

VOICES FROM THE VOID:  
INDIAN GIRLS' EXPERIENCES OF GROWING UP IN AN ORPHANAGE

by

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## Abstract

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by

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The literature on children who have lost their parents and have been raised in an orphanage indicates that they are at a developmental disadvantage compared to children who were raised within their own families. The majority of previous research in this field is gleaned from the barren institutions of Romania and Russia. The goal of this study was to provide an in-depth exploration of how Indian girls experience living in an orphanage, with a focus on what contributes to their sense of "well-being." Participants included 19 girls all living together in one orphanage in Jaipur, India. Ethnographic data, including observations, conversations, and photographic images, provided data of their experiences of daily living in the orphanage. Data analysis was guided by principles of grounded theory which places priority on the participant's narrative and meaning of their experiences. The data illuminated the daily joys and struggles of growing up parentless. The data converged on several key themes that were posited to contribute to the girls' overall sense of well-being and happiness: 1) the girls' grasp of being a valuable member of the larger society and the household; 2) the girls' experience of having defined roles in the home; 3) the quality of the girls' relationships with staff and peers and; 4) the girls' sense of their own spirituality. The data also captured powerful feelings of loss and longing experienced by the girls, despite their resilience. The findings of this research contribute to a greater understanding of a child's experience growing up in an orphanage, thus revealing potential policy changes for how orphanages are run worldwide.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

According to the United Nations, the number of orphans worldwide is 163 million; in developing countries the number is 150 million. In India alone, there are 25 million orphans (United Nations Children's Fund, 2010). With the ongoing AIDS epidemic in Africa, immense natural disasters, including the Asian tsunami of 2004 and the Haitian earthquake of 2010, the plight of children without parents cannot be ignored. However, the picture painted in the Western world is that of deplorable conditions in orphanages, with much research focused on the deprived environments of the Romanian and Russian orphanages. There is a growing need for research to be conducted on orphanages in developing countries, including India.

There is a large body of research that indicates that these children are at risk for psychological and physical health problems, with high rates of depression and many other psychological difficulties (Makame, Ani & Grantham-McGregor, 2002; Atwine, Cantor-Graea, & Najunirweb, 2005). Along with mental health difficulties, children raised in institutions have demonstrated difficulty with interpersonal relationships, including difficulties with attachment to caregivers or newly adoptive parents (Chisholm, Carter, Ames & Morrison, 1995; Zeanah, Smyke, Koga & Carlson, 2005), as they lacked a warm and sensitive caregiver in their infancy years.

In spite of the aforementioned physical and psychological risks involved in institutional care, not all children suffer to the same degree. The resilience literature points to various individual attributes found within a child that can act as protective factors against being raised in adverse circumstances including age, temperament, sense of humor, memory, reasoning, perceptual competencies, sense of purpose, belief in a bright future, and a sense of spirituality

(Boyden & Mann, 2005). Having a sensitive, warm, attuned caregiver can often be seen as being a protective barrier against psychopathology (Fonagy, Steele, Steele, Higgitt, & Target, 1994). Yet this is framed in the western notions of resilience, which hold western values as indicators of resilience, including school attendance, security of attachment to caregiver or parents, and non-delinquent forms of adaptation. There is growing need for a more culturally and contextually sensitive understanding of resilience (Ungar, 2004).

Using ethnographic data – including observations, conversations and photographic images compiled from daily interactions with girls living in an Indian orphanage -- the present study is an in-depth exploration of how girls experience living in an orphanage, with a focus on what contributes to their sense of “well-being.”

The review of the literature begins with an overview of attachment security, with a focus on attachment security in institutionalized children. Next, the review examines the risks to orphaned children and follows up with the research on resilience from a cross-cultural perspective. Characteristics of Indian society, and of child development within India, are reviewed in order to contextualize the present study.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### **Overview of Attachment**

John Bowlby's (1969/82) theory of attachment became the cornerstone of contemporary research on the relationship between the infant and the primary caregiver. He viewed attachment behavior as being designed specifically to re-establish proximity with the caregiver. According to Ainsworth and her colleagues (Ainsworth, Belhar, Waters, & Wall, 1978), attachment refers to the affectional bonds that form between infants and their caregivers that often endure across time and situations. Attachment is the paramount organizing system for the child during infancy and early childhood, and its full activation precludes the activation of other systems. Exploration, learning, and psychological growth are threatened when the attachment system is activated due to separation or unavailable or unresponsive caregivers. The quality of the child's attachment bonds has developmental significance beyond infancy into adulthood (See Slade, 2008; Allen, Stein, Fonagy, Fultz, & Target, 2005).

The concept of the working model of the attachment figure and of self was one of Bowlby's (1969/82) most enduring and important aspects of his attachment theory (e.g. Meins, 1997). Meins (1997) described how a working model of the attachment figure is constructed from the child's interactions with that person. For example, if the caregiver is sensitive, receptive, available, consistent, and predictable, a sense of trust develops in the infant. The quality of the caregiver-infant interaction is translated into a series of mental representations that are present to provide the child with expectations of future interactions with that person and others. In this view, a child constructs an internal working model as a reflection of experienced interaction patterns not only with one caregiver, but also with several different individuals. Thus,

the child develops distinct individuated working models for each important relationship (Meins, 1997).

It has been shown that infants whose efforts to gain proximity to the caregiver have been steadily accepted will develop a different internal working model of relationships than infants whose attempts are unpredictably accepted, ignored, or where access is constantly blocked and unavailable. This may disrupt the internal working model with reorganization, restriction, and redirection in attention, behavior, and emotional expression (Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985).

Though internal working models cannot be seen or observed, they are assumed to be operating when the child is in an unusual environment. The behaviors of that child can shed light on his or her internal world. The Strange Situation is an experiment conducted with one-year-old children which measures a child's attachment status (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Based on an infant's reaction to separation with his/her primary caregiver, Ainsworth was able to determine the child's attachment status as secure, anxious/ambivalent or anxious/avoidant. This approach focuses on secure-base behavior, avoidance, and distress resolution. Disorganized attachment is a fourth pattern that reflects an unpredictable mix of the other patterns. Main and Hesse (1990) used the term disorganized disoriented attachment to describe patterns of infant behavior during the Strange Situation which seemed odd and lacked an organized strategy with respect to the attachment figure.

The protective function of attachment still plays an important role as children go off to school, although the nature of "danger" and separation experience changes (Cicchetti, Cummings, Greenberg, & Marvin, 1990). Attachment behavior is also important during the preschool years as it is reflected in the child's representation of themselves, and their associated behavior, in interpersonal relationships. For example, McCarthy (1998) found that children with

secure attachment representations had a more positive view of themselves in the attachment relationships, as well as a more positive perception of the way others view them than either disorganized or avoidant children, respectively. It has also been suggested that representational measures have a good potential to predict meaningful social outcomes. There is evidence that children with early internal working models of sensitive care and secure attachments are more responsive to positive changes in their environment and more resilient to negative changes compared to children with insecure internal working models (Sroufe, 1983).

### **Attachment Security in Institutionalized Children**

Children raised in residential institutions typically experience frequent changes in caregivers, and these caregivers have several children under their care. Caregivers in the orphanages have little training, and the job is low paying and low status, making hiring difficult and turnover substantial. All these factors may limit the emotional expenditure the caregivers direct towards the children, which might ultimately affect how they care for the children, and therefore, may affect a child's ability to form a secure attachment (Groark, Muhamedrahimov, Palmov, Nikiforova, & McCall, 2005).

Using Ainsworth's Strange Situation, Vorria and colleagues (2003) found that 66% of Greek institutionalized infants (11-17 months of age) had disorganized attachments with their caregivers, and another 8% had unclassified attachments. Only 24% of the children were securely attached to their caregivers. In contrast, in a comparison group of Greek home-reared infants, 41% were securely attached, 25% were disorganized, and 22% were unclassifiable. Though the differences between the two groups were substantial, the findings may underestimate the difference between institutionalized and home-reared infants. The authors suggest that their comparison group may not have been typical of Greek infants, as it was drawn from child-care

centers, and it is unusual for Greek infants to be placed in child care. Despite this, the results were not explained by birth weight, health status, gender, ethnicity, temperament, or caregiver sensitivity. The authors' conclusion was that residential care affected every aspect of the infants' development and was linked to the high rate of disorganized attachment.

Severe cases of attachment pathology, including Reactive Attachment Disorder, were found in a sample of Romanian children (Zeanah, Smyke, Koga & Carlson, 2005). In this study, the authors also used Ainsworth's Strange Situation to assess two groups of children: those who currently lived in an orphanage and those being raised in the community and never institutionalized. Those in the orphanage were assessed with their "favorite" caregiver while the community sample was assessed with their mothers. Institutionalized children had significantly higher levels of Reactive Attachment Disorder "emotionally withdrawn/inhibited" ratings as well as "indiscriminately social/disinhibited" ratings compared to the community sample. In terms of their attachment classifications, 65.3% of the institutionalized children were rated as disorganized, compared to 22% of the community sample. Seventy-four percent of the community sample was rated as securely attached compared to 18.9% of the institutionalized children. Although limited to children in Romanian orphanages – infamous for their neglect of children's basic emotional needs -- these findings clearly indicated that attachment can be severely compromised in young, institutionalized children.

Even the Romanian children adopted from orphanages into Canadian homes did not fare much better. Several studies reported that these children were delayed in all areas of development (Chisholm, Carter, Ames & Morrison, 1995). When viewing the children through the attachment lens, children who had spent at least eight months in an orphanage in Romania were found to be less securely attached than children adopted before the age of four months

(Chisholm, 1998). Another study examining Romanian children found that 40% showed a disorganized attachment style (Marcovitch et al., 1997).

A study in the United Kingdom also observed insecurity and atypical attachments among adoptees from orphanages, and longer periods of institutionalization augmented these trends (Marvin & O'Connor, 1999). Thus, although a substantial minority of children with prolonged orphanage experience succeeded in forming secure attachments, the majority did not do so, and many of the insecure attachments took atypical, disorganized, severe forms.

### **Psychological Risks to Orphaned Children**

A discussion of the resilience literature implies that a child may grow up under adverse circumstances. Such conditions of risk might refer to “variables that increase an individuals’ likelihood of psychopathology or their susceptibility to negative developmental outcomes” (Boyden & Mann, 2005, p. 6). Included risks might include those that affect some children in a society but not necessarily an entire cohort, such as ill health, maltreatment, and chronic poverty, to major societal events that affect most children in a particular context, including armed conflicts, natural disasters, and famine. In particular, the death of a parent is highlighted as one of the more immediately traumatizing events for a young child, often linked to later psychological disorders, notably depression (Boyden & Mann, 2005). The following section reviews the psychological risks that orphaned children may experience, expanding the discussion beyond attachment security.

In Uganda, psychological distress was examined in 123 11-15 year old children whose parents (one or both) were reported to have died from AIDS. These children were compared to 110 children of similar age and gender living in intact households in the same neighborhood (Atwine, Cantor-Graea, & Najunirweb, 2005). Symptoms of psychological distress were

assessed using the Beck Youth Inventories of Emotional and Social Impairment (BYI); there was also a standardized interview. Orphans had greater risk for higher levels of anxiety, depression, and anger. They also endorsed several items that are regarded as particularly sensitive to the possible presence of a depressive disorder, including vegetative symptoms, feelings of hopelessness and suicidal ideation.

Another study examining psychological well-being of orphans in Tanzania found similar results (Makame, Ani & Grantham-McGregor, 2002). Forty-one orphans living in the poor suburbs of Dar es Salaam whose parents (one or both) had died from AIDS were compared with 41 matched non-orphans from the same neighborhoods. Psychological distress was measured through an instrument that assessed internalizing problems, adapted from the Rand Mental Health and Beck Depression Inventories. Orphans had significantly more internalizing problems compared to their matched peers and 34% reported they had contemplated suicide in the past year. A regression analysis concluded that the predictors of internalizing problems included gender (higher for females), going to bed hungry, no reward for good behavior, not currently attending school, as well as being an orphan. The study concluded that orphans have risks that endanger their long-term mental health.

Similar findings of significantly higher internalizing problems in orphans were found with a sample of Chinese orphans (He & Ji, 2005) as well as Turkish adolescents raised in institutions (Erol, Simsek, & Munir, 2010).

Yet, not all institutions are created equal. Eritrean war orphans, who were victims of the 30-year-long war with Ethiopia have been examined longitudinally (Wolfe, Dawit & Zere, 1995; Wolfe & Grebremeskel, 1998; Wolfe & Grebremeskel, 1999). The results challenge the categorical conclusion that orphanages are breeding grounds for psychopathology and delayed

child development. When the orphanage was first examined (Wolfe et al., 1995), the Social Affairs Department of the provisional Eritrean government became alarmed when the initial findings were released. These findings indicated that over 25% of the 4-7 year-old orphans were at significant risk for serious psychiatric illness. The Department asked several expatriate consultants to make recommendations about how the social climate of the home could be improved, despite the shortages of staff and material resources. The recommendations were quickly implemented (within one year) and the home was transformed from an impersonal bureaucratic institution to a child-centered residential setting. After the changes were in place, the emotional state of the children improved dramatically (Wolfe, et al., 1995). The orphans were re-examined in a five-year follow up (Wolff & Fesseha, 1999). This time they were compared with unaccompanied children who had spent the war in institutions where they had not been exposed to active combat. The institutions differed qualitatively in their social climate, principles of child care, and patterns of staff-child interactions. The emotional distress that they first observed in the children was still present yet the severity of the symptoms had lessened. However, the children performed on cognitive measures as well or better than the unaccompanied children. The authors concluded that:

the findings that residential settings governed by principles of collective responsibility, which encourage close personal ties with stable adults, can mitigate and partially offset the more serious psychological consequences of having lost both parents and chronic exposure to the violence of war, should be relevant for all war-torn Third World countries (Wolff & Fesseha, 1999, p. 1237).

A fifteen year follow-up study of institutionalized children demonstrated the appearance of great difficulties in establishing mutually satisfactory relationships (Robertson & Robertson

1972). Another study examining the psychological and physical consequences of an orphanage experience assessed in a group of adults raised in orphanages in Quebec, Canada 50 years ago (Sigal, Perry, Rossignol, & Ouimet, 2003). The authors found similar results to those found in present institutions, and that the consequences were far reaching. Orphan adults were compared to a matched group of adults. The orphan group had five years less education than those in the comparison group. The orphans were more likely never to have been married or in a common-law relationship, and they lived more isolated lives by several criteria. Both men and women in the orphan group reported experiencing more symptoms of psychological distress, had more episodes of suicidal ideation, and made more suicide attempts. Differences were also found in physical symptoms, including more chronic illnesses that could be stress related, such as, allergies, joint problems, and serious back problems.

These negative psychological and physical effects may be a result of authoritarian or affectively- and cognitively-barren institutions (see Wolff & Fessaha, 1999; Sigal, Perry, Rossignol, & Ouimet, 2003). The Eritrean study and others suggest that a more administrative structure, as well as provision of cognitive and affective stimulation and appropriate after care may eliminate or greatly reduce these negative consequences. Sigal and colleagues (2003) noted that some participants in their 50-year follow-up study were functioning quite well psychosocially and physically. Factors affecting their resilience and those of other orphaned children in the face of an inadequate upbringing may be found in the next section.

Overall, the research on children raised in orphanages highlights the potential risks of institutional care, including findings of heightened internalizing difficulties across different cultures and geographic areas. These consistent findings not only extend to children and youth across continents, but to adults as well who were raised in orphanages.

## **Resilience in Children**

Numerous studies have identified risk and protective factors at the level of the individual, family, and community, which include individual cognitive abilities, temperament, and ability to self-regulate; family parenting style, mental illness, divorce and parental loss, attachment style, maltreatment; and community resources and safety (Stein, 2006).

Research has shown that in addition to a child's inner resources and competencies, interpersonal relationships, including social support from peers, are critical to fostering and maintaining resilience (Boyden & Mann, 2005). In a setting such as an orphanage, where children outnumber caregivers, this finding is of particular importance for the present study. Friendships provide children with opportunities to be themselves and to feel good about who they are, all processes that can contribute to a child's resilience (Boyden & Mann, 2005). In an orphanage setting, a child's peer plays a dual role of being a family member and a friend.

In addition, mentors clearly can enhance resilience, particularly in the lives of at-risk children and adolescents. Non-parental adults in mentor roles can provide reliable emotional support, communicate moral values, teach information and skills, inspire, motivate, enhance interpersonal relatedness, and foster self-esteem (Southwick, Morgan, Vynthilingam, & Charney, 2006).

The concept of resilience in psychoanalytic theory, as well as in developmental psychology, draws heavily on attachment theory. Based on a study that documented the intergenerational transmission of attachment status (Fonagy, et al., 1994), the authors concluded that there might be a possibility to pre-empt the cycle of disadvantage as manifested in the transmission of insecure attachment. The authors suggest that secure attachment is a legitimate goal of intervention because attachment may well be an important component of the individual's

psychological equipment in their struggle with life's adversities. The child's psychological self is vulnerable because it requires an attentive and sensitive caregiver. If this sensitive caregiver is absent or is not capable of responding in a sensitive way, the child may resort to primitive defensive strategies in order to ensure its survival. This may include behaviors identified by Ainsworth et al. (1978), such as avoidance, resistance, and in extreme cases disorganization. Yet this conclusion is clearly framed in the western notion of attachment security and the western ideal of a primary caregiver. How would this then apply to children who do not have one primary caregiver, or who do not live in the western world?

Of note, there is evidence that even in a dysfunctional social milieu immersed in psychopathology and abusive patterns of relatedness and deprivation, a close bond with one caring person with high warmth and absence of severe criticism with some degree of mutuality and acceptance can mitigate the effects of a hostile and dysfunctional atmosphere (Shaw, 2006).

Though the literature above details the emphasis many researchers have placed on the mother-infant bond and the long lasting effects of this attachment, it is also increasingly recognized that in many cultures and societies the mother is only one of several caregivers, and thus the child's attachment may be quite dispersed (Boyden & Mann, 2005). This is particularly relevant to Indian society, where the present study was carried out.

Some writers have advocated a larger eco-systemic view, noting that systems beyond the community such as physical environment, social class, biology, ethnicity, spirituality, poverty, racism, and social policy interact with one another and the child, family, and community (Waller, 2001, in Stein, 2006). Indeed, the push to examine contributors to resilience beyond a static intrapsychic trait is being endorsed by more researchers (see Ungar, 2008; Boyden & Mann, 2005).

## **Resilience across cultures**

While the resilience literature created through diligent work by researchers has contextualized risk and provided us with a number of protective processes that predict positive outcomes, most resilience researchers have focused on outcomes that tend to highlight western-based individual and relational factors typical of mainstream populations and their definitions of healthy functioning. This research has demonstrated a lack of sensitivity to community and cultural factors that view the definition of resilience differently and how resilience-type behaviors are manifested in the community (Ungar, 2008; Boyden & Mann, 2005).

The definition of resilience may not be as simple as having a positive outcome under adverse circumstances. There is growing consensus that resilience has multiple uses. It may be a constellation of characteristics, which children are born with and, despite growing up in adverse conditions, tend to be successful. It may also refer to a certain competence under stress. Thirdly, it may be defined as positive functioning after recovering from a trauma. All three of these definitions, drawing on a developmental outcome, a set of competencies, and coping strategies overlap (Kirby & Fraser, 1997). Further, there is also robust research pointing to the idea that resilience is not an individual trait, but related to the vulnerability and protective factors at play in the child's environment (Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000). Resilience exists as a trait of a child's social and political circumstances and setting. The child's environment, culture and resources will have to be able to support resilience if the child is to experience a sense of well-being. Resilient families and communities need to support their children in order for them to be resilient (Ungar, 2008). One does not exist without the other.

In order to address the aforementioned limitations in the study of resilience Ungar and his colleagues (Ungar, Lee, Callaghan & Boothroyd, 2005; Ungar, Clark, Kwong, Makhnack &

Cameron, 2005) set up the International Resilience Project (IRP) consisting of an iterative and participatory model of mixed methods research. The IRP examined global, as well as culturally and contextually specific aspects of resilience in children and youth. Findings from this project suggest that resilience is a “multidimensional construct, the definition of which is *negotiated* between individuals and their communities, with tendencies to display both homogeneity and heterogeneity across culturally diverse research settings” (Ungar, 2008, p. 219, italics in original).

Ungar (2008) proposes a new definition of resilience, based on the shortcomings of the current literature and the findings from the aforementioned study (Ungar, et al., 2005), resulting in a definition more culturally and contextually relevant:

In the context of exposure to significant adversity, whether psychological, environmental, or both, resilience is both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to health-sustaining resources, including opportunities to experience feelings of well-being, and a condition of the individual’s family, community and culture to provide these health resources and experiences in culturally meaningful ways (Ungar, 2008, p. 225).

The child must navigate towards certain health resources, and have the individual capacity to negotiate for those resources. Both concepts of navigation and negotiation are prominent in this definition, making a clear distinction from the more static understandings of resilience as a clearly defined set of outcomes or culturally independent processes (Ungar, 2008). Here the definition combines personal agency (the act of seeking out resources) with the actual availability of these resources and help. “One can only navigate towards what is available and easily accessed” (Ungar, 2008, p.225).

Research into non-Western ways of negotiating resilience is still in its early years and more work needs to be done. Qualitative methodologies have been instrumental in gaining the knowledge thus far. Qualitative research is ideal as the findings from such studies remain embedded in local contexts and are based on the participants' own understanding of their coping strategies. It also allows the researcher to discover unnamed processes, attend to contextual specificity of health phenomena, and remain aware of one's own bias to view findings from an adult-centric perspective (Ungar, 2004). With qualitative research, one can begin to grasp the everyday experience of youth through their eyes.

### **Indian Society and Childhood**

The population of India is over one billion, with more than a hundred million infants and young children. It is a vast and complex nation. Spanning over five thousand years of human habitation, the people of India have a rich heritage reflected in their social, cultural, and economic diversity (Ahuja, 1993; Sharma, 2003).

“An exploration of the psychological terrain of the Indian inner world must begin with the cluster of ideas, historically derived, selected and refined, through which Hindu culture has traditionally structured the beliefs and behaviour of its members...the Hindu world image...provides its members with a sanctioned pattern, a template which can be superimposed on the outer world with all its uncertainties and on the flow of inner experience in all its turbulence, thus helping individuals to make sense of their own lives...whether consciously acknowledged and codified in elaborate rituals, or silently pervading the ‘community unconscious’ [the Hindu world image] has decisively influenced Indian languages as well as ways of thinking, perceiving and categorizing experience.” (Kakar, 1981, p.15)

In this section, I will outline only a few themes of the Hindu world image to help describe Indian society and more specifically the “sociocentric orientation” of Indians. An examination of childhood development and family structure in India will follow.

**Sociocentric orientation of Indians.** There are two general types of understanding the sources of behavior within a society, one focusing on sources within the individual, the other focusing on sources within the social whole. The American understanding focuses on the autonomous individual, framing the roles that one has to play and commitments one has to make according to an individual judge (Derne, 2003). Indian society, on the other hand, sees action as driven by the needs of the social whole. To understand how this ideal is passed on to future generations, I will highlight three main ideas that help one understand the creation of a sociocentric understanding within the Indian culture.

In Hindu culture, the ultimate aim of existence is to achieve *moksha*. *Moksha* has several meanings such as self-realization, transcendence, salvation, a release from involvement in the world. It is also describes as a state in which all distinctions between subject and object have been transcended, “a direct experience of the fundamental unity of a human being with the infinite” (Kakar, 1981, p.16). Freud (1913/1950) attempted in *Totem and Taboo* to grasp this concept and put forth an “oceanic feeling” as his collective term for mystical, ecstasy, or other religious experiences. However, *moksha*, is not a temporary surge of oceanic feeling but a constant and fully aware “living-in-the-ocean” (Kakar, 1981). By following this ideal, the individual seeks to ‘undo’ the distinction between ‘me’ and ‘not-me.’ This ultimate achievement is not realized until a person not only has a full awareness of “I” in themselves, but also has a similar feeling of “I” in the selves of others: an empathy that also extends to a complete

identification with the other. This is the ultimate attainment. Until this is realized, the Hindus would say that one is living in *avidya*, meaning ignorance or false consciousness.

To further understand *moksha*, one also has to understand how the doctrines of *dharma* and *karma* contribute to this ultimate achievement. *Karma* is cycle of birth and death whereby an individual progresses or regresses to another level depending on past deeds. It is not just a doctrine of “reincarnation.” It is a promise of hope. *Karma* assures the individual that the attainment of the ultimate goal of *moksha* is certain even though there may be many setbacks in the process and may require many rebirths and many life cycles for completion. After many lives a man may attain *moksha* by doing the good deeds (*dharma*) required of him by society; if he is tempted by evil deeds, then his form changes and he regresses to a lower form, thus requiring further life cycles to regain his ground and attain *moksha* (Kakar, 1981).

*Dharma* is the means through which man can approach the desired goal of human life (*moksha*). It can be translated into law, moral duty, or right action. It is the principle underlying social relations. The ‘right action’ for an individual depends into which culture he is born, the period of historical time in which he lives, the efforts required of him at different stages of his life, and on his individual genetic makeup. Right and wrong are relative and are dependent on the four previously mentioned tenets of ‘right action’ (Kakar, 1981). Indians see action as driven by the needs of the social whole and they see the “right action” as driven not by individual choices, but by their religious *dharma* of their caste (Derne, 2003). “To size up a situation for oneself and proceed to act upon one’s momentary judgment is to take an enormous cultural as well as personal risk; for most Hindus such independent voluntary action is unthinkable” (Kakar, 1981, p. 37). Hindus often look to respected elders in a caste or family to provide guidance about dharmic rules. According to Kakar, *dharma* acts as social cement, binding the individual and the

society together.

### **Familiar patterns and childhood development.**

In Indian society, with all of its enormous heterogeneity, the pervasive dominance of the extended family, almost as an entity unto itself, is a constant. The importance of emotionally close, well-defined, hierarchical family relationships with reciprocal responsibilities throughout life is even manifested linguistically, where there are specific words for each and every kinship relationship (Roland, 1987, p.239)

For centuries the Indian family system has been the fundamental institution in the transmission of culture from one generation to the next. It is also responsible for a multiplicity of other functions such as reproduction, socialization of the young children, teaching appropriate sexual behaviors, providing emotional, social and financial support, and promoting morals, values, and beliefs. Families in India have traditionally been classified as extended or joint in nature. Joint families consist of one or more married couples residing with their children and other close relatives such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, all in one home. Nuclear families in contrast comprise of a single married couple and their children. The trend in modern day India is hedging towards that of nuclear families, where children are encouraged to function in an individualized manner, take initiative, and act independently. In contrast, in extended or joint families, respect for age and status is of great importance as well as subservience of individual members' interests to the interests of the family as a whole, joint responsibility, and seniority. Authority to make decision for the family is vested in the head of the family, which is usually the eldest male member (Ahuja, 1993). Joint families may become troublesome for young couples, especially the young bride as she usually has to come under the strict control and authority of her husband's mother, who expects the young wife to bear the most burdensome chores in the

household (Kakar, 1981). All work has to be done in the interest of the entire family, and individual goal directed behavior is discouraged (Bisht & Sinha, 1981).

One could imagine this type of arrangement in a small orphanage with a limited number of children of different ages. The strength of the deeply ingrained cultural principles of fellowship and a cooperative way of living should not be underestimated. The Indian child is socialized with a deep sense of obligation and duty towards kin, perhaps even more so when they are orphaned as the other children are the only family they know. The tradition of the Indian joint family may bode well for children who are orphaned and are raised in an institution. If the orphanage is able to maintain the idea of a large joint family, this may mitigate any negative consequences that may come to children raised in traditional orphanages. Based on his own fieldwork in a rural Indian village Sharma (2003) states that

“children’s ideas of belongingness to a family and household were shaped by their ability to adjust to the inherently social and collective nature of everyday interactions. The ambiguities about possession (what is mine and what is a part of me versus what does not belong to me) fostered feelings of sharing, partnership, and reliance in children. Almost everything had to be shared with age mate family members and peers, from maternal attention to at times even clothing, certainly the living space, food, toys, books, and other belongings.” (p.30).

Traditionally, the Indian infant is constantly held, cuddled, and talked to by his or her mother. In contrast to Western mothers, Indian mothers indulge their children and give in to their every wish. Grandparents, relatives, and even non-familiar members such as neighbors join the parents in caring for infants. Close physical contact with the mother prevails from infancy into

early childhood. Falling asleep with or near the parents is common. Anxiety or distress is relieved immediately if possible by the mother or mothering persons (which can include grandmother, aunts, older siblings or cousins, a servant). There is a remarkable social and cultural congruency in the Indian woman attaining her main status as a mother. With a traditionally de-emphasized conjugal marital relationship within the extended family, she makes her major emotional investment in her children, and particularly in her sons (Kakar, 1981; Roland, 1987). For the mother, her child is the savior and instrumental in winning the love and acceptance of those surrounding her (Kakar, 1981).

Prolonged infancy fosters a sense of self that is much more along the lines of “we-ness” (Roland, 1988), with a closer interconnection of inner images of self and other. This also involves outer ego boundaries remaining much more permeable to constant affective exchanges and emotional connectedness with others. Perhaps as a result, empathy is much more attuned to conscious nonverbal communication than in the West (Roland, 2005). Extensive closeness, positive affect between mother and child, and the joint family tradition all fuel a prolonged dependence that shape Indian’s sociocentric orientation (Derne, 2003). From a broad psychological perspective, one can view the more symbiotic mothering and modes of relationship, with a relative inhibition of separation and autonomy, as being highly adaptive. It prepares the Indian child for close, extended family relationships throughout life where decisions will ordinarily be made for the child and often for the adult as well by the elders of the family on the basis of the male hierarchy—but usually through consultation and always based on concern and responsibility (Roland, 1987).

Ethnographers offer a different viewpoint and (see Kurtz, 1992) have challenged the view of the childhood overindulgence by mothers. Though the mothers may be physically close, it

may not mean that they are emotionally close. Mothers, siblings, and other caregivers are described as providing infants with constant physical closeness, meeting infants' needs, and rarely employing physical punishment. Such care is made possible by the Indian joint family structure, providing a range of caregivers to look after the infant. Kurtz (1992) emphasizes the familial group as a significant socializing agent in the lives of children and feels Kakar and Roland have both viewed the dyadic mother-infant relationship through Western theories. Kurtz (1992) proposes that the early rearing of the pre-Oedipal child is shaped by a group of benevolent caregivers, all mothers, who work jointly to assist the young child to move away from an exclusive relationship with mother towards a broader relationship with the entire family. While Kurtz (1992) may be correct to highlight that Indian children are immersed in a complex network of socialization, his absolute emphasis that 'all mothers are one' denies the possibility that the other caregivers may not have the same amount of influence on the child as the mother. There is consensus that Kakar's original theorizing of the mother being the emotional anchor for the child during the period of infancy indulgence is correct and that "she is the chief source of nurturance and others follow her lead by reinforcing common Indian socialization practices in non-equivalent but important ways" (Roopnarine & Suppal, 2003, p. 130).

Roland (1988) theorizes that due to the Hindu joint family the developmental significance of separation and individuation is not the primary experience of Indian children compared to their counterparts in Europe and America. Individuation and separation, important milestones in Western childhood development, do not appear as vital in the structural development and functioning of the Indian familial self. He proposes a significantly different psychoanalytic developmental model for the Indian familial self, where greater individuation can occur but within the structural development of a familial self. Roland believes that individuation is not

linked in the same way to separation, differentiation, autonomy, and identity integration, as it is theorized by Western psychoanalysts.

This developmental model leads to a set of three different selves, one of which is the familial self. For the purposes of the literature review, I will focus on the latter. The familial self is thought of as a basic inner psychological organization that allows individuals to function within the intimate hierarchical relationships of the family, community, and culture. There are various dimensions to the familial self that Roland has formulated (1987; 2005). One such dimension is the we-self regard, which he considers central to Indian relationships. The maintenance and enhancement of each other's esteem takes precedence over the truth in any given matter. Of importance to the we-self regard is the reputation of the family as selfobject, where how one behaves in public is central and reflects back on one's family and reciprocally, one's family reputation is central to one's own esteem. Reciprocity of respect, nurturance, and responsibility can be seen in hierarchical relationships flowing between superiors and subordinates. The aim is always to maintain the other's esteem.

**Female Roles in Indian Society and Female Relationships.** As the present study involves only girls, female roles and relationships are examined. Social reforms in the last century enabled women to have a voice in the Indian social system and raise their status through education, freedom to make their own decisions, and increased opportunities. These changes have had a profound impact on the family system, marital relationships, and parenting (Ahuja, 1993).

Customs, beliefs, habits, values, and modes of behavior are transmitted from one generation to the next through the process of socialization. The family is the first and primary unit that influences these value systems. As with other values and ideals, the roles of men and

women in Indian society are taught to young boys and girls from early childhood. The two great epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, play a significant part in teaching approved male and female roles. Tales from these stories and others are used to instill values, morals, and accentuate themes of truth, persistence, industriousness, and resourcefulness. For example, the heroine in the Ramayana is personified by *Sita*, the ideal woman and the epitome of wifely devotion. As she states in one of her speech: “For a woman, it is not her father, her son, nor her mother, friends not her own self, but the husband, who in this world and the next is ever her sole means of salvation” (Kakar, 1981, p. 65).

