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Framing the Issue of Orphans and Vulnerable Children

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1 INTRODUCTION

As the AIDS epidemic has grown and its impact has increased, so too has the literature addressing the consequences of the epidemic. One area of increasing prominence is that of children orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV/ AIDS. According to UNICEF, the number of such children has grown, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, with the most recent estimates predicting over 25 million children orphaned by 2010 (UNICEF 2006:8). International agencies argue that this situation must be addressed because, after a parent's death, orphaned children are in increasingly vulnerable positions, nutritionally, educationally, emotionally and politically. One of the most prominent documents to address this phenomenon is *The Framework for the Protection, Care and Support of Orphans and Vulnerable Children Living in a World with HIV and AIDS*. The *Framework*, published in 2004, presents a series of recommendations designed to strengthen the international response to orphaned and vulnerable children through a range of organizations, institutions and governments. It represents the current position of the development establishment towards the question of orphaned and vulnerable children. I propose to analyze the *Framework* from the perspective of contemporary theories in the anthropology of development to evaluate the politics that

shape both the development community and the documents and recommendations that it produces. This analysis is important because the politically acceptable solutions should not predetermine the diagnosis.

Implicit within the *Framework* are a number of development assumptions, policies, and politics. The document defines the interest groups assumed to be responsible, labels problems, identifies solutions, and divides interventions into categories for further research and action. It makes suggestions about what should be done and who should do it. All of this is presented as self-evident and necessary, although I will argue that the document is rife with assumptions and that the politics of the development establishment can be seen in the text. The *Framework* constructs a specific version of the issue of orphans and vulnerable children, a version stripped of its contexts, in order to create a more manageable subject.

Close reading and analysis of the *Framework* reveals that histories and stories of countries, families, and international organizations are removed, except when needed as a testimonial or humanizing example. As a result the document works rhetorically to place itself outside of its historical and contemporary context. Its language represents a compromise consensus opting for words that are strong but not too forceful, for categories that are focused but not too narrow, and for

solutions that are achievable but not too political. As a production of the development establishment, the *Framework* represents the “problem” of children orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV/ AIDS in internationally acceptable terms. My analysis will reveal what is included, what is excluded and how this feat is accomplished and presented. This is important because successful responses to orphaned and vulnerable children will go beyond the politically palatable portion of the situation that is presented. These solutions would include some of the theories and practices emerging out of contemporary anthropology and the critique of development, such as the involvement of children as active and legitimate participants and a critical engagement with the assumptions underlying much of development.

Locating Orphans and Vulnerable Children

Anthropology has a long and complicated history with development. Before discussing the two dominant tracks that emerged from these many interactions, it is necessary to briefly discuss the history of development itself. “Development,” as it relates to international policy and programs, began with the end of World War II and the initiatives to rebuild the areas damaged by the conflict (Edelman & Haugerud 2006:6). But the history of the word and the beginnings of its entwinements with

social initiatives and colonialism date back farther. Gustavo Esteva, in his essay on development for *The Development Dictionary*, traces the history of the use of the term back to the 1700s, where it had a primarily biological definition. There “development” was understood as a metaphor for growth, specifically for a pre-determined pattern of growth that could be seen by the biologist (Esteva 1993:8). From biology it rapidly became part of social discussions and, when applied to history, “converted [it] into a programme: a necessary and inevitable destiny” (Esteva 1993:8).

President Truman’s 1949 speech labeling countries as “underdeveloped” marked the beginnings of the current use and connotations of “developed” and “development” (Esteva 1993:3). As the meanings and uses of the term “development” multiplied and diversified, and became part of the common language, the debates over whether development was something valid and relevant diminished. Esteva writes in his discussion of dependency theorists, who argue that underdevelopment is caused by development and that the Third World is created and kept poor for the success of the First World, “no one seems to doubt that the concept does not allude to real phenomena. They do not realize that it is a comparative adjective whose base of support is the assumption, very Western but unacceptable and undemonstrable, of the oneness, homogeneity, and linear evolution of the world” (1993:12).

Esteva also discusses the 1950's shift to viewing development in largely economic terms. One important influence was the Bretton Woods Conference, where the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were created. These institutions, and this conference, began two decades of control of economies through state intervention, subsidies, and other forms of control (Edelman & Haugerud 2006:6). This changed in the 1970s when there was a movement from focusing on economic growth to addressing poverty and social equity. This shift began to cross the divide between solely economic or solely social development (Edelman & Haugerud 2006:7; Esteva 1993:12). The debt incurred by poor countries attempting to follow the recommendations of the Bretton Woods institutions, and by wealthy countries being too willing to lend large amounts of money, led into the 1980s and 1990s Structural Adjustment Plans (SAPs). SAPs "sought to reduce the state role in the economy, and called for reductions in state expenditures on social services such as education and health care" (Edelman & Haugerud 2006:7).

It is in this context that what I call the "development establishment" evolved. This group of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), governmental groups and multinational institutions composes the actors working to promote, create, and implement development strategies. Some of the organizations that are part of this group include

the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS), as well as the larger institution of the United Nations (UN), national organizations such as the United States Agency of International Development (USAID) and the Danish International Development Agency (Danida), as well as smaller organizations such as Save the Children and CARE, and schools such as the Columbia and Johns Hopkins Schools of Public Health. I have chosen to list these organizations for two reasons: they provide a representative cross-section of the larger groups that make up the development establishment and they are all signatories to the *Framework*.

Such a list belies its grouping underneath one heading such as "development establishment." These groups have a wide range of policies and interests. The concerns of the United States government are vastly different from those of the Danish government, and both differ from local NGOs, international organizations such as the UN, and universities. Each group operates from a range of budgets, interests, and influences. Some bilateral organizations, like USAID and Danida, are primarily influenced by the politics and agendas of their sponsoring country. Other, multilateral organizations, such as the UN programs, must negotiate every decision through all of their member organizations, resulting in compromise decisions of what the majority are willing to

endorse. NGOs are responsible largely to their boards and donor communities. In spite of these differences, I group them together because they share important commonalities. All of these organizations, and others like them, provide money and technical advice to those who accept their programs. All are working towards “development” and all wield considerable power in this endeavor. The power held by these organizations stems from their position in global politics, their access to funds and governments, and their ability to withhold resources should target communities disagree with proposed interventions. The organizations that compose the “development establishment” represent a powerful force in shaping the world.

Just as the meaning of development has grown and changed, so too has the relationship between anthropology and development. From this relationship two dominant tracks of discussion have emerged, development anthropology and the anthropology of development. Development anthropology works from inside the field of development to present suggestions for improvement (Crewe & Harrison 1998:16; Edelman & Haugerud 2006:40). The anthropology of development, on the other hand, places itself outside the field of development to analyze and critique the establishment’s assumptions and methods (Crewe & Harrison 1998:16; Edelman & Haugerud 2006:40). My analysis will focus on the

anthropology of development, utilizing its emphasis on discourse as revealing the assumptions present within development work.

The anthropology of development emerged as part of a critique of the increasing differentiation between the First and Third Worlds, the role of groups such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in shaping development and national policies and the growing trend for reflexivity within the field of anthropology. Arturo Escobar is one of the most prominent voices in critiquing development and calling for changes. His 1991 book *Encountering Development* is a post-structuralist analysis of development discourse that looks at the development industry and what he argues is its narrow, sometimes destructive, focus. Escobar argues that the First World in general and the development industry in particular have constructed the Third World as an object of knowledge and recipient of expertise and aid. This construction has hurt the Third World and allowed the First World to ignore the ramifications and historical consequences of their actions.

Another early and influential author coming from the post-structural tradition is James Ferguson and his 1990 book *The Anti-politics Machine*, a critique of the development establishment in Lesotho. Ferguson argues that the development establishment created a discourse that separated Lesotho from its context in an effort to create a subject that

was more contained, more technocratically manageable, and less politicized. For example, in discussing Lesotho's location in and history with South Africa, particularly its position as a labor force reserve, and the World Bank's curious ignoring of this, Ferguson writes, "history, as well as politics, is swept aside, and the relationship between the two 'national' economies of Lesotho and South Africa is seen as one of accidental geographic juxtaposition, not structural integration or political subordination" (1994:63). Ferguson uses this, and other examples, to illustrate how the World Bank created a discursive subject that could be managed without engaging in the complicated political and social dynamics that originally created it.

Ferguson's methods and conclusions are frequently referenced, for example in Jonathan Crush's introduction to the edited volume *Power of Development*. Drawing on Ferguson, Crush argues for returning the subjects of development to the complicated context from which the development discourse has sought to remove them, writing, "ideas about development do not arise in a social, institutional or literary vacuum. They are assembled within a vast hierarchical apparatus of knowledge production and consumption" (1995:5). He describes the global and local concerns that must be a part of any attempt to address questions of

development. Crush goes beyond this to say that such global and local concerns must be part of questioning the overall idea of development.

Escobar and Ferguson, and their emphasis on discourse, are part of a later trend in the anthropology of development that grew out of the 1990s discussion of post-structuralism. Post-structuralists disagreed with the universal truth and structure argued by structuralists. Rather than believing in one truth, one path of history, and one ultimate destination, post-structuralists call for the inclusion of many truths, and argue the presence of many realities. They work to deconstruct the monolithic categories created by structuralism in order to include previously unheard voices and points of view. The works of Foucault, particularly his discussions of discourse and knowledge/ power, heavily influences both authors, as well as the larger body of post-structural theory. Foucault studied power and the ways in which it was exercised, especially the more indirect forms of power. One of Foucault's theories that is particularly relevant to questions of development is that of governmentality, which "encompass[es] the mentalities, rationalities, and technics used by governments, within a defined territory, [to] actively create the subjects (the governed), and the social, economic, and political structures, in and through which their policy can best be implemented" (Mayehew, Oxford Reference Online 2004). Governmentality's emphasis on the production of

subjects and the means by which they are produced raises many questions when used as a lens to look at development discourse.

The concept of discourses is utilized by Foucault, Escobar, and Ferguson, and is broadly defined as “a specific assembly of categorizations, concepts, and ideas that is produced, reproduced, performed, and transformed in a particular set of practices” (Mayhew, Oxford Reference Online 2004). In the context of developmental discourses, Escobar’s (1995) definition as “the process through which social reality comes into being [...] the articulation of knowledge and power, of the visible and the expressible” is particularly useful. Discourses are inextricably intertwined with questions of power and reality, “the dynamics of discourse and power in the representation of social reality, in particular, has been instrumental in unveiling mechanisms by which a certain order of discourse produces permissible modes of being and thinking while disqualifying and even making others impossible” (Escobar 1995:5).

