

Underserved Populations: Testing a Model for the Care and Wellbeing of Rich and Poor Orphans– 2019

James M. Brant

President, World Institute for Social Education Development, USA

m.brant@wise-ed.org

Abstract

Our world has become starkly inequitable with 0.01% of the population owning 11% of all wealth, 1% owning 38% of all wealth, 10% owning 76% of all wealth, and the lower 50% owning almost nothing. Amongst all of these, there is a group of the most vulnerable, the most underserved, and ironically the most silent because, for the most part, they cannot speak for themselves: orphans, most of whom are in the lower 61%. The world population of orphans today is approximately 153 million. Selfishness and indifference have brought us to an appalling point in human history, but a radical change could be made, starting with the orphan population, if the world's middle class and above would adopt them in some way. The purpose of this paper is to explore the feasibility of such a social action and demonstrate the viability and potentially rapid effectiveness of this positive social engineering. The subject area is social and emotional learning, social responsibility, social entrepreneurship, and global citizenship. One of the groups in question is underserved and one is overserved yet underserved in that it lacks real happiness, in effect, both orphans. Through the lens of social constructivism, we examine the feasibility of projects through which the overserved help the underserved and both find fulfillment. Quantitative facts highlight the possibilities for radically ameliorating the orphan problem and qualitative investigation can measure the ensuing fulfillment of these groups. The final significant implication is that the orphan problem could be solved in this generation.

Keywords: Underserved, Orphans, Indifference, Middle Class, Social-Emotional Learning, Social Responsibility, Social Entrepreneurship, Global Citizenship

Introduction

Cornell University Law School (2022) defines the underserved as populations who meet challenges in accessing victim services due to factors such as geographic location, religion, gender, ethnicity, age, disabilities, and other special needs. Our world has become starkly inequitable with 0.01% of the population owning 11% of all wealth, 1% owning 38% of the wealth, 10% owning 76%, and the lower 50% owning almost nothing (The Hill, 2021; Business Insider, 2021). Another viewpoint of the glaring disparity is that there is a high-income class comprising 7% of the world population, an upper middle-income class of 15%, a middle-income class of 17%, a lower income class of 51%, and a class considered in extreme poverty of nearly 10% (World Vision, 2022). This implies that more than half of our world is underserved. The United Nations' Social Development Goals (SDGs) outline the types of services that are inequitably provided, as well as who the underserved are (unstats, sdgs report, 2018). These include the most vulnerable, the most underserved, the most helpless and defenseless, and ironically the most silent because, for the most part, they cannot speak for themselves: orphans, most of whom are in the lower 61%. The world population of orphans today is approximately 153 million (SOS Children's Villages, 2022).

Contemplating this problem in the light of how beliefs can impact the teaching and learning of an underserved population, we must consider the duality of the problem. The orphans have an obvious need and problem, yet simultaneously, those who could bring a solution to the orphans' problem may be affected by their own need and problem, for example, a certain learning disability, symptomatic of both autism and even psychopathy (Jones et. al., 2010). To explain further, those who could solve the problem might possibly not care enough to sense the urgency to solve it and believe that it is not their responsibility but someone else's or believe that the problem is unsolvable since it has always been there and no one has totally solved it before, therefore it is unrealistic to strive for a total solution and we must tolerate it. Empathy deficit is symptomatic of those with psychopathic tendencies as well as those with autistic disorders (Jones, et al., 2010), often manifested by convenient self-centeredness coupled with temporary but unstable happiness (Dambrun, 2017), compounded with a fatalistic attitude (Levin et. al., 2021). The latter group referred to is the upper 41% of the socio-economic spectrum, who, if it were possible to help them learn to not tolerate the situation and learn to give of themselves sufficiently, could adopt the orphans. The estimated global population of 153 million orphans is a high number for any one or few nations to absorb and care for institutionally, but by dividing the number among capable families, it could be possible to support them. It would depend upon the charity of such families. Is humanity capable of such a selfless act? Selfishness and indifference, among other factors, have brought us to an appalling point in human history, in which more than half of the world suffers need, while the other less-than-half continues to grow in wealth, even resulting in 17.5% of all children to live in extreme poverty (World Bank, 2020) and 6.5% to be orphans, but a radical change could be made, starting with the orphan population first, if the world's middle class and above would adopt them. The purpose of this paper is to explore the feasibility of such a social action and demonstrate the viability and potentially rapid effectiveness of this positive social engineering.

