



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG
DEPT OF SOCIAL WORK

ONCE A LION – NEVER A CAT?

A minor field study of former street children's experiences of stigma
and sustainable resettlement methods
in Kampala, Uganda

SQ1562, Scientific Work in Social Work, 15 higher education credits
Bachelor in Social work
Fall semester 2013
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Abstract

Title: Once a Lion – Never a cat? A minor field study of former street children's experiences of stigma and sustainable resettlement methods in Kampala, Uganda

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Keywords: former street children, street children, stigma, resettlement, Uganda

Research has shown that street children are exposed to discrediting and stigmatizing treatment, but what happens after the child has left the street? Does the discrediting treatment belong to street life or is the stigma a taint forever to be held? Once a street child, always a street child? – Once a lion, never a cat?

From a first-hand perspective the issue of stigma among former street children has here been studied as well as how this may affect their way of living. In addition, as experts of the matter, the former street children have identified key-factors which makes the resettlement work of street children more sustainable.

This Minor Field Study has taken place in the city of Kampala, Uganda, and has been performed through four interviews with three former street children as well as through observations. To enable an answer to the research questions, the data collected has been analyzed through Goffman's (1963) Stigma theory as well as Antonovsky's (1991) theory of Sense of Coherence.

The study shows that former street children are exposed to stigmatizing treatment due to their experience of street life and that they are using different strategies to cope with this treatment. The division between the strategies can be explained by the study's theoretical finding: *the strategy of how to cope with the stigma is affected by the individual's sense of coherence*. Along with this, six key-factors of a preventive and individualized character have proven to be effective in the resettlement work of street children. A kind of work where former street children have proven to be great resources.

Acknowledgements

First of all, I want to send a special thank you to my respondents. This for letting me take part of their traumatizing experiences and closest secrets. My appreciation also goes to the social worker who introduced me to my respondents and never stopped in the tries of finding others.

Secondly I want to thank my supervisor Anders Törnquist, and this for his patience and distinctiveness in his supervision.

I also want to thank SIDA through which I got the Minor Field Study-scholarship that took me to Uganda for this study, as well as the inspiring lectures and lecturers at the pre-course in Härnösand.

Last but not least a huge thank you to all of you, friends/family/teachers, who have given me the boost and support needed in order to complete this study.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction of the problem

According to the United Nations committee on the rights of the child, the number of children living on the street in Uganda is increasing rapidly, an increase that has its concentration in the capital city of Kampala (CRC, 2005).

Children move to the city in hope of a better life with better opportunities, a life without poverty, loneliness or corporal/sexual abuse. At the time when the child reaches the city of Kampala and the expected easy and free life is nowhere to be found, the child has no other option than to adjust to the life on the street – a life that often includes those elements which initially forced the child to the street. (UN, 2012)

The lifestyle that these children are being forced to encounter is truly unsafe, in fact street children are living their lives in a constant high-risk environment where they are exposed to different kinds of dangers on a daily basis. These dangers include heavy exposure of drugs, corporal and sexual abuse and lack of medical care. (Coren et. al., 2012) These are all major issues that do interfere with children's health, but a more common threat for these children is less concrete and physical than these mentioned risk-factors, it can be titled as *social exclusion*. (Volpi, 2002; Kopoka, 2000)

The situation the children are in happens in the context of limited access to birth certificates, registration documents, stability of residence, good education and health care (Panter-Brick, 2002). These are clear signs of social segregation. Being categorized into a group which is socially excluded decreases the child's possibilities of detaching from the lifestyle that is expected in that category. So the implication of being socially excluded as a street child is not only performed through the aspect of practical and public issues, it also is executed by the citizens of the society, through their way of interacting with the street children. The latter do increase the difficulty of leaving street life, and that treatment may remain even after the child has physically left the streets, due to "the stigma" (Goffman, 1971).

The stigma the street children experience links to the social role that they are given and the behavior which is expected in that role. These children are clearly differentiated from children who do not live on the street, portrayed as being minor criminals with bad moral values and behavior (Thomas de Benitez, 2012). Being given this roll and looked at in a way where their human value is declined, as said before, that itself may be the children's biggest intimidation from being able to dissolve with their lifestyle as street living children. This actuality is strengthened by the shown fact that no intervention program for street children is successful unless the community is prepared to respect, protect and provide opportunities for street children. (UNICEF, 2001)

What I wanted to examine through this study was how it can be to live with the experience of being a street child, i.e. how *former* street children are treated by others and the effect that have on their lives.

As has been quoted above, it is shown that the attitude of others is an important factor when street children are being resettled (UNICEF, 2001). Unfortunately the work carried out with resettling street children has a low profit, the resettlement process often ends up with the child going back to the street (Martinez, 2010). What causes this pattern is not an investigated field, neither the social aspects nor the more practical aspects of the resettlement process. In fact NGO's in Kampala have expressed a collective desire for more sustainable solutions according the phenomenon of street children, where the resettlement process is a big actor (Thomas de Benitez, 2007). Due to this, the study will also focus on key-factors for a sustainable resettlement.

1.2 Purpose and research questions

The purpose of this study is to examine the possible stigma that former street children may be exposed to as well as to find and analyze key-factors in the resettlement of street children. By the following research questions I want to enable the former street children's view of these issues:

- *Are former street children exposed to any stigmatizing treatment due to their experience of street life?*
 - *If that so, how do they handle this treatment?*
- *What do the former street children see as key factors in the resettlement process?*
 - *What is of importance for it to be sustainable?*

1.3 Definitions

As they are defined in this study:

Street children - This concept is highly disputed in terms of what the use of it contributes to. For example that "Street children" is a homogenous label of a heterogeneous group and therefore not showing the unique and complex conditions and relationships that the child have, but also that the concept being stigmatizing for the children regarded. (Panter-Brick, 2002) This discomfort with the concept among researchers and organizations however has not led to a development of an adequate alternative (Thomas de Benitez, 2007).

An exception to this is Low (2010) who have used the concept "survivors" instead of street children which were his respondents own description of themselves. I do believe Low (2010) has contributed with a good example in this issue of labeling. If someone, it should be the respondents themselves that get to define how they are defined in the study participated. I can see the importance of renaming "street children" into a concept where their capability and worth is emphasized so I hereby send out a request for a general concept to be compiled in order to discuss the issues of this group without reproducing negative perceptions.

When encounter with my respondents no other term than street children were used by them when talking about their time on and off the street, so therefore this term

will be used in this study. The definition used of this concept will be the one performed by Inter-NGO's Program for Street children and Street youth (UNICEF, 2001):

[A street child is]any girl or boy who has not reached adulthood, for whom the street (in the broadest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc.) has become her or his habitual abode and/or sources of livelihood, and who is inadequately protected, supervised or directed by responsible adults.

Former street children – The same principle is used here as above when deciding which concept to use for the study. “Former street children” was the concept used in the conversations with the respondents and in absence of better alternatives it will be used in the study. As the term is defined here, “Former street children” are persons whom have an experience of living on the street as a child or youth but did manage to leave the street life without returning.

Stigma – In short, the concept of stigma elucidates when an individual is disqualified from full social acceptance from others. A person with a stigmatizing attribute does not fulfill what is considered as normal according to the social norms and is therefore treated as an inferior by others. The concept of stigma captures this social phenomenon. A more detailed explanation of the concept of stigma will be given under 3.2 *Theoretical views*.

Resettlement – The meaning of resettlement is the process where the child leaves the life on the street and is settled down in another environment where it can live a more stable life under supervision of adults.

NGO – Non-governmental organization, organizations that work independently from any type of government.

Hir/Sie – In this study, whenever there is a statement or explanation that is not connected to a specific person the pronouns used will be *hir* and as a subject *sie*. This to emphasize that that particular information is not representative for a specific sex.

1.4 The Ugandan context

To enable an understanding of the context of this study a short review of Uganda's political history and current social stage will here be given along with short facts of the country.

Uganda is located in East Africa between the countries of Kenya and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. With its fertile soil, Victoria lake shore and source of the Nile River Uganda soon became an interesting target for colonial countries, more especially the British in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Due to the British's self-interest rule and selective treatment of the clans of Uganda, the disfavored clans started the protests which latter resulted in Uganda's autonomy in 1962. The time after the autonomy was characterized by a shattered

political stage that led into two coups, including the one of the dictator Idi Amin that later killed hundreds of thousands of citizens as well as deported all people with Asian origin. Even the following dictator Milton Obote used violence and assassinations to erase the citizens that disagreed with his opinions.

Ever since Obote was violently dethroned in 1986, the country has been ruled by President Yoweri Museveni whom through changing the country's laws and constitutional laws makes sure he remains in rule. During Museveni's rule different guerilla troops have disordered the country, where the most heavily and internecine one is the Lord Resistance Army that terrorized and completely destroyed the north of Uganda in 1987-2006. (Utrikespolitiska institutet, 2013) The guerilla wars created a great social need where millions of citizens became international and national refugees, many were mentally and physically injured as well as children suffering from being recruited as guerilla soldiers. This crisis in combination with a liberal approach from the Museveni-regime where state-provided services were sold out and privatized increased the vulnerability of the Ugandan citizens. This social desperation made the number of NGOs in Uganda to prosper from the mid-1980s up to time of writing. A great part of the country's social service sector has ever since been in hands of NGOs. (Thue, Makubuya & Nakirunda, 2002) This fact is problematic since the work carried out by NGOs is by nature very arbitrarily and not necessarily designed according to the country's greatest needs. Regardless of focus or services, NGOs serves to fulfill its own interest which is often regulated by international or national donors and due to the financial insecurity the interventions done are often short-term based. This makes the social welfare of Uganda very shattered and difficult to overview. (Nabukeera, 2002)

The same rule is valid when it comes to the social work carried out with street connected children. What can be said about this work is that the number of NGOs in Uganda working with street children has increased parallel to the progressive number of children entering Kampala (Biggeri & Anich, 2009). It is the ideology of the NGO that determines the focus and the location of the organization as well as how their work is carried out. The effect this has is that it may not be the children that are in greatest need that receive help or the help given may not be adjusted to the context in which the work is performed, the latter especially valid for the numerous of foreign NGOs that are active in Uganda (Thue et al, 2002). The social welfare in Uganda is clearly a complex matter, NGOs occurred due to lack of governmental responsibility where now no governmental responsibility is demanded due to the presence of NGOs. The nature of NGOs has affected the development of the country's welfare services such as health care, social work and education negatively. Serious social problems are left to its destiny, including one great part of the country's future: the current and former street children.

1.4.1 Uganda. Short facts

Population: 36.35 million (2012)

Capital city: Kampala, approximant population 1 700 000 (2011)

Religion: 85% is Christian, 12% Muslim and a few per cent exerts none or traditional religions.

Government: Presidential Republic under President Yoweri Museveni, National Resistance Movement (NRM).

(Utrikespolitiska institutet, 2013; World Bank, 2013)

1.5 Precomprehension

The very design of this study, the issues studied and the location chosen, can be explained by my previous experiences. The subjects of stigma and resettlement came notable to me during my internship that was performed in one of the slum areas in the city of Kampala, Uganda. At the NGO where I was stationed one part of their work was to resettle street children back to their origin homes. Unfortunately this work rarely turned out as desired since the children returned to the street after a short period of time. After counseling children in their process of leaving the life on the street I soon came to identify two key issues in this type of work, issues that made the resettling efforts counterproductive.