The overt hierarchal structure of the Hindu family is male-oriented, where men are controllers of finances, makers of decisions for the family, and women are seen as subordinate to the men. However, women often hold the power when it comes to arranging marriages, and thus working out new family alliances and connections, which maintains the family’s social position. Women often manage internal family affairs, including preparing and taking care of traditional family festivals, which in turn preserve the family hierarchical relationships through rituals practices. These duties often mean that women are perceived as “agents of the supernatural or aspects of the divine, aspiring to powers of the goddesses to further the growth and process of development of the family” (Roland, 1988, p.217). They are also the keepers of culture. Thus, despite the overt male dominated hierarchy, women yield enormous, though covert, structural power within the Hindu family (Roland, 1988).

The hierarchical cultural value system in place is often conveyed to the young child by the older women in the family, be it the mothers, grandmothers, aunts, servants, and older sisters. This value system purports affection and understanding within the family with an emphasis on solidarity and cooperation, including observations of traditional norms and customs of the

family, and the importance of mediation and conciliation among the members when problems and conflicts inevitably arise (Roland, 1988).

Every female is born into a well-defined community of women within her particular family. Though not always filled with solidarity and goodwill, this exclusive sphere of femininity and domesticity gives the young girl and the other women of the household a tangible opportunity to be productive and lively. The activities that reside in the feminine sphere are independent of the patriarchal values of the outside world. Moreover, the other women in the sphere, be it her mother, grandmother, aunts, sisters, act not only as the young Indian girl's teachers but provide her with allies against the discrimination and inequities of the society. This feminine sphere can help offset the damage to the girl's self-esteem when she discovers that she is viewed as inferior to a boy in the eyes of society (Kakar, 1981). This sort of feminine kinship also found in the orphanage in the present study might also provide another buffer against any psychological risks to the young girls.

### **Purpose of Present Study and Rationale**

As stated above, research indicates that children who have lost their parents and have been raised in an orphanage are at a developmental disadvantage compared to children who were raised within their own families. However, it appears that orphanages can create cognitively and affectively appropriate environments that may mitigate against psychological risks. Resilience research across cultures states that there is always a negotiation between the child and their environment to help offset adverse circumstances. The child's environment must work with the child's inner resources to provide the best chance for succeeding under hardship. In a country such as India, where there is more of an emphasis towards the well being of the group as opposed to the individual, where large extended families still exist, and where caring for and

respecting others resides in the national Hindu psyche, the tenets of the society may help the child towards her path of resilience. This study contributes to the orphanage and resilience literature by providing an in-depth exploration of how the girls experience living in an orphanage, with a focus on what contributes to their sense of "well-being." Certain themes that will be coded from the qualitative data are posited to contribute to the girls' overall sense of well-being and happiness: 1) the girls' grasp of being a valuable member of the larger society and the household; 2) the girls' experience of having defined roles in the home; 3) the quality of the girls' relationships with staff and peers and; 4) the girls' sense of their own spirituality.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS

#### Research Setting

The orphanage is named Geeta Children's Home (a pseudonym) and is located in Jaipur, Rajasthan, India. It is a children's home specifically for destitute girls. It was founded in 1992 by Janu and Geeta B., a couple of Indian origin who lived and worked in Canada for most of their lives. In their retirement they started living at Geeta Children's Home. Both committed themselves to Geeta Children's Home's mandate of providing the girls with an enlightened and liberal upbringing as well as a good education. The home is run by a board of trustees and is funded by a charity in Canada. Each girl has sponsor parent(s), most of whom live in Canada, Britain, the U.S. or Germany. Each girl is very proud of her foreign "mommy and daddy" and communication with them is extremely important. There are currently 22 children in residence at Geeta Children's Home ranging in age from 4 to 22 years. Most of the girls came to Geeta Children's Home at a young age, and six have been there since birth. As well as the girls, a warden, one caretaker and one cook live in the home. All the cooking is done at the home by this cook and by the girls.

In order to gain access to Geeta Children's Home, the researcher had to approach the management team in charge of the orphanage. Through email correspondence, she was able to make contact with the son of the founder of the home. He was the contact person between the management team and the researcher. The researcher prepared a three page proposal detailing what would be asked of the girls and the rest of the home. The management team approved the proposal and granted permission to the researcher to conduct the research. The caveat was that the researcher was also required to be a volunteer (the home has a rotating cycle of volunteers

from Canada and the UK) for a period of approximately three months, while the research was conducted.

### **Participants**

Participants were 19 girls, between the ages of 4 and 22 (mean age 11.95, and standard deviation 4.89), all of whom were living in the home at the time of the study. Three girls declined to be part of the research. For the Photovoice portion of the research, six girls participated with an age range between 15-19 years.

### **Design and Instruments**

The present study utilized a mixed-method (qualitative and quantitative) approach. The overall methodology was guided by the principles and practices of ethnography, and the data included observations, conversations, and daily interactions with all the participants, gathered while the study's researcher lived among the participants for a period of 10 weeks. The methodology of participant observer was employed to achieve an understanding of the patterns of social life occurring in the home (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002), providing an opportunity to record what the girls actually did in their day-to-day activities.

**Photovoice.** One of the ethnographic methods used was called Photovoice. Photovoice is a participatory action research tool, in which photography is used to express the views and experiences of individuals or communities (Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang, 2006). Photovoice is based on literature from the fields of feminist theory and community-based participatory action. It has three main goals: (1) to enable individuals to capture their everyday realities; (2) to promote knowledge and dialogue regarding personal and community strengths and concerns; (3) to reach policy makers (Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang, 2006). Photovoice was chosen because of certain restrictions imposed by the orphanage management team. They felt that formal interviews

would be not appropriate as the girls would feel pressured to give the “right” answer and the data collected would not be a valid representation of their experience. They suggested that time spent in the home, along with informal interviews with the girls would yield more valid data.

Therefore, Photovoice was added to the methodology as a supplement to the other, traditional ethnographic methods of observation and informal interviewing. Further, using a visual approach to collecting data can be a valid method to capture the child’s story of his or her life (Didkowsky, Ungar, & Liebenberg, 2010) as it allows them to tell their story from their point of view, without needing to use many words. Photographs taken by a participant also reduce the usual power imbalance between ‘researcher’ and ‘researched,’ by having the youth actively participate in the gathering of data.

Four weeks after the researcher’s arrival, she started the Photovoice procedure with a subset of the girls, the six oldest in the home. The Photovoice process was carried out over five weeks. The decision to start Photovoice four weeks after arrival was twofold: 1) the first four weeks allowed the girls to become more comfortable with the researcher; 2) when the researcher first arrived, the children were thought to be at another home in Northern India to escape the heat of Jaipur; since the home in Jaipur is their permanent home, it was believed that it would be a better place to start Photovoice. However, when the researcher arrived, the girls had already returned from Northern India because of a water shortage in the second home, so all the girls were present upon the researcher’s arrival in Jaipur. The researcher still believed it was best to wait for a month before starting Photovoice to allow for the girls to become more comfortable with her. At the beginning of the fourth week in the home, the researcher met with each participant individually to explain this part of the research. In addition, the participants met as a group to review the ethics around camera use and to explain certain photography taking

technique tips. A disposable camera with 24 exposures was distributed to each participant. Each girl was asked to take photographs of “people, places, things that make you feel happy and good inside” as well as photographs of “people, places, and things that make you feel less happy and less good inside.” The girls were instructed not to talk to each other concerning the subjects of their photographs until everyone had completed taking their photos and handed in their cameras to the researcher for film developing. After that, they could talk about the photos they took. The reason for asking the girls not to discuss what they planned to photograph was to increase the likelihood of girls providing a diverse range of photos that reflected their individual experiences. If the girls discussed what they intended to photograph with one another, it was possible that they would influence each others’ choices in selecting subjects for photos, and possibly would have all taken the same or similar photographs.

During the fifth, sixth, and seventh week, the participants took their photographs. Once the photo-taking session was concluded, the researcher collected the cameras and brought them to a photography lab for processing. Once the photographs were back from the lab and distributed to each girl, the researcher instructed them to title each photograph in their roll. The participants were given a week to do this, as the researcher did not want the girls to be overly distracted from their academic studies. However, some of the girls took an additional week as they were busy with schoolwork. When the titles were assigned, the participants were asked to choose six photographs (three for things that make them feel good and three that represented things that did not make them feel good/happy) they liked most or felt best captured the research theme and to write one paragraph in English detailing why they chose that photograph. The participants were asked to fill out a page for each of the six photographs; the page had a box at the top for the photograph, a line below for the title and the rest of the page was for the description and the

reasons they chose the photograph. During this time, the researcher met individually with each girl to go over a short series of questions concerning their six chosen photographs. These questions were based on the Photovoice methodology (Wang, 2006):

1. Describe your photograph.
2. What is happening in this photograph?
3. Why did you take a picture of this?
4. What does this picture tell me about your life?
5. How does this photograph make you feel?
6. Give a title to this photograph.

(after title is given): Tell me why you gave it that title

The participants were then asked to describe the last time they had an encounter with what they had photographed, or a memory with the subject of the photograph and describe what had taken place. The interviews were audiotaped and videotaped with the participant's permission. The participants were also asked to write down if there was any photograph that they were not able to take for various reasons and were asked to write down the reasons for wanting to take the photographs, and the reasons they felt they could not. For instance, if there was a person who made them feel unhappy, they may have felt anxious about taking that photo, or worried that they would get in trouble if they did so, or they might not have been permitted to take photos of certain persons or places (for instance, inside a religious institution, or pictures of men in the community/neighborhood). These were to be included in the group discussion.

The original plan was that once the individual meetings were completed, the participants and the researcher would meet as a group to display their photographs and have a group discussion reflecting on the images they produced. From the individual meetings, the researcher

would have noted the six chosen photographs of each participant and would display them in front of the whole group. The girls would not be asked to identify their photographs, although they would be free to if they liked. This way, if some of the participants were anxious or worried about the subject of their photographs, they did not need to disclose which photographs were theirs. All six participants would then have begun the group discussion. The participants would be divided into three groups of two. Each group would search all 36 photographs for three pairs of images they felt were similar, or belonged together, or felt the same. The researcher would then display the paired photographs on the wall with tape presented in columns. The participants would be asked if any of these first photographs “belonged” together. The next round would then commence, with the participants once again choosing pairs of photographs that were similar. Together, the participants and the researcher would have decided what “theme” each column represented using plain language to code the columns.

However, several of the girls expressed worries about sharing their photographs with the group. They worried that the confidentiality of the group would not be assured and some girls would tell the elders the nature of the photographs. Others worried about hurting other girls’ feelings and did not feel comfortable talking about their photographs. After talking to each of the girls individually about their concerns, the researcher decided that it would be best not to have the group discussion as planned, but adapt it to make the girls feel more comfortable. The participants did not share their photographs; instead the researcher asked the girls to reflect on their experience of the project. They were asked to talk about what they thought of the project, whether they learned anything about themselves, and whether there was anything they wanted the researcher to bring to the elders as concerns they might have had about the home. The girls were much more at ease with this group conversation and everyone participated.

At the end of the researcher's 10-week stay, the girls were asked if they had any further thoughts or feelings about their photographs or anything else they would have liked to tell the researcher before her departure. This served as a sort of debriefing discussion about the photographs and the study in general.

Finally, the participants had an opportunity to listen to and/or watch the taped individual and group discussions. If there was anything on the tape that made any of the participants uncomfortable, that particular section of the tape was omitted. No material was omitted from the tapes.

**Ethnographic Observations.** Observations, conversations, and daily interactions with the girls took place throughout the ten weeks. The observations began while the girls were still on summer vacation, during the second week of the researcher's arrival. This meant that the girls were in the home throughout the day leaving the researcher with the freedom to observe the girls all day. Once the girls were back at school, during the researcher's third week, observations were limited to when they were present in the home. The observations took place during mealtimes (breakfast and dinner) and during homework time (4:00pm to 8:00pm) during the weekdays, and on Saturdays, when the participants had more leisure time. On weekends when all the girls were in the home during the day, observations took place throughout the day. The researcher used a standard ethnographic field note approach to record her observations (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002).

### **Quantitative Measures**

**The Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL).** To get an overall sense of the participants' psychosocial functioning, the CBCL-II (Achenbach, 1991; see Appendix A) was given to the warden/caretaker of the home to complete as a screening measure of disruptive behaviors for the girls who were under the age of 18. The CBCL-II is designed to assess the social and behavioral

problems of children from the ages of four to 16. These are then compared to typical norms of the appropriate age group. The checklist consists of 118 items scaled from 0 (not true) to 2 (very true) which are then summarized into individual dimension and summary scores. The behavior problem scale yields a profile of the type and number of the child's behavior difficulties in general (e.g. externalizing, internalizing) and specific areas (e.g. delinquent, aggressive, depression). The CBCL-II has demonstrated high internal consistency and reliability (alpha coefficient = 0.90). Stability of individual intraclass correlations over a 3-month period were .84 for behavior problems and .97 for social competencies.

**Young Adult Behavior Checklist (YABCL).** The YABCL (Achenbach, 1997) (see Appendix B) is a questionnaire for participants aged 18-30 years and was developed to tap into the transition period between adolescence and adulthood. The YABCL was given to the home's warden/caretaker to be filled out for the remaining girls in the home who were over the age of 18. It contains 118 problem items that can be scored on a total problem scale, and eight syndromes: withdrawn, anxious/depressed (together constituting the internalizing scale); delinquent behavior, aggressive behavior, intrusive behavior (together constituting the externalizing scale); somatic complaints, attention problems and thought problems. Reliability on the YABCL averages 0.85 across syndromes (Hack, et al., 2004).

### **Procedure**

This section describes all the methods in temporal sequence. The researcher arrived at Geeta Children's Home during the second week in June. The children were on summer holiday; it was first thought the girls would be located in the summer house in Northern India. However, due to a water shortage in the town, the girls returned to their permanent home in Jaipur and were there when the researcher arrived. During the first week, the researcher introduced the

research to the staff, explained the notion of informed consent and had those who agreed to participate sign a consent form. The warden signed the 'caregiver' permission form for all the girls in the home. The researcher met with the older girls as a group, explained the notion of informed consent and had those who agreed to participate sign a consent form. The researcher then met with the other girls as a group and described the research in terms that they would understand. The oldest girl in the home acted as a translator for the youngest children. They were then given time to decide if they wanted to participate. If they chose to, the researcher went through the child assent forms with them and they circled their decision to participate. The data collection began during the second week. During the fifth week in the home, the researcher began the Photovoice portion of the research with the older girls. As this was taking place during a period of six weeks, the researcher continued with her daily observations and conversations with all of the girls in the home. Once the Photovoice portion wrapped up, the ethnographic observations continued until the end of the researcher's 10-week stay in the home.

As part of an agreement with the orphanage staff, the researcher served as a volunteer in the home during her ten week stay. The researcher slept in a separate room. She researcher ate with the girls and shared all common spaces and shared a bathroom with the adults. The routine in the home was as follows: Monday through Saturday the children woke up at 6:00am and had an hour to bath and dress themselves before prayer at 7:00am. On Sundays the children were woken by 8:30am and there was no prayer time. Prayer consisted of four, non-denominational songs sung in a circle around the dining room. After this, breakfast was served. The younger girls were always served first while the older ones help them get settled. Everyone left for school at 7:20am. The researcher walked with them to school both ways. On most Saturday mornings the older girls attended school for a half-day, but the younger girls did not, therefore

weekends were the busiest for the researcher because this was when the girls had more free time. Lunch was served at noon and at 2:30pm the girls returned from school. They had an hour to sleep (the younger ones are supposed to nap), do chores or play, and at 4:00pm tea/hot milk was served. At 4:30pm all the girls went into one of two classrooms in the basement with the teachers to study and do their daily homework. The younger girls usually finish around 6:00pm but the older ones were frequently working until 8:00pm. Dinner was served as they finished and the researcher usually ate around 7:30pm. Bedtime for the younger girls was 8:30pm and 10:00pm for the older girls. Many of them liked to watch television, play on the computers or spend time with the researcher.

The researcher's role as a volunteer was mainly one of support and companionship for the girls. The role as a "didi" is very important because the volunteers are one of the main sources of affection for the girls. "Didi" is Hindi for older sister and is a term of respect. This is one of the main reasons why it is requested that all volunteers commit to a minimum of close to three months as an emotional attachment does form and will be difficult to break. The girls were busy with schoolwork during the week so weekends provided the largest amount of time for the volunteer to start projects or just play. The home did have many toys and games and the researcher had access to them as she held the key to the locked cabinet in the basement. The role volunteer is expected to come to the home with ideas for simple projects, games and activities for a broad range of children.

### **Data Analysis**

The audio-taped individual meetings and group discussion data were transcribed verbatim. The photographs and the oral and written explanations/descriptions of them were analyzed using Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2000), which required that plain language codes be

applied to the material in order to capture themes expressed by the participants. The data gathered from the individual meetings, including the titles of individual photographs was included in the analysis. In addition, the researcher kept a journal while gathering information during her stay in the orphanage. The multiple methods of data collection, including photography, observations, conversations, and group discussion, provided breadth in understanding the participants' experience of growing up in an orphanage.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

The results gathered from the ethnographic observations, the photographic and interview data, along with the quantitative measure of psychosocial functioning will be presented in the following section. The chapter is divided into six parts by the various methods utilized: psychosocial functioning, the setting, the observations, the titles of the photographs, the interviews, and finally the group conversation.

#### **Part 1: Psychosocial Functioning**

To assess overall psychosocial functioning and the presence of maladaptive behaviors, the warden of the home filled out the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL-II; Achenbach, 1991; see Appendix A), for the girls between the ages of 4 and 18. The Young Adult Behavior Checklist (YABCL; Achenbach, 1997) (see Appendix B) was used for the two girls who were over the age of 18 and it was also filled out by the home's warden. The means, standard deviations, and the maximum and minimum scores of the total score, externalizing score, and internalizing score of the Child Behavior Checklist and the Young Adult Behavior Checklist can be found in Table 1.

Table 1-CBCL score Means (standard deviations)

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<u>CBCL</u>		Maximum	Minimum
Total Score	48.53 (8.52)	63	36
Internalizing Score	49.40 (3.81)	56	43
Externalizing	50.82 (11.12)	71	33

<u>ABCL</u>		Maximum	Minimum
Total Score	54.00 (2.82)	56	52
Internalizing Score	55.50 (6.36)	60	51
Externalizing Score	53.00 (4.24)	56	50

Considered clinical: Total T Score  $\geq$  65

A score of 65 was used to determine clinical cut-off. The mean scores for the Total, Internalizing, and Externalizing scores all fell below 65, meaning that the girls' behavior on average was not in the clinical range. There were two exceptions: Two of the girls scored above 65 for the Externalizing Score.

## **Part 2: The Setting**

The orphanage is named Geeta Children's Home (GCH) and is located in a neighborhood outside of Jaipur, the capital of the state of Rajasthan. Rajasthan, a semi-desert land, is the largest state in India and is located in the north-west region of the country and it shares a border with Pakistan.

This trip was not my first time in India. I had travelled throughout the country six years prior and had stopped to visit GCH for a short visit of 10 days during that time. Compared to the chaos that can ensue in large cities in India, and Jaipur is one such city, the neighborhood where the home was located was an oasis of sorts, calm and relatively quiet. It was a pleasure to turn off the main road away from cars, trucks, rickshaws, and motorcycles, and be taken in by the peacefulness of the area.

The neighborhood or "colony" as it is called locally is upper middle class. The homes surrounding GCH are large, usually with one family living in them. All families have hired help,

which could include a cook, a maid, and a driver. The girls know most of their neighbors and vice versa. At midnight each night, the colony is locked by gates on all sides, and reopened at daybreak. During the day, various characters flow through the neighborhood. Every morning, the garbage man wheels his cart through the streets and picks up everyone's garbage; the fruit stand man shouts through the neighborhood during the afternoon announcing his arrival and drawing the women of the houses out to buy fruit from his cart; the paper collector man buys old papers from people for recycling; the young men on bicycles, or if they are lucky, motorcycles speed down the streets in an attempt to gain attention from the young neighborhood girls; and the cows who often roam in packs, stop to eat rotten fruit and old chapattis (pitas) thrown onto the street from the houses.

The nearest shops are about a five minute walk from the home. More shops can be found further down the busy road, which includes a mall, as well as small shops along the road. The girls are often sent on errands for vegetables for dinner and other such things. The girls always run the errands in pairs, at least. They navigate the walk along the busy road with ease, not blinking an eye when they need to cross a round-a-bout quickly to avoid buses, cars, motorcycles, rickshaws, cows, and the occasional camel. I was humbled in the first few days of walking the road to see the ease with which they proceeded down the road, with cars, trucks, and motorcycles speeding past them. I constantly looked behind me to make sure there was enough room for traffic to pass by without hitting me. Once we made it to the round-a-bout, the girls would reach for my hand and tell me to be careful, "careful didi"--careful older sister, as they checked when it was a good time to make a run for it. Reaching for my hand was not for their protection, though I was twice their age; this was clearly to make sure I made it through the traffic safely.

GCH is divided into two main parts: one part is three stories high and contains the girls' quarters, including their rooms, the kitchen, the office, and the rooms downstairs where they study and play. The other side is where the founder of the home lives. One can access the other side simply through a door and the girls have access at all times. The founder's side contains a living room, dining room, kitchen, bathroom and bedroom, and an office, all on one floor.

Surrounding the home is a well designed garden that wraps around the home. There is a rectangle shaped path, where the girls can "do rounds," meaning they can walk around the garden for exercise. Next to the garden there is a simple playground with a set of swings, two see-saws, and a slide. The youngest children use this area the most, although it is a good refuge for the older girls to chat with one another without being interrupted. All the girls congregate every day on the front steps of the home, reading the newspapers in the morning, before morning prayers, and in the afternoon and evening, taking in the sights and sounds of the neighborhood.

It is a children's home specifically for girls. Of the girls who took part in the study, the majority arrived from the large government orphanage. Four of the girls arrived as newborns, via a local hospital where they had been abandoned; one girl was dropped off at the home's doorstep. Of the girls who arrived from the larger government- run orphanage, some had been there since birth and others arrived as young children. The government orphanage was notorious for not keeping records of the children and many times the girls arrived at GCH without knowing their birth date or even their age. The staff then assigned birth dates and ages based on their physical appearance.

During my stay at GCH, I had my own room. As part of the agreement with the home, I was a volunteer during my time there. At the time, I was the only volunteer; if there had been

another I would have had to share my room with her. My room was basic, with two single beds, each with a thin mattress and pillow, an armoire to put my clothes in, a small desk, another armoire for my valuables, which could lock, access to a long balcony that stretches along the side of the house, and a ceiling fan to circulate the hot air with the hope that it would help to cool it down as well. I was advised to lock my room each time I left it to keep my things safe. The girls' warden did the same with her room.

When I first arrived at GCH it was in the beginning of the month of June (June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2010). The monsoon rains had not yet arrived and the temperature hovered between 104 and 115 degrees Fahrenheit. It was hot. It was heat the likes of which I'd never experienced. It was heat that sucked all the moisture out of your body. I broke into a sweat even by just standing still. I barely slept the first night, as the ceiling fan just circulated the hot air around my room. However, by the third night, I was delighted to have slept well, amazed that my body was already able to adjust to the heat. But during the day, everyone stayed in the basement as it was the coolest part of the house, and most of the girls slept for long stretches of time, as they were still on summer vacation. By 6pm, everyone rushed out to enjoy the cooler fresh air that descended upon the neighborhood. The older girls chatted on the steps, the younger ones ran to the garden to play on the swings. I often walked around the garden with one or two of the girls to get some exercise, enjoying the cooler air.

The monsoon rains were late that summer; I have never looked more forward to rain in my life. As the days passed and the rains did not come, the girls and staff talked anxiously about when the rains would come. When the first drops did begin to fall, the joy that spread through the home and then whole neighborhood was contagious. The girls raced up to the roof and began dancing in the rain, laughing and running and splashing. I could see other neighbors on their

roofs as well. The excitement, joy, relief were all palpable, that the rains had finally descended upon Jaipur. I joined in on that joy and relief; the temperature dropped dramatically making everything easier -- walking, eating, sleeping, reading, and writing.

### **Particular struggles during my time in the home.**

The main role of a volunteer at GCH was to be a big sister, “didi” in Hindi, to the girls. I was to treat the home as my home for the months that I would be there and I did not have any real duties to perform. It was meant to be casual: Be a friend and a sister to the girls, interact with them; play with the little ones, talk with the older ones. I sometimes helped with homework, or helped in the kitchen with the cooking, but often the girls treated me as a guest in their home and expected me to do nothing except hang out with them. This was fine when I was wearing my volunteer hat; I went about my day just being a member of house, waking up for morning prayers, walking the girls to school, helping with homework time. It became harder when I put my researcher hat on. Or perhaps it is more accurate to say that I wore both hats the entire time. I felt as if I was constantly negotiating between being a researcher and a volunteer: as a volunteer, I could do as I pleased, take time to myself, spend time with the girls. As researcher I felt that I always had to be “on” or writing notes on everything that I saw and experienced, but could not do that as I would have been writing all the time and not spending the time with the girls.

I also struggled while I negotiated being a participant and an observer: between taking a step back and being an observer to the home and the girls, and stepping forward to actively participate in the daily activities with the girls. What I realized was that when I was a participant, I understood much more about what was going on and I felt more connected to it. When I was just observing, then I was left out, I did not understand everything that was going on, and could not get as good a grasp of the situation as I could have if I were a participant. In addition, due to

the language barrier, I often understood much more what was happening in the situation when I was participating in it. Becoming a participant often resulted that the girls more likely translated the conversation for me compared to when I took a step back and stayed as an observer.

I also struggled with observing all the girls equally. Here is an excerpt of my personal notes about this dilemma:

It is nearly impossible to do this, and I feel that I have not done a good job at this. Inevitably, there are girls who spend more time with me than others, and so I end up writing about them more often. So I know the observations are skewed in a certain way, but I don't know how to remedy it. Some girls I think avoid me, or are shy and do not want to spend time with me. So I don't feel like I can force myself on them and spend time with them, but it does mean the data is skewed and maybe I am only getting a small picture of the home. I mean, of course I am only getting a small picture of the home, but I wonder how I would be able to adapt it so that it could be more rounded.

After writing this and reflecting on my observations, I took extra care to widen my observation lens to include all the girls in the home to remedy the potential biases.

Near the end of my stay at the home, I struggled to maintain the energy to continue the research each day. Here is an excerpt of my personal journal from around that time:

The idea of burnout; or the reality of it. These days, after being here in the home for 8 weeks, I am tired. I am almost done with the individual interviews -- that will finish tonight. I am supposed to have the group discussion tomorrow, but I don't know if that is going to happen. I know that I should do it sooner than later, but I feel tired. It is also a little bit lonely here-with none of my friends. I long to

have some good adult conversation. I know that I will in two weeks time, but I think that is contributing to my burn out. I just feel tired-or mentally exhausted. To think at the end of the day, what happened, what I remember, is there anything that I think is worth writing down. But everything is worth writing down. I am just tired. Tired of observing, tired of trying to talk to teenage girls, trying to understand the little girls, just plain tired. But I also know that I am leaving in two weeks.

In the end, I was successful at powering through the rest of my stay at the home. I took a day off of observing just to be with the girls without worrying about remembering interactions. This renewed my energy and conviction to continue trying to capture the girls' experiences. As my departure approached, I grew aware of feelings of not wanting to leave, of missing the girls, missing the time spent just being present in the home with the girls and working on the research. I felt as if I was leaving my family and as the day got closer, I grew sadder. The day that I left, I went around the home and said goodbye to each of the girls; I spent time with the founder and she gave me a parting gift; I took photographs of my home and my sisters. When the time came, the girls helped carry my bags down to the waiting rickshaw. A group of girls, young and old, came to see me off, along with the home's warden. As I climbed into the rickshaw, which was playing a hit Bollywood song, I felt such sadness that I could not speak. I smiled at the girls and thanked for them for giving me a home for 10 weeks, and blew kisses as I looked at their smiling faces through blurry eyes. I was surprised that I was so sad about leaving; but I was leaving my home after all, leaving my sisters and my family, leaving a place that gave me solace for a short time. I would be forever grateful.

### **Part 3: Observations**

During my stay at GCH, I took daily observation notes. This meant that I would interact with or observe the girls during the day, generally going about my day as a volunteer in the home, and then would write up one or two observations at night after they went to bed. I decided that writing field notes on the spot in a notebook would be too disruptive to the girls, as it would have drawn more attention to the research process and possibly interfered with their developing relationship with me as their “didi.” Therefore I observed during the day, and once alone at night I wrote down my observations. Once I completed collecting data, each observation was reread and given a code, or two, depending on what the observation captured. These individual codes were then categorized into themes. The list of codes divided into the themes are in Appendix C. The section is divided into six headings corresponding to the categories of codes: My Role in the Home, Role of Culture, Family Tradition and the Environment, Relationships with Elders and Staff, Roles of the Girls in Home, Sister Relationships, and Feelings of Longing in the Girls. Each section will be summarized below and will include excerpts from the observations that depict that particular theme, which will then be further discussed in the next chapter. Bolded headings indicate categories containing common themes. The italicized headings are the themes derived from the individual codes. The names of the girls and staff have been changed to a pseudonym to protect their identities. The girls’ ages appear in parentheses to help orient the reader.

#### **My role in the home.**

As I began to describe in Part 2 of this chapter, I struggled with the many hats I wore during my time in the home. Though I was engaged as a “didi” to the girls, I found myself playing several roles in the home, that of sister, friend, and mother. Indeed I was often cast as the

mother, especially with the youngest girls, who were four and five years old.

***Role of a mother.***

June 18<sup>th</sup> 2010: Today at 2pm, the older girls are busy in a meeting and they are not around to help the little girls go down for a nap in the afternoon. I ask Daya (11) if they should have a nap. She says yes. I lie down on the bed in the same big game room. Two of them come running and jump on me. When I say “sleeping time,” Pia (4) perfectly imitates by accent and said “sleeping time” and bursts into laughter. Priti (5) laughs too, and they seem very excited. I wonder if they will be able to fall asleep. Padma (5) does not come to the bed (two beds put together). Daya joins us so there were four of us on these two beds: Daya, Priti, me, and Pia. Pia keeps jumping on me and I try to tell her it was time to nap. Daya yells at her in Hindi. I pretend to sleep and lay my head down (as I have seen one of the older girls do). Pia keeps trying to play and Daya speaks harshly to her, telling her that I am sleeping. I turn to face Pia and she laughs and smiles and puts her face very close to mine. I smile and say “sshhhh.” She laughs and throws her arm around me. I close my eyes and she closes hers. She keeps her arm around my body. I take hold of her hand and hold it in mine. She closes her eyes and slowly starts to fade. She strokes my hand as I hold it. By 2:15 she is fast asleep as is Priti. They sleep undisturbed for two hours.

On another occasion, I provide comfort to a sick girl, much like a mother would to a daughter who is not feeling well and needs some physical and emotional comfort.

August 9<sup>th</sup> 2010: Pia (4) does not go to school today because she is not feeling well. She comes to me and I ask her if she wants to sleep. She nods and I bring

her upstairs to her bed. She falls asleep quickly while I stroke her back. Soon after, I find her downstairs, sleeping on the couch; I guess she does not want to be alone in her room. She continues to lie on the couch, drifting into sleep. When I return from being outside, she asks me to stay. When I try to get up, she holds onto my hand and says, “didi.” I stay with her and stroke her hair. She takes my arm and wraps it around her neck and head and holds it there. We stay like this for about 30 minutes, waiting for dinner to be ready. She does not sleep, but lies still and appears to like the comfort of a simple touch. When dinner is ready, I see that she has fallen asleep. I lay her head down on the couch and get up to eat.

I was often seen taking care of the little girls and I was seen as a substitute mother to them. The older girls appear to understand this and on more than one occasion, one of the older girls engaged me in a playful dialogue about my role as a mother and what it meant to take care of children. It also appeared that the girl was playfully trying to understand the responsibility of mothers, and her own thoughts about how mothers behave.

July 21<sup>st</sup> 2010: As we walk home from school today, Ishita (11) asks me where my children are. (Every Saturday when I walk with the older girls to school, she asks me the same thing. The three youngest girls do not go to school on Saturday and therefore are not walking with me. So today, since the youngest girls were at home, they were not walking with me.)

I: Where are your children di?

K: Oh, they are at home, sleeping.

I: did you forget them?

K: No, I didn't forget them. They are sleeping now. Or I hope they are sleeping.

I: I think you forgot them. I think you lost them.

K: Lost them? Oh no, they are at home waiting for me.

I: But I think you have trouble remembering all of them.

K: I do?

I: Yes, you do, because you have so many, like 500 children.

K: 500 children?! Wow, that is a lot.

I: no, maybe 1000. You have 1000 children and you lose them all the time.

K: Oh no. How do I keep track of all of them?

A: you can't. They are too many.

As mentioned previously, I often took the role of a mother substitute for the youngest girls. It was my feeling that they also saw me as a mother figure, as illustrated in the observations below.

July 30<sup>th</sup> 2010: Today I am alone picking up the three little girls from school. As we hit the street, Padma (5) is really limping and I think that she cannot walk all the way home. I stop them and motion for Padma to climb on my back. She likes the idea and climbs on. I ask her if she is fine. She said that she is. Then holding hands with Priti (5) and Pia (4), we set off down the road. Priti starts to say something in Hindi with some English words such as “baby,” “mommy.” I ask her who is the baby and she says Padma. I ask her who is the mommy and she says me, and laughs. She then points to herself and Pia and says that they are the sisters. We all laugh and continue down the road.

