Capacity to thrive, as seen from the child’s perspective

What is the effectiveness of an organisation working for the welfare of children in especially difficult circumstances, in terms of the child’s perceived capacity to thrive?

an exploratory study

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“Capacity to thrive as seen from the child’s perspective”

This paper seeks to question the underlying premise of much work by childcare agencies and children’s service providers, namely, that they know what the child needs now in order to thrive in life ahead.

Performing an exploratory pilot study in the City of Manila with fifteen children in especially difficult circumstances, now looked after by a local non-governmental welfare organisation, the researcher sought the perspectives of the children on this foundational question.

An experimental methodology was devised, based on two proven psychological techniques. In this methodology the children participate in open-ended creative activities whereby they are given opportunity for self-expression in relation to a given context or topic, through pictures and words. In sequence, the second of these exercises was tailored to responses given by the children in the first activity.

As a comparative measure, an independent index designed for assessing and promoting resilience in children and young people was selected. The responses to the activities in this study were correlated against the index. Even with the limited size of the study, this showed a strong correspondence. Key commonalities and distinctions were noted.

The activities yielded responses which revealed a significant number of clear needs identified by the children as important for their capacity to thrive in life. While some of these might have been expected, there were also some responses that were less obvious, and might not have emerged without engaging the children in a process of self-expression.
Critique of the methods used is offered in the light of the pilot study, and enhancements are recommended to modify the techniques for differing ages and abilities, and to improve the quality of the response in further studies.

A proposal is made to use the methodology for establishing a baseline of indicators with looked after children, and with children living and working on the streets, in relation to perceived needs for their capacity to thrive.

It is also suggested that the independent index, which emerged originally from a different context, could be utilised for children in especially difficult circumstances, and nuanced to reflect the milieu in which these children live.
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Anak Mo ako.

Narito munting puso,
pakinggan munting tinig
Angkop nga ba ako sa mundo ninyo
Kasali ba ako?
Ako'y anak ninyo.

Pagmasdan narito kami
Mga bata sa inyong mundo
Nag-iisa, may takot pa
Nadarama n'yo ba?
Alam, n'yo ba tulaad ninyo
May pangarap din kami
Kami'y anak n'yo.

Anon, in Philippine National Police, Police Handbook on the Management of Cases of Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances, Quezon City: Department of Social Welfare, National Project on Street Children (in cooperation with Unicef), 1993

translated by Binia Nightingale
1. INTRODUCTION

“Capacity to thrive as seen from the child’s perspective: What is the effectiveness of an organisation working for the welfare of children in especially difficult circumstances, in terms of the child’s perceived capacity to thrive?”

It is easy for adults to assume that they know what a child needs, particularly if that is the nature of their work. Providers may offer services such as a night shelter, a drop-in, a mobile clinic, or kerbside schooling for children living and working on the street. All want to work for children’s welfare. But the often unexamined presupposition of the provider is that they know what the child needs. There is a danger in this. At best, while providing in general for many children’s needs there is the risk of failing to tailor the service to the particular needs of each child. At worst, there is the possibility of “rescuing” children who don’t need rescue and are managing life perfectly well without the intrusive intervention of well meaning but misguided adults.

So at the outset, it is inadequate simply to ask, “what do these children need?” — in other words, “what do we adults think they need?” Instead we must ask, “what do these children tell us that they need?”

1.1 Exploratory Study

This paper forms an exploratory study in which the author hopes to test this underlying premise of childcare work, and show that a creative methodology in which children are active participants can serve to identify their perceived needs. These may then function as indicators against which to determine the efficacy of an organisation working on their behalf.

A further intent in this paper is to correlate the outcomes of this exploratory method against an independent index proven through research with children, but originating in a different context. The purpose here is to provide a two-way critique which may offer insight into the use of the outcomes as an assessment measure, and the wider applicability of these, as well as to ascertain the potential scope for using this approach in other contexts.
1.2 Key Focus and Objectives

While the title question refers to the effectiveness of service provision, the focus in this study is on the underlying premise of the child’s perceived needs in order to thrive in life, as this is the essential basis of the title question. Since the impact of the benefits received now lies in the future, identifying present needs for future outcomes is the key. In other words, from the perspective of the child’s or young person’s, “Is this service helping me to gain now what I need for my capacity to thrive in my life ahead?”

Once the necessary factors which contribute toward capacity to thrive are understood from the perspective of the child, only then can questions be asked about the extent to which service provision meets these needs, and the intentionality of the organisation as a criterion of its efficacy in this respect.

The objectives are therefore as follows:

• to determine from the children what they perceive as necessary for their future capacity to thrive in life.

in the process...

• to test the methodology as a valid means of ascertaining this data, correlating the results against an independent index.

Subordinate but related to the key focus, another area of interest in this study is that of children’s participation. Assessment of service provision should at the very least be informed by the beneficiaries of an organisation, or the recipients of the services. And any such consultation should not be a tokenistic exercise. For organisations concerned with child welfare, this is a particular challenge. Yet, allowing children to participate in evaluating service provision is an essential step to ensuring its effectiveness. For a truly child-sensitive organisation, this is only a first step towards empowering children to contribute to service planning and decision making processes.

This philosophy of participation will be carried through the methodology employed in this study, giving, as far as possible, free expression to the children’s perspectives on achieving a positive future.
Research for this study was carried out in the Philippines with street children who are now looked after by an NGO. Over a five day period, the researcher used creative activities with fifteen children based at one the urban centres of the NGO, in the City of Manila.

1.3 Structure of Study

In this paper, the first step is define key terms and to explore the underlying concepts for the study, as these provide the foundation for the research activities. This is done in chapter 2. At this stage an independent index is also introduced. Following this, the wider context is seen in overview in chapter 3, narrowing down to the situation of the NGO and the particular project where the research was carried out. Also some contextual introduction is made to the children who participated in the study.

In chapter 4 the methodology is unpacked, with explanation of the source ideas for each of the two key research activities, then detail of the process. Also at this stage, the choice and usage of analysis tools is given. Comment is made on some problems that arose with the methodology during the study, and observations given on how these could be improved upon for future studies.

Next, the outcomes of the data and analysis are written up. Also, in chapter 5, the opportunity is taken to reflect on the applicability of the Developmental Assets framework (as an independent index) to this context.

And finally, the key strands of the study are brought together to conclude.
2. CONCEPTS

In order to create a theoretical framework for the current research study it is necessary to outline some of the key concepts that will be employed throughout. This requires a definition of the key terms and an explanation of how they relate to each other and to the research.

2.1 Key Terms Introduced

First of all this study is about children, which to take the simple definition under international law (and to avoid a long discourse on childhood as a sociological construct) refers to persons under the age of eighteen years. More specifically, this exploratory research has in focus children in especially difficult circumstances.

Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances is a technical term used by Unicef and some child welfare agencies. It includes “working children, street children, abused, neglected, and abandoned children, children in armed conflict and disaster” — categories which are not mutually exclusive. Other agencies prefer to use less technical terms such as, “children at high risk”, and may identify factors which are potentially detrimental to a child’s wellbeing or development (such as: physical and psychosocial hazards; occupational hazards; dangers of exploitation or abuse; marginalisation). Nonetheless, whether risk factors or situational categories are used, essentially the same children are being identified.

“Looked After” Children or those “in care” in this study refers to children who, overseen by a social welfare institution (government social services, or a third sector agency) are living with adults other than their parents or extended family who are acting as primary caregivers in loco parentis. Normally the reasons for this have to do with the child being “…in especially difficult circumstances” and the natural family being unable (for whatever reason) to provide for the child’s basic needs or uphold the child’s human rights. Hence street children finding refuge within a CBO or NGO shelter are potentially in transition toward being in care, or looked after by the agency concerned.

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1 UN, Convention on the Rights of the Child, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 1989, article 1
2 Szanton Blanc, Urban Children in Distress, Gordon and Breach Publishers, 1994, p.36-37
3 Szanton Blanc, Urban Children in Distress, p.351
The research in relation to these children seeks to explore their capacity to thrive in life. At the very least this has to do with coping skills enabling them to handle adversity. But for the concept of thriving there is also a broader and more positive aspect, a proactive facet as well as a reactive facet. As a term capacity to thrive is less common in literature, and the term resilience is often preferred. Hence some initial definitions are offered here.

**Resilience** may be defined as, “the capacity of a person or a social system to live well and to develop positively in spite of difficult conditions of life, and this is in a socially acceptable way,” or more succinctly, “the capacity to do well in a socially acceptable way when faced with adversity”. However, as Vanistendael notes, there may be problematic social and political implications of such a definition. His own definition is slightly simpler: “...the capacity of a person to do well facing difficult conditions in life.” He does, however, include the social dimension, hence would discount strategies such as drug dealing or violent crime from his definition of resilience, even though they may provide a way for some young people to escape adversity and to survive. An alternative definition is offered by Bradford, who defines resilience as, “...the capacity of a human being to endure hardship and recover with maturity and wisdom to lead a meaningful and productive life.”

**Coping Skills** are one facet of resilience, specifically, responding or reacting to adversity. They may be defined as, “...constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person.” In other words, the adaptive strategies (emotional, mental, physical) that a child (or adult) will employ to face the challenging stresses of life. Stress refers to the mental and emotional strain experienced in adverse circumstances. In process, coping with stress involves appraising the threat to one’s own wellbeing, selecting an appropriate strategy, employing it in the face of the threat, and then reflecting on the effect, as to whether stress level is reduced or not, either by diminishing the source of the

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5 Vanistendael, *Growth in the Muddle of Life*, p.5
6 Vanistendael, *Growth in the Muddle of Life*, p.10
7 Bradford, J., *Caring for the Whole Child*, the Children’s Society, 1995, p.25

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threat, or increasing one’s capacity to face it. All human beings face stresses and develop coping strategies as a normal response. The difference for children in especially difficult circumstances is one of degree.

