, Igor recalls that altercations would ensue between him and staff members. “One time I got so angry I threw my tray of food across the room, and it went all over the wall. They sent me away for some weeks.” Several occasions this would culminate Igor’s removal from the orphanage.

For Igor, the customary institutional practice of children who are served food by staff members symbolized the lack of agency and self-determination he experienced in his overall situation. Igor reflected that he would not have done it differently, “I needed to prove to myself I was my person it was worth getting in trouble.” Igor resisted what has long been understood as being problematic with institutional or communal life. The inability to treat each institutional resident as an individual, with their own separate needs and abilities is a core failing of any large, systemic, rigid programme servicing large groups. Igor’s practicing of personal agency through his rebellion to assert his individualism, was understandably viewed as rebellion as he was breaking the rules (Berridge, 2017). Igor was punished and then removed from the orphanage for

expressing his own agency. Subsequently he was sent to a psychiatric facility because his behaviour was viewed as “diagnostically” defiant.

6.4.2 Allowances

The children were regularly given small allowances from the state to spend. Although staff encouraged participants to save, they reported taking the money to a nearby shop and purchasing multiple types of junk food (chocolate bars, sweet drinks or treats etc.) one might see any Latvian child purchase. Mila, Irina, Svetlana, Natasha, Tania, Maxim, Galina, Kristine, Veronika, and Leon reported that using the small allowance provided by the orphanage to buy sweets and other treats became a significant ritual and a happy memory of the orphanage. Veronika reported, “Most of the time we would all run to the store together and then go back, sit in a big circle and share our treats.”

While telling these stories participants' physical demeanor was very bright and upbeat. It was easy to recognize the positive significance of the experiences held when interviewees shared the details of their experiences. Leon stated, “We got five lats every month as our pocket money. We could go to the shop and decide what to buy. Usually, it was gums, sweets, candies, and chips. There was always a line to get in from all the kids in the orphanage. It was a paradise for us. We ate all the sweets on the same day.”

Participants stressed that they had practices and rituals that were created around the purchasing of food and consuming it. It is noteworthy to mention that only the positive experiences reported from the eight participants included purchasing treats with their allowance in the orphanage. One might have expected otherwise with the combination of children in care, money, and no regulations on how to spend it. It is possible money was spent in less acceptable places by some who did not report it, but that did not emerge from the stories.

6.4.3 Experience of group care

Orphanages and institutional care are associated negatively with stripping individuality from a person. This is often accomplished through employing strict routines and communal expectations (Laksevics et al., 2018). However, multiple studies on social orphans in Latvia including Trapenciere (2008) and Zumente-Steele (2018) maintained that the families social orphans came from are not able to maintain consistent childcare and family schedules due to erratic dysfunctional lifestyles. It seems that most of the social orphans lacked consistency in daily life and that maintaining control by adhering to schedules and routines might be pertinent yet a transition for the children. Some participants reported that daily routines were a significant transition. Mila, Svetlana, Kristine, Natasha, Veronika, Ana, Kisa, Lana, Madara, and Dmitri reported that the orphanage's daily and weekly schedules took time to transition to. This transition was not always an easy one and they reported they often fought against it.

Participants' orphanage routines, which were often difficult for the newcomer to integrate, identified these key areas to help that make the transition. This included school attendance, mealtimes, homework times, chores, bedtimes, and curfews. Some participants reflected that they appreciated the routines of the orphanage as they were able to gain knowledge that they currently use in daily life. Maxim stated, "At first I did not like how things were done, but I am thankful now it helps me know how to get up for work and be responsible." For many participants, the orphanage's predictable routines provided a sense of normalcy and a structure they had not previously experienced. Dmitri reported that the predictability and regular schedule of the orphanage was extremely therapeutic. "I felt so relaxed there. I knew what was happening and when. People did what they said they would do. My pain inside started to get smoothed over." These participants address one of the key attributes of group living. The orphanage offers residents an experience of healing through predictable, consistent routines which counterbalance their previous volatile and at times traumatic pre-care life experience.

6.4.4 Relationships whilst in care

Relationships emerged as a key theme and in this section relationships with individuals holding a variety of roles in the participants' lives were highlighted. These included relationships with staff

members, the orphanage nurse, the cleaning staff, peers, siblings that were also in care, parents, and host families.

6.4.4.1 Relationships with Staff

1. Staff to child relationships were extremely significant in participants' stories for the parts of their relationship that were included in a typical job description of a care home and for surrogate parents. One participant stated, "She (the staff person) was there every morning of my life in the orphanage to say good morning, give me a big hug and start me on my day. When I came back in the afternoon she was there to hear about my day. She was the best mother I have had even over my real mother and the foster mothers." The consistency expressed in this story of a mother figure shows how care leavers felt they could depend on and have vital needs met by staff in the care home even more than biological and foster mothers.

This confirms Houston's statement that positive relationships between orphanage staff members and the child residents are often pivotal to a child's later view of their care experience (Houston, 2011). Hugely different culturally to Western residential care practices, at times children from the orphanage visited the homes of staff members for a weekend. Additionally, several participants reported going home with staff members over a weekend or a holiday to spend time with the staff's family members. Veronika reports, "I went home on a regular basis with Sveta and slept in the room with her daughter. I loved it we had so much fun, and it felt very loving." Several participants acknowledged relationships with staff were some of the most critical relationships for them while they were in care. Emond (2000) and Berridge (2002) agree that staff to resident relationships are vital to the success of the care placement.

Art Based Contribution 3 “Valentine”



This art piece was completed by two participants in the study that reported, “It reminds us of the love we felt from *(staff at the orphanage).” This is an example of the significant impact of the staff relationships on the children in care.

*Names of staff were omitted here and replaced with (staff at the orphanage) for confidentiality.

6.4.4.2 Nurse

The nurse offered a special type of caring relationship for residents in that she took care of the children’s health, could offer a cozy cot to lay on and rest while she sat at her desk, “she gave out hard candies for a sore throat and a sweet drink for a tummy ache” reported one participant. “These were special attentions we all enjoyed whenever possible, and it didn’t hurt that she was very pretty and smiled always.” Another participant said, “I loved the nurse she always let me listen to music and play with dolls in her office.” The data that emerged from the current study validates Houston’s (2011) findings, although in this study, other staff members such as the cleaners and the nurse offered supportive relationships with the children.

6.4.4.3 Cleaners

The cleaners were at the orphanage on a regular basis and many participants created important relationships with them. One participant stated, “I love the cleaner Lana, she always asked me

about my day, I tell her about school, and she listens to everything while she mops the floor. She never said she didn't have time; she always was interested in me. I really missed her when I left but sometimes, I stop by the orphanage to say hello."

According to Kendrick (2012) the important qualities that make for a positive staff-to-child relationship include: "empathy, approachability, persistence, willingness to listen, reliability". In this study, Mila, Dmitri, Christian, Veronika, Natasha, Kisa, and Madara report that individual staff took on the role of being like a mother or grandmother for them. The attributes these participants affirm created a familial type of bond are as follows: "taking extra time with the children, smiling, helping with schoolwork, not yelling, playing games, trustworthy with secrets, gives hugs." According to Kendrick (2012) these characteristics are linked to the family-style caring relationship. Unfortunately, most of the literature claims that orphanages are not able to offer these types of relationships consistently to the children in their care.

The same participants also reported a preference for staff who had the same ethnic background as themselves. Many of the study participants were Russian and preferred Russian staff. They reported experiencing them as familiar. Dimitri knew no Russian upon his first arrival at a Russian orphanage. The site was close to the Latvian/Russian border, and he reported being afraid of the differences between the Russian and the Latvian women he knew from home. After he was able to learn to speak Russian, he became close to the Russian staff. "I loved the Russian teachers they were all like my grandmothers making soup and loving us all." Dimitri's experience offered him a loving example of caring adults that he reports he "keeps these memories close to him years after he found himself in different institutions."

Svetlana told the story of the children slipping notes under the door of a staff member. Several children, including her, felt this staff member was like their mother. In contrast the children were distressed with the punitive actions of a member of staff working the overnight shift. "The night teacher was such a mean woman she screamed at us and hit our legs and backs when we did not listen. When it happened, we wrote on notes what she did and put it under the office door of our orphanage mother." Svetlana and the other children who wrote notes asked for protection from the night staff person. These notes were taken seriously, and the day staff intervened on behalf of

the children. Subsequently, the overnight staff member who hit them was fired after being reported by the children.

6.4.4.4 Peer Relationships

Participants all acknowledged the importance of peer relationships. There was an even more striking emphasis on peer relationships in foster placement or hosting than in the institutional settings. This emphasis on these themes speaks of the importance and opportunities for significant relationships to build out of shared experience in communal settings. Madara, Natasha, Dmitri, Leon, Kisa, Galina, Laura, Ana, Veronika, and Svetlana reported the peer relationships while living in the orphanage were vital. Most subjects referred to these relationships as replacements for family relationships. Vadim stated, “Without my two best friends I would never have survived the orphanage it feels like I have known them my whole life, but I met them at thirteen, and they are like sisters.” Madara, Dmitri, Vadim, Kisa, Galina, Laura, Veronika, and Natasha reported that if offered a choice of who to place their trust in it would be in friends from the orphanage. This is over all others including family members. They report feeling this way due to their shared experiences, understanding, trust and closeness they formed with each other over time. Kisa reported, “We were like one big family of children without the others I don't know where I would be.”

Emond (2003), in her significant work on residential care in Scotland noted that children in institutional settings often locate close relationships that feel like family. These relationships are complex and can often account for problems peers may experience within those same relationships. The subtheme of peer relationships and the subtheme of abuse by peers also are closely related.

Art Based Contribution 4 “The Eye”

Art piece 6 is a piece painted by a participant as a representation of her world view and in the center of the eye the name represents the importance of the relationships she had at the orphanage.

6.4.4.5 Siblings Together in Care

The social care system attempts to keep siblings together in care situations. Several participants had siblings in the same group care home and others were separated for assorted reasons. Most separations of siblings occurred for the participants after the orphan court legally separated them. One participant had a sister that was adopted internationally post hosting. Both sisters were initially hosted internationally, and Svetlana was extremely unhappy throughout the month in the United States. Her younger sister on the other hand connected to the host family and six months later the family requested only the younger sister to visit, not Svetlana. This request was experienced as a painful rejection for Svetlana and caused a lot of strife between the two sisters. They fought and distanced themselves from each other. Another painful blow came for Svetlana when her younger sister agreed to be adopted by the host family. Since her sister's adoption social media has allowed them to get back in touch and rebuild their relationship.

6.4.4.6 *Parents*

Kendrick's study (2012) explored the complexity of biological parents being involved with their children while their offspring are in state care's auspices. Children must often attempt to hold their birth alliances with both biological parents and then care givers at the institution simultaneously. Parental visits or the lack thereof were often emotionally charged for the study participants. Some participants stated they received consistent visits from family members for several months. They reported however that the family member would then just stop visiting without ever explaining why. Other subjects described problematic emotions surfaced when other children received visits, and they did not. Mila stated, "Every time the other children had visits from mothers or grandmothers, I was desperate and sad. It made me feel terrible that no one cares." Mila's interpretation of her family's lack of care as the reason she had no visitors is one reason family visits can be challenging for children placed in state care. Staff members who may be privy to information regarding families and potential reasons for their lack of connection were in the double-bind of caring deeply for their charges but then could not discuss the reasons their family members were not visiting with the children. As an adult Mila understood later that her mother did not visit because she was incarcerated for two of the years she was at the orphanage. At the time, however, all she could do was blame herself.

Veronika reported her mother visited a few times each year and typically the visit ended in an altercation between her mother and the orphanage staff. "The teachers hated my mother, and she hated them. Every visit ended with my mom yelling at them and them telling her to leave." Veronika's interpretation of these events always ended with her feeling sad and depressed. She stated, "I looked forward to her visits so much, and then when they ended badly, I felt very down for many weeks." Veronika experienced a regression of emotional wellbeing after each visit. A pattern emerged including depression, refusal to eat, crying, refusal to attend school, withdrawal from staff members and peers. As an adult, she understood that staff members were in fact trying to protect her from these painful responses and that they did not necessarily dislike her mother but learned that the visits would trigger Veronika's distress.

6.4.4.7 *Host Families*

As seen in the Participant Table in Chapter 5 many of the participants were hosted to the USA multiple times by a single family and in some circumstances, they were hosted by multiple families. Mila, Madara, Ana, Tania, Veronika, Natasha, Kisa, Vadim, Galina, Kristine, Svetlana all reported being hosted by families in the United States of America. Christian reported being hosted by a family in France.

Svetlana, Natasha, Veronika, Christian, Ana, Tania, Kisa, Kristine and Mila were hosted multiple times and by different families. Svetlana, Madara and Tania were hosted with their siblings and reported these events were not phenomenally successful. It was noted that the host family was displeased by the multiple disputes between the siblings. Tania was hosted individually several times and she reported that the experience was successful. She indicated that she formed a close bond with the mother of the host family. Kristine chose a situation with her host family as one of her Critical Events noted in the preceding chapter (Under Kristine, Critical Event). Kristine reported several hosting experiences and shared a bond with the host family that helped shape her identity and ideas regarding relationships. She reported that in her host family she observed a loving relationship between the host parents and grandparents.

Kisa reported multiple hosting placements and one which she emphasized. While visiting the family, the host mother took her to the hairdresser. She dyed her hair from deep brown to blonde so the two of them would match each other. She additionally gave her a traditional English name and called her this throughout the rest of the summer instead of using her Russian name.

Ana reports that she felt bonded with the host family but refused their request for adoption. She did not want to leave her siblings who were still in the orphanage without her. Galina reported that after her hosting placement, she turned down an opportunity for adoption. The host family then reacted angrily and cut off all contact with her.

Madara, Mila and Veronika reported that they appreciated the host placements as it provided new experiences which they might never have been exposed to. Though not adopted from the hosting experiences, these children expanded their world view. The hosting concept fulfills many

elements of exposure that are not offered to many children. These youth were able to experience diverse cultures, different family rules and processes and yet maintain their sense of Latvian identity. The bravery of these young people to agree to expand their horizons beyond the world of the institutions meant being willing to choose to embrace the unfamiliar and the unknown. For the young people who had already been removed from their families of origin to embrace the differences of being hosted (language, time zone, foods, family expectations and rules) is a remarkable testament to their inner strength and need for affiliation and care.

