Can I tell you, my story? A critical hermeneutic inquiry into the life narratives of Ugandan children living within an orphanage in Kampala

Elle Bunyan

School of Psychology, Sociology and Education, Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh, Scotland

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ABSTRACT

The detrimental impact of childcare institutions (CCIs), or orphanages, is well known. Despite deinstitutionalisation strategies in Uganda, CCIs remain the predominant intervention method employed by Western actors responding to the needs of children there. Reforming this approach requires contextualised critical understandings of the children's experiences and perspectives of their institutionalisation, to reduce the misidentification and misappropriation of children as orphans. Therefore, operationalising the theoretical lens of Bourdieu within critical hermeneutic analyses, this article draws upon the narratives of 30 children living within an orphanage in Kampala, to enhance critical understandings of their experiences, perspectives, and behaviours throughout transition from home to an orphanage, via the streets of Kampala, illuminating how and why they come to be living there. Guided by Ricœur's critical hermeneutic approach, the study found that poverty drives children to the streets in search of economic opportunity and organisations perceived to offer access to basic services of which they are deprived, such as education. Education, as a form of cultural capital, is understood amongst participants as ensuring an elevated position within society, or a means of overcoming poverty. Within this transition from home to the orphanage, whilst on the streets, socially acquired dispositions and harmful stereotypes contribute to the manifestation of the 'street kid' construct, for which the children are marginalised, and experience physical and sexual abuse. Girls are most at risk, whereby gender inequality contributes to their exploitation and the normalisation of rape. However, for the children entry into a CCI from the streets means relinquishing agency and social capital that is integral to them, often.

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Introduction

One of a series, this article presents the findings of a critical hermeneutic study pertaining to the experiences and perspectives of 30 children who have transitioned from home to orphanage, via the streets of Kampala, Uganda. Discussed in depth in Bunyan (2021a), the researcher has worked alongside these children for a decade. In Uganda, the growth of orphanages, or childcare institutions (CCIs) has been exponential in recent years, but most are unlicensed, raising concerns about child protection accountability (Mutenyo et al., 2020). The perpetuation of this approach has been problematised as harmful to the children on an individual level in terms of health and development (Ayaya et al., 2021; Berens & Nelson, 2015; Nelson, 2007; Nsabimana, 2016; Smyke et al., 2007; van IJzendoorn et al., 2020; Zeanah et al., 2005), and as detrimental to long term, sustainable, child protection efforts, underpinned by the 1989 United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and indigenous response initiatives (Cheney & Rotabi, 2015; De Wet, 2016; Mutenyio et al., 2020; Riley, 2012; Vogt et al., 2016). The UNCRC (1989) was ratified in Uganda in 1990, and – on paper – underpins national child protection policies and frameworks established by the Ugandan Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MoGLSD), such as The National Orphan and Vulnerable Children Policy ([NOP] MoGLSD, 2011) and the National Alternative Care Framework ([NACF] MoGLSD, 2012).

Despite knowledge – albeit limited within the Ugandan context – of the inefficacy and detrimental impact of CCIs, and consequent deinstitutionalisation strategies embedded within the NOP (MoGLSD, 2011) and NACF (MoGLSD, 2012), predominantly Western

* Corresponding author. ORCID ID: 0000-0002-0356-3779

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actors have continued to establish CCIs (Cheney & Rotabi, 2015; Mutenyo, 2020; Riley, 2012). Meanwhile, the number of children on the streets has reportedly continued to rise across all major towns in Uganda, as has the prevalence of abuse, violence and rape inflicted upon children, increasing particularly throughout the Covid-19 Pandemic (Kakuru et al., 2019; Sserwanja et al., 2021; UNICEF, 2019). Moreover, deprivation that restricts access to basic services such as healthcare and education, continues to affect the lives of children, particularly girls (Mulumba et al., 2021; Walakira et al., 2014; UNICEF, 2019).

Authoritative figures that *should* ensure children's protection – such as the police – criminalise the children, and are often perpetrators of physical and sexual abuse (Kawala et al., 2020; Sserwanja et al., 2021; Walakira, Ddumba, et al., 2014). Although such approaches are diametrically opposite of those employed by Western funded CCI actors overall, this article contends that both contribute to the reproduction and reinforcement of inequality for children facing poverty in Uganda. Further, this piece takes the position that this is a result of a lack of critical understandings of the children's experiences, how they shape their actions, thoughts, expectations and future projections, and manifest into longstanding dispositions associated with a 'street kid' stereotype. This lack of critical awareness is explicable by the absence of the children's own descriptions and perspectives of their transition from home to an orphanage within academic literature. Cultivating this awareness begins with engaging critically with the life stories of the children themselves, to develop the knowledge base by which to inform the policies and practices of those engaging with vulnerable families and children on the streets, particularly Western actors – such as Missionaries and volunteers. Without this knowledge base, the *oppressive* and *repressive* approaches will continue unabated. Whereas, illuminating and problematising the interrelationships between children's experiences and their negotiation of their social spaces, wherein the tensions between agency and structures manifest, could pave the way for reform. Consequently, policy makers, practitioners, humanitarian, and missionary actors involved in the provision of childcare, could amend their approaches to ensure children's rights are upheld, and in so doing, more efficaciously facilitate their health and wellbeing. Therefore, to contribute to this process, this article presents the findings of a critical hermeneutic study of the life story narratives of 30 children living within an orphanage in Kampala, who have formerly lived on the streets. A hermeneutic approach demands dynamism, and comfort with ambiguity to facilitate a process of multiple contextualisation. In promoting the (re)active expansion of the study scope in this way, critical hermeneutics calls for the critical examination of emergent issues and themes as they arise, within an ever expanding interpretive horizon, viewing inquiry as a dialectical conversation (Kinsella, 2006; Klein & Myers, 1999; Ricœur, 1984). In so doing, Bourdieu's (1980) theory of Habitus emerged as a useful theoretical framework by which to illuminate the complex relationships between the children's experiences, perspectives and dispositions, and the reproduction or reinforcement of their marginalised, disenfranchised social conditions. In aiming to elucidate this process and its repercussions, this article considers the following questions: From the perspectives of children, how and why do they transition into an orphanage? How can the experiences of children in transition to an orphanage be understood, from their perspective? To what extent are the experiences of the children shaped by their social context, and how do socially derived dispositions shape the children's lives? The study context, researcher's situated ontology, and methodology are discussed in depth elsewhere by the researcher (Bunyan 2021a; 2021b). However, the following article provides an overview of the situation of separated and institutionalised children in Uganda within the subsequent literature review, including relevant policies and frameworks. The purpose of this, is to allow an understanding of the prevalence, role, and impact of orphanages within Ugandan society, and their effect on the lives of children there. Next, to introduce the theoretical lens employed within the study, Bourdieu's theories of Habitus (1984) and Capital (1986) are discussed. This is followed by an overview of the methodology, methods, and analytical process constituting the broader study in which children's narratives were elicited before the findings are presented. To foreground the children's words, the findings present extracts from the children's narratives, as opposed to those from adult interviews, to explain and critically discuss the themes pertaining to experiences of transition from home to an orphanage.

