

# Becoming a street child: an analysis of the process of integration of street children in Ukraine and Zambia and implications for their resocialization and reintegration

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DOI: 10.17846/SS.2020.5.2.14-37

## Abstract

The article analyses the process of integration of street children into the street life in two different social and cultural settings: Makeevka, East Ukraine and Lusaka, Zambia. The study was designed as a mixed method approach and included 139 respondents from the street and 9 case studies of local NGOs. The process of integration was analyzed through 4 stages: acculturation, placement, interaction and identification. Results show the process of integration to be highly individualized. On the basis of these findings, a conceptual scheme for the development of an individualized approach to the resocialization of street children is outlined.

**Keywords:** street children, integration, resocialization, street children in Ukraine, street children in Zambia

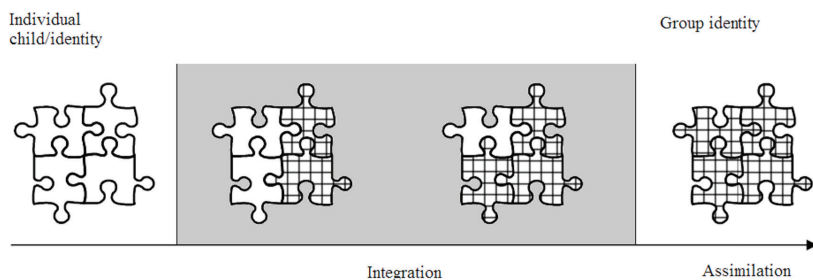
## Introduction

Street children have become a relatively well-researched phenomenon, and a growing number of researchers approach the topic with terminology and concepts developed within the framework of the subculture (Beazley, 2003; Chitradub, 1998; Davies, 2008; Naterer & Godina, 2011). However, while issues like substance abuse and violence have been addressed, other social processes influencing a child's transition to the street and life outside traditional frames of socialization remain

widely un-tackled. Particularly vague is the understanding of the processes of integration and assimilation of children into street life; such inadequacy ultimately produces programmes for resocialization and reintegration for these children that are relatively limited in fulfilling their primary goal: saving children from the streets (Dybicz, 2005). The need for empirically based interventions, developed with an individualized approach and effectively targeting the population's needs, has been expressed by many authors (e.g. Davies, 2008; Dybicz, 2005; Naterer, 2010). Although the number of empirical studies on street children appears to be rising (Thomas de Benitez, 2011), there remains a great lack of transference of knowledge into programmes of resocialization and reintegration remains.

The article aims to draw the attention of the scientific community researching street children and intervening in their resocialization and reintegration (RR) to the process of integration that is here regarded as a gradual, continuous process. By analyzing the stages of this process, we strive to understand how children become social participants in street life, and on this basis to outline guidelines that could improve policies, programmes and projects of the RR for these children.

Generally speaking, the processes of integration and assimilation produce changes in one's identity (Naterer and Godina, 2011) and are closely tied to the individual's migrations from one cultural/social milieu to another (Young, 2002). The process of assimilation is commonly regarded as a complete exchange of identity; integration, on the other hand, is viewed exclusively as the replacement of some parts of specific identity. Although the main focus of the present study remains integration, it is imperative to regard these two processes as a continuum, within which both remain simultaneously connected, though not inseparably: within the process of assimilation, it is necessary for an individual to integrate; while, in contrast, it is not necessary for an integrated individual to assimilate (Borstner and Gartner, 2007) (Figure 1: Process of Integration and Assimilation)



**Figure 1.** Process of Integration and Assimilation

Our understanding and analysis of integration is based on Esser's proposition for social integration, with its four basic forms (Esser, 2000):

- *Acculturation* as a process of acquisition of knowledge, cultural standards and competences that are necessary for social interaction;
- *Placement* of an individual within the system of established social relations;
- *Interaction* as a process of formation of social networks and membership of social groups;
- *Identification* as a process of individual identification with other participants within the given society.

It is this specific understanding that was employed in forming the theoretical, analytical and interpretive frame of the present study and used as a basis for developing guidelines for intervention.