None of the research regarding Latvia included the hosting experiences and their impact on the youth or their institutional experience. There is currently no scholarly literature that specifically includes this area. However, grey literature which was excluded from the formal literature review does discuss the pros and cons of hosting. There seems to be a current shift by policymakers away from hosting practices and currently hosting has been halted. However, most participants in this study were aware of other children or those who had siblings adopted through the hosting program. Due to social media which makes global communication so much easier in this era, many participants had opinions to share regarding the success of the adoptions.

There seem to be many successful adoptions of older children who are hosted by families in an area of the Southern United States called the 'Bible Belt'. The hosting/adoptive families tend to use their religious beliefs and their relationship with God to influence the children they are hosting or trying to adopt. This has been noted to have varying degrees of success. While cultural competency is not encouraged, many of these older children struggle with the vast differences thrust upon them. Some children will accept the family doctrine in order to fit in with the host family. Experiences and effects of hosting is an area that has not been studied for children hosted from Latvia and it would be beneficial to determine its strengths and weaknesses.

6.4.4.8 Abuse Experienced in Care

Some participants reported experiencing situations of abuse while in care. Dobeliniece et al., (2014) found that children residing in orphanages in Latvia had higher risks of exposure to violence, abuse, and exploitation than children growing up with parents watching over them. However, that assumes most children outside of the care system have parents watching over

them which is not always the case in at risk families. Two sub-themes related to abuses emerged from the data. First, abuse perpetrated on younger or more vulnerable children by older or more powerful children. Second, abuse perpetrated by staff members, which was less prevalent.

6.4.4.8.1 Abuse By Other Residents

Several participants reported experiencing abuse, participating in a peer's abuse, or observing sexual or physical abuse of another child or children while in the orphanage. These victims were forced into sexual acts against their will and these events were not considered exploratory sexual relations by consenting children. Study participants reported these experiences have had significant adverse effects. This has included increased anxiety, nightmares, fears, and an inability to sleep or trust others.

Veronika, Svetlana, Natasha, Kisa, Tania, and Christian all reported sexual and physical abuse by peers in the orphanage. Tania reported she was forced to perform oral sex on a boy by a group of older girls. This occurred when she was nine years old. Veronika and Svetlana report that at age seven and eight years, several boys pulled off their pants and taunted them while other girls were cheering the boys on. Natasha and Svetlana reported being a part of the crowd that cheered on the boys pulling off another young girl's clothing and forced her to have oral sex with one of the boys. Veronika was filmed with a flip phone getting dressed and dancing in her undergarments and subsequently was blackmailed by an older girl to ensure it was not shown to a group of older boys. Christian reported a sexual assault by two older boys behind the orphanage. He said they hated him because of his slight stature. Kristine reported that she observed several boys having sexual intercourse with a younger girl in the girl's bed. She reported it to the night staff, and the situation was stopped. Kristine stated, "The boys were 13, 14 and 15 and the girl was ten years old, and she kept telling Kristine not to get the boys in trouble because she wanted to have sex with them. This confused everyone, and then one of the teachers said she was not right in her head." This young girl had emotional and developmental disabilities, although she was highly functioning, she had been removed from her home where she experienced severe abuse, including sexual abuse. The situation was highly problematic as it was reported she invited the three boys to have sexual intercourse with her, and they complied.

All the children in this situation were noted to be at considerable risk and vulnerable due to their life histories and personal circumstances.

Most reports of abuse by other children were perpetrated by a group or with group bystanders. This seems to buck the trend of abuse having to happen in secrecy. In the orphanage multiple residents knew of these abuses or were even bystanders in the events. It was clear that although the perpetrators were peers, they held more social currency and power than the abused child. There were reports by participants when they held positions of both the abuser and the abused at separate times. Once abused by members of the peer group when the opportunity presented itself, some participants wielded their own sense of power over another child, either directly or as a bystander, encouraging continued abusive situations. Other participants deliberately refused to take on the role of an abuser but were among the young people who experienced the abuses.

The participants' different choices were not explicitly addressed by the study, although the social currency component is closely considered. The participants who did not participate as abusers held exceptionally low social currency within the group. One could argue that holding the role of a bystander or abuser could increase or decrease the social currency held by the child. Being a victim also could increase or decrease one's social currency (Emond, 2003). Several participants reported experiences relating to these findings. "After it happened (coerced into performing oral sex on a peer) everyone thought I was cool, you know wanted to hang out with me because I had done this." In this case the participant held more social currency because of the incident and did not report the experience of coercion as traumatic, it was reported more as a rite of passage into a lead position with the other residents. In another situation a participant reported a vastly different outcome after engaging with peers in a comparable situation. "I hated this girl she was weak, and I made her pay for it. Then the kids thought I was cool but after when she cried and acted like a big baby everyone got mad at me and wouldn't talk to me. She got all the attention for being such a baby." In this situation the participant chose someone who was too far down the social chain. This was a girl who everyone felt sorry for and instead of gaining social capital the participant lost it and the other girl climbed it for a fleeting time. A few weeks later the weaker girl no longer carried her increased capital for what she had gone through and simultaneously the stronger girl continued with a loss of social capital as the group did not forgive her.

Participant Irina reported a different type of abuse perpetrated on another slightly younger girl from the orphanage. This report was discussed in the previous results chapter (Under Irina and Critical Events). Irina convinced another girl to run away with her. She did not inform the girl that her plan was to exploit the younger girl by commercially trafficking her for sex. She reported, “I forced her to have sex with men, and then I took most of the money, and she also got some money.” Irina learned to commercially exploit girls by watching others making money by exploiting younger adolescents in this way such as exploitative staff members (see below). Irina returned to the orphanage without the other girl after two months. Irina expressed concern over the other girl's wellbeing and whereabouts, however, was unaware of any information regarding what happened to her.

6.4.4.8.2 Abuse Perpetrated by Staff

Dobeliniece et al., (2014) present the issue of exploitation in care which was also reported by participants in this study. Laura, Ana, and Irina all reported similar abuses from one orphanage intended for older adolescent girls. Two staff members commercially sexually exploited the girls in Riga for over two years until authorities shut down the orphanage. The girls were exposed to sexual assaults, physical assaults, and psychological intimidations. All three participants reported a diagnosis from medical personnel of Post-Traumatic Stress disorder. These three participants reported trauma symptoms: severe anxiety, paralyzing fears, suicidality, self-harm, drug addiction, reoccurring physical symptoms and pain, sexually transmitted disease, and a lack of confidence. Prostitution, stripping and dancing in Latvia are taken on by some social orphans who have run away from placement or after completing care. This study allowed Maxim to discuss physical and psychological abuse by staff members while he was in a correctional institution. This institution was later closed due to allegations of abuse and misconduct. Maxim stated, “They put us, boys, against the fence and beat our legs and backs with sticks” This finding is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5, (Maxim, Critical Events). Springe (2017) discusses that social orphans are more vulnerable to exposure to violence than other Latvian children who live at home with families.

Studies of residential care have found that there is a distrust in services and supports available to report such abuses which makes sense given the abuse of power that can happen (Frost & Wallis, 2000, Kendrick & Smith, 2002). Although exposure to violence, abuse and exploitation was recorded in this study, it is noteworthy that most of the violence reported in this study happened before the institutional experience.

6.4.4.9 Education

Every participant reported attending school in the community, and that their attendance was inconsistent. Galina, Svetlana, Mila, Tania, Laura, Dmitri, Igor, Leon, Vadim, Kisa, Dima, Irina, and Natasha reported attending Primary School, which includes Grades 1-9. Christian, Ana, Veronika, and Kristine report completing Secondary School, which includes Grades 10-12. Kristine reported that “school made me feel proud inside because I was good at it.”

Christian reported “I started school at seven years old and there were many problems. I could not concentrate, I had learning disabilities, my mind was broken, I could not sit in my seat, so they sent me to a boarding school.” Christian reports he was challenged by several learning disabilities and spent time at a state-funded boarding school for social orphans. He reported visiting the orphanage on the weekends and staying at school during the week. Dmitri, Igor, and Leon reported that school was challenging for them due to his social issues. Leon reported, “I got into many fights at school, someone was always talking bad about me for being poor or an orphan and I would scream at them that I had a mom and dad.” The stigma social orphans experience is discussed more fully in Chapter 1. Judgements and stereotypes were identified and emphasized by each subject when discussing their lack of success in the educational setting. An example of this stigmatisation was reported by Dmitri; “I had a friend at school, and we played in the park then his mom came out and screamed at him to come home because I was filthy, but I wasn't... she meant the orphanage.” Anspoka et al., (2013) argue that the stigma from social discourse and social behaviours, including learning difficulties, lack of organisational skills and exceptionally low self-esteem, are the factors that prevent social orphans from finishing secondary school.

6.4.4.10 Foster Placements

Most research studies in Latvia favour deinstitutionalisation and placement in foster families (Berens & Nelson, 2015; Ismayilova et al., 2014; Lin et al., 2005; Razeva & Silova, 2014; Vaschecko, 2014). Interestingly, most participants in the current study reported preferring the orphanage experience above their foster placements.

Svetlana, Kristine, Natasha, Vadim, Leon, Christian and Igor reported living in foster families. Christian and Igor lived in more than one foster family. Svetlana and Natasha reported living in foster families for approximately six months. Both reflected that they were happy in their placements with foster families. Kristine reported living in a foster family for six months after healing from traumatic physical abuse. She reported that the foster situation ended in turmoil and was emotionally painful. She recognized that this was a contributing factor in her inability to develop trusting relationships. Christian reported being placed in multiple foster families. After his first foster placement where he experienced both physical and psychological abuse alternative foster placements were negatively affected by the earlier events. He reported he could not form relationships with the other foster families due to his initial earlier abusive experiences. Leon reported a placement in a foster family that was remarkably successful, and he felt bonded with the family and specifically the grandmother. He thought he would stay there forever; however, he was returned to his biological mother (who maintained custody). The same circumstances which caused his original removal from the home continued. Igor reported his multiple foster family placements were unsuccessful. His experience in a larger orphanage institution was more successful than in the smaller family placements. Vadim reported he was in a long-term foster family placement that was quite successful. He continues to consider the placement setting as his family and continues contact with them. Vadim reported there were times when it was challenging. His foster mother and he disagreed specifically regarding the rules she set for him. “When I became 18 years old, I sat at the table with my foster mother and had an emotional conversation. She told me she is very thankful that I taught her a lot. I told her that I am thankful, as well. Because of her, I am a better person now. She taught me to control my anger, not to give up and to think before I do something.” Vadim's foster care experience appeared to be as ideal and representative of a successful fostering experience.

Within the placement they experienced multiple challenges, but the foster mother appeared to have the skills and experience to handle them. One of the large issues that foster care is supposed to combat is the lack of stability for children in care. In this study, as one can see, Vadim's experience is in the minority. No other foster placement reported by the subjects was considered successful by the care leavers. Browne et al., (2006) found that the children moved from institutional care to foster families could recover from both physical and cognitive developmental delays. They assert that children in these countries should always be moved into foster care from more extensive institutional settings as quickly as possible. What makes these outcomes problematic is the author's broad generalisations and the large-scale study only included children from birth to age three. Older children and adolescents may have a vastly distinct set of responses in the two settings. The current research fully supports foster care when it correctly meets the needs of the children in care which will be further discussed in Chapter 7. However, the study's data indicates that children often feel isolated and vulnerable in foster care when it is less than adequate.

6.4.5 Time Period Three: After Leaving Care

After Leaving Care includes explorations of what participants report about their lives since leaving the childcare system. The key themes to emerge included areas of school, training, employment, relationships, having their own children and gender differences. Multiple studies have looked at the experiences and trajectories of social orphan's post-care. Trapenciere (2014) found that social orphans post-care in Latvia face several issues. They appear to be unprepared for life's challenges and not ready to live independently. Razeva and Silova (2014) identified that youth living in the orphanage have a low sense of responsibility.

6.4.5.1 School, Training and Employment

School, training, and employment were combined in this section. This has been done to examine the results of the participants' narratives regarding the three subjects. These were combined when interviewing the participants and discussing further study or training at a post-secondary level. As is discussed further in Chapter 2, there is financial assistance offered to social orphans who continue to engage in academic or vocational programmes from the government.

Participants Christian, Ana, Veronika, and Kristine reported attending secondary school while in care, thus maintaining their eligibility to attend a university or a trade school. Vadim and Maxim reported attending a vocational education program. Kristine attended university to train as a Veterinary Medical Technician. She states, “I love what I am doing in school and my work with animals.” Veronika attended a childcare training program after secondary school and wants to teach at a school for young children or at an orphanage. Maxim attended a training to be a certified Tram driver and his social life and identity revolve primarily around this successful career. Maxim states, “The driver training offered me a direction for my life.” Vadim attended a vocational school fixing automobiles and currently is employed in the field.

Gainful employment can be a challenge in Latvia, and marginalised populations struggle to find stable employment more than the general population. Language and stigma can contribute to the difficulties of locating employment. Anspoka et al., (2017) study points out that individuals from Russian families who never learned to speak Latvian have extreme difficulty gaining employment. Further, if and when employment is available, they received lower wages and the jobs were unstable. If children are placed in an orphanage in Riga, the capital city, they most often attend school and learn Latvian, all becoming fluent in Latvian. In turn this gives them an advantage when seeking employment as most of their biological families never became fluent in Latvian and thus were unemployed.

The choice to temporarily migrate for better employment is discussed in Chapter 2 as a common thread among the Latvian working class, irrespective of whether they are a social orphan (Zumente-Steele 2018). Svetlana, Dima, Christian and Igor report that they migrated for seasonal employment purposes. Leon and Madara reported moving to England to find their way into restaurant work. Leon had a relative who managed a restaurant and was able to secure him proper documentation. Madara travelled to work in the food industry where she also had a prior connection. Svetlana relocated several times to the Netherlands where she was able to work in a meat factory for several months at a time before she returned to Latvia.

Christian moved to France at eighteen to work in a religious program for youth. He believed that this was going to be a permanent move. However, he reported he returned to Latvia after six

months because he felt “different than the French people, so I came back to Latvia, and now I am happy.” Dima reported travelling to Germany after leaving the orphanage at the enticement of friends. It was disappointing and he returned to Riga after a few months. Igor reported he felt he had little choice but to travel to the Netherlands to seek employment. After leaving the orphanage at eighteen, Igor stated, “I did not know how to survive, I had no skills. I was stealing every day because it was a thing I knew. It was my job.” Igor reported that his identity continued to be defined by this lifestyle. He stated that his current employment in Latvia is as a “drug dealer, not the bad kind I do not hurt people.”

