

“THE BEST AND WORST OF ALL THAT GOD AND MAN CAN DO”: PATERNALISTIC
PERSPECTIVES ON THE INTELLECTUALLY DISABLED AT FLORIDA’S SUNLAND
INSTITUTIONS

by

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ABSTRACT

Historians have studied mental institutions in the mid-20th century; however, few have discussed them within the context of the period's paternalistic social movements and perceptions. Florida's Sunland program provides a lens for studying the parental role the institutions and general public took toward the intellectually disabled. Specifically, administrators saw residents of the Sunland Training Centers and Hospitals as perpetual children, trapped in an "eternal childhood." The institution was presented as a family unit, abiding by 1950s ideals of the companionate household. When the Sunlands proved generally unsuccessful, Florida's communities began to supplement their efforts. The social movements of the 1960s inspired community care organizations and other special programs in lieu of institutionalization. Reports of neglect and abuse at the Sunlands contributed to the community's subsequent perception of residents as "victimized children," deprived of a "normal" life. Such a view of the intellectually disabled continues to dominate discussions of the Sunlands, community care, and "normalization." This study informs a broad understanding of the past while contributing to these contemporary considerations.

Research into the Sunland Training Centers and Hospitals, as well as their surrounding communities, relies on subjective sources. The flagship training center, located in Gainesville, published an internally-circulated newsletter utilized in this work. Detailed studies of Florida's newspapers provide the perspective of Florida's community members, including women's clubs and civil rights activists. Finally, articles and books written on Sunland "hauntings" illustrate recent attempts to define and patronize the intellectually disabled. All of these sources point toward a liberal paternalism that dominated discussions of the intellectually disabled in the mid-20th century.

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INTRODUCTION

Historiography

Histories of mental illness were generally traditional in the 1930s through the 1950s, emphasizing the benevolent nature of institutions and the prominent figures who influenced their development. Divisive events in the 1960s and 70s shaped a more critical historiography of intellectual disability, mental illness, and institutionalization.¹ In recent years, historians argued whether or not mental institutions were benevolent forces or systems of social control. Michel Foucault's theory of social control is central to these debates. In the last decade, historians began to explore the history of the family, gender, and race as part of these discussions.

Before these histories, monographs of mental health represented a teleological approach. Albert Deutsch's 1932 *The Mentally Ill in America* represents a seminal work of this period. Deutsch suggests that the abuses of patients by doctors are merely stepping stones on the way to an idealized mental health system in the United States.² Even Deutsch's more controversial *Shame of the States* predicted an eventual solution to overcrowding and understaffing based in the institutions themselves.³ Even as late as the 1960s, this positivist trajectory was being emphasized. Nina Ridenour's 1961 monograph emphasizes progressive reform and the lives of

¹ Though the term "intellectually disabled" has been used extensively in the past ten years, it officially replaced the term "mentally retarded" in 2010. This term is now used exclusively by the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. The term "developmentally disabled" is sometimes used interchangeably with "intellectually disabled." Typically, an individual who is developmentally disabled is intellectually disabled due to issues related to brain development in childhood. Therefore, this thesis will use "intellectually disabled," as it is currently the standard term set by professional associations, and provides a more general definition. For more information, see: Robert L. Schalock et al., "The Renaming of *Mental Retardation*: Understanding the Change to the Term *Intellectual Disability*," *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities* 45, No. 2 (2007): 116-124; American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, "About Us," American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, http://www.aaidd.org/content_2383.cfm?navID=2 (accessed August 11, 2012).

² Albert Deutsch, *The Mentally Ill in America: A History of Their Care and Treatment from Colonial Times* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937), 215, 228, xv.

³ Albert Deutsch, *The Shame of the States* (New York: Brace, NY: Harcourt, 1948, 88.

famous mental health advocates.⁴ She explores what she perceives to be a steady climb towards perfection in the mental health industry. Rideour's perspective is colored by her own personal experience – the volume's introduction makes special note of the fact that she was involved in some of the events described.⁵ In accordance with many other histories of the 1950s and early 60s, the tone is celebratory, lauding the accomplishments of figures like Clifford Beers whose autobiography, according to the author, is so crucial to the study of mental health that one cannot be understood without the other.⁶ Neither of these works addresses how the experience of institutionalization differed depending on a patient's race and gender. These early histories of mental illness and institutions centered on the deeds Progressive reformers and not the actual “patients.”

As the 1960s progressed, however, this type of history came under increasing scrutiny. It became apparent that institutions were unable to support the number of patients in mental hospitals, and accusations of understaffing and abuses became common. During this period, histories based on “antipsychiatry” began to argue that institutions were agents of social control. Erving Goffman's “total institution” portrayed the asylum as a force of industrialization that operated much like a prison.⁷ Michel Foucault's 1965 work, *Madness and Civilization*, argued that asylums were utilized by powerful government forces to separate dissidents and other “unreasonable” groups from the population.⁸ Though historians of mental illness united in their criticism of Foucault's lack of historical context, his description of the institution as a force for

⁴Nina Ridenour, *Mental Health in the United States: A Fifty-Year History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), 76, 132.

⁵*Ibid.*, xi.

⁶*Ibid.*, 6.

⁷Erving Goffman, *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (Chicago: Aldine Press, 1962), 3-12.

⁸Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Random House, 1965), 257.

social control proved divisive.⁹ This social control theory would be accepted and advanced by historians who began to focus on race as a key element in the institutionalization system. Additionally, historians writing post-colonial histories of institutionalization would invoke Foucault when describing steps colonial powers would take to subdue populations and treat them unfairly.¹⁰ This is not to suggest, however, that Foucault's claim on the construction of mental illness enjoyed widespread acceptance. Most historians mention *Madness and Civilization* in the introductions to their works without necessarily accepting his historical analysis. Nevertheless, the social control theory is pervasive in historiography, with most historians still addressing Foucault's ideas.

In the 1970s, the notion of a progressive history of mental health in the United States was challenged by troubling developments in the industry. Popular opinions of institutions became increasingly negative, influenced by the more liberal attitudes of the 1960s and 70s. Such perspectives informed the writing of Kathleen Jones' work, *A History of the Mental Health Services*. In the book's introduction, Jones addresses these new debates as having sharply

⁹For notable works that utilize the theory of social control, see: Jack Pressman, *Psychosurgery and the Limits of Medicine* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); David Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic* (Boston: Little Brown, 1971); Andrew Scull, *Social Order/Mental Disorder: Anglo-American Psychiatry in Historical Perspective* (Los Angeles: California University Press, 1989); Thomas Szasz, *The Myths of Psychotherapy: Mental Healing as Religion, Rhetoric, and Repression* (New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1978). For its detractors, see: Gerald Grob, *Mental Illness and American Society, 1875-1940* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983); Edward Shorter, *A History of Psychiatry: From the Era of the Asylum to the Age of Prozac* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1997); Joseph Melling and Bill Forsythe, *Politics of Madness: The State, Insanity and Society in England, 1845-1914* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Abraham Luchins, "Social Control Doctrines of Mental Illness and the Medical Profession in Nineteenth-Century America," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 29, vol. 1 (1993): 29-47.

¹⁰ For example, see: Judith T. Kenny, "Climate, Race, and Imperial Authority: The Symbolic Landscape of the British Hill Station in India," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 85 (1995): 698-699; Sally Swatz, "The Black Insane in the Cape, 1891-1920," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 21 (1995): 408-414; James H. Mills, *Madness, Cannabis and Colonialism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 6, 104; Mary B. Zeigler and Viktor Osinubi, "Theorizing the Postcoloniality of African American English," *Journal of Black Studies* 32, no. 5 (2002): 588-589.

diverted from past works in the historiography.¹¹ Significantly, Jones herself is influenced by tumultuous events of the 1960s such as Civil Rights and second-wave feminism, which focused on giving new rights to previously underrepresented groups. Though she does not fully subscribe to anti-psychiatry rhetoric, the work explores the representation of individual persons, and questions whether or not their rights and liberties are being kept intact.¹² The volume's thesis hinges on these ideas – Jones is primarily concerned with discovering Great Britain's particular way of administering mental health treatment, and what this can reveal about a society's humanity.¹³ Though Jones is centrally concerned with individual liberties despite minority status, her work focuses on government structures, and does not explore the lives and concerns of patients. Jones' academic research relates primarily to public administration, which explains her focus on external structures as opposed to the everyday experiences of patients. In her introduction, Jones addresses the work of Erving Goffman and David Rothman. Though Jones refrains from heavily criticizing these authors, she sees such perspectives as full of “paradoxes” requiring greater context.¹⁴ Therefore, her volume is an attempt to temper such theories with the realities of deinstitutionalization, as well as the negative consequences of segregation. Jones would again explore this balanced perspective over two decades later – though the historiography of the topic would have, by that time, become changed by increasing controversy.

Not all historians embraced Foucault's interpretation of institutions. Edward Shorter, writing in 1997, heavily criticized Foucault; in fact, his *A History of Psychiatry: From the Era of the Asylum to the Age of Prozac* presents straightforward history that portrays highly

¹¹ Kathleen Jones, *A History of the Mental Health Services* (Boston: Kegan Paul, 1972), xii-xiii.

¹² *Ibid.*, xiii.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 341.

controversial treatment methods as necessary advances.¹⁵ Gerald Grob, a seminal author in the field of mental illness, was more successful in achieving a balanced perspective. Grob acknowledges the non-linear aspects of the institution and failures of the system; however, he sees them as part of a generally benevolent system.¹⁶ These historians blamed antipsychiatrists and historians like Andrew Scull and David Rothman for the problems that came with deinstitutionalization.¹⁷ In particular, Abraham S. Luchins took advocates for social control to task in an article for the *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences*. Essentially, Luchins argues that historians should not determine important government policy.¹⁸ After the 1990s, historians would continue to acknowledge this debate over social control, though typically without taking sides.

The 1990s also saw a trend in exploring mental illness in the American South. In the 1990s, Lynn Gamwell and Nancy Tomes published a monograph focusing on perceptions of black and Native American mental health. This central theme shifted, however, as finding sources written from the perspectives of these people groups were nearly impossible to locate.¹⁹ Historians would continue to struggle with the issue of finding sources. Steven Noll's *Feeble-Minded in Our Midst*, published in 1995, was the first major work written to focus on issues of race and mental illness in the American South. As a specialist in children's mental health, Noll's work reflects on the plight of the intellectually disabled in the South. As a region, Noll argues

¹⁵ Edward Shorter, *A History of Psychiatry: From the Era of the Asylum to the Age of Prozac* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1997).

¹⁶ Gerald Grob, *The Mad Among Us: A History of America's Mentally Ill* (New York: Free Press, 1994); Gerald Grob, *Mental Illness and American Society, 1875-1940* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

¹⁷ Also see: Joseph Melling and Bill Forsythe, *Politics of Madness: The State, Insanity and Society in England, 1845-1914* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

¹⁸ Abraham S. Luchins, "Social Control Doctrines of Mental Illness and the Medical Profession in Nineteenth-Century America," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 29, no. 1 (1993).

¹⁹ Lynn Gamwell and Nancy Tomes, *Madness in America: Cultural and Medical Perceptions of Mental Illness before 1914* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1995), 7.

that the South's asylums were far poorer in quality compared to the rest of the United States. For African-Americans, conditions were particularly horrific, and Noll describes the Southern asylum as a punitive structure meant to control deviant behaviors.²⁰ Shortly after Noll's publication, articles focusing on the eugenics movement as well as Southern asylums agreed with these findings.²¹ Though not explicitly promoted, the theory of social control can be seen throughout these works, particularly since Southern administrators and officials were often accused of segregating free blacks into asylums.²² These works would lead to a greater understanding of ways in which race operated within institutions.

In the 2000s, the historiography of mental illness and institutions began to look back on and address antipsychiatry and the civil rights movement for the disabled. This trend has its roots in the previous decade. Historian Kim Nielson's *A Disability History of the United States* frames the narrative of mental illness and institutions as a civil rights story, reshaping the traditional narrative. David and Sheila Rothman's *The Willowbrook Wars* explore the perspectives of litigators-reformers during the Willowbrook State Institution scandal, and reveal a strong connection between the civil rights movements for African-Americans and the intellectually disabled. Elizabeth F. Shores' work has also revealed the litigious side of civil rights for the intellectually disabled. These works draw on sources such as court cases and government reports

²⁰Steven Noll, *Feeble-Minded in Our Midst: Institutions for the Mentally Retarded in the South, 1900-1940* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 1995), 91.

²¹For example, see: John S. Hughes, "Labeling and Treating Black Mental Illness in Alabama, 1861-1910," *The Journal of Southern History* 58 (1992): 435-460; Wilma King, "'Mad' Enough to Kill: Enslaved Women, Murder, and Southern Courts," *The Journal of African American History* 92 (2007): 37-56; Martin Summers, "'Suitable Care of the African When Afflicted with Insanity': Race, Madness and Social Order in Comparative Perspective," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 84 (2010): 58-91; Gilles Vandal, "Curing the Insane in New Orleans: The Failure of the 'Temporary Insane Asylum,' 1852-1882," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 46 (2005): 155-184; Nathaniel P. Weston, "The Evolution of Mental Health Administration and Treatment in Antebellum Louisiana," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 40 (1999): 305-326.

²²For example, see Vandal, 157.

to examine deinstitutionalization.²³ The future of the historiography of intellectual disability and institutions seems likely to further explore connections to the civil rights movement and the ways in which public memory influences institutions that have closed.²⁴ Historians that incorporate the perspectives of distinct races, regions, and time periods are replacing broader histories of mentally illness.

Historians have recently integrated histories of the family unit into studies of intellectual disability. To understand how the intellectually disabled were treated in the 20th century, these historians study how families and childhood operated in the time period. The historiography of family life and childhood has developed significantly in recent years. As Joseph M. Hawes points out in *Children Between the Wars*, recent scholarship illustrates the variety of ways in which perceptions of childhood have changed in recent years. Childhood as preparation for a societal role is a recurring theme through these recent works.²⁵ Patricia Crain's "Childhood as Spectacle" explores the gender-specific nature of these roles and the idealization adults place on childhood. Understanding the family of the 1950s is critical to a proper analysis of perceptions of childhood. Elaine Tyler May's seminal work on the 1950s family unit, *Homeward Bound*, uses statistical analysis and personal interviews to illustrate the decade's Cold War-influenced attitudes toward

²³ Kim E. Nielson, *A Disability History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012); David J. Rothman and Shelia M. Rothman, *The Willowbrook Wars: Bringing the Mentally Disabled into the Community* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2005); Elizabeth F. Shores, "A Pivotal Place in Special Education Policy: The First Arkansas Children's Colony," in *Mental Retardation in America*, ed. Steven Noll and James W. Trent Jr. (New York: New York University, 2004): 384-412.

²⁴ Steven Noll's article on southern institutions' shaping of their past provides a fascinating example of institutionalization in American memory. See: Steven Noll, "The Public Face of Southern Institutions for the 'Feeble-Minded,'" *The Public Historian* 27, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 25-41.

²⁵ For examples, see: Patricia Crain, "Childhood as Spectacle," *American Literary History* 11, no. 3 (1999): 545-533; Joseph M. Hawes, *Children Between the Wars: American Childhood, 1920-1940* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1997); Joseph Illick, *American Childhoods* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

the family unit.²⁶ May argues that the 1950s was a singular point in the history of the American family. Stephen Mintz's article, "Does the American Family Have a History?" utilizes May's study as part of a broader perspective on the American family. Essentially, Mintz concludes that the 1950s "companionate" family was highly idealized. These works illustrate recent historical conclusions on the 1950s family.

These historiographical trends are influencing new perspectives on the history of intellectual disability. Steven Noll and James W. Trent Jr.'s 2004 compilation, *Mental Retardation in America*, featured four articles that analyzed the role of the intellectually disabled individual in family life. Historians Janice Brockley, Katherine Castles, Kathleen W. Jones, and Wendy M. Lehring discuss attempts to "normalize" residents through controlling a specific area associated with childhood, such as education and recreation. In particular, Brockley's article, "Rearing the Child Who Never Grew," explains the reticence of some parents and members of society to treat grown intellectually disabled individuals as adults. These studies build on previous works both on intellectual disability and the 1950s family unit.

Historians have also recently studied links between intellectual disability and sexual deviancy in this period. The history of sexuality informs any discussion on the intellectually disabled. H.G. Cocks' "Historiographical Review" provides a broad, authoritative perspective on trends in the historiography of sexuality to the present. The article speaks particularly to society's modern hesitation to accept "deviant" sexual behaviors. Though not explicitly discussed, except in terms of mental illness broadly, the intellectually disabled person's sexuality fall into this category. Sexuality and the intellectually disabled are topics closely linked to studies of the

²⁶ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 6-7.

eugenics movement. Diane B. Paul's work, *Controlling Human Heredity*, explores the movement, which she argues continues up to the present day. Karen Keely offers a singular perspective on this topic. A literary theorist, Keely's article, "Sexuality and Storytelling" discusses perceptions of intellectual disability and sexuality in southern literature during the late 20th century. Authors such as William Faulkner and John Steinbeck discuss the fear of the "rampant sexuality" of these individuals, and accompanying sterilization efforts. The eugenics movement had an important impact, even into the 1950s, on the perceptions of the sexuality of the mentally ill. Most notable is Katherine Castles', whose work argues that readings of black women as oversexualized led to high sterilization rates for this group even into the 1960s and 70s.²⁷ The Sunlands, like many institutions, attempted to control residents' sexuality and ability to reproduce. These histories illustrate the perceptions behind these actions.

The study of women's roles within institutions is another important trend in the historiography. Early histories emphasized the control administrators exerted over female residents, while later monographs focused on observing gendered roles. Women's History grew in popularity during the 1960s and 70s, emphasizing the role of women in history. The movement emerged from new histories being written that rejected consensus histories.²⁸ Instead, monographs focusing on minorities and women's appearances in history were introduced. Into the 1990s, however, Women's History was criticized for merely explaining the presence of women in history – the "add women and stir" approach.²⁹ This dissatisfaction some had with Women's History led to Gender History, which focused on the construction of gender roles in

²⁷See Katherine Castles, "Quiet Eugenics: Sterilization in North Carolina's Institutions for the Mentally Retarded, 1945-1965," *The Journal of Southern History*, 68 (2002): 863.

²⁸Peter Charles Hoffer, *Past Imperfect: Fact, Fictions, Fraud – American History from Bancroft and Parkman to Ambrose, Bellesiles, Ellis, and Goodwin* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 63.