***Role as a sister/volunteer.***

When I agreed to the terms of the home for conducting the research, I agreed to be a volunteer as well. This meant that I was essentially to play the role of a “didi,” a term meaning older sister. Though I was often twice the age of the girls in the home, I was often treated as an equal, or even as a younger sister who needed to be to be cared for and watched out for. This may be due to the fact that the girls are used to younger volunteers who often have never been to India and need some guidance. During my time in the home, I often had to remind myself that I was a woman in her early thirties conducting research and not an adolescent girl living with my sisters.

June 21<sup>st</sup> 2010: After I finish eating, I head back downstairs and sit with some of the girls. I complain about feeling itchy because of the heat; Rupa (15) says that I need to put powder on. I ask if it helps. “Oh yes,” she replies. I say that I don’t have any. She says that I could have some of hers. Then Aruni (13) says that I could have some of hers. I say “ok, let’s go upstairs.” We race upstairs and Aruni runs into her room to get her bottle of powder. Rupa then races to lock her in her room while she gets her own powder. She hands it to me and I say that I don’t know how to use it. She then tells me to put my head back and she applies it to my collarbones and neck. Rupa tells me to look in the mirror to make sure that I am happy with how much I have. I say that it looks fine. Then Aruni gets out of her room and she gives me her powder. Rupa takes it and applies more powder to my neck and shoulders.

Being a volunteer gave me access to the home beyond just being a guest. The girls welcomed me into the home and I became part of the family, playing the role of older sister. I felt part of the family as well. This happened quickly into my stay as illustrated below when I

had only been at the home for three weeks.

July 1<sup>st</sup> 2010: After I return to the home from Delhi to exchange the cameras (I was gone for two nights), I stand outside the home and pay my rickshaw driver, I hear yells from the roofs of “Hello Kate didi” from a group of girls. They repeat their cries of hello and enthusiastic waves; I smile and feel very happy to be back home. Once I walk to the entrance, other girls who had heard the welcome rush to greet me at the door. Pia (4) runs up and hugs my legs. Aruni (13) comes up and gives me a hug. When I walk inside, Janya (19) greets me with a much appreciated glass of water. I am so touched to have such a welcome. I put my things up to my room with the help of Lakshmi (13) and Daya (11) who eagerly take my bags from me.

As a volunteer I helped out in the home, as an older sister might, with chores in the house, including cooking, dropping off and picking up the girls from school, and helping with homework.

June 25<sup>th</sup> 2010: I enter the kitchen when Rupa (15) is cooking chapattis. I start to form the balls of dough next to Rupa, who tells me that Lakshmi (13) is supposed to be helping but is not. We talk as we work together. Soon Lakshmi comes in and seamlessly takes up her position over the fire. I form the balls of dough; Rupa rolls them out into thin chapattis; and Lakshmi cooks them over the gas stove. We work together making enough chapattis for dinner, about 60.

Often, my role as a volunteer was blurred with my role as a mother and an older sister. Naturally, the roles overlapped and I found myself acting as a volunteer/sister one moment, and a comforting mother the next. I struggled with bouncing back and forth between being a playful

buddy to the girls to being a supervising adult intervening in negative interactions.

July 15<sup>th</sup> 2010: For the second day in a row the little girls were in with the older girls during homework time. This is because their tutor is on vacation. Pia (4) once again was sitting next to Maya (17). With Maya and another girl helping her, Pia tries to finish her copying work. But she keeps making mistakes and the older girls are getting increasingly frustrated, often yelling at her and hitting her on the back, pinching her cheeks hard, and hitting her head. She keeps her head down and tries to work on it. Maya shows Pia a previous page where the cursive letters are written and it seems like she tells her to copy them. After this, Maya gets up and leaves the room. Pia sits by herself, looks around, and then looks back to her paper. I am sitting almost next to them the whole time and watching while reading my book. Pia looks at me, imploringly, and then turns her eyes away. I get up and kneel next to the desk and begin to help her. Pia leans in closely and gives me a kiss on the cheek. We work on the letters.

Though the headings in this section are clearly demarcated by my different roles, I often struggled between that of being a volunteer and being a researcher. I was often at a crossroad: do I intervene as I would if I was just a volunteer, or do I remain a researcher and see how the scenario unfolds if I were not present. Every time I encountered such a scenario, it became a judgment call whether or not I stepped forward and became an older sister rather than staying in the background as a research observer. In addition, subscribing to a participant-observer methodology I found myself negotiating and deciding the degree to participate versus just to observe. The following observation is one such instance:

August 2<sup>nd</sup> 2010: The younger ones' tutor is away and has been away for the past

three weeks. Maya (17) is once again helping Pia (4), who has to fill out a “what comes next” in English numbers. Pia is either not comprehending or not wanting to, but is not answering the question. Maya is getting more and more impatient; at first raising her voice, then pushing Pia’s shoulder, then grabbing her cheek, and then hitting her on the head, all while yelling louder and louder. When Pia does not answer, Maya laughs at her, perhaps out of frustration, and then shares the problem with the other girls, who then also laugh. I have seen that Pia does not do well when she is yelled at and humiliated. She begins to cry and Maya becomes more annoyed and yells at her. She hits her on the head a couple of times. The other girls keep looking at me perhaps to see if I will intervene. Reva (16) comes in and takes Pia into the other room, perhaps to get some work got done. A couple of minutes later, Pia returns to her work but then was not answering the question properly. Reva, who is patient to a point, but then can yell, starts to yell and hit her on the head. Pia starts to cry and looks at me. I try to stay out of it and return to my work. Reva takes Pia out of the room; Pia is really crying. Soon we hear Pia scream and cry loudly. Rupa (15) says, “oh, Reva” and at this point, I get up to see what has happened. It turns out that when Reva moved the table, she accidentally hit Pia’s foot, who started to cry. Pia is hysterical at this point. I say to Reva that she needs a break, and I take Pia in my arms and hold her. She molds into me and cries. I rub her back and say that she is fine and that she just needs to calm down. I sit down in the chair, still holding her and wait a couple more minutes. She stops crying. I look at her and wipe her eyes and then she is ready to go back to work. I then leave the room

During this episode, I struggled in two different ways. Do I take the role of volunteer or researcher? And if I took the role of researcher, do I stay an observer or become a participant? I remember thinking that I wanted to see how the scenario would unfold if I were not there, so I chose to remain just an observer, examining the particular roles the girls played. But as the situation unfolded and Pia became more dysregulated I felt then that I had to become a participant/volunteer and intervene in the situation. In retrospect, it would have helped the situation if I had intervened earlier; perhaps guiding Maya with how best to help Pia so Maya would not have become so frustrated and Pia would not have become hysterical. This observation highlights one of the difficulties in the home, the lack of supervising adults and the requirement that the older girls fill this void. Maya was struggling to finish her own homework but was asked to help Pia do hers. Thus when Pia could not or would not do the work, it took time away from Maya completing her work and she became angry with this and took it out on Pia. This observation also shows the mother hunger in Pia, as she quickly molded into my arms when I comforted her and was able to recover fairly quickly and return to her work when soothed.

#### **Role of culture, family tradition, and the environment.**

The external world of culture and tradition and the environment played a large role in the home. With cultural and specific family rituals, the girls are part of a larger cultural family of being Indian, as well as being part of the family at GCH. This is not an orphanage, but rather a large extended family. This was evident through the traditions that the girls took part. Not only did the family traditions help bind the girls to the home and each other, they also served to welcome me into the home, as I was always included in the traditions.

#### ***Religious and family traditions.***

There were several traditions that occurred every day. Simple ones but they were woven into the fabric that made the home come together and function each day.

July 15<sup>th</sup> 2010: Every morning, Geeta, the founder of the home comes to the temple in the home and lights incense. Once the incense is lit and the scent wafts through the home, the girls come running down. They gather around Geeta, holding their hands in prayer form and closing their eyes. She swirls the incense sticks around their heads and they make a movement of taking the incense and enveloping it around their heads, as if bathing in it. She offers prayers to each girl and once bathed in the incense and prayer, they leave to allow space for other girls. This ritual happens every morning.

Geeta acts as a matriarch, binding the family together with her prayers and incense. Each girl has a place to receive her blessings from her, making the girls feel that they are part of a home.

When I arrived in the home, it had been almost a year since the founder, “Janu Uncle,” died. He was the patriarch in the home and was sorely missed by all the girls. In Indian tradition, the dead are honored 11 and a half months to the day that they passed away. Interestingly, when I asked why this was so, no one in the home could answer me, but they all felt that it was an important day to honor. I witnessed the prayer ceremony, called a “puja,” and was asked to take part in it as well.

July 7<sup>th</sup> 2010: The service takes place in the space between both halves of the house, where there is an alter already in place meant as a sacred space. Blankets and sheets are laid down so that family members can sit and take part in the service. Geeta sits on an elevated seat with her sister next to her. Next to Geeta is

a framed picture of her husband, with a garland of flowers draped around the frame. I watch the ceremony from above with several girls; there is no ceiling to this space and it extends up to the second floor and then up to a skylight. Most of the girls watch the ceremony from here. Geeta is asked to do several things by the priest, mostly centered on building the fire and then throwing things into the fire. She is visibly moved throughout the ceremony and is crying intermittently. During one section, Geeta is putting oil into the fire and five people around the fire are putting what appeared to be woodchips into the fire. Everyone in the house has to do this: Throw in bits of woodchips when the priest says a certain word during his chanting. Several rounds of people take part; the girls all line up waiting for their turn. I stay where I am until Geeta looks up at me and signals me to come down. I nod and go downstairs. I join the circle around the fire. Geeta instructs me what to do. I listen and then along with four girls put the woodchips into the fire upon hearing the words. We do this five times and then get up to leave the circle.

Amongst the family traditions is one in which the girls dress up for a special occasion. They each gain tremendous pleasure from this, perhaps testing out their femininity and individuality, as they have numerous clothes from which to choose. Dressing up could be for individual birthday celebrations, outings to the movies, and fancier wedding receptions.

July 15th 2010: When I go downstairs in the morning, Kalpana (7) runs up to me to tell me "Daya, happy birthday" meaning that it was Daya's 11th birthday.

When I step outside I see her: She is dressed in a fancy tank top, made of glittering blue fabric, new jeans, and fancy sandals instead of her school uniform.

It is her birthday. I wish her happy birthday and she smiles widely. After the usual morning prayers everyone sings to Daya "happy birthday" and she beams. Right before heading off to school, she hands out candy to everyone, which is a tradition in India. If it is your birthday you receive gifts, but you also mark the day by giving out candies.

Due to the large number of girls in the home, birthdays, with a party and cake, are celebrated in groups. Girls are honored by grouping several months of birthdays together. When these nights come along, there is great excitement in the house, as it means special food and birthday cake for everyone.

July 17<sup>th</sup> 2010: There is a party tonight for three girls' birthdays. Because of the number of girls, the home celebrates birthdays in chunks; today's party is for girls whose birthdays ranged from April to July. Priti turned 5, Bimala turned 10, and Daya turned 11. They all dress up; Priti wears a dress and her hair is in a ponytail; Bimala wears her new shirt and jeans, her hair up in new clips; Daya wears a white party dress. They stand around their birthday cake as we sing to them. The girls sing a Hindi birthday song; then we sing "Happy Birthday" in English. All three girls hold the knife and cut through the cake. Everyone claps. Candles are lit, but are not blown out. Instead they are carried to the temple and left to burn there. Janya (aged 19) tells me that there is to be light on your birthday, not darkness, and therefore candles should never be blown out. Once this is done, Geeta Auntie cuts three small pieces from the cake and feeds them to each of the girls. Then it is time to eat the special meal: Chow Mein with soft drinks. Cake is then distributed and eaten with delight. Music is playing and many girls take the

opportunity to dance.

***Weather and the environment.***

The weather, particularly the temperature and the wait for the rains, played an important role while I was in the home. I arrived in June and the temperature was extremely hot. Life slowed down; the girls slept most of the day and only played outside in the evening. Many girls abandoned their bedrooms for weeks at a time, preferring to sleep together downstairs in the basement, sharing beds all lined up next to each other. If there was any breeze, girls opted to sleep on the roof to try and gain some respite from the stilted heat inside the house. Waiting for the rains consumed the entire home. Anticipation was at its peak:

June 25<sup>th</sup> 2010: Today, just before snack, suddenly there is great commotion. Most of the girls in the basement rush upstairs yelling loudly. I ask one of the girls what is happening and she tells me that the rain is falling. As I run upstairs also, I am faced with a wall of dust. Rajasthan has dust storms/thunderstorms before the monsoon, which is indicative of the pre-monsoon time. The air is thick with sand and the wind is blowing fiercely. Some girls rush upstairs to grab their clothing which is hanging on the clotheslines on the roof. The dust keeps swirling and gets into the girls' eyes, including mine. But the air that comes with the dust is much cooler. It is worth getting the dust in your eyes for a feel of that cooler air on your skin. But there is no rain. We wait and wait. Finally, some drops fall and we run outside to let it cool us down. The rain is over all too quickly, but the cooler air persisted, making it a nice treat compared to the heat of the day. We will have to keep waiting for the real rains to come.

It is hard to describe the joy that accompanies the arrival of the monsoon. I do not think I

have ever experienced and observed a more dramatic and exuberant display of joy until I saw the girls' reactions when the rain began to fall.

July 5<sup>th</sup> 2010: I was downstairs with the smallest girls in the morning when Aruni (13) called down to say that it was starting to rain. We rush upstairs. Udita (7) has jumped out into the rain and is dancing around. Soon Padma (5) joins her. Then there is chatter and Tiya (15) tells me that everyone is going to the roof. The rain is slowing down at this point, but most of the girls are up there. They are soaked through. They are splashing around in the water still coming down and in the water that has gathered to form puddles. The youngest girls are stripped down to their underwear and are almost diving into the puddles that have formed. Other girls have gotten hold of a bucket and are filling it up and then dumping it on each other. The girls scream in delight. I stand with some of the older girls as the rain dissipated. We lean against the ledge of the roof, letting the rain soak through our clothing, and take in the now wet neighborhood, and dancing neighbors. I say to Rupa (15) that people in New York tend to go inside when it rains. She cannot believe it: "why didi? I love the rain; everyone here loves the rain."

When the monsoon was still not bringing its full force, any rain during the day was a welcome relief and cause for joy. Feeling the effects of the heat and humidity, I joined the celebration when it did rain, feeling like a member of the home and of the country.

July 7<sup>th</sup> 2010: Soon after lunch, the rain begins to fall. Everyone runs up to the roof. Several girls are there, waiting for the rain. Soon it began to fall harder and the girls rejoice. "Didi join us," Rupa (15) says as she runs in the rain and does a twirl. I run out into the rain and soon I am soaked. The girls are dancing in the

rain, running, twirling, screaming and laughing. The little girls run up to me and scream “didi” and reach out for my hands. I pick up the youngest ones and twirl them around. Once they touch their feet to the ground, they are off again running in the rain. One of the older girls, Maya (17), holds her face against the sky and closes her eyes. She stays this way for some minutes, enjoying the feel of the water on her face. At the same time, Rupa stands on a pillar, holding her arms out as if to receive the rain. She then breaks into song and begins singing as she sways in the rain. She puts her face towards the sky and lets the rain wash over her.

#### **Relationship with elders and staff.**

The home has 22 girls, along with several staff members, including the warden, Kanti, who acts as the head of the household, in charge of the girls and the rest of the staff consisting of one caregiver, Rita, the cook, and her husband, the gardener. Geeta, called “Geeta Auntie” by all in the house, is one of the founders and lives on the other side of the house.

#### ***Special relationship with ‘Geeta Auntie’.***

Geeta played the role of mother and grandmother to the girls in the home. They sought her out for comfort and for advice. Though she is getting older and did not spend as much time with the girls as she used to, she tried to visit the girls’ side of the house at least once a day. And she always took part in the special family and cultural traditions, and other events with the girls.

June 25<sup>th</sup> 2010: Ashna (24) (who is getting married later on in the day) appears very serious while she slowly tries to eat her breakfast. She begins to cry as she puts food into her mouth. Kanti goes over to comfort her and talks quietly with her. Then Geeta Auntie comes into the room and sits down. When Ashna is

finished eating, she goes to sit next to Geeta Auntie. She begins to cry again and Geeta wraps her arms around Ashna and speaks softly to her. As this is happening Kanti sits next to me and says that for a bride it is very difficult as their whole world changes when she marries; she goes to a new home with relative strangers and is away from everything familiar.

Geeta is able to comfort Ashna about her impending marriage and departure from the home. As Geeta had to do this herself when she was first married, I guessed that she offered Ashna words of comfort and support. She also wrapped Ashna into her arms, providing physical soothing as well.

June 27<sup>th</sup> 2010: Once home from a shopping expedition, the girls happily show off their clothes to Geeta and Kanti, who sit together enjoying the fashion show. Each girl puts on her clothes and parades around for them, who reciprocate with their admiration. Everyone talks of prices to make sure no one was ripped off or to show off what a bargain they got. The house is full of excitement. We arrived at milk time so everyone hungrily drinks their milk with their biscuits.

Geeta also acted as a mother, guiding the girls and teaching them things that a mother might teach her daughters.

July 11<sup>th</sup> 2010: Because of the cook's day off, the girls have to step in and cook for the rest of the house. Janya (19) decides to make cutlets, which are mashed potatoes, with onions, chilies, and other spices, rolled into a ball and fried in oil. She busily makes the batter and shapes the cutlets, while Aruni (13) fries to balls in oil. When Janya is done, she approaches Geeta Auntie (who was sitting at the dining room table) and complains about her burning hands. The chilies had gotten

into her pores and she is suffering. Geeta instructs her to apply some coconut oil as that helps. Janya goes upstairs to get some. When she returns she again goes to Geeta and says something in Hindi. Geeta responds and Janya goes off. Geeta then turns to me and says that "this is how they learn; if I had known I would have told her that she should apply oil to her hands before. Somehow the oil prevents the chilies from entering her pores. But now she knows."

With the youngest girls, Geeta was a grandmother, who balanced discipline with fun and rewards. The girls clearly loved when she was visiting them and gathered around her, eager to get her attention. She appeared to know that some of the girls' needed special attention and she happily provided it.

August 8<sup>th</sup> 2010: During lunch time, Geeta Auntie comes to sit down at the table. At one point she turns to see the three little girls eating. She says something to them (and I guess right) as it is about who is going to be the first one to finish eating. She keeps looking back, encouraging them to continue eating. Priti (5) finishes first and proudly shows Geeta Auntie her plate. "We have a winner!" she says in English. Geeta smiles widely as does Priti, who then brings her plate to the kitchen. Priti then returns to the table and sits right next to Geeta. Geeta then says something to the other two eating. She then starts to count, 1,2,3 very slowly, in English. Every time she says the next number Pia (4) quickly scoops her spoon into her rice and eats it. Priti keeps assessing the situation, seeing who is eating faster. She is clearly very excited about the race. When Geeta reaches 5, Pia has finished. She gets up and as she goes to the kitchen she shows Geeta her plate. "Now we have number 2," Geeta says. She turns to me and says, "Sometimes

they need a little motivation to help eat.” Geeta continues to count slowly, very slowly, until 10. Padma (5) has not finished her plate by then. Geeta says something to her in Hindi. She then gets up and Pia and Priti follow her to her side of the house. They return with one candy each. Padma is left without any candy.

***Relationship with other staff.***

The girls in the home were often left to their own devices for much of the day. The caretaker and the warden often did not appear to play an active role in taking care of the girls, with an exception of the little girls. Even with the little girls, three older girls were paired up with each of the little girls to take care of their daily needs, showers, laundry, eating, bedtime. I often did not observe many interactions with the staff and children. What follows are some excerpts of the times that I did see interactions.

July 6<sup>th</sup> 2010: Study time starts at 4:30 and the girls are usually punctual. All the girls are in the room today, and almost all the desks are occupied. Today around 5:15, Kanti (the warden) comes into the room. She begins at the back of the room and sits next to Tiya (15). They appeared to be going over Tiya’s homework. She spends about five minutes with her and then moves to Aruni’s (13) desk. A similar process happens in which she appears to be going over her work. Smiles are exchanged. After five minutes, Kanti moves onto Daya (11) and the same thing happens. She continues this until she talks to all the girls in the room and then goes upstairs. I asked her later what she was doing. My guess was correct: she was just checking in with them.

Though I did not observe too many interactions with staff, the girls appeared to gain

much pleasure when they did spend time with Kanti, the warden.

July 30<sup>th</sup> 2010: Kanti is in her office trying to do some work. A couple of the girls trickle in and begin talking to her. They ask if they can put on some music. They choose to put Shakira's world cup song, "Waka Waka" and turn up the volume. Other girls enter the office and soon some of them are dancing. Kanti is showing some girls photos on the computer. She is smiling and laughing with them. I come in and lift one of the little girls into my arms and we start dancing together. Kanti turns to me and says with a smile, "you see, I try to get some work done and they all want to come in and chat". She laughs at the end of this and then turns to one of the girls who is trying to get her attention. The music continues for much of the afternoon, with girls filtering in and out of the office, smiling, dancing, and laughing.

The warden sometimes took the role of a mother, especially with the three little girls. This occurred, rarely, and it appeared that the mothering fell either to the other caretaker, Rita, who did not have much patience, or the older girls and to me. The following is an observation recorded when Kanti did act as a patient mother with one of the girls.

July 14<sup>th</sup> 2010: Pia is seated next to Rita during lunch. Lunch time with the three little girls is always loud and long. Today, all three girls had been separated at this point so that they would not be distracted by each other while they ate. Pia (4) and Priti (5) complain about the vegetable, as they do not like the eggplant dish. But no exceptions are made and they are made to eat it. Pia is having particular trouble with it. At one point, she has a mouth full of eggplant and wants to drink some water. Rita takes her cup away and shouts at her. Pia keeps her mouth open

as she begins to cry. Rita grabs what is in Pia's mouth and puts it on another plate. She then grabs Pia by the arm and begins to drag her away from the table. At this point, Kanti walks in and asks what is going on. She sits down at the table and pulls Pia close to her. She takes her plate and talks softly to her. Pia stands next to Kanti's seat and listens as Kanti continues saying something. Then Kanti takes the vegetable, breaks it into smaller pieces, and mixes it with the daal. She then puts some on the spoon and while talking to Pia feeds her a bit. Pia takes it and begins to chew. Then Kanti says something to her and gives her the spoon. Pia takes it and scoops another bite and eats it. Kanti then takes the spoon and waits until she is finished and then feeds her another spoonful. This continues until Pia's plate is empty. Then Kanti says something to Pia, who looks clearly pleased with herself that she has finished her meal. Kanti continues to say something and then I hear "promise?" at the end of the sentence. Pia replies "promise" and smiles. Kanti smiles back and gives her a hug.

Taking care of the girls also involved reprimanding them when they did something wrong, or did not complete one of their chores.

July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2010: At 6:45 am, the girls gather for morning prayers as usual. There is some time to get everyone settled. Kanti tells some girls to straighten up, as I see her say something and then they stand straighter. Once the singing is underway, there seems to be a lack of enthusiasm and Kanti keeps her eyes open to see if everyone is singing. At the end of the four songs, Kanti speaks about something. Reva (16) points her finger at Kalpana (7), who then looks down as if she has done something wrong. Kanti keeps talking and then points to the bathroom.

Some girls speak up and then the talk is finished. I go up to Kanti immediately after and ask her what she said. She says that she was telling the girls that the roof was dirty and that they had to take care of it. There is a small room on the roof and Kalpana had gotten matches from somewhere and had burned a bed sheet and then left it there. She said that they don't give them matches or candles for this reason and she didn't know where Kalpana gotten it from. She also said that the side balcony was dirty as was the downstairs bathroom. She said that she told the girls that they had to take turns to clean because both are dirty.

On several occasions, I witnessed discipline with which I had difficulty. As a researcher, I struggled between being an observer and a participant. At times, I aimed to keep a neutral stance and continue to observe the situation as if I was not present. Other times, I intervened as previously described.

July 12<sup>th</sup> 2010: I walk into the dining room from the kitchen to see Rita pulling Pia (4) by the arm and dragging her into the dark bathroom. She then closes the door and locks the door, with the light out. She walks back to the bench and looks at me and smiles. I do not smile back. I ask one of the girls what happened. Daya (11) says that "Pia was not eating and was saying that she wanted to eat only small chapattis." I start to ask a question, but stop myself. We can all hear Pia's crying and banging on the bathroom door. After about five minutes, Rita opens the door and lets Pia out, who is still crying. One of the older girls then sits next to Pia and speaks to her softly. She then gets up and begins to make small chapattis for the three youngest girls. Pia is still sniffing as the older girl places the small chapattis on her plate. Rita then goes into the kitchen to get her food. Instead of

eating at the table, which she usually does, she sits on the bench next to Pia and stays there for the remainder of the dinner. By the end of dinner, Pia is talking to Rita.

Though I did not intervene at the time, I later spoke to Geeta and one of the board members about Rita's conduct with the girls. They acknowledged that this was a problem and said that they had already spoken to her about it. They appeared disappointed in her behavior towards the girls and told me that they would talk to her again. Indeed, as the weeks passed, I noticed that Rita was yelling far less at the girls.

*Substitute father-figure.*

Only girls lived in the home and there were not many men around the home. No men could sleep overnight on the girls' side of the house. However, the girls still sought out relationships with male figures, including their tutor who came in the afternoons, Geeta's cook who lived beside the house, and the gardener, who was married to the girls' cook. The three little girls called the gardener 'Papa'. He worked at GCH for more than 20 years and was a strong presence in the home.

July 19<sup>th</sup> 2010: While I am walking around the garden, as I usually do in the evenings, Pia (4) and Priti (5) are gathered on the grass. Priti begins to play with the lawnmower, which is on the lawn. Papa sees this and walks over. He scolds Priti for touching the lawnmower, but then goes about fixing it as it is broken. As he works on it, Pia and Priti stand nearby watching. They continue to watch as he fixes it and he talks to them, perhaps explaining what he is doing. As he is finishing the repairs, his daughter comes to give him tea. He then sits down on the grass and they join him. They sit in a circle, talking as he drinks his tea.

July 20<sup>th</sup> 2010: In the evening, Priti (5) and Padma (5) run into the garden and begin to try and push the manual lawnmower. Papa comes onto the grass and as he walks towards them, he says something to both of them. He then demonstrates how to use the lawnmower and they watch intently. Then he offers that they try to push it. Priti goes first and pushes with all her might, but she cannot move it forward. She giggles as she tries. Then Padma tries and she cannot move it either. Papa then takes the lawnmower, points in the right direction and then again they try to push it. But this time, they try together. He helps to get them going and once he lets go, they are off. Padma and Priti push it all along the length of the garden. They laugh as they go and shout my name for me to watch them. Now it seems they got the hang of it, as they continue to go back and forth along the grass pushing it together, each time calling my name for me to watch them. I smile and laugh and they laugh as well, obviously taking great joy for their feat.

Papa was given the role of a father and taught them patiently to using the lawnmower. I, in turn, became a mother, being asked to watch and praise the girls as they succeed, much like a mother would to her children.

### **Roles of girls in the home.**

For the home to function successfully as a family, the girls, particularly the older girls, played several roles. They could be seen as comforters and protectors, disciplinarians, leaders, role models, and teachers. All the girls could be seen as working together, contributing to the family so that it could function as a successful unit. There are several observations of the older girls looking after the younger girls, protecting them and comforting them in times of need.

***Role of older girls as comforter/protector.***

June 15<sup>th</sup> 2010: I heard Priti (5) crying on the stairs and Reva tells me that “Priti is being very naughty; she is eating colors (crayons) and is spitting on the tutor”.

Reva (16) then picks Priti up and walks her to the room and lays her down on a bed. Reva then pats her on the back and leaves. I watch for a few minutes and then go over to her and stroke her back. She pushes my hand away and buries her face and keeps crying. I return to my chair and watch her. About 5-10 minutes later, Tiya (15) comes in and goes over to Priti and lays her head on her back and whispers some things into her ear. She strokes her hand and keeps her head on Priti’s back, while she plays with her hand. Priti then takes Tiya’s hand in her hand and strokes it. Tiya keeps her head laying on Priti’s back and keeps saying something to her. She then abruptly lifts her head up and asks Priti something and looks into her mouth. She then reprimands her but then lays her head back down on Priti’s back. Priti has stopped crying. Tiya stays there for a few minutes and then hugs her and gets up to leave.

July 2<sup>nd</sup> 2010: After the rain fell for a bit of time, some of the girls are outside. Janya (19) and I are sitting on the steps talking when all of a sudden we hear Pia (4) scream. We turn to see that Shyamu the dog had jumped on her as she is coming out of the house. She falls down onto the ground and he jumps on her again. Sonali (16) comes running from the other steps and tries to get to Pia but Shyamu jumps on her. He is not biting, but he is scaring everyone. Then Rupa

(15) comes running from inside and scoops up Pia in one motion and whisks her inside. Sonali and Padma (5) are now stuck on the steps. Padma starts to cry and when Sonali tries to take her, Shyamu tries to jump up. Then I make my way over to them but Shyamu jumps on me. Rupa comes back from inside and takes Padma into her arms and brings her inside.

July 16<sup>th</sup> 2010: As Pia (5) walks to school today, she drops her water bottle. Water spills everywhere on the street. She looks back at some older girls and seems a little perplexed about what to do. She slowly picks up her water bottle and the cap. Lakshmi (13) is saying something to her about her water. She then rushes up and takes the cap from Pia. Lakshmi takes water from her own bottle and begins to clean the cap off. When she is done cleaning it, she gives it back to Pia.

July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2010: As we walk to school, Pia (4) and Priti (5) run ahead as they hold hands. All of a sudden, Priti is down on the ground, having fallen. She immediately begins to cry. Rupa (15), who is just behind them, runs to scoop her up. Tiya (15) runs over and begins to dust her off. Priti is crying and holding out her hand. Rupa wraps her arm around her and everyone continues to walk. Priti is still crying as she walks. Rupa continues to keep her arm around her and repeatedly strokes Priti's cheek with her hand.

***Role of older girls as disciplinarians/leaders/role models/teachers.***

The older girls always took on the role of leaders and role models in the home. Perhaps because there were few adults in the home, the older girls took on the role to help the home

function properly. They became disciplinarians while watching over the younger children during chores, leaders during an outside expedition, and teachers when they are cooking and helping with homework.

June 24<sup>th</sup> 2010: The girls are sitting in front of the TV watching their usual show, when Janya (19) comes up and asks Maya (17) to mute the television. Once muted, Janya says something and at once everyone gets up quickly and runs to their respective rooms. I ask her what she said. She tells me that they needed to brush their teeth, that Geeta Auntie wanted them to brush their teeth every night. All the girls brush their teeth and then return to watch the show.

June 27<sup>th</sup> 2010: Once we leave the home for the shopping expedition, which includes eight younger girls (ages 10-13) and three older ones (ages 15-17), the younger girls clamor to be close to the older ones; most of them are holding hands. They do not seem so sure of themselves outside of the home. Once the first bus is spotted coming down the road, the girls start getting ready to board, making sure everyone is ready and in line. I am herded along with the girls, as Rupa (15) and Maya (17), being the oldest become protective over me as well. We all make it onto the bus and all squish in the back; girls hanging onto each other to counter the bumpy ride. There is lots of laughter and some raised voices as some of the girls are not holding on properly. As the bus empties out and more seats become available, the younger girls are instructed by the older girls to sit down. Some go easily and some more hesitantly, perhaps not wanting to detach from the group. But Maya insists with a strong voice and they all comply.

July 14<sup>th</sup> 2010: At homework time, the older girls look after the younger girls. Udita (7) brings her homework to Tiya (15), who looks it over. She nods her approval and Udita goes back to her desk and places her book in her bag. She then takes out the next book and continues to work. Aruni (13) then comes up and sits next to Pia's (5) desk and speaks softly to her and tries to show her what to do. Pia's homework is to write out the number 1, "one" repeatedly down the page. Aruni is patiently sitting with her, holding the eraser, as Pia writes "one" in cursive and Aruni corrects any mistakes that she is making. Within a couple of minutes, she moves back to her desk and Pia continues her exercises.

***Working together as a family/ contributing to the family.***

All the girls, even the youngest ones, have roles in the home that help with the overall functioning of the home. They all work together, during walks to school, chores, to help make the daily functioning of the home run smoother.

July 2<sup>nd</sup> 2010: It is the first day of school. Aruni (13) hands out breakfast to everyone before she eats. We have Maggi (noddles) and curd (yoghurt). The girls eat quickly and then are ready to leave. We leave the home at 7:20 am for the walk to school. All the girls carry their backpacks, even the youngest ones. Aruni holds my hand and Priti (5) comes to hold my other hand. The girls depart and the pack soon thins out as some girls are walking faster than others. On the road, Aruni changes her position, so that Padma (5) is between us and she is on the outside, next to the traffic. I am between Priti and Padma. Priti is dragging a bit and Aruni has to tell her several times to hurry up. She does so without

responding. The oldest girls, Maya (17), Rupa (15), and Tiya (15), who had started out last, catch up to us but do not pass us. They act as gatekeepers to make sure no one is left behind. Everyone holds hands as we cross the busy streets.