6.4.5.2 Relationships

Participants in this study reported continued or renewed connections with families of origin, continued peer relationships from those they met in care, continued relationships with foster families or hosting families, and new relationships built with others since leaving care. Foster families and host family relationships that have continued, even on an intermittent basis, seem to offer social currency to participants' experiences. Several participants reported how much they enjoyed telling their friends about host families in the United States. When doing so their friends find it to be impressive.

6.4.5.2.1 Continued Host Relationships

Some of the host relationships have extended beyond casual contact. Kisa reported that the host family offers her regular financial support and have purchased her a vehicle. This would not have been possible otherwise and they had invited her to visit them with her new baby. Kisa stated, “When I was being hosted, I had a lot of love and support. Visiting so many places in the world would not be possible if I weren't at the orphanage.” The host family offers continued emotional support from the U.S. through video calls, email, and messaging. She acknowledges that this is the way they have built up her relationship, through the ongoing conversations and dialogue of caring. Mila's continued the relationship with her hosting family, and she recently even visited them for a month to attend a family wedding. Ongoing relationships with foster and host families appear essential to participants as well as relationships with friends from the orphanage which offer more support in daily life.

6.4.5.2.2 Continued Friendships from The Orphanage

As referenced earlier in the chapter, Emond's study of Cambodian orphanages discusses the importance of peers in the orphanage. These continued relationships seem to continue to hold a great deal of significance for care leavers (2010). Madara, Dmitri, Kisa, Galina, Laura, Veronika, and Natasha reported continuing their relationships with friends from the orphanage. They suggest that these peers offer support in several aspects of life, including housing, employment, childcare, and emotional assistance. Dmitri stated, "I started to work in a pizzeria. I helped many of my friends from the orphanage get jobs there because I knew how hard it is to get a job when you don't have a good education." Participants reported that the friends that they grew up with within the orphanage were often their chosen family. Further they intimated that a new friend might be nice but that the friends from care shared an inside experience that was not easily understood otherwise. Another theme shared by several study participants is the notion that they were more comfortable getting to know people in their lives who had shared care experiences because, with others who didn't have these shared experiences, there is a concern for hidden judgements and biases. This stigma that participants reported trying to avoid is discussed in Laksevics et al., (2018) ethnography of Latvia's relevant stakeholders. It informs us that the participants' concern regarding this appears to be well-founded. Stigma surrounding children in care is understood to be a part of Latvia's discourse and most other places worldwide.

6.4.5.2.3 Reconnecting with family

After leaving the orphanage, young adults often reconnect with biological families out of their necessity for housing, food, and childcare. Others reconnect out of a desire to attempt to be close to them again after years of separation. For some participants, this is a continuation of a relationship maintained throughout the care experience, and for other participants, it is an attempt at a total reconnection.

Art Based Contribution 5 “Family Cuffs”

Is a drawing by a participant who reported that she was bound by her family history of poverty. She commented, “We are in prison in my family, but we have the key there it is that no one knows how to open the lock but me. I will open the lock.”



This participant returned home after 12 years of living at the orphanage and was determined to help her family out. She reported: “I learned things at the orphanage even my parents and grandmother doesn’t know. I can speak Latvian now, I went to school, I have a job, I can help them get to a better life.” This speaks to some of the more positive aspects of care as for this participant there were enough skills gained that she felt she could positively impact not only her own life but that of her family’s.

Dima's relationship with his grandmother included childhood abuse before care and became filled with anger when he attempted to reconnect with her. He stated, “All I could think of was how terrible she treated me as a child, and I hate her even though I know I should not.” Dmitri and his father had a problematic relationship before the orphanage and had little relationship during care. After Dmitri left the orphanage, he hoped his relationship with his father would

change. “I was hoping that my dad won't touch me anymore, because I was an adult now.” Initially, the relationship between father and son was what Dmitri hoped for; however, several weeks in after his return home his father became drunk, got out of control, and while intoxicated initiated a physical fight with him. Dmitri stood up to him for the first time. “I didn't hurt him because he is my father, but I pushed him away and told him I was done with him. I moved out as soon as I could after that and have no relationship with him.” Dmitri reported that he wanted a different outcome in life for himself than his father had and actively pursued his own goals to make this happen. The pursuit of a new identity is touched upon by several participants and discussed in Mencil's case studies of social orphans (2014).

6.4.5.2.4 Having Children of Their Own

Ten participants from this study reported having children of their own since leaving care. Ana, Irina, and Laura reported they have been parenting two children since leaving care. Svetlana has a five-year-old son born while she lived at the orphanage. Natasha, Galina, Kisa, Mila, Laura and Dmitri have each had one child since leaving care.

Vasecheko (2014) found Latvian adults with social orphanhood experience at elevated risk for both addiction and having their children removed from home. This unfortunately continues the orphanhood cycle. While some of the participants from this study appear to confirm this finding, others such as Dmitri and Kisa highlight a more positive narrative.

Kisa, who left the orphanage eighteen months ago, is raising her infant daughter with the infant's father. She reported that they both take care of her. However, it is her responsibility to provide day-to-day care since her boyfriend is the one with employment. Kisa receives some assistance from the state, although she reports it is minimal. It helps pay for diapers and baby formula. Kisa continues a relationship with her host family with whom she stayed on multiple occasions in the United States of America. They have assisted her quite a bit financially. They paid the rent on her apartment and purchased her a car to drive. Kisa also has emotional support from them with regular phone calls and messaging. Her biological father also provides considerable emotional support to her and so does her paternal grandmother. They both visit her and the baby regularly,

and she enjoys her relationships with them. Perhaps without this support, Kisa would be at risk of losing custody of her child, and thus the support prevents all of them from taking this risk.

Art Based Contribution 6 “Inside Fighter and Outside Girl”



These art pieces were drawn by a participant as a self-portrait of her internal and external self. The left-hand side as an individual looks at the two pieces is the warrior; she says she can become if it is necessary to protect her child. The right-hand side is what she believes most people think of her which is quiet and shy. She reported that her inside fighter comes out if her infant is at any risk. “Some lady made a bad comment to her friend about me, and my baby and I could feel the fight come out in me. We moved away but I wanted to fight her and say to stay away from us.”

Dmitri is another participant that shifts the prevailing narrative. He is a single parent and lives with his young son. He states that he intends to be a “good father”. “This drives me to work hard and live a clean life. Without my son I would be dead in the street somewhere because I would not care about anyone only me.” Dmitri receives assistance from the state as well; however, it is limited in what it covers. He has a stable job which pays for the two of them to live. When

possible, his family gives him a few Euros to assist. Dmitri has committed himself not to get involved with drugs and alcohol or a relationship. He feels these are the things that will put him at risk of losing the life he has created for his son. It is not this way for others who have less determination and are more likely to fit the more negative stereotype of care leavers.

Svetlana's story is more consistent with Trapenciere's (2018) study regarding social orphans leaving care. Young mothers are at extremely elevated risk for addictions, criminal activity and losing custody of their child (2018) when living on their own after leaving the orphanage. Svetlana reported moving out of the orphanage at eighteen with her son and had a particularly challenging transition. She had her son at fourteen, thus the state and the orphanage cared for both for several years. She had little idea, experience, or training as to how to care for a child. Living at home until she was nine and then growing up in the orphanage, she felt she did not have any example of how to treat a child. The transition to living independently with him while finding full-time employment in primary education was a momentous task. Svetlana recalled that she was not close to any staff members at the orphanage and felt like she was on her own in all areas. She believes she has made many mistakes parenting and is concerned for her future. Svetlana struggled to bond with her son as an infant, and since then the child has been diagnosed with an attachment disorder and speech disorder. She attributes these diagnoses to her inability to bond with the child.

When she first moved into her place with him, she often left him alone overnight. She now deals with a great deal of guilt for this. "I have not always been a good mother, and I feel terrible about the times I left him to go out and party. I was lucky nothing bad happened but at that time, I was only thinking of myself not him". Svetlana ran up a high credit card debt that she took out in her mother's name—putting her in a difficult situation. She has had to pay her current bills as well as the debt with high-interest payments. She stated, "It is almost like the world is begging me to be a criminal because to do things the honest way is impossible. There is no way for me to work enough to pay all of this, and food for my son and me, so I feed him as best I can."

Svetlana planned to move to the Netherlands to work for several months and leave her son with her mother. Leaving one's child to gain employment is a common route for many Latvians

(Zumente-Steele, 2018). Her parents maintain a similar socio-economic level, but she hopes they can take care of her son and feed him. She stated, “Many girls told me to put my son at the orphanage for a few months while I work, but I am afraid I will not get him back after.” Many social orphans have historically been placed in the orphanage for this reason.

Historically parents could return to reclaim their child from the placement, however this has changed. It is much more difficult for parents to prove themselves to the orphan court now to be reunited with their child (Ismayilova et al., 2014). Svetlana is one of the participants that came from an intergenerational family of social orphans. She represents the third generation of this phenomenon. If her son is brought into care, it will be the fourth generation. This phenomenon has not been well studied in Latvia, although several studies bring it up, such as Skrodele-Dubrovskā (2012).

6.4.5.3 Gender differences in leaving care experiences

There were seven males and twelve females who participated in the study. Most of the female participants demonstrated some characteristics in their resilience that differed from those of the male participants. Most of the challenges limiting female participants' life trajectories were related to family, intimate relationships, and childcare responsibilities (Hatoss & Huijser, 2010). Examples in my research findings begin with Svetlana, who had a child at fourteen. Although she had been highly successful in her education before this, her pregnancy became evident to others, and she did not complete secondary school. She had the opportunity to stay in school, but after the baby was born, she felt different and did not want to attend any longer. Three other female participants had babies while still residing in the orphanage. None of these women appeared to have contact with their child's father. It was noteworthy that the fathers were not a part of their children or the mother's lives, and that full responsibility for the children's care and financial support came from the mothers.

Twelve female participants reported experiencing sexual abuse as children, and one of the male participants reported sexual abuse. Although these numbers may not be accurate reflections of the social orphan population, it remained a disturbingly high number of female participants burdened by this experience in some way. Three female participants were all residents at the

same all-female orphanage that was shut down due to several staff members sex trafficking the residents. The male participants told stories of being arrested much more often than the female participants. These interactions with the law included offences for low-level street drugs and disturbing the peace.

Both males and females with backgrounds as social orphans dealt with adversity and challenges, to create their desired lives. The types of adversity and challenges are what appear different. The women were more likely to have to work to overcome experiences of sexual violence, the effects of pregnancies, abortions and having children as adolescents. Male participants identified fewer family responsibilities, less healing from abuse, and had a higher incidence of being arrested for criminal behaviour than the female participants.

Research agrees that often challenges limiting life trajectories for women were related to family, intimate relationships, and responsibility for children and with men it often relates to employment (Hatoss & Huijser, 2010). Gender experiences also differed with respect to many coping experiences, which included the use of drugs and alcohol to have a break from life circumstances and the importance of relationships to cope with stress.

Females reported multiple challenges gaining employment as they are often the sole person responsible for babies or children of their own, or for caring for elderly grandparents, and they have to do all the household duties. Without support specifically for child-care there is often an experience of dependency on the males in the family for financial support. This dependency appeared to create a power differential in male-female relationships that allowed for an increase of relationship violence and feelings of hopelessness. For example, “When my boyfriend gets drunk, he gets mean and sometimes, you know he gets out of control like my dad did with my mom when he beat her up. Just like my Mom I can’t leave because I would be living on the street with my little boy.”

For the male participants, many had travelled outside of Latvia for employment for six months at a time. Most expressed no feelings of responsibility for children although they had one or two children. The challenges that were discussed surrounded addictions to drugs and alcohol and

issues with law enforcement. Several had spent time in prison for drug offences, theft, and minor assault.

6.4.5.4 The Impact of Telling their Stories

This theme emerged unexpectedly from the experience of the participants telling their life stories in this study. Life history narratives evolve from lived experience and are a retelling of one's life in the voice of the teller. This is then shared as it is remembered and understood by that individual. Atkinson (2007) discusses the advantages of the act of telling one's life history:

“Clearer perspective on personal experiences and feelings, greater self-knowledge and a stronger self-image and self-esteem, sharing of cherished experiences and insights with others, joy, satisfaction, and inner peace, purging, or releasing, of burdens and validation of personal experience, for people who have suffered trauma, storytelling can be central to the recovery process, creating a community, showing that we have more in common with others, helping other people see their lives more clearly or differently, and perhaps inspire them to change something in their life, allowing others to know and understand us better, providing a better sense of how we want our story to end, or how we could give it the good ending we want, by understanding our past and present, we also gain a clearer perspective of our goals for the future” (p.235-236).

It is understood that although there are benefits assigned to life history storytelling, not all research participants will experience a life history interview this way. For some, it can be challenging to reflect on experiences that they would rather avoid processing. In this study participants reported enjoying the process of engaging in life history storytelling. Leons said, “I realise now after this (The interview process) that talking about it (his experiences) makes it feel better although I don't know for how long.”

Art Based Contribution 7 “My Heart”

was painted and named by the participant and reported, “my heart feels happy today.” When asked what reason might account for this feeling of happiness the participant reported that “telling my life story made me happy.”



6.5 Chapter Summary

In this chapter on thematic findings multiple themes and art pieces were discussed under the organization of each time period of the data: *Prior to care*, *During care*, and *After Care*. In the first section of themes from *Prior to Care* several of the themes confirm other research on the reasons children in Latvia are often brought into care. One of the contributions from this section is the richness of the narratives behind the reasons the participants entered care. Additionally, the theme of *Happiness* is not usually included in research regarding social orphans, but emerged in my findings, making it an important contribution, and speaks to the complexity of situations where children are removed from parental care. In the second section of the themes from *During*

Care the theme of *Difficult Transitions into Care* emerged and reveals an important finding that was not found in the review of literature in Chapter 3. Additionally other themes were: *Daily Life, Experiences of Group Care, Relationships Whilst in Care, Education and Foster Families* and these shed light on the experiences of growing up in care. The significance of relationships with staff members and friends is highlighted through the richness of the stories. The final period explored: *After Leaving Care* included the following themes: *Education, Training and Employment, Hosting Relationships, Friendships from Care, Reconnecting with Family, Having Children of One's Own, and Gender Differences in the Leaving Care Experience*. The first theme *Education, Training and Employment* was significant in that it highlighted the continued disconnection between social orphans and school regardless of incentives and the importance of vocational training in gaining employment. Relationships again emerged in the themes as significant and the new theme of care leavers having babies of their own and the impact of that on their lives was highlighted. Finally, the theme of Gender Differences emerged and put forward an area of research in Latvia that has seemingly not been studied or published in English.