²⁹Merry E. Weisner-Hanks, "Women, Gender, and Church History," *Church History* 71, No. 3 (2002): 601.

society. Within the asylum, treatments and patient perspectives were impacted by gender as well as race. Intellectual disability in women has been linked to notions of “hysteria,” a socially constructed “illness” closely associated with madness. Hysteria is extensively studied in Elaine Showalter's work, including *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture*. One of the seminal authors of the early feminist movement, argues that the asylum structure itself is a feminized concept.³⁰ Due to her background in the tumultuous feminist movement of the 1960s, Showalter's account of women's treatment is highly informed by ideas of power and oppression. Liz Bondi and Erica Burman, both educated in early 2000s and late 1990s, respectively, are also influenced by gender studies and the general study of suppression. Though not as vehement in their condemnation of male power as Showalter, the authors agree with her identification of female madness as a constructed concept. In their article was the *Feminist Review*, a journal that explores power and gender, they argue that strength and sanity have been historically associated with masculinity, while insanity has been associated with female hysteria.³¹ In explaining the disproportionate number of women in mental institutions during the twentieth century, Bodi and Burman discuss the construction of gender without the asylum itself. Women were often seen as further from a true cure, due to a supposed natural proclivity toward intellectual disability.³² These skewed numbers have been identified regarding black patients as well. Studies focusing after the Civil War typically included some separation of how black men and women were treated. The focus of these historians on the difference of care and treatment for men and women indicates the influenced of the gender studies on the historiography of mental institutions. This includes the work of Gilles Vandal, whose article on the temporary insane asylums of New

³⁰See: Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830-1980* (London: Virago, 1987), 4.

³¹Liz Bondi and Erica Burman, “Women and Mental Health: A Feminist Review,” *Feminist Review* 68 (2001), 8.

³²*Ibid.*, 8-9.

Orleans reveals that the majority of the patients were black women, who were often treated poorly.³³ The construction of female gender as something that needed to be controlled would also be discussed by postcolonial historians. Gender historian Lynette Jackson's work heavily incorporates the idea that mental institutions were used to force native women to adhere to Western customs.³⁴ As a historian primarily focused on gender, Jackson's work reflects the different ways in which male and female patients were treated. These works, influenced by a new emphasis on women's and gender studies, illustrate the importance of gender to both American and postcolonial authors.

Central Questions

Historians such as Janice Brockley and Katherine Castles are exploring how intellectually disabled children were perceived in terms of childhood and the family unit. Yet to be explored is the institution's response to these ideas in the 1950s and 60s. Therefore, this work asks: how did perceptions of the intellectually disabled person as a perpetual child inform how administrators at Sunlands treated patients in the 1950s-60s? The answer to this question depended on the race and gender of the child; however, for all residents, care was based on 1950s perceptions of a child's role in a family. For the first time in the history of mental illness, institutions like the Sunlands portrayed themselves as a family. This thesis explores the ways in which the

³³Vandal, 156.

³⁴Lynette Jackson, *Surfacing Up: Psychiatry and Social Order in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1908-1968* (Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 100.

Gainesville Sunland Training Center paternalistically defined and treated its residents, and examines the historical context for such decisions.³⁵

The Sunlands did not care for their “children” in a vacuum. A community surrounded each Sunland, with women’s groups, college groups, and journalists taking a special interest in the institutions. How did perceptions of these institutions and the “children” within them inform how communities viewed and reacted to the Sunlands? Newspaper articles, in particular, relate a great deal of information on this question. As funding for the Sunlands dwindled paternalistic, community groups stepped in to ensure the institution’s “children” received “normal” childhoods. When conditions at the Sunlands rapidly deteriorated in the mid-1960s, student and African-American newspapers reported on widespread abuses. In the 1970s, litigators and civil rights activists for the disabled promoted the view that the Sunlands were overcrowded and dangerous. Studying these perceptions will contribute to a holistic understanding of what the Sunlands meant to a wide group of individuals.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Sunland Hospitals closed down and training centers were repurposed. Community care organizations and associations for the intellectually disabled began to play an active role in caring for former Sunland residents. Growing accusations against the institutions fueled the public’s desire to care for the “victimized children” of the Sunlands. This paternalistic spirit contributed to opportunities for community care; however, efforts were not enough to support the large number of individuals now living outside the institution. This chapter explores how the myth of the Sunlands contributed to a paternalistic outpouring of support.

³⁵ The scope in examining this historical context is not limited to the American south, or the state of Florida. This is a national history, and though specific events are unique to Florida, similar legislation, funding situations, and community perceptions were occurring across the nation. When applicable, this thesis draws parallels between regional and national narratives.

Contribution to Literature

Steven Noll's *Feeble-Minded in Our Midst* relates the history of mental institutions in Florida until the early 20th century. The history of Florida's mental hospitals past this point has yet to be researched and communicated. The Sunland mental institutions, located in various locations around Florida including Mariana, Ft. Myers, Orlando, Miami, Gainesville, and Tallahassee, have also not yet been approached by scholars for the purposes of a historical study. This work adds greatly to an underrepresented historical topic. The type of resources available the Sunlands, and the methods this work takes in employing them, are also unique. This thesis utilizes newsletters, photographs, and internal-facing reports to assess the perspectives of an institution's administration, staff, and residents. This work merely skims the surface of the wealth of information found in these sources.

Additionally, the research and analysis provides an opportunity for self-reflection to Florida's current leadership. Currently, about 200,000 intellectually disabled persons in Florida do not have proper access to services. If the state decides to attempt reform, histories of past attempts at providing for the intellectually disabled should be available. The paternalistic attitude of reformers described in this work should serve as a warning against efforts that omit the voices of the intellectually disabled themselves and their families.

Further, this contribution brings together two important historiographical topics: the history of the family in the 1950s and 60s and the history of mental illness. Janice Brockley and Katherine Castles have explored the role of the intellectually disabled in mid-century families; however, a historian has yet to apply family history from the period to the history of mental institutions. The period's idealization of the companionate family illuminates the perspectives of Sunland administrators, who treated residents as "children" in need of paternalistic care.

Source Material

Before the Gainesville Training Center was a Sunland, its official name was the Florida Farm Colony. This is reflected in the title of its newsletter, *The Colonette*. These self-published volumes contain a great deal of information on how administrators viewed residents, and the subsequent actions these perceptions entailed. Articles in *The Colonette* feature interviews with attendants, physicians, psychologists, and clergy working at the Sunland. Further, they go into significant detail concerning the vocational training program and “normalization” initiatives at the institution. This source will be used significantly in the first chapter, which addresses internal perceptions of residents at the Sunlands. With a few exceptions, the majority of the newsletter publications can be found at the University of Florida Library in Gainesville. The Sunland Hospital in Tallahassee also published an internal newsletter, parts of which can be found at the Florida State Archive in Tallahassee.

Articles and reports in newspapers are essential to the second chapter of this work, which addresses perceptions of the Sunlands from outside the institution. Newspapers from the 1960s-70s relay a great deal of information on what community groups, civil rights activists, and the general public thought of the institutions and the intellectually disabled individuals living in them. As the Sunlands staffing and funding problems grew worse, persons living in the surrounding areas felt the need to step in as surrogate families, experts, and advocates. The majority of the newspaper articles featured in the second chapter come from Florida Atlantic University’s online database. Specific newspapers include: *Bradford County Telegraph*, *Brevard County Telegraph*, *Calhoun-Liberty Journal*, *Clay County Crescent*, *Clewiston News*, *Deland Sun News*, *Flagler Tribune*, *Gadsden County Times*, *Gainesville Sun*, *Independent Florida Alligator*, *Gilchrist County Journal*, *Jackson County Floridian*, *Jacksonville Air News*,

Kissimmee Valley Gazette, Lake City Reporter, Levy County Journal, Madison Enterprise, Mayo Free Press, Miami Times, Okeechobee News, Palm Beach Post Perry News-Herald, The Star, The Star-Advocate, and Wakulla County News. Additionally, articles from the *Orlando Sentinel* and *Evening Star* come from the University of Central Florida's microfilm collection, and articles from the *Florida Democrat* can be found in the Florida State Archive in Tallahassee.

Official state and federal government reports provide a final and informative source for this work. Chapter 1 utilizes the Sunland Training Center in Gainesville's initial report to the state legislature. Karl Lundgren, a senior administrator at the Sunland, prepared the report to showcase new buildings and programs instated as part of the institution's transformation from the Florida Farm Colony to the Sunland.³⁶ The document showcases administrator's perception of residents and their idealized perspective of what the institution could be. A report from the President's Committee on Mental Retardation features heavily in Chapter 2. The 1970 "Profile of Residents in Florida's Sunland Centers for the Retarded" reveals serious issues in the implementation of programming and basic resident care. The report provides an important perspective on the issues plaguing the institutions as a foundation of why popular opinion was turning against them. Both of these reports are available at the University of Florida library in Gainesville, Florida.

Methodology

There are few statistics available on the Sunland Training Centers and Hospitals. Patient records are unavailable for research purposes. Quantitative analysis will be utilized only to reveal broadly the racial makeup of residents and employees at the institution. Historians Allison C.

³⁶ Karl Lundgren, *Florida Sunland Training Center*, (Tallahassee: Government Printing Office, 1959, 4.

Carey, who studies civil rights and intellectual disability, argues against using statistics to prove or disprove racism or abuse in institutions.³⁷ Therefore, on the whole, this is a qualitative analysis.³⁸

This research relies on highly subjective primary sources, such as internally-circulated newsletters and editorials. Though these sources are heavily biased, the goal of this work is neither to validate nor contest reported events at the Sunlands. Rather, it will reveal perceptions of the individuals reporting on the institutions.

³⁷ This is because a case can be made for racism if the population of African-Americans is higher or lower in the institutions than in the surrounding population. Allison C. Carey, *On the Margins of Citizenship: Intellectual Disability and Civil Rights in Twentieth-Century America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009).

³⁸ Margaret Humphreys utilizes a method of interpreting statistics that is similar to this work. Humphreys employs statistics only as an impetus to explore qualitative sources, and sees numbers as requiring significant analysis. See, Margaret Humphreys, *Intensely Human: The Health of the Black Soldiers in the American Civil War* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2008), 11.

CHAPTER 1: FLORIDA'S SUNLAND INSTITUTIONS

The Florida Farm Colony in Gainesville, Florida, changed its name in 1957 to the Sunland Training Center. The name change reflected an important shift in priorities. The number of children placed by parents in the institution was increasing. From the late 1940s to the late 1950s, growth at the Gainesville institution grew by about four hundred residents per year.¹ Simultaneously, the institution became more interested in training these children to fulfill societal roles than simply providing custodial care.² The period between 1945 and 1955 was singular in the history of the American family as divorce rates, which had been rising at a steady increase, plummeted.³ Men and women married and had children at a younger age than seen in decades.⁴ Simultaneously, the number of children committed to institutions for the intellectually disabled doubled for children under six.⁵ A focus on institutionalized children and the idealization of the 1950s family encouraged parents and psychologists to present the “mentally retarded” as merely in a state of “eternal childhood.” Sunland administrators treated and perceived residents based on the “eternal child” theory. Such perceptions suggested that the intellectually disabled person deserved a “normal” childhood. This understanding of childhood emphasized the importance of a companionate family, the consultation of child-rearing experts, opportunities to play, be educated, and trained for future societal roles, and sexual repression. Residents at the Gainesville Sunland Training Center in the 1950s were treated according to these ideas of “childhood” regardless of age.⁶

¹ Lungren, *Florida Sunland Training Center*, 5.

² *Ibid.*, 12.

³ May, 4-5.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

⁵ Castles, 362.

⁶ This chapter analyzes internal documents and newsletters, which often portrayed residents as “child-like,” but did not necessarily convey an exact age. Some documents indicate that individuals in educational classrooms were, for

The concept of intellectually disabled persons as “eternal children” was new in the 1940s-50s. Before this period, the intellectually disabled were still commonly thought of as social deviants, rather than helpless “children.” Eugenics proponents argued that “imbeciles” were an affront to natural selection and society generally.⁷ In 1917, the Florida Legislature proposed that state institutions’ main purpose would be to “segregate” the “feeble-minded.”⁸ The Florida Farm Colony’s name change to the Sunland Training Center signaled an important break from the past. No longer were institutions segregating deviants from society, now they were “training children” to become “normal” individuals in a “normal world.” These “colonies” with cottage-style layouts became what historian Elizabeth Jones calls the “noninstitutional institution.”⁹ This presentation of the institution was, in part, based on a 1950s ideal of preserved childhood.¹⁰ The Sunland’s new role was to provide a real “childhood” for the “eternal children” in its care, not to segregate deviants from society.

In the 1940s and 50s, psychiatrists, parents, and society generally used the language of childhood to describe the intellectually disabled, even once these individuals had physically grown into adulthood. Parents and society preferred to see the intellectually disabled as children who managed to retain, as if by magic, an enviable “child-like” nature. Books such as *The Child Who Never Grew* illustrate this concept. The author, Pearl Buck, describes her intellectually

the most part, under the age of eighteen. In other instances, age may have varied. I have noted the ages of residents in footnotes when such indications are available in the primary sources. See: Letter to LeRoy Collins from Dorothy P. Shepard, September 7, 1960, Ferris Bryant Papers, the George Smathers Collection, the University of Florida; Lundgren, *Florida Sunland Training Center*; Betty Eby, “Junior Women to Present Revue,” *The Kissimmee Gazette*, November 16, 1961, 3.

⁷ Diane B. Paul, *Controlling Human Heredity: 1865 to the Present* (New York: Humanity Books, 1995), 6.

⁸ Lundgren, *Florida Sunland Training Center*, 4.

⁹ Kathleen W. Jones, “Education for Children with Mental Retardation: Parent Activism, Public Policy, and Family Ideology in the 1950s,” in *Mental Retardation in America*, ed. Steven Noll and James W. Trent Jr. (New York: New York University, 2004): 329; Elizabeth F. Shores, “A Pivotal Place in Special Education Policy: The First Arkansas Children’s Colony,” in *Mental Retardation in America: A Historical Reader*, 384.

¹⁰ Crain, 546.

disabled daughter as, “forever a child” though she was at least twenty when the book was written.¹¹ The verbiage used to describe the intellectually disabled revealed a perception of these individuals as “children.” The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*, published in 1952, described those with intellectual disabilities as “childish” and emotional.¹² One article in *The Kissimmee Gazette* noted that, at the Sunlands, childhood ranged “from infancy to middle age.”¹³ Gainesville Sunland Training Center employees when describing residents. Administrators at the Sunlands portrayed residents as “childish” and “impish.”¹⁴ Residents were described in one *Colonette* article as “precious jewels.” The article also conjured the Biblical image of “giving a cup of cold water to a child” as an illustration of Sunland employees’ calling.¹⁵ The verbiage used by Sunland employees indicates an understanding of residents as “child-like.”

Sunland employees’ equating of intellectual disability with “childishness” inspired efforts to advance the situation for institutionalized children at older resident’s expense. In the 1940s, the literature of the period focused almost exclusively on training and educating institutionalized children, though adult residents still lived in institutions.¹⁶ The Association for the Help of Retarded Children (AHRC) conducted advertising campaigns in the 1950s that portrayed the intellectually disabled as cute children.¹⁷ Even into the 1960s and 70s, children remained the face

¹¹ Pearl Buck, *The Child Who Never Grew* (New York: The John Day Company, 1950), 3.

¹² The Committee on Nomenclature and Statistics of the American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual: Mental Disorders* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association Mental Hospital Service, 1952), 22.

¹³ Eby, “Junior Women to Present Revue,” 3.

¹⁴ Luis, “Nursery Training: The Importance of Each Child,” *Colonette*, 1956, 1.5, University of Florida Libraries. Though this article is titled “Nursery Training,” the individuals described in the article are clearly beyond infancy.

¹⁵ “Precious Jewels,” *Colonette* 1956, 1.5, University of Florida Libraries, Gainesville.

¹⁶ Grob, *Mental Illness and American Society, 1875-1940*, 187; Karen Kruse Thomas, *Deluxe Jim Crow: Civil Rights and American Health Policy, 1935-1954* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012), 1; Noll, “The Public Face of Southern Institutions for the “Feeble-Minded,” 190.

¹⁷ Katherine Castles, “Nice, Average Americans”: Postwar Parents’ Groups and the Defense of the Normal Family,” in *Mental Retardation in America: A Historical Reader*, 359.

of “mental retardation,” with services geared toward their needs.¹⁸ Even psychiatrist’s categorization of the intellectually disabled was based on the ages of children. “Mental ages” presented adults as children whose development was arrested a particular age.¹⁹ These “mental ages” were defined using highly subjective methods and means.²⁰ The Sunland institutions had their own system for determining mental ages, which illustrate their focus on children. Living spaces and training opportunities were divided up into the following age categories: 0-6, 6-9, 9-12, 12-18, 18-35 and 35+.²¹ In addition to seeing the intellectually disabled as figuratively young, administrators treated literal children with a higher degree of focus and care.

These perceptions did not emerge in a vacuum; rather, they were based on distinct 1940s and 50s family ideals. During this period, the public saw the family unit as a shelter from the pressures and problems of the wider world.²² This “companionate family” placed emphasis on friendship and special intimacy.²³ Affection and emotions were supposed to be more freely shared among members.²⁴ Fathers were seen as “breadwinners,” which ideally allowed wives to stay home and care for the home and children.²⁵ The idealized 1950s family had no place in it for an intellectually disabled child. Of all the issues that could occur with a foster child, prospective

¹⁸ Wendy M. Nehring, “Formal Health Care at the Community Level: The Child Development Clinics of the 1950s and 1960s,” in *Mental Retardation in America: A Historical Reader*, 381.

¹⁹ For instance, “idiots” were “cases showing a mentality roughly analogous to that of children of under two years.” Sidney Leavitt Pressey and Luella Cole Pressey, *Mental Abnormality and Deficiency: An introduction to the study of problems of mental health* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1926), 219.

²⁰ Rachel Cooper, *Classifying Madness: A Philosophical Examination of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (Dordrecht, the Netherlands: Springer, 2005), 5-6; The Committee on Nomenclature and Statistics of the American Psychiatric Association, 10; Albert I. Rabin, “Diagnostic Use of Intelligence Tests,” in *Handbook of Clinical Psychology*, ed. Benjamin B. Wolman (New York: McGraw Hill, 1965), 488.

²¹ Lundgren, *Florida Sunland Training Center*, 19.

²² May, 12.

²³ Stephen Mintz, “Does the American Family Have a History? Family Images and Realities,” *OAH Magazine of History* 15, no. 4 (2001): 9-10.

²⁴ Illick, 108.

²⁵ May, 16.

families placed “retardation” at the top of their list of concerns.²⁶ Further, the Child Welfare League of America claimed that these children could not form the emotional bonds needed to truly be a part of the 1950s “companionate” family.²⁷ At the Gainesville Training Center, administrators agreed that parents “have severe emotional problems” related to “the birth of a mentally retarded child,” and the institution was the solution to this problem.²⁸ American society in the 1950s idealized the family unit, and saw no place in it for a “retarded” child.

A lack of meaningful connection between an institutions’ residents and their biological family illustrates this point. More than in any other decade in American history, the 1950s saw a surge in children entering institutions. Janice Brockley, in her article on intellectually disabled children in 1950s families, argues that the lack of a role for these children revealed “cultural constructions” of American family life in the period.²⁹ An intellectually disabled child’s presence supposedly created tension between parents, ruining the companionate marriage idealized in the 1950s.³⁰ The degree to which the intellectually disabled child adversely affected members of the family was considered a key factor in determining whether a severely retarded child should be institutionalized. This tension was based on confusion over family “roles,” since the child disrupted normal expectations for family life.³¹ Popular culture portrayed the mothers of intellectually disabled children as in danger of spending more time with them than their husbands and other children.³² Keeping an intellectually disabled child at home was seen as risking the

²⁶ David J. Rothman and Shelia M. Rothman, *The Willowbrook Wars: Bringing the Mentally Disabled into the Community* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2005), 164.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 164.