The first notion was that resettling street children is not only about convincing a family member to accept the child back into the house or finding a good school that the child can attend. To accomplish a sustainable outcome of the resettlement work there has to be something more put in to it, something that the NGO I worked at clearly did not take in to notice. Of course I wondered what this could be, what was missing in order for the resettlement process to be fulfilled. The second issue that I encountered is deeply connected with the previous one, and may also be seen as an explanation to the phenomenon of street children returning to the streets. It is concerned with stigma. More specifically, the stigmatizing treatment that the street children experienced after they had left the life on the street. My curiosity about these issues later founded this study.

Due to my internship as well as my following University studies and voluntary work in Kampala, my precomprehension of the area of the study as well as the issues handled is relatively wide.

2 Earlier research

This study focus on seizing the knowledge of former street children, their knowledge gained through their experiences of stigmatizing treatment from others as well as their qualified awareness of what is essential to enable a sustainable resettlement. What is mutual for these two areas of the study is that it is difficult to find research done with the same choice of focus and examined through a former street child perspective. Therefore this study cannot function as lengthening of prior, equivalent research. In fact having former street children as respondents are rare when it comes to research conducted about the phenomenon of street children. To involve former street children in research is however prospected in the latest report from the Consortium of street children, whom expresses the lack of user participation as an evidence-gap (Thomas de Benitez, 2012).

Research conducted according the phenomenon of street children is, fully understandable, focused on the children that are currently living on the street and how to prevent them from entering street life (see: de Moura, 2005; Street Action, 2010). Panter-Brick (2002) however wants to see a modification of this pattern of research focus, and that with an addition of research that contributes with an understanding of the street children's way off the street and how their lives develop in a long-term perspective. This study, with focus partly on key-factors in

the child's way off the street as well as the social effects of that very experience, can be seen as a break of the research pattern as well as an answer to Panter-Brick's (2002) inquiry. Due to this history, research about former street children and especially in combination with experiences of stigma has not been found. So in order to understand the situation of former street children and the experiences they may carry from the street an excerpt from previous research according street children's exposure to stigma will be presented below. That will give a required background to enable this study to see if there is any stigmatizing treatment from the life on the street that remain to occur while the individual has left the street life.

In the search for previous findings about street children I have gone through different databases. By searching for street children and stigma at www.google.com I found the empirical database of the *United Nations* as well as the one of the network *Consortium of Street Children*. These two globally attached organizations both perform and gather a large range of the research existing in the field of street children. In their research it has been successful to track other studies performed through various academic disciplines and organizations. When it comes to the location of the research presented in the study it originates from different parts of the world, mostly Sub-Saharan Africa but also Latin-America. Studies taken from other countries than Uganda can be explained by the fact that little research have been done so far about street children in Kampala (Biggeri & Anich, 2009), especially in the areas being examined in this study.

2.1 Stigma among street children

In research about street children, stigmatizing features have been documented. Partly it is about structural stigmatization and the abuse of their human rights which has been mentioned above, such as lack of health care, education and violence conducted by state authorities (Thomas de Benitez, 2007; Coren et.al., 2012; Biggeri & Anich, 2009). In this study however the focus is on the social, more interpersonal stigma that former street children perceive - a stigmatizing treatment that undoubtedly interplay with the structural treatment of street children and former street children.

The research presented here will therefore be concentrated to features of how street children are encountered and viewed on by others in the society they live in, features that seem to be mutual regardless of the country examined (see UNICEF, 2001(Zimbabwe); UNODC, 2001 (Egypt); Bengtsson, 2011(Peru); Rao, 2008 (India)).

The public perceptions of street children can be divided into two dichotomous figures. Street children are portrayed as either victimized, hungry and vulnerable creatures that is constantly exposed to external violence; or the street child is seen as a hopeless delinquent whom has no respect for the social order. (Panter-Brick 2002) The earlier perception is often embodied by younger children, which then changes as the children grows older and then as a teenager are perceived as the latter (Thomas de Benitez, 2012). Victimizing is problematic and dehumanizing since it conceal the child's own ability and will to act by portraying it as a passive

object of a reckless society. This while the latter characterize the street children as being immoral and unworthy of trust, that they all are criminals and that this behavior in correlation with a heavily substance abuse makes them dangerous to encounter with. (UN, 2012)

These two stereotype pictures are both dangerous in their existence since they contribute to erase both the structural influence on the street children's situation and behavior as well as eradicate the fact that all street children are unique human beings and therefore an inhomogeneous group. In addition, the street child seen as a delinquent justifies both a public and a state-led violence and exclusion. (Thomas de Benitez, 2012)

One authority that reproduces the public notion of street children is the media. In the media street children are being portrayed as 13-14 year old males that uses drugs, are sexually active in an early state in life, are involved in delinquency and are either abandoned or orphans. Surely these attributes can be seen in street children's lives but this stereotypical image does not reflect the diverse and complex reality of street children. (UN, 2012)

Something that shows the stigmatizing treatment in a concrete way is the local words that are used by the public to describe the children living in the street. Examples of this can be anything patronizing in line with "scavengers" and "filth" to "pigs" or "parasites". Here the public hostility becomes clear and it shows the stigmatization that street children are exposed to on a daily basis in interaction with others. (Thomas de Benitez, 2012)

Karabanow (Bengtsson, 2011) stresses the effects of street children's feelings of stigmatization and marginalization when reintegrating into society, he claims that these feelings along with the fact that they are socially excluded can make a reintegration complex and difficult to conduct. This followed by a study done by the UN (2012) that states that the strong connections to the street that the child is forced to establish to survive, in combination with social stigma and prejudices can make it problematic for them to see any desirable alternative off the street. The public's social treatment of street living children therefore stagnate the children in the situation they are in.

In contrast to these stereotypical characteristics of street children is the street children's own perspective on their situation. Research show that street children self-identify themselves as strong, positive and engaged which stands in conflict with the role as either a victim of society or as a destructive force that demolishes its society. In fact studies show that children living on the street feel proud when contributing to the society and supporting themselves and their families through working. They are able and willing to help others which is highly notable in their interaction with other children in the same situation. (UN, 2012)

2.2 The resettlement work

As been noted above, key-gaps in academic research have been addressed in the latest report from Consortium of street children (Thomas de Benitez, 2012). One of the gaps mentioned is information about the interventions used in the

resettlement process that is gained from those who actually experienced it - the street children and former street children.

In this field there are studies done where different resettlement methods are evaluated and ranked but the data collected is mostly gathered from organizations that work with children, not the children themselves (see Smith & Wakia, 2012). My aim in this study is to give a voice to them who I am willing to call experts of the matter and by that reduce the research field's lack of user participation.

A study that does acknowledge users own experiences is a study done by Martinez (2010) where environmental issues in the resettlement process are examined. By interviewing street children and former street children he is examining which factors that make some children stay off the street after being resettled into shelters as well as factors that makes some children leave the institution and go back to street life. His findings give characteristics of supportive and non-supportive environmental attributes of institutions that are set to provide for street living children.

Factors that have a supportive impact on the children when they leave the street life in favor of the shelter is: 1) *provision of basic needs*, like food, hygiene, accommodation/rest and education; 2) *presence of emotional support*, a relationship with the staff members that is built out of love and trust, affections that the parents of the children often have failed to show; 3) *parental and peer support*, an outside support to live in a shelter which was addressed to parents (for those who still had one or both) but also peers that helped the children in their transition process; 4) *personal decision to change*, that the choice to leave the street is made by themselves; 5) *perceived personal development*, that the child can feel that the stay at the shelter has contributed to a positive change in their life, that they feel encouraged to stay in the shelter due to their perceived personal development. These factors Martinez (2010) found as significant for supporting children in staying in shelters and not going back to the life on the street.

On the other hand factors that made children prefer the street life in front of living in a shelter was the five main attributes as follow: 1) *peer influence*, that the child have a strong notion that sie cannot leave hir friends that still are on the street and therefore decide to leave the shelter; 2) *difficulty in detaching themselves from street lifestyle*, the former lifestyle and habits was difficult to leave behind, like different activities provided for street children but also they could have a hard time to detach from the careless and free lifestyle that is characteristic for the street life and live after the rules and regulations of the shelter. This as well as the possibility to earn money on the street which could be appealing for the children, especially after getting use to that possibility when living on the street; 3) *boredom*, that the life at the shelter is scheduled and they do not have the same space to do and act as they feel like compared to what they could when living on the street. This factor in correlated to the previous, where the adjustments needed are difficult to handle; 4) *relationships with center's staff*, here it is the absence of supportive emotions mentioned before, like acceptance and care shown from the staff at the shelter; 5) *experience of conflicts inside the shelter*, conflict between the children inside the shelter made some children decide to leave and go back to the street life.

Even though Martinez (2010) study has a focus on institutions that resettle street children, his results do not differ from other research that have a more universal focus on where the children are resettled (research with workers as respondents). In fact researchers that dismiss the institutions for street children as a solid resettlement method (and more advocate for reuniting with family members), they get similar results of what is important in the resettlement of street children (Smith & Wakia, 2012; Williamson & Greenberg, 2010; Volpi, 2002). So no matter what solution is viewed as the most sustainable one, there is no dispute in what is significant to enable a successful resettlement for the child, attributes that Martinez (2010) discloses in his study.

What can be said in this much-disputed field of resettling methods that is universal, are two issues that Vopi (2002) emphasizes in her research about promising approaches and practices in the resettlement work. First, is that every step of the resettlement process – from connecting with the child at the street to the point where interventions are no longer needed – have to acknowledge the importance of children’s participation and an individualized attention in order for the resettlement to be sustainable. That means that every resettlement has to be funded in the child’s own will and formed by the specific circumstances of that child. (Vopi, 2002) This due to what has been cleared before, that every street child has their own history and unique personal and individual living conditions (Coren et. al., 2012). Secondly, in research done about the resettling process of street children, it has been cleared that the earlier a child is resettled the bigger chance for it to be successful. The meaning of this is not only to connect with the child just after it has entered the street, it also include work in communities and villages and there prevent children from ever go to the street. (Thomas de Benitez, 2007)

3 Theoretical views

3.1 Introduction

According to the above presented research, street children represent a stigmatized group in society. To detect possible stigmatizing processes and also get a substantial understanding for how they may occur, the data collected has been analyzed with Goffman’s (1963) stigma theory. So far in the study the concept of stigma has been used without being given a clear explanation, something that now will be done in detail with the theory behind the concept. The section of the stigma theory is divided into four subsections, all displaying different aspects of the theory.

To enable an understanding of what is of importance when a street child is resettled, many theories can be used. In this study I have chosen Aaron Antonovsky’s theory Sense of Coherence. This since it acknowledges both the traumatizing experience that the street child have been through when the resettling process starts, as well as highlighting the fact that many former street children manage to regain mental health, in spite of the trauma. The main concepts of this theory will be used to analyze the data collected, concept that are presented in two subsections.