7 General Discussion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of this study that contribute to the research on social orphans in Latvia discussed in Chapter 3. The first significant finding was a preference for group care by the participants. The reason for this preference was aspects of group care provided experiences for them that were not present for most of them in family placements. These aspects were a feeling of belonging which was contributed to by three factors: relationships with staff members and peers; a sense of stability through routines and length of placement and living space through personal and shared spaces as well as location. The second significant finding was that care leavers were extremely resilient which problematises the strong discourse of vulnerability that social orphans and care leavers are surrounded by. The last significant findings were a recommendation from care leavers for two things that would improve life trajectories. These included more vocational training and an increased inclusion in decision making about life decisions while in care.

7.2 A Preference for Group Care

This study's findings challenge certain taken-for-granted truths regarding social orphans in Latvia and perhaps children in care more generally. The primary assumption, discussed in Chapters 2 and 4, that is challenged is that children without parental care can only receive the care they need in a family setting. The finding from this study of a preference for group care is particularly significant in the current climate of de-institutionalism (Laksevics et al., 2018). From the participants, i.e., care leavers' perspectives there was a clear preference for group care and four reasons for this preference were identified. These reasons include a sense of belonging which was created through significant relationships with staff and peers, stability of placement and living space. These same aspects were also included in participants' preference for group care, and the breakdown of what was identified as working well according to the care leavers

will be identified and discussed. This finding regarding a preference for group care is contrary to what is most often understood about children and care which is instead a preference for individual foster family care (Berens & Nelson, 2015). This preference for foster care is a prominent topic in child welfare literature and has propelled Latvia to join the legislative commitment to close all orphanages by 2023 (Vaschecko, 2014). This assumption about family care is argued by Smith et al. (2017) and is not founded in as much fact as it is in discourse contributed to by the well-known Romanian orphans' studies. This would posit that when a child is placed in an institutional setting, institutional care's typical conditions make it less likely that children will develop clear, classifiable healthy attachments (Kristiansen, 2009). Emond argues however that caregivers and positive peer relationships can promote a feeling of belonging (Emond, 2009). This is clearly what was illuminated in this study. Due to a better sense of belonging and access and development to positive peer relationships in this study participants preferred group care. This finding is discussed in the following sections: Belonging in section 7.2.1, Significant Peer Relationships in 7.2.1.1, and a Sense of Stability in 7.2.1.2. These offer the empirical evidence that lead to this finding.

7.2.1 Belonging

The study suggests from the participants' accounts that a sense of belonging was critical to why group care worked for them and almost all participants experienced this sense of belonging in group care. The critical factors for this experience of belonging in group care emerged from three elements which are significant relationships with both staff members and peers; a sense of stability supported by the regular routines and schedules as well as the typically longer-term placements; and a comfortable living space with items both personal and shared that were available to them.

7.2.1.1 *Significant relationships: Peers and Staff Persons*

Relationships in group care, specifically the relationships amongst peers in the orphanage, were credited through this study as a significant reason care leavers felt they could cope with their life experiences. There is never a want for a playmate since there are always other children available.

“I know my best friend is always there; we grew up together in the orphanage, left together, now we help babysit each other's babies. Without her, I would not be alive, maybe.” These relationships mimicked the more traditional relationships a young adult might have with typical family members. However, the different critical element was that social orphans in care were identified as their ‘chosen family.’ The ongoing support the children experienced from having various friends and staff relationships and the ability to choose to engage with the other children at almost any given time is a vastly dissimilar experience to family placement. In group care, the children engage in informal activities throughout the day and evening: sports, bike rides, children creating their games and fun. Several participants reported boredom of assigned responsibilities in foster families, “After school, I had to weed the garden and give the plants water always working never being a child even though I was one. My legs wanted to play.” Several participants reported that the most important activity for them was spontaneous activities. “We played sports every day unless it was freezing, and then we played inside in the big room, we put music on and did acrobatics over the couches. We were active.” Another participant stated, “At the orphanage, I got to share a room with my two best friends, we had fun together did hair, makeup and danced to music videos.” As noted in Chapter 2, planned activities occur on weekends; the children attend sports, movies, concerts, museums, and other activities often donated by community venues.

The literature suggests that children in group care have no one providing guidance and protection in these settings. This misunderstood dynamic then reinforces the notion and argument that group care offers insufficient support for these children (Vaschecko, 2014). In this study between the two types of care, the care leavers reported feeling cared for in a group care setting. It was commonly reported that older sibling-type relationships between younger and older children developed into role-modelling, which supported the growth of both individuals. Older children were encouraged to develop leadership skills and independent living skills while supporting and mentoring the younger children in care. This then allows the older child to be a trailblazer of new experiences while also being a leader for the younger child. These younger residents then can reap the benefits of the older child’s experience and expertise. The famous educator Maria Montessori created and built an entire educational school curriculum by applying these

principles. She implemented these tenets as a fundamental method for helping children develop individually and as strong members of a multi-age community (Ala et al., 2012).

When the older children go out into the surrounding community, they tend to move together as a pack. These relationships are strong and often include siblings from various age groups (Emond, 2003). However, when the children leave the orphanage property, there is a change in their bond. One young man stated. “When we are at home (the orphanage), the younger boys might piss me off, and I gave them a tough time. If we were out in Riga and someone hurt them, I would kill that person! They are like my little brothers.” The sense of safety and security is almost automatically provided in group care by virtue of the semblance of a connected identity the young people share. This is not easily identified when a child is in foster care. A participant reported, “When I am with my brothers (other male friends from the orphanage), we run fast, hot and have fun.”

What emerged from this study regarding this significant transition is that participants who identified more successful transitions discussed the factors that created this success and said that they had to do with continued support from friendships developed in the orphanage and staff member relationships that transitioned to mentor-like relationships after leaving the orphanage. This was previously identified by Trapenciere (2018) in a study on the transition out of care. The significant relationships of the participants in this study most often came from friendships, family members, intimate partners, and semi-professional relationships. By categorizing the types of significant relationships formed, and the qualities experienced, it is clear why friendships that developed for the most part in care and carried through the transition to independence offer so much benefit. Staff members and such a mentor-like relationship with young people post-care also contributed to supporting the transition.

The four types of relationships most discussed by young people were compared across the characteristics most often mentioned as important to have in a relationship. Support levels were contingent on the relationship. This unofficial mentorship is one reason the care leaver credits with her ongoing success in her transition. Most care leavers, unfortunately, do not have this type of mentorship to cushion the transition. This style of relationship post-care is discussed by

Gilligan (2019) in his writings regarding promoting resilience with care leavers in Ireland. He states that meaningful relationships between a caring adult and a care leaver, “promoting resilience in the young person transitioning from care: they can cultivate aspirations for the future in the young person, and they can provide support in the cause of realizing those aspirations” (p. 65).

Thompson et al., (2016) research also suggests that mentorship with care leavers from the foster care system effectively increases resilience and protective factors; however, they were looking at ‘natural’ mentors from care leavers in everyday life. Courtney & Dworsky (2006) agreed with this finding, as did Greeson (2010). This appears to be what has happened with the example of Veronika. It was a natural relationship that developed organically from the orphanage. Many care leavers do not acquire natural mentorship and it is unclear if a programmatic mentorship for all care leavers in Latvia would work successfully? An initial issue is that care leavers have experienced layers of loss in their lives. Mentorship that is set up may be challenging to have care leavers invest emotionally in. There is also the issue of worker turnover, which does not lend itself to long-term mentoring relationships. Natural mentoring relationships also occur because of some shared interest or connection, and a formal relationship may be a more challenging basis from which to form a relationship. Despite these potential blocks to its success, there is the possibility of looking at mentorship for care leavers as a possible support and intervention.

Care leavers suggested transitioning out of group care in small groups of friends to live together in small cohorts who can support each other. Field et al., “. suggests that the need to reconceptualize these young people’s transition as a move to ‘interdependence’ rather than ‘independence’ (p.12). Participants in this study did this to some extent informally by living together, offering support in-home and childcare, providing referrals for job openings. Some orphanage staff continued their relationships with the care leavers, thus continuing the natural mentorships they had provided for the young people. Greeson and Thompson (2019) created an intervention based on the idea of natural mentors and foster youth leaving care. Natural mentors were recruited to take part with the young person in the program. Outcomes were mixed in this

first attempt; however, the study's outcome strongly supported the acknowledgement that connection with a natural mentor was helpful for the young people.

Care leavers in this study identified that supportive relationships had a significant impact on the care leaver's trajectory. As an example, the connection between care leaver and natural mentor such as a staff person who kept a continued interest in them was a contributing factor for assisting them in their post-orphanage experiences. Friendships developed in the orphanage and staff member relationships that transitioned to mentor-like relationships after leaving the orphanage were essential to well-being. According to Steckley and Smith (2011), Bronfenbrenner (1994) argues that every child needs one person that really cares about them to be okay. Vadims stated, "He (staff) said to me always; you can be a good man when you get big like me, I believe this for you. I remember this even now when it is tough." This at times also comes in the form of a skill that created success or a place of comfort. In this study, this person or place in their life most often came in the form of a staff member at the orphanage that took a special interest in the success of the child. An example of this was Kisa who stated, "The art teacher at the orphanage always said what a great artist I was. When I feel bad about other things, and I cry because of my mom I think I am a great artist, and I will be okay." This study's participants noted that significant relationships most often came from friendships, family members, intimate partners, and staff relationships. By categorizing the types of substantial relationships formed in care and the qualities experienced, it is clear that friendships developed while in care carried through to support the youth's transition to independence. Staff members who maintained a relationship with young people post-care also supported their transition out of care. Unfortunately, most care leavers do not have this type of natural mentorship to cushion the transition as it is not deliberate and intentional customary practice. The reason for this is those staff relationships are often limited through risk aversion and child protection (Steckley and Smith, 2011). Veronika recalled that one staff member would take her home some weekends to spend with her family. Veronika reported the benefits of these weekend visits for about a year and how much she enjoyed them and felt loved through this act. However, when the director of the orphanage discovered this was happening, it was stopped, and she overheard the staff member being spoken to harshly. Veronika reported, "this was the old style of doing things, and it is against the rules now."

7.2.1.2 *Stability*

Care leavers also explain that the daily routine of the orphanage provides a sense of predictability and stability. In group care, routines and schedules tend to be more rigid than in families. When reflecting on both, young people felt strongly that clear and consistent daily schedules were beneficial. In contrast, the foster family's routines and daily habits were inconsistent and dependent on the family. "I never knew what was to happen. It always was the father say do this, do this job, and if he were mad at me, he would say, go to bed. In the orphanage, I always know when my time is, school time, work time. I am not afraid to make someone mad and go to bed." A breakdown of daily routines in the foster family often resulted from parental alcohol use or familial conflict. "I was in a family, and everything seemed good, they love me then the dad gets sad, and I ask him why and he says the mom is sick again, but then the sister tells me she isn't sick she is drunk." In the orphanage, children reported that they did not need to be concerned with a routine breakdown. This speaks to the need for increased vetting of potential foster families and training of parents and families in integrating a foster child into their family.

Group care was favoured on the issue of the length of time in placement. Children overall did not enjoy being moved around, and typically group care was more permanent than foster families that often didn't work out for assorted reasons. "I had three foster families, two host families, my family and the orphanage. I spent the longest time growing up at the orphanage, which was fine with me. I don't trust parents." These findings locate one of the major critiques universally regarding foster care which is lack of stability in the placement (Gypen, 2017). A child might enter an orphanage in Latvia and although growth and development may move through the various age groupings, they could stay in the same orphanage but could be with the same core group of other children from the age of five to eighteen. Foster family placements rarely last that long, and frequently, when a child misbehaves, or if the family situation changes, the child can be sent back to the orphanage. In group care, unless there is a severe crisis where a child is hospitalized or incarcerated, the child will remain in the orphanage. Environmental permanence holds an essential and critical role in the child's well-being (Biehal, 2014). The participants expressed security in this semi-permanence of group care, whereas in foster care, they often

waited for when they would be terminated and moved on. “I always waited, to be sent back (to the orphanage) from families once it stopped working.”

Living Space

As discussed in Chapter 2, orphanages and group care facilities in Latvia are set up internally, like a family home. The children are guaranteed a clean, spacious, organized living environment with appropriately aged toys. Most participants discussed the importance of their bedroom and their roommate. A participant told this story, “In the foster homes, I never got my own space, shared with the actual kids in the family, felt like I didn’t belong. I could tell those sisters didn’t want me there.” Toys, music, electronics, and the like are communally shared and not individually owned.

On the one hand, the child does not own anything specific, but on the other hand they can also use any of it when available. Some children experienced not owning anything in foster placements but also feeling no right to use the shared items either. As one young man described it, “In the foster family, the kids never wanted me to use his bike. It was his. In the orphanage, the bikes are a little run-down, but no one can tell me I can’t ride if I get there first. I can use it.”

Personal space and feeling like they belong was necessary, and group care appeared to offer both. Playing space indoors and out was available at the orphanage. As shown in chapter one, children are offered free space to run, play sports and just be outdoors. The care leavers prioritized this as an essential part of their growth and development. Having that type of space and free time to play was not always available in family placements. This quote expressed the importance of the comfort of the home, “The foster family lived in a very old house with lots of glass statues of animals I was afraid to break, so I was very careful and could not relax.”

Cleanliness at the orphanage is a part of the routine for both the children cleaning their rooms and the cleaning staff, who have cleaning responsibilities. For many children who may not be accustomed to personal choices around this, it was not usually preferred to have inconsistencies with cleanliness. “I noticed the toilet smelled very bad, and mice were always in the kitchen. It made me sick, and the mother there called me a spoiled princess if I complained.” The location of the care home is essential due to the transportation needs of older children and adolescents.

Orphanages in Riga allowed older children freedom to stay connected to their community, familiar stores, see friends from school, go shopping or play games at the parks and shopping centres. Foster families in rural areas cut children off from this connection. “I grew up in Riga, so going to a foster family on a farm was terrible. I hated all of it; I had a new school, working with animals. I kept running away back to Riga and the orphanage until they finally gave up, and I went back to the orphanage.”

This section discussed how the caring relationships developed in the orphanage; daily routine and longer-term placement developed a feeling of stability, and comfortable living space with both personal space and group spaces all contributed to a sense of belonging in group care. Next, the discussion will turn to the second challenge taken for granted truth, which is the label of children in care as vulnerable.

