Processes of Erasure:

The Consequences of Social Emotional Learning with Burundian Refugees in Tanzania

By

Kelsey A. Dalrymple

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The dissertation is approved by the following members of the Final Oral Committee:

Diana Rodríguez-Gómez, Assistant Professor, Education Policy Studies
Lesley Bartlett, Professor, Educational Policy Studies
Nancy Kendall, Professor, Education Policy Studies
Maria Lepowsky, Professor, Anthropology

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ABSTRACT

For decades, refugee and crisis-affected children have been the targets of humanitarian education interventions through the Education in Emergencies (EiE) sector. This dissertation examines the recent integration of social and emotional learning (SEL) into EiE programming and how a Burundian refugee community in Western Tanzania makes sense of and experiences this programming. Drawing on 10 months of ethnographic research in the Nduta refugee camp, and using the analytical tool of critical theory, research findings demonstrate that SEL plays a significant role in several perceived processes of socio-cultural erasure in this context. Interviews, observations, and document review reveal how the Nduta community perceives SEL as a racialized project that aims to mold their children in the image of white-dominate societies and for unrealistic futures driven by neoliberal logics. The older generation in Nduta regards the individualistic orientation of SEL, the self-centric values it promotes, and the pedagogies it employs as a neocolonial form of values imposition that is contributing to the moral decay of youth in Nduta and the erasure of their culture and humanity. Additionally, critical and reflexive analysis of the research process itself reveals the complexities and challenges of knowledge co-production in refugee contexts and highlights issues related to epistemic, structural, and every-day control in 'participatory' research. This dissertation utilizes SEL as a vehicle to connect, extend, and apply critical discourse to—and encourage more critical reflection of—larger practices, assumptions, and systemic ways of working within EiE work, research, and humanitarian intervention more broadly.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CASEL	Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning
CIE	Comparative and International Education
CFS	Child Friendly Space
DAFI	Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative
DUCE	Dar es Salaam University College of Education
FCH	Formation Civique et Humain
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FPH	Formation Patriotique et Humain
EiE	Education in Emergencies
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
INEE	Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies
IRB	Institutional Review Board
IRC	International Rescue Committee
KCP	Knowledge Co-Production
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEL	Social Emotional Learning
PSS	Psychosocial Support
UDSM	University of Dar es Salaam
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
U.S.	United States of America

USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollar
WASH	Water Sanitation and Health
WISE	World Innovation Summit for Education
WFP	World Food Program

PREFACE

Home Truths

I identify as a white, cisgendered, North American woman. I am also the child of retired international development workers. After serving in the Peace Corps in Cameroon for two years, my parents—both white, cisgendered, North Americans who grew up in upstate New York—worked in the Democratic Republic of Congo for six years before eventually moving to Rwanda. During that time, they had my sister and eventually me. While I was born in New York, at two-weeks old I took my first plane ride; or rather, my parents snuggled me into a cardboard box provided by the airline and lovingly shoved me under the seat in front of them for the first leg of our journey back to Kigali…as the story goes.

I spent the first two years of my life in Rwanda before my family moved to Mali. After two years in Bamako, we moved to Chad. These moves were dictated by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) projects that my father worked for in the sector of agricultural economics; my mother worked in remote sensing and earned a teacher certification along the way. Throughout my childhood in these countries, I experienced the quintessential 'expat' lifestyle. I attended international schools, lived in nice houses walled off from the surrounding community, went on exciting safari trips, and grew up with household 'help' that included local nannies, cooks, cleaners, gardeners, and security guards. To soften these colonial clichés, my parents made sure to expose me and my sister to the local culture, did not shy away from unpacking our observations of poverty and inequality, and raised us to feel comfortable around— and be respectful towards—all individuals we encountered, including those they employed.

Despite the international circles we moved in, as infants and toddlers my sister and I spent much of our time being looked after by two Rwandan woman, Elizabeth (EB for short) and Francoise. These two women not only supplemented the attention and care our parents provided, but also established loving and familial relationships with all four of us. For me and my sister, they served as some of our first teachers and guides through the social and cultural worlds around us, thus shaping our lived experiences and worldviews.

Due to a family emergency, we abruptly left Chad in early 1994 and returned to the United States (U.S.). Rapidly going from a noisy, colorful, and vibrant international city to a small, largely white, rural, farming community in upstate New York was a tough transition for me and my sister. While we grappled with being part of the racial majority and slowly disassociated from expat life, 7,000 miles away hundreds of thousands of people were slaughtered in the Rwandan genocide. In following this news, my parents became despondent for a time, having lost friends and colleagues, never hearing from EB or Francoise again. A child during the event, it has taken time for me to fully grasp how the genocide has impacted the lives, histories, and futures of the Rwandan people and how its impact still ripples through families in and outside of Rwanda today, including my own.

In the following years, we moved to rural Wisconsin, my parents fully transitioned into U.S. work, and we all settled into 'American' life while my parents tried to track down Rwandan friends and colleagues who had fled as refugees. Routinely listening to stories from my parent's Peace Corps days and pre-child adventures created for me a romanticized ideal of international development work, and hearing intermittent news about people fleeing conflict around the world only to languish in refugee camps led to my interest in humanitarian aid. When talking with my father one day about what I wanted to be when I grew up, I remember saying some version of, "I want to save babies in Africa!". This sentiment and these childhood experiences led to a winding journey of becoming a 'nice', white, humanitarian aid worker, traveling to 'exotic' emergency contexts in an effort to 'save' those who I thought could not save themselves; all the while my 'do-gooder' delusions blinding me to the neocolonial and paternalistic white savior complex I was perpetuating.

I am proud of my family and cherish my childhood experiences. Though, my doctoral experience has been a new journey of coming to terms with my positionality, privilege, and power and my complicated relationships with race and culture. In reflecting on my indulgence in white saviorism and complicity in processes of epistemic control and erasure, this dissertation is one step in a lifelong process of transforming these experiences and reflections into productive contributions towards equity, social justice, anti-colonialism, and anti-racism—both in and outside of the humanitarian world.

INTRODUCTION

When my plane touched down in Dar es Salaam in October of 2017, it was the first time in nearly a decade that I had set foot on the African continent, and nearly thirty years since I had been in East Africa as an infant. As I exited the plane and navigated the tarmac to the arrival door, I was hit by a familiar wave of heat and humidity. Walking through the airport, I was overwhelmed by sense-memories from my childhood: smells of human sweat, aromatic wood, and air-conditioner fluid; sights of colorful fabrics, beaded jewelry, and wooden statues laid out for sale in little stalls; and sounds of humming florescent lights and various languages being spoken around me.

After spending the night in Dar es Salaam, I met the Country Director of my organization at the airport for an early morning flight to Mwanza. A seasoned humanitarian practitioner from Norway, he explained to me about the work I would be doing, the team I would be working with, and some of the office drama as we became airborne. He rejected the flight attendant's offer of juice, but greatly accepted the instant coffee. "Terrible stuff, but you'll learn to drink it. It's the only coffee available where you'll be" he said. Eager to impress him, I also accepted a cup, wincing as I gulped down the curiously thick liquid.

When we arrived in Mwanza, I had assumed we would catch a similar Air Tanzania plane to Kigoma and then drive the five hours to Kibondo. However, the Country Director had gotten us coveted spots on a small World Food Program (WFP) plane with a direct route. In the waiting area we met an International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delegate and a British expat photojournalist from Kenya, as well as two WFP staff members, who would join us on the flight. When the plane pulled up, my heart dropped into my stomach. I had never been on a propeller plane in my living memory; it looked more like a child's toy than something trusted to carry people. As we all crammed our bags and bodies into the tiny cabin, I was shoved so far forward that I was basically in the cockpit with my knees next to my ears. When the plane took off and my stomach dropped to my feet, the Country Director noticed my nerves and said, "Don't worry, this is nothing compared to the work you have cut out for you."

As I pondered his ominous words, the sprawling lakeside city of Mwanza dissipated and small towns dotted the countryside until we reached a never-ending landscape of uninhabited bush. Within an hour, the Country Director nudged me and said, “Look, that’s the Nduta camp.” I peered out the window to see what looked like a small city, its rows of blue and white huts, straight roads and paths, and evenly distributed water points in stark contrast with the surrounding countryside. A few minutes later we started our dissent into Kibondo, the small town that functioned as the hub of humanitarian operations for the camp. As the plane touched down, the Country Director smiled at me and said, “Welcome home!”.

Indeed, Kibondo was my home for the next year and a half. I worked as an Education in Emergencies (EiE) Specialist for the organization Plan International (Plan). Plan had been part of the refugee response since the most recent influx of Burundian refugees in 2015. Having recently received a large grant from the Swedish government, Plan had been in need of someone who could bolster its education activities and portfolio. Having worked my whole career for this kind of job, I was eager to accept the offer. I spent the first few weeks in Kibondo getting to know my colleagues, learning about the existing programs and activities, and identifying key issues to address. Among these included: limited teacher training, a lack of access to teaching and learning materials, overcrowded classrooms, and poor school readiness for children in Nduta transitioning from pre-primary to primary school.

After two weeks of contemplating these issues, I was whisked away to the Qatar Foundation’s World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE) in Doha. I had been invited to deliver a series of lectures on EiE for participants. During my time at the summit, I saw a presentation delivered by a tiny non-governmental organization (NGO) that specialized in early childhood development and social emotional learning (SEL)—the process of learning and applying social and emotional competencies, such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, and empathy (CASEL, 2023)—in refugee contexts. While I had vaguely engaged with SEL in previous positions, I had never really seen SEL in practice in a crisis context; I was eager to learn more. Upon connecting with the Executive Director of the tiny NGO, I learned that their programming had helped improve refugee children’s academic achievement, emotional behaviors, interactions with others, and school readiness. This seemed like a perfect solution to address the

educational issues identified in the Nduta camp. After talking it over with the team in Kibondo, a partnership agreement was drafted and logistics were arranged to replicate the tiny NGO's program model in the Child Friendly Spaces (CFSs) where Plan delivered its early childhood learning activities in Nduta. Teacher trainings were delivered, teaching and learning materials were distributed, and the program was up and running.

Over the next few months, buzz about SEL boomed in the global EiE community. Rhetoric positioned SEL as the answer to improving academic achievement, psychosocial wellbeing, and resilience for crisis-affected children (INEE, 2018). Indeed, 2018 saw the publication and promotion of numerous humanitarian SEL toolkits and guidance notes[1], intense investment from major donors into SEL programming and research[2], and the development of various SEL policies and strategies among these transnational actors.

Though, along with SEL's rapid rise in the EiE community, a parallel discourse was growing about the cultural relevance of SEL and its unintended consequences. Scholars in the international education sector highlighted SEL's U.S. origins and acknowledged its dissonance with non-Western cultures (Jukes et al., 2018). Critical EiE actors were wary of the limited evidence base on SEL in crisis contexts and the over-reliance on SEL research from non-crisis contexts in the Global North (USAID, 2021). Confusion about the differences and overlaps between psychosocial support (PSS) and SEL were growing (Soye & Tauson, 2018) and concerns about the over-emphasis of SEL as a means to address trauma also emerged (UNESCO, 2019). At the same time, scholars in the U.S. were beginning to draw attention to SEL's role in the reinforcement of racial inequity and structural violence (Jagers et al., 2018) and demonstrate its function as a classroom management tool that controls children's bodies and affects to align with white, middle-class norms (Gregory & Fergus, 2017; Stearns, 2019).

[1] E.g. INEE's PSS-SEL Guidance note (2018), Save the Children's Learning & Wellbeing in Emergencies Toolkit (2016), IRC Safe and Healing Learning Spaces Toolkit (2016), the World Bank's Step-by-Step SEL Toolkit (2018).
[2] E.g. DANIDA, DFID, Dubai Cares, ECHO, GIZ, The LEGO Foundation, Porticus, SIDA, UNICEF, USAID, World Bank.

While I had drunk the proverbial ‘Kool-Aid’ of SEL back in Doha and had become an active and uncritical advocate of its use in crisis contexts, these critiques and discourses began to permeate my bubble of Kibondo and the Nduta camp. While delivering a follow-up SEL teacher training in the camp in 2019, I paid closer attention to teachers’ unenthusiastic reactions to things like positive discipline, play-based learning, and emotional check-ins. In discussions with teachers about their experiences in the classroom, I became more aware of the regurgitated training language and social desirability bias at work, knowing they were simply telling me what they thought I wanted to hear (i.e. yes, the children are happier, more calm, learning more, etc.). During classroom observations, it became clear that teachers were performing for me, eager to return to their preferred pedagogies after I left.

In reflecting upon the premise of SEL as a skills-building approach, I began to recognize it as a form of social engineering by propagating specific ways of thinking, feeling, communicating, and being, aligned with my own beliefs and those who created the SEL materials in the first place (i.e. mostly white practitioners in the U.S.). Indeed, the Plan team and I had done no community consultation or contextualization of the SEL materials we used in Nduta. Instead, we took for granted the notion that the skills and behaviors promoted through SEL were universally beneficial and relevant for all children globally, and especially for refugee children who were positioned by global EiE guidance as deficient in these skills and in need of external support to develop them (INEE, 2016, 2018; Save the Children, 2017; Varela et al., 2013). As these realizations began to take hold, I also reflected on my own position in this process. Having firmly adhered to these assumptions underlying SEL work in the EiE community, I recognized my position as the ‘white expert’ with the ‘superior’ knowledge, there to help/save/fix children in Nduta, as without my help they would remain traumatized and uneducated with a dismal future ahead. In this role, I was simply enacting white saviorism and imposing my values and worldview on the Nduta community.

Motivated to disrupt this process, and wanting to explore these issues further, I embarked on a doctoral adventure. Shedding my assumptions about SEL’s functions—whether good or bad—and its impact on crisis-affected communities, I designed a research project to explore how the Nduta community

experiences and makes sense of SEL. This dissertation is the product of that research project. Drawing on 10 months of ethnographic research in Tanzania, and using the analytical tool of critical theory, research findings demonstrate that SEL plays a significant role in several perceived processes of socio-cultural erasure in the Nduta camp. Interviews, observations, and document review reveal how the Nduta community perceives SEL as a racialized project that aims to mold their children in the image of white-dominate societies and for unrealistic futures driven by neoliberal logics. The older generation in Nduta regards the individualistic orientation of SEL, the self-centric values it promotes, and the pedagogies it employs as a form of values imposition that is contributing to the moral decay of youth in Nduta, generational fractures, and the erasure of their culture and humanity. Lastly, critical and reflexive analysis of the research process itself reveals the complexities and challenges of knowledge co-production in refugee contexts and highlights issues related to epistemic, structural, and every-day control in 'participatory' research.

In the remainder of this introduction, I first present the theoretical debates and discourses that frame and inform this dissertation. I then provide an overview of the forced migration of Burundians into Tanzania and the policyscape of the corresponding refugee response. Following this, I discuss the ethnographic methods that guided the processes of data collection and analysis. Finally, I present an outline of the rest of this dissertation. Importantly, this dissertation is comprised of three empirical chapters; each can be read and understood as a freestanding paper with its own introduction, theoretical framework, background, methods, findings, and conclusions.

Debates and Discourses

This dissertation describes SEL's role in various processes of socio-cultural erasure. To conceptualize processes of erasure, I draw on Bonaventura de Sousa Santos' concept of *epistemicide*, or the "murder of knowledge" resulting from "unequal exchanges among cultures" (de Sousa Santos, 2007). Epistemicide manifests in the destruction of a social group's tangible and/or intangible systems of knowledge through subordination, devaluation, and sometimes genocide (Patin et al., 2020). While

various schools of African philosophy abound (Falola, 2022), numerous African ethno-philosophers[3] outline the explicit link between African epistemology and philosophy, which is inherently communitarian and relational. These scholars maintain that African epistemology is a reflection of social realities, cultural and conceptual systems, and modern resources of knowledge. Thus, an African ethno-philosophical perspective posits that epistemicide encompasses the erasure of not only knowledge, but also culture, values, language, identity, societal structures, and general ways of being (Kapatika, 2022). Furthermore, scholars like Masaka (2018) point out that African thinkers'[4] observations of these destructive processes in fact, "precedes de Sousa Santos's naming of this practice as such" (p. 287).

Building on this conceptualization, this dissertation is also informed by the concept of *epistemic control*. Often part of processes of epistemicide/erasure, epistemic control refers to "techniques to rationalize, systematize, and routinize the ways in which we know, including the identification of legitimate contributors to knowledge production and dissemination processes, as much as proper forms of knowing, instruments, procedures, etc." (Igelsböck, 2020, p. 2). Epistemic control often results in the possession of *epistemic power*, or the extent to which a person, group, or institution "is able to influence what people think, believe, and know, and…enable and disable others from exerting epistemic influence" (Archer et al., 2020, p.29). This dissertation utilizes SEL as a vehicle to examine these processes of erasure and epistemic control in a refugee context. To do so, I draw from critical theorists in the fields of Comparative and International Education (CIE), refugee studies, and anthropology—specifically the anthropologies of childhood, development, and humanitarianism.

Deficit discourses and universal solutions

While saving and improving lives are often positioned as the core missions of international development and humanitarian aid, it is common knowledge that contemporary development and

[3] E.g. Placid Tempels (1959), Leopold S. Senghor (1964), J.S. Mbiti (1970), and Alexis Kagame (1956) (Bodunrin, 1981).
[4] E.g. Taiwo (1993), Hountodji (1983), Masolo (1981), Mohmoh (1985), Mazuri, Ajayi, Boahe & Tshibangu (1991) (Kapatika, 2022)

humanitarian structures are shaped by the philosophies, epistemologies, and value systems of Europe and North America (Davey et al., 2013; Jayawickrama, 2018). Correspondingly, it is no secret that development and humanitarian aid are part of the neocolonial project of Westernization, democratization, and the global propagation of Western values (Barnett, 2011; Duffield, 2002; F. Fox, 2001; Joseph, 2013; Novelli, 2010). Numerous scholars reveal how development and humanitarian aid function as tools of governance, subjugation, and control of vulnerable populations (Barnett, 2012; Ferguson, 1994; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Mosse, 2005; Piotukh, 2015). They argue that the spread of 'universal' norms through humanitarian intervention may be a dangerous triumph of liberal-market democracy and global governance techniques that can be used to reorient and engineer societies towards Western values (Duffield, 2002; F. Fox, 2001), thereby suppressing and/or erasing alternative epistemologies (Igboin, 2011; Nkeshimana, 2007; Rwantabagu, 2010; Simpson, 1992).

These critiques are extended by scholars who highlight the universalizing rhetoric found in various humanitarian declarations and instruments. In particular, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) promotes a universalist ideal of childhood based on the Western values that underpin the humanitarian system (Bourdillon & Musvosvi, 2014; Chibanda, 2015). This concept is premised on the notion of an idealized, white, Euro-American, middle-class child in the Global North (Balagopalan, 2018; Holt & Holloway, 2006). As such, there has been much documentation of how this conceptualization of the 'universal child' and the 'ideal childhood' is highly incompatible with alternative value systems, community and familial structures, and the realistic lives of children in the Global South (Balagopalan, 2014; Bourdillon & Musvosvi, 2014; Monaghan, 2012). The perpetuation of the ideal universal child is also intertwined with discourses on 'global best practices' related to child rearing, education, and development (Delors, 1996; Monaghan, 2012; PIN, 2019; Richter, 2018; USAID, 2010; Walberg & Paik, 2000; WHO, 2020). By globalizing these 'universal best practices', the institutions that promote them retain epistemic control and power by being positioned as the intellectual and moral experts in these subject areas (Bryan, 2022; Elfert, 2018); thus positioning non-conforming groups, and their knowledge and practices, as deficit and/or wrong (Bian, 2022; Brun & Shuayb, 2023; Oddy, 2023).

This critical scholarship converges with classic discourses on refugees, which depict displaced communities, and children in particular, as helpless victims deficient in the skills, attitudes, and behaviors seemingly possessed by the universal child (Malkki, 1996; Rajaram, 2002). Rhetoric from the field of CIE, and its sub-field of EiE, builds upon these discourses by maintaining that conflict and displacement can result in toxic levels of stress, which can negatively affect physical and mental health and cognitive development, thus impacting a person's ability to learn and develop 'appropriately' (INEE, 2010; Shivshanker et al., 2021). This sentiment is often articulated alongside common portrayals of refugee children as deeply traumatized and lacking the skills and resources to manage the challenges of displacement and meet expectations of 'bouncing back' from adversity (UNESCO, 2019). Critics of these trauma narratives, deficit discourses, and resiliency rhetoric contend that they serve to ignore community knowledge, practices, and supports; justify external humanitarian invention; and position refugee children as at risk of deleterious life outcomes without such intervention (Bian, 2022; Shah, 2015, 2023).

Despite these critiques, humanitarian actors continue to target refugee children with a range of external interventions and skilling regimes (e.g. literacy & numeracy, life skills, gender-equality, empowerment activities) to address these perceived deficits, as they have done for the last several decades. Many of these interventions have been framed as transmitting a universally beneficial set of 'soft skills' (i.e. attitudes, behaviors, characteristics, competencies) required by all children for adequate learning and development, as well as to cope with adversity and trauma (UNESCO, 2019; UNICEF, 2019; WHO, 1999). Though, these interventions have been the subject of significant critique. For example, Urciuoli (2008) equates soft skills with Michel Foucault's (1988) "technologies of the self", arguing that they fashion individuals as compatible with dominant institutions, ideologies, and epistemologies. This work is extended by scholarship that conceptualizes these skilling regimes as mechanisms to regulate childhood by determining what a 'normal' vs. 'abnormal' childhood looks like. In doing so, they responsibilize children to overcome structural barriers that are the root causes of their perceived 'abnormal' childhoods and achieve an imaginary future of self-reliance aligned with notions of the universal child and Global North standards of 'success' (DeJaeghere, 2022; James & Prout, 1997;

Maithreyi, 2019; Shah et al., 2020). In doing so, these interventions contribute to processes of erasure by reshaping knowledge and practices related to child rearing, learning, and development, as well as children themselves—and their socio-cultural identities and ways of being—in the image of dominant institutions' 'universal' values and epistemologies.

How does SEL connect to all of this?

Contemporary SEL is a U.S.-centric pedagogy that aims to help students develop skills to manage their behaviors, emotions, and interactions with others in order to maximize their learning experiences and later-life outcomes (Elias et al., 2006). These skills broadly fall under the categories of self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, which make up the most commonly used SEL framework today developed by the Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). Today, SEL is embroiled in various debates related to race and equity in U.S. classrooms. Numerous scholars have demonstrated how most contemporary SEL approaches largely center white, Western, middle-class knowledge systems as superior to all others, and white Global North experiences as universal (D. M. Hoffman, 2009; Strong & McMain, 2020). By encouraging students to develop self-awareness, to self-manage, and to be resilient, SEL posits that children have the potential to close the achievement gap, go to college, achieve financial security, and live a successful life according to white, liberal standards (Dauphinais & Morvay, 2023). In so doing, SEL is used to frame the social conditioning of racially and socio-economically marginalized students and erase their 'undesirable' behaviors, cultures, and characteristics (Au et al., 2016).

Contemporary SEL developed as part of interventions targeting students labeled as 'at risk', which was code for Black and Brown young people and especially those living in poverty (Dalrymple & Phillips, forthcoming). As a result, SEL today positions mostly white educators as having the responsibility to correct, fix, and police behaviors associated with these groups (Hoffman, 2009; Kaler-Jones, 2020). Dauphinias & Morvay (2023) illustrate how this is a reflection of the white savior industrial complex, where predominately white researchers, administrators, and teachers impose their values on

Black and Brown communities and declare success when students adhere to these values. Indeed, various other critics have noted the racialized and paternalistic logics underpinning the popularity of SEL in the U.S. and have questioned the motives and equity implications of largely white adults focusing on conditioning, shifting, and engineering the social and emotional behaviors of marginalized children 'for their own good' (Ford, 2020; Love, 2019; Starr, 2019).

SEL is often depicted as a 'nice' and 'kind' form of classroom management, suited to a field dominated by 'nice' white women who see their work as apolitical and neutral, rather than political and rooted in the maintenance of white supremacy (Galman et al., 2010); not unlike the EiE sector. However, Gregory and Fergus (2017) demonstrate how prevailing colorblind notions of SEL that don't consider power, privilege, and culture difference, and ignore individual beliefs and structural biases, can lead educators to react harshly to behaviors that fall outside a white and Western-dominant cultural frame of reference. While promising work has been done to explore culturally-relevant, equity-based, justice-oriented, and indigenous forms of SEL (DeMartino et al., 2022; Schlund et al., 2020; Sun et al., 2022), critics like Simmons (2019) warn that if more attention isn't paid to the unintended consequences and risks of SEL, it will simply function as "white supremacy with a hug".

Despite this growing area of scholarship and critique, little of it—if any—features in the narrative of SEL as promoted through transnational policy flows. Key actors (e.g. OECD, UNESCO, World Bank) engaged in the transnational dissemination of SEL often hide behind universalizing rhetoric that positions all children globally as needing social and emotional competency in order to participate in global citizenship and contribute to the universal goals of humanity. For example, Bryan (2022) demonstrates how SEL is positioned by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as crucial to supporting not only the holistic development of children, but also as contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) agenda of promoting human rights, gender equality, cultural diversity, and a culture of peace. Correspondingly, SEL has become increasingly intertwined with the international human and child rights agendas as advocates maintain that 'effective' SEL is rights-based and is thus underpinned by—and should promote—the rights to education, healthy development,

play, and protection (UNESCO, 2020). While many transnational actors portray these goals and rights as unequivocally good for humanity, critiques demonstrate how the mechanisms by which they are pursued and their underlying assumptions are rooted in white, Western, neoliberal values that allow these actors to retain their epistemic control and power in the global governance landscape (Carney & Klerides, 2020; Elfert, 2018). Indeed, the transnational diffusion of SEL perpetuates a 'nice' and 'universally beneficial' narrative that is devoid of historical accounts and current implications of colonialism, imperialism, racism, and epistemicide (Arora-Jonsson, 2023; Laroche et al., 2023; McEachrane, 2019; UN, 2022b).

Such is the case with SEL's diffusion in the EiE community. In 2016 the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE))—the umbrella network for EiE practitioners, scholars, and advocates—released a paper that claimed SEL could "enhance academic achievement and attainment; improve school attendance, engagement, and motivation; reduce negative student behavior in schools and in the community, such as bullying, violence, and juvenile crime; benefit the mental health of staff and students by lowering stress, anxiety, and depression; improve health outcomes by reducing teenage pregnancies and drug abuse…" (INEE 2016, p. 12) for crisis-affected children. Nowhere in the 85-page document was there acknowledgement of the ways in which this research was conducted almost exclusively with 'at risk' minoritized populations in the U.S. Nor were any emerging critiques in the Global North about SEL being a problematic and racialized project mentioned. Rather, SEL was, and continues to be, promoted as an unmitigated 'global good' that can only benefit—not harm—refugee and crisis-affected children. Since then, nearly half a billion USD has been invested in SEL for refugee and crisis-affected learners (ECW, 2018, 2019, 2022; LEGO, 2018; Renau, 2022) and critical discourses in the EiE community about the imposition of SEL—and its role in processes of socio-cultural erasure—remain limited.

These concepts, debates, and discourses are revisited in each of the following chapters. In the first chapter, I build upon the concepts of epistemic control and power through a deep-dive reflection on the research process itself. In this chapter I interrogate guidance on knowledge co-production processes in humanitarian contexts and whether it is even possible to truly co-produce knowledge due to constraints of

who retains both epistemic control over, and every-day control throughout, the research process. In the second chapter, I connect and extend the above debates and discourses by demonstrating how the Nduta community perceives SEL as a racialized and neoliberal skilling regime, while in the third chapter I do so by revealing SEL's function as a form of neocolonial values imposition; in both instances highlighting perceived processes of socio-cultural erasure within the Nduta community, and SEL's role in these processes. In doing so, this dissertation utilizes SEL as a vehicle to apply critical discourse and analysis to, and encourage critical reflection of, larger practices and assumptions within EiE work, and humanitarian intervention more broadly. The following section describes the contextual background of the Nduta camp and why it is a germaine context to examine SEL in humanitarian practice.

A note about Ubuntu

This dissertation identifies several issues between the individualistic nature of humanitarian SEL programming and the relational and collectivist nature of the Burundian refugee community in Tanzania. This relational and collectivist culture and ontology is not unique to Burundi, but is often applied to the African continent and societies writ large under the concept of 'ubuntu'. While ubuntu has many meanings and applications across African cultures and languages, and cannot be pinned down to have originated at a particular point in human history, there is general consensus among scholars that it originated among African (Bantu) people as part and parcel of their cosmology and ontology (Makalela, 2018; Murove, 2012; Venter, 2004).

The ubuntu concept was popularized by Desmond Tutu during South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Drawing on the Nguni proverb, *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (a person is a person through other people), Tutu used it to illustrate interconnectedness, interdependence, and co-agency (Ogude & Dyer, 2019) and today ubuntu is often referred to as a relational ethic, philosophy, ontology, and the essence of humanity (Ahiauzu, 2011). Indeed, Murove (2012) highlights ubuntu's relationship with the concept of humanity by asserting that " Ubuntu means humanness – treating other people with kindness, compassion, respect and care… Hence, failure to act humanely towards other

people is thus considered as a lack of humanness or lack of Ubuntu. This follows that someone who lacked Ubuntu could not be considered as a human being" (p. 37).

Since its popularization by Tutu, ubuntu has been applied to a variety of issues across the African continent and globally, such as: the reimagining of the political project and fostering of reconciliation in post-apartheid South Africa (Molefe & Magam, 2019; Shutte, 2001; Tutu, 1999); to reconceptualize management theory (Lutz, 2009); to address global sustainability (Le Grange, 2012); and to nuance African educational discourse (Venter, 2004). Ubuntu has also been positioned as a moral theory (Metz, 2007) and has been widely regarded as a set of values and characteristics that individuals can learn and embody. Burundian scholar, Ildephonse Horicubonye (2019), describes ubuntu as a constellation of value claims and moral normative requirements; the potential for being human and thus valuing the good of the community above self-interest; and striving to help people in the spirit of service, showing respect to others, and being honest and trustworthy. Similarly, South African scholar Elza Venter (2004), maintains that individuals possessing ubuntu have the characteristics of being caring, humble, thoughtful, considerate, understanding, wise, generous, hospitable, socially mature, socially sensitive, and virtuous.

However, many scholars have documented how slavery, colonialism, and the specter of authoritarian control and economic deprivation in the postcolonial context have and continue to undermine the core values of ubuntu (Murove, 2012; Nkeshimana, 2007; Ogude & Dyer, 2019; Rwantabagu, 2010). Various African scholars have highlighted the reification and stereotyping of ubuntu, the commodification of ubuntu by a "Black capitalism" bourgeois agenda, and how ubuntu discourses are often conducted in sporadic unstructured, naive and dangerous ways (Fagunwa, 2019; Maluleke, 1999; Mangharam, 2011; McDonald, 2010; Stuit, 2016). Similarly, Molefe (2017) demonstrates how the scholarship on African ethics and ubuntu as a moral theory has been dominated by white non-African scholars, and particularly Thaddeus Metz (2007, 2010, 2011, 2012), who reify ubuntu and African morality as simply relating with others positively. Molefe (2019) conversely argues that a relationship-based account of ubuntu is implausible and instead puts forth the notion that ubuntu is preoccupied with the moral potential of the human being, and that to be called a person is to be morally praised for

converting raw moral potential of our human nature to an embodiment of a sound character or moral excellence. It is this conceptual framing that informs my thinking on ubuntu in this dissertation.

Finally, it is important to note that the findings in this dissertation that relate to ubuntu were not derived by any assumptions about the general application or relevance of ubuntu to Burundian culture due to its location on the African continent. Rather, ubuntu was identified by my research partner—a Burundian resident of the Nduta refugee camp—as an essential element of the traditional Burundian moral order and foundation of the Burundian concept of *ubushingantahe*, discussed in detail in chapter three, and amplified by various Burundian scholars and philosophers (Kagabo, 1994; Kayoya, 1971; Manirakiza, 2020; Nkeshimana, 2007; Rwantabagu, 2010).

Contextual Background

Conflict in Burundi

Like other countries in the Great Lakes Region of East Africa, Burundi has endured decades of violent conflict, including multiple genocides and a 12-year civil war (Nkurunziza, 2018). These conflicts were fueled by a variety of issues, including ethnic conflict between the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups. From the 1970s to the 1990s, the majority of refugees who sought safety in neighboring countries were from the Hutu tribe (Schwartz, 2019). In 2015, the incumbent president, Pierre Nkurunziza, unconstitutionally declared he would seek a third term in office, sparking violent protests and a failed coup d'état. These actions plunged Burundi into chaos as opposition leaders fled the country, suspected government turncoats were assassinated, and the violent, militarized youth wing of the ruling party—the Imbonerakure—raided the countryside, brutally torturing and killing hundreds along the way (HRW, 2017). During this time, more than 400,000 people fled Burundi, seeking refuge in neighboring countries (UNHCR, 2018). Many individuals have repatriated to Burundi over the years, though just over 131,000 Burundian refugees currently remain in Tanzania (UNHCR, 2024b).

Due to the cyclical violence in Burundi since the 1970s, most of these individuals have experienced multiple displacements throughout their lives, with many having been born as refugees in

Tanzania, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Those who fled the 2015 violence did so for two key reasons: 1) they were former returned Hutu refugees who were facing violent and interminable land disputes and used the political violence as a reason to receive humanitarian support in Tanzania, and 2) they were either Hutu or Tutsi individuals who opposed the government and received violent threats, forcing them to flee (Schwartz, 2019). As a result, while the majority of remaining Burundian refugees in Tanzania are part of the Hutu ethnic group, the Nduta refugee community consists of both Hutu and Tutsi individuals.

The refugee response in Tanzania

Tanzania has been a consistent refuge for individuals fleeing violence from neighboring countries for decades. Since 1996, Tanzania has hosted a large Congolese refugee population in the Nyarugusu camp, which is run by UNHCR, with oversight from the Tanzanian government, and serviced by local and international humanitarian agencies (UNHCR, 2017b). When Burundians began crossing into Tanzania in 2015, they were first placed in Nyarugusu. Though, as it became clear that more individuals would arrive than the camp could accommodate, the Nduta and Mtendeli camps were opened in the Kibondo and Kakonko districts respectively. Both a 20-minute drive from Kibondo town, these camps have existed for decades, opening and closing under various monikers with the cyclical influx of refugees since the 1970s (UNHCR, 2008).

Over the last three decades, Tanzania has taken an increasingly hostile stance towards hosting refugees (Milner, 2012). For instance, the government has employed strict encampment policies since the 1990s, only allowing refugees to exit their camp for medical, asylum/relocation, or specially approved reasons. The government has also committed refoulment several times, having closed camps and forced thousands of Rwanda refugees to return ‘home’ in 1996 and over 38,000 Burundians to return ‘home’ in 2012 under military threat (Boeyink & Schwartz, 2023; HRW, 2019; Rueters, 1996). In an effort to encourage ‘voluntary’ repatriation, the Tanzanian government most recently closed the Mtendeli camp in December 2021 and consolidated all Burundians in the Nduta camp. In March 2024, the government held

meetings with the Nduta community to again encourage ‘voluntary’ repatriation and inform them that the government would be systematically shutting down humanitarian services in the following months.