3.2 Stigma

Stigma is a concept which illuminates the very situation where an individual is disqualified from full social acceptance from others. The disqualification itself arises where there is a discrepancy between a person's attributes and the stereotype of what is considered as normal in the society. Since the relationship between what is discrediting and desirable is very much bounded to the context, the concept of stigma becomes very hazy in its appearance and in the explanation of it. (Goffman, 1963)

But the very basic, and therefore an important perspective, when it comes to understanding the concept of stigma is to see that the definition making of who is deviant or considered normal is not a division of two contrarious groups. More rather, to be able to understand the meaning of stigma and how these groups are created the phenomenon has to be seen as a natural process of the society, a process that occur wherever there are identity norms that people relate to (Goffman, 1963). Therefore the stigma concept should be seen as a bipolar social process where the individual is constantly shifting its position between fulfilling the norm and doing the opposite, also known as being stigmatized. This is a process that is always present for everyone in the society and the individual is always a part of both of these roles, all according to the context and the situation the individual is in. (Goffman, 1963)

3.2.1 Norms and its deviations

So the concepts of the normal and the stigmatized cannot be seen as two clearly divided and cemented groups or even be personified, it is more like two perspectives on peoples relation to the norm. But even though the concept of stigma is considered as a perspective rather than a deserved personal possession, an individual can possess an attribute that throughout its life has put hir in a stigmatized role in the society. What the stigma does is that it affects a majority of the person's social interactions since the discrediting attribute place hir in a contradiction to the norm-fulfilling persons, the normals. The stigmatizing attribute makes hir a deviant. (Goffman, 1963)

Lifting these social processes to a metalevel is highly important to enable an understanding of how stigmatizing treatment occur. The social actions that generate the two perspectives of normality and stigma are all a part of a bigger picture, a picture that is delineated by the political state and development, historical treatment of the group and also the possible social policies formed to change the exposure of the group. These are all factors that affects the attitude people have against a certain attribute that an individual possess, which in turn affects the role that the created group of same-attributed people gets in the society. (Goffman, 1963)

This role and placement in the society, i.e. how the government relate to people possessing a certain stigmatizing attribute, also creates the foundation for how the normals treats them when they encounter - or in avoidance off encountering. If the government do not care for a certain group of people it is likely that the situation of this group neglects by the people as well. What is explained here creates what

Goffman (1963) calls a *stigma theory* that embraces the deviant. This stigma theory becomes an ideology which explains his lower status in society as well as its functions to assure the normals of the true danger that the deviant possesses. This shows the fact that the stigmatized individual is being treated according to his discrediting attribute, that he gets judged and categorized by this characteristic, and therefore not seen as a full worthy human being. A person's real group, the one that the society says he belongs to, is the one that does discredit him.

The scenario where a person has been in a stigmatized position of the society but is currently not, the same rule is valid: this person will still be judged by his experience and categorized into an inferior group, even if the attribute is no longer there. When talking of stigmatized groups Goffman (1963) refers to an aggregate of people that share the same stigma. To be clear, being categorized as a deviant due to a stigmatized attribute gives the picture that that person is nothing more than what the stereotype of that attribute articulates and does not show the diversity between the people in that very group. That people are being categorized by their stigmatized attribute, that fact remains no matter of how the person's behavior is valued.

3.2.2 Dual Identity

Since stigma is an answer to a nonfulfillment of the social norms and is something that is set by others, the stigmatized individual can experience a dual identity, a division between the *virtual social identity* and the *actual social identity*. It is when the individual is being placed in one of the established categories of society, and does not associate himself with the characteristics of that category, that the virtual social identity is being given to the individual. With other words, the virtual social identity illustrates the picture that the individual has been given by others, a picture that is created according to perceptions about his attributes. The attributes that the individual does have are referred to as his actual social identity. This is a central role of the stigma theory, that the individual is being seen as someone that he does not associate himself with. (Goffman, 1963)

3.2.3 Averting stigma

A dilemma arises when the stigmatized person considers himself as normal and not different from others but the society, and as well the individual through his internalized social view of himself, treats him as different. For the individual this becomes a self-contradiction that makes no sense to his identity. One way to handle this kind of discrepancy the stigmatized person can, in the will of being accepted and getting a comprehensive picture of himself, choose to be selective in the presentation of himself. Being selective means that the individual does not give out his whole picture or all the parts of his history and therefore adjusts the picture other people have of him. This choice of action occurs when the individual realizes that his appearance or experiences do not match what the norms of the society demand of him. Here the individual learns that his attribute is filled with shame and to avoid this unpleasant feeling he can decide to not express it or act like a normal person even though it can be draining both physically and mentally according to the nature of the stigma. (Goffman, 1963)

So the task to be done by the individual at social occasions is to avert that the stigmatizing attribute gets known. This situation do create a complex managing of the stigmatizing information, all according to who sie meets and that person's knowledge about hir attribute or that one's possible attitude to it if the individual choose to tell. It is a constant consideration of to tell or not to tell; to display or not display; to lie or not to lie; and all set into relation of who the individual meets, where and under which circumstances. So to hide is not an easy task, but still it gives the stigmatized person a ticket to be considered normal, and all the benefits that brings. (Goffman, 1963)

By claiming that this action is beneficial for the individual Goffman (1963) means that a stigmatizing attribute affects the interaction with all the people sie meets, and even though the consequences of every interaction may be small, in the big picture it can have a huge impact on the individual's possibilities and potential in life. So the stigma do affect the social identity and by concealing the stigma the person does not only control hir social identity, sie also creates a more coherent notion of hir own personal identity for himself.

Actually, the controlling function of how much an individual choose to tell is not up to hir himself, it is all in the hands of the normals and what they find appropriate. A person with a stigmatized attribute will not expose more information about it than what the others may find normal or understandable, the moment sie cross that thin line between normal and deviant sie will be discredited by the others. It is easy to think that those who have a close relationship to a stigmatized person are very understanding and can see the person for who sie really is and therefor the person can be open with hir discreditable attribute. But this is not always the case, in fact these persons can be the ones that the stigmatized individual the least wants to get to know about his discreditable possession. The individual do not want the people that care for hir to associate hir with the stigmatized attribute, and there change their way of judging hir, i.e. changing hir social identity. This shows the complexity of knowing when to disclose a possession that the individual knows is considered disqualifying, to determine when sie will be seen as a deviant or being understood by the judges, also known as the normals. So to understand what is seen as deviant in the society, we should look at what is considered normal, if not to say the desirable in society. All those who do not fulfill this can be treated as deviants. This is a significant perspective when it comes to stigma and to be able to see where, how and why this phenomenon arises. (Goffman, 1963)

3.3 Sense of Coherence

The theory of Sense of coherence (SOC) is based on Aaron Antonovsky's concept and perspective of salutogenesis (Antonovsky, 1991). Salutogenesis focus on the factors that bring and enables health and well-being of people, rather than identifying the cause of sickness like the pathogenic view on health does. The salutogenic approach has a different view on the relationship between health and sickness by not seeing this as a dichotomy, instead as a variable where a person moves between the healthy and unhealthy end of the theory's ease-dis-ease continuum. A person is therefor never seen as completely healthy or fully sick, it

is placed somewhere in-between these contradictory concepts, a placement that depends on the persons SOC.

The theory of Sense of Coherence was developed through Antonovsky's research on experienced health among women who survived the concentration camps of the Second World War. In this research he found that a group among these women actually had a good health, despite their traumatizing experiences from the holocaust. For Antonovsky this was incomprehensible, that people who had lived through an extreme traumatizing situation actually could experience the same health as others who did not suffer from that kind of experience. What he questioned, and what came to be his motto for his research, was: "How the Hell can this be explained?" (Eriksson & Lindstöm, 2006:238) This enigma of how some people can adapt and overcome great stressing situations motivated Antonovsky to find an explanation to his discovered fact, and the model for that later became the theory of Sense of Coherence. (ibid.)

This is also the story behind the choice of this theory. The respondents of this study have all lived through the traumatizing experience of street life, and this at a young age. This theory will be used to see which factors that influence the children's well-being and relationship to their traumatizing experience.

What the theory of SOC do is that it looks at to what extent a person has a comprehensive, persistent as well as dynamic feeling of trust that: 1, the stimuli the person receive from its inner and outer world during its life is structured, predictable and understandable; 2, the resources needed to encounter the demands of these stimuli are available and; 3, that these demands are challenging, worthy of investment and commitment. (Antonovsky, 1991) These three parts all have an impact on a person's SOC, parts that Antonovsky has formulated into three components which are explained further below.

1. *Comprehensibility*: This component has a cognitive character since it involves the individual's capability to handle the inner and outer stimuli that sie face, as well as finding these stimuli as being structured, explainable and predictable. It is all about to what extent the individual can understand and have a clear view of its situation rather than apprehend it as disordered, randomly or even inexplicable.

What Antonovsky (1991) says with this component is that people need a certain level of predictability to be able to understand what happens to them in life. It is called the cognitive component since people legitimate their surroundings in a rational way and if something unpredictable occurs that phenomenon is explained with reason and intelligence. In a case where there is no explanation to be found for the circumstances a person can either see it as bad luck or as an outcome without hir influence, but if the person has a low sense of comprehensibility sie will put the blame on hirself and may even think that this infortune will haunt hir over time.

2. *Manageability*: As it is cleared above the second component refers to the extent the individual experience that sie has the resources needed to handle the stimuli that sie encounter. Which resources and to what extent these are possessed by people are very individual, but mutual is that they help individuals to manage

situations in life. The word resources contain strengths in different aspects, like the personal aspect where the level of intelligence and self-esteem are significant or on the social level where the relationship to the family, friends and other social groups are of importance for the individual to be able to handle its situation. If the individual feel that it is lacking resources to solve the situation it is in, the sense of manageability is considered low.

3. *Meaningfulness*: When a person's capability of making his own decisions becomes limited and instead lays in the hands of another, Antonovsky (1991) means that the person is reduced to an object. When someone else makes the decisions for you, you are given a position and specific role in society, a role where the others set the rules and therefore also construct the result of your work, the reason of your presence. The effects of this treatment, where the person do not feel it can control its way of being, will erase the sense and meaning of life. This element of meaningfulness is quoted as the most important one of the three since a loss of reason to fight and survive challenges will leave the person in a state where it has no motivation to change or even cope in its situation. When lacking a sense of meaningfulness the person will not do anything that may challenge the strength of the other two components, which shows the complex relationship between the components of the theory. The significance of making people involved and thereby giving them motivation to be engaged and invest in different areas can therefore not be stressed enough.

To summarize these three concepts one could say that experiences of predictability are fundamental for the component of comprehensibility; a good balance of encumbrance is needed to experience manageability; and involvement in the process and result creates the foundation of the feeling of meaningfulness. (Antonovsky, 1991)

Depending on how the person experience these components and rate himself as a more or less possessor of them, the person's SOC is valued. As Antonovsky's (1991) perspective on health this is done as a variable, with either stronger or lower SOC. A strong SOC is characterized by a person having a clear view of its situation where it feels capable to manage and also influence the setting of it. Any factor that indicates the opposite will lower a person's SOC. Therefore the individual's mental health and how sie relate to his traumatizing experiences is a result of his SOC.

3.3.1 Stressors

Objects that may interfere with a person's SOC and therefore can be seen as threats to accomplish or remain health, Antonovsky (1991) title as *Stressors*. Stressors is basically stimuli that when facing the individual is perceived as a tension, or a stressful stimuli.

Tensions do arise when the brain has stated that the person has an unsatisfied need, and that it is necessary for the person to act to change this condition. Here it is the relationship between the individual and his surroundings that creates an issue of psychological stress, a stress that founded in the person's perception that the surroundings having too high demands and therefore will compromise his

health. This makes him feel that he is incapable to act against the stimuli that created the unsatisfied need.

But tension does not automatically have to have a negative effect on people's health, the effect of the tension that stressors bring can also be perceived as a motive for action. How the stressor is perceived is according to the individual's SOC. A strong SOC makes the person more adaptive for tension and avoiding it to turn into stress. Seeing stimuli as meaningful, understandable and manageable creates a source of motivation to solve the issue on a cognitive level. If the person has a low SOC on the other hand, the tension becomes a burden, for not to say chaotic or overwhelming for the individual.