While the approaches used by Escobar, Ferguson, and others have been highly influential they have not been without their critiques. One example is Emma Crewe and Elizabeth Harrison’s book *Whose Development?* They question the choice to group all of development together, and in opposition to all of those affected by development.

Crewe and Harrison argue that this categorization continues the essentialization of an “us” and “them” category, and reduces the lives of those not instigating the development initiatives to nothing more than a reaction to the actions of developers. They call for a balanced and nuanced discussion of development that does not divide the situation into two categories but rather differentiates between the many individuals and organizations within each. Crewe and Harrison also express reservations over the emphasis on discourse and discourse analysis, positing that the term has been so overextended as to become nearly meaningless, while at the same time distracting from the very real effects of development in favor of academic concerns (1998:17).

Within the anthropology of development these theories and discussions have been applied to a range of questions. Crewe and Harrison’s ethnography include the promotion of fishponds in Zambia and the development and marketing of stoves in Sri Lanka, and analyses of the many levels of interaction on both sides of the initiative that shaped the eventual outcome. Stacey Pigg’s 1997 piece, “Authority in Translation,” examines the literature and practice surrounding the intersection between international health policy, traditional birthing assistants, and midwives in Nepal. She argues that discourses of the development establishment have real outcomes, and that these outcomes

involve the devaluation of local knowledge and practices (Pigg 1997:233). The questions pursued by anthropologists and the issues raised cover the range of development initiatives. From ground level critiques of the production of knowledge by Pigg; to the deconstruction of an organization from within it performed by Crewe and Harrison; to the establishment-wide questioning of discourses and history by Escobar; the anthropology of development seeks to “make the self-evident problematical” (Crush 1995:3) and question the portrayal of development as inevitable and necessary.

The question of orphaned and vulnerable children, however, is relatively unexplored. There are a growing number of research projects throughout the world, and particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, seeking to find the best way to address the needs of these children, but there has been little post-structural analysis of the development discourses that resulted. There is therefore a need to conduct a similar analysis of the development discourses of orphans and vulnerable children because these discourse demonstrate how the development establishment constructs the issue. *The Framework for Protection, Care, and Support of Orphans and Vulnerable Children Living in a World with HIV and AIDS* is one example of such discourse. It is a particularly relevant example because of its position as one of the first of these documents to offer strategies for action

(Interview with Aaron Greenberg, February 1, 2008). The *Framework* also begins to move beyond some of the limitations and shortfalls of its predecessors, though it continues the task of constructing a very specific version of the situation of orphans and vulnerable children and addresses its proposed solutions to this constructed version.

The methodology used by Ferguson and Escobar, and the shift of viewing the *Framework* as political creation rather than neutral document, is highly revealing of the development establishment. The approach of discourse analysis is useful in exposing and examining some of the concerns that underlie both the document itself and the larger issue of orphans and vulnerable children. This analysis is augmented with two techniques from sociology; the concepts of social construction and of frames. Social construction is the theory of viewing issues and situations as a product of society, as shaped and understood by the society in which they exist. Escobar discusses and utilizes social construction as intertwined with discourse analysis. Paraphrased by Peet in *Theories of Development*, Escobar argues that “reality is constructed in the sense of being understood and re-created through Western ideas” (1999:146).

This is paired in my analysis with the concept of frames, first introduced by Erving Goffman as a tool for analyzing how people see the world around them, that is, what is influencing and shaping the way

people see, or don't see, things (König, n.d.). A similar concept is utilized by Mitchell to discuss the "enframing" of realities, explained as "the observer inevitably 'enframe[s]' external reality in order to make sense of it; this enframing [takes] place according to European categories" (Escobar 1995:7). The question of seeing, and not seeing, is very apt in considering how *The Framework* sees, and does not see, the issue of children orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV/ AIDS. Discourse analysis, governmentality, social construction, and frames provide the tools to ask these important questions.

There are two other trends in anthropology that are important to consider in relation to the *Framework*. The first of these relates directly to discourse analysis and the politicization of the written word. In the 1980s Marcus and Clifford published *Writing Culture*, in which they sought to make anthropologists aware of the importance of the very act of writing. They argue that writing is not the neutral byproduct of doing ethnographies but rather a contested site where biases and politics shape what is included and how it is presented. These decisions are vital because they produce the final project of an ethnography, which is then viewed as the authoritative and unbiased source of information on a culture, despite the fact that it represents only one viewpoint. *Women Writing Culture* (1996), a volume edited by Ruth Behar and Deborah A.

Gordon, expanded on *Writing Culture* by arguing that Clifford and Marcus had failed to consider women's voices and perspectives in their own book. Together, these two books began the politicization of the written word and self-reflexivity in relation to writing that continues within anthropology today.

The second trend that I would like to address is the growing literature surrounding the anthropology of children and childhood. Two excellent works that present a thoughtful range of the issues under study are *Small Wars*, edited by Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Carolyn Sargent, and *Children and Politics of Culture*, edited by Sharon Stephens. While my analysis focuses on the anthropology of development there are many important overlaps with, and concepts from, the anthropology of children and childhood. Primary among these is the notion of childhood as a cultural context, and the type of childhood currently promoted as a very specific Western understanding of the word. Quoting Jo Boyden, Stephens writes, "the norms and values upon which this ideal of a safe, happy and protected childhood are built are culturally and historically bound to the social preoccupations and priorities of the capitalist [and bourgeois classes] of Europe and the United States" (1995:14). The emphasis on a Western childhood is part of a larger emphasis by the development

establishment on the Western concept of family, a concept that supports capitalism and colonialism (Stephens 1995:16).

The emphasis on children and families partially arises from the important role that children play as a site of social and political contestation. Scheper-Hughes and Sargent describe childhood as “a primary nexus of mediation between public norms and private life” (1998:1). Children become contested because their education and upbringing brings out of the abstract and into conflict issues of culture, politics, family, schooling, economy, and others. In many instances, there is a conflict between the imposition of global, Western concepts of modernity, which are frequently found in the public spheres, and questions of family, culture and society, which tend to occupy the private spheres. In this respect children become part of the politics of culture, that is to say, the negotiations surrounding the “proper” childhood, or whether there is such a thing as childhood, and larger discussions over cultural identity, or whether that exists either. Scheper-Hughes and Sargent describe the complicated nexus of childhood and politics, “the cultural politics *of childhood* speaks [...] to the public nature of childhood. [...] The *cultural politics* of childhood speaks to the political, ideological, and social uses of childhood” (1998:1). The discussions surrounding the construction of childhood, family, and culture are examples of the creation

of colonial subjects, and thus of Foucault's governmentality (Stephens 1995:16).

Alongside the glorification of Western childhood are growing discussions of both children at risk and children as risks (Stephens 1995:18). Not only are children, and childhood, being portrayed as victims of ignorance or, in the case of children orphaned and made vulnerable by HIV/ AIDS, by disease, but they are also begin cast as threats to order and progress. Scheper-Hughes and Sargent write of "fears of engulfing hoards of unwanted children" (1998:11), while Stephens describes an imagery in which "some children [are] people out of place and excess populations to be eliminated, while others must be controlled, reshaped, and harnessed to changing social ends" (1995:13). Tobias Hecht's ethnography of street children in Brazil, *At Home in the Street*, explores one such group of children that fall in both the category of "at risk" and "a risk." His analysis utilizes both the anthropology of childhood and the anthropology of development, as he critiques the literature produced about Brazilian street children and the organizations producing it.

Methods

My work will be a discourse analysis of *The Framework for the Protection, Care and Support of Orphaned and Vulnerable Children Living in a World with HIV and AIDS*. The *Framework* is authored by UNICEF and UNAIDS but signed by a range of other governments and organizations, including the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Save the Children, The Global Alliance and many others. This particular document is the result of a series of reports entitled *Children on the Brink* and a number of United Nations conferences. The *Framework* places itself as the synthesizing document of the previous responses to the issue, saying, “the guidance provided in this framework brings together common elements and key themes from these efforts and is integral for both government and civil society seeking to strengthen their responses at the community, district and national levels” (UNICEF and UNAIDS 2004:27). I will be analyzing the document itself, its language, assumptions and implications, utilizing the perspectives of the anthropology of development. More specifically, I will look at the way that specific language presents the situation of children orphaned and made vulnerable and proposes to solve it.

I begin by placing the *Framework* in context, something of crucial importance given Ferguson’s point that much of development is an “anti-politics machine” that works to remove issues from their complicated

webs of politics, history and context. This context involves locating the *Framework* within its history, identifying some of the key themes within the document and the larger development establishment, and discussing some of the politics and critiques that surround both. History, in this case of the document itself and the reports that it cites as its predecessors, can serve to elucidate some of the negotiations and compromises that are present in the current recommendations. The overarching themes reveal a small section of the debates and larger constructions that inform the *Framework*. By looking not only at the document but also at what preceded it and what runs through it, I will place the *Framework* back into its context and contrast the changes in foci and recommendations that have taken place. This relocation and analysis reveals the ongoing construction of orphans and vulnerable children and the proposed solutions.

I say “construction” here rather than “description” because the language used to describe the issue serves to construct it and reveal the describer’s own contexts. Similar to the theory of social construction utilized by Escobar, the presentation of the issue is part of the creation of the issue. This also speaks to the concept of frames and Mitchell’s notion of “enframing” a subject. Following the use of frames, the act of description reveals the preconceptions of the describer. Building on this

with “enframing,” the subject is presented in Western terms and concepts. Together, these tools serve to increase awareness of the important and political nature of the written word.

After placing the *Framework* in context I plan to analyze the document itself. I will look at the groups that have been defined and what their assigned roles and responsibilities are; the categories created within discussion of problems and solutions; and the suggestions for further action. By looking at the groups involved I will show how they are seen and constructed, as well as how the development establishment envisions itself and its roles in respect to them. Next I will consider the Five Key Strategies that the *Framework* recommends for addressing the issue of orphans and vulnerable children. Consideration of these strategies reveals underlying themes of the *Framework*, which I have grouped into the questions of who, what, where, when and why. Finally, I will focus on how the suggestions presented at the end demonstrate what the development establishment sees as both the actions that need to be done and the actions that can be recommended. In all of these, I will build on the issues and themes raised by the earlier contextualization of the *Framework*. I seek to answer questions of how these suggestions fit with the earlier language and rhetoric of the document, what issues are excluded, and what forms the recommended actions take.