7.2.1.3 Vulnerability vs Resilience

As discussed at length in Chapter 3, the label of vulnerability in social orphans is a widely known discourse with deep roots. As also discussed in Chapter 3, this discourse, although it has its purpose, to remind us children deserve protection, also inhibits children in care in developing other aspects of their identity. In this study, care leavers wanted to be known as more than the image vulnerability brings forth and more so as the affectionate word often used in residential care for resiliency in the U.S., which is “scrappy.” Based on this study, that was what social orphans and care leavers from Latvia showed over vulnerability. The term resilience describes the process of bouncing back after adversity. In this study, resilience is understood from more of a social constructionist perspective: “resilience as being accumulated and as an accumulating set of resources that allows individuals and communities to make sense of the world around them, and to adopt, to adapt and even thrive” (Wilson & Arvanitakis, 2014, p. 68). Using this definition of resilience, some study participants demonstrated more of an ebb and flow in their resiliency skills. The image of children in care as the ‘victimized child’ requiring assistance and then later in the child’s life the care leaver as a ‘peripheral member of society’ is a widely accepted version of the truth. Similar discourse is historically recognized regarding this population in other parts of the world. Hendrick (1997) stated that despite the significant child welfare reforms in the nineteenth century in the United Kingdom, a duality of beliefs about orphaned children still

existed. “The child victim was nearly always seen as harbouring the possibility of another condition, one that was sensed to be threatening to moral fibre, sexual propriety, the sanctity of the family, the preservation of the race, law and order, and the wider reaches of citizenship” (Cronin, 2019, p. 7, Hendrick 1997, p. 24).

The data exhibited resilience of children through individual capabilities, relationships with other people, and the influences of the institutions that supported them, whether that be living situations, jobs, or vocational training. All the participants articulated diverse ways to integrate skills and resources that helped them become more resilient. The factors supporting their building resilience include their determination to meet personal goals and support from significant relationships that counterbalanced their adverse childhood experiences. Examples of this are found throughout the findings in Chapters 5 and 6 in the ways in which, despite all the adversity they dealt with, they were there talking with me, reflecting on their lives, suggesting they had all made it through growing up in complicated, sometimes extremely difficult home lives into care and out again on the other side. All of them had in diverse ways coped and thrived to different extents, and this making it through to adulthood had an impact on most of them. Examples of this are Arturs, who reported, “I like my life now. It isn’t easy always, but I am happy.”

According to Gilligan, “Adversity is inevitably a shadow presence behind resilience. Resilience is about doing better than expected in the face of the adversity-the concept of resilience is necessarily wedded to the concept of adversity” (2019, p.51). An example of resilience shows the process of resilient behaviour used to achieve one female subject’s personal goal. She had a baby of her own at eighteen. Some physical and financial support was given to her, but she feels most inadequate in caring for her baby’s emotional needs. She reports that her newborn is extremely fussy, and she is distraught, not knowing how to calm her down. This situation could be pivotal in the mother-infant relationship. She realizes that few of her family members or many friends with children can provide her with guidance or proper role-modelling. She decides against reaching out and instead uses the internet as a source of corrective information. She researches parenting on the internet and finds Latvian videos on ‘You tube’ regarding the parental care of newborns. She then emulates the examples for cuddling and soothing a baby,

and her child rewards her with a decrease in her distress. This creative way of learning shows her resiliency.

The image of the child in care is often presented to the public as isolated, traumatized and without responsible, caring adults. The image of the ‘orphan’ evokes discomfort, sympathy, and contempt for the child or the situations that caused their placement. The perception by the public of those who leave the institutions at the age of majority (18) is often as ingrained as the orphan (Gilligan, 2019). The care leaver is often seen as unreliable, lazy, a drain on the social welfare system and at times involved in criminal behaviour. They are seen as replicating the social cycles of their parents and grandparents who came before them (Mikene & Zumente-Steele, 2019). Understanding the life experiences of social orphans in Latvia is connected to the dominant story of social orphanhood in Latvia. The evidence for this prejudicial attitude is that almost every participant in this study experienced some form of labelling. For example, Mila reported hearing the orphanage children being described as “throwaways” by mothers watching their children at the park.

These were stigmatizing beliefs regarding their abilities, futures, personhood, stigmatizing comments regarding their living arrangements, lack of parental care, low socioeconomic status. An example is Natasha, who told her favourite teacher about her dreams of becoming a teacher like her at ten years old. “She (her teacher) looked at me with pity and said don’t be silly, but maybe I could be a helper in school. I knew she did not think a girl like me from the orphanage could be like her.” Natasha says that this experience caused a disconnection from her future dreams of becoming a teacher and ultimately from education as a whole. Life trajectories of social orphans and care leavers have been intricately linked to significant adults’ expectations in the various spheres that at-risk children experience as key adults’ expectations significantly affect what social orphans evaluate themselves as capable of (Sulimani-Aidan, 2017).

An important takeaway from resilience theory is that resilient behaviour in one sphere of a persons’ life can be replicated in another sphere (Rees, 2013). This tenet was apparent in this study and highlighted repeatedly. One participant, who drew a connection between her acts of resistant behaviour as a child when being physically abused by her aunt, connected this to her

resiliency as a young adult who, despite her history, committed to attending university to study veterinary medicine. As a child, she was ridiculed for her resistance to the aunt's mental trickery. This same drive supports her when she feels like giving up taking classes and working full-time. She demonstrates going against the norm she feels her family and the Latvian society set for her. Her childhood acts of resistance have transferred to her acts of resilience in adult life. Resilience in social orphans and care leavers, when defined as resources and experiences that build over time to adapt and handle adverse life circumstances, offer hope for the future for care leavers. This lens on resilience assists care leavers in identifying and building these inner resources over time and then being transferred to their post-care experience. The paradigm shift then challenges the deficit thinking that comes from the culturally dominant narrative and offers an unknown future for care leavers.

The areas care leavers identified as significant for them in leaving care which, although given some attention, could possibly be focused more on are included in decision making around life decisions that impact them; an increase in the attention paid to vocational training before they leave care and the significance of relationships that are developed in care.

7.2.2 Inclusion in Decision Making

Care leavers want to be included and listened to regarding decisions that impact their lives. Specifically, around decision making on placement transitions or endings. Kristine stated, "When I was taken from my parents, I was a little girl, and it was very hard I didn't know what was happening. When I was put in a foster family, I didn't want to leave the orphanage. No one explained anything to me. It is important to explain to orphans what is happening and why it is happening because it will help them feel better and behave better." Since the UNHRC (1989), children's rights include the right for youth to freely voice their opinions on matters affecting themselves. Care leavers specifically noted they want to be included genuinely. They do not want to be included in disingenuous or 'token' ways. Dima stated, "I went to meetings about me but just sat there. I didn't understand what they were talking about. I wished someone asked me what I wanted." Hart (1992) discusses that marginalized groups might be invited to participate in meetings; however, in actuality they are treated as peripheral members not equally

knowledgeable to others present, more of a token presence. Care leavers want to be included in the invitation to contribute at every stage of their care, most notably the transition out of care. Field et al., (2021) in a study on care leavers in England found that decisions regarding leaving care could be usefully reconfigured based on the needs and input of the individual child. Research tells us that when this happens, there are increasingly better outcomes for young people (Bakketeig & Backe-Hansen, 2018).

7.2.3 Increased Vocational Training

Vocational training emerged as an area where care leavers would have liked additional support while they were still in the orphanage. “If I were trained to paint women’s nails and style hair before I left the orphanage, I would have a job now. To go to beauty training now would be hard because of my daughter. There she was taken care of now I take care of her.” Most care leavers expressed similar views regarding vocational training during care being advantageous in gaining employment after leaving care. Five participants completed some vocational training after leaving care, however others felt if this training were available from potentially age 16-18, they would be completed and ready for jobs at 18. The five that completed vocational training became a teaching assistant, a veterinary assistant, a tram driver, a mechanic, and a pastoral assistant. Other participants that had not pursued any training wished they had vocational training and wished it was offered as a viable alternative for care leavers and was available in Latvia.

7.2.3.1 School

Care leavers in this study felt little to no connection to their schooling. In Latvia, the child welfare system offers social guarantees around accessibility of education by the Cabinet of Ministers for care leavers until the age of twenty-four. If care leavers choose to continue their education, they will receive extra benefit payments. This includes approximately 60 Euros a month plus a portion of utilities for housing such as water, electricity, and heat (lm.gov.lv). Trapenciere (2018) interviewed staff from the orphanages with young adults ageing out of the system. After reviewing this study, the evidence emphasized that many children had low school attendance and performance. The financial incentive to continue attending school was not typically fruitful. Bebriša et al. (2007) surmised that social orphans’ future trajectories are

affected by a lack of school attendance and high drop-out rates in the population. In surveying adolescent social orphans to find out the reasons for the results, it is reported that 10-14 % of social orphans believe the curriculum offered in school is too complicated. They feel overly challenged and without enough individual support. Further, they suggest that there are frequent conflicts with teachers who do not understand them. Reportedly, there are several other causes for youth leaving school after reaching the age of independence. These include but are not limited to substance use, drug dependency, learning issues, low self-confidence, poor organizational skills, a lack of age-appropriate social skills, and coming from a minority family group that did not learn Latvian or engage in its culture (Ratkeviciene 2018). Given what is known regarding this typical disconnection between the education system and social orphans supports this study's conclusion that vocational training could be a practice suggestion to positively contribute to trajectories of social orphans.

7.2.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed several findings from this study that contributes to the research on social orphans in Latvia. The first was a preference for group care by the participants. The reason for this preference was aspects of group care that were not present for most of them in family placements. These aspects were a feeling of belonging which was contributed to by three factors: relationships with staff members and peers; a sense of stability through routines and length of placement and living space through personal and shared spaces as well as location. The second significant finding was that care leavers were extremely resilient, which opposes the strong discourse of vulnerability that social orphans and care leavers are surrounded by. The last significant findings were recommendations from care leavers for two things that would improve life trajectories. These included more vocational training and an increased inclusion in decision making about themselves.

8 Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This brief concluding chapter is based on the suggestions for concluding a thesis made by Murray (2011). It explores the aims and objectives and how they were achieved, the study's originality, how it fits with existing research, and the knowledge and limitations of the study. Lastly, recommendations for practice and further research reflect my learning from embarking on this thesis to finishing it. Finally, I end with some concluding remarks.

8.2 Revisiting the Aims and Objectives

The topic for research arose during a personal visit to an orphanage in Latvia, discussed in Chapter 1, where I questioned staff members about the children's futures. As discussed, the answer I received led me to conclude that it was believed the children had an extraordinarily limited future to look forward to. My interest in the topic stemmed from the personal story of adopting my daughter and the professional work discussed in Chapter 1. The research aim was formulated following an extensive reading of both empirical and grey literature on the subject. The overall aim of the research was to explore the factors constituting social orphanhood in Latvia. This has been achieved within the confines of a small study involving nineteen participants. The key areas of the lived experiences of social orphans from prior care, during care and aftercare, were identified and summarised. The reasons participants became social orphans, their experiences during care, and how care leavers were experiencing life after leaving care were presented in Chapter 5 through the lenses of Critical Event Theory and Acts of Resistance. In Chapter 6, themes were presented from the three different periods. The significant finding of a preference for group care was presented in Chapter 7. Additionally, significant findings of resiliency went against the often-central assumption of vulnerability that almost takes over the entirety of how people view children in care. Chapter 7 finished with two gaps in practice

identified by participants: an increase of inclusion in decision making regarding placement, treatment and general care decisions, and an increase in accessibility during the transition period of ages 16-18 to complete a vocational training course.

8.3 Originality of the Study

The study makes an original and innovative contribution to the knowledge of the field of social work in two ways. First, it is one of very few empirical research studies about social orphans in Latvia that draws on first-hand knowledge from participants. Secondly, it is the only research in Latvia that uses a Life History Methodology to explore this topic. This methodology positioned participants as 'knowers or experts of their experiences. Although this was unique for most participants, there was a lot of critical thinking by the participants regarding many complex issues faced by children living in care. From this knowledge, several significant findings emerged. The study contributes to knowledge of the field of social work in three main ways. First, the methodology allowed the participants' voices to be central in the findings and the discussion. Secondly, it fills a gap in knowledge by being an empirical research study about social orphans and care leavers in Latvia. Thirdly, using narrative research methods combined with an arts-based approach and three different lenses of analysis, including critical event theory, resistance theory, and thematic analysis, it is a unique study regarding children in care and was theoretically coherent. The methodology and methods adopted elicited rich life history accounts of the care leavers' lives. The open-structured interviewing style worked well as participants prioritized and told the stories about their lived experiences with as little direction or influence from the researcher as possible. Using the lens of resistance and critical event theories elucidated the root causes of those challenges.

8.3.1 Fit with Existing Research and Knowledge

Latvia is an FSU country with a young social service system. It is a member of the European Union, funding reforms to deinstitutionalize its current child welfare system. The study confirms other research on why children in Latvia are often brought into care, as summarised in Chapters 5

and 6 and used throughout the thesis to illustrate findings. Additionally, the study confirmed other research regarding the challenges care leavers encounter in care and as they transition to aftercare and to living on their own. As well as confirming others' findings, the study offered a fresh perspective in exploring the lived experience of social orphans in Latvia. There are several areas where the results are significant and contribute new perspectives to previous research or confirm research that may appear to be in the margins of central ideas regarding children in care.

8.3.2 Implications of the Findings

This study elicited significant findings, and these are represented in terms of the implications for social work practice and policy. However, it also has implications for social work education and further research, and there are some overlapping of these domains.

8.3.2.1 *Implications for Social Work Practice and Policy*

As taken from the findings and discussion chapters, several gaps are identified regarding care and the transition in and out of care that has implications for practice and policy work. The first significant set of implications are regarding the preference for group care among most participants, as discussed in Chapter 7. The second involves the need for increased communication and involvement of the children at all points, from the transition into care through to the point at which they leave care. The third involves an increased ability to complete vocational training courses while still in care. The fourth and fifth implications for practice and policy change include the transition out of care. Residents have the possibility of transitioning out of the orphanage into small cohorts of friends, promoting an increase in trust-building for care leavers with support and services available for them after leaving care. Finally, some comments on the findings of abuse reported from the participants prior to care as well as living in social care.