July 19<sup>th</sup> 2010: Usually the girls walk to school. But this morning it begins to rain heavily and the girls say that they would go by van. Kanti (the warden) gets the van out of the garage and pulls it onto the road. Everyone begins to pile in. Sixteen girls need to fit into the van, which normally fits about 8. Everyone seems to fit; Padma (5) and Priti (5) were left waiting for a spot. There is a lot of negotiating going on within the van, all in Hindi. Padma and Priti seem apprehensive about squishing into the van and several times are told to get in and they protest. A school bus comes down the road and it is clear that room in the van has to be made quickly. Bags are moved to the trunk, girls shift positions in the van and Padma is hoisted into the van first. I don't see where she goes; she disappears amidst the girls. Priti hangs back and is reluctant to get in. I put my arm around her and encourage her to get in. Her sisters speak to her, trying to usher her in the van. She then takes a step and is hoisted into the van and also disappearing into the folds of her sisters. The door slams and the van takes off.

July 25<sup>th</sup> 2010: Today, Janya (19) is given permission to move into her own room. As the oldest girl in the house now, she requested having her own room as she needs to have a place to study. She got permission today during the Sunday meeting and immediately began to move. A few of the girls help her move both

her armoires and her bed. She is very excited. Her move prompts other moves to happen in the home. Tiya moves to Rupa's room; Lakshmi moves into Janya's old room, because she now takes care of Padma (5), who is in that room. Shruti (12) moved into Janya's old room also. The girls orchestrate all the moves, helping each other move their armoires and their beds. No adult is present. There is a good deal of laughter and shrieking.

Each girl had a set of chores to undertake, with the result that the home runs smoothly. The older girls are given more responsibility, often being asked to prepare the afternoon snack, cook a meal, and clean up the kitchen, among many other things.

July 27<sup>th</sup> 2010: At 4pm I walk into the kitchen and watch Tiya (15) get the milk for the children and the tea of the adults ready. Carefully pouring the boiled milk into a large container, she places the container on the kitchen counter. She then retrieves cups for the girls, carefully counting them to make sure there are enough. She lines them up and again recounts them. As she does this, she peeks at the pot, in which the tea is being made. She then adds milk to the tea, assessing when she has put enough. She adds a little more and then seems happy with it. She smiles at me as I watch her. She then begins to pour the milk into the cups. She takes a ladle-type cup and dips it into the container of milk. Happy with the amount in the ladle, she spoons it into a cup. She then does this repeatedly for every cup. As she does this, she continues to look over her shoulder. She is making sure that the pot of tea does not boil over. The tea, now with all the ingredients, must come to a boil and then remain boiling for about five minutes. Every time she has finished pouring milk into another cup, she looks back at the

pot of tea to make sure it is not boiling over. Once she finishes with the cups of milk, she attends to the tea, turning the heat down, and then looking for something to lift the pot up so she can drain the tea and pour it into the pitcher used for the tea. She locates it and then carefully pours out the tea into the pitcher and brings it over to the counter. “Di, tea” she says to me. She reaches for a tea cup and then pours out a cup and hands it to me. I thank her.

### **Sister relationships.**

The majority of observations that I collected involved interactions among the sisters. As noted above, the interactions often involved the girls playing certain roles designated to them in the home, helping the home run like a well-oiled machine. The children also experienced each other much like any sisters would in a family. They cared for each other, loved each other, teased each other, and fought with each other. Below is a sampling of these interactions.

### ***Girls taking care of each other/love between girls.***

July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2010: Priti (5) can’t decide what she wants to play with and then settles on the chalk and small “slates” (small chalkboards). She excitedly takes them from me as I hand them to her. Priti and I spell out her sisters’ name on each of our boards, just as Pia (4) walks in. She is looking down and she had been crying because she was last to complete her school work. Meanwhile, Padma (5) has trouble with the puzzle and asks me, and I motioned to her to come closer. She picks up her pieces and sits next to me. Pia sits down and looks around. Padma then hands her a slate and Pia smiles. Priti gives Pia the brush to clean off the slate.

Seeing that Pia was upset, both of her sisters come together to help make her feel better.

Though no words were exchanged, they sensed that Pia needed some comforting. Similarly, the sisters often did not exchange words but appeared to know exactly what each other wanted, as illustrated below.

July 10<sup>th</sup> 2010: During Saturday night television watching, Lakshmi (13) goes to her room and gets a container of oil. She hands it to Ishita (11) and sits down in front of her. Ishita then opens the container, pours some out into her hand, and begins to apply it to the other girl's hair. She spends several minutes massaging the oil in, making sure all the strands of hair are covered. When she is done, they wordlessly switched places. Now Lakshmi is massaging Ishita's hair. The girl takes her time and carefully applies the oil to Ishita's curly hair. When she is done, Lakshmi helps Ishita tie her hair up into a bun. During the time both girls' eyes did not leave the television screen and no words were exchanged.

The girls in the home were often seen taking care of each other's needs, as the above observation illustrates. Girls relied on each other for help with everything from homework, to grooming habits, to needing an ear when things were not going their way.

July 18<sup>th</sup> 2010: Shruti (11) comes up to me to show me her new haircut, done by Janya (19). I then walk to Janya's room and find her cutting Sonali's (17) hair. I walk in and Janya smiles and says that now I can finally see her cutting hair. I sit down on the bed with Reva (16), Aruni (13), and Lakshmi (13). We all sit and watch Janya cut Sonali's hair with concentration and confidence. She appears to be enjoying herself. Much of the conversation is in Hindi. Janya jokes that she will begin charging the girls money for their haircuts. Sonali sits in front of the mirror, patiently waiting for her cut to be done, exhibiting none of the anxiety that

one might normally see if an older sister was cutting hair. Sonali clearly has confidence in Janya's ability. Reva lays her head on my leg, saying that she is tired and hot. I say that the humidity was bad and I am feeling very hot as well. Once Janya is done, Sonali stands up and shakes her hair back and forth, clearly pleased with the results.

There were many occasions when I saw sisters taking care of each other's health as well, perhaps caring for each other much like a mother would for a daughter. Below is one such example.

July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2010: I am sitting at the dining room table with Bimala (10) when Daya (11) comes to us. Bimala tells me that Daya has a fever. I feel her skin and she is burning hot. Bimala says that she had the fever yesterday also. I asked Daya if her head or her stomach hurts. Bimala says that Daya complained of a stomach ache at school. Then Rita (the caregiver) came from downstairs and words were exchanged. Rita felt Daya's forehead and says something to Bimala. Bimala gets up and goes into the kitchen and comes back with a bowl. She then goes to the fridge and returns with a cold bottle of water. She pours the water into the bowl and then says something to Daya, who goes to lie down on the couch in the office. Bimala runs upstairs and comes back with a handkerchief. She then sits next to Daya, who is lying on the couch. She puts the handkerchief into the bowl of cold water and squeezes out the excess water. She applies it to Daya's forehead--Daya lets out a cry and says that it is so cold. She laughs and tries to squirm away. Bimala again applies the compress and pushes it hard on Daya's cheeks. "Gentle, gentle" I say. Both Daya and Bimala laugh. Bimala continues her

task, carefully squeezing out the excess water and applying the compress to parts of Daya's face, neck, arms, legs. Daya often squirms away or calls out "didi, it is so cold" directed at me. Bimala continues patiently with the bowl of water. She then gets up and gets a piece of ice from the fridge. She wraps it in the handkerchief and again starts the process again. This whole process takes about 25minutes. Bimala faithfully continues her task. Once finished, it is snack time. Bimala retrieves the milk for Daya and makes her drink. She then drinks her own milk.

I also witnessed simple acts of love between the girls.

July 21<sup>st</sup> 2010: Priti (5) gets up from the seat during homework time and goes to see Tiya (15). She shows Tiya her cut on her hand from the morning, when she fell on the street. Tiya looks at it and then takes Priti's cheek and kisses it. She kisses the other cheek and then Priti kisses her cheek. Both smile and Priti returns to her seat.

***Girls playing together.***

The sisters also interacted with each other much like sisters in any home. Girls played games together; watched television together; chased each other around the house; and gossiped about boys together. There was name calling and teasing, and play fighting as well.

July 19<sup>th</sup> 2010: Lunch time on Sunday. Reva (16) and Tiya (15), biological sisters, are eating side by side. I sit down next to them. Tiya looks at me and says that she is "pagal" (crazy/mad). Reva retorts that it is she who is "pagal." They then look at each other and smile, then turn to their food and keep eating. Tiya plays with her food a little, saying that she doesn't like it today. She tries to pass it onto

Reva, who flashes an ‘older sister’ look and Tiya doesn’t try again. Later when Tiya is done, she comes by the table and flicks water at Reva. Reva pauses for a second then launches out of the chair. Tiya runs around the table and Reva chases her. Tiya successfully runs away but then Reva catches her and wrestles her to the ground. They both fall down laughing. Tiya gets up and says that Reva is “pagal” and Reva laughs hysterically.

Playing the role of “didi,” older sister, I often was welcomed into their games and made to feel like a sister as well.

July 7<sup>th</sup> 2010: During a rainstorm, a group of six girls gather in a circle in the middle of the roof. They begin to play a game. I was sitting on the edge of the roof watching. Udita (7) comes running up to me and climbs up next to me. She leans into me and I hold her in my arms. Daya (11) comes and sits next to us also. She then jumps down to join the girls in a circle, as does Udita; she beckons me to follow. I join the girls in the middle. Rupa (15) tells me about the game; it is a clapping game, where we are all assigned a number, I am three. We then clap in unison and Rupa is the first to call out her number and then someone else’s number. The person whose number is called then has to call out another number and so on. The number calling has to be in unison with the claps. If you mess up, then you are out. So we start, the girls, Rupa, Sonali (17), Maya (17), Daya (11), Ishita (11), Shruti (11), and Udita (7) all giggle in excitement. Soon the girls drop out one by one. Each out is confirmed by the girls’ screams. Shruti and I are left. We have to say “hubba hubba bubba bubba” back and forth until one of us messes up. Shruti mixes up the sounds and I raise my arms in victory. The girls laugh and

cheer. “Chello, chello” the older girls say to the younger ones, “let’s go.” The rain is letting up and some girls are shivering. Rupa says with enthusiasm, “ok, di, come and we will take a bath again!” She laughs when she says this.

As in any home, the girls find ways to entertain themselves, often in surprising ways. I came across the following interaction one afternoon.

July 20<sup>th</sup> 2010: Downstairs, before snack time, I come across Pia (4), Priti (5) and Padma (5). Padma is fast asleep on the floor. Priti and Pia are dancing together and appear to be putting on a performance. Priti spots me and tells me to “come” and pulls out a chair so that I can sit down. I tell them that I am going outside and tell them to come with me. As I leave the room, I hear their footsteps behind me. I sit on the steps outside the home. Pia stands in front of me and holds her hand up, as if talking into a microphone. She speaks in Hindi, but I pick out some words “Priti” and “dance” and then she sits down next to me. Then Priti comes onto the “stage,” smiling widely and begins to sing and dance. She continues to dance for about a minute and then breaks into peals of laughter, running around the corner of the house. I clap and say “very good.” Then Priti comes out and takes to the stage. Holding her hands as if holding a microphone, she announces Pia to the stage. Pia prances onto the stage and begins to dance. I clap enthusiastically and say “very good.” They repeat this sequence three more times, until it was snack time.

Playing outside when it is raining was a favorite activity for the girls of all ages.

July 25<sup>th</sup> 2010: Today, which is a Sunday, it rained. As it begins to fall, some of the girls run to the roof. Ishita (11), Janya (19), Daya (11), Uditā (7), Priti (5), Pia

(4) are on the roof. They run back and forth across the roof as the rain falls. They fill buckets up from the streaming water running down from a pipe and once filled they throw the water on each other. They shriek with joy.

***Fights between girls/mistreatment of girls.***

Not only did the girls care for each other and played with each other, they also fought with each other and were often observed being unkind to each other.

June 24<sup>th</sup> 2010: At 10:00, I get the toys out for the young girls. Priti (5) asks for the blocks. I hand her the bag and she leaves the room to go play in another room. But something happens on the way there and she begins to protest about something. She is making noise and is disrupting the room. I think she is complaining that someone is trying to take the blocks. Then Lakshmi (13) comes by and says something to her sharply and slaps her across the face. Priti immediately begins to cry, drops the blocks and leaves the room. I walk up to Lakshmi and tell her that she should not slap Priti like that. She protests that she had no choice. I then talk to Janya (19) and Reva (16) about Lakshmi's behavior. They say that they will go talk to Lakshmi.

July 1<sup>st</sup> 2010: I am sitting with some girls in the basement doing an arts and crafts activity. Pia (4) appears and she sits down. I notice that there as a lot of chatter among the girls when she sits down; they say her name and she is looking upset and looks down at the ground. When I ask what is going on, Daya (11) says "Pia did not clean herself after potty, and she is smelling, and we told her to go wash [sic]." She bursts into laughter as do the other girls. Pia looks more upset and

remains quiet. She clearly wants to join in the activity as everyone is ripping images out and gluing them in the books, but she is excluded because of her lack of cleanliness according to the girls. I ask Daya if Pia cleaned herself up. Daya responds “yes, but I can still smell the bad smell.” I pause but cannot smell anything. When I say so, Daya insists saying that she can smell it meaning that Pia is still dirty. When Pia tries to participate the other girls don’t let her use their water cups. Tears well up in her eyes. I motion for her to come sit next to me. Priti (5) immediately pulls her water cup away and says something to Pia. Tears fall from her eyes. I asked Shruti (11) to tell Pia that she can get some water from upstairs. Shruti laughs and says something in Hindi. I repeat my request and soon Pia goes upstairs to get water. When she comes back down, she struggles with her task of ripping out the images and appears unhappy for the rest of the morning.

August 8<sup>th</sup> 2010: Padma (5) is late eating breakfast and is not ready to go to school. Aruni (13) shouts at her to get her bag. She then slaps her across the face. Padma appears shocked, but then goes downstairs to get her bag. She slowly comes up the stairs carrying her bag.

### **Feelings of longing in the girls.**

During my stay at GCH, I often observed in the girls what I can only label as feelings of longing. The older girls talked with me about feelings of loneliness, sadness, and disappointment in the home. At other times, though they did not directly speak of it, it was clear that they reflected on their experience of being raised in a home such as GCH. The younger girls did not speak with me, but their actions often reflected a deeper need for comfort, perhaps missing a

mother figure in their lives.

***Missing father figure.***

As previously mentioned, the patriarch of the home died the previous year of a heart attack. It was a shock to the entire home.

June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2010: Janya (19) sits down with me at the table and begins to share with me how the home has changed since the founder died. Janya, who has been in the home since she was five years old, says that the home has changed completely and nothing is the same. She says before he died, she always felt him behind her. The older girls could go to him and he was very reasonable and frank with them. He guided them and loved them. Janya always felt his love. Reva (16) agrees that things have changed completely since he died. They feel that the home cares for them in terms of food and education, but that they do not feel the love that he gave them. They do not feel loved and do not feel that anybody cares about them because they are older now. She thinks that there is love between the girls and they care for each other, but that is the only place where they are getting the love.

***Missing mother/neglect of girls/need for comfort.***

There were times when I observed the girls and thought about how their lives might be different if they each had a primary caregiver. The girls did take care of each other, but things were often left unattended if the older girls could not be bothered. I wondered if things would be different if there was a stronger mother figure in the home.

June 26<sup>th</sup> 2010: In the morning, I walk into one of the rooms in the basement and see that Maya (17) is going through Daya's (10) hair. I sit down and ask if she has

lice. Maya responds, “yes, di, she has so many, look.” She splits Daya’s hair to expose the roots and I see many eggs. “Why?” I ask. “Because she doesn’t comb her hair, di.” Daya remains quiet. Some 15 minutes later, I am upstairs putting away my key when I see that Maya is sitting opposite Daya on the floor. Daya’s head is bent forward as Maya is going through her hair with a comb. Rupa (15) is in the room as well. I sit down next to Maya and watch her roughly comb through Daya’s hair, as the nits come out. “See, di, she doesn’t comb her hair properly, she doesn’t comb it ever.” Rupa then speaks up and says “she lost her comb and hasn’t bought a new one; she could ask some of the girls, but she hasn’t.” I say, “well it’s probably best that she isn’t sharing combs.” Rupa responds, “but some girls have two and they could have given her, but she doesn’t ask.” Daya stays quiet throughout this whole time. Maya continues to comb through her hair and then tap the comb on the newspaper that is laid out. Nits fall down onto the paper and Daya crushes them between her fingernails to kill them. A couple of times, lice come out also and crawl on the paper as Daya kills them as well. This continues for about five minutes until Maya gets up and leaves. I know all the lice and nits remain in Daya’s hair, so I wonder why she left. It is lunch time but I wonder how the nits would come out as I figured that Daya would not take care of them on her own.

When the girls became sick, they were often left to their own devices, having to manage on their own.

July 4<sup>th</sup> 2010: Kalpana (7) had vomited the night before during homework time and I did not see her much throughout the day. During dinner, the table is

crowded with girls eating their food. Kalpana comes out of the office and walks slowly as if to go upstairs. She stops and vomits right in front of the table. All the girls look as she finishes vomiting and then continues to walk outside where she vomits again. She comes back to the dining room. Everyone has gone back to eating with some chatter about the vomit and looks of disgust. Rupa (15) speaks up and says something to Kalpana, and with her gestures, I figure it out. It had to do with asking Kalpana to go upstairs to wash her mouth out and then having to come back and clean up her vomit. She disappears upstairs. She returns soon after with a bucket and a rag and proceeds to slowly clean up the vomit (which was mainly water as she hadn't eaten anything all day) in front of the dining room table. Once this is done, she moves onto the vomit outside and I see her scrubbing the stairs. She looks upset and sad as she is cleaning.

It was not only in times of need that I observed a wish for comfort. During regular daily activities, I often felt that the girls expressed a wish for comfort, a wish to be close to a parental figure.

August 7<sup>th</sup> 2010: During the Saturday night movie, Pia (4) stations herself close to me while I sit with the girls. She lies between my legs, head resting on my lower torso. She sits up and leans into my arms. She plays with my hands and feet, tapping them, pulling them, holding them. When I get up to shower, she looks at me imploringly and lingers in the doorway to my room. When I come back after my shower, she is in the same position as I left her, right outside my door. I sit down and she immediately leans into me. She burrows into my legs and shifts positions trying to get comfortable. Her eyes close and she begins to drift off. I

then lift her up and carry her to her room. I lay her down on her bed. She taps the space next to her and tells me to sleep. I lie down and she shifts positions, trying to get comfortable, while still holding onto me. She settles facing towards me her arm around my body. I stroke her back lightly. When I think she is asleep, I stop stroking her back. She opens her eyes, holds onto my shirt and shifts her body facing away. With the arm extended behind her, she holds onto me. I stroke her back and then slowly stop. When I see that her breath has slowed down, I get up and leave the room.

The three youngest girls are paired with three older girls, who care for them which included waking them up in the morning, giving them showers, doing their laundry, putting them to bed. The older girls giving the care were not so old themselves, between the ages of 11 and 13. I wondered if they did not also wish to have a parental figure to help them out as they cared for their younger sisters.

July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2010: Pia (4) wet the bed during her nap and is awoken by Ishita (11) who comes in yelling her name. She tells me that Pia has done “toilet” in the bed and she is waking her up. I hear Pia crying. I know that she is being scolded for wetting the bed. Pia heads upstairs to change her clothes and Ishita goes with her, with her arms wrapped around her. I talk to Ishita about the incident and she tells me that it happens every night. I say that someone should wake her up in the middle of the night and Ishita says that she tries but she can't. Ishita helps Pia change her clothes. Pia is then ordered downstairs and is made to bring up the wet bedclothes to dry on the roof, which makes her cry all over again. Sonali (16) then hears about the bed wetting and scolds Pia again. She continues to cry. I hold out

my hand and she takes it. We go upstairs and I ask her if she wants water. She nods and we go into the kitchen. She drinks it at once and then I wash her cup. We sit down at the table, she on my lap, and we stay like this until after snack time (4:00).

The girls often sought me out for comfort, knowing that I would take them into my arms.

July 7<sup>th</sup> 2010: During a rainstorm, I am sitting on the edge of the roof watching the rain and the girls. Udit (7) comes running up to me and climbs up next to me. She is shivering. I ask her if she is cold, she says that she isn't, but she continues shivering. Her body is warm to the touch. She leans into me and I hold her in my arms. I rock back and forth and tell her that she is cold and maybe she should go inside. She shakes her head vigorously and leans back into me.

***Thoughts of biological family/ Reflections on their status as orphans.***

On a couple of occasions, the girls either directly or indirectly talked to me about the home they live in, their life before they arrived and their biological parents.

July 26<sup>th</sup> 2010: Maya (17), Sonali (17) (both girls have been at GCH since they were newborns) and I are sitting on the steps outside the home during snack time. Maya asks me if I can see the GCH sign from the road. The GCH sign is a sign both in English and Hindi declaring the home is a home for orphaned girls. I tell them that I can't see the sign from the road. Maya says, "no, didi, you can totally see it. Oh god, you can see it." At the same time, both Maya and I get up from the steps and walk into the garden to get a better view. Maya says, "see, didi, you can totally see it." We walk back to the steps and then Sonali gets up and Maya says, "let's go out on the road to see it." Maya takes my hand in hers and Sonali takes

my other hand and we walk out of the gate and turn the corner. We stand back and assess the sign. It was clearly more visible than I remember it being when I first arrived. I say, "It is more visible, but why didn't I see it before?" Maya says, "oh god, didi, it is so obvious now." Sonali says, "you can see it totally didi." We walk back to the home and I was still confused about how it suddenly became more visible. Maya tells me that the gardener had cut down some branches so it was more obvious. I ask her why he did this. Maya says, "because then people will know that it is home for girls and they can come and donate things; nobody could see the sign for a long time and people couldn't find the place." I say to Maya, "you really don't like people seeing the sign, why?" She replies, "no didi, it is fine. Everyone at school knows I live here, it's ok."

Though declaring that they were fine with the sign being visible, they clearly were uncomfortable and maybe embarrassed. Perhaps they did not feel comfortable sharing with me how they felt about living at GCH and being known at school as girls who did not have biological parents.

At another time, one of the same girls shared with me her wish to know her parents and a wish to live with them. This was expressed after being humiliated at school and feeling that the elders at GCH did not look out for her as her real parents would have.

July 31<sup>st</sup> 2010: When Sonali (17) got home she went immediately to Geeta and explained the humiliation at school. She was accused of having a cell phone and when she did not produce it, a male teacher searched her bag and clothes. She told them the story and they didn't believe her. They insisted that she was lying, that it was her boyfriend's phone. She explained to them that she doesn't have a

boyfriend and that it wasn't her phone. She then spoke to me about it. "If family members don't believe you, who will believe you and stand up for you?" She wanted one of the elders to go to the school to say "don't do this to my daughter; you cannot treat her that way." She said that she told the stories to her sisters, but "sisters cannot go to the school to stand up for you. This is when a father is supposed to go to the school and say you can't treat my daughter this way. I am always sad, thinking this is a bad life...I wish I knew my real parent and ask them why they left me...I miss them a lot during these times....we have such a bad life-all the girls say that-wondering about their biological parents, why they left us."

It was only a few girls who shared with me their thoughts about their biological parents. It was always the same question they wondered about: why they were left. Others, perhaps not wanting to dwell on the reasons they were left, chose to forget about their biological parents.

August 5<sup>th</sup> 2010: During snack time, Rupa (15) comes to sit with me outside. We talk about how both of us are slowly waking up after sleeping in the afternoon. Then we are quiet. I ask her how old she was when she came here. She says 7. I ask her what it was like to come here. "It was like everything I knew, the opposite of that." I ask her what she means. She says, "here, they care about you and they love you. That was different." I ask her where she was before. She says she was at the government girls' hostel. I ask her what that was like. She says "you did your work and nobody bothered you. Nobody cared about you." I asked her how long she was there. She says she was there for two years. And then I ask, where she was before. "I was with my parents." I asked her if she remembered anything from it. She says, "I have forgotten about them now."

#### **Part 4: Titles of Photographs Taken during Photovoice**

In combination with the daily observation notes on the home and the girls, I introduced Photovoice to the six oldest girls to further explore their sense of well-being in the home. Each girl was given one 24 exposure disposable camera and asked to take photographs of things that made them feel happy and things that made them feel unhappy or sad. When they received their prints, the girls gave a title to each photograph. When the research was completed, the titles of the photographs were examined and divided into the two main categories of things that made them feel happy and things that made them feel unhappy/sad (see Appendix D). Next, the titles were examined individually and sorted according to higher order themes. These are discussed in the section below.

##### **“Things That Make Me Feel Happy”**

The girls took many more pictures of things that made them feel happy than things that made them feel unhappy. Several higher-order themes emerged from these photographs: relationship with elders/family, relationship with sisters, hobbies and material things, the weather, pop culture and cultural references, GCH home, family and religious traditions, school, interest in appearance and clothes, food, and self-reflection.

##### ***Relationship with elders/family.***

The girls took photographs of several elders in the family and outside of the family, including Geeta, the founder of the home, teachers at school, their afternoon teacher (tutor), the neighbor, and the family as a whole. Some titles included: “I like my mom (the founder),” “My dearest Uncle (founder),” “My housekeeping faculty--lovely lady in my college,” “My talented teacher,” “My good teacher,” and “My family.”

***Positive feelings towards sisters.***

The subjects of many of the photographs were the participants' sisters in the home. Many of the girls simply titled their photographs with the name of the sister they had photographed. Others gave titles that described the nature of the girls, such as "She is quite good to share secrets with," "Adorable gal," "Her nature is good and kind to me," "Cute sister, and "She is very close with me." Here we get a sense of the aspects of the relationships that the girls find to be pleasurable and rewarding.

***Hobbies and material things.***

The participants took many photographs of their hobbies and material items that made them feel happy. Some of them titled the photograph with an explanation of what they liked about the subject. These included, "Dancing--always fresh my mood," "Singing is like very close to me, it brings my mood and happiness," "Oh, no words for him, he is a good author, I loved his books, too interesting for me," "Movies--love watching movies a lot," "Watching TV is my passion," and "I am always influenced with positive books like 'U Can Win.'" Others simply described the subject of the photograph: "Drawing books," "Story books," "My book world," "New TV," "Teddy Bear," and "I like to see cars and I like cars."

***The weather.***

Similarly to what I collected during my daily observations, the weather played a large role in the lives of the participants. They favored rainy weather over the hot, humid weather that had plagued the state and the home when I first arrived. Again, there was a mixture of just naming the weather, "Rainy weather," "My favorite season—rain," "Nice weather," and an explanation of what they liked about the weather, "I like to play in the rain" and "Clouds and rain always made me feel excited."

***Pop Culture/cultural references.***

The participants photographed several pop culture stars and pastimes that made them feel happy. These included naming several non-Indian pop stars, coming from television series and the music and film industry: “Smiley Miley” (Miley Cyrus-American), “I’m a big fan of Vanessa and I like watching this movie (HSM)” (High School Musical-American), “Shakira-my mentor, my love, my inspiration” (pop star from Venezuela), and “Robert Pattinson--my crush--lol” (British movie star), with one title dedicated to a male star of an India television series, “I luv watching this serial as I have a crush on this guy.” One participant photographed the comic books series “Archies” and titled it, “Archies--anytime, anywhere, like many always my favourite pastime.”

***GCH home/family traditions/ religious traditions.***

The participants took photographs that reflected their environment, including their physical environment, as well as their cultural one. Some photographs taken depicted the actual GCH building and its surrounding, including the “Long Balcony” that extended the length of the home and ensured access for the girls to the outside; and “My beautiful garden,” which provided the participants with a pleasant space outside in which to relax and enjoy. The participants also photographed GCH family traditions, such as “Celebrating B-Day is the most precious thing in my life,” which was a photograph of a group birthday celebration, with a special meal and cake. One participant chose to photograph herself praying at the home’s temple and titled it “Talking to god always makes me happy and energetic.”

***School.***

Only one participant chose to include the subject of school as a thing that makes her feel happy, titling her photograph “Going to school is lovely.” As will be described below, more

participants chose to put school in the category of things that made them feel unhappy or sad.

***Appearance/care in one's appearance.***

Several of the participants took photographs depicting their happiness when thinking about clothes, dressing up, and their appearance. These photographs depicted individual dressing style, "My dressing style," and love of dressing up and pride in appearance, "Stylish--that's I always love to be, to dress up differently and stylish, "I like my dress I buy at GT and I look good in this dress," including wearing a school uniform, "I luv wearing my school uniform." The participants clearly took pride and joy with how they looked, perhaps asserting their femininity, and sense of community at the same time.

***Food.***

Two participants took photographs of food as a source of happiness. Both of these photographs depicted foods that the girls do not normally have in the home on a regular basis, chocolates "I love chocolates," and pizza "Pizzas-yummy my favourite food-anytime and anywhere I'm ready for."

***Self-reflection.***

Lastly, two girls chose to photograph scenarios or items that allowed for self-reflection in their lives. One girl chose to take a picture of herself dreaming, "Dreaming--I love dreaming, and make me happy and motivates me for future." Of note, this is the same participant who took a photograph of herself praying at the home's temple. Another participant chose to photograph her personal diary, simply labeling it "My personal diary."

**"Things That Make Me Feel Sad"**

As noted previously, the participants did not take as many photographs of things that made them feel sad or unhappy. One participant stated that "nothing makes me unhappy" and

had great difficulty reflecting on what made her sad. Interestingly, many of the photographs taken for the ‘unhappy’ category were also seen in the ‘happy’ category, pointing to the idea that the participants could hold in mind positive and negative aspects of certain things. The higher order themes that emerged from this category included, relationship with elders, negative feelings towards sisters, disappointment in environment/personal possessions, feelings about school, and relationship with boys.

***Relationship with elders.***

Several participants took photographs of elders in the home who made them feel unhappy. Two of these photographs depicted the warden of the home, “Think of the devil and here she is,” and “Her mind is very sharp.” Another photograph depicted the late founder of the home, which made the participant sad to think of him being no longer part of the home, “My dearest Uncle.” Interestingly, this photograph was also included in the “things that made me feel happy” category as the participant was adamant that she felt both emotions when taking the photograph.

***Negative feelings towards sisters.***

Many of the participants photographed their sisters in the home as sources of unhappiness. Much like the “positive relationship with sisters,” some of the participants simply titled their photographs with the name of the sister they had chosen. Others were more explicit with their titles, including naming the sister “Sonali--I don’t like her,” and “Janya--not my sister,” “I don’t like her.” Still further, some participants explained why this particular sister made them unhappy, including naming characteristics about the sister, “She is a fighter,” or stating certain qualities “I hate when she doesn’t understand my importance,” and “When Maya shows me her selfishness and her attitude.” General statements were also made about sisters in

the home, including “I hate people like backstabbers,” with sisters playing the part of acting mean in the photograph. Some of the girls told me during the individual interviews that they had to find ways to take photographs of the sisters without them knowing that it was for the project. They often asked another younger sister to take a photograph of the sister using their camera or told them it was for reasons other than what makes them unhappy.

***Disappointment in Environment/Personal Possessions.***

Several participants chose to highlight disappointments they had about their immediate environment, including the GCH home, which caused them to feel unhappy. These included “Pile of dirty clothes,” “Dirty shoe rack,” and “Unused computers.” Two participants chose to photograph things that belonged to them as sources of unhappiness. One participant also stated that though her “personal diary” is a source of happiness, it also can make her feel sad. Lastly, one participant chose to photograph herself in a dress that she did not like “In this dress I look very poor and I don’t like my home dress,” in contrast to when she took pride in new clothes that she had bought and brought her happiness.

***Feelings about school.***

Several participants highlighted aspects of going to school that made them feel unhappy. Simply stating “I hate going to school” and more specifically “I hate studying.” One participant chose to further explain her unhappiness with school, choosing the title “My course (Hotel Management) which I still think my had and worst decision [sic].”

***Relationship with boys.***

Lastly, one participant chose to photograph a former love interest as a source of unhappiness, “\_\_\_\_--my net love, who didn’t understand my love and importance.” In this title, she explains why thinking about the subject brings her sadness.

## **Part 5-The Interviews**

The intensive transcript analysis of the six interviews generated several hundred codes. These codes were subsequently grouped into higher order categories that captured certain themes that emerged from the narrative data. The individual codes, listed by categories, can be found in Appendix E. These higher order categories were then clustered under distinct overall domains. These domains highlight aspects of the girls' lives that brings them happiness and sadness, ultimately affecting their sense of well-being in the home: Feelings Towards Sisters, Relational Hierarchies, Relationships with Mother and Father Figures, Feelings Towards Warden, Relationship with Elders in Home and Neighborhood, Cultural and Familial Traditions, Weather and Physical Environment, Hobbies and Pastimes, Femininity and Body Awareness, and Self-Reflection. Each category is summarized below using participants' quotes throughout to accentuate the aforementioned domains, which will be further discussed in the next chapter. A note about certain language that the participants use: "didi" and "di" mean older sister; during the interviews the girls often referred to other sisters with "didi" or to me using "di" when describing something. In addition, the girls' English fluency varied and some words have been added in order to help bring the girls' points across to the reader.

### **Feelings towards sisters.**

Throughout the interviews, every participant discussed their relationships with their sisters in the home. This domain includes a spectrum of the varying nature of these relationships.