It is important to notice that stressors cannot be seen as single or separate issues, they form a complex process of management that is constantly changing. The task of the individual becomes to mobilize resources to handle the stressors and try to avoid that the solution of one stressor creates another. As has been cleared before, the management of this is perceived differently depending on the individual's SOC. (Antonovsky, 1991)

4 Methods

4.1 Choice of method

The purpose of this study is to see how the everyday life of former street children can be affected by their past experiences of living on the street. As it has been cleared before, children's experiences of living on the street are very individual, and so are also their affection and relationship to this very experience. Martinez (2010) expresses that it is the way people put meaning into their experiences that forms their understanding and interpretation of their reality. This means that people's response to similar occasions and conditions differ. Therefore, to enable an understanding of how the respondents perceive their affection of former street life, it is necessary to do what Panter-Brick (2002:165) stresses "to contextualize [...] and increasingly seek to look at the circumstances of [former street] children as they themselves perceive them".

What Panter-Brick (2002) wants to see more of in research is a user's perspective. This to enable that the users' needs and their experiences of previous interventions, or the lack of them, are being identified and embraced in the knowledge development of their situation. To acknowledge the users voice can make the intervention programs more efficient and appropriate, and therefore decrease the magnitude of the issue. (SOSFS, 2005)

When set that fact in relation to this study, I do argue that those who have the experience of living on the street and succeeded in the task of reintegration into society, they are the number one experts in how this transaction of lifestyles can be successfully and sustainably made. They are also the ones who can witness about possible stigmatizing treatment during their time off the street. So to enable future reintegration work with street children to be more adequate as well as recognizing the effects of former street life, this study will acknowledge former street children as the knowledge holders that they are.

Due to this it is not possible to give a general and comprehensive picture of how former street children get affected by their past street life. The aim of this study is therefore to exemplify by enlighten how a person *can be* affected by this experience. This focus makes the study suitable for a qualitative research method, which according to Kvale (2009) enables one to reach the respondent's own explanation of its "life world" and how that person relates to this. Karpatschhof (Kvale, 2009) continues that this method correspond well to research where contextualized phenomenon are being studied.

The qualitative methods used to collect the research data has been interviews and observations, the procedure of that will be presented below.

4.2 Sample

In order to reach out and find adequate respondents for this study I knew that it was not possible without a relationship based on trust that could link me to respondent's stories. By this I mean that to be able to share this kind of sensitive experiences as a respondent you first have to be certain of whom or where this information is addressed to. To get this necessary bridge over to the respondents' trust I contacted a social worker at an organization I knew was working with resettling street children, and had been doing so for many years. The man's years-long relationship with his clients did establish this very bridge between me and my two first respondents. Unfortunately this was not a trend that remained. The aim at this point was to get a variety of people to participate in the study, like equal number of men and women, different ages and with separate religious believes. But reaching people that wanted and were able to come for interviews became a hard task, even though the social worker had a deep relationship with his clients. A possible reason for this difficulty is presented below, under *Sensitive subject*.

To not get stuck in an unprogressive mode I decided to contact interview person nr 2 (IP2) again for a second interview. This respondent then introduced me to the third interview person of this study, IP3.

To summary, the method of sampling in this study was the snowball, or network method. This one is commonly used to reach smaller groups of the society, groups that can be hard to reach as a researcher that is unacquainted with the area of the study. By establishing a contact with a member of, or someone that is close to, the group that is being studied, further contacts and adequate respondents can be found through this person. (Sturgis, 2008) Through this method I reached three men that matched the required characteristics for the study and were willing to participate.

4.2.1 Choice of area of research

This study is concentrated to the capital city of Uganda, Kampala. Street children move around the city during their time on the street so due to this the selected area of the study is chosen by the area that the former street children live in right now, and not where they stayed when they were living on the street. The area is one of

Kampala's largest slum areas with an uncountable number of citizens and it is also known for being one of the toughest areas in Kampala due to theft, drug use and poverty (Dobson, Fricke & Vengal, 2011).

When it was hard to find more respondents, the research area was extended to the whole of Kampala, but still the respondents participating in the study are from the area that the sampling started from.

4.3 Interviews

4.3.1 Preparation of interviews

For this research I fulfilled a total of four official interviews, one with interview person nr 1 (IP1), two with interview person 2 (IP2) and also an interview where both IP2 and the third interview person (IP3) participated. The first interview person did not speak English fluently so an interpreter was used, issues according to this is presented ahead under *Interpreter*.

All the interviews was prepared with an semi-structured interview guide (Bryman, 2011), see appendix, but I did not read from that one during the interviews since I felt it would be awkward to bring it out in the interview situation and also in fear that it would be intimidating for the respondent. Instead I wrote down the themes of the interview on my hand so that I had them close in case in need of refreshing my memory. These four interview was recorded and after that transcript for analysis.

4.3.2 Interview 1

The first interview took place at a restaurant where the respondent was working. IP1 was nineteen years old and had been off the street for three years, this ever since an organization offered him an education in catering. He accepted that offer and he had now been working at this place for the last two years. The location of the interview was due to the impossibility of matching IP1's time off from work and the social worker's working hours, whom both introduced us and interpreted this interview. A dilemma soon made the situation of this interview very special where IP1 did not want his colleagues to be aware of his experience of street life at the same time as they became curious of our meeting. The colleagues' suspicion led to an interruption of the interview after twenty minutes. Despite the short time, this interview was very fruitful since it became a combined interview and observation that manifested the very complexity of the issue examined in this study. In spite of the tension in the room IP1 was very freely spoken during the interview, a fact that I am convinced was due to the presence of the social worker. Due to IP1's fear of a possible exposure of why we met he did not want to do a second interview. The reason to this fear will be given under *5 Result and analysis*.

4.3.3 Interview 2

The second interview was one out of two formal interviews with IP2. It was stationed at his house and the people present were the respondent, the social worker and I. IP2 had been off the street for several years, he was now in his early thirties and left the street when he was nineteen. The interview lasted for a bit more than one hour where the respondent was very talkative, according to him it was not his first time to be interviewed about his experiences from street life, even though this interview focused on the time after the life on the street.

4.3.4 Interview 3

The third interview was at the same place as the second one, the house of IP2. There I had an interview with IP2 and his longtime friend, IP3. They had been friends since they lived on the street and even left the street together after starting a band and through concerts raising money for living. They also had a history of working with street children together and due to their history they were very close, a factor that I think contributed to the relaxed feeling of the interview. The formal part of the interview, i.e. when the recorder was on and I was the one who mostly questioned them, that part lasted for one and a half hour but then continued with a conversation for some hours more. During the interview the talkative one, IP2, was dominant in the conversation but as he went out for some time I also got some more time with IP3 which was good to enable both perspectives. It was nice to have two people to interview at the same time since they then could remind each other, and I do believe that the fact that IP2 had a positive attitude to me made IP3 to feel comfortable in sharing. I had been in contact with IP3 before with the assistance of the social worker that knew him, but then he did not show up at our appointments. So an approval from IP2 of who I was and my reason of being there, I believe was the key for IP3 to attend the interview. One thing that was notable in this interview was that IP2 now felt that he could be more free-spoken than the first interview we had. This he said was due to the absence of the social worker, a man that he had great respect for and therefor did not want to brief all his experiences in front of him.

4.3.5 Interview 4

The forth interview was with IP2 and it was done in a park outside of a church in the area of the study. We decided to go there since his house was very crowded with many people entering and wanted to converse with him. The interview lasted for one and a half hour and was very relaxed in terms of freedom for me to ask personal questions about his experiences. It felt like the time we now had known each other, all the days that I had spent in his house and there meeting the people that always spent their time there, seeing his life as it proceeded, this was necessary to enable the trustworthy relationship that was needed to reach the very subject of this study. Here it is not only about me getting to know him, it is also about him making sure of who I am and where this information will end up. As I said earlier he had been interviewed before but that time the information got in the wrong hands, information that is a part of his private history. So I do believe that I was first tested for him to make sure the information given would be treated in the right way.

4.4 Observations

Several times when an interview was set it happened that the respondent was unable to participate or that the situation we were in demanded other actions than sitting down for an interview. The first times that this happened, the delay could make me anxious about not being able to collect enough data for the study. But later I realized what a valuable insight I got in the respondent's life during those times when the interviews were not able to take place. The postponed interviews became great moments for observation.

These moments came to result into hours and hours of participating observations. I was what Gold (Bryman, 2011) would call a participant-as-observer, which signifies an observation where the researcher contribute to the social environment on an equal level as the people he is observing. But one important note for this participant-observer role is that the people being observed know that the researcher is there in the position of a researcher.

The observations took place in IP2's house and had a duration for two to five hours at a time. I was there as an observer on six different occasions and it did not take me long until I realized the function of this very house. IP2 is known in the area as being a social and helpful man, which resulted in that this house, that only consisted of one smaller room, was like a social spot in the area where people came when they wanted help with something or just felt like hanging out with others. So in this room I got to see how these people interacted with each other and what kind of activities they came together around. Since I become a frequent visitor in the house those who spent a lot of time there become use to me and felt comfortable in my company and with my mission of being there. This created an arena where it was possible for me to collect data in the interaction with people living in the area who often had similar experiences of street life as IP2.

This ongoing circle of people dropping in and out of the house was one of the reasons for us, IP2 and me, finding it problematic to get moments for formal interviews.

4.5 Ethical questions

In this kind of research where the sought information puts the respondent in a very exposed situation during the interview, I believe it is highly important for me to ensure that I emphasize my ethical responsibilities. Before the three first interviews started I introduced myself by telling my purpose of meeting them and that everything being said would be considered confidential and that their participation was both anonymous and totally voluntarily and unforced. A positive thing was that the social worker that introduced me to the two first respondents had told them this information when he first asked them to participate for an interview, which then made them clear of who I was and what we were going to do when the interview took place. My thought about providing this information was that if it is not carried out successfully the risk would be that the respondent would not feel safe enough to share its story.

According to Bulmer (2008) one ethical dimension of social science is the extent that the researcher intrudes into what the respondent considers to be private. This ethical aspect was not easy to handle in this research due to the fact that as a researcher you never know ahead what the respondent you have in front of you consider as private or not. The study discusses personal experiences of stigma, experiences which can be highly attached to a person's integrity, or as well be something a person have a desire to reveal in order to demolish the stigmatizing effect (Goffman, 1963). So this was an issue I was dealing with, both during the preparation of the interviews as well as the interview proceeded. To get an idea of how the interview persons related to their experiences I first talked to the social worker that introduced me to the respondents to see what he thought about the their willingness to share their stories, a method that I do believe was successful. Successful in that way that the respondents, not from my notice, felt that I intruded in their private sphere.

4.5.1 Sensitive subject

When analyzing my process in reaching out to respondents for this study it is now, in a subsequent stage, clear that the complexity and the stigma attached to this very topic is of a higher rate than I initially thought. When conducting this study and designing its target, I was aware of the fact that being considered as a street child is stigmatizing, a phenomenon that do affects both street children and former street children. My strategy for collecting data was therefor to go with a person that the respondents trusted and had known for a long time. This way of reaching to the respondent made our conversations possible, but it did not instantly create a trustworthy relationship between the respondent and me. Situations could occur where the respondent wanted to contribute with its experiences but was unable to follow it through due to fear of others reactions if they got to know about their street life or that their experiences was too hard to talk about. A trustworthy relationship is needed when examine subjects that they otherwise may try their best not to reveal. The gist of this is that time for connection and building relationship with the respondent is needed in this kind of sensitive research.