Significance

Analyzing the text and context of the *Framework* helps to begin to understand the forces shaping the responses to children orphaned or made vulnerable by HIV and AIDS. In beginning to understand these forces the actors involved, whether they be members of the development establishment or members of the communities affected, can work to create more appropriate solutions. These will be solutions to the problem that exists within and beyond what is constructed in the *Framework*. This is significant because effective solutions cannot be designed until the question of orphans and vulnerable children, with all of its complicated contexts, is fully considered and not translated and simplified through the politics of the development establishment. It must not be couched in neutral and unthreatening language, nor stripped of its contexts.

My interest in the issue of children orphaned and made vulnerable by AIDS emerges from the overlap between class work and research on HIV/ AIDS and on school fees in Africa. A group that appeared in both categories was that of OVCs, orphans and vulnerable children. I had not previously encountered this area of concern, or this “framing,” and decided to do more research. My interest grew throughout my junior year and culminated in an internship in Lusaka, Zambia last summer.

My internship was predominantly with Africa Directions, a youth center in a low-income neighborhood. Though my work there did not deal directly with the question of orphaned and vulnerable children, I spoke with a number of individuals and groups involved in addressing the situation in Zambia, as well as involved in other aspects of community health and development. These conversations demonstrated to me the difference between what I had read while in the United States and what I was seeing and hearing in Zambia. This led me to reconsider my original thesis proposal to investigate community responses to orphans and vulnerable children. I wanted to explore the disjuncture between my time in Zambia and the literature on orphans and vulnerable children. This desire, combined with a rereading of *At Home in the Street*, resulted in a shift to a critical analysis of the text on which I had previously planned to base my conclusions. This change has also given me the opportunity to educate myself about development anthropology, an area of anthropology that will be very important in my plans to work in international community health and development. The authors and theoretical debates within the field that I have read thus far are key voices in many of the current debates regarding the direction of the fields of development and public health.

The *Framework*, as a key series of recommendations endorsed by all of the most well known NGOs, governments, and international organizations, is a rich source for discourse analysis. The *Framework's* language, organization and focuses are the result of the politics and interests that shape the development establishment itself. It is important to reveal these underlying forces because they are the same forces influencing the lives of millions of children.

2 SELECTED BACKGROUND TO THE FRAMEWORK

The *Framework* is part of a community of literature that addresses the issue of orphans and vulnerable children. Though the *Framework* does a better job of citing its predecessors and related documents than other examples of developmental discourse, it fails to address the critiques and shortcomings of the literature that it claims as its antecedents. In this section I will explore the concerns and critiques of two of the documents that the *Framework* lists in its opening pages, the USAID series *Children on the Brink* and the UN *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. I will explore these two because they are representative examples of the language and ideas that have influenced the *Framework*. Even a preliminary exploration begins to reveal some of the politics involved in the documents that inform the *Framework*, politics that the *Framework* itself never mentions or discusses.

Children on the Brink

The *Children on the Brink* series was authored by USAID and published in 1997, 2000, 2002 and 2004 editions. The series presents an

account of the world's children orphaned and made vulnerable by AIDS and is the basis of a number of publications and policy recommendations within the field, including the current UNICEF publication, *Africa's Orphaned and Vulnerable Generation*, and the *Framework* (see Appendix for "Family Tree of the *Framework*").

Much of the language within the *Framework* is a direct descendant of that in *Children on the Brink 2002*. This is most obvious in the five strategic recommendations for action that each document presents, shown below in Table One. What also becomes clear in comparing these recommendations is the changes in language that have occurred. The differences between the two sets of recommendations demonstrate the ongoing contestation and negotiation of language and commitments that underlies all developmental discourse. While I will examine the *Framework's* strategic recommendations in greater depth later, a preliminary viewing of the documents and discussions from which it arises helps to show that the recommendations have evolved and are not the self-evident, immutable truths that they are presented as.

Table One. The Five Strategic Recommendations of *Children on the Brink 2002* and *The Framework for Protection, Care and Support of Orphans and Vulnerable Children*

Recommendation #	<i>Children on the Brink 2002</i>	<i>The Framework</i>
One	Strengthen and support the capacity of families to protect and care for their children	Strengthen the capacity of families to protect and care for orphans and vulnerable children by prolonging the lives of parents and providing economic, psychosocial and other support
Two	Mobilize and strengthen community-based responses	Mobilize and support community-based responses
Three	Strengthen the capacity of children and young people to meet their own needs	Ensure access for orphans and vulnerable children to essential services, including education, health care, birth registration and others
Four	Ensure that governments develop appropriate policies, including legal and programmatic frameworks, as well as essential services for the most vulnerable children.	Ensure that governments protect the most vulnerable children through improved policy and legislation and by channeling resources to families and communities
Five	Raise awareness within societies to create an environment that enable support for children affected by HIV/ AIDS	Raise awareness at all levels through advocacy and social mobilization to create a supportive environment for children and families affected by HIV/ AIDS

Contrasting the two sets of recommendations side by side allows for a direct comparison of the language. Many of the similarities, such as the continued and repeated use of certain words by both documents, are

clear on first read. Many of the differences are also evident, and I wish to examine two examples to demonstrate the shift in language.

Looking at the first recommendation it is evident that the version presented in the *Framework* has been greatly altered from its *Children on the Brink* predecessor. While both versions address the group of “families,” the first seeks to “strengthen and support the capacity of families to protect and care for their children” while the second seeks to do the same but narrows the category from all children to specifically “orphans and vulnerable children.” This alteration has reduced the scope of the document’s responsibility. The *Framework* is now supporting families only in the care of orphans and vulnerable children, rather than of all children. The category dictating the form of this support has also been narrowed. The second version of the first recommendation does not end at strengthening and supporting but adds “by prolonging the lives of parents and providing economic, psychosocial and other support.” This clause defines the types of support to be provided, and reveals the priorities of the *Framework’s* authors. The *Framework* could have chosen other methods to propose, such as “by promoting community gardens,” or, “by providing universal child and health care.” Alternatively, the *Framework* could have chosen not to add a second clause at all, and to

continue with the comparatively open-ended construction of the first version. But it did not.

In addition, the third recommendation demonstrates the semantic shifts that reveal negotiations and politics. Of the five recommendations the third has the greatest change between the version used in *Children on the Brink 2002* and the one that appears in the *Framework*. The original version repeats the language of “strengthening capacity” used in the first recommendation, though in this instance it is directed at children rather than families. In the *Framework*, however, this language has disappeared from the third recommendation, which now reads, “Ensure access for orphans and vulnerable children to essential services, including education, health care, birth registration and others.” The new goal is not to build capacity but to ensure access to a specific set of services. By framing the issue in this manner, the *Framework* once more creates a much more narrow definition of both its target population and its responsibilities to this population. Additionally, by using the terminology of “essential services” and listing the top concerns as service issues, the development establishment ensures its own survival. Someone is needed both to “ensure access” and also to provide the “essential services.” The immediate suggestion would be for governments to provide these, but the

next recommendation cuts this short by emphasizing the responsibilities of governments as “improv[ing] policy and legislation.”

Comparing the two versions of the two recommendations reveals a shift in programming and political emphasis. It demonstrates that the versions presented in the multilateral, UN published *Framework* have their history and their beginnings in another document written by a bilateral, U.S. organization. A discussion of these differences restores some of the contexts stripped from the *Framework*. By restoring these contexts the *Framework* ceases to be a self-contained, self-referential document and begins to be part of a community and history of literature and politics.

There is no such distinction between *Children on the Brink 2004* and the *Framework*. While *Children on the Brink 2004* and the *Framework* were published in the same year, *Children on the Brink 2004* was published after the *Framework* and serves in many ways as its companion document. I will not go into great depth on *Children on the Brink 2004*, since it repeats the strategic recommendations of the *Framework*, but I wish to point out a key difference between the two that demonstrates the continued evolution of the discussion surrounding orphans and vulnerable children. This difference is the change in the age of who is classified as a child. Though the *Framework* defines a child as someone under eighteen, its statistics, and those in *Children on the Brink 2002*, are based on the previous definition of

a child as someone under the age of fifteen. There is no explanation given for why the age has been raised, nor for why it was originally set at fifteen. Other than a brief mention of the influence that this has on the numbers presented, there is no further explanation. An explanation would involve discussion of the reasons why the number was originally set at 15, why there was a need to change it and why 18 was chosen as the new age. Any such discussion would need to touch on politics and definitions of childhood, two areas that the *Framework* has been careful to stay away from. By discussing the age change, the *Framework* would be locating the boundaries of childhood in politically contentious and changeable waters.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child

Within the sections entitled “Global Goals” and “Guiding Human Rights Principles,” the *Framework* positions itself as part of the UN and the community involved in supporting and promoting the Millennium Development Goals, the General Assembly Special Sessions of HIV/ AIDS and Children and the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. While there is a body of literature in anthropology addressing the many ways of defining and understanding the term “community,” in this instance I mean the governments, bilateral, multilateral, and nongovernmental organizations

that have endorsed the aforementioned documents. In considering the *Framework*, which has identified itself as a member of this community, it is important to note that at no point are the drawbacks, compromises, and critiques of these various motions, recommendations, goals and conventions discussed. Moreover, the *Framework* never mentions whether these have been successful, or even accomplished. Such a discussion would involve the *Framework* in the politics that shaped and influenced it. It would locate the document among its peers and efforts to aid orphans and vulnerable children, a location that would reveal the *Framework* as only one of many documents, and only the most recent attempt.

The failure to engage in any discussions regarding other documents or initiatives and their success or failure is part of the *Framework's* larger disengagement from the political contexts surrounding both the specific issue of orphans and vulnerable children and the larger issue of development initiatives. The reasons for success or failure include politics at the local, national, and international level, as well as issues of funding and efficacy. Moreover, a discussion of failure would involve discussing real people, both those implementing the initiatives, those who must deal with the development establishment's intervention and hundreds of other individuals involved. People and politics are two of the areas that the *Framework* works to avoid as part of its creation of a simpler,

more easily addressed subject. It is also not in the nature of documents produced by the development establishment to be critical, because it is not in the nature of the larger development establishment to reflect on the success and failures of their initiatives beyond superficial critiques of insufficient funds or cultural barriers (Crewe and Harrison 1998:15).