²⁸ Lundgren, *Florida Sunland Training Center*, 16.

²⁹ Janice Brockley, “Rearing the Child Who Never Grew: Ideologies of Parenting and Intellectual Disability in American History,” in *Mental Retardation in America: A Historical Reader*, 133.

³⁰ Bernard Farber and Samuel A. Kirk, “Effects of a Severely Mentally Retarded Child on Family Integration,” *Society for Research in Child Development*, 24, no. 2 (1959): 13.

³¹ A. R. Mangus, “Family Impacts on Mental Health,” *Marriage and Family Living* (1957): 261.

³² Brockley, 145.

divorce, and even death of, the child's parents, and the mental well-being of siblings.³³ The "mixture of relief and despair" parents felt at leaving their children was assuaged by research and the expert's opinions, which assured them of the correctness of their actions.³⁴ The institution offered a method of salvation from the family. Institutionalization was seen as "a strategy to counteract effects of the retarded child on the family."³⁵ Psychiatrists found that parents who sent a child to an institution had fewer marital problems than those who kept the child at home.³⁶ A Sunland speech pathologist Dr. Frances Smith, put it this way: "If no one else knew what to do...send them to the Sunland."³⁷ Once institutionalized, children often had little to know contact with their families, some of whom "never mentioned or acknowledged such children again."³⁸ "Periodic visits" from families were encouraged by Sunland staff to support children; however, parents rarely kept in contact with their children.³⁹ Long visits to families were discouraged and were not supposed to exceed three weeks.⁴⁰ In an early Mother's Day celebration at the training center, only seven mothers attended, though hundreds of children were enrolled at the institution.⁴¹ The intellectually disabled were portrayed as cute "children" in the 1950s; however, their appeal could not overpower the national belief that family peace and quiet were important family virtues.

These families, however, did not see their children as wholly undeserving of a family. On the contrary, psychiatrists in the 1940s and 50s began to argue that all children had the right to

³³ Farber and Kirk, 28; Castles, 361.

³⁴ Rothman and Rothman, 7.

³⁵ Farber and Kirk, 51.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 54.

³⁷ Elaine Morgan, "Sunland: It Used to Be a Dumping Ground," *Florida Times Union*, July 22, 1984.

³⁸ Kim E. Nielsen, *A Disability History of the United States* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012), 142.

³⁹ Lundgren, *Florida Sunland Training Center*, 15.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

⁴¹ George E. Tison, "Mother's Day Parade Successfully Presented," *Colonette*, 1956, 1.5, University of Florida Libraries, Gainesville.

live “normal” lives in homes and schools with “normal” families that closely resembled their counterparts’ outside the institution.⁴² Historian Elizabeth Jones refers to the word “normal” as a part of “the 1950s discourse of mental retardation.”⁴³ The Sunland Training Center tried to encourage volunteerism to supplement their efforts at creating a “normal” family atmosphere. According to one petition: “Many of the residents at the Sunland Training Center receive little or no attention from relatives in the way of visits, canteen spending money, letter or presents.”⁴⁴ This neglect caused “outbursts of anger and resentment” in residents who had “no one on the outside” to send packages.⁴⁵ The Gainesville Training Center attempted to give these “children” as “normalized” an experience as possible.

For children to be given a “normal childhood”, the Sunland institute had to serve as a surrogate family. This was a national concept, with institutions from every state attempting to fill a void.⁴⁶ Sunland administrators described attendants as “substitute mothers and fathers” to residents in the institution.⁴⁷ The *Colonette*’s pages are filled with articles meant to bring together the staff on a personal level. The newsletter reported on grandbabies being born, auto accidents, wedding announcements, and other personal anecdotes from the medical staff and attendants.⁴⁸ The announcements also included stories from and about residents. “Pat D. has gone home for a three week’s vacation,” one article reads, “We will miss her for she is a very

⁴² Shores, 386; Jones, 329.

⁴³ Jones, 325.

⁴⁴ “Special Appreciation Extended to Individuals and Organizations for Sponsorship Program at Sunland,” 1961, 11.5, S. 1636 Tallahassee Sunland scrapbooks, 1967-1980, Volume 1, State Archives of Florida, Tallahassee, FL.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, The residents described are both children and adults.

⁴⁶ Jones, 333.

⁴⁷ Lundgren, *Florida Sunland Training Center*, 18. These “substitute mothers and fathers” looked after both adults and children.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.

sweet girl but we hope she has a lovely time.”⁴⁹ The Gainesville Sunland Training Center portrayed itself as a large family unit, providing a familial experience for residents.

Inclusion in this family depended on race. Through physical segregation and racist perceptions, the Sunland presented its “family” as white. This image was based on 1950s constructions of the idealized family. Society rarely represented African-American families as part of this “model” family. In the 1950s, the “companionate family” was seen as white; thus, black children and families were segregated from the suburbs.⁵⁰ Black children were physically segregated into an inferior “negro unit.” While white children could expect a gymnasium, an occupational therapy building, a chapel, and other amenities to provide a sense of community and “normalcy,” black children received only the basics.⁵¹ Kitchen appliances in the white kitchen are proudly listed in a Sunland report, while “the Negro Kitchen” was only described as having “comparable equipment and facilities.”⁵² African- American employees were also segregated from their white counterparts. They were not allowed to live on-site and engaged in separate recreational activities.⁵³ When the institution put on a Mother’s Day program, only “children of the white school” were invited to participate.⁵⁴ Separate rarely meant equal. Southern health accommodations for African-Americans were notoriously bad.⁵⁵ In addition to physical segregation, the Sunland operated under ideas of difference. Theatrical performances from the Sunland’s dramatics clubs were well-attended, presumably by white students, and

⁴⁹ Sarah C., Ines. F., Mrs. Boyd, “Azalea Cottage,” *Colonette*, 1958, 1.6, University of Florida Libraries, Gainesville. Pat’s age is not made explicit.

⁵⁰ May, 17.

⁵¹ Lundgren, *Florida Sunland Training Center*, 5.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 38.

⁵³ Helen A. Robinson, “Views and Reviews,” *Colonette*, 1962, 11.19, University of Florida Libraries, Gainesville.

⁵⁴ Tison, “Mother’s Day Parade Successfully Presented.”

⁵⁵ Thomas, 190.

black-faced numbers were featured at least twice.⁵⁶ The black character's "hysterically funny dialogue" and silly antics represented a theory of race as contributing to abnormal tendencies. Such performances certainly alienated a group within the institution they were supposed to be "normalizing." Further, the drama club presented a perspective of African-Americans as "primitive" in comparison to white residents. The Gainesville Sunland Training Center's familial atmosphere was created using the idealistic family of the 1950s, treating black residents as different from their white counterparts.

The Sunland administrators involved family and child-rearing experts to facilitate the management of their companionate family. Psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers had important roles at the Sunland, training residents to inhabit "normal" lives. Traditionally, institutions had been run by administrators. The 1930s and 40s saw clinical psychiatrists working in large numbers at institutions.⁵⁷ In hiring these individuals, administrators at the Sunlands were participating in an important national trend. A "flood" of professional literature on how to train children appeared in the 1950s.⁵⁸ In his comprehensive work on 1920s-1940s childhood, Joseph M. Hawes argues that the writings of "psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers" had a distinct impact on child-rearing between the two world wars.⁵⁹ The 1950s saw a general move toward reliance on the opinions of "experts" in everyday life.⁶⁰ The goal of these "experts" was to assign specific recreational and educational requirements for parents and teachers and thus

⁵⁶ Diane Chamberlin, "Colony Dramatics Club Scores Another Success," *Colonette*, 1956, 1.6, University of Florida Libraries, Gainesville. Ray E. Morris, "Sunland Thespians," *Colonette*, 1958, 11.5, University of Florida Libraries, Gainesville.

⁵⁷ Molly Harrower, "Differential Diagnosis," in *The Handbook of Clinical Psychology*, ed. Benjamin B. Wolman (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), 382.

⁵⁸ Brockley, 139.

⁵⁹ Hawes, 1.

⁶⁰ May, 26.

identify and create the “normal” child.⁶¹ Psychiatrists identified and tracked mental development stages, and informed the public as to the year and even the month when normal children would develop certain skills.⁶² Experts were seen as essential for assisting parents and defining what a “normal childhood” actually looked like.

These experts had a substantial role in the training and treatment of the intellectually disabled. Psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers targeted their efforts on “normalizing” intellectually disabled children by the 1950s.⁶³ Researchers tracked children’s mental health to determine the significance of environmental factors.⁶⁴ As previously noted, these professionals also played a role in the mass surrendering of children to institutions. Though intellectually disabled children’s mothers were seen as nurturing and caring, experts of the 1940s and 50s argued that they could not properly care for these children without proper guidance.⁶⁵ At the Sunland Training Center in Gainesville, psychologists and social workers saw themselves as providing essential services. The Sunland boasted a Behavioral Clinic, where children would be evaluated with a complete family history.⁶⁶ The Behavioral Clinic’s exclusive focus on children emphasizes the importance placed on the role of the psychologists in child-rearing during the 1950s. The Sunland was well-staffed with psychologists and behaviorists to evaluate resident behavior.⁶⁷ The psychology department was influential at the Sunland. In the Sunland’s internal newsletters, amidst barbecue recipes and comics, short summaries like one on “Phenpyruvie

⁶¹ Hawes, 67.

⁶² David H. Russell, *Children’s Thinking* (Waltham, MA: Blaisdell Publishing Company, 1956), 35-36.

⁶³ Hawes, 70.

⁶⁴ Illick, 106-107.

⁶⁵ Brockley, 132-133.

⁶⁶ Lundgren, *Florida Sunland Training Center*, 27.

⁶⁷ “New Staff Member,” *Colonette* 1956, 1.5, University of Florida Library, Gainesville.

Oligophrenia” would appear.⁶⁸ Psychologists measured resident’s intelligence and promoted the institution’s companionate atmosphere.⁶⁹ Social workers became key personnel at the Sunland during the 1950s. These individuals were tasked with providing a “normalized” life to residents through training and integration into the community.⁷⁰ The institution relied on the advice and opinions of experts to “normalize” residents.

The Sunland also used recreation and “play” as a way to “normalize” children. Nationally, recreation was portrayed as a necessity for intellectually disabled children. At the Willowbrook Institution in New York, parent organizations spent more money on parties and recreation than ensuring basic care for children.⁷¹ This emphasis was radically different from previous decades, where the institution merely served a custodial function.⁷² In the 1950s, attendants and administrators at the Sunland spoke and wrote of recreation as a right for all “children.”⁷³ The Department of Recreation at the Sunland Training Center was established in the late 1950s to supplement the meager efforts of previous decades.⁷⁴ Physical therapists were brought on in the 1950s to assure children could have as “normal” a childhood as possible, despite any physical impediments.⁷⁵ Recreation assistants carefully structured play time and residents, regardless of their disability level, were made to play on an extensive playground.⁷⁶ Children were given

⁶⁸ “Phenylpyruvic Oligophrenia,” *Colonette* 1956, 1.7, University of Florida Libraries, Gainesville.

⁶⁹ A. Bromley, “The Psychology Department,” *Colonette* 1958, 2.4, University of Florida Libraries, Gainesville.

⁷⁰ Russel G. Green, “Social Services in an Institution for the Mentally Retarded,” *Colonette*, 1961, 11.16, University of Florida Libraries, Gainesville.

⁷¹ Rothman and Rothman, 77.

⁷² Grob, 316.

⁷³ George E. Tison, “A Well-Deserved Rest,” *Colonette*, 1956, 1.5, University of Florida Libraries, Gainesville.

⁷⁴ Lundgren, *Florida Sunland Training Center*, 6.

⁷⁵ S. E. DiFede, “Physical Therapy,” *Colonette*, 1958, 2.4, University of Florida Libraries Gainesville. This article indicates that the playground was used by all residents, including adults.

⁷⁶ Lundgren, *Florida Sunland Training Center*, 13-14.

parties, including birthday celebrations, which were usually hosted by community volunteers.⁷⁷

Recreation and play were essential parts of life for residents at the Gainesville Sunland Training Center.

Because the general public claimed children learned societal roles through play, Sunland administrators placed a special importance on recreation. In the 1940s and 50s, childhood shifted from a time period of vocational labor to a learning season, which encompassed play and a formal education. In schools, a time period of play and preparation for children was a new idea. Before the 1920s, childhood was seen as a time for work and apprenticeship.⁷⁸ Following World War I, greater importance was assigned to recreation. By the 1950s, “play” was institutionalized in public schools and other “governmental agencies,” while businesses placed importance on leisure time and recreation.⁷⁹ Public schools, in particular, saw recreation and education as both facilitating learning.⁸⁰ The modern era saw recreation as reflective of children’s future roles in society. The period’s sociologists saw play as preparing children for a “role.”⁸¹ Recreation was perceived as instructive for children learning how to behave in society.⁸² Girls prepared for motherhood by playing with dolls, while boys engaged with “masculine” activities such as playing with cars and trucks.⁸³ Toys and recreation provided “training” that would assist in navigating emotions, such as “aggression” and “grief.”⁸⁴ To this end, residents at the Sunlands were given toys guns and knives to express hostility and “family dolls” to express familial

⁷⁷ Carol Francis, Juana Cowart, Diane Chamberlin, “Recreation Rattle,” *Colonette*, 1956, 1.5, University of Florida Libraries, Gainesville; Mary C. Purvus, “Poplar Cottage,” *Colonette*, 1957, 1.6, University of Florida Libraries, Gainesville. In these articles, the participants were literal children.

⁷⁸ Hawes, 65.

⁷⁹ Oscar W. Ritchie and Marvin R. Koller, *Sociology of Childhood* (New York: Appleton Century Crofts, 1964), 210.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 216.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 203.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 207.

⁸³ Crain, 546.

⁸⁴ Illick, 108.

instincts and creativity.⁸⁵ In the 1950s, psychologists portrayed play as important both in and outside the institution.

In addition to teaching children their roles and imparting societal rules, play at the Sunland was as an important introduction to the “normal” community. Trips to pet shops, overnight camps, and local attractions served to introduce Sunland residents to the outside world.⁸⁶ Young people were encouraged to participate in games and activities enjoyed by their counterparts outside the institution, including trips to Disney World.⁸⁷ Administrators offered as a way of introducing “children” to the outside world. They also achieved this goal through a rigorous vocational training program.

The Gainesville Sunland Training Center, as evidenced by its name, emphasized vocational training as essential for “children” to become “normal” societal members. The push for the education of the intellectually disabled reflected the general consensus after World War II that education be part of a “normal” childhood.⁸⁸ Lyndon B. Johnson’s Great Society exacerbated this belief, with Johnson himself arguing that “mentally retarded” children deserved education as a basic right.⁸⁹ Sunland staff argued that education and religious instruction were rights for all children.⁹⁰ The Sunland particularly highlighted religious education, drawing parallels between

⁸⁵ Lundgren, *Florida Sunland Training Center* 28. These “residents” included both children and adults.

⁸⁶ Pryor, “Our Trip to the Pet Shop,” *Colonette*, 1956, 1.5, University of Florida Libraries, Gainesville. “Our Trip to the Nurseries and the Train Station,” *Colonette*, 1956, 1.6, University of Florida Libraries, Gainesville; E. Luis, “First Overnight Camp for Colony Children,” *Colonette*, 1956, 1.6, University of Florida Libraries, Gainesville; “Sunland Residents Take Educational Tour of the Jacksonville Zoo,” *Colonette*, 1965, 9.23, University of Florida Libraries, Gainesville. The first two of these trips were taken by children. The third, though it refers to “boys and girls,” was actually comprised of adolescent and adults residents. The ages of residents on the final trip are vague.

⁸⁷ Photographic Collection, S. 1636 Tallahassee Sunland scrapbooks, 1967-1980, Box 1, Folder 3, State Archives of Florida, Tallahassee, FL. While the vast majority of those pictures are children, older residents are occasionally seen as a part of the trip.

⁸⁸ Jones, 323; Thomas, 178. This “consensus” was based, in part, on Cold War competition between Russia and the United States.

⁸⁹ Lyndon B. Johnson, “Full Educational Opportunity,” in *The Great Society Reader: The Failure of American Liberalism*, ed. Marvin E. Gettleman and David Mermelstein (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), 186; 189.

⁹⁰ Lundgren, *Florida Sunland Training Center*, 16. By this, all residents of the Sunland are implied.

its work and religious service as often as possible.⁹¹ Vocational and religious training programs were a common function of centers like the Sunland during the 1950s.⁹² For those deemed ready to re-enter the community, the institution had a lengthy, specified process for qualified individuals to be eventually released from the center.⁹³ To facilitate this process, the Sunland took on new employees with the sole purpose of teaching intellectually disabled persons how to become functioning adults in society.⁹⁴ Administrators believed the popular mid-century idea that “Eighty-five percent of the mentally retarded can be employed,” despite the fact that much fewer were receiving training at the time.⁹⁵ Even musical therapists were described as “occupational therapists” at the Sunlands, providing a sense of “normalcy.”⁹⁶ Administrators’ emphasis on training was based on national theories. Eunice Kennedy Shriver, sister to President John F. Kennedy, argued that children who were properly trained could go on to lead “useful” lives doing “small contributions” and doing menial work.⁹⁷ At the Gainesville Sunland Training Center, this goal was not always reached for all the institution’s residents. In a letter to Florida Governor LeRoy Collins, Dorothy P. Shepard, a state employee and a Sunland resident’s mother, communicated her regrets that only a little over ten percent of children were enrolled in a training program.⁹⁸ In response to these low numbers, the Florida government attempted to

⁹¹ For example: Everett L. Holder, “Hope,” *Colonette*, 1956, 1.5, University of Florida Libraries, Gainesville, which is written as a prayer for intellectually disabled children to learn the hope found in the Bible; Henrietta McGee, “Report,” *Colonette*, 1957, 1.7, University of Florida Libraries, Gainesville, which details children’s religious training; Rev. Samuel S. Cuthbert, “Fellowship Hour: A Method to Develop Further Growth in Religion,” *Colonette* 1962, 11.20, University of Florida Library, Gainesville.

⁹² Noll, “The Public Face of Southern Institutions for the “Feeble-Minded,” 31-33.

⁹³ Mark Morgan, “Vocational Training at Sunland,” *Colonette*, 1956, 1.7, University of Florida Libraries, Gainesville.

⁹⁴ Karl Lundgren, “Vocational Positions Filled,” *Colonette*, 1956, 1.7, University of Florida Libraries, Gainesville.

⁹⁵ Karl Lundgren, “Some Pertinent Facts in Regard to Mental Retardation in the United States,” *Colonette*. 1965, 9.32, University of Florida Libraries, Gainesville.

⁹⁶ “Sunland Finds Music Therapy is Aid in Treating, Training,” *Florida Times-Union*, October 2, 1960, 19.

⁹⁷ Eunice Kennedy Shriver, “Hope for Retarded Children,” in *Mental Retardation in America: A Historical Reader*, 305.