4.5.2 Interpreter

In the interview with IP1 an interpreter was necessary to use since the respondent's English was poor and my Luganda (the local language) was even poorer. The good thing about the settings was that the social worker that introduced me to the respondent also interpreted that very interview. Since he had been working with the respondent ever since he lived on the street, the respondent felt comfortable to talk about his experiences. The social worker and the respondent's relationship was dated back to the time when the respondent still lived on the street, and I believe that this fact made him feel secure to talk about his experiences, both with me and with the social worker as an interpreter. From my point of view the interpretation was very beneficial since it gave me time to both take in and think of what the respondent was saying as well as observing the social interaction that emerged between IP1 and his colleagues during the interview.

4.6 Validity, Reliability & Generalization

The concepts of validity, reliability and generalizability are created to evaluate quantitative research, an origin which explains the concepts measuring and truth-searching nature (Bryman, 2011). But still, the concepts purpose of assuring that the study is trustful is still important in every type of research, whereby the concepts have been adapted to the standards of qualitative research.

Validity is about if the research really examining what it is set to examine. This is not a procedure done in retrospect, the validation needs to be done throughout the whole process of the research. The researcher needs to constantly validate if its actions are in line with the purpose of the study and this throughout the preparations of the interviews, during the interviews as well as when analyzing the data collected. (Kvale, 2009) A concrete example of validating during the interviews is to always make shore that the questions asked as well as the response gained are understood correctly, and this by asking follow-up questions. I find this guaranteeing procedure extra important for qualitative research since it is about understanding another person's understanding of the issue handled. It is important to make shore that both the researcher and the respondent refer to the same things.

My aim was throughout the interviews to use open questions to not influence the interview person's view of the matter. This could give answers of a more dissolute character where focus often shifted from the subject studied. I here made shore that the conversation came into the right route again by pointing out something of interest in their information given and ask them to explain this further.

One the other hand, this way of conducting the interviews also affects the reliability of the study. Reliability refers to if the study is correctly performed and thereby possible to retake and then receiving the same results. With other words, if the outcome of the study would be the same disregarding the researcher's influence and the change in time. (Kvale, 2009) This I do see as inoperable for this study, since the qualitative research is dependent on and formed by the human interaction that take place during the collecting of data. Another researcher would probably not follow up with the same questions and as in this study where the relationship has proven to be a major factor for reaching the subject of stigma, the outcome of the study is even more affected by the researcher's personality. Still, the reliability can be increased by a transparency of the process behind the study as well as the methods used. This procedure has been explained as clearly as possible in previous sections.

From this qualitative, small-scale study, no generalizations can be made. This is neither the aim of the study, which is rather to acknowledge and exemplify effects due to street life as well as finding elements which have been of importance for the respondents. As Kvale (2009) points out, that an interview says nothing but the persons own view of itself. So due to the qualitative approach of this study generalizations become difficult. But still, since the subject of stigma among street children has not been problematized in previous studies these findings become valuable and can be seen as the start of a documented truth of the matter.

4.7 Analyzing method

The data collected for this research has been analyzed in a circular process where an interaction between the theoretical framework and the gathering and analysis of the material has been a constant progression. My research questions along with the theories presented above have set the framework of how to collect and construe the data, a procedure that resulted in new theoretical findings.

When analyzing my data the prior focus was on finding information that was in line with my research questions, findings that then composed key-points. To enable an answer to my research questions two theories was chosen, from which framework I then sorted out the key-points into different concepts. It was at this stage that the connection between Goffman's Stigma-theory and Antonovsky's Sense of Coherence was shown in the data. This relationship between the two theories then became the interpretation of further analyzing of the material selected. Through this two new possible theoretical concepts were developed, both presented under 5.3. *How to handle stigmatizing effects?*.

In this way my analyzing method became a combination of a more traditional way of analyzing qualitative data where the theories are used as tools for reading the data, as well as an inductive approach where theories develops through the data collected (Bryman, 2011).

5 Result and analysis

5.1 Introduction

To be able to receive knowledge about how former street children can be affected of their experiences of street life, as well as identifying key-factors in the resettlement process, interviews were held with persons that have lived through both these issues: the street life and the resettlement process. In addition to the information gathered through interviews, observations have also been a source of the empirical findings. The information gathered through these research methods will be presented below, divided into recurring themes found in the data. To avoid a repetitive review of the materiel, the result is connected with the analysis.

The first theme being presented in this part will be features in the respondents' stories that respond as stigmatizing as well as how they handle this discrediting treatment. Secondly my findings of what the former street children consider important for a successful resettlement will be given.

5.2 Stigmatizing features

Experiences of social stigma due to former street life were something that the respondents all could witness about. They were clear about that their stigmatizing experiences were based on other people's perceptions and expressed a discomfort and anger about the easy assumptions that often were made of how street children and former street children "are". The attributes documented through research as often perceived about street children, like delinquency and drug abuse, are here

found in the respondents stories. For example in a discussion about reasons for hiding the fact that you have been living on the street, IP2 says:

Most people think that as you have been a street child you remain as a street child. [That] you are like an animal, you can do anything which is bad. Which is not true. [...] when they [people] see children on the street, those young ones, they consider whoever was or is a street child can do like that one. We change!

Goffman (1963) explains this very phenomenon where a person that once been categorized into a stigmatized role of the society, still will be judged by its experiences and seen as inferior to the normals. So even if the stigmatizing attribute is no longer there, in this case that the respondent doesn't live on the street, he will still be categorized into the same group as before. A categorization that makes him into a deviant and gives a picture of him that he is nothing more than the stereotype of a street child. That will say, as (UN, 2012) explains it: a drug abuser that is involved in criminal activity. In the interview with IP1 he gave the characteristics that his colleges would associate him with if he revealed his background as a street child:

..theft, mostly theft, that they are unreliable. [...] even drugs, that street children use drugs. So the boss might think that 'maybe I am having somebody who uses drugs and the police can raid and the hotel can be closed'. Just because it is harbouring drug abuses. So it is not a good thing to talk about. (Interpreted by the Social worker)

When connecting this quote to UN's (2012) findings on prejudices against street children it becomes notable that the same stigmatizing treatment does proceed after the child has left the street. The public perceptions of immorality and unworthiness of trust has not changed (UN, 2012). This can be linked with Goffman's (1963) saying that the group a person belong to in society, its "true" group, is always the discredited one. The other categories that the person qualify for, all its other skills, has no value when the public mind decides a person's true category. According to IP1's notion his qualification for his job and his personality will both be dismissed if the boss gets to know about his past as a street child. The effects a revealing may have in IP1's life shows the magnitude of the stigma that street life brings, that a person can be judged for this experience even after years of working at this restaurant.

This signifies what Goffman (1963) calls the "stigma theory" that embraces the person with a stigmatizing attribute, that the stigma has a major effect on that person's everyday life. The stigma theory ensures the normals of the true danger that the deviant possesses and therefore justify a discriminative treatment against the stigmatized person. The deviant is not seen as a full worthy human being since it is judged by its discreditable attribute. These effects of being categorized as a street child can be seen as reasons for hiding that very attribute, as IP1 decided to do for his work colleges. This strategy will be explained further under 5.3.2 *Calculating strategy*.

When it comes to public perceptions and prejudices IP2 underline the inhumanity in the notion of both street children and former street children and keep on

referring to them as animals, that they are both treated and looked on by others as animals:

It's just a perception that a street child is like a wild animal who can do anything, particularly, bad...maybe kill. What they think is not true.

The referring to animals is to picture street children as reckless and dirty creatures that do not have the capacity to be full worthy human beings. As it was seen in Thomas de Benitez (2012) research, this dehumanizing violence is also shown in the public discourse where street living children are being called names to consolidate their inferiority. This discourse also became notable to me during my observations with former street children. Words like “kassasilo” (garbage) and “embra” (dog) were common when I walked with former street children at the streets of Kampala. So it there became obvious that the oppressive discourse had not changed even though the person’s living situation had, that the public treatment remained.

5.3 How to handle Stigmatizing effects?

When analyzing the data collected for this study I came to notice two separate directions of how to handle the experience and effects of former street life. The two directions, or strategies as I would say, shows differentiated ways of living with a stigmatizing attribute, strategies that has a major impact on the individual’s daily life and relationships. What I have found in this study is that: *the strategy of how to cope with the stigma is affected by the individual’s sense of coherence.*

As mentioned in the theory section the stressors in the theory of Sense of Coherence can be seen as threats to accomplish or remain health, this since the stressor is perceived as a tension or as a stressful stimuli by the individual. The essence of the concept of stigma is the rejection taking place when an individual being disqualified from full social acceptance from others. What I am claiming is that this negative treatment from others, that is due to a stigmatizing attribute, can be seen as a stressor for the individual. As the theory of SOC states, stressors are adopted differently according to the individual’s SOC, either as a stressful tension when the individuals SOC is low or as a motive for action when the SOC is high. As mentioned above, from what I have seen through the interviews and observations performed for this study the respondents react differently to the stigmatizing treatment they encounter, and therefore use different strategies to cope with this treatment. These strategies will be presented further below, strategies that have occurred through my findings from the interviews and observations done with former street children.

5.3.1 The fortifying strategy

The first of these strategies I have chosen to call the “Fortifying strategy”. When using this strategy to cope with a stigmatizing attribute the person shows a proudness of being a part of the social category that the stigma places hir in. Sie is able to see the unique knowledge that is gained through hir experiences and is willing to use this knowledge in a constructive way. In hir treatment of the stigma

sie choose to enrich its value by advocating to others about hir situation as well as helping people that are exposed to the same disqualifying treatment. The content of this strategy is for the stigmatized to counteract the stigmatizing treatment by demonstrating their normality, which can title them as advocates for both themselves and others who have experienced the same stigmatizing treatment.

IP2 and IP3 where both open to others about their experiences of street life, for them it was a natural and integral part of their history and identity. Their transparency and attitude about this experience showed that they had a non-complex relationship to it. When we were talking about the possibility of hiding this experience in their interaction with others, the openness and attitude was shown in IP2's answer "*People know us, most people know us*". IP3 then filled in and said "*If someone asks me, I would say. I won't hide*". Even though both IP2 and IP3 were clear of the fact that street life was seen as a stigmatizing attribute in their society, they had chosen to be open about it even though they did not associate themselves with its characteristics.

What can be theoretically said about their choice is that the virtual social identity they both get exposed to, they tackle by fighting it. The virtual social identity enforce them into representatives for the characteristics that are in line with the perceptions of the stigmatizing attribute, characteristics that do not correspond with their view of themselves or their experience of the street life. Their strategy of handling this contradiction was to claim uniqueness due to their experience of street life. By this, they defended the strengths of the stigmatized group that their virtual identity placed them in, with other words: they fortified it.

In my interviews and conversations with IP2 it became clear that he sees his experience of street life as a privileged and true knowledge. A knowledge and an awareness that, according to him, could entirely be held by people that shared the experience of street life. By this he claimed that there was a difference between people that have not lived on the street and those who had.

There is a difference. [...] I have shared the life like that on the street so I don't want someone to suffer more than I did or like I did. This because I know the goods and the bads of the street, I know it very well. A night out is not something good.