Both the Nyarugusu and the Nduta camps are governed by the Tanzanian Ministry of Home Affairs, which has appointed regional refugee management officers based in the town of Kigoma, as well as individual Camp Commandants based in Nyarugusu and Nduta. While these government workers retain de facto power and approval over all refugee policies and services, the Tanzanian government has provided no financial or technical humanitarian assistance. All services in the camps (i.e. food, water, shelter, education, protection) are supported and coordinated by UNHCR. This includes providing funding to mandated humanitarian partners dedicated as sector leads. For example, Oxfam was previously dedicated as the water, sanitation, and health (WASH) partner, Plan was the protection sector lead, and currently the International Rescue Committee (IRC) is the mandated education partner. While the lead partner agency per sector has changed hands over the years, other local and international agencies have obtained funding from bilateral and multilateral donors to supplement services. When I arrived in 2017, twenty-six UN agencies and humanitarian NGOs were involved (see Appendices 2 & 3), regularly engaging in various coordination working groups on the collective refugee response (UNHCR, 2017a). All agencies engaged in the response must obtain government approval to operate in Tanzania, while all humanitarian activities require stamps of approval from both the Tanzanian Ministry of Home Affairs and UNHCR.

While most humanitarian agencies in the refugee response employed Tanzanian nationals at the time, a variety of international staff members—like me—hailed from the East Africa region, as well as North America, Europe, the Middle East, South Asia, and Austral-Asia and occupied mostly leadership (i.e. Head of Office, Emergency Response Manager) and technical advisor positions. Though, the current number of international staff working in Kibondo has significantly decreased as the government has denied visas and work permits as part of its recent efforts to shut down the refugee response. Congolese and Burundian camp residents were, and continue to be, employed by humanitarian agencies as translators, enumerators, activity facilitators, teachers, nurses, etc. While they are compensated small

monthly or daily salaries (e.g. $15-25 USD/month or $3.50 USD/day), all decision-making power related to camp activities and operations lies with the humanitarian agencies and Tanzanian government.

The Nduta refugee camp

This study engaged residents living in the Nduta camp, where over 72,000 Burundian refugees lived at the time.[5] Residents of Nduta generally speak Kirundi—the mother tongue of Burundi—and many individuals also speak Kiswahili—the lingua franca of East Africa. While much of the older generation has limited educational achievement and come from largely rural agrarian backgrounds, younger and more educated community members who have completed their secondary schooling also speak French and some English.[6] Those falling into the latter category comprise an array of professions (e.g. medical personnel, educators, engineers, lawyers, politicians, artists, musicians, activists, etc.) and come from varying urban and rural locations across Burundi.

As mentioned previously, while the majority of individuals living in Nduta are part of the Hutu ethnic group, the Nduta camp hosts both Hutu and Tutsi individuals. During my time in the Nduta camp as both a humanitarian aid worker and researcher, I did not observe any tensions between these groups. Rather, I observed numerous peacebuilding and social cohesion activities with goals of conflict prevention, as well as many community events (i.e. musical, dance, and drama performances; speeches; educational presentations)—particularly during Burundian, Tanzanian, and international holidays—that promoted pride for a general Burundian identity. While the lack of ethnic tension and intense promotion of social cohesion in camp was corroborated by Elisha—my research partner and an Nduta community member—it is also important to recognize a wealth of research documenting the shifting socio-cultural-mythico-historical-political identities of Burundian refugees in Tanzania over time (LeMarchand, 1995; Malkki, 1995; Sommers, 2001; Waters, 2003).

[5] Currently, just under 65,000 are living in Nduta (UNHCR, 2024).
[6] In Burundi, Kirundi is the medium of instruction in primary schools, while French is the medium of instruction in secondary schools.

Conditions in the Nduta camp have been described as dire for the better part of a decade. Whole families squeeze into one-room dwellings constructed from a combination of branches, mud bricks, corrugated iron, and UNHCR tarps; food rations are only half of what individuals need to survive; and risks of communicable diseases are high (MSF, 2023; WFP, 2023). In the dry season, red dust lingers in the air, settles on every surface, and brings forth chronic respiratory infections for many. In the rainy season, constant dampness and hygiene difficulties amplify health problems. Reports of imprisonment, torture, and death upon returning to Burundi have spread fear across the Nduta community, preventing many from repatriating. This fear is compounded by rumors of political agents infiltrating the camp and reporting back to the Burundian government about its dissidents.

NGOs, UN agencies, and bilateral and multi-lateral donors have supported education activities in the Nduta camp since 2015, which have taken place in a variety of CFSs, youth centers, community spaces, and twelve formal primary schools and one formal secondary school. Despite UNHCR's policy recommendation to integrate refugee children into host-country education systems (UNHCR, 2019), children in Nduta are forcibly subjected to substandard education in the camp. Out-of-date Burundian curricula materials are used by Burundian refugee teachers and administrators to educate pre-primary through secondary school students. While most teachers and administrators have received prior certification in Burundi and/or training from NGOs in pedagogy, lesson planning, and classroom management, academic achievement among students in Nduta is low, school drop-out remains high, and the quality of education in the camps has been described as poor by both NGO workers and refugee teachers and parents (Dalrymple, 2018). Teachers and students in Nduta contend with high teacher-student ratios, extremely overcrowded classrooms that are in serious disrepair, a severe lack of teaching and learning materials, and limited opportunities for higher educational advancement. Refugee teachers and administrators are grievously underpaid and student achievements, test scores, and educational certificates are disregarded upon return to Burundi, denigrating the value of education in the eyes of many Nduta community members. This is compounded by limited opportunities of higher education for secondary school graduates who must rely on the few and highly competitive humanitarian scholarships

offered each year through the Mastercard Foundation (2024), the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) (UNHCR, 2024a), and the World University Service of Canada Program (WUSC, 2024).

Several initiatives have aimed to improve the education system and academic achievement of learners in Nduta over the years. In addition to the delivery of a variety of teacher and administrator trainings, these have included the introduction of ICT materials (i.e. tablets, smartphones, Ideas Boxes[7]); remedial, catch-up, and accelerated learning activities; the mainstreaming of gender-equality, child protection, and inclusion; and most recently the introduction of play-based pedagogies and SEL. Educational NGOs introduced formalized SEL to the camp in 2017, targeting children at the pre-primary and primary levels. This has mainly included teacher trainings and the distribution of teacher manuals, aligned with the CASEL framework, provided by Save the Children, Plan International, and the IRC. Formal classroom methodologies include: games, songs, storytelling, mindfulness, emotional check-ins, and explicit skill-building and practice (i.e. group/pair work, conflict-resolution role plays, and naming feelings and emotions). While most of these materials have been translated and cursorily contextualized, they are mostly based on core content and approaches generated in Europe and North America.

While rationale from the Tanzanian government remains unclear, over the last two years the Tanzanian authorities have enacted various policies in the camp to make the living situation even more adverse in order to pressure community members to repatriate to Burundi. This includes banning the practice of small-scale farming, which community members have done since 2015 to supplement their inadequate food supply. It also includes the closing of all markets and small business in the camp, as well as disallowing the use of bicycles to traverse the expansive terrain of Nduta, making the collection of firewood, water, and other resources more strenuous and dangerous. The government has also cracked down on material goods that NGOs can bring into the camp and, as of March 2024, has begun the systematic closing of schools and educational activities in Nduta. Despite appeals from humanitarian

[7] A mobile ‘pop up’ multimedia center and learning hub developed by Libraries Without Borders.

agencies for the Tanzanian government to continue hosting Burundian refugees, and consistent reports of violence against refugee returnees in Burundi, numerous Nduta community members feel that refoulment is likely by the end of 2024 (Boeyink & Schwartz, 2023).

Methods

Research design

The nuances of SEL programming and its functions require long-term, extensive, and qualitative examination (Grant et al. 2023). Thus, drawing on the longstanding tradition of anthropology and refugee studies scholars (Agier, 2011; Feldman, 2018; Gilad, 1988; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Lubkemann, 2008; Malkki, 1995; Redfield, 2013; Turner, 2001), I employed an ethnographic research design. Though, as the Nduta community has experienced consistent extractive research practices, I opted for a more participatory and engaging methodology. Thus, rather than following the tradition of the 'lone ranger/researcher' model as many ethnographers have done (Bressler et al., 1996; Douglas, 1976), I utilized a team ethnography approach by working closely with a member of the Nduta community. While I present the details of this individual and our working relationship further below, team ethnography has become an increasingly popular and accepted methodology in the social sciences (Erickson & Stull, 1998). Numerous scholars have documented the benefits of such a model maintaining that it can enable a wider and deeper coverage of work, a broader comparative base, and multiple researcher triangulation (Woods et al., 2010). Wasser and Bressler (1996, p. 7) argue that this collaborative approach takes place within the 'interpretive zone', defined as "the crucible where researchers sift, sort, and consider the meaning of fieldwork." Thus, each team member brings a different voice, set of identities, experiences, knowledge, and beliefs to the interpretive zone, and from that diversity the team must strive to collaboratively produce knowledge, derive new understandings, and engage in collective sense-making (Scales et al., 2008). While numerous challenges of this methodology have also been documented (Jarzabkowski et al., 2015), the issue of 'separate and together' in data collection has been flagged in recognition of the myriad issues that separate data collection across research team members in team

ethnography can raise (i.e. data quality, capture, consistency, communication, organization, interpretation, etc.). To address these issues, Scales et al. (2008) identify the needs to establish diversity and trust across research teams, embracing and addressing conflict and contradiction in the interpretive zone, and eventually establishing consensus, all of which I aimed to navigate with my research partner.

Recognizing the need to have long-term access to the Nduta community, I was hosted by my previous employer Plan International (Plan). Plan facilitated my travel to and from the Nduta camp and supported me to recruit my research partner, Elisha. In return, I generated a report of my preliminary research findings to help inform their educational programming in the camp. To conduct my research, I obtained IRB clearance from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, as well as Plan. To specifically conduct my research in Tanzania, I needed to obtain a research permit from the Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology. To obtain this permit, I was required to be hosted by a Tanzanian research institution. As such, the Dar es Salaam University College of Education (DUCE)—part of the larger University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM)—agreed to host me as a Research Associate for the duration of my time in Tanzania. This affiliation allowed me to not only obtain my research permit, but also my initial student visa and subsequent residency permit. DUCE and UDSM staff also helped me to obtain my refugee camp entry permit from the Tanzanian Ministry of Home Affairs. In return, I provided feedback on DUCE student papers and delivered lectures on Qualitative Research Methods and Academic Writing to students and staff. Finally, to fund my research, I was granted a Fulbright Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Award from the United States Department of Education.

Knowledge co-production

Extensive research has been conducted with the Nduta community for years in the name of improving humanitarian services and systems. Since the reopening of the camp in 2015, community members have been subjected to multi-sector needs assessments (Education Working Group, 2018), thematic research studies (IRC, 2022a), and routine monitoring and evaluation activities. Interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), surveys, and student assessments are commonplace in Nduta. However,

while much of this work is done with the aim of creating positive change, the Nduta community has seen little benefit from participating in research as the status quo of their displacement continues. Additionally, these activities have caused research-fatigue by routinely requesting precious time from individuals that could be spent on activities required for their daily survival and wellbeing (e.g. fetching water and firewood, collecting food rations, participating in community meetings).

As mentioned above, in order to not reproduce these extractive research practices I utilized a team ethnography approach, which draws from feminist theory (Kassan et al., 2020; Mingot & González, 2023) and maintains that meaning is multiple, fluid, and contestable, which provides entrée for a team of researchers to conduct ethnography collaboratively in order to reach a richer collective understanding (Creese et al., 2008; Scales et al., 2008). To compliment this methodology, I also applied a knowledge co-production (KCP) approach. Originating from the work of Elinor Ostrom in the 1970s, 'co-production' grew out of the recognition that more horizontal partnerships between the public sector and communities were needed to improve the delivery of goods and services (Ostrom, 1996). Over the past few decades, the idea of 'co-production' has been increasingly associated with the goal of addressing power hierarchies in research and knowledge production and has been taken up by scholars in various disciplines and philosophies of science (Zurba et al., 2022).

The methodology of KCP is deeply rooted in feminist and decolonial principles (e.g. reflexivity, reciprocity, ethics of care, situated knowledge, situated ethics). Scholars at the crossroads of these disciplines are deeply committed to equality and social justice and maintain that developing knowledge collaboratively can help to restore equality among the different ways of knowing the world (Fonow & Cook, 1991; Maynard & Purvis, 1994). The value of KCP thus stems from the role it plays in building mutually-agreed-upon knowledge (Caretta, 2015), and from its potential as an emancipatory process (Collins, 1991; Cook & Fonow, 1990). Working to ensure that a plurality of voices and the realities of marginalized groups are the driving forces behind the research process helps researchers move away from extractive practices that perpetuate an oppressive status quo (Chilisa, 2020; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999).

I drew on these feminist and decolonial principles, as well as recent guidance on conducting collaborative research in refugee contexts (Lokot & Wake, 2021). I aimed to follow a series of steps to successfully execute a KCP process, which included: recruiting a local research team member and working together to set the research agenda and engage in data collection; regularly checking in about power dynamics throughout the research process; and conducting co-validation exercises with study participants. These steps were guided by key principles found in most KCP frameworks such as: shared decision-making, flexible methodologies, establishing trusting and respectful relationships, and reciprocity.

To apply these strategies, I first recruited a research team member from the Nduta community. This process involved working with Plan staff to identify candidates in the camp based on their knowledge and understanding of the community; ability to translate between English, Kirundi, Kiswahili, and French (as I only speak English and a low-intermediate level of Kiswahili); and their availability. The selected individual was Elisha, a 21-year-old male resident of the Nduta Camp who had recently completed secondary school with the goal of one day earning a bachelor's degree in mathematics. Elisha was hired based on the above elements, and also due to his interest in the research topic; his curiosity and excitement to learn and engage in research activities; and his strong commitment to improving the circumstance of his community. While much guidance on KCP supposes the inclusion of multiple research team members, I only had enough research funds to compensate one.

Next, I met with Elisha to introduce him to the proposed research topic, methods, and schedule of data collection, as well as to negotiate the terms of his compensation. In this meeting, I described the concept of KCP and expressed my desire for Elisha to fully participate in the research process and regularly engage in dialogues about his experience, power dynamics, and positionality. Upon Elisha's acceptance of this proposal, we moved on to setting the research agenda. Together we revised central research questions, developed interview protocols, determined a sampling strategy, designed a data collection schedule, and recruited study participants.

Data collection

Elisha and I collected data from October 2022 to July 2023 and engaged 199 individuals total. While SEL was taking place in multiple learning spaces across the camp, we selected three primary schools and five CFSs targeted by a recently-launched NGO education program with a significant SEL component. We conducted nearly 150 hours of observation, which included observing teacher trainings, classroom instruction, student recreational activities, community meetings, distribution activities, and NGO meetings. Over 140 documents were collected and analyzed, including teacher training manuals, curriculum materials, policy briefs, and project monitoring data. We conducted in-depth structured interviews with 149 members of the Nduta community[8] and 16 individuals working for NGOs delivering SEL programming in the camp. We used a stratified-purposive sampling strategy[9] to ensure the inclusion of various stakeholder groups in order to explore diverse perceptions and experiences across the wider Nduta community. Interview protocols were used for each stakeholder group and freeform notes were taken during observations. Additionally, notes on unstructured and informal discussions with community members and NGO staff were also collected.

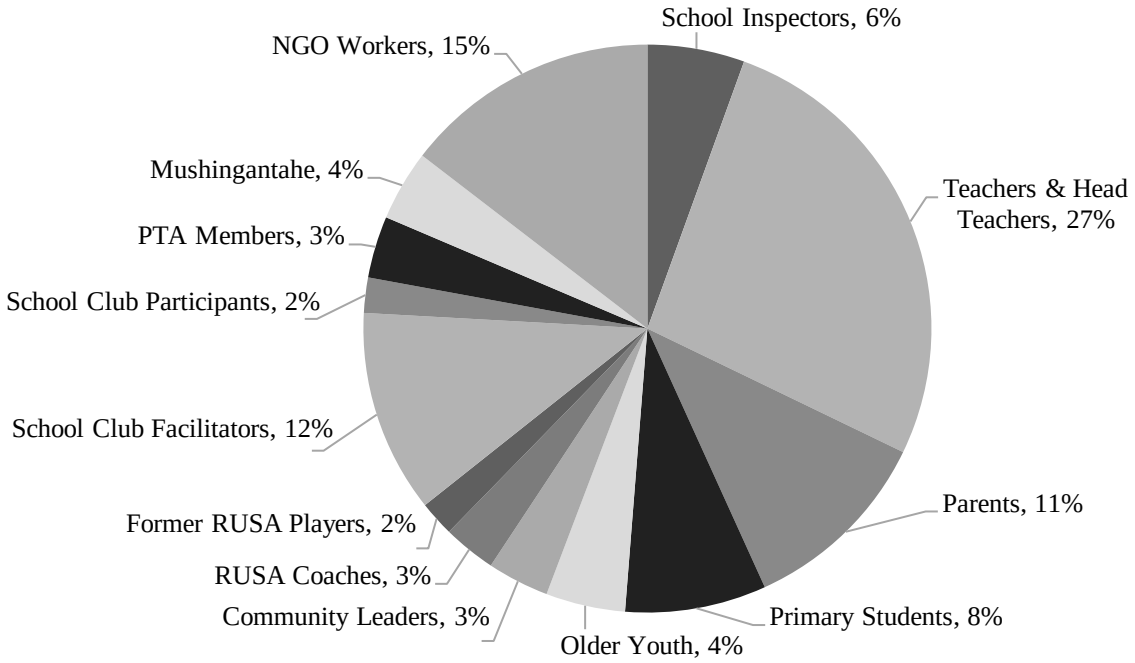
It should be noted that multiple programs with SEL components were being delivered in the Nduta camp by various NGOs. As such, we collected and reviewed training, curricula, and teaching and learning materials, and interviewed NGO staff working, across these programs. While observations focused mainly on the implementation of the most recent SEL program in the locations noted above, we were able to observe the compound effects of the convergence of many of these programs as teachers and facilitators have been the targets of multiple SEL interventions over the last seven years.

[8] Stakeholders included: teachers, headteachers, school inspectors, primary school students, out-of-school youth, school club facilitators and student participants, recreational programming facilitators and child participants, parents, community leaders, and community elders (Mushingantahe).

[9] Purposive sampling involves identifying and selecting individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with the phenomenon of interest, while stratified sampling involves dividing research subjects into subgroups called strata based on characteristics that they share (e.g., race, gender, educational attainment) (Creswell, 2009).

Chart 1

Breakdown of Total Study Participants Engaged



Interview protocols were used for each stakeholder group and freeform notes were taken during observations. Interview protocols (see Appendix 4) included questions related to: the kinds of skills, competencies, and values community members expected children to learn, as well as where, how, and why; traditional practices related child development and learning; thoughts about NGO education activities in Nduta; and ideas about the futures of children in the camp. Depending on the depth of responses, Elisha and I regularly probed for further detail and explanation. After interviews and observations, Elisha and I often discussed, and recorded in field notes, emerging ideas and information we wanted to capture for memory and later analysis. Throughout data collection, Elisha and I drafted both personal and research-specific memos to help document our personal journeys and experiences through the research process, as well as to think through key themes, ideas, and connections as they emerged throughout data collection. We then shared our memos with each other and debriefed about them in routine meetings.

All study participants provided their verbal consent and participated in interviews in the language of their choice (i.e. English, French, Kiswahili, or Kirundi). Almost all interviews were conducted in person (three were conducted via MS Teams) in the Nduta camp and the nearby town of Kibondo, and were audio recorded, transcribed, and lasted between 20 to 90 minutes. In most instances, interviews were verbally translated into English by Elisha in real time, though some translation happened at the time of transcription.

Over this 10-month period, Elisha and I met weekly, and often daily, to coordinate and conduct data collection, share and manage data, revise interview protocols, and check-in about our experiences in the research process. We regularly drafted memos about our perceptions and experiences and discussed how the issues of gender, age, race, and my previous work with the Nduta community as an NGO worker might be influencing the research process. Before I left Tanzania, I conducted an in-depth interview with Elisha about his experience participating in the study and his thoughts about the KCP process. Lastly, we developed a plan for continued communication (and compensation for Elisha) to further analyze study data and draft findings for publication.

Table 1

Breakdown of Data Collection Workload

Team Members	Interviews	Observations	FGDs	Document Review
Kelsey & Elisha Together	65%	40%	0%	25%
Kelsey (alone)	10%	15%	0%	70%
Elisha (alone)	25%	45%	100%	5%

Data analysis

I regard qualitative data analysis as an iterative process that is not a repetitive mechanical task, but rather a reflexive process that is key to sparking insight and developing meaning (Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009). As part of the KCP approach, before I left Tanzania Elisha and I conducted two rounds of preliminary inductive data analysis and six co-validation focus group discussions (FGDs) with research

participants. As I was unable to install any qualitative data analysis software on Elisha's computer due to licensing issues and fees, we conducted all data analysis in MS Word documents and hand-written notes[10] that we were able to share via e-mail, Apple airdrop, WhatsApp, and Google Drive.

To take advantage of our time together, in May 2023 Elisha and I independently reviewed interview transcripts, observation notes, field notes, and memos and generated key themes. We then compared our independent analyses and generated a combined set of key themes. The first round of themes included: values & skills prioritized by the community; how prioritized skills and values are taught and learned; main aims of teaching children certain skills and values; and influence of NGO programming on these prioritizations and processes. After the collection of additional data, we repeated the process in June 2023 to see if we identified additional themes. Upon comparison, we revised our key themes to include additional themes and sub-themes of: corporal punishment, play-based pedagogies, culture, race, social norms, future expectations, and financial security.

We then shared these preliminary findings with 79 study participants through six voluntary co-validation FGDs. The FGDs were conducted by Elisha without me present in an effort to ensure maximum comfort of participants to share their genuine thoughts and feelings about our analysis. Each FGD was audio recorded by Elisha. He then generated transcripts in English to share with me. When debriefing about the FGDs, Elisha and I were able to confirm that our analysis was accurate and reflective of Nduta community perceptions and experiences. In an effort to ensure the following dissertation chapters continued to be reflective of the Nduta community, I shared numerous drafts with Elisha for his initial input. Upon revising the drafts, I sent them back to Elisha whereby he facilitated voluntary meetings to share the drafts with study participants for their review and input, which guided further revisions. Finally, I generated a simplified briefer document (Appendix 5) at the request of the Nduta community, which Elisha translated and circulated throughout the community, to answer questions about this dissertation, its key findings, and potential outcomes of the research. Throughout these processes, all

[10] Elisha would often draft ideas and thoughts in handwritten notes. He would then take photos of these notes with his phone and then send them to me via the mechanisms noted above.

identifying information in interview notes, transcripts, and observations were coded and kept in separate files to ensure study-participant privacy and protection, and all names mentioned in the following chapters are pseudonyms.

Critical KCP analysis

Throughout data analysis I recognized the rich opportunity to conduct specific analysis on the KCP process. I postulated the following questions to guide this analysis: what worked and did not work in the endeavor to follow prescriptive methodological KCP guidance? and was knowledge actually co-produced?

Upon returning to the U.S., I reviewed interview and FGD transcripts, field notes, observation notes, memos, and the transcript from the final interview between myself and Elisha and inductively coded them in Word documents that I was able to share with Elisha. During analysis, I paid attention to not only what individuals—including myself and Elisha—said or noted, but how they engaged with and responded to each other, as well as self-reflected, about the research process and past research experiences. Upon generating key themes related to affective, relational, resource, and decision-making control, I revisited my graduate course syllabi and materials, and reflected upon my time as a teacher and humanitarian aid worker, to examine how my academic training and professional experiences also influenced the KCP process. I then shared the initial findings with Elisha for his review and inputs. Upon further discussion, Elisha and I developed a framing for the findings and I drafted the following chapter with further edits and inputs from both Elisha and study participants. Throughout this process, we were able to again reflect on our own journeys through the KCP process and ascertain if we had in fact succeeded in co-producing knowledge.

Ethical Implications

Issues of consent, privacy/protection, and ethical approvals have been described above and are also detailed in the following chapters, as are efforts to ensure study participants retained agency and

control in the research process through co-validation FGDs and reviewing and inputting into the following chapters. Though, it is also important to attend to the ethical issues of reciprocity and care, key aspects of KCP and feminist and decolonial research (Edwards & Mauthner, 2012; Noddings, 1984; Staffa et al., 2022; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). Surprisingly, most KCP frameworks omit the issue of compensation for participation. Therefore, as I was short on research funds and did not want to unduly influence study participants (MacKay, 2022), I had not originally budgeted for participant renumeration. Though, as the study progressed, Elisha and I recognized that this was a key constraint affecting study participants' buy-in to the research and perceptions of our appreciation of their time and knowledge.

In response, prior to leaving Tanzania, Elisha and I dispersed a small amount of funds to each study participant as a token of our gratitude for their participation, which was received positively. In an effort to maintain long-term reciprocity and care, upon leaving Tanzania I raised funds among family, friends, and colleagues to again disperse among study participants during the 2023 end-of-year holiday period.[11] Additionally, in early 2024 I received an award from the Society for Applied Anthropology for Chapter 1 of this dissertation. As part of the reward, I received $3,000 USD. Recognizing that I would not have won the award without the engagement of the study participants, I again sent these funds to Elisha to be dispersed throughout the community. Throughout these processes, Elisha and I remained in consistent contact and I continued to compensate him for his engagement, which included both monetary compensation and regular check-in calls whereby I provided personal and professional development support.

In aiming to establish ongoing reciprocity and care, I have maintained a long-term relationship with the Nduta community by making myself available through social media platforms and e-mail for study participants to share their experiences and concerns with me about their displacement. I have reflected these experiences and concerns in the following chapters (and will do so in subsequent

[11] These funds were sent via Western Union to a Tanzanian colleague and NGO staff member in Kibondo, who then took the money to the Nduta camp and together with Elisha inconspicuously dispersed the funds among the research participants. All efforts were taken to maintain the protection of Elisha during this process.

publications) and have shared them in professional fora to ensure they and their situation will not be forgotten in the midst of the ever-growing global refugee crisis.

Limitations

While I detail study limitations in the following chapters, it is important to highlight four in the forefront. First, while I aimed to engage a wide range of stakeholders in the microcosm of the Nduta refugee camp (e.g. across ages, genders, positionalities, professions, etc.), it must be acknowledged that the study participants only make up a small slice of the larger Nduta community. Although I may have technically reached data saturation, based on the notion of reaching a point of "hearing the same comments again and again" (Saunders et al., 2018), I recognize that study findings are not homogeneously reflective of every member of the Nduta community. Similarly, I do not maintain that these findings are generalizable or should be applied to other refugee communities globally, but rather serve to showcase the roles, functions, and perceptions of SEL in this specific context.

Second, time was a key constraint. Based on the limited availability of study participants—due to competing priorities (e.g. household chores, attending community meetings, work requirements, etc.)—interviews ranged from as short as 15 minutes to as long as 90 minutes and in-depth engagement with individuals was kept to a minimum to respect personal schedules. While I had intended to conduct follow-up interviews and ensure repetitive engagement with some study participants, the study timeline and availability of study participants did not allow for this. I had originally intended to spend a minimum of 12 months with the Nduta community. Though, because of personal reasons and rising hostilities of the Tanzanian government towards international individuals working in Kibondo and the Nduta camp, I was only able to spend 10 months with the community.

Third, due to security protocols put in place by UNHCR and the Tanzanian authorities, I was required to ride in NGO-branded cars and wear NGO-branded visibility gear (i.e. ID badge, vest, t-shirts). Additionally, these protocols, and my IRB scope, required me to stay in certain designated areas (i.e. schools, CFSs, NGO offices), which meant I was not able to readily explore the community at large. This

resulted in me not being able to view or observe home spaces and family interactions, or other community events and interactions, for which I had to rely on Elisha.

Fourth, these security protocols and my affiliation with Plan resulted in issues of trust and social desirability bias. Throughout data collection, it became clear that despite telling study participants I was not employed by Plan, but was rather a student conducting academic research, most believed this was a lie and that I was secretly collecting information to share with Plan and other NGOs. This resulted in social desirability bias, or study participants simply saying what they thought I wanted to hear rather than their genuine thoughts and opinions. This recognition led to me stepping away from direct data collection and validation exercises and Elisha taking the lead on his own. This process and experience are detailed further in the following chapter.

Chapters Overview

Increasingly, the field of CIE, and its sub-field of EiE, have begun to seriously problematize their racial, colonial, and imperial roots and the corresponding implications they have for scholarship and practice today (Brun & Shuayb, 2023; Menashy & Zakharia, 2022; Novelli, 2019; Novelli & Kutan, 2023; Oddy, 2023; Shah et al., 2023; Silova et al., 2017; Takayama et al., 2017; Walker et al., 2021). This dissertation aims to contribute to and extend these dialogues by highlighting the lack of critical reflection on the rapid uptake of humanitarian initiatives like SEL, the positioning of them as universally good and necessary for all children globally, and their role in perpetuating deficit discourses and the promulgation of Western values and epistemologies. In illuminating SEL's role in processes of socio-cultural erasure, the following chapters aim to spark further debate around the larger complicities of the fields of CIE and EiE in the epistemic control and domination of crisis-affected communities and the research methods employed to examine them and these processes.

There are three empirical chapters that comprise this dissertation, which can be read and understood independently. In the first chapter, I offer critical reflections on attempting to navigate a KCP process in this study. I interrogate the prescriptive and procedural guidance targeting researchers who aim

to utilize collaborative and participatory methods in refugee contexts and present a nuanced understanding of the inherent challenges and complexities in endeavoring to follow this guidance. I raise concerns about the growing prevalence of institutionalized guidance on knowledge co-production; a hyper-focus on power and a lack of consideration of control among researchers and guiding institutions; and the limited acknowledgement of alternative epistemic conceptualizations of collaborative knowledge production. In this chapter, I advocate for researchers in the fields of applied anthropology, refugee studies, and CIE to seek out and generate more nuanced methodological guidance that prioritizes relational and situated ethics, and to recognize the control regimes produced by the Western academy and Global North institutions that shape and influence relations of power throughout research processes.

In the second chapter, I explore the Nduta community's experiences and responses to humanitarian SEL programming and demonstrate how they perceive such programming as a racialized and neoliberal project. I show how approaches to SEL—rooted in an individualistic and neoliberal orientation—clash with the collectivist nature of the Nduta community and enact perceived socio-cultural erasure. I also illustrate how the EiE community promotes SEL as imperative to 'saving' young, vulnerable refugee children from a 'bleak and hopeless' future. In doing so, I highlight how trauma narratives, deficit discourses, and resiliency rhetoric render skilling regimes like SEL critical to constructing 'normal', adaptable, and desirable childhoods aligned with Western values and neoliberal rationality. Finally, I demonstrate how such programming responsibilizes individuals in displacement to cope with and overcome their adversity and strive for a 'better' future in the image of 'modern', white-dominant, Global North societies. By linking critical discourses on SEL in the U.S. to larger critical discourses about humanitarian intervention and the international child rights agenda, this chapter demonstrates the imperative for scholars and practitioners in CIE and EiE to be more critical and reflective about the hidden curriculum and unintended consequences of SEL, and similar humanitarian interventions, in crisis contexts.

In the third chapter, I explore influences on moral development in Burundi and for Burundian refugees, particularly focusing on processes of values imposition through colonization and modern

humanitarian intervention. Despite SEL's purported focus on skills rather than values, I show how it serves as a mechanism for transmitting particular values, attitudes, and characteristics to crisis-affected communities. I also demonstrate how the refugee camp functions as a microcosm with unique processes of socio-cultural and moral transformation, SEL's role in these processes, and its contribution to the perceived erosion of traditional Burundian values and the moral decay of the younger generation. To address the dearth of scholarship on the intergenerational implications of humanitarian interventions with refugee communities, this chapter highlights shifts and fractures in intergenerational relationships and moral obligations, as Western values supplant the existing social, cultural, and moral orders in the Nduta refugee camp. As a result, the older generation fears the loss and erasure of socio-cultural identity and the essence of humanity among its younger counterparts. This chapter contributes to scholarship at the crossroads of anthropology and refugee studies that conceptualizes displacement, and specifically the refugee camp, as a socio-cultural conditioner; extends historical and contemporary discourses about colonial and neocolonial processes of Westernization and values imposition through humanitarian intervention; and challenges the positioning of SEL, and similar humanitarian skilling regimes, in the fields of CIE and EiE as a secular skills-building approach by illustrating how it functions as a form of moral education and perpetuates a universal Kantian ethics that is mirrored by the larger humanitarian project.

These chapters present a variety of tensions between the traditional cultural practices, social norms, and values prioritized by many individuals in the Nduta community and those that underpin, and are promoted by, humanitarian SEL programming. Many of the values associated with SEL are positioned as universal human rights (i.e. education, child rights & protection, gender-equality, inclusion, play, etc.). While this dissertation problematizes the universal human rights and child rights agendas, it is important to note that I, and this dissertation, do not maintain that all value systems are equal; indeed numerous harmful and oppressive value systems have been documented throughout history and persist around the world today. Correspondingly, I, and this dissertation, do not maintain that the traditional Burundian values system, cultural practices, and social norms should remain unchanged or are superior to those

promoted through humanitarian SEL. Rather, the following chapters demonstrate how the values promoted through SEL are often positioned as universal and superior to alternative, traditional, local, and/or anachronistic values and detail perceptions among Nduta camp residents that their traditional cultural practices, social norms, and value system are being compromised and erased by SEL.

In the conclusion, I reiterate the positioning of SEL as an entry point and vehicle to analyze larger processes in humanitarian intervention, summarize each chapter's key discoveries and arguments, describe the implications of this research for the fields of CIE and EiE, present avenues for future research, and provide suggested paths forward for practitioners interested in a transformative agenda.

CHAPTER 1

Geometries of Control:

Co-producing knowledge in a refugee context

Abstract

We are currently witnessing the highest levels of forced human displacement in history, and with it an abundance of research to generate evidence-informed practices. Refugee studies scholars and humanitarian organizations endeavor to utilize collaborative and applied anthropological approaches with the aims of addressing power hierarchies and galvanizing transformative change for displaced communities. This paper offers empirical reflections on engaging in a process of knowledge co-production, a popular collaborative and applied research methodology rooted in critical feminist, decolonial, and epistemically inclusive principles. Drawing from my recent doctoral research with Burundian refugees in Tanzania, I unveil insights into the challenges and opportunities of knowledge co-production, offering a nuanced understanding of the complexities inherent in collaborative research processes in refugee contexts. Through critical analysis of study data, findings raise concerns about a hyper-focus on power and a lack of consideration of control among researchers; the growing prevalence of institutionalized guidance on knowledge co-production; and the limited acknowledgement of alternative epistemic conceptualizations of collaborative knowledge production. To address these issues, I advocate for more nuanced methodological guidance that prioritizes relational and situated ethics, and urge refugee studies and applied researchers to recognize the control regimes produced by the Western academy and Global North institutions in order to navigate the geometries of control configured by these regimes that shape and influence relations of power throughout the research process.

Introduction

On a hot, sunny day in January of 2023, Elisha and I sat under a UNHCR tarp held up by metal poles, just next to the head teacher's office at the Kassim Majaliwa primary school in the Nduta refugee camp in Western Tanzania. The space was empty, except for the wooden table and chairs we brought in to

conduct our interviews. Our backpacks sat on chairs to avoid the red muddy ground. We had paper interview protocols on the table accompanied by my phone to keep the time. The space served as a make-shift classroom or private meeting space when needed. While it was a respite from the heat of the sun, it was not impervious to the curious eyes and whispers of children who had gathered outside, wondering what the 'mzungu' was doing back in the camp after so long. Indeed, many of them new me in my former role as a humanitarian aid worker in the camp from 2017-2019.

