Matilda Jerneck

Supervisor: Ellen Hillbom

The Orphan Protagonist

Critical Grounded Theory of Orphanhood,
Self-image and Conduct Control

Abstract

This thesis is a grounded theory study of orphanhood in the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in sub-Saharan Africa. It aims at understanding how orphans experience their life circumstances; negotiate social interactions and self-images; and develop aspirations for future existence. The study was conducted in Pallisa, Uganda and the methods used were participant observations, photo elicitation and in-depth interviews, complemented by child-centred methods. A constructivist grounded theory approach resulted in a substantive theory called the *Orphan Protagonist*. Using symbolic interactionism, the substantive theory was validated into a formal theory in two parts: *Self-image Typology* and *Conduct Control*. The Orphan Protagonist demonstrates the importance for orphans to excel beyond parented peers in all activities, including good behaviour, in order to avoid maltreatment or exclusion from the community. It also indicates orphans' capability to manage risks and fend for themselves and younger siblings. Finally, it shows that orphans are resourceful persons with the ability to succeed in their future lives. The OP is transferable to similar settings and phenomena.

Keywords: o*rphanhood, sub-Saharan Africa, grounded theory, symbolic interactionism, sociological understanding.*

Acknowledgment

List of figures and tables

1 Introduction

"An idle mind is the devil's workshop," said Gabriel. Playing football keeps him away from bad thoughts, like stealing goats. His younger brother Glen agreed. They are orphans and can never misbehave, or people might exclude them from the community.

They work hard every day to feed their family but some neighbours still call them lazy and thievish. I wondered about the meaning of all this. I was curious to understand what orphanhood meant to these children. I was doing a short but intensive ethnography *with* children *about their* views of growing up without parental guidance. I found that these children were diligent and resourceful, growing up with aspirations of going to university and climbing out of poverty.

In the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, armed conflict, and poverty, sub-Saharan Africa is experiencing a process of mass orphaning, creating a generation of 25 million children without parental guidance (UNICEF 2010). Blood relatives would support orphans (Mugyenyi 2008:79) but due to an overburdened kinship support system, many children have to fend for themselves (Francis-Chizoro 2008:6). They are exposed to threats of land and property grabbing; trafficking, prostitution and forced premature marriages;

delinquency, drug addiction, and homelessness (UNICEF 2010; Pallisa District 2007). In addition, many orphans, irrespective of their parent's cause of death, are subject to stigma and hurtful discrimination owing to the inevitable association with AIDS. It is time to kill the myth: 'Africa has no orphans' (Mugyenyi 2008:80).

Uganda is a telling example of the orphan crisis and the number of orphans is expected to rise steeply in the near future (Avert 2010). National and international agencies launch campaigns to the support of orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) (OVC Toolkit 2010; Oleke et al. 2007:541). But to truly assist these children we need multiple understandings of orphanhood informed by social and ethnographic research that value children's own particularities and needs (Oleke et al. 2007:541). For that purpose, I conducted a field study (October-December 2009) in Pallisa Town and one of its adjacent villages in eastern Uganda. My research required intensive and repeated interaction with nine children in three orphan families.

The thesis is a rich personified story of orphanhood and a detailed discussion of the iterative process of doing grounded theory. The Orphan Protagonist, crafted in the process, is an ideal type in the Weberian sense (Ritzer and Goodman 2003:116-17) that captures

the essential features of orphans' life worlds, as I see it. The Orphan Protagonist is my substantive theory. I validate it through symbolic interactionism into a formal theory in two parts called the Self-Image Typology and Conduct Control. The formal theory reflects self-image negotiation and the importance of good behaviour. I have aimed for a new sociological understanding of orphanhood by "estranging the familiar", thus theorising the taken for granted perceptions of everyday life of orphans (Bauman 1990:24).

AIM, RESEARCH QUESTIONS, STRUCTURE

I argue that problem solving research (Cox 1981:128-30), in the context of orphanhood, would proceed from the notion of high 'risk *exposure*' and suggest interventions to protect orphans from exploitation. As an alternative, I take a critical stance (ibid) exploring 'risk *resistance*' among selected orphans in a given context. My interpretation of orphanhood springs from their life worlds and self-images and aims at identifying them as capable individuals, and how they become so. To that end, three empirical questions guided my data generation process and early analysis:

- How do orphans *experience* the everyday struggle of orphanhood?

- How do orphans *interact* with others in the community such as siblings, relatives, neighbours, classmates, friends and me as a researcher?

- What aspirations do orphans have in life and how do orphans *visualise their future*?

I first give a brief overview of the orphan crisis in Uganda followed by a short review of research on orphaned children in sub-Saharan Africa wherein I position myself. Secondly, I fuse constructivist grounded theory with symbolic interactionism and introduce a sequence of field methods that I employed. Thirdly, I analyse orphanhood, discuss the validation process, and visualise my model. Finally, I evaluate my contribution.

THE CONTEXT

This study is set in Pallisa District in Uganda. The setting displays features common to many rural areas in sub-Saharan Africa: it has a young population with many orphans; the disease burden is high; a majority of its inhabitants survive on subsistence farming on environmentally degraded land, and impacts from climate change are expected to increase (IFAD 2010; Pallisa District 2007).

At the dawn of the AIDS-era, in the 1980s, the epidemic veritably scourged Uganda. Uganda was home to many orphans even before the outbreak of HIV/AIDS, due to armed conflict and disease, but the pandemic exacerbated the orphan phenomenon. (Kamya and Poindexter 2009:6) Almost a whole generation of people of productive age was wiped out, leaving behind masses of orphans[1] and an economy in crisis (Mugyenyi 2008:76; Kamya and Poindexter 2009:7). Initially, blood relatives would take care of orphans but as the epidemic continued the kinship support system became overburdened and the tradition of taking in orphans died out together with one million Ugandans (Mugyenyi 2008:77; Pallisa District 2007). As the burden mounted, relatives often favoured their own children over orphans who were neglected or exploited. Many ended up living with sick and elderly grandparents who were unable to provide proper food, education, and security. The malfunction of the support system led to the formation of child-headed households.[2] (Mugyenyi 2008:80; Francis-Chizoro 2008:5)

Since the 1990s, strong political leadership and massive awareness raising campaigns reduced the HIV/AIDS incidence dramatically. But, recently there are signs of a resurgence of the disease meaning that the number of orphans will continue to increase. In 2005, the UN Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS specified that children affected or infected by the disease need special attention in terms of counselling, psychosocial support, access to education, and the provision of necessities to avoid hurtful discrimination. It is also underlined that these children need protection from hurtful discrimination, and governments and international agencies have a joint responsibility in catering to their needs. (Francis-Chizoro 2008:8; Plan 2005:3) In Pallisa, only few interventions target orphans and only a handful of the needy are successfully assisted,

---

[1] There is a distinction between single and double orphans, the former implying the loss of one parent, in the majority of cases the father, the latter implying the loss of both. As most orphaned children become so due to AIDS, single orphans often run the risk of becoming double orphans; because when the father is infected in extra-marital sex he may infect his spouse and eventually die, leaving his children with a dying mother (Plan 2005).

[2] According to Plan International (2005) a child-headed household is a household composed of double orphans, due to both parents death, and of which a child is responsible for: parenting siblings, decision-making on feeding and other household related issues, and being the principal breadwinner. Relatives might live with or nearby the child-headed household but their economic support is limited and cannot sustain the child-headed household.

the principal reasons being increasing numbers of orphans due to HIV/AIDS, budget restraints and insufficient skills in OVC programming (Pallisa District 2007:7).

ORIGINALITY OF THE STUDY

Research on orphans in Uganda or other sub-Saharan African countries tends to portray orphans as voiceless victims subject to exploitation and high risks compared to their parented peers (Francis-Chizoro 2008). Research on orphans in Uganda is mainly quantitative and deals with issues of law enforcement of orphan property rights (Caruso and Cope 2006), school enrolment (Kasirye and Hisali 2009), mental health (Dalen et al. 2009; Atwine et al. 2005), insecurity, and livelihood degradation (Parker et al. 2009).

The bulk of research in the field applies Western centric theories of childhood, rooted in developmental theories with a tendency to regard children as 'human becomings' rather than human beings (Francis-Chizoro 2008; Bourdillon 2006:1207). This approach is based on the conception of a child/adult dichotomy wherein complete adults teach and mould incomplete children into capable and complete adults (Ritzer and Goodman 2003:395; Bourdillon 2006:1203). Such culturally and geographically specific constructs

may be inadequate for sub-Saharan Africa and thus limit understandings of the actual context; in addition such interventions may marginalise orphans even more as they are depicted as objects devoid of agency (Francis-Chizoro 2007; Mientjes and Giese 2006; Bourdillon 2006:1204). The discourse manifests itself in expressions like "stolen childhood" (Amber 2005) and "the world's most voiceless and vulnerable" (Caruso and Cope 2006).

Orphans themselves and their voices are strikingly absent and most studies are accounts *about* rather than *of* orphans. In contrast, my research is situated within the frame of the new social studies of childhood arguing that children must be regarded as beings attaching purpose and meanings to their actions. Moreover, childhood is not a universal analytical category but differs according to geographical location and socio-cultural context. (Young and Barret 2001:141) This suggests the existence of multiple childhoods, one of which may be orphanhood in the context of HIV/AIDS. This approach requires specific research methods that involve children actively in the process, i.e. child-centered methods such as observations, drawings and visual techniques (Young and Barret 2001:142).

4

Notably, three academic works attempt to give orphans a voice and this is undoubtedly where my work on how orphans experience their daily quandaries and social interaction fits with previous research. The three qualitative studies employ ethnographic and child-centered methods in the hope of shedding light on the orphan lifestyle from within. Bukuluki (2008) analyses succession planning and the phenomenon of grooming in orphan households in southern Uganda. Grooming refers to the process wherein parents teach their children certain skills and prepare them for a life without parents (Bukuluki 2008). He also studies how children understand their own life history once their parents are dead (Bukuluki 2008). Francis-Chizoro (2008) explores the formation of child-headed households in rural Zimbabwe and whether orphans in their socialisation process imitate conventional family patterns or strive for social transformation. She also explores their interactions with adults; survival strategies; and how the conceptualisation of childhood is altered (ibid). Young and Barret (2001) examine coping skills and survival strategies among street children, many of which are orphans, in Kampala, Uganda. The authors use visual methods to understand how orphans conceptualise social and public space. I argue that these academic works provide critical and thick descriptions of orphanhood by moving beyond shallow and obvious interpretations (Geertz 1973). I will complement them by contributing an abstract rendering of the mundane aspects of orphan life. With my deeply theorised version of orphanhood I strive at a profound sociological understanding (Bauman 1990:24) that will put orphans in the limelight and regard them as full participants in society (Bourdillon 2006:1207) rather than as potential citizens waiting to be molded by adults into full members of society. By directing analytical attention to their own interpretations, and by grounding my theoretical understanding of orphanhood in data, I will challenge the reports that victimise orphans or downplay their agency. Yet, I do this without losing sight of the looming dangers that orphans constantly grapple with. This approach may allow researchers and professionals to interact with orphaned children in more informed ways based on profound knowledge. If my theoretical finding is of interest to others working on issues related to orphans and vulnerable children, then it can fill a void in this particular research field.