## Method

The data presented here was collected during two anthropological research projects carried out among street children in Makeevka, Ukraine from 2000 until 2012 (approx. 16 months of direct, in-field participation) and in Lusaka, Zambia in 2013 (approx. 1 month of direct, in-field participation), with a brief follow-up phase in 2014 and 2015. Both studies were based on a mixed-method approach, with the main theoretical and interpretive foundation in Grounded theory. The three main methods employed were *participant observation* (of the day-to-day life of street children, gathered in the form of field notes, diaries, field reports or conversation records); *interview* (inquiring about participants'

current personal situation, family background, interpersonal relationships, living conditions and future aspirations); and *visual notes* (photo and video equipment was used to create a series of video records of the children's everyday lives). In addition, a *questionnaire with pre-coded questions* (gathering socio-graphic and quantitative data), *observation without participation* (for the purpose of triangulation) and *thematic drawings* (with interpretations of the content) were employed as supplementary methods.

Once gathered, the data was coded using Grounded Theory approach (at the first stage through open-ended coding, at the second stage through axial/focused coding), the codes were grouped according to similar content, and key concepts and categories were derived. All the data collection and a substantial portion of the interpretation were performed with the consent or direct involvement of the children in cross examination of the data or in triangulation.

In Makeevka, Ukraine, a non-random sample of 68 street children was chosen and researched (52 boys, 16 girls, average age 13.6 years). The participants were living in four groups at four different locations in the city: Group 1 was living in the centre of Makeevka; Group 2 was living in the suburban part of the city (10 km from the centre) – Ziljoni quarter; Group 3 was living approximately 8 km from the centre of the city – Pushka quarter; and Group 4 was living near the centre of the city. In order to protect their identities when presenting qualitative data, pseudonyms are used. In addition 6 NGO programs for resocialization and reintegration of street children were analyzed through a series of case studies and subsequently categorized as an example of either good or bad practice.

In Zambia, Lusaka, a non-random sample of 71 children was chosen and researched (63 boys, 8 girls, average age 16.3 years). The majority of participants (60%) were recruited at 3 local NGOs working with street children (taking children directly from the street), while others were approached directly on the street in four different locations: the city-center market place, marketplaces in the Northmid district and Kamwala district and the Soweto market. Programs of these NGOs were also analyzed and categorized as an example of either good or bad practice.

Participants in Makeevka and Lusaka were approached both through organizations and directly on the street. Initial contact was made with

the help from people living and working in the street children's micro setting, and subsequently their own social networks were used to recruit other participants (snowball sampling).

### **Street children in Ukraine and Zambia**

There have been many attempts to define street children according to their place of living as either "on" or "off" the streets (e.g., Thomas de Benitez, 2011), or through their active participation in a street subculture (e.g., Davies, 2008; Naterer & Godina, 2011). Among researchers, there is no universal consensus on the definition of a street child. Nevertheless, these youngsters exhibit many characteristics that are universally evident and recognized: by spending most of the time on the streets, they are excluded from traditional processes of socialization, and they are exposed to a harmful physical and social environment, to substance abuse and criminality, to victimization and marginalization. Moreover, the longer they stay on the streets, the longer and more difficult is the process of their resocialization.

In the region of former Soviet Union, street children are not new. There is considerable historical evidence (e.g., Bosewitz, 1988; Naterer, 2010) indicating that the phenomenon periodically emerges as a result of major social and cultural events like the collapse of Tsarist Russia, or the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Contemporary street children, known as *bomzhi*, started emerging on the streets of major Ukrainian cities in the late 90s as a result of the severe economic and social crisis that swept through the nation after the declaration of independence.

Among study participants from Makeevka, the majority (75%) were boys between 10 and 16 years old, many of whom had been on the streets for 4 to 5 years. Major factors that led them on to the street could be found in their social background, which is mostly dominated by malfunctioning (structurally incomplete or matrifocal) and abusive (negligent and violent) families, while the main factor pulling them out of the traditional frames of socialization appears to be the influence of peers already living on the streets (Naterer & Godina, 2011). Children survive on the street by begging and by collecting and re-selling waste materials, and sleeping in an underground heating system called the *teplukha*. Apart from petty crimes, like pick-pocketing, daily criminal activities among these youngsters appear to be rare.