Vanistendael notes a useful distinction:

For action it is helpful to point out that resilience consists of two components, which makes it a richer concept than coping: resistance against destruction, the capacity to protect one’s own integrity under pressure; and beyond mere resistance, the capacity to construct a positive life in spite of difficult circumstances.

In this study, a new term will be employed, namely, “capacity to thrive”.

**Capacity to Thrive** is a broader term chosen here to encompass a child’s resilience (including coping strategies), both reactive and proactive facets. However, the intent is also to go beyond an understanding situated in the immediate timeframe (that is, whether or not a child exhibits resilience at any moment, given the circumstance or event). Etymologically the word “thrive” has to do with reaching forward or grasping. In this study the intent is to reach forward in time, to explore conditions which will facilitate a positive outcome in life, as perceived in terms of the perspective of the child. Hence the term is chosen because of its emphasis on a positive scope and future-oriented focus.

2.2 Independent Index

In this study, an independent frame of reference will be introduced in order to provide an index against which to measure the outcomes. For this comparative index, the Developmental Assets approach, formulated by the Search Institute, has been selected. The Search Institute grew out of Lutheran Youth Research, established in 1960, and describes itself as “a trailblazer and innovator in promoting positive change on behalf of young people” for fifty years. With a strong grounding of in-depth research on child and adolescent development, risk prevention, and resiliency, in 1990 the Search Institute formulated a framework of

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10 Vanistendael, Growth in the Muddle of Life, p.9
11 thrive: Middle English, from Norse thrífask, reflexive of thrífa, to grasp, to take hold
“positive experiences, relationships, opportunities, and personal qualities that young people need to grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.”\textsuperscript{14} Originally there were 30 items in this framework, later expanded to 40, referred to as Developmental Assets. Alongside this they have advocated five action strategies for community and society transformation, to provide a healthy environ for children and young people.\textsuperscript{15}

This approach is intended for assessing and promoting resilience in children and young people. And while it was originally developed in quite a different context to the current study, the claim is made that assets have power for all young people.

Regardless of gender, ethnic heritage, economic situation, or geographic location, assets both promote positive behaviours and attitudes and help protect young people from many different problem behaviours.\textsuperscript{16}

\textbf{Developmental Assets} is a term employed in reference to important “building blocks” for nurturing children and young people towards maturity in a healthy way. Developmental Assets represent “...the relationships, opportunities, and personal qualities that young people need to avoid risks and to thrive.”\textsuperscript{17} Studies performed in the United States “consistently show that the more assets young people have, the less likely they are to engage in a wide range of high-risk behaviours and the more likely they are to thrive.” The approach defines high risk behaviours as problem alcohol use, violence, illicit drug use, and sexual activity.\textsuperscript{18} In terms of a child’s future prospects, it is posited that “levels of assets are better predictors of high-risk involvement and thriving than poverty or being from a single-parent family.”\textsuperscript{19}

Employing the term “capacity to thrive” in this study is intended to reflect the intent of the Developmental Assets approach, yet without using identical terminology. These definitions will provide the basis for a comparison between the independent index, and the current study.

\textsuperscript{14} Search Institute, “Fact Sheet”, Minneapolis, 2008 p.2
\textsuperscript{15} Search Institute, “Fact Sheet”, p.4
\textsuperscript{16} Search Institute, “Fact Sheet”, p.2; cf. Hong, Kathryn (ed), \textit{Insights and Evidence: promoting healthy children, youth and communities}, vol.3 no.1, Minneapolis, 2006
\textsuperscript{17} page: /developmental-assets on website < www.search-institute.org >, accessed April 2010
\textsuperscript{18} page: /research/assets/assetpower on website < www.search-institute.org >, accessed April 2010
\textsuperscript{19} page: /developmental-assets on website < www.search-institute.org >, accessed April 2010
2.3 Resilience Explored

Cyrulnik, in his volume entitled “Resilience”, observes that “…in an attempt to defend themselves, children often display a combination of aggressiveness and precocious maturity…” an apparently contradictory combination which will “…allow them to adapt to an environment that would destroy them if they did not have those defences.” But research studies seek to take a closer look.

2.3.1 Why Research Resilience?

In order to promote resilience, we need to understand how it works. What is it that one child has that another may lack?

“…research on resilience does not trivialise the seriousness of the trauma. It outlines a comparative method that allows us to steal a few ideas on how to survive…”

Cyrulnik refers to a longitudinal study of university students and notes that...

...those who had the ‘hardest’ childhoods were those who had the most satisfying lives as adults, probably because, at the age of eighteen, their earlier ordeals had obliged them to mobilise positive defences. ... The second surprise was that the defence mechanisms most commonly noted in the adults who blossomed were the same as those observed in a population of resilient abused children.

In other words, there is clear evidence of a link between the capacity to overcome traumatic incidents in childhood and scope for fulfilment later in life.

2.3.2 Formulating a Model

Moving beyond a functional definition, attempts have been made to formulate a model which systematises diverse elements of the concept of resilience.

From his research with adolescents, Loesel identifies three facets of resilience as a starting point: good outcomes despite high risk; sustaining competence while under threat; recovering from trauma and doing well afterwards. Moving from effects to
causes, Gilligan identifies three fundamental building blocks, namely: a secure base giving a sense of protected belonging, self-esteem giving a sense of internal worth, and self-efficacy giving a sense of external capabilities.\textsuperscript{25}

But these terms are still very general. Further specificity is needed. In a more developed study, Grotberg proposes fifteen measures of resilience\textsuperscript{26} which function as a practical checklist. He includes the following elements: significant relationships with adults, positive outlook on life, abilities and initiative, an appreciation of oneself, and a sense of humour.

Notably, these elements are echoed in a more deliberately structured way in the model formulated by Vanistendael. He selects five interlinking orbits:\textsuperscript{27}

\begin{itemize}
  \item informal social support networks, and unconditional acceptance of the child as a person;
  \item capacity to discover meaning, sense and coherence in life, related to the child’s spirituality;
  \item diversity of social and problem-solving skills giving a sense of control over what happens in life;
  \item self-esteem and positive view of the self;
  \item a sense of humour, and a climate in which humour can grow.
\end{itemize}

Not for mere observation and assessment (though they may function as such), these orbits are intended as five practical areas of intervention. In other words, one can move from observation of the child’s capacities for resilience towards taking action in order to increase the child’s resilience.

Some might suggest that the appeal to spirituality in this model is a compensation for a lack of resilience, rather than a dimension of it. However, it cannot be so easily dismissed. In his exposition of childhood spirituality Bradford states:

\begin{quote}
...religion should not be espoused and devotional spirituality pursued with the sole intention of having a personal anchor in times of difficulty, but a religious commitment can provide the following as a by-product: 
\end{quote}

\begin{itemize}
  \item a pre-hardship network of protective factors", in Hurrelmann, K. & Loesel, F. (eds), \textit{Health Hazards in Adolescence}, Walter de Gruyter, 1990
\textsuperscript{25} Gilligan, "Beyond Permanence? the importance of resilience in child placement practice and planning", in \textit{Adoption and Fostering}, no.21(1), 1997, p.12-20
\textsuperscript{27} Vanistendael, \textit{Growth in the Muddle of Life}, p.6, 18-29
\end{itemize}
A similar claim might be made in relation to the role that culture plays, as aspects of personal identity may rooted in religious or cultural values, and these cannot be simply taken out of the equation. Even the secular and humanist philosophies of an altermodern or postmodern urban society function in this religiocultural role.

A well constructed model for resilience in children is proposed by Daniel and Wassel. Utilising Gilligan’s fundamental building blocks and Grotberg’s checklist, already mentioned, their model proposes the concept of “domains of resilience” set in an ecological framework drawn from Bronfenbrenner operating at three levels: child, family, community. For each of their six domains identified (social competencies, secure base, education, friendships, talents and interests, positive values) they provide questions that can be used for assessing the resilience of the child, and offer intervention strategies for further promoting resilience.

### 2.3.3 Resilience and Developmental Assets

So the notion of Developmental Assets is not unique in offering a model for assessing and promoting resilience, though it may be one of the most tested and researched. In contrast to Daniel and Wassel’s six domains at three levels, the Developmental Assets model proposes eight spheres, four of which denote realities external to the child (broadly covering relationships, expectations and opportunities), and four of which denote realities internal to the child (such as character qualities, values and capabilities). And moving beyond Grotberg’s fifteen point checklist, this approach identifies forty assets which give a measure of a child’s resilience.

As with other models the proposition is (and the research indicates) that the more of these assets the child has, the greater their capacity to transcend adversity in life.

As an aside, if we look at this child development concern from the perspective of the humanitarian sector, we may notice an interesting parallel: the eight spheres of

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28 Bradford, *Caring for the Whole Child*, p.27
the Developmental Assets approach for children’s resilience carry echoes of the concept of capital in a livelihoods approach for the resilience of the household. Moser identifies six capitals which may reduce a household’s vulnerability and increase its capacity to meet its basic needs. These are: physical, financial, and environmental capital as tangible assets, and social, human, and political capital as intangible assets. While the Developmental Assets focus is on the child, it is not as far removed from the livelihoods approach as it might seem. It makes no attempt to decontextualise the child, as contextual factors are a crucial dynamic in the whole model. Perhaps a useful distinction is to say the Developmental Assets framework utilises the languages of sociology and psychology to describe the child in context, whereas a livelihood model states the humanitarian realities of the context using fiscal terminology.

2.4 Child Participation

Volumes have been written on the topic of child participation. Their involvement in decisions affecting their lives is of interest to the richest institutions as to the least resourced CBO. There is no simple blueprint for involving children in decisions which affect their lives, but key principles which may inform a philosophy and culture of inclusion for agencies working with children.

The right to participation for children is enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: Article 12 says children have the right to express their opinions in all matters affecting their lives, and to have their opinions taken seriously by adults; and Article 13 says that children have the right to obtain information and share their views with anyone else using any media they choose (provided their expressions are not intrinsically harmful or offensive to others).