We waited for our first interlocuter that day, the Burundian Education Coordinator. A highly educated male teacher in his 50s, and a refugee for much of his life, Ndizeye is responsible for overseeing much of the formal education in the camp. Earlier that day, Elisha had confided in me that he was slightly nervous to lead his first interview. While he had observed me lead multiple interviews over the past few months, his anxiety not only stemmed from being put in a position of authority, but also from having to operate his newfound authority while engaging with respected elders, many of whom had been his teachers. Eventually Ndizeye entered the tent, greeted us with a kind smile and respectful handshakes, and sat down at the table with us. With wise eyes and a character of calm about him, Ndizeye asked a few questions about our research and then instructed Elisha to proceed with the interview.

As Elisha settled into the interview questions and established a rhythmic patter with his former biology teacher, I could see his muscles relax and his mood lift. However, while Elisha's anxiety dissipated, my uneasiness rose. According to all of the guidance materials that had influenced my knowledge co-production research design, Elisha and I were supposed to collaborate through shared control of the research process. Though as the interview progressed, questions began to plague me and second-guess the process: as Elisha was conducting the interview in a mixture of Kirundi, Kiswahili, and French, how was I to know if his translations were accurate? how would I know if he was sticking to the interview protocol? and what if something really important came up but wasn't captured because he didn't think it was necessary? These doubts and this particular experience are examples of the myriad elements that configure the intricate geometries of control that Elisha and I navigated over the next few months.

We are currently witnessing the highest levels of human displacement in history due to armed conflict, climate change, and economic and political instability (UNHCR, 2023). In tandem, there has been a surge of humanitarian programming and a drive for evidence to inform such programming. While research with refugee communities has an extensive history (Black, 2001), more recently refugee studies scholars have begun to problematize the deep colonial, imperialist, and racist foundation on which this area of study has been built (Arat-Koç, 2020; Shah et al., 2023). In particular, issues of knowledge extraction, exchange, and co-production are increasingly at the center of ethical debates around power inequities in the research process (Sarria-Sanz et al., 2023). Participatory and applied anthropological methods in refugee research not only aim to address inequities and advance action with and for displaced communities, but are also utilized with the recognition that displaced participants hold unique knowledge and should adopt a role beyond being mere research subjects (Phillips et al., 2013; Robertson & Simonsen, 2013). Though, many scholars argue it is not sufficient to simply involve participants in data collection and dissemination. Instead, researchers must ground their work in commitments to disrupting the epistemic order and ensuring knowledge sovereignty for subaltern cultures and communities (Enria, 2016; Marzi, 2021).

This paper offers empirical reflections on engaging in a process of knowledge co-production (KCP), a popular collaborative research process that is rooted in critical feminist, decolonial, and epistemically inclusive principles (Caretta & Riaño, 2016). These reflections offer insight into three main issues found within KCP literature, which include: a hyper-focus on power and a lack of consideration of control; the growing prevalence of institutionalized methodological guidance on KCP that targets refugee studies scholars and applied researchers; and the limited acknowledgement of alternative epistemic conceptualizations of collaborative knowledge production. These reflections are based on my doctoral research project, which involved ethnographic methods to explore how Burundian refugees in Tanzania experience and make sense of social and emotional learning (SEL) programming. To avoid extractive research practices, I utilized a KCP approach, which included: recruiting a local research team member (Elisha) and working together to set the research agenda and collect data; regularly checking in about

power dynamics throughout the research process; and conducting co-validation exercises with study participants.

Recognizing the rich opportunity to examine the KCP process in this study, Elisha and I conducted critical analysis of study data, including field notes and memos, to explore what worked and did not work in the endeavor to follow prescriptive methodological KCP guidance, and to determine if knowledge was in fact co-produced. As a result, this paper considers not only the processes of engaging in KCP, but also challenges notions of narrowly constructed 'ideal' KCP processes. KCP offers opportunities to position displaced communities as the drivers of collaborative research. However, the challenge for refugee studies scholars and applied researchers in these contexts is to not only reflexively grapple with their power and privilege, but also 1) challenge the barriers to KCP posed by the control regimes produced by the Western academy and Global North institutions and 2) acknowledge and navigate the geometries of control configured by these regimes that shape and influence relations of power throughout the research process.

Problematizing refugee research

The field of refugee studies has been rooted in largely applied anthropological work with the aim of contributing to positive change for displaced communities since its inception (Stein & Tomasi, 1981; Zetter, 1988). As a result, refugee studies scholars have long critiqued the power hierarchies embedded in humanitarian aid, arguing for a greater awareness of how power shapes interactions with, and outcomes for, refugee communities (Agier, 2011; Barnett & Weiss, 2008; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Hyndman & Giles, 2011; Malkki, 1996). While Harrell-Bond (2002) questioned whether humanitarian aid for refugees could ever be humane, similar critiques have reflected on the extractive and harmful practices of refugee research itself. Extensive scholarship documents paternalistic processes of collecting and disseminating data without considering refugees' expertise in their own experiences and how research with refugees more often serves the researchers, rather than the 'researched' (Bloemraad & Menjívar, 2022; Sarria-Sanz et al., 2023).

Contemporary scholars have called for the development of nuanced and responsive research practices that consider the colonial and imperial roots of humanitarianism, which may yield more humane outcomes for displaced participants and their communities (Bakewell, 2021; Carpi, 2021). However, the persistence of knowledge extraction continues to be flagged as part of ethical considerations of power inequities in refugee research. Indeed, recent work illustrates how recurring extractive research—conducted by refugee studies scholars and humanitarian agencies—results in the domination of subaltern knowledge systems, misrepresents or glosses over adverse circumstances and structural violence, and perpetuates an oppressive status quo for study participants (Cabot, 2016, 2019; Espiritu et al., 2022; Grabska & Clark-Kazak, 2022; Tazzioli, 2022).

To address the issues of extractive research, a number of global North-South partnerships have been established over the years. Networks, partnerships, and collaborations have become a prerequisite in funding calls for research on forced displacement and Global North funding agencies often require an academic partner from the Global South (Bradley, 2008). However, the conditionalities and embedded power relations within these partnerships tend to perpetuate global inequities rather than challenge them (Barrett et al., 2011; Shuayb & Brun, 2021). For example, such collaborations generate institutional configurations where Northern actors hold the power to choose and shape the Southern voices captured in their research and render refugee participants complicit in humanitarian governance and the global containment regime (Landau, 2012). Shah et al. (2023) also showcase how the research ecosystem has placed those in Northern institutions in a position of dictating the design and implementation of research carried out in the Global South, which represents and reifies ‘local experiences’ through dominant epistemologies, agendas, and frameworks (Shanks & Paulson, 2022). This reinforces the control of the Western academy and Global North institutions and actors in the production of knowledge in refugee research.

Knowledge co-production in refugee research

Critical feminist and decolonial theorists and activists have long argued that those closest to injustice, and with lived experience of it, have access to understanding and epistemic knowledge that others do not (Luttrell-Rowland, 2023). In line with this theoretical stance, and in an effort to address extractive research practices and power inequities, refugee studies scholars and humanitarian agencies have attempted to utilize participatory and collaborative methods in recognition that refugees hold unique knowledge (Chambers, 1997; Doná, 2007; Sarria-Sanz et al., 2023). Drawing on applied anthropological methods such as participatory action research, community-based research, and collaborative visual research (Pink, 2009; Trotter et al., 2014), these approaches have been celebrated for facilitating the production of knowledge in ways that emphasize knowledge exchange rather than extraction (Marzi, 2021). However, the drive for data and evidence has resulted in a disconnect between these approaches and the operations of humanitarian agencies and researchers (Lokot, 2019). Rigid project timelines, tight budgets, and the pressures of quickly generating evidence that meets academic standards make it difficult for researchers to operationalize genuine collaborative research and engage in deep, meaningful knowledge exchange in refugee contexts (Lokot & Wake, 2023).

In a more recent attempt to address these issues, the methodology of knowledge co-production (KCP) has been taken up by refugee studies scholars. Originating from the work of Elinor Ostrom in the 1970s (1996), 'co-production' grew out of the recognition that more horizontal partnerships between the public sector and communities were needed to improve the delivery of goods and services. Over the past few decades, the idea of 'co-production' has been increasingly associated with the goal of addressing power hierarchies in research and knowledge production and has been taken up by scholars in various disciplines (Zurba et al., 2022).

The methodology of KCP is highly rooted in critical feminist and decolonial principles. Feminist research is grounded in a commitment to equality and social justice. It is conscious of the gendered, historical, and political processes involved in the production of knowledge (Fonow & Cook, 1991), and specifically challenges the relationships between epistemology, power, and knowing. Feminist research

aims to subvert hierarchies of knowledge and power—linked to gender and other dimensions of our social identities—by examining diverse experiences across marginalized groups and increasing awareness of how social hierarchies influence oppression of these groups (Maynard & Purvis, 1994). Additionally, feminist theory puts forth the notion of 'situated knowledge', the idea that all forms of knowledge reflect the particular conditions in which they are produced and the social identities and locations of knowledge producers (Haraway, 1988; Harding, 1991; Scheper-Hughes, 1994). From this standpoint, notions of neutrality, objectivity, and the idea of finding 'truth' are seen as inherently flawed (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2006).

Scholars working at the crossroads of feminist and decolonial research maintain that developing knowledge collaboratively can help to restore equality among the different ways of knowing the world. The value of KCP thus stems from the role it plays in building mutually-agreed-upon knowledge (Caretta, 2015), and from its potential as an emancipatory process (Collins, 1991; Cook & Fonow, 1990). Working to ensure that a plurality of voices and the realities of marginalized groups are the driving forces behind the research process helps researchers move away from extractive practices that perpetuate an oppressive status quo (Chilisa, 2020; Scheper-Hughes, 1990; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). While largely associated with critical, feminist, and decolonial scholars, this ethos was also widely taken up by female anthropologists and pioneers of the refugee studies discipline (Colson, 1989; Harrell-Bond & Voutira, 1992; Malkki, 1990).

Key elements of feminist and decolonial KCP include reflexivity, reciprocity, and an ethics of care. Reflexivity refers to the process of reflecting inwardly on one's own position, beliefs, judgments, and decisions during the research process. Reflexivity is also preoccupied with critically examining power dynamics that exist between the researcher and research subjects and the impact these dynamics may have on the production and dissemination of knowledge (Rose, 1997; Wickramasinghe, 2010). Feminist scholars thus ask the question of whose voices are heard in processes of knowledge production and challenge the presumed authority of the researcher (Enria, 2016; Grabska, 2022; Reinharz, 1992).

Feminist and decolonial KCP also requires attention to reciprocity and an ethics of care, which stipulate that research should benefit both the researcher and research subjects (Edwards & Mauthner, 2012; Noddings, 1984; Tronto, 1998). These principles imply pursuing research questions aligned with the interests and needs of research subjects; engaging with them as co-researchers; ensuring research findings are co-generated, written, and disseminated; and maintaining long-term relationships with research partners (Staffa et al., 2022; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). These approaches are largely rooted in anthropological and ethnographic methods that prioritize listening, dialogue, and relationship-building between research stakeholders (Enria, 2016; Grabska, 2022; Lundy et al., 2020). These methods are also highly relational, meaning they are operated with acknowledgement of the complex and intricate ways people are implicated in each other's lives, how knowledge is largely co-constructed, and the everyday impacts of long histories of colonization, global violence, and systems of domination (Luttrell-Rowland, 2023). As Aída Hernández Castillo notes, such "research based on 'dialogues of knowledges' (diálogos de saberes) recognizes the partial nature of our perspective, the multiplicity of the subject positions characterizing the identities of social actors (including their relations of subordination), and the limitations of our situated knowledges" (2016, p. 35).

Recent KCP guidance for those working in refugee and humanitarian contexts aligns with these feminist and decolonial principles. However, where it diverges is in procedure. Various feminist and refugee studies scholars have demonstrated how, in order to facilitate genuine knowledge exchange and co-coproduction, researchers must extend beyond the boundaries of procedural ethics and engage in situated ethics (Bilotta, 2021; Block et al., 2013; Chilisa, 2009; Rose, 1997; Stanley & Wise, 1993). This refers to researchers responding to the unpredictable, everyday ethical issues and decision-making processes that surface during research encounters (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). In order to uphold the relational ethics of care required by feminist and decolonial methods, researchers must often deviate from prescriptive research procedures (Clark-Kazak, 2017) and conduct their work in a more organic and situated manner that is responsive to the needs and dilemmas that arise in particular places and at

particular times. This situated approach then allows researchers to better address concerns about knowledge, control, and power than an ‘a priori’ research contract (White & Bailey, 2004).

In contrast to this situated approach, much of the recent KCP guidance for those working with refugees has become institutionalized and procedural. Mirroring prescriptive KCP frameworks increasingly found at the intersections of sustainability research and Indigenous studies (Matuk et al., 2020; Norstrom et al., 2020; Yua et al., 2022), the recently drafted *Guidelines for Co-Produced Research with Refugees and Other People with Lived Experience of Displacement* (UNSW Kaldor Center, 2023) provides a succinct definition of co-produced research and lays out specific steps to achieve this aim. Similarly, a guidance document on KCP between communities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and academics in humanitarian response (Lokot & Wake, 2021) articulates key practices of KCP in refugee contexts that incorporate feminist and decolonial principles, yet provides specific instructions on what to do, what not to do, and how to traverse the many challenges and barriers to collaborative research with refugees.

KCP is increasingly becoming a catch-all term for various forms of collaborative research and has acquired ‘buzzword status’ that refugee research funders and partners look for (Lokot & Wake, 2023). This institutionalized guidance helps to cut through this confusion and ambiguity by providing clear definitions and explanations of what KCP is and should look like in refugee contexts. Though, in doing so, it perpetuates the conceptualization of KCP as a specific, ideal process that ignores calls for more diverse understandings of KCP that are situated, subjective, and relational (Mach et al., 2020; Zurba et al., 2022). Additionally, they promote the possibility of KCP becoming a series of exercises and tick-box activities that researchers can check off in order to claim that they have successfully conducted collaborative research. Thus, these frameworks run the risk of being co-opted by researchers who need a roadmap to help them perform KCP in order to meet the pressures to produce data and evidence quickly and on a budget. Although these guidance materials were theoretically designed with decolonial and emancipatory intentions, in actuality they may serve in some ways to reinforce extractive research practices and the very power hierarchies that they aim to subvert.

Geometries of power and control

Issues of power are at the heart of collaborative research and KCP efforts. As a result, there has been much theorization about the relationships between knowledge and power in these processes (Brubaker, 2021; England, 1994; Farrow et al., 1995; Grosz, 2013; Kobayashi, 1994; Nast, 1994; Wartenberg, 1988). Though there has been little attention paid to the issue of control in this literature. In this chapter, I differentiate power from control by drawing upon French and Raven's (1959) concept of social power as the *ability or potential* to influence others and Manz & Gioia's (1983) concept of control as the *process* of influencing others. Additionally, I draw upon scholarship that identifies administrative and bureaucratic control in social science research as a set of rules, requirements, and procedures that must be followed (Bozeman & Hirsch, 2006; Shultz, 1998; Simon, 1957). For example, Bozeman & Hirsch (2008) highlight how the Institutional Review Board (IRB) has a near institutional monopoly on certifying the ethics and procedures of research, thus exercising control over researcher decisions, actions, and conduct. While it is widely acknowledged that bureaucratic control, particularly through institutions like IRBs, can uphold the safety and protection of research participants and help researchers achieve certain goals and adhere to particular quality and accountability checks (Bozeman & Hirsch, 2006; Clearly, 1987; Ferraro et al., 1999; Hall, 1991), this chapter highlights how administrative and bureaucratic control influences researchers in the thick of data collection, making deviations from the preset administrative and bureaucratic rules, procedures, and expectations nearly impossible.

Many feminist researchers who engage in refugee research (Hyndman, 1996; Lokot, 2019; Sarria-Sanz et al., 2023), build upon feminist geographer Doreen Massey's (1993) notion of 'power geometry', which is conceptualized as positions of privilege and subordination that individual or collective agents take in uneven spatial orders. Power geometries articulate how structural conditions (e.g. unequal distribution of resources) and the spatial practices of those in positions of dominance (i.e. how the powerful organize space, use it, and move across it) influence and constrain human agency. This notion has been applied by researchers in various disciplines to conceptualize uneven relations of power that give institutions, communities, and individuals various forms of control over knowledge production. In

response, KCP has been adopted by feminist, and other, researchers as a way to subvert power geometries (Caretta & Riaño, 2016).

However, as mentioned above, the notion of control has been significantly undertheorized in KCP scholarship. The terms power and control are often conflated and referred to as one in the same. Interrogators of collaborative research argue that epistemic control cannot be escaped in the research process and must be acknowledged and considered more deeply by researchers who aim to subvert power geometries (Herberg & Vilsmaier, 2020; Igelsböck, 2020). Epistemic control refers to the "techniques to rationalize, systematize, and routinize the ways in which we know, including the identification of legitimate contributors to knowledge production and dissemination" (Igelsböck, 2020 p. 319). Herberg (2019) uses the co-design process at the beginning of most KCP projects, often assumed to be a democratized joint effort, to highlight the asymmetry of epistemic control. He illustrates how conscious and unconscious devices of control, embedded in everyday activity, shape each decision in the research process (e.g. whose goals are selected, what roles people will take, data collection timelines and methods, how project resources will be used) and limit how reflexive and emancipatory collaborative research can be. This is complimented by McCabe et al.'s (2021) notion of resource power, which they conceptualize as decision-making control in the research process. Because decision-making is assumed to be open to everyone in many KCP processes, non-participation is viewed as tacit agreement, which allows the powerful to remain in control and drive the research process.

Additionally, van der Hel (2016) maintains that the more recent institutionalization of KCP into formalized methodologies are in tension with the conceptualization of KCP as a mechanism to address power inequities. In particular, van der Hel (2016) reveals how logics of accountability and impact—largely dictated by IRB's, research funders, institutional agendas, and academic standards for 'legitimate' science—require formalized structures and institutional procedures that result in modes of governance over KCP. That is to say, certain forms of administrative control must be held by research stakeholders in order to produce knowledge that is perceived by those in power as legitimate, accountable, and

epistemically inclusive (Wolf, 1996), which directly contradicts the relational and situated ethics of the feminist and decolonial paradigm of KCP.

The institutionalization of KCP and other collaborative methodologies has resulted in what Herberg (2019) calls 'control regimes' in collaborative research, which have produced a collaboration-and-control conundrum for researchers. This conundrum raises the question of whether KCP is realistically achievable under an administrative and bureaucratic paradigm, or whether it is an imaginary 'ideal' that in actuality is dictated by forces of control that serve to manage, govern, and order collaborative research in socially and epistemically inclusive ways (Herberg, 2019; Lundy et al., 2020; van der Hel, 2016). The incompatibility between these feminist/decolonial and institutionalized/administrative/bureaucratic paradigms has been observed in other instances. For example, Mukhopadhyay (2004) demonstrates how the push to mainstream gender the in the development sector resulted in a transformative, political project fading into bureaucratic procedures and thus being 'streamed away'. Indeed, various humanitarian projects such as the mainstreaming of protection, diversity, and inclusion have taken a similar path. Unfortunately, KCP runs the same risk of being extolled as the 'gold standard' of collaborative research with refugee communities, yet finding its aim to subvert power inequities muted by obsessions with accountability and impact that result in the procedural management, governance, and control of knowledge production.

Drawing on this scholarship, I posit that this control regime, produced by the institutionalization of KCP, contributes what I conceptualize as 'geometries of control'. I maintain that geometries of control are made up of epistemic, structurally, relationally, and socially embedded devices of administrative control that researchers cannot easily step away from or dismantle, but must navigate. Through critical analysis, I identified four forms of control that significantly influenced this study. These include: **affective** control—or the ability to regulate one's emotions and modify one's own emotional states; **relational** control—or patterns of behavior related to one's own assertions and response to other's assertions; and **resource** control—or the ability to allocate resources in a particular fashion. All of these are intertwined with **decision-making** control, as they—in this study and in research more broadly—

shape each decision in the research process, and in-so-doing shape power relations among research stakeholders that feed into the larger power geometry. Therefore, I argue that in order to subvert power geometries, researchers must equally pay close attention to geometries of control. The following sections describe my experience trying to execute an 'ideal' KCP process, informed by institutional guidance and procedures, in a refugee context while struggling to navigate complex geometries of control, which manifested in unpredictable, complex, and every-day dilemmas.

Research Setting and Methodology

This paper draws on a qualitative, ethnographic study that aimed to understand how Burundian refugees in Tanzania experience and make sense of SEL programming. Like other countries in the region, Burundi has endured decades of violent conflict, including multiple genocides and a 12-year civil war. In 2015, more than 400,000 Burundians fled the country due to political violence (UNHCR, 2018). Many individuals have repatriated to Burundi over the years, though just over 131,000 Burundian refugees currently remain in Tanzania, split between two camps (UNHCR, 2024). This study engaged those living in the Nduta camp, where nearly 77,000 Burundian refugees live.

Conditions in the Nduta camp have been described as 'dire' for nearly a decade (UNHCR, 2016). Whole families squeeze into one-room dwellings constructed from a combination of branches, mud bricks, corrugated iron, and UNHCR tarps; food rations are only half of what individuals need to survive; and risks of communicable diseases are high (MSF, 2023; UNHCR, 2016; WFP, 2023). A struggling education system results in little matriculation and high drop-out, and limited income-generating activities and a strict government encampment policy perpetuate dependence on humanitarian actors (ReDSS, 2022).

In response to these persistently poor conditions, extensive research has been conducted with the Nduta community for years in the name of improving humanitarian services and systems. Since the reopening of the camp in 2015, community members have been subjected to multi-sector needs assessments (Education Working Group, 2018), thematic research studies (IRC, 2022a), and routine

monitoring and evaluation activities. Interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), surveys, and student assessments are commonplace in Nduta. However, while much of this work is done with the aim of creating positive change, the Nduta community has seen little benefit from participating in research as the status quo of their displacement continues. Additionally, these activities have caused research-fatigue by routinely requesting precious time from individuals that could be spent on activities required for their daily survival and wellbeing (e.g. fetching water and firewood, collecting food rations, participating in community meetings).

In order to not reproduce these extractive research practices, I applied a KCP approach to my ethnographic research design. I drew on both feminist and decolonial principles, as well as recent guidance on conducting collaborative research in refugee contexts (Lokot & Wake, 2021). I aimed to follow a series of steps in order to successfully execute a KCP process, which included: recruiting a local research team member and working together to set the research agenda and engage in data collection; regularly checking in about power dynamics throughout the research process; and conducting co-validation exercises with study participants. These steps were guided by key principles found in most KCP frameworks such as: shared decision-making, flexible methodologies, establishing trusting and respectful relationships, and reciprocity.

To apply these strategies, I first recruited a research team member from the Nduta community. This process involved working with Tanzanian NGO staff to identify candidates in the camp based on their knowledge and understanding of the community; ability to translate between English, Kirundi, Kiswahili, and French (as I only speak English and a low-intermediate level of Kiswahili); and their availability. The selected individual, Elisha, was hired based on these elements, and also due to his interest in the research topic; his curiosity and excitement to learn and engage in the research activities; and his strong commitment to improving the circumstance of his community. While much guidance on KCP supposes the inclusion of multiple research team members, I only had enough research funds to compensate one.

Next, I met with Elisha to introduce him to the proposed research topic, methods, and schedule of data collection, as well as to negotiate the terms of compensation. In this meeting, I described the concept of KCP and expressed my desire for Elisha to fully participate in the research process and regularly engage in dialogues about his experience, power dynamics, and positionality. Upon Elisha's acceptance of this proposal, we moved on to setting the research agenda. Together we revised central research questions, developed interview protocols, determined a sampling strategy, designed a data collection schedule, and recruited study participants.

Elisha and I collected data from October 2022 to July 2023. To gather detailed information on perceptions and experiences, the primary method we used was in-depth structured interviews with 158 members of the Nduta community[12] and 16 individuals working for NGOs delivering SEL programming in the camp. We used a stratified-purposive sampling strategy to ensure the inclusion of various stakeholder groups in order to explore diverse perceptions and experiences across the wider Nduta community. This data complimented nearly 150 hours of observation, including: classroom instruction, recreational activities, teacher trainings, community meetings, and NGO meetings, as well as document review of over 140 items, including: teacher training manuals, curriculum materials, program strategies, policy documents, and monitoring and evaluation data. Interview protocols were used for each stakeholder group and freeform notes were taken during observations.

All study participants provided their verbal consent and participated in interviews in the language of their choice (i.e. English, French, Kiswahili, or Kirundi). Almost all interviews were conducted in person (three were conducted via MS Teams) in the Nduta camp and the nearby town of Kibondo, and were audio recorded, transcribed, and lasted between 20 to 90 minutes. In most instances, interviews were verbally translated into English by Elisha in real time, though some translation happened at the time of transcription. Elisha and I both conducted preliminary inductive data analysis, based on general patterns

[12] Stakeholders included: teachers, head teachers, school inspectors, primary school students, out-of-school youth, school club facilitators and student participants, recreational programming facilitators and child participants, parents, community leaders, and community elders (Mushingantahe).

we identified throughout the data collection process, to generate initial key themes (Saldaña, 2016). We then shared these themes with study participants through six voluntary co-validation FGDs with 79 participants. Finally, we revised the initial key themes based on this process and conducted a more thorough analysis to develop descriptive memos, followed by analytical memos (Miles et al., 2020), related to culture, social norms, future expectations, race, and financial security.

Over this 10-month period, Elisha and I met weekly, and often daily, to coordinate and conduct data collection, share and manage data, revise interview protocols, and check-in about our experiences and perceptions in general. Our discussions often reflected on our individual positionalities—Elisha, a 21-year-old Burundian male refugee who had recently completed secondary school with the hopes of one day earning a university degree, and me, a 35-year-old white female North American Ph.D. student and humanitarian practitioner with the hopes of completing my degree and finding a meaningful job after graduating. We regularly discussed issues around gender, age, race, and the influences of my existing connections and previous work with the Nduta community from 2017–2019 as an NGO worker. Before I left Tanzania, I conducted an in-depth interview with Elisha about his experience participating in the study and his thoughts about the KCP process. Lastly, we developed a plan for continued communication (and compensation for Elisha) to further analyze study data and draft findings for publication. While I wrote the initial drafts of these dissertation chapters, Elisha reviewed and contributed to them and also facilitated a process whereby study participants were able to review the chapters and provide their feedback and thoughts.

Critical analysis

Within the context of the larger study of SEL, throughout data analysis I recognized the rich opportunity to conduct specific analysis on the KCP process. I postulated the following questions to guide this analysis: what worked and did not work in the endeavor to follow prescriptive methodological KCP guidance? and was knowledge actually co-produced?

Upon returning to the U.S., I reviewed interview and FGD transcripts, field notes, observation notes, memos, and the transcript from the final interview between myself and Elisha and inductively coded them. During analysis, I paid attention to not only what individuals—including myself and Elisha—said or noted, but how they engaged with and responded to each other, as well as self-reflected, about the research process and past research experiences. Upon generating key themes related to affective, relational, resource, and decision-making control, I revisited my graduate course syllabi and materials, and reflected upon my time as a teacher and humanitarian aid worker, to examine how my academic training and professional experiences also influenced the KCP process. I then shared the initial findings with Elisha for his review and thoughts. Upon further discussion, Elisha and I developed a framing for the findings and I drafted this initial article with further edits and inputs from both Elisha and study participants. Throughout this process, we were able to again reflect on our own journeys through the KCP process and ascertain if we had in fact succeeded in co-producing knowledge.

Findings

Learning control

My relationship with control is not only rooted in my familial proclivity towards Type-A characteristics, but also in the ways I was professionally and academically trained. In becoming a teacher, I was instructed about classroom management, which translates to keeping control of students and the learning environment. I was responsible for ensuring student safety and wellbeing, covering a certain amount of the curriculum in a given timeframe, and ensuring activities followed the lesson plan; all responsibilities of control. As a humanitarian aid worker, I was trained in safety and security. This included being aware of potential dangers out of my control and doing everything within my control to keep myself and others safe; control as a means of survival. As a humanitarian project director, I was expected to have hyper-control of program plans and activities, staff members, budgets, and timelines, among numerous other things.

While working in Tanzania, I occupied director and management positions. Specifically, I was responsible for all of my organization's education programming in the Nduta camp, and also served as the interim "Head of Office" from time to time. Not only did I exercise day-to-day control in these roles, but they influenced the way I was seen by others. Colleagues and staff viewed me as being responsible for our collective operations, programming, and strategic direction. They also recognized the control I had over their employment. Similarly, Nduta community members perceived me as the 'boss' of my organization who had control over their livelihoods and access to resources.

As a doctoral research student, control featured heavily in my training and preparation for this study. In reviewing syllabi and readings from my courses, critical theory and reflection is a key theme throughout. My instructors challenged me to think about loci of power in the research process, as well as neocolonial practices of domination through scholarship. I sat in various lectures and participated in numerous discussions about the importance of recognizing the researcher's power and privilege, the diversity of knowledge systems, and being aware of who dictates the narrative. The concept of intended and unintended consequences of research surfaced time and again, and the strategies of critical reflexivity (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2020; Berger, 2013) and collaborative research (McGinn, 2004; Stull, 2019) were promoted as appropriate preventative strategies to violent and extractive practices. While I was unaware of it at the time, I was being conditioned to control my power and privilege.

As a result of this conditioning, I recognized and feared the risks of how easy it would be for me—a white, cisgendered, North American woman—to reproduce negative research practices that could cause overt and insidious forms of harm for my study participants. I had been complicit in 'parachute' research (Odeny & Bosurgi, 2022) with the Nduta community as an NGO worker and did not want to replicate those experiences. As a result, I became obsessed with integrating checks and balances into my study that would safeguard participants' agency, authority, and protection. Recognizing that engaging in full-on participatory action research was not feasible, given my doctoral timeline and funding constraints, I adopted a KCP methodology. To successfully engage in this kind of process, I knew power-sharing and limiting my control was paramount.

However, the architecture of Western academia and the structures of most doctoral programs contradict many of these critical discourses, often obstruct collaborative research practices, and produce control regimes with students at the center. For example, a key element of KCP includes encouraging study participants to drive the research process. This means engaging in co-design to develop research questions, methods, and procedures to ensure they are aligned with participant-community values, interests, and needs. Though, my departmental requirements, doctoral committee, and the various research grants I applied for required me to submit a full research proposal with clearly articulated problem statements, questions, and methods prior to engaging with study participants. While it is possible for student researchers to collaborate with participants during the development of their research design, it is highly unlikely for nascent researchers embarking on an international study with a hard-to-reach population that they are physically distanced from, as was the case in my circumstance.

Additionally, while the notions of 'valid' and 'objective' research have been heavily disputed, particularly in the social sciences, pressures around the integrity, quality, and authenticity of data are prevalent (Flick, 2022). Through my academic training, I came to understand these concepts as related to both credibility and depth. For example, Schensul and LeCompte (2013) maintain that *"high-quality research uses appropriate research designs and makes claims that both are supported by sufficient evidence and hold up to the scrutiny of the people who are studied"* (p. 319). Whereas Denzin (1989) argues that quality anthropological research *"goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances. It presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another"* (p. 83).

In parallel, warnings about collecting insufficient information or data impacted by various biases abound, and the importance of triangulating your data to 'verify' its quality and integrity is consistently reinforced (Creswell, 2009; Maxwell, 2013). As a critical ethnographer and applied anthropologist, I was particularly inundated with instructions to collect 'thick' data:

> *"Thick description builds up a clear picture of the individuals and groups in the context of their culture and the setting in which they live … Thick description can be contrasted with thin description, which is a superficial account and does not explore the underlying meanings of cultural members"* (Holloway, 1997, p. 154).

Much of this methodological scripture again positions the researcher as needing to be in constant control of data quality in order to avoid the perils of 'thin' data and social and systematic biases. In so doing, this rhetoric questions the capacity and abilities of less-trained or inexperienced research team members:

> *"Field team members who are lax about recording or writing their field notes or who record incomplete field notes even after receiving feedback from team members are limited in their capacity to contribute to the combined knowledge resources of the research team. At the same time, they undermine the science of ethnography, which is rooted in the quality and contextualization of the observations and interviews"* (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010, p. 188).

Discourse on the need to control for the faults of research team members is extended through discussions about language and translation. In the arena of international research conducted by an 'outsider', particularly with vulnerable populations such as refugees, language and translation are not only perceived as ethical concerns, but also potential risks that could impact the authenticity and credibility of data:

> *"The first, and potentially most significant from an academic standpoint, is the risk of biased responses resulting from the use of translators or local research assistants. Conducting an interview or survey in the refugee's language, when the researcher is not fluent in that language can result in translation problems and inaccuracies"* (Kabranian-Melkonian, 2015, p. 717).

As a result of this rhetoric, language training was a large part of my preparation to ensure I was equipped to gather ‘thick’, ‘quality’, and ‘authentic’ data. Though, while I was prepared to engage study participants in English and Kiswahili, I knew many of them would prefer speaking in French or their mother-tongue of Kirundi. Being able to work with study participants in the language of their choice was crucial for KCP. This stipulated that I would need to recruit a research team member who could communicate across all of these languages and, by default, relinquish much control over these elements, which provided a challenging nuance to the collaboration-and-control conundrum in this study.

Having experienced this professional and academic training over the previous decade, I entered my study with problematic dualism. On one hand, I was committed to engaging in a genuine KCP process with study participants, which included the necessity of power-sharing and limiting my control. On the other hand, I was expected—by the control regime of Western academia and myself—to exercise various forms of control throughout the research process in order to meet the standards of quality, integrity, and authenticity. As a result, navigating the geometries of control with Elisha and study participants proved more complicated and precarious than expected. Furthermore, this dualism with which I entered the study aligns with critiques that question the very notion that KCP is even possible to begin with.

Negotiating control throughout KCP

While there were certain forms of control I had to maintain in order to ultimately obtain my doctorate, I knew it was imperative to find ways to share control with other research stakeholders if I were to attempt any kind of KCP process. However, the steps to do so were neither easy nor smooth. Step one in most KCP guidance includes recruiting local research team members, which I accomplished by recruiting Elisha. Next, I aimed to collaboratively set the research agenda. Most KCP frameworks include identifying the problem, defining questions, and developing methods together with research team members and the study community, seemingly from ‘scratch’. However, as noted in the previous section, the requirements of my academic program, and other institutional standards of the larger Western

academy, resulted in me drafting these elements prior to engaging with Elisha and the Nduta community. While Elisha was generally involved in somewhat revising study questions, developing interview protocols, and determining a sampling strategy, this process took place at the start of our relationship before trust and comfort were established. This resulted in the research agenda remaining mostly aligned with my original research design and draft protocols and allowed me to performatively engage in this process without giving up any real control.

Most KCP guidance also includes multiple community members in this co-design phase. However, due to the limited availability of community members and logistical restrictions of schedules and movement within the camp,[13] I felt that we did not have time to meaningfully engage the larger Nduta community in this process. Though, upon reflection, I plainly used this as an excuse for the fact that I was not willing to give up such control over the research agenda due to my anxieties about delivering what I had promised to my doctoral committee and financial sponsors. Unfortunately, throughout the study, Elisha and I realized that this was a hugely missed opportunity as study participants routinely asked that we focus our research on their adverse circumstances and perceived knowledge domination: *"The teachers requested that the main focus of the research should be on how people are treated in the camp and how NGOs are influencing Burundian culture and many other African cultures"* (Elisha's Memo, June 5, 2023).