Street children in Zambia, on the other hand, are relatively new phenomenon (Unicef, 2006), not present until a series of economic and social crises starting in the late 70s and increasing until the late 90s. The majority of them are boys (85%) in the 11-18-year-old age group (Unicef, 2006: 21-22). Both, our own research data and other reports (UNICEF, 2006) show the main motivation for these children to run away from home as their own desire for money, while other relevant factors like an abusive family or peer influence play a secondary role. Younger children survive on the street mostly by begging, performing odd jobs (e.g., emptying dust bins, dish-washing at restaurants) or helping older peers with their work (e.g., carrying water for car-washing). Older peers, being bigger and stronger, do not engage in begging, but rather in other, often formal and legal forms of work (e.g., portering), which enables them to be well integrated into the social network on the micro level within their local environment. Criminal activities among them are rare during the day but become more frequent at night.

For both populations, economic activities in their immediate local environment represent a prime channel for integration into new social networks on the street. Once engaged, these networks enable children to survive on their own, which subsequently boosts their feelings of independence, freedom and control over their own destinies. Data gathered in both social contexts show that these feelings play an important role in their daily routines and result in perpetuation of the social problem of street children.

### **Processes of integration among street children**

To fully understand the process of integration, it must be approached on two levels:

- processes of integration at the level of an individual within the group and/or the local society,
- processes of integration at the level of the group of street children within the local society.

To consider both levels is crucial. An individual child is a member of a larger society that forms the basis for his potential integration or assimilation into the subculture on the street. Since the group, if developed, acts as a subject in the local society, this level must also be considered.

Elsewhere we have already discussed two types of integration of street children into street subculture: integration through time and integration through fulfillment of the children's needs. There is a strong correlation evident in this data from street children in both Makeevka and Lusaka suggesting the influence of the length of the period a child spends on the street and his integration into street life. Children who spend more time on the street can better interiorize these norms, mores, perception and attitudes. Among street children in Makeevka, this premise becomes evident in the social structure and functioning of their subculture: children with longer street careers are placed at the core of the group, while younger peers and newcomers remain at the periphery. In contrast, street children in Lusaka do not organize themselves into groups having any elements of a subculture; nevertheless, integration proceeds, resulting in the placement of an individual within existing social structures based on the child's economic activities in the local setting. Unlike their Ukrainian counterparts who integrate firstly into the subculture and subsequently as street-subculture-participants into the local economy, street children in Lusaka integrate directly into the local economy, as individuals. Support for this thesis can also be found in data gathered from case studies of local NGOs in both countries: according to self-report and internal statistics of older street children and street children with longer street careers, the process of resocialization takes more time and effort, while newcomers resocialize relatively quickly.

Integration into street life through functions appears to be most evident in a subcultural context, for it offers a distinctly organized and specialized social formation on a small scale. These functions can be regarded as prefabricated collective responses to a child's need for physical and emotional support. The function of physical support is collective provision for a child's physical security from harmful influences, while emotional support assures psychological stability. For street children in Makeevka, the group on the street provides collective protection, a new system of social roles and relations, and concepts of authority and hierarchy which are in some groups similar to the familial system (Naterer, 2010; Naterer and Godina, 2011). Triangulated data also confirms the child's need for a structured social life, which is evident in both the organization and the functioning of their subculture, which in many cases simulates their absent family. Relatively large groups provide a strong

frame of inter-peer-protection, and although there are many forms of abusive behavior within the group, these play an important role in the process of an individual's development of a sense of security and belonging. Though in many cases physically abused by their group-peers, street children in Makeevka perceive themselves as members of a subculture.

Street children in Lusaka, on the other hand, do not organize themselves into distinct subcultures. Nonetheless, their needs for physical and emotional support are met through a distinct organization of life on the street. The first element of this distinct organization is the relatively high degree of mobility for any individual. In comparison to their counterparts from Makeevka, participants from Lusaka are considerably more mobile within their local environment; groups are consequently smaller, interpersonal attachments exist on a smaller scale, but are stronger, and the children are not particularly territorial. Rather than confronting dangerous situations with the police or other groups, they tend to avoid these by relocating to other suitable places for their activities. Another important factor that is also well developed among them is cooperation with people, which could also be regarded as a tactical evasive maneuver.

However, to further our study of social dynamics, it is necessary to adopt a broader and more detailed and structural approach to the analysis of integration. Integration of children into street life should be understood as a nexus of progressive stages, comprising 4 basic forms: acculturation, placement of an individual within the system of established social relations, interaction and identification. Once these stages are complete, we can regard a child as being quite fully integrated into street life.