An ideal of good practice should insist upon seeking the fullest possible participation of street children and street families in identifying their own needs,

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35 UN, Convention on the Rights of the Child, Articles 12 & 13
and defining the appropriate services to fulfil those needs, and evidence from research reinforces this assertion.\textsuperscript{36}

Furthermore, when participating in any research studies, children have the right to expect the highest standards, and for their contribution to be of their free consent, and not to be exploited or manipulated in any way.\textsuperscript{37}

For this paper, every effort was made to ensure the process and activities adhered to this philosophy.


\textsuperscript{37} Beazley, Ennew, Bessell, Waterson, “What Children Say: comparative research on the physical and emotional punishment of children in South East Asia and the Pacific”, Save the Children Sweden, 2005, p.21–22; cf. UN, Convention on the Rights of the Child, Articles 3.3 & 36
3. CONTEXT

In the concepts we have defined “children in especially difficult circumstances”, which includes the street children who are the focus of this study (now “looked after” by the NGO). But who are the street children? The answer is not a simple one.

3.1 Street Children

The simplest definition could be that street children are “…children who make the street their home and source of livelihood.”

Early attempts were made to distinguish children “on” the streets from children “of” the streets: that is, those who live permanently on the streets and have severed family contact, from those who spend much time on the streets, but still return home to family members. In her 1991 Philippines study for Unicef, Black distinguishes children “on” and “of” the street. This distinction is imported from the Latin American policy context though its applicability there is questioned. But this is quite alien to the Asian continent. In India, for example, frequently whole families live in the streets, so even the terms “street” and “home” merge into one. Neither has this distinction proven helpful to the Philippines context, where relatively few children actually live on the streets without any family contact.

Others have tried to sub-categorise “street children” and “street-based working children”, but trying to use definitions based on patterns of work merely introduces another set of complexities.

Coming from an anthropological viewpoint, Veale, Taylor, and Linehan deconstruct the reason why street children defy any attempts to define them:

In reality, children exist within multiple communities, and their experience is one of moving between different settings in the street and their community of origin. Concepts of abandonment set “family” and “street” as opposed constructs and tend to presuppose that the child participates only in one...

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38 Kilbourn (ed), Street Children: a guide to effective ministry, Marc Publications, p.7
40 note: the distinction originated with a project working in the markets of Tegucigalpa, Honduras
41 Porio, Moselina, Swift, “Philippines — Urban Communities and theirFight for Survival”, in Szanton-Blanc, Urban Children in Distress, p.113
42 Porio, Moselina, Swift, “Philippines — Urban Communities and their Fight for Survival”, p.113
43 Black, Street and Working Children, Innocenti Summary Report, Unicef, Feb 1993, p.7-8, 17-21
whereas...

[a social constructivist] analysis of child-in-context recognises the psychological unity of children participating in a set of relationships which include the street, family, community of origin, halfway houses, and other programmes and contexts in which the child is active.44

Even if we take the theoretical stance that children make a “rational choice” to live or work on the streets, definitions tend to oversimplify and decontextualise the child. And psychosocial definitions are (Veale et al claim) distorted by the “cognitive dissonance” of the researcher whose perspective is inevitably tainted by persistent common misperceptions.45

**Why street children?** If they are not abandoned, and the theory of free choice is inadequate, the question can be asked, “Why are these children on the streets?”. Causes commonly cited include: poverty, natural and human disasters, rural to urban migration, as a result of economic crisis in the family, in some cases family breakdown, abuse or neglect.46 And already noted, some may be children of families living in the streets.

In the Philippines context, using the concept that accumulated sociopolitical and economic factors create a “compound disadvantage” for urban poor families,47 historical studies show that external debt and structural adjustment had a significant impact during the eighties, with reductions in public service expenditure adversely affecting low income households. Rural population growth and accelerated urbanisation are also key factors.48

**How many street children?** Estimates of the number of children living or working on the streets vary widely and are notoriously unreliable anyway.49

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45 Veale, Taylor, Linehan, “Psychological perspectives of ‘abandoned’ and ‘abandoning’ Street Children”, p.138–139
47 Wilson, J. *The Truly Disadvantaged*, University of Chicago, 1989
48 Porio, Moselina, Swift, “Philippines — Urban Communities and their Fight for Survival”, p.104–111
In an attempt to quantify the issue, in 1998 the Department of Social Welfare and Development made an estimate based on sampling in 65 major cities across the Philippines. Classifying “highly visible” children in the streets, they counted a total of 3266 in Manila City, 2867 in Quezon City, 1530 in Kalookan City, and 1420 in Pasay City. These cities are all within Metro Manila, and had the highest figures. Of an estimated 222,417 street children across the whole of the Philippines, some 138,328 were in Mindanao province, 40,860 in Visayas, and 22,728 in Luzon.50

In terms of service provision, a survey carried out by the Consortium for Street Children in 2003 records an estimated 350 CBO and NGO programmes for street children across the Philippines.51

Myth and Reality: People living in the streets, especially children and youth, are subject to lots of negative stereotypes.52 Some may be true in some contexts, but to apply these in an over-generalised way does not do justice to the situation of street children, nor help resolve the issues they may face. Reality may be far from perception.

Lessons learned internationally that can be applied in regional and national contexts:
• The numbers are not, in general, huge. There are far fewer street children than agricultural workers or child domestic workers; • Most street children have contact with their families and go home either at night or from time to time. They are not in general abandoned. They may have chosen this way of life and they usually show strength and resilience in coping with its difficulties. This should command adult respect and compassion, not their pity and not their fear; • Street children tend to have mainstream values. They are not all antisocial, not all criminals, drug users or prostitutes. Living on the street may be only a temporary part of their lives.53

3.2 Philippines: Status of Street Children

Awareness of the issues of child exploitation and the need for protection have been enshrined in law in the Philippines for almost 20 years now, since the Child Protection Act of 199154 was passed in the Senate. It is described as “an act providing for stronger deterrence and special protection against child abuse, exploitation and discrimination, providing penalties for its violation.” Its provisions

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51 Consortium for Street Children, Civil Society Forum for East and South East Asia on Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Street Children, Mar 2003
52 Ennew, Street and Working Children, p.13–14
53 Ennew, “Overview of the Status of Street Children in the Region”, in Civil Society Forum for East and South East Asia, p.7
54 Republic of the Philippines: Child Protection Act, 1991 (Human Protection Laws: Republic Act 7610)
were quite wide ranging, with articles addressing offences related to the trafficking of children, commercial sexual exploitation of children, and other forms of abuse, cruelty, or neglect, as well as offering protections for children in situations of armed conflict, working children, and children of indigenous cultural communities.

Other legislation has followed to amplify the legal provisions and protections for children in particular circumstances: the Anti Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003 (focused particularly on children and women), the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006, and the Anti Child Pornography Act of 2008, to name three key statutes in the last decade.55

Furthermore, in the Philippines police officers have received special training on how to treat street children with respect and dignity,56 and there are national indicators for monitoring all programmes and services for street children. Committees have been established and central government departments tasked with ensuring that policy is put into effect.57 Networks and coalitions exist nationally and regionally, and at local level there are city task forces set up for the protection of street children and other children in especially difficult circumstances.58

However despite all these “achievements”, street educators and street researchers record that practice has been slow to follow the stated intent of the policies. One particular recent study gives clear evidence that in the guise of “protection” many children living and working in the streets of Manila have in fact had their rights trampled as they are forcibly removed from the streets against their will by government approved units, and regardless of their family attachments.59 This practice was verified not only by accounts given by street children, but the researchers actually witnessed this first hand on occasions while interviewing children on the streets.

56 Philippine National Police, Police Handbook on the Management of Cases of Children in Especially Difficult Circumstances, Quezon City: Department of Social Welfare, National Project on Street Children (in cooperation with Unicef), 1993
57 Department of Interior and Local Government, Police Women and Children’s Protection Desk; Department of Social Welfare and Development; National Programme Committee on Street Children, Street and Urban Working Children Programme
58 Agaid (ed), “Philippines: Country Report” (Childhope Asia), in Civil Society Forum for East and South East Asia, p.19
59 Nugroho et. al., Sagip or Huli? Indiscriminate rescue of street children in the city of Manila, Australian National University, in cooperation with Bahay Tuluan, Jan 2008
At the core is an undeniable and desolate actuality:

Street children the world over have no status. They are outside both civil society and state systems, often having no official existence in the form of birth or registration certificates, so that their access to fulfillment of the rights belonging to all children is nil. Their social image at best is as victims and objects of pity, at worst as a threat to respectable, law abiding citizens and even to national security.60

On Manila’s city streets in 2010, children are still marginalised in this way.

3.3 the City of Manila

Metro Manila is a dense metropolitan conurbation encompassing Quezon City, Pasig City, and Makati City, to name three of the largest, which conjoin with the City of Manila, an urban sector 8 km from north to south, averaging 4 km across, with its coastline lying to the East. In the survey of 2003, some 25 facilities were identified in the City of Manila offering services to street children, ranging from street education to drop-ins to residential and surrogate family care.61

In the City of Manila there are 13 districts.62 Just two of these form the context for this study: Ermita and Malate. These used to be a notorious red light zone prior to the mayor closing down many establishments selling sexual services operating illegally in the area during the mid nineties, which has reduced, though not eliminated the problems. These two districts have been particularly targeted for municipal “street cleaning” raids to forcibly remove children, though other tourist sites across the City have also experienced such raids.

3.4 Project Context

Research for this paper was carried out with an NGO63 established 21 years ago and registered with the government in 1988. From the outset the intention was to provide sanctuary for street children who were increasingly experiencing exploitation and abuse. Its head office is situated in the heart of Ermita and Malate districts, and it employs 27 staff, and many volunteers, some who may come from

60 Ennew, “Overview of the Status of Street Children in the Region”, in Civil Society Forum for East and South East Asia, p.6
61 Consortium for Street Children, A Civil Society Forum for East and South East Asia on Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Street Children, 2003
62 note: map in appendix 1
63 note: information in this section sourced through an interview with the Director of the NGO.
abroad, and others from local universities through social work and nursing course placements.