The themes presented following the chronology of the children's transition, as follows: 'From home to the streets'; familial adversity, and the *mzungu* phenomenon. Followed by: 'Streetlife'; the Street Kid construct, the dual oppression of women, and self-sustenance. And finally: 'From the Streets to the Orphanage'; relinquishing agency. Explanations and critical understandings of the meanings of themes are conveyed within an amalgamated results and discussion, reflecting Ricœur's (1984) interpretative process. Finally, the article concludes that despite current policies aligned with the UNCRC (1989), children facing poverty are severely disenfranchised, the extent of which increasing as they are separated from family within transition from home to a CCI, via the streets of Kampala. Children are not institutionalised through a lack of parental or familial care, or a desire to live within an orphanage, but because of the deprivation caused by poverty, restricting access to education and basic services. Contrasted by beliefs and social norms surrounding CCIs, children go to the streets as means of navigating poverty, wherein socialised dispositions and stereotypes contribute to their experiences of physical and sexual abuse, exploitation, and disempowerment. Thus, extensive enhancement of dialogue is required between policy makers, practitioners, professionals, humanitarian, and missionary actors involved in the provision and reform of children's care in Uganda.

Literature Review

The Situation of Institutionalised Children in Uganda

Whilst 'childhood' should not be considered a universally understood construct due to the different conceptualisations arising within different cultural contexts, both the UN and Uganda define a child as anyone below the age of 18 in legislation and policy (MoGLSD, 2011). Globally, there are an estimated 2.7 million children aged 0–17 living in orphanages, also known as childcare institutions

(CCIs), of which an estimated 286,000 are within eastern and southern Africa (Petrowski et al., 2017). However, it is impossible to gather accurate figures due to the prevalence of unlicensed orphanages and unregistered births, in addition to a lack of recent published data. This is particularly the case in Uganda (East Africa), where despite legal requisites concerning licensing, monitoring and evaluation of CCIs, most recent figures suggest that only 70 of an estimated 800 are legal and accounted for, 800 reportedly housing around 15000 children (Milligan, 2016; MoGLSD, 2012; Mutenyo et al., 2020). CCIs were a foreign concept to Uganda, introduced by the British during Colonialism. Today, while their number continues to rise, most do not identify as such, operating instead as non-government organisations (NGOs), faith-based or religious-based organisations (FBOs), schools, babies' homes, or 'children's villages' (Mutenyo et al., 2020).

Within acute crisis, disaster response contexts, or instances wherein children face abuse at home, CCIs may be necessary, unavoidable, and conducive to children's health and wellbeing in the short-term. For example, evidence from sub-Saharan Africa along with other Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs), has suggested that children in CCIs outcome measures of health and wellbeing were approximately equal to those within family-based environments (Atwoli et al., 2014; Braitstein et al., 2013; Embleton et al., 2014, 2017; Gray, 2015; Huynh et al., 2019; Whetten et al., 2009). However, as Huynh et al (2019) found, the benefits of institutionalisation are dependent on the quality of care provided, concluding from the study across five LMICs that child psychological wellbeing was correlated with quality of care received regardless of whether it was family-based or institutional. That said, arguments in support of CCIs are countered by an overwhelming majority of evidence suggesting the detrimental costs of institutionalisation to children's health and development. For example, studies have correlated institutional care with impaired cognitive development, physical growth, social, emotional, and psychosocial health deficits (Mutenyo et al., 2020; Nelson, 2007; Nsabimana, 2016; Smyke et al., 2007; van IJzendoorn et al., 2020; Zeanah et al., 2005). Moreover, a 2017 systematic review of nine studies (four covering sub-Saharan African countries) conducted between 2011 and 2015, concluded that abuse was pervasive in institutional care (Ayaya et al., 2021).

Contrary to common misconceptions, most children within orphanages in sub-Saharan Africa are not orphans (Nsabimana, 2016; Nsabimana et al., 2019). Whilst the term is contested, orphans are defined by UNICEF (2017) as those who have lost one (single orphan) or both (double orphan) parents, a definition adopted within Ugandan childcare policy (MOGLSD, 2012). However, most children within orphanages in Uganda have living, contactable parents, and for those who are orphaned or separated, as is traditional there, around 90% are cared for by extended families and communities (Cheney & Rotabi, 2015; Milligan, 2016). While not a homogenous group, the nexus between those with living families becoming separated from them and institutionalised is multidimensional, comprised of push and pull factors (Mann, 2015; Milligan, 2016; Walakira et al., 2014; 2015). For example, the predominant push factor in sub-Saharan Africa is poverty, which presents the multidimensional implications of social, cultural and political deprivation (Mann, 2015; Mutenyo et al., 2020; Okello, 2019; Riley, 2012; Walakira et al., 2017; Walakira, Ochen, et al., 2014). Further push factors towards orphanages in Uganda include, family breakdown, abuse, neglect, illness, disability and living on the streets (Morantz et al., 2013; Walakira et al., 2017; Walakira, Ochen, et al., 2014).

Exploitation and Misappropriation

However, concerns have been raised for institutionalised children in light of evidence suggesting that they are knowingly or unknowingly exploited as "commodities within a growing industry" in which establishing and operating a CCI is a lucrative business (Brubacher et al., 2021; Csáky 2009 p. 12; De Wet, 2016; Lyneham & Facchini, 2019; Riley, 2012). This model is funded by Western donors, predominantly North American Church affiliations, with evidence suggesting that those causing the most concern – Pentecostal, Evangelical and other FBOs – account for 80% of CCIs in Uganda (Milligan, 2016). Combined with a promise of income from donors, the growth of this model is attributed a perception that the more children an institution 'supports', the more income they will receive from foreign churches or sponsors (Chaitkin et al., 2017; Csáky 2009; De Wet, 2016; Milligan, 2016). This often leads to an active or forcible recruitment of children into orphanages directly from impoverished families (Chaitkin et al., 2017; Kakura et al., 2019). Additionally, combined with a lack of access to information surrounding the detrimental impact of institutionalisation, evidence suggests that due to material poverty, parents/caregivers often feel they had no choice but to place their children within orphanages perceived to offer financial sponsorship (Chaitkin et al., 2017; De Wet 2016; Milligan 2016; Walakira et al., 2015). Thus, despite their cost inefficiency, and lack of contribution to legitimate or local child protection improvement efforts, a narrative of "orphan rescue" is perpetuated for and by donors, which drives this industry (Cheney & Rotabi, 2015). While well-meaning international actors may assume they contributing to the wellbeing and protection of children in Uganda, Riley (2012) found that 97.5% of CCIs have no child protection policies or social work capacity involved, 60% had insufficient administration of children's information and records, and overall, the standard of care and protection was poor, to very poor in the majority. Rather, studies suggest that the notion of "orphan rescue" associated with the proliferation of CCIs, is predominantly based on gospel, or religious centred approach adhering to a missionary agenda, as opposed to national or international rights-based policy or legislation (Cheney & Rotabi, 2015; De Wet, 2016; Milligan, 2016). Overall, the misappropriation of the term 'orphan', associated rescue narrative, and the perceived economic benefits of establishing an orphanage could, in part, account for their growth in numbers, and continued separation of children from families.

Overall, considering factors pertaining to the separation of children from their families in sub-Saharan Africa is important because such children are subsequently disproportionately vulnerable to experiencing physical and/or sexual abuse compared, with non-separated children (Ayaya et al., 2021; Kidman & Palermo, 2016; Walakira et al., 2017). This is within the geographical region

among those that children, and particularly adolescent girls experience the highest rates of physical and sexual abuse globally (Selengia, 2020; World Health Organisation, 2020). In Uganda, despite the exponential increase in CCIs, figures pertaining to children experiencing such violence has continued to increase, with rape particularly acknowledged by UNICEF (2019) as rising by 30% from 7,360 reported cases in 2009 to 9,588 in 2013, figures that are likely understated. Sexual abuse is the most common form of violence, with gender representing a major risk factor. Every day, around 26 girls are defiled, and 40.4% of women are married before the age of 18 (UNICEF, 2019). Further, with disparities in access sexual healthcare and at least 78% of healthcare provided by FBOs, among adolescents aged 10-19 years mortality due to HIV/AIDS has doubled (Mulumba, 2021; UNICEF, 2019). This makes HIV related deaths the second leading cause of death amongst adolescents, following another preventable, and treatable condition; Malaria (UNICEF, 2019).

