

# Contemporary Trends in Global & International Studies

The Orphan Industrial Complex: Charitable Commodification and  
its Consequences for Child Protection

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The Hague, Netherlands

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**2:30PM**

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In her new book, *Crying for Our Elders: African Orphanhood in the Age of HIV and AIDS*, Cheney argues that the misidentification of “orphans” as a category for development and humanitarian intervention has subsequently been misappropriated by many Western individuals and charitable organizations, resulting in an ‘orphan industrial complex’ that problematically commoditizes children as targets for charitable intervention—

particularly in the global south. The discourse and practice of “orphan rescue” drives the “production” of orphans as objects for particular kinds of intervention that are counter to established international standards of child protection. In this presentation, Cheney will explain the concept of the orphan industrial complex: how it works and what its consequences are for children, families, and child protection systems.



Kristen E. Cheney is Associate Professor of Children and Youth Studies for the International Institute of Social Studies, a graduate development studies institute in The Hague, Netherlands. Dr. Cheney’s research deals with children’s survival strategies amidst difficult circumstances and the politics of humanitarian intervention for such children, mainly in Eastern and Southern Africa. Her first book, *Pillars of the Nation: Child Citizens and Ugandan National Development* (2007), looks broadly at the social intersections of childhood and nationhood in international development, while her new book, *Crying for Our Elders: African Orphanhood in the Age of HIV/AIDS* (2017, University of Chicago Press) draws on youth participatory ethnographic research with orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) to examine issues of social exclusion, policy, and protection for children affected by HIV/AIDS.

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