In Ermita and Malate it offers on-street services in five localities. Employing two Street Educators and several volunteers, they work extensively in the community with street families. One primary need is access to health care, so the NGO provides referrals to hospital or a clinic, when required, and payment for laboratory tests, and medicines. Health care is free, but medicines are not, and non-prescription medication is more expensive. In addition the NGO provides several skills programmes, including a parenting effectiveness programme, lifeskills for youth, adolescent sexuality and reproductive health, prevention of drug and substance abuse. The NGO seeks a holistic approach based on a Christian philosophy, and so offers spiritual development and values formation, along with educating children about their rights.

For those on the street they also provide a drop-in centre for children and young people, adjacent to one of the main city thoroughfares. Here creative advocacy opportunities are explored with a focus on participation and empowerment. These include a street-based theatre group and an expressive music outlet called “hip hop voice”. The personnel maintain connections with other NGOs and Street Educators in other areas of the city as some children can have a very mobile street life!

Following on from the work on the street, the NGO runs a Receiving and Assessment Centre, “Sunshine House”, which accommodates children who have experienced physical or sexual abuse, neglect or abandonment. Children are referred from several sources: street educators, social services, police, hospitals, “NGOs without shelter” (street and community-based), and in some cases child self-referral. The case management team at Sunshine House consists of the social worker, the health worker, the children’s tutor, and the houseparent. Access to services of a psychiatrist and a lawyer are also provided as needed.

Each child may remain at the Receiving and Assessment Centre for up to twelve months, and children who have family may maintain some form of periodic contact. Where a secure and stable home environment can be achieved, it may be possible for the child to be reconciled with their family. Necessary after-care support is put in place to avoid a recurrence of any abuse or neglect. Where a reunion with the

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64 note: names of the organisation, staff, and children have been changed to protect anonymity.
family is achieved, the young person’s situation and progress is monitored to ensure they do not re-enter the cycle of street life.

For each child the decision as to what will offer the best provision in the longer term depends on their situational assessment. If reconciliation with family is not possible, then at the start of the academic year they normally proceed on to the more permanent residential academy placement in San Pedro Laguna. All children receive educational access support (uniforms, books, and other provisions). For out-of-school boys (including special needs) aged 14 years and above, an alternative placement is given on the rural farm at Alfonso Cavite. These boys are given a range of vocational training options (such as automotive, or furniture making), rather than the more academic route.

Periodic family contact is still maintained where possible. In each of these locations a child may live until they reach older teen or young adult years. They are followed through their college studies or vocational training and are assisted towards independent life.
4. METHODOLOGY

In this study the methodology is not proven, but experimental. Part of the intent of the exploratory pilot is to test the processes and activities, to discover if they can be effective in yielding valid data from which useful inferences can be made. Hence the methodology is given in some detail here, along with the analysis tools as well as the origin of the concepts behind the participative activities.

4.1 Parameters

Prior to detailing process and activities, the key parameters framing the research are outlined here.

4.1.1 Location of the Study

For selecting an NGO for the purposes of this study, there were two key criteria: that the organisation must be working for children and young people’s welfare; and that the work must be of a long term nature. The NGO identified meets both of these criteria.\(^6\)

While it was possible to visit the NGO’s facilities at San Pedro Laguna and at the rural farm in Alfonso Cavite, constraints on accessibility of these remote locations meant that the researcher could only spend any extended time with the NGO’s services in Manila. In the City, due to the relative transience of client contact at the drop-in centre, only Sunshine House offered scope for extended contact for the purposes of meaningful research.

4.1.2 Participants in the Study

Scope for selecting participants for the research was unfortunately entirely constrained by the singular location. The researcher’s intended criterion was to for participants to be children and young people between the ages of 8 and 18 years who are using the services of the organisation. In the event, there were fifteen children at Sunshine House, eight girls and seven boys, between the ages of 7 and 16 years. All had been in residence for between two and twelve months.

In terms of the definition of “children in especially difficult circumstances”, more specifically these were all children who had experienced serious domestic violence,

\(^6\) note: the researcher had open options on two locations: the Philippines and Colombia. Due to time constraints it was not possible to do both, and due to contract schedule the Philippines came first.
abuse or neglect, and who had ended up living or working on the streets as a result. Essentially, their time in Sunshine House is a critical moment in each child’s life, as they move out of this crisis situation and into a more stable, secure and nurturing environment.

4.1.3 Language and Translation

It was necessary to use a local translator, so that the children could express themselves in their native Tagalog. One of the project staff, with whom the children were at ease, was available for this role. The positive aspect of this was the children having a trusted person to talk to, in whom they are used to confiding.

Yet the problematic question arises when using staff as translators. The potential impact on the research is that the children could feel obliged to nuance their answers in such a way as to be viewed in a favourable light by the project staff. In the absence of an independent assessor, there is no way to measure the effect of the staff member’s presence on the children’s responses.

4.1.4 Ethics and Child Protection

For all the children who participated in this study, ethical concern for their wellbeing was a primary consideration. The researcher has recent UK CRB checks, and has more than 20 years experience of working with children and young people, often who are vulnerable or in marginal contexts. The following summarise of the ethical considerations applied throughout the research study:

- Permission for the research was sought from the director of the child welfare organisation prior to beginning the study.
- The purposes of the research study was clearly communicated in advance to the director and as appropriate, to the staff acting in loco parentis.
- It was a requirement that each child have the cognitive capacity to understand the tasks and activities, which were appropriate to their age and abilities.
- The purpose of each activity and its relevance to the research study were clearly explained in advance, and in child-friendly terms.

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66 Criminal Record Bureau: an Executive Agency of the UK Home Office, aligned with Police Services.
• The choice as to whether or not to participate in each activity was open to each child without pressure or coercion of any kind, and their free and informed consent was sought in advance.

• Any child was able to withdraw from any activity at any time, without needing to give an explanation.

• All information received from the children in the course of the activities has been treated with full confidentiality.

• In the analysis and writeup, all the raw data has been anonymised and names changed, such that any one child’s responses cannot be identified.

Had there been any disclosure of evident risk made by any child in the course of the research, this would have been handled in accordance with the NGO’s child protection policy, which the researcher had read and signed.

This research has complied fully with the Oxford Brookes University Code of Practice for Research Involving Human Participants.

4.1.5 Mood and Ethos

Since no inducements to participate could be offered, and there is a self-selection factor (that is, children may choose not to participate), the researcher was fully aware that the activities needed to be engaging in and of themselves. Hence, the participative activities were be designed to be enjoyable and stimulating, focused on creative and positive change in the life of the children and young people, and their hopes for the future. Participation in each activity was its own reward.

4.2 Research Activities

An inductive approach is used for this study, in which pictorial, verbal and written responses are gained from the children through creative activities. The results from these were then subject to quantitative analysis and qualitative interpretation. They are also correlated with the independent index for a comparative perspective.

Methods chosen were designed to give an open opportunity for the children to express themselves freely, but in relation to a given context or theme. In this sense the context or theme should provide the only constraint. A logical progression to the sequence is designed.
• picture activity: art-based future-imaging using drawing to evoke broad responses focused on the child’s imagined future context in which they perceive themselves as thriving.

• word activity: self-characterisation word-associative exercise using an anchor term (a keyword or phrase) to evoke written expressions in response to selected themes identified in the picture activity.

So the picture activities are the starting point, and provide an initial understanding of the semantic fields and values articulated by the children and young people. Following these, the word activity is employed to explore some of these elements in further depth.

It is a valid question as to whether constraining the children’s response actually denies true participation. In the case of the first activity (drawing pictures), the constraint is actually extremely broad: an imagined possible positive future, in any terms that the child might choose to express it. In other words the children’s imagination has free reign to create their own desired scenario. In the case of the second activity (writing words), the themes given will all emerge from the responses to the first activity. In other words, these themes are not so much adult imposed constraints, but rather a deeper exploration of a topic identified by the children as relevant. The key to a participative approach is not so much the method as how the method is used.

Some... social science methods are called “participatory”, but methods can be both participatory and non-participatory depending on how they are used. Questionnaires are often described as “non-participatory”, while collecting children’s drawings is often described as a fundamentally participatory method. Yet a questionnaire can be participatory if children are involved in its design, and especially if they use it to do their own research. On the other hand, drawings or role plays can discourage children, if they have to follow adult instructions without understanding why this method is being used, and be completely non-participatory if children are not given the opportunity to explain what they have drawn and cannot be confident that researchers will not use the information, or drawings, in ways that might embarrass them or put them in danger.67

For the research activities children were divided by gender rather than age, forming two groups: eight girls in the first group, and seven boys in the second. There were fifteen children in total who participated in the study, aged between 7 and 16 years. Hence there were four activity sessions held on four separate days. Apart from one girl who was absent from the word activity, all of the children participated in both activities. On the final day, one girl and one boy were invited for interview.

4.2.1 Roots of the Research Activities

**Visualisation:** Visualising an alternative future has its roots as a concept in Frederik Polak’s seminal work *Die Toekomst Is Verleden Tijd*, which received the Council of Europe Award in 1955.68 An experimental idea, this was explored by Boulding (who translated Polak’s work) in collaboration with Ziegler.

Much more recently, Máire Dugan developed an envisioning process (based on Boulding and Ziegler) which built upon this notion for an intentional conflict resolution strategy involving the participant in imagining the self in a desired future, and expressing that potential scenario in concrete terms, as if it were already a reality.69

In this paper, the researcher will use a similar imaginative process, using a picture activity to enable the children to identify realities of importance to their future.