Therefore overall, it is fair to surmise that the exponential increase in CCIs has not contributed to the overall health and wellbeing of children in Uganda, nor furthered efforts to ensure their rights and protection.

National Policies and Legislation

In recognition of the inefficacy and detrimental impact of CCIs, Uganda has sought deinstitutionalisation measures in line within international strategies and aligning with traditional methods of extended family and community care. Referring to the first deinstitutionalisation strategy, the UN (2010) contend that, efforts should primarily be directed to enabling children to remain with parents or relatives, through enhancing family support services and community capacity building. The need to apply a child-focussed lens is also prioritised, to examine the contextual factors that increase a child's vulnerability, such as economic, social, health, educational, and cultural factors (Csáky 2009). Based on these principles, Uganda therefore implemented the NOP and NACF (MOGLSD, 2011; 2012), in line with the UN Alternative Care Guidelines, and Article 20(3) of the UNCRC (1989), that emphasise institutional care as the *last* resort. Both the NOP and NACF comprise components of Uganda's child protection strategy, which – on paper – foreground the rights of children and their families, enshrined within the UNCRC (1989). The 54 articles of UNRC (1989) stipulate the civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights of *all* children, falling under four general principles; non-discrimination (article 2), best interests of the child (article 3), right to life survival and development (article 6) and right to be heard (article 12). Thus, policies, frameworks, and interventions, such as the NACF and NOP, underpinned by the UNCRC aim to uphold the principles of the convention, ensuring the rights of all children to protection across all domains. Poignantly, rights-based approaches emphasise the role of all children as agents in determining their own situations and choices, highlighting the need to foreground the children's voices and understand their choices within, and about, *their* lives within their social context (Consortium for street children, 2017). However, there is a dearth of literature that does so within the Ugandan context, leaving space for the continued misidentification and misappropriation of children and consequent perpetuation of the CCI model, deemed harmful to children's health and development. Thus, for more effective deinstitutionalisation and implementation of rights-based policy *in practice*, these processes must begin with comprehensive understandings of children's lives and experiences pertaining to their institutionalisation, from their own words.

Summary

Therefore, elicited through their narratives, the following study foregrounds the stories of children concerning their experiences throughout transition from home to an orphanage, via the streets of Kampala. As illustrated above, Ugandan children are growing up in a context in which there are multiple and pervasive forms of injustice, inequality, and disenfranchisement. Children separated from families, those on the streets, women and girls are most at risk of violence and exploitation, however, the current predominant response – CCIs – are detrimental, and ineffective in enhancing children's rights, protection, and wellbeing. Despite this knowledge, such children's own accounts of why and how they come to living within a CCI are omitted within academic literature, disregarding the children's voices and agency, and consequently, leaving space for further misunderstanding, misidentification, and misrepresentation. As a result, both policy makers and most importantly, those intervening in children's lives directly, lack the knowledge base by which to *inform*, and *reform*, their approaches. Thus, addressing this situation requires not only a qualitative approach that, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2005) inherently seeks social justice, but the criticality by which to scrutinise the social context and pervasive social dispositions that are reinforced and challenged by existing power relations and structures. As Moncrieffe (2007, 2009a, 2009b) contends, Bourdieu's (1980) theory of Habitus provides a useful theoretical lens by which to gain such contextualised critical understandings of the experiences, and social conditions, of marginalised children.

Theory: Habitus

Within the current study, exploring the children's positioning in, and negotiation of social spaces in which they engage, such as in street settings, allows understandings of the meanings of their experiences, relevant to policy makers and those interacting with the children. Consequently, such stakeholders may be better informed in reforming interventions to uphold children's rights and protection, and thus, facilitate health and wellbeing. Therefore, Habitus (Bourdieu, 1984) complemented the critical hermeneutic methodology in illuminating, and making sense of, the systems of power that emerged within the application of Ricœur's approach. As such, the following provides an overview of Habitus (Bourdieu, 1984), before elucidating how this theoretical frame was engaged methodologically.

Bourdieu perceived power as culturally and symbolically created, perpetually reified through an interplay between agency and structure. Agency refers one's thoughts and actions that express their individual power to shape their experiences and life trajectories. Whereas, structure pertains to the complex, interconnected social forces, relationships, and institutions, that collaboratively influence people's thoughts, behaviours, choices and thus, experiences. The resulting social norms, that influence actions, perspectives and future projections, are conceptualised within Bourdieu's theory of Habitus (1984), which describes the way these resulting socialised tendencies and dispositions shape behaviour, thoughts and feelings (Navarro, 2006). Thus, Habitus is produced through social, as opposed to individual processes, that cause enduring but transferrable, and adaptable, patterns of thought and behaviour, of which its origins can extend back into distant history (Navarro, 2006). Moreover, Habitus is produced by the interplay *between* agency and structure over time, moulded by past experiences and historical power relations which in turn, shape current practices and experiences, and people's understandings and perspectives of them (Bourdieu, 1984; Navarro, 2006; Moncrieffe, 2007). As such, Habitus is largely unconscious, produced and reproduced "without any deliberate pursuit of coherence... without any conscious concentration" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 170).

The social and institutional spaces in which Habitus is manifested, are conceptualised as 'fields', within which, forms of capital beyond the economic constitute a central role in shaping society. 'Fields' refer to the structures or networks of relationships that may be institutional, educational, religious, cultural, or sub-cultural, for example, marginalised populations, within a broader cultural context. Capital may be transferred across fields, and may be social, cultural, or symbolic, each of which influence the power relations and hierarchy within society (Bourdieu, 1986; Navarro, 2006). Bourdieu describes social capital as the social connections established by an individual, or: *the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition* (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 119). Whereas cultural capital has three distinct - but often interlinked - forms. Institutionalised cultural capital refers to the knowledge and credentials, such as academic record, that are perceived to ensure one's place within society. Also signifying elevated position in society; objectified and embodied cultural capital refer to cultural possessions and mannerisms or dialect, respectively. To Bourdieu (1986), cultural capital plays the integral role in the manifestation and maintenance of domination and marginalisation, that both creates and hides causes of inequality, and thus unjust social order. This '*social order is progressively inscribed in people's minds*' through '*cultural products*', which includes health and education systems, judgements, beliefs and values, strategies of classification and the day-to-day activities and roles within life (Bourdieu, 1986, p.471). To Bourdieu (1986, p.141) The unconscious acceptance of the hierarchy created through systems of cultural capital within a field - in which resulting dispositions are reproduced, - manifests '*a sense of one's place*', and consequently, self-exclusionary behaviour. However, as Moncrieffe (2007), powerfully illustrates, people experience and respond to power in different ways, dependent on context (field), for example their portrayal of a Ugandan Woman MP who expresses her power at work but remains submissive to the husband at home. Therefore, Bourdieu's (1984) Habitus, can also be operationalised to explore, and account for, instances of acceptance of domination in one field, while resistance is expressed within another (Moncrieffe, 2007; 2009a; 2009b).