For children, *acculturation* present a process of acquisition of the knowledge, social and cultural standards, rationalizations and other competence that are necessary for survival in the street. Within this stage, children get to know their peers and their life on the street. The process of acculturation among street children in Makeevka starts even before actual escape to the street. The process is triggered in the early stages of social interaction between street children and those children who live at home but spend a lot of time on the street. Research data suggest that most of a child's street social connections originate from

the year just prior to their escape to the street and the first few months of living there.

*Is it a big deal, getting used to living on the street (AN)?*

No, not really... it is very easy. At first you just hang with *pacani* [rus. peers] on the street and you go home to sleep... then more and more time. Then, after a while, you don't even go home any more...

(Informant 1, 16 years old, interview fragment, 2006)

Among street children in Lusaka, the process of acculturation starts after their introduction to the street. The assembled data suggest that, unlike their Ukrainian counterparts who had a period of transition to the street, escape to the street for most study participants from Lusaka happened abruptly:

One day I went out [to Lusaka city center] with my friend. We got some money from a lady [passerby]. I was amazed... it was the first time for me to have money for myself. So, we decided to stay and get some more... and so I stayed... just stayed on the street and didn't go home anymore.

(Informant 3b, 12 years old, interview fragment, 2013)

Within the phase of acculturation, there are three basic forms of knowledge and competences that are relevant for a child:

- knowledge and competences acquired at home and brought by the individual child to the street; these often determine one's advantages and disadvantages at the beginning and during the street career,
- specific knowledge and competences already present on the street, which are introduced to an individual as a set of prefabricated solutions enabling survival on the street (e.g. subcultural knowledge),
- knowledge and competences gained through individual innovation and adaptation.

Other important elements gained in this phase are social and cultural standards, which are gained through a series of interactions within three types of social spaces: private space (subcultural space among peers),

semi-private space (the local environment) and public space (broader social space) (Naterer & Godina, 2011).

The assembled data indicates the main motive for the perpetuation of the phase of acculturation to be a combination of the child's desire for independence, mostly monetary, and the feeling of control over one's own destiny. Triangulated data also point out the crucial role of this phase even before actual escape to the street, that is in the development of motivation for escaping to the street: children become aware of alternatives beyond their families and at the same time gain adequate levels of (sub)cultural competence, knowledge and skills for survival on the street.

*Placement* of an individual within the system of established social relations is the next phase in the process of integration into the street. Children already living on the street provide newcomers with a primary set of social relations, and once a new member joins as a fully-fledged participant, he gains access to other social networks connected to street children subculture. These are usually present directly in a group's immediate vicinity. By entering the street group, particularly if the group functions as a subculture, the new member gains not only social and cultural capital, but also a set of identities and pre-existing social networks that are crucial for survival on the street (e.g., Naterer & Godina, 2011).

There are two distinct social formations emerging among street children in Makeevka and Lusaka. Street children in Makeevka organize themselves into groups with 5-15 members. They have developed a distinctive subculture with many similarities to traditional subcultures as conceptualized by Cohen (1955) and to Maffesoli's neo-tribes (1996). Their subculture could be perceived as a collective response to individual problems and motivations. Participation is mostly determined by push factors within a child's family (e.g., lack of a symbolic core in the family, maltreatment or abuse), on the one hand, and by pull factors from the street (e.g., peer influence and the pre-existing system of tight social relations in the group on the street), on the other. Unlike in a classical subculture, class and gender play a minor role in determining subcultural participation. The social system of the group is based on norms which, in respect to conventional Ukrainian norms, are only partly reversed, which means that street children in Makeevka are not

oriented contra-culturally. They do exhibit some deviant characteristics, like short-term hedonism, but rarely engage in acts that would mark the delinquent population. The social structure of the group is hierarchical, prescribed and relatively rigid, based on a distinctly subcultural order and economy that are both non-formal (when interacting with peers) and formal (when interacting with members of broader society). Subcultural participation is evident on both the manifest level (in a specific subcultural language, image and attitudes) and on deeper, latent levels of social interaction (e.g., the *Guliat'* code enforcing solidarity among all street children and social codes influencing participating peers). For many of these children, the subculture offers a psychosocial simulation of their absent families (Naterer & Godina, 2011).

Street children in Lusaka are also organized into groups containing 3 to 4 members, but since these groups lack developed emblems of produced distinction, these cannot be perceived as subcultures in the same way as their Ukrainian counterparts. According to self-reports, participation in these groups offers some protection and support among peers but, in comparison with subcultures emerging among street children in Makeevka, is extremely limited in both extent and function:

... [on the street] you are on your own. You have some buddies... you know - helping you out... but eventually you are responsible for yourself, your food, your clothes... your life...