### ***Anger and feelings of dislike with sisters.***

All participants talked of feelings of anger and dislike with particular sisters in the home (See Table 1). Interestingly, different participants often spoke of the same sisters when describing the sister who made them angry or did something that they did not like. One

participant spoke about one sister who she does not like, possibly because she “never understands my problems,” she is a “very good fighter” and “very, very small things she used to fight.” The same participant described another sister in the home who she is “not close to” by saying that “I don’t like her because she don’t behave good with me [sic]” and “she spread the talk [sic]” meaning that she gossips and does not keep secrets. When asked how she felt about this sister, she responded “extremely very bad.” Another participant did not like the oldest sister as that sister did not seem to act fairly. The participants all used the word “partiality” to describe the sister’s bias towards sisters she likes more: “And she gives partiality also that...sometimes Maya washed her hair and she says nothing to her. But if *we* wash, then she scolds us...I took this picture because of this only, she partialates [sic].” Another participant echoed the same sentiment about this older sister, whom often had to delegate work and keep on top of the sister to do their work, though did not do her own chores:

Because she is always telling everyone else to follow the rules. But look at her bed. There is everything on her bed. She is all the time scolding us to bring our clothes from upstairs, there should be no clothes on our bed or in our bucket also or on the sofas. But then her bed, she has, she does everything wrong and she tells us to do right. I don’t like that, no.

This same participant declared that this older sister “never behaves like my sister” and “she is always rude with everyone.” Another participant talked of not liking it when this same older sister would tell her what to do: “She don’t like that I talk to Reva. She thinks Reva is, I mean, Reva is not, Reva doesn’t have a good character. So she always scolds. She [Janya] always tell me not to stay with her [Reva], which I don’t like [sic].” Another girl made a general statement about a particular behavior in the home that she did not like, called “buttering up:”

Buttering up to them, like... 'oh didi, you are...very nice girl, you're best among any other didi'-they always like that...when someone just comes to me just for help. He doesn't have any feeling for me, but just coming whenever he/she needs me. I don't like that.

When she was asked for a particular time when that happened, she stated "I don't remember."

***Feelings of hurt and sadness because of sisters.***

Along with feelings of anger and dislike, the participants also spoke of when they felt hurt and sad because of something their sisters had done (Table 2). Often feelings of sadness originated when the participants would fight with their sisters, or feel misunderstood by them. One participant described how she feels when sisters talk behind her back:

I mean, in front of me they will be nice, they'll be like 'oh my god Janya di is a really nice girl, or didi, or whatever' but at the back, I get to hear they talk something bad about me, or say something false about me, which I haven't done.

This same participant identified that if one sister is involved in the back stabbing, "especially if they talk something about me to Maya, then I don't feel good [sic]." She continued to say that "nowadays, I feel that she [Maya] doesn't care about me...she doesn't have any importance about me, she doesn't really care." Another sister talked about how she felt ignored by her sister, "I hate that. Because...most of the time she goes only with her, Maya only, so that's when I feel like she is not talking to me, so I feel bad." This same participant explained that she does not share her feelings with anyone and "that's why I write everything in my diary." Another sister explained "here there are too many sisters...we can't just keep secrets, it gets opened quickly," meaning that secrets are shared with others, and wondered if it was because of

feelings of “jealousy” that sisters did not keep secrets.

***Love for sisters and feeling of closeness.***

During interviews of three of the participants, feelings of closeness and love for certain sisters were discussed (Table 3). One participant spoke of an older sister, who is no longer in the home, as someone who “understands everything about me, so I love her.” She also photographed another sister and explained that “she has always been close to me, since childhood, I have always loved her.” She continued to explain that she loved “taking care of her” and that this sister has “always been an important part of my life.” This feeling was reciprocated by the aforementioned sister as she declared about the above participant that “she is important in my life.” Another participant described her close relationship with a sister and said that “she shares everything with me” and that she makes the participant “happy.” Another participant spoke of what made her feel close to a particular sister: “she listened to my problems...she always take care of me and other sister too [sic].” She declared that this particular sister, who is her biological sister, “is the most important person in my life.” This participant also talked of all the sisters in the home: “because I like living with my sisters and they are good...if nobody was here, I would be alone and it would be no fun...I need some sisters to play with, to fight with.” Another response was that feelings of closeness and love existed between some sisters because “we treat each other as real sisters.” When asked why she titled her photograph of a particular sister ‘I really adore her,’ the participant explained that it was “because I love her.” Another aspect of feelings of closeness was the ability for the sisters to keep each other’s secrets, “I can share my secrets with Rupa and Reva, but not with some others.” This participant also said, “I feel comfortable sharing my secrets with her [a sister no longer in the home]...and she even shares secrets with me.”

### **Relational hierarchies.**

#### ***Sisters being caretakers in place of adults.***

Some participants also talked of how they took care of their sisters in the home and how much they enjoyed it (Table 4). One girl stated that she “loves taking care of her,” a younger sister, and has done so “since childhood.” She elaborated, “I have always helped her in every moment...I like, you know, have tried to make her happy, every time.” Indeed, she went on to say that “in fact, sometimes it happens that she’s been wrong, and I have not scolded her, but others I have scolded.” One girl talked about a time when she helped a particular sister, “I helped her, I helped her a lot” even though she did not like this sister overall. This same participant spoke of how she became the caregiver to one of her sisters in a time of need:

...I just go to sleep with her only. Most of the time, I used to sleep with her, because she is very close to me and she tells me that ‘Reva, I am scared-at night I am scared-so please will you please sleep with me’. I don’t mind that, I can sleep with her and she sleeps with me.

Another participant talked of her biological sister, “she always take care of me and other sisters too [sic].” A fourth girl talked about how the sisters often take care of each other: “we always help each other. That whenever nobody-if a big person is gone we have to help the children [sic].”

#### ***Hierarchy within GCH.***

A number of girls spoke about the hierarchy in the home, often causing them to feel unhappy (Table 5). One girl disregarded the warden’s request that the girls check in with her after school, “because I don’t think it is necessary to tell. If we tell, she will do nothing. And if we won’t tell, even then she won’t do nothing, so I thought not to tell her [sic].” She expressed a

belief that the warden would not do anything, perhaps undermining the warden's authority.

Another participant complained that the warden often took an older girl's favor: "Now she is older, she is elder sister. Kanti didi (the warden) also take her favor [sic]. Kanti didi also says that she is right and you should listen to her." The participant felt that this older sister often showed favoritism to some girls and felt that this was unfair, and also felt that there was nothing to be done. Another participant complained about this older sister and said that "she doesn't like we smaller should get any luxury [sic]," seemingly an observation based on the age hierarchy in the home. This participant went on to explain how it affected her daily life:

And always, we have to wash our hair twice a week, like we can wash it any day. But *she* [the eldest sister] has said that you will only wash your hair on Wednesday and on Sunday. But everybody wants to wash, everybody has to wash their hair on Wednesday and we have to go to school, so it takes time. So I think maybe I can wash my hair on Friday or Thursday. But then she won't allow, 'no you have to wash it on Wednesday only.' I don't get time to wash my hair because everybody washes their hair, it takes time. *She* washes her hair whenever *she* wants, but she wants us to follow the rules, only on Wednesday and Sunday.

### **Relationships with mother and father figures.**

#### ***Thoughts and feelings about Geeta Auntie.***

Two girls mentioned one of the founders of the home, 'Geeta Auntie,' during their interviews (Table 6). One of them titled the photograph of her and Geeta Auntie as "my mysterious mom" and elaborated that "she is like a mommy to me." When asked about what made her mysterious, she explained "sometimes I think she is happy and sometimes she is sad, but I don't know why." She continued to explain that Geeta Auntie can get irritable and "if she is

talking to you, she won't look at you and she won't talk nicely." She reflected that she was not always like this, "not always, but since Uncle left," referring to Janu Uncle's (Geeta's husband) death in July 2009. She said that she took the photograph because:

...She is smiling. Because when Uncle left, she has been crying a lot. But looking at this photo and this was taken after Uncle left and she is smiling. So it makes me feel every time she is smiling, she is happy.

She elaborated that when she sees Geeta Auntie sad or in pain, she also feels sad, "I don't want to see her face when she is sad." The other participant wrote in the paragraph accompanying a family photograph that she had taken that "Geeta Auntie and Janu Uncle are the God for us who opened this house [sic]."

***Thoughts and feelings about Janu Uncle.***

Two participants spoke of 'Janu Uncle' during their interviews (Table 7). One participant remembered him as being disappointed in her for not scoring better in her school results. She also remembers begging him to allow her to attend college outside of Jaipur.

So I, I, I really tried to ask Uncle, 'Uncle please give me chance so that...' But he said, 'no, never.' But it's true why I never proved to him that I could do very well, that I can do. So, but, he said, somehow he said you have to do it from here (Jairpur) [sic].

Another girl talked of Janu Uncle stating "he was a very good man" and that he helped them in many ways, "he had every Sunday meeting...and we used to tell our problems and he used to give solutions [sic]." This same girl reflected on the impact that Janu Uncle had on her life, as well as her sisters' lives. Thinking back to the time she arrived in the home along with her sister at the ages of three and four, she stated "that time, that day, if he was not there to help me

and Reva, then di, I don't know where we will be." She responded that she felt "happy and sad both" and when asked to elaborate she stated, "happy...because di, because of him only I am here, so that makes me happy that he was my father and sad because di, he is no more with us."

### **Feelings towards the warden.**

#### ***Positive and close feelings toward warden.***

Three of the girls talked in positive ways about GCH's warden (Table 8). One participant described feeling helped by the warden when she was not feeling well and had to go to the doctor. Another time, this participant felt cared for by her because they helped each other out while making lunch for the home: "I was making chapattis for now three days and she was helping me. Although she is not feeling well, still she is helping me. And I am also not feeling well, since three days, she helps me." She also felt happy "when she used to talk very nicely and sit together and give some good mind," meaning that she appreciated when she felt the warden gave her good advice. Another participant stated that "she helps us so much, so that's why I like her." There was also admiration for the warden's "sharp" mind: "She can understand--we don't tell her secrets--but you know what, she makes an idea and the idea she makes is true," meaning that the warden often had an intuitive sense of what was happening with the girls without the girls telling her. However, this was sometimes felt as intrusive: "her mind should not be *that* much sharp."

#### ***Negative feelings towards warden.***

Four of the participants also talked of negative feelings they had towards the warden (Table 9). These were often mixed with positive feelings, pointing to the girls' ability to see both positive and negative aspects of the warden. One of the main complaints about the warden was the feeling that she favored or uses 'partiality' with some of the girls.

Sometimes I don't like her. I don't know why, but sometimes she do, what I think, sometimes she do partiality. So this is true, but she think that she never do partiality. She never thinks that she does that, but everybody says that she does partiality...I also think she do partiality [sic].

Another girl stated that “mostly Kanti didi do partiality with us, so I don't like Kanti didi [sic].” Another girl said that she did not like the warden because she “always says no. If Rupa and all will ask, she will say yes. But if I will ask, she will say no, no.” This same participant also did not like that the warden did not allow her to see friends after school,

Because she thinks that if I say that I am with my friend, she thinks that I won't be going with my friend, but going with someone...I mean she thinks that I have too many boyfriends...that's why she don't allow me to go [sic].”

Another girl did not like the warden because she said that the warden sometimes lied to the other elders about what the girl had done.

### **Relationships with elders in home and neighborhood.**

Several of the participants also talked of other elders, beside the founders and the warden, whom they found helped them in their lives (Table 10). One participant made a general statement about the elders, saying that she “likes elder persons; I have respect for them.” Another participant talked of her neighbors who were very involved in the home and she liked them “because they help us so much in everything; they give us big parties...give us money...I am so happy.” This participant also liked another elder, Uncle X, who “takes care of us also” and though he was not blood related to the founder (Janu Uncle) “do everything that make him look like a real brother.” This same participant stated that she was very close with her former tutor, whom she considered to be a brother. Several of the girls talked of a particular tutor who helped

them with their studies every afternoon in the home. The girls highlighted that they felt cared for and helped by this tutor; one girl stated that, “instead of my warden...he behaves very good to me...I don’t know why he helps me a lot.” Another participant described the tutor in very positive terms:

Because he is very nice. He understands everything. He is a friend to us, everybody. And also, like a brother also. And he teaches very well. And he is entertaining also and he knows everything. He is very nice...he has every quality...he is good in sports, teaching, in entertaining and he is a good husband (laughs) and brother and friend. Everything.

#### **Cultural and familial traditions.**

Two participants talked of religious, cultural, and family traditions that made them feel happy and good inside.

#### ***Faith in higher being.***

One participant talked at length about her relationship with her god as depicted by a picture of the home’s temple with her praying (Table 11). Being near the temples, she stated that she felt “good because there are all pictures of god, different pictures of god.” When asked if she was praying for something when she took the photograph she stated “yeah...I was actually asking that ‘please whatever I wish for please change,’ I mean I want to change my course (degree), I just think god can help me out in that.” She also described her relationship to god as “wherever I will go, god is always there,” and “I want him to be always in front of me in any event.” And she felt that he is “always close” to her, “if I am crying, I’ll talk to him...if anything good happens with me, I talk to him.”

#### ***Family traditions.***

Another participant declared that the family tradition of celebrating group birthdays together made her feel very happy (Table 12). It also contributed to her sense of belonging to the family and being part of something that she will be able to carry with her in the future:

Because after marriage, we won't be staying here, it will be going to our husband's house [sic], so whenever it will be my birthday I can think that, yeah, at Geeta Children's Home, I used to celebrate my birthday like that...we have this tradition and all.

She also acknowledged that this was a special tradition for this home as "in other hostels people don't celebrate their birthdays...but here we have gotten the opportunity to celebrate our birthday." She wrote in her paragraph about the photograph that though she was happy at this event, she also "feels sad during birthday celebrations as she wishes her biological parents were there."

### **Weather and physical environment.**

#### ***Emotional state affected by environment/weather.***

Though several participants took photographs of the weather, only one girl chose a weather photograph for the interview and the paragraph write-up (Table 13). She said that she "likes rain" and that she likes "getting wet in the rain" because it "makes me feel happy." She also elaborated and said "like whenever I am sad and if I look and it is nice weather outside, it can make me feel happy...it makes me feel that I am nice." She concluded in the paragraph write up: "Nice weather can always make anyone happy, especially those who like peace in their lives."

#### ***Thoughts about school and studying.***

Several participants talked about school or their study habits during the interviews (Table

14). One participant who goes to a local college talked about her unhappiness about her chosen degree. “Whenever I enter this college, I feel bad...this college always makes me feel sad.” She elaborated that she “never wanted to do Hotel Management” but felt that she did not have any other choice because she had to stay in Jaipur for college. “Oh my god, this isn’t my course...now I am actually feeling that this is really giving me stress and this is not what I wanted to do...this makes me feel sad.” She concludes that “somehow I think, if this thing (college degree) can change, then I will be happy.” Another participant who reads a lot of story books said that she did not like “course books” and that “normally I don’t study”. Another girl said that she liked going to school because of her “friends...the day before, it was good. It was good. The day before, it was good. Me and everybody sitting at back. It was making fun of teachers and all (laughs).” It appears that the reason this participant thinks “going to school is lovely” has to do with spending time with her friends, rather than actually studying.

***Thoughts about GCH home and family.***

Four of the participants talked about certain aspects, physical and otherwise, about the actual GCH home (Table 15). One girl talked of the physical home itself, saying “our house is so pretty” and “the garden...it is so beautiful.” Several girls talked about the philosophy of the home, “GCH is doing too much for us, yeah, and we feel happy being here,” and “I like living with my sisters, they are all good.” One girl reflected about her life if GCH did not exist, “we have, nobody would be here. If nobody was here, I would be alone and it would be no fun. I need some sisters to play with, to fight with.” Another participant, clearly affected by being raised in the home, declared “I have also been thinking that if I do something, if I will be something, and if I have enough money, then I would definitely help, my family, my mom and my brother, this family, as well as other girls.”

***Thoughts of lack of resources in home/home too big.***

Two participants alluded to the feeling that sometimes the home felt too big or lacked some resources (Table 16). One girl wondered if the number of girls in the home affected their ability to keep secrets. This girl felt more “comfortable” sharing secrets with her friends at school than her sisters in the home. Another participant felt that there were not enough books in the home, declaring that she wanted to “read more books.” This same girl talked of the broken computers and felt that “nothing is being done” about them, which made her feel “sad.” She reflected “we only have one computer...we are so many who want to work on the computer.” Her solution was to have them fixed: “I think if these computers can be seen by vendors and they can...we can use them, it would be nice,” or “like we can actually sell them or we can make them usable; this is also good.”

**Hobbies and pastimes.**

***Singing and dancing aspirations.***

Two of the participants talked at length about their singing and dancing aspirations providing great happiness in their lives (Table 17). “I love singing” and “I have always dreamt of being a great singer...that’s why I keep practicing and I keep dancing in front of the mirror and singing songs.” Both participants use pop stars and movies as inspiration, “so I can learn songs and sing them.” The girls look to certain pop stars for confidence in their own abilities:

these girls, actors, are singing a lot, so I get confidence, so, I mean, so I can sing like that, it gives me confidence...Vanessa (American movie actress) is my age only and if she, if she, is a confident singer then why can’t I?

When asked what I was to learn about her life by her love of a certain pop star, she replied “that I want to be something like Shakira. If I keep practicing then I will be like Shakira.”

***Books as best friends, comfort, escape, and entertainment.***

Three of the girls talked about their love of reading and story books and the happiness they felt when reading (Table 18). The participants made statements about reading and books: “Books are my best friends,” “I like reading books, story books, in Hindi and English both,” “books are my world,” and “I love reading books.” The reasons for their love of reading varied. One girl talked about a particular Indian author, Chetan Bhagat, and how “we can imagine ourselves being in that thing,” meaning that she could imagine herself doing the things that the characters did in the plot, and said that her favorite stories are love stories. Another girl stated “the time passes, the times passes, the time passes when you read story books” perhaps speaking to a way to escape the present moment. Similarly, one girl stated that “whenever I feel sad or happy or if I want to forget everything else, I would read Harry Potter book.” This same girl talked of her love of “fantasy” books, of reading the Harry Potter books “more than 25 times each” and became very excited during the interview: “oh god! I want to read them just now *again!*” This same girl said that when she had the Harry Potter books she kept them “beside my pillow” and expressed a wish for the future: “I want books every-beside me every time.”

***Femininity and body awareness.***

***Pride in appearance and interest in clothes.***

Half the participants expressed pride in their appearance and for two of them a particular interest in clothes (Table 19). One participant said that she practices in front of the mirror to get the dance moves correct. Two other girls talked of how new clothes make them feel “happy.” One girl took a picture of herself wearing a newly bought dress: “I buy new dress and I am so happy [sic].” Another girl said that it was the actual buying of clothes that made her happy, “I am thinking, when will I go buy clothes? When will I go buy clothes...if somebody asks me what is

your favorite choice...I say clothes only, only clothes.” Interestingly, both of these girls talked about how wearing western clothes made them happy, “especially when I buy jeans and shirt and shirt, not salwar suit (traditional Indian clothing).” This girl also said that she liked to “show the style [sic]” when she wore different clothes and “share with my sisters.” She also liked the idea of how she looked: “I love to wear different clothes...I love to do modeling, wearing that and start modeling; someone would make my video also...so I could see that, how I am looking and all [sic].”

### ***Emerging sexuality and femininity.***

All the participants were adolescent girls and though not directly referring to their emerging sexuality and femininity, some participants expressed certain ideas and themes that one could view as budding femininity (Table 20). One participant was acutely aware of her femininity when she went to college every day, “I am always, like, when I go to college, I always say, me around with a lot of guys.” The presence of boys in the minds of some of the participants was evident. One of the girls talked about being followed by a neighborhood boy and reporting it to the warden. This boy happened to be the secret boyfriend of another participant’s and this caused a fight between the girls. One participant complained that the warden did not trust her and thought that she would go and see boys instead of staying with female friends: “I mean she thinks that I have, I have too many boyfriends and like that. That’s why she don’t allow me to go.” This is the same participant who excitedly told me that she “bunked school with a boy,” meaning she skipped school and spent the day with a boy, which is strictly forbidden by the home. Another participant told me that “boys are taking rounds” around the home, meaning that boys circle the block where the home is hoping to catch a glimpse of the girls. Many of the participants talked of how they looked, as mentioned in the above section. Taking pride in their

appearance, by wearing new and different types of clothes, can be seen as the girls figuring out their femininity and sexuality and how they want to be seen by others. One participant often danced in front of the mirror to see how her body moved and how she looked when she danced and sang. A number of participants talked of looking up to male elders, tutors or “brothers”, and television stars, whom they admired. These descriptions were full of compliments about the men’s abilities, one of them getting the title of being the “best” at everything. One girl even looked at a photograph of her brother every night before she went to bed, saying that it made her feel bad “because he was not there with me.” One participant dreamt of “finding a boyfriend who only loves me.” Another proclaimed that “I like getting wet in the rain...it makes me feel happy.” This could also be the beginning of an awareness of her femininity and sensuality, as when clothes get wet in the rain, they cling to the body, outlining it for others to see.

***Pop stars as mentors and inspiration.***

Another aspect of their budding femininity was two girls’ admiration for particular female pop stars (Table 21):

Shakira! Like whenever I sing, I always dream of becoming Shakira. I love singing songs-and of mostly of her. Every time I would love, I mean, I think if I had free time I would watch all her videos at one time, and uh, I like her dancing, especially I like her dancing. And she is very good human being, what I think. I mean, she expose herself, that doesn’t matter. But actually, what her heart is so good, because she helps a lot of people, she helps a lot of people, in Africa. She’s been involved more in charity. That’s why she attracts me a lot, in everything, she’s good at dancing, she’s good at singing, she is beautiful, she is like kind of my height, a bit taller than me, but she is a lovely person.

This participant highlighted things about Shakira that one could label as her femininity and her sexuality: her dancing, her clothes, and her beauty. She went on to say that she identified with Shakira's struggle:

Yeah, she is my mentor, like, um, I love her. I love her a lot. And she's always inspired me, in everything. And I've, and I have googled also about her biography, which really inspired me. Like since childhood, she has also struggled. I mean, like I'm struggling, and she also struggled a lot. This thing always inspired me a lot. If she can do something like that, then why can't I?

So Shakira becomes not only a symbol of a successful pop star, but also a strong woman who has overcome obstacles in her childhood. Another participant drew confidence from watching one of her favorite pop stars, an American actress called Vanessa Hudgens, sing and dance in a series of movies.

### **Self Reflection.**

#### ***Self-reflection, dreaming, and journaling.***

Two participants talked of how they use different avenues to reflect on their lives and experiences (Table 22). One participant uses her "personal diary" and doesn't "share it to anyone" to record when "something very special happens." She uses her diary because "I don't feel like sharing my feelings with others." She reflected on how she felt about her diary, "both happy and sad...when it is a happy moment, then I feel like writing and then I am happy. If it is a sad moment then I feel sad." The other girl described that "this dreaming and thinking is always close to me," when describing a photo of herself thinking. She elaborated that she often thinks and dreams "if I get opportunities in front of me, then I will really do well...I dream to be one of among the top...to be great...so I can help myself and others." This girl also voiced that

dreaming is not always positive as she feels that sometimes “I keep dreaming, instead of being in present” and “if I am thinking about something and it doesn’t happen then I get irritated and I don’t like that.”

### *Feelings of sadness about life.*

Four participants briefly mentioned moments when they had sad feeling about their life (Table 23). One girl titled a photograph “bad life” because she had had earlier fights with her sisters and felt very sad about them. Another girl stated that she “sometimes feels that nobody loves me” when she was talking about her feelings towards god. This same participant stated that she is a girl “who can really get emotional” and often cries when she feels hurt or betrayed. Another girl wrote in her paragraph about group birthday celebration that she felt sad because she “wishes my biological parents were there.” Though not explicitly stating that she was sad about her life, another participant explained that she did not like to share her feelings with anyone and therefore wrote in her diary. She elaborated that she even hides it from her biological sister, who has found it and read it numerous times, forcing the participant to change her hiding place several times.

### **Part 6-The Group Conversation**

As part of the methods, the original plan was to have the oldest girls share their photographs with each other and talk about their multiple meanings. I changed the essence of the group discussion because a few of the girls told me that they did not feel comfortable sharing their photographs, as they worried that some of the sisters would tell the elders what they said. They were not comforted by what I told them as the confidentiality agreement between all the girls and myself. I took their cues and decided to hold a group conversation about their experience of taking the photographs and thinking about what made them happy or sad. The girls

were shy in front of each other and chose not to talk very much. Two girls concurred that at first it was difficult to think about things to take photographs of:

Yeah sometimes....I was personally in deep thought; what makes me so happy because we never thought about that. Yeah ok whatever things are going on. But I never thought what can make me so, like what thing can make me upset. This thing made me think actually [sic].

Another girl stated, “taking the photo of that if we don’t like, but it is hard to take the photo of these....hard to take the photos that made you upset [sic].” Similarly, another girl said “it was hard to capture pictures which were made me feel upset [sic].” The girls also talked of some changes they would like to see in the home after I ask them if they wanted to me talk to the elders about anything they thought of during this project that they would like changed. The girls uniformly answered that they would like it if the food stored in the basement, such as cookies, and chocolates were distributed on a daily basis before they expire. The girls also wanted to be able to go see their school friends after school and on the weekends.

Besides what was highlighted above, the girls were reticent to talk in the group but denied feeling uncomfortable. There were several exchanges in Hindi between the girls, which were then not translated for me, an unusual occurrence as they often translated for me when I asked them. My sense was that they felt uncomfortable and because of my position in the home as “older sister” felt reluctant to say so. This was strikingly different to how they were open with me when we had the individual interviews. The meaning of this will be further discussed in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

The present study set out to be an in-depth exploration of how girls experience living in an orphanage in India, with a focus on what contributes to their sense of well-being. Using a variety of methods, including observations of the home and girls, conversations with the girls, photographic images taken by the girls, and interviews about those images, the study aimed to provide a rich and complex picture of the girls' daily living.

The study used different sources of data in order to gain the most insight into the lives of the girls as possible. Themes generated from the observations held more weight compared to those derived from the photographs and interviews for two main reasons. Firstly, the photographs and interviews only involved the six oldest girls in the home; the observations included all the girls, and the orphanage staff. Secondly, I was told before I went that the girls would be shy about having interviews with me and would try to give me answers they thought I was looking for. Though I do not think this happened in every case, it might have occurred to a certain degree, resulting in some answers only touching the surface of their true experience. Comparatively, the observations captured the girls during their regular routines and daily interactions with each other, and appeared more illuminative of their experiences in the home. Despite this, the results were strengthened as many of the themes that emerged in the observational data also came to light using the photographic and interview data thus providing a well-rounded picture of the girls' experiences.

It was posited that certain themes would emerge from the qualitative data that would highlight factors that contribute to the girls' overall sense of well-being and happiness: 1) the girls' grasp of being a valuable member of the household and of the larger society; 2) the girls'

experience of having defined roles in the home; 3) the quality of the girls' relationships with staff and peers and; 4) the girls' sense of their own spirituality. The complimentary methodologies helped to locate and substantiate themes over the different modes of research. These converged and resulted in several overarching themes present in the girls' lives, several of which were hypothesized to be important contributions to the girls' well-being and resilience. Though these themes, and the aspects of the girls' lives that they represent, were first posited as separate entities, the data have suggested that they are interrelated and influence each other, a series of concentric circles if you will, in which one aspect influences the others.

Bronfenbrenner's seminal work on the ecology of human development (1979) theorized and emphasized environmental interconnections and their influence on the forces directly affecting psychological growth. His theory was one of "development-in-context" and outlined a series of systems in the individual's immediate environment and beyond that affect the psychological development of the individual. These systems are seen as concentric structures, which can be visualized as concentric circles, each contained within the next (see Figure 1 below). The inner-most structure is the *microsystem*, which includes an individual's "pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations...in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics" (p. 22). A *mesosystem* comprises two or more settings that a developing individual actively participates in, such as relations among home and school. Containing these two is the *exosystem*, which is one or more settings that do not always directly involve the developing individual, such as a town or neighborhood, but in which events occur that subsequently affect events in the setting containing the individual. The *macrosystem* "refers to consistencies, in the form and content of lower-order systems that exist...at the level of...the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies" (p.

26).

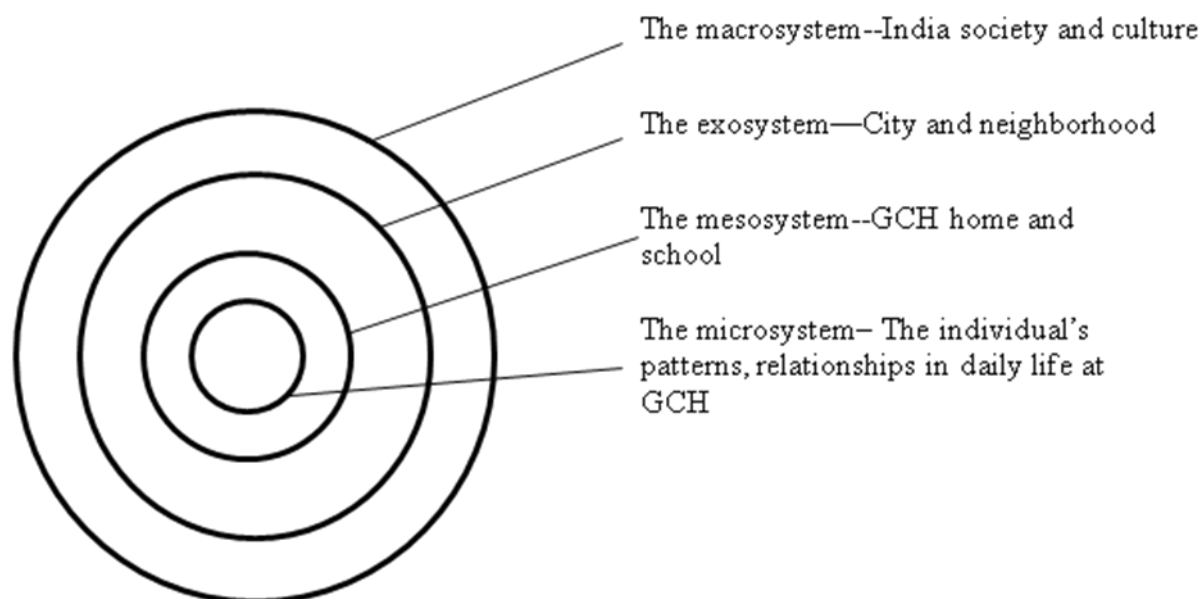


Figure 1. Systems Contributing to the Girls' Psychological Development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

To understand the findings from the present study, one must take into account the location of the home: India. This geographical and cultural structure provides the larger context for the daily activities of the girls. The external structure of the country and culture (macrosystem), seen as the outside circle, helps bind the structure of the neighborhood (exosystem) and the home (mesosystem), both the physical structure of it as well as the structure of how the home is run, which includes the girls' sense of being valuable members of the home, the family rituals, and the girls' established roles in the home. In turn, the structure of the home then influences the daily lives of the girls (microsystem). This structure of country and culture, now paired with the second structure of the home, helps foster what I view as a central finding of what contributes to the girls' sense of well-being: the sister relationships and the relationships the girls had with the elders in the home. Particularly, the sisterhood of the home plays an immense

part of the girls' daily lives and helps foster a sense of family. The role of the neighborhood, country and culture as a multi-layered structure binding the home and the girls will be explored in the following section. One can view the structure of Indian society and culture, as well as the home, as providing a safe containing environment leading to a cultivation of the interpersonal relationships among the girls and the elders. The structure of the home and the sister relationships help nurture the girls' resilience in face of trauma and parental loss.

### **The Girls' Grasp of Being Valuable Members of the Household and of the Larger Society**

There were several ways in which the girls' experiences of being valuable members of the home and Indian society were evident in the observational data, as well as in the photographic and interview data. These were found in the following categories of the observations and the interview themes: *Religious and family traditions*, *Weather and the environment*, *Working together as a family*, and *GCH home/family traditions/religious traditions*. Belonging to the home and feeling that they were valuable members was accentuated by the larger cultural context, that of the home being located in India. These findings echo understandings gleaned by prior research:

Implicit in the organization of Indian society, in which each individual is part of a complex, hierarchically ordered, and above all stable network of relationships throughout the course of his life, is a psychological model of man that emphasizes human dependence and vulnerability to feelings of estrangement and helplessness...Hindu social organization accentuates the continued existence of the child in the adult and elaborates the care-taking function of society to protect and provide for the security of its individual members. (Kakar, 1981, p. 124)

Although the economic, social and political realities often differ from the country's ideology about itself, India is generally thought of by its citizens as a "maternal country" (personal communication, S. Akhtar, 2011). A mother's body provides nourishment and a haven for her children. The mothering function, usually reserved for an individual person designated to be a mother, is more widely distributed in this society. As a result, there is more room for empathic understanding between individuals and greater attunement among strangers (Roland, 1988). This is understood to mean that India as a country and culture emphasizes a caretaking function, as in the quote above, resulting in her citizens helping each other more often, where boundaries between self and other are more permeable, and there is more interest in each other's internal world. It can be thought of as a country where there is a great interest in other people's needs and hence an emphasis on attending to these needs.