By providing a means of in-depth exploration into the processes that generate and maintain inequality and marginalisation, Habitus provided a useful, complimentary theoretical frame within the critical hermeneutic research design, by which to illuminate the hidden meanings of children's understandings of their experiences of transition into life within the orphanage. Moreover, by inviting identification and elucidation of the complex nuances of these processes and resulting products of marginalisation, Habitus allows insight into the extent to which these understandings are socially acquired, and their implications to the children's actions, and perspectives of self and others. Although the Ricœur (1976, 1984) inspired philosophical and methodological framework is discussed in-depth in Bunyan (2021b), particularly pertaining to children's narratives, the following provides an overview of the overall study methods, procedures, and analysis, in order to situate the findings.

Research Method

This study employed a novel and innovative research strategy to accommodate the ways in which the children already communicated with the researcher, as is detailed below, and to maintain flexibility and adaptability in order to explore a broad range of issues should they arise. As such, traditionally recognised methods validated within the Ugandan context - freelist and key informant interviewing - were combined with children's life storytelling, based on the researcher's previous experiences with them. Throughout this time prior to the study, the children had chosen to tell the researcher their stories, of their own volition. Additional in-depth interviews with Ugandan orphanage directors, and a broad range of local community members, unaffiliated with the orphanage supplemented the children's interviews, to explore a diverse range of local perspectives. These methods were complimented by long term observation and ongoing dialogue with the children and community, and systematic autoethnography, to enhance critical reflection (see Bunyan, 2021a). However, the focus of the study, and principal source of data, is the children's narratives. Thus, in seeking to foreground their stories, it is their extracts that are presented within this article, as opposed to those of adults. Purposive, opportunistic sampling was used throughout, leading to a sample comprised of 30 children between the ages of 10-17, representing those present full time within the orphanage during the researcher's formal fieldwork, over a duration of three months. 15 children identifying as Male, and 15 as Female participated following attainment of both verbal and written consent, from both the participant and orphanage caregiver. However, caregivers were unaware of which children took part unless children chose to tell them, with caregiver secondary consent anonymised.

Children's interviews

Children's interviews were carried out individually and recorded via dictaphone. As discussed in Bunyan (2021a) having established trusting relationships with the participants through the reciprocal sharing of stories and issues over several years on a one-to-one basis, children's interviews began by asking: "Tell me your story please". Other than asking the children whether there was anything they would like to add once they had concluded their narrative, no further questions or probes were used, allowing the participants the opportunity for a free narrative, as suggested by Ricœur (1984). This allowed a broad scope of enquiry, rather than limiting narratives to a pre-set criterion. Once the participant indicated they had finished 'telling their story', the freelist interview began. Freelisting is widely employed within cross-cultural research, including in the Ugandan context, as a qualitative method of identifying and exploring local understandings of issues and phenomena, relating to psychosocial wellbeing (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2019). The purposes of the Freelisting component of the children's interviews were threefold. Firstly, to obtain a list of the children's perceived problems with descriptions of each; secondly, to identify key informants who would be knowledgeable on such problems, and thirdly, to obtain a list of the daily tasks/activities of the children. Within free listing, the purpose of asking a broad question that leaves scope for a wide range of responses was to allow an understanding of what the participants perceive to be problems for this population, rather than impose a western construct of what could constitute a problem (Bolton & Tang, 2002). This process is also implemented as the first stage of the DIME approach to developing or reforming interventions among populations in low-income countries that seek facilitate health and wellbeing.

Although the researcher has a basic grasp of the children's local language (Luganda), all interviews were conducted in English for two main reasons. Firstly, because the children use English to informally communicate with the researcher and in school, and secondly, to ensure the children's comfort, whereby the introduction of an interpreter to a situation in which they were likely to discuss highly sensitive personal experiences was inappropriate (Applied Mental Health Research Group, 2013).

Adults Interviews

Adult interviews were comprised of three participant groups; orphanage caregivers (n=2), who are also the directors, having founded the organisation as former street children; a diverse range of local community members unaffiliated with the orphanage (n=12); and key informants, identified by the children (n=2). All interviews began by asking participants what they believed to be the problems for children in their area (in and around Kampala), facilitating an open narrative for participants to discuss the issues facing children at length, with probes used where necessary to explicate further details. Subsequently, key informant and local community member interviews focussed on emergent themes and issues from children's interviews, and factors identified by the children as 'problems'. Whereas interviews with orphanage directors focussed specifically on the children within their care, how and why they came to be there, issues faced now, how such issues are addressed, and perceived needs, including specific case examples. The purpose of adult interviews was to gain a broad understanding of the way issues affecting the lives of children are locally understood and approached amongst the community, as well as the causes for child institutionalisation from the perspectives of those who provide their care. Additional purposes included to explore any differences between the perspectives of adults, and those of the children, and to inform future studies which intend to implement reformed child support strategies. Thus, whilst adult interviews informed this study in providing a broad understanding of the children's social context, they are not the focus within the following findings section. Rather, they contributed to expansion of the interpretive horizon as described by Ricœur (1984), within the following analytical process.

Data Analysis

All data were subject to critical hermeneutic analysis, underpinned by Ricœur's theory of interpretation, and facilitated by reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2019). As described in depth in Bunyan (2021b), for the children's life-stories, Ricœur's (1991) Three-Fold Mimesis served as the philosophical *and* methodological approach to interpretation and understanding. Ricœur's narrative approach is underpinned by his theory of interpretation (Ricœur, 1984), which forms the analytical framework of the overall study. Like others who have employed this approach as a method of analysis within the social and health sciences, this process comprised iterative stages, which involve moving back and forwards, inwards and outwards between each stage, demonstrating the circular and never-ending nature of interpretation and understanding (Ricœur, 1984).

This three-step process was initiated by verbatim transcription and thorough reading of all interview data, to allow naïve interpretations for each interview, and preliminary understandings of the overall data set. Subsequently, informed by Ricœur's (1984, 1991) narrative and interpretive theory, a structural analysis was then implemented. As others have done in recognition of the similitude between the critical hermeneutic structural analysis and thematic analysis (Tan et al., 2009; Luborsky, 1994), transcripts were then thematically analysed. For clarity and coherence, thematic analysis was guided by Braune and Clarke's (2014; 2019) reflexive thematic analysis, which allowed the imposition of Ricœur's critical hermeneutic framework upon the analytical process. Broadly, this involved the division of texts into units (themes), which were described regarding content and possible meaning (Ricœur, 1991). Moving back and forth within and across texts, the structural analysis produced the logic of each text, and elucidated the data in terms of the interdependent relations between its parts, and the whole. Finally, critical understandings were achieved through a process of critical reflection, including the use of autoethnography (as follows), and synthesis of relevant theoretical, conceptual and research literature. Through this process, Bourdieu's theory of Habitus (1984) emerged as a useful means of making sense of the prominent themes within the text, and their relationship to one another.

Autoethnography as critically reflective analytical tool

Both Bourdieu (1984) and Ricœur (1984) emphasise the need for thorough critical reflection in order to interrogate one's own social dispositions, and their influence upon the research process and interpretations. Therefore, to supplement and strengthen the research process in terms of rigour and transparency, autoethnography was used to systematically critically reflect upon embodied knowledge garnered from experiences and observations within the study setting. The ways in which autoethnography facilitates the derivation of pertinent details of this approach are discussed in depth in Bunyan (2021a;2021b). However, broadly speaking, autoethnography - a method that is both a *process* and a *product*, describes and systematically analyses experiences and observations (auto) in relation to their wider cultural (ethno) context, within an account of this process (graphy), to produce enhanced critical sociological understandings of the study context, and the researchers position and influence within it (Bunyan, 2021b).