⁹⁸ Letter to LeRoy Collins from Dorothy P. Shepard.

support training programs at the Sunlands. Governor Farris Bryant held a summit on education for the intellectually disabled in 1962, where Sunland employees were represented.⁹⁹ In 1965, educational support for the “mentally retarded” passed the Florida legislature, further solidifying the state’s focus on education.¹⁰⁰ Education and vocational training were important components of the Sunland’s “normalizing” mission.

As with recreation, vocational training was important, in part, because it directed children toward roles based on age, gender, and race. The emphasis on roles was a new idea; before the 1920s, vocational training was seen as a type of “cure” or “moral therapy,” while agricultural training supplied food for the institution.¹⁰¹ For institutions of the 1950s, these programs were also meant to divide children into perceived “roles,” as determined by their abilities.¹⁰² Sunland administrators affirmed that they provided “realistic” job choices to residents, which were based on societal roles.¹⁰³ After all, residents were not only taught a trade, the program also provided them with basic social skills.¹⁰⁴ For girls, this meant learning how to tidy themselves up and act with poise and graciousness. Therefore, they were trained to work on beauty parlors and as housekeepers.¹⁰⁵ For boys, vocational training supposedly prepared them to step into their father’s shoes as a provider. A boy, even when he was intellectually disabled, was “expected eventually to achieve a status in the community at least equal to that of his father,” while

⁹⁹ K. Lundgren, “Projects, Trips, and Travel by the Superintendent and Staff Members of Sunland,” *Colonette*, 1962, 11.20, University of Florida Libraries, Gainesville.

¹⁰⁰ Karl Lundgren, “Three Education Provisions in the Appropriation Bill will be of Great Benefit to Handicapped and Mentally Retarded,” *Colonette*, 1965, 9.32, University of Florida Libraries, Gainesville.

¹⁰¹ Pressey and Pressey, 227; Karl F. Heiser and Benjamin B. Wolman, “Mental Deficiencies,” in *The Handbook of Clinical Psychology*, ed. Benjamin B. Wolman (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), 852.

¹⁰² Noll, “The Public Face of Southern Institutions for the “Feeble-Minded,” 33.

¹⁰³ Lundgren, *Florida Sunland Training Center*, 15.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 12. Lundgren comments that residents should learn “how to be a good employee, how to get along with his fellow-workers, to take pride in his work to be responsible, dependable, and punctual.”

¹⁰⁵ Morgan, “Vocational Training at Sunland,” 5.

significantly less was expected of “the normal girl.”¹⁰⁶ Less tension supposedly existed in families with intellectually disabled girls because of the strain associated with the failure of a boy’s inability to produce.¹⁰⁷

Vocational Training programs were selected for a resident based on race. The Sunland operated under an understanding that black resident’s “abilities” were less than their white counterparts.¹⁰⁸ Career options for black, male residents included shoe-shining, laundry, and work in the kitchen and “agricultural classes.”¹⁰⁹ Under supervision, around sixteen African-American males participated in “vocational agriculture.” The agricultural training program was not available for whites.¹¹⁰ For white males, options included: Janitorial, Office Messenger, General Warehouse Training, P&E Warehouse Training, Painter's Helper, Library Assistant, Carpenter's Helper, Brickmason Helper, Industrial Arts, Teacher's Aides, Housekeeping, Laundry, Cafeteria Training, Home Nursing, Grounds Maintenance, Kitchen Helpers, Chaplain's Helper, and Administrative Helper.¹¹¹ Education for black residents was also unequal to that of their white counterparts. Though black students represented thirty percent of those being educated, they received only four class offerings, to a white student’s fifteen. Further, they were excluded from the library and any type of music education.¹¹² This segregationist attitude, adopted by Sunland administrators, meant less opportunities were available for African-American residents.

¹⁰⁶ Farber and Kirk, 19.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 44, 54.

¹⁰⁸ Renalda Davis, “Vocational Home Making Training for Girls,” *Colonette*, 1961, 11.15, University of Library, Gainesville.

¹⁰⁹ Marc Morgan, “Vocational Training Program in the Laundry,” *Colonette*, 1961, 11.14, University of Florida Library, Gainesville.

¹¹⁰ Morgan, “Vocational Training at Sunland,” 2-3.

¹¹¹ Ruth Relos and Jack Eisele, “Progress in Habilitation Program,” *Colonette*, 1961, 11.15, University of Florida Libraries, Gainesville.

¹¹² H. E. Wakefield, “Training and Rehabilitation Department,” *Colonette*, 1958, 11.6, University of Florida Libraries, Gainesville.

A familial atmosphere, the engagement of experts, and the opportunity to experience play, education and training were meant to provide the institution's "children" with a "normal" childhood experience. Part of this goal was the containment of residents' sexuality. Even as the "eternal child" grew, the Sunland and institutions across the nation attempted to protect their innocence. The Gainesville Training Center's presentation of the intellectually disabled as child-like family members hinged on careful control of residents' sexuality and the way it was perceived by the public. The institution's attempt to control sexuality and reproduction is reminiscent of Foucault's description of modern "apparatuses" that self-proclaimed "normal" individuals use to control the sexuality of "problem groups."¹¹³ Decades of ideas on eugenics and the sexual deviancy of the intellectually disabled informed the Gainesville Sunland's decision to treat residents as sexually deviant and unworthy of reproductive rights.¹¹⁴ In the institution's perception of the intellectually disabled as industrious children, there was no room for sex and reproduction.

Sunland administrators used gender segregation and silence on sexuality to prevent the appearance of inappropriate conduct. A goal of the institution was to keep "these unfortunates [the intellectually disabled]...from reproducing their kind, and the various communities and the state...relieved from the heavy economic and moral losses arising by reason of their existence."¹¹⁵ Therefore, every effort was made at institutions to keep residents from engaging in sexual activities. The Gainesville Sunland divided living cottages based on sex.¹¹⁶ Activities and

¹¹³ H. G. Cocks, "Historiographical Review: Modernity and the Self in the History of Sexuality," *The Historical Journal* 49, no. 4 (2006): 1212.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1213, the current histories of sexuality argue that definitions of sexuality in a particular period are invariably linked to preceding perceptions.

¹¹⁵ State of Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, 7.

¹¹⁶ Noll, "The Public Face of Southern Institutions for the "Feeble-Minded," 33.

recreation were generally coed, provided that the event did not involve an overnight stay.¹¹⁷ Segregation was intended for the female “feeble-minded,” whose sexuality was seen by eugenics-driven literature as particularly “out of control,” though the sexuality of intellectually disabled men was also seen as a threat to society.¹¹⁸ Perceptions of sexuality, coupled with the fear that unemployed, “feeble-minded” women would be forced into prostitution, led to a belief in programs to assist “deviant” but “trainable” women.¹¹⁹ These beliefs were based on the general public’s perceptions. One Sunland was sued when a forty-year-old woman was found to be pregnant.¹²⁰ The Gainesville Training Center supported a perception of male and female residents that was sanitized, wholesome and gendered, in an attempt to counter commonly-held beliefs regarding the rampant sexuality of the “feeble-minded.” In the 1950s, sexuality was not openly discussed, though issues of sexuality were probably part of the day-to-day experience for administrators and doctors. The newsletter and official documents are silent on the point of sexuality, while discussing all manner of behavioral and physical problems experienced by intellectually disabled children. In conflict with their actions, institutions attempted to portray residents as asexual, with male and female residents taking assigned roles based on gender roles.

Institutionalization of children soared in popularity as American society idealized and sought to protect the family. The intellectually disabled were seen as “children,” destructive to the “companionate” family, but still deserving of a “normal” childhood. The Sunland Training Center at Gainesville presented itself as a facilitator of an idealized childhood that prepared

¹¹⁷ Luis, “First Overnight Camp for Colony Children,” 1.

¹¹⁸ Noll, “The Public Face of Southern Institutions for the “Feeble-Minded,” 27; Karen Kelly, “Sexuality and Storytelling: Literary Representations of the “Feebleminded” in the Age of Sterilization,” in *Mental Retardation in America: A Historical Reader*, 212.

¹¹⁹ Pressey and Pressey, 221; 207; Paul V. Lemkau, “Local Mental Health Services,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 286 (1953): 118.

¹²⁰ “Suit: Patient Got Pregnant in State Mental Hospital,” *Orlando Sentinel*, October 21, 1989, D19.

residents for societal roles in the same way as children outside the institution. To this end, Sunland administrators promoted a familial atmosphere, expert opinions, recreation, education, training, and a state of perpetual “innocence.” The Sunland claimed to prepare “children” for a world outside the institution, and this assertion was based on ideas of race and gender. In the 1960s and 70s, public skepticism would arise challenging the ability of institutions, including the Sunlands, to provide all that they claimed.

CHAPTER 2: COMMUNITY INVOLVMENT IN THE SUNLANDS

In the late 1950s, the Sunland Training Center in Gainesville created its program based on the decade's ideas of what a family should be like. The model was successful and, ten years later, there were Sunland Training Centers in Miami, Marianna, and Ft. Myers, and Sunland Hospitals in Orlando and Tallahassee. In the 1960s and 70s, growing popular skepticism and public questioning would unravel the program, and lead to the closings of most of the institutions. As Florida's state government oversaw the building of new Sunlands, surrounding communities began to take an interest in contributing to and learning about the institutions. The social reform movements of the 1960s and 70s, new ideas on civil rights, and antipsychiatry led to community involvement in the Sunlands. Like the institutions, these movements sought to define "normalcy" for the intellectually disabled; however, their definition involved the freedom to make self-determining choices. To further this view, special associations, social clubs and journalists sought to educate the public on the Sunlands and intellectual disability. These groups recognized the Sunland's needs and attempted to provide children and adults at the Sunlands with a sense of "normalcy," something they perceived institutions as being unable to do.¹ As the institutions' shortcomings became known, liberal college organizations and civil rights advocates fought battles against the institutions in the press, through scholarly publications, and in court. All of these efforts reflect a belief in human rights for the intellectually disabled and the influence of the era's civil rights movements.

Social movements of the 1960s and 70s led to a public questioning of establishments and institutions, including those for the mentally ill. The rights of the mentally ill were an important

¹ Though the paternalistic efforts of community groups often included treating intellectually disabled persons as "children," these groups represented a wide variety of age groups. If an age is specified in the primary source, it is noted in the text or in a footnote.

component of the civil rights movement.² David J. and Shelia Rothman identify the struggle to “desegregate Southern schools” and the civil rights movement for African-Americans as an important first step toward the civil rights movement for the intellectually disabled.³ The Civil Rights Movement for African-Americans began the social protest movement in the 1950s, inspiring dissent from other minority groups.⁴ In the 1960s, civil rights for African-Americans, the anti-war movement, feminism, and the gay rights movement intertwined together.⁵ These civil rights groups united in their disdain for the “establishment” and the “faceless bureaucracy” of institutions.⁶ The social movements of the 1960s and 70s sought to raise public awareness through the questioning of traditional establishments and power structures.⁷ Mental institutions, considered the best place for the intellectually disabled for over a century, suddenly came under increasing scrutiny. Like civil rights protestors, advocates for the mentally ill often utilized reporters and newspaper publications to bring attention to their cause.⁸ Before the 1960s, few articles even mentioned the intellectually disabled. After 1962, articles on the topic regularly appeared in Florida’s newspapers. In Dade County, Florida, *The Miami Times* reported on civil rights for intellectually disabled as well as African-Americans.⁹ Similarly, the African-American newspaper *Florida Star* focused on defending the rights of the intellectually disabled.¹⁰ The impacts of these social movements would create a public discussion on institutions across the

² See: Nielson; Suzanne Fleming, “Shrinks vs. Shysters: The (Latest) Battle for Control of the Mentally Ill,” *Law and Human Behavior* 6, no. ¾ (1982): 356.

³ Rothman and Rothman, 51-52.

⁴ Stewart Burns, *Social Movements of the 1960s: Searching for Democracy* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990), 4, 11.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 41, 144.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁸ Rothman and Rothman, 46.

⁹ For example, see: “The Editor’s Notebook,” *The Miami Times*, April 27, 1963, 4.

¹⁰ For example, see: “Incest is Hinted in Murder Case,” *Florida Star*, January 25, 1964, 1.

nation, including the Sunlands, leading to a higher degree of community involvement and advocacy.

In the 1960s and 70s, civil rights lawyers and advocates for the mentally ill felt that these individuals were not receiving the opportunity to lead a self-determined life, which they considered a basic human right and part of a “normal” experience. The shift toward this position can be clearly seen in law journals from the 1940s-1980s. In the 1940s and 50s, the only human rights issue associated with the mentally ill was the danger of a sane person being accidentally committed.¹¹ Such articles frequently cited “protection” for the community as a key factor in choosing to commit the mentally ill and the intellectually disabled to institutions.¹² By the 1960s, scholars of the law changed their rhetoric dramatically. By this time, a generation of law school graduates emerged from civil rights and anti-war struggles on college campuses, and prepared to defend the rights of the mentally ill.¹³ Startling *exposés* of understaffed institutions and abusive conditions forced judges to take a closer look at conditions for the intellectually disabled.¹⁴ In 1969, the Duke Law Journal bemoaned the fact that, “legislative and public concern has often stopped at the asylum door,” beyond which were shoddy facilities, overcrowding, understaffing, and “antiquated philosophies” on treatment.¹⁵ The 1970s saw a greater emphasis on “control” and a mentally ill person’s ability to oversee their own affairs.¹⁶ Civil rights lawyers were vital in dismantling the institutional system and clearly articulating the arguments of the civil rights

¹¹ Henry Weihofen, “Hospitalizing the Mentally Ill,” *Michigan Law Review* 50, no. 6 (1952): 837, 847; “Analysis of Legal and Medical Considerations in Commitment of the Mentally Ill,” *The Yale Law Journal* 56, No. 7 (1947): 1180, 1182-1183, 1202.

¹² “Analysis of Legal and Medical Considerations in Commitment of the Mentally Ill,” 1185.

¹³ Rothman and Rothman 52.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁵ “Compulsory Commitment: The Rights of the Incarcerated Mentally Ill,” *Duke Law Journal* 4 (1969): 677, 681-682.

¹⁶ Fleming, 355.

movement that was already spreading to the public. Their work encouraged the nation to consider and discuss the rights of the intellectually disabled.

Two specific rights litigators brought to public awareness were the “loss of basic civic liberties,” the right to refuse treatment and the “right to privacy” enjoyed by most citizens under the constitution.¹⁷ According to advocates for the mentally ill, the decision to institutionalize ran “contrary to the principles of personal and civil liberties” central to the social movements of the 1960s.¹⁸ Lawyers aimed litigation at “liberating” residents and returning them to the community, where they could presumably enjoy normal experiences without the interference of an institution.¹⁹ In the 1960s, President John F. Kennedy called for “a bold new approach to the care and treatment of the mentally retarded and mentally ill” that did not involve institutions.²⁰ An African-American newspaper, *The Miami Times*, reported on Kennedy’s plans, adding that, “This appeal should sink deep into the hearts of our Congress and receive earnest consideration. Let us hope it will.”²¹ In the 1970s, public and judicial opinion did appear to bend toward community care over institutionalization. Courts consistently affirmed the civil rights of mentally ill persons living in an institution.²² The 1973 Rehabilitation Act prohibited job discrimination in cases of mental illness, offering the disabled a way out of institutions.²³ These efforts and achievements would culminate in 1976 legislation affirming a resident’s right to “treatment; the right to

¹⁷ “Compulsory Commitment: The Rights of the Incarcerated Mentally Ill,” 683, 706.

¹⁸ Ruth I. Freedman and Ann Moran, “Wanderers in a Promised Land: The Chronically Mentally Ill and Deinstitutionalization,” *Medical Care* 22, No. 12 (1984): 3.

¹⁹ Cynthia Faye Barnett, “Treatment Rights of Mentally Ill Nursing Home Residents,” *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 126, no. 3 (1978): 579.

²⁰ Freedman and Moran, 1.

²¹ “Help for Mentally Retarded,” *Miami Times*, February 9, 1963, 6.

²² Rothman and Rothman, 54.

²³ “From Wanderers to Workers: A Survey of Federal and State Employment Rights of the Mentally Ill,” *Law and Contemporary Problems* 45, no. 3 (1982): 43.

confinement in the least restrictive environment... dignity, privacy, and human care.”²⁴

Community care organizations, such as Gateway in Florida, which trained children, began to receive more attention.²⁵ In 1963, the Citrus-Hernando County Association for Retarded Children began sponsoring crafting classes for the “senior mentally retarded.”²⁶ In the 1960s and 70s, Florida’s communities became increasingly involved at the Sunlands and interested in the civil rights of residents.

The antipsychiatry movement promoted debates surrounding community care, civil rights and institutions. The horrors of World War II and concerns over dangerous treatments, such as lobotomies and electro-convulsive therapy, led to a general questions surrounding the intentions of psychiatrists. This began with academics and spread to the general population. In the mid-20th century, as these questions arose, French philosopher Michele Foucault published *Madness and Civilization*, which accused institutions of serving as prisons for social deviants. Thomas Szasz, a psychiatrist and philosopher, debated whether mental illness even existed. Erving Goffman’s popular work, *Asylum*, contended that a normal life within an institution was not possible.²⁷ The work of Wolf Wolfensberger argued that “normalization” was impossible inside the institution, where segregation and labeling led to “less progress” for children.²⁸ The general public, including Floridians, would become increasingly involved in discussing the fate of institutions.²⁹ Popular magazines and books such as *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* coupled with existing

²⁴ Fleming, 359.

²⁵ Betty Eby, “Sorority Hears of Work at Gateway,” *The Kissimmee Gazette*, February 22, 1962, 3. These were literal children.

²⁶ “Retarded Children Association Meets Tonight,” *The Citrus County Chronicle*, January 17, 1963, 1. Despite its title, the association assisted intellectually disabled persons of all ages.

²⁷ Erving Goffman, *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (Chicago: Aldine Press, 1962), 3-12.

²⁸ Rothman and Rothman, 450.

²⁹ David Mechanic, “Correcting Misconceptions in Mental Health Policy: Strategies for Improved Care of the Seriously Mentally Ill,” *The Milbank Quarterly* 65, No. 2 (1987): 203.

social movements to increase public doubt as to the fitness of institutions such as the Sunlands.³⁰ Historian Edward Shorter identifies Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* as a pivotal moment in the general public's perception of antipsychiatry.³¹ The subsequent 1975 film further tarnished the reputation of institutions, with Louise Fletcher's performance as the calloused Nurse Ratched providing a convenient image representing the administrative and medical staff of institutions. The book and the film paraded the very real issues of institutions before the public and took root in popular imagination. Szasz's argument was summed up in actor Jack Nicholson's famous line, "What, do you guys think you're crazy or something? Because you're not!"³² As was the case around the country, public perceptions and open discussions of conditions at the Sunland Training Centers and Hospitals made a significant impact on deinstitutionalization in Florida. In central Florida, attention increasingly turned toward "self-respect" and "human dignity" for residents of the Sunlands.³³ Women's groups, college organizations, and journalists became volunteers and advocates for the rights of residents to live apart from the oversight of psychiatrists and institutions.