Audience, Subjects, and Rationale

The targets in our model are both audience and subjects; audience because they participate in a living, ongoing class on social-emotional learning and social education; subjects because we study the effect of

the teaching and experience of giving on their lives. As was explained that the problem in study is dual in nature, so the study groups are dual: on the one hand, the lower and extreme poverty class, and on the other hand the middle and above class. The lesson for the middle and above class is to share their wealth wisely, so that efforts are sustainable. The lesson for the lower and poverty classes is to use well the opportunity by taking good care of resources, working, and studying to become self-sustaining and be transparent about costs and expenses because there are sometimes abuses in this sense which turn donors away. The class size on the giving side could be a classroom of participating students at a school, a group of friends on a social network, a church congregation, a club, a neighborhood, a town, or even a city, state, or country, depending on the type of outreach used. We have experimental models for each of these, but since the point of this study is to show the potential of individuals, families, and the small groups they comprise, we focus on those smaller, more personal levels. On the receiving side, size could be a family, community, orphanage, school, village, or national project, also depending on the opportunity available. An orphan is a child without parents, with one parent, with parents incapable of caring for the child, an abused child, or a refugee who cannot return to his family for safety's sake, possibly temporarily (Brandeis University, 2011). Not all the orphans in this study live in formal orphanage buildings. Our charity projects span the range from individual families to nationwide projects. Age range can be all ages since we can learn to give and care at any age, and we never finish learning and practicing the subject. We have projects K-12, university, for parents, teachers, business sector, and government. These all overlap and intersect, but the materials and activities are age appropriate and specific. The subject area is social and emotional learning, social responsibility,

social entrepreneurship, and global citizenship. The demographics are varied on both sides, including several ethnicities, religions, and socioeconomic classes. In one highlighted example model, we include special needs learners on the giving side, including PTSD recoveries, Asperger syndrome (semi-autistic) helpers, ELL students, and a semi-disabled previously homeless gentleman, all of whom work together as a team to operate a small farm from which products are sold to local families and community, and the proceeds support projects to help underprivileged children. In particular, they support a group of 23 orphans in a home-orphanage in Uganda, who two years ago were dressed in rags, had little to eat, were often sick, and had no possibility for schooling because it was not free in that area. These orphans are now well dressed, eat daily, are in good health, and do well in their studies, with teens aspiring to become doctors, lawyers, and teachers. This home-orphanage now owns a farm which is sufficient to feed them and produce money for other needs. Their goal is to help reproduce other such self-sustaining models locally. Simple people helped simple people, and this is the result. Our teams in Kenya, Congo, and other diverse locations are also quite varied, some working on provincial or national levels.

The underserved population within the audience is the world's orphan population, using as an example the children and director of the Uganda orphanage, as well as very low-income school children with families, and young village girl entrepreneurs served in our Kenya projects. There are also families who have lost many of their members to violent terrorism in Eastern Congo along with ex-child soldiers, and Syrian refugee children in camps and medical homes at the borders of Syria. In all cases, the child needs care, but this could be through and together with relatives, one of the parents, or even the community where the child lives, thus broadening the scope of how to adopt a child. Instead of the conventional concept of bringing the child to a new family, sometimes in a foreign land, those who want to help the child through adoption could support both the child and caretakers right where they are, in their native country. This could be more

appropriate if the child is with part of the family, but mainly needs financial support. In all cases, the primary consideration must be, “What is best for the child?” Longitudinal research studies (Brandeis University, 2011) have shown that institutionalized orphan care does not provide the same nurturing effect as a child’s own parent, even if only one, a relative, or adoptive family care. Education is only one aspect of their needs in institutions, intertwined with the need for food, shelter, and the warmth of a family. Using this informed logic as a guideline, we can deduce that 153 million orphans are underserved because they are still orphans, even within the broader scope of the definition, and being an orphan implies that they are deprived of what others have besides the already heavy burden of living in extreme poverty or low income. If each family of the upper 39% of the world population was to adopt one orphan or orphan with accompanying caretakers, the problem would be solved. The current world population is estimated at 7.96 billion, 39% of which equals 3.1 billion (Pew Research, 2022). The average family size in the U.S. and Europe is 3.3 and 3.1 persons, respectively, with Australia having 2.53. India’s growing middle class (28%) with an average family size of 4.8 brings the average to 4 (Pew Research, 2020; Statista, 2022) which translates to approximately 775 million families of middle-class level and above in the world. If each of these families adopted one orphan, the problem would be solved five times over.

As the audience is dual, so the underserved population is dual along with the solution to the problem: those in need of help and those in need of willing to give the help. These two groups are ironically intertwined, a pair of quarks on distant sides of a universe, mysteriously entangled, affecting the movement or resistance to movement of one another. In the case of our rescue group, those who could solve the problem if they choose to; are also affected by their circumstance of wealth because by denying access to their lives of relative abundance, and for some, excess, they are isolating themselves from the rest of the human family, closing their eyes to a need which could be solved by them. The same psychologist cited in the introduction of this paper, Michael Dambrun, who diagnosed self-centeredness and its temporary unstable happiness followed by depression, contrasts it with selflessness and the accompanying stable and enduring happiness it engenders (Dambrun, 2017). In our model, both groups are orphans, one not by choice, and the other by choice, yet put to the test, a chance for freedom if it will venture out of the self-imposed gilded cage of materialism. This background to the twin-problem conundrum can shine a light on what the solution could be, which also is dual in this Rubik’s-cube-type challenge (Zeng, et al., 2018). By moving one part, the next part can move, part by part, until all the squares are in place. One of the groups in question is underserved and one is overserved yet underserved in that it lacks real happiness. My instruction to this dual group would not be so much with words, but through the experience of fulfilling each other’s needs, the true social constructivism of learning together to give and to receive, totally student-centered learning with only the necessary facilitation to make the opportunity possible.

Personal Convictions and Beliefs

My beliefs about relating to people of whatever race or background apply to relating to orphan children or possible rich donors. I have had friends, rich and poor from many races, and lived as the rich or as the poor. I know that people are people, although we need to brush the mud off when it comes to someone coming from much hardship. Experience has strengthened my conviction that I need to relate to all and have empathy and compassion for all. Over the years, I have been friends to rich “poor people” and poor “rich people”, and at times have felt my heart break for each of them. My conviction to see past their outward appearance and circumstance and care about their real person inside has also been strengthened by spiritual

and moral education. Finally, I realize that we are all orphans, some way, until we find meaning and share love in life, so this awareness challenges me to keep looking for the orphans in this world and help them to find what they need. I am reminded of what was said in the book titled “Becoming a Global Competent Teacher” about needing to move past empathy and on to “caring for”, meaning to put our good intentions into action to help someone (Tichnor-Wagner et.al., 2019). I am challenged to reach out to all the underserved people and help them to receive what they need. Life’s course is helping me to define my plans in this respect. These beliefs can positively help me to give instruction to the underserved groups I go to because they can help us to connect and relate. As far as negatively affecting my instruction toward a group, I sometimes tend to be too compassionate if that is possible when it is necessary to require and expect more from people, to help them reach their greatest potential. In the case of orphans, many great people have come from that group: Nelson Mandela, Steve Jobs, John Lennon, and Edgar Allan Poe, to name a few.

Conclusion

Two policy recommendations for governments could be to give a special tax relief credit for those adopting an orphan in whatever form, and to initiate a campaign of social and emotional learning related to this subject for all citizenry, promoting it through social media and in school curriculums. A possible caveat relating to potential participant givers is that some might be considered poor themselves and not able to give, yet a notable counter to this doubt is that those who have less are often those who are more willing to share with those who have even less. Future research initiatives could include measuring the effects of this civil diplomacy toward world peace, keeping track of the rate of change in the world orphan population after this project grows, observe in which countries and cultures this project takes off, and qualitative as well as quantitative measurement of the effects in the lives of the receivers and the givers of the support.

It is easier to settle for a belief that the problem of orphans in whatever form cannot be solved than to move society to not only believe that the problem can be eradicated but take the actions to make it happen. Sometimes looking at the numbers involved can help us to see possibilities that we would not otherwise see, thus energizing us to rise to the challenge. Taking the responsibility for an additional child in whatever form is not a small step for anyone and to think that such a large portion of the world population as the entire middle class and above would even consider doing it might seem outlandish and unreasonable to most, seeing the current world economic situation. On the other hand, numbers do not lie and can show us possibilities beyond what we thought was possible. Sustainable development projects can take time and may encounter political and government-level economic obstacles which waylay efforts, but meanwhile, children suffer and die daily for a lack of timely care which at a citizen-to-citizen level could have been provided. and that is within our grasp, even if sacrificial for some, even if it is only until the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) can be achieved and take effect around the world, enabling each region to become self-sustaining. Would we tell our own children to wait on that if they were in such life and death struggles and needed our help today? We should consider counting these as our own children. That seemingly simple decision would be our next action step. Consider the relatively immediate change that decision would bring to the world. This generation would be known as the generation that took the step together to banish orphanhood. It is possible.

References

- Brandeis University, Schuster Institute for Investigative Journalism, 2011, Orphan Statistics Explained, Or<https://www.brandeis.edu/investigate/adoption/orphan-statistics.html>, (accessed 4/11/2022)
- Business Insider (2021), Here's how much wealth each wealth class makes per year,
- Cornell Law School (2022). Definition of underserved
[https://www.law.cornell.edu/definitions/uscode.php?width=840&height=800&iframe=true&def_id=34-USC-1008625459-1259336281&term_occur=999&term_src=title:34:subtitle:I:chapter:121:subchapter:III:section:12291#:~:text=\(39\)%20Underserved%20populations%20The%20term,racial%20and%20ethnic%20populations%20C%20populations](https://www.law.cornell.edu/definitions/uscode.php?width=840&height=800&iframe=true&def_id=34-USC-1008625459-1259336281&term_occur=999&term_src=title:34:subtitle:I:chapter:121:subchapter:III:section:12291#:~:text=(39)%20Underserved%20populations%20The%20term,racial%20and%20ethnic%20populations%20C%20populations), (accessed 4/11/2022)
- Dambrun M. (2017). Self-centeredness and selflessness: happiness correlates and mediating psychological processes. *PeerJ*, 5, e3306. <https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj.3306>, (accessed 4/09/2022)
- Jones, A. P., Happé, F. G., Gilbert, F., Burnett, S., & Viding, E. (2010). Feeling, caring, knowing different types of empathy deficit in boys with psychopathic tendencies and autism spectrum disorder. *Journal of child psychology and psychiatry, and allied disciplines*, 51(11), 1188–1197. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7610.2010.02280.x>, (accessed 4/09/2022)
- Levin, Y., Bachem, R., Palgi, Y., Hyland, P., Karatzias, T., Shevlin, M., Ben-Ezra, M., & Maercker, A. (2021). Fatalism and ICD-11 CPTSD and PTSD diagnoses: results from Nigeria, Kenya & Ghana. *European journal of psychotraumatology*, 12(1), 1988452. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20008198.2021.1988452>, (accessed 4/09/2022)
- Pew Research, (2020). With billions confined to their homes worldwide. [https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/03/31/with-billions-confined-to-their-homes-worldwide-which-living-arrangements-are-most-common/#:~:text=Around%20the%20world%2C%20the%20average,\)%20and%20Europe%20\(3.1\)](https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/03/31/with-billions-confined-to-their-homes-worldwide-which-living-arrangements-are-most-common/#:~:text=Around%20the%20world%2C%20the%20average,)%20and%20Europe%20(3.1).). (Accessed 4/12/2022)
- SOS Children's Villages-USA, Worldwide Orphan Statistics. 2022, [https://www.sos-usa.org/our-impact/focus-areas/advocacy-movement-building/childrensstatistics#:~:text=ORPHANS,worldwide%20are%20orphans%20\(UNICEF\)](https://www.sos-usa.org/our-impact/focus-areas/advocacy-movement-building/childrensstatistics#:~:text=ORPHANS,worldwide%20are%20orphans%20(UNICEF)). (Accessed 4/11/2022)
- Statista, (2022). US population by gender. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/737923/us-population-by-gender/>, (accessed 4/12/2022)
- UN Stats, The sustainable development goals report, (2018). <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2018/overview/>, (accessed 4/10/2022)

The Hill, (2021) Share of global wealth held by billionaires climbs during pandemic.<https://thehill.com/regulation/finance/584710-share-of-global-wealth-held-by-billionaires-climbs-during-pandemic/#:~:text=The%20top%20.,1995%2C%20according%20to%20the%20report.> (Accessed 4/12/2022)

Tichnor-Wagner, A., Parkhouse, H., Glazier, J., & Cain, J. M. (2019). Becoming a globally competent teacher (Links to an external site.). ACSD. (Accessed 4/14/2022)

World Bank, (2020), One in six children lives in extreme poverty, World Bank-UNICEF analysis shows,<https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/10/20/1-in-6-children-lives-in-extreme-poverty-world-bank-unicef-analysis> shows#:~:text=Children%20are%20more%20than%20twice,live%20in%20extremely%20poor%20house holds. (Accessed 4/11/2022)

World Vision, (2022), How many people live in poverty in the world?,<https://www.worldvision.org/sponsorship-news-stories/global-poverty-facts#:~:text=BACK%20TO%20QUESTIONS,How%20many%20people%20live%20in%20poverty%20in%20the%20world%3F,in%20poverty%20as%20of%202019.> (Accessed 4/11/2022)

Zeng, DX., Li, M., Wang, JJ. et al. Overview of Rubik's Cube and Reflections on Its Application in Mechanism. *Chin. J. Mech. Eng.* 31, 77 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s10033-018-0269-7>, (accessed 2023/6/06)