In doing so, critical awareness was achieved concerning issues such as neo-colonialism, cultural imperialism, and the white saviour complex, facilitating a broader interpretive horizon through recognition of the historical underpinnings of the social context in which the children reside. The researcher recognised her own complicity within these issues, through her presence as a Scottish, White, non-religious academic, responsible for the representation of the children - a position arising from a Western based desire to 'help'. Recognising that this desire to 'help', comprised the assumption of Western socially constructed notions of both what 'help' entailed, and those assumed to 'need help', allowed scrutiny of researcher positionality. Therefore, as advocated by Ricœur (1984), the following findings represent the results of a continually critically reflective analytical process.

Results

These findings present themes that capture the experiences and perspectives of the children, and their meaning, within the children's transition from home to the orphanage, via the streets of Kampala. In doing so, they address the following questions: From the perspectives of children, how and why do they transition into an orphanage? How can the experiences of children in transition to an orphanage be understood, critically? To what extent are the experiences of the children shaped by their social context, and how do socially derived dispositions shape the children's lives? Addressing these questions is important, because without a comprehensive knowledge base that foregrounds the children's stories, policy makers and practitioners lack the basis by which to ensure the reforms to child protection that they seek in Uganda. To reflect the chronology of the children's stories, in addition to the analytical process evoked by Ricœur's critical hermeneutics, each extract is introduced and followed by explanation. Subsequently, critical understandings are presented within amalgamated, embedded discussions, drawing upon the theoretical and conceptual lens of Bourdieu. All names, including those within extracts and those that indicate potentially identifiable information, are replaced with pseudonyms or 'anonymised', to protect participant confidentiality. Further, it is pertinent to note that at times, children use the terms 'slums' and 'streets' interchangeably, due to their specific location on the streets being in and around a slum dwelling.

From Home to the streets

Familial Adversity

Whilst five of the children recounted the loss of one or both parents, none suggested this was their primary or singular catalyst towards life in an orphanage. Rather, adverse experiences for the children's families, such as poverty, family breakdown and abuse emerged as the most common push factors from home to the streets, in and around a slum dwelling. However, poverty was the primary factor from which all other themes emanated. For example, due to the lack of income for parents or extended family caregivers, children couldn't obtain school fees, leading to them going to the streets. For example:

Hannah (F) Age: 15

Yes, so my story. When I was still with my family hmmm, when I was still with my family, I was four to five years old. My mother was not working and even my father was not working. My mother used to go and visit other places so that she could work and get food for us to eat, school fees, she managed to pay for us school fees for me and my sister in [anonymised] Primary School in Kampala. My sister stopped in Primary seven, me I stopped in Primary three. Time moved on, like four months to five months, then, they decided to take me to the village even me I agreed with them, and they took me to the village. The village is in Mpigi. Then in Mpigi I stayed for one year there, then I decided to move away because my future was going to stop there, I saw no future. So, I decided to run away from the village, I I I came to Kampala. I went to the street.

For the children, poverty symbolises a challenge to navigate; initially by going to the streets within a slum setting, in order to exercise their agency in overcoming the structural constraints of poverty. For some, parents or wider families were able to work but the income was insufficient for basic necessities. For others, due to illness such as advanced AIDS, parents were either no longer able to work or could not afford both the required medications as well as children's needs. However, this transition was predominantly associated with acquiring access to education, which signifies a sense of hope and future opportunity to the children, as 17-year-old, Erica (F) illustrates: "*I'm studying studying studying, so I see a future*". Thus, from the perspective of Habitus theory (Bourdieu, 1984), education emerges as a cultural product, and from the offset, the implications of acquiring cultural capital emerge. Due to the socialised presupposition that education ensures an elevated position, or future, within society, but is only available to those who can afford it, children from a young age face the prospect of having to leave family, in search of a means of gaining access. Moreover,

as becomes more salient throughout the children's lives, as suggested by Bourdieu (1984), this inequality becomes hidden beneath labels applied to the children and associated dispositions; first as 'street children', then as orphans within an orphanage.

However, within the theme of familial adversity, the implications of poverty concerning access to education were closely associated with family breakdown or adjustment, such as the added strain of poverty on a single parent, or the presence of stepparents.

Ross (M) Age: 15

Life there on slum was bad. Sometimes they, those people there stabbed and beat me. But I had to go there because I don't have a father and my mother did not have money, she had many children. I don't know what happened to my dad. But I ran away because I did not get any education.

Ross conveys the complex interplay between the structural constraints of poverty, familial breakdown and acquiring cultural capital, in addition to the perceptions of single mothers as unable to adequately provide for their children. The historical roots of gender inequality and consequent dichotomous constructs of women and men are elucidated within critical understandings discussions below, however this perception largely pertains to the notion that men, or fathers, have an elevated status within society with regards to economic opportunity and higher earnings than women, or mothers. Relatedly, within the context of familial adjustment, the detrimental implications *stepmothers* emerged as theme. However, references to *stepmothers* as opposed to *stepfathers* are a result of both gender-based predispositions, and a social context in which there is often acceptance of men having multiple wives or partners, whereas women are largely expected to remain monogamous. For example:

David (M) Age: 16

Then later, I was sent to my dad where I found a stepmother, as you know a stepmother, their behaviours, so life was not good....the stepmother didn't like me, she could do what, you know stepmums.

Stepmothers were widely perceived as displaying preference towards biological children, which for many, was understood as the barrier to acquiring education due to the added financial commitments of attending school. However, as illustrated by David in the assumption that the researcher was inherently aware of children's negative perceptions of stepmothers, their presence is preceded by negative categorisation and preconceptions. Whilst there are instances of abuse by stepmothers which should by no means be minimised, the cultivation of a stereotype of them as inherently 'bad', and that of single mothers as inferior economically, illustrates Bourdieu's (1984) *Habitus*. However, this notion of gender-based *Habitus* becomes more salient within children's narrations of a significant pull factor towards the streets, and of their experiences there, as follows.

The Mzungu Phenomenon

A dichotomy emerged between the adversity faced at familial homes concerning parents' economic struggles as a push factor towards the streets, and the pull factor embodied by "the Mzungu Phenomenon". The term 'Mzungu' is used by the children and others across East Africa to denote White people from Western nations, predominantly referring to Missionaries or NGO actors here. Within analyses, the Mzungu phenomenon emerged as a construct that signified a gatekeeper in accessing education, pertaining to their financial resources and sponsorship opportunities. Although the Mzungu phenomenon is critically examined in depth elsewhere (Bunyan, 2021b), the following extract captures the nature of this dichotomy wherein Sarah discusses "Mzungus", in contrast to the situation of poverty at home, in which her parents were unable to provide school fees.

Sarah (F) Age:

"But I heard people saying they help children; they pick children from the street they help them to those homes; they pay their school fees. But my main intention was trying to find school fees to go back to school. Then I said oh, I tried three times to look for schools, but I had no money. I had no anything to use you know requirements what they need for school, ah, everything, because everything is surrounded by money. Because you can't do anything without money. Then I said, I don't have money what am I going to do, I want to go to school but I have no money, so I have no rights."