2 Constructivist Grounded Theory

Here I explain how I employ grounded theory and use symbolic interactionism (SI) as a device to strengthen my substantive theory as well as to formalise and test my substantive grounded theory.

Constructivism is my meta-theoretical standpoint implying that reality is continuously constructed and reinterpreted by the social actors who inhabit it (Bryman 2004:15). There is *no one single* reality; and I therefore study multiple realities of my research subjects; the orphans. For that sake I employ grounded theory and its attached methods as a qualitative research strategy for capturing everyday lives, routines, feelings and beliefs (Charmaz 2006:14; Bryman 2004:14). The aim is to demonstrate the complexity of particular social realities and how people's actions form the local and larger worlds (Charmaz 2006:132). I use an inductive approach meaning that emerging theory derives from data constructed on the basis of the social realities of the participants, the orphans, rather than from existing theory (Bryman 2004:10; Charmaz 2006:14).

This resonates with grounded theory emerging in American sociology in the 1960s as a *reaction* to the positivist and analytical-statistical research that strove to verify extant grand theories by

distancing itself from social reality. In contrast, grounded theory proceeds from social reality. It aims to explore new or understudied social phenomena focusing on various forms of interaction between social actors. (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000:12-15)

My approach implies that data and theories spring from the *shared* relationships and experiences between participants and between researcher and participants (Charmaz 2006:130). Reflexitivity is thus a vital element, as I could not completely rid myself of preconceptions and theoretical sociological knowledge when making judgements in the field. Thereby, I became a distinct part of the research process and I constructed an interpretative exposé of the studied phenomenon (Charmaz 2006: 10,130-31,187).

Charmaz (2006) advocates the use of sensitising concepts for guidance in initial research stages. They serve as points of departure, giving the researcher hints of what to inquire about (Charmaz 2006:17). I chose conflict, space and language/labels[3] as my sensitising concepts but did not to let them freeze my research into a prefabricated theoretical frame. When the children claimed that they

---

[3] Lefebvre's notion of space (1974) and Collins' concept of conflict (1975).

never argued with siblings and when language/labels proved to be too difficult to interpret due to insufficient local language skills, I considered the concepts as 'expired' and discarded them. Even if eventually inapplicable to the research setting, the concepts helped me keeping an initial analytical approach to data (Charmaz 2006:17; Silverman 2005:83-84). This was especially helpful in this *extremely* repetitive and taken for granted everyday life that participants never reflected upon; thus challenging for me to theorise.

Categories emerged through the analytical process of coding that took place immediately after a piece of data was generated. Categories and codes were brought back to the research participants either during in-depth interviews, informal interviews or through observations hereby shaping fuller and richer categories. Like Charmaz (2006), I express my categories in gerunds; they show 'what is going on' in orphanhood and depict what children are 'doing', 'thinking' and 'feeling'. Although I argue that there is no optimal point of saturation, implying that no new information can be generated from data (Charmaz 2006:187), I had to define such a moment for practical reasons.

Following grounded theory, I engaged in a process of gradual abstraction of the empery. The initial phase of abstraction was characterised by intensive examination of a limited empirical material and this phase required my *empathy* as researcher. (Alvesson and Sködberg 2000) Secondly, the empiric foundation was expanded through the method of constant comparison meaning that the empirical material is internally compared and constantly refined and redefined through continuous and systematic comparison of elements of data (Charmaz 2006:23). I compared individuals' behaviour over time (however short); I compared individuals' behaviour with individuals' verbal accounts; I compared individuals within and between households. As an illustration, I show here how categories emerged in the logical process of constant comparison. I take the example of one of my five categories, *Seeking Spiritual Solace*. At first, this category was noted through observations: each Sunday the children went to church, they always prayed before meals, and they often talked about God and the soothing effect of prayers. This was further solidified in how children photographed churches with the intent to show the house of God. In the photo discussion that followed, churches were described as a place to find peace and solace. Finally, the category was cemented when earlier

dictums were verified in in-depth interviews. By using multiple methods sequentially, I generated different types of data to be continuously compared. The process is applicable to all my categories.

In sum, doing grounded theory means; finding information in data, keeping close to data in initial stages and gradually moving towards higher levels of abstraction to craft a substantive theory (Charmaz 2006.4). The substantive theory is my own construct resulting from a creative process wherein I define theory as "a set of concepts which define and explain a social phenomenon" (Silverman 2005:99).

Importantly, grounded theory distinguishes between substantive and formal theory (Charmaz 2006:187,189). The former is empirically close and rooted in the studied social setting, the latter is an abstract conceptual understanding, and if solid can be applied to other settings to test its viability. It can be argued that substantive and formal theories represent two different levels of theoretical generalisability. (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000:16) In my thesis, the substantive theory consists of the ideal type of the Orphan Protagonist who is empirically close to the participants in the research setting. The formal theory emerges through my testing of the viability of the Orphan Protagonist against symbolic interactionism. This gives rise to a formal theory in two parts: Self-image Typology and Conduct Control.

SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

Symbolic interactionism (SI) is a micro-sociological perspective that theorises social conduct in human group life (Klunklin and Greenwood 2006:33). SI also demonstrates how people give meaning to situations and experiences through a process of *role-taking*. This is core to SI and implies viewing situations from the vantage point of others (Athens 2010:92). Role-taking enables actors to predict, interpret and act upon other people's actions. It also serves to adjust one's own action in accordance to feedback from surrounding people representing the so called *generalised other*. (Athens 2010:93) Importantly, role-taking enables social interaction and is crucial for avoiding social chaos because through interaction with the generalised other, attitudes and beliefs are internalised and become an instrument of social control (Athens 2010:93). This interaction between multiple actors is called *joint action* meaning that actions are carried out by collectives of people acting in harmony (Klunklin and Greenwood 2006:34).

The ability of individuals to do role-taking is rooted in the possession of a *self* enabling a social being to ponder and react to one's own behaviour (Athens 2010:93). The self is constructed through socialisation by *significant others*, key figures surrounding a child, such as parents or siblings. (Athens 2010:93; Klunklin and Greenwood 2006:33) Interaction with significant others is a sort of rehearsal ground, where behaviours and actions can be tried out before they are employed in settings with the generalised other (Klunklin and Greenwood 2006:34). SI also dictates that an individual's self simultaneously contains a multitude of self-images but with varying dominance depending on the social situation. This means that orphans are not only orphans. Hence, I will show how they juggle a multitude of self-images.

The constructivist grounded theory that I use, springs partly from the sociological tradition of symbolic interactionism and coincides with its methodological procedures such as direct and prolonged studies of the social world (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000:12-14). I translated this into a limited yet in-depth ethnography wherein I use SI to conceptualise orphan's behaviour as meaningful and as direct expressions of their world views.

3 Doing research with children

SAMPLING AND GATE-OPENING

At the outset, I was determined to exclusively target HIV/AIDS orphans. But due to the sensitive nature of the issue, I realised that it was unethical to use parents' cause of death as a sampling criterion. I thus decided to enlarge the sample to orphans in general while acknowledging that HIV/AIDS is the main culprit in the Ugandan orphan crisis. Assisted by the social services, Pallisa Probation Office, I identified and located suitable orphan families. By combining configurations and facets of orphan lives in terms of age, gender, sibling status/order, types of relatives, and other identity aspects, I attempted to create a microcosm of orphanhood. Three units were then purposefully selected on the criteria of being likely to provide information on my research topic (Silverman 2005:129) – *what it means to be an orphan*. In research, I realised that two orphan families lost their parents to HIV/AIDS while the third one lost theirs to skin cancer and maternal death. Despite the small size, I thus ended up with a rather broad, varied and interesting sample.

The orphan family represented a specific social setting and thus constituted 'a world of its own'. Despite this, the boundaries

between the families and the community were blurred owing to a complex network of neighbours, relatives and friends. Orphans eat in one house and sleep in another; provide not only for siblings and grandparents but also for cousins and aunts; and seek personal protection from friends but at are the same time responsible for younger siblings. Therefore, my small sample of three orphan families also represents three rich social settings.

The initial purposive sampling provided a starting point, but true to grounded theory I mainly used theoretical sampling (Silverman 2005). It guided me on which leads to follow, what information to gather next, and which further participants to interview. Through continued empirical query I advanced my analysis by consolidating and deepening tentative codes into categories. Importantly, theoretical sampling helped me form full-bodied and rich categories. This process was facilitated by memo-writing where I took analytical records of the progress made (Charmaz 2006:97-108).

For assistance, I employed a research facilitator and interpreter who served both as a gatekeeper and as an informal source of information (Scheyvens and Storey 2003:133). He spoke several of the local languages and worked as a communal social worker; he was

therefore familiar with the plight of many orphans. This allows him to possess relevant knowledge on the research topic (Scheyvens and Storey 2003:134) and better understand the intentions of my research. He was indeed invaluable to my research. But since I was unable to detect linguistic nuances or culturally specific behaviours among the children it is difficult to say how and to what extent his presence influenced the research. It is thus important to bear in mind that the research process is a product of interactions between me, the children and the research facilitator.

PARTICIPANT OBSERVATIONS

Participant observation was used to study the research subjects in their natural setting and gain inside knowledge of how the participants 'do' their social world (Charmaz 2006:21). This was the ideal method to study their routines with minimal interference from the researcher (Silverman 2005:120). My principal goal was to get an insiders view, however, I am aware that my academic schooling tainted this process and in the end I might have created 'an outsider report' as it became evident that my mere presence disrupted the research setting; thereby bringing its 'naturalness' into question (Charmaz 2006:21). This was especially true as my visits often tended to be very spectacle-like; crowds of people would gather

around the homes of the participants; chores and normal activities were postponed; special meals were prepared in my honour; and the children took great pride in my presence vis-à-vis the spectators.

More specifically, my role can be categorised as a participant-as-observer. I participated fully in the activities and daily life of the studied setting. No field notes were taken during the course of the observations as this would intrude on and be a reminder to the participants that their every move was scrutinised. (Bryman 2004: 306-308) Nonetheless, it must be noted that due to time constraints, fear of discomfort and lack of local language skills my participant observations are not full scale ethnography (Bryman 2004:303). The participant observations were mainly concentrated to the early stages of the research process, when they offered good opportunities for the participants to get used to my presence and for me to create rapport (Punch 2002:3). The method was saturated when I became unable to concentrate on the scene that I was currently immersed in. (For a methods overview see Table 1).