One of the documents that the *Framework* mentions but fails to discuss is the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CRC), which I will focus on here. The *Framework* cites the Convention as one of its guiding documents, and goes so far as to include what it considers the relevant articles in an appendix. Nowhere, however, is there recognition of the difficulties inherent with a basis in the Convention. These difficulties include the Conventions' grounding in Western ideals of individualism and modernity as well as its imposition of a Western concept of childhood (Bentley 2005:117). Politically, the Convention is also contentious because it is legally binding and not universally endorsed. The United States is one of the few nations that has yet to ratify the Convention (Human Rights Watch), which is particularly interesting given the relationship between the *Framework* and *Children on the Brink*, a series produced by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and discussed previously. By basing itself in both *Children on the Brink* and the

Convention, the *Framework* fails to fully commit to the human rights called for in the Convention.

In broadly addressing the Convention, it is important to mention the discussions surrounding notion of universal human rights. Many anthropologists have argued that the concept of universal human rights is difficult, if not impossible, to conceive. Cultural relativists argue that “universal” human rights are actually a Western, individualistic conception of rights, and as such cannot be imposed on other cultures. If the *Framework* bases its own universalizability on the universal quality and nature of human rights, it is based on a complicated and flawed system. Scheper-Hughes and Sargent also charge that an emphasis on a rights discourse “makes political morality the result of unconditional moral imperative rather than the result of political discourse, reflection and compromise” (1998:10). By not discussing the issues surrounding the concept of universal human rights, the *Framework* avoids discussing limitations or the politics involved in its own foundation.

Looking more specifically at children’s rights, a similar line of critique emerges in the discussion of who is defined as a child and what constitutes childhood. As the change in age seen between *Children on the Brink 2002*, the *Framework*, and *Children on the Brink 2004* demonstrates, the very age at which childhood is considered to have ended has changed.

Regarding the concept of childhood, Kristina Bentley writes that “the CRC enshrines a largely Western ideal of childhood,” going on to argue that this is a conception of childhood based on the capitalist economic model and understood in relation to a child’s engagement with or protection from wage labor and other “adult” responsibilities (2005:117). This is an argument that has echoes in the anthropology of childhood. Stephens writes:

The Declaration was aimed at protecting and nurturing childhood, as defined by adults within the framework of Western modernity. It did not recognize that there might be cultural differences in what constitutes children’s ‘best interest,’ or that children themselves might have something to say about the nature of these interests. [1995:35]

Vanessa Pupavac takes a different angle in attacking the basis of the understanding of children’s rights. She argues that the modern understanding of rights is based on viewing rights as something “directed at the powerless, that is, those lacking capacity” (n.d.:2). Thus the right-holders must depend on appealing to a separate ‘moral agent’ who will represent them in petitioning for their rights. According to Pupavac, this stance serves to delegitimize families and communities and empower officials to step in as the “moral agent” representing the children (n.d.:3).

Pupavac and Bentley both criticize the Convention as viewing children as having no agency. Bentley sees this view as stemming from

the Convention's basis in the ideal Western childhood, one in which children have no responsibility (2005:117). Pupavac, cited in Bentley's article, builds on this and her argument regarding rights to say that:

The institutionalizing and globalizing of Western models of childhood under the Convention means that the experience of childhood in developing countries is outlawed and thus Southern societies through the failure to comply with Western childhoods become permanent objects of outside intervention. In other words, the discourse on children's rights infantilises the South. [Bentley 2005:117]

These critiques of the Convention offer insight to some of the issues surrounding one of the principle documents referenced by the *Framework*. They also reveal some of the difficulties with a foundation in the Convention, structural flaws that underlie the *Framework's* rights based approach. This furthers the *Framework's* continued construction of the global South as failing, in this instance in the protection and promotion of childhood as conceived by the global North. This failure continues to legitimize the development establishment's intervention.

Pupavac's comments also raise the question of agency. The *Framework* emphasizes "involv[ing] children and young people as active participants in the response" to both HIV and to orphans and vulnerable children (UNICEF and UNAIDS 2004:28). The *Framework* argues for the inclusion of children but bases its legitimacy in the Convention, a document which Pupavac argues removes agency. Is the *Framework* then

following its stated goals of viewing children as active participants, or is it following the Convention and not viewing children as agents? What appears to be a fundamental contradiction is reconciled by a closer reading of the language of the *Framework*. It speaks of “involv[ing] children and young people,” which indicates that the *Framework* still envisions there as being an external force, as someone completing the action of involving children. Ultimately, then, though the *Framework* says it is based on the Convention, which in turn says that it promotes children as having agency, neither views children as capable of acting on their own. Pupuvac and Bentley discuss the lack of agency in the Convention, and the *Framework's* own language reveals its position. But while a closer reading of the *Framework* shows that it is consistent with many of the agendas present in the Convention, the *Framework* itself never addresses the apparent conflicts or politics in which it is enmeshed.

The Framework as Narrative

The *Framework* is ultimately a written text and can be discussed using the language of narrative and style. It is part of both a genre of literature produced by the development establishment and the subgenre of the development establishment's literature on orphans and vulnerable

children. Both the genre and the subgenre are distinguished by their production by the development establishment and their narrative style.

One of the primary characteristics of any text is that someone wrote it. While this may seem self-evident many development documents, including the *Framework*, are signed only by the organization that produce them. The *Framework* is published by UNICEF and UNAIDS, and the Executive Summary is signed by the directors of each agency. These two names, Carol Bellamy of UNICEF and Peter Piot of UNAIDS, are the only names and personal signatures on the document, and in this instance they represent not the authors of the text but an official endorsement of what is written. Nowhere is a person listed as the author. The *Framework* exists without authors or process, it is not attached to individuals who can be contacted and asked about the politics and organization that went into its writing. The *Framework*, like the entire genre, seems to emerge fully formed from the development establishment. This presentation removes the *Framework* from the human context that wrote it.

The follow up document to the *Framework*, *Enhanced Protection for Children Affected by AIDS (Enhanced Protection)*, does a better job at transparency. On the second page the acknowledgements list the authors, editors, and contributors that wrote it. These are the people that took part in the creation of *Enhanced Protection* and the inclusion of their names is a

vital part of transparency and accountability. It meant that I was able to find and contact Aaron Greenberg, the final author of *Enhanced Protection*, and speak with him regarding the process of its writing. Greenberg was most familiar with *Enhanced Protection* and was, unfortunately, unable to speak at length about what had gone into writing the *Framework*, or who the authors were who could be contacted and interviewed (interview, February 1, 2008). The *Framework* thus makes itself inaccessible and its process unknowable.

The *Framework's* lack of authorship and its Athena-like creation result in the document having an impersonal and all knowing voice. This voice is the voice of the development establishment, an impressive feat of homogenization, given the diverse range of organizations that compose the "development establishment." Nevertheless, the narrative style of the genre utilizes a removed, omnipotent voice that possesses all of the knowledge but is distant from the communities that will ultimately be affected by its content. Escobar discusses this both in terms of Donna Haraway's argument of "the god trick of seeing everything from nowhere" and Foucault's concept of the "panoptic gaze" (1994:155). The "panoptic gaze" sees all without being seen and parallels social control and the power of sight, of who gets to observe whom (Escobar 1994:155-56). Both are useful in considering a document whose content is produced

and justified by the development establishment, not by individuals. An individual has less authority but is more accountable and accessible than an international institution, as evidenced by my ability to contact Aaron Greenberg regarding *Enhanced Protection*. Individuals are also more easily connected to contexts of politics, beliefs, location, and education, the very contexts that the *Framework* seeks to remove itself from.

Thus the *Framework* utilizes its position of power to employ an all knowing, all seeing voice, a defining characteristic of developmental discourse. The lack of individuals as authors furthers this removal and reinforces the untouchable nature of the *Framework*. Both of these narrative styles separate the document and the issue of orphans and vulnerable children from the complicated contexts of rights discourses, international politics, and accountability.

3 OVERARCHING THEMES IN THE FRAMEWORK

Creating a Need

The development establishment must create a justification for its existence and intervention. It must justify its presence in a foreign nation as well as its implementation of programs that rearrange lives, economic systems, and traditions. One of the most frequent reasons given is the portrayal of a region or society as in need of advancement, of development. Other methods employed specifically by the *Framework* are the presentation of the number of orphans and vulnerable children as escalating out of control, as well the creation of a culture of blame surrounding the “failure” of groups to fulfill their responsibilities and the children’s needs.

The development establishment as a whole frequently justifies its intervention by casting itself as restoring order and bringing advancement to a chaotic and backwards situation. In some instances, such as the December 2005 tsunami in Southeast Asia, there is a catastrophic event that provides immediate and identifiable needs. In other cases, however, the reason and need are less clear. In these situations the development

establishment frequently utilizes language to create this need. Crush explains:

Without [development], order cannot be restored, improvement is impossible [...] The language of ‘crisis’ and disintegration creates a logical need for external intervention and management. Accompanying the imagery of crisis is an implicit analysis of causation – sometimes external, more often internal. The causes are mostly endogenous – tribalism, primitivism and barbarism in older versions; ethnicity, illiteracy and ignorance in more modern incarnations. [1995:10]

Though the *Framework* does not explicitly say that the areas with large populations of orphaned and vulnerable children are in states of extreme disorder, it does implicitly paint the image of a “chaotic and disorderly terrain” (Crush 1995:10). This is evident in the sense of impending doom that underlies the discussion of orphans and vulnerable children, of the implied future that waits should no action be taken. It is also consistent with the issues raised by Scheper-Hughes, Sargent, and Stephens regarding the dual presentation of children as “at risk” and as “a risk” (1998:11; 1995:13). One example of this is the repeated use of the current number of orphans and vulnerable children that there will be by the year 2010, as if to paint a bleak future. Two others appear in the document’s opening pages; the Foreword begins, “one of the most tragic and difficult challenges of the HIV/ AIDS epidemic is the growing number of children who lost parents to AIDS or whose lives will never be the same

because of it”(4); while the Executive Summary starts, “The HIV/ AIDS epidemic is a massive and rapidly mounting disaster for children” (5). Another example of the “crisis of orphaned and vulnerable children”, though not used in the *Framework*, posits that children who are not helped will grow up disillusioned with their country, disinclined to participate in democracy and ripe for recruitment by terrorists (Patterson 2003:13).