*What do you do when you are together? (A.N.)*

Sometimes sleeping... it's a bit safer... and cooking. We get together in the evening, somebody makes *nshima*, somebody brings *kapenta* (dried fish) or tomatoes to make *relish*...

*And then? (A.N.)*

Nothing – we eat, go to sleep, get up and everyone for himself again.

(Informant 4b, 16 years old, interview fragment, 2013)

In the interviews, genuine affection among peers living together was expressed. However, since peers do not engage in any lasting cohabitation and there are no other collective projects in which to participate

(for example, group work or collective criminality), there is no opportunity for the development of close interpersonal ties (e.g. *communitas*) that would produce group identities, subcultural social structures or other social codes comparable to those among the street children of Makeevka.

*Interaction*, as a phase in the integration of children into street life, is interwoven with processes of acculturation and identification. This interaction must be understood not in the general sense of the term, but as interaction outside the child's traditional frame of socialization and outside traditionally prescribed roles and relations - in the case of our study, as interaction on the street. There are two distinct types of interaction evident among both populations of street children: interaction with members of the general public and interaction within a peer group. The majority of interaction outside the group for street children in both Makeevka and Lusaka, involves interaction with people within their primary habitat - the street (e.g. costermongers, police or drug dealers). Since all children participating in our study were, while living on the street, either working and/or begging, these interactions appear to be mostly economically motivated. However, apart from enabling children to acquire money and other means to support themselves (e.g., charity clothes or food), these interactions also enabled children to acquire social capital by expanding their social networks beyond their peer-group. In many cases children reported on the good relationships they had developed with other people from their primary habitat, like shop owners, costermongers at the local market or even police. Despite the harshness of the habitat, children report these relationships to be emotionally, psychologically and socially fulfilling and in this respect of crucial importance:

... we call her [female market vendor] *mamka* [Russian: Granny] 'cause she us helps with food and all that... and we love her... She also lets us leave our stuff [valuable personal belongings] with her... so's nothing'll go missing [stolen].

(Informant 5, 15 years old, interview fragment, 2007)

Distinct peer interactions are evident among street children in both Lusaka and Makeevka. Among street children in Lusaka, these interactions are characterized mostly by mutual exchange of money, goods, help

and support, but in comparison with the interactions among their subculture-participating-peers from Makeevka, are relatively unelaborated. Interactions among participants within the subculture in Makeevka are also directed towards acquisition and transmission of economic and social capital, but have at the same time the capacity to form distinct elements that are materialized in their subcultural capital, which is one of the foundations for a child's identification with a subculture.

*Identification* is the last stage in the process of integration of children into street life. The process of identification is evident among populations of street children in both Makeevka and Lusaka, although it does not proceed in the same way. For street children in Makeevka, their primary context of identification is their subculture. Apart from providing participants with protection and support, it also constitutes their ultimate social reality on the street. This is the main mechanism of distinct social relations, norms, values and other element directing the perceptions, cognitive schemes and attitudes of its participants (e.g. Naterer & Godina, 2011). The collected data shows that street children regard their subculture not as something abstract, but as a set of concrete elements that can be observed, measured and manipulated. This can be illustrated with the example of *their subcultural capital*, which is a form of capital in the eyes of relevant others (peers) and enables the accumulation of prestige for the owner (Thornton 1995, 202). Among street children in Makeevka, there are many elements that have been transformed into subcultural capital: scars from recent fight with another group, for instance, are regarded as war medals which boost the bearer's image/social role of hero. It is also important to note that within the subculture of street children, subcultural capital exists in close relationship with economic, social and cultural capital and can be transformed from one to any other type of capital following a simple rule: the more of X capital one possesses, the easier the access to Y capital. Subcultural capital is also one of the main channels of group identification and at the same time one of the basic mechanisms for social positioning and internal mobility within the subculture: the more/less subcultural capital one possesses in the eyes of the relevant reference group (fully-fledged participants), the closer one is to the core/periphery of the subculture.

