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The University of San Francisco

CHILDREN APPROPRIATING A NEW WORLD OF HOPE
IN PERU, PARAGUAY, AND HAITI.

A Dissertation Presented
to
The Faculty of the School of Education
Department of Leadership Studies
School of Education

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

By
Luis Enrique Bazan
San Francisco, California
May, 2009

THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO
Dissertation Abstract

Children Appropriating A New World Of Hope
In Peru, Paraguay, And Haiti.

Even though the popular belief is that vulnerable children are not mature enough to confront the world, through understanding their identity and collaborating in the authorship of a shared narrative, they can recognize their past and actively appropriate their world, dramatically inspiring actions that improve people's lives and the organizations with which they are affiliated. In this sense, this study examines the identity of children through their narratives, their appropriation of the world, and their influence in people's lives and organizations. The study follows critical hermeneutical participatory inquiry (Herda 1999) and has been informed by the works of Ricoeur, Habermas, and Kearny. From this perspective, the study finds that the policies of international organizations that deal with working children are not paying attention to working children's ipse and idem; working allows children to appropriate a world that validates who they are; children that live in extreme circumstances of violence and poverty have an intuitive impulse to search for a different kind of life; and the repression of children's identity turns into a struggle to search for the connectedness of life.

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Even though the popular belief is that vulnerable children are not mature enough to confront the world, through understanding their identity and collaborating in the authorship of a shared narrative, they can recognize their past and actively appropriate and re-imagine their world, dramatically inspiring actions that improve people's lives and the organizations with which they are affiliated. However, the public domain does not recognize that children, especially poor children, have the ability to appropriate a narrative and recreate a public space with and for others.

Children in westernized cultures are likely to be institutionalized if their lives do not correspond to globalized standards of development. Institutionalization may result in programs for children that are unidirectional and dependent on only a few persons in power to 'shape' future generations. This research investigates the communal identity of children who are the participants in group environments that provide opportunities for them to participate in the creation of their own narrative. More specifically, it examines the activities of three organizations – Fédération des enfants ayant vécu dans la rue (FETJABEN) in Haiti, Generacion in Peru, and Center Santa Teresa and Calle Escuela who are members of the Coordinadora Nacional de Niños y Adolescentes Trabajadores (CONNATS), in Paraguay that are witnessing children's narratives, their appropriation of the world, and their influence in people's lives and organizations.

Background of Research Topic

Appropriation is a central part of human life. Every culture, every group and every individual discovers themselves through the appropriation of the world. Appropriation is used by Heidegger to describe the nature of the relationship between person and being. He writes (Heidegger 1971: 127) appropriation is “what brings all present and absent beings each into their own, from where they show themselves in what they are, and where they abide according to their kind.” Appropriation not only manifests the absent, but also inspires the possible for ourselves with and for others.

All children are vulnerable in some way or another, but there are children who are exposed to much higher vulnerabilities than others. This study is about vulnerable children – street and working children – whose families are living in poverty, whose parents have limited education, and who are or were raised by a single parent. These children may be living in the streets without the supervision of an adult and have worked in order to subsist. The areas where they lived or worked are subject to high crime rates. I will use various terms (poor, marginalized, at risk, and vulnerable) interchangeably.

The United Nations estimates that 150 million children, ranging in age from three to eighteen, live on the world’s streets (Tejada 2005: 37). Deprived of the most basic human necessities, these defenseless victims face brutal violence, neglect and abandonment, sexual exploitation, drug addiction, and human rights’ violations. When we talk about these vulnerable children, we can pay attention to their tragedies or their stories of hope. On one hand, it is important to see their tragedies in order to gain awareness and prevent the conditions that threaten their well-being. On the other,

children's stories that narrate the fulfillment of their own dreams are a remarkable accomplishment. Therefore, in the midst of their tragic conditions, my interest in this dissertation is in the children's possibilities to appropriate a new world of hope.