Indeed, research has shown that Indian ethical traditions emphasize particular responsibilities, including duties to help significant others in one's life, compared to American traditions which emphasize personal choice and individualistic rights (Miller & Bersoff, 1998; Savani, Markus, Naidu, Kumar, & Berlia, 2010). For instance, in one study, Indian students given moral dilemmas were more likely to risk violating a general standard of justice in order to help a friend (Miller & Bersoff, 1998). In a study that examined the effects of interpersonal influence it was found that influence attempts in India are more likely to be acts of well-wishing influence rather than attempts at self-serving manipulation (Savani, Morris, Naidu, Kumar, & Berlia, 2011). Similarly, in the event of a natural disaster, a South Indian fishing villager refused outside help if it could not reach the entire community (Kayser, Wind, & Shankar, 2008). "Though it is a country of diversity, various cultures, various traditions, various languages, various religions, but when such calamities came, everybody came together 'What can I do to

protect or to save or to help my fellow man?"” (Kayser, Wind, & Shankar, 2008, p. 93).

Good social relationships may help protect against the harmful psychological effects of poverty in a country such as India, where there is a strong cultural value placed on family relationships (Biswas-Diener & Diener, 2001). Homeless individuals in Calcutta rated their subjective well-being higher than homeless individuals in two different states, Oregon and California, in the United States (Biswas-Diener & Diener, 2006). In fact, they rated their subjective well-being in the positive range compared to the US samples which were both in the negative range. The Calcutta sample reported significantly higher satisfaction with their overall social lives, their families, and the amount of affection, despite having poorer access to food, clean water, medical care, opportunities for employment, and adequate shelter compared to their US counterparts. Several reasons might have contributed to the results. Sharing living quarters with many other people was correlated with increased life satisfaction in India, thus shelter may be easier to come by compared to in the USA. The Calcutta sample had a higher rate of income satisfaction despite having extremely low incomes but this could be due to the lower cost of daily living in India, as well as individuals' standards to satisfaction judgments. Due to the high rates of poverty throughout India, and Calcutta in particular, there might be less social stigma attached to homelessness compared to the US, where being homeless is often seen as the result of personal failure (Biswas-Diener & Diener, 2006). It could be that a lack of basic material needs takes a psychological toll, but that individuals adapt rather well to it compared to a lack of good social relationships.

The girls in the orphanage are in particular need of strong social relationships. The caretaking function of the society instilled within the psyches of the elders in the home helped foster the protection of the girls. Traditional Indian society helps its members continue to make

deep connections with other human beings where they can rely on each other for mentorship, guidance, and help in getting through life (Kakar, 1981). I believe that despite the shortcomings of the home and some complaints by the girls that they often struggled on their own without the help of elders, they still felt that the core of any social relationship is the process of caring and mutual involvement with another human being (Kakar, 1981). The evidence of this was how they interacted with each other; they had the ability to see each other as full human beings, the good and the bad, the nice and the cruel, and were still able to work together to make the home run and enjoy each other in the process. Their relationships and interactions will be discussed in further depth in a later section.

I also saw this “community of care” (Fraenkel, 2006) in how the girls and the elders interacted with me: I was made to feel immediately part of the family. I was cared for, looked after, and worried about as if I was an older sister in the home. I was rarely alone, like many Indians (Kakar, 1981), and was almost always in close physical contact with the girls. The home was able to cultivate the importance of protective social relationships among the girls by making the girls feel that they belonged to the home and to the family. They did this in several ways.

Firstly, the family and cultural traditions in the home helped solidify the girls’ sense of belonging to the home and to the larger culture. The rituals, large and small, including the those performed for a sister’s wedding, the ritual prayer ceremony for Janu Uncle, the morning prayers and blessings, the group birthday celebrations-- all feted each girl’s place and importance in the GCH family. “[The traditional ceremonies] are the ritual reassurance that [she] belongs...they not only affirm individual identity as a family member, they consolidate the child’s and the adult’s belief that family ties are the most moral, durable, and reliable of all social relations” (Kakar, 1981, p. 122). This is most vital for these orphaned girls, whose only sense of family and

belonging is cultivated within the home.

Secondly, as the present study's observational and interview data revealed, the girls took on several roles in the home, that of comforter, protector, teacher, and disciplinarian (their roles will be explored in depth in the next section). By working together, they were acting within the home's hierarchy, which in turn was informed by the larger social hierarchy in Indian society. This hierarchy in the home emphasized the girls' dependence on each other; they learned that they could be vulnerable with each other and they would in turn take care of each other.

To help unify the home, all the girls in the home shared a common last name. In Hindi the name means "of India" and it was specially chosen by the founders of the home because of the meaning. The girls have come from all over Rajasthan and last names are evidence of which caste to which they belong. *Jati* "is caste in all the immediacy of daily social relations and occupational specialization" (Kakar, 1981, p. 122). It is considered to be the social group to which an individual belongs by birth. Wanting all the girls to feel they belonged to the family and each other, they were given this last name. Through this, they became girls 'of India' and not from a specific caste. This gave them a sense of belonging to a family; it also gave them a sense of belonging to a larger society, part of the fabric of India as a whole.

The prayers sung every morning by the girls provided them with a ritual that helped solidify and bind them to each other and to the home. The singing ritual can be thought of as soothing for the girls; as they sing they also become the listener of the song, hearing the song sung by them and to them, perhaps reminiscent of a mother's lullaby, possibly reconnecting to a mother, a recuperation of the lost object (Racker, 1951). This diminishes the loneliness of the girls and can be seen as a self-regulatory act, a way to master the threat of trauma, and the fear of

being abandoned once again by emphasizing protection by the gods and by their community (Kohut, 1957).

The girls also experienced the daily living of being in India, with the hot summers and downpours during the monsoon season. Every time the skies opened up and the monsoon rain came pouring down, the girls rejoiced and danced in the rain, along with their neighbors and countless other Indians across the state and country. Embracing the monsoon rains did not only occur in the home, but also in the wider “exosystem” of the neighborhood. To revisit an observation described in the results:

July 5<sup>th</sup> 2010: It was starting to rain. Other girls have gotten hold of a bucket and are filling it up and then dumping it on each other. The girls scream in delight. I stand with some of the older girls as the rain dissipates. We lean against the ledge of the balcony, letting the rain soak through our clothing, and take in the now wet neighborhood, and *dancing neighbors*. I say to Rupa (15) that people in New York tend to go inside when it rains. She cannot believe it: “why, didi? I love the rain; *everyone here loves the rain*”.

I italicized a few words in the above excerpt from an observation as I want to highlight that the girls’ excitement and joy about the rains allowed them to feel part of a greater society than just the home. “Everyone here loves the rain” and one could finish the sentence with “and we do too; see we belong also”. The girls feel a greater emotional connection to the culture and society, fostering a sense of belonging to something greater than themselves.

### **Family Dynamics: The Girls’ Experiences of Having Defined Roles in the Home**

The second theme expected to emerge from the data was that the girls’ experience of having defined roles in the home would contribute to their sense of well-being and thus aid in

their resilience. This overarching theme contained the following themes from the observational, photographic, and interview data: *Role of girls as comforter/protector, Role of older girls as disciplinarians/leaders/role models/teachers, Working together as a family, Girls taking care of each other.*

If one thinks of the home not as an orphanage but as a large family, one inevitably comes across familial successes and failures witnessed and experienced in any family. Structural Family Therapy (SFT) views families as open systems subject to influences from within and outside the family system. Problems are viewed as resulting from imbalances and/or rigidity within the family. Specifically, when families have difficulty adapting to developmental stressors or environmental challenges, problems manifest (Minuchin, 1974). STF posits universal characteristics of family organization and functioning. These include family hierarchies, rules, and boundaries. A family is considered functional when there is a good “fit” between the family’s structure and the family’s developmental and social needs (Walsh, 2003b).

**Clear roles, clear understanding: sources of resilience.**

As outlined in the literature review, the overt hierarchy of a traditional Hindu family is male-dominated, although covertly, women do have a substantive amount of power (Roland, 1988). The hierarchy at GCH, where no males lived in the home, and only a few males were connected to the home, did not contain the same elements as a typical Indian household. However, I did arrive in the home only a year after the patriarch, Janu Uncle (as he was known to the girls) died, and so I was able to observe the lingering effects of his decidedly traditional male presence. It was evident from some observations and excerpts from the girls’ interviews that he held much power in the home, making decisions for the home and helping the girls with their problems. In the words of one participant, “he (Janu Uncle) was a very good man and he

had [a] Sunday meeting and...we used to tell our problems, and he used to give solutions.” Even in his death, he continued to symbolically reign over the girls as there was a large portrait of him hanging in the common area where the girls ate their meals. To honor him, a fresh garland of flowers was placed over the portrait every day. As several of the oldest sisters told me, he also provided the girls with love and this feeling of love disappeared when he died. With his death, the hierarchy in the home became more tenuous, as discussed below.

Hierarchical conflict was mitigated by more concrete implementations set up in the home. The structure of the home -- meaning how the home is set up, how it was run, and what was expected of the girls in terms of the roles they played in the home --was of vital importance. These expectations helped structure the girls and also made the home feel more like a large extended family than an orphanage.

The four rooms in the home were arranged without age segregation, meaning that each room housed girls of varying ages. An older sister was assigned to each room and the sisters were evenly distributed between the rooms, each containing the youngest children to the middle group to the oldest group. The oldest girl, Janya, had her own room as she needed the quiet to study for her college classes. The older girls who took care of the youngest ones were paired together in a room, much like a mother and child would sleep together in a traditional Hindu household (Kakar, 1981; Roland, 1988), and their beds were placed close together, furthering the symbiotic close relationship characteristic of the typical mother-child relationship in India referred to in the literature review. This arrangement of the children in rooms helped foster a family-like atmosphere that would not have been the case if the girls were segregated by age, which would have resulted in a more institutional feel. The girls in their respective rooms were often seen playing together and taking care of each other, such as fixing each other's hair; much

like real sisters would do in a large Hindu home.

The girls were often assigned clear roles such as taking care of the little girls, cooking meals for the family, cleaning the kitchen, doing their laundry, cleaning their rooms, and fetching vegetables from the market. The oldest girls were given the roles of caretaker, teacher, role model, and disciplinarian helping the youngest girls learn household skills. The skills and knowledge acquired in the home prepared them for running their own household one day, similar to how the youngest girls in a joint family would be the apprentices of the older women in a traditional Hindu family (Kakar, 1981). The oldest girls also spoke of their role in taking care of each other as something that made them feel good inside. This caretaking function will be revisited later in the section on the sister relationships as it is at the core of their roles and of the nature of their relationships as sisters.

One could say that the girls maintained a sense of cohesion because of the *dharmic* rules that were imposed on them by the hierarchy of the home (Kakar, 1981). The girls continued with their “good deeds” even if they sometimes were in conflict with each other. They have been raised in a home and in a society that aims to look out for the good of the whole as opposed to the good of the individual. The girls knew what was expected of them as members of the household and family and they adhered to these social rules. *Dharma* can be seen here as the social cement of the home, binding the girls to each other and society as a whole. Here again, the cultural context is of utmost importance in maintaining the harmony of the home. However, it was also the case that the roles were at times more fluid and interchangeable as the hierarchical boundaries were more permeable. And much like any family with shifting hierarchies, this often caused conflict in the home.

**Disrupted hierarchies, disrupted family: sources of continued difficulty.**

In any given Hindu household, there are multiple hierarchical relationships (Roland, 1988) but the roles are usually stable and clear. Ostensibly, the hierarchy in home while I was there consisted of: Geeta Auntie → Kanti (the warden) → Rita (another caretaker) → me → Janya (oldest sister) → the older girls (ages 15-17) → the middle girls (11-14) → the youngest girls (4-10). However, hierarchies in the home seemed more unstable and confusing at times than in a traditional home. Although, Geeta was considered to be the head of the household, she was at times a distant figure partly due to her grief at the loss of her husband and her health difficulties. She admitted to not spending as much time with the girls as she would have liked. As a result of her not consistently enacting her position of hierarchy, among the girls and the warden, several substitute hierarchical relationships emerged. There were also multiple hierarchies within the groups of girls. One of the difficulties in the home was that Kanti took a rather distant approach to caretaking and was not often seen with the girls. In addition, the girls openly talked about not liking some of her characteristics and at times openly defying her and her authority. Rita, the other caretaker, was often cruel with the little girls, or ineffectual as a caretaker; she often acted more like a child than the girls.

Another difficulty as captured by the photographs and the interviews, was the sense that both Kanti and Janya, the oldest girl, used “partiality” to make certain decisions and the other girls believed this to be unfair. Janya took the role of a “parental child,” having been allocated the role by the home’s warden and founder (Minuchin 1974; Walsh, 2003b). In this role, she was caught between the sum total of challenges by all her sisters, who often displaced onto her their anger about lack of a true mother figure, and the rewards of her coveted position, power and alliance with the elders in the home. Janya also shared with me that she often felt that no one

loved her. Her allocated role of parentified sister often clashed with her own childhood need to be mothered. This hindered her ability to take on her role effectively and fairly.

### **The Quality of the Girls' Relationships with Staff and Peers**

Having in place the structure of Indian society and culture, combined with this particular orphanage, helped establish and nurture the interpersonal relationships among the girls and the few elders in the home. The home created a safe containing environment helping to buffer the girls against their parental loss and helped foster strong ties particularly among the sisters.

The data from the ethnographic observations, the subjects of the participants' photographs, and the interviews with the six oldest girls converged on several themes centering on relationships in the home. These themes included: *My role in the home, Special relationship with Geeta Auntie, Relationship with other staff, Girls taking care of each other/love between girls, Girls playing together, Fights between girls/mistreatment of girls, Feelings of anger and dislike with sisters, Feelings of hurt and sadness because of sisters, Love for sisters and feelings of closeness, Thoughts and feeling about Geeta Auntie and Janu Uncle, Feelings towards warden, and Relationships with other elders in home and neighborhood.*

The sister relationships were prominent in their daily lives. It was not only the positive and loving aspects of the relationships that the girls cherished; but also the negative aspects, the fighting, the arguing, that the girls highlighted as part of their lives. As one participant put it beautifully, "if nobody was here, I would be alone and it would be no fun...I need some sisters to play with, to fight with both." The six oldest girls in the home were able to talk about the loving as well as not so loving feelings about their sisters without fear that the feelings would destroy the relationships. Within the supportive and containing atmosphere of the home, these sister relationships thrived in all their dynamic aspects, good, bad, ugly, and allowed the girls to have

the experience of loving and caring for each other as well as hating and dismissing each other, a truly human experience. These positive and negative experiences may have helped them feel “normal” and just like other sisters in a more traditional family. They could treat each other like “real sisters” where there is love and hate mixed together. In the following section, the sisterhood of the girls at GCH will be examined first followed by an examination of the girls’ relationships with the elders in the home.

### **Understanding the sisterhood at Geeta Children’s Home.**

#### ***Mistreatment and mistrust: negative aspects of the sisterhood.***

Up until only recently, the psychoanalytic literature has downplayed the importance of the sibling relationship beyond experiences fueling feelings of envy, rivalry, and competition for the love of the parents (Freud, 1951). Indeed, observations of the girls in the home revealed relations that were often negative and cruel. However, these children were not overtly competing for a parent’s love. The hurt feelings that some older girls talked about during the interviews related to feeling left out by two sisters, or not feeling loved by certain sisters. Instead of competing with each other for a parent’s love, they at times appeared to be competing for another sister’s attention. The cruelty and mistreatment of younger sisters by the older sisters that I witnessed appeared to be a way to discharge some aggression onto each other (Neubauer, 1983). At times, this aggression was difficult to watch as it took on a cruel dimension. How can this behavior be understood in light of the “care-taking” societal ideals of India?

There could be two things going on. First, if one views the home as a large family, the mistreatment could be seen as a part of the multigenerational transmission process being passed from one generation of sisters to the next. Multigenerational transmission process refers to the pattern that emerges over generations as lower levels of intrapsychic and interpersonal

differentiation (that is, difficulty separating emotion from thought and a tendency to respond to others on the basis of emotional reactions rather than on emotions first processed by reflection) are transmitted from parents to children (Bowen, 1978). In the orphanage, where sisters are mothering sisters without proper skills, a lack of emotional differentiation, and with their own sense of maternal loss, it is inevitable that interaction patterns become negatively skewed. Cruelty often happened when the older sister became frustrated with the younger sister because she was not doing what she was supposed to be doing, thus risking the older sister getting in trouble with the warden because she was not doing her job of helping her younger sister. The older sister would react with frustration which quickly turned into anger and violence, while the younger sister reacted to the violence with increased fear and refusal to cooperate. This only enraged the older sister more who would eventually strike out and then give up and abandon. Perhaps having unconscious experiences of their own mistreatment and abandonment evoked, they may have wished to induce their pain into others as a way to manage their sense of abandonment and loss (Akhtar, 2011).

The moments of cruelty between sisters stand in stark contrast to the general belief that Indians treat each other with maternal care. It may be that the daily rituals (prayers, sayings) emphasizing this ideology of care partially serve as a shared defense (idealization) that “defends against the guilty recognition of having injured others in fact or fantasy” (Akhtar, 2011, p. 155). The idealization perpetuates the “all good” view of the world and oneself and helps to protect the girls against unconscious conflicts and feelings of abandonment. The girls could be using the cultural ideology of the care-taking, interdependent Indian society as a defense mechanism and as a self-regulatory device in the attempt to soothe themselves (personal communication, Fraenkel, 2011). Combining rationalization, intellectualization, and idealization (Freud, 1968),

these beliefs serve to highlight the positives of the home and society, (i.e. ‘my sisters care for me, India cares for me’) while downplaying the negatives, (i.e. ‘my sisters are impatient and cruel towards me;’ ‘I was abandoned’) and may help mitigate the effects of mistreatment.

Rationalization and intellectualization might be used by the little girls to help soothe themselves during a traumatic time – e.g, ‘this is okay because I know my sisters love me because they have loved me and cared for me in the past because we are sisters and we all love each other, as people do in India.’

Along with the mistreatment and cruelty, there was a significant amount of mistrust between some of the girls when it came to keeping secrets. In the individual interviews, several of the older girls stated that some girls were not good at keeping secrets. One stated that she preferred to share her secrets with her school friends than with her sisters because “secrets get opened” in the home. This mistrust was also evident during the group conversation that took place after the individual interviews. The girls were reluctant to speak up when in the group and were reticent to share any thoughts or feelings with the group, in contrast to the open atmosphere during the individual interviews. This can be understood in several ways. Firstly, the girls felt unsafe, perhaps due to the hierarchical confusion in the home (Minuchin, 1974). Often it was not clear if the oldest sister Janya was allied with the sisters or with the elders, and some girls feared that other sisters would reveal the nature of their photographs to the elders. Secondly, many of the photographs taken were of each other, for positive and negative reasons. They may have wanted to avoid the anxiety that came along with revealing favoritism (which sister made another happy) or retribution (which sister caused another’s sadness). Thirdly, during the individual interviews, the girls knew that I would eventually leave the home and thus take anything they had told me in confidence with me. Their secret inner thoughts and feelings were

safe with me as I was neither part of the permanent structure of their home nor part of the community. Fourthly, it is theorized that because of the permeable outer ego boundaries that are part of intensely intimate relationships within the familial hierarchy where there is not much privacy, individuals develop another inner ego boundary whose aim is to create inner psychological space and protect a highly private self, abundant with its feelings and fantasies (Roland, 1988). Though the girls got along and loved each other deeply, they each maintained an inner psychological space that was kept private, filled with their feelings and fantasies. It is no wonder then when speaking in a group about what made them happy and sad, they were restrained about sharing these deeply private inner feelings with each other.

Perhaps the quality of the sister relationships can be summarized by Kakar (1981) using a simile from Schopenhauer: that of hedgehogs on a cold night. They are drawn to each other for warmth, get pricked by quills and move away, only to get cold and again try to come nearer. The movement back and forth continues until an ideal position is reached, where they are not freezing and the pain inflicted by the quills is bearable. "In Indian society the optimum position entails the acceptance of more pain in order to get greater warmth" (Kakar, 1981, p. 86). We have examined the quills; the warmth will be described next.

***Love and care: positive aspects of the sisterhood.***

The negative interactions among the sisters allowed the girls to show their aggression and anger knowing that this would not destroy the sister relationship (Kernberg & Richards, 1988). These relationships were seen as necessary and supremely important to the girls and incorporated loving and close feelings, which ultimately contributed significantly to the girls' internal worlds (Kris & Ritvo, 1983; Neubauer, 1983; Kernberg & Richards, 1988; Akhtar and Kramer, 1999; Vivona, 2007). Indeed, "these loving feelings towards...siblings/peers...play a significant part

in the structure of the psyche” (Coles, 2003, p.92). The girls showed me through their play and action, and told me through their photographs and words, something that we know is true: the inherent ambivalent nature of all human love, always a combination of love and hate for the object. I witnessed acts of love and closeness among the sisters and the older girls took photographs and elaborated on their positive and loving feelings towards particular sisters during the interviews: “she is the most important person in my life,” “we treat each other as real sisters,” “she shares everything with me,” “I really adore her.” The loving aspects of the sister relationships contributed to the girls’ sense of ‘we-ness’ and community. Both Emde (1988) and Kernberg and Richards (1988) emphasize the importance of the sibling relationship to provide opportunities to foster the development of the concept of *we*. “We-ness is the beginning of the conceptual generalizations about the community of spirit with other peers. Human beings must learn this we-ness to survive” (Kernberg & Richards, 1988, p. 56). Emde (1988) states that sibling identification gives rise to a “we” ego, the inner representation of self with other. One can imagine that in a home like GCH, the concept of ‘we-ness’ would prove to be vitally important for the girls’ inner representations of themselves. Being part of the home, part of the ‘we’ of GCH allowed the girls to feel part of a community and more so part of a family to help buffer against the pain of being abandoned. This sense of belonging, this sisterhood, even if only experienced unconsciously, is vital to the girls’ sense of self and their resilience in the face of orphanhood.

As alluded to earlier in the chapter, the role of sister as caretaker was prominent in both the observations and the interviews. Roland’s (1988, 2005) familial self contains a sub-organization termed “symbiotic reciprocity,” that involves intensely emotional intimacy relationships, in which dependency and obedience are exchanged for strong expectations of

being taken care of, and this in turn enhances the esteem of the caregiver. The girls were gratified both when taking care of their sisters, as well as when being cared for by them. Interactions were seen of girls taking care of each other, and this could be seen with sisters who were older taking care of younger ones, as well as sisters who were the same age, playing and comforting each other. The role of the sister was given much more weight in this context of the home as the girls did not have a mother to turn to for help. Thus, things such as cooking, bathing, laundering their clothes, cutting and taking care of their hair, were taught or done by the older sisters in the home in the absence of a mother. This finding was in line with other non-Western research on siblings observing the phenomenon of “second mothers” in older female siblings (Watson-Gegeo & Gegeo, 1989), although in this home some girls acted as “first mothers” to the youngest girls.

Indeed, the caretaking activity by the older sisters as well as by me in the home could be seen as mirroring the mothering role in a Hindu family. The close sleeping quarters of the girls, especially during the hottest nights when they slept downstairs, several to a bed, often with limbs intertwined is reminiscent of the traditional Hindu close sensual mother-child relationship, where physical closeness is prominent and a child is rarely left alone (Roland, 1988). This closeness did not only happen during sleeping states, be it in the middle of the day for a nap or the night time sleep, but also during any sort of large gathering, walking to school, watching television, and family meetings. The girls would comfortably hold each other’s hands, lean on each other, and caress each other. This closeness with each other recreated a sense of being mothered, something all of them lacked, and helped cultivate a sense of dependence and interdependence that is far more valued than autonomy and separation in this society (Kakar, 1981). This in turn fosters a sense of self that is more inclusive of “we-ness” (Roland, 1988), creating a closer

interconnection of inner images of self and others. The girls' ego boundaries were much more permeable compared to their Western counterparts to constant affective exchanges and emotional connectedness with others (Roland, 1988) and thus created a heightened empathic attunement with others that was sensitive to nonverbal communication. Revisiting an observation described in the previous chapter:

July 21<sup>st</sup> 2010: Priti (5) gets up from the seat during homework time and goes to see Tiya (15). She shows Tiya her cut on her hand from the morning, when she fell on the street. Tiya looks at it and then takes Priti's cheek and kisses it. She kisses the other cheek and then Priti kisses her cheek. Both smile and Priti returns to her seat.

Without words being exchanged, Tiya sensed what Priti needed at that time and Priti was gratified with an act of love and affection. Though the girls in the home do not experience the intense one-on-one mothering that they may have had if they had not been abandoned, the girls themselves re-created this mothering to the best of their ability. This close, physical, sensual mothering creates an inner core of well-being and a profound sense of protection, such as Priti experienced in this moment. This inner core comes with an expectation that you can somehow rely on others, strengthening the person against great struggles and deprivation (Kakar, 1981). One could hypothesize that by mothering each other, the girls also satisfied their own needs to be mothered (Pines, 1988), thus meeting a part of their attachment needs.

In addition, the sister relationships and the number of girls in the home provided them with ample opportunities to form several meaningful relationships. The large home, with the varying ages, provided the younger girls, as well as the older girls, several good chances to form close bonds with each other. Similarly, the girls in the home were part of a well-defined

community of girls and women, providing ample opportunity to experience autonomy and power, along with the experience of feminine and familiar intimacy (Kakar, 1981).

As further evidence of the strong relationships between sisters, the sisters who left the home, either for college or because they got married, continued to stay in contact with the girls still at GCH. Through telephone calls, emails, and social media sites such as Facebook, the girls maintained the ties of the GCH sisterhood. In addition, the girls who moved away often came back to the home for visits. When I was in the home, one sister who was married the previous year, returned to the home for Ashna's wedding, as well as for the death anniversary of Janu Uncle. This tells us that the girls are not merely living together in an orphanage but are active participants in a family and the relationships continue even when there is considerable distance between them. It could be said that the girls have internalized the sister relationships and even when they have not seen each other for a while can conjure up the relationship with a particular sister in their mind. The sister relationship remain strong even when the girls are no longer living together, much like in a real family when the children leave home to carry on with their own lives.

#### **Relationship with the elders in the home.**

Contributing to their sense of well-being and resilience, the girls fostered relationships with elders in and around the home, including with me. The quality of the relationships the girls had with the female elders echoed the ambivalent nature of the sister relationships. The nature of the relationships with the male elders was one of idealization and love; hate and anger was strikingly missing.

The relationships with the female elders, notably with Geeta Auntie and Kanti, were marked with myriad of emotions: confusion, anger, love, respect, dislike. Both of these women

were in the role of mother figures. Geeta, as described above, did not spend as much time with the girls as she would have liked. Kanti, and Rita, a member of the staff and designated caretaker, were seen as the primary caregivers to the girls. Yet neither Kanti nor Rita acted like a typical Indian mother, with a close and sensual physical relationship; both were at times distant from the girls. Kanti was not seen very often in the day-to-day activities of the girls; Rita was with the girls much more, but was often cruel or immature and not effective in her role as a caregiver. Since the opening of the home, Geeta recalled, it has been difficult to find appropriate women to fill the role of caregiver, women who were educated but also wanted to live in the home full time. Perhaps sensing this distance and lack of warmth, the girls attempted to gain this closeness from one another; trying to find an attachment figure whom they could rely on. Much like the orphans in the war nurseries (Freud, 1973), the girls attached to each other in the face of not having a primary caregiver. Geeta and Kanti did provide the girls with advice and help when it was sought and thus formed a feminine sphere, buffering the girls against the patriarchal values of the outside world (Kakar, 1981). Indeed, both of them were educated women, passing on the value of education and self-worth to the girls.

The need for attachment figures, the porous quality of interpersonal boundaries and perhaps the Indian collectivism (everyone available cares for everyone else) allowed the girls to connect with me deeply and quickly. I was taken into the home immediately and made to feel as if I had always belonged. By most of the girls I was viewed as an “all-good object,” someone whom they could rely on for warmth, love, and affection. The little girls sought me out for comfort and a motherly touch; the older girls sought counsel from me for various problems. The girls often encouraged to me join them downstairs to sleep at night, ostensibly because of the heat, but possibly because I was seen as a mothering figure and could then fulfill the maternal

requirement of being physical close to the children at all times (Roland, 1988) . There were many instances when the girls, big or small, initiated physical contact with me, be it through hand holding, hugs, prolonged holding, actions that clearly gave them (and myself) great gratification. Being part of the family, I as well found myself craving the afternoon nap with the littlest girls with limbs thrown around me and hands being held.

My relationship with Pia, the youngest girl in the home, often placed me in the role of a maternal object. She sought me out to temporarily relieve her yearning for an attachment figure. Bearing witness to cruelty inflicted on her by her sisters, I felt protective of her. Though we did not speak each other's languages, she must have understood this at a nonverbal level. She sought me out when feeling down or sick. I was also told by one of the girls that she often said that she was going to tell "Kate didi" if someone was mistreating her.

The girls' relationships with the male elders in the home and surrounding area were laced with idealized, overwhelmingly positive thoughts and feelings. Janu Uncle, the founder of the home, was the family's patriarch. Though he had died the previous year, he still played a prominent role in the minds of several of the girls. One girl stated that he was "like a god for us, who opened this house," clearly an idealized and saintly figure.

The girls' tutor, who came to the home every afternoon to help with homework, also became the object of the girls' affection and idealizations. Several girls took pictures of him for the project and said that he made them and "all the sisters" feel good and happy. He could be seen as an idealized father figure, an image of the girls' hopes and wishes for a loving and all-knowing father. He might have also played a role in the girls' developing sense of femininity and sexuality, as one participant stated along with several other positive attributes, he was a "good husband" and then giggled widely. Similarly, during my ethnographic observations, there were

several interactions with the youngest girls and the home's gardener, whom they called "Papa." He also acted as a father, teaching them about the garden, helping them learn how to mow the lawn, and picking them up from school. He was clearly a source of gratification for the youngest girls, much like the gardeners were for the Hampstead war nursery children (Freud, 1973). Both these figures could be seen as substitute oedipal figures, replacing the absent father in the girls' lives.

When one speaks of the relationships between the girls and the elders, attachment relationships come to mind. The question remains in which ways the western bound attachment categories, mentioned in the literature review, are useful or not in understanding this population. There are two main reasons why I think the classifications are not useful in aiding us to further understanding the girls of GCH. Firstly, inherent in the definition of the attachment categories is the concept of a relationship between a child and a primary caregiver; one is securely attached or insecurely attached to one's primary caregiver. In this population of orphan girls, no primary caregiver is available. Thus, already the western bound attachment categories fall short as they do not include other relationships beyond ones with maternal and paternal attachment figures. For the categories to be useful in this population, they would have to be broader in their definition of an attachment relationship. The girls at GCH had multiple attachment relationships with several people: Geeta Auntie, Kanti, myself, the girls' tutor, for example. And each of these relationships meant something different to each of the girls. Some were closer to Kanti, some felt more attached to Geeta Auntie. These relationships could not be put in a distinct category. I would even go so far as to say that one girl might have been "securely attached" to Geeta Auntie, but "ambivalently" attached to Kanti. In this population, it is very difficult to use the western bound attachment categories as several meaningful relationships coexist for the girls.

Secondly, the attachment categories do not take into account the culture of this population. The western bound classifications use a western philosophy and psychology to inform the definitions of a secure and insecure attachment, and inherently then what is a healthy or unhealthy relationship. As outlined in the literature review and in early parts of this chapter, the Indian relationships, particularly the maternal relationships, are quite different from the western maternal relationship. A close, almost symbiotic, relationship that a mother has with her child is considered the norm in this population. These girls do not have a close maternal relationship, but they have close physical relationship with each other. This closeness is an important aspect of their social relationships with each other and is informed by their culture. Using the western bound attachment categories, one might conclude that the close relationship is considered “unhealthy.” But this conclusion would be ignoring the important and culturally appropriate ways of interacting with others. The western bound attachment categories do not leave room for culturally appropriate ways of social interaction, that could be different but still healthy, in other cultures. Thus, the attachment categories are not useful in trying to gain more understanding of this population.

### **The Girls’ Sense of Their Own Spirituality**

One of the themes posited to be important to the girls’ overall sense of well-being and thus contribute to their resilience was their sense of spirituality. The following themes contributed to this overarching theme: *Religious and family tradition*, *Faith in a higher being*, and *Family traditions*. All girls participated in spiritual practices yet only one girl spoke of it in her interview indicating the importance of a multi-method research approach—relying on both interviews and observations together.

Several of my observations pointed to the girls benefitting from a sense of spirituality.

Each morning, the girls gathered to sing the “morning prayers,” a collection of four songs sung in a circle. This family ritual contributed to their sense of spirituality and community. Likewise, the incense and blessing ritual performed every morning by Geeta provided the girls with a sense of being blessed as well as a sense of community, as everyone took part in the ritual. These served to strengthen their spirituality. When the time came to honor Janu Uncle’s death anniversary, the girls observed and took part in the elaborate ritual with curiosity and intensity. When asked to participate in the ritual, they did so with elegance and grace, clearly appreciating the importance and power of their actions. Acting together as a community in a spiritual way strengthened their sense of family, making each girl feel that she belonged to the family (Kakar, 1981), and thus could be understood as contributing to a girl’s positive experiences in the home.

Only one participant spoke of her love of god as something that made her feel happy and contributed to her sense of well-being. She gained strength from her relationship with god and proclaimed that god was her best friend. Clearly her sense of spirituality and the important role that it played in her life helped combat her feelings of sadness and loneliness. Indeed, god as a substitute attachment figure has been theorized and researched (Kirkpatrick, 1999), particularly when there is a loss of a parental attachment figure. “Attachment to god may confer the kinds of psychological benefits associated with secure interpersonal attachments” (Kirkpatrick, 1999, p. 818).