**Self-characterisation:** Also published in 1955, is Kelly’s hefty two-volume work *The Psychology of Personal Constructs*,70 which has to do with how a person understands others, and their view of the self in relation to others, and this is where the exercise of self-characterisation is rooted. Using the theory which Kelly derived from his clinical practice, Winter outlines a therapeutic approach to psychological disorders.71

In the research for this paper, the concept is used in the word activity merely to enable the child or young person to reflect upon how they view the self in relation to the imaginative realities identified.

For each of these two research activities, the method utilised will now be explained in detail.

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4.2.2 In Pictures: art–based future–imaging activity

For the picture activity, each child was given an oversized piece of white paper (size A1) to draw on, and a choice of many colours of regular craft paper (size A4), to tear out a character representing the self. A variety of bright and dark marker pens was supplied.

For this activity a script was devised by the researcher\textsuperscript{72} to ensure consistency in the instructions given to each group. The script serves to assist the subjects in visualising a positive future reality for themselves in which they are “thriving”, however they might imagine that to be. In the script several terms are intentionally repeated in order to reinforce the evocative effect.

Firstly, the singular word “thriving” is amplified in the script using related terms selected from a thesaurus. The purpose of this is to create an open–ended sense of the meaning in terms accessible to the child. The following phrases were selected:

• positive moments
• life is going really well for you
• moments that you enjoy
• enjoying yourself
• thriving in life
• flourishing in all that is good for you

In order to situate the child’s imaginative exploration within a place and time that they can understand, several other terms are repeated. These include:

• yourself in the future, in your future, in the future
• you are a few years older than you are now
• in your life, part of your life
• during the day
• all through the week

In the script three verbs are used in imperative form to direct the child into action. These are sequenced as follows:

• imagine (used four times)
• remember (used once only)

\textsuperscript{72} note: script in appendix 2.
The script is in two halves. The first half focuses on “people and things” — external elements and tangible realities experienced around the child. The second half focuses on “feelings and thoughts” — internal elements and intangible realities experienced within the child. So this pattern is identical for each half of the script.

The translator was given the script beforehand, and the importance of all these repeated terms was emphasised. The translator made note of these terms and selected a corresponding word in the local language (Tagalog) to use for each one. This ensured consistency in the instructions given for the activity.

While there was no set time to the drawing exercise, the researcher was attentive to the level of engagement of each of the children, and alert to any indication that they were getting distracted or bored. Once most of the children had filled their paper with pictures, the researcher began to ask them in turn to describe their drawings. This proved essential for two reasons: the best interpreter of the picture’s intent in this instance is the artist, especially when what is drawn is not instantly recognisable; and equally important, the sentiment behind emblematic or symbolic pictograms could only be identified through interpretative expression.

For the verbal descriptors that accompanied the pictures, the responses were translated from the Tagalog as they were given by the children, and noted by the researcher in English.

4.2.3 In Words: self-characterisation word-associative activity

Data from the picture activity was run through a semantic field sorting process (detailed in the analysis section), in order to provide a list of anchor terms (key words or short phrases) for the word activity. As with the picture activity this also is a scripted exercise. The child is offered each anchor term, and encouraged to use this in relation to themselves and to construct a response which expresses the meaning or value they attach to the word. In the performance of this task only ten of these anchor terms were used.

For this written exercise, the children wrote their responses in Tagalog (with the exception of one girl who used English), and the responses were translated later.

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73 note: script in appendix 2.
4.2.4 Semi-structured Interview

Opportunity was taken to interview two of the children, one girl and one boy. Interviews were carried out in the relaxed and colourful atmosphere of the social worker’s window ledge. The researcher held a set of questions, but the wording was not strictly scripted, and the order of use was changed according to the direction of the interview. An approximate twenty minute limit was imposed as a guideline time for each interview (including translation and note-taking). As there are only two interviews, these should be taken as illustrative, not representative.

4.3 Analysis Tools

For interpreting the results of the research activities, analysis tools were selected according to their appropriateness for this task.

4.3.1 Semantic Field Sorting

Beginning with the responses to the picture activity, the data that emerged was in the form of a list given by each child of references to elements and realities which they perceived as important in their imagined future. The references are to: “people and things” — external elements and tangible realities experienced around the child; and to “feelings and thoughts” — internal elements and intangible realities experienced within the child. Each list was an accumulation of items drawn plus the child’s verbal descriptors. In order to make sense of these lists of words, a linguistic tool, semantic field sorting, was employed as follows.

It was possible to identify the elements and realities which emerge most commonly, by scoring the frequency of occurrence of each descriptor used by each child, and then clustering closely related concepts into a single semantic field or theme. These words used in the verbal descriptors indicate the interpretations, meanings and values, as articulated by the children and young people themselves. Of the words used by the children in their verbal descriptors, twenty references were selected, half of which are tangible realities (“people and things” around the child’s environment), and half of which are intangible realities (“feelings and thoughts” within the child’s experience).

Each of these semantic fields or themes was allocated a key word or short phrase, chosen directly from those used by the children (or in some instances, indirectly by using closely related terms from the concept cluster), to be used as an anchor term for the meanings and values in each theme. These anchor terms were used in the
word activity. It is important to ensure that the words used are familiar and accessible within the vocabulary of the child, and which they would commonly use to describe elements or realities associated with an imagined future in which they perceive themselves as thriving.

4.3.2 Correlative Mapping
As intended in the design of the research, the children’s responses to the picture activity, and to some extent the amplified responses in the word activity, serve to identify elements and realities associated (in the child’s perception) with thriving. These are of a kind comparable to the forty factors identified in the Developmental Assets approach. Hence the latter may serve as an independent index against which to compare results. The original intent had been to use a numerical conversion to produce a statistical mapping of similarities and differences. In the event, and due to the minimal sample size, a simple tablature sufficed (which is interpreted under the outcomes and analysis).

Nonetheless, if a larger study were performed, these results could be quantified, to give a figure indicating the proximity of the data set with the Developmental Assets framework. This could provide a comparison for similar research carried out in other contexts.

4.4 Problems Encountered
During the research some unforeseen constraints were encountered which posed challenges for the researcher.

Firstly, the subjects of the research: the original intention had been to work with at least two (preferably three) separate groups of children, anticipating around 10 to 15 in each group. While the NGO was providing long-term care services to many more children in their residential farm at Alfonso Cavite and academy at San Pedro Laguna, due to inaccessibility of the locations, remote from the City, it was not possible to arrange for extended time to carry out research there.

All fifteen of the children at the Sunshine House centre in Manila City were keen to participate in the research activities, and there was a balance between the number of girls and boys. However, the age range was slightly lower than ideally desired, particularly for the boys.
This further complicated the study due to the limited literary skills of these younger participants. The picture activity proved quite achievable, as the children were given time to interpret their pictures verbally. However, the word activity proved challenging. At the time the researcher emphasised the self-selection option, so that those who felt uncomfortable with writing could exclude themselves. However, this did not occur — none of them wanted to be “left out”. At this point the researcher offered an alternative option for children to speak their response to the trusted adult who was assisting the process, who would write it down for them, if the child felt this was easier for self expression. Once again the offer was declined.

Hence the word activity proceeded as a written activity, with all of the children included, even though the younger ones would have benefited from the verbal option offered. This proved problematic as it hindered the pace of the exercise, with the risk of becoming tedious for the older and more literate children. And where the older children were scripting a sentence or phrase, the younger ones were struggling to write one or two words. Due to the hindered pace, only ten of the twenty selected anchor terms were used for this exercise.

In hindsight, this activity could have been segregated by age and ability rather than by gender. With the younger children it could then have been tailored to utilise a verbal form of expression. However, this would add another challenge, that of response “contamination” — each child potentially being influenced by having heard the answers given by others. Even during the written exercise it was difficult to deter the sharing and copying of ideas.

Also while the word activity worked effectively for the older children, it inevitably proved quite conceptual for some of the younger children, since from a cognitive perspective the capacity for self-reflection is classed as a formal-operational rather than a concrete-operational skill, and this is rarely developed before the pre-teen years. It had been the intent of the researcher that with a slightly older age range, and self-selection, this would not have been an issue.

It should be noted though, that a younger child’s self-perception can still be sophisticated, but that accessing internal sensations, thoughts and feelings tends to

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be done in externalised concrete ways. For example, while an older child will verbalise a sense of empowerment as “feeling strong”, the younger child will associate the self with a picture of a superhero figure.

Also noted earlier was the challenge of using a translator, in this case one of the project staff, which has both positive and negative aspects. While the trusted staff member serves as a reassuring presence to the children, at the same time the children may nuance their response (consciously or unconsciously), because of this person’s presence.

4.5 Honing the Method

Out of the experience of running this exploratory study, it is clear that there are several points where the methodology could be honed, to enhance the focus and clarity of the resulting data.

**Picture activity:** after the drawing phase, each child is given time to describe (interpret) the pictures drawn. Scripted prompt questions could be used here by the researcher to help the child access the intangible as well as the tangible aspects of their drawings. In addition to asking:

- What have you drawn here? and
- Can you tell me about this picture?

the researcher could more frequently and intentionally prompt:

- What do you think about this? and
- How do you feel about this?

If open questions directed towards thoughts and feelings were employed, this might improve the identification of these elements. This is important to get a fuller understanding of what the child perceives is needed in order to thrive in life.

**Word activity:** for younger children, where self selection does not occur, this activity needs to be restructured such that the children can use a verbal response in preference to a written one, but in such a way as to avoid response contamination. This may require seeking responses from only one child at a time. In addition, the

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75 Vasta, Haith, Miller, *Child Psychology: the modern science*, p.494-499
scripted instructions would need to be simplified, evoking concrete-operational responses and avoiding the expectation of formal-operational responses.