8.3.2.1.1 Group Care

Group care was much preferred for the care leavers than other forms of placement such as foster families. This is important because Latvia is currently working to close all the social care centres in Latvia over the next few years. As discussed in Chapter 7, there was a preference for group

care in this study. Although I am not a proponent of institutions or foster care, I can see aspects that are supportive for children in both arenas. From the findings in this study, there are implications; however, that could improve out-of-home care for children generally. Creating a sense of belonging for the child in whichever care setting they are placed in would appear to be central. In this study, a sense of belonging was created when children experienced several factors:

- A comfortable living space where they had a small part of this space of their own. This space could be a room or a small section of a room, but it was a space they owned.
- Toys, equipment, or other items that they could use that either belonged to them or to the community, versus an item that must be borrowed from another child but equally owned so that any negotiations between the children over the use of the item were equal.
- A daily routine that had free time built into it to use autonomously.
- A sense of stability in the length of the placement, in other words, knowing that if a child misbehaves or an issue arises, they are not sent away.
- Prioritizing nurturing relationships between staff members or other carers and the children.

8.3.2.1.2 Improved Communication with Children

Chapter 6 discussed that many participants were distressed during the transition into care because they had no idea what was going on and why they were taken into care, what would happen next and what to expect. At other times children were not aware of the whereabouts of their biological family members. Without communication surrounding this, there were often detrimental misunderstandings regarding not receiving visits. The child had no way of knowing without communication why a parent or grandparent, for instance, did not visit them. Involving children in decisions about their care situation is not only a good suggestion. It is their right. The UNCRC (1989), discussed in the literature review (Article 12), requires explicitly that children, according to their age and maturity, are included in decision making and listened to regarding their care, including placements. This is a start, and according to this study, the older children

and adolescents in care would like more inclusion in comprehending and processing what happens to them.

8.3.2.1.3 Inclusion of Vocational Training Courses

A key finding that emerged and was discussed in Chapter 7 was that participants felt strongly that an opportunity to complete vocational training courses while still living in care between the ages of 16-18 would increase opportunities for employment and decrease the need to choose more risky ways to make money.

8.3.2.1.4 Possibility for Care Leavers to Officially Transition as a Small Group

Care leavers suggested transitioning out of group care in small groups of friends to live together in small cohorts which can support each other. Young people did this to some extent informally by living together, offering support in-home and offering childcare and providing referrals for job openings. Still, they thought it would be a tremendous asset in their transition to independence if it were more formalised. While this study warns against deficit discourses about social orphans leaving care, further research is needed to explore ways care leavers transition out of care and create successful life trajectories. This is even more important given the strength and value these Latvian care leavers demonstrated when positioned as 'knowers of their experience.' Understanding the young adults' views and attitudes regarding their lives should be an integral part of any research whose aim is to understand their lived experiences (Cheney, 2007; Trapenciere, 2018).

8.3.2.1.5 Increase in Trust Building Between Care Leavers and Service Providers

An increase in trust-building between care leavers and various support services is meant to provide care leavers with the help they require, such as counselling, health care, childcare, parenting classes which is pertinent to an increase in the use of these services. The study determined that though the services existed, there is a lack of trust, which prohibits young people from accessing them. This trust-building most likely needs to begin early on in a child's experience of living in care to carry over to trust in services after leaving care. Where precisely the distrust in services originated was not always clear in the data; however, it mostly arose from

before leaving care and even from prior to care. Another example of this distrust included a participant who experienced what appeared to be postpartum depression, and she was too fearful of seeking out state-run services for herself in fear her infant would be taken away from her. Yet another example was a young man who was experiencing suicidal thoughts and, although considered counselling, did not access it due to fear that his employer would find out and he would lose his job. A scheme to increase trust might be helpful in encouraging care leavers like these to utilize the supportive services that are available.

8.3.2.1.6 Decreasing Childhood Abuse

Throughout Chapters 5 and 6 there are multiple stories of abuse experienced by the participants. Much of this abuse occurred in families of origin which was either the primary reason for removal from the home or a contributing reason. Additionally, some of the reports of abuse occurred while under the care of the State. Social protections for children in Latvia are in place and as is the case everywhere there is need for improvement however the focus of this thesis was not on the examination of these practices and policies. There are several factors at play here that will be briefly touched upon but not dissected. As discussed in Chapter 1 there is a lack of trust for officials potentially left over from Soviet rule that appears to contradict social services' mandate of reporting neglect and abuse of children. This does not affect the entire population however as many cases of abuse of children are reported annually. There are some anecdotal connections between substance misuse and abuse that was discussed in Chapter 5. Almost entirely participants who told stories of abuse experiences connected them to abusive parents' simultaneous substance misuse and addictions. There is additionally an anecdotal connection between care leavers having children at a young age and repeating the cycle of parenting they experienced. Parenting classes are available to young parents however accessing this educational support is optional.

Within the social care centres abuse happened typically at the hands of peers and at times from staff members. Much of this abuse appeared to have been allowed to occur without the knowledge of the staff on duty. High staff to child ratios are potentially to blame for this as often a single staff member were responsible for 20-25 children overnight. Staff members abusing children in their care is potentially the most offensive as they are paid to care for the children. Reports such as the adolescent young women who were sex trafficked by a staff member as

reported in Chapter 6 are particularly loathsome however were managed by officials and the care centre was closed. There is no knowledge of any reparations made to the young women however including none of them reported an offer of therapeutic treatment. There is also no knowledge of the staff member in question receiving any punishment for these abuses other than losing his job. Social work practice and policies need to protect children above all else and specifically vulnerable children. Potentially deinstitutionalization will address protecting children in care more effectively as smaller settings means more eyes on the children from staff members with smaller staff to child's ratios. Increased vetting of staff members is recommended including higher educational requirements for staff may help address this as well however low wages for social care centre staff do not attract higher educated candidates.

8.3.2.2 Implications for Social Work Education

The implications for social work education developed from the understanding of what was considered supportive in developing the types of lives the participants wanted. Social work education needs to challenge what it is to be a professional and to include that at times, especially with young people, there is a requirement for a close, purposeful relationship with clients.

8.3.2.3 Implications for Social Work Research

From the findings of this research, there are several areas where further research is highlighted.

- Firstly, I feel that research to evaluate the current efforts to deinstitutionalize the orphanages in Latvia is vital as these policies are not congruent with the experiences and preferences concluded from this study.
- Considering the finding that most foster care placements in Latvia do not offer permanence and stability, young people can prefer orphanage care. Investigation is important into the foster care system to further an understanding of what is working and what is not for the children.
- A study that investigates the impacts specifically of Hosting programs in Latvia.

- A study that investigates the impact social media and cellular phones have on the relationships children in care have with their families in Latvia.
- Research that investigates generations of orphanage care experiences such as those which were discussed by three participants.
- Research into gendered experiences in and after living in care.
- A longitudinal study that captures care leavers as they progress through life trajectories.
- Research that explores why more care leavers do not take advantage of the support and allowances offered by the Ministry of Education and how the suggestion by care leavers of more vocational training might impact care leavers.

8.3.3 Limitations of the Study

Literature is abundant about best practices in qualitative research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2012; Creswell, 2013). However, the literature on its limitations is equally so (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). As discussed in Chapter 5, the best practices were reached for throughout the process of this research. However, the life history narratives are the only representative of the lives of nineteen care leavers in Latvia. In terms of rigour, the study engaged theoretical constructs, data collection, and analysis processes. Interpretivist research assumes that the values of the researcher are inherent in all phases of the research process. Practicing reflexivity acknowledges this but does not guarantee more valid or reliable research; however, it can improve the chances (Creswell, 2013). The findings have resonated with audiences comprising academics and practitioners at conferences and workshops through presentations on this study, evidenced through feedback from participants. This might be considered as a measure of validity.

There were limitations to this study, and those were in the scope of the research and the recruitment of participants. First, this study's scope was limited to young adults aged 18-25 with backgrounds of social orphan status in Latvia. Second, there were no parameters on the length of time participants lived in care, so various lengths were included from three to eighteen years. Additionally, the study was initially intended to be conducted over two data collection points; however, with the global pandemic of Covid 19 shutting down travel in March 2020, there was no possibility of continuing data collection.

Lastly, looking for research participants through networking was extremely helpful, whereby one participant would refer a friend to the research study. Although this worked well, it was also a potential limitation as participants referred on by others were known to them through similar experiences such as cohorts of friends or institutional placements. On the plus side, this comfort of knowing other participants created an environment of willingness to participate in the study as they heard the process had been a positive one from their friends, and the interviews were spread out over several weeks, and more participants were reached than expected.

8.3.4 Reflection

The process of completing this research and drafting the thesis has been significant, although it also was incredibly challenging and tested my strength in completing it. I am clear that the benefits will far outweigh the work put in over the past few years. I have made incredibly meaningful relationship connections in Eastern Europe and Scotland at the University of Dundee. I have experienced complete immersion through the PhD process in this topic and look towards continuing these connections. I plan to continue presenting my findings at conferences, workshops, and research forums within academic and practice spheres, and I hope to publish several papers from this research. Finally, I plan to return to Latvia in a research capacity to study how continued efforts of de-institutionalization in Latvia are impacting children in care.

Final Statement

Research regarding children living in care in other countries is vast still in Latvia; far fewer researchers are looking into the subject, and seemingly not enough to fill the visible gaps in knowledge. An overarching conclusion is that social orphans from Latvia should not be reduced to a label or past experiences; instead, the underlying narratives that highlight successes should be made more visible. The contribution to the body of knowledge in this study has been writing about care leavers' life histories and using this study as a platform to provide counter-narratives from young people who were social orphans. Chapter 6, therefore, presents life history narratives

of care leavers following their life experiences from a family of origin through placement in care to transitioning to living on their own. Using their life history narratives, the research objective that sought to highlight the lived experiences of social orphans from the time of removal from the home to settling as an adult in independent living has been addressed. As a research methodology, the life history narrative enables analysis at multiple levels and recognize that the individual story is always intertwined with more significant stories (Sikes & Goodson, 2017). This study provided a platform for social orphans' voices to be heard on issues that affect their lives. Care leavers have multiple types of social capital, capabilities and resilience that can be further developed to support them transitioning into society and building lives.

The significance of being heard has become noticeably clear to me from my relationships with the participants. That not only is positioning someone, who typically does not have opportunities to do so, to tell their story, but additionally is listening to them. I say genuinely listening because I have also learned that there are times the participants experienced the first half of this without the second, and this was highly unappreciated by them. Thus, it seems that being heard or validated for speaking one's story or truth is just as critical as positioning someone to speak. The impact it has may not be significant for everyone; however, one participant said this in an email after the interview, "Now that I have been listened to by you, I want to be listened to by everyone. I want to stand up and shout my story to help the scared ones, and this is a good feeling." Given the relevance of the life history narrative methodology and the usefulness of critical event theories, resistance theories and thematic analysis, and an art-based approach, there is value in applying the same theoretical and methodological framework to studying other marginalized groups. What I can offer potentially in this thesis feels quite simple; it is a platform for the care leavers, my participants, to be heard. Gilligan (1982) and Reinharz (1992) stress the importance of being a platform for the voices of previously silenced groups of people. The methodology used allowed the participants to tell their stories from an agentic position, and now I "cautiously" as Riessman (1993) states, discuss what I heard from them.

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10 Appendices

10.1 Appendix 1

Informed Consent

Yes/ No

1. Taking part in the study

I have read the Participant Information Sheet, or it has been read to me. I have been able to ask questions about the study and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study and understand that I can refuse to answer questions and I can withdraw from the study at any time during data collection, without having to give a reason.

I understand that taking part in the study involves the *use of audio recording of interviews which will then be transcribed, typed up and anonymised.*

I understand that taking part in the study might involve talking about aspects of my life that may have been difficult at some point. You don't have to talk about anything you don't want to.

2. Use of the information in the study

I understand that information I provide will be used for possible publications.

I understand that personal information collected about me that can identify me, such as my name or where I live, will not be shared beyond the researcher.

I agree that anonymised direct quotes can be used in research outputs.

I agree that my pseudonym can be used for direct quotes in research outputs.

3. Future use and reuse of the information by others.

I give permission for the data collected from the interviews and journal that I provide to be kept with Zoë Kessler so that they can be used for future research.

4. Signatures

Participant's Name Participant's Signature Date

By signing above, you are indicating that you have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet and that you agree to take part in this research study.

Zoë Kessler _____

Name of Researcher Signature of Researcher Date

For participants who have difficulty reading the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form, and/or signing the consent form, there is an alternative form of gaining informed consent.

_____ participant's name/date

Participant's Name Date

Participants unable to sign their name should mark the box instead of signing

I have accurately read out the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form to the potential participant. To the best of my ability, I have ensured that the participant understands what they are freely consenting to and have completed the Consent Form in accordance with their wishes.

Zoë Kessler _____

Name of Researcher Signature of Researcher Date

Form of consent for participants unable to provide a signature or to mark the box:

5. Study contact details for further information

Zoë Kessler

zkessler@dundee.ac.uk

0119782906016

10.2 Appendix 2 Informed Consent: Latvian Version

Piedalīšanās pētījumā

Es esmu lasījis Dalībnieku informācijas lapu vai arī tā man ir lasīta. Man ir bijusi iespēja uzdot jautājumus par pētījumu, un uz maniem jautājumiem tika atbildēts ar gandarījumu.

Es brīvprātīgi piekrītu būt par šī pētījuma dalībnieku un saprotu, ka varu atteikties atbildēt uz jautājumiem un jebkurā laikā datu vākšanas laikā varu atteikties no pētījuma, nenorādot iemeslu.

Es saprotu, ka piedalīšanās pētījumā ir saistīta ar audio izmantošanu interviju ierakstīšana.

Es saprotu, ka dalība pētījumā ir saistīta ar potenciālo risku.

Pētījumā izmantotās informācijas izmantošana

Es saprotu, ka mana sniegtā informācija tiks izmantota iespējamai publicēšanai vairāk nekā vienā gadījumā.

Es saprotu, ka par mani savāktā personīgā informācija, kas var mani identificēt, piemēram, mans vārds vai dzīvesvieta, netiks kopīgota ārpus mācību grupas.

Es piekrītu, ka anonimizētus tiešos citātus var izmantot pētījumu rezultātos.

Es piekrītu, ka manu pseidonīmu var izmantot tiešiem citātiem pētniecības rezultātos.

Informācijas turpmāka izmantošana un atkārtota izmantošana citiem Es doodu atļauju datiem, kas savākti no intervijām un žurnāla Es apņemos turēties kopā ar Zoe Kessler, lai to varētu izmantot turpmākā izpēte un apmācība.