In our final interview, Elisha and I discussed the impact that not involving the community in setting the research agenda had on the KCP process. It was clear that while study participants had some interest in what we were doing out of pure curiosity, they felt no ownership of the study; another key principle of most KCP frameworks. Had we designed the research around what the community valued and wanted to know, rather than our own interests, we may have been able to gather richer data and had more community cooperation and buy-in, as Elisha explained:

[13] I was reliant on NGO cars and schedules for getting to and from the camp.

> *"Refugees don't care about your study. But they care about helpful messages. They want to hear from someone who is interested in their current situation. Whether you are working on education or business or health topics, you should make sure to include something that shows your interest in the current situation in the camp. Include them in the research design so they know that you value them and their current situation. This will help researchers to be successful, because refugees will support and appreciate the work"* (Interview, June 23, 2023).

As we moved through data collection, I aimed to tick the boxes of flexible methodologies and shared control and decision-making with Elisha throughout. As mentioned previously, one element I had no choice to relinquish control over was language. Due to my limited Kiswahili skills and inability to speak French or Kirundi, Elisha had unequivocal control over translation, which I had anticipated and accepted. However, when it came to leading in interviews and observations, I struggled to give up control due to my academic conditioning. My methods training was inherently tied to the pressures of meeting Western academy standards of data quality and integrity. Therefore, giving up control in this arena might not have only impacted data credibility and depth, but also my prospects of completing my degree to the standard expected by my doctoral committee and myself.

As far as I was concerned, Elisha was new to qualitative research and was learning on the job. I enjoyed sharing what I had learned in my courses with him; for example how to conduct an interview, what it meant to 'probe deeper', and how to take 'thick' observation notes. However, in reviewing Elisha's observation notes, they could have been thicker, and in interviews he liked to phrase questions in yes/no formats, rather than leaving them open-ended. This issue was the catalyst for the first time Elisha felt comfortable enough to push back in the research process:

> *"I propose that we change the techniques we are now using to interview teachers…Some are direct and specific in their answers, and some are indirect and unspecific. Most people are neither straight nor concise when they come to answer. They habitually provide more*

> *explanations before they go straight to the real point of the asked question….So if we want to get more right and orderly information, we should request them to specifically provide a concise answer. For example, if we ask someone such a question, 'What kind of future do you want for your students?', although we want some detail, we preferably want short, clear, and direct answers. For example, the answer should be like this, 'I want my students to become public motivational speakers.' I think this is a right and concise answer* (Elisha's Memo, December 1, 2022).

I was eventually able to convince Elisha about the benefits of asking open-ended questions and allowing study participants to answer in a free-flowing manner. However, I could sense his continued frustration during interviews. This issue demonstrates a key tension between the epistemic control of the Western academy and Global North institutions, and KCP guidance that advocates for shared decision-making and flexible ways of interacting and working that incorporate alternative methodologies and approaches to data collection.

Despite my reservations about Elisha's interviewing techniques, another factor came to our attention that forced me to relinquish greater control over data collection; the issue of trust, or rather the illusion of it. As I had worked for an NGO in Nduta from 2017-2019, I already knew many of the study participants, having established what I perceived as positive working relationships and many personal friendships. When I returned to the Nduta camp five years later to conduct this study, I was met with smiles, hugs, and disbelief that I had in fact returned, as most international NGO staff rarely do. Many study participants were pleasantly surprised to find that I remembered their names and details about their lives and families. This initially gave me a welcoming feeling of acceptance back into the Nduta community and the belief that I had the community's trust. This made me confident that I was well on the way to accomplishing the KCP strategy of establishing trusting and respectful relationships across research stakeholders.

Before starting data collection, Elisha and I crafted informational and consent language to ensure that every study participant was aware of who we were, why we were interviewing and/or observing them, and what the research was for. We tried to make clear that I had returned to the Nduta camp as a student researcher, not as an NGO worker. We stressed that we were conducting this research purely for my doctoral degree and that it was not commissioned by or for the NGOs working in the camp. We also emphasized that the aims of the research were to understand the experiences and viewpoints of the Nduta community and hopefully benefit the community in some way. While most study participants nodded their heads in acknowledgement and consent, we quickly realized that this was a performative act, influenced by various power dynamics.

In particular, it was difficult for participants to believe that the research was not on behalf of an NGO. Because I was hosted by the original NGO I had previously worked for, and was required to travel in their branded cars and sometimes wear branded clothing for safety and visibility reasons, many study participants assumed I was still employed by the NGO and was conducting this research on its behalf. This was confirmed by Elisha*:*

> *"They all think you are the big boss of [the project]. They think you have come here to get information from them secretly that you will then tell to [the NGO]. Because you worked for [the NGO] before, they all think you are still working for them; they can't believe you are only a student"* (Elisha's Memo, December 1, 2022).

While I had intended to oversee all data collection in order to control for quality and integrity, in this instance my presence in these activities put us at risk of collecting inauthentic and biased information; Elisha and I knew we had to pivot. Acknowledging that Nduta community members intrinsically felt more relaxed with Elisha on his own than with me present, we ultimately decided that I would step away from interviews and observations and Elisha would conduct these activities on his own. Given my reservations about Elisha's interviewing techniques, this was a difficult moment. Elisha not only had

control over translation, but he now had significant control over how topics, concepts, and questions were phrased and framed.

Elisha leveraged this opportunity to explore how far he could extend his control in the research process. For example, while reviewing interview transcripts, I noticed that Elisha asked questions specifically related to gender, politics, and the economy that were not included in the protocol. While I worried that these questions were taking valuable time away from asking questions more directly related to the study, Elisha saw this as a chance to relate interviews to what study participants cared more about. In this way, participants began to understand the research as aligned with community interests, as Elisha explained in our interview:

> "*Most people in Nduta are here because of political or economic issues, and others are here because of security issues. So to include [these topics] shows that you value the current situation in the camp. And if people say, 'We learn this way', it could be because of the economic situation or their political situation. So it helped us collect [deeper] information about [our topic]"* (Interview, June 23, 2023).

Although it was inherently difficult for the Nduta community to trust me and my research aims, by rooting interviews in issues valued by the community Elisha was able to slowly gain the community's trust. In many of our routine check-in's—another common KCP strategy—Elisha expressed his awareness that he occupied a new position of power by working with me; he had access to resources and knowledge that the rest of the community did not. However, he worked hard to set his newfound authority aside and demonstrate to study participants that they held power and control in their own right. Elisha confided that using this approach allowed him to gain the trusted position of knowledge broker for his community:

> *"One of the ways I [Elisha] put my power and authority aside was to appear simple to people, to make them feel that they are really important in our research. I told them that without them I am unsuccessful and that I rely on them….So showing them great respect"* (Interview, June 23, 2023).

> *"Elisha told me that because he hasn't changed his personality or attitude since working with me, as the community assumed would happen (i.e. that he would get a big head and become full of himself), that the community respects him and still feels comfortable with him. This has helped people feel more comfortable to let him observe them and for them to open up to him. He feels that the community knows he is acting in their best interests"* (Kelsey's Memo, April 27, 2023).

In reflecting on power dynamics and aiming to act in the best interests of his community, during many of our check-in's Elisha raised the issue of compensation for study participants. Based on my own previous engagement with the Nduta community I knew that they had been conditioned by extractive research practices to expect some kind of monetary or in-kind (e.g. t-shirts, backpacks, refreshments) payment for their participation in research. However, most KCP frameworks surprisingly omit the issue of compensation for participation, despite the fact that it is clearly related to the principle of reciprocity. Therefore, as I was short on resources and did not want to unduly influence study participants (MacKay, 2022), I had not budgeted for renumeration. Unfortunately, the expectation of individuals to voluntarily engage in the study did not sit well with Elisha or the study participants:

> *"The parents expressed their frustration with [the NGO], as they had been called for interviews and discussions more than four times in the past. They were not given any refreshments during these meetings, and they felt that they were not appreciated for their time and effort. They asked me [Elisha] whether it was a good thing to invite them and not offer them any kind of refreshment. I apologized to the parents and thanked them for attending the discussion. I*

> *explained that although they had participated in different meetings with [the NGO], they have only met us for one day, and this was the second meeting with us"* (Elisha's Memo, June 7, 2023).

This quote exemplifies frustrations among study participants at the lack of compensation and also illustrates research fatigue and the conflation of various research activities into a single continuous stream of engagement. While we tried to emphasize that our study was independent of organizational activities, many participants combined our work with other interviews and FGDs they had recently participated in. These unmet expectations and exhaustions clearly impacted interest and buy-in from the Nduta community to engage in the KCP process all together.

In parallel, extractive research practices have also conditioned the Nduta community to understand that their knowledge has particular value for researchers, and that they should benefit—personally and communally—from sharing their knowledge with others. Certain study participants were highly aware of the power dynamics of research activities and perceived their knowledge as a sought-after commodity that they themselves had invested in:

> *"As you have done this research with teachers and school club facilitators, I want to say that whoever shared with you some information on how we teach, he or she has done you a favor…Because for example when we were studying these skills and knowledge, we paid money [to learn them]…So, on my behalf I should not have said anything [to you] without something in return, because even the knowledge I shared with you, I paid for it"* (FGD, June 6, 2023).

To rectify the issue, Elisha and I decided it would be best to provide some form of compensation to study participants to show our appreciation of the value of their knowledge and engagement. Due to difficulties of sourcing physical items in this context, Elisha and I thought cash would be best. Though, as cash transfers were highly monitored by UNHCR and the Tanzanian authorities in the camp, we worked

with two Nduta community focal points to ensure individual study participants were equally and inconspicuously compensated at the end of data collection. Our decision was positively reinforced by messages of gratitude from study participants for our gesture of appreciation.

Towards the end of data collection, I also aimed to accomplish the KCP step of co-validation and shared control in data analysis. To do this, Elisha conducted FGDs without me present to share our preliminary findings with study participants and receive their comments and inputs. He was successful at obtaining participant feedback that confirmed some of our initial findings and helped us identify others. Though, through these discussions it became clear that despite Elisha gaining trust from the community, study participants still had apprehensions and expressed their desire to have control over how study findings were composed and disseminated.

For example, I made study participants aware that I intended to use this research to obtain my doctorate, as well as generate academic products (i.e. journal articles, book chapters, conference presentations). As a result, they had strong feelings about how we framed their narrative on an international stage. Specifically, many individuals were nervous about being portrayed in a negative light and the possible ramifications of this:

> *"As we are discussing how this data will help or be used to write journal articles or papers, my opinion is that there are some topics that should be excluded. For example if you publish or write journal papers saying that in the Nduta camp there is no education, and teachers are not teaching but instead they are working only for money, this can cause problems to us and other people who are in the Nduta camp when other people who are abroad and the Burundian government read them. So, my opinion is to select and publish something which are well corrected and positive"* (FGD, May 31, 2023).

Study participants were well aware of the impacts that research findings, and the way they are presented, can have on the continuation of humanitarian funding, services, and resources available to

refugee communities. Therefore, in recognizing the needs and context of these knowledge holders, it was imperative—both ethically and as a key principle of KCP—that Elisha and I deeply considered the potential effects of our research and ensure findings were aligned with the narrative desired by the community. While the Nduta community fought for control over the narrative that Elisha and I would ultimately tell, I struggled with the dual responsibilities of ensuring the academic integrity of the study and doing right by the community.

Finally, in addition to articulating their desire to have control in crafting the narrative of the study, participants recognized the opportunity to leverage the study findings for their own benefit and utilize the research platform to convey their own messages. For example, as mentioned previously many individuals expressed a desire for Elisha and me to showcase how difficult life was in the camp in order to receive external help and support. While the KCP principle of reciprocity can be interpreted in various ways, most often it is equated with ensuring research outcomes mutually benefit all research stakeholders. Though, instead of identifying these potential benefits together, the study participants and Elisha took control of this process without my involvement, as Elisha explained:

> *"They thought that maybe they should form a campaign to learn about how people should progress in living together, and how they should work together to improve the way they are treated in the camp. The research has given inspiration to a lot of people to think about what they can do to help the community"* (Interview, June 23, 2023).

Pleased that the study participants took some control and ownership of the study findings and research process to leverage it for their own perceived benefit, I aimed to tick off a few more KCP steps by sharing my dissertation chapter drafts with Elisha and the study participants for their review and contributions. These final co-validation steps resonated with the Nduta community and provided a sense of control and comfort that previous extractive experiences had not: *"We know that Kelsey has learned*

from Burundian culture. We are not expecting her to be manipulative as other researchers. She will tell our story well" (FGD, May 31, 2023).

These findings illustrate how Elisha and I navigated an unpredictable, imperfect, and circuitous KCP process. Although I tried to follow the steps, strategies, and principles commonly included in KCP frameworks, the geometries of control resulted in a messy and challenging process that rendered many of these strategies potentially extractive. Elisha and I eventually employed a situated ethics by responsively pivoting in many instances in order to address unexpected issues as they arose. Though, at the end of the research process I was left feeling that we had failed to co-produce knowledge because we didn't tick every box of the initial guidance. However, adhering to the prescriptive, institutionalized KCP steps and strategies seemed impossible and impractical; to do so would have violated the foundational ethics of care that KCP was originally built upon. In our final interview, when I posed this issue to Elisha he responded with the following:

> *"I am 100% sure that we equally generated the data findings. Because although we had different positions in the research team, we were all important in the research. You had your contribution and I had mine; I relied on you, and you relied on me. That is why I say we were equal. It shows that we equally generated the knowledge and findings, because we were collaborating in all study activities. I also felt that my contribution was valuable and appreciated, that is why I think we co-generated the knowledge and findings together"* (Interview, June 23, 2023).

Discussion

This critical analysis investigated the process of KCP with a refugee community by examining what worked and did not work well in the endeavor to follow institutionalized KCP guidance, and whether knowledge was in fact co-produced. The findings outlined above illustrate how the geometries of control that shape KCP are both established and navigated, and in-so-doing challenge guidance that presents KCP as a prescriptive and procedural methodology (Lokot & Wake, 2021; UNSW Kaldor

Center, 2023; Yua et al., 2022). Additionally, these findings problematize the assumptions surrounding KCP and the very notion of what KCP is or should be. In the realm of refugee studies, this analysis raises questions about the research ecosystem that influences the production of knowledge in contexts of displacement and extreme power imbalance. Expectations of conducting collaborative research on tight timelines, with few resources, and under the pressures of high academic standards complicates decisions researchers in these contexts make about the knowledge we generate, how we generate it, and what we do with it.

My own anxiety to avoid extractive research practices and the dominion of my knowledge system over others motivated my decision to employ a KCP approach. I was attracted to the transformative and emancipatory potential of KCP, underpinned by critical feminist and decolonial principles that aim to subvert power hierarchies, call for a plurality of voices in the research process, and encourage epistemically diverse forms of knowing and knowledge production. Indeed, these principles also align with the applied goals of the refugee studies discipline to generate positive change and address power inequities for displaced communities; tick and tick. However, while the Western academy introduced me to these principles and theories, the control regime it produced also prompted me to utilize institutionalized KCP frameworks that would allow me to adhere to the standards, requirements, and expectations set forth by my doctoral program and the larger academy. Additionally, it is likely that the pressures I put on myself due to the conditioning of this control regime, and my personal drive for acceptance by the academy, influenced my interpretation of KCP guidance, rendering it more rigid and procedural than its authors intended.

The findings outlined in this paper reveal my struggle to function within the control regimes produced by the Western academy and those that have institutionalized KCP, while trying to fulfil the feminist, decolonial, and refugee studies goals noted above. Indeed, the complex geometries, configured by affective, relational, resource, and decision-making devices of control, rendered a prescribed and procedural methodology of KCP nearly impossible to follow. The unpredictable and everyday encounters with these devices of control insisted that Elisha and I respond and negotiate in situated ways. While our

pivots were done in order to avoid extractive research practices and uphold an ethics of care, some were more successful than others. For example, in navigating affective control, I had made peace with my apprehensions about Elisha's authority over translation, yet my anxieties about maintaining the research agenda prohibited a genuine process of co-design. While I struggled to calm my concerns over stepping away from data collection, Elisha and I were able to negotiate relational control by recognizing that I was unable to establish authentic trusting relationships with study participants in a way that Elisha could. In navigating resource control, we deviated from the original research design to compensate study participants in an effort to uphold reciprocity, while recognizing participant perceptions of their knowledge as a valuable resource, of which they controlled the allocation. Finally, Elisha and I regularly negotiated decision-making control between ourselves (i.e. to compensate or not? to use open-ended questions or not? to reframe the study around community interests or not?) and study participants (i.e. who controls the narrative? what to share and what not to share?).

In aiming to determine if we did in fact co-produce knowledge, this critical analysis converges with critiques about 'ideal' and procedural forms of KCP, governed by logics of accountability and impact. These critiques contemplate whether structural and epistemic geometries of control serve to 'stream away' or mute the transformative and emancipatory potential of KCP and render institutionalized KCP an impossible or imaginary process (Herberg, 2019; McCabe et al., 2021; van der Hel, 2016). While findings from this critical analysis demonstrate that Elisha and I unequivocally fell short of most procedural KCP processes, and we certainly did not crack the collaboration-and-control conundrum, they give rise to the following questions: should Elisha's perception that we succeeded in co-producing knowledge be dismissed? did we in fact fail because we didn't stick to the procedures set out by institutionalized KCP? and, if so, does that then allow the Western academy and those who institutionalize KCP to retain distant forms of structural and epistemic control over the knowledge we generated?

Conclusion

The reflections offered in this paper bear testimony to the complex and imperfect nature of KCP, and collaborative research more broadly, in refugee contexts. They demonstrate how processes of collaboration across cultures, languages, and power hierarchies are messy and challenging, and illustrate how KCP is not a straightforward methodical procedure, but rather a relational and situated process of exploration and negotiation of power and control, shaped by assumptions, conditioning, and past experiences. They also offer insights into three core concerns related to KCP: a hyper-focus on power and a lack of consideration around control; the growing prevalence of institutionalized guidance on KCP that targets researchers working with displaced and crisis-affected communities; and the limited acknowledgement of alternative epistemic conceptualizations of collaborative knowledge production. Firstly, this paper highlights how KCP is rooted in feminist and decolonial principles, which aim to subvert geometries of power. However, obsession with subverting power geometries may blind researchers to the embedded issues of control. Without also addressing the geometries of control that shape and condition power relations in collaborative research, feminist and decolonial KCP efforts are limited and risk reinforcing the very power hierarchies they aim to address.

Secondly, desires to more effectively engage refugees in collaborative and applied research have prompted the creation of prescriptive methodological guidance constructed from an institutionalized and bureaucratic paradigm, concerned more with logics of accountability and impact than reciprocity and an ethics of care. The transformative, emancipatory, decolonial, and epistemically inclusive potentials of KCP with refugees remain, and my argument is not to throw the proverbial baby out with the bathwater. However, much existing KCP guidance is governed and ordered by the control regimes produced by the Western academy and Global North institutions. These control regimes have produced a problematic notion of ‘ideal’ KCP along with procedural steps and strategies to achieve that ideal. As demonstrated by this study, simply following these steps does not guarantee collaboration and may even result in extractive forms of research. Sticking to a rigid set of strategies may prevent critical reflection and analysis of the research process itself, which is necessary to help research teams situationally pivot and identify

collaborative ways forward that may fall outside of the original research design. Therefore, striving to execute institutionalized KCP may actually serve to dismiss productive research collaborations that do not tick every box of a KCP research design and reinforce structural and epistemic control over knowledge production.

This links to the final concern of narrow epistemic conceptualizations and applied understandings of what KCP is and how it should be done. Various scholars have put forth calls for the diversification of KCP approaches that move beyond idealized depictions and focus more on pragmatic benefits and transformative social change (Grabska, 2022; Jagganathan et al., 2020; Mach et al., 2020; Zurba et al., 2022). These calls challenge institutionalized ideas of what successful KCP looks like and encourage wider consideration of alternative epistemic conceptualizations of what collaborative knowledge production is and how it can be done. In this way, we can begin to move away from portraying the success of KCP as ticking off boxes in the research process and more towards the consideration of other factors, such as the perceptions and opinions of knowledge co-producers. Though, recognizing that institutionalized research guidance will remain pervasive, especially in refugee and humanitarian contexts where the hunger for data is at an all-time high, based on the reflections shared in this article I advocate for more nuanced and thoughtful guidance on collaborative and KCP methodologies in these contexts. Recognizing the feminist and decolonial roots of KCP; including discussions about relational and situated ethics; reflecting on personal experiences, conditioning, affective pressures, and anxieties; and acknowledging the control regimes that govern, order, and regulate KCP processes and configure the unpredictable and complex geometries of control that researchers will have to navigate are a start. In this way, these nuanced additions may prevent, or at least delay, the ‘streaming away’ of the transformative, emancipatory, decolonial, and epistemically inclusive potentials of KCP.

In writing this paper, I do not seek to justify any perceived failures in the KCP process or my complicity in upholding imbalanced power relations through devices of control. On the contrary, I seek to dissect it to understand it. Against this backdrop, questions arise of how KCP should be conceptualized and conducted. While this article has problematized these issues and the eagerness of researchers who

seek a roadmap that will allow them to easily and quickly engage in collaborative and applied research with refugees, KCP remains a methodology full of potential. It provides opportunities to position displaced communities as the drivers of knowledge production to ensure outputs result in tangible and meaningful changes aligned with community needs, desires, and values. However, the challenge for refugee studies scholars and applied researchers in these contexts is to not only reflexively grapple with their power and privilege, but also challenge the barriers to KCP posed by the control regimes produced by the Western academy and Global North institutions and acknowledge and navigate the geometries of control configured by these regimes that shape and influence relations of power throughout the research process.

CHAPTER 2

‘My child belongs to the NGOs’:

Social emotional learning as a racialized, neoliberal project in a refugee context

Abstract

The Education in Emergencies community positions the skilling of refugee and crisis-affected children as necessary for upholding the right to education, fulfilling the humanitarian imperative, and avoiding a ‘bleak and hopeless’ future for the world’s most vulnerable. Social emotional learning (SEL) has recently gained attention as a pedagogy with the potential to improve academic achievement, promote trauma-recovery, and help build resiliency for refugee and crisis-affected children. Drawing on 10 months of collaborative, ethnographic research with Burundian refugees in Tanzania, this article demonstrates how SEL is perceived by this community as a racialized and neoliberal project. Findings showcase how SEL serves to responsibilize individuals in displacement to cope with their adversity and strive for a ‘better’ future in the image of white-dominant and individualistic societies driven by neoliberal rationalities. While this study is a single example of the unintended consequences of SEL with refugees in sub-Saharan Africa, is exemplifies how skilling regimes like SEL are being operationalized, enacted, and contested in the battle for constructing childhoods in displacement and crisis contexts.

Introduction

On a cool, sunny morning in the Nduta refugee camp in Western Tanzania, teachers and children gathered outside in a child-friendly space (CFS). The red clay ground was slightly damp from the night’s rainfall and a light haze of smoke lingered in the air from nearby cooking fires. Four Burundian refugee pre-primary teachers gathered over 100 young children into a circle to open the school day. Using a mixture of French and Kirundi, one of the teachers asked “Do you like to sing?” and the children shouted, “Yes, we like to sing!”. In a pattern of call and response, the teachers and children chanted, “Early on Monday I went to school. I was happy because I was going to learn. When we are children, we are like small mice. But when we learn, we are like white people.”

Suddenly, the teachers and children bent down in unison and began patting their hands and knees in a rhythmic drumming. When the drumming concluded, the children ran towards a block of classrooms and formed three lines. One of the teachers then used a chime bell to lead the children in a mindfulness exercise. At each sound of the chime, the children silently moved their arms in a repetitive pattern: chime, up in the air; chime, out to the sides; chime, down towards the ground. After a few rounds, the teachers and children closed their eyes and took a few quiet breaths together. At the final sound of the chime, the children opened their eyes and ran into their respective classrooms to start the day's lessons.

What I and my research partner, Elisha, witnessed in these moments was the result of a pedagogical practice recently brought to the camp by non-governmental organizations (NGOs): social and emotional learning (SEL). SEL is commonly described, from a Global North[14] perspective, as the process of learning and applying social and emotional competencies, such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, and social problem-solving (CASEL, 2023). Over the last five years, this U.S.-centric interpretation of SEL has been taken up by governments globally in an effort to prepare their students for the cosmopolitan world market and to address the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (Marsay et al., 2021; Yorke et al., 2021).

Over the last thirty years, humanitarian actors have targeted refugee children with a range of skilling regimes (e.g. literacy, life skills, gender-equality, vocational training, empowerment activities) that have included elements of contemporary SEL. As a result, SEL is often conflated with other skilling approaches as there is significant overlap among them. For example, the most commonly-used SEL framework that has been widely taken up by the Education in Emergencies (EiE) community comes from the Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), which includes core and sub-skills in the areas of: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. This framework is nearly identical to the World Health Organization's Life Skills framework from the 1990s (WHO, 1999), which defines life skills as a set of psychosocial abilities

[14] In this chapter, 'Global North', and its corresponding term 'Western', are conceptualized as largely wealthy, white-dominant, North American, and Euro-centric contexts, cultures, practices, and beliefs.

for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. These frameworks are also highly aligned with the United States Agency for International Development's (USAID) SEL and Soft Skills Policy (2019), which utilizes the CASEL definition of SEL and explicitly links it to basic education, while considering 'soft skills' as a broad set of behaviors and personal qualities that contribute to youth workforce development and higher education.

Since the uptake of contemporary SEL by the EiE community, rhetoric has focused on academic achievement, future success, and the mental health and wellbeing of displaced and crisis-affected learners. For example, USAID maintains that conflicts and crises can create toxic levels of stress, which can negatively affect physical and mental health and cognitive development, thus impacting a person's ability to learn (Shivshanker et al. 2021, p. 3). This sentiment is often articulated alongside common portrayals of refugee children as deeply traumatized and lacking the skills and resources to manage the challenges of displacement and meet expectations of 'bouncing back' from adversity (UNESCO, 2019). Enter SEL, which has been positioned by EiE actors as having the potential to improve academic achievement and support psychosocial wellbeing, trauma-recovery, and resiliency for displaced and crisis-affected learners (INEE, 2018).

These narratives are ubiquitous in the EiE community and correspond with classic discourses on refugees, which depict displaced communities, and children in particular, as helpless victims deficient in the skills and behaviors valued by white-dominant societies in the Global North (Malkki, 1996; Rajaram, 2002). Critics of these trauma narratives, deficit discourses, and resiliency rhetoric contend that they serve to justify external humanitarian invention, position refugee children as at risk of deleterious life outcomes, and depoliticize the actions that put young people at risk in the first place (Shah, 2015). Drawing on this scholarship, I showcase how SEL in the context of the Nduta refugee camp serves to pathologize refugee children and reflects Western concerns and assumptions about childhood.

While critiques of SEL within the EiE community are limited, SEL is currently embroiled in heated debates related to race, equity, and social justice. Numerous critics conceptualize SEL as a pedagogical approach that privileges whiteness and serves to police and/or 'fix' non-white students

(Kaler-Jones, 2020; Strong & McMain, 2020). These arguments are bolstered by critiques of long-standing child rights and childhood studies discourses, inspired by Western, neoliberal values (Chibanda, 2015), that perpetuate dominant conceptualizations of the ubiquitous, normally developing, middle-class, white child located in the Euro-American and English-speaking nations of the Global North (Balagopalan, 2018; Holt & Holloway, 2006). Despite numerous critiques that demonstrate how this conceptualization of the ideal child—and childhood—is highly incompatible with African familial structures and the realistic lives of children in the Global South (Bourdillon & Musvosvi, 2014), I demonstrate how this racialized and neoliberal conceptualization of the 'universal child' is perpetuated by SEL programming in the Nduta camp.

Critiques of SEL are paralleled by wider disputes of life skills and soft skills programming targeting marginalized communities. For example, Urciuoli (2008) equates soft skills with Michel Foucault's (1988) 'technologies of the self', arguing that they fashion individuals as compatible with dominant institutions; establish the type of person valued by the privileged system; and demonstrate the willingness of individuals to 'play by the rules' in order to be accepted by the privileged system. Corresponding scholarship theorizes that soft skills are essential capacities for asserting the value of 'the person' and ascribe cosmopolitan qualities that reinforce the value of individualized persons who transcend local norms of conduct (Hizi, 2021). From this theoretical stance, I conceptualize SEL as a possible mechanism of cultural erasure through the individualization of a collectivist society, as well as a tool of governance that requires individuals to 'play by the rules' in order to survive.

These lines of discourse are intertwined with literature on 'affective labor', which illustrates how soft skills and life skills interventions aim to prepare marginalized individuals to not only obtain employment, but to do so by exhibiting behaviors and demeanors valued by white-dominant societies (Kikon & Karlsson, 2020). These efforts are often driven by aims of preparing individuals for a specific, idealized future, aligned with neoliberal rationalities and assumptions (Desai, 2020). This work is linked to scholarship that conceptualizes these skilling regimes as mechanisms to regulate childhood by determining what a 'normal' vs. 'abnormal' childhood looks like. In doing so, they responsibilize

marginalized children to overcome structural barriers that are the root causes of their perceived 'abnormal' childhoods and achieve an imaginary future of self-reliance aligned with white-dominant, middle-class, Global North standards of 'success' (James & Prout, 1997; Maithreyi, 2019; Shah et al., 2020). Drawing on this scholarship, I position SEL as device that not only aims to control children's behaviors and affects through emotional labor, but also employs 'the future' as a device of control (Rodríguez-Gómez, 2022) that aims to shape individual's expectations and aspirations for a future that is in tension with the uncertainty and structural violence they face.

While the scholarship outlined above provides important insights into the various functions of soft skills and life skills with marginalized groups, no such scholarship has applied this critical lens to SEL, and specifically not in a context of crisis and displacement. Thus, this article draws on the above scholarship and conceptual framing to examine a refugee community's experiences of and responses to SEL programming and discusses how they perceive such programming as a racialized and neoliberal project. Based on ten months of collaborative, ethnographic research with Burundian refugees in Tanzania, I show how approaches to SEL—rooted in an individualistic and neoliberal orientation—clash with the collectivist nature of the community and enact perceived cultural erasure. I also illustrate how the EiE community promotes SEL as imperative to 'saving' young, vulnerable refugee children from a 'bleak and hopeless' future. In doing so, I highlight how trauma narratives, deficit discourses, and resiliency rhetoric render skilling regimes like SEL critical to constructing normal, adaptable, and desirable childhoods aligned with Western values and neoliberal rationality. I demonstrate how such programming responsibilizes individuals in displacement to cope with and overcome their adversity and strive for a 'better' future in the image of 'modern', white-dominant, Global North societies. Finally, it is important to note that the findings below do not position traditional Burundian culture, practices, beliefs, and values as superior to all others or argue that they should remain unchanged. Rather they outline how SEL promotes white-dominant cultures, values, and practices as universal and superior to all others and perceptions among Nduta camp residents that their traditional cultural practices, social norms, and value system are being compromised and extinguished by SEL. I discuss these insights further in the following

sections, after first presenting a brief historical and situational account of skilling efforts in sub-Saharan Africa, an overview of the research context, and the study methodology.

Research Context

African children have been targeted by external skilling regimes throughout history. While sophisticated Indigenous educational systems existed across sub-Saharan Africa prior to colonization (Seroto, 2011), the intentional skilling of African children by external forces can be traced to the French and British colonial regimes. These regimes aimed to foster social and behavioral skills in African learners that would allow them to assimilate to European culture, while preparing them to take up subservient roles that upheld racial divides and served the best interests of the colonizer (Malisa & Missedja, 2019). Scholars like Curry (2009) argue that these skilling interventions were concerted efforts to 'deculturize' Africans while conditioning them to provide labor to Europeans.

As sub-Saharan Africa hosts over a quarter of the world's refugees, with nearly 60% being children (UN, 2022), it has been a significant test site for external humanitarian skilling regimes in displacement contexts, including SEL. This work is bolstered by Sustainable Development Goal 4: quality, equitable, and inclusive education and lifelong learning, which includes specific targets for crisis-affected children (UNESCO, 2015). SEL for refugee learners is also tied to the World Bank's Africa Human Capital Plan (HCP), which includes a workstream on preventing and reversing damage to efforts focused on developing human capital in settings affected by fragility, conflict, and violence (World Bank, 2023).

One particular population targeted by SEL programming has been the Burundian refugee community in Tanzania, with which this study was conducted. Like other countries in the Great Lakes Region of East Africa, Burundi has endured decades of violent conflict, including multiple genocides and a 12-year civil war. In 2015, the incumbent president, Pierre Nkurunziza, unconstitutionally declared he would seek a third term in office, sparking violent protests and a failed coup d'état. These actions plunged Burundi into chaos as opposition leaders fled the country, suspected government turncoats were

assassinated, and the violent, militarized youth wing of the ruling party—the Imbonerakure— raided the countryside, brutally torturing and killing hundreds along the way (HRW, 2017). During this time, more than 400,000 people fled Burundi, seeking refuge in neighboring countries (UNHCR, 2018). Many individuals have repatriated to Burundi over the years, though just over 131,000 Burundian refugees currently remain in Tanzania (UNHCR, 2024). This study engaged those living in the Nduta camp, where over 72,000 Burundian refugees lived at the time. Due to the cyclical violence in Burundi since the 1970s, most of these individuals have experienced multiple displacements throughout their lives, with many having been born as refugees in Tanzania, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The Nduta refugee camp has existed for decades, opening and closing with the influx of Burundian refugees from the 1970s to the 1990s and most recently 2015 (UNHCR, 2008). Conditions in the Nduta camp have been described as dire for the better part of a decade. Whole families squeeze into one-room dwellings constructed from a combination of branches, mud bricks, corrugated iron, and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) tarps; food rations are only half of what individuals need to survive; and risks of communicable diseases are high (MSF, 2023; WFP, 2023). In the dry season, red dust brings forth chronic respiratory infections for many. In the rainy season, constant dampness and hygiene difficulties amplify health problems. Reports of imprisonment, torture, and death upon returning to Burundi have spread fear across the Nduta community, preventing many from repatriating. This fear is compounded by rumors of political agents infiltrating the camp and reporting back to the Burundian government about its dissidents.

Recently, the Tanzanian authorities have enacted various policies in the camp to make the living situation even more adverse in order to pressure community members to repatriate to Burundi. This includes banning the practice of small-scale farming, which community members have done since 2015 to supplement their inadequate food supply. It also includes disallowing the use of bicycles to traverse the expansive terrain of the camp, making the collection of firewood, water, and other resources more strenuous and dangerous, as well as cracking down on material goods that NGOs can bring into the camp. The Tanzanian government is particularly strict on the encampment of Burundian refugees, as it has a

shared objective with the Burundian government to encourage their return. As refugee integration and self-reliance has been explicitly rejected as a policy objective, any space or intervention that allows refugees in Tanzania to develop their livelihoods and engage in economic activity has been discouraged (ReDSS, 2022).

SEL in Nduta

NGOs, UN agencies, and bilateral and multilateral donors have supported education and child protection activities in the Nduta camp since 2015. Despite UNHCR's policy recommendation to integrate refugee children into host-country education systems (UNHCR, 2019), children in Nduta are forcibly subjected to substandard education. Out-of-date Burundian curricula materials are used by refugee teachers and administrators to educate pre-primary through secondary school students in overcrowded, dilapidated classrooms with few resources. While most teachers and administrators have received prior certification in Burundi and/or training from NGOs in pedagogy, lesson planning, and classroom management, academic achievement among students in Nduta is low, school drop-out remains high, and the quality of education in the camps has been described as poor by both NGO workers and refugee teachers and parents (Dalrymple, 2018).