The use of escalating numbers of orphans and vulnerable children is paired with a construction of the various groups in question as failing. As will be discussed in the next chapter, the *Framework* puts a great amount of effort into both constructing the categories and presenting them as failing to meet the needs of the growing number of children. As a result, intervention is needed in order to bolster these groups and save children. Following governmentality, intervention is also needed to create better colonial and capitalist subjects (Stephens 1995:14,16).

Defining Boundaries

One of the hallmarks of the AIDS epidemic has been its spread across borders and continents, a trait that makes it difficult to locate issues associated with the epidemic, such as orphans and vulnerable children, in traditionally accepted and understood geopolitical terms. As a result, the *Framework* focuses on establishing the issue in terms of demographics and

groups affected, drawing boundaries on the social territory that it cannot demarcate on the physical. The result is the *Framework's* emphasis on defining the groups within the issue of orphans and vulnerable children. It is part of constructing new social boundaries around a sprawling issue.

Gavin Williams argues that “development discourse represents whole countries or regions in ‘standardized forms’ as objects of development [...] These global spaces are inhabited by generic populations, with generic characteristics and generic landscapes either requiring transformation or in the process of being transformed” (1995:15). Such a regional generalization is very much in evidence in the discussions surrounding orphans and vulnerable children in sub-Saharan Africa, and demonstrates the ongoing desire for territorial demarcations in spite of the sprawling nature of the issue. The *Framework* focuses almost exclusively on sub-Saharan Africa, despite the presence of 80 million orphans in Asia and 12.4 million in Latin America (USAID 2004:7-9). In providing examples of places and responses the *Framework* mentions, Namibia, Malawi, the United Republic of Tanzania, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, Uganda twice, Zimbabwe twice, Ethiopia twice, and Cambodia. Cambodia stands as the sole example provided outside of Africa.

The emphasis on the creation of spaces is also part of governmentality and the larger discursive construction of subjects. Escobar writes that developmental discourses “successfully deployed a regime of government over the Third World, a space for ‘subject peoples’ that ensures certain control over it” (1994:9). Expanding on this, governmentality “includes the organized practices through which subjects are governed, and *the ways in which spaces and places are created*, and used, in order to pursue policies” (Mayhew, Oxford Reference Online 2004, emphasis added). The *Framework’s* emphasis on a homogeneous sub-Saharan Africa is an example of the creation of places, while the groups defined represent the creation of spaces and subjects that it can govern. These creations demonstrate the way in which the *Framework* is struggling to contain and define a sprawling and complex issue that defies traditional tactics.

4 THE TEXT OF THE FRAMEWORK

Constructing the Groups

The *Framework's* full title, *The Framework for Protection, Care and Support of Orphans and Vulnerable Children Living in a World With HIV and AIDS*, begins the task of defining the participants and assigning them roles. In the first pages “families and communities,” “governments,” “community-based organizations,” and “orphans and vulnerable children” are all identified as part of the solution and part of the problem. Each group is assigned responsibilities and their shortcomings are identified. As previously discussed, the creation of groups is part of the *Framework's* attempt to map the problem socially and politically, and part of its governmentality. This is coupled with a continued use of language of failure, which presents the case for the development establishment's intervention.

“Families and Communities”

At various points the *Framework* identifies “families and communities” as “the best hope for vulnerable children”(15), “the first line

of response to the epidemic” (10), and the “foundation of an effective scaled up response” (5). This language continues to build the sense of crisis. Referring to families as “first responders” portrays them as the emergency response team, implying that the situation of orphans and vulnerable children is an emergency. Moreover, it invokes the idea of second responders, the more qualified and better equipped follow up to the first response. To use the metaphor of a patient in an accident, the first responders are the Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) and the ambulance, who perform the necessary immediate procedures but who then transport the patient to the hospital, where professionals perform the more serious procedures. In this metaphor and language, “families and communities” are the EMTs and the development establishment the professional. The language of “first line of response” and “effective scaled up response” also conjures imagery of battle and attack, not defense. Though different from the emergency situation imagery, both serve to convey a sense of crisis and urgency.

“Families and communities are also cited as “increasingly struggling” and “failing to provide for their children’s needs” (10). Above all, it is families and communities that are assigned the responsibility of protecting children, and these families and communities are presented within the document as having failed. This responsibility is stated and

based in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. By citing the Convention, the *Framework* seeks to support its argument for families as the primary caregivers, and those primarily responsible for children.

Though families are rarely explicitly blamed their guilt and failure are implied and occasionally outright stated. This condemnation justifies the development establishment's intervention. The third paragraph of the Executive Summary of the *Framework* begins, "The reaction of families and communities to the plight of these children has been compassionate and remarkably resilient. However, they are struggling under the strain" (UNICEF and UNAIDS 2004:5). If family, the most basic institution, the foundation of society, culture and government, has failed, then the problem demands outside intervention because it demonstrates a society, culture, and government that have failed.

It is worth questioning what the *Framework* means when it says "family." The concept of family used within its pages appears to be largely based on the Western nuclear family. There is great weight put on the stories of grandmothers, or aunts, uncles, and cousins, raising children. But this weight exists because of the connotations of the word "family" held by the largely Western audience of the *Framework's* readership. The modern Western concept of family is of a mother, father, and one to three children,

with limited, occasional visits to aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, and other extended family. This model makes stories of grandmothers and aunts raising children seem extraordinary. The *Framework* explains:

In practice, care of orphans and vulnerable children comes from nuclear families surviving with community assistance, extended families able to cater for increased numbers with community assistance, and, in extreme cases, children in child-headed households or with no family involvement. [UNICEF and UNAIDS 2004:11]

This quote demonstrates a backhand awareness of other ways of raising children, of societies in which families are located within strong and important kinship networks and where child raising is already a shared activity. But these situations are presented as deviations from the norm and undesirable.

The contrast of Western nuclear families with other varieties is not to romanticize one version over the other or to diminish the very real dilemma of overburdened social networks struggling to respond to the large number of children and deaths. It is to point out that all of these issues, and especially the ones raised by other definitions of family, are side stepped by the construction of this category as “families and communities,” or in the case of the quote, by the repeated addition of “with community assistance.” The addition of “communities” serves to expand the category of families to include the extended social networks

and other definitions of families without challenging the *Framework's* own promotion of the concept of a Western nuclear family.

“Government”

The *Framework* urges “governments” to step in and ensure the protection and support of children. “Governments” and government officials are the target audience of the *Framework*, which is “directed particularly to senior government officials as well as organizational leaders and decision makers” (UNICEF and UNAIDS 2004:12). At the same time, however, there is a strong critique of the failure of governments thus far to intervene, or intervene sufficiently. On page ten the *Framework* writes, “Government social safety nets are often absent, when present they may fail to reach the most marginalized families and communities.” What this critique does not say is why governments have not provided social safety nets. It does not discuss Structural Adjustment Plans, which radically reduced government spending on services such as health care and education. Nor does it discuss colonization, political unrest, food insecurity, or any of the other reasons that governments might be falling short. These situations make “government” a much more complicated category than the *Framework* would present it as.

It is necessary, however, for the *Framework*, to construct governments as failing in order to legitimize its own intervention. The *Framework* says on page eleven that, “government leadership, coordination, and facilitation has been fragmented and weak.” It would be politically difficult for the governments, or even multilateral and nongovernmental organizations, to justify their presence in foreign countries without constructing governments as weak and inadequate. An example of this is the controversy that arose around Venezuela’s offer in 2006 of heating oil at a forty percent discount to American families struggling to heat their home, which critics argued was a ploy to improve relations and distract from the reasons for high prices (Padgett 2006). The U.S. is one of the most active forces in shaping development policy and discourses, empowered by its political and economic weight. For this reason, the government reacted strongly to others offering aid to *its* citizens, and the implied critique of its lack of power and failure to fulfill its responsibilities. Yet it is acceptable for the United States to provide food aid to countries with corn grown and subsidized in America.

Even when discussing the support of government initiatives and programming, the *Framework* is unable to entirely remove itself from continued involvement. Addressing efforts to improve the responsiveness and capabilities of local officials the *Framework* writes:

Meeting the service needs of orphans and vulnerable children should be incorporated with these efforts by building the capacity of district officials and local authorities to identify vulnerable children, households and communities; asses their needs; collaborate with other stakeholders and service providers to train staff and extend services; develop alternative delivery methods; and monitor coverage. [UNICEF and UNAIDS 2004:24]

The list of skills is long and all are to be taught through “building the capacity of district officials and local authorities.” What is not said is who is to “build capacity” and who will judge when enough “capacity has been built.” In other words, when will the *Framework* view its role and responsibilities as fulfilled, when will it leave?

“Community-Based Programs”

The *Framework* sees “community based programs” as the link between families and governments. It is also a category distinct from “communities” in “families and communities” as well as from the international and donor communities. While the *Framework* says that “thousands of community-based programmes have been implemented,” it then immediately goes on to say that these programs have fallen short, been “reactive in nature,” “regard children as ‘helpless victims’,” and “fail to take a long term perspective” (UNICEF and UNAIDS 2004:11). This argument of failure allows, and even necessitates, the intervention of the development establishment. It also undercuts the *Framework’s* discussion

of agency and community initiatives because it demonstrates that the *Framework* does not approve of the “thousands of community-based programmes that have been implemented.” No criteria are given for what would constitute a successful program, and so the *Framework* reserves the right to continue to judge all as insufficient.

“Orphans and Vulnerable Children”

The group of “orphans and vulnerable children” lies at the heart of the *Framework’s* construction of the larger issue. The *Framework’s* construction of the category belies the complicated history that underlies the way that the name of the group currently referred to as “orphans and vulnerable children” has changed. *Children on the Brink* references the evolution in language but the *Framework* never mentions the way that the terminology and the classification of affected children have altered.

Two important changes within this complicated history have been the shift away from using either “AIDS orphans” or “OVC,” which stands for “orphans and vulnerable children.” *Children on the Brink* explains the change from “AIDS orphans” to “children orphaned by AIDS” or “orphans due to AIDS,” by saying that children, not the disease, come first and, furthermore, that the name “AIDS orphans” serves to perpetuate

stigma and disadvantage (USAID 2004:6). The shift from “OVC” is explained by saying, “Experience has shown that such jargon eventually becomes used at the community level to identify particular children” (USAID 2004:6). This demonstrates an awareness of the impact of language on real lives, and the importance that words can play in shaping someone’s reality. The development establishment is struggling to move away from language that can damage, yet still seeks language that can classify. In doing so, they appear to fail to see the possibility that it is the act of categorization or classification itself that is causing the damage, a damage that is compounded to a greater or lesser extent by the name assigned. No matter the name, the children in question are still being labeled and targeted. Even if in this instance they are the target of aid and support rather than stigma and violence, they are nevertheless being singled out as different and separate from the surrounding community.