The assembled data shows that, among street children in Lusaka, identification within the group plays a minor role and is limited to

younger children at the beginning of their street careers. Once children grow older, they tend to identify, not with peers or subcultural positions, but with the roles that they perform daily in their local environment. As has been established, for them the group exists only temporarily and since there is no subculture with a distinct social structure and mechanism for regulating participants' perceptions and attitudes, their identifications appear to be more individualized:

[about social structure] ... they are friends and that's it. Nobody's their leader or anything else... sometimes they get together, do something and after that – everybody for himself.

*What do you mean? (A.N.)*

Look, I drive a *zamkap* [a rentable wheelbarrow] and get some money... he [pointing to a friend] cleans cars, this one here was emptying trash... we get our money... for example, we go and buy *chibuku* [corn beer], drink together and that's it. After that, we go back to work.

(Informant 8b, 20 years old, interview fragment, 2013)

The data shows despite these differences and similarities, both populations, Ukrainian and Zambian, exhibit the main motivation for engagement in the process of identification: the need for acceptance in the existing social structure and maintenance of feelings of belonging.

### **Implications for resocialization and reintegration**

Studies of programmes of resocialization and reintegration targeting street children are relatively scarce, and those that exist reveal a relatively limited range and a low success rate (Dybiczyński, 2005). There are several reasons for that; firstly, street children have proven to be a population that is hard to reach and research and even harder to resocialize and reintegrate; secondly, programmes are cost-intensive and, thirdly, since the field of operation has a relatively short history, few best practices and no prefabricated solutions, there is no immediate promise of success.

The programmes of resocialization and reintegration that have been subjected to analysis within this study show that some of the promising success can be attributed to the degree of understanding of the process through which children become street children. This success is mostly

achieved by implementing knowledge about individual needs, perceptions, motivations and other elements influencing the integration of children into street life. However, this knowledge appears to be heavily fragmented, unsystematic and based not on scientific evidence and analysis, but on trial-and-error; it is thus unsuitable as a basis for a resocialization and reintegration model. In order to assure a level of understanding that will boost success of these programs, a systematic, direct and individualized approach is required.

In order to be effective, programs of resocialization and reintegration must be individualized, flexible, easy to perform, modify and upgrade, and as cost independent as possible. Because of space limitations in the present article, we can outline only the scheme of individualization, while other characteristics remain to be developed.

Individualization can be achieved by first identifying the stage of each child's integration into street life, which will subsequently enable effective targeting of the distinct, specific push and pull factors influencing each case. This is crucial, since every child's street career is an individual one and at the same time dependent on the length of his street career. A systematic approach to the process of integration (see Table 1) allows identification of different phases along with the distinct content that is relevant for an individual child within his street career. At the same time this also enables direct targeting of both idiosyncratic issues (e.g. individual motivations and perceptions) and the external factors and conditions (e.g. material and social infrastructure) that support the development of a child's street career.

Content/ Phase	ACCULTURA- TION	PLACEMENT	INTERAC- TION	IDENTIFICA- TION
Start /dura- tion	Starts before escape to the street and lasts throughout the phase of placement	Starts at the moment a child begins to spend most of the time on the street and lasts throughout the child's street career	Starts during the phase of acculturation and lasts throughout a child's street career	Starts after successful placement and interaction of the child within the new environment

BECOMING A STREET CHILD: AN ANALYSIS OF THE PROCESS OF INTEGRATION OF STREET CHILDREN IN UKRAINE AND ZAMBIA AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THEIR RESOCIALIZATION AND REINTEGRATION

Intensity	Most intensive before and in the beginning of a street career and in the phase of placement	Most intensive during seasons with weather and social conditions suitable for living outdoors	Increasingly intensive during the phase of placement with a peak in identification	Intensity increasing in accordance with time spent on the street
Content	Acquisition of new knowledge and cultural standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acquisition of knowledge and cultural standards,</li> <li>• Interaction,</li> <li>• Identification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acquisition of knowledge and cultural standards,</li> <li>• Positioning within existing social structures</li> <li>• Subcultural social mobility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positioning within existing social structures</li> <li>• Subcultural social mobility</li> <li>• Active participation in creation of alternative cultural standards</li> </ul>
Conditions	Child has stable and lasting contact with peers on the street	<p>3 types of infrastructure enabling survival:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• material infrastructure (shelter)</li> <li>• social infrastructure (social networks)</li> <li>• economic infrastructure (economic sustainability and independence)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible alternative social network enabling displacement from child's family (e.g. a marketplace with chances for children to work)</li> <li>• Existing alternative social group (peers on the street)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Successful placement and interaction in the new environment</li> <li>• Durable position within social structures</li> <li>• Access to vertical mobility in an alternative social group on the street</li> </ul>
Child's perceptions of the phase	Children perceive this phase as an introduction to an alternative to a conventional lifestyle	Children perceive this phase as taking their control over destiny	Direct application of elements acquired during acculturation (playing a new game)	Being an independent, competent, fully-fledged participant