As discussed in the first chapter, a key goal for the Gainesville Training Center was to provide "normal childhoods" for young residents. This ideal spread as the geographical scope of the institutions increased. The Sunland institutions were attempting to provide a "normal" lifestyle for children, and support from the community made this marginally possible. A volunteer at the Tallahassee Hospital commented, "We want the patients to lead as normal a life

³⁰ Wynne S. Korr and Briggett C. Ford, "Measuring quality of life in the mentally ill," *Quality of Life Research* 12, (2003): 18.

³¹ Shorter, 275.

³² Jack Nicholson, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, directed by Miloš Forman, Beverly Hills, CA: United Artists, 1963.

³³ Dolores B. Norley, "Testing the validity of the waiting lists of the State of Florida's institutions for the retarded: the Sunland training centers and hospitals" (MA Thesis, Florida Atlantic University, 1969), 6-7.

as they would at home with parents.”³⁴ At the Tallahassee Hospital, birthday parties, trips to the circus, and participation in the Special Olympics reinforced the idea that residents experienced a full childhood at the institution.³⁵ In the 1970s, “grandparents” were brought into the Tallahassee Hospital to improve the lives of young children.³⁶ With the help of volunteers, the Tallahassee Sunland established a Boy Scout troupe, with members enjoying typical scouting activities.³⁷ Though the Sunlands were still attempting to provide “normalization,” deficiencies in funding and staffing thwarted these efforts. In the 1960s, an increasingly aware and concerned community would step in to fill the void.

In the early 1960s, Florida’s communities began associations for the intellectually disabled. Katherine Castles explains this phenomenon on a national level, asserting that the post-war suburban boom and parents’ loss of connections to extended family members played a role in increasing the popularity of family-centered groups.³⁸ Across the country, community groups stepped in to promote recreation, grooming, holidays, general wellness, and a sense of normalcy.³⁹ Parents founded the Association for the Help of Retarded Children (AHRC) to supplement social service agencies and provide support for intellectually disabled children.⁴⁰ In states like New Jersey and New York, parents groups formed to learn about intellectual disability

³⁴ “Volunteers Brighten Days of Patients at Sunland,” 1967, Box 1, Folder 1, S. 1636 Tallahassee Sunland scrapbooks, 1967-1980, Volume 1, State Archives of Florida, Tallahassee, FL.

³⁵ LaNedra Carroll, “An Olympic spirit fills 300 hearts,” *Florida Democrat*, Box 1, Folder 2, S. 1636 Tallahassee Sunland scrapbooks, 1967-1980, Volume 1, State Archives of Florida, Tallahassee, FL. Based on an analysis of the numbers of participants, these games must have involved the majority of the hospital’s adult population, as well as children.

³⁶ Mike Abrams, “Her Prescription is Love, and it’s Amply Provided,” *Florida Democrat*, Box 1, Folder 2, S. 1636 Tallahassee Sunland scrapbooks, 1967-1980, Volume 1, State Archives of Florida, Tallahassee, FL.

³⁷ Cindy Miller, “Volunteer Williams Gives Good Vibrations,” *Florida Democrat*, July 1, 1975, Box 1, Folder 2, S. 1636 Tallahassee Sunland scrapbooks, 1967-1980, Volume 1, State Archives of Florida, Tallahassee, FL. The Scout Troup, led by lawyer and community activist Bo Williams, was for young boys, though adults participated in outings.

³⁸ Castles, 353-354.

³⁹ Jones, 331-332.

⁴⁰ Castles, 351.

and advocate for families wishing to keep disabled children at home.⁴¹ The Citrus-Hernando County Association for Retarded Children, which assisted children as well as adults, began meeting in the 1960s in Inverness, Florida.⁴² Soon, the association was partnering with women's charitable groups to arrange parties for adults and children.⁴³ In the mid-1950s, the Polk County Association for Retarded Children was formed and began setting up community training schools for intellectually disabled persons of all ages.⁴⁴ In the 1960s, community groups began partner with the association and gave them a public forum.⁴⁵ The Alachua County Association for Retarded Children formed in the 1960s to raise awareness of intellectual disability as a "national concern."⁴⁶ These groups often consisted not only of mothers and fathers, but also psychologists and sociologists.⁴⁷ In Florida, a plethora of women's societies, sororities, and volunteer organizations presented themselves as surrogate families in the 1960s-1970s, providing an essential service and beginning a public discussion on the treatment of the intellectually disabled. The civil rights movement would encourage this level of community involvement, and eventually bring awareness to the adults living in the Sunlands as well as the children.

In the 1960s, women's groups gained an increasing awareness of problems at the Sunlands, leading to a higher level to discussion, education and involvement. Perceptions of the family and the influence of President John F. Kennedy inspired these women's groups to take action, as well as the previously discussed social movements. Social clubs with a mission to assist the

⁴¹ Jones, 323, 328.

⁴² "Retarded Children Association Meets Tonight," 1.

⁴³ "Retarded Group Slates Program," *The Citrus County Chronicle*, May 16, 1963, 1; "Retarded Group to Plan Programs," *The Citrus County Chronicle*, September 26, 1963, 1.

⁴⁴ "Polk Retarded Children Unit Elects Officers," *Winter Haven Daily News-Chief*, May 1, 1964, 2.

⁴⁵ "Pilots Donate to Hospital Building Fund," *Winter Haven Daily News-Chief*, May 13, 1964, 1.

⁴⁶ "Retarded Child Group Meets Here Today," *Gainesville Sun*, July 14, 1964, 2. The association was interested in discussing intellectual disability in adults and children.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 329. These group meetings often consisted of lectures by a medical professional, either a doctor, institutional administrator, or psychologist. See: Dominick Bosco, *Bedlam: A Year in the Life of a Mental Hospital* (New York: Carol Publishers, 1992).

intellectually disabled were not uncommon during this period. According to historian Kathleen W. Jones, an “intense middle-class familialism” brought social clubs and families together to promote “normal” conditions for children out and inside of institutions.⁴⁸ Fundraising efforts at the Sunlands used the language of childhood to play on individuals’ idealization of the family. One Sunland administrator argued that each of the Sunland residents was “somebody’s child” and deserved the chance at a normal life.⁴⁹ Such perceptions represented a national trend. At the Willowbrook Institute in New York, parents planned parties, outings, make cakes, and invited clowns.⁵⁰ As noted in the previous chapter, child-rearing experts were an important piece of the family dynamic in the 1950s. As the 1950s and 60s progressed, the community increasingly relied on experts to guide their perceptions of the intellectually disabled. In the 1960s, groups devoted time and resources to the Sunlands, and sought to understand how the institutions worked. The new emphasis on understanding intellectual disability was, in part, due to widespread knowledge of President Kennedy’s disabled sister Rosemary, and Eunice Kennedy Shriver’s efforts to publicize the “problem” of what to do with these individuals, as well as a new interest in their humanitarian rights.⁵¹ An editorial by Senator Edward Kennedy was published in *The Winter Haven Daily News-Chief* was published in 1964, claiming that mental illnesses and intellectual disability could be cured through improving state institutions and additional services.⁵² As similar groups in Florida began to see themselves as well-informed, the Sunland Training Centers and Hospitals appeared increasingly deficient. The clubs learned about the

⁴⁸ Jones, 329.

⁴⁹ “Retarded Child Group Meets Here Today,” 2.

⁵⁰ Rothman and Rothman, 22.

⁵¹ Shriver, 305.

⁵² Edward M. Kennedy, “Senator Kennedy Supports Helping the Mentally Ill,” *Winter Haven Daily News-Chief*, May 28, 1964, 4.

deficiencies at institutions, and sought to correct them, giving residents the chance for lives comparable to children on the outside.

Social events, intended to raise awareness of and funds for the Sunlands, typically revolved around social events and women's traditional roles. Though these events had a social purpose, they also educated the community on intellectual disability and the difficulties faced by residents of the Sunlands. As early as the 1950s, a Junior Women's Club in Kissimmee made public the lack of training and recreation at the Sunlands.⁵³ In 1962, Kissimmee's Junior Women spent two months planning a follies show and talent night to benefit the Sunland Training Center.⁵⁴ The carefully planned event, held in a local auditorium, featured a highly-anticipated "Kiss-im-me Polka" number and highlighted the plight of children at the Sunland – denoted in one article as the women's "pet project."⁵⁵ The club raised over one million dollars in the 1950s to bring televisions and playground equipment into the training center.⁵⁶ Though men participated, the Junior Women ran the show and communicated the needs of the Sunlands to the audience and the press.⁵⁷ The Idlewood Club in Flagler County planned a masquerade dance in in November of 1963. Though social in nature, the event also solicited funds for a Sunland Training Center.⁵⁸ Another club produced a fashion show as a fundraiser, while still keeping the Sunland and its goals the focus of the evening.⁵⁹ These events raised both funds and awareness for the centers and intellectually disabled children.

⁵³ Betty Eby, "Junior Women to Present Revue," 3.

⁵⁴ "Junior Women Make Plans for Follies," *Kissimmee Gazette*, August 9, 1962, 2; "Junior Women Plan Talent Night Party," *Kissimmee Gazette*, September 13, 1962, 5.

⁵⁵ "Follies of 1962 to be Staged This Week," *Kissimmee Gazette*, October 4, 1962, 1.

⁵⁶ Eby, "Junior Women to Present Revue," 3.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ "Idlewood Club Meets with Bette McDaniel," *Flagler Tribune*, October 17, 1963, 5.

⁵⁹ "Junior Woman's Club News," *Florida Times*, November 21, 1962, 5.

Before these groups attempted to raise awareness in the community, they usually became educated first. A Junior Women's Club in Bradford County heard from a Special Olympics coordinator who had worked with the Sunlands. His speech was part of a larger Valentine's Day party, the purpose of which was also to plan a fashion show to raise funds and promote a Valentine's Day party for a cottage at the training center.⁶⁰ The Madison County Association for Retarded Children heard special speakers and researchers for the institution and then enjoyed "a social hour followed with coffee and doughnuts."⁶¹ The Titusville Junior's Women's Club sought to educate themselves through a "slide presentation" delivered from a nearby Sunland Training Center. At the end of the presentation, members began planning Christmas gifts for Sunland children and enjoying a social hour with cookies and eggnog.⁶² Trainings and speeches also informed the community as to the unique challenges of the intellectually disabled.⁶³ Mrs. Dixie Hughes, of the Sunland Hospital in Orlando, presented information on and solicited donations for the institution while speaking at Kissimmee's Needlework Guild. She also invited members to form groups and tour the Sunland Hospital.⁶⁴ Events such as these blended traditional women's club activities with education and advocacy.

After women's groups became educated, they began taking action. Gifts provided a way for these organizations to assist in "normalizing" children and contribute to their well-being. Presents varied widely across groups, which gave them based on perceived ideas of what "normal children" would want or need. They were not usually practical. A Friendship Club in

⁶⁰ "Junior Club Fashion Show Set for March 14th," *Bradford County Telegraph*, February 14, 1974, 3. The age of those living in the cottage is not specified.

⁶¹ "Madison Co. Asso. for Retarded Children," *Madison Enterprise*, April 28, 1961, 1.

⁶² "Junior Women to Hold Christmas Program Tomorrow," 5.

⁶³ "Capsule of Events in DeLand," *Deland Sun News*, November 15, 1964, 2; "Sponsors Needed for Patients at Sunland Center."

⁶⁴ "Needlework Guild Held Ingathering," *The Kissimmee Gazette*, May 14, 1964, 5.

Kissimmee ended their Easter celebration with the women creating “beautiful party favor hats made out of paper plates” and tray favors made of “artificial flowers and bottle caps.” The Friendship Club intended the hats to be used at an Easter Party for the Orlando Sunland Hospital.⁶⁵ In 1967, a Girl Scout Troop, under the direction of their Troop Leaders, made Christmas toys for Sunland children. The girls created “hobby horses, dolls, snowmen, and octopi” to brighten Christmas for the intellectually disabled residents at the training center in Marianna.⁶⁶ One women’s group “voted to give \$10 to the Sunland Training Center” as well as crayons and coloring books.⁶⁷ In 1975, a group of women raised money to “improve” Sunland Training Center in Gainesville cottages, with an emphasis on creating a “homelike atmosphere.”⁶⁸ Typically, cottages contained only a few chairs a table, and this fundraising campaign promised improved upholstery and décor. Air chiefs’ wives in Jacksonville donated more practical gifts. They gave the Gainesville Training Center a wheelchair in 1969, and collected clothing the year following.⁶⁹ Sororities and college groups generally donated more material objects toward the Sunlands; however, women’s groups also participated, hoping to “normalize” children’s lives at the institution.

Clubs and organizations often used the language of sponsorship or even adoption when conducting activities intended to help a Sunland’s residents. Visits to the institution from sponsors were uncommon, but did occur, particularly in coordination with religious

⁶⁵ “Friendship Club Held Luncheon,” *Kissimmee Gazette*, April 26, 1962, 2; “Friendship Club to Meet Thursday,” *Kissimmee Gazette*, November 21, 1963, 2. The party was for all residents, regardless of age.

⁶⁶ “Girl Scout Troop 48 Makes Toys for Sunland Training Center Residents,” *The Star*, November 30, 1967, 5. The toys were intended for all residents of all ages.

⁶⁷ “Epsilon Alpha Chatter,” *The Islander*, September 22, 1960, 4.

⁶⁸ “OWJC Awarding Charity Funds,” *Jacksonville Air News*, May 1, 1975, 12.

⁶⁹ “Chiefs’ Wives Group Donates Wheelchair to Training Center,” *Jacksonville Air News*, August 14, 1969, 9; “Wives Make Holiday Plans,” *Jacksonville Air News*, November 5, 1970, 5.

organizations and activities.⁷⁰ In 1961, the *Kissimmee Gazette* reported that the local Junior Women's Club chose four boys to sponsor with a musical revue.⁷¹ The Jayceettes, a Port St. Joseph group, adopted a boy from the local Sunland Training Center in 1964. According to one article, the boy was "remembered by these girls in every special way."⁷² The sponsorship was so successful that the group decided to adopt a second child a few months later.⁷³ Despite the good intentions of the Jayceettes, the sponsorship fell through. The group sent the original child birthday presents and made plans to visit for a visit to the Marianna Sunland.⁷⁴ In return, the boy sent "a heartwarming letter," which was read out loud to the "delighted" group over pie and coffee.⁷⁵ The Jayceettes' adoption inspired public sympathy toward children at the institution, contributing to a general perception of these individuals as needy and underprivileged.

Soon, other groups were adopting and sponsoring children. The Bradford County Junior Women's Club outdid the Jayceettes in terms of the number of children sponsored. In the mid-1960s, the organization adopted over forty girls and began sending them gifts. At least two members frequently visited the adoptees, who lived at the Gainesville and Marianna Training Centers.⁷⁶ Some community members began adopting entire cottages at training centers.⁷⁷ By 1969, as the Sunlands became overcrowded and underfunded, adoptions consisted of sending cash, rather than gifts. Some women at a religious function argued that gifts were not appropriate, when sent from well-meaning clubs who did not know the best use of donated funds.⁷⁸ Instead,

⁷⁰ "W.S.C.S. Studies New Frontiers," *The Clewiston News*, July 4, 1963, 3.

⁷¹ "Junior Women to Sponsor Revue," *Kissimmee Gazette*, October 26, 1961, 4."

⁷² "Jayceettes Sponsoring a Child at Sunland," *The Star*, March 26, 1964, 4.

⁷³ "Jayceettes Hear County Health Doctor," *The Star*, September 17, 1964, 6.

⁷⁴ "Convention Report Given to Jayceettes at July Meeting Monday Evening," *The Star*, July 21, 1966, 7.

⁷⁵ "Jayceettes Hold Meet at St. Joe Motel," *The Star*, November 19, 1964, 4.

⁷⁶ Gladys Mooty, "Local Attorney is Speaker for Junior Women," 3. The age of these adoptees is not noted.

⁷⁷ "Sunland to Hold Open House," 1.

⁷⁸ Gladys Mooty, "Episcopal Women Promote Singalong Event Tonight," *Bradford County Telegraph*, November 20, 1969, 2.

Sunland administrators asked groups to consider “sponsorships,” which would guarantee funds for a resident, as well as his or her emotional well-being.⁷⁹ In the late 1960s, the Gainesville Training Center’s special services coordinator Lee Crook spoke to a local Rotary Club about the “overcrowding” and dismal conditions for children at the center. A “sponsorship” consisted of just one dollar per month, and was for seasonal presents. “An occasional letter, postcard, or visit” was also encouraged.⁸⁰ According to Crook, children not receiving this special treatment were “depressed” and even “anti-social.”⁸¹ These symptoms were becoming common seen as side effects of living in an institution. Erving Goffman described similar emotional problems when detailing the “total institution.”⁸² Sponsorships from volunteer organizations were popular ways of attempting to negate the effects of institutionalization and promote a “normal” childhood.

Social movements of the 1960s and 70s generally involved the participation of college students. In the case of the Sunland Training Centers and Hospitals, sororities, fraternities, and young people’s organizations played a key role in disseminating information about and providing support to the intellectually disabled. Like women’s groups, college organizations gave gifts and organized events intended to normalize residents and bring them a part of the community. One University of Florida organization held a Christmas party in 1964 during which participants made cookies and candy for the Gainesville Sunland Training Center’s Christmas party.⁸³ A sorority group in Miami held a benefit tea for the local training center.⁸⁴ These events were intended to raise awareness of the Sunlands, as well as provide gifts. A Junior Women’s Club in

⁷⁹ “Sponsors Needed for Patients at Sunland Center,” *Bradford County Telegraph*, March 20, 1969, 5. These residents included adults and children.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Goffman, 3-12.

⁸³ “Campus News Briefs,” *Florida Alligator*, December 8, 1964, 3.

⁸⁴ “Chattier that Matters,” *Miami Times*, December 21, 1963, 5.

Titusville sewed mu mus for adult women at the Sunlands, a rare shift in focus from younger residents. The group diligently met three mornings a week for two months to finish the mu mus, and encouraged other community members to provide donations of fabric. The community noticed their efforts. An article on the initiative praised the young women “who are donating their time and energy toward making these gifts.”⁸⁵ A Junior Club in Bradford County donated a similarly practical gift to adult women at the Sunlands. A hairdryer was given as a special Christmas present for women at the Sunland Training Center in Gainesville.⁸⁶ Sororities and clubs for young women gave gifts to the women and children of the Sunlands, their selections based off perceived needs and a desire to improve the lives of the institutions’ residents.

University clubs, particularly Greek organizations, raised funding and provided gifts for Sunland residents, and they also spent more time actually visiting and interacting with them than their adult counterparts. Sororities, fraternities, and young people’s clubs spent a great deal of time and resources planning and executing sponsored events at the Sunlands. In 1975, University of Florida students planned a Special Olympics for children at the Gainesville Training Center. The student newspaper advertised the free event to the public and raised awareness of the needs of Sunland residents.⁸⁷ Sorority Zeta Phi Eta, a professional speech arts society, performed James Thurber’s play “Many Moons” for Sunland children, dressing up in homemade costumes. The student widely distributed images of the performance through the University of Florida’s paper, *The Alligator*.⁸⁸ The newspaper also praised fraternity Phi Gamma Delta in 1964 for their efforts at the Sunlands. In an article, the reporter singled out the men of the fraternity for taking a “few

⁸⁵ “JWC Sewing Mu Mus for Sunland Patients,” *The Star-Advocate*, February 26, 1964, 3.