At their base, however, all of these phrases share a common issue, one that is larger than the shift between “AIDS orphans” and “children orphaned by AIDS.” This issue is the very use of the word orphan. The Oxford English Dictionary defines orphan as, “a person, *esp.* a child, both of whose parents are dead (or, rarely, one of whose parents has died). In extended use: an abandoned or neglected child.” In Western conventions the word orphan refers to a child who has lost both parents. Yet in the

Framework, and most documents and conversations referring to orphans and vulnerable children, an orphan is a child who has lost either parent. This difference is briefly referred to in a small box that elaborates only by further subdividing the category of orphan into maternal orphan, paternal orphan, single orphan and double orphan, but is never further explained (UNICEF and UNAIDS 2004:7).

On the one hand, the use of the word orphan can be seen as an effort to make language fit a complicated situation. In some instances, the loss of one parent effectively results in the child being left alone, such as in the case of the death of a mother when the father has never been involved or is away due to work or war. In these instances the word orphan may be appropriate to express the reality of the child's situation, if not the actuality of their parent's status.

On the other hand, the use of the word orphan may appear manipulative, as if the development establishment is playing on the specific Western understanding of the word to make the situation appear more dire, and thus more in need of intervention. When the figure reads "by 2010, the number of children orphaned by AIDS globally is expected to exceed 2 million," this is understood as children who have lost both parents but actually includes children who have lost one or both parents (UNICEF and UNAIDS 2004:5). This use of the word also serves to "kill"

the surviving parent when a child is a single orphan. The surviving parent may never have been part of the family or may be away at war or work, but they might also be alive and struggling to help their children and their families. By calling all children that have lost one parent to AIDS orphans, the development establishment is negating the hard work of the surviving parent.

Part of the shift in terminology is a move away from targeting solely “AIDS orphans” to more broadly programming for “vulnerable children.” This is in an effort to reduce the stigma, resentment and other difficulties that come with targeting a specific group. Singling out children orphaned by AIDS can draw more negative attention to them, and can also mean that people and programs change from broad range programming to more narrowly focused initiatives. It is also part of an effort to recognize that it is not only children who have lost parents to HIV/ AIDS but also children that have sick parents, are sick themselves, or any of a number of other permutations, who are impacted. By expanding to include “vulnerable children” the development literature seeks to recognize the many ways that children can be affected by the AIDS epidemic.

This expansion, however, is not without its complications. The phrase, and the category, of “vulnerable children” are amorphous. In one

respect, all children can be classified as vulnerable; their very position as children places them at risk for numerous forms of exploitation and abuse. At the same time, the creation of a group that includes all children is so broad that attempts to tighten it can result in very narrow categorizations. In an effort to place some limits on what constitutes a “vulnerable child” the pendulum may swing too far in the other direction of excluding too many children, for instance, excluding children whose parents are ill with AIDS but who have not yet died. There is also great variation from community to community in determining who are children who are made vulnerable by HIV/ AIDS, following the great variation of the epidemic’s impact in different communities. Aaron Greenberg gave the example of Africa versus India. In sub-Saharan Africa an estimated 22.5 million people are infected with HIV, whereas as in India there are an estimated 2.5 million (UNAIDS 2007). The result is that more children are impacted by the disease in sub-Saharan Africa, where programming for “vulnerable children” would involve essentially programming for all children, and fewer in India, where a smaller number of children would be deemed “vulnerable”.

The debate over terminology is more than just academic; as *Children on the Brink’s* comments illustrate, the name assigned can have very real impacts. The recent controversy in the African Republic of Chad

illustrates the consequences of different definitions of the word “orphan.” Members of a French relief group called “Zoe’s Ark” arrived in the country with money raised to rescue Sudanese orphans. Using local individuals and eventually chartering a plane from the town of Achebe, they sought to remove 103 children to France (Polgreen 2007). The members of Zoe’s Ark were arrested by the government of Chad moments before take-off and charged with kidnapping. The government charged that the children in question were neither Sudanese nor orphans but rather Chadian and living in family situations. This raised the complicated discussion of what it means to be an orphan, and what it means to be an orphan in the West versus in Africa. It is unclear whether or not the children had lost one or both parents, but in either case they were understood by the government of Chad and the U.N. as living in fine family situations (Polgreen 2007). Ultimately, what the members of Zoe’s Ark had viewed as a humanitarian mission to better the lives of war orphans was judged inappropriate, unsolicited, and illegal, and the six people involved were sentenced by the government of Chad to eight years of hard labor before being returned to France to serve their time (Carvajal 2007).

If the actions of the members of Zoe’s Ark were viewed as illegal, and their definition and classification of children as orphans incorrect,

where does this place the *Framework's* use of the term? The story of Zoe's Ark demonstrates the very real ramifications, politically and socially, of the development establishment's use of the word "orphan" to mean children who have lost *one or both* parents. The move to develop a word or phrase other than "orphan" would require a dramatic change, something more than "the category formerly known as orphans and vulnerable children." It would involve questioning why the word "orphan" had been used in the first place, and why it should now be abandoned. Such a discussion would touch on any number of the issues raised in this section, including the changes that have occurred in the category's name, the difficulties of determining the age at which childhood ends, let alone of determining what childhood is, deciding what "vulnerable" means, and situations such as the one that unfolded in Chad. All of these are areas that the *Framework* works to avoid, and no discussion of the use of the word "orphan" appears in the development discourses. It is much easier for the document and the development establishment to ignore such issues and simply say "orphan," thus reinforcing the image being created of societies failing and in need of intervention. Unfortunately, the situation is not a simple one, and the repeated denial and removal of these complications compromises the *Framework's* recommendations.

The Who, What, Where, When, and Why of the Five Key Strategies

The five key strategies recommended by the *Framework* to address the issue of orphans and vulnerable children represent the core of the document. While the details of the strategies are important and worthy of critique, the themes that thread through them are more revealing of the rhetoric that shapes the *Framework*. These themes can be loosely gathered under the headings of “who,” “what,” “where,” “when,” and “why.” They raise questions of implementation and power, efficacy and accountability. Consideration of the issues embedded within the strategies reveals an unresolved conflict over recommendations and no clear definition of top priorities.

“Who”

Throughout its pages, but particularly in the Five Key Strategies, the *Framework* uses the language of empowerment and improvement. “Strengthen,” “enhance,” “improve,” and “ensure” appear frequently, especially in the wording of the strategies themselves and the bulleted recommendations within each strategy. But the question arises of who is acting out these verbs, of who the *Framework* views as responsible for strengthening, enhancing, and ensuring. I argue that it is not

governments or families but rather the *Framework*, and the development establishment that it represents, who are the actors behind the verbs, and whose position is revealed through their language.

The beginning of the document states that the *Framework* is targeted to “senior decision-makers and officials around the world” (UNICEF and UNAIDS 2004:12). Yet the responsibility for implementing the key strategies is divided among the groups that the *Framework* constructs and identifies as wanting to include. It is unclear whether the *Framework* sees the “senior decision makers and officials around the world” or the “local communities,” “families,” and “orphans and vulnerable children” as the ones responsible for “strengthening,” “enhancing,” and “improving.” The previous discussion of the *Framework’s* call for building capacity, however, reveals the document’s trend to remain involved in a country, and to maintain control over the decision of when to leave.

The groups defined by the *Framework* cannot be the actors because the very powerlessness of the groups in the document is one of the reasons that they are currently the target of the *Framework’s* recommendations. Only families that do not have the resources to buy antiretroviral drugs or access distant services find themselves in need of the support called for by the *Framework*. If these families had the capacity to perform these actions, the very act of performing them would remove

the families from their position as a target group for the *Framework*. The contradiction of the *Framework* is that it both wants to portray families, communities, orphans, vulnerable children and other members of the groups constructed as possessing their own agency and ability but at the same time must remove agency and capability in order to justify intervention. The “who” that is enhancing and empowering is the *Framework* and the Western development establishment that wrote it. As a result, all actors are part of a hierarchy of power, because it is ultimately the Western development establishment that has the power to withhold resources and the power to operate and communicate internationally. Peet writes that the, “modern potential [to live well] is realized to differing degrees, is corrupted, or used as domination, depending on the power relation within which life is constructed,” adding later that development “exercised power not only by controlling money flows, but also by creating the dominant ideas, representations, and discourses” (1999:12, 146). Together these quotes demonstrate both the power of the development establishment to construct realities and the vested interest in defending and promoting these realities, even at the cost of the poorest families.

Focusing exclusively on development initiatives and community responses to these initiatives, however, portrays the families,

communities, orphans and vulnerable children as nothing more than recipients. This portrayal is dangerous because it keeps the development establishment at the center and maintains an “us” vs. “them” dichotomy. In *Whose Development?* Crewe and Harrison discuss the implications of such a dichotomy and argue that much development analysis perpetuates this situation. They argue that portraying people only as reacting to development gives development undeserved importance. This reduces people’s lives and relationships to nothing more than a response to Western intervention, and thereby perpetuates ethnocentrism on the part of the Western development establishment (Crewe and Harrison 1998:18). Such a portrayal is in contrast to viewing development as only one piece of the complicated structure of power and occurrence that people are constantly reacting to and involved in. The construction of the *Framework* makes it difficult to find a balance between overly focusing on the development establishment and discounting it too greatly. The document excludes the other “whos” who are vital to considering the individual lives and realities of the people who make up the target groups. The *Framework* is in many ways guilty of Crewe and Harrison’s critique because the only “who” that is given any power in the document is the development establishment.