On November 20, 1989 the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention outlines children's rights, including education, protection, health care, and survival, and urges countries to protect these rights. This Convention is the most widely ratified human rights agreement in history because it has been ratified by almost every country in the world (USA and Somalia are the only two nations that have not ratified it). The article 3 of United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states, "in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration." Considering the best interest of the child is taking into consideration their stories, dreams, and ways to fulfill those dreams (Cussianovich Villaran 2006: 55). There are children around the globe who are forming groups with other children in their local communities in order to work for their best interests (Cussianovich Villaran 2006: 355).

There are millions of children around the world who work, but a group of them are organizing a children worker's union (Cussianovich Villaran 2003). In the last world summit of organized working children held in Spain in November 2007, participants mentioned the necessity to make public their own narratives. These children are a group constantly remembering the strong connection with their past while interpreting the present in order to recreate the vision of their future. Interpretation is a key element that fuels these children's actions. Herda writes (1999: 75) "to understand the meaning of the

text calls for interpretation – an appropriation *here* and *now* of the intention of the text.” Herda also writes that “Appropriation leads to an opening up of possible new actions in the real world of our lives” (Herda 1999: 77). In spite of their difficult past and present, there are many groups of organized children in Latin America and the Caribbean who are wielding great social influence (Cussianovich & Méndez 2008: 12). This research investigates how their narratives, and their interpretation, allow them to appropriate the world.

Significance of the Research

Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation...
(Article 19.1, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child)

Street children are vulnerable; young, small, poor, and often chemically dependent, and they become easy targets for violence (Tejada 2005: 166). Governments and non-profit organizations have a duty to protect children from all forms of violence, but paternalistic and patronizing policies may influence the direct action of governments and non-profit branches of transnational organizations. If anthropologists, sociologists, educators, human rights activists and other people who work for transnational NGOs do not understand the identity, narrative participation, and recreation of the world of organized children, it is probable that they will do more harm than help. This issue is important to study in order to understand the history of organized children, their struggle as a community, their vision for the future, the opportunities that they have to share their own experiences, and most important, to understand the need for a dialogical approach to

development. Seeing the life of children from a perspective of hope, presents children as participative actors in the appropriation of a new world. Even though the issue of working children has been studied many times and from different perspectives, this research is different because it has never been approached from the critical hermeneutical standpoint.

During my visit to the different countries, I encountered situations that show the importance of the research. For example, my last night in Peru, I was having a family reunion before I returned to the US. We were all talking when Gregorio, a guy who currently lives in the streets, rang the bell. My family and I have seen Gregorio in both good and bad circumstances. He is a very good hip-hop dancer, so he has performed for us countless times. He used to live in a house with other teenagers that were around his age. This group of teenagers worked in the morning and went to school in the afternoon. The problem began when other people living in the area did not like having a group of teenagers that had previously lived in the streets as neighbors, so they gathered signatures to close the house. Gregorio did not have any other place to go, so he ended up back in the streets.

I do not recall seeing Gregorio in such bad shape as I saw him that night. After taking a shower and getting clean clothes, he joined us for dinner. As the good friend that he is, he was involved in the conversation and we shared some laughs. In the quiet moments, we all could hear his quiet crying and could tell that he was trying to hide his tears.

Gregorio was desperate for being in a safe place where he could share stories and be heard. We found out that he just had a nasty fight to protect himself and his friend

from people who wanted to enslave them. He had faced marginalization so many times since he went back to the streets that it crossed his mind that slavery might be his only fate. So Gregorio had to visit us to remember that there is a family that will always receive him with tenderness.

I spent three days in the Dominican Republic before entering Haiti. In Dejabon, a city that borders Haiti, a woman pointed out three teenagers, and said that she'd rescued them from Haiti. She claimed that without her help their lives would be nothing. But the reality is that she herself is now holding these young women in bondage, because without their labor she cannot afford to send her son to school. The young women work all day selling products for the older women in the streets, and in the afternoon they work in her home. They have never been to school or been paid, and their owner still believes that she is doing them a favor because in Haiti, exchanging children as Restavek, or slaves, is not uncommon.