IP2 claims that there is a difference, that there is a collective understanding that the street children and former street children share, an understanding that IP2 title as "the heart". In the quote below IP2 talks about this and gives an example of when he worked at an organization that helped street children. There he noticed a big difference between the workers that had the experience of living on the street and those who did not.

Most especially they [social workers who haven't experienced street life] don't care because they have not gone through the same problem. [...] When working for this organization we used to go for night work, at night work they used to get tired. They wanted to go and take their beers but for us [the former street children] we were still telling them: 'no let's go there and let's go over there'. Most of the time they used to leave us there on the street. I used to look at them and think: you don't have the heart.

What IP2 calls “the heart” can be translated to what Goffman refer to as “that”. “That” implicates a certain knowledge that some stigmatized persons feel that they have gained through their experience, which gives people who share the same stigma a collective understanding of their situation. A person can therefor feel that the stigma has given hir a greater apprehension than those who have not experienced the same stigmatizing treatment. Those who are stigmatized value their unique knowledge. This is what the quote above demonstrates, as well as it claims the potential and virtue of “that” in the work with street connected children.

The stigma, or stressor, here becomes something that they are proud of and what Antonovsky (1991) would refer as a “motive for action”. What can be said about the former street children that do fortify their stigmatized category is that they find it manageable, they feel that they are able to handle the effects that the stigma has on their daily lives – and even be motivated by it. The ability to handle a stressor this way indicates on a strong SOC, which is gained through a good understanding of the situation that they are in, that they do comprehend and can address the reasons for its outcome; as well as they feel that they have the support needed to be able to be open with their stigmatizing attribute. But without this, and the most important component for a strong SOC: a motivating purpose/a meaning for action, the stressor will be perceived as a stressful stimuli and interfere with the person’s wellbeing. How the latter may occur for former street children will be presented below.

5.3.2 The calculating strategy

The other strategy of how the respondents cope with their stigmatizing attribute, I have chosen to title the “calculating strategy”. In this strategy, in opposite to the fortifying strategy, the stigmatized person is not public with its discrediting attribute. The extent of openness about the stigma here becomes contextualized and the individual is obligated to calculate what and how much it can reveal about himself and hir experiences in interaction with others.

As have been explained under the theory section, a person with a stigmatizing attribute can experience that hir own view of himself do not correspond to others view of hir. The stigma develops a discrepancy between the person’s actual social identity and the virtual social identity. The virtual social identity is based on others perceptions, which make it possible to adjust the virtual identity by being selective about what people know about you. What people do not know, they cannot judge you for. Being selective means to conceal the stigmatizing attribute in contexts where it will be depreciative, a procedure which may be necessary to enable a normal way of living.

When looking at former street children and some of my respondents’ way of handling their stigma, the matter of selectivity was highly present in their lives. Actually this coping strategy and its possible negative impact became truly notable during the interview with IP1. As said before the interview with IP1 was disrupted and ended at an early stage. This disruption was due to fear of exposure of his stigma.

For IP1 his experience of street life was a secret, and so it needed to remain, in order for him to remain employed and sheltered. His colleagues were unaware of it as well as all the other new acquaintances he had made during the time off the street. Those who knew were persons like the social worker that introduced us, persons that IP1 knew had a great understanding of his situation. As has been quoted above, IP1 kept his street life experience in secrecy due to fear of being associated or suspected for theft and using/harboring drugs. What can be said about this is that IP1 was truly dependent on what his working colleagues thought, or rather perceived, of him. Here it becomes clear that IP1 is in fear of being judged for his stigmatizing attribute, a scenario which would defeat the colleagues' current opinion about him. He would no longer be seen for what he possesses, his actions would be judged in relation to the stereotype of his stigma. A stereotype which in this case would make him into a true danger for the restaurant that he is working at.

What IP1 has done at his workplace is the calculation of his stigmatized attribute, if it would be accepted and seen beyond its stereotype or not. This apparently was not the case and therefore his experience of street life is remained unexpressed. To reveal his stigmatizing experience could lead to a scenario where he loses that very thing which now permits him from living on the street. With other words: a revealing of the stigmatized experience could force him to relive the stigma.

Another example that witnesses of the same situation is one of the women that first wanted to attend in this study but then backed out before the interview took place. For her, she wanted to share her story but saw a participation in this study as a threat to her marriage. After leaving the street life she had decided not to tell anyone about her past, including her husband. If he ever got to know about her contributing to a study like this one, her strong notion was that he would pretend that she had never existed in his life. Living with this secret cannot be easy, but due to the stigma it carries IP1 and this woman finds it far more beneficial than living with the social effects it may have on their lives. According to Goffman (1963), hiding a stigmatizing attribute for those who are closest to you and you care about mostly is not something unusual. Those can be the ones that you are particularly anxious about not knowing of your shameful attribute. This in relation to the examples just given, where an exposure of their past life to their closest may threaten their entire lifestyle. The following is a quote that indicates on the latter:

Street life is associated with bad characters. If they learnt that he has that background and maybe even the boss gets to know it, he will get fired. (IP1, interpreted by the social worker)

As well as keeping a stigmatizing attribute in secrecy can be beneficial in a social aspect, it can also help the individual to get a more comprehensive picture of himself. When a person does not identify himself with the virtual social identity that the stigmatized attribute gives him, one way of getting a more coherent picture of himself can be to be selective in the presentation of himself. This way of handling the stigma can result in what Antonovsky (1991) would refer to as a cognitive capability of understanding what happens in life. By keeping the stigma as a secret, the level of predictability will rise for both IP1 and the woman in the previous example. For them this way of handling the stigma does affect them in their social life, since they are not able to devolve the whole of their history, but

according to their life situation keeping it a secret has the least negative effect on their daily lives.

Living in this secrecy may after a while become the truth, even to the one keeping it (Goffman, 1963). This was notable in the interview with IP1:

For him, it has become a part of him that there is some information you keep to yourself. You don't devolve it so it's normal. For him, he does not even think of thinking about it. People know that he came from a school. So it gives him a cover-up. (IP1, interpreted by the social worker)

But even though the hiding of a stigmatizing attribute may be perceived as normal for the stigmatized person, it does not mean that social situations are unproblematic. Occasions where the present persons have different knowledge about the stigmatized persons attribute is confusing and demanding since the secret holder needs to constantly be calculating of what is being said by him and others. This as well as the calculation of the possible attitude of the person sie meets, will that person be understanding and trustworthy or not, will it be more draining not to tell than to tell, is it me who is making a big fuss over my experience or will a reveal have a negative outcome – what will the consequences be? The calculation never stops and it can be draining in both ways, either living with the negative effects that a stigma may give or not being able to share a traumatizing experience with your closest, as for the woman in the example above.

One of these situations where the calculating became highly serious for IP1 was actually at our interview. In order for the three of us to meet, the social worker, him and I, the interview needed to take place during working hours and therefore we met at the restaurant where IP1 worked. That the social worker met him there was not unusual since the social worker was known there as a teacher from IP1:s catering school who randomly came and checked on his former students. The odd thing was me, a white lady that wanted to meet this young and average man in the middle of the slum area. Of course his colleagues became curious as well as IP1 anxious about them not getting to know the purpose of our meeting. When the three of us met, IP1 first needed to calculate who I was and my true purpose of wanting to meet him – was I really as innocent as I tried to appear or could the information he gave in the interview be used in his disadvantage? Here the presence of the social worker gave me a free ticket to his stories, I had been approved by someone he trusts and therefore he knew that I also was trustworthy. Still, the calculation wasn't over. Sitting in one of the corners of the restaurant I could see IP1:s constant awareness of the distance of his colleagues and also noticed his eruption in speaking whenever they came to close. As displayed in the quotes above, this calculation was highly important for IP1, if his stigma got exposed he could lose his job and shelter and be back at the street again.

What happened was that the social worker ended the interview when IP1:s colleagues started to ask questions about our meeting, this so it would not lead to any negative consequences for IP1. What can be said is that this interview, even though it was short in time, gave a great understanding of the situations that the stigma of being a former street child can establish.

In contradiction to what was stated in the fortifying strategy, the stigmatizing attribute of being a former street child is in this strategy perceived as a stressful stimuli. When a stressor arises the person feel that it is necessary to adjust that stressful state by changing the conditions causing the tension. But as been displayed in the examples for this strategy, there are cases where the person perceives that the surrounding conditions make this impossible. At this state the stressor becomes a burden for the individual, like it has for both IP1 and the woman in the previous example. Neither of them are capable of changing others perceptions of their stigmatized attribute and therefore they chose to act like the stressor never occurred, which in itself creates other stressors. Here is the dividing line between these two strategies: those with the fortifying strategy do feel that they are able to change others perceptions. What is dividing these former street children into different actions/strategies is their level of SOC. That is what determines how the stressful stigma is perceived and treated. With other words, how a traumatized person chose to handle a stigmatizing attribute is a result of their own understanding of their situation; their capability in terms of self-esteem, economic resources, social support; and their notion of the possibility to influence the settings of their situation.

A strong SOC enables the person to have a good mental health despite a traumatizing experience. All the above mentioned components for a strong SOC can be strengthen, if the right support is given. To enable the street child to have a strong SOC and be strengthen by its street life experience rather than reduced by it, it is highly important that the right components are given to satisfy the child's needs in the resettling process. In the following section these needs will be identified and examined.

5.4 Key factors for a sustainable resettlement

5.4.1 Introduction

As been presented under 2.2 *Resettlement work*, there is a dispute according what method is the best in resettlement of street children: shelters/institutions or reuniting with the family. What has been examined in this study goes beyond that disagreement by looking at factors that help the child to remain in the resettlement process and not returning to the street. That means, that either if the child is resettled with their family in the village, at a shelter with other former street children or at a boarding school, the findings presented below are fundamental for the resettlement to become successful.

What have been found are six components of great influence on prevention and resettlement work with street children, components that will be presented below.

5.4.2 Before street life

As been said in the introduction of this study, many children leave the undesirable conditions in their villages in favor for the myth of a better life at the streets in the city. At this stage they do not know what is ahead of them, only that the street alternative seems far better than remaining where they are. Unfortunately this lack

of knowledge leads them into a traumatizing situation, a situation that is highly difficult for them to get out of once they are in.

What is needed is a true killing of the myths that tempts children into seeing street life as an option, and this by focusing where the problem starts – in the villages and communities. As the research of Thomas de Benitez (2007) has shown, the chances for a resettlement to become successful increases the earlier actions are taken, if not to say, adequate actions where the needs of the child are acknowledged.

There are also children in the communities that are homeless and drifting around but according to IP3, there is a huge difference between that kind of life than the street life in the city:

Oh that life is different, very difficult. Because those children you find there [at the streets of the city] might treat you...the treatment they give you, they beat you, you have to give them money, to work for them – before you become a permanent member. [...] Those big guys they treat you anyhow, they are the ones who decide that you get to stay or not.

For IP2, before he entered the street life he lived in the community, constantly shifting between running away from home and being sent back by the local chairman. This procedure made him leave the community in favor for the city of Kampala, or as he puts it himself: *“I developed an idea, that if I no longer stayed in the community they would no longer have access to me”*. IP2 was right about that but he now wishes that he had been treated differently at that stage, that he had gotten sufficient help in the community and known what was facing him when entering the city. Due to this and what he has seen in his work with street children he advises:

I advise organizations if they want their preventive measures constructive, not to wait for someone to go one the street. So you can avoid someone from going to the street by, let's say for example, in the community there are some people you can see their potential [...] it is easy to see someone who is about to go from the community. That one is the best to go at.