“*What*”

The disagreement between the language of the key strategies and the language and order of the recommendations demonstrates the difficulty in answering the question of what the *Framework*'s key priorities and top recommendations are. The disagreement can be seen to a greater or lesser degree in all of the strategies but is most striking in the first, which reads, “Strengthen the capacity of families to protect and care for orphans and vulnerable children by prolonging the lives of parents and providing economic, psychosocial and other support.” The two paragraphs that follow this heading elaborate on the situation outlined in this strategy, and are then followed by the box in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Elaboration of the First Key Strategy, as seen on page 15 of the *Framework*

- | |
|---|
| <p>Building the Capacity of Families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve household economic capacity • Provide psychosocial support to affected children and their caregivers • Strengthen and support child-care capacities • Support succession planning • Prolong the lives of parents • Strengthen young people's life |
|---|

Logically, it would seem that the recommendations expressed in the key strategy that titles the section are the ones that the *Framework* and

its authors view as the most important. It would also logically seem that the order of the bullet points would reflect the order of importance, that those at the top would be the ones viewed by the *Framework* as the most important to “building the capacity of families.” The two sets should agree, with the most important recommendations appearing in both the overarching key strategy and the top of the list of elaborated recommendations. Yet they do not.

This disagreement begs the question of what the *Framework's* top priorities and recommendations are. If we look at the example of the first key strategy, the way to strengthen the capacity of families to protect and care for orphans and vulnerable children is first by “prolonging the lives of parents,” then by “providing economic, psychosocial and other support.” But when we look at the box, improving economic capacity has moved from number two to number one, psychosocial support from three to two and prolonging the lives of parents from one to four. The disconnect between the overarching key strategy and its elaborated recommendations suggests the politics behind the wording and presentation of the document. Perhaps compromises were made in order to favor certain recommendations in one place and others in another.

Regardless of the reason, the result is a document that never fully commits to one recommendation but rather divides its power and

persuasion and thus reduces its influence. If both the bulleted strategies and the title key strategies agreed then it would be clear that the *Framework* was placing all of its influence, the weight of all the organizations that had signed on to it, behind those strategies. By having the areas disagree, however, the *Framework* is pulling back from signaling one recommendation over the others.

“Where”

One of the themes repeated throughout the *Framework* is that of determining the boundaries of the issue of orphans and vulnerable children. The complicated, multinational, and multigenerational nature of the problem makes it difficult to locate in traditional terms. As previously mentioned, efforts to contain and define the issue have taken two forms. The first is locating the problem in geo-political space, resulting in the focus on sub-Saharan Africa. The second is the construction of groups, such as families and communities. The difficulties of this effort can be seen in the question of where, where the *Framework's* strategies and recommendations will be implemented, where they will succeed, and where they will fail. By constructing the issue as one that affects all of sub-Saharan Africa uniformly and proposing solutions for what is conceptualized as a homogeneous region, the *Framework* ignores the many

differences, in culture, landscape, and epidemic level that characterize the region. It succeeds in removing the complicated political, social, and cultural contexts within which the groups and regions in question are located. An example of this was the earlier contrast between the number of individuals infected with HIV/ AIDS in Africa and India. In that instance I gave only the averages for each location. Such a contrast ignores that one is a country and the other a half of a continent. It also ignores the differing rates of infection, and all of the reasons for this. Basing responses on such a generalization ignores factors such as government, religion, economy, and individuals. The blanket assumption is that all of the regions and populations are the same and all of the interventions are appropriate.

The section detailing the five key strategies begins by cautioning that the differential impact of the epidemic means that different combinations of strategies will be needed in different places. But once this caveat has been issued, there is no further mention of differences in strategies or applicability. Moreover, the implication behind many of the recommendations given is that they are the best; tested and proved. For example, part of the introduction to the second key strategy reads, “lessons learned through the many community activities undertaken to date in support of orphans and other children at risk indicate the need for

a systematic approach to community mobilization” (UNICEF and UNAIDS 2004:19). Such language implies that the recommendations are applicable across a broad range of situations. By implying this, the *Framework* is undermining its previous caution that not all strategies apply in all places. In presenting the strategies as equally applicable, the variations and individualities of peoples and places are once more erased in the effort to construct uniform categories.

Overgeneralization occurs at both the regional and the group level. The “where” of groups is more abstract than that of regions, but equally applicable. The groups that the *Framework* constructs become part of a discussion of “where” because of their role as an effort to define and locate an epidemic that crosses traditional geo-political borders. The idea that the “where” of families and communities, governments and organizations can be broadly generalized fails to consider all of the variations, and the impact of such diversity. It is easier to place a caveat regarding variation between regions than between families or governments. Discussing the variety between such groups undermines all of the efforts thus far to construct them as uniform categories. By saying that perhaps a child is sometimes better when removed from his or hers family’s care, the *Framework* would be undermining the work that has

gone into arguing that families are not only the best place for children but also a key site of intervention.

In constructing the categories used to contain and define the issue of orphans and vulnerable children the *Framework* has made sure to demonstrate how they are failing. This is because, as Crush discusses, such failure is necessary to justify the interventions and strategies proposed. However, the *Framework* must walk a fine line because it wants to say that the groups in their current forms are failing, not that the categories are flawed or not the best way to consider the situation. These are, after all, the groups that have been constructed to understand, map, and contain the issue of orphans and vulnerable children, groups that the document has worked hard to create. This is important to governmentality because the creation of the groups is part of “the organized practices through which subjects are governed, and the ways in which spaces and places are created, and used, in order to pursue policies” (Mayhew, Oxford Reference Online 2004). The failure of the categories would result in difficulties in governing subjects and spaces. For example, saying that a child is sometimes better removed from their family would present a situation in which the group has failed. But it would also be one in which the concept of that group, complete with the

roles and responsibilities that the *Framework* has assigned it, has failed.

Where then, would the *Framework* direct its interventions?

“When”

The question of “when” relates not to when the strategies will be begun but rather more to when the interventions will be finished, when they will be judged successful and thus ended. There are no guidelines within the *Framework* regarding timelines or end dates, the only goals presented are utopian ideals of every child living with their nuclear family and every government providing a security net to help families and children who are struggling. These are situations that have yet to be achieved anywhere in the world. By setting these as the finishing point, the *Framework* is laying the groundwork for the ongoing intervention of the development establishment, for an intervention that has no end.

Moreover, without an end date or achievable goals, the proposed interventions have no standard by which they can be judged. With no point of comparison, it becomes impossible to say when the interventions can be judged as failing or inappropriate. Within these questions of monitoring and evaluation are the continuing questions of power and agency. The diffuse goals mean that those at the sites of intervention are given little say in the depth or duration of the intervention in question.

This returns to the question of agency. In this instance, however, it is a recognition of the low levels of power and agency that the subjects of development have, particularly when they are constructed as nothing more than subjects. This returns to Crewe and Harrison's critique but also moves beyond it. Thinking past developmental dichotomies, as Crewe and Harrison encourage, involves considering the other factors that influence a person's response to a development initiative. Among these are the power and agency available to an individual. Once more, Peet's description of unfulfilled potential trapped within a power dynamic is relevant (1999:12). It becomes an issue of unequal access and unequal agency, not all people have the freedom and the ability to exercise agency. The *Framework* compounds the damage it does to individuals by encouraging them to agency, only to blame them for failing, when in fact they never had the ability to exercise their agency.

"Why"

In discussing Lesotho and the World Bank's efforts there to construct a more manageable subject, Ferguson writes:

For an analysis to meet the needs of 'development' institutions, it must do what academic discourse inevitably fails to do; it must make Lesotho out to be an enormously promising candidate for the only sort of intervention a 'development' agency is capable of launching: the apolitical, technical 'development' intervention. [1994:69]

This quote summarizes one of the primary motivations for why the *Framework* has presented the issue of orphans and vulnerable children in the neutral, apolitical phrases discussed in this paper, and why it has ignored or glossed over so many of the issues that underlie much of the document. This “why” extends back to some of the original discussions regarding discourse and power. Foucault’s discussion of discourse “has been instrumental in unveiling the mechanisms by which a certain order of discourse produces permissible modes of being and thinking while disqualifying and even making others impossible” (Escobar 1994:5). The development discourse, of which the *Framework* is a part, works to construct realities that are acceptable and understood in Western terms.

Escobar expands on the idea by discussing the system of relations within which development operates, a system that includes the many organizations that make up the “development establishment,” the governments involved in giving and receiving aid and the individuals working with or around these initiatives. The system of relations “establishes a discursive practice that sets the rules of the game: who can speak, from what points of view, with what authority, and according to what criteria of expertise” (Rahnema 1997:87). The history of development and of development establishments are an integral part of

considering “why” the *Framework* has worked to construction the version of the issue presented in its pages.

“The Way Forward”

“The Way Forward” is the final section of the *Framework*. In these last pages the *Framework* recommends what it believes to be the necessary next steps in addressing the issue of orphans and vulnerable children. Here the *Framework* retreats to language of study and observation. This shift is the result of the *Framework*'s, and the development establishment's, effort to ensure its own place and involvement. It is also an effort to limit their responsibilities and accountability.

The beginning of the *Framework* is filled with words of action such as “enhance” and “improve.” The recommendations in “The Way Forward” emphasize much more passive actions. For example, the final three of the recommended actions advocate:

- Implementation of the newly developed set of core indicators and monitoring guidance for assessing national level progress towards goals.
- Use of programme level monitoring and evaluation to maintain and enhance the quality of interventions to ensure optimal use of limited resources in reaching orphans and vulnerable children and improving their well-being.
- Adequate measurement of progress over time in closing the gap between what is being done and what must be done to

adequately fulfill the needs and rights of orphans and vulnerable children. [UNICEF and UNAIDS 2004:33]

“The Way Forward” appears not to be at the level of the communities and individuals affected but far removed, on the level of politics and international organizations. The emphasis on statistics and measurements seen in these recommendations once more reflects governmentality. Statistics and measurements are one more technic of governance and control, one more way of defining and containing a subject.

As discussed previously, the group that is ultimately performing nearly all of the actions proposed in the *Framework* is the development establishment. Even when the words have argued for community involvement, the strategies proposed, and the agency and power, have been under the control of the development establishment. Thus, while the retreat in this last section to less active language may be striking it is consistent with the *Framework's* larger effort to be both the main actor and address only the manageable subject that it has constructed. It is also a reflection of the politics that underlie the *Framework's* recommendations.

In *The Post-Development Reader* Escobar writes:

What is included as legitimate development issues may depend on specific relations established in the midst of the discourse: relations, for instance, between what experts say and what international politics allows as feasible (this *may determine, for instance, what an international organization may prescribe* out of the recommendations of a group of experts) [1997:90, emphasis added]

The *Framework* and the development establishment thus utilize language to cast themselves as the main actors but are also limited by politics in what actions they can take.