PHOTO ELICITATION

By making use of photo elicitation I was hoping to get closer to a sociological understanding of orphanhood through visual techniques

(Bolton et al. 2001:506). This proved to be an empowering method for working with marginalised children. It permitted them to be in charge of the process and they became researchers themselves (Bolton et al. 2001:517). The participants were now allowed to describe and classify an environment that usually defines and constrains them. It was thus an ultimate tool to gain understanding *of* orphans rather than *about* orphans. (Bolton et al. 2001:517; Young and Barret 2001:143) Furthermore, as these children were constrained by language and illiteracy, visual techniques let them construct their own reality in pictures (White et al. 2010:148). This method did not require sustained immersion in the research setting, but still gave me information about the participant's daily life, and especially on settings and situations that I did not have access to. This is otherwise a requirement for ethnography. (Bryman 2004:312; Young and Barret 2001:148) Even if many of the photographs were staged in a deliberate manner (dressing up, posing, using faked mimicry) they are useful to understand children's meaning making processes (White et al. 2010:150).

.I invited the households to do photo diaries using disposable cameras. I distributed eight cameras of which six were returned and resulted in over 150 photographs. The children were given some

loose instructions of what to portray, such as sadness, happiness, fears, child/adult attributes, and role models (see Appendix). The purposefully taken photographs represent a source of data on their own and were also used in discussions with the photographer (Bryman 2004:312). From these discussions, I retrieved rich accounts of children's lives. Initially I was worried about the result as some children failed to follow the instructions; some took photos of motifs of their own choice deviating too much form the intended focus; some were obliged by others to take photos of certain motifs; some children had to share cameras as one camera was defect while two were stolen by other children; and some children (especially those who had never been to school) had a low level of abstract thinking and analytical ability to even imagine what motifs to frame. This was enforced by the children's unfamiliarity with visual imagery as they seldom have books, TVs, cartoons and photographs (Punch 2002:14). Yet, it must be noted that some of them had the possibility to visit nearby video halls, which may have been inspirational for this photo, Figure 1:

Figure 1 (Gabriel's photo)
This is a typically staged photo (Gabriel's best friend Carson in borrowed clothes, striking a pose not unlike that of a music video), however, the backdrop gives him away: a poor peasant having to take the family's most precious belonging to graze.

INTERVIEWS

Seven in-depth interviews were conducted as the final stage of the research process and served as a means of verification and a follow up instrument. The idea was to explore in-depth, the understanding of my research participants' life worlds and self-images (Kvale and Brinkman 2009:116, Charmaz 2006:25). I formulated a few broad and open-ended questions to guide the interviews (see Appendix), as seen in the analysis, hoping that these would encourage unanticipated answers from the respondents, and thereby continue to guide my research and gradually fill the emerging theoretical frame (Charmaz 2006:27).

However, even if the interviews opened up for the participants' inner thoughts it was unmistakably the least suitable method for research with children. It was also difficult for me to detect disparities in language use, gestures, and cultural norms (Kvale and Brinkman 2009:144). In addition, it was problematic that some children withheld information or were too hungry and listless to answer the questions. Most importantly, it was challenging that some children cried when we discussed sensitive issues. I then tried to console them and talk about other issues. Interestingly, these themes then resurfaced through other, more child-centred, methods.

CHILD-CENTRED METHODS

As a complement to the conventional methods I employed child-centred methods such as drawings and picture diaries as well as participation in children's games to encourage the children to express themselves more openly. This helped me develop a theoretical understanding grounded in the children's perceptions as it diminished the adult/child power relation (White et al. 2010:146). My motive for using child-centred methods lies within the perception that children are competent beings, like adults, but their skills differ from those of adults (Punch 2002:3; White et al. 2010:144). Children expressed themselves more openly and honestly in drawing, in picture diary discussions, and while playing games than during in-depth interviews, which to them were artificial.

I gave notebooks to five of the children and they were asked to draw and write about their daily activities, feelings and thoughts (see Appendix). The main idea was to draw their family, their home and their favourite activities. The diaries were also used when certain topics (such as parental disease and death) were too delicate to discuss in a face-to-face conversation. Diaries and drawings were later individually discussed with the children.

My participation in games was effective in various ways. Playing with children is an invaluable opportunity to gain insight into their existence through informal talk and it is ingenious for avoiding adult interference. It also increased the relation of trust between us. They saw me as an adult, but young, and in play the power asymmetry relation between us shrunk. It was still palpable, but had more to do with my origin than my age.

ETHICAL CONCERNS

According to the 'do no harm' and 'non-invasion of privacy' principles, some might consider it cruel to do research with vulnerable individuals, such as orphans, since their participation can undo emotional wounds and make traumatic experiences resurface (Bryman 2004:505). This became apparent as most children (and I) cried while talking about a parent's death. However difficult it was to talk about it, they still agreed to share their experiences with me. Most children never talked about their deceased parents as this was discouraged by people in their surroundings. Therefore, I believe that participation in my research was a positive and cathartic experience in which these otherwise marginalised children were given the opportunity to voice their beliefs, hopes and fears (Scheyvens and Storey 2003:175). Sally, Simon, and Samantha *each*

wrote the following message as part of their last diary entries: (clearly, they must have cooperated!)

> Hello Matilda! This is to send to you a great thanks for the much support you give us since parents died. I have been lonely and unhappy because of lacking parents. We now say a warm goodbye. May God bless you and your journey back. Greetings to all the brothers of Sweden!

Ethically, it was crucial to explain the research purpose at the outset of the process and the potential gains of involvement (Scheyvens and Storey 2003:173). Participation entailed no material gains for the participants but as a white researcher, I think I represented affluence in their eyes. I suspect that the participants sometimes exaggerated their hardship to make me pity them and give them money, food or other material things. A telling example was when a participant claimed having gone without food for a whole day but at the same time had pieces of food stuck between her teeth. Some participants would produce long lists of things they needed and expected me to provide, but I replied with a firm 'No'. The children always tried to find ways to get food, clothes, money and with time I realised that it was important not to give in to their every demand. When I left, I divided all my household effects and old clothes

between the three orphan families. The children were delighted and thrilled, especially those who had never slept in a proper bed!

Finally, I specifically asked the children if I could use their photographs and drawings in my thesis, which they all agreed to. When I mentioned that I would give them pseudonyms in order not to reveal their identities (Scheyvens and Storey 203:177) they were almost disappointed. They were proud to be part of the research which in turn was no secret as my presence in their homes hardly went by unnoticed! It should be noted, though, that all names used here are pseudonyms.

Table 1. Quantitative summary of my field methods.

	indepth interviews	photo interviews	drawing/diary interviews	participatory observations
Flora	1	1	1	X
Frances	1			X
Gabriel	1	1	1	X
Glen	1	1	1	X
Sally	1	1	8	X
Samantha	1	1	7	X
Simon	1	1	7	X
Steven		1	7	X
Sandy		1	7	X
Benson				X
Harmony			1	X
Symphony			1	X
Melody			1	X
Gibson			1	X
Hope			1	X
Dickson			1	X
Total	7	8	45	

4 Exploring orphanhood

My analysis contains two parts; First, I elaborate the substantive theory of the Orphan Protagonist (OP), then I formalise it.

In the first part I discuss in-depth the OP's five categories: Doing Domestic Dexterity, Living Liminally, Dealing with Death, Adjusting to Adult Absence/Ambiguity, and Seeking Spiritual

Solace. Four of the five categories include one sub-property each; Extinguishing emotions, Incarnating identities, Guaranteeing guardianship, and Forming a future. By focusing on the *leitmotif* in my research questions: *experiences* of everyday struggles, social *interactions,* and *aspirations* for the future, I can describe and explain the orphans' daily lives and principal activities

I formalise the substantive theory into a formal theory in two parts; a Self-Image Typology and Conduct Control. The former entails the processes of Normalisation, Denial and Complete Absorption of orphan self-image. The latter demonstrates a code of conduct that the OP lives by to avoid bad labelling and abuse and to enjoy benefits from the community. The formal theory springs from my empery but is transferable beyond this, to similar settings and phenomena.

To enrich the analysis the substantive and formal theories will be simultaneously analysed using SI. Whenever applicable in the analysis, I will use the core SI concepts of *self, role-taking, joint action, significant other* and *generalised other*.

I now introduce the archetypal orphan; a synthesis of a stereotypical imagery of orphans springing from fiction. It serves to grasp the complexity of the phenomenon. The archetypal orphan also justifies

the name that I have given my substantive theory. I will then provide short narratives of each of the participating orphan families.

THE ARCHETYPAL ORPHAN PROTAGONIST

In fiction, the orphan symbolises tragedy (Leoutsakas 2003) but has a dual character; provoking sympathy and pity but at the same time scorn and disgust in its entourage. The orphan symbolises possibility and hope but also despair (Kimball 1999). It leads a life free from parental meddling and constraints but is deprived of the freedom and privileges of a child (ibid). Legendary orphans in literature, and there are many, epitomise the self-made hero and are often depicted as protagonists (Kimball 1999; Leoutsakas 2003). They are self-contained and lead fascinating and adventurous lives in the quest for affection, identity and success (ibid).

Real life orphans in contemporary Uganda do not share all aspects of the literary heroes' extraordinary lives. Contrary to them, Ugandan orphans are burdened with family obligations such as parenting younger siblings, caring for ill relatives, and earning the daily bread. The daily life of a typical Ugandan orphan holds little excitement and instead s/he leads a simple life, fettered to the domestic hearth, and preoccupied only by the mundane chores. The tragic truth is that

16

few orphans actually find their Mr. Brownlow or prince[4]. Instead, in order to survive, they are required to be masters of their own destiny not unlike their literary predecessors. This is what I attempt to demonstrate, hence the literary notion of – the Orphan Protagonist. I now introduce the participants in my study, on whose life worlds the substantive theory is constructed.

THE ORPHAN FAMILIES

- Fourteen-year old Flora lives alone. Her sister, eighteen-year old Frances, and four other siblings go to boarding school and come back to visit only during the holidays. Their home is situated in Pallisa Town. They have electricity, a large house with several furnished bedrooms, and most importantly, they rely on remittances from a step sister who lives in the UK. Managing schoolwork and the household is cumbersome for Flora. She also suffers from solitude, especially at night as living alone in the large and empty roadside house makes her feel scared and vulnerable; it is common that people pay her nocturnal visits to frighten her.

She may live alone, but neighbours and relatives play a great part in her everyday life.

- Gabriel is fifteen years old. He is the head of a household providing for a family of six younger cousins, his younger brother Glen, as well as a crippled and sick grandmother, a lame aunt and her perpetually drunk husband. They live in Pallisa Town and neither Gabriel nor Glen go to school, instead they have to struggle to get by on small jobs like weeding people's cassava gardens, carrying bricks or harvesting crops. Nine people share a minimal dark and dank house completely void of furniture and with only tattered sisal mats to sleep on. When it rains the compound turns into thick mud that floods the house and the clatter of rain on the tin roof is deafening. Their compound is situated close to their relatives' homes, of which most are widows with many children. As the oldest living male in this social setting, Gabriel serves as the main bread winner. He is thus the head of what can almost be called an orphan colony.