Also in Paraguay, I met with an organization (CONNATS) working with a group of homeless children who were recruited to work at a shopping mall to help the customers carry their bags and to also clean the bathrooms, the floors, and parking lots of the mall. They were promised compensation from the shopping mall but what they got were only the tips from some of the costumers. The children were afraid of saying something to the owners because they knew that they could lose even the tips from the customers. However, a small group of courageous kids protested for their salary.

The owners immediately fired the protesters, cleared them out of the area, and did not pay them for their work. They made sure to tell everyone that letting the children receive a tip and stay in the mall during the day is more than enough because the streets

are dangerous.

In this case the story has a good ending. CONNATS decided that it was necessary to take this case to court because there is a corporate culture in Paraguay that makes children consent to unpaid work due to their necessity to subsist (they should not ask a child to work for eight hours as exchange for food when s/he has no other option). The children won the case.

A service approach from a non-profit organization without knowing the children's stories, their fears and challenges, and their dreams, is an approach that might see the poorest children as an obstacle for the normal development of society (Tejada 2005: 34). In my current and past research work in the streets of Lima, Peru; Durban, South Africa; San Salvador, El Salvador; Ciudad del Este, Paraguay; and Port Au Prince, Haiti, I have seen that the most marginalized children are seen as individuals that do not behave, produce, or bring anything valuable to society. People discriminate against them because the stigma makes them believe that these children destroy progress. On the other hand, people interested in knowing the children's stories is already acknowledging that these children can become participative actors in the appropriation of a new world. Thus, more academic work still needs to be done in making these stories known.

The stories told by my research partners give meaning to the research and life to the organizations. Herda (1999:7) states that "the ontology of participatory research in the critical hermeneutic tradition invok[es] the potential of humans to reflect on their history and to imagine worlds we could inhabit." The wisdom that comes from the stories of my research partners can be carried over in the real world to serve a higher purpose.

Summary

In brief, this investigation examines how vulnerable children's narratives, and their interpretation, allow them to appropriate the world. My intent has been to create a text for leaders working with humanitarian organizations so that they are better able to understand the relationship between the communal identity of vulnerable children, the participation in the creation of their own narrative, and development. Chapter two of this dissertation introduces the research context of my investigation. Chapter three focuses on the lives of street children, examines the history of the children's social movement, and discusses the role of Non-Governmental Organizations in the lives of these children. Chapter Four discusses the theoretical framework for my research, the data collection and analysis process that guides this project, and a description of the researcher's background. Chapter Five examines the data collected in Haiti, Paraguay, and Peru, and presents an analysis from the anthropological interpretive study grounded in critical hermeneutic theory, and finally in Chapter Six, I am presenting a new direction for non profits assisting working and street children: a direction informed by the stories and experiences of the people working with these children, as well as my own experience and interpretation.

CHAPTER TWO: THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

Introduction

Community organizing has been a good solution for disadvantaged groups of individuals to come together, raise their voice, claim their rights, and hopefully have their needs met (Cussianovich Villaran 2008: 43). This process happens in all communities that feel under-estimated and under-represented in the public's opinion. The same is happening in developing countries where it has been shown that children could influence policies. Cussianovich Villarán writes that the leaders of a group of organized children from Peru were able to

participate in discussions with the people elaborating the public policies affecting all the children of the country. The movement [of working children] criticized the discrimination against children younger than 12 years for not having the right to work, at the same time, they asked for their rights to create an organization with conditions equivalent to the groups of adolescents (Cussianovich Villaran 2003: 43).

Cussianovich's quote reflects the intention of a children's movement concerned with exercising their rights.

There is an international movement of organized working children that are lobbying for active participation in issues that concern them, including social, political, and economical decisions that allow them to appropriate a new world (Cussianovich Villaran 2008: 11). These organized children argue that The Convention on the Rights of the Child ratificate their desires (Cussianovich Villaran 2008: 13). To support the children's initiative, international NGOs are sponsoring researchers, field workers, and small NGOs to create environments that encourage the active participation of children. I have included the vignettes and descriptions in this section of each research