Child's motivations for persistence	Enhanced feelings of control, power and independence; Thrill and excitement of new social worlds	Experience of a reality that is alternative to life at home	Active participation in the new social reality on the street	Active participation in the creation of social reality on the street
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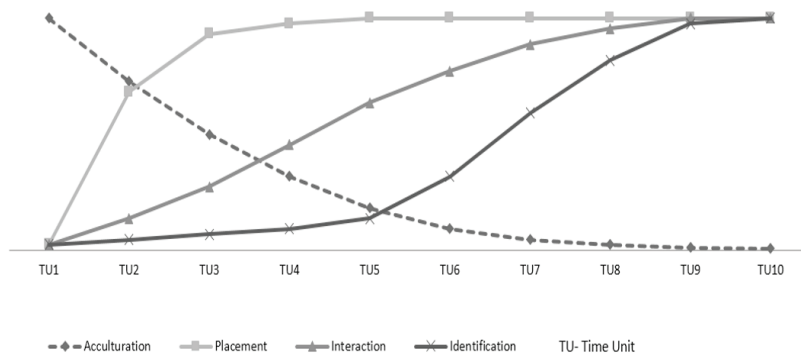
**Table 1.** Elaboration of the process of integration

For example, a child that is in the acculturation phase is influenced by a different set of motivations, perceptions and conditions than a child in the phase of identification and therefore requires a different approach. The process of identification of the phase must be based on a questionnaire that is short and possible to administer in any setting (either on the street or in an organization) in a relatively short time; it also needs to be sufficiently specific to gather an adequate amount of data. Questions should be based on codes requiring:

- the child's background, targeting individual motivations for running away and familial and socio-economic background (assessing the overall scheme of resocialization and reintegration),
- the amount of time (day and night) spent on the street, in order to assess the development of their street career in the time perspective (assessing acculturation and placement),
- the amount of knowledge already gained which makes life outside the family possible (assessing the child's cultural capital, acculturation and interaction),
- living conditions on the street (assessing acculturation and placement)
- economic activities of a child (assessing acculturation, placement and interaction),
- existence, elaboration and functioning of a primary group on the street (assessing acculturation, placement, interaction and identification),

The step following the data acquisition and placement of a child in one of the 4 described stages should involve integrating the knowledge gained into an individualized resocialization and reintegration scheme

(RRS). Since the development of different stages proceeds with varying dynamics and intensity, time is crucial (Figure 2), with the best chance for of successful intervention coming at the beginning of the phase of acculturation and placement.



**Figure 2.** Intensity of the four stages of integration over time

The RRS must carefully balance two facts: that, by escaping to the street, the child acquired certain benefits (e.g. independence and freedom) which are, once acquired, hard to give up, and that reintegration will probably limit or eliminate these benefits, which will be painful, but will in the end result in normalization of the situation. Actions within the process of resocialization therefore cannot eliminate a specific behavior, begging for instance, without replacing it with something that will preserve the function for a child, in this case an activity that will make a child feel independent without having to beg for money. Otherwise, the child will keep running back to the street. Therefore, the RRS must be based on 2 principles: first, limiting/eliminating factors supporting the process of the child's integration into a street career, and second, reinforcing factors that contribute to the child's resocialization and reintegration. Any individualized RRS must in particular address conditions outlined above, the child's perceptions and motivations (Table 1), so as to establish a suitable response for each individual case (Table 2):

Identified stage	Identified conditions (main characteristics)	Children's perceptions and motivations	Action 1	Action 2
ACCULTURATION	The child (not necessarily living on the street) has stable and lasting contact with peers on the street	Children perceive this phase as an introduction to an alternative to a conventional lifestyle, which enhances their feelings of control, power and independence, along with thrill and excitement	Limitation of existing contact with street peers and preventing formation of new contacts (e.g. by social workers and police interventions on the street)	Reinforcement of factors promoting accepted socialization (e.g. mandatory school participation, strict adult supervision)