- Sally, fifteen, Simon, thirteen, Samantha, eleven, Steven, nine, and Sandy, seven, live 'deep in the village', which is a

---

[4] Oliver Twist is eventually adopted by the wealthy Mr. Brownlow and both Cinderella and Snow White are rescued by princes.

remote village called Okotai far from the tarmac road. After their parents' recent demise they were taken in by their uncle. Due to a quarrel between him and the children's late father, the uncle seems determined to make them suffer. Their good-hearted grandfather lives nearby, but his age limits his ability to interfere with and stop the uncle's maltreatment of the children. The children are landless and most of their belongings were sold or stolen when their parents died. They all go to school and are forced to juggle school work, parenting, and household chores. They largely rely on doles from their relatives or neighbours to get by.

In all, nine children play a main role as participants in my study that is embedded in a context where children and orphans are plentiful.

THE ORPHAN PROTAGONIST

Doing Domestic Dexterity

The OP takes great pride in the performance of domestic chores. The chores are performed with great ease and swiftness. The OP is keen to demonstrate different kinds of techniques of how to perform a certain chore in the best possible manner. This includes sweeping, washing, carrying and cooking techniques. Furthermore, domestic chores and activities like fetching water and firewood, sweeping the compound, digging in the garden, cooking, washing plates, doing laundry, grinding cassava or maize, cleaning the house and doing these same chores for older relatives or neighbours take up the vast majority of the OP's time and life. The OP will rise at dawn to do some chores before school and then finish them upon return. When chores are done, a common pastime is "just sitting". This is an expression that means to sit or loiter around the house to chat and watch passer-bys. Fatigue, from work and malnourishment, hinders the children from playing and they rarely have any money to engage in other activities.

The OP's capabilities are manifested through the hard work performed which in turn contributes to enhancing the OP's respectability in the eyes of the community. Through arduous work the OP avoids being labelled as lazy, thievish and a useless orphan. The hard work is therefore not only a reproductive activity that needs completion for the daily life to function but it is also a strategy to gain acceptance and respect, and thereby indirectly, assistance from the community. As a social interactant, the OP imaginatively occupies the role of others, views her/himself from the vantage points of people in the surroundings, anticipate their reactions and

thereby fit her/his actions into a social transaction (Klunklin and Greenwood 2006:34). Role-taking is an essential element of social interaction as it guarantees a certain amount of permanence of society. Conformity to the expectations of behavior results either in gaining benefits or in evading negative repercussions (Klunklin and Greenwood 2006:34). According to the research participants, community members in general expect the OP to be zealous in the performance of household chores, whereas failure to perform these tasks adequately boosts the negative image of the orphan and thereby her/his maltreatment.

This is exemplified through Simon's injury. Recently he fell from a tree and was severely injured. Due to the lack of medical treatment, he still suffers from chest pains, vomiting and breathing difficulties. As a result he is no longer apt to perform most of the household chores. Simon's condition demonstrates the harsh truth; that an orphan who cannot work hard is useless and much worse off than his able bodied siblings. Furthermore, his injury combined with his recent parental bereavement has made him depressed and he can no longer perform adequately at school. His future therefore, sadly enough, looks rather bleak and his uncle readily takes advantage of the situation. Simon has become his uncle's personal slave, to be used as he pleases for nonsensical work or to be subject to bouts of arbitrary beatings. The uncle makes him stay home from school to dig in the fields even if Simon's efforts only last half an hour. The uncle then punishes his poor school performance by caning him. Furthermore he has made Simon abandon Catholicism (his parents' religion) to instead join a Christian Born Again Church. Simon can only comply as refusing will egg on the uncle in his pitiless deeds. The uncle knows that no one can protest or criticise him for exploiting a (parentless) child. It has to be noted that regardless of whether parents are alive or dead, according to Ugandan mores, children should be respectful, helpful of and never talk back to adults.[5] This practice is enhanced when the children lack guardians.

Doing Domestic Dexterity, manifested through my interactions with the children, is also a telling example of how I was perceived as a white person. A common image among the children was that I did not know how to cook, clean or do heavy manual labour.

---

[5] "Every child shall have responsibilities towards his family and society, the State and other legally recognized communities and the international community. The child, subject to his age and ability, and such limitations as may be contained in the present Charter, shall have the duty; (a) to work for the cohesion of the family, to respect his parents, superiors and elders at all times and to assist them in case of need;" (*African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child 1999*).

Furthermore, they believed I needed special food, never leftovers and always the best pieces of meat. They saw me as a fragile being in need of pampering and rest. My inability to do things (as an adult) made them feel capable and responsible. It was a manner for them to show me how well they managed the household, and their domestic dexterity was hereby further established. Thus, I can also distinguish how the orphan status is reified and solidified through interaction not only with the community but also with me as a temporary participant, especially since my interest in them is grounded in the fact that they are orphans. Therefore their dominant self-image (in relation to me) is that of the orphan.

Extinguishing emotions

What is more, the engagement in household chores and the OP's skilfulness in these is a manner to become absorbed by the present. This conception of time becomes apparent in many ways. In the children's diaries for example, day after day, the same activities are repeated and there are no emotions attached to their daily doings and whereabouts. When asked to draw pictures of their families the children drew those people who were present in their home at the time of making the drawing. When asked what they had done during the day, they simply replied by the usual mantra "I fetched water, I bathed, I cooked, I swept, I dug in the garden and I cooked" (Sally, Simon, Samantha), or "you know my work" (Flora). They never referred to their pastime activities such as games and conversations with uncles or aunts. There seemed to be a complete emotional detachment from the immediate present, and feelings were rarely mentioned more elaborately than "good" or bad". I am convinced that their unwillingness to talk about such things was not only due to an emotional detachment but also a manner to preserve the favourable image of their orphan status, their domestic dexterity and their devotion to work rather than play.

I realised that adults rarely took interest in children's preoccupations and therefore the children omitted details on games in their accounts, believing that this was unimportant. However, when probing, they were more than willing to share the secrets of childhood with me. Some examples follow: Gabriel told me that he and his friends are trying to start a football team so that they can join in the local tournaments; he also told me about the music and videos he likes. Glen loves Jet Li movies. And Frances and Flora told me about what type of fashion they like and the best places to buy clothes in Pallisa. Seven year-old Sandy drew pictures of himself fetching wood. The

wood was not for making fire but for building a hut of his own, where he fancied living with his future wife, in three years time.

Doing Domestic Dexterity and its sub property, extinguishing emotions are closely linked to the concept of Living Liminally because the OP experiences blurred boundaries between childhood and adulthood, as we will now see.

Living Liminally

Drawing on the concept of Van Gennep / Turner (1909/1967), I argue that the OP experiences liminal living. The state of liminality is a grey-zone, a twilight zone where the subject is torn between disparate social realities, identities and roles (Aguilar and Filomeno 1999). The OP is trapped between childhood and adulthood; unruly and innocent on the one hand and capable and responsible on the other. The OP zigzags between these two phases but is never quite at ease. The OP combines domestic dexterity with dexterity in play meaning excelling in games. During play the OP is therefore seemingly carefree and happy and forgets about worries such as how to put food on the table. Yet, the OP might engage in a game of football or '*blada*' (jumping over an elastic cord) while waiting for the maize to roast – usually the sole meal of the day, Figure 2.

Figure 2 (Samantha's photo)
"This day we went to bed without supper. Sally had been playing *blada* but then she started to worry. We had only had maize and now it was getting dark and we had no food. We thought about the parents and we cried together. I consoled her saying that tomorrow early in the morning I will go and break maize and roast."

As an adolescent, the OP is already expected to be a principal breadwinner of a family which means performing all adult chores but still running the risk of being physically punished for misbehaviour. In school the OP is allowed, or even expected, to be a child; at home s/he is forced to parent siblings without having received any parenting. Even if the orphan status forces the OP to

21

drop out of school to take on breadwinning activities s/he does not fail to dress in school uniform. Gabriel insists on wearing his school uniform everyday even if he has not been enrolled for two years. This way, he can pretend to linger in childhood and look both well-behaved and smart, Figure 3.
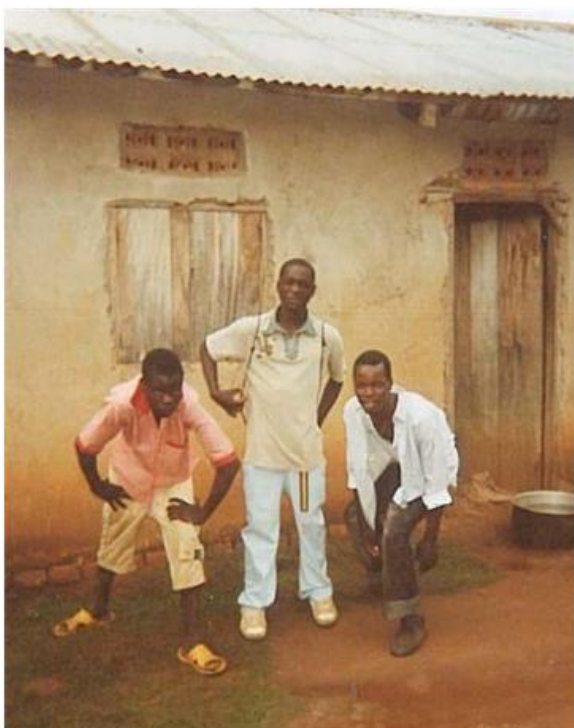

Figure 3 (Gabriel's photo) Gabriel is first from left: "I'm wearing my old school uniform. I wear the same clothes everyday and people tell me it's like a second skin that cannot be changed."

The OP regards itself as a child, who goes to school, plays and yearns for parental love and affection. In the eyes of fellow siblings the OP needs to be a devoted and resourceful provider but in the eyes of the community the OP is 'an irresponsible leach' who is incessantly begging for food or other goods. At the same time, the OP might in the current situation when parents have died, be better off in terms of housing, schooling, clothing, etc. The OP has extremely restricted autonomy and is tied down by kin and family restraints and expectations. On the one hand the OP is free from meddling and bossing from parents but on the other hand lacks the freedom that can be granted by parents. The OP is forced to perform all the work of an adult but at the same time not being awarded the same respect as one. Furthermore the OP is also a burden on the community and must struggle hard to gain acceptance and respect. Commonly the OP has to engage in day labour to earn the daily bread. Doing so, the OP is paid less than adults as s/he is *defended by no one*.