Parallel to the weak education system, a child protection structure also exists in the camp. UN agencies and NGOs train adults and children on issues related to child rights and safety, positive parenting practices, and how and where to report child rights violations. Professionally trained counselors are available to address child mental health concerns and psychosocial support (PSS) activities (e.g. music, dance, art, sports, crafts) are delivered in CFSs. Teachers receive regular training on how to support student psychosocial wellbeing and utilize referral systems if a child is in need of specialized services. While much of the day-to-day child protection and education work is done by NGO-trained Nduta community members, all activities are officially overseen and managed by Tanzanian NGO staff who have been trained by international staff members based largely in the Global North.

Training materials, project reports, and guidance documents show that elements of SEL have been mainstreamed through child protection activities in the Nduta camp since 2015, with the main goals of supporting wellbeing, trauma-recovery, and resilience. For example, positive parenting trainings include content related to building healthy relationships and positive communication skills; PSS manuals focus on emotional regulation and stress management; life skills materials incorporate content on positive decision-making; and various guidance documents note the importance of helping children to develop prosocial behaviors. NGOs responsible for education report introducing formalized SEL to the camp in 2017, targeting children at the pre-primary and primary levels, with the aims of improving academic achievement, supporting wellbeing, and contributing to future success. This has mainly included teacher trainings and the distribution of teacher resources, aligned with the CASEL framework. Formal SEL classroom methodologies include: games, songs, storytelling, mindfulness[15], emotional check-ins, and explicit skill-building and practice. While much of this content has been translated and cursorily contextualized, it is mostly based on core content and approaches generated in Europe and North America.

Methodology

Recognizing that SEL is a nuanced topic that is deeply connected to historical and contemporary social, economic, political, and cultural factors (Brush et al., 2022), I utilized a qualitative, collaborative, ethnographic research design. Additionally, as imbalanced power relations and extractive practices in refugee research have been widely documented and contested (Arat-Koç, 2020; Shah et al., 2023), I applied a knowledge co-production approach to this study (Lokot & Wake, 2021). Acknowledging that my positionality as a white, North American, female scholar and practitioner can result in the domination of subaltern knowledge systems, I aimed to decenter myself in the research process by working with a

[15] Often defined as awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally and is regularly used as a therapeutic technique to address stress and other mental health issues (Kabat-Zinn, 2003).

research team member from the Nduta community, Elisha, who identifies as a Black, male, Burundian refugee. Elisha and I worked closely together to revise central research questions, develop interview protocols, determine a sampling strategy, design a data collection schedule, and recruit study participants.

We collected data from October 2022 to July 2023. To gather detailed information on diverse perceptions and experiences, we utilized in-depth structured interviews and a stratified-purposive sampling strategy. In total, we interviewed 158 members of the Nduta community, including: teachers, headmasters, school inspectors, primary school students, out-of-school youth, school club facilitators and student participants, recreational and PSS programming facilitators and child participants, parents, community leaders, and community elders. We also interviewed 15 Tanzanian, and one European, NGO workers (16 total). This data complimented nearly 150 hours of participant observation, including: classroom instruction, recreational activities, teacher trainings, community meetings, and NGO meetings, as well as document review of over 140 items, including: teacher training manuals, curriculum materials, program strategies, policy documents, and monitoring and evaluation data.

Elisha and I both conducted preliminary inductive data analysis, based on general patterns we identified throughout the data collection process, to generate initial key themes (Saldaña, 2016). We then shared these themes with study participants through six voluntary co-validation focus group discussions with 79 individuals. Finally, we revised the initial key themes based on this process and conducted a more thorough analysis to develop descriptive memos, followed by analytical memos (Miles et al., 2020), related to culture, social norms, future expectations, race, and financial security. The insights from this analysis are discussed further in the following sections.

Findings

The 'need' for SEL: Trauma narratives, deficit discourse, and resiliency rhetoric

SEL approaches in the EiE community are often positioned as 'needed' to improve and maintain the mental health and wellbeing of learners. Most SEL-EiE guidance contains content related to the extreme trauma children can experience in displacement and crisis contexts and the short- and long-term

effects it can have on development, wellbeing, and learning (UNESCO, 2019). As a result, SEL has been advanced as having the potential to help children develop competencies that promote trauma recovery, psychosocial wellbeing, and resiliency (INEE, 2018). Though, these trauma narratives, deficit discourses, and resiliency rhetoric perpetuate racialized and neoliberal conceptualizations of how 'normal' children should conduct themselves and promote the responsibilizing of both children and educators to cope with and 'bounce back' from their psychosocial adversity and circumstance of displacement.

SEL materials used in the Nduta camp are strongly aligned with this rhetoric. Teacher guides and training materials feature lengthy descriptions of the importance of teacher and learner wellbeing, how trauma can cause stress, and the necessity of stress management and emotional regulation for both children and adults. In particular, these resources position wellbeing as a pre-requisite needed for learning, as one teacher guide articulates: *"Learners who are not well, do not learn well. Educators who are not well, do not teach to their fullest potential."* Similarly, child protection materials emphasize the variety of 'maladaptive behaviors' children can adopt due to conflict and displacement (i.e. depression, anger, regression, violence against others) and reason that with 'appropriate' support, children can overcome their trauma and stress. As one UNHCR guide used in the camp puts it: "*Nearly all children will show some changes in emotion, behaviour, thoughts and social relations in the short term in humanitarian settings…With the help of PSS [and SEL] programmes, the majority of children will regain normal functioning."*

This language positions refugee children as deficient in the competencies perceived—by the EiE community—as needed to cope with trauma and live life 'normally'. Indeed, this framing pathologizes crisis-affected children rather than viewing their behaviors as a normal response to an abnormal situation (Dehnel et al., 2022). Additionally, most SEL materials in Nduta contain content that renders children in need of external humanitarian support in order to achieve social and emotional equilibrium and restore their capacity for learning. However, this framing is in contrast with many attitudes across the Nduta community, as parent Akimana expressed:

> *"These organizations keep saying they are teaching our children to cope with stress so that they can learn. But they don't know what my child's life is like here; they come for some hours and go. There is nothing wrong with my child. Just because they think my child is stressed does not mean he does not have the capacity to learn."*

Regardless of community attitudes, the perception of SEL as 'needed' for children in the Nduta camp is pervasive among NGO workers who have been trained to understand social and emotional competencies as universally beneficial and necessary for all children. For instance, Education Officer Methusela shared: *"Knowing how to manage yourself, to control your emotions, to communicate with others…all children need to know these things, not just refugees."* Indeed, efforts to develop children in line with the racialized, Western conceptualization of the 'universal' child were overt. For example, many SEL materials used in Nduta were developed by institutions based in North America and Europe and were designed for use in public schools in those contexts. Images and drawings in these materials display white individuals in Western, middle-class living and learning conditions and contain no specialized content related to non-Western cultures or life in displacement. While one set of SEL materials intentionally developed illustrations to reflect the racial and cultural identities of the children in Nduta, in a teacher training on those materials we observed facilitators using language such as: *"This is a modern system of education. It takes a strong teacher to prepare lessons with play activities and songs like they do for white children in America."*

Additionally, the vignette presented at the beginning of this article is one example of the various instances we observed teachers casting learning, academic achievement, and 'appropriate' behavior as attributes of white-dominant societies. Other examples include teachers referring to me as the 'mzungu' or white person who came to observe their class, using language such as: *"Let us welcome our mzungu guest. Today show her how much you have learned. Then maybe one day you will know enough to be able to study with the mzungus in America"* and telling their students things like: *"You must behave*

yourselves. Do you think mzungu children fight and shout and disrespect their teachers like this where she [Kelsey] is from?"

While the explicit intention of much SEL programming in Nduta is to support children to cope with and overcome psychosocial adversity in order to learn, to do so children are expected to engage in emotional labor. That is, children are instructed to manage their negative behaviors, emotions, and stress responses and exhibit positive affects. For example, teacher training materials and educator guides include activities like "What am I Feeling?" and "What Makes Me Happy?" that aim to teach children how to restrain their impulses, keep calm, self-regulate, and use 'acceptable' ways of controlling negative emotions like anger, frustration, anxiety, and sadness. In following this guidance, we regularly observed a team teaching approach in pre-primary and primary school classrooms whereby one teacher led the lesson at the front of the classroom while the other teacher walked around the overcrowded classroom surveilling student behavior. This often included the teacher identifying children who were crying, fighting with others, or exhibiting other negatively-perceived emotions and behaviors and ushering them out of the classroom until they were ready to return with a more acceptable demeanor. When I asked Elisha what happened to the children outside of the classroom he mentioned that in his experience the teacher usually scolded the children for their behavior and instructed them to sit on their own until they were ready to return. While we never did observe what happened to children who were ushered outside of the learning space, it was clear that negatively-perceived emotions and behaviors in these classrooms were simply removed rather than addressed.

A wider view of wellbeing regards negative emotions as what is needed to motivate civic engagement in response to social injustices, inequities, and oppression (Strauss, 2021). However, we did not observe any SEL elements of restorative or social justice, or reflection on why children in Nduta may feel the way they feel or behave the way they do. In fact, there was no acknowledgement of the systemic factors and political events and actions that contributed to children's harsh circumstance of displacement and possible trauma in the first place. The lack of consideration for the part that structural issues (e.g. poverty, political persecution, displacement, encampment) play in the social and emotional behaviors of

children in Nduta translates them into perceived problems of individual development (Maithreyi, 2018). In doing so, SEL responsibilizes children in Nduta to overcome these structural disadvantages by adopting skills that will support them to cope with their psychosocial adversity and situation of displacement, rather than challenge it.

Pervasive resiliency rhetoric throughout SEL programming in Nduta also contributes to the responsibilizing of individuals by creating expectations for community members to 'bounce back' irrespective of the structural and every-day challenges they face (Shah et al., 2020). Additionally, based on statistical data that demonstrate how many displaced individuals will experience chronic poverty and adversity throughout their lives (Ferris, 2018), various SEL materials in the Nduta camp expound the importance of children developing resilience in order to cope with future hardship, as one program description frames it: "*Learning these skills helps children to overcome traumatic experiences and build resilience, which can help children return to routine, the normalcy of being a child, and to cope with future adversity*." Much of this content is operationally linked to stress-management activities like mindfulness.

As referenced at the beginning of this article, we observed various uses of mindfulness in classroom activities. For example, we saw the use of mindful movement to control student behavior. The activity Zip-Up—whereby students suck in their breath and hold it while pulling up an invisible zipper from their toes to the top of their heads, then forcefully releasing their breath in a *whoosh!* while dragging the invisible zipper back down—was a popular choice. We also observed the use of mindful breathing as a way to calm students before the start of lessons. Numerous exercises required children to stand or sit still, close their eyes, and breathe slowly for a few seconds in time with a chime bell, or alternatively breath in time with a Hoberman Sphere that the teacher would rhythmically expand and contract. While teachers in Nduta widely acknowledged their use of mindfulness as a classroom management tool, most teachers also reported perceived psychosocial benefits, as teacher Chantal shared: *"Mindfulness helps*

children to forget their problems. When they come to the CFS they are happy and forget the negative things at home and the difficulties in the camp."[16]

We also observed the use of mindfulness in a teacher training module on educator wellbeing, whereby a facilitator led a deep breathing exercise. Numerous other stress-reduction techniques were discussed and their importance was punctuated by two activities. The first included a facilitator presenting a clear plastic bottle filled with water and some dirt, shaking up the bottle, and explaining that when you are stressed your mind looks like the dirty water; cloudy and lacking clarity. As the dirt settled to the bottom of the bottle, the facilitator explained that with mindfulness and stress-management, the mind is able to function 'normally' again, which allows teachers to teach better and learners to learn better. This was followed by the second activity, which involved two facilitators throwing numerous balloons into the air and instructing the teachers to not let any balloons touch the floor. Upon completion of the activity, one facilitator explained: *"The balloons represented challenges that impact teacher and student wellbeing and it is the responsibility of teachers to identify solutions to them."*

These findings demonstrate the nuanced functions of trauma narratives, deficit discourses, and resiliency rhetoric embedded in SEL programming in the Nduta camp. The racialized and neoliberal image of the universal child and ideal childhood is omnipresent throughout. This is evident in depictions of how 'normal' children should behave, emote, and live, as well as by teachers and facilitators internalizing the strive for 'modern' education and learning, aligned with white-dominant societies. Additionally, SEL in Nduta plainly promotes the responsibilizing of both children and educators to cope with and 'bounce back' from their circumstance of displacement. SEL components like mindfulness are used as tools to forget or ignore adverse living conditions and calm perceived negative responses to them, rather than reflecting on and challenging them. However, contrasting attitudes across community members dispute these expectations and the positioning of children as traumatized and deficient in the

[16] It is acknowledged that this response may have been due to social desirability bias and the teacher telling us what we wanted to hear. Though, this sentiment was pervasive among pre-primary teachers who used mindfulness in the classroom.

skills needed to cope and learn. Furthermore, the glossing over of structural barriers and every-day challenges is not lost on the Nduta community. Many individuals are highly aware of the racialized and neoliberal assumptions underpinning SEL programming and challenge the expectations of individual responsibility to overcome structural barriers, manage their own precarity, and 'regain normal functioning', as teacher and parent Rukundo articulated:

> *"These NGOs bring behaviors for our children to adopt while the condition of living in Nduta is different from the way white people live. For example, in our community a child must go to look for water before they bathe, but in the countries of white people a child uses a showerhead to receive a continuous stream of water. The child in Nduta may not even be able to bathe at all. So if you want to teach these two children the same thing in the same way, the child in Nduta will get many problems because the conditions are not the same. These NGOs are influencing the way children [in Nduta] are developing today, because they organize what they want us to learn and how they want us to learn without having analyzed the living condition we are going through*."

Individualizing the collective

Similar to life skills and soft skills (DeJaeghere, 2022; Maithreyi, 2018), the dominant conceptualization of SEL is rooted in a neoliberal, individualistic orientation that positions young people as being able to learn specific competencies and use them to achieve desired outcomes (INEE, 2018). However, this orientation is in opposition to the collectivist nature of the Nduta community. The CASEL framework has evolved over time to express a more collectivist ethos. However, the SEL materials utilized in the Nduta camp draw on older versions of the CASEL framework that have an explicit focus on skills-building for individual success.

Training materials, program guides, and parenting and teaching resources in Nduta all reiterate how mastering social and emotional competencies prepares children for school, work, and future life by giving them the skills they need to individually succeed. While social skills (i.e. communication,

collaboration, cooperation, empathy) feature heavily in all materials, they are framed as necessary competencies for individuals to possess in order to be accepted by their communities; a requisite for their personal success, not for the greater good of the community. While this framing emphasizes the importance of relationships, it ignores the relational worldview embedded in many African communities (Le Grange, 2012) and does not consider how individuals learn, live, and express these skills in relation to others and their environment (DeJaeghere, 2022).

The absence of a relational approach to SEL in the Nduta camp is in stark contrast with the African concept of *ubuntu*—the notion that humanity is expressed in relation to others (Ogude & Dyer, 2019), and the Burundian concept of *ubushingantahe*—a set of values that one embodies including integrity, trustworthiness, justice, and tolerance (Rwantabagu, 2010). These concepts are explicitly embedded in the Burundian education system through its Formation Civique et Humain (FCH) and Formation Patriotique et Humain (FPH) curricula. FCH and FPH courses are taught throughout primary and secondary school to equip Burundian students with a variety of social, emotional, and life skills in order to create healthy and responsible citizens, work towards social cohesion, prevent future conflict, and instill and maintain the values of *ubuntu* and *ubushingantahe*. Though, when asked if they were aware of the FCH and FPH courses, all interviewed NGO workers delivering SEL in Nduta confirmed they were not. Similarly, only two NGO workers who had grown up in locations close to Burundi had heard of the notion of *ubushingantahe*, though confirmed it had not been factored into their SEL programming.

SEL experts acknowledge that culture and values systems play a large role in how children learn and express social and emotional competencies (Brush et al., 2022). However, as is common in many skilling initiatives (DeJaeghere, 2022), the values and beliefs implicit in SEL programming in Nduta are influenced by Western, neoliberal discourses of what young people should be and do in order to 'live life well'. For example, activity cards designed for teachers to use in lesson planning specifically aim to help children develop the competencies of self-control, self-realization, self-confidence, and self-worth. Activities like "What am I Feeling?", "I Can Do Hard Things", and "What Makes Me Happy" reinforce inward reflection and self-regulation. While most NGO workers described lightly contextualizing their

SEL materials, respondents mostly outlined translation activities and the integration of local songs and games; the core content and implicit values remained aligned with a non-relational and individualistic approach to SEL.

These opposing individualistic and collectivist philosophies resulted in various tensions throughout the Nduta community. In schools, this was observed in teacher attitudes and practices. The most common pedagogical practices in Nduta, particularly at the primary and pre-primary levels, are whole-class choral reading, call and response, storytelling, and scenario-based lessons. However, in teacher trainings that we observed, group work and pair work were highly emphasized. For example, trainers routinely role played with participants by splitting them into teams to play learning games, to compose and perform a drama/play, or design and deliver a lesson plan; dividing them into pairs to complete tasks like building a stable tower from blocks, separating a list of foods into nutritional categories, or drawing a map of their community or classroom; and rotating participants from group to group for various tasks to encourage integrated learning. While educators in Nduta prioritize teaching their students skills that foster the values of cooperation and collaboration, the idea of group and pair work did not sit well with them for two reasons.

First, as most classrooms have upwards of 100+ students, teachers reported that team-teaching was the most effective classroom management approach. Second, by teaching the whole class together, teachers could ensure all students were learning the same content at the same time in a collective manner, which supported the inclusion of all students and fostered a sense of classroom community. By splitting the students into smaller groups or pairs, teachers worried that they would not only lose control of the classroom, but that they would also lose a sense of connection with their students. This was articulated by teacher Nzoyikorera: *"If I put my students into groups, I will not be able to spend enough time with each group. The lesson is too short, which means some children will be excluded in the activity."* Unsurprisingly, in classroom observations we saw the use of collaborative group work only five times and never witnessed the use of pair work.

While not unique to the Nduta context, another key tension observed in the school context, as well as the family context and larger Nduta community, was the perceived deterioration of child behavior. Respect and discipline, which white-dominant, Western societies increasingly associate with obedience and compliance (Jukes et al., 2018), have largely been eliminated from SEL approaches in favor of competencies like self-confidence and critical thinking. However, for the Nduta community, respect and discipline are highly valued and form the foundation of *ubushingantahe*.

Numerous parents, teachers, and community members expressed their frustration that children in the camp are becoming overly confident as a result of NGO programming. For example, in a recreational program with a significant SEL component, we observed children being encouraged to express themselves, communicate their feelings, and advocate for their rights and wellbeing. In teacher trainings, we regularly observed trainers instructing teachers to encourage students to ask questions, think more critically, lead activities, and speak up more in lessons. In a master training for facilitators of a gender-transformative youth life skills program with a significant SEL component, one energetic trainer expounded the importance of youth—and particularly girls—becoming more confident, standing up for themselves and each other, claiming their individual rights, and challenging traditional gender norms. Though, parents blamed this programming for emboldening children to come home late, skip school, defy parents, talk back to teachers, and challenge community elders.

In the community, Elisha witnessed many occasions of children engaging with adults in ways perceived as in appropriate. For example, at an event where NGO staff were distributing buckets of toiletries to adolescent girls, Elisha observed a young girl cut through the long line and return to the distribution table to alert a staff member that she was missing an item from her bucket. This unusual display of confidence and self-advocacy was in direct contradiction to the social etiquette of Burundian culture and the practices of ‘waiting your turn’ and ‘respecting your elders’. Violating these social norms and pointing out the mistake of her elder in a public way was perceived as a show of great disrespect and resulted in the girl being aggressively chastised by surrounding adults, which then led to her tearfully apologizing to the staff member while kneeling on the ground in front of the crowd.

These examples illustrate the rising frustration and anxiety among Nduta community members about changing child behaviors. While these changes are likely the result of a combination of factors, the intentional behavior modification element of SEL in Nduta implies a strong connection between NGO programming with significant SEL components and perceptions and observations of increased child behaviors that defy traditional Burundian rules of social conduct. Additionally, sentiments about how these evolving behaviors were connected to the larger issue of cultural erasure and racial oppression were prevalent among study participants, as shared by teacher and parent Nishimwe:

> *"The way these organizations want us to teach children [here] is like the way they teach white children in other countries. Children there speak to anyone they want, they can talk to a child and an elder in the same way. But that is not how it is done in our tradition. To speak to an elder the way you speak to a child is very disrespectful. I think these organizations want to change our culture to be more like the white people. I worry that Burundian culture will disappear*."

This relates to a third tension observed in both school and community settings. Most SEL content in Nduta is accompanied by messaging about child rights and positive discipline strategies, which ban corporal punishment. Teachers in Nduta are required to sign a code of conduct agreeing not to use corporal punishment, which is also stipulated as a means for the termination of their employment. In teacher trainings, we observed various modules on positive discipline practices. Often a trainer would describe the negative consequences of corporal punishment (i.e. physical injury, psychological trauma, poor academic achievement) and the benefits of positive discipline (i.e. establishment of positive student-teacher relationships, improved classroom environment, child wellbeing, and academic achievement). Trainers also demonstrated strategies of positive discipline through role plays by asking a training participant to play the role of a disruptive child—which many participants eagerly volunteered for as a cathartic outlet— and then demonstrating how to: not yell at the child, but speak calmly and respectfully; to bend down to the child's level and give them full attention; to ask the child why they were being

disruptive in order to understand and address their behavior; and to never physically hurt a child but rather beckon them to a quieter area outside of the classroom in order to not embarrass them in front of the rest of the students. While these strategies were not new to the teachers, Elisha and I observed many of them rolling their eyes, laughing under their breath, and feigning disbelief that these strategies would work in their classrooms, which were incredibly overcrowded and under-resourced. Despite numerous attempts from trainer to position positive discipline as a more effective and efficient classroom management strategy compared to corporal punishment, in interviews with teachers and school administrators corporal punishment remained the preferred approach.

Additionally, corporal punishment is also highly valued by the Nduta community as it is perceived by many as a way of caring for children and a necessary means of fostering discipline and respect. Corporal punishment is highly tied to the Burundian idiom '*umwana si uwumwe*' meaning that 'a child does not belong to one person' but to the community (Rwantabagu, 2010). Like many African societies, the Nduta community associates this sentiment with bestowing authority on all adults to care for, teach, and protect children, regardless of biological relation. However, many adult study participants articulated feelings that these beliefs and practices are fading away due to the ban on corporal punishment and increased child confidence.

Parents in a FGD expressed that adults no longer have power over children as they are becoming more unruly, disobedient, and aggressive. They described how children are now emboldened to physically strike them back in the name of asserting their rights, or report adults to NGOs if they use corporal punishment or simply ask a child to do something they don't want to do. As a result, many community members no longer feel a responsibility towards children that are not their own or are apprehensive to intervene due to fears of being reported. This feeling of lacking control, power, and responsibility was summed up by teacher and parent Innocent: *"In the camp, a child neither belongs to their parents, nor teachers, nor the community; they now belong to the NGOs."*

While I do not maintain superiority of a collectivist society over an individualistic one, promote the use of corporal punishment, or disagree with the basic tenets of child rights, the above examples

demonstrate how the conflicting individualistic approach to SEL and the collectivist ethos of the Nduta community are resulting in various tensions related to pedagogical practices, child behavior, relationships between children and adults, and communal child-rearing practices. By prioritizing the 'self' over the collective and ignoring the relational worldview of the Nduta community, SEL programming is resulting in perceived cultural erasure and anxieties about the future of Burundi, as expressed by teacher and parent Bikorimana:

> *"50 years from now, [Burundi] will be in bad situation because it will no longer have people who know how to fix and organize things in a culturally acceptable way, and there will no longer be people who have Burundian cultural discipline. There will only be people who do not know to respect. They will act the way they want on their own behalf and not care about their community."*

Preparing young people for what?

Along with supporting the mental health and wellbeing of learners, SEL in the EiE community is highly focused on helping students to excel academically and preparing them for a 'healthy and productive' future. However, various scholars have demonstrated how education and skilling regimes in refugee contexts influence aspirations and hopes for an imagined future that ignores structural barriers and is largely disconnected from reality (Dryden-Peterson & Horst, 2023; Poole & Riggan, 2020). SEL programming in Nduta is no different. With plenty of language related to learning skills that are 'essential' for future success, SEL training guides and teaching materials emphasize the importance of a growth mindset, setting future goals, imagining a future of one's own design, and creating a more 'hopeful' future for the children in Nduta. However, attitudes about children's futures are not homogenous across the Nduta community, which manifests in various ways.

Opinions are largely split between a small faction of more educated and progressive individuals and a larger group on the other end of the educational and socio-political spectrum. For example, school

inspectors and older and younger university-educated teachers and parents largely agree that, despite coming from the Global North, school-based SEL is a promising pedagogy that can contribute to Burundi's progress. Rather than viewing SEL as an external practice being forced upon them, they embrace it as a form of international development that they believe will position their students as competitive in a cosmopolitan, global world market, as school inspector Ndizeye expressed: *"The way we are teaching students here is matching what students are learning around the world…[SEL] is not a form of colonization, it is a form of development."*

While these individuals demonstrated their own growth mindsets by envisioning a future beyond the Nduta camp—one where children would find safety, security, and opportunities in Burundi, they were also realistic about the likely life children will return to if they repatriate. For example, there is a recognition among all adult study participants that employment in Burundi is severely limited, especially for returned refugees who are often discriminated against due to perceptions of them as political dissidents. As a result, we observed Burundian teacher trainers translating and adapting SEL content in ways that made more contextual sense. For example, when describing the skill of 'creativity', which the SEL materials define as *"the ability to come up with new solutions for future problems",* the trainers instead framed it as the ability to be entrepreneurial and identify various paths to income generation. When discussing the concept of 'inclusivity', which the SEL materials framed as "*ensuring the participation of all students regardless of ability*", the trainers translated it as the ideal of social cohesion and fostering a sense of community and togetherness in the classroom. In so doing, they equated the notion of inclusiveness with concepts and language teachers were already familiar with in the FCH and FPH curricula.

Conversely, more conservative parents, teachers, and community members with fewer years of education expressed their worry that SEL programming in Nduta is not teaching children the skills needed for their realistic futures. In life outside of displacement, the majority of Nduta residents live rural, agrarian lifestyles dependent on physical labor and whole family participation. As such, many study

participants perceive SEL as a project aiming to 'soften' the children of Nduta and mold them in the image of individualistic, white-dominant societies. For example, teacher and parent Kamikazi shared:

> *"White people are bringing new behaviors to the camp that make children want to live a soft life. They are killing our new generation because our community needs everyone to work hard in order to eat. This is where we lose our culture and adopt the one of white people*."

Adding nuance to these polarized opinions, children and youth across Nduta expressed attitudes of uncertainty about their future. Older youth articulated frustrations at Tanzania's strict encampment policy, which severely limits their options for educational matriculation, vocational experience, and income generation. As secondary school graduate Bigirimana shared, this has resulted in not only frustration, but also feelings of despondence about future possibilities: "*Because we are not allowed into the host-community, we are in a bad situation of not being able to learn or participate in selling, farming, or breeding. So how can I answer about my future when I am unable to do anything today?*" Younger children conveyed more hope about their future goals and expressed desires to become doctors, teachers, musicians, and government workers. But when asked where they wanted to perform these occupations, most children expressed uncertainty about their lengths of displacement, as exemplified by primary school student Kwizera: "*I can be a doctor here in the camp or outside of the camp, or maybe in another camp in a different place. I don't know where I will be, so I will have to be a doctor wherever I am."*

Despite these expressed anxieties and uncertainties, we observed an attitude of ambivalence across teachers. For example, when asked if any school inspectors pushed back or challenged SEL programming during their Training of Trainers, NGO workers reported no such issues, but rather a positive embrace of the pedagogy. Likewise, while we observed clarifying questions during the cascaded teacher training, we witnessed no challenge or pushback from teachers about integrating SEL into their classrooms. However, in confidential spaces, numerous teachers confided in Elisha that they were frustrated with certain elements of the pedagogy. For example, group work and classroom arrangements

led to unruly student behavior, integrating SEL activities into daily lesson plans took extra time and effort, and they felt that SEL activities took time away from more important academic content. However, these frustrations were rarely seen or expressed during classroom observations.

These attitudes of ambivalence also resulted in performative compliance. Teachers in Nduta are well aware of the precarity of their employment. Teaching is one of the few salaried opportunities available in the camp, and for every employed teacher there are ten community members eager to fill their position. As performance is tied to job retention, teachers have been conditioned to 'perform' what is expected by NGOs in order to remain employed. Thus, regardless of whether teachers view SEL as having any real positive or negative impact on their students' current and future lives, they perform it as required. I myself experienced this numerous times when observing classroom lessons, as teachers regurgitated the language, activities, and games they knew I had observed them learn in trainings. In almost every primary school lesson I observed, I witnessed the same activity whereby students were split into teams and asked to write on the chalkboard a food falling into a certain nutritional group; almost word for word as the trainers had done. I also observed various attempts at positive discipline—a team teacher bending down to a student's level and asking what the problem is— before eventually ushering the student out of the classroom beyond my watchful gaze.

This is not to say that teachers do not care about the impacts of their teaching on their students. On the contrary, numerous educators expressed deep affection for their students and desires to support their learning and development. However, as different pedagogies enter the camp with every new project, teachers are forced to grapple with new expectations, required actions, and content that they must shoehorn into their daily lessons. Indeed, educators in Nduta are well aware of the game they must play in order to retain their jobs, and regard SEL as just one pedagogy in a long line of those that have come before and those that will come after. This sentiment was felt at the beginning of numerous observations when teachers would ask Elisha, "*What kind of teaching do you want to observe today?*"

These findings extend scholarship that documents how those living in precarious circumstances of displacement must navigate the clashing temporalities of surviving the present while planning ahead in

a context where those designing and delivering humanitarian and development services, and those receiving them, envision very different futures (Brun, 2016; Rodríguez-Gómez, 2022). This is reflected in the case of SEL in the Nduta camp, where the rhetoric of SEL promotes an idealized future where anything is possible despite the structural and every-day barriers that restrict geographic, social, and economic mobility. While I do not argue that refugee children should not have access to education and educators that prepare them for a variety of future possibilities and opportunities and encourages them to have goals and ambition, language that necessitates the development of social and emotional skills for a 'successful' future are predicated on neoliberal rationalities and assumptions about what access to resources and opportunities children in Nduta will have throughout their lives. While some community members embrace SEL as contributing to positive societal development and progress, others view it as a tool of cultural erasure and control that is preparing children for an unrealistic life ahead. Though, despite pervasive feelings of frustration, anxiety, and uncertainty about what is to come, educators tasked with delivering SEL performatively comply in order to secure economic stability as they navigate their unsettled futures.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates that the Burundian refugee community in Tanzania conceptualizes and experiences SEL as a racialized, neoliberal project that is significantly influencing traditional child development, teaching, and learning practices. Tensions resulting from the individualistic nature of SEL are manifesting in changing child behaviors, child-adult relationships, and communal child-rearing practices that are not aligned with the traditional values of *ubuntu* and *ubushinganahe*. While some community members view these changes as a potential path to progress, others perceive it as a harbinger of cultural erasure, akin to the racially deculturizing efforts of colonial regimes from decades past.

Additionally, the trauma narratives, deficit discourses, and resiliency rhetoric embedded in SEL promote a particular view of wellbeing and normality based on neoliberal values, the racialized ideal of the universal child, and the strengthening of individual traits that are seen as protective against the

continued adversities these children will likely face. In parallel, SEL becomes a discursive technology used to train and responsibilize individuals to cope with, ignore, and overcome their psychosocial adversity, situations of displacement, and the structural disadvantages that accompany and compound it. Problematically, this promotion of individual resilience becomes a tool of neoliberal governmentality by placing the burden of displacement onto the shoulders of the Nduta community.

Finally, this study reveals that children in the Nduta camp have become the subjects of NGOs endeavoring to correct their perceived deficits, aid in trauma-recovery, build resiliency, and help them develop in the image of the white-dominant, Western societies where their SEL programming hails from. While most NGO workers believe that they are providing children with universal skills that will allow them to have a 'better' and more 'hopeful' future, these perceptions clearly contradict the lived realities and uncertain futures of children in Nduta. Furthermore, this study highlights how those required to deliver SEL in Nduta both culturally translate and ambivalently perform it; exercising technologies of the self to 'play by the rules' in order to be accepted by the privileged system. In this way, SEL functions as a mechanism to 'fix', regulate, and control displaced individuals, and a critical tool in the construction of 'normal', adaptable, and desirable childhoods aligned with white-dominant, middle-class, Western values and neoliberal rationalities.

CHAPTER 3

Erasing Our Humanity:

Moral Education and Generational Fractures in the Nduta Refugee Camp

Abstract

This paper explores influences on moral development in Burundi and with Burundian refugees in Tanzania, particularly focusing on processes of values imposition through colonization and modern humanitarian intervention. Prior to colonization, the indigenous concepts of *ubuntu* and *ubushingantahe* emphasized communitarian values and interdependence. However, colonization and evangelism disrupted the traditional Burundian moral order by imposing Western values. Today, humanitarian aid programs continue this legacy by promoting Western values through interventions such as social emotional learning (SEL). Despite SEL's purported focus on skills rather than values, it serves as a mechanism for transmitting particular values, attitudes, and characteristics to crisis-affected communities. Through ethnographic research with Burundian refugees in Tanzania, this study reveals how refugee camps function as microcosms with unique processes of socio-cultural and moral transformation. Findings illustrate SEL's role in these processes and its contribution to the perceived erosion of traditional values and the moral decay of the younger generation. Interviews and field observations highlight shifts and fractures in intergenerational relationships and moral obligations, as Western values promoted through SEL supplant the existing moral order in the Nduta refugee camp. As a result, the older generation fears the loss of cultural identity and the essence of humanity among its younger counterparts.

Introduction

Prior to colonization, moral development in sub-Saharan Africa was conceptualized through the relational and communitarian notion of *ubuntu*, the belief that humanity exists only through others (Metz & Gaie, 2010; Ogude & Dyer, 2019). Through counsel, proverbs, folktales, and leading by example, parents and community elders aimed to instill in children the values of community, family, social justice, respect, solidarity, and environmental protection for the benefit of the present and future generations (Le

Grange, 2012; Venter, 2004). This indigenous approach to moral development across sub-Saharan Africa was deeply impacted by colonization, which was viewed as a vehicle for the *civilization* and *moral progress* of African societies (Malisa & Missedja, 2019). Various scholars demonstrate how colonial forms of moral education functioned as tools of cultural imperialism, forced assimilation, and social control (Obiagu, 2023; Swartz, 2011). Colonization has also been widely condemned by African scholars for the moral corruption of their societies and the gradual loss of peace-enhancing values, which has resulted in cyclical violence across the continent (Nduka, 1980; Rwantabagu, 2003).