### **Other Themes Found Contributing to the Girls’ Sense of Well-being**

In addition to the above themes, several other categories of themes came to light during the research. One of the domains that emerged that brought the girls happiness was Hobbies and Pastimes, which included *Singing and dancing aspirations*, and *Books as best friends, comfort, escape, and entertainment*. It is not surprising that both of these themes contributed to the girls’

happiness as they are activities that many other individuals around the world enjoy doing. Two girls talked at length about enjoying learning new songs and dances from different movies. They enjoyed being able to express themselves and learn new skills. They also gained pleasure from looking into the future and seeing themselves as stars, with the recognition and power that comes from being a star, much like many adolescents around the world (Raviv, Bar-Tal, Raviv, Ben-Horin, 1996). Perhaps this thought kept other thoughts at bay, such as being abandoned and left by their biological parents. The three girls who talked about reading as an activity that made them happy, spoke of the enjoyment they received from being completely absorbed by a story. Another girls stated that “whenever I feel sad or happy or if I want to forget everything else, I would read Harry Potter book,” speaking to a need to escape from certain emotions. Books transported the girls to another life and world, perhaps alleviating some of the sadness they experienced.

Another domain that materialized in the data was Femininity and Body Awareness, included under it were *Pride in appearance and interest in clothes*, *Emerging sexuality and femininity*, and *Pop star as mentor and inspiration*. By trying on new clothes and modeling them in front of the mirror or each other, the girls could experiment with their burgeoning femininity in the safety of the home. As described in the literature review, Indian girls have the myth of *Sita* to guide them in their pursuit of womanhood. “The ideal of womanhood incorporated by *Sita* is one of chastity, purity, gentle tenderness” (Kakar, 1981, p. 66). These girls are beginning to learn more about their bodies and themselves, so that they can embody the ideal Indian woman, *Sita*. But these girls are also adolescent girls who are growing up in the age of the internet and they can learn about other embodiments of a feminine ideal from overseas. The girls may have looked to these pop stars as a way to gain knowledge about how to become strong successful women, as

they could not turn to a mother for these personal matters (Raviv, Bar-Tal, Raviv, & Ben-Horin, 1996). They can take a little bit from each world, the world of Sita and also the pop world of Shakira to learn more about how they can develop into strong independent, but gentle and tender women.

**Summary: Contributors to the Girls' Resilience.**

The themes posited and explored above come together and contribute to the girls' experience of growing up in an orphanage, with a focus on the girls' sense of well-being and their resilience in the face of trauma, which is inherent when experiencing parental loss and abandonment. The sense of belonging to the home and greater society, having defined roles and places in the home, experiencing close relationships with the elders and particularly with each other, and being in touch with their spirituality can be seen as four buttresses supporting the girls' resilience. Though I did not administer a quantitative measure of resilience, the girls' warden filled out CBCL-II (Achenbach, 1991) and the YABCL (Achenbach, 1996) to give an overall assessment of the girls' psychosocial functioning. As detailed in the results chapter, the mean Total score, as well as the Externalizing and Internalizing scores fell below the recognized clinical cut-off of a T-score of 65, for both the CBCL-II and the YABCL. This suggested that the girls managed well despite the inherent trauma of being parentless. This finding is in contrast with other studies that found higher instances of internalizing disorders in orphaned children from various parts of the world, albeit using different measures (Makame, Ani & Grantham-McGregor, 2002; Atwinea, Cantor-Graaea, & Najunirweb, 2005; Erol, Simsek, & Munir, 2010). Though no definitive conclusion can be drawn as the present study was not a comparison study, it would appear that the girls are coping relatively better than other orphaned children around the world. This speaks to the structures implemented at Geeta Children's Home that have helped the

girls with positive experiences and thus help their resilience.

As detailed in the second chapter, a cross-cultural examination of resilience not only takes into account the individual's personality traits, but also incorporates the child's family, community and culture in order to better account for the influence of the child's context when trying to find health related resources and positive resilient experiences (Ungar, 2008).

Resilience can be understood as a social ecological construct (Ungar, 2010), meaning that a child's social and ecological environment has to become a facilitating environment, which then potentiates positive development. The child must navigate towards certain health resources, and have the individual capacity to negotiate for those resources. The child's internal capacities must be supported by the quality of the child's social ecology.

The social ecological environment of the girls in the home helped provide the necessary resources for the girls to be able to negotiate experiences of positive growth despite loss and hardship -- in other words, resilience. All four themes found across the multiple methods can be seen as providing a context of culturally appropriate health-related resources made available to the girls. Due to the home being located in India, one can hypothesize that India's socio-centric society with its emphasis on a collective caretaking function (Kakar, 1981) provides the girls with much needed protection against the psychological impact of being parentless. Further, the home and the way it is set up and run offers the girls a safe, containing environment, with the space to experience all facets of human life, without fear that they will be abandoned and left alone once again. The home emphasizes certain expectations and rituals, the prayers in the morning, the daily blessings by Geeta, the shared last name, the arrangement of the rooms, in order to provide a family-like atmosphere in the home, thus attempting to give the girls a sense of belonging, something that they desperately need and want. The country and home together

provide the girls with a sense of being Indian and from India and bind them together as a unit.

The strong sister relationships between the girls give them a sense of true sisterhood, where they are cared for, looked after, loved, and scolded, and accepted as being members of the same family. This makes experiences of well-being possible in the face of adversity.

### **A Caveat: Feelings of Longing and Loss**

Despite the structures in place to help the girls navigate towards positive experiences, feelings of longing and loss were evident. I witnessed several incidents and exchanges that made me wonder how they would differ if the girls had not lost their mother and father. Likewise, some of the girls described experiences of not feeling loved and had questions about their biological parents. It is important to explore these feelings of longing to get a richer and better understanding of the girls' experiences of growing up in this home.

Mental pain “consists of a wordless sense of self-rupture, longing, and psychic helplessness that is vague and difficult to convey to others” (Akhtar, 2000, p. 220) and comes after the loss of a significant object. Though they might not consciously experience it, the girls are left with trying to find ways to defend against and understand their feelings of longing and sense of abandonment. Some talked to each other, as one girl told me, about why they were left. Others, it appeared, tried hard to understand the role of a mother and her responsibility to care for her children, as was apparent in the repeated exchanges I had with Ishita (11) about my many children:

I: Where are your children di?

K: Oh, they are at home, sleeping.

I: Did you forget them?

K: No, I didn't forget them. They are sleeping now. Or I hope they are sleeping.

I: I think you forgot them. I think you lost them.

K: Lost them? Oh no, they are at home waiting for me.

I: But I think you have trouble remembering all of them.

K: I do?

I: Yes, you do, because you have so many, like 500 children.

K: 500 children?! Wow, that is a lot.

I: No, maybe 1000. You have 1000 children and you lose them all the time.

K: Oh no. How do I keep track of all of them?

I: You can't. They are too many.

In a playful tone and exchange that happened every Saturday when I would walk with the older girls to school without the youngest girls, Ishita voiced wonderment and concern about my many children and my thoughtlessness in forgetting them. She placed me in the role of a mother and tried to understand what role a mother has in protecting her children. Perhaps she wondered at the time if her mother “forgot” her and “lost” her and that was why she was at GCH. Prior to arriving at GCH the year before, she was at the government orphanage where she had been since she was an infant. Perhaps the only way she could reconcile being abandoned was that her mother had simply lost her, without any malevolent or conscious decision to leave her.

Other girls employed a number of defenses in order to keep the pain at bay. As previously mentioned in the section about the sister relationships, the girls seemed to use idealization to maintain the view of an “all good” world. They might have acted out and attempted to induce the pain into others to be rid of it. Or they might have attempted to deny being dependent on others (Akhtar, 2011). When talking about her biological parents to me, one girl stated that she had “forgotten about them now.” As a way to cope with the devastation of

being abandoned, she denied and repressed all memories of her biological parents, in hopes of not being weighed down by her dependency needs and accompanying overwhelming emotions (Akhtar, 2011).

The older girls spoke to me at times about not feeling taken care of by the elders in the home. They stated that they had everything they needed in terms of basic necessities, but they did not receive the love that they had previously felt when Janu Uncle was alive, or when they were younger. Not receiving the love they crave from the elders, they turned to each other to try and fill that void. I believe at times they were successful and felt nurtured and cared for by their sisters, although I think they still longed to be looked after by a mother.

There were moments when I felt that the girls yearned for a maternal attachment figure, especially in the times when they just wanted the close physical contact and individual alone time with me. There was a visceral feeling coming from the girls of a need for longing and closeness that I experienced when I was with the girls. I also felt that this differed depending on the girl, not all of them openly expressed this wish. In particular among the little girls, Pia reached out to me for comfort, physical and otherwise. I spoke to Kanti, the warden, about Pia appearing to need this closeness more than the other little girls. She agreed. We discussed the fit between the home and the girls. Much like in attachment theory and the goodness-of-fit between mothers and babies, there appeared to be an issue of degree of goodness of fit between the home and the individual girls (Chess & Thomas, 1999). Although acknowledging the importance of innate temperament, goodness-of-fit theorists argue that developmental outcome is in fact predicted by the interaction, or fit, between a child's temperament and the demands or expectations of her or his environment (Chess & Thomas, 1999). Kanti spoke of how some girls appeared to adjust better to the home, with many girls and only a few caregivers. At the time, it

was thought that Pia was having a more difficult time adjusting to the lack of attention than the two other little girls.

### **Clinical Implications**

#### **Recommendations for GCH.**

Geeta Children's Home did fall short when it came to cultivating ties to stable adults in the home. As previously explored, many girls felt closer to each other and felt that they could only rely on each other for help and support. This might have been because they felt that they were often treated unfairly by the warden, who used "partiality" when dealing with certain girls. GCH should strive to have more female caregivers in the home, who can act as substitute mothers. This would help the littlest girls with their needs and it would also alleviate the older girls who are in charge of taking care of the youngest. While it is still important for the girls to have roles in the home, and in particular to care for their younger sisters, it would contribute to the structure of the home to have several maternal women who could continue to cultivate the sense of family among the girls.

There is a belief and mandate in the home to take care of each other without instructions about how to in fact do it. The older sisters in the home should get better training on how to be a better sister. They should receive training that teaches concrete skills to ensure that they can manage difficult scenarios. Armed with these skills, they could better function when the something goes awry without becoming overwhelmed. This might make a big difference to the harmony of the home and would help strengthen the relationships among the sisters, as the older girls would not resort to violence and the younger girls would not be paralyzed with fear.

#### **Wider implications.**

The plight of orphaned children often fall on individuals, organizations, and countries

alike to find solutions to battle against the pain of parental loss. Geeta Children's Home took a particular approach to help young Indian girls, and the present study suggests that certain structures implemented in the home created an atmosphere of family and love. The practices utilized in this institution could help inform other orphanages how to foster a family-like atmosphere conducive to positive development in the children. The following practices could be implemented:

- Having children of different ages staying in the same room to foster a sense of family.
- Creating daily rituals for the children to perform which are particular to the home and culture to emphasize a sense of belonging.
- Implementing culturally specific roles for the children to perform on a daily basis that support the principles of collective responsibility for the home (Wolff & Fesseha, 1999) so the children feel they are contributing to the family in a meaningful way.

### **Strengths and Limitations of Present Study**

The present research utilized a multi-method approach to examining Indian girls' experiences of growing up in an orphanage. A strength of the present study lay in the use of multiple methods to gather data. This allowed me to observe things that were not present in the photographic and interview data, and learn things the interviews provided that could not be discerned from the observations alone. It also added strength to particular results as things that I observed were often then photographed and discussed in the interviews. Due to the design, I was also provided with multiple viewpoints of the home: mine, the staff's, as well as the oldest girls'. While I recorded the daily observations of the children and staff, the girls choose what to photograph and what to discuss with me, thus bringing different perspectives to the data collected.

Despite the varied methods which provided breadth in understanding their lives, there were several limitations to the research. Firstly, the research was time-limited and only took place over a couple of months in the home. Due to my schedule, I could only afford to be in the home for two and a half months. True ethnographic data collection uses a benchmark of one year as sufficient time spent within a community. In one year, the researcher experiences a full cycle of activities across all seasons, and holidays (Reimer, 2009). Given the pressures of finishing my doctorate, I could not take a full year to be in the home but tried to be there for an extended period of time. Being there for only 10 weeks limited my exposure to the girls and their daily experiences.

Secondly, ethnographic research is invariably affected by the researcher's own biases, seeing events through one's own eyes. "We bring our cultural selves with us wherever we go, and even with the best of intentions, an ethnographer can never see life completely through another person's eyes.... 'However objective they may seem, there is an autobiographical dimension to all ethnographies'" (Crapanzano, 1977, p. 72 as quoted in Reimer, 2009). What I observed and recorded was filtered through my own life experiences and was influenced by my own autobiography. To mitigate against the potential bias, I asked the oldest girls to take photographs and describe in their own words things that made them feel happy and sad. The results that I found using ethnographic observations also came to light through the girls' photographs, thus giving my observations significant weight and power.

Thirdly, I embarked on this research knowing that I was at a significant disadvantage because I did not speak Hindi, the girls' native language. Though the girls spoke English in varying degrees of fluency, I was always at a disadvantage because I could not know the exact words used among the girls. I often asked what was spoken to be translated, but I could not do

this every time the girls spoke to each other; it would have been too intrusive on my part.

Therefore, I used my powers of observations and ability to pick up on non-verbal cues, plus my growing vocabulary of Hindi, to attempt to get an understanding of the particular situation. I sometimes pretended that I was observing a group of infants, and therefore focused in on the girls' behaviors and nonverbal communication. Despite my attempts, I often felt that I was not grasping the entire situation. If I were fluent in Hindi, the observations would have been richer in detail.

Fourthly, while the research did employ a variety of methods, the data was mostly collected using ethnographic and qualitative methods. This was due to the restrictions imposed on the research as the board members of the home did not want to girls to feel like "experiment subjects". I could not give them any questionnaires to fill out. Thus, an understanding of their sense of well-being could not be documented by quantitative measures. However, as prominent cross-cultural researcher Michael Ungar (2008; 2010) believes, a quantitative measure is not as informative as a social constructionist qualitative approach when examining resilience across cultures.

Lastly, GCH was selected as the research site for several reasons, mainly due to opportunity. I had previously been to the home and spent time with the girls and I believed that this would help with gaining access in order to conduct the research. It is important to note that GCH is a rare orphanage, as the girls are not up for adoption and they are made to feel part of a big family. The home is kept small to help foster that experience and help give the girls enough individual attention. The girls are also raised as middle class citizens, with access to school, health care, and significant privileges that a poorer orphanage could not afford. Thus, I am fully aware that the findings in this present study may be unique to this particular home and therefore

not generalizable to the greater Indian orphan experience. However, the findings – especially the importance of fostering positive sibling relationships -- could help inform certain implementations that could help make an orphan's experience more positive in the larger and poorer orphanages around India and the world. This limitation, as well as the others mentioned is addressed in the next section on ideas for future research.

### **Future Research**

The findings discussed in this chapter reveal that the children who have lost parents and live in an orphanage are a valuable source of information about their experiences. They have shown us that despite the circumstances of their lives, they are able to successfully use the resources of the home and each other to help them navigate a path towards a positive outcome. As outlined in the literature review, the plight of orphaned children is one of hardship and setbacks. There is also a growing body of research from orphanages around the world, aside from the dreary outcome studies of children raised in Romanian orphanages. Future research should first begin with a comparison study within India. As previously mentioned, the home that was the research site for the present study was one of middle class values, with the finances to back up their philosophy. It would be interesting to see how this compares to how other orphanages are run in India, perhaps the ones that do not have such readily available resources. And though the present study benefitted from in-depth exploration and analysis of the narrative data, it might be more beneficial when comparing two homes to use a mixed methods approach, both quantitative and qualitative methods. Thus, the quantitative methods could be used to effectively compare the two sites, while not losing the richness of the qualitative data from the narratives of the personal experiences.

Once two orphanages in India are compared, it would also be greatly illuminating to then

bring the comparison between orphanages in India and orphanages in other parts of the world, such as Romania, Russia. To compare a home in India to a home with a more Western-oriented philosophy could prove fruitful to better understand the influence of the country's culture on the philosophy and management of the homes. As discovered in this present study, the context of GCH being in India had a great influence on the home and the girls' experiences. It would be important to see if Romania or Russia would have the same influence on the children and the home. In addition, there is more research coming out of several countries in Africa, such as Tanzania, Kenya, and South Africa. It would be advantageous to examine differences and similarities among these orphanages and those in India.

The goal of all future research must be better understand the children's experience and to determine how best to run an orphanage so that it can be a source of comfort and support for the children as they navigate through this world without parents. If a home can be built and managed more like a large family, this could potentially offset the psychological difficulties of many of the children raised in institutions. If there is more understanding of how best to help these children, then guidelines could be implemented in the homes for optimal functioning, making the home safe and secure and in which children have found a place to thrive.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The richness and complexity of the data make this study an important contribution to our understanding of the daily experience of orphaned girls in India; in addition, it also enriches the overall understanding of a population that is often viewed solely as a traumatized and hopeless subset of children.

Though there were times of sadness and loss in the home, these were juxtaposed with experiences of joy and love. This study showed that though children continue to feel the loss of

their parents, certain structures put in place can help mitigate the emotional difficulties they inevitably encounter. The children in this study showed me their resilience by opening their home and their hearts to me and welcoming me into their family.

They also showed me what was lacking in the home and through their behavior and words voiced a strong yearning for love and a place where they felt they belonged. The home still has room for improvement to help the girls with the difficult task of thriving despite having the set back of early parental loss.

It is through witnessing both these categories of experience, of joy and pain, that I gained insight about the girls' experiences. These insights can help the staff at GCH strive to make the home even more of a place of nurturance and love to provide the children with the necessary tools to lead them to best possible outcome. Future research can provide us with more clues and insights to help other homes create such places.

## APPENDIX A

### CHILD BEHAVIOR CHECKLIST FOR AGES 4-18

For office use only  
ID # \_\_\_\_\_

CHILD'S NAME _____			PARENTS' USUAL TYPE OF WORK, even if not working now. (Please be specific — for example, auto mechanic, high school teacher, homemaker, laborer, lathe operator, shoe salesman, army sergeant.)			
SEX <input type="checkbox"/> Boy <input type="checkbox"/> Girl	AGE _____	ETHNIC GROUP OR RACE _____	FATHER'S TYPE OF WORK: _____			
TODAY'S DATE Mo. _____ Date _____ Yr. _____		CHILD'S BIRTHDATE Mo. _____ Date _____ Yr. _____		MOTHER'S TYPE OF WORK: _____		
GRADE IN SCHOOL _____	Please fill out this form to reflect your view of the child's behavior even if other people might not agree. Feel free to write additional comments beside each item and in the spaces provided on page 2.		THIS FORM FILLED OUT BY:			
NOT ATTENDING SCHOOL <input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/> Mother (name): _____			
				<input type="checkbox"/> Father (name): _____		
				<input type="checkbox"/> Other — name & relationship to child: _____		

<b>I. Please list the sports your child most likes to take part in.</b> For example: swimming, baseball, skating, skate boarding, bike riding, fishing, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> None	<b>Compared to others of the same age, about how much time does he/she spend in each?</b>	<b>Compared to others of the same age, how well does he/she do each one?</b>
	Don't Know    Less Than Average    Average    More Than Average	Don't Know    Below Average    Average    Above Average
a. _____	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
b. _____	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
c. _____	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>II. Please list your child's favorite hobbies, activities, and games, other than sports.</b> For example: stamps, dolls, books, piano, crafts, cars, singing, etc. (Do not include listening to radio or TV.) <input type="checkbox"/> None	<b>Compared to others of the same age, about how much time does he/she spend in each?</b>	<b>Compared to others of the same age, how well does he/she do each one?</b>
	Don't Know    Less Than Average    Average    More Than Average	Don't Know    Below Average    Average    Above Average
a. _____	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
b. _____	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
c. _____	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>III. Please list any organizations, clubs, teams, or groups your child belongs to.</b> <input type="checkbox"/> None	<b>Compared to others of the same age, how active is he/she in each?</b>	
	Don't Know    Less Active    Average    More Active	
a. _____	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
b. _____	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
c. _____	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	

<b>IV. Please list any jobs or chores your child has.</b> For example: paper route, babysitting, making bed, working in store, etc. (Include both paid and unpaid jobs and chores.) <input type="checkbox"/> None	<b>Compared to others of the same age, how well does he/she carry them out?</b>	
	Don't Know    Below Average    Average    Above Average	
a. _____	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
b. _____	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
c. _____	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	

- V. 1. About how many close friends does your child have?  None  1  2 or 3  4 or more  
 (Do not include brothers & sisters)
2. About how many times a week does your child do things with any friends outside of regular school hours?  
 (Do not include brothers & sisters)  Less than 1  1 or 2  3 or more

- VI. Compared to others of his/her age, how well does your child:
- |   | Worse                    | About Average            | Better                   |   |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| a. Get along with his/her brothers & sisters? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> Has no brothers or sisters |
| b. Get along with other kids?                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |   |
| c. Behave with his/her parents?               | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |   |
| d. Play and work by himself/herself?          | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |   |

VII. 1. For ages 8 and older—performance in academic subjects. If child is not being taught, please give reason \_\_\_\_\_

	Failing	Below average	Average	Above average
a. Reading, English, or Language Arts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. History or Social Studies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Arithmetic or Math	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Science	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other academic subjects—for example: computer courses, foreign language, business. Do <i>not</i> include gym, shop, driver's ed., etc.				
e. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Is your child in a special class or special school?  No  Yes—what kind of class or school?

3. Has your child repeated a grade?  No  Yes—grade and reason

4. Has your child had any academic or other problems in school?  No  Yes—please describe

When did these problems start?

Have these problems ended?  No  Yes—when?

Does your child have any illness, physical disability, or mental handicap?  No  Yes—please describe

What concerns you most about your child?

Please describe the best things about your child:

Below is a list of items that describe children and youth. For each item that describes your child now or within the past 6 months, please circle the 2 if the item is very true or often true of your child. Circle the 1 if the item is somewhat or sometimes true of your child. If the item is not true of your child, circle the 0. Please answer all items as well as you can, even if some do not seem to apply to your child.

0 = Not True (as far as you know)			1 = Somewhat or Sometimes True			2 = Very True or Often True			
0	1	2	1.	Acts too young for his/her age	0	1	2	31.	Fears he/she might think or do something bad
0	1	2	2.	Allergy (describe): _____					
				_____	0	1	2	32.	Feels he/she has to be perfect
					0	1	2	33.	Feels or complains that no one loves him/her
0	1	2	3.	Argues a lot	0	1	2	34.	Feels others are out to get him/her
0	1	2	4.	Asthma	0	1	2	35.	Feels worthless or inferior
0	1	2	5.	Behaves like opposite sex	0	1	2	36.	Gets hurt a lot, accident-prone
0	1	2	6.	Bowel movements outside toilet	0	1	2	37.	Gets in many fights
0	1	2	7.	Bragging, boasting	0	1	2	38.	Gets teased a lot
0	1	2	8.	Can't concentrate, can't pay attention for long	0	1	2	39.	Hangs around with others who get in trouble
0	1	2	9.	Can't get his/her mind off certain thoughts; obsessions (describe): _____					
				_____	0	1	2	40.	Hears sounds or voices that aren't there (describe): _____
0	1	2	10.	Can't sit still, restless, or hyperactive					_____
0	1	2	11.	Clings to adults or too dependent	0	1	2	41.	Impulsive or acts without thinking
0	1	2	12.	Complains of loneliness	0	1	2	42.	Would rather be alone than with others
0	1	2	13.	Confused or seems to be in a fog	0	1	2	43.	Lying or cheating
0	1	2	14.	Crries a lot	0	1	2	44.	Bites fingernails
0	1	2	15.	Cruel to animals	0	1	2	45.	Nervous, highstrung, or tense
0	1	2	16.	Cruelty, bullying, or meanness to others	0	1	2	46.	Nervous movements or twitching (describe): _____
									_____
0	1	2	17.	Day-dreams or gets lost in his/her thoughts	0	1	2	47.	Nightmares
0	1	2	18.	Deliberately harms self or attempts suicide	0	1	2	48.	Not liked by other kids
0	1	2	19.	Demands a lot of attention	0	1	2	49.	Constipated, doesn't move bowels
0	1	2	20.	Destroys his/her own things	0	1	2	50.	Too fearful or anxious
0	1	2	21.	Destroys things belonging to his/her family or others	0	1	2	51.	Feels dizzy
0	1	2	22.	Disobedient at home	0	1	2	52.	Feels too guilty
0	1	2	23.	Disobedient at school	0	1	2	53.	Overeating
0	1	2	24.	Doesn't eat well	0	1	2	54.	Overtired
0	1	2	25.	Doesn't get along with other kids	0	1	2	55.	Overweight
0	1	2	26.	Doesn't seem to feel guilty after misbehaving				56.	Physical problems without known medical cause:
0	1	2	27.	Easily jealous	0	1	2	a.	Aches or pains (not headaches)
0	1	2	28.	Eats or drinks things that are not food-- don't include sweets (describe): _____	0	1	2	b.	Headaches
				_____	0	1	2	c.	Nausea, feels sick
					0	1	2	d.	Problems with eyes (describe): _____
0	1	2	29.	Fears certain animals, situations, or places, other than school (describe): _____					_____
				_____	0	1	2	e.	Rashes or other skin problems
0	1	2	30.	Fears going to school	0	1	2	f.	Stomachaches or cramps
					0	1	2	g.	Vomiting, throwing up
					0	1	2	h.	Other (describe): _____
									_____



Please print your answers.

**ADULT BEHAVIOR CHECKLIST FOR AGES 18-59**For office use only  
ID#

<b>ADULT'S FULL NAME</b> First Middle Last			<b>ADULT'S USUAL TYPE OF WORK</b> , even if not working now. Please be specific—for example, auto mechanic; high school teacher; homemaker; laborer; lathe operator; shoe salesman; army sergeant; student (indicate what he/she is studying & what degree is expected). Adult's work _____ Spouse or partner's work _____
<b>ADULT'S GENDER</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female	<b>ADULT'S AGE</b>	<b>ETHNIC GROUP OR RACE</b>	
<b>TODAY'S DATE</b> Mo. _____ Date _____ Yr. _____		<b>ADULT'S BIRTHDATE</b> Mo. _____ Date _____ Yr. _____	
<b>PLEASE CHECK ADULT'S HIGHEST EDUCATION</b>			
<input type="checkbox"/> 1. No high school diploma and no GED		<input type="checkbox"/> 7. Some graduate school but no graduate degree	
<input type="checkbox"/> 2. General Equivalency Diploma (GED)		<input type="checkbox"/> 8. Master's Degree	
<input type="checkbox"/> 3. High school graduate		<input type="checkbox"/> 9. Doctoral or Law Degree	
<input type="checkbox"/> 4. Some college but no college degree		<input type="checkbox"/> Other education (specify): _____	
<input type="checkbox"/> 5. Associate's Degree			
<input type="checkbox"/> 6. Bachelor's or RN Degree			
<b>THIS FORM FILLED OUT BY</b> (print your full name): _____			
Your relationship to adult: <input type="checkbox"/> Spouse <input type="checkbox"/> Partner <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify): _____			
Please fill out this form to reflect <b>your</b> views, even if other people might not agree. You need not spend a lot of time on any item. Feel free to print additional comments. <b>Be sure to answer all items.</b>			

**I. FRIENDS:**

- A. About how many close friends does he/she have? (Do not include family members.)  
 None  1  2 or 3  4 or more
- B. About how many times a month does he/she have contact with any close friends? (Include in-person contacts, phone, letters, e-mail.)  
 Less than 1  1 or 2  3 or 4  5 or more
- C. How well does he/she get along with close friends?  
 Not well  Average  Above average  Far above average
- D. About how many times a month do any friends or family visit him/her?  
 Less than 1  1 or 2  3 or 4  5 or more

**II. SPOUSE OR PARTNER:**

- What is his/her marital status?  Never been married  Married but separated from spouse  
 Married, living with spouse  Divorced  
 Widowed  Other—please describe: \_\_\_\_\_

At any time in the past 6 months, did he/she live with a spouse or partner?

- No—please skip to page 2.  
 Yes—Circle 0, 1, or 2 beside items A-H to describe his/her relationship **during the past 6 months:**

0 = Not True (as far as you know)    1 = Somewhat or Sometimes True    2 = Very True or Often True

0 1 2 A. Gets along well with spouse or partner	0 1 2 E. Disagrees with spouse or partner about living arrangements, such as where to live
0 1 2 B. Has trouble sharing responsibilities with spouse or partner	0 1 2 F. Has trouble with spouse or partner's family
0 1 2 C. Seems satisfied with spouse or partner	0 1 2 G. Likes spouse or partner's friends
0 1 2 D. Enjoys similar activities as spouse or partner	0 1 2 H. Is annoyed by spouse or partner's behavior

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 www.ASEBA.org

Please be sure you have answered all items.  
 Then see other side.

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*Please print your answers. Be sure to answer all items.*

---

III. Does he/she have any illness, disability, or handicap?  No  Yes—please describe:

---

IV. Please describe any concerns you have about him/her:  No concerns

---

V. Please describe the best things about him/her:

Please print your answers. Be sure to answer all items.

VI. Below is a list of items that describe people. As you read each item, please decide whether it has been true of the adult over the past 6 months. Then circle 0, 1, or 2 to describe the adult. Please answer all items as well as you can, even if some do not seem to apply to the adult.

0 = Not True (as far as you know)    1 = Somewhat or Sometimes True    2 = Very True or Often True

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 0 1 2 1. Is too forgetful   | 0 1 2 37. Gets in many fights  |
| 0 1 2 2. Makes good use of his/her opportunities  | 0 1 2 38. His/her relations with neighbors are poor                                    |
| 0 1 2 3. Argues a lot   | 0 1 2 39. Hangs around people who get in trouble                                       |
| 0 1 2 4. Works up to ability  | 0 1 2 40. Hears sounds or voices that aren't there<br>(describe): _____                |
| 0 1 2 5. Blames others for own problems   | 0 1 2 41. Impulsive or acts without thinking   |
| 0 1 2 6. Uses drugs (other than alcohol or nicotine)<br>for nonmedical purposes (describe): _____ | 0 1 2 42. Would rather be alone than with others                                       |
| 0 1 2 7. Bragging, boasting   | 0 1 2 43. Lying or cheating  |
| 0 1 2 8. Can't concentrate, can't pay attention for long  | 0 1 2 44. Feels overwhelmed by responsibilities  |
| 0 1 2 9. Can't get mind off certain thoughts;<br>obsessions (describe): _____                     | 0 1 2 45. Nervous, highstrung, or tense  |
| 0 1 2 10. Can't sit still, restless, or hyperactive   | 0 1 2 46. Nervous movements or twitching (describe):<br>_____                          |
| 0 1 2 11. Too dependent on others   | 0 1 2 47. Lacks self-confidence  |
| 0 1 2 12. Complains of loneliness   | 0 1 2 48. Not liked by others  |
| 0 1 2 13. Confused or seems to be in a fog  | 0 1 2 49. Can do certain things better than other<br>people                            |
| 0 1 2 14. Cries a lot   | 0 1 2 50. Too fearful or anxious   |
| 0 1 2 15. Is pretty honest  | 0 1 2 51. Feels dizzy or lightheaded   |
| 0 1 2 16. Cruelty, bullying, or meanness to others  | 0 1 2 52. Feels too guilty   |
| 0 1 2 17. Daydreams or gets lost in his/her thoughts  | 0 1 2 53. Has trouble planning for the future  |
| 0 1 2 18. Deliberately harms self or attempts suicide   | 0 1 2 54. Feels tired without good reason  |
| 0 1 2 19. Demands a lot of attention  | 0 1 2 55. Moods swing between elation and<br>depression                                |
| 0 1 2 20. Damages or destroys his/her own things  | 0 1 2 56. Physical problems <i>without known medical<br/>cause</i> :                   |
| 0 1 2 21. Damages or destroys things belonging<br>to others                                       | 0 1 2 a. Aches or pains ( <i>not</i> stomach or headaches)                             |
| 0 1 2 22. Worries about his/her future  | 0 1 2 b. Headaches   |
| 0 1 2 23. Breaks rules at work or elsewhere   | 0 1 2 c. Nausea, feels sick  |
| 0 1 2 24. Doesn't eat well  | 0 1 2 d. Problems with eyes ( <i>not</i> if corrected by<br>glasses) (describe): _____ |
| 0 1 2 25. Doesn't get along with other people   | 0 1 2 e. Rashes or other skin problems   |
| 0 1 2 26. Doesn't seem to feel guilty after misbehaving   | 0 1 2 f. Stomachaches  |
| 0 1 2 27. Easily jealous  | 0 1 2 g. Vomiting, throwing up   |
| 0 1 2 28. Gets along badly with family  | 0 1 2 57. Physically attacks people  |
| 0 1 2 29. Fears certain animals, situations, or<br>places (describe): _____                       | 0 1 2 58. Picks skin or other parts of his/her body<br>(describe): _____               |
| 0 1 2 30. Poor relations with opposite sex  | 0 1 2 59. Falls to finish things he/she should do                                      |
| 0 1 2 31. Fears he/she might think or do something bad  | 0 1 2 60. There is very little that he/she enjoys                                      |
| 0 1 2 32. Feels he/she has to be perfect  | 0 1 2 61. Poor work performance  |
| 0 1 2 33. Feels or complains that no one loves him/her  | 0 1 2 62. Poorly coordinated or clumsy   |
| 0 1 2 34. Feels others are out to get him/her   |  |
| 0 1 2 35. Feels worthless or inferior   |  |
| 0 1 2 36. Gets hurt a lot, accident-prone   |  |

Please print your answers. Be sure to answer all items.