Living Liminally, implying dual roles, is thus a profound enabling and disabling psychosocial process as the child somehow enjoys the best of both worlds. Nevertheless, this can only be so if the child learns to deal with life in *limbo*, meaning a state of uncertainty

described as 'betwixt and between', otherwise it might be a rather disruptive lifestyle as the clash of self-images is a highly disabling psycho-social process. Living Liminally is therefore, as the term suggests, a double edged sword and its disabling or enabling elements depend on how the individual in question internalises and acts upon the disparate self-images.

Dealing with Death

Death is omnipresent in the life of the OP who has a close relationship with death, in particular that of their parents. The OP speaks about death in a matter of fact way; have dreams about death and sometimes even wish for death. The first thing Flora sees as she opens the shutters each morning are her parents' tombs. The Okotai siblings live next to their late parents' house which is left to dilapidate slowly due to a two year long mourning period, Figure 4. Also, the OP is constantly reminded of the orphan status whenever failing to find food. The OP is aware that older relatives can die anytime and that even s/he as a young person is exposed to death:

> Jesus can come and take you any time. There are certain diseases and accidents that kill young people too. You can even die when you're happy, like after playing football. / Gabriel

Figure 4 (Sally's photo)
"This is my parents' house. It makes me sad to see this […] we have to wait for the last funeral rites before we tear down the house. If you break the house before the last rites someone can come and kill a family member. I don't know what will happen to the land after it has been broken."

This is also why the OP is keen to be photographed when dressed in nice clean clothes, in order to be remembered by loved ones after death, Figure 5.

23

Figure 5
(Gabriel's photo)
Gabriel is standing, to the left, in front of the guava trees that give him and his family food.

He likes dressing up in nice borrowed clothes, thus a memory for his relatives to remember him by, if he dies.

Death is regarded as something natural, ubiquitous and as God's will. Proximity with death constantly solidifies the orphan self-image as it obviously sets the OP apart from children with living parents. This is closely linked with the sub-property that I will introduce here, incarnating identities, which is a strategy for the OP to preserve the memory of the late parents and a manner to be

socialised in the absence of the most conventional *significant others* (Klunklin and Greenwood 2006:33).

Incarnating identities

Unruh (1983) specifies different strategies that people who have lost loved ones employ to preserve the identity of the demised person. The first strategy entails redefining the negative aspects of the life and identity of the dead person. Elements that were regarded as problematic while they were alive are romanticised (Martin 2010:19) According to the OP the past is always depicted as a happy and problem free era; the parents were alive, s/he had freedom to play, had food, clothes and books, and felt safe. Paradoxically enough, in some cases the children were 'worse off' in certain respects when the parents were alive. The Okotai siblings used to sleep in their parents minimal hut of eight square meters. The parents would sleep in the bed and the children would all huddle on a matt placed *under* the bed. Now they live with their uncle in a proper brick house although they still sleep on mats on the floor. During the time of their parents' disease they were forced to sell land in order to afford medical drugs, they had little food and were obliged to care for ailing parents. They would witness daily how the parents would vomit, urinate in bed, wallow in pain. Frances was forced to drop out

24

of school to care for her sick mother. Back in school, a boarding school, she is now practically freed from domestic chores.

Secondly, the OP struggles to keep the memory of the late parents alive by preserving certain activities and rituals that these were involved in (Martin 2010:19). The OP possesses a curiosity to explore her/his roots in order to solidify an identity and is also keen to reincarnate the parents' virtues and qualities. This is manifested through an eagerness to hear stories about the late parents; by being careful not to tarnish the late parent's reputation; and by reproducing the parent's actions. Flora always gives food to hungry children as this is what her father would have done. Gabriel prefers to be called Junia, his late father's name rather than his own name. The Okotai siblings are determined to behave as their father did when he was a child (!) and therefore listen attentively to their grandfather's stories.

Thirdly, the OP sanctifies places and objects that are related to the deceased parents in order to preserve the parents' character and memories thereof (Martin 2010:19). The Okotai siblings often visit their parents' dilapidating houses when they are sad or want to be alone. Sandy weeds daily around his parents' houses in order to prevent it from becoming overgrown.

Due to the absence of the most conventional *significant others*, namely parents, one would think that other actors would step in to replace them as agents of socialisation. Interestingly enough the late parents remain the dominant inculcator of values and beliefs as the socialisation process is done indirectly through a glorification and perpetuation of their personalities and values. In the absence of parents the OP tries to reconstruct the image of them through inquiry about parents' life style from relatives and their own memories.

Adjusting to Adult Absence /Ambiguity

The adult absence implies that there are either no adults present in the home, or that adults are not able-bodied (and thereby inept at performing adult work), or that they are mentally absent, often as a consequence of alcohol consumption. At Flora's and Frances' house the adult absence is strikingly apparent. Some aunts and uncles stop by occasionally but the household is completely run by children.

At Gabriel's and Glen's house the adults are always physically present as both the aunt and the grandmother are disabled and thus immobile. They loiter around the house and can hardly do any physical work. What adults usually provide - money and security -

seems to be absent, however. The adults all consume great amounts of alcohol and this makes them 'mentally absent', Figures 6 and 7.

The Okotai siblings live with their grandfather and several paternal uncles. They have their own kitchen and latrine but share sleeping quarters with the uncles and grandfather. They do therefore not experience adult absence but rather adult ambiguity. The grandfather provides some moral support and at times also food from his garden or ducklings to sell. However, he is old and therefore not capable of being their full guardian.

The uncle who is a primary school teacher makes the children's lives miserable. He makes them work for him without any benefits in return, he steals and sells their belongings, and he punishes them arbitrarily. The children still think however, that it is an advantage to live with their uncle even if he mistreats them. The principal reason for this is that sometimes they actually get some food, clothes or other material things and they are protected from thieves and assault. The adult ambiguity lies within the fact that the children can never count on the uncle to provide for them; instead they have to show extreme gratitude every time he gives them even the slightest bit.

Figure 6 (Glen's drawing, top), Figure 7 (Gabriel's drawing)
When asked to draw common scenes from their homes, Glen and Gabriel (albeit on different occasions) depicted very similar motifs. Glen drew his aunt and her husband sharing a bottle of Waragi (Ugandan gin) at 4pm on a Sunday afternoon. Gabriel drew the husband drinking Waragi, the aunt half naked due to the heat, and the old grandmother making her way around the compound with a walking stick.

The aspects of suffering due to the adult absence/ambiguity and parental bereavement can be divided into three main categories. The primary source of suffering concerns the lack of material resources such as food, clothes, beddings, scholastic material, and medical treatment. The material aspects are the mostly cited obstacles that the OP faces. For many the primary quotidian preoccupation is how to get food for the day:

> Things for sleeping we don't have. We three boys we sleep down like animals on the ground and sometimes we cannot eat and we drink water only and eat mangoes. / Simon.

> The most difficult thing is to get food, sometimes you do not have anything to eat and you don't have anyone to buy beddings. At least, when you have parents they make sure that you eat well and sleep well. / Gabriel.

> We cry when we have to go to bed without food and then we think of the parents and that this would not have happened if they were here. / Samantha.

The second source of suffering concerns the lack of emotional support and care. The OP has few people to confide in and talk openly to about troubles and worries. Hence, parents are immensely missed. But the loss, as expressed by the children, refers to an almost instrumental vision of their parents. This means that parents' are useful as they give the OP freedom and liberty to be a child. When parents were alive the OP had leisure time and did not have to worry about finding food or money to buy necessary things:

> Some children who are with their parents, they are very happy but for me I am not 100% happy like those ones' who have their parents. Something that makes me happy is when parents give me freedom. / Sally.

> Our parents divided work and give us time to play and we were not overloaded with work. Now sometimes when the uncle is there, we do not play because he overloads us with work. / Simon.

> I am really missing my parents, because even at school if someone beats me, I cannot do anything, just keep quiet and the teacher can beat me even if I do things right. I wish my father was there so that I can tell him what happened. / Samantha.

The third source of suffering concerns the lack of sufficient protection. This implies that the OP is vulnerable to exploitation and physical violence due to the orphan status. As the OP lacks an adult spokesperson, the OP can be beaten, wrongfully punished, subjected to nocturnal attacks and harassment and have belongings stolen:

> When I am alone I fear someone will come and scare me. People know that I live alone and people can come and scare me because they know there are no adults. People come and scare me so that I will leave the house and go, and they can steal my things. When someone scares me I stay in my room. I just endure in bed. I pray for God's guidance and mercy. Usually they just leave. / Flora.

People fear to enter those homes with adults but with us, anyone who wants, can come and do his own things because nobody can stop them from doing it, because all who stay here are children. [….] They can come and beat the children, not me because I'm somewhat big but the others, and if people come across things like saucepans they can steal and then we have no say. / Gabriel.

This place scares me because it's bushy [*the late parents' houses*]. Someone can hide there and attack you and cut off your head. I am scared it could happen to me or my beloved ones. It can happen to us because we have no parents and anyone can just come and take us from the house. People do this because we have no parents and cannot defend ourselves. I cannot prevent it from happening, but being good mannered helps. Praying can also help. When you pray when someone has come to steal, God's power can help divert the person from stealing. / Sally.

Steven is afraid that if something would happen to him, like being murdered no one would ever know because his parents would not be around to investigate it. He reckons that his sister could try to look for him but she would not succeed, like the parents would have:

One lady had her head cut off. It scares me! Because I have no parents and if someone would kill me no one will come and look for my body. I think that Sally would come and look for me but she cannot find me. They might cut off my head and throw the body in the bush and Sally might fear to go in the bush. My parents however, would never fail to find me. / Steven.

The essence of adult absence/ambiguity is the importance for the OP to be completely self-reliant as adults can never be counted on for assistance. The OP has to struggle hard to get adult assistance but through respectful behaviour and helpfulness s/he is at times granted some. Even if parents, in their absence, still are the principal agents of socialisation, it must also be stated that the *generalised other* plays a great role in the socialisation process of the OP. Important agents of socialisation through the generalised other are: teachers, peers, relatives and neighbours. Primary socialisation through *significant others* serves as a sort of exercising ground for social interaction. As this is largely absent due to the lack of parents, the OP is catapulted into the social world to be socialised by the *generalised other* rather brusquely. The OP uses primarily three socialisation strategies in order to safeguard good manners:

Instillation of moral values by relatives: such as go to school, do not defecate along the road, do not loiter in people's homes, and do not delay when you are sent to run errands, Figure 8.

28

Figure 8 (Simon's photo)
"Our grandpa teaches us morals, how to be good and avoid trouble. He canes us if we disobey. He tells us not to fight in school, not loiter about people's homes, and to do our readings."

Avoiding bad company: such as non-studious children, prematurely pregnant women, the opposite sex, etc):

> Married friends or friends with babies give you trouble and bad ideas, it's best only to have friends who study. / Frances

> To spend time with bad mannered people at school is bad because even if I don't want [*to do what they do*] it makes me feel not good because they discuss dropping out of school and can influence me at times even if I don't want to. / Flora

Participation in activities that prevent idleness and allow forgetting worries: household chores and playing are such examples. Also, it prevents the children from being idle which otherwise could lead to criminal behaviour in the worst case, Figure 9.