If these adjustments are made to the methodology then a stronger data set would result. Combined with a larger sample size, any inferences made would have a stronger basis.
5. OUTCOMES

It should be recalled that this is an exploratory pilot study. The methodology has been trialled, and for this limited sample group some inferences can be made from the data in respect of the questions posed at the outset. However, it will not be possible at this stage to give any solid conclusions to be more widely applied. The strongest point that can be made is that in the light of the outcomes this study, and utilising this methodology with the enhancements already noted, further research will prove to be of value.

Key outcomes of the research activities are given here, but preceded by comments on interpreting the data.

5.1 Interpreting the Data

Firstly it should be noted that the sample size for this particular piece of research was extremely limited, hence these cannot be taken as representative of any wider grouping. Also it should be noted that the average age for the girls in the study is higher than that of the boys, hence any differentiation in response may simply be indicative of age differences rather than gender differences.

5.1.1 Internal or External?

Performing the picture activity was a two stage process, with half the time allocated to external elements and tangible realities (people and things), and the other half of the time devoted to internal elements and intangible realities (thoughts and feelings). This raises the question as to whether drawing the latter requires too high a level of abstraction which even some adults might struggle to achieve. In the event, no children protested that they couldn’t draw their thoughts and feelings. Simply and unquestioningly, they concretised their thoughts and feelings with other tangible realities with which they had a positive association. When opportunity was given to describe what they had drawn, the children were able to use these drawings to access the feelings again.

As a result when summarising the data from the picture activity, many more external elements were evident than internal ones. Nonetheless, some of these represented positive thoughts and feelings (directly or indirectly), which it was possible to identify from the verbal descriptors.

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76 ages (mean): girl age 12.75 years, boy age 8.57 years
Hence verbalisation is essential to enabling effective participation of the children in this activity. It is not the task of the adult to interpret their pictures for them. And what the pictures represent is at least as important as the pictures themselves.

5.1.2 Imaginative Abilities

Looking at the totals for the tabulated data, it is immediately evident from the responses that the girls were much more productive in supplying pictures and verbal descriptors than the boys (giving twice the number of responses), and also much more diverse in their imagery. As already noted, this distinction may be due to age rather than gender. However, there is insufficient evidence of a clear gender differentiation in terms of internal and external realities. That is to say, proportionally, girls and boys both gave a similar proportion of internal (feelings and thoughts) and external (people and things) elements. Hence we cannot say that one gender (or age group) is more inward or outward looking than the other. With a larger sample set, such patterns might emerge.

5.2 Key Results

For interpretative purposes, note that number of subjects (i.e. statistical population) is fifteen. Hence a score of fifteen is statistically equivalent to all the children mentioning an element, a score of seven or eight would equate to half the children mentioning a particular element, assuming a fairly even distribution of references, which is not always the case. If a score is particularly skewed (by age, gender, or other factor), this has been noted.

5.2.1 Outcomes from the Picture Activity

From the pictures and verbal descriptors given by the children in response to the scripted instructions for picture activity, the following themes emerged either as isolated concepts or thematic clusters. Within the terms of the study, the significance is that the children perceive these to be associated with achieving an outcome in life in which they are thriving.

Highest featuring theme was access to the natural environment (a total of 32 references)\(^7\) for enjoyment, beauty and wonder. For some this was associated with

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\(^7\) scores (mean): girl proliferate 20.13, girl diverse 14.25, boy proliferate 8.29, boy diverse 7.14

\(78\) cluster: natural world = 32 references
recreation, sport and games (total of 11 references)\textsuperscript{79} which also scored highly. And the boys added to this the need to have interaction with creatures either as pets or in the wild (8 references).\textsuperscript{80}

Parents or parental figures (scoring 12 in total)\textsuperscript{81} and a house or home (scoring 14),\textsuperscript{82} siblings or friends (scoring 17 together)\textsuperscript{83} all express a need for a normative nurturing relational environment.

Religious activity and related festival celebrations also had a fair showing (score of 9 and 5 respectively),\textsuperscript{84} and there were several references to livelihood, work or employment.\textsuperscript{85} School or study opportunities\textsuperscript{86} was highlighted particularly by the girls. These all reflect a sense of purpose in life, an aspiration to learn and to achieve.

Direct reference was made by half of the children to feeling of happiness, and occasionally they identified other internalised values, such as wisdom, hope, beauty, and in one case, feeling “big” inside, which stands alongside some children’s identification with hero figures. Possession of these values is a beneficial factor related to the desired positive future for the child.

Some references were also made to poor people, victims, beggars, and others present in the child’s future, and to whom they perceived they would relate in a helping role. A similar dynamic was present with those children who imagined a future role as teachers, with students in their care. Hence these references identify that opportunity to serve others is an important factor.

From the perspective of the children, these values, relationships, opportunities, experiences contribute to their capacity to thrive in life. The presence of these elements is needed.

\textsuperscript{79} cluster: fun and games = 11 references
\textsuperscript{80} concept: pets = 5 references, combined with concept: wild creature = 3 references
\textsuperscript{81} cluster: parent = 9 references, combined with concept: unrelated significant adult = 3 references
\textsuperscript{82} cluster: house or home = 14 references
\textsuperscript{83} concept: sibling = 9 references, cluster: friends or peers = 8 references
\textsuperscript{84} cluster: church or worship = 9 references, cluster: celebrations = 5 references
\textsuperscript{85} concept: workplace = 5 references, combined with concept: livelihood = 2 references
\textsuperscript{86} cluster: study or school = 12 references
5.2.2 Linking the Picture and Word Activities

Derived from the above, some twenty anchor terms were chosen for the word activity. Quite intentionally, half of these denote external elements or tangible realities, and the other half denote internal elements or intangible realities.

However, psycholinguistics is not a precise science. Here explanation is offered as to why some of these terms were selected. In some cases the connection with the data is a direct one, in other cases it is indirect.

Several anchor terms were selected simply on the strength of the number of uses of a particular descriptor. This includes “house or home”, “sister or brother”, “study or school”, and “parent or carer”. In some cases an accumulation of related descriptors provide the impetus. For example, a wide diversity of pictures were drawn by the children which relate to the natural world: mountains, rivers, trees, flowers, and many more. These were described by the children in terms of beauty and enjoyment. Hence while each element alone scored relatively low, cumulatively there were more references to the natural world than any other theme. To echo the children’s words the anchor term “the beauty of creation” was selected.

Less direct reference was made in the imaginative process to internal elements and intangible realities (thoughts and feelings) than to external elements and tangible realities (people and things). Hence identifying anchor terms with an internal aspect was not so straightforward. One such term selected was “feeling big and strong”. While there was only one direct usage of such words by a child, there were other references to positive feelings, and also in several instances self-identification of the child with characters or roles that denote empowerment. This was considered strong enough reason to select the anchor term. Similarly with “being learned or wise”, only one child had used the term wisdom, plus a reference to becoming a scholar or graduate. However, this is the internal corollary to being a student and going to school, to which there were significant number of direct references.

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87 quote: “The reader has the right to remain sceptical... I don’t know if there are any ‘universal words’, and even if there were such words, I don’t know whether there are any indefinable words in terms of which all the other words could be defined, and even if there were such words, I don’t know whether they could ever be identified; furthermore, even if there is a set of indefinables and defining concepts, and even if there is a set of universal words, I don’t know whether the former would necessarily correspond to the latter.” Wierzbicka, Semantics, Culture and Cognition: universal human concepts in culture-specific configurations, Oxford University Press, 1992, p.16–17
5.2.3 Outcomes from the Word Activity

While the overall quality of the data from the word activity was poor (due to the problems already discussed under methodology), there were some gems among the responses. Some notable points that emerged are detailed here.

Clear references were made to feeling secure in Sunshine House, with the NGO project and staff. For example, Helen and Isobel gave the following responses:  

- this is a good place because you are safe here and there are many people to help you

- she is safe in Sunshine House and being protected

Also all the children were more expressive of aspirational future roles in life: lawyer, doctor, soldier, fireman, teacher, actor, scientist (and yes, Quinn wants to be superman, and Robert, a secret agent).

While none of the boys mentioned school in their pictures, in response to the anchor term “study or school” in the word activity, the colloquial expression “life tastes good” was used twice, by Samuel and Victor. It seems the boys do have a positive sense of the value of education after all.

The experience in the word activity served largely to reinforce (and in some cases add depth) to the responses from the picture activity.

5.2.4 Anomalies

In the collated data there were several patterns that could be identified, though due to the limited number of participants, the statistical significance of these will remain open to question. Distinct patterns in response are noted here:

- most the references to the self came from the girls (out of 27, only two self-referential descriptors given by boys).

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88 note: due to the way the activity is structured, when a child responds in the second or third person, they are actually referring to the self.

89 response: g96–i6 (Helen: being safe)

90 response: g97–i6 (Isobel: being safe)

91 responses: (girls) g91–i8, g92–i8, g95–i8, g97–i8, (boys) b81–i8, b84–i8, b85–i8, b86–i8, b87–i8

92 responses: b82–i8 (Quinn: hope or purpose), b83–i8 (Robert: hope or purpose)

93 responses: b84–e6 (Samuel: study or school), b86–e6 (Victor: study or school)
Comment: the significance of this may be an age distinction rather than a gender one, and the result is skewed as a third of all references to self came from one girl.

• most references to a house or home came from the girls (out of 14, only three references from the boys), though references to family members were more evenly balanced.

• all references to school, teacher, students, came from the girls (12 references in total).

Comment: For the youngest boys, they may have been unable to envisage formal schooling, as it would have been outside of their own experience. However, all of the children had received tutoring while in residence at Sunshine House, and the older children may have had some, if limited, experience of schooling.

• all the references to pets, and all except one reference to wild creatures, came from the boys (8 references in total).

In addition, there were two unusual responses that emerged during the picture activity with the girls’ group, and these are noted here:

• Elsie’s picture and verbal descriptors revolved almost entirely around herself and her own world. She drew multiple pictures of herself in several heroic roles (performer, artist, scientist, athlete, lawyer, president).