The disconnect between the beginning and end of the *Framework* is played out on a small scale in the sentence that concludes “The Way Forward.” The final sentence reads, “we must aim to ensure the [orphans’ and vulnerable children’s] rights are protected, respected, and fulfilled so they grow into a strong generation, one able to contribute to repairing the profound social and personal damage caused by HIV/ AIDS” (UNICEF and UNAIDS 2004:34). In the final clause of the sentence, the *Framework* moves to justify the protection of children’s rights. It gives the rationale of protecting these rights “so that they grow into a strong generation, one able to contribute to repairing the profound social and personal damage caused by HIV/ AIDS” (UNICEF and UNAIDS 2004:34). The reason for helping orphans and vulnerable children is so that they can in turn help to repair the damage of HIV and AIDS, not the altruistic, protecting rights for rights sake, motive that the first half of the sentence presents. Just as “The Way Forward” retreats from the language and ideals of the previous sections of the *Framework*, the second half of the final sentence retreats from the ideals and idealism of the opening clause.

Both the large retreat of “The Way Forward” from the *Framework* and the small retreat of the last part of the last sentence from the first half demonstrate the backpedaling of the *Framework* and the development establishment. Where the rally cry to action should be the strongest, the language is the weakest. In these final pages all that the *Framework* saves is itself and its role in the issue of orphans and vulnerable children. It is unable to either admit to or extract itself from its location within development discourse, the development establishment, the history of colonialism, or international politics. The result is that the *Framework's* final words are a retreat from strong recommendations.

*5 REFRAMING THE PROTECTION, CARE AND SUPPORT OF ORPHANS
AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN*

The efforts of the *Framework* to construct the issue of orphans and vulnerable children into a technocratically manageable subject parallels Escobar's argument that the Third World is constructed by the First World as an object of knowledge and recipient of expertise and aid. The reasons for such a construction are in many ways explained by Ferguson's notion of an "anti-politics machine," of the development establishment as constructing their subjects in a manner that eliminates political, historical, and cultural contexts in order to make them more easily addressed. My exploration of the *Framework* has been part of an effort to reveal both the politics that shape the document and the construction of orphans and vulnerable children. It has also been an effort to return both the *Framework* and orphans and vulnerable children to the contexts from which the document has sought to remove them. It is this return to contexts that separates my interpretation of the issue of orphans and vulnerable children from the one presented in the *Framework*. Jonathan Crush, Emma Crewe, Elizabeth Harrison, and numerous others have argued that such a return is vital in moving forward the discussion on

development and the peoples and places that are the object of development.

This is what the anthropology of development has to contribute, and the important part that it plays in reframing and expanding development discourse. Contexts are historical, social, political, and ethnographic. Colonial and political history means that not only do countries speak different languages but also that their governments and ideologies take different forms. Policies in post-apartheid, English speaking South Africa will be different from those in the post-dictatorship and French speaking Central African Republic, both of which will be different still from those in Thailand. Moreover, colonial history has frequently overwritten differences within the region that it governs, disregarding ethnic groups and local traditions in dividing and assigning territory. The result is modern political boundaries that frequently do not match the previous political divides. These situations and stories are the “contexts” that development discourse removes from its subjects, and they are crucial in considering the situation of and designing responses for orphans and vulnerable children. I have attempted to include some of the history and politics surrounding the *Framework* but have not included ethnographies or colonial histories. This is because these will be specific to the area and intervention; they cannot be broadly generalized or

homogenized. In fact, it is the very effort to do so from which development discourses suffer.

After identifying and deconstructing the *Framework* it is important and necessary to reflect on the similar project of my paper. In other words, what makes the reality that I have constructed any better or more real than that presented by the *Framework*? My reality is constructed by a white female undergraduate sitting far from the issues, organizations, and peoples under discussion. I argue that it is my reflexivity that is important. The *Framework*, and the reality that it constructs, lacks such reflexivity. Speaking with the removed voice of the development establishment, the *Framework* is mired within the discipline's narrative and does not allow for critical reflection. The dictates of politics, budgets, agendas, and the multitude of other factors that influence the implementation of a recommendation, are some of the many reasons given for the solutions and situations presented. These factors include power dynamics, Western frameworks of knowledge, and colonial history, all underlying influences on the construction of development discourses.

The emphasis on deconstructing the *Framework*, however, does not acknowledge the efforts that are being made. The issue of orphans and vulnerable children can be deconstructed to nothing more than language

and the creation of a situation of need, of a culture in system-failure, and of a heroic, all-knowing development establishment. But deconstruction to such an abstract level ignores the presence of millions of children suffering. Crush writes, “though development is fundamentally textual, it is also fundamentally irreducible to a set of textual images and representations” (1995:5). The developmental discourses surrounding the issue certainly have their failings, but they also have instances that demonstrate a level of awareness and accessibility that should be their ultimate goal. Though *Children on the Brink 2004* continues the focus on sub-Saharan Africa, it also discusses and compares the number of orphans and vulnerable children across the world (USAID 2004:7-9). *Enhanced Protection* lists authors and individuals involved with its production. And the *Framework* includes notes of hope and success, writing, “there is an abundance of challenges. But there is also reason for hope” (UNICEF and UNAIDS 2004:11). These small efforts must be extended and intertwined with reflexivity and awareness in order for these discourses to emerge from the patterns of knowledge in which they are ensnared.

Part of moving past deconstruction is also moving past a purely post-structural analysis. Peter Little (2000) writes, “comparative understandings of development theory and practice require some agreement that systematic patterns can be observed, recorded, and

compared through a set of acceptable concepts and methods” (123). Little encourages moving beyond a simple grand narrative vs. complete relativism divide and focusing on the links between theory, method and practice and the work that has continued while academics have debated (2000:126). As part of this he calls for “a meaningful dialogue with local populations and local communities of scholars and practitioners [that] must figure strongly in constructions of theory and application” (Little 2000:128). The inclusion of other forms of knowledge and scholarship is particularly important in theoretical and academic debates, such as those surrounding discourse analysis. Foucault, Escobar, and others can be difficult for those entering the established debates surrounding discourse and development, even if they are native English speakers and educated in Western rhetoric. This debate must be opened to other ways of conceiving and describing the issues present, not solely those described by privileged Western male academics.

A key group to include in the reframing of the issue of orphans and vulnerable children are children themselves. Scheper-Hughes and Sargent argue that “the narratives of children are subjected to a discrediting double test, one shared historically with slaves and ethnographically, for example, with peasants: How can you know when a child (or a slave, or a wily country person) was telling the truth[...]?”

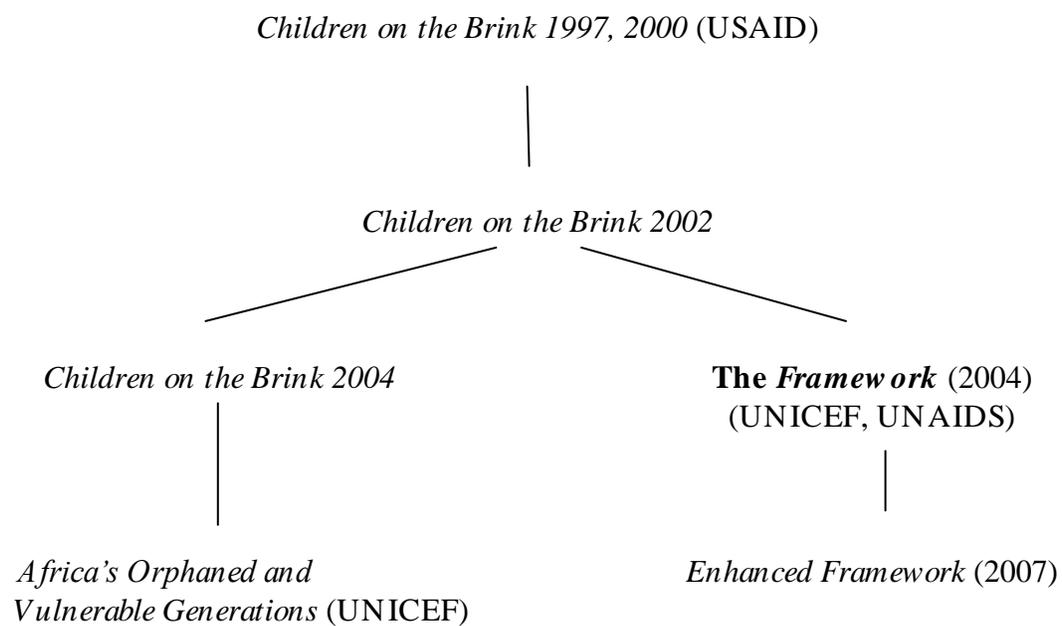
(1998:14). The question here is not one so much of discovering “the truth” as learning a truth, as learning the way in which this group or this individual sees the issue. Scheper-Hughes and Sarget build on the inclusion of children’s narratives to say, “while children have been – indeed, sometimes relentlessly – tracked, observed, measured, and tested, rarely are they active participants in anthropological research, setting agendas, establishing boundaries, negotiating what may be said about them” (1998:15). The *Framework* encourages the involvement of children, but this policy must be not encouraged but so much as actively pursued. The inclusion of children must be paired with an awareness of the very real difficulties associated with working with children, including difficulties of access and agency.

Stephens works from within the anthropology of childhood to conceive of these debates in ways that involve children and move beyond universalism and relativism. She eloquently concludes her introduction to *Children and the Politics of Culture* with a discussion of this challenge:

The choice here, it seems to me, is not between cultural relativism and universalism, or between a wholesale rejection and an uncritical celebration of international-rights discourses. Despite the important criticisms that can be made of universal children’s rights discourses, there are certainly situations where legally binding international agreements can be seen to be in children’s and, more broadly, in society’s best interests [...] there are many other situations where universalizing modernist discourses on children’s rights are more problematic. [The aim] is not to undermine

international-rights discourses, but to make them more powerful and flexible. [1995:40]

Development discourses, international-rights discourses, and anthropology find themselves caught between identifying themes and acknowledging differences. While reflexivity is not the only answer, it helps in negotiating this tangle. Peet argues for “examining the causes of material differences with a view to changing them, enabling more human potentials to be realized” (1999:11). I would build on this to say that material difference can be examined so long as such an examination involves questions of power and access, and human potentials can be realized so long as their realization truly involves a range of possibilities, not just those predetermined and privileged by developmental discourses as appropriate or best.

APPENDIX: A FAMILY TREE OF THE *FRAMEWORK*

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