The oldest sibling in each sibship; Sally, Frances and Gabriel, recognises the immense responsibility they have for the well-being and moral upbringing of their younger siblings, this leads us to the sub-property of *Guaranteeing guardianship*.

Figure 9 (Gabriel's (right) photo)
"My friend's mother says that playing football keeps me away from criminality, being idle is not good as it makes you think of stealing. I say that the idle mind is the devil's workshop."

Guaranteeing guardianship

Frances and Sally were both prepared or 'groomed' by their parents to take over the household after their death. The girls were taught how to manage a household and were trained how to cultivate land, cook, take care of youngsters etc. They are now the heads of households and guardians of their younger siblings. Gabriel was too young when his parents died to be groomed but nonetheless he is the principal breadwinner and head of the family. In their respective family, they make the decisions in the household and when needed they ask relatives or friends for assistance. This responsibility is a burden, but it also brings gratification and pride when obstacles are overcome. The heads of household also feel that they have to protect the younger ones; this can be done through giving them more and better food, or telling them to play instead of work. If the household heads fail to perform certain chores, like if they play instead of work, they are afraid that they will disappoint their siblings. But when they succeed in something the younger ones show gratitude:

> If I fail to do my work my siblings would be mad, they would think of our parents and wishing they were here. They understand that I have a difficult situation and they are grateful to me. They say "thank you Sally you are the one who planted the crops that now gives us food". It makes me feel good and proud. It makes the situation a

bit more bearable as I know that I am capable. If I compare with other 15-year olds, I have more opportunities. I know how to dig, but others with parents do not. And I have learnt how to keep young children and others have not. / Sally.

The OP has few people to turn to when they need help or want to be consoled, therefore they often turn to religion for consolation, thereof the category *Seeking Spiritual Solace.*

Seeking Spiritual Solace

The OP rarely speaks openly about loss, about the time when the parents were sick or when they eventually died. At times when there is no food or other material artefacts the OP cries but rarely openly. When the children cry in the presence of other people they are often told "you have to endure, stop crying" or "you are not the only one in a bad situation, just endure". Such comments discourage the children to speak about their loss and it impedes them from venting their emotions and thoughts. The ultimate manner for the OP to express its sadness is therefore spiritual solace. Religion is central to Ugandan society; the principal religion is Christianity (85 per cent) and the most important denomination is Catholicism (45 per cent), followed by Protestantism and then several evangelical

denominations (UBOS 2002). Frances and Flora belong to a Baptist church, Gabriel and Glen as well as the Okotai siblings are Catholics, except Simon who has been forced by his uncle to join a Christian Born Again Church. As these sermons are longer and the church is further away than the Catholic Church, Simon has little time to play and spend time with his siblings on their day of rest.

The OP claims to have a close relationship with God, prays several times a day, is a devoted church attendee and puts hope in God for the future. What sets the OP apart from other church visitors is probably that by putting faith in God s/he disclaims her/his responsibilities for a short while. Taking on such responsibilities at an early age is difficult and no adult will voluntarily step in to play the role of the parent and therefore only God can *unburden* the OP. Through faith in God, the OP can more easily bare the plight of orphanhood. Going to church is probably the highlight of the week; the children dress up, sing in the choir, and get relief and assistance. Sandy simply likes church because the priest arrives at church by car! But there are other reasons too, Figure 10 and quote:

> In the church there is praise and worship. I forget about troubles when there is praise and in the bible there are

some scriptures that talk about death and they counsel me. Even priests preach against discrimination. / Gabriel

Figure 10 (Flora's photo)
"This is the place of God and I like to go to church. I go there to thank God for what he does to us and I pray for guidance to get the daily bread. I pray when I'm lonely and when I need solace. It helps me a lot to pray."

Forming a Future

The future is always referred to in a vague manner as the OP has no taken for granted person to sponsor her/him to get anywhere. Despite this the OP has a bright outlook on the future. In order to become rich the children unanimously state that this is achieved through

zealous reading in the hope of being enrolled at Makerere (the principal university in Uganda). They express a will to live in the city (of Kampala) but still having land in the village, maybe hiring someone to cultivate it for them. The girls want to go to nursing school; Simon wants to own a truck. Affording to buy a car is the ultimate sign of success. All of the children are convinced that despite their dire situation, they possess a certain advantage vis-à-vis peers with living parents, as the capabilities go *beyond* those of their peers. They admit that they have had to grow up too quickly but at the same time this has moulded them into resourceful and responsible beings; the OP has bright outlooks on the future and is determined to succeed.

5 Formalising the substantive theory

A TYPOLOGY OF ORPHAN PROTAGONIST SELF-IMAGERY

The OP is crafted inductively from empery, not deductively from abstract theory, to capture essential features of the life worlds of orphans, as I see them. Notably, the OP is a heuristic. As such, it is an exaggerated representation of social reality, not a mirror, serving

as a magnifying glass for seeing 'what is going on' in the real world. (Ritzer and Goodman 2005:116-17)

I added a three-dimensional self-image typology to the OP to further consolidate it. The nine subjects in the three orphan families manifest different fronts or self-images in their interactions with the community meaning that the orphan families embrace or even identify with their orphan status in differing ways. I have isolated three strategies of *self-image negotiation* to form a typology: normalisation, denial, or complete absorption of the orphan status. The boundary between the types of self-images is blurred in the sense that an orphan can take on one or any combination of the three self-images; the essence is that one self-image is dominant.

Normalisation of orphan self-image

Some orphans tend to normalise their orphan self-image. Usually they are those whose parents' demise occurred a long time ago (Gabriel and Glen). These children have not experienced an abrupt rupture between the life style of the pampered child and the abandoned orphan. This has enabled them to completely internalise their orphan identity, especially as they have experienced no other

family configuration. The children demonstrate sobriety and openness vis-à-vis their parents disease and death and speak candidly about the little they know of their late parents without ever shedding tears. These children do not, in contrast to those who are completely absorbed by orphanhood, blame all their misery and hardship on the fact that they are parentless. And unlike those who deny the links between suffering and orphanhood they somewhat accept their plight. The youngest of the boys eleven years old, is or appears to be completely indifferent to being orphan as he makes no difference between intact and non-intact households, he says that all children share the experience of playing and therefore no extensive difference exists.

However, they sometimes deliberately use their orphan status to gain advantages by playing on people's conscience and sympathy. Since their parents succumbed to AIDS, the children know from their internalisation of the generalised cultural other that they should expect to experience discrimination and even ostracism. As their orphan self-image is fully internalised and accepted the children often respond to such treatment with witty comments whereupon

they run in order to avoid a beating. This dialogue, an excerpt from one of my interviews with Gabriel, is an example:

> **Gabriel, how do you think people with HIV are treated?**
>
> Since AIDS has no cure, some people fear to share plates and clothes with infected people. Not like malaria; people can share things with those with malaria as it does not kill and it has a cure.
>
> **Do you think that people treat you differently because your parents died from AIDS?**
>
> Some treat me in a bad way and some in a good way.
>
> **What could a bad way be?**
>
> On neighbour said that: Your father had a high libido for sex so it's good that he died so he could not infect others.
>
> **How does that make you feel?**
>
> Very bad.
>
> **What do you do when your neighbour says such things?**
>
> I did nothing; I just said that death is for everybody so that means that you will die too. Then I ran to avoid being caned.

The children who have normalised their orphan status internalise their fate, as demonstrated by this quote showing that the children can, and accept, to manage life on their own.

> We weed cassava. We do this every day. It feeds us. This
> is what we will do for a living until God takes us. / Glen.

Denial of orphan self-image

This strategy refers to Flora and Frances. The children who deny their orphan status claim that they are better off than intact households. As they are relatively well off economically – they rely on remittances – their claim is to some extent true and they show little tendency to relate material destitution to orphanhood. They work hard in order for the community to see beyond the orphan status; they are generous with food to those who are in greater need than themselves and try hard to excell in school.

As an attempt to stifle their orphan self-image they are involved in the social process of 'defensive othering' (Schwalbe 2001) as they distance themselves from other orphans by treating fellow parentless children as lazy, filthy, and bad mannered (Frances). 'Othering' is the social process by which a dominant group defines another group

as subordinate and from which they must differentiate and distance themselves. The specific process of defensive othering implies that members of a subordinate group adopt a degrading image transposed on them by a dominant group. In turn, they apply it to fellow subordinate group members to distance themselves and claim that the pejorative labeling does not apply to them. (Schwalbe 2001)

This process implies that subordinates themselves legitimise an unworthy identity and hereby they reinforce the inequalities between them and the dominant group. Their negative image is accepted and thereby solidified. (Schwalbe 2001:425-26) Adhering to the negative image of the dominant group, severely undercuts subordinate group solidarity and maltreatment of orphans may thus continue. So, by denying their orphan status, they solidify their orphan identity, even if their intention is to distance themselves from it.

The parents' death is associated with anger and deception and the siblings never talk about their loss or feelings. Frances is angry with her father for having brought HIV into the home. She also had to drop out of school in order to care for the mother. Flora, who went to boarding school when her mother died, was not informed about her mother's death until she was already dead and buried. Flora still

feels resentment towards the people who withheld this information. Since all but one child in this sibship go to boarding school, the orphan status loses importance; it is forgotten and quenched. At the boarding school they are surrounded by adults with a set of strict rules and regulations, they get three meals a day and they are freed from domestic chores. This implies that they can concentrate on their studies and be pupils rather than orphans, Figure 11.

Figure 11 (Flora's photo)
Flora took this picture of Frances' belongings from boarding school. Flora is impatient to see her own belongings packed like this. She says that when her time comes to go to boarding school: "I'll just take my things and go, I won't miss anything from home!"

What is more, at boarding school all children are without parents in one sense or the other. However, Flora who is left behind, in the house in Pallisa, experiences orphanhood on a daily basis as she has to deal with the ordeal on her own, and needs to juggle school and housework. For Flora, the mere act of denying orphan self-image solidifies her orphan identity. Frances and the younger siblings successfully deny their orphan status at boarding school, but once in their family home they suffer in solitude as they constantly deny their orphanhood towards others but also towards themselves. Those who employ denial strategy can see a link between suffering and orphanhood but they deny that this suffering should refer to them.