Comment: At 12 years of age, she exhibited a pseudomaturity that meant she could easily have passed herself off as one of the older girls in the group (who were 16 years of age). In dialogue she projected a persona of high confidence in her capacity to make something of her life. For her, these were not simply dreams of success, but that success in life was a reality she was determined to achieve. This may have been an over-compensation for not having been in control of her life in the past, or a survival strategy against the consequences of failure, which may be too stressful to contemplate.

• Jemima drew and gave verbal descriptors of a cluster of images that appeared to relate to a traumatic event in her past (an infant surrounded by clouds, a ghost, a cross).
Comment: She identified the infant as her baby cousin, but did not detail the incident itself. She could not access any feelings associated with these images, as if they were inhibited, possibly suppressed due to the trauma of the event.

5.3 Correlation with the Independent Index

As an independent reference frame the Developmental Assets framework was used. In this index there are forty assets. For the purposes of comparison, these will not be taken separately, but the intent is to look for connections between any of these and the elements or factors which emerged from the children's responses to the picture and word exercises.

Firstly, one of the assets will be excluded from this comparison: that the child should have an optimistic outlook for a positive personal future. Certainly, this was clearly seen in the mood of the children’s responses, and in the semi-structured interviews.

Q: What about decisions of your future, what you want to do in life? Do you think the staff here will help you achieve what you want in life?

A: I want to become a lawyer. I am going to study hard and finish my schooling. Yes the staff here will help me and encourage me to do well.

But to claim this as evidential is problematic, since the entire study is predicated on the premise that children can imagine a positive future when encouraged to do so. Hence this one indicator has to be excluded here.

In terms of other assets in each sphere, the following connections have emerged:

For the Developmental Asset spheres of support (external) combined with expectations and boundaries (external): there are two clear correlations. Firstly the children gave many positive reference to family and parents, and also a few to

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94 cf. DA40 positive view of personal future
95 interview with William (boy, 10 years)
96 cf. DA01 family support, DA02 positive family communication, DA11 family boundaries
other supportive adults\textsuperscript{97} such as staff at Sunshine House. Also in the same sphere is positive peer influence\textsuperscript{98} which did not fare so highly on the children's rating.

For empowerment (external) combined with positive values (internal): there were several notable references where the children made it clear that they saw part of their role in the future as helping others, either in specific terms (such as family members, students, beggars, fire victims, the poor are mentioned), or as a general reference — “these things bring happy feelings, because I am helping others and pass the goodness on.”\textsuperscript{99} Also there are several references where the child views the self in the role of giving gifts to others (carollers, poor people, fire victims, other students). These correlate with serving the community, caring about others, and values of equality and social justice.\textsuperscript{100}

For constructive use of time (external), in the children’s responses there were several references to a religious community or activities, plus some to creative expression (singing, dancing, writing), in some cases related to a religious event. These correlate directly with two of the assets in this sphere.\textsuperscript{101}

For the sphere of commitment to learning (internal), it has already been noted that there were a significant number of references to schooling (including teacher, student, etc.) from the girls in the study.\textsuperscript{102} Some girls liked to visualise themselves in the role of teacher in the future.

Notably absent were any direct references to the neighbourhood, which feature in the Developmental Asset framework.\textsuperscript{103} This may raises the question as to whether the concept of a neighbourhood is relevant for children living or working on the streets. It is known that street children can travel far across a city, and that their support networks can be widely dispersed.

For social competencies (internal), the assets listed here were not seen in the responses to the picture and word activities, but began to emerge in the
semi-structured interviews. For example, the competency of peaceful conflict resolution.\(^{104}\)

Q: What are some of the ways you have changed since you have been here?

A: My attitude — pick less fights, have learned to control my temper. Also to respect my elders more.\(^{105}\)

As a consequence of correlating the data from this study with the framework, there is a notable gap in the Developmental Assets: it is absent of any reference to the natural world. While other contexts (such as home, school, religious community) are given for some of the assets, the implication of the high scoring in this study is that the natural world is perceived by the children as an important environ for their capacity to thrive. Not only do they want to see natural things, for them it is an environment in which they can play, and with which they wish to interact. The association made during the picture exercise is with a positive future, but some of the more interpretative verbal descriptors given by the children hinted at echoes of a happy infancy where they enjoyed these things. This perhaps is a particularly important need for children growing up in an urban locality.

So this correlation has provided a useful insight for the Developmental Assets approach, which might enrich the dynamics of effective intervention in assessment and promotion of resilience. Even with this limited sample there is a clear direct linkage with half of the assets in the independent index.

5.4 Questions Arising

Attempting a correlation with the Developmental Assets framework created an interesting point of comparison. The assets approach, while intending to be applicable cross-culturally, has emerged (at least initially) out of a context quite different to the one being researched here. Clearly a correlation is only valid if there is a measure of similarity between the indices being compared. While some clear connections have been noted, several questions arose from this attempt.

At the most basic level the question is: can the Developmental Asset framework be applied to children living on the streets or with a childcare organisation? In the case of this study, the question might be phrased as: how do developmental assets apply

\(^{104}\) cf. DA36 peaceful conflict resolution
\(^{105}\) interview with William (boy, 10 years)
to a child “looked after” or “in care”? The foundational concept is that there are qualities and attributes, relationships and experiences which provide resilience for the child. While this would appear to have universal applicability, perhaps the terms in which these are expressed need to be nuanced to the context.

5.4.1 Family and Alternatives

Focus on parents and family is quite prominent in the Developmental Asset framework for good reason. This is a normative environ for children’s nurture. However the children in Sunshine House are not with their families. To what extent can “parent figure” or another surrogate be transposed for an actual parent? Evidently, it possible to substitute the genetic or natural parent with another person who sociologically fulfils the parental role, as occurs with fostering or adoption. But it cannot be assumed that this is of equal value as an asset to the child, or provides an equal basis for resilience. Particularly, this is of concern in the world of a CBO, NGO, or other service provider where attention given to the child by significant adults may fluctuate in level or be intermittent in focus. Constancy (in time) and consistency (in quality) of care are two key criteria for determining the value of surrogate care.

Another aspect of this is the question of sibling relationships. It was notable that during the semi–structured interviews, one of the children quite intentionally referred to the others in the house as “sisters and brothers” even though none of them are related to the child in any way.

Q: Are you friends with the other children here?
A: The other children are not only friends, but like sisters and brothers.106

In the area of parental and sibling relations and their alternatives, it may be helpful to compare studies of children on the streets and children “looked after” or “in care” with the baseline data for the Developmental Assets framework.

Furthermore, where the parental role is not fulfilled by the natural parent, it may be useful to delineate more clearly what is considered a “good enough” parent in these instances.

106 Interview with William (boy, 10 years)
5.4.2 Learning and Schooling

Another association in the Developmental Assets framework which must be questioned in the light of this study is the tendency to conflate learning with schooling. One of the eight spheres of assets is commitment to learning (internal). However, of the five assets listed here\textsuperscript{107} the first four explicitly mention school, and the fifth refers to reading, which aligns with the dominant learning style of an academic education environment.

When observing the looked after children at Sunshine House, and the street children served by the NGO’s drop-in facility, it is not their commitment to learning that comes into question, but whether their commitment to learning is expressed in these terms. Certainly the children at Sunshine House are receiving tutoring which includes learning to read and write, to prepare them for entry to school at an appropriate level within a year. However, the children and youth who use the drop-in centre are involved in street theatre, urban music and dance. They are learning about rights and how to engage in effective advocacy. Some are selling “Jeepney” street magazine\textsuperscript{108} to earn an income.

Learning is an essential competence for children living and working on the streets. Apart from the need to acquire one or more trade skills, they may have to learn communication skills to negotiate, financial skills for money management, social skills for networking. They learn to adapt when one source of livelihood is taken away, by seeking out another. If they are to get through each 24 hour period, they must learn a host of strategies for basic survival, night and day. If they are to live, they have to learn.

But none of this has anything to do with schooling. For the Developmental Assets framework to prove relevant here, these five assets would need to be recast in a broader perspective of formal and informal learning outside the classroom, as well as within.

5.5 Intentionality of Service Provision

Is the organisation supplying what the children perceive they need? Or is it simply supplying what is assumed (by the adults) to be the needs of the children? Not that

\textsuperscript{107} DA21 achievement motivation, DA22 school engagement, DA23 homework, DA24 bonding to school, DA25 reading for pleasure

\textsuperscript{108} Shaw & Shaw (eds), Jeepney, Quezon City: Urban Opportunities for Change Foundation Inc.
the two are necessarily mutually exclusive, but that the ability of the organisation to listen to a child in residential care is vital for mitigating any likelihood of institutionalisation and associated problems.

In this study it is clear that some of the key needs of the children are being provided by the NGO, and that without its services the children would lack these. While in residence these children receive the following that would not be readily available to them on the streets:

• access to the natural world, through day trips out into rural areas;
• surrogate parental nurture;
• a secure home environment;
• structured learning with tutorial support;
• involvement in religious activities and cultural celebrations.

In other words, there is a significant benefit in terms of increased capacity to thrive for these children and young people at Sunshine House.

The organisation may use the outcomes of this study to inform their work, along with using the independent index as a broad reference for indicators of capacity to thrive. Further to this they may continue to engage children in identifying their needs, giving them appropriate input into decisions about service provision.

All these benefits have the potential to reinforce for the longer term any other assessment measures the organisation may make. Positive outcomes with a future orientation for children and young people may also prove more attractive to donors and resourcers.

5.6 Children and Young People

For the children and young people who participate, quite apart from any influence the results of the study may have on the organisation’s service planning and decision making processes, a key benefit has been clarification of their own needs in order to thrive in their life ahead. Awareness and possession of this self-knowledge is in itself a positive attribute, and a step towards empowerment.
5.7 Further Research

In terms of the independent index, where there is a clear correlation in the independent index with this study, perhaps the terminology of the assets approach could be nuanced to reflect its relevance to family contexts or to learning environments that may not fit its normative bias.