0 = Not True (as far as you know)    1 = Somewhat or Sometimes True    2 = Very True or Often True

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 0 1 2 63. Would rather be with older people than with people of own age                | 0 1 2 93. Talks too much   |
| 0 1 2 64. Has trouble setting priorities   | 0 1 2 94. Teases a lot   |
| 0 1 2 65. Refuses to talk  | 0 1 2 95. Temper tantrums or hot temper  |
| 0 1 2 66. Repeats certain acts over and over; compulsions (describe): _____            | 0 1 2 96. Passive or lacks initiative  |
| _____  | 0 1 2 97. Threatens to hurt people   |
| 0 1 2 67. Has trouble making or keeping friends  | 0 1 2 98. Likes to help others   |
| 0 1 2 68. Screams or yells a lot   | 0 1 2 99. Dislikes staying in one place for very long  |
| 0 1 2 69. Secretive, keeps things to self  | 0 1 2 100. Has trouble sleeping  |
| 0 1 2 70. Sees things that aren't there (describe): _____                              | 0 1 2 101. Stays away from job even when not sick and not on vacation  |
| _____  | 0 1 2 102. Underactive, slow moving, or lacks energy   |
| 0 1 2 71. Self-conscious or easily embarrassed   | 0 1 2 103. Unhappy, sad, or depressed  |
| 0 1 2 72. Worries about his/her family   | 0 1 2 104. Is unusually loud   |
| 0 1 2 73. Meets responsibilities to his/her family                                     | 0 1 2 105. Is disorganized   |
| 0 1 2 74. Showing off or clowning  | 0 1 2 106. Tries to be fair to others  |
| 0 1 2 75. Too shy or timid   | 0 1 2 107. Feels he/she can't succeed  |
| 0 1 2 76. Irresponsible behavior   | 0 1 2 108. Tends to lose things  |
| 0 1 2 77. Sleeps more than most other people during day and/or night (describe): _____ | 0 1 2 109. Likes to try new things   |
| _____  | 0 1 2 110. Makes good decisions  |
| 0 1 2 78. Has trouble making decisions   | 0 1 2 111. Withdrawn, doesn't get involved with others   |
| 0 1 2 79. Speech problem (describe): _____   | 0 1 2 112. Worries   |
| _____  | 0 1 2 113. Sulks a lot   |
| 0 1 2 80. Stares blankly   | 0 1 2 114. Fails to pay his/her debts or meet other financial responsibilities   |
| 0 1 2 81. Very changeable behavior   | 0 1 2 115. Is restless or fidgety  |
| 0 1 2 82. Steals   | 0 1 2 116. Gets upset too easily   |
| 0 1 2 83. Is easily bored  | 0 1 2 117. Has trouble managing money or credit cards  |
| 0 1 2 84. Strange behavior (describe): _____   | 0 1 2 118. Is too impatient  |
| _____  | 0 1 2 119. He/she is not good at details   |
| 0 1 2 85. Strange ideas (describe): _____  | 0 1 2 120. Drives too fast   |
| _____  | 0 1 2 121. Tends to be late for appointments   |
| 0 1 2 86. Stubborn, sullen, or irritable   | 0 1 2 122. Has trouble keeping a job   |
| 0 1 2 87. Sudden changes in mood or feelings   | 0 1 2 123. He/she is a happy person  |
| 0 1 2 88. Enjoys being with people   | 124. <i>In the past 6 months</i> , about how many times per day did he/she use tobacco (including smokeless tobacco)? _____ times per day.   |
| 0 1 2 89. Rushes into things without considering the risks                             | 125. <i>In the past 6 months</i> , on how many days was he/she drunk? _____ days.  |
| 0 1 2 90. Drinks too much alcohol or gets drunk  | 126. <i>In the past 6 months</i> , on how many days did he/she use drugs for nonmedical purposes (including marijuana, cocaine, and other drugs, except alcohol and nicotine)? _____ days. |
| 0 1 2 91. Talks about killing self   |  |
| 0 1 2 92. Does things that may cause trouble with the law (describe): _____            |  |
| _____  |  |

## APPENDIX B

### Themes of Observation Data (with corresponding dates of the individual observations.)

#### **My Role in the Home**

My role in home/family (as mother/sister/friend/volunteer/researcher): 06.18, 06.19, 06.20, 06.21, 06.22, 06.23, 06.24, 06.25, 06.26, 07.01, 07.02, 07.06, 07.07, 07.10, 07.13, 07.15, 07.21, 07.26, 07.27, 07.28, 07.30, 08.02, 08.07, 08.09

#### **Role of Culture/Family Tradition**

Cultural, family tradition: 06.20, 06.21, 07.05, 07.06, 07.15, 07.17, 07.18, 07.23

Dressing up for special occasion: 06.21, 07.15, 07.17, 07.27

Weather/Monsoon/Environment: 06.25, 07.05, 07.07, 07.25, 08.03, 08.06

Family outing: 06.23, 06.27

#### **Elders and Staff**

Grandmother/mother figure: 06.15, 06.17, 06.20, 06.24, 06.27, 07.11, 07.17, 07.20, 07.21, 08.08

Hierarchy of home (respecting elders): 06.15, 06.24

Staff intervening, chores to do/scolding from elders: 07.03, 07.05, 07.12, 07.13, 07.14, 08.02

Staff watching over children: 07.06, 07.13, 07.14, 07.19, 07.21, 08.03

Wish to rebel against authority: 06.16, 07.13,

Substitute father figure: 07.19, 07.20, 07.25, 07.31

Disappointment in elders/family: 06.22, 07.31, 08.08, 08.08

#### **Role of Family/Roles of Girls in Family**

Older girls as comforter, protector: 06.15, 06.24, 07.02, 07.12, 07.16, 07.21, 07.22

Older girls as disciplinarian: 06.15, 06.22, 07.03

Older girls as leaders: 06.19, 06.20, 06.24, 06.27

Older girls as role models/teachers: 07.05, 07.08, 07.13, 07.14, 07.29

Taking care of younger children: 06.15, 06.24, 06.26, 07.02, 07.08, 07.12, 07.16, 07.22, 08.08

Contributing to family: 06.19, 06.21, 07.07, 07.27

Roles of girls in family: 06.19, 06.21, 06.24, 06.25, 07.05, 07.06, 07.07, 07.27, 07.28, 08.08

Working together as family: 06.19, 06.21, 07.01, 07.19, 07.25, 07.30, 08.07

Cooking: 06.25, 07.27, 07.28

Reflections on GCH: 07.26, 08.05

Rules of the house: 06.17

#### **Sister Relationships**

Girls taking care of each other/love between girls: 06.21, 06.23, 06.26, 06.27, 07.03, 07.10, 07.13, 07.18, 07.19, 07.21, 07.31,

Confiding in sisters/sisters as support: 06.16, 06.21, 06.26

Girls playing together: 06.24, 07.05, 07.07, 07.20, 07.25, 08.03

Mistreatment of girl by other girls/fights between girls: 06.24, 07.01, 07.15, 07.21, 08.02, 08.08, 08.08

**Feelings of Longing**

Feelings of aloneness/Wish for more love in home: 06.22, 07.31

Missing Father Figure: 06.22, 07.23, 07.31

Missing mother/Neglect of girls: 06.26a.b, 07.01, 07.04, 07.11, 07.15, 07.28, 07.29, 08.09

Self sufficiency/self reliance: 07.04, 07.08, 07.10, 07.28, 07.29, 08.06

Thought of biological parents: 07.21, 07.31, 08.05

Need for comfort: 06.18, 07.03a,b, 07.07, 07.08, 07.14,07.15, 07.22, 08.07, 08.09

## APPENDIX C

### **Title of Photographs**

#### **Things that make me feel happy:**

#### **Relationship with Elders/Family**

My talented teacher

My mysterious mom

My good teacher

I like my mom

Helpful girl

I like uncle and Rupa but sometime I don't like Rupa but I like uncle so much

I like Kanti didi but sometimes I don't like

I like P Auntie, her nature is so good

My family

My dearest Uncle

#### **Relationships with Sisters**

Maya (sister)

Reva (sister)

I like Padma so much but sometimes I hate her when she is not listening to me

See-off

Hm, hm, hm, she is quite comedy

She is quite good to share secrets with

Adorable gal

She is very close to me

Cute sister

Her nature is good and kind to me

I like S didi-whenever come I always play with them and I like Kate didi also

#### **Hobbies /Material things**

My book world

Watching TV is my passion

Oh, no words for him, he is a good author, I loved his books, too interesting for me.

Dancing-always fresh my mood

Singing is like very close to me, it brings my mood and happiness

Movies-love watching movies a lot

Drawing books

Story books

New TV

Gadgets make me feel wanted, always get attracted to more than jewelry

Teddy Bear

I like to see cars and I like cars

I like to go on motorcycles

### **Weather**

Rainy weather  
 My favourite season-rain  
 Nice weather  
 I like to play in the rain  
 Clouds and rain always make me feel excited

### **Pop Culture/Cultural References**

Smiley Miley  
 I'm a big fan of Vanessa and I like watching this movie (HSM)  
 Shakira-my mentor, my love, my inspiration  
 Robert Pattinson-my crush-lol  
 Archies-anytime, anywhere, like many always my favourite passtime

### **GCH home/Family Traditions /Religion/Traditions**

Talking to god always makes me happy and energetic  
 Long Balcony  
 Celebrating B-Day is the most precious thing in my life  
 My beautiful garden

### **School**

Going to school is lovely  
 I luv wearing my school uniform  
 My housekeeping faculty-lovely lady in my college

### **Interest in Boys**

I luv watching  
 this serial as I have a crush on this guy

### **Appearance/Care in one's appearance**

My dressing style  
 Stylish-that's I always love to be, to dress up differently and stylish  
 I like my dress I buy at GT and I look good in this dress

### **Food**

I love chocolates  
 Pizzas-yummy my favourite food-anytime and anywhere I'm ready for

### **Self-Reflection**

Dreaming-I love dreaming, and make me happy and motivates me for future  
 My personal diary  
 I am always influenced with positive books like "U Can Win"

**Things that make me feel sad:****School**

I hate going to school

I hate studying

My course (HM) which I still think my had and worst decision

**Environment/Personal Possessions**

Pile of dirty clothes

Dirty shoe rack

Unused computers

My personal diary

In this dress I look very poor and I don't like my home dress

**Relationship with Sisters**

Sonali-I don't like her (sister)

Janya didi-not my sister (sister)

I don't like her (sister)

She is a fighter (sister)

Maya-I hate when she doesn't understand my importance (sister)

When Maya shows me her selfishness and her attitude (sister)

Janya didi (sister)

Reva (sister)

Sonali (sister)

I hate people like backstabbers

**Relationship with Elders**

Think of the devil and here she is (warden)

Her mind is very sharp (warden)

My dearest Uncle

**Relationship with Boys**

My net love, who didn't understand my love and importance

## APPENDIX D

### Individual Codes

#### Feelings Towards Sisters

##### **Table 1. Anger and Feelings of Dislike with Sisters**

Aware that sister is angry because reported to elder about sister's, Reva, boyfriend  
 Dislikes sister, Sonali  
 Doesn't like sister, X, because of her bad behavior with sisters  
 Doesn't like when sister Janya scolds her about talking with sister R  
 Experiences sister Janya's rudeness in volume and tone of voice  
 Feels sister behaves selfishly with other sisters as well  
 Feels sister Janya is rude with everyone  
 Feels sister, Sonali, fights with her a lot  
 Feels sister, X, doesn't do her work in the house  
 Feels sister, X, gossips  
 Feels sister, X, is mean and fights a lot  
 Feels that she needs to placate sister to prevent fight  
 Take photograph of sister, Janya's bed to avoid conflict with Janya  
 Thinking about sister, X, makes her feel "extremely very bad"  
 Thinks sister Janya is always fighting  
 Thinks sister Janya is rude and does "partiality" with the sisters  
 Sister makes her feel happy and sometimes upset  
 Sister Janya's messy bed symbolizes hypocrisy of her scolding sisters to clean  
 Sister Janya does everything wrong and tells us to do right  
 Sister Janya doesn't follow rules but expects sisters to listen to her  
 Sister Janya is always scolding  
 Sister Janya is not behaving like a sister  
 Photograph of sister she does not like  
 Photographs sister secretly to avoid fight  
 Scolded by sister Janya when uses sister Janya's loud tone  
 Fights with sister, Sonali, about every day things  
 Hates when sisters talk behind her back  
 Sister Janya uses her authority as elder sister to control sisters' behavior

##### **Table 2. Feelings of Hurt and Sadness because of Sisters**

After sister, Reva, reads secret diary felt need to change hiding place  
 Always feels sad when thinks about sisters going behind her back  
 As eldest sister, when tells younger sisters what to do dislikes hearing them talk behind her back  
 Concerned about lack of reciprocity of being thought of by sister  
 Cries when she doesn't feel important to sister  
 Doesn't want to talk about photograph of sister, Janya  
 Feel ignored by sister when intending to help  
 Feels bad when fights with sisters and brother

Feels disrespected and ignored by sister  
 Feels hurt when sister behaves badly with her  
 Feels sad looking at photograph of sister, Maya.  
 Feels sad that sister Janya doesn't behave like her sister  
 Feels sad that sister Janya scolds her even make making effort to care for younger sister  
 Feels sad when left out by sister, Reva and Maya  
 Feels sad when sister, Reva, is angry at her  
 Feels uncared for by closest sister  
 Feels upset when looking at photograph of sister  
 Not close to sister, X.  
 Particularly upset when closest sister is involved in backstabbing  
 Sometimes doesn't talk/fights to sister, Sonali, for months at a time  
 Sometimes feels happy and sometime feels not happy with sister J  
 Titles photograph 'bad life' when reflects on fight at home and feeling sad  
 Too many sisters in the GCH home makes it difficult to keep secrets  
 Wonders if sisters tell secrets because of jealousy  
 Writes in diary because she doesn't feel like sharing feelings with others

**Table 3. Love for Sisters and Feelings of Closeness**

“I like every of my sisters”

Can only share secrets with Rupa and Reva  
 Comforts sister, Maya, by sleeping next to her  
 Despite intense dislike for sister, X, feels at times she is fine  
 Feelings of closeness towards sister  
 Feels close to sister M because confidence in secret keeping from sisters P and Janya  
 Feels close to sister M because shares room with her  
 Feels close to sister Janya because of closeness with sister P  
 Feels close to sister, Maya, because of shared demographics  
 Feels close to sister, Maya, because they share food and clothes together  
 Feels close to sister, Maya, because they talk all day and night  
 Feels close to sister, Maya  
 Feels close to sisters Reva and Rupa because "treat each other as real sisters"  
 Feels closer to older sisters Janya, P, M  
 Feels good with sister Janya  
 Feels happy thinking of sister, Maya  
 Feels happy when sister Reva listened to her problems  
 Feels happy when taken care of by sister Reva  
 Feels positively about sharing clothing with sisters  
 Feels sister, Maya, shares everything with her  
 Feels sister, Maya, had a good nature  
 Feels sisters help each other in absence of adults  
 Feels very good when spending time with sister  
 Has always loved closest sister since childhood  
 I talk with her so I am so happy  
 Likes closest sister

Likes living with sisters  
 Likes sister, Maya, very much  
 Loves older sister because she feels understood  
 Loves sister Janya  
 Loves taking care of sister  
 Needs sisters to play and fight with  
 Often doesn't scold sister when she should  
 Reports spending time without fighting with sister  
 Sister is important part of life  
 Sister Reva is the most important person in her life  
 Sister Janya is an important part of her life  
 Sister Janya is very open with her  
 Sister Janya is very open with her and talks frankly  
 Takes picture of sister Janya because feels liked by her  
 Taking care of sister since childhood  
 Talks to sister Janya about school and stupid boy, J  
 Talks with sister, Maya, about boys  
 Thinks that sister Janya thinks of her a lot and shares her secrets  
 Would be alone and have no fun without sisters

### **Relational Hierarchies**

#### **Table 4. Sisters as Caretakers in Place of Adults**

Comforts sister, Maya, by sleeping next to her  
 Doesn't like sister, X, because of her bad behavior with sisters  
 Feel happy because GCH is doing a lot for the girls  
 Feels as though always helped sister in every moment  
 Feels close to sister, Maya, because they talk all day and night  
 Feels close to sisters Reva and Rupa because "treat each other as real sisters"  
 Feels happy when sister Reva listened to her problems  
 Feels happy when taken care of by sister Reva  
 Feels protective over sister since childhood  
 Feels sisters help each other in absence of adults  
 Helps sister, X, she dislikes  
 If successful wants to use money to help biological family, GCH family, and other girls  
 Loves taking care of sister  
 Often doesn't scold sister when she should  
 Sister Reva is the most important person in her life  
 Taking care of sister since childhood  
 Would be alone and have no fun without sisters

#### **Table 5. Hierarchy Within Home**

As eldest sister, when tells younger sisters what to do dislikes hearing them talk behind her back

Dislikes buttering up, being sought out just for others' needs  
 Feels closer to older sisters Janya, P, M  
 Feels sad that sister Janya scolds her even make making effort to care for younger sister  
 Feels sisters help each other in absence of adults  
 Feels teacher is more important and helps more than warden  
 If we tell or if we won't tell that we are home warden's response is the same  
 Ignores warden's request to check in after school  
 Likes and respects elder persons  
 Often doesn't scold sister when she should  
 "She doesn't like we smaller should get any luxury"  
 Sister Janya does everything wrong and tells us to do right  
 Sister Janya doesn't follow rules but expects sisters to listen to her  
 Sister Janya uses her authority as elder sister to control sisters' behavior  
 Thinks warden gives authoritative role based upon age

### **Relationships with Mother and Father Figures**

#### **Table 6. Thoughts and Feelings about Geeta Auntie**

Asks Geeta Auntie about how she is feeling  
 Believes Geeta Auntie is sometimes happy, sometimes sad  
 Comes to Geeta Auntie after school  
 Confused and curious about Geeta Auntie's emotional state  
 Doesn't want to see Geeta Auntie's face when she (GA) is feeling sad  
 Feels sad when Geeta Auntie is in pain and looks sad  
 Has never asked Geeta Auntie about her emotional state  
 Interprets Geeta Auntie not looking when talking to you as irritability  
 Feels happy when believes Geeta Auntie is expressing happiness by smiling  
 Likes Geeta Auntie  
 Notes difference in Geeta Auntie's behavior since Janu Uncle died last year  
 May ask Geeta Auntie about her emotional state  
 Thinks Geeta Auntie is sometimes irritated  
 "She's like a mommy to me"  
 "Geeta aunty and Janu Uncle are the God for us who opened this house"

#### **Table 7. Thoughts and Feelings about Janu Uncle**

Attributes being alive to Janu Uncle which makes her happy  
 Begged Janu Uncle to study outside of Jaipur  
 Feels Janu Uncle was upset when I scored badly  
 "If we would not have he, I don't know where I would be."  
 Feels sad that Janu Uncle is dead  
 Janu Uncle was a very good man  
 Liked that Janu Uncle problem solved with sisters  
 Likes that Janu Uncle was punctual about time  
 Likes that Janu Uncle was studious

Refers to being brought to GCH as a young child  
 Wonders about where she would be without Janu Uncle  
 “Geeta aunty and Janu Uncle are the God for us who opened this house”

### **Feelings Towards Warden**

#### **Table 8. Positive/Close Feelings Towards Warden**

Feels cared for by warden when ill  
 Feels good when helped by warden  
 Feels happy when warden gives good advice  
 Feels sometimes happy and sometimes bad when thinking of warden  
 Feels warden's intuitive sense is uncanny and intrusive  
 Feels warden is sometimes rude and sometimes not  
 Warden expects girls to check in when back at GCH

#### **Table 9. Negative Feelings Towards Warden**

Does not like when feels warden lies about her behavior  
 Doesn't feel good looking at picture of warden] [doesn't like warden  
 Doesn't like warden's face  
 Doesn't like warden because she "does partiality"  
 Feels sometimes happy and sometimes bad when thinking of warden  
 Feels teacher is more important and helps more than warden  
 Feels upset about relationship with warden  
 Feels warden's intuitive sense is uncanny and intrusive  
 Feels warden's protectiveness from boys is contradictory to reality of contact with boys in school  
 Feels warden approaches intuitively when sisters speak badly of her  
 Feels warden asks her a lot of questions about sisters' interest in boys  
 Feels warden is sometimes rude and sometimes not  
 Hasn't approached warden to talk in a week]  
 If we tell or if we won't tell that we are home warden's response is the same  
 Ignores warden's request to check in after school  
 Sometimes doesn't like warden  
 “Think of the devil and here she is”  
 Thinks warden gives authoritative role based upon age  
 Warden doesn't allow social freedom to prevent contact with boys  
 Warden expects girls to check in when back at GCH  
 Warden is not good compared to uncle in terms of partiality  
 Feels warden has never done anything for he  
 Feels warden does not like her because Janu uncle preferred her (participant)

#### **Table 10. Relationship with Elders in Home and Neighborhood**

All sisters like auntie, the neighbor  
 Considers auntie, neighbor, helpful person  
 Feels good when looking at photograph of auntie

Feels helped financially by neighbor, auntie and uncle  
 Likes and respects elder persons  
 Believes all sisters feel good in presence of her brother  
 Believes teacher doubts that she will complete homework  
 Believes teacher, R, is a good husband  
 Believes teacher, R, is everything  
 Compares self positively to teacher, R.  
 Feels bad when fights with sisters and brother  
 Feels good when looking at photograph of brother  
 Feels happy because met nice person, like Teacher R  
 Feels happy when helped by teacher  
 Feels happy when spends time with brother  
 Feels happy when spends time with Uncle X  
 Feels he is a good teacher  
 Feels sad when fights with brother  
 Feels sad when not talking to brother because of fight  
 Feels teacher can help her in the future  
 Feels teacher is helping her  
 Feels teacher is more important and helps more than warden  
 Feels teacher, R, always enjoys dynamic with her  
 Felt cared for by teacher when ill  
 He is very nice to me  
 Likes Uncle X because feels taken care of  
 Likes specialness of relationship with brother  
 Likes teacher  
 Likes teacher because he is a good teacher and teaches all her sisters  
 Misses brother when she looks at photograph before bedtime  
 Plays with teacher  
 Respects Uncle X because of adherence to funeral rituals when founder died  
 Teacher is very important to her  
 Teacher, R, is a friend to everybody  
 Teacher, R, is also like a brother  
 Teacher, R, is entertaining  
 Teacher, R, is good in sports  
 Teacher, R, is nice  
 Teacher, R, teaches very well  
 Teacher, R, understands everything  
 Thinks Uncle, X, is a good man

### **Cultural and Family Traditions**

#### **Table 11. Faith in Higher Being**

Asking for something  
 Asking for something from a god

Asks god to change her degree  
 Asks god to fulfill wishes for change  
 Believes god can make concrete changes in one's life  
 Feels close presence of god  
 Feels good surrounded by pictured of god  
 I am praying  
 "I keep shouting at god, why he is not helping me out"  
 Love of god  
 Love of religious temple  
 Loves talking to a god  
 Talking to best friend as god  
 Temple in home

**Table 12. Family Traditions**

Appreciates GCH birthday tradition in anticipation of contrast in future husband's home  
 Birthday celebration is happy moment  
 Birthday celebrations are unique to GCH household  
 Celebrating group birthdays because individual birthday are too expensive  
 Feels happy when looking at photograph of GCH family  
 Feels very good when looking at birthday photograph  
 Felt happy and likes special food at birthday celebration  
 It is way enjoyable to combine birthday celebration  
 Feels sad during birthday celebrations as she wishes her biological parents were there

**Weather and Physical Environment**

**Table 13. Emotional State Affected by Environment/Weather**

Feels excited about getting wet from rain  
 Feels happy when gets wet in rain  
 Feels ok looking at photograph of herself and the weather  
 Likes getting wet in the rain  
 Likes rain  
 Nice weather is when it is not hot  
 Nice weather makes me feel that I am nice  
 Nice weather outside can shift sadness to happiness  
 Photograph of clouds before rain  
 "Nice weather can always make anyone happy, especially those who like peace in their lives"

**Table 14. Thoughts about School and Studying**

Associated college with being around guys  
 "Because normally I don't study....."  
 Begged J Uncle to study outside of Jaipur  
 Believes changing course will make her happy  
 Can't tolerate being upset by guys at college  
 College makes me feel sad

Compares self to others in course  
 Cries when hears something bad about her  
 Dislikes course (school) books  
 Doesn't feel like going to HM College  
 Doubted interest in hotel management  
 Enjoys making fun of teachers  
 Feel J Uncle was upset when I scored badly  
 Feels bad when enters college  
 Feels course is making her feel stressed and sad  
 Feels happy looking at picture of herself going to school  
 Feels left out by guys  
 Feels more comfortable sharing secrets with school friends than with GCH sisters  
 Feels she has no future in Hotel Management  
 Felt excited when “bunked school” with boy  
 Felt limited in academic options due to restriction of staying in Jaipur  
 Ignores warden's request to check in after school  
 It is good to go to school  
 Likes going to school for friends  
 Loves going to school  
 Negative feelings during course  
 Picture of participant going to school in school uniform  
 Reflects on her actions about going to college  
 Reflects on the way she is perceived cause she is left out  
 Successfully completes first year of college  
 Talks to sister T about school and stupid boy, J  
 “That, uh, always makes me feel a big question mark, why am I doing, and what am I doing?”(about school course)

**Table 15. Thoughts about GCH Home and Family**

Feel happy because GCH is doing a lot for the girls  
 Feels happy when looking at photograph of GCH family  
 If successful wants to use money to help biological family, GCH family, and other girls  
 Likes living with sisters  
 Refers to being brought to GCH as young child  
 GCH house is pretty  
 Photograph of sister J in beautiful GCH garden  
 Needs sisters to play and fight with  
 “Geeta aunty and Janu Uncle are the God for us who opened this house”

**Table 16. Thoughts of Lack of Resources in Home/Home too big**

Feels nothing is being done about unused computers  
 Feels sad when looking at photograph of computers  
 One laptop for personal use after 12th grade  
 Only one computer for all the girls  
 Photograph of useless computers in computer room

Thinks solution would be to fix old computers  
 Thinks solution would be to sell or make usable unused things  
 Too many sisters in the GCH home makes it difficult to keep secrets  
 Unused things at GCH are disregarded and not looked at  
 Wants more time to work on computer  
 Wants to learn computers  
 Wants to read more books  
 “We are so many who want to work on the computer”

### **Hobbies and Pastimes**

#### **Table 17. Singing and Dancing Aspirations**

Because of shared age with movie star gets confidence about her singing  
 Compares self to Shakira  
 Dreaming to be a pop star is my childhood dream  
 Dreams of becoming Shakira when singing  
 Dreams to be a great singer  
 Especially likes Shakira's dancing  
 Excited to see movie "high school musical" and requested it from sponsor grandmother  
 Gets confidence in her own singing with success of singer her age  
 I love singing  
 Inspired by Shakira  
 Likes female American movie star from "High School Musical"  
 Likes Vanessa because she is a good dancer and singer  
 Loves singing Shakira's songs  
 Practices and dances in front of mirror to fulfill dream of being singer  
 Uses movie to learn and sing songs  
 Wants to be like Shakira  
 Wishes to watch Shakira's videos all at once

#### **Table 18. Books as Best Friends, Comfort, Escape, and Entertainment**

Books are my best friends  
 “Books are my world!”  
 Favorite story is a love story  
 Feels happy and excited when looking at photograph of books  
 Harry Potter is her favorite book  
 Has read each Harry Potter book 25 times  
 I love reading Harry Potter books  
 “I want books every-beside me every time”  
 Keeps books beside her pillow  
 Likes fantasy books  
 Likes J.K. Rowling's writing  
 Likes mystery books  
 Likes reading books  
 Likes to read both English and Hindi story books

Likes to read particular kinds of books  
 Loves reading books  
 Loves reading Indian author's books  
 Often missed bedtime when wanting to read Harry Potter book  
 Re-reads same books  
 Read Harry Potter books when sad, happy, or wanting to forget everything  
 "That I love books!!"  
 "The time pass, time passes, the time passes when you read storybooks"  
 Thinks Harry Potter books are easy to read  
 Thinks of happiness when looking at story books  
 Wants to read more books  
 We can" imagine ourselves" being in the story  
 Wishes to re-read books  
 Wants to be writer, poet when older  
 When younger, read story books because she felt alone

### **Femininity and Body Awareness**

#### **Table 19. Pride in Appearance and Interest in Clothes**

Excitedly states passion for "clothes only, only clothes"  
 Feels especially happy when buys Western clothes  
 Feels happy when buys new clothes  
 Feels happy when wears different clothes  
 Feels happy when wears non-donated clothes  
 Feels positively about sharing clothing with sisters  
 Feels positively about having choice of clothes  
 Loves to model the different clothes  
 Loves to wear different clothes  
 Photograph of her favorite clothes  
 Practices and dances in front of mirror to fulfill dream of being singer  
 Takes joy in trying on sisters' clothes while sisters are at school  
 Thinks of buying clothes when trying on sisters' clothes  
 Wishes to be videotaped so she can see how she looks

#### **Table 20. Emerging Femininity and Sexuality**

Associated college with being around guys  
 Aware that sister is angry because reported to elder about sister's, Reva, boyfriend  
 Believes teacher, R, is a good husband  
 Believes teacher, R, is everything  
 Can't tolerate being upset by guys at college  
 Concerned that guy talk will inhibit sister's future  
 Despite Shakira's exposing herself, her heart is good  
 Doesn't want American movie star's image to go down because of improper clothes  
 Especially likes Shakira's dancing  
 Favorite story is a love story

Feels especially happy when buys Western clothes  
 Feels happy when gets wet in rain  
 Feels happy because met nice person, like Teacher R  
 Feels left out by guys  
 Feels teacher, R, always enjoys dynamic with her  
 Feels warden's protectiveness from boys is contradictory to reality of contact with boys in school  
 Feels warden asks her a lot of questions about sisters' interest in boys  
 Felt excited when bunked school with boy  
 Likes getting wet in the rain  
 Likes specialness of relationship with brother  
 Looks at photograph of brother before going to sleep  
 Loves to model the different clothes  
 Misses brother when she looks at photograph before bedtime  
 Practices and dances in front of mirror to fulfill dream of being singer  
 Talks to sister T about school and stupid boy, J  
 Teacher, R, understands everything  
 The actor who plays Harry Potter is my favorite Hollywood actor  
 Warden doesn't allow social freedom to prevent contact with boys  
 Dreams of finding boyfriend who only loves her

**Table 21. Pop Star as Mentor and Inspiration**

Attracted to Shakira because she is good at everything  
 Compares self to Shakira  
 Continues to follow movie star's career through internet  
 Despite Shakira's exposing herself, her heart is good  
 Doesn't want American movie star's image to go down because of improper clothes  
 Dreaming to be a pop star is my childhood dream  
 Dreams of becoming Shakira when singing  
 Dreams to be a great singer  
 Especially likes Shakira's dancing  
 Feels close to Shakira  
 Feels very happy when looking at picture of Shakira  
 Inspired by Shakira  
 Inspired by Shakira's story of struggle and success  
 Likes female American movie star from "High School Musical"  
 Likes Vanessa because she is a good dancer and singer  
 Loves Shakira  
 Loves singing Shakira's songs  
 Shakira's heart is good because she is involved in charity  
 Shakira is her mentor  
 Thinks Shakira is a good human being  
 Thinks Shakira is awesome and beautiful in videos  
 Uses movie to learn and sing songs  
 Wishes to watch Shakira's videos all at once

## Self-Reflection

### Table 22. Self-Reflection, Dreaming, and Journaling

After sister, Reva, reads secret diary felt need to change hiding place

Always thinks of future

Doesn't share diary with anybody

Dreaming in contrast to being in present

Dreaming is both negative and positive

Dreams of helping others

Dreams of helping self

Dreams to be great

Feels dreaming and thinking is important

Feels irritated when something doesn't happen that she is thinking about

Feels positive when she acts on thoughts and succeeds

Good to dream but sometimes feels bad

Hope to succeed if given opportunities

Reflects on her actions about going to college

Reflects on the way she is perceived cause she is left out

Thinking in every situation

“This thinking word is very close to me”

Writes in diary when something special happens

Writing in diary heightens both happy and sad feelings

“I dreamt to be one of among the best”

If found at fault, wants to change

“That, uh, always makes me feel a big question mark, why am I doing, and what am I doing?”(about school course)

“Everybody loves themselves and I love myself too!”

### Table 23. Feelings of Sadness about Life.

“I am a girl who can really get emotional”

“I sometimes feel that nobody loves me”

Longing for a better life

Titles photograph 'bad life' when reflects on fight at home and feeling sad

Writes in diary because she doesn't feel like sharing feelings with others

Feels sad during birthday celebrations as she wishes her biological parents were there

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