⁸⁶ Gladys Mooty, “Junior Club Given Christmas Children’s Party,” *Bradford County Telegraph*, January 7, 1971, 2.

⁸⁷ “UF to Sponsor Sunland Event,” *Independent Florida Alligator*, May 8, 1975, 4

⁸⁸ “Zeta Phi Eta,” *Florida Alligator*, May 8, 1964, 5.

minutes out of a hurried schedule” to “shed a little light on an otherwise lightless day.”⁸⁹ A Junior Club “entertained a group of women at the Sunland Training Center” and presented them with gifts.⁹⁰ Phi Kappa Taus from the University of Florida regularly visited the children at the Gainesville Training Center. On at least one occasion, they also took a high school group with them.⁹¹ One University of Florida fraternity sponsored a Gainesville Training Center cottage, not through monetary donations or gifts, but by playing sports with the boys. One fraternity member, “emphasized the needs of Sunland residents to have contact with people outside the center.”⁹² Sororities and fraternities, particularly from the University of Florida, regularly provided gifts and visits for residents of the Sunland Training Center.

Open Houses at the Sunlands, which took place during the 1960s and 70s, encouraged community members to learn about the institutions and take an active role. At a 1963 open house at a training center featured tours of the cottages. This educational opportunity was meant to secure sponsorships for notable community members and inform the community of the center’s programming efforts. The institution’s staff provided entertainment for participant’s children, though they were not allowed to tour the cottages.⁹³ The Gainesville Training Center hosted an open house in 1964 that featured tours and movies for their children who, again, were kept away from the cottages. Particularly featured at this open house were the vocational rehabilitation programs and recreational facilities, which promoted a normal lifestyle.⁹⁴ The Marianna Training Center hosted in open house in 1966 that included a “residents’ talent show” as well as a tour. During this open house, intellectually disabled children actually gave the tours. Superintendent

⁸⁹ “Salute to Fijis,” *Florida Alligator*, November 13, 1964, 6.

⁹⁰ Mooty, “Junior Club Given Christmas Children’s Party,” 2.

⁹¹ “Delta Chi’s Plan Ball,” *Florida Alligator*, February 21, 1964, 5.

⁹² “Lambda Chi’s to Host Party,” *Florida Alligator*, November 13, 1964, 3.

⁹³ “Sunland to Hold Open House,” *Clay County Crescent*, November 14, 1963, 1.

⁹⁴ “Open House at Sunland This Sunday,” *Gainesville Sun*, November 16, 1964, 2.

Harry Howell encouraged participants to attend a question and answer session with him, to learn more about programming and training. These Sunlands intended the Open Houses to involve the community and teach them how the institutions were being run. Again, the center encouraged community members to “bring the home family,” making the open house a social as well as educational event.⁹⁵ Thousands of community members attended these open houses and became better-informed on the Sunland Training Centers.

As the general public became educated and involved in the Sunlands, civic groups, associations for the intellectually disabled, and local governments also increased their participation. An Orlando Sunland administrator, C. H. Dutcher, spoke to the West Volusia Civic Roundtable in 1964, describing programming. The general public was also invited to this lecture.⁹⁶ Karl Lundgren of Gainesville’s Sunland Training Center spoke at a meeting of the Alachua County Association for Retarded Children, and showed an educational film.⁹⁷ The local government in Marianna supported the creation of a special recreation park where the intellectually disabled, “may come, along with their families, for a beach vacation.”⁹⁸ This benevolent action was seen as essential to family health, where summer vacations were an essential component of family “togetherness.”⁹⁹ The Sunland Recreation Park continued to expand as the legislature directed funds toward it, emphasizing the social mission of the park.¹⁰⁰ At least two local politicians utilized his efforts for intellectually disabled children to make a

⁹⁵ “Sunland Training Center Sets Open House November 20,” *Walluka County News*, November 17, 1966, 2. It is not clear whether the residents who performed were adults, children, or both.

⁹⁶ “Capsule of Events in Deland,” 2.

⁹⁷ “Retarded Child Group Meets Here Today,” 2.

⁹⁸ “Ground Broken for First Sunland Recreation Park,” *The Star*, August 3, 1972, 1.

⁹⁹ Jones, 334.

¹⁰⁰ “More Money for Sunland Center,” *The Star*, July 28, 1977, 1.

case for his philanthropic record.¹⁰¹ Florida Governor Ferris Bryant personally commented on the Sunlands, noting in a speech that, “I would hope above all else that in this field of helplessness we not shirk our responsibility.”¹⁰² As awareness of the Sunlands grew, civic groups and politicians, supported by women’s organizations, sought to contribute to a group of individuals they perceived as helpless without their intervention.

As the 1960s progressed, the Sunlands institutions more frequently became the targets of scathing newspaper editorials and public scrutiny. University of Florida students, particularly those outside of the Greek system, brought reports of scandal and abuse to light. Other newspapers followed suit, particularly into the 1970s. As early as 1954, W. C. Smith, a journalist for *The Star*, published a lengthy article on the vocational training programming at the Marianna Training Center. Smith explained the “main purpose of the center” as training “a retarded person to do a specific job,” which would allow the individual the change to “leave the center.” Frequent trips to the outside world were meant to mitigate the possibility of a “shock” for the individual upon departure.¹⁰³ Such articles were meant to disseminate information for public consideration. Readers of the *Kissimmee Gazette* in 1961 learned of the intricate educational efforts, and “considerable” taxpayer savings, at the Gainesville Training Center.¹⁰⁴ In 1968, funds were requested of the Florida Legislature to create a recreation area for Sunland children.¹⁰⁵ The state government charged a local architect with completing designs that would create a “normal” park experience for children and their families, keeping others out.¹⁰⁶ Editorials praised the efforts and

¹⁰¹ “Burns,” *Gainesville Sun*, April 9, 1964, 3; Helen Coble, “Duties of Attorney General Outlined by Florida Official,” *DeLand Sun News*, April 19, 1964, 3.

¹⁰² Addie Summers, “Somebody’s Child,” *Okeechobee News*, April 21, 1961, 5.

¹⁰³ W. S. Smith, “Sunland at Marianna,” *The Star*, November 23, 1954, 7.

¹⁰⁴ “Forrest Park School Achievements Told,” *The Kissimmee Gazette*, April 6, 1961, 1.

¹⁰⁵ “Commissioner Group Selects Kennedy as Representative,” *The Star*, October 3, 1958, 1.

¹⁰⁶ “Plans Drawn for Sunland Training Recreation Center,” *The Star*, March 27, 1969, 1.

argued that funding them was “vital.”¹⁰⁷ The editorial was one of many that began to be published about the intellectually disabled.

In the 1950s, newspaper articles in Florida rarely featured articles on the Sunlands. By the 1970s, editorials regularly appeared connecting state and national movements for the intellectually disabled. One editorial claimed, “There is no mirth in the cruel fact that hundreds of thousands of people – all children at some time or another – are either mentally or physically retarded.”¹⁰⁸ The author went on to claim that these children were “neglected by today’s society” and deserved greater advocacy from the community.¹⁰⁹ *The Collier County Daily News* published an article in 1964 asserting that the “stigma” against intellectually disabled children should end in Florida.¹¹⁰ Such editorials reveal changing attitudes in the public’s perceptions of the intellectually disabled. In the 1970s, as public outcry against the Sunlands grew more intense, reporters also began to comment on changes in leadership occurring at the Sunlands.¹¹¹ The purpose of these articles was to inform the public of the Sunlands’ missions, goals, and methods for achieving them.

In the 1960s, articles began to appear that identified major problems with the Sunland Training Centers and Hospitals, becoming increasingly critical of the institutions. In 1964, the *Gainesville Sun* published a story on two adult “runaway patients” who walked away from the training center, right under the noses of attendants and staff.¹¹² Eventually, even mainstream newspapers began to report on abuses. In 1974, the *Florida Times*, *Gainesville Sun*, and *Miami*

¹⁰⁷ “What Does Economy Mean?” *The Star*, March 28, 1969, 5. The Sunlands were not the only institutions across the nation that struggled with budget cuts and funding issues during this time. For example, Jones, 332-333.

¹⁰⁸ “Chance to Help ‘Least of These,’” *Citrus County Chronicle*, February 21, 1963, 8.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ “The Retarded Child,” *The Collier County Daily News*, September 17, 1964, 4.

¹¹¹ “Childers Qualifies as Supt.,” *The Star*, July 15, 1976, 5.

¹¹² “Find Escapees from Sunland,” *Gainesville Sun*, January 7, 1964, 2.

Herald reported that ten employees at the Gainesville Training Center had regularly “beaten, kicked and terrorized” residents.¹¹³ The *Herald* stated that “residents care personnel and possibly administrators” were aware of the beatings and had covered them up.¹¹⁴ That same year, the directorship of the Sunlands changed hands following reports of sexual abuse in the institutions.¹¹⁵ In 1975, the *Florida Times* reported on the “homosexual murder” in the Marianna Sunland Center. Both the accused, who later hanged himself, and the victim were residents, and the event appeared to have taken place without attendants becoming fully aware of the situation.¹¹⁶ The newspaper published speculation that, “at least three other patients at Sunland were involved in the murder,” under the noses of the training center’s administrators.¹¹⁷ Such incidents made the Sunland administrators appear neglectful and even abusive.

Public scrutiny continued to focus on issues at the Sunlands, bringing attention to the plight of the intellectually disabled residing there. The *Orlando Sentinel* also addressed the amount of residents who were tube-fed. Based on a 1982 survey, they claimed that “Seventy-five percent of all tube-fed institutionally mentally retarded patients in the country” could be found at the Orlando Sunland.¹¹⁸ It is worth noting that another early news publication to focus on abuses in the Sunlands was the *Miami Times*. An African-American newspaper, the publication focused on abuses at the Miami Sunland in the 1960s. Particularly, a case involving a “17-hour ‘sweat-box’ punishment” for two intellectually disabled boys.¹¹⁹ This disciplinary action involved keeping two adolescent boys in an abandoned truck for five hours, without food, water, or opportunities

¹¹³ “Sunland Training Center Employees are Suspended,” *Florida Times*, November 24, 1974, 5.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ “Kelley Named Sunland Director,” *United Press Association*, November 26, 1974, 5.

¹¹⁶ “Murder Suspect Found Dead in Marianna Jail,” *Florida Times*, October 15, 1975, 5.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Delthis Ricks, “Orlando Sunland,” *Orlando Sentinel*, November 30, 1989, C1.

¹¹⁹ “Sunland Training Center Head Fired Over Sweat Box Punishment,” *Miami Times*, May 26, 1967, 1.

to use the restroom. The article reported that the sad event was not simply instigated by a few rogue attendants alone; rather, one of the center's psychiatrists had ordered the punishment. In addition, the newspaper revealed that the institution hired the psychiatrist despite his record of being fired over negligence.¹²⁰ These revelations of neglect reflect a changing public opinion and increasing skepticism regarding the institutions.

Public criticism of the institutions was national and widespread. As institutions lost public support, they also lost funding, leading to a cycle of neglect caused by underspending and increasing mistrust of them.¹²¹ Cuts ran so deep at the Gainesville Training Center that state prisoners staffed the institution until public attention forced their removal.¹²² Even once the prisoners were gone, older residents continued to cohabitate with their younger counterparts, leading to allegations of abuse and neglect on the part of the staff.¹²³ It took a court order for the Sunlands to separate out felons from the Tallahassee Hospital's general population.¹²⁴ As funding wells dried up, the Tallahassee Hospital began, in their words, to "phase-down operations" at the institution.¹²⁵ One newspaper reported on an eleven-year-old girl who broke her arm at a Sunland, and attendants did not take action for ten days.¹²⁶ Neglect at the Sunlands was due, in part, to cuts in funding; however, newspapers placed blame on the institutions.

The university student-run *Independent Florida Alligator* began actively reporting on the institutions. Unlike the *Florida Alligator*, which focused on benevolent activities from Greek

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ Noll, "The Public Face of Southern Institutions for the "Feeble-Minded," 36.

¹²² "Civilian Workers Due to Replace Prisoners," *Florida Times-Union*, June 21, 1961, 24.

¹²³ Denny R. Wood, "Dangerous Building," *Florida Times*, May 1, 1975, 29.

¹²⁴ Harriet Ludwig, "Couple Says Neglect a Problem at Sunland," Box 1, Folder 2, S. 1636 Tallahassee Sunland scrapbooks, 1967-1980, Volume 1, State Archives of Florida, Tallahassee, FL.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

organizations, the paper reported on scandals and failings within the institution. In the 1970s, students reported on staff members forcing residents to “eat soap” at the Gainesville Training Center¹²⁷ A few months later, the newspaper revealed that physical abuse at the Sunland was widespread. High-level administrators were supposedly aware that attendants “kicked or slapped teenage residents,” and yet did nothing.¹²⁸ Students writing for *Independent Florida Alligator* carefully followed the trials of those accused of physical abuse.¹²⁹ The students brought abuses and neglect to the public’s attention.

Public outcry was particularly strong when the government reported the Training Centers were not even fulfilling their central function of preparing residents for life outside the institution. According to advocate Eunice Kennedy Shriver, only five percent of children were “untrainable” and “dependent.”¹³⁰ At the Sunlands, according to one researcher, “the emphasis is custodial and the other services tangential.”¹³¹ The Sunlands promised they would train residents for vocations; however, by 1970 only nine percent of students could even wash their clothes.¹³² Only seven percent could take public transportation.¹³³ Worst of all, the Sunlands reported only 458 residents – between eight and nine percent - could be considered “semi-skilled,” with about one percent eligible for employment.¹³⁴ One former resident described “little emphasis on academic learning” during her time at the Orlando Sunland Hospital. Administrators reserved any special

¹²⁷ Bruce Morris, “Jury examines Sunland Abuses,” *Independent Florida Alligator*, January 16, 1975, 5.

¹²⁸ David Klein, “Judge drops three charges in Sunland abuse case,” *Independent Florida Alligator*, April 16, 1975, 8.

¹²⁹ Janet Park, “Mistrial declared in Sunland Case,” *Independent Florida Alligator*, April 17, 1975, 6; “Three convicted in Sunland trials,” *Independent Florida Alligator*, April 21, 1975, 10.

¹³⁰ Shriver, 305.

¹³¹ Norley, 42.

¹³² “President’s Committee on Mental Retardation,” 28.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.* 28-29.

events, field trips, and therapy sessions for young children.¹³⁵ One grandmother lobbied to have special classes for her granddaughter in the public education system, which would save her from going to a Sunland.¹³⁶ One association for intellectually disabled children worked with a PTA to convince the community that these children could be helped within the traditional school system.¹³⁷ In response, administrators proposed plans for the Sunlands; however, to many it was already clear that the institutions failed their central purpose. This illustrates a national trend that would lead to further protests against the Sunlands.

In addition to lobbying for better programs, parents and community groups began to claim the institutions were denying children at the Sunlands a basically suitable childhood. Florida's Sunlands were not unique in the public attacks on this front. Perhaps no more well-known example of institutional neglect exists than that of Willowbrook State School in New York. In 1972, journalist Geraldo Rivera's report made public the institution's many failures. Children lived in filth among a plentiful amount of cockroaches, with a few attendants looking after as many as seventy children.¹³⁸ The footage caused a national outcry, and media interpretation portrayed institutions as problematic at best and abusive, at worst. A documentary film on Willowbrook that followed also discussed programs in California that allowed children to be trained at home with support from community clinics. Most of Willowbrook's residents were eventually placed in the community, either with foster families or in special community homes.

¹³⁵ Elaine Morgan, "Sunland: It Used to Be a Dumping Ground," *Florida Times-Union*, Box 1, Folder 2, S. 1636 Tallahassee Sunland scrapbooks, 1967-1980, Volume 1, State Archives of Florida, Tallahassee, FL.

¹³⁶ "Casey Promises Program for Profoundly Retarded," *Bradford County Telegraph*, September 6, 1979, 1.

¹³⁷ "Group for Retarded Will Meet Nov. 21," *Citrus County Chronicle*, November 14, 1963, 1; "Floral City PTA Joins Retarded Association," *Citrus County Chronicle*, November 14, 1963, 2.

¹³⁸ Noll, "The Public Face of Southern Institutions for the 'Feeble-Minded,'" 36; Rothman and Rothman, 75; Geraldo Rivera, *Willowbrook: The Last Great Disgrace*, produced by Albert T. Primo, New York: WABC-TV, 1972.

The Sunland Institutions struggled with the same accusations Willowbrook faced – and not without due cause. Neglect, generally due to understaffing, was a serious problem at the Sunland Institutions. In Tallahassee, the staff-patient ratio climbed to more than one child for every staff member.¹³⁹ This was serious, considering that the vast majority of these children required intensive care. Parents with children on the Sunlands’ lengthy waiting list would sometimes go 8-10 years before being contacted with updates.¹⁴⁰ Administrators who did reach out to these families were usually poorly-trained and unaware of the Sunland’s actual services.¹⁴¹ Denny R. Wood, a disability advocate, addressed problems at the Tallahassee Sunland in 1975. In a scathing editorial, Wood accused the building’s structure of being unsound, the lives of children being in danger from abuse at the hands of older residents, the facility as being overcrowded and understaffed. When addressing the probability of conditions changing, he stated, “The retarded cannot speak for themselves as well as other well-represented special interest groups that we see so represented in Tallahassee.”¹⁴² As social rights for the intellectually disabled grew into a national movement, the Sunlands seemed farther behind.

The greatest charge against the Sunlands was that they kept residents from a self-determined life, which community care organizations could supposedly provide. The Orlando and Tallahassee Hospitals, in particular, were reported as lacking in the “home-life atmosphere” needed to provide residents with “normal” lives.¹⁴³ Instead, doctors and attendants administered

¹³⁹ Anthony Campanero, “Sunland Seeks Community Help,” *The Canon*, Press Clippings, S. 1636 Tallahassee Sunland scrapbooks, 1967-1980, Volume 1, State Archives of Florida, Tallahassee, FL.

¹⁴⁰ Norley, 9. In the 1960s, the town of Canal Point had a waiting list of over 1,000 students with 55 being added every month. See: “Retarded Children Get Helping Hand,” *The Everglades News*, April 26, 1963, 8. Long waiting lists were a national problem, and not merely an issue at the Sunlands. For example, see Jones, 326.

¹⁴¹ Norley, 43.

¹⁴² Wood, 29.