Consistently across the dataset, children's references to the Mzungu were within the context of facilitating access to the necessary financial resources enabling school attendance, rather than a desire to live within an orphanage. The way in which the Mzungu phenomenon was framed - as a gatekeeper to opportunity - contrasted the way in which impoverished families were portrayed - as unable to provide the opportunity, or 'future', symbolised by education. As such, the Mzungu phenomenon signifies a power structure, which - to the children - mitigates the acquisition of cultural capital. However, this notion of the children as disenfranchised without the intervention of Western Missionaries, volunteers, or NGO operators, contributed to stereotypes of the children who live predominantly on the streets. Unconsciously perpetuated by such Mzungu actors, the interactions and associated dispositions within the Mzungu Phenomenon fail to recognise the children's agency and distort understandings of the children. Whilst the children see this interaction as another means of trying to navigate poverty to secure an elevated place within a society in which education is a cultural capital, the Mzungu evokes a predisposition of saviourism based on pre-conceived labels of the children as powerless, and helpless. From the perspective of Bourdieu (1984), labelling processes that create stereotypes and stigma contribute to the conditions, experiences and behaviours that are synonymous with the labels, but that this does not always include acceptance of the *meanings* of such labels (Moncrieffe, 2007). According to *Habitus* (Bourdieu, 1984; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990), despite discrepancies between

the meanings of labels from the perspectives of others versus to whom they are applied, people can therefore unknowingly become complicit in the reproduction of hegemonic power relations. This is attributed to the extent to which societal hierarchy, social norms and values becomes ingrained, and disempowerment ensues, meaning that inequality goes unchallenged (Bourdieu, 1989; Moncrieffe, 2007). This process is evident within children's narratives regarding the way in which they evoke a sense of 'needing saved' by Western NGOs as a means of navigating poverty, in order to access school and resources due to societal hierarchy attached to education, as opposed to the powerless predisposition. However, this is demonstrative of their ingenuity and tenacity in overcoming the challenges of poverty, and the power structures that inhibit their accrual of cultural capital, as opposed to any sense of deception or disingenuousness.

Street life: The Street Kid Construct

Conversely, children's experiences and perspectives of interactions with local community members and authoritative figures such as the police, reveal an alternative, contrasting, way in which they are categorised. Despite the contrast, the process and implications of Habitus emerge within children's narrations of the stigma and treatment perpetrated by police and some local community members. In this context, the children portray the discrepancies in meaning, application, and acceptance between 'the street kid' construct. Therefore, the following extracts captures the nature of the contrast, between the stereotype associated with the mzungu phenomenon above, and that associated with local community members. Firstly, extracts and brief explanations pertaining to the "street kid" stereotype are presented, to allow understandings of the children's experiences and perspectives of the manifestation of this construct, as well as the implications. Subsequently, critical understandings are discussed employing the lens of Bourdieu, to illuminate the origins and implications further.

David (M) Age: 16

It was Sunday evening if I'm recalling well...I had spent two nights and two days without eating. I walked around the slums, but I was very hungry.... After eating I had to find somewhere to sleep. So, I went where those big busses are in the slum. I slept there. In the morning when I woke up, they were going to burn me alive because they thought I was a thief. You know they fear street kids. You know if you go near those busses, they think you are going to steal the batteries and generators. So, they got me and they beat me. I was seven. Ah, I survived; they had brought petrol to burn me, to kill me.

Whilst some children, like David, recounted persecution, and abuse by local community members, many also described this treatment at the hands of law enforcement actors, such as the police and Kampala City council officials:

Stewart (M) Age: 17

But as well, in the slum, for me, I don't like police. When I am in slum police disturb us so much, when you are asleep at night they come and beat you and say bring any money what you have there. I would tell him officer we don't have any money. But you know those state council guys they take children to Kamparingisa [KNRC]. Sometimes they took me to that prison, but I ran away from the bus that takes you there and another time a man helped me to run away when I was going to fetch water. He told me don't run on road, run in the forest but don't go with our jerry can [laughing].

Importantly though, despite the children having left the street environment and now living within the orphanage, their experiences of being labelled in this way continue unabated within the present day:

Jacob (M) Age: 15

One day the teacher she told me "eh you have thieved my money", to all the children from safe house [former transition house between the streets and orphanage]. I told her no, no no no, it wasn't us. She told me "oh all you children come from the streets, the children of the streets are thieves". She told me "oh you are a bad boy". But back then [when living on the streets], ah, I didn't have enough food, I didn't have enough water, I couldn't bathe, everything was bad. The people, the people were abusing me, my clothes were dirty rags, it's shameful. I tried the fuel, I took some to stop feeling, it's like some people, we had stress, ah, we had....Some people are criminals and many people are a thief, it's scary and stressing, you feel fear. So that's my life. I'd see the children very very dirty and I'd say ah I don't want to be dirty I want to be clean. They told me you can't be, you will be dirty like us. I was so ashamed. I wanted to be clean."

The tensions between acceptance and rejection of this label and the longstanding detrimental impact on the children in the present day is further conveyed by Sarah:

Sarah (F) Age: 13

Here they call us street kids, but me I sat down, and I said, I have to accept this because all children who are here are from the streets, I have to appreciate it because I'm here, but I'm not just a street child. Because every time people refer to us as just street children, it hurts me, but no, no, because I know I'm more than that".

As Moncrieffe (2007) emphasises, the misrepresentative labels applied by authoritative actors can have a longstanding influence on how they see and feel about themselves, challenge or seek to change their conditions, react to opportunities, and exercise agency. Again, the way in which tensions between power structures, such as the police, and the children's agency in navigating poverty,

result in social norms that shape the children's experiences, thoughts, and behaviour, synonymous with Bourdieu's (1984) Habitus. The way societal expectations and dispositions of the 'street kid', such as stealing, substance use, or prostitution, transcends and disempowers the individual, to the degree that rather than challenging expectations and social norms, they feel they have to, or have no choice but to comply with them, in order to cope or survive. 14-year-old Isaac concludes his narrative poignantly in summing up this point: *"if you have somewhere to live its OK but somehow still bad because you learn bad behaviours from there like taking drugs and learning to steal, but you have to, you don't have a choice"*.

Thus the "street kid" stereotype is a confluence of the discourse and socialised dispositions amongst and surrounding street children, between the construct perpetuated by the Mzungu: that children are dependent on them, helpless, and powerless; and that of authoritative local community members, that the children are a societal problem, categorised as thieves and drug addicts, to be corrected or eradicated. In turn, according to Habitus, elements of both constructs become deposited within the children's sense of self, others, and future, and cultivate behavioural social norms that maintain power relations and marginalisation. However, within the streets, the way in which societal power structures shape and restrict children's agency was increased exponentially for girls, who face a situation of double marginalisation: first for being considered a 'street kid', and secondly for being a woman.

The dual oppression of Women and Girls

The way in which gender inequality intersects with the street kid construct to create conditions in which women on the streets face dual oppression is captured amongst the following extracts, which reflect the consensus of both female *and* male participants on the situation of girls.

Mary (F) Age: 17

I went to church to pray, it was at night and I prayed with my friends, there were 2 of them. Then we went to the shop, it was night by then, then there was some men. They pushed us, they pushed my friend, they put her head into the stone. By the time they had raped us, my friend didn't survive, [whispers] she passed away....[pause in speech]. Then some people took us to the police. By the time they were taking us to hospital, my friend had already passed away.