Even so, its claimed universality may need to be tested in relation to the complex contexts of children in especially difficult circumstances. For this, further studies using an open-ended exploratory methodology, such as that employed here, could be of value in establishing a baseline of elements which, from the perspective of street children and looked after children, are needed to ensure their capacity to thrive in life, achieving a positive and purposeful future outcome, despite the adversity they have faced. Not only would this be useful to test the applicability of the index, it would also have value in itself for resilience studies.

This could then be followed up with a longitudinal study to confirm its veracity.
6. CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this paper, the intent of this exploratory pilot study was outlined. The purpose was to question the underlying premise of an organisation working with children in especially difficult circumstances, namely that the service it provides is of benefit to their future prospects in life. Rather than accepting the presupposition that the needs of the child are known, the study sought to use participative research activities in order to learn from the children what they perceive as necessary to flourish in life.

Key concepts of coping skills and resilience were unpacked, and some models of resilience explored. An independent index (the Developmental Assets framework) sourced from research with children and young people but in a different context, was chosen for a comparative measure. In this study selection of the term “capacity to thrive” was preferred over the term resilience, due to its open-ended definition and future-oriented aspect.

6.1 Outcomes

Apart from the direct benefit to the children who participated, these outcomes can provide a basis for informing the organisation’s service provision and for determining whether it is providing what the children perceive they need in order to flourish in the longer term.

The method employed yielded some clear results in respect of the children at Sunshine House. From the picture and word activities:

- More than fifty items were identified by the children, representing feelings and thoughts, people and things, which they perceive as important for their capacity to thrive in life towards a positive future of their own imagining.

- Of these some eight clusters of elements were demonstrably significant for the children in this pilot study.

Included in these are many factors that might be expected to reinforce resilience, such as parental figures, a home environment, peer relationships (whether siblings or friends), opportunities for recreation, even cultural and religious activities.

An aspect of the child’s sense of purpose that emerged was the need to contribute to the community (even if their perception of a “neighbourhood” was weak),
through giving or serving others. The child’s need for security and inner strength or confidence was also evident. Perhaps surprising is the intensity of expressed need for access to a natural world environ, to enjoy and with which to interact. Notably, this latter element was not evident in the independent index which was used for comparison, though other contexts (school, home, religious community) were shared with the outcomes of this study.

- Almost half of the indicators on the independent index were matched by evidence of direct correlation with the outcomes of this exploratory study.

This could be tested further with a larger sample of participants.

A few interesting anomalies arose, which if pursued have the potential to offer further insight, either for the whole participant group, or for the individual children with whom the data is associated. Due to the limited number of participants, results could not be taken as statistically representative of any wider group.

6.2 Process
In process, the methodology for the picture activity proved largely successful, though could be honed for repeat studies with more intentional use of open-ended prompting at the verbalisation phase. The word activity proved more problematic due to constraints of age and ability, despite more age-appropriate opportunities for expression being offered. An alternative approach is identified to enhance the usefulness of the response in any repeat of the study.

While the organisation in this study is certainly seeking to meet the needs of these children in especially difficult circumstances, the efficacy of such service provision will be proven by whether the children in care now do indeed go on to thrive in life. For this to be achieved, it is essential to remain attentive to the needs of the child as the child perceives them, and not simply as perceived by the adults on whose care the children rely.

This method may help to successfully determine the child’s perceived need.

6.3 Possibilities
In prospect, there is scope for further study in relation to street children’s capacity to thrive. This methodology enhanced as recommended, may serve for an extended
comparison with the independent index, if the study were to be repeated with other
groups of street children or children looked after by a child welfare agency.

The independent index itself could then be adapted for the situation of children in
especially difficult circumstances and the wording nuanced to reflect this context.

Furthermore, the method could prove to be of value in and of itself for NGOs and
CBOs who wish to question the underlying premise of their work, in order to ensure
their provision is effective for the children who use their services.

After all, adults don’t always know what children need in order to thrive.
Mula ng makilala ka
Ang buhay ko'y nagbabago na
Dati ay lagging nalulungkot
laging nag-iisa
Iniisip kong sumuko na
Tila wala ng pag-asa
Ngunit tunay na hindi pala
Diyos ay narito na
Binago Niya and ikot ng mundo
Muling binuhay ang puso ka
Ngayo'y naging makulay ang lahat
Pagkat Diyos ay kapiling ko
Wala na ngang mas hihigit sa iyo
Lahat na yata ay inalay mo.

Umasa kang wala ng pupurihin pa ako
Kundi ang katulad mo.

From the time I met you
My life was changed
Before was full of sorrow
always alone
I thought of quitting
It seems hope was gone
But I was wrong
God is here
He changed my world
He renewed my heart
Now everything is full of life
Because God is with me
Truly no-one can be compared to you
You have offered everything.

I will never praise anyone
But you alone.

Rappe “Raffy” Tamayo, “Street Voice”, in Shaw & Shaw (eds), Jeepney, Urban Opportunities for Change Foundation Inc., vol.1 no.4, 2009
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: MAP

City of Manila
APPENDIX 2: SCRIPTS

Note: the scripts are read verbatim. This is to ensure that each time the exercise is repeated, exactly the same instructions are being given.

Research Activity 1: art-based future-imaging script

BEGIN

We’ll divide the paper down the middle.

Pick a favourite colour that has a happy sense for you, that gives you really positive thoughts and feelings. Using the paper tear out an outline of a person. This person is you. Do it as big as you can!

We’ll glue this person, who is you, in the middle of the line.

(After time to glue...)

Now close your eyes and imagine yourself in the future, when you are a few years older than you are now. I want you to imagine positive moments, when life is going really well for you. Imagine some of the moments that you enjoy during the day, and all through the week. You are enjoying yourself and thriving in life, and flourishing in all that is good for you.

Now ask yourself what are some of the things, and who are some of the people that you see in your life then? Imagine these people and these things. You experience them around you during the day, and all through the week. These are things and people that you see around you in the future, when you are a few years older than you are now. These are things and people that are part of your life when you are flourishing in all that is good for you, enjoying yourself and thriving in life. Remember these moments.

Now open your eyes and draw on the paper what you see around you in your future. Draw the positive moments you enjoy during the day, and all through the week. You can draw as many pictures as you like. Draw the things and the people that you can see in your life, when you are a few years older than you are now.

Draw only on one side of the line.
(After time to draw…)

Now close your eyes again and imagine yourself in the future, when you are a few years older than you are now. I want you to imagine positive moments, when life is going really well for you. Imagine some of the moments that you enjoy during the day, and all through the week. You are enjoying yourself and thriving in life, and flourishing in all that is good for you.

Now ask yourself what do see inside you, the thoughts and feelings that are in your life then? Imagine these thoughts and these feelings. You experience them inside you during the day, and all through the week. These are feelings and thoughts that you see inside you in the future, when you are a few years older than you are now. These are thoughts and feelings that are part of your life when you are flourishing in all that is good for you, enjoying yourself and thriving in life. Remember these moments.

Now open your eyes and draw on the paper what you see inside you in your future. Draw the positive moments you enjoy during the day, and all through the week. You can draw as many pictures as you like. Draw the thoughts and the feelings that you can see in your life, when you are a few years older than you are now.

Draw on the other side of the line.

(After time to draw…)

OK, now to help me out, I would like you to tell me what it is you have drawn. Tell me about this picture. What things or people have you drawn here? What thoughts and feelings have you drawn here? You can write this next to what you have drawn.

END
Research Activity 1: art-based future imaging script (deconstructed)

Here a key is given as to indicate different linguistic elements of the script.

amplifiers of the term “thriving”, invoking positivity

Firstly, the singular word “thriving” is amplified in the script using related terms selected from a thesaurus. The purpose of this is to create an open-ended sense of the meaning in terms accessible to the child. The following phrases were selected:

- positive moments
- life is going really well for you
- moments that you enjoy
- enjoying yourself
- thriving in life
- flourishing in all that is good for you

situators of context

In order to situate the child’s imaginative exploration within a place and time that they can understand, several other terms are repeated. These include:

- yourself in the future, in your future, in the future
- you are a few years older than you are now
- in your life, part of your life
- during the day
- all through the week

active verbs, imperative instructions

In the script three verbs are used in imperative form to direct the child into action. These are sequenced as follows:

- imagine (used four times)
- remember (used once only)
- draw (used four times)

focus of segment, either external or internal

The script is in two halves. The first half focuses on “people and things” — external elements and tangible realities experienced around the child. The second half focuses on “feelings and thoughts” — internal elements and intangible realities experienced within the child. So this pattern is identical for each half of the script.
Research Activity 2: self-characterisation word-associative script

BEGIN

Pretend that you are someone who is sympathetic to you, perhaps like a close friend or special friend you may have. Pretend you are this person.

This person is looking at you and seeing you as you are now. This person knows you well, and knows what is happening in your life today and this week. I want you to tell me what that person would say about you now.

REPEAT

If they look at you right now, what would they say about you and _______?
Tell me what they would say right now.

END

list of anchor terms for self-characterisation word-associative

Each word or phrase is used in place of the blank in the script: for example, “…what would they say about you and helping others?” The first part of the script is given once, and the second part is repeated.

Selected key words used:

- a house or home (e1)
- helping others (i1)
- a sister or brother (e2)
- feeling big or strong (i2)
- being thankful (i3)
- a favourite place or creature (e4)
- study or school (e6)
- being safe (i6)
- having hope or a purpose (i8)
- church or worship (e9)

Selected key words not used:

- work or a job to do (e3)
- being wise or learned (i4)
- close friend or helper (e5)
- celebrations (i5)
- parent or carer (e7)
- giving gifts (i7)
- the beauty of creation (e8)
- creativity (i9)
- fun and games (eA)
- being a leader (iA)