¹⁴³ Norley, 11.

custodial care, with neither recreation nor training programs.¹⁴⁴ The threat of a federal lawsuit, as well as petitions from special interest groups, forced the Florida legislature to raise funding slightly in 1975.¹⁴⁵ The Florida Association for Retarded Citizens still sued, arguing that the Sunlands were “unsafe, unsanitary and offered improper treatment.”¹⁴⁶ A member of the Citrus-Hernando Association for Retarded Children lobbied the local government for “at least one class in Citrus County for mentally retarded children,” to be held at a school with other children.¹⁴⁷ By the mid-1970s, the public saw the Sunlands as “bad institutions” that were understaffed, abusive, and lacking in essential services that would provide a basic “childhood” experience.¹⁴⁸ The social movements of the 1960s and 70s fostered a sense of outrage and suspicion. The public began to look for new solutions for the intellectually disabled as the institutions’ failures became better known. Nationally, family and advocacy groups were already arguing that the idealized family could include a “mentally retarded” child.¹⁴⁹ The consequences of this perception, namely community care, will be discussed in the next chapter. The general public increasingly saw the Sunlands as unable to provide a normal life for residents, particularly since “normal” was being redefined to include self-determination.

The public’s concern for residents promoted a serious discussion of how the treatment of residents was based on race. The social movements of the 19560s and 70s and the shift toward community care dramatically changed the racial landscape of the Sunlands. Dolores Norley, an MA candidate in social work in 1969, focused on the problematic disparities between African-American and white residents in the Sunlands. In the 1950s and early 60s, when the Gainesville

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ “Help for the Retarded,” *Florida Times*, May 4, 1975.

¹⁴⁶ Dan Tracy, “Pact Ends Feud Over Sunland,” *Orlando Sentinel*, June 5, 1985, C1.

¹⁴⁷ “Strickland, Connor Hear Constituents,” *The Citrus County Chronicle*, February 21, 1963, 1.

¹⁴⁸ Michael Goldman, “Director Gives Hope to the Retarded,” *United Press International*, January 12, 1975.

¹⁴⁹ Jones, 327.

Training Center reopened, African-American were underrepresented at the institution compared to the population. In 1969, as community care services improved, the opposite became true.¹⁵⁰

Norley argued that as community care began to improve and expand, African-American families with intellectually disabled members found a “lack of opportunity within the community” and increasingly turned to institutions.¹⁵¹ African-Americans did not have access to parents’ groups, which were generally white and middle-class. As Katherine Castles explains that groups such as the National Association for Retarded Children (NARC) were not interested in providing assistance for the poor, African-Americans, and Hispanics, “their focus was on gaining services and public sympathy for the moderately retarded children of respectable American families.”¹⁵² As institutions such as the Tallahassee Hospital became increasingly diverse, however, volunteers followed suit. Regardless, African-American children and adults did not receive the types of benefits, benevolence, and advocacy extended to their white counterparts. Norley’s work illustrates a public discussion of this fact.

In the 1960s and 70s, members of the public began to question institutions and formal organizations. Civil rights for the mentally ill and intellectually disabled were an important component of a larger movement. Litigators and activists involved in this movement emphasized the important of human rights for individuals. This included the right to live a “normal life,” which the public increasingly saw as impossible within an institution. The antipsychiatry movement contributed to these ideas, positing that psychiatrists invented mental illness and portraying institutions as apparatuses of social control. The Sunland Training Centers and Hospitals had attempted to provide residents a “normalized” life; however, funding cuts and

¹⁵⁰ Norley, 8.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁵² Castles, 356.

understaffing prompted community groups to try and meet this need. Because fundraisers revolved around perceived female roles, social clubs for women focused the most attention on the Sunlands. Community groups also became educated about the Sunlands through these efforts. Such organizations saw themselves in a paternalistic role, providing gifts and even “adopting” or “fostering” children. College organizations, particularly fraternities and sororities at the University of Florida, also donated time and efforts to the Sunlands. They visited and Sunlands and educated the community about the residents living there. In order to contribute to the education of the public, the Sunlands held Open Houses to attract additional support. These educational opportunities prompted local government action on behalf of the institutions; however, they also caused a public discussion on the suitability of the Sunlands for intellectually disabled persons. *The Miami Times* and *The Independent Florida Alligator*, an African-American and student-run publication respectively, provided early criticism of the institution. Soon, outrage at conditions in the Sunlands became widespread. The public specifically doubted whether the training centers and hospitals could provide residents with a “normal life,” which in the 1960s, began to include the idea of self-determination and individual freedoms. The treatment of African-American residents at the institutions also began to receive attention. By the 1980s, public pressure led to the closing of two Sunland Hospitals and the deinstitutionalization of many persons living in the training centers. The public would take control of the fate of these individuals by providing support services in the community.

CHAPTER 3: DEINSTITUTIONALIZATION AND COMMUNITY CARE

In Florida and nationally, the civil rights movement for the intellectually disabled led to deinstitutionalization and a rise in community care. After decades of social and political pressure, the Sunland initiative was reshaped. Several institutions closed down permanently, while others scaled back their programs. The Sunlands only became more controversial in the following decades and the public contended over how former residents were treated. The demolition of the former Orlando Sunland in the 1990s provided a public forum for contention over these issues. The general public began to see themselves in a paternalistic role during this deinstitutionalization period. They were to provide the “normal life” the institutional model had failed to offer. As the institutions downsized or closed, community members formed associations and special programs to supplement state efforts to care for former Sunland residents. In the public debates that surrounded deinstitutionalization and the emergence of community care, the community portrayed intellectually disabled individuals as helpless victims of abuse and neglect.

The deinstitutionalization movement was a national outcome of antipsychiatry and civil rights movements, which cast residents of institutions as helpless and abused victims. For many mental institutions, the stigma and public pressure proved too great to overcome. Local community’s paternalistic attitude toward the intellectually disabled meant new resources became available outside the institution. Hospitals and vocational training centers across the United States closed amidst protests over neglect and abuse.¹ Others remained open, shedding the majority of their residents and focusing on short term stays and providing medical and legal

¹ Charles W. Murdock, “Civil Rights of the Mentally Retarded – Some Critical Issues,” *Family Law Quarterly* 7, No. 1 (1973): 21; Lawrence Downes, “In a Reborn Corner of Long Island, Blight Comes Creeping Back,” *The New York Times* December 23, 2008, accessed September 4, 2013.

services.² From 1955 to 1970 alone, the population of institutions dropped 80 percent as community organizations began to take on greater patient loads.³ “The number of inpatients in US public mental hospitals declined from 559,000 in 1955 to approximately 110,000” in the 1980s.⁴ This number far exceeded goals set by President Kennedy the decade before.⁵ Even though some parents protested the closing of institutions, activists contended that community care was more “humane.”⁶ The push for these services was so great that some states began lessening institutional populations without considerable foresight for the ramifications.⁷ As with the infamous Willowbrook State School in New York, residents were supposed to find homes in the community or stay in specially-designated centers.⁸ In New York, the state employed foster families to care for intellectually disabled individuals.⁹ To make the deinstitutionalization movement a success, members of the public and state governments were required to step into a paternalistic role and begin providing services for the disabled.

The closing of the two Sunland Hospitals and the downsizing of the Gainesville Training Center, in particular, required this kind of community support. In the 1970s, Sunland administrators announced that the Orlando and Tallahassee Sunland Hospitals would close within the next 5-10 years. A timeline was introduced whereby residents would slowly be placed at

² For example, see: “Central State Hospital: Milledgeville,” Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, no date, accessed September 4, 2013, <http://dbhdd.georgia.gov/central-state-hospital-milledgeville>.

³ Shorter, 280.

⁴ David Mechanic and David A. Rochefort, “Deinstitutionalization: An Appraisal of Reform,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 16 (1990): 301.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 302.

⁶ “Don’t Close Sunlands, Parents Say,” *Palm Beach Post* April 27, 1982, B4.

⁷ Rothman and Rothman, 11; 91.

⁸ Karen Olson, “With love: Holidays a routine day at Sunland Tallahassee,” S. 1636 Tallahassee Sunland scrapbooks, 1967-1980, Box 1, Folder 2, State Archives of Florida, Tallahassee, FL.

⁹ Rothman and Rothman, 151.

other institutions, into community care facilities, or in foster families.¹⁰ Overcrowding was the official reason administrators gave as to why these two institutions were selected first for closing.¹¹ Federal funding in the 1960s waned following the Mental Retardation Facilities and Community Mental Health Centers Construction Act of 1983, which made states responsible for recurring costs.¹² As seen in the previous chapter, journalists and advocates targeted criticism at these buildings, due to their disrepair and neglect. The Tallahassee Hospital was a tuberculosis hospital before becoming a Sunland, and the building had deteriorated since its establishment in the early 1950s. One activist called for the demolition of the building, claiming it was decrepit and unsafe.¹³ Photographs of the site just before being torn down reveal the dilapidated state of the building.¹⁴ The final closing of the Tallahassee Sunland occurred in 1983 when the final few residents were transferred.¹⁵ An administrator, Sara Carter Pankaskie, composed a special song to commemorate the closing of the Tallahassee Hospital. Residents were trained to sing the following lyrics:

There are some things we'd like to say,
And share with you upon this special day,
About a place that's meant so much to all those gathered here,
Though some are sweet and some are sad, they all remain so clear...
For those of you who gather here,
The mem'ries flood, the pictures reappear,
We've seen the best and worst of all that man and God can do,
We've had a chance to see ourselves that comes to very few,
And so let's -

¹⁰ Brenda Jones, "Sunland report termed 'misleading,'" S. 1636 Tallahassee Sunland scrapbooks, 1967-1980, Box 1, Folder 1, State Archives of Florida, Tallahassee, FL.

¹¹ "Sunland Centers Closing Seen Under Medicaid Plan," S. 1636 Tallahassee Sunland scrapbooks, 1967-1980, Box 1, Folder 1, State Archives of Florida, Tallahassee, FL.

¹² Deborah S. Metzler, "Historical Social Geography," in *Mental Retardation in America: A Historical Reader*, 432.

¹³ Wood, 29; Pat Harbolt, "Tallahassee Losing Sunland Center?" S. 1636 Tallahassee Sunland scrapbooks, 1967-1980, Box 1, Folder 2, State Archives of Florida, Tallahassee, FL.

¹⁴ Beatrice M. Queral, "Sunland Hospital – Tallahassee, Florida," Florida Memory Project, 2006, accessed August 5, 2012, <http://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/14363>.

¹⁵ Anne M. Doyle, "Local Sunland closing starts," S. 1636 Tallahassee Sunland scrapbooks, 1967-1980, Box 2, Folder 3, State Archives of Florida, Tallahassee, FL.

Tie a yellow ribbon 'round the Sunland door,
We've had sixteen years, but there'll be no more,
We're starting something new now and the future's not so clear,
But let's stay on the track,
Never look back,
And hope for so much more, as we,
Tie a yellow ribbon 'round the Old Sunland door.¹⁶

As the lyrics in the song suggest, the early memories of the hospital were bittersweet for residents and administrators. The song's casting of the institution as a generally benevolent institution would come under increasing scrutiny from surrounding communities.

The Orlando Sunland Hospital, which closed its doors two years later, and the other Sunlands would also generate controversy after closing or being repurposed. According to a writer for the *Orlando Sentinel*, the technology and the buildings at the Orlando Sunland Hospital had become too outdated to support residents.¹⁷ After their closings, two former Sunland Hospitals sat empty for a decade. The Training Centers in Miami and Gainesville were repurposed. The Gainesville Training Center became Tacachale, a community for the intellectually disabled. Children lived in an area that was meant to be a "neighborhood" of Gainesville, not a segregated district.¹⁸ A few residents, mostly considered too "low-grade" to live outside of an institution, were transferred. The Marianna Training Center, which had been subject to little controversy, was not closed down, and many children were sent to that location.¹⁹ A new center in Lantana opened to manage the overflow of residents.²⁰ Unfortunately, the transition proved too difficult for some individuals.

¹⁶ Sara Carter Pankaskie, "Sunland Center at Tallahassee March 14, 1967 through December 15, 1983," S. 1636 Tallahassee Sunland scrapbooks, 1967-1980, Box 1, Folder 2, State Archives of Florida, Tallahassee, FL.

¹⁷ Jack R. Stacey, Jr., "Sunland Center Leaves a Legacy of Love, Compassion," *Orlando Sentinel*, April 11, 1985, 19.

¹⁸ Bob Arndorfer, "Sunland to Tacachale," *The Gainesville Sun* May 26, 2004, accessed September 4, 2013, <http://www.gainesville.com/article/20040526/NEWS/40528023>.

¹⁹ Harbolt, State Archives of Florida.

²⁰ "Lantana Home for the Retarded Opens," *Palm Beach Post*, July 28, 1983, B2.

Nine died while being sent to a center in Jacksonville.²¹ For the severely-disabled individuals who survived transfers, institutions began to serve purely custodial functions. After deinstitutionalization, the nation's remaining institutions for the intellectually disabled became increasingly specialized, were at the mercy of tight budgets, and could usually only house residents for a short period of time.²² The former residents of these Sunland institutions would supposedly receive more training and education in nearby community centers and schools. As community organizations became increasingly involved with the care and training of the intellectually disabled, these institutions were remembered in an increasingly negative light.

The paternalistic spirit of the 1960s social movements led to these new opportunities for intellectually disabled persons within the community. Further, the general public saw community care as a way for intellectually disabled "victims" to escape the evils of institutionalization. Former employees of the Sunlands engaged in a public debate with journalists and the public as the institutions became more maniacal in the popular imagination. In 1989, an article by Delthis Ricks in *The Orlando Sentinel* condemned the hospital for neglecting residents. Ricks claimed that understaffing probably led to the deaths of "critically ill" individuals.²³ Further, the journalist argued that attendants "found conventional feeding too time-consuming" and chose to use feeding tubes on residents who could otherwise be taught to feed themselves.²⁴ Such reports further condemned the Sunlands in the eyes of the public and helped to support a rise in community care resources.

The demolition of the former Orlando Sunland Hospital's main building caused the controversy surrounding the institution to rise to the forefront of public consciousness. These

²¹ Doyle, State Archives of Florida.

²² Noll, "The Public Face of Southern Institutions for the "Feeble-Minded," 26.

²³ Delthis Ricks, "Orlando Sunland," *Orlando Sentinel*, November 30, 1989: C1.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

buildings sat idle for over a decade, becoming a legend among Florida's ghost hunters. A local man slipped into the main building with friends in 1997 and fell down an elevator shaft, prompting an effort to have the building demolished.²⁵ The next year, the University of Central Florida's President John Hitt toured the building site with colleagues to see if it could be added to the university's expanding campus.²⁶ The dilapidated state of the building could not be overcome, however, and it was torn down in 1998.²⁷ This event led to a public debate on the Sunland's legacy between former employees and members of the greater Orlando community.

Essentially, these arguments revolved around whether or not the Orlando Sunland Hospital had properly cared for residents and given them as normal a life as possible. As the building was under consideration for demolition, a scathing article appeared in the *Orlando Sentinel* condemning the institution's faults; in particular, the admitting of physically disabled patients, the filthy state of the building, and the neglect of basic patient needs.²⁸ Two former Sunland employees related stories of horrific abuse. Mary and Dick Kortez claimed they saw neglect and underfunding. They described pest infestations and the "clunking of bodies" as "patients" were turned on terrazzo floors while being bathed.²⁹ A local called the building, "a four-story shell covered with graffiti."³⁰ Former employees immediately wrote the paper arguing that they "resented" the article's assumption that "nobody" would be "sorry to see Sunland go."³¹ Further, they charged that the paper had, "done the wonderful clients and dedicated employees" of the

²⁵ "Raze Sunland Center: Measures to Keep People Away from the Hospital Have Proved Ineffective," *Orlando Sentinel* July 30 1997, A12.

²⁶ Kevin P. Connolly, "UCF Checks Sunland Site for Future Branch," *Orlando Sentinel*, July 26, 1998, K12.

²⁷ Jorja and Nathanael Igbanol, "Sunland Scenario," August 16, 1998, G2.

²⁸ Sandra Mathers, "None Will Mourn When Sunland Walls Fall Down: The Former State Hospital – and Home of Painful memories for Many – is Being Demolished," *Orlando Sentinel*, August 10, 1998, B1.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ "Raze Sunland Center," A12.

³¹ Igbanol and Igbanol, "Sunland Scenario."

institution “a great disservice.”³² They argued “it did not lack people who cared,” whatever its faults.³³ Those arguing against this argument used the testimony of former residents to prove their point.

Individuals with physical disabilities, who had mistakenly been placed in the Sunlands also painted a grim portrayal of the institutions. The accounts of these physically disabled persons gave an important perspective on the Sunlands. Intellectually disabled individuals could not often speak concerning how they were treated. At the Sunlands and at institutions across the country, however, physically disabled persons placed in mental institutions by mistake began to speak on their experiences.³⁴ One woman, who had cerebral palsy, was placed in the Orlando Sunland Hospital. She reported that the building had been filled with rats, which got into the “crib-like” bed she was forced to sleep in.³⁵ Lorena, blind woman from Jacksonville, was sent to the Tallahassee Hospital after she failed to learn Braille.³⁶ She informed the public of the “awful” food at the hospital and failures of administrative staff to provide “academic learning.”³⁷ These reports from former members of the Sunland community influenced the public’s perception of the institutions.

By the 1990s and 2000s, the Sunlands were generally viewed negatively. Former employees and residents were fondly remembered in local obituaries and tributes; however, urban legends

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ For example, see: Mathers, B1; Elaine Morgan, “Sunland: It Used to Be a Dumping Ground,” *Florida Times Union*, July 22, 1984 S. 1636 Tallahassee Sunland scrapbooks, 1967-1980, Box 2, Folder 2, State Archives of Florida, Tallahassee, FL; various interviews from: *Unforgotten: Twenty-Five Years After Willowbrook*. Directed by Jack Fisher (New York: City Lights Pictures, 1997), DVD.

³⁵ Mathers, B1.

³⁶ Morgan, S. 1636 Tallahassee Sunland scrapbooks, 1967-1980, Box 2, Folder 2, State Archives of Florida, Tallahassee, FL.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

on abuses at the Sunlands continued to grow.³⁸ Generally, the Sunlands became associated with the worst of abuses that surfaced in the 1960s and 70s, with the Orlando and Tallahassee Hospitals serving as the sole representatives of the movement in ghost tourism books such as *Florida's Ghostly Legends and Haunted Folklore* and *Orlando Ghosts*.³⁹ Such publications were part of a larger, national movement associating mental institutions with hauntings.⁴⁰ Websites devoted to ghost hunting and urban legends propagated a growing mythology surrounding the Sunlands. Administrators were accused of accepting residents, while already at capacity, in order to receive additional state funds. Factual stories from one institution would be transferred to others, usually the Orlando or Tallahassee Hospital. Both institutions were said to have closed in 1983, suddenly and without warning, which was certainly untrue. In these stories, the Sunlands were usually retitled "Sunnylands" or even "Bellevue Hospital."⁴¹ Bloggers and ghost-hunters circulated rumors of a curse on the grounds of the Orlando Sunland. Social media sites claimed that lobotomies were performed at the Tallahassee Sunland and children were kept in pits.⁴² These reports influenced public memory of the Sunlands. After the 1950s, the general public in

³⁸ For example, see: Morris Williams, "Dancing and chocolate with Mikhail," *Lake City Reporter*, April 9, 1990, 7; "Pat Resor," *Lake City Reporter*, December 25, 2005, 5; "Ollie Mae Hardee," *Levy County Journal*, May 3, 2007, 7; "Amos and Alene Philman to celebrate wedding anniversary," *Gilchrist County Journal*, September 18, 2008, 5; "Cornelia Nordan Lockart," *Jackson County Floridian*, May 18, 2010, 7A; "Louise J. Rogers," *Jackson County Floridian*, October 24, 2008, 7A; "Mr. George Washington 'G.W.' Parrish," *Lake City Reporter*, November 4, 2008, 9; "Hazel E. Hart Thomas," *Mayo Free Press*, October 20, 2005, 2A.