This quote added to the previous presented research indicates on a preventive approach where the focus is on children in the communities that are in the risk-zone for becoming street children. To make this long-lasting I would like to say that focus should not be only on children at risk, it needs to be on the whole community. In order for this work to be sustainable the problem of children entering the streets needs to be seen in a bigger perspective, where people that live with and meet these children are aware of the signs and the interventions needed. To avert that children are entering street life the preventive measures needs to be rooted in the communities in order to be sustainable, and not dependent on voluntary organizations.

With this said, it is not only the children's knowledge about the life on the street that needs to be raised, the people surrounding the child also needs to learn the signals of when a child is about to leave the community – and feel and take responsibility for that child.

5.4.3 An individual approach

“Street children” is a collective term that is contested with individual needs. The history, personality, skills and dreams of every child is as it is for every person on this planet – unique. This includes whatever motives that made them enter street life, what they have experienced during that period as well as what options they have of returning to their family. (Vopi, 2002) This fact makes any standard solution insufficient in the resettling process of street children, an individual approach needs to be the motto of this work in order for it to be successful.

For IP2 this was a natural approach in his work with street children, he knew that tailor-made resettlements including choice of studies were the successful ones, which he explained as follows: *“If it’s not something for them they will go back to the street the moment the training is over”*. This is often what happens when the child’s own will has not been in focus, either they leave the place where they stay, could be a shelter or with the (extended) family, or they drop out of school in lack of motivation (Martinez, 2010). Seeing this in a theoretical perspective, the child’s choice of returning to the street can be explained by the main component of SOC, the component of meaningfulness.

When someone else decides in your place and by that also control the reason of your presence, the result will be a loss of sense and meaning in life. Without the capability of influencing the life conditions which you are set to act under, the sense of meaningfulness will be erased. This shows the importance of letting the child’s own will to lead in the resettlement process, as well as maintaining their sense of meaningfulness at a high level throughout the process. The latter is needed for the resettlement to be sustainable since if the individual approach is lacking in the resettlement work, the child can perceive the life on the street to be more meaningful and therefore return. As Antonovsky (1991) stresses, without reason to fight challenges the person will have no motivation to change its living situation.

One interesting example of a resettlement where the sense of meaningfulness was shifting was one boy that IP2 helped a couple of years ago. This boy came to visit IP2 during one of my observations, this to thank IP2 for the work he had done to help him off the street. IP2 told me that this boy first started at the school of mechanics, but:

He failed to do that but we know that there is something right for everyone to succeed in, and for this one it wasn’t mechanics as we first thought, it happened to be the military [...] this man failed in the program that we put up for him. But we believe in success, success that fits you.

This is what the individual approach is all about, to customize the resettlement according to the child’s interests. But still, an individual focus does not only signify that the child’s will and needs are addressed, it is also important to be aware of the child’s participation in the resettlement process, to consult if it is ready to leave the street life.

What needs to be taken into notice is the strong bond these children often have to the street. The longer a child has lived on the street the more connections have

been established, connections that are needed to survive when living outside society. A contributing factor to this is the stigmatizing treatment that they are exposed to which enforces them to create a network among each other for protection purposes. (UN, 2012) This bond as well as other mechanisms like drug abuse can make the street life superior for the child than a life off the street. They know what they have but not what they get, and therefore the child may not be ready to leave the street life. Due to this it is important to acknowledge this factor before starting a resettlement process so the child do not feel forced to leave or get a bad experience and dismisses future resettlements.

IP2 had experienced the phenomenon where the organization wanted more than the child several times, both as a street child and later as a worker. He explained that this fact is hard to take in when resettling street children, the will is to help them all but *"you must know that no, you cannot change everyone one the street"*. Even IP3 had experienced this and explained it as follows: *"Some of my friends are still there, they are grown-ups. The organizations used to spend money on them but there is no sign that they will get out of the street tomorrow or the next day. There is no sign"*. The fact that you cannot change anyone's will is strengthen by both Martinez (2010) and Volpi (2002) that emphasizes the importance not to influence but respect the child's decision. IP3 explain as follows, how he experienced the consequences of organizations taking in children that did not want or was not ready to leave the street:

It bothers me because that guy had many changes. I even used to think that if those changes was mine I could use them in the right way, but he misused those changes. He had many changes: he lost his change and another organization came and took his hand – he lost another one, just like that.

This quote picture a twisted approach in the organizations selection process. This is partly the reason why I am emphasizing the matter of letting the child to determine whether or not it should be resettled. The nature of this process as I have perceived it through my observations and in my previous work with street children in Kampala has shown this process to be very normative in an odd way. The focus in the evaluating process of which child that gets to be "picked" is not judged according to their will, rather their ability to "behave" and frankly, their ability to pretend that they are not living on the street. The ones who are picked to be resettled are the ones who is always happy and polite, wear washed clothes, are never shown with any use of any substance, are always in order and do not show any signs of aggressiveness. This behavior has nothing to do with the child's will or desire to leave the life on the street, only their ability to polish the surface. IP2 explained the behavior that organizations picked children after as follows: *"You must come from wild to domestic, but you cannot mix. It's like a lion, it's different from a cat. You have to be like a cat."*

My understanding of this way of evaluating the children is that the organizations are blinded by their own values and therefore miss out on children that cannot live up to these reality-twisted standards. Or as Goffman (1963) says, that the stigmatized person has to be as close to the behavior of the normals as possible for them to care for hir. This gives an explanation but still in order for the resettlement of the children to be sustainable I ally myself with Martinez (2010)

and Volpi (2002) and claim that the child's will should be in focus and that this should be evaluated equally, disregarding a clean surface.

5.4.4 Counseling and accommodation

At the stage where the child is ready to start its resettling process and is about to leave the street, its prior needs according to my findings is counseling and accommodation – and that in that very combination.

The importance of combining these two components is best explained by a quote from IP2, a quote that shows the dependent relationship between the components:

First of all we need to have constant counseling and in addition: accommodation. Because if you get constant counseling and after counseling you go back to the street, you will find out that what you got through counseling just goes out of your head.

What the accommodation gives is the predictability that the child needs in order to handle the inner stimuli that the counseling gives, without that the counseling may cause more harm than good. Predictability enables the stimuli to be perceived as something developmental and even encouraging, but if the child has no clear view of its situation and always needs to be on its alert of what's next, the counseling will be a stressor for the child. The street life's lack of predictability can be seen in IP3:s explanation of how stressful street life can be:

Right now you are here and you don't know how to sleep, what you are going to eat [...] today you stay here, tomorrow you are staying in another place – just like that. And there are seasons like rainy seasons, the times when rain comes and: Ah, you suffer!

When living under these shifting and unsecure conditions the child do not have the capability of processing what comes up during counseling. So what the components of counseling and accommodation do is that they give the child the foundation needed for handling the traumatic experiences they carry from the time on, and perhaps before, the street. Previous research also acknowledges accommodation and counseling as main aspects for an effective resettlement (see Martinez, 2010; Thomas de Benitez, 2012). But they both add the child's need of emotional support given by adults, that building strong relationships with adults in their new environment was an important factor for the child to stay off the street. What Martinez (2010) says is that this affective support, built on trust and mutual respect, gives the children the love and affection that many of them missed out on at home. This fact corresponded to IP2:s answer on why children decides to leave the home and entering the street *"Most of the times it's the parents. At times parents love us but they don't show. They love inside but they don't show their love."* This shows that the children need affective care and a safe home during their resettlement, this to enable them to process their traumatizing experiences and get a good understanding of the same.

5.4.5 Drug rehabilitation

One complex issue when it comes to street living children is the use of drugs. Drugs become complex due to their multiple functions in many of the street children's lives, multiple in terms of the physical, psychological and social impact that they have on the children's sense of their well-being. The children's relationship to drugs can interfere with their will and attempts of resettlement which makes this issue an important factor to acknowledge in the resettlement work.

Drugs are used for several reasons since they can reduce physical pain as in hunger or coldness; release psychological stress like anxiety or boredom; work as a sociological tool to establish status in groups; a way to gain amusement; as well as working as a collective protest against the stigmatizing treatment they encounter. (Thomas de Benitez, 2012). According to the conditions that street children live under, the above given reasons shows the drugs attractiveness: they can ease every trouble. IP2 explains this fact as follows:

In the short run you get some advantages. Like I am outside and I am feeling cold, I take and the coldness goes. You cannot mind about the disadvantages, you continue like that. [...] You can forget even the past yet it is hurting your heart, you can forget that there is eating.

The drugs easily become a way of handling the situation but as this quote show, there are disadvantages in the long run – especially at the time of quitting. The drugs complex impact on the street children's lives can make the resettlement process problematic for those who are used to them, especially if the child is using it for several purposes. The children need support in finding new ways of handling the situations in which they have a habit of using drugs. They need to be rehabilitated and become free from drugs during their resettlement in order to become independent citizens. Drugs are strong pull-factors (Martinez, 2010) so if the support is lacking the child will soon be pulled back to the streets, this as in IP2:s example:

I remember at one time they took a female but she failed because she was so much obsessed with sniffing and the school didn't tolerate that. They paid for her school fees but she didn't manage without that [the drugs].[...] Once you're addicted it's difficult.

What can be said is that to enable a sufficient resettlement the issue of drugs needs to be handled, and this individually since every child has their own relationship to drugs. The strong pull-factor that the drugs are, do actually only say one thing: the resettlement work needs to pull stronger.

5.4.6 A desirable alternative

What the resettlement work needs to provide in order to defeat the pull-factors of the street, is a desirable alternative. This means that the child needs to perceive the resettlement process as more satisfying and stimulating than it finds the life on the street, i.e. what the child gains by being resettled needs to be more worthy than

what it loses by leaving street life – and this during the whole process in order for the resettlement to be completed.

What research has shown (see Martinez, 2010) is that a gratifying of only the basic needs like food, shelter and safety is often not enough for the child to remain in the resettlement program. The children are used to a high rate of stimulation due to the street life's constant happenings, whereby the resettlement can be perceived as dull in comparison. Therefore it is highly important that the children feel a motivation in proceeding in the process of resettlement.

If using Antonovsky's terminology, this can be translated into what he calls the most important component for a strong SOC, the one of meaningfulness. This component is not only about being able to influence your conditions as was mentioned under 5.4.3 *Individual approach*, also in order to feel motivated to change the person needs to feel that there is a meaning for the effort required. If not, the person will drop out. This regardless if the other two components of comprehensibility and manageability are fulfilled, components that include basic needs like food and shelter as well as emotional and economic support.

By feeling meaningfulness during their resettlement the children will be strengthened in a new context whereby they also can begin to revalue their own understanding of themselves. IP2 explains this as follows: *“You need to have something where you realize that you can do something better than walking on the street. [...] You need something developmental.”* Martinez (2010) findings correspond to this, that the children look for signs of transformation during their resettlement process and need to feel that they are developing in order to continue with their resettlement. What this says is that the children's sense of meaningfulness needs to be acknowledged throughout the resettlement process.

To give an example of how this meaningfulness can be performed in reality, the story behind IP2 and IP3:s resettlement will be given. IP2 and IP3 met at a NGO where they came up with the idea of starting a band, a band that would reach out to and stand up for street living children – a Street Voice. The band Street Voice was for them a motive for action and gave them a sense of meaning that the street life never had offered. This is how IP2 puts it:

I was in darkness, I had no vision. So they [the organization] showed that somewhere there is some light where you can get something. You can realize who you are and after that think that you can do this and this. [...] to see light is to focus.