These processes of erasure are not limited to historical colonization. Extensive literature illuminates how the contemporary humanitarian industry is an extension of the colonial project. Despite its seemingly compassionate intentions, numerous scholars reveal how humanitarian aid functions as a tool of governance, subjugation, and control of vulnerable populations (Barnett, 2012; Piotukh, 2015). They argue that the spread of 'universal' norms through humanitarian intervention may be a dangerous triumph of liberal-market democracy and global governance techniques that can be used to reorient societies towards Western values (Duffield, 2002; F. Fox, 2001).

While the term 'morality' is largely absent from humanitarian programming, instilling particular values across crisis-affected communities is common practice (Barnett, 2017; Peak, 2020; van Leeuwen, 2015; Wilkinson & Tomalin, 2023). For example, child rights rhetoric, women's empowerment, and life skills interventions have all propagated the value systems of Europe and North America (Davey et al., 2013; Jayawickrama, 2018). Indeed, understandings of 'right' and 'wrong' and expectations of 'appropriate' self-conduct have been transferred through the hidden curricula of humanitarian interventions for decades, often rooted in Western individualistic paradigms that do not align with the more collectivist ethos prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa (Barnett, 2011; Calhoun, 2008).

A recently popularized humanitarian intervention is social emotional learning (SEL). SEL is a largely Western pedagogy and is commonly understood as the process of learning and applying social and emotional competencies, such as self-awareness, emotional regulation, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2023). SEL experts maintain that moral education focuses on values inculcation, while SEL is

preoccupied with skills and attitudes (Elias et al., 2014). Though, scholars like Greene (2019) have highlighted the moral and religious roots of SEL, showcasing how it deeply influences the codes of ethics, values, and socio-cultural norms that children are expected to abide.

Drawing on 10 months of ethnographic research with Burundian refugees in Tanzania, this paper demonstrates SEL's function as a form of moral education and its role in processes of socio-cultural and moral transformation unique to the microcosm of the refugee camp. Findings illustrate how the neocolonial imposition of Western values through humanitarian SEL in this context is contributing to the perceived moral decay of the younger generation and exacerbating generational fractures. Interviews, observations, and document review show how the restructuring of the moral order in the Nduta camp is stripping adults of power and authority, thus reshaping child-adult relationships, roles and responsibilities of elders in the moral development of youth, and moral obligations to ensure the wellbeing of future generations to come. While youth in the Nduta camp navigate these shifting moral boundaries, the older generation fears that the decline of traditional Burundian values and communitarian ethics has initiated the erasure of not just their culture, but the essence of their humanity. Finally, it is important to note that the findings below do not position the traditional Burundian value system and moral order as superior to all others or argue that they should remain unchanged. Rather, they demonstrate how the values promoted through SEL are often positioned as universal and superior to alternative, traditional, local, and/or anachronistic values and detail perceptions among Nduta camp residents that their traditional cultural practices, social norms, and value system are being compromised and erased by SEL.

This chapter contributes to scholarship at the crossroads of anthropology and refugee studies that conceptualizes crisis and displacement as a socio-cultural conditioner. Findings also extend historical and contemporary discourses about colonial and neocolonial processes of Westernization and values imposition through humanitarian intervention. This work also challenges the positioning of SEL, and similar humanitarian skilling regimes, in the Comparative and International Education (CIE)—and Education in Emergencies (EiE)—literature, by illustrating how it functions as a form of moral education and perpetuates a universal Kantian ethics that is mirrored by the larger humanitarian project. Finally,

while the generation gap has been documented and explored in a variety of areas and contexts (Alber et al., 2008; Boubakar, 1985; Herrera, 1972; Le Vine, 1968; Patil, 2014), there is limited scholarship examining the influence of displacement and humanitarian intervention on generational connections and conflicts (Kalocsányiová et al., 2024; Tize, 2022; Turner, 2001). The findings in this chapter address this dearth by exploring the role of humanitarian SEL programming in generational detachment in the Nduta refugee camp in Tanzania.

Moral Education in Burundi

Moral education and development in Burundi has traditionally been guided by the principles of *ubuntu* and *ubushingantah*e. *Ubushingantahe* is a Burundian concept commonly understood to be a set of values and characteristics that an individual strives to embody and enact. These include: righteousness, sociability, sagacity, compassion, self-control, responsibility, honesty, discretion, hospitality, fairness, sincerity, justice, fidelity, transparency, tolerance, etc. (Nshimayezu, 2023).

The concept of *ubushingantahe* stems from the institution of *Bashingantahe*, a council of elders (traditionally men), which has three primary functions: moral, social, and political. In the moral function, *bashingantahe*[17] serve as models of the values of *ubushingantahe* and are responsible for passing them on to the next generation. In the social function, they are instrumental in dispute and conflict resolution and stand for peace, justice, and solidarity within the community. In the political function, they act as representatives of their local community and also advise monarchs—now presidents—on important matters (Nindorera, 2003). In this sense, *bashingantahe* have a moral and social responsibility to their communities and have historically been the guardians of tradition, culture, good behavior, peace, and harmony (Buszka, 2019).

[17] While *Bashingantahe* is the council of elders, *bashingantahe* is also the plural of the individuals who serve on the *Bashingantahe* council, while *umushingantahe* is the singular. These nouns differ from *ubushingantahe*, which is defined as a set of moral virtues or values that a human embodies and enacts.

While the moral education of children was one responsibility of *bashingantahe*, it was not theirs alone. As the Burundian saying goes, '*umwana si uwumwe'* or *'*a child does not belong to one person', which implies that the education and development of children is not the exclusive responsibility of one person or institution, but rather must be the common concern of all in the communitarian spirit of solidarity (Rwantabagu, 2010). Additionally, recognizing that each child is a potential model for new generations, the accompanying saying, '*umwana ni Uburundi bw'ejo*' or 'the child is the Burundi of tomorrow' also indicates that the community is responsible for those on whom it will rely on later (Nindorera, 2003).

In the pre-colonial period, the homestead, with the backing of the community, constituted a 'wall-less school' (Rwantabagu, 2003) where parents taught by counsel, proverbs, folktales, and setting a good example (Makarakiza, 1957). This indigenous pedagogy was based on strategies of dialogue and values inculcation (Ocitti, 1994), as the character of young people was slowly molded and infused with the prevailing social norms and values. As Rwantabagu (2010) observes, "Like the Greek '*arete*', the latter were not only internalised but also experienced and practised in everyday situations…by protecting the weak and the elderly, by abiding by the laws of justice, respecting the rights of everyone and protecting the environment for the benefit of present and future generations" (p. 347).

With the advent of colonization and evangelism, the institution of *Bashingantahe* faded and was replaced with a centralized justice system. Similarly, indigenous pedagogies were disregarded in favor of European approaches to schooling and moral education was guided by principles of Christianity, rather than *ubuntu* or *ubushingantahe*. As Nkeshimana (2007) argues, "the process of Westernisation has gradually eroded the binding power of traditional value systems as well as the social institutions which embodied those norms that shaped youth behaviour and ensured social harmony" (p. 121). Indeed, various Burundian scholars document how the gradual replacement of Burundi's traditional value system with foreign value systems during colonization undermined the ethical foundations of Burundian society that secured peace and social cohesion, thus leading to decades of ethnic violence and civil unrest (Manirakiza, 2020; Nkeshimana, 2007; Rwantabagu, 2010).

It was not until the mid 1990s, after years of civil war, that serious interest grew in reviving the *Bashingantahe* institution in an effort to move the country towards peace. In 1997, the Burundian government officially reinstated the institution through presidential decree (Kwizera, 2017). After the signing of the Arusha Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Burundi in 2000, numerous international donors and aid agencies contributed to the rehabilitation of the *Bashingantahe* institution in recognition of its historical role in promoting peace and security (Ntahombaye & Manirakiza, 1997). At this time, advocacy grew among local and international actors for the integration of the traditional values of *ubushingantahe* into social systems with the desire to protect against the evils of tribalism and ethnic hatred (Nindorera, 2003).

A key effort included national education reform (UNESCO, 1994, 1996, 2003). In 2003, the Burundian government held a colloquium to majorly reform civics education in public schooling. The revised curricula were split between the Formation Civique et Humaine (FCH) course at the primary school level, focusing on life skills, and the Formation Patriotique et Humaine (FPH) course at the secondary school level, focusing on citizenship. Both curricula included topics related to: knowledge of the self and others, human values, peace education, and environmental protection and fostered skills like conflict resolution, decision-making, empathy, and establishing positive relationships (MENRS, 2007).

The Ministry of National Education and Culture maintained that the motivation for this reform was that the consequence of the most recent Burundian civil war "has been that moral and social values, once the basis of social cohesion, balance and stability in society, have been undermined….Values such as mutual respect, mutual aid, tolerance, the culture of non-violence, the peaceful resolution of conflicts and others have progressively disappeared, giving way to violence, [and] intolerance of all kinds" (Ibid, pg. 7). In response to these concerns, the main objective of the curricula reform was to develop individuals of peace, integrity, and patriotism by supporting students to develop the values of *ubushingantahe*. These newly developed curricula were rolled out in public schooling in 2006 with subsequent curricula materials and revisions over the next decade (Manirakiza, 2020).

Clearly, Burundi has had a tumultuous relationship with morality since the 16th century. After years of suppression, the traditional Burundian value system has resurfaced through the reclamation of the *Bashingantahe* institution. While the legacy of Western values and Christian moral education remains a significant influence over contemporary moral and civic education in Burundi today, the FCH and FPH curricula strive to instill traditional Burundian values in the next generation with the hopes of preventing conflict and preserving peace for years to come. However, as the findings from this study demonstrate, the practice of imposing Western value systems that suppress and/or compromise traditional orders remains alive and well with the dissemination of veiled Western moral education approaches like SEL.

Morality, Values Impositions, and the Generation Gap

The concept of morality has long-been debated across time and discipline. Rooted in ancient ethics put forth by philosophers like Socrates and biblical prophets like Jesus, and further theorized by the likes of Kant (1765) and Mill (1863/2002), morality is often conceptualized as a set of values, principles, implicit rules, and shared cultural customs built on the opposition between good/right and evil/wrong to guide social behavior (Haidt, 2007). While these terms are routinely interchanged, moral principles are often described as a universal set of values that are common to all people in all societies (Sverdlik et al., 2012). This universalist approach was championed by philosopher Immanuel Kant, who emphasized concern for individual rights, social justice, and care for humanity (Schwartz, 2005).

Though, for some time various scholars have challenged the notion of 'universal' values by recognizing the significant influence of culture and social structure (Firth, 1951; Nadel, 1947; Read, 1965). In the 1980s, this work was built upon by scholars who utilized the notion of 'communitarianism' and raised questions about the liberal, Kantian emphasis on the autonomous individual, individual rights, and universal principles. Instead, they acknowledged the moral centrality of communities, social contexts, webs of interlocution, and different ways of life (MacIntyre, 1981; Sandel, 1982). More recent scholars have extended this work by positing that an individual's environment establishes shared cultural knowledge, which brings about affective, cognitive, and behavioral consequences on morality. Thus,

morality and the values a society prioritizes are based on, and differ across, cultures and social structures (Bentahlia et al., 2021).

Building on this conceptual pluralism, the concept of *values imposition* emerges; that is when one individual or group imposes their value system on another, thereby suppressing or oppressing the alternative value system (Simpson, 1992). As noted above, this most clearly took place during colonization. In sub-Saharan Africa, scholars like Igboin (2011) illustrate how:

> "…colonial rule was an imposition that unleashed deadly blow on African culture with the immediate consequence of the introduction of such values as rugged individualism, corruption, capitalism and oppression. Colonial rule disrupted the traditional machinery of moral homogeneity and practice. The method of moral inculcation was vitiated, which resulted in the abandonment of traditional norms and values through a systematic depersonalisation of the African and paganisation of its values. Instead of the cherished communalism which defined the life of the African, for example, a burgeoning societal construct was introduced which alienates and destroys the organic fabric of the spirit of we-feeling" (p. 101).

In the recent era, neocolonial values imposition has significantly taken place through the international development and humanitarian sectors. For instance, actors like the European Commission, World Bank, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (USECO), and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) subscribe to Kantian ethics by promoting the notion of a universal set of values, attitudes, and behaviors that all global citizens must possess in order to achieve social harmony, global democracy, and a thriving world economy (Bryan, 2022; Delors, 1996). It is common knowledge that this 'universal' set of values is shaped by the value systems of Europe and North America (Davey et al., 2013; Jayawickrama, 2018). It is also no secret that development and humanitarian aid are part of the neocolonial project of Westernization, democratization, and the global propagation of Western values thought to be morally superior (Barnett, 2011; Duffield, 2002; F. Fox, 2001; Hall, 2007). In particular,

common humanitarian interventions like child rights mainstreaming, life skills education, girls' empowerment, and psychosocial support all include a hidden curriculum of how individuals should behave and conduct themselves, engage with others, manage and express their emotions, and make responsible decisions. While the term 'moral' does not feature in this work, when reviewing humanitarian resources such as: *Child Rights Toolkit* (UNICEF, 2014); *Comprehensive Life Skills Framework* (UNICEF, 2019); *Gender Transformative Education* (UNICEF, 2021); and *Psychosocial Teacher Training Guide* (IRC, 2004), it is clear that these interventions all aim to shape the development of children's values and character, and thus function as forms of moral education.

The issues of morality and values imposition converge with scholarship on the generation gap. Earlier work is preoccupied with generational fractures across sub-Saharan Africa due to state independence and various subsequent changes (i.e. social, cultural, economic, political, institutional, technological) in the post-colonial period (Boubakar, 1985; Le Vine, 1968). Though, more recent work has focused on generational ruptures that stem from tensions related to tradition vs. modernity, evolving moral values, and the imposition of foreign values through international development and global discourse (Alber et al., 2008). For example, various scholars have documented how rhetoric and interventions related to child rights, gender equality, sexual and reproductive health, youth economic empowerment, and education for development violates the African intergenerational contract; negatively affects generational relationships; impedes the principles of generational reciprocity, solidarity, and moral responsibility; and renders young people as morally tainted in the eyes of elders (Bochow, 2008; Bourdillon, 2008; Kyaldondo, 2008; Niyonkuru & Barrett, 2021; Rwantabagu, 2003; Sibanda, 2014).

Parallel scholarship has also documented the phenomenon of intergenerational trauma across African societies and diaspora—due to the slave trade, colonialism, apartheid, genocide, civil war, and the HIV/AIDS crisis—and how it contributes to both generational connections and conflicts (Berkmoes, 2022; Boersch-Supan, 2012; Manolache, 2023; Prager, 2016). However, while an intergenerational lens has been applied to examinations of values imposition, morality, and trauma across African societies, explorations of intergenerational issues related to humanitarian intervention—specifically among refugee

communities—remains limited (Kalocsányiová et al., 2024; Tize, 2022; Turner, 2001). This chapter utilizes SEL as a vehicle to address this lacuna.

Social and emotional learning

A recently popularized humanitarian intervention is social emotional learning (SEL). SEL is a U.S.-centric pedagogy that aims to help students develop skills to manage their behaviors, emotions, and interactions with others in order to maximize their learning experiences and later-life outcomes (Elias et al., 2006). These skills broadly fall under the categories of self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making, which make up the most commonly-used SEL framework today developed by the Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (2024).

While SEL has been rendered largely secular due to is prevalence in public schooling, its moral and religious roots have been widely recognized. For example, Green (2019) outlines how there is nearly a one-to-one correspondence between the cardinal virtues, first described by Socrates and later incorporated into Christian theology, and the core SEL competencies in the CASEL framework.

Table 2

Values Correspondence

CASEL Competencies	**Greek/Cardinal Virtues**
Responsible decision-making (identifying solutions & reasoned judgement)	Justice & Prudence
Self-awareness (self-confidence & self-efficacy)	Courage
Self-management (impulse control & self-discipline)	Temperance & Prudence
Social awareness & relationship skills (conflict-resolution & standing up for the rights of others)	Justice

SEL experts like Elias et al. (2014) also recognize the inherent connection between SEL and moral education. Though, instead of promoting a universal values inculcation approach, they maintain that SEL aims to help learners develop a set of skills to support their conduct, decision-making, and moral reasoning. Green (2014) points out the limitations of detaching SEL from moral development and SEL approaches that do not acknowledge moral diversity across individuals, communities, and cultures. He urges SEL practitioners to work with recipient communities to align SEL instruction with their value systems in ways that make its abstract concepts meaningful and accessible. Otherwise, by neglecting community values, SEL runs the risk of simply reinforcing the dominance of Western moral philosophy, rooted in Kantian universalist ethics, and perpetuating neocolonial values imposition.

Over the last decade, SEL has been taken up widely by a variety of donors[18], UN agencies[19], NGOs[20], bilateral & multilateral policy-makers/donors[21], and research institutions[22] in the name of helping refugee and crisis-affected children to overcome trauma, develop resilience, and improve their academic achievement (INEE, 2016; UNESCO, 2019). Since, 2018 nearly half a billion USD has been invested in SEL for crisis contexts (ECW, 2018, 2019, 2022; LEGO, 2018; Renau, 2022). However, in following tradition, the notion of morality remains absent from humanitarian SEL interventions. Most SEL work in crisis contexts draws directly on the CASEL framework, experiences little or no contextualization, and rarely acknowledges or incorporates pre-existing forms of moral, religious, and/or character education (Dalrymple, 2023).

Similar to various humanitarian interventions that have come before it, SEL in refugee and crisis contexts is underpinned by humanitarian propaganda that positions the Western values and traits

[18] Ex. Aga Khan Foundation, Bernard Van Leer Foundation, Dubai Cares, Education Cannot Wait Fund, Global Partnership for Education, LEGO Foundation, Luminos Fund, Porticus, Queen Rania Foundation, Sesame Workshop, TheirWorld, Yield Giving.
[19] Ex. Global Education Cluster, Inter-agency Standing Committee (ISAC), UNESCO, UNICEF, UNHCR.
[20] Ex. Creative Associates International, Finn Church Aid, FHI360, International Rescue Committee, Plan International, Norwegian Refugee Council, Right to Play, Save the Children, War Child, World Vision.
[21] Ex. European Commission Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO), Global Affairs Canada (GAC), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), UK Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO), U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), World Bank.
[22] Ex. Harvard Ecological Approaches to Social Emotional Learning Lab, NYU Global TIES for Children.

promoted through SEL as progressive, necessary for world peace, and universally good for everyone (UNESCO-MGIEP, 2019). Correspondingly, SEL has become increasingly intertwined with the international human and child rights agendas as advocates maintain that 'effective' SEL is rights-based and is thus underpinned by—and should promote—the rights to education, healthy development, play, and protection (UNESCO, 2020). While humanitarian organizations have slowly developed an evidence base for the effects of SEL on children's academic achievement and psychosocial wellbeing, little is known about how refugee communities experience SEL and what role it plays in processes of cultural, social, and moral transformation. This paper begins to address this gap in the knowledge base by first describing how dimensions within the microcosm of the Nduta refugee camp are influencing the moral development of the younger generation, and then by outlining perceptions among the older generation about SEL's role in this process of moral transformation and the implications it has for the culture and humanity of generations to come. Specifically, findings detail how SEL work in Nduta is rooted in an individualistic orientation, which largely ignores the communitarian philosophies that underpin traditional Burundian methods and aims of moral development and instead emphasizes individual skills-building and self-centric values under the guise of trauma recovery, academic achievement, and resiliency-building for an assumed future of adversity.

The Refugee Camp as a Microcosm

Refugees have historically been constructed as 'others' who are out of social, economic, and political place and are in need of management and ordering (Agier, 2011; Hyndman, 2000; Malkki, 1992). As a result, they are often excluded from mainstream society, confined in liminal spaces, and suspended from the normal functioning of life (Agier & Bouchet-Saulnier, 2004; Turner, 2005). Maintaining that such framings and processes are grounded in deeply held assumptions about how place, nation, and culture coincide, this powerful regime of order, which Malkki (1996) designates as the 'national order of things', equates movement across international borders with the loss of identity, culture, and agency. Indeed, much discourse renders refugees as dehistoricized and depoliticized 'bare life',

victims of subjugation by way of biopolitics, and subjected to a 'politics of life' (Agamben, 2005; Fassin, 2007; Hyndman & Giles, 2017).

Alternatively, various scholars dispute and/or nuance these depictions by illustrating how displacement by way of conflict acts as a socio-cultural conditioner, rather than an eraser. That is, displacement does not remove culture and identity from refugees, but reorders their social structures, cultural customs, and value systems (Lubkemann, 2008). In particular, the refugee camp has been shown to be a space of social, cultural, political, and moral transformation (Abduramadan, 2022; Ciabarri, 2008; Feldman, 2012). For example, building on Malkki's (1995) work that explored the impact of displacement on the transformation of collective socio-historical identity and moral order among Burundian refugees in Tanzania, Turner (2001) documents how factors unique to displacement result in perceived 'moral decay'—or violation of the existing moral code—among Burundian refugees in the Lukole camp in Tanzania. Similarly, Holzer (2014) showcases how refugees engage in 'moral boundary work' that helps establish a new moral order and how 'good' people should act in inhumane circumstances. Correspondingly, a rich body of literature describes the 'moral injury' experienced by refugees. Defined as "the lasting psychological, biological, spiritual, behavioral, and social impact of perpetrating, failing to prevent, or bearing witness to acts that transgress deeply held moral beliefs and expectations" (Litz et al., 2009, p. 697), numerous scholars have chronicled the moral dilemmas and transgressions experienced by refugees in flight, and those they face in protracted displacement, that result in moral injury (i.e. stealing food to supplement rations; illegally leaving a camp to earn income; harboring 'moral emotions' such as anger, hate, guilt, or shame for acts done in the name of survival) (Hoffman et al., 2018; Nickerson & Specker, 2023).

In this way, the refugee camp function as microcosms of sorts. Though, rather than representing the qualities of something larger, in this sense they function as bounded 'small worlds' where everyday operations do not mirror those in the larger outside world. This is exemplified by the dimensions unique to the refugee camp that require and shape social, cultural, and moral adaptation.

A particular dimension relates to values imposition. Refugee camps are key sites for the dissemination of Western values through humanitarian interventions like those described previously. While these values and initiatives are also delivered in non-displacement, international development contexts, refugee camps differ in that humanitarian interventions receive much less scrutiny, are cursorily contextualized, and are implemented at a much quicker pace (Hilhorst et al., 2021). Additionally, while recipients of international development initiatives have some agency to reject and/or not comply with imposed values and practices, refugees have much less power to do so as their access to basic resources (i.e. food, water, shelter, healthcare) are controlled by the very humanitarian actors imposing these values (UNOCHA, 2021). Within the microcosm of the Nduta refugee camp, findings show how processes and dimensions unique to displacement are resulting in perceived moral decay by the older generation, thus threatening their imagined future of Burundi. As the younger generation navigates the shifting moral boundaries specific to Nduta, generational fractures are emerging.

The Nduta refugee camp

The Nduta refugee camp is located in the Western Kigoma region of Tanzania and has existed for decades, opening and closing with the influx of Burundian refugees from the 1970s to the 1990s (UNHCR, 2008). Due to renewed political violence in 2015, more than 400,000 people fled Burundi seeking refuge in neighboring countries (UNHCR, 2018). Many individuals have repatriated over the years, though just over 131,000 Burundian refugees currently remain in Tanzania, with around 72,000 residing in the Nduta camp at the time of data collection (UNHCR, 2024). Conditions in the camp are anything but adequate, with cramped living space, poor access to safe water, annually diminishing food rations, and limited healthcare. Despite these adverse conditions, reports of imprisonment, torture, and death upon returning to Burundi have spread fear across the Nduta community, preventing many from repatriating.

The Tanzanian government is particularly strict on the encampment of Burundian refugees, as it has a shared objective with the Burundian government to encourage their return (ReDSS, 2022). As such,

the Tanzanian authorities have enacted policies in the camp to make the living situation even more hostile to pressure community members to repatriate. When the Nduta camp re-opened in 2015, families were encouraged to plant 'kitchen gardens' to supplement their food rations. Additionally, UNHCR supported the running of a camp market, the set-up of small businesses (i.e. mobile phone repair, bicycle repair, hair salons), and the delivery of vocational training and start-up capital to young adults. Though, in the last few years, the Tanzanian authorities have restricted all such activities and closed all markets and businesses in the camp. Now the only legal mode of income generation is employment with an NGO (i.e. teacher, translator, enumerator), though employment opportunities are severely limited and privilege a minority group of those with higher levels of education and multi-lingual skills.

An education system exists in the camp, comprised of primary schools, secondary schools, and pre-primary education delivered in Child Friendly Spaces (CFS).[23] Though, classrooms are overcrowded, teachers are underpaid, schools are under-resourced, and dropout rates are high. In 2017, humanitarian NGOs introduced school-based SEL in Nduta. This was done primarily through teacher trainings and the provision of teaching guides with suggested classroom activities for helping children to develop social and emotional competencies (i.e. songs, games, group work, art activities). Since then, at least six NGOs have been involved in delivering a variety of concurrent SEL programs, targeting mostly primary and pre-primary students. All SEL interventions in Nduta are derived from content, materials, and approaches developed by NGO staff based in North America and Europe. Most SEL programs draw directly from the CASEL framework, though more recent programs draw on iterations of the CASEL framework

While education activities are delivered by Burundian teachers and administrators, like with all other services in Nduta, they are governed and funded by humanitarian NGOs. Thus, all operational, pedagogical, and curricular decision-making power, such as the introduction of SEL, lies not with the Nduta community, but with the NGOs. Similarly, a robust child protection system exists in the camp and

[23] As of February 2024, Nduta community members were informed that starting in March 2024 schools would be systematically shut down by the Tanzanian authorities due to the poor quality of education in the camp and the desire to encourage repatriation.

has mainstreamed child rights rhetoric (i.e. the right to play, the right to no harm through corporal punishment and other forms of abuse, the right to not engage in child labor, etc.) through the education system and other humanitarian services. Though, this rhetoric is aligned with the Western value system that underpins the humanitarian industry, not the values prioritized by the Nduta community. The findings presented below explore SEL's role in processes of socio-cultural and moral transformation that are unique to the microcosm of the Nduta camp, and the generational fractures emerging due to the dissonance between the values imposed by humanitarian SEL and those traditionally prioritized by the community.

Methods

Ethnographic fieldwork was conducted in the Nduta camp from October 2022 to July 2023 to explore how the Burundian residents experience and make sense of humanitarian SEL programming. Multiple qualitative methods including: in-depth interviews, observation, focus group discussions (FGDs), informal chats, and document review were used to triangulate data. Data validation checks were done through voluntary FGDs with research participants to ensure data accuracy and maximize the involvement of research participants in shaping research findings.

Data was collected by myself—the author—who identifies as a white, North American, cisgendered woman. At the time, I was a Ph.D. Candidate conducting this research for my dissertation. Data was also collected by Elisha, who identifies as a Black Burundian man and resident of the Nduta camp. Elisha had recently completed secondary school and was recruited due to his deep knowledge of his community, availability, interest in the research project, and language skills in Kirundi, French, Kiswahili, and English. Elisha was compensated for his work and continues to remotely work with me up to now in drafting findings, including providing input for this chapter.

While SEL was taking place in multiple learning spaces across the camp, we selected three primary schools and five CFSs targeted by a recently-launched NGO education program with a significant SEL component. We conducted early 150 hours of observation, which included observing teacher

trainings, classroom instruction, student recreational activities, community meetings, distribution activities, and NGO meetings. We collected and analyzed over 140 documents, including teacher training manuals, curriculum materials, policy briefs, and project monitoring data. We also conducted in-depth structured interviews with 158 members of the Nduta community[24] and 16 individuals working for NGOs delivering SEL programming in the camp. We used a stratified-purposive sampling strategy to ensure the inclusion of various stakeholder groups in order to explore diverse perceptions and experiences across the wider Nduta community. Interview protocols were used for each stakeholder group and freeform notes were taken during observations.

It should be noted that multiple programs with SEL components were being delivered in the Nduta camp by various NGOs. As such, we collected and reviewed training, curricula, and teaching and learning materials, and interviewed NGO staff working, across these programs. While observations focused mainly on the implementation of the most recent SEL program in the locations noted above, we were able to observe the compound effects of the convergence of many of these programs as teachers and facilitators have been the targets of multiple SEL interventions over the last seven years.

All interviews were audio recorded and conducted in the language of the interlocuter's choice (e.g. Kirundi, French, Kiswahili, English). Translation was done by Elisha and transcription was completed by both of us. Elisha and I went through several rounds of separately conducting data analysis and then comparing our findings as a validation measure. Once we compiled a key set of findings, we shared them with 79 voluntary participants through six co-validation FGDs. Finally, we revised the initial findings and conducted deeper analysis that has resulted in the findings shared below.

Participants were fully informed about the academic nature of this research, potential risks and benefits, and their right to withdraw at any time. All interviewees provided verbal consent to participant and blanket consent for observations was obtained from school and CFS administrators and their

[24] Stakeholders included: teachers, head teachers, school inspectors, primary school students, out-of-school youth, school club facilitators and student participants, recreational programming facilitators and child participants, parents, community leaders, and community elders (Mushingantahe).

governing organizations. I was hosted by a humanitarian organization to secure camp access and the study received ethical approval from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the hosting organization, and the Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology.

Finally, the findings in this study demonstrate that a traditional method for the transmission of moral values between older and younger generations includes family interactions. However, no observations in home spaces were conducted as I was not permitted by UNHCR policy to enter home spaces of Nduta residents, and my Internal Review Board approval did not cover areas outside of school and CFS spaces. We recognize that this is a limitation of the study as we were unable to observe family interactions to compliment the data presented below.

Findings

Moral decay in the microcosm of Nduta

> *"These organizations are destroying our values by keeping children in play. They say they are protecting the rights of our children, but what about the rights of our community? Because of play, children are now thinking and doing only for themselves. They are losing the culture of Burundi, they are losing their future success, they are losing their humanity."* – Miburo

In line with Turner's (2001) work on moral decay amongst Burundian refugees in Tanzania nearly thirty years ago, the quote above from a community elder begins to reveal the myriad dimensions unique to the Nduta refugee camp today that are contributing to the perceived moral decay of the younger generation and rising anxieties amongst community elders about the future of Burundi. Four dimensions in particular were noted by adult interviewees, including bans on child labor and corporal punishment, and a strong emphasis on play, encompassed by the larger umbrella issue of child rights.

Child rights

Various scholars highlight how the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) promotes a universalist ideal of childhood based on the Western values that underpin the humanitarian system (Bourdillon & Musvosvi, 2014; Chibanda, 2015). Regardless of this critique, child rights rhetoric based on the UNCRC is mainstreamed through all humanitarian services in Nduta and child rights and protection policies are strictly enforced. However, this interpretation of child rights is contrary to realistic life in the Nduta camp and the traditional Burundian moral and social orders.

Almost every adult community member we spoke to expressed frustration at the influence of child rights rhetoric on children's development of two key qualities: respect and discipline, which they believe are the cornerstones of moral character. Respect was referred to mostly as having respect for elders (i.e. being deferential, helping with physical activities, using respectful greetings, not speaking back or out of turn) and other people's property, as well as being obedient to parents. The concept of discipline was articulated as an umbrella term that encompassed most of the virtues associated with *ubushingantahe*. For example, while various stakeholders equated discipline with respect, trustworthiness, and integrity, mother of five Manirakiza explained:

> *"Discipline is everything. It is respecting, it is valuing school, it is knowing wright from wrong and how to behave. To have discipline is to be kind and work in a team with others. It is about conducting yourself well, acting polite, being responsible, helping others, and avoiding problems."*

Additionally, the quality of being responsible was mentioned time and again. This included being responsible for one's self, as well as one's family and community. Responsibility and the other virtues associated with moral character were framed within a relational worldview guided by the tenet of *ubuntu*. That is, striving to embody *ubushingantahe* in the Nduta community is not regarded as a means to individual success and prosperity, but rather for the success and wellbeing of the entire family and

community, as articulated by *mushingantahe* Muhoza: *"Everything we teach children is for them to participate in the community, to contribute to the success of the community, to love each other and live together peacefully."* However, the following sub-sections illuminate how the influence of child rights rhetoric and policy is affecting children's development of these key values and characteristics.

Child labor

As mentioned previously, the Tanzanian government has enforced a strict encampment policy, has closed all businesses and markets, and banned agricultural activities in Nduta. These actions have been accompanied by child rights policies that prohibit child labor in the camp. Almost every adult interviewed reported these policies and restrictions as contributing to the poor moral development of children. In particular, not being able to teach children about farming, animal husbandry, and commerce was equated with not being able to instill in children the value of hard work for the success of the family and community. As *mushingantahe* Miburo shared:

> *"Children in the camp will get problems when they go to Burundi as they are being poisoned with the current situation in the camp where it is forbidden to grow crops, to sell goods. This is making children build a negative image in their mind for what is important for them, their families, their communities. What children should be shown as a good thing has been turned bad and illegal in their eyes. Now, the culture of encouraging children to be hard working in farming, breeding, and selling is disappearing."*

The restrictions on agriculture and income generation have rendered families in Nduta completely reliant on humanitarian services, which have been steadily declining over the years. As a result, children and youth have been driven to illegally exit the camp to earn income in the host community through menial labor. While many parents, teachers, and community elders reported advising children not to violate the encampment policy, numerous youth respondents feel they have no choice but to disobey their

elders for the survival of their families, as secondary school graduate Niyonkuru reflected: *"There is no freedom to earn here in the camp. I must go out, otherwise there is nothing here, we will go hungry."*

Additionally, by not learning to engage in family work, many elders expressed that children have come to expect aid from humanitarian agencies, resulting in laziness and entitlement amongst the younger generation. In an informal meeting with PTA members, one individual explained, *"[When they return to Burundi], students and children who are in the camp will be homeless and street beggars because they do not know how to work, they only expect things to be given to them"*. Numerous individuals also expressed that the issue of child labor is nuanced in their culture and context as most families rely on whole-family participation in agriculture, income-generation, and household chores in order to survive. This was reflected by PTA member Butoyi:

> *"To stay alive in Burundi is the result of hard work; in Africa people eat because of their hard work; the community survives because of hard work. So, since the NGOs say that the children do not need to work hard and cannot do physical [labor], what life are they expecting children in Africa to live?"*

Corporal Punishment

In line with child rights and protection policies, corporal punishment has been strictly forbidden in the Nduta camp. Though, in the eyes of the older generation, this ban is critically influencing children's development of positive moral character. For example, most educators interviewed, and even students themselves, reported that the lack of corporal punishment has resulted in students speaking back to teachers, arriving late to school, and being disruptive in lessons with no real repercussions. Similarly, many parents and community elders described children coming home late from school, not helping with family chores, speaking rudely to elders, and threatening to report parents to humanitarian organizations if they punish their children or force them to do something they do not want to do. Numerous times while driving from one school to another, Elisha and I experienced children shouting and throwing rocks at our

car for fun and Elisha would remark, "*See their disrespect? If we were in Burundi, those children would be too afraid of punishments to throw rocks*." PTA member Tuyikeze reflected Elisha's sentiment:

> *"In Burundi each fault goes with punishment, while here in the camp no student or child is punished. This is negatively affecting the development of our children. They are not learning discipline and respect, which will give them trouble when they return to Burundi."*

Play

In parallel, numerous humanitarian actors have promoted the right to play for refugee children, maintaining its importance in supporting psychosocial wellbeing, trauma recovery, social and emotional development, and a return to 'normal' childhood. Various psychosocial activities in Nduta include dance, music, art, and sports activities, while free play is facilitated in CFSs and play-based pedagogies have been mainstreamed through the education system. Play has been a natural part of Burundian processes of learning and development throughout history. However, play as a pedagogical tool in formal schools is sparingly used, especially at the upper-primary and secondary-school levels. As a result, many educators in Nduta explained that play is not an effective means of teaching discipline and respect, as primary-school teacher Kaneza shared: *"Now anytime I ask my students to do something all they want to do is play. They don't listen, they don't work, they are only demanding to play."* This observation has also permeated into the wider community as reflected by *mushingantahe* Kabura:

> *"The culture is changing because children are taught to keep playing all the time. Children are valuing play above anything else. When a parent asks a child to fetch water, the child says, 'No, it is my right to play'. Children are not learning about what is important and necessary for community life."*

Though brief, these findings illustrate ongoing processes of social, cultural, and moral transformation in the microcosm of the Nduta camp, directly influenced by humanitarian intervention. Most study participants expressed desires for the social progress and economic development of Burundi and did not dispute the basic tenets of child rights, play, and children learning non-agrarian vocations. Similarly, I do not maintain the superiority of the traditional Burundian moral order or value system over others, believe it should not evolve, or dispute the basic tenets of child rights. Rather, these findings demonstrate how the intense enforcement of these ideals through the channel of humanitarian intervention, and the severe restrictions administered by the Tanzanian authorities, have resulted in a departure from traditional values and community needs, and a shift towards the Western values that inform the humanitarian system. With the younger generation seemingly failing to learn and embody the values of hard work, discipline, respect, and responsibility, there is even more pressure on forms of moral education to address the perceived moral decay among Nduta's youth. Though, as the following sections illustrate, dissonance between traditional moral education and humanitarian SEL converges with the issues of child rights outlined above to exacerbate this perceived moral decay and corresponding generational fractures.