³⁹ Greg Jennings, *Florida's Ghostly Legends and Haunted Folklore: Volume One: South and Central Florida* (Sarasota, FL: Pineapple Press, 2005); Amanda Branham, *Orlando Ghosts* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing, 2009).

⁴⁰ For instance, see: Lauren Davis, "Six Abandoned Asylums with Genuinely Chilling Backstories," *io9.com*, June 9, 2013, accessed February 28, 2014, <http://io9.com/six-abandoned-asylums-with-genuinely-chilling-backstories-512154481>.

⁴¹ Bellevue is a controversial mental hospital in New York. It is the oldest in the United States.

⁴² For example, see: "Sunland Mental Hospital," *WeirdUS.com*, accessed August 11, 2012, http://www.weirdus.com/states/florida/abandoned/sunland_hospital/; "Sunland Hospital," *GhostReport.com*, accessed August 11, 2012, <http://www.ghostreport.com/states/florida/sunlandhospital.htm>; "Sunland Hospital Pine Hills: A horror story that still lingers," *PSIresearcher Blog*, accessed January 31, 2014, <http://psiresearcher.wordpress.com/2012/01/27/sunland-hospital-pine-hills-a-horror-story-that-still-lingers/>.

Florida increasingly saw state-funded institutions as unable to provide quality care and “normalization” for residents, and stepped in to fill a perceived void.

Privately-run and non-profit groups formed associations, community care groups, and special programs were supposed to undo the supposed evils of institutionalization and promote a “normal” lifestyle that involved embracing a largely self-determined lifestyle. Acceptance of community care for the intellectually disabled was a complete reversal from previous decades. In the early 20th century, the public saw intellectually disabled individuals as deviant and dangerous.⁴³ They were not encouraged to rejoin the community once they had been institutionalized. This perception had completely changed by the 1960s. Associations formed to protect the rights and abilities of the intellectually disabled person to live in the community. Florida had numerous associations that solicited contributions and memberships through local newspapers.⁴⁴ These groups attempted to facilitate intellectually disabled individuals who were placed in the community and with their families.

By the 1970s, community care centers were located in neighborhoods throughout Florida. In 1977, the state of Florida officially had begun to move toward a system of “private group homes and private homes” because the state government “decided it would be a normal lifestyle.”⁴⁵ Private companies ran the homes, offering intellectually disabled individuals the chance for a “normal” life.⁴⁶ The state and institutions only intervened when clients of these organizations became violent.⁴⁷ These private homes defined and tried to implement a “normal” life for individuals, which included vocational work and a sense of community. Geographer Deborah

⁴³ Keely, 207.

⁴⁴ Susan H. Lincoln, “33rd ‘Lady of the Year’ to be named,” *Perry News-Herald*, April 21, 2006, A5; “For Retarded Gadsden Children,” 3; “Hope Displaces Despair Through Contributions,” *Jax Air News*, October 19, 1967, 2.

⁴⁵ “Mental Health, Peat Mining Top Issues at Legislative Session,” *Brevard County Telegraph*, January 24, 1984, 1.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ “Mental Health, Peat Mining,” 1.

Metze, in an article on these community care centers, describes them as centering on “human relationships” and promoting a sense of “inclusion.”⁴⁸ One Floridian journalist described these facilities as, “smaller homes in ordinary neighborhoods.”⁴⁹ These organizations in Florida were following a national trend. In 1972, the Supreme Court ruled that “people should be served in the least restrictive environment,” usually meaning with private homes or foster families.⁵⁰ These organizations, including the Forrest Park School in Kissimmee, were supposedly cheaper for taxpayers and better for intellectually disabled children.⁵¹ These places gave intellectually disabled individuals a place to live and kept an eye on them as they supposedly made connections and took jobs.⁵² Formerly institutionalized populations were placed in the care of privately-held companies, usually a short distance from the intellectually disabled individual’s familial home.⁵³ Services were placed in close proximity to these homes to encourage relatives to engage with intellectually disabled members.

As support services for the intellectually disabled improved, parents also felt more comfortable taking their intellectually disabled children back into their homes. In the 1950s, the general public thought the intellectually disabled child “disrupted” the family; however, by the early 1960s, parents began to argue that they alone could provide “love, security, kindness, and

⁴⁸ Metzel, 436.

⁴⁹ Karen Olson, “With love: Holiday’s a routine day at Sunland Tallahassee,” S. 1636 Tallahassee Sunland scrapbooks, 1967-1980, Box 2, Folder 2, State Archives of Florida, Tallahassee, FL.

⁵⁰ Metzel, 434.

⁵¹ “Forrest Park School Achievements Told,” *Kissimmee Gazette*, April 6, 1961, 1.

⁵² For more information on community care, see: For more information and perspectives on the spread of community care, see: Allison C. Carey, *On the Margins of Citizenship: Intellectual Disability and Civil Rights in Twentieth-Century America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009); Murray Levine, *The History and Politics of Community Mental Health* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981); Rothman and Rothman, 1984; Andrew Scull, *Decarceration: Community Treatment and the Deviant: A Radical View* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1977).

⁵³ Metzel, 433.

understanding.”⁵⁴ “Development clinics” working with families, began in the 1950s and also gave parents the option of keeping their child at home.⁵⁵ Groups such as the Citrus-Hernando County Association for Retarded Children began offering training programs in the 1960s for intellectually disabled persons of all ages who were living at home.⁵⁶ Parents took advantage of these opportunities, particularly after the 1960s. As intellectually disabled individuals were kept at home, Florida’s schools began to accept them into classes.

According to the proponents of community care, part of a “normal” life was enjoying an education with peers. In the 1960s, parents of intellectually disabled children had already begun to find alternative training and education platforms outside of institutions, including homeschooling and privately-run daycares.⁵⁷ In 1972, the Supreme Court ruled that all intellectually disabled children deserved a free education.⁵⁸ In the 1970s, intellectually disabled children from the institutions were placed in traditional schools, though segregated from the rest of the classrooms. This was in response to the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, which required equal access to education for intellectually disabled children. This required Florida’s state legislature to set aside funds for special teachers, classrooms, clinicians, and counselors.⁵⁹ In 1980, Bradford Middle School established a special education wing, “a permanent facility with good restrooms,” that provided special education classes.⁶⁰ The school also hosted the Special Olympics for children and adults.⁶¹ The programs were expensive and

⁵⁴ “For Retarded Gadsden Children,” *Gadsden County Times*, June 25, 1964, 3.

⁵⁵ Nehring, 372.

⁵⁶ “Retarded Children Association Meets Tonight,” 1. Despite its title, the association assisted intellectually disabled persons of all ages.

⁵⁷ “For Retarded Gadsden Children,” 3.

⁵⁸ Shores, 402.

⁵⁹ “Public Hearing is July 20 on County School Budget,” *Bradford County Telegraph*, July 15, 1982, 2.

⁶⁰ “School Opening Couldn’t Be Smoother,” *Bradford County Telegraph*, August 28, 1980, 1.

⁶¹ “Special Olympics Meeting Today,” *Bradford County Telegraph*, October 9, 1980, 3.

caused funding problems for school districts.⁶² Nevertheless, special education classes continued to expand in Florida.

In addition to classroom learning, vocational training and education were available to adults through local non-profits. These organizations encouraged rehabilitation through creative expression and craftsmanship.⁶³ An adult activity center was created in Port St. Joseph to educate intellectually disabled adults who lacked a basic k-12 education.⁶⁴ These individuals typically learned to create decorations and novelty items sold for profit.⁶⁵ Members of the general public engaged with intellectually disabled adults, attempting to provide them with education and training.

Though many in Florida were willing to assist former Sunland residents, the large number of deinstitutionalized individuals overwhelmed community care organizations and programs. Older intellectually disabled persons were sometimes placed in nursing homes ill-prepared to care for their needs.⁶⁶ Many of the mentally ill lived on the streets, unable to find steady work or housing.⁶⁷ In extreme cases, intellectually disabled persons found themselves in Florida's prisons.⁶⁸ General-purpose hospitals received the largest portion of this new burden, providing basic care to the intellectually disabled in crisis situations.⁶⁹ Even when appropriate facilities were available, former Sunland residents did not always make a full adjustment after spending

⁶² "Casey Says Bradford Short-Changed in State Education Funding," *Bradford County Telegraph*, February 17, 1983, 2.

⁶³ "Bristol native Marilyn Yon named Woman of the Year in the Arts," *Calhoun-Liberty Journal*, April 1, 2008, 5.

⁶⁴ "New Director Named for Adult Activity Center," *The Star*, April 12, 1979, 5.

⁶⁵ "Falling Cones Provide Material for Wreaths by Retarded Adults," *The Star*, October 2, 1980, 8.

⁶⁶ Shorter, 280-281.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 238.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 281.

⁶⁹ Mechanic and Rochefort, 311.

decades in an institution.⁷⁰ In addition, the community services provided for trainable individuals were far from perfect. One parent complained to *The Okeechobee News* that her child, who attended a rehabilitation center, was being treated as “slave labor.”⁷¹ The facility subsequently lost its Medicaid funding. Advocacy groups and community programs sought to provide former Sunlands residents with a “normal” life, however, the amount of individuals needing care was higher than the resources available.

Florida’s legislators occasionally supplemented funding measures and programs for the intellectually disabled living in the community. In the 1970s, the state government implemented a program to help intellectually disabled juvenile offenders; however, it proved to be ineffectual.⁷² The vast majority – over ninety percent – of the young men in the program were African-American.⁷³ Despite continuing budget cuts, Florida’s Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services continued to push normalization services so the “disabled person” could “live as closely as possible” with “the mainstream of society.”⁷⁴ A 1980s plan valiantly attempted to place intellectually disabled persons in employment and provide services, though government documents admitted they had no funding for most of the programs that were desperately needed.⁷⁵ By the 1990s, Florida’s Developmental Services offered “family respites,” assistance in finding employment and subsidies for living expenses.⁷⁶ Following the welfare cuts of the 1980s, the basic requirements of community care – support the mentally ill through education

⁷⁰ Nancy Kennedy, “Pauline Campbell: A woman who made people smile,” *Clay County Crescent*, February 25, 2008, 1.

⁷¹ Eric Kopp, “Clients leaving rehab facility,” *Okeechobee News*, October 27, 2013, 9.

⁷² State of Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, “Evaluation of the ARK Program for Retarded Offenders,” State of Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, Youth Services Program Planning Coordination Unit, 1980, 1.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁷⁴ Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, “Florida Development Disabilities State Plan: 1987-1989,” Florida Developmental Disabilities Planning Council, ii; 1.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 40; 71-72.

⁷⁶ Florida Developmental Services, “Informational Pamphlet,” Florida Department of State, 1993.

and normalization – were not being met for the majority of former residents of institutions.

Nevertheless, the paternalistic spirit of community care continued to drive residents away from institutions, even when programs and residences were full.

The deinstitutionalization movement began in the 1960s and community care organizations soon became the preferred option for intellectually disabled persons. Community association and organizations claimed the Sunlands were unfit to properly care for residents, and took charge of their well-being, with minimal assistance from the state government. Neglect and deterioration propelled this paternalistic sentiment, and controversy surrounding the institutions continued to grow. The demolition of the Sunland Hospital in Orlando illustrated the variety of perspectives and opinions that still existed on the institutions. Journalists and community members increasingly vilified the Sunlands in public debates, leading to new non-profits to help former residents find a “normal life.” By the 1980s, however, the failures of community care became increasingly more dramatic as funding was cut. Today, ghost hunters and community members are continuing this conversation on blogs and online discussion forums. The Sunland Hospitals and Training Centers are still seen as horrific examples of care for the intellectually disabled. It remains to be seen whether community care, with its problems and failures, will also come to represent a low point in the history of the intellectually disabled.

CONCLUSION

Sunland administrators and community care advocates similarly operated under paternalistic assumptions that they could provide the best life for the intellectually disabled, though the ideas of “the best life” were dramatically different. The Sunland training centers and hospitals attempted to step into a parental role, providing residents with a normal life and childhood with the institution as a surrogate parent. In the 1960s and 70s, social groups, special associations, and activists saw themselves as these “children’s” protectors. When institutions’ failures became well-known, community care organizations stepped in to provide training, education, and “families” for the intellectually disabled. Both the Sunlands and the community groups protesting them were operating under paternalist assumptions. This patronizing attitude attempted to judge the preferences of the intellectually disabled apart from these individual’s input.¹ Both the institutions and the deinstitutionalization movements saw Sunland “children” as requiring their assistance to lead a “normal life,” though their definitions of “normalcy” and methods for accomplishing this were different.

The state of Florida formed and operated the Gainesville Training Center under the paternalistic assumption that intellectually disabled persons were “children” within the institution’s “family.” 1950s ideals of the family and childhood unit informed this assumption. The Sunlands were not unique in this regard, as psychiatrists and the general public frequently described the intellectually disabled as “children who never grew.”² Residents who were literally children received the most attention, including special programs and training. Administrators

¹ Robert E. Goodin, “Democracy, Preferences and Paternalism,” *Policy Science* 26, no. 3 (1993): 232.

² For example, see: Buck, 3; The Committee on Nomenclature and Statistics of the American Psychiatric Association, 22.

described all Sunland “children” as “precious jewels,” “childish,” and “impish.”³ They were portrayed as asexual, and protective measures were employed to ensure residents did not engage in sex or reproduction. One journalist said of Sunland residents: “Childhood lasts from infancy to middle age.”⁴ The institution presided over these “children” paternalistically, providing a family unit in a decade when parents frequently gave up the care of their intellectually disabled offspring. Sunland “parenting” provided discipline, activities, and training to prepare residents for their future “roles” in society. An institutional language invoked the parent-child relationship. A government report described attendants as “surrogate mothers and fathers” and administrators encouraged Sunland employees to act and behave like a family.⁵ These individuals trained residents for the “roles” and vocations they would experience outside the institution, which supervisors based on gender and race. The “family unit” Sunland administrators envisioned was generally white, resigning African-American residents to menial “training” sessions and inferior living facilities. The treatment black residents and employees received at the Sunlands illustrates the Sunland program’s patronizing elements. The training center constructed and treated residents as “children,” with the institution as the paternalistic figure, accommodating a “normal childhood.”

The Gainesville’s Sunland Training Center’s failure to measure up to their own standards led to a concerned community uniting in a new paternalistic movement. The Sunlands came under public scrutiny as liberal reformers of the 1960s and 1970s argued the community promoted “normalization over deinstitutionalization” for institutionalized persons.⁶ The period’s numerous social movements led to a questioning of authority and government establishments. Litigators,

³ Luis, “Nursery Training”; “Precious Jewels.”

⁴ Eby, 3.

⁵ Lundgren, *Florida Sunland Training Center*, 14, 18.

⁶ “Mental Health, Peat Mining,” 1.

advocates, and concerned community members feared that the intellectually disabled were unable to experience a “normal life” inside of institutions, particularly since the term also included a degree of self-determination. Shocking exposés of understaffed institutions and accusations of abuse added to this concern. Before 1960, the public was generally content to allow institutions to function as their administrations saw fit. By the mid-1960s, social clubs, sororities, and fraternities were donating money, gifts, and time to the Sunlands. Tours and special presentations increased the public’s awareness of the institutions’ many needs. African-American and university newspapers reported on abuse cases in the Gainesville and Miami Sunland Training Centers. In the 1970s, articles and editorials condemned the dilapidated state of buildings and neglectful practices at the Orlando and Tallahassee Hospitals. When the Sunlands appeared to have failed, these groups attempted to take charge of residents’ care. The public paternalistically portrayed Sunland each Sunland resident as “somebody’s child,” in need of support and even rescue.⁷ In discussing these individuals, associations and groups saw them as helpless victims of an incompetent, and even controlling, system.

As Sunland Training Centers and Hospitals closed or scaled back operations, community organizations sought to provide residents with the “normal life” that the Sunlands had supposedly taken away. In the 1960s and 1970s, activists preferred for community care as a more “humane” option for the intellectually disabled.⁸ In the 1980s and 1990s, these Floridians were given the chance to see this approach in action. The deinstitutionalization movement caused a major drop in patient numbers inside mental institutions. Articles written on the Sunlands and public debates over the tearing down of the hospital locations informed the perspective that

⁷ Summers, 5.

⁸ “Don’t Close Sunlands,” B4.

former residents were “helpless children,” whom the Sunlands had victimized. Reports from former residents themselves contributed to this perspective. The national ghost-hunting movement added to the public’s ill-will towards the institutions, as they played up the abuses at the Sunlands without offering conflicting testimony. This perspective led to a public interest in promoting community care centers, associations, and other alternatives to institutionalization. Biological and foster parents also began to feel comfortable raising an intellectually disabled child at home, since social services were now more readily available. In addition, the assumption that communities should take care of children contributed to families feeling more comfortable with an intellectually disabled member. Private organization’s involvement changed the way the general public treated the intellectually disabled, though they were still seen as helpless, and requiring benevolent care.

This paternalistic movement toward community care was not without complications. Opportunities for training, education, and care were often scarce compared to the demand. State and federal governments cut funding for programs in the 1980s and 1990s. Today, according to one report, “more than 20,000 intellectually disabled are on state waiting lists for services.”⁹ Demand has overwhelmed Florida’s nonprofit organizations. Intellectually disabled felons’ controversial executions have brought attention to Florida’s failures in caring for the intellectually disabled. The public’s horror at the Sunland institutions, however, has not abated. This work could provide insights into the current debate over services for the intellectually disabled.

⁹ “Florida Intellectually Disabled Get Funding Help,” WCTV, June 19, 2013, accessed February 27, 2014, <http://www.wctv.tv/home/headlines/Florida-Intellectually-Disabled-Get-Funding-Help--212240361.html>.

There are still many other mental institutions in Florida from this period that also merit discussion. Historians should conduct further into the records of specific institutions, if these ever become accessible. This work has focused primarily on the Sunland Hospitals in Orlando and Tallahassee and the Sunland Training Centers in Gainesville and Miami, due to the nature of sources now open for public research. In coming years, as more records become available, the training centers in Marianna and Ft. Myers could be utilized for a significant study. The observation of these institutions could inform current discussions of the intellectually disabled in Florida.

In addition, more concentrated work needs to be done in specific areas briefly mentioned in this work. The study of gender roles and race within the institution and local volunteer groups would yield rich results. The study of Florida's women's groups and social clubs, in particular, requires further research. Women in these organizations navigated 1950s and 1960s social norms while promoting education and activism. Male journalist's patronizing perspective contrasts sharply with the significance these women placed on their activities. Finally, African-American volunteers' growing involvement at the Sunlands, particularly the Tallahassee Hospital, raises significant questions on community activism and changing demographics in central Florida's major urban areas.

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