Now they felt a need of changing their situation and happened to do so in an organization that acknowledged the street children's wishes, which made them focus on something constructive and developmental. Here the importance of an individual approach in the resettlement work is shown where it gives the children the opportunity to start their own resettlement and by that be driven to work it through, it provides them with their own reason to fight. That is when the resettlement becomes desirable.

5.4.7 The importance of former street children

The aim of this study is partly to see which elements that make a resettlement successful, what is required for the child to leave the street and stay off. One of my findings is that the true experts of this matter, those who have managed to fulfill this transformation in lifestyles, they are extremely important in the resettlement work.

Due to their experience the former street children have a greater understanding of what the street children are going through. They know how it is to sleep on the streets, they can feel the hunger that the children feel, they know all the informal rules and they know how it is to be exposed to the stigmatizing treatment. Therefore they can understand the children's behavior and decisions at a deeper level than someone without the same experience. This is what IP2 refer to as "the heart". As was presented under 5.3.1 *Fortifying strategy*, Goffman (1963) claims that people with the same disqualifying attribute share a collective knowledge, a knowledge which can only be gained through experience of stigmatizing treatment. The knowledge and solidarity is according to IP3 gained through: "*We as former street children we know each other, we have grown up together, we struggled together. So we are blood, like brothers, like brothers [...] So we struggled a lot to be where we are and we have that heart as IP2[author's change of name] talked about*".

This knowledge is invaluable in the resettlement work, the former street children are all living proof of sustainable resettlements – they know what is needed. IP2 explains their knowledge like this: "*We know what they are going through, we know their pain better than someone who is from the university that has been reading books. He knows a street child from research and the book.*"

With this said, the claim is not to exchange social workers with former street children, the claim is that both parts are needed in order for the work with the street children to become as effective as possible. What happens is that the street child often have a lot of respect to the former street children, the child knows that they are aware of what it is going through and therefore have evidence behind their words. Due to their mutual experience the children may also feel more relaxed and feel a bigger acceptance in telling things without fear of being judged or looked down on. This makes the former street children valuable in the resettlement work, as shown through IP2:s experience: "*After completing hairdressing at the international school of beauty they could not release me because I was very much useful for them in terms of mobilizing street children*".

What the former street children do, just through their presence, is that they give hope to the children, their journey away from the street life show the children that they are also capable of detaching from their current lifestyle. The former street children become role models. They become role models by showing that a normal life is possible, or as in the case of IP3, as a street child you are able to reach your dream. IP3 has continued schooling and working with music ever since he left the street through Street voice. By now he is well-known for his duets and cooperation's with some of Uganda's biggest artists, and is highly respected by the street living children. This is how he explains what he does: "*I'm singing,*

giving private lessons in guitar. These musicians you hear on the radio, I teach them.” This example of a successful story helps the children in their resettlement process, this by identifying themselves with IP3 and his background.

Off course former street children do not compose a homogeneous group where everyone is willing, capable or suitable to work with street children and their resettlement process. But for those who do, my findings show that the understanding they have of the children’s situation is valuable in the ambition of making the children’s resettlement sustainable.

6 Conclusions

This study shows that being a street child is stigmatized, regardless if you are currently or were previously living on the street. The public notion of someone who has the experience of street life remains unchanged no matter if the person lives on the street or not. The respondents feel judged due to their experience, a judgment that decreases their personality and associate them with discrediting attributes like criminality and drug use. Just as previous research of street children has shown, the former street children are also perceived as the stereotype of a street child, which here has been explained as a reckless, animal like problem maker. Someone you do not want to have employed in order to keep your restaurant going.

Former street children use different strategies to cope with these prejudices, in this study two have been revealed. Former street children are either open with their stigmatizing attribute where they support street children and fight the prejudices by advocating for their normality. This in contrast to the other strategy where the former street children chose to hide their experience of street life in order to elude the negative effects the experience brings. Neither of these strategies is optimal since both fighting stigmatizing conjectures and keeping a period of your life secret can be draining and create complex situations. The strategies have been named after how the stigma is handled, the fortifying and the calculating strategy, where the dividing line has been shown to be the person’s Sense of Coherence.

This theoretical finding shows a connection between Goffman’s (1963) stigma theory and Antonovsky’s (1991) theory of Sense of Coherence. Stigmatizing treatment can be perceived and handled differently by different people, a feature that was shown in my empirical findings. The stigma is an outer stimuli, or a stressor as Antonovsky (1991) titles it, that effects the person that is exposed to it. The way of handling the stressor depends on the person’s capability of understanding and influence its situation as well as it having the resources needed to cope with the tension that the stressor brings. What has been found is that if the persons SOC is strong, the stigma will be seen as a motive for action and contrariwise with a low SOC the stigma becomes stressful and overwhelming for the individual. These ways of handling the stressor of the stigma, constitutes the strategies presented above.

Making street children into former – that is what the resettlement process is all about. Though as explained above, this is not an easy task to perform. This study

has presented six different key-factors for this work to be carried out in a sustainable way. With the motto “the sooner the better”, a preventive focus was found to be efficient to avert children from ever entering street life. At the state where the child has entered the street, the child’s own will has to be in focus when designing the resettlement. The individual approach enables the child to be motivated throughout the whole process and not being pulled back to the life at the street. For the child to get a good understanding of its traumatizing experiences from the street life, it is important that its SOC is strengthened during the process of resettlement. This will both help them to remain in resettlement as well as being able to handle their experiences in a more constructive way in the future.

Former street children need to be acknowledged for the great knowledge they possess, a knowledge that is gained through their experience of street life and resettlement. Street children are true resources when it comes to research about both street children and former street children as well as in research of the resettlement process. In the resettlement work, this knowledge becomes valuable hence they do understand the context of street children at a deeper level as well as the former street children become role models that the children can identify themselves with.

7 Final discussion

Former street children are in an exposed position in society, suffering the social effects of the stigma that street life brings. That instead of being seen as the true resources that they are for the development of their society. The aim of this study has been to capture the unique experiences and knowledge that former street children have according to their situation and their resettlement process. The study has acknowledged the effects that a life on the street may have in a person’s life and how it relates to this stigmatizing attribute, as well as determining factors that are needed in the resettlement of street children. These subjects are extremely important for the nation of Uganda, where a developmental change is crucial if the future children and grown-ups are not going to suffer from the same exclusion as the country’s current and former street children.

When designing this study I had a strong notion that the subject chosen was possible to conduct within the confines of a bachelor level essay. I do believe that it was my conviction of the importance of the topic chosen in combination with both mine and the social workers belief that the study was possible to conduct, that made me push it further. Now in a subsequent mode I am very glad I did not back down and changed subject. Hence, the complexity of finding respondents do in fact speak for itself. The difficulties in reaching the subject of stigmatization among former street children become a strong notion of how severe this issue is and to what extent it does affect their lives. So the lack of participants shows the importance of continuing the research of this subject so the magnitude of the problem gets known and examined. I want this study to be seen as an eye-opener for the stigma among former street children as well as an emphasis of user participation in research about the resettlement process.

7.1 In a wider perspective

As was presented in the introduction of this study, the number of children entering the streets of Kampala is constantly increasing and so at a high speed. The consequence of this fact is that a higher rate of Uganda's population will experience traumatic incidents at a young age and be exposed to stigmatizing treatment due to their street life. No matter of how effective the resettlement work becomes or how extensive the stigmatizing treatment is fought, it will not be enough to break the pattern. What is needed is a change in the assessment of street living children. As was explained under *3.2.1 Norms and its deviations*, lifting these issues to a metalevel is highly important. The socially disqualified role that street children and former street children are given, a role that sets the conditions of their living, is a result of the political state, development and the (possible) social policies established to change their vulnerability. With this said I do believe that the only sufficient way of making the resettlement work needless and creating a society where a former street child do not have to live in secrecy or be disqualified as a person due to hir attribute, is that a governmental responsibility is taken.

What can be said about the work carried out with street children in Kampala (and the rest of the world) is that it is a small plaster on an open wound, a wound demonstrating the crucial state of a nationwide epidemic. The former street children experience the same discrediting treatment as when they lived on the street. In order to counteract this excluding processes it would be contradictable if focus did not involve both street children and former street children when fighting the social stigmatization. The gravity of the phenomenon of street children needs to be acknowledged not only as a crime against children's rights but also for the negative effects it has on society – because I do believe that this is the only valid motive for the government to act in this matter.

7.3 Suggestions for further research

From a theoretical point of view, the validity of the connection found between Goffman's (1963) Stigma theory and Antonovsky's (1991) theory of Sense of coherence, needs to be further examined. What was shown in this study, was that a person's way of handling a stigmatizing attribute is due to its sense of coherence. Since this is a small-scale study, this possible connection needs to be evaluated in a survey of a bigger extent which can reveal any existing pattern between these mentioned theories. What is needed for that kind of study is plenty of time, time for building relationships with the respondents so it is possible for the researcher to reach the subject of stigmatization. It should be added that this possible bridge between the theories is not attached to the issue of former street children, it can be examined at any type of stigmatizing attribute.

In order for the government in Uganda to understand the severe negative consequences it is of having such a high level of citizens living outside society, I promote that a large-scale research is performed to set a price of this matter. As I said before, I do not think that the issues of street children and former street children will be taken seriously until the government itself realizes that they will

gain from a responsibility taken. This research needs to be extensive where both short- and long-time costs are evaluated, costs for the society that is due to the numbers of lives living outside society. A governmental responsibility in the matter of street children will hopefully lead to two things: that the changed political attitude will erase the social stigma and that the pressure on the resettlement work will decrease due to fewer children entering the streets.

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9 Appendix

Interview guide

Their history

Would you like to tell me about...

- What it was that made you to start living on the street? Which situation or what causes led you to a life at the street?
 - o How old were you then? For how long time?
 - o Where did you stay? In which area? Alone?
- A normal day at the street? What happened, what did you do?
- What did people think of children who were living on the street? What picture or expectations did people have of children that lived on the street?

Have you been on and off the street several times?

- What was it that made you leave the streets? How did that happen?
- What was it that then made you go back to the life on the street?
- How was it when you were leaving the street life? How did you experience the new situation?
- What do you think it was that made you stay off the street at that time?

Reactions of others

- How did other people treat you while you were living on the street?
 - o Normal citizens?
 - o Police?
 - o Ignorance?
 - o Any example?
- How do people react when you tell them that you have lived on the street before?
 - o Why do you think they react in that way?
- What do you think that people think of people whom are former street kids?
 - o What do you think of people that have lived on the street?

Secrecy

- The people you have around you, like your family and friends, do they know that you have lived on the street for some time?
- Does anyone at your job know that you have lived on the street?
 - o If not, how come?
 - o What do you think would happen if they knew? Which consequences can occur?
 - o What is it that makes you feel that you need to hide your experience of street life?
- How did they react when you told them?
 - o Why do you think they react in that way?

- Have you ever felt that you needed to hide that you once been living on the streets?
- What do you think that other people think of a person that has been on the street?
- What do you feel when you are seen as a former street child?

Finish

- What have this experience done with you?
- Is there any difference between people who have lived on the streets before and people who never done? Do you ever feel different from people who have not lived on the street?
- In what way do you think that your experience of street life has changed you?
 - o What have you learned from this experience? What do you know now that you didn't know before?

Future work with street children

- What do you think is important when a child is leaving the life on the street?
- What do you think can help children who have gotten off the street to stay off the street? What do they need?
- What was important for you during your resettlement?
- What would you have wanted to be different in your way back from the life on street?