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PLACEMENT	The child is using material infrastructure (shelter on the street) to survive on the street.	Children perceive this phase as taking control over their destiny and experiencing a new reality that is an alternative to life at home.	Existing infrastructure used by children to live on the street must be made inaccessible (limiting access to empty buildings and underground structures).	Family counseling for child's reintegration. Alternative infrastructures must be made available for a child that is unable to stay within their primal habitat (e.g. investigation of the possibility of reintegration in an extended family, foster family, or orphanage) .
	The child is using social infrastructure (social networks on the street) to survive on the street		Organization of street children into street groups must be hindered in order to eliminate peer influence as a factor pulling children to the street.	Activities promoting participation in locally accepted social networks suitable for children must be supported (e.g. collective sports, competitive games, common projects with shared responsibilities).
	The child is using economic infrastructure (economic sustainability and independence) to survive on the street		Economic activities (economic child labor or begging) enabling children to survive on the street must be eliminated.	Other, locally accepted activities enabling re-establishment of the status of a child. If child work is a local social and cultural norm (e.g. picking crops on a family owned farm), money/goods earned must be contributed to the family.

INTERACTION	Interaction of a child outside the family within alternative social network (e.g. a street group) enabling displacement from his primary habitat/family (e.g. on a marketplace with opportunities for children to work).	Children experience this phase as “playing a new game” with direct application of elements acquired during acculturation and become active participants in the new social reality on the street	Systematic and lasting enforcement of required action 1 prescribed for the stage on placement (above outlined category).	Systematic and lasting enforcement of required action 2 prescribed for the stage on placement (above outlined category).
IDENTIFICATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child is:</li> <li>• successfully placed and in lasting interaction in the street environment</li> <li>• permanently positioned within social structures on the street</li> <li>• able to participate in vertical mobility in a social group on the street</li> </ul>	Children regard themselves as being independent, competent, fully-fledged participants with active participation in the creation of social reality on the street	Strict physical limitations of any participation in street life must be enforced.	Alternative formation of a complete social life away from the street must be made available (e.g. placement of a child within an isolated, structured community, with assigned social roles and responsibilities that are locally socially and culturally accepted).

**Table 2.** Individualization of RRS

An example of a good practice from Lusaka speaks in support of this idea. A campaign to deliberately raise public awareness that giving money to begging street children is not charity but active participation in keeping them on the street, had significantly influenced the number of street children in the district of Lusaka:

Signs [referring to a big sign in front of a shopping mall erected by the Department of social welfare and discouraging giving money to street children, Picture 1], like the one at Manda Hill had a dramatic impact. There was a lot of children begging, not just there, but all over the city

[Lusaka] ... Just at Manda Hill at least a hundred of them every day... and more and more were coming. Then they raised the sign, people stopped giving money and children stopped coming. I'm not saying that this entirely solved the problem of street children in Lusaka. But what it did is made it harder for them to survive on the street and therefore more likely to stay at home.

[Informant A, local NGO, Lusaka 2013]



Picture 1. Sign from Manda Hill

## Conclusion

Our understanding of the processes through which children become street participants has yet to be fully developed, and by investigating the process of integration our study has elucidated one of the most important processes. We have shown that the process of integration must be understood as a gradual and individual process in the development of a child's street career and that, through analysis of its stages, a significant contribution to the individualization of RR programmes can be made.

However, there are some limitations to this study which must be acknowledged. Firstly, the empirical evidence of the study was gathered in two different cultural and social settings and therefore pertains to two cases. Further research/data would therefore be needed in order to empirically support and validate this concept of the process of integration. Secondly, the proposed implications for RR programmes, although based on fragmented empirical evidence, are ultimately a product of the authors' logical deductions and have yet to be applied and empirically tested. At this point these implications must not be understood as a template for universal and direct action, but rather as guidelines for further development of or upgrades to interventions.

In order to understand the fragile and marginalized population of street children more effectively, greater research efforts are needed. In particular, it must be grasped that street children are not a homogeneous group, but rather a vast population of individuals with idiosyncratic psychosocial and cultural backgrounds, sets of motivation and street careers. Excessive generalization in understanding and approaching reduces them to an undifferentiated social group and hinders effective RR. Therefore, the future of effective research and resocialization of street children must live in the development of an individualized approach.

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