Complete absorption of orphan self-image

Complete absorption can be seen as the opposite of either normalisation or denial of orphan self-image. This process refers to the Okotai siblings. They blame their plight exclusively on the recent demise of their parents. The graves and dilapidating houses constantly remind the children of their fate. They have experienced an abrupt rupture between childhood and orphanhood and their self-image and life style is thus completely renegotiated. The children cry frequently and they discuss their plight openly with each other. The orphan self-image is dominant and it permeates their manner of interacting with the community. At the moment they are first and foremost orphans and secondly children. They still struggle to identify with their newly found self-image, they are not yet all too skillful in interpreting and acting upon the community's actions towards them and perceptions of them. They have not yet learned the nuances of orphanhood; when to emphasise it and when to downplay it, and therefore they face nuisance from the community. The process of trading power for patronage (Schwalbe 2001:426-27) is a telling example of how their orphan self-image is negotiated and becomes a source of suffering and abuse. Trading power for patronage is a strategy to resist and cope with subordinate status allotted to them by a dominant group. This strategy is of a dual character meaning that by resisting, subordination is solidified and reproduced. It entails accepting an inferior position in the hope of getting a beneficial exchange from a relationship with the dominant group. Members of the subordinate group accept humiliating treatment in exchange for support and security. By adopting a docile behavior one might satisfy immediate or material needs but in the long run it contributes to reproducing inequalities. (ibid) Simon is highly involved in this resistance strategy as he accepts his uncle's

maltreatment. The hope is that by being acquiescent, the uncle will provide him and his siblings with certain benefits such as food, clothes, and a sleeping place in a secure house. But by accepting such treatment the uncle is further egged on to continue the unfair treatment of his nieces and nephews and their orphan identity is cemented. Simon's conduct is counterproductive in the long run and the question arises: how should he behave?

The orphan self-image is manifested in different ways in terms of normalisation, denial or absorption of it. In all three cases one orphan self-image is dominant. This typology demonstrates that a temporal aspect is decisive for the orphan self-image and the time that has elapsed since the death of your parents dictates this. The more recent their demise, the stronger is your experience of orphanhood. These variations are also dependent on the overall economic situation and member configuration of the household.

CONDUCT CONTROL

The children claim that good manners are key to being accepted in the community. All the participating children state that they have good manners and rarely misbehave. Several elements are crucial for anyone to be able to live by the code of conduct that I depicted in my

five categories derived from data. *Doing Domestic Dexterity* underlines the importance of diligence in performing domestic chores; *Living Liminally* demonstrates the need to balance between child and adult behaviour; *Dealing with Death* and *Adjusting to Adult Absence/Ambiguity* demonstrate the plight of accepting parents' death and having to adjust to life without parental guidance; *Seeking Spiritual Solace* indicates how praying, attending church, and thinking religiously become a resort in the daily quandaries of orphanhood.

Conduct Control lies at the heart of the OP's life world. The importance of being good mannered and on your best behaviour is immense in order to avoid the risk of being excluded from or exploited by the community. The OP is a marginalised being in a very hierarchical system and has little margin for misconduct. Therefore the OP needs to be a moral marker. This implies that the OP undergoes a constant struggle to be a "super orphan"[6] i.e. to be

---

[6] This notion refers to Charmaz's concept of *super normal identity*. She developed this term in reference to chronically ill individuals, who not only strive to manage their profession as prior to their diagnosis, but also intend to be *even more successful* than the able bodied peers (Charmaz 2006:57,124)

able to do everything her/his peers do and excel beyond them in every aspect of life and in whatever activity undertaken in order to facilitate integration in the community. However, the moral superiority is also a source of conflict and therefore *role-taking* is crucial for the OP, i.e. fitting actions, expectations, and behavior with those of the community. As an example, the OP's success in school causes jealousy and whenever s/he comes across material resources such as food, sharing is essential in order not to be labeled as stingy and braggart:

> Bad mannered people at school think I am bragging, that I can do everything on my own, that I do not need anyone's help. When they do this I just ignore them. / Flora.

> They say that I am bragging, because I am an orphan and I am getting attention. When I do not do what I am told people bark at me but otherwise they are happy with me. My relatives who live nearby get jealous when I have bought fish or meat. Sometimes I give them but only when there is enough for everyone. If they do not get they give me gloomy looks. I just say that it is Jesus will and what can I do about it! / Gabriel.

As such roles exist prior to the individual and are socially, historically, and culturally rooted they constitute a framework in which interaction can take place. The existence of such a framework prevents society from turning into a social mayhem. (Athens 2010:93). This is manifested through an unwritten social code of conduct that the OP has to live by to gain acceptance from the community. This code of conduct is constantly negotiated through social interaction.

The process of begging for food is a telling example of how the three core theoretical underpinnings of SI operate in this context. In order to gain benefits, in terms of food, as a result of orphan status, the OP has to limit food begging to a maximum of three occasions a week. The OP thereby acts on the *meanings* attached to the action of begging for food (the first pillar of SI). The OP, when involved in *role-taking*, knows that it is socially expected and accepted of an orphan to beg for food as orphans often are in dire straits and people in their surroundings pity them. It is hereby clear that the meaning of begging springs from social interaction (the second pillar of SI). However, if the OP begs excessively this privilege will be lost. The OP will soon be regarded as an ungrateful parasite, especially as s/he relies on dons from households that are food insecure. As a consequence, the OP prefers to starve some days rather than tarnishing her/his reputation. However, the fact that the OP starves solidifies the image of a destitute orphan and sympathy towards

her/him is fueled. Finally, we can see that the meanings of begging are constantly altered through social interaction, the third pillar of SI. (Yeon 2004:25)

In what concerns adults in the presence of orphans, it is socially expected of them to give food or other items to orphans once in a while, yet at the same time no one will blame adults if they refuse to share or if they unjustly punish or take advantage of an orphan. The abovementioned social process is an evident example of *joint action* (Klunklin and Greenwood 2006).

The OP knows that s/he has to endure maltreatment in order to enjoy material benefits or security. The OP knows that s/he is perceived as filthy and therefore strives to be as clean as possible; not attend church when there is no soap to wash clothes of fear that people will label her/him as crazy; never wear a school uniform while doing domestic work to not get it dirty; and never ever defecate along the road. Moreover, the orphan status is associated with AIDS and this results in that the generalised other keeps the OP at a distance such that it now has to endure taunts and abuse. To downplay such malefic treatment, the OP makes a point out of not interacting with the opposite sex, not acquainting prematurely pregnant girls or even

other orphans. By doing *role-taking*, anticipating reactions from the community, the OP can determine/control its own acts and decide how to behave in order to avoid maltreatment.

In this thesis I have taken the first steps in formalising my substantive theory, the OP, into the frame of Self-Image Typology and Conduct Control. This formalised version of my grounded theory represents a higher level of generalisation of the OP. It can be used for analysing and interpreting self-images and conduct in other settings and/or with other subjects, and is thus transferable to other social domains and phenomena The Self-Image Typology and Conduct Control are applicable in settings of scarcity and hierarchy wherein a dominant group ascribes a certain image to an inferior group of subjects who are marginalised and experiences restricted room of manoeuvre. To ensure applicability, I have to expose the basic social and psychosocial processes in my grounded theory. I therefore rid the five OP categories and the three self-images of their *orphan specifics* to reduce them into generic processes beyond orphanhood. This procedure is an act of theoretical generalisation (Bryman 2008:392).

Regarding the Self-Image Typology, Normalisation means that subjects accept and internalise dominant self-images transposed onto them by the generalised other. Denial means that subjects downplay and reject these same dominant self-images. Complete Absorption means that subjects struggle to adjust to a new dominant self-image.

The reduction of the OP categories resulted in a ***new set*** of categories associated with Conduct Control. Doing Daily Dexterity implies the endeavour to perform the most important daily activity with great diligence and pride. Living Liminally implies the need to constantly juggle two or more disparate social roles and self-images. Dealing with Death and Adjusting to Abrupt Absence, entail accepting and adjusting to sudden change of existence, often for the worse. Seeking Spiritual Solace indicates the importance of engaging in a higher cause in order to find consolation in one's plight. The sub-properties; Extinguishing emotions, Incarnating identities, Guaranteeing guardianship, and Forming a future remain the same and can thus be readily transposed to other contexts.
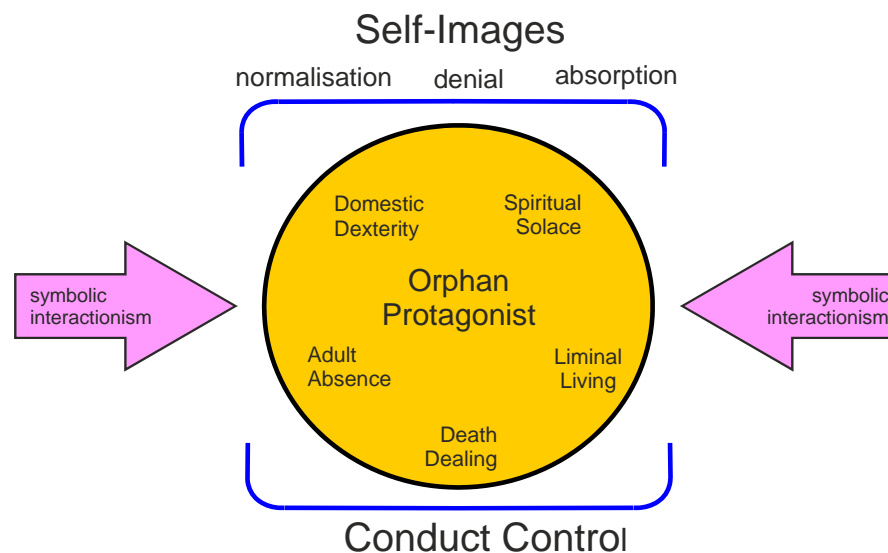
Figure 12. Model of the substantive and formal theory.

6 Conclusion

Inspired by symbolic interactionism I have done constructivist grounded theory with ethnographic methods to systematically document the lived experience of orphaned children as they grapple with the strains of their everyday lives. In the first part of the analysis I created a substantive theory. I engaged with my three empirical research questions to examine how the children *experience* their life circumstances entailing physical and emotional pain; how they make sense of their personal suffering; how they negotiate *social interactions*; and finally how they *maintain motivations* to live in hardship and *develop aspirations for future existence*. These themes represent processes of orphanhood from *within* and thus lie at the heart of the five categories forming the Orphan Protagonist.

In the second part of the analysis I crafted a formal theory. To that end, I studied the meaning-making process attached to their personal and social lives by exploring how *self-images* evolve and are influenced by temporal aspects such as the time elapsed since the parents died. I explored *strategies to safeguard efficient social interaction* with the generalised other and how these depend on a rigid set of rules. Finally, I explored the importance of *good conduct*

and morals in becoming a *responsible citizen* despite the lack of parental guidance. By fitting my substantive theory within symbolic interactionism, I safeguarded my nascent theory from ending up in a theoretical vacuum. I tested the viability of the Orphan Protagonist and to some extent succeeded in formalising my theor*y* through the Self-Image Typology and Conduct Control.