Every female participant who had spent time on the streets recounted being raped there. Equally if not more harrowing, was that - just as Mary implies through the way she says *"by the time they raped us"* - rape and sexual abuse were almost normalised within the street setting. Rather than being rare, or standalone incidents, participants emphasised the prevalence of this abuse. For example: as 16-year-old female Ailsa states: *"I didn't have clothes, bed, people abuse people, they really abuse people, they beat, even the police do that. And us girls are raped, all the time. All the time"*. Although this situation is indicative of the wider gender inequality within Uganda, the increased marginalisation and disenfranchisement of girls on the streets manifests through socialised norms in which dispositions towards them are cultivated from historically rooted patriarchy, combined with those applied to the 'street kid'. In turn, girl's ability to exercise agency is impeded, as is revealed through critical analysis of the ways in which children navigate the adversity of street life, with particular regards to the accrual, meaning and function of social capital, as follows.

Self-Sustenance

Whilst on the streets, the importance of the children's ability to exercise their agency endured, most prominently, regarding the generation of economic capital by which to sustain themselves, navigate, and cope, with street life. However, accruing economic capital, was interdependently related to their systems of social capital. As Bourdieu (1986) emphasises, the possession of one form of capital influences the acquisition and use of another. For example, one's ability to attain economic capital is shaped by that individual's cultural and social capital, such as their education, or the networks of relationships which facilitate access to income generating work. The interdependent nature of capital accrual, and the way this is shaped and restricted by the wider field of power outside of street settings, was particularly salient among the children's narrations of income generation. Essential for survival on the streets, and indeed a reason for going in the first place, the generation of economic capital was shaped by gender, and facilitated by the accrual of social capital as illustrated within the following extracts.

Males were afforded more opportunity to secure work than females, and importantly - more *choice* of what 'work' entailed, placing women at the centre of a series of concentric circles of oppression. The dichotomy between the situation of males versus females regarding access to work for self-sustenance whilst on the streets is illustrated by the contrasting extracts of males and females below:

Ben (M) Age: 14

The days passed away passed away passed away, then I knew the city, how to manage money, how to get something to eat, things like that. But I had a talent for playing football, when I reached there, I found a certain team they were training. Even me I went to join them. You know street kids they were good to a street kid. If you are good, they are good. They called me and they gave me a chance to play, I showed them that I can play, from there they told me that I could come and play. Then I could wake up at 5 and go looking for scrap, after selling scrap I get my breakfast for 1000, 700 for food and 300 for tea then from there I could go and do training. After that I could save my money for lunch because I didn't want to be in that system of going on the streets and begging. Yeah. And another thing I didn't want was to eat from the rubbish, I didn't want to do that because I found many street kids begging for money, eating from the rubbish pit. Yeah. For me I had to go to work.

Whilst conveying importance of agency that is often overlooked amongst children on the streets, this extract also allows recognition of the disparity between agency amongst males, versus that of females. Girls within the participant group emphasised how much their agency was impinged upon by the lack of choice or opportunity for alternative work, illustrating the intersected nature of their position within the streets, and wider society. Specifically, although they want and need to work to survive while seeking or awaiting intervention by NGO actors, they feel that transactional sex is their only option, despite knowing the risks. For example:

Rose (F) Age: 12

You know in the slums us; we have to let men use us to get money. There is different girls. Some they bring themselves somewhere and sell their body to get money for buying food buying clothes. At night there is a place where they go where they sell themselves. But we know if we sell ourself and we get HIV, we will spend only some days then die. But sometimes anyway the men find you when you are sleeping and rape you and they rape the boys too and boys even rape their friends and the girls. Ah, it's tough. Tough.

Rose's story conveys the consensus of the girls' perspectives of their position on the streets, and the way this disposition influences their perspectives of others - both men and other women, - actions, experiences, and future projections. She emphasises that most girls feel they 'have to let men use' them, and even if not, they are often raped anyway, conveying the ways in which the socialised dispositions of others - or the way that women are categorised - constricts both their sense of agency, that they have little control of their conditions, and the ways in which it may be used. This sense of disempowerment continues through to their working environments, in which they experience exploitation beyond that experienced by males. For example, Victoria (16, F) recounts: "There was a lady who used us in the brothel; she was getting the biggest portion of it, of the money to herself so I only got a small little bit of it".

Moreover, whilst most boys recounted their experiences of playing football in the streets and emphasising the importance of this activity, girls, did not speak of access to any leisure activities on the streets within the slums. Further, girls are not visible during the day in or around the setting in which activities such as football take place, whereas boys are. For example - the football pitch created by male youths, which served as a central social space within Kisenyi slum. Critically examining these contrasts through the lens of Bourdieu (1984), the importance and multifaceted function of social capital emerges, through the multiple ways in which the children's social networks facilitated access to both economic and recreational opportunity. As Bourdieu (1986) suggests, the management of economic capital was largely dependent on the accrual and functioning of social capital, or the specific ways in which one utilises their social networks. Given the nature of work for girls in contrast to that of boys, the latter are afforded greater opportunity to develop and utilise wide social networks by working together to generate income. Whereas, transactional sex work is largely solitary and competitive, meaning the girls' social networks - comprised of the few they felt they could trust and rely upon - are smaller, resulting in a decreased sense of security and reciprocal support in facilitating income generation. Whilst friendships were equally important to the girls and serve as a source of resilience, their utility was reduced by the gender-based power structures that inhibit their work opportunities. Conversely, the ways in which boys' social networks were utilised in terms of protection and income generation, are captured within the following extract:

Peter (M) Age: 15

My friend told me don't walk there again, it's bad, we have to walk together. My friend is older, he's not young but he has power he's strong. I walked with him all the time, well sometimes. He helped me find scraps, we keep all the scraps to sell, he sold his scraps and I sold mine. But it wasn't good, one day when I was walking with him I found a man who was stealing the scraps, I saw he was beaten, I said to him "why don't you get some jobs", he said "I don't have work". I said "let us get some scraps together", then when we get some money we're going to get some place where we are going to sleep.

As Peter's extract suggests, for males, their social networks ensure their ability to exercise agency whilst on the streets, in turn, supporting the generation of economic capital. However, despite the differences in the utility of social capital, the confluence of the importance of exercising agency plus the importance of friendships influenced children's perspectives and actions associated with transition from the streets into the orphanage in a similar way. Therefore, understanding the complex relationships between the way that children navigate the streets, comprised of their accrual and management of social and economic capital, and agency, are fundamental prerequisites for understanding what NGO intervention means to the children. This knowledge is vital in understanding why some intervention or support efforts fail, or result in children disengaging, and running away back to the streets. This is captured within their narrations of transition from the streets to the orphanage, as follows.

From the streets to the orphanage

Relinquishing Agency

The relationship between agency and intervention by NGO actors is complex and nuanced, in that while intervention - as previously seen - means opportunity (education), the positive connotations are juxtaposed by the negatives. Poignantly, this includes relinquishing agency, social networks, and the friendships of which they are comprised, to be replaced by a reliance on sponsorship of - often unknown - Western donors. As such, for the children, overt tensions arise between agency and structure, whereby despite having initially gone to the streets as step towards gaining access to education or basic necessities, when presented with the chance to do so by NGO actors, they may not engage, or disengage after a short time period. This is influenced by both the level of agency

they hold within street settings versus that within a CCI, and their perspectives and expectations of adults, which is shaped by their experiences thus far. Moreover, as suggested by Bourdieu (1984) within the street setting (field), in which the children's perspectives, future projections and dispositions are moulded to accept their conditions; they are unconsciously disempowered. This restricts the children from envisaging or aspiring to that which has thus far been inaccessible to them. For example, the elevated position and quality of life previously perceived as accessible through education. The essence of this situation is conveyed from both males and females, within the following extracts:

David (M) Age: 15

[Orphanage caregiver] came and he told me to come here but for me I refused at first because I didn't know him and didn't trust. Even I didn't want to leave the streets, I wanted to stay there because I had got many friends, which I could work with. Then, when two years had gone, my friends told me eh you are still young, you can go and play, you know you can go back and study and go back to school. But again, for me I didn't want. Then [uncle figure within the slums] told me that there is no way in which you can help others or yourself if you have not gone to school, however much you are good at soccer, you have to go and study. Then I hated [uncle figure] because I didn't want to go back. I spent like one month without going to see [uncle figure], I changed my station I went to another place because I knew Kampala, even I had got other friends, they are the ones who named me that name; David. That's why I didn't want to live without it, why I stay with that name so that I can remember my friends. When I lived on the streets, yeah I faced many challenges, there were many. But the day came, and I had got a friend [male friend's names] and another three but they are not with us anymore.