Paraksts

Datums

10.3 Appendix 3 Latvian Participant Information

Dalībnieku informācijas lapa respondentiem no Latvijas

**Pētot to jauno pieaugušo cilvēku balsis, kuri pozicionēti kā sociālie bāreņi Latvijā
Dandī Universitātes skolu pētniecības ētikas komitejas pieteikuma / apstiprinājuma
numurs: [ievietot apstiprinājuma numuru no lēmuma vēstules]**

Jūs esat uzaicināts piedalīties pētniecības projektā. Pirms izlemjat, vai vēlaties piedalīties, ir svarīgi izlasīt zemāk sniegto informāciju. Tas palīdzēs jums saprast, kāpēc un kā tiek veikts pētījums, un kāda līdzdalība būs saistīta. Lūdzu, dariet zināmu pētniekam, kurš jums sniedza šo informāciju, ja kaut kas ir neskaidrs vai jums ir kādi jautājumi.

Zoe Kessler veiks pētījumu kā sociālā darba doktora grādu Dandī universitātē Apvienotajā Karalistē. Pētījuma mērķis ir izpētīt sociālo bāreņu uzskatu un pieredzes atspoguļojumu Latvijā.

Jūs esat uzaicināts piedalīties, ja jūs atbilstat kritērijiem; esat 18-25 gadus vecs, vismaz vienu gadu dzīvojāt bērnu namā Latvijā un jums ir iespēja vismaz divas reizes satikties uz intervijām.

Turklāt jūs esat juridiski atbildīgs par sevi.

Dalība ir brīvprātīga, ja nepiedalāties, tas nekādā veidā neradīs problēmu. Jūs varat nolemt jebkurā laikā izstāties no pētījuma bez paskaidrojumiem un bez soda. Ja vēlaties jebkurā brīdī atteikties no pētījuma, lūdzu, sazinieties ar pētnieku Zoe Kessler. Pēc datu savākšanas dalībnieks var nebūt iespējams izstāties no pētījuma, jo dati ir anonīmi.

Ja jūs piedalīsities šajā pētniecības projektā, būs vismaz divas tikšanās reizes, kurās jums tiks uzdoti jautājumi par jūsu dzīves pieredzi. Intervijas tiks ierakstītas audio ierakstos, un tām katru reizi nevajadzētu ilgt vairāk kā 90 minūtes. Dzīves notikumos, kas notiek brīvprātīgi, notiek emocionāli riski, kas var izraisīt sarežģītas emocijas. Ja nepieciešams papildu emocionāls

atbalsts, jūs varat novirzīt uz palīdzības bāreņiem Latvia.lv garīgās veselības organizāciju, kas kvalificēta garīgās veselības atbalsta sniegšanai.

Dalība šajā pētniecības projektā tiks pilnībā konfidenciāla. Intervijas notiks anonīmi, bez nosaukumiem vai identificējošas informācijas. Personīgajai informācijai nevarēs piekļūt neviens cits kā pētniece Zoe Kessler. Vienīgā situācija, kurā jebkad tiks pārkāpta šī konfidencialitāte, būtu ziņot attiecīgajām iestādēm par iespējamu kaitējumu vai briesmām dalībniekiem vai citiem, vai noziedzīgām darbībām, piemēram, informācijai par terorismu, nelikumīgi iegūtu līdzekļu legalizēšanu vai vardarbību pret bērniem.

Kas notiks ar manu sniegto informāciju?

Pētījuma dati tiks glabāti bez jebkāda sakara ar jūsu vārdu vai jebkādu personu identificējošu informāciju ar Zoë Kessler. Dati tiks arhivēti, un tiem, iespējams, piekļūs un tos atkārtoti izmantos Zoë Kessler. Ja jums vajadzētu izvēlēties atteikties no pētījuma, jūsu informācija tiks iznīcināta un netiks izmantota nekādā veidā. Pētījuma rezultātus var publicēt vai kā citādi padarīt publiski pieejamus vai izmantot pārskatos. Rezultāti tiks parādīti kā anonimizētas personu grupas vai anonīmi citāti, no kuriem indivīdus nevar identificēt. Dalībnieki varēs piekļūt publicēto rezultātu kopijām, izmantojot Discovery, Universitātes repozitoriju vai pēc pieprasījuma pētniekam, ievērojot finansētāja vai izdevēja prasības.

Datu aizsardzība

Universitāte apgalvo, ka ir likumīgi, ja tā šajā projektā apstrādā jūsu personas datus, jo apstrāde ir nepieciešama, lai izpildītu uzdevumu, kas tiek veikts sabiedrības interesēs, vai kontrolierim piešķirtajām oficiālajām pilnvarām.

Dandī universitāte ir šajā projektā apstrādāto personas datu un / vai īpašo kategoriju personas datu kontrolieris

Universitāte ievēro jūsu tiesības un izvēles attiecībā uz jūsu datiem un, ja vēlaties atjaunināt, piekļūt, dzēst vai ierobežot savas informācijas izmantošanu, lūdzu, paziņojiet mums, rakstot uz e-pastu zkessler@dundee.ac.uk. Lūdzu, ņemiet vērā, ka dažas no jūsu tiesībām var būt ierobežotas, ja personas dati tiek apstrādāti izpētes nolūkos, taču mēs ar prieku to apspriežam ar jums. Ja vēlaties sūdzēties par jūsu informācijas izmantošanu, lūdzu, vispirms sazinieties ar Universitātes datu aizsardzības inspektoru (e-pasts: dataprotection@dundee.ac.uk). Varat arī sazināties ar Informācijas komisāra biroju (<https://ico.org.uk/>).

Plašāku informāciju par personas datu izmantošanas veidiem Universitātē varat atrast vietnē <https://www.dundee.ac.uk/information-governance/dataprotection/>.

Vai ir kāds cits, kuram varu sūdzēties?

Ja vēlaties sūdzēties par pētījumu veikšanas veidu, lūdzu, sazinieties ar Universitātes Pētniecības ētikas komitejas vadītāju (<https://www.dundee.ac.uk/research/ethics/contacts/>).

Alternatīvi formāti

Pētniekam jāpiedāvā dalībnieka informācijas lapas un piekrišanas veidlapas kopija alternatīvos formātos (piemēram, ar lielu druku, Braila rakstā). Padomus par alternatīviem formātiem var saņemt no Invaliditātes dienestiem (e-pasts: altformats@dundee.ac.uk).

10.4 Appendix 4 Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet for respondents from Latvia
The narratives of social orphans in Latvia: An exploratory longitudinal study
University of Dundee School Research Ethics Committee Application/Approval Number:

No.1654

- You are invited to take part in a research project about young people who grew up in an orphanage in Latvia and have now moved out on their own.
- Zoë Kessler is doing the study as a part of the University of Dundee in Scotland.
- I am doing this to help people understand your experience of living in the orphanage and after leaving.
- It is your choice if you want to take part.
- If you start the study and change your mind, it is perfectly fine to stop.
- What you share with me, and your name will be confidential which means private I will never share your name with anyone.
- I will audio record three interviews over the next year. I will give you a throw away camera and a journal to take pictures of things that are important to you and write down thoughts or draw pictures you want to share with me.
- If after being a part of the study, you need help or to talk to someone about anything Help Latvian Orphans Now is available 24hr./day walk in clinic Riga (116111)
- Any other questions please ask me: zkessler@dundee.ac.uk
- Thank you for thinking about being a part of the study!

Additional Information:

The only information that is not kept private is if you tell me a child was or maybe hurt.

What will happen to the information I provide?

The data from the research study will be kept without any connection to your name or any personal identifying information with Zoë Kessler. The data will be archived and, potentially accessed and re-used in the future by Zoë Kessler. If you should choose to withdraw from the study your information will be destroyed and not used in any way. The results of the research may be published or otherwise made publicly available or used in reports. The results will be presented as anonymised groups of individuals or anonymous quotes from which individuals cannot be identified. Participants will be able to access a copy of the published results through Discovery, the University's repository, or by request to the researcher, subject to any funder or publisher requirements.

Data Protection

The University asserts that it is lawful for it to process your personal data in this project as the processing is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest or in the exercise of official authority vested in the controller.

The University of Dundee is the data controller for the personal and/or special categories of personal data processed in this project

The University respects your rights and preferences in relation to your data and if you wish to update, access, erase, or limit the use of your information, please let us know by emailing zkessler@dundee.ac.uk. Please note that some of your rights may be limited where personal data is processed for research, but we are happy to discuss that with you. If you wish to complain about the use of your information, please contact the University's Data Protection Officer in the first instance (email: dataprotection@dundee.ac.uk). You may also wish to contact the Information Commissioner's Office (<https://ico.org.uk/>).

You can find more information about the ways that personal data is used at the University at: <https://www.dundee.ac.uk/information-governance/dataprotection/>.

Is there someone else I can complain to?

If you wish to complain about the way the research has been conducted, please contact the Convener of the University Research Ethics Committee (<https://www.dundee.ac.uk/research/ethics/contacts/>).

Alternative formats

The researcher should offer to provide a copy of the Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form in alternative formats (e.g., large print, Braille). Advice on alternative formats can be obtained from [Disability Services](#) (email: altformats@dundee.ac.uk).

10.5 Appendix 5: Topic for Interviews for research study

Zoë Kessler

University of Dundee

October 7, 2019

The topics for interviews will focus on the research questions (1) What are the issues facing the social orphan population in Latvia? (2) What are Latvian social orphans' experiences of transition out of institutional life after reaching the age of maturity (eighteen years)? (3) What are the experiences of Latvian social orphans living in the community as young adults after leaving institutional life? (4) What supports and hinders Latvian young adults successful experience of living independently after the orphanage?

Topics for interviews based on research questions and interview sequence.

Interview 1

Research Question 1

Reflections on experiences concerning status as a social orphan.

Stories from childhood

Issues facing social orphans generally.

Research Question 2

Reflections on transitioning from orphanage.

Research Question 3

Community living

Family

Social

Future plans

Interview 2

Research Question 2

Continued reflections from transition to the community.

Research Question 3

Community living

Family

Social

Future plans

Research Question 4

Support System

Community based support

General Questions

Interview 3

Research Question 2

Continued reflections from transition to the community.

Research Question 3

Community living

Family

Social

Future plans

Research question 4

Support System

Community based support

General Questions

10.6 Appendix 6: Descriptive map for review questions with quality and relevance appraisal

Studies

Key: **Vulnerability**, **deinstitutionalise**, **risks**

Brief Reference	Bullet point description of methodology	Bullet point summary of findings	Empirical Research (Yes/No)	Transparency of methodology (Yes/No)	Weight of evidence (e.g., appropriateness of study design, focus)	Research Question 1, 2, 3
Jurgena and Mikainis (2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪Qualitative design ▪Semi-structured interviews ▪Experts ▪Reports analyzed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪Social orphans are vulnerable and at elevated risk for having rights denied and social rejection. ▪Reasons for children becoming social orphans are economic distress, social and psychological stress, physical, emotional, sexual Violence against children. ▪Insufficient social integration for youth graduating from the orphanage. ▪ adoption is considered the best option in Latvia to offer children a better life. ▪Social Orphan do not receive social skills and social integration. ▪Social and legal protection of children has been based on the tenet that families are the fundamental precondition for the development of a child's personality. Therefore, family options such as fostering, adoption, guardianship are a priority over orphanages. <p>Deinstitutionalise Deinstitutionalisation of institutions is a priority.</p>	Y	Y	N/A	1,3
Browne, Hamilton-Giachritsis, Johnson, and Osterge (2006)	<p>Quantitative design.</p> <p>Two Surveys: 11 countries (including Latvia).</p> <p>Children under 3-social services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Institutional care for young children is not restricted to countries in transition but is common throughout Eastern European countries. ▪Children who are moved from institutional care to foster care before the age of 6 months usually recover from any physical and cognitive developmental delays. 	Y	Y	High	1

	administered surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪Emergency institutional care may be necessary, but children should be moved into foster care as quickly as possible. 				
Trapen ciere (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪Young people birth to 18 ▪Latvia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪In 2014, 2000 social orphans ▪Many graduates of the orphanage are socio-psychologically maladjusted, characterized as infantile, ignorant, and lacking recognition of themselves as individuals. ▪From a social policy perspective, too little attention has been paid to interagency cooperation to find solutions to the SO problem. ▪Social orphanhood, neglect, abandonment has not been studied rigorously in Latvia. ▪Main reasons for the rise of SO is the prevalence of family problems, inadequate policy mechanisms to identify and assist at-risk families at an early enough stage to prevent children from going into orphanages. Lack of effective policy to prevent this problem. 	Y	Y	High	1, 3
Ismayil ova, Ssewamala, Huseynli (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ study aims: Critically examine current de-institutionalism efforts in FSU countries. Explore the potential family-level economic strategies to improve life opportunities for social orphans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ In FSU countries, children in institutional care are a part of the most vulnerable group. ▪Placing formerly institutionalized children in a safe family environment could improve psychosocial outcomes, risks, and poor developmental outcomes. ▪Exact number of children in care is difficult to calculate. ▪Reasons for SO are parental abandonment, imprisonment of parents, substance abuse, labour migration, abuse, and an inability to care for children. ▪Single mothers may place children in care so they can work expecting to get them returned. ▪ living in orphanages poses tremendous harm for normal psychosocial functioning and well-being. 	Y	Y	High	1, 3,