The OP is mobile and can travel to *other settings* where we want to study orphanhood as a social phenomenon. It is transferable to settings where local features are *similar* to those of Pallisa – poor rural subsistence farming on degraded lands with high burden of disease and a young population – be it in Uganda or elsewhere (in Sub-Saharan Africa). Importantly, this means that the OP is applicable to, but *not contingent on*, a specific context. In new research settings the OP can be applied, tested and further improved. The formal theoretical concepts of the Self-Image Typology and Conduct Control, can be transposed to *other social phenomena* with similar characteristics of hierarchical systems, marginalisation and limited leeway for social actors.

The OP is a typical orphaned child living alone or with siblings; orphanhood is understood as having lost both parents in childhood.

The loss implies that the OP is left without parental guidance – love, care, support, protection, punishment – leaving her/him with mammoth responsibilities in a context of limited resources. It is expected of the OP to provide for her/himself, for siblings, and possibly even for old and sick relatives.

The OP status is a double-edged sword. The OP constantly struggles to gain acceptance and sympathy from the generalised other. The OP benefits from stirring emotions and awakening sympathy while triggering frustration and prejudice of being lazy, dirty and thievish. In order to dodge bad labelling and maltreatment, the OP must be an expert in knowing when to 'fish' for sympathy or when to be capable, self-sufficient and in control of conduct. But by being capable and managing on its own, the OP challenges the prevailing power asymmetry between children and adults or between human beings and 'human becomings'. Despite the power asymmetry the OP is a resilient character with immense emotional resources to tap from in order to overcome obstacles and sorrows.

I am careful not to romanticise the lives of these orphans and not to lose sight of the hardship and discrimination that the children may face. I suggest that orphans are capable beings in charge of their own future but I also acknowledge that to be accepted and assisted by the community, they must preserve a certain image of themselves that actually reproduces the system of exploitation against orphans.

I am aware that my theoretical construction is still in its cradle. To formalise it fully, I would have to interpret and conceptualise results of multiple studies and compare settings of similar nature over longer time periods and in different stages of children's (or other social groups) lives. I would also have to link my new concepts further to related extant theory such as those of Anselm Strauss and Erving Goffman. By focusing on agency I downplay structural perspectives of power struggles, including gender, in my own research, while I still recognise their importance for understanding the multiple facets of the orphan crisis. The research setting is imbued with gendered representations rooted in language and social interactions, but given my limited language skills and methods, I could not grasp and theorise that now.

The imaginative interpretation, the thick description (Geertz 1973), and the sociological understanding of orphanhood allowing us to see beyond the obvious path of an understudied pressing social phenomenon (Charmaz 2006:180-81), is my main contribution.

Importantly, I mainly depict orphans as *risk resistant* persons and citizens rather than as *risk exposed* victims.

The near future of the Ugandan orphan saga has an uncertain ending. We can speculate on where the OP is heading and if there is any opportunity for social upward mobility. I have seen that despite the hardship of the daily endeavours that the OP has to face, the absence of parents has formed individuals that are self-contained, resourceful and introspective and who strive for affection and respect from the community. So, is it too bold to claim the unexpected paradox, namely that orphans are Uganda's hope for the future? Instead of regarding orphans as futureless victims and a burden on society, perhaps these children belonging to a parentless generation can contribute to building the nation of Uganda. The Orphan Protagonist is a playful child as well as an arduous and resourceful worker with high morals, immaculate behaviour and an optimistic outlook for the future. I discovered clear signs that (individual) orphans in this Ugandan generation demonstrate a strong will not only to survive, but to thrive! The full consequences of the orphan crisis for individuals and for society are yet to be seen, however.

References

Aguilar, V. Filomeno Jr. (1999) Ritual Passage and the Reconstruction of Selfhood in International Labour Migration. *Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia,* 14:1, 98-139.

Alvesson, Mats and Sköldberg, Kaj (2000) *Reflexive Methodology – New Vistas for Qualitative Research*, London, Sage Publications.

Amber, Jeanine (2004) Stolen Childhood. *Essence*, 35:7, 200-207.

Athens, Lonie (2010) Naturalistic Inquiry in Theory and Practice. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 39:1, 87-125.

Atwine, Benjamin, et al. (2005) Psychological Distress among AIDS-Orphans in Rural Uganda. *Social Science and Medicine*, 61:3, 555-565.

Bauman, Zygmunt (1990) *Thinking Sociologically. An introduction for Everyone*, Cambridge: Basil Blackwell.

Bolton, Angela, et al. (2001) Picture This: Researching Child Workers. *Sociology*, 35:2, 501-519.

Bourdillon, Michael (2006) Children and Work: A Review of Current Literature and Debates. *Development and Change*, 37:6, 1201-1226.

Bryman, Alan (2008) *Social Research Methods*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bukuluki, Paul (2008) *Traditional and contemporary social constructions of succession planning for orphans and vulnerable children in the context of AIDS and armed conflict in Uganda: An ethnographic study,* PhD dissertation: University of Vienna.

Caruso, Jeanne and Cope, Kevin (2006) The Lost Generation: How the Government and Non-Governmental Organizations are protecting the Rights of Orphans in Uganda. *Human Rights Review*, 7:2, 98-115.

Charmaz, Kathy (2006) *Constructing Grounded Theory*, London: Sage Publications.

Cox, Robert (1981) Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory. *Millennium – Journal of International Studies*, 10, 126-155.

Dalen, Nina et al. (2009) "They don't care what happens to us" - The Situation of Double Orphans Heading Household in Rakai District, Uganda. *BMC Public Health*, 9:1, 321.

Francis-Chizoro, Monica (2008) *The Formation, Constitution, and Social Dynamics of Orphaned Child-Headed households in Rural Zimbabwe*, PhD Dissertation: University of Saint Andrews.

Geertz, Clifford (1973) *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays.* New York: Basic Books.

Kamya, Hugo and Poindexter, Cynthia (2009) Mama Jaja: The Stresses and Strengths of HIV-Affected Ugandan Grandmothers. *Social Work in Public Health*, 24:1-2, 4-22.

Kasirye, Ibrahim and Hisali, Eria (2010) The Socio-Economic impact of HIV/AIDS on Education Outcomes in Uganda: School Enrolment and the Schooling Gap in 2002/2003. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 30:1, 12-22.

Klunklin, Areewan and Greenwood, Jennifer (2005) Symbolic Interactionism in Grounded Theory Studies: Women Surviving with HIV/AIDS in Rural Northern Thailand. *Journal of the Association of Nurses on AIDS Care*, 17:5, 32-41.

Kvale, Steinar and Brinkmann, Svend (2009) *Interviews – Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*, London: Sage Publications.

Martin, Daniel (2010) Identity Management of the Dead: Contests in the Construction of Murdered Children. *Symbolic Interaction*, 33:1, 18-41.

Mientjes, Helen and Giese, Sonja (2006) Spinning the Epidemic: The Making of Mythologies of Orphanhood in the Context of AIDS. *Childhood*, 13:3, 407-430.

Mugyenyi, Peter (2008) *Genocide by Denial – how Profiteering from HIV/AIDS Killed Millions*, Kampala: Fountain Publishers.

Oleke, Christopher et al. (2007) Experiencing Orphan Care in Amach, Uganda: Assessing Policy Implications. *Journal of Social Aspects of HIV/AIDS*, 4:1, 532-543.

Palermo, Tia and Peterman, Amber (2009) Are Female Orphans at Risk for early Marriages, Early Sexual Debut and Teen Pregnancy? Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa. *Studies in Family Planning*, 40:2, 101-112.

Pallisa District (2007) *Orphans and Vulnerable Children Strategic plan 2007-2013*, Republic of Uganda.

Parker, Dawn et al. (2009) A Qualitative Study of the Impact of HIV/AIDS on Agricultural Households in Southeastern Uganda. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health,* 6:8, 2113-2138.

Plan Finland (2005) *Helping AIDS Orphans in Child-Headed Households in Uganda – from Relief Interventions to Supporting Child-Centred Community Coping Strategies*, Helsinki: Plan Finland.

Punch, Samantha (2002) Research with Children: The same or Different From Research with Adults? *Childhood*, 9:3, 321-342.

Ritzer, George and Goodman, Donald (2003) *Sociological Theory*, New York: McGraw-Hill.

Scheyvens, Regina and Storey, Donovan (2003) *Development Fieldwork,* London: Sage Publications.

Schwalbe, Michael et al. (2000) Generic Processes in the Reproduction of Inequality: An Interactionist Analysis. *Social Forces*, 79:2, 419-452.

Silverman, David (2005) *Doing Qualitative Research*, London: Sage Publications.

UBOS (2002) 2002 *Housing and Population Census: Population Composition Analytical Report*, Kampala: Uganda Bureau of Statistics.

White, Allen et al. (2010) Using Visual Methods to Explore Contemporary Irish Childhoods. *Qualitative Research*, 10:2, 143-158.

Yeon, Yun-Hee (2004) The Application of Grounded Theory and Symbolic Interactionism. *Scandinavian Journal of Caring Sciences*, 18:3, 249-256.

Young, Lorraine and Barret, Hazel (2001) Adapting Visual Methods: Action Research with Kampala Street-Children. *Area*, 3:2, 141-153.

Internet sources

AIDS Orphans http://www.avert.org/aidsorphans.htm, retrieved on 2010-05-05

Child Protection from Violence, Exploitation and Abuse – Orphans and Vulnerable Children http://www.unicef.org/protection/index_orphans.html, retrieved on 2010-05-05

IFAD operations in Eastern and Southern Africa, http://www.ifad.org/operations/projects/regions/pf/index.htm, retrieved on 2010-05-19

Kimball, Melanie (2010) "Assembling Orphan Tales: From Folklore to Fiction to Fact". http://www.sacbf.org.za/2004%20papers/Melanie%20Kimball.rtf, retrieved 2010-01-15.

Leoutsakas, Dennis (2010) "Contemplating Fictional and Non-Fictional Orphan Stories" http://www.sacbf.org.za/2004%20papers/Dennis%20Leoutsakas.rtf, retrieved 2010-01-15.

OVCToolkit http://info.worldbank.org/etools/docs/library/164047/howknow/definitions.htm, retrieved 2010-05-05.

Appendix

Guiding interview themes

Tell me about your typical day…

Tell me about growing up without parents…

Tell me about the closest people to you, outside the family…

Tell me about things that make you happy/sad, scared/hopeful…

Tell me about what you want to do when you get older…

Tell me something about your life before your parents died…

Tell me about the time when your parents were ill and died…

Tell me about some happy or sad memories/ dreams/nightmares…

Diary instructions/questions

Write and draw about what you do/where you go/how you feel/what you think of

How has your life changed since your parents died?

Do you think that your family differs from families with parents?

Tell me about good/bad things about having a guardian…

Did your parents prepare you in any way to take over the household?

Photography instructions

Take pictures of:

Places you go to in a typical day

People you meet in a typical day

Activities you do in a typical day

People/places/objects that make you happy/sad/scared

People who are special to you

Places/objects/activities that adults/children do

Something you dream of for the future

Secret/favourite places that you may go to

A motif of your own choice