As captured within David's extract, despite – like most children – leaving home for the streets in search of access to education, once there, these aspirations and priorities often change, as they become embedded within a field that allows them to exercise agency, within the confines of their unconsciously derived marginalised social position. However, concurrently, due to the way they are treated on the streets, their trust in others – particularly adults – is diminished to the degree of only trusting their immediately friendship groups, comprised of those sharing similar social position and disposition. Consequently, children often do not want to leave, because to them, leaving for an orphanage means relinquishing their social network comprised of trusted relationships, in addition to their sense of agency, and ability to exercise it. As a result, children are torn in their decision as to whether to transition into the orphanage, meaning that ultimately many choose to remain on the streets, or return there after a short period of time, as conveyed by Ben (16, M): *But many times they help the children there in the slum and bring them here but they run away, they go back, like your friend [names of male and female children who formerly lived in the orphanage before returning to the streets], they try to help them and give them a home but they go back to get money and do other things.*

Framing other children's return to the streets in the context of a desire to regain the power to manage their own days, activities, and particularly finances, was consistent among children's descriptions of their peers who had returned to the streets. Whilst this appeared less frequent among girls owing to the limited agency and increased risk associated with their social position on the streets, particularly emphasising a lack of trust in men, they too framed disengagement in this same light. For example:

Hannah (F) Age: 15

Maybe [friend on the streets] died, maybe she's still there or maybe she found a chance or maybe someone picked her because she was a good girl but the bad things that happened to her made her act bad, so she liked to sell her body to everyone. Me I told her why don't you stay here with me? She refused even she took [female friend], [female friend] also went. But they were all good friends of mine, but they went.

Illuminating the implications of this sense of lost agency associated with life in a CCI in contrast to the freedom of income generation on the streets, Hannah's narrative highlights the instances in which children return to the streets with others, including those who have not spent time there before. However, Hannah also captures women's and girls' perspective on the impact of "bad" experiences in terms of contributing towards unconscious acceptance of injustice. Attributing her friend's behaviour and choice to engage in transactional sex to past mistreatment evokes the sense of succumbing to an unjust social norm, and ingrained socialised dispositions suggested by Bourdieu (1984). Thus, despite how inconceivable it may seem to an outsider, for some, because of the ingrained, hidden, or normalised nature of women's and girls' inequality and injustice on the streets, they feel more disempowered by a CCI than on the streets. For example, whilst rape and exploitation are normalised and thus hidden as a severe injustice, the sense of agency associated with the streets endures, and overrides the sense of mistreatment or trauma.

Conclusion

Several conclusions can be drawn in addressing the research questions, which were: From the perspectives of children, how and why do they transition into an orphanage? How can the experiences of children in transition to an orphanage be understood, critically? To what extent are the experiences of the children shaped by their social context, and how do socially derived dispositions shape the children's lives? Primarily, children begin the transition into an orphanage not through a desire to live on the streets or within a CCI, but to access the basic services, such as education, that are inaccessible to them due to financial poverty. The theoretical lens of Bourdieu provides a useful means by which to understand children's experiences, critically. For example, beliefs and social norms surrounding the opportunities provided by Western operated organisations and economic opportunity, leads children towards the

streets of Kampala as a means of navigating, or overcoming this situation of poverty that prevents access to education. Education, a form of cultural capital, is understood as ensuring an elevated position within society, or a means of overcoming or avoiding poverty. Children's experiences within this transition whilst on the streets, are shaped by socially derived dispositions that influence both the way they are perceived, and the way they perceive others, their choices and actions, their sense of agency, and ability to exercise it, illustrated by both the 'Mzungu Phenomenon', and 'The Street Kid' construct. Socially acquired dispositions contribute to the abuse and exploitation experienced by the children, with social capital and gender as mediating factors in a context in which women and girls face dual oppression; first for being women, and then for being on the streets. This contributes to a social position in which socialised inequality and associated dispositions are so engrained, that they are hidden as injustice, instead featuring as accepted social norms, meaning that the normalisation of rape and exploitation, in addition to physical abuse, continues unabated.

These critical findings have important implications for both policy and practice concerning children in Uganda. Based upon the narrative to emerge in this study, it is evident that the rights of children in Uganda enshrined within the UNCRC (1989) are not being upheld at any stage of the children's transition. Specifically, article 9 states that children must not be separated from families against their will, unless it's in the best interests of the child. Arguably, although the children went to the streets of their own volition, for the majority this was not due to a desire to leave family; rather, the constraints of poverty. Relatedly, article 18 pertaining to the requirements for governments to support parents by facilitating support services to help parents care for their children, and article 19 which emphasises children's right to protection from abuse and neglect, including for those separated from family, as stipulated in article 20. Additionally, evidently article 28 which stipulates rights to free primary education and accessible secondary education for *all* children is not upheld. Relevant to children's experiences on the streets, articles 32-34 are not upheld, concerning children's rights to protection from dangerous labour, exploitation, and sexual exploitation. However, this is not an exhaustive list of the ways in which children's rights are violated within and beyond this transition, further research is required that again, foregrounds the children's stories, but perhaps retrospectively, after life within a CCI. Whilst there, they may not feel able to discuss specific issues with a researcher, due to a reliance on continued sponsorship by the institution. This could be considered a limitation of this study, along with a lack of children who have not been separated from family, within a CCI, or those who remained on the streets as participant groups by which to gain comparative perspectives.

Overall, however, this study illuminates the need for a multisectoral approach in supporting children, beginning with increased dialogue with stakeholders beyond policy makers, those either already interacting with children in Uganda, or intending to. Whilst no doubt well-meaning, Western actors seeking to 'help' children are undermining de-institutionalisation efforts within national policies such as the NFAC and NOP (MOGLSD, 2011; 2012), by acting as a pull-factor towards the streets and CCIs. Thus, raising critical awareness should concentrate on foreign volunteers, and particularly Missionaries, given that this demographic continues to facilitate and establish varying forms of CCIs in Uganda (Cheney & Rotabi; 2015; De Wet, 2016; Mulumba, 2021; Riley, 2012). There is no simple, easy, or quick solution to the issues raised within this article, existing CCIs cannot and should not be automatically disbanded as many children may now be left homeless or have lost contact with family over the years spent in a CCI. However, by fostering greater critical awareness of both the children's life stories and the ways their lives are affected by social context and interventions therein, in addition to promotion of knowledge of existing rights-based policies and practices, local and international actors *could* contribute to children's wellbeing in Uganda. This begins with adequate research and dissemination, that challenges misrepresentations of both children and interventions in Uganda, thus researchers must also reflect this need by employing a critical lens, beyond a positivist superficial approach.

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