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪Children in institutions are more vulnerable and likely to experience abuse and neglect. ▪Transitional countries such as Latvia may feel pressure to deinstitutionalize. This is a part of joining the EU. 				
Trapen ciere (2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪Qualitative Study ▪SO, whose parents have left them based on an economic need. ▪Latvia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ youth identified insufficient emotional, moral support, increasing risks of negative behaviours and vulnerability 	Y	Y	High	1, 2
Broka (2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪Latvia ▪Qualitative Methods ▪Verification of existing theories ▪Discourse and social policy analysis ▪Semi-structured interviews with social workers and other relevant experts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪SO highly vulnerable group. ▪Orphan court social workers felt helpless in assisting families ▪Difficulties in finding creative solutions ▪Need to challenge current social assistance for families- not enough support for families. 	Y	Y	High	1
Lin, Cermak , Coster, and Miller (2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪60 school-age children ▪Quantitative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Longer the institutionalisation, the more sensory integration dysfunction, sensory integration, health, brain function. ▪Increased Vulnerability and risks of behavioural problems, academic problems, ▪SO may benefit from occupational therapy 	Y	Y	High	1, 2
Ratkevi ciene (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪Narrative research method ▪Semi-structured interviews with social workers ▪Documents, journals, stories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪Many stories the social workers hear from their clients shock them and are difficult to shake. ▪The vulnerable conditions and risky lifestyles the youth live. ▪The children do not realize that it is possible to live in diverse ways. ▪Unsuitable living conditions with an elevated risk of sexual, physical, and emotional abuse of the children. 	Y	Y	High	2,3

	submitted in writing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ youth attending school drunk ▪ Failure to attend school was related to mother drinking, so adolescents stayed home to take care of younger children. ▪ Parentified children ▪ Teachers and social workers chose 'blackmailing' as the most effective technique to get youth to attend school and follow rules that were deemed for their own good. 				
Vasecheko (2014)	Mixed Methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Specifics of socialization of SO ▪ vulnerability of not having an adult to look after you. ▪ One's social attitude is shaped by the adults around you. ▪ Growing up in the orphanage creates a vulnerable adult that has crippled relationship experiences. ▪ SO future is at severe risk of addictions, intergenerational abuse and having their children taken away. 	Y	Y	Medium	1, 3 2
Lotko, Leikuma, and Battle (2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mixed methods approach ▪ Latvia ▪ Comparative Analysis ▪ Outreach workers for SO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ History of SO ▪ Concern over the high numbers of Latvian youth in risky situations such as hanging out or being homeless. Running away from orphanages. ▪ Vulnerable youth involved in sex work, drugs, alcohol abuse, police violence against youth, sexually transmitted diseases. 	Y	Y	High	2
Razeva and Silova (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Questionnaire ▪ Surveys ▪ SO, files ▪ Latvia ▪ responsibility as an ability of SO ▪ Data collection from workers and other experts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Responsibility of social orphan has a lack of research ▪ There is no vision of a future life after graduating from the orphanage; there is no way to know what the conclusions are. ▪ youth in the orphanage have a low level of sense of responsibility for themselves. This potentially affects future success. ▪ SO are not taught responsibility or control over their lives. ▪ Not taught to plan or organize, have jobs. Therefore, they do not understand the value of 	Y	Y	High	3

		<p>things or how to handle things responsibly.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> These conclusions leave youth vulnerable to poor management and risky choices. 				
Zument e-Steele and Mikene (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of legal documents, care forms Empirical data: 12 semi-structured interviews with six experts working with SO in Latvia. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-equality in access to social services and differences in social assistance nationwide in Latvia. non-formal programmes are more likely to be attended due to mistrust in government programmes. Social mentoring is confirmed as an effective tool in assisting vulnerable adolescents, and young adults. quality of care is a continued issue. youth is continually put at risk for social orphan status by parents that need to emigrate to have jobs thus, leaving children alone. 	Y	Y	High	1, 3
Springe (2017)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mixed methods design Surveys and expert interviews Types of Violence experienced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> violence against children is a pressing issue. At risk children/ social orphans have higher odds of experiencing violence violence experienced as children associated with increased odds of poor health, alcohol abuse, suicide attempts, psycho-emotional problems. 	Y	Y	High	3
Skrodel e-Dubrov ska (2012)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A lack of support in addressing family problems, alcoholism, drug addiction, poverty is what puts children at risk of becoming social orphan. neglect and abuse are also contributors. Children from poor, needy families are at risk for continuing the cycle of not being educated thus not employable, thus leading to losing custody of their own children. 	Y	Y	Medium	3
Dobelin iece, Millere,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Situational Analysis Reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying risks 	Y	Y	High	1, 3

and Salmane-Kulikovska (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Surveys ▪ Qualitative ▪ Interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Children in orphanages are exposed to violence, exploitation, and maltreatment. ▪ Socioeconomics are one reason children become SO but not all. ▪ Alcoholism, unemployment, housing, lacking basic skills, mental health issues, lack of support from social services, child neglect. ▪ Need to improve social services 				
Filipova and Moors (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evaluation research ▪ Case analysis ▪ 100 families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Not common in Latvia to use standardized assessment tools ▪ 80% of the cases had been given the highest quality of care. ▪ 14% reasonable quality ▪ 6% poor quality ▪ Social service system has developed over the past 20 years ▪ Overworking of social workers is common ▪ Puts certain families at risk for children becoming SO. 	Y	Y	High	2
Laksevičs, Poksans, and Zalans (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fictional Ethnography ▪ Qualitative research ▪ 32 semi-structured interviews ▪ 18 structured interviews ▪ two focus groups ▪ Interviews with relevant stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deinstitutionalism ▪ youth falling through the cracks ▪ Identified agency of families trying to make changes ▪ Removing stigma ▪ Social orphan, most marginalized ▪ Coordinating municipal and public discourse ▪ Disabilities, need community learning regarding their disabilities. 	Y	Y	High	1, 3
Trapenciere (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Qualitative Design ▪ Semi-structured interviews ▪ Open-ended questions ▪ Two interview groups; experts on this population and SO leaving the orphanage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Average stay in an orphanage is 2-6 years ▪ 12% live ten years ▪ Transition is crucial to get them ready for risks of independent life. ▪ Huge gap in research in leaving care through to adulthood. ▪ More likely to be socially excluded. ▪ The transition to adulthood is another gap in SO, as well as a need to understand risk and protective elements better. 	Y	Y	High	3, 2

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪Twenty interviews ▪Three areas of Latvia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪Inconsistent preparation for the transition. ▪Teenage single mothers leaving the orphanage are at even higher risk. ▪Argues that youths have not been asked to comment or express their thoughts. Interviews are typically not done with SO. ▪Many children do not want to leave the orphanage. ▪Scared, lonely feel vulnerable to the world. ▪ Training for independence should begin by 16 years. 				
Mencil (2014)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪Qualitative Research design ▪Case Studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪Socialisation Process of SO-becoming independent ▪Complexity of factors- SO, caretakers, tasks, assistance upon independence lower risks. ▪A desire to have a different life than a biological family. ▪They have plans ▪Need to be taught to have personal agency. 	Y	Y	High	3, 2
Anspok a, Paed, Lemešonoka (2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪Mixed Methods Approach ▪Surveys ▪Observations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What prevented finishing secondary school for social orphans included addictions, social behaviours, learning difficulties, extremely low self-esteem, extremely low confidence, low self-organizational skills. Aggressiveness They originate from a minority family that does not speak Latvian. ▪Frequent absences. 	Y	Y	High	2
Trapenciere (2008)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪Qualitative ▪Experts interviewed ▪Records analyzed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪Child Abandonment ▪Reasons why SO ▪Most vulnerable group ▪Alcoholism, abuses, lack of social services, inability to care for children. 	Y	Y	High	1
Dzene (2017)	Qualitative Interviews with experts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explore orphan court and other social services ability to help SO in the best way. 	Y	Y	High	3

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Findings that they do not have the social work training needed to make the best decisions for the SO.▪ Vulnerable groups				
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10.7 Appendix 7: NVivo initial Codebook

Nodes

Times of personal agency 0 0

Untitled 0 0

Nodes\\Phase 2 - Generating Initial Codes (Open Coding)

Abuse 16 79

Emotional Abuse References of participant's experiences of emotional abuse. 3 4

Neglect 4 8

Perpetrating Abuse Any references to participant's perpetrating abuse. 2 6

Physical Abuse References to experiences of physical abuse 11 31

Physical abuse in the orphanage 3 5

Physical abuse with biological family
before the orphanage

4 4

Sexual Abuse References to participant's experience of sexual abuse. 9 13

Sex trafficking 2 10

After the Orphanage 11 21

Examples of personal agency after 5 10

Participant's children 4 17

School 9 14

School experience while in the
orphanage

9 11

Before orphanage 9 13

abuse at home with parents 3 4

Acts of personal agency 2 3

Food 2 8

Biological parents 11 26

Domestic Violence 3 3

Crisis Centre 10 20

Foster Families 9 17

Hostile Experiences 10 24

Important Quotes 10 15

In the Orphanage 11 33

Food 5 8

Positive Experiences 13 28

Acts of resistance in the orphanage 8 21

Negative Experiences 8 24

Relationships with peers 8 26

Issues between Russians and Latvians 1 1

Mental Health Issues 5 8

Personal agency 8 19

Poverty 2 8

Food 2 8

Relationship Abuse 6 13

Substance Use 17 73

Alcohol Abuse Parents 10 19

Drug Abuse by parents 6 7

Grandparents 6 14

Teachers The staff are called teachers at the orphanage, crisis Centre and Transition Centre. 7 21

Transition to the orphanage 17 30

Trauma 6 9

Nodes\\Phase 3 - Searching for Themes (Developing Categories)

1 - Before orphanage 10 14

Alcohol Abuse Parents 10 19

Biological parents 12 27
 Drug Abuse by parents 6 7
 Family 1 1
 Food 3 10
 Food 3 10
 Food (2) 5 8
 Grandparents 6 14
 Physical abuse with biological family
 before the orphanage
 4 5
 Substance Use 15 32
 Trauma 0 0
 2- In the Orphanage 11 33
 Abuse 12 14
 Acts of resistance in the orphanage 15 48
 Acts of personal agency 2 3
 Personal agency 8 19
 Crisis Centre 10 20
 Foster Families 9 17
 Hostile Experiences 9 23
 In Care Stories while in the care of the orphan system which includes crisis centre, orphanage,
 hosting experiences and foster family experiences, biological parents during this time,
 abuse during this time, and stories of acts of resistance
 0 0
 Mental Health Issues 5 8
 Negative Experiences 8 24
 Perpetrating Abuse Any references to participant's perpetrating abuse. 3 14
 Physical abuse in the orphanage 3 6
 Positive Experiences 13 28
 Relationships with peers 8 26
 Issues between Russians and
 Latvians
 1 1
 School experience while in the
 orphanage
 9 11
 Substance use in the orphanage 1 1
 Teachers The staff are called teachers at the orphanage, crisis Centre and Transition Centre. 7 23
 Transition to the orphanage 16 28
 Trauma 7 10
 Abuse 17 86
 abuse at home with parents 3 4
 Domestic Violence 3 3
 Emotional Abuse References of participant's experiences of emotional abuse. 3 4
 Neglect 5 9
 Neglect (2) 4 8
 Perpetrating Abuse Any references to participant's perpetrating abuse. 2 6
 Physical Abuse References to experiences of physical abuse 11 31
 Physical abuse in the
 orphanage
 3 5
 Physical abuse with biological
 family before the orphanage
 3 3
 Sexual Abuse References to participant's experience of sexual abuse. 10 14
 Sex trafficking 2 10
 Emotional Abuse References of participant's experiences of emotional abuse. 5 9
 Physical Abuse References to experiences of physical abuse 12 36
 Sexual Abuse References to participant's experience of sexual abuse. 9 13
 In biological family 0 0
 In the orphanage 0 0
 In Crisis Centre 0 0

Sex trafficking 2 10
 3- After the Orphanage 0 0
 Abuse 0 0
 Acts of resistance 0 0
 Employment 0 0
 Participant's children 4 17
 Poverty 0 0
 Relationship Abuse 6 13
 Relationships 0 0
 School 9 14
 Substance use 0 0
 Important Quotes 10 15

Nodes\Phase 4 - Reviewing Potential Themes (Coding on)

1 - Before orphanage 10 14
 Acts of Resistance 2 3
 Poverty 0 0
 Relationships Stories that include any relationships the child had including parents, grandparents, siblings, friends, teachers.
 0 0
 Biological parents 12 27
 Alcohol Abuse Parents 10 19
 Alcohol Abuse Parents 10 19
 Domestic Violence 3 4
 Drug Abuse by parents 6 7
 Food 7 18
 Neglect 1 1
 Grandparents 6 14
 Substance Use 15 32
 Trauma 1 1
 Physical abuse with biological family before the orphanage
 4 5
 2- In the Orphanage 12 34
 Acts of resistance in the orphanage 13 30
 Experiences of abuse within the orphanage
 3 6
 Crisis Centre 10 20
 Negative Experiences 8 24
 Mental Health Issues 5 8
 Relationships while in the orphanage 0 0
 Foster Families 9 17
 Hosting Experiences 9 26
 Perpetrating Abuse Any references to participant's perpetrating abuse. 3 14
 Relationships with peers 12 34
 School experience while in the orphanage
 9 12
 Teachers The staff are called teachers at the orphanage, crisis Centre and Transition Centre. 11 30
 Substance use in the orphanage 3 3
 Transition to the orphanage 16 29
 3- After the Orphanage 0 0
 Abuse 0 0
 Acts of resistance 0 0
 Employment 1 1
 Participant's children 4 17
 Poverty 0 0
 Relationship Abuse 6 13
 Relationships 1 1
 School 9 14

Substance use 1 1

Nodes\\Phase 5 - Defining and Naming Themes (Data Reduction-Consolidation)

- 1. Family Life 18 113
 - 1.1 Living in Poverty 15 35
 - 1.3 Abuse Participant experienced abuse experiences as a child before the orphanage. 18 67
 - 1.3.1 Sexual Abuse 0 0
 - 1.3.2 Neglect 1 3
 - 1.3.3 Physical Abuse 1 3
 - 1.3.4 Emotional Abuse 1 2
 - 1.3.5 Siblings 6 10
 - 1.4 Resilience Participant exhibited resilience. 8 11
 - 1.2 Caretakers 19 101
 - 1.2.1 Domestic Violence 5 5
 - 1.2.2 Parental Substance Abuse Parents or caregivers and an alcohol or drug issue. 15 43
 - 1.2.3 Grandparents 9 18
- 2. Institutionalism as reported by social orphans 22 264
 - 2.1 Entering care 20 61
 - 2.2 Relationships with parents, peers, teachers 19 116
 - 2.3 Relationships with teachers 14 41
 - 2.4 Relationships with peers 15 55
 - 2.4.1 Peers as family 13 23
 - 2.4.2 Abusive relationships among peers 9 32
 - 2.5 New Families 15 68
 - 2.6 Foster families 11 18
 - Hosting Families 11 23
 - 2.7 Coping 9 19
- 3. Negotiating identities post orphanage 16 162
 - 3.1 Questioning Asking the question who am I? 16 79
 - 3.1.1 My own place 8 13
 - 3.1.2 Relationships (with who I want) 13 29
 - 3.3 Babies and children 5 23
 - 3.2 Betwixt and between 9 48
 - 2. Financial Instability 5 10
 - 3. Risky Choices 7 19
 - Violence 7 14
 - 3.4 Making a new life 14 35
 - 3.5 Reflecting back 11 17
 - Important Quotes 10 15