Dissonance between moral education approaches in Nduta

Moral education in the Nduta refugee camp takes many forms and is delivered by diverse facilitators with varying aims. While traditional community-based moral education and the FCH and FPH curricula are utilized in the camp, the parallel initiative of SEL has also been mainstreamed through the school system. SEL in Nduta is framed as a secular skills-building approach, though, findings demonstrate its function as a form of moral education and values imposition. Additionally, while SEL purports to serve the academic and wellbeing needs of Nduta's children, its dissonance with traditional forms and aims of moral education is pronounced.

In addition to the FCH and FPH courses, study participants described a variety of community-based mechanisms used to support children's moral development and facilitate intergenerational

knowledge exchange. Among these include both indigenous Burundian and Christian[25] religious education activities, like Sunday school, as well as parents and community members instilling the traditional values of *ubushingantahe* at home and in every-day interactions. Pedagogical practices include the use of songs, riddles, proverbs, storytelling, group discussions, hypothetical scenarios, and the general imparting of advice. Numerous individuals also mentioned the necessity for adults to model appropriate behavior and character, as community elder Mutabazi, articulated: *"Children are amazing creatures; they play, do, sing, and practice what they have seen from adults. When adults are insulting or mistreating each other, the child will also gain these habits as he or she grows up."*

The *Bashingantahe* institution also exists in the camp. While *Bashingantahe* councils in Nduta have limited power and are governed by NGOs and the Tanzanian authorities, many *bashingantahe* interviewed consider the moral education of children as their responsibility. Some we spoke to described similar methods as those outlined above to teach children how to behave, about discipline and respect, and to know right from wrong. Often referring back to the common proverb '*umwana si uwumwe'* or *'*a child does not belong to one person', most *bashingantahe* conveyed that it was their duty to support all children in the community towards these aims. For example, *mushingantahe* Ciza shared:

> *"As bashingantahe we have no limited time or place of work; we engage with the community whenever and wherever we are. I teach children in my family to love each other and, when I go outside of my family, I happily talk with children and make them laugh. I create a friendly situation to advise them and criticize the way they are behaving if it is bad*."

A common sentiment among community members, and particularly elders, is the aim to ensure children do not endure a future that is reflective of the violent past of Burundi. As such, much of the community-based moral education in Nduta, as well as the FCH and FPH curricula, is preoccupied with

[25] While the Nduta community also includes Muslim groups, interviewees only made reference to Christianity.

instilling communitarian values in children that will foster social cohesion, contribute to peace, and prevent against ethnic division. For example, primary school teacher Niyonzima articulated: *"Of course social skills are important for children. They help children to love each other, be connected, and work together. That is the only way we will prevent [ethnic] groups from fighting."* Additionally, like that of the pre-colonial *bashingantahe*, many community elders expressed feeling responsible for establishing social harmony for future generations to come. As *mushingantahe* Nikiza shared: *"In the world of today, we must prioritize and prepare youth before all else. They are the leaders of tomorrow and our hope for a peaceful Burundi."*

Contrary to traditional Burundian methods, humanitarian SEL programming shies away from values and character-language and instead is positioned as a 'skills-building' approach to support children's academic achievement and psychosocial wellbeing. Most humanitarian SEL programs are driven by rhetoric about the trauma of crisis and displacement and how it can affect children's learning and psychosocial wellbeing. Thus, most SEL programs in Nduta focus on stress-reduction and the cultivation of social and emotional competencies to develop positive relationships and coping mechanisms. For example, one program description states:

> *"…many refugee children are suffering from the excessive or prolonged activation of stress response systems in the body and brain. 'Toxic stress' can have damaging effects on learning, behavior, and health across the lifespan. Holistic psychosocial support and social-emotional learning strategies are needed to address the effects of toxic stress in children…enhance holistic learning and heal from trauma."*

Though, despite limited language around morals and values, SEL programming in the Nduta camp is clearly influencing the development of children's moral values and character. For example, an SEL training manual instructs teachers on setting expectations for students that include the following:

> *"We HELP each other! We listen to each other and make helpful comments (You can do it!") or ask interested questions ("How did you make that great color?"). We do not laugh at or make fun of each other or their art/dance/music. We RESPECT each other, our materials, and our time together! We SHARE our materials, ideas, and feelings. If someone says something personal in our group, it stays in our group."*

Similarly, another SEL program aims to instill the values of peace, helping, and sharing, while a parallel program aims to help children achieve 'deep learning' that fosters social problem-solving and conflict-resolution skills inside and outside of the classroom.

All SEL programming in Nduta also includes content designed to teach children about responsible decision-making. This is illustrated by numerous instances of hypothetical situations in SEL lessons plans, such as: *"If you saw a fellow student being insulted by other students, what would you do*?" and *"If you saw two students arguing over something, is it your responsibility to help solve the problem?".* While SEL materials position these types of situations as helping children develop social and emotional skills, they are also clearly influencing children's development of moral responsibility and processes of moral reasoning.

Additionally, being empathetic towards others, and exhibiting 'appropriate' behaviors and characteristics feature heavily in all SEL materials. For instance, one bank of lesson plans includes modules titled: *"Understand other people's feelings"* and *"Controlling ourselves"*, while an SEL teacher guide includes activities with learning objectives such as: *"By the end of the lesson, a learner should be able to identify different emotions (happiness, sadness, and anger) and control negative emotions using deep breathing."* Corresponding activity cards detail how SEL activities aim to help children *"correct each other's behavior"*, with one in particular designed to instill the value of *"respecting the community".* The subject description for this particular activity is *"civic and moral education in real*

life". Although this is the only mention of 'moral' throughout the SEL materials we reviewed, it is plain that SEL in Nduta functions as a form of moral education through value and character development, whether it intends to or not.

There is obvious overlap between the competencies, characteristics, and values that community-based moral education and school-based civic and SEL programming aim to instill in children in the Nduta camp. Indeed, the data presented above demonstrates how SEL programming clearly aims to instill the values of discipline and respect that are highly prioritized by the Nduta community. However, dissonance between these approaches, including: pedagogical practices; which values they promote and particularly how they are framed; and their ultimate aim contributed to clear misalignment. First, almost all SEL programs in Nduta use play-based pedagogies. As discussed previously, while play is a natural part of Burundian culture, its use in formal schooling and as a method of teaching key moral values is not. Rather than engendering the values of hard work, discipline, respect, and responsibility, many adult community members regard the intense encouragement of play among children as a key contributor to their moral decay.

Second, while all forms of moral education in Nduta promote values like: peace, sharing, and integrity, the way they are framed is significantly different. The FCH and FPH curricula and community-based moral education approaches are driven by a relational and communitarian ethos, rooted in the principles of *ubuntu*, and aim to develop responsible citizens committed to the wellbeing of their communities, environment, and future generations. While SEL programming may support these larger goals by proxy, most SEL initiatives in Nduta do not include content on environmental or community welfare and are concerned mostly with individual skills-building and personal wellbeing (e.g. fostering the competencies of self-control, self-confidence, and self-worth). Some also include an emphasis on teaching children leadership skills, the ability to advocate for themselves, and critical thinking, which encompasses inquisitiveness and active learning, rather than knowledge inculcation.

These skills are also appreciated in traditional forms of moral education in Nduta. However, SEL interventions frame them as necessary competencies for individuals to possess in order to be accepted by

their communities; a requisite for their personal success, not for the greater good of the community. When asked if they knew of the concept of *ubushingantahe* or about the FCH and FPH courses, almost all interviewed NGO workers responsible for delivering SEL programming in Nduta reported that they did not. Similarly, all interviewed NGO staff confirmed that discussions and thinking about the long-term, inter-generational, and whole community implications of SEL did not feature in the design of their initiatives. As curriculum specialist Jonah articulated:

> *"The main aim is to help children here and now. I know a lot of the project documents have language that talks about 'building a brighter future for children' and supporting the wellbeing of communities, but really it is focused on helping individual students cope with stress and get back to learning in the immediate timeframe. Sure it will help them in the future, but the priority is dealing with the current situation. That is emergency education, right?"*

The quote above not only illuminates larger implications around the assumptions and ways of working that influence humanitarian SEL programming, but also the third issue of dissonance in aim and intention of these programs. This is illustrated by the pervasive resilience rhetoric mainstreamed through SEL programming. As described previously, traditional community-based moral education and the FCH and FPH courses are motivated by aims to enhance social cohesion, prevent ethnic division, and establish lasting peace in Burundi. Recognizing that the absence of these things has contributed to the cyclical conflict, hardship, and displacement experienced by older generations in the Nduta camp, traditional moral education is driven by the desire to mend the social fabric of Burundi for future generations to come. Alternatively, much SEL programming in the camp is informed by statistical data that demonstrate how many displaced individuals will experience chronic poverty, adversity, and displacement throughout their lives (Ferris, 2018). Correspondingly, numerous SEL materials expound the importance of supporting children to develop resilience in order to cope with immediate and future hardship. This seemingly pragmatic approach is in juxtaposition with traditional moral education in Nduta as it is

essentially preparing children for continued existence in a torn and irreparable society, rather than addressing the root causes of these societal tears and their ramifications in the first place.

These findings showcase the various forms of moral education in Nduta, including SEL's clear role in children's moral development. While I do not maintain that traditional Burundian moral education approaches are superior to that of SEL, these findings highlight the dissonance between their varying approaches, pedagogies, and aims. Traditional methods are clearly informed by the history of Burundi and lived experiences of displacement, with emphasis on moral development for generational peace and prosperity. Though, SEL is lamentably uninformed by the history, and contemporary practices, of moral education in Burundi and the cultural traditions it aims to maintain. While I do not assert the superiority of collectivist societies over individualistic ones, SEL largely ignores the communitarian philosophies that underpin traditional moral development in Nduta and rather emphasizes individual skills-building and self-centric values under the guise of trauma recovery, academic achievement, and resiliency-building for an assumed future of adversity. Additionally, the ignorance of traditional values and attitudes of "That is emergency education, right?" among NGO workers represents the lack of consideration around the long-term, intergenerational, and community implications this work has. This issue is not unique to SEL or the EiE community, but speaks to larger attitudes and practices within humanitarian intervention more broadly and represents yet another dimension unique to the microcosm of the refugee camp. The following section explores how the dissonance described in this section converges with the issues of child rights to further exacerbate the perceived moral decay of the younger generation and SEL's role in the shifting dynamics of intergenerational relationships and interactions.

Generational fractures in Nduta

SEL is just one factor among many influencing the moral development of children in the Nduta camp. Though, its influence is clearly felt throughout the community. Findings in this section illuminate SEL's convergence with the child rights issues described previously and its role in the 1) reordering of parent-child, educator-student, and elder-younger relationships and 2) shifting perceptions of those

traditionally responsible for children's moral development. While the power and influence of the older generation in Nduta appears to be in decline, anxieties about the future of Burundi are rising.

A key issue raised by adult members of the Nduta community is the perception of changing child behaviors and attitudes. While many individuals blame child rights promotion for the newfound boldness of children, SEL's conditioning of children to feel comfortable interacting with individuals across the social hierarchy—through the promotion of self-centric values and assertive characteristics—also contributes to perceived violations of the traditional social and moral orders. For example, Elisha observed in various instances young children casually sitting next to elders in community meetings; an action traditionally viewed as rude and disrespectful. Similarly, father of three Ntirampeba shared that:

> *"[Previously] children would not pass between or near parents when they are having a discussion, but now children are not afraid to interrupt. The discipline of long ago was formed on fear, where children were afraid of parents and teachers so that they would develop respect. But now, children are not afraid and have no discipline, no respect."*

While the quote above emphasizes frustration about changing child behaviors and child-adult interactions, it also indicates the convergence of SEL with the ban on corporal punishment. Improving child-adult relationships and eliminating fear from learning is a key focus of many SEL programs in Nduta. For example, numerous SEL training manuals include content on how teachers should create safe, inclusive, and happy learning environments for children and treat students with kindness and respect. One SEL guide includes a module on positive discipline, citing that children learn best when they are not afraid and feel safe and excited to learn, while another explains that children's social and emotional wellbeing is dependent on nurturing adults who make children feel safe and valued. While traditional Burundian culture does not dispute prioritizing the safety and value of children, positioning teachers and other authority figures as benign contradicts traditional fear-based processes of teaching, learning, and development. The requirement by NGOs to follow these SEL practices in lieu of corporal punishment is

significantly influencing how teachers perceive their role in children's moral development, as shared by teacher Nimubona:

> *"I am useless as a teacher now. How can I help my students develop discipline and respect if I cannot punish them and if I am required to only play with them? They are not developing in the right way. Before, I thought of students like my own children, but I cannot treat them like my own children anymore. I am failing them."*

This quote not only demonstrates the shifting self-perceptions of educators and their role in children's learning and moral development, but also SEL's convergence with the promotion of the right to play. Indeed, the use of play-based pedagogies in SEL was brought up regularly as a key issue affecting the authority of parents and teachers. Numerous PTA members expressed that children no longer view their teacher as 'in charge', but rather as a playmate and friend. Alternatively, various parents cited SEL programs as encouraging children to play all the time, including participating in recreational after-school clubs, psychosocial support activities, and sports teams. As mentioned previously, parents not only expressed that their children no longer feel a moral obligation to obey them, but that they have no sense of moral responsibility to help the family.

This issue of moral responsibility and its connection to the promotion of play through SEL also converges with the ban on child labor. As described previously, numerous parents and elders expressed their frustrations that children were not learning the value of hard work and traditional agrarian skills needed for survival should they ever return to Burundi. Findings indicate that the promotion of play through SEL is compounding these frustrations. This was reflected by mother Tuyishime: *"My child does not come home after school to help me, they are only playing. They say their homework is to set a personal goal and their goal is only to play."* Additionally, some *bashingantahe* we interviewed keenly observed that due to the amount of time children spend in recreational NGO programs, the less time they spend at home with their families. This has increased the exposure of children to NGO messaging and

values and decreased the amount of influence parents have on the moral development of their children. In reviewing our observation notes, we identified numerous children who attended CFSs in the mornings, then attended school, then returned directly to the CFSs for recreational programming after school, thus racking up nearly eight hours a day under NGO influence. Elisha regularly reflected that in Burundi this phenomenon would be impossible as many children must help their families, not only out of moral and cultural obligation, but also for survival.

Stripping parents, teachers, and other authority figures of their role and responsibility in the moral development of the younger generation is manifesting in various ways across the community. For example, the confidence of children to threaten to report their parents to NGOs for any number of reasons has influenced the communitarian view of child rearing for many. As *mushingantahe* Nyandwi shared:

> *"The saying that a child belongs to the community is changing. Before, the development of children was the responsibility of everyone in the community. A child could sleep at their neighbor's house. But today if a neighbor punishes your child for their own safety or to teach discipline, it causes conflict and can even impact the terms of resettlement for people in the camp. So parents now are not comfortable to be responsible for children that are not their own."*

Additionally, the fact that NGOs hold decision-making power in Nduta has resulted in the imposition of SEL without significant community consultation. In particular, most PTA members expressed their extreme frustration at not being consulted about the integration of SEL throughout schooling in the camp, as articulated by PTA member Minani:

> *"PTA members are like working gears, we are not welcomed to give our suggestion or opinion in education; we are not respected by these NGOs. PTA members no longer feel responsible for schools and community education activities for youth because we are not being valued, respected, or welcomed by these NGOs."*

Various *bashingantahe* echoed this sentiment, describing how they have no real authority in the camp. When *bashingantahe* provide guidance to youth, they believe it is undermined by NGO programming like SEL, which contradicts their advice and limits their influence over children's development. As reflected by *mushingantahe* Nzisabira: *"The responsibility of bashingantahe is decreasing. When youth want advice, they go to other sources like organizations, tv, radio, or the internet. They are learning new behaviors and values different from ours. The bashingantahe will [fade] and the next generation will not know us."*

While these examples illustrate the broadening fractures between the existing older and younger generations in the Nduta camp, the omission of environmental content from SEL is also shaping the relationship of today's youth with their future counterparts. Various community members shared examples of environmental disrespect among youth, including the climbing of trees, the stomping of plants, and the mistreatment of animals. While at a primary school, the head teacher explained to Elisha and me how the hole in the ground in front of us was the result of school children pulling out a newly planted tree. This disregard for the physical environment is a display of limited moral responsibility to future generations, as articulated by *mushingantahe* Butwengo: *"We advise children to not climb trees or hunt birds for enjoyment. They don't think about the impact of these actions now or later. They feel no responsibility to the earth or the future generation."*

These findings demonstrate how SEL intersects with myriad issues, and particularly the intense promotion and enforcement of child rights, in the microcosm of Nduta to influence processes of social, cultural, and moral transformation. While I do not dispute the basic tenets of child rights or maintain that traditional value systems and moral orders should not evolve, the dissonance of SEL with traditional approaches to moral development is not only (re)shaping child behaviors and intergenerational social dynamics, but also children's values and attitudes of moral responsibility to their present communities and future generations. While many traditional stewards of moral development in Nduta are relinquishing their responsibility in this domain, others maintain their responsibility but feel powerless to exercise it.

This has resulted in feelings of anxiety across the older generation as reflected by school administrator Nduwayo:

> *"There are many intelligent individuals in the camp who can help to fix the problems of discipline and respect. But we are considered fools by these organizations. They have all the power and they are destroying our culture and the nature of Burundian discipline. They are destroying the future of children and killing their humanity."*

Discussion and Conclusion

The generation gap is a global phenomenon and for centuries elders have complained about the difference in attitudes, values, behaviors, and aspirations amongst their younger counterparts due to myriad factors (i.e. modernization, urbanization, industrialization, technology) (Alber et al., 2008; Boubakar, 1985; Herrera, 1972; Le Vine, 1968; Patil, 2014). Though, while generational fractures have been documented thoroughly in a variety of eras and contexts, there is limited scholarship examining the influence of displacement and humanitarian intervention on generational connections and conflicts (Kalocsányiová et al., 2024; Tize, 2022; Turner, 2001). The findings presented above begin to address this dearth by exploring the role of humanitarian SEL programming in processes of socio-cultural and moral transformation, values imposition, and generational detachment in the Nduta refugee camp in Tanzania. In so doing, these findings contribute to, extend, and nuance several lines of discourse across the disciplines of anthropology, refugee studies, and CIE.

First, at the crossroads of anthropology and refugee studies, this study exemplifies the concept of displacement as a socio-cultural conditioner that catalyzes processes of social, cultural, and moral transformation (Abduramadan, 2022; Ciabarri, 2008; Feldman, 2012; Lubkemann, 2008). Findings demonstrate how the refugee camp functions as a microcosm with unique forces and dimensions that shape these processes. In the case of the Nduta camp, strict encampment, the intense enforcement of child rights policies—including the bans on child labor and corporal punishment, and the extreme promotion of

play—are imposing alternative and conflicting values. These foreign values are perceived by the older generation as encouraging youth to challenge existing social hierarchies and moral boundaries and abandon traditional beliefs and practices (Holzer, 2014), thus contributing to their moral decay (Turner, 2001) and the restructuring of the traditional moral and social orders.

Another factor unique to the refugee camp is exemplified by the attitude of "This is emergency education, right?" common amongst NGO workers. Within CIE's sub-field of EiE, contradicting rhetoric prioritizes both rapid setup and delivery of education services in crisis contexts while also taking the time to adapt and contextualize education materials and approaches. The findings outlined above demonstrate prominence of the former sentiment as NGO workers reported moving quickly and focusing on the "here and the now" without little consideration of the long-term, inter-generational, and whole community implications of their SEL programming. Despite moving beyond the acute emergency phase, programming and services in protracted refugee contexts like Nduta often continue to operate under tight timelines, limited budgets, and practices and procedures employed during the acute phase as they struggle to navigate the humanitarian-development nexus (Brun, 2016; Hyndman & Giles, 2019; S. Miller, 2017; Milner, 2014; UNICEF, 2022). Despite having more time to consult with the community and gather information that could inform their SEL programming, findings illustrate ignorance among NGO workers in Nduta about Burundian cultural traditions and concepts (i.e. *ubushingantahe*), unawareness of existing SEL approaches in Nduta (e.g. FCH & FPH curricula and community-based methods), limited community consultation, and the missed opportunity to align SEL programming with community values. These issues are not unique to the EiE community, but also extend to various humanitarian sectors, interventions, and practices in protracted refugee contexts.

Second, this study challenges the positioning of SEL in the fields of CIE and EiE as a secular skill-building approach. Various scholars have acknowledged the parallels between SEL and forms of moral education and values inculcation (Elias et al., 2014; Greene, 2019). However, the EiE community promotes SEL as a secular school-based approach that teaches learners skills that will allow them to enact their personal values, rather than a method of fostering specific values (IRC, 2022b; Save the Children,

2017). However, study findings clearly illustrate how SEL functions as a form of moral education and a conduit for instilling particular values, attitudes, and behaviors. Through the promotion of self-centric traits, the development of competencies like responsible decision-making, and the presentation of hypothetical moral scenarios, SEL in Nduta is significantly influencing the development of children's value systems, self-conduct, and processes of moral reasoning.

Third, these findings extend a rich body of work from African scholars who articulate processes of moral and cultural erasure through colonial values imposition (Manirakiza, 2020; Nduka, 1980; Nkeshimana, 2007; Obiagu, 2023; Rwantabagu, 2010), as well as scholarship that positions contemporary humanitarian aid as a tool of Westernization through neocolonial value imposition (Barnett, 2011; Duffield, 2002; F. Fox, 2001). While this study does not position the traditional Burundian values as superior to all other, findings demonstrate the clear misalignment of the values imposed by humanitarian SEL in Nduta and the traditional Burundian values of *ubushingantahe*. While the objectives of SEL to support students' academic achievement and wellbeing are seemingly well-intentioned, they are rooted in an individualistic orientation that is aligned with a universalist Kantian ethics (Noddings & Slote, 2002), which prioritizes the autonomy and dignity of the individual, not the collective. This orientation is in stark contrast with the communitarian ethics (Bentahlia et al., 2021; MacIntyre, 1981) that have historically guided the moral development of Burundian children and the value system of Burundian society (Rwantabagu, 2010). Again, while I do not maintain that superiority of collectivist societies and communitarian ethics over others, in the eyes of Nduta community elders, the imposition of this Western, individualistic value system is contributing to the erasure of the collectivist values believed to make the Burundian community and its members human and whole.

Fourth, these findings also contribute to discourse in the anthropologies of childhood and humanitarianism. For example, the promotion of universalist Kantian ethics through processes of values imposition is also observed in the advancement of child rights rhetoric through humanitarian intervention. Numerous scholars in these fields critique child rights discourses by highlighting how the UNCRC—which underpins all child-related services and programs in the Nduta camp—is premised on the notion of

an idealized, Euro-American, middle-class child in the Global North (Balagopalan, 2018; Holt & Holloway, 2006). Correspondingly, there has been much documentation of how this conceptualization of the 'universal child' is aligned with Western values that are highly incompatible with alternative value systems, community and familial structures, and the realistic lives of children in the Global South (Balagopalan, 2014; Bourdillon & Musvosvi, 2014; Monaghan, 2012). In particular, Kjørholt (2019) identifies how the global child rights discourses position children under the age of 18 as individual rights holders and claimers with competence, agency, and rights as citizens, independent of their status as members of a family and community.

This study exemplifies and nuances these critiques by illustrating how parents, teachers, and community elders in the Nduta camp perceive certain dimensions related to child rights as detrimental to the younger generation's moral development. While I do not dispute the basic tenets of child rights or promote the use of corporal punishment, child labor, or condemn play-based learning, the bans on child labor and corporal punishment, and the extreme promotion of play, are significantly misaligned with the realistic needs of the community and traditional childrearing practices. By forbidding children to engage in labor, community elders believe youth are not learning the value of hard work and the skills they will likely need to ensure the survival of their families and communities outside of displacement. Consequently, community elders are observing a decline in moral responsibility among the younger generation and their increasing entitlement due to their conditioned reliance on humanitarian aid. This is compounded by the ban on corporal punishment, which has emboldened children to defy their elders, reject requests for help or support, and violate the existing social hierarchy. The intense promotion of the right to play exacerbates these issues by encouraging children to indulge their individual desires and interests, rather than attend to the needs of their families and community.

Finally, these findings showcase some of the generational fractures in the Nduta camp, thus addressing limited understandings about the influence of displacement and humanitarian intervention on generational connections and conflicts. In particular, they highlight the role of humanitarian SEL in the expansion of these fractures as SEL both promotes, and is promoted by, the global child rights agenda

(UNESCO-MGIEP, 2019). By employing play-based pedagogies and positive discipline practices, promoting the respect of children and their individual value, and fostering self-centric characteristics, SEL is reinforcing the positioning of children as individual rights holders independent of their families and communities; thus perpetuating the global dominance of universalist Kantian ethics. In the eyes of the older generation, the dissonance between the values and child rights rhetoric promoted through SEL and the traditional communitarian values of Burundian society is negatively impacting: children's development of values associated with *ubushingantahe*; child-adult relationships and interactions; and the moral responsibility of children to their families, community, and descendants.

This dissonance is impacting the roles and responsibilities the older generation has traditionally taken up in the moral development of children. Due to the positioning of teachers as benign playmates, the stripping of disciplinary power from parents and other adult authorities, the limiting of PTA members in their function, and the rendering of *Bashingantahe* as anachronistic, much of the older generation has relinquished their communitarian child rearing practices and moral obligation to the success of the next generation. Consequently, many community elders have begun to let go of their dream of a peaceful Burundi, powerless to prevent the fading of the peace-enhancing values of *ubushingantahe* and collectivist tenets of *ubuntu* among the younger generation.

Just as the imposed colonial value systems initiated the suppression of indigenous moral orders across sub-Saharan Africa over 500 years ago, the neocolonial introduction of humanitarian SEL in the Nduta camp today is similarly imposing a Western value system—rooted in Kantian ethics—that is dissonant to the communitarian values prioritized in Burundian culture. As a humanitarian intervention, SEL is also driven by universalist child rights discourses that contradict community needs and the lived realities of children in the Nduta camp (Duffield, 2002; F. Fox, 2001). While African scholars have condemned colonialism and neocolonialism for the moral corruption of their societies and the gradual loss of traditional peace-enhancing values (Nduka, 1980; Rwantabagu, 2003), similarly community elders in Nduta are holding humanitarian interventions like SEL responsible for exacerbating the moral decay of

their youth, generational detachment, and the gradual erasure of their humanity; rendering hope for a peaceful Burundi distant and dim.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation was motivated by the recognition of my own complicity in processes of epistemic control and erasure. As a humanitarian aid worker, I had subscribed to the universalizing rhetoric of the humanitarian system that positioned certain ways of teaching, learning, developing, and being as superior to all others. I accepted the deficit discourses, trauma narratives, and resiliency rhetoric that framed refugee and crisis-affected learners as in need of my 'expert' help to avoid a bleak and hopeless future. In learning about SEL, I became an uncritical and enthusiastic advocate for its use in displacement and crisis contexts to address the myriad issues I had been trained to assume learners in these contexts faced. With little contextualization and much naivety, I promoted and facilitated the imposition of SEL in various refugee contexts with little reflection on its role in processes of socio-cultural conditioning, control, and erasure.

This dissertation is the product of both critical self-reflection, as well as scholarly exploration to examine how the Nduta refugee community in Tanzania experiences and makes sense of SEL. My research demonstrates that SEL serves as much more than the 'nice', universally beneficial, skills-building intervention that it is so often portrayed as. Findings from this study showcase how SEL is perceived by the Nduta community as a racialized and neoliberal project that aims to mold their children in the image of white-dominant societies and for unrealistic futures underpinned by neoliberal logics. This study also demonstrates how SEL serves as a form of neocolonial values imposition that is resulting in processes of perceived socio-cultural erasure and intergenerational fractures. Finally, critical reflection on the research process itself demonstrates key issues around epistemic and every-day control over knowledge production and the challenges of engaging in collaborative co-production processes in refugee contexts. While these findings were derived using the vehicle of SEL, they serve as an entry point to examine and analyze similar logics, assumptions, processes, and ways of working within other humanitarian sectors and the larger humanitarian ecosystem generally.

Finally, while the imperative of 'do no harm' mandates humanitarian actors to take measures to prevent and alleviate any adverse consequences of their actions on crisis-affected populations, the

findings from this study demonstrate the perceived harm that SEL is inflicting within the Nduta community. This perceived harm is also mirrored in the various discourses and reflections about SEL's relationships with race, equity, social justice, and systemic violence in the U.S. and elsewhere. While some critics of SEL argue for its abolition, many advocate for its reimagining. In the following, I briefly summarize the key conclusions from the three previous chapters, their scholarly and practical contributions, potential avenues for further research, and sketch out a potential transformative agenda for SEL-EiE work and humanitarian intervention more broadly.

Knowledge Co-Production and Epistemic Control

Critical reflections offered in Chapter 1 reveal the complex and imperfect nature of KCP, and collaborative research more broadly, in refugee contexts. They demonstrate how processes of collaboration across cultures, languages, and power hierarchies are messy and challenging, and illustrate how KCP is not a straightforward methodical procedure, but rather a relational and situated process of exploration and negotiation of power and control, shaped by assumptions, conditioning, and past experiences. In particular, this chapter offers three critical insights.

First, chapter one highlights how KCP is rooted in feminist and decolonial principles, which aim to subvert geometries of power. However, obsession with subverting power geometries may blind researchers to the embedded issues of control. Without also addressing the geometries of control that shape and condition power relations in collaborative research, feminist and decolonial KCP efforts are limited and risk reinforcing the very power hierarchies they aim to address. Second, while the rise of prescriptive and procedural guidance for researchers to engage in KCP in humanitarian contexts may provide a useful concrete roadmap, much of the existing KCP guidance is governed and ordered by control regimes produced by the Western academy and Global North institutions. The transformative, emancipatory, decolonial, and epistemically inclusive potentials of KCP with refugees remain. However, striving to execute institutionalized KCP may actually serve to dismiss productive research collaborations that do not tick every box of procedural KCP guidance and thus reinforce epistemic control over

knowledge production. Lastly, narrow epistemic conceptualizations and applied understandings of what KCP is and how it should be done limit KCPs transformative and emancipatory potential. Instead, I echo calls from various scholars to move beyond idealized depictions KCP, focus more on KCP's potential to result in pragmatic benefits and transformative social change, and encourage wider consideration of alternative epistemic conceptualizations of what collaborative knowledge production is and how it can be done.

These insights contribute to and extend the work of refugee studies scholars who have long critiqued the power hierarchies embedded in humanitarian aid and the extractive and harmful practices of refugee research that result in the domination of subaltern knowledge systems (Agier, 2011; Barnett & Weiss, 2008; Harrell-Bond, 1986; Hyndman & Giles, 2011; Malkki, 1996b). Recent guidance for researchers in refugee contexts has been seemingly responsive to these critiques by encouraging KCP approaches that incorporate feminist and decolonial principles in an effort to disrupt these traditional power hierarchies and extractive practices. However, this chapter provides a practical account of how following this procedural guidance can actually hinder these efforts by limiting conceptualizations of KCP and reinforcing the epistemic control of knowledge production and knowledge itself. I aim for these reflections to encourage researchers and practitioners to be more critical about receiving and following such procedural guidance, to pay more attention to the issues of control and situational ethics they will encounter, and for institutions generating this guidance to be more aware of—and better address—the epistemic control and power they retain, and the control regimes they perpetuate, in these research processes.

To further these insights and lines of discourse, future research that explores how refugee and crisis-affected communities conceptualize knowledge, knowledge production, and collaboration—and the impacts of crisis and displacement on these conceptualizations—are imperative. More critical self-reflection of researchers in these contexts would help to highlight the successes, failures, challenges, and supports of executing collaborative and participatory approaches like KCP. These reflections could then

help to inform, nuance, and challenge the prescriptive and procedural guidance that is likely to prevail in refugee research.

SEL, Universality, Race, and So Much More…

Chapter two demonstrates how the Burundian refugee community in Tanzania conceptualizes and experiences SEL as a racialized, neoliberal project that is significantly influencing traditional child development, teaching, and learning practices. Tensions resulting from the individualistic nature of SEL are manifesting in changing child behaviors, child-adult relationships, and communal child-rearing practices that are not aligned with the traditional values of *ubuntu* and *ubushinganahe*. While some community members view these changes as a potential path to progress, others perceive it as a harbinger of cultural erasure, akin to the racially deculturizing efforts of colonial regimes from decades past.

The trauma narratives, deficit discourses, and resiliency rhetoric embedded in SEL also promote a particular view of wellbeing and normality based on neoliberal values, the racialized ideal of the universal child, and the strengthening of individual traits that are seen as protective against the continued adversities these children will likely face. In parallel, SEL becomes a discursive technology used to train and responsibilize individuals to cope with, ignore, and overcome their psychosocial adversity, situations of displacement, and the structural disadvantages that accompany and compound it. Problematically, this promotion of individual resilience becomes a tool of neoliberal governmentality by placing the burden of displacement onto the shoulders of the Nduta community.

Finally, this chapter reveals that children in the Nduta camp have become the subjects of NGOs endeavoring to correct their perceived deficits, aid in trauma-recovery, build resiliency, and help them develop in the image of the white-dominant, Western societies where their SEL programming hails from. While most NGO workers believe that they are providing children with universal skills that will allow them to have a ‘better’ and more ‘hopeful’ future, these perceptions clearly contradict the lived realities and uncertain futures of children in Nduta. In this way, SEL functions as a mechanism to ‘fix’, regulate, and control displaced individuals, and a critical tool in the construction of ‘normal’, adaptable, and

desirable childhoods aligned with white-dominant, middle-class, Western values and neoliberal rationalities.

The findings in this chapter build-upon and contribute to discourses that critique the universalizing rhetoric of the humanitarian system that positions refugee children as 'abnormal' and deficit of the competencies, behaviors, and characteristics of the racialized, neoliberal, universal child (Balagopalan, 2018; Bourdillon & Musvosvi, 2014; Chibanda, 2015; Holt & Holloway, 2006). These findings also nuance critical discourses of SEL in the U.S. as a mechanism that exacerbates racial inequity through the socio-cultural conditioning of marginalized children (Dauphinais & Morvay, 2023; D. M. Hoffman, 2009; Kaler-Jones, 2020; Simmons, 2019; Stearns, 2019; Strong & McMain, 2020). Findings in this chapter demonstrate how the positioning of U.S.-centric SEL as a 'universal global good' and the uncritical implementation of SEL in crisis contexts simply replicates these harmful practices and results in perceived processes of socio-cultural erasure. These findings can help to inform scholars and practitioners in the fields of CIE and EiE who continue to promote U.S.-centric SEL as 'best practice' to pause and critically reflect on the intended and unintended consequences of this work.

I recognize that abstract discussions around race, equity, and decoloniality without actionable recommendations and concrete ways forward often paralyze practitioners in these fields. However, there has been much progress in the development and testing of transformative, anti-racist, anti-colonial, abolitionist, equity-based, and social-justice oriented SEL models and curricula (Abolitionist Teaching Network, 2020; Camangian & Cariaga, 2021; CASEL, 2020, 2023a; Leahy & Lesnik, 2021; Learning for Justice, 2022; NEP, 2024), which will be detailed further below. A landscape review of these efforts and key commonalities between them may be a helpful starting point to spark discussions in the fields of CIE and EiE on potential pathways forward.

Values Imposition, Generational Fractures, and Erasing Humanity

Chapter three explores the influences on moral development in Burundi and with Burundian refugees in Tanzania, particularly focusing on processes of values imposition through colonization and

modern humanitarian intervention. Findings in this chapter demonstrate how the refugee camp functions as a microcosm with unique forces and dimensions that shape processes of social, cultural, and moral transformation. In the case of the Nduta camp, strict encampment and the intense enforcement of child rights policies are imposing alternative and conflicting values. While I do not maintain that the traditional Burundian moral order or values system is superior to all other or should remain unevolved, the foreign values imposed by SEL are perceived by the older generation as encouraging youth to challenge existing moral boundaries and abandon traditional beliefs and practices, thus contributing to their moral decay and the restructuring of the traditional moral and social orders.

The introduction of humanitarian SEL programming is an intersecting factor perceived as exacerbating moral deterioration and generational detachment in the Nduta camp. This chapter clearly illustrates how SEL functions as a form of moral education and a conduit for disseminating particular values, attitudes, and behaviors aligned with the Western values system that informs the humanitarian industry and the notion of the 'universal child'. In so-doing, SEL is significantly influencing and reshaping child-adult relationships; the roles and responsibilities the older generation has traditionally taken up in the moral development of children; and the development of children's values system, processes of moral reasoning, and sense of moral responsibility to their families, community, and future generation.

The findings in this chapter contribute to scholarship at the crossroads of anthropology and refugee studies by exemplifying the concept of displacement as a socio-cultural conditioner that catalyzes processes of social, cultural, and moral transformation (Abduramadan, 2022; Ciabarri, 2008; Feldman, 2012; Lubkemann, 2008). Findings demonstrate how the refugee camp functions as a microcosm with unique forces and dimensions that shape these processes. This chapter also builds-upon and extends critical discourses related to processes of colonial and neocolonial values imposition, particularly through humanitarian intervention (Barnett, 2012; Duffield, 2002; F. Fox, 2001; Igboin, 2011; Manirakiza, 2020; Nkeshimana, 2007; Rwantabagu, 2010), as well as critiques of universal child rights rhetoric (Balagopalan, 2014; Kjørholt, 2019; Monaghan, 2012). They also challenge the current positioning of

SEL by the fields of CIE and EiE as a secular skills-building approach and further Green's (2019) argument that it is impossible to disconnect SEL from the moral development of individuals and the value systems of communities. In fact, these findings exemplify the importance for EiE practitioners involved in SEL programming to seriously consider the historical and contextual factors that influence a community's value system and the processes of social, cultural, and moral transformation unique to displacement. As shown in this instance, ignorance of these processes and existing value systems can result in epistemic conditioning, control, and erasure. Additionally, this chapter addresses limited understandings of how displacement and humanitarian intervention influences intergenerational dynamics for refugee communities as findings articulate SEL's role in exacerbating intergenerational fractures in Nduta. As such, these findings have the potential to influence CIE and EiE scholars to cease framing SEL as a beneficial and benign skills-building approach, and acknowledge its potential role in processes of neocolonial values imposition, socio-cultural erasure, and generational detachment.

Emerging research has started to document processes of co-creating Indigenous SEL models with communities in the U.S. (Sun et al., 2022) and New Zealand (Fickel et al., 2023) that are more epistemically, culturally, and linguistically aligned with community values and goals. Future research to replicate and document these processes with crisis-affected and displaced communities could help the EiE community move beyond 'best practice' and 'universal' approaches and move towards supporting and delivering initiatives that are more pluralistic, epistemically inclusive, and aligned with the EiE community's anti-racist and anti-colonial goals (INEE, 2020).

Dare I Propose a Transformative Agenda?

As mentioned above, despite the humanitarian imperative of 'do no harm', the implementation of SEL in the Nduta camp is resulting in perceived harm through processes of socio-cultural erasure. The findings from this study demonstrate how issues of race, equity, structural disadvantage, and systemic violence are intensely present in SEL-EiE work, regardless of the fact that critical discourses on SEL and harm associated with these intersecting issues have yet to meaningfully make their way into the EiE

community. Indeed, while various EiE actors have produced statements on their commitments to anti-racism, decoloniality, diversity, equity, and inclusion, little meaningful work has been done to address these issues (Brun & Shuayb, 2023; Oddy, 2023).

This dissertation has critiqued the uncritical promotion of SEL in crisis contexts and illuminated its various consequences on the Nduta community. Though, I do not believe we should throw the proverbial baby out with the bathwater just yet. Instead, my concern is with getting "rid of the colonial bathwater of continued fantasies of superiority, homogeny and violent universality, civilizing the Other and the age-old white man's burden" (Rutazibwa, 2018, p. 175) while holding onto the goals of supporting children's learning and holistic wellbeing in crisis contexts. Unfortunately, there are no uniform, universal, fixed, or one-size-fits all approaches to anti-racism and decolonization, despite the EiE community's propensity for 'best practices' and prescriptive toolkits, guidelines, and standards (Brun & Shuayb, 2023). There are, however, examples of anti-racist, anti-colonial, equity-oriented, and social justice approaches to SEL—albeit largely from Global North contexts—to start the conversation.

Many of these approaches begin with reflecting on personal responsibility for, and implicitness in, the issues this dissertation has identified while recognizing the parallel necessity of structural change. There is a need for EiE actors—myself included— to recognize and name the assumptions and biases we bring to SEL work. We must ask questions such as:

- How do I define and think about social and emotional wellbeing?
- How do I think people should behave, express themselves, and interact with others?
- How, where, and from whom did I learn these ideas, and what paradigms, cultures, and institutions did these ideas come from?

This inward exploration can help us to understand how our own values, beliefs, and opinions perpetuate dominant ideologies, cultures, and ways of being through SEL (Dauphinais & Morvay, 2023).

At the programming level, I encourage those engaged in SEL-EiE work to explore how SEL can seek to transform, rather than reproduce, oppression, erasure, inequities, and injustices. There are now a range of approaches and models, including transformative, anti-racist, anti-colonial, anti-biased, equity-

based, socially-just, and humanistic SEL that can help inform this work (Abolitionist Teaching Network, 2020; Camangian & Cariaga, 2021; CASEL, 2020, 2023a; Leahy & Lesnik, 2021; Learning for Justice, 2022; NEP, 2024). While distinct in their approaches, they do share some common principles including:

1. Starting with educators, administrators, and practitioners to understand the implications and historical context of race, racism, and white privilege and to engage in the critical self-reflection.
2. Ensuring that SEL frameworks, curricula, competencies, and pedagogies are not rooted in white norms, but rather are culturally affirming. At a minimum this means accounting for the diverse epistemologies, languages, religions, values, and historical and contextual factors that shape the lived experiences and identities of students and communities from the inception of designing any program.
3. Emphasizing the need for a socio-ecological approach and the importance of engaging not just whole school ecosystems, but wider community structures, institutions, and stakeholders as part of any program design or review process.
4. Including frameworks, curricula, and teaching materials that have explicit goals around: prejudice reduction; challenging various forms of stereotyping, bias, and discrimination; identifying personal and community experiences of inequity, oppression, and injustice; practicing restorative justice; building solidarity; and galvanizing collective action among learners.

More recently, scholars have begun documenting their work in these areas with helpful lessons that are applicable for EiE actors (Cipollone et al., 2022; Dauphinais & Morvay, 2023; DeMartino et al., 2022; Slaten et al., 2015). For example, Sun et al. (2022) describe how they utilized a transformative SEL and anti-colonial approach, grounded in tribal critical race theory, to co-create a culturally affirming and sustaining SEL model rooted in Indigenous epistemology. Similarly, Fickel et al. (2023) document the co-

construction of a culturally and linguistically sustaining SEL model, rooted in Māori epistemology and approaches to social and emotional wellbeing.

A key element, across many of these actions is collaboration and co-creation of SEL interventions with communities of interest. This begins with understanding how crisis-affected communities think about and define learning and wellbeing and what they aspire to regarding the learning, development, and wellbeing of their children. Correspondingly, it is critical to identify what existing forms of SEL are present in communities, and through what mechanisms/institutions, as well as if/whether additional SEL support is truly needed or desired to achieve community aspirations for the well-being and future success of their children. This also includes understanding what previous forms of humanitarian SEL or SEL-adjacent programming a community has been exposed to, and if/how they experienced it, co-opted it, and/or rejected it. If it is determined that additional SEL support is welcomed by a community, implementing partners must work directly with community members to either adapt an existing SEL mechanism or co-construct something new that is aligned with community values, practices, and goals. If co-construction is pursued, there should be consideration of if/how to incorporate the principles and practices found in the alternative SEL frameworks and guidance materials referenced above.

As mentioned throughout this dissertation, I do not hold all value systems to be equal and do not position the culture, values, beliefs, and practices of all refugee and crisis-affected individuals and communities to be good, superior, or just. As the findings from this study show, even within the Nduta community there are varying viewpoints and opinions on issues of social progress and development, as is the case in any community around the world. Therefore, if and when engaging with communities to adapt existing or co-construct new SEL approaches, it is crucial for EiE actors to reflect on whose voices, opinions, goals, and values are being prioritized, and whose are not and why. While most implementing organizations that engage in EiE work are mandated to promote the principles of universal human rights, child rights, gender equality, inclusion, and so on, it is also important for EiE actors reflect on the framing, processes, intentions, and intensity of this promotion and consider how it may clash with community culture, traditions, values, beliefs, and practices. Working closely with those who understand

the histories, lived experiences, epistemologies, and ontologies of communities receiving SEL is necessary to anticipate and address potential epistemic and socio-cultural conflicts and perceived harm. Finally, I encourage those engaged in SEL-EiE work, and those that govern it (i.e. donors, policymakers, global 'experts'), to be open to challenging status quo ways of working, letting go of terminology, and deviating from the institutionalized roadmaps, guidance notes, best practices, and indicators that drive SEL-EiE work today. Only when SEL-EiE work, and humanitarian intervention more broadly, are truly driven by recipient communities can we as humans, actors, agents, and a community of practice move towards positive transformation.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Map Showing Location of Nduta Camp

Appendix 2: UNHCR Nduta Camp Profile August 2017

UNHCR North-West Tanzania — Nduta Camp Profile — 31 August 17

United Nations TANZANIA Delivering as One

Camp Opened: 04 October 2015 | **Population : 127,499** | **Camp Phase : Emergency**

CAMP OVERVIEW

Coordinates :	Lat 3°25'17.399"S Lon 30°53'24.212"E
Camp Extent :	3,340 Hectares
Av. Camp Area/Person	305 m²
Distance from border :	37 km
Region/District :	Kigoma / Kibondo
# of Partners :	24
Admin divisions :	21 Zones, 738 Villages
Authority :	Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) - Government of United Rep. of Tanzania

CURRENT SERVICES

The Following Services are available in the camp:
1 Hospital, 6 Health Posts, 2 Community-Based Rehabilitation Centers, 6 Primary Schools (5 schools under planning), 1 Secondary School, 3 Youth Centers, 1 Women's Center, 3 Food Distribution Centers, 3 Police Posts, 1 Common Market, 2 Camp-based Markets, and 86 Solar Street Lights.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

The Camp Community Organization is structured around three administrative layers, which are Zones, Villages and Blocs. Each organizational level has its representatives with currently 4,491 bloc leaders, 738 Village leaders and 21 Zonal leaders.

BACKGROUND

Nduta camp opened on 4 October 2015, as an emergency measure to relocated 40,000 Burundian Refugees from Nyarugusu camp (decongestion). New arriving Burundians were hosted in Mtendeli camp once Nduta reached its initial maximum capacity of 50,000 persons (January 2016). Since Mtendeli camp reached its capacity of 50,000 on 3th October 2016, the government agreed to reopen Nduta camp again to host all newly arriving burundians. Following the revocation of the prima facie refugee status recognition on 20 January 2017 by the government, all new arrivals are undergoing a refugee status determination process. The Voluntary Repatriation of Burundians began in early September 2017.

SITUATION

SECTORS OVERVIEW

Reporting Month : August 2017

Sector	Indicator	Minimum Standard	Target	Achieved	Actors
CCCM	% of families receiving CRIs	100%	60%	50%	MHA, UNHCR, DRC
	% of actors regularly participating in CCCM meetings	--	100%	60%	
Protection	% of PoCs registered and documentation issued according to UNHCR standards	100%	100%	99.5%	UNHCR, IRC
	# of individuals who received SGBV MSR support	--	800	565	
Shelter	% of households living in adequate dwellings (Transitional Shelters)	--	36%	34%	AIRD, NRC
	# of Km of road constructed and maintained	--	16	16	
WASH	# of persons per usable tap	200	100	136	TCRS
	% of households with family latrines	--	40%	16%	
Food	% of refugees receive timely monthly food assistance	100%	100%	96%	WVI, DRC, WFP
	% of required food quantity distributed (2,100 kcal)	100%	100%	83.0%	
Health	Crude Mortality Rate (CMR) - per 1,000 population/month	<1	0.7	0.2	TRCS
	Consultation per clinician per day	<50	50	42	
Education	% of children aged 6-14 yrs enrolled in primary education	100%	75%	62%	IRC
	% of children aged 15-18 enrolled in secondary education	100%	50%	1%	
Livelihood	# of start-up kits/cash provided	--	2,250	1,313	DRC, IRC, Plan Inter.
	# of refugees provided with financial services	--	1,380	1,091	

Target reached or exceeded | Target borderline (≥75% of the target) | Target not met (<75% of the target)

DEMOGRAPHY

Key Figures

- Arrivals 122,290
- Refugees 79%
- Births 5,209
- Asylum Seekers 21%
- Registered 100%
- Households 49,675

Biometrically Registered Population Growth

Mar-17	Apr-17	May-17	Jun-17	Jul-17	Aug-17
122,932	123,810	124,858	125,682	126,740	127,499

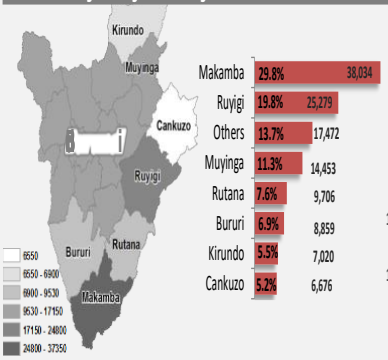
Monthly arrival trend

Mar-17	Apr-17	May-17	Jun-17	Jul-17	Aug-17
4324	721	311	377	525	314

Age and Gender

- Women & children 75%
- Elderly 60+ 2%
- Children 0-17 55%
- Adults 18-59 43%

Localites of Origin of Registered Refugees



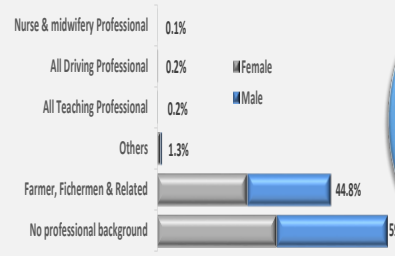
Makamba	29.8%	38,034
Ruyigi	19.8%	25,279
Others	13.7%	17,472
Muyinga	11.3%	14,453
Rutana	7.6%	9,706
Bururi	6.9%	8,859
Kirundo	5.5%	7,020
Cankuzo	5.2%	6,676

Age and Gender

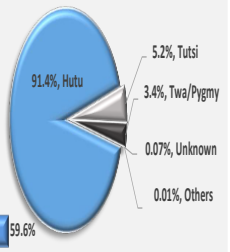
53% Male | 47% Female

0-4	14,616	11%	11%	14,320
5-11	12,420	10%	9%	12,022
12-17	8,874	7%	6%	7,403
18-59	30,118	24%	20%	24,898
≥60	1,456	1%	1%	1,372

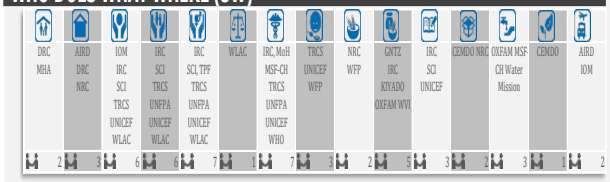
Population Professional Backgrounds



Population Ethnicities

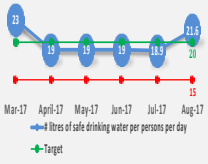


WHO DOES WHAT WHERE (3W)

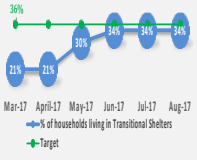


CHALENGING SERVICES MONITORING

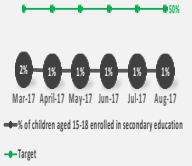
WASH



Shelter



Education



UNHCR gratefully acknowledges the support of the following partners in Nyarugusu Camp :

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For more information or suggestions please contact: Paul Nsiela (nsiela@unhcr.org) or visit: https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/burundi/location/2034

Appendix 3: List of Partners Involved in Refugee Response September 2017

Partners in the Response:

- Refugee Services Department, Ministry of Home Affairs
- Ministry of Health
- [illegible]Regional Administration and Local Government
- ADRA - Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA)
- AIRD - African Initiatives for Relief and Development
- CARITAS
- CEMDO - Community Environmental Management and Development Organization
- CSFM - Centre for the Study of Forced Migration
- CWS - Church World Service
- DRC - Danish Refugee Council
- GNTZ- Good Neighbours Tanzania
- Help Age International
- ICRC - International Committee of the Red Cross
- IFRC - International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent
- IOM - International Organization for Migration
- IRC - International Rescue Committee
- MSF- CH - Medecins Sans Frontieres
- NRC - Norwegian Refugee Council
- OXFAM - Oxfam Great Britain
- Plan International
- REDESO - Relief to Development Society
- Save the Children
- TRCS - Tanzanian Red Cross and Red Crescent Society
- TCRS - Tanganyika Christian Refugee Services
- UNFPA - United Nations Population Fund
- UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund
- Water Missions
- WHO -World Health Organization
- WLAC - [illegible]
- WFP- World Food Programme
- World Vision

Agencies are very grateful for the financial support provided by donors who have contributed to their activities with unearmarked and broadly earmarked funds as well as for those who have contributed directly to the operation.

CONTACTS

Ms. Daria Santoni, UNHCR External Relations Officer, Dar es Salaam
santoni@unhcr.org, Tel: +255 22 2602708-10, Cell +255 784 730 427
Mr. Kanali Rankho, UNHCR External Relations Associate, Kibondo
rankho@unhcr.org, Tel: +255 28 282 0154, Cell +255 620 001 001

LINKS

For more information on the current Burundi refugee situation in Tanzania, kindly click here to visit the Interagency Information Sharing portal.

Appendix 4: Sample of Interview Protocols

*Note that when you see the word "skill" below, it was often translated and interchanged with the terms: behaviors, characteristics, and values.

TEACHERS

Background questions:

- Name
- Age
- Grades taught
- Length and detail of training and teaching experience
- Current role and responsibilities

Skills for Holistic Development:

1. Were you supporting your students to develop these skills before the training?
    a. If yes, how?
    b. If no, what were you focusing on teaching your students?
2. Are these skills new for your community or are they things your community has valued for students to learn previously?
    a. If they are new, what are/were the things/skills parents/the community expect(ed) children to learn in school?
    b. If they are not new, is the program impacting the way you and your community think about or value these skills for students?
3. Are there other skills that you or your community value for students to learn more highly than these five? If yes, why?

Social & Emotional Skills:

1. Are social and emotional skills things that have been traditionally taught in the Burundian school system?
    a. If yes, how and why?
    b. If no, how did/do students learn these skills outside of school?
    c. If no, what do you think about them being integrated into the school system here in the camp?
    d. If no, how do parents feel about their children learning these skills? Do they value these skills for their children? Why or why not?
2. Do you think formally teaching your students these skills in school will impact their overall development?
    a. If yes, how?
    b. If no, why not?
3. Do you think that including these skills in formal education is impacting the way you and your community think about overall child development?
    a. If yes, how?
    b. If no, why not?

The Future:

1. What kind of future do you want for your students?
2. How do you think about or define future success for your students? OR What does a successful adult look like in your community?
3. What kind of skills do you think your students should learn in order to achieve this ideal future success?

4. If your students return to Burundi, how do you think your teaching methods and what they are learning from you will impact them after repatriation?
5. If you yourself return to Burundi, how do you think the teacher training you have received here and your ideas about child development will impact you when you return?

PARENTS

Background questions:

- Name
- Age
- Profession
- Length of time living in Nduta camp & other experiences of displacement
- Current number of children
    - Genders
    - Ages
    - Number attending schools and what grades
- Level of education completed
- Do you value education for all of your children? Why or why not?
- Are you involved in your child(ren)'s schooling in any way (i.e. parent-teacher association, school-management committee, volunteer, etc.)?

Skills/Knowledge:

1. What kinds of things do you want or expect your child(ren) to learn at school?
    a. Why?
2. Do you teach your child(ren) any specific skills at home?
    a. If yes, what, why, and how?
    b. If no, why not?
3. Are there specific skills that you expect your child(ren) to learn naturally in the community?
    a. If yes, what, why, and how?
    b. If no, why not?
4. Are there specific skills that you expect teachers to teach your child(ren) at school?
    a. If yes, what, why, and how?
    b. If no, why not?

(IF THEY HAVE NOT MENTIONED IT ALREADY)

1. Do you think it is important for your child(ren) to learn how to be social (social skills)?
    a. If yes, why? Can you give examples?
    b. If no, why not?
2. How do your child(ren) learn social skills (i.e. at home? in school? in the community?)?
3. Do you think it is important for your child(ren) to know how to control and manage their emotions?
    a. If yes, why? Can you give examples?
    b. If no, why not?
4. How do your child(ren) learn how to control and manage their emotions (i.e. at home? in school? in the community?)?

Child Development:

1. Is the way teachers teach children today different from how teachers taught children when you were in school?

    c. If yes, how and why?
    d. If no, why not?
5. What do you think about the way teachers are teaching your child(ren) here in the camp?
6. Do you think that the education programs brought in by these NGOs is influencing the way you and your community think about child development?
    a. If yes, how and why?
    b. If no, why not?
7. Do you think that the education programs brought in by these NGOs is influencing Burundian culture and the new generation?
    a. If yes, how and why?
    b. If no, why not?
8. There is the saying "A child belongs to the community, not one person". Do you think this belief is changing in your community?
    a. If yes, why and how?
    b. Is it just changing here in the camp, or in Burundi also?

The Future:

6. What kind of future do you want for your child(ren)?
    a. OR what does a successful adult look like in your culture and community?
7. What kind of skills do you think your students should learn in order to achieve this ideal future success?
    a. OR if you were one of your child(ren)'s school teachers, what and how would you teach your child(ren) in order to reach that ideal of success?
8. Is it possible that you and your child(ren) might repatriate to Burundi in the next few years?
    a. If yes, how do you think the way your child(ren) are being taught and what they are learning here in the camp will impact them when they return to Burundi?
    b. If no, why don't you want to repatriate, or your children to repatriate?

STUDENTS

Background questions:

- Name
- Age
- Grade

1. Do you like coming to school?
    a. Why or why not?
2. What kind of things do you learn at school?
    a. What is your favorite thing to learn / what is your favorite subject?
        i. Why?
3. What kind of activities do you do at school?
    a. What is your favorite kind of activity at school?
        i. Why?
4. Are there any activities you do at school that are about your feelings and emotions?
    a. If yes, what kind of activities do you do?
    b. Do you enjoy them?
        i. Why or why not?
    c. Do you do any of these activities outside of school?
        i. If yes, which ones. Describe.

5. Are there any activities you do at school about being good friends and communicating or working with your classmates?
    a. If yes, what kind of activities do you do?
    b. Do you enjoy them?
        i. Why or why not?
    c. Do you do any of these activities outside of school?
        i. If yes, which ones? Describe.
6. What kinds of things do you want to do in your future (i.e. travel, more education, job, etc.)?
    a. What kind of things do you think you need to know to do those things?
    b. What kind of personal skills do you think you need to be able to do those things?

COMMUNITY LEADERS

Background questions:

- Name
- Age
- Length of time living in Nduta camp & other experiences of displacement
- Position held in the community & details (i.e. why? election process? length of time in position, role and responsibility, etc.)
- Other professions & positions held in lifetime

Skills/Knowledge:

1. What kinds of things do you want or expect children in your community to learn at school?
    a. Why?
2. Are there specific skills that you expect teachers to teach children in your community?
    a. If yes, what and how?
3. Do you teach children in your community any specific skills?
    a. If yes, what, why, and how?
    b. If no, why not?
4. Are there specific skills that you expect children in your community to learn naturally in other places in the community?
    a. If yes, what, why, and how?

Social & Emotional:

1. Do you think it is important for your children in your community to learn how to be social, or to develop social skills?
    a. If yes, why? Can you give examples?
    b. If no, why not?
2. How do children in your community learn social skills (i.e. at home? in school? in the community?)?
3. Do you think it is important for children in your community to know how to control and manage their emotions?
    a. If yes, why? Can you give examples?
    b. If no, why not?
4. How do children in your community learn how to control and manage their emotions (i.e. at home? in school? in the community?)?

Child Development:

1. Is the way teachers teach children today different from how teachers taught children when you were in school?
    b. If yes, how and why?
    c. If no, why not?
2. What do you think about the way teachers are teaching children here in the camp?

3. Do you think that the education programs brought in by these NGOs is influencing the way you and your community think about child development?
    a. If yes, how and why?
    b. If no, why not?
4. Do you think that the education programs brought in by these NGOs is influencing Burundian culture and the new generation?
    a. If yes, how and why?
    b. If no, why not?
5. There is the saying "A child belongs to the community, not one person". Do you think this belief is changing in your community?
    a. If yes, why and how?
    b. Is it just changing here in the camp, or in Burundi also?

The Future:

1. What kind of future do you want for children in your community?
    a. OR what does a successful adult look like in your culture and community?
2. What kind of skills do you think children should learn in order to achieve this ideal future success?
    a. OR if you were a school teacher, what and how would you teach children in order to reach that ideal of success?
3. If children in the camp repatriate to Burundi, how do you think the way they are being taught and what they are learning here will impact them when they return to Burundi?

NGO WORKERS

Background questions:

- Name
- Current position title & organization
- Length of time in position, and history of work in refugee response
- Role and responsibility

Social and Emotional Learning:

1. Did any of your previous work activities include helping stakeholders like parents, community members, or children build social and emotional skills?
    a. If yes, please describe.
    b. If yes, why was SEL included in the interventions?
    c. If yes, how was the SEL component developed or designed? Where, by whom, what was the process?
2. What were the main goals of those activities?
3. How do you understand or conceptualize SEL?
    a. Where did you learn about/develop this conceptualization of SEL?

Culture:

1. Were the SEL components of your interventions contextualized for the Burundian refugee community?
    a. If yes, please describe.
    b. If no, why not?
2. Do you think that the SEL components of your interventions apply to or match the culture, values, and practices of the Burundian refugee community?
    a. If yes, why and how?
    b. If no, why?
3. How do you think the SEL components of your interventions are being experienced by different members of the Burundian refugee community (i.e. teachers, parents, students, etc.)?
4. Do you think that the SEL components of your interventions will impact or change the way that different members of the Burundian refugee community (i.e. teachers, parents, students, etc.) think about and support learning and child development?
    a. If yes, why and how?
    b. If no, why not?

The Future:

1. What kind of future do you think different members of the Burundian refugee community (i.e. teachers, parents, students, etc.) want for their children or students?
2. How do you think different members of the Burundian refugee community (i.e. teachers, parents, students, etc.) think about and define future success for their children and students?
3. What kind of skills do you think different members of the Burundian refugee community (i.e. teachers, parents, students, etc.) want their children to learn in school in order to achieve success and their ideal future?
4. Do you think your program is aligned with these community goals and ideas?
5. As many children participating in program activities will likely repatriate to Burundi in the next few years, how do you think the SEL components of your interventions will impact them after repatriation?

Appendix 5: Dissertation Brief
*Translated into Kirundi by Elisha for distribution throughout the Nduta community

DISSERTAION BRIEF

April 2024

This document has been created by Kelsey A. Dalrymple and Elyseé (Elisha) Irankunda in response to questions from the Nduta refugee community about the dissertation research that Kelsey and Elisha conducted in the Nduta camp from 2022-2023. The following provides a simplified outline and description of Kelsey's final dissertation as part of her fulfillment of earning a Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and aims to help answer key questions raised by the community during the review process of the dissertation chapters. However, please note that the information below is an over simplification of what is included in the full dissertation and we encourage you to read the dissertation chapters for more detail and information.

Dissertation Title
Processes of Erasure: The Consequences of Social Emotional Learning with Burundian Refugees in Tanzania

Dissertation Structure
This dissertation is not a single continuous paper. Rather, Kelsey and Elisha have drafted three individual journal articles that each have their own introductions, literature reviews, theoretical frameworks, methods, findings, discussions, and conclusion sections. The total dissertation includes a general introduction and conclusion section to explain the overall research project, however, the three main chapters exist as three separate journal articles that we hope will be published in academic journals over the next year.

Chapter 1: Geometries of Control: Co-producing knowledge in a refugee context
This chapter is a reflection of the research methods that we used to collect data. We used what is called a knowledge co-production (KCP) approach, which aims to make sure that a single researcher, or research team, does not simply take information from a community and interpret it in line with their own dominant way of thinking. KCP is a research approach that acknowledges that there are many different ways of thinking, knowing, and being in the world. KCP requires researchers to work together and with communities to make sure that the information that is shared and the knowledge or findings that are generated from the research are produced in a way that make sense to all of the individuals involved.

One way we did this method was by making sure that Kelsey was not the only one leading the research. Elisha also had power and control in choosing interview questions, identifying study participants, collecting data, interpreting the findings, etc. Sharing power and control throughout the research process is a big part of KCP. Another way we did this method is by providing many opportunities for the Nduta community to review the findings we generated from the research to make sure it was accurate and reflective of the community's opinions and experiences and in line with their way of thinking, knowing, and being.

This chapter specifically highlights the challenges that Kelsey and Elisha experienced in trying to share power and control using the KCP method. The main argument of the chapter is that researchers should be careful of following guidance generated by humanitarian organizations and practitioners about how to do KCP because they present KCP as a fixed step-by-step process. But in our experience, we think KCP must not adhere to rigid steps and procedures, but must be defined by the communities with whom researchers want to co-produce knowledge with.

Chapter 2: 'My Child Belongs to the NGOs': Social emotional learning as a racialized, neoliberal project in a refugee context

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is a kind of educational approach and pedagogy that comes from the United States. It is a pedagogy used in schools to help children develop different kinds of social and emotional skills, behaviors, characteristics, attitudes, and values. Examples are things like self-management, emotional regulation, communication skills, learning how to establish and maintain positive relationships, and responsible decision-making. Over the last ten years, humanitarian organizations have integrated SEL into their education programming in refugee camps. For example, there are many elements of SEL included in education and recreational programming delivered by Plan International, Save the Children, Right to Play, and IRC in Nduta.

This chapter highlights the fact that many humanitarian education programs like SEL come from majority (racially) white countries in Europe and North America that are very individualistic in culture; meaning the culture and way of life in those countries is focused on individual success, rather than community success and wellbeing. As a result, many of these SEL programs that are used in refugee camps are not aligned with the collectivist nature and values of many African societies that prioritize the wellbeing and success of the community over the individual. Also, many Nduta community members shared that they fear this kind of programming is making children in Nduta like white children in other countries who have very different lives, behaviors, and access to resources, and is preparing children in Nduta for unrealistic futures. The findings in this chapter show how many members of the Nduta community are worried that this programming is contributing to the erasure of Burundian culture and is shaping children more in line with the culture of white children in other countries where humanitarian SEL programming comes from.

Chapter 3: Erasing Our Humanity: Moral education and generational fractures in the Nduta refugee camp

This chapter recognizes that SEL is a form of moral education because it influences the moral development and values of learners. This chapter also provides an overview of the Burundian concept of ubushingantahe and shows that the values and characteristics associated with ubushingantahe make up the moral value system for Burundian culture. Also, because ubushingantahe is rooted in the philosophy of ubuntu, and because ubuntu often translates in many languages and cultures as "humanity", we argue that the values of ubushingantahe define the humanity of Burundian individuals.

The findings in this chapter highlight how the values promoted by humanitarian SEL programming are somewhat misaligned with the values of ubushingantahe, and how this misalignment is resulting in changing child behaviors, attitudes, and values in Nduta. For example, teachers and parents told us that children are more unruly these days, they do not listen to elders, and they are not learning the key values of discipline and respect and the other values of ubushingantahe. As a result, children are not developing a moral sense of responsibility to their families, community, and future generations, which is causing worry among adults in Nduta that their culture is being erased, and also that the humanity of children in Nduta is also being erased.

Target Audience

These chapters are targeting individuals, organizations, and donors who work on humanitarian programming, and specifically education interventions, in crisis and displacement contexts.

Research Goals

A main goal of KCP is to make sure that the white, Western, ways of thinking, knowing, and being do not continue to dominate other ways of thinking, knowing, and being in the world. Another main goal is to make sure that the knowledge and information produced from the research contributes to positive change for oppressed communities.

Hopeful Outcomes of the Research

- We hope that this research makes individuals, organizations, and donors who work on humanitarian education programming aware of the potential negative impacts that pedagogies like social and emotional learning can have on refugee and crisis-affected communities. By sharing the experience of the Nduta community, we hope that this research can show these actors the unintended consequences of this work and encourage them to not continue these neocolonial practices of imposing external pedagogies and practices on communities without first listening to what communities need and want.
- We hope that this research will contribute to larger changes in humanitarian practice by showing the larger humanitarian industry the importance of understanding the history, lived experiences, daily realities, culture, traditions, and philosophies of the refugee communities it serves and to stop assuming that white, Western ideas, behaviors, and ways of teaching and learning are superior to all others around the world.
- We hope that this research will also inform other researchers who work with refugee communities about the importance of KCP and to not just follow prescriptive guidance on how to do it, but to truly work with communities deeply throughout the research process.
- We hope that the Nduta community can use the knowledge and information from this research for their own benefit in ways that the community identifies.
- Lastly, we hope that by publishing this research it will help to inform the international community about the bad situation in the Nduta camp and inform and motivate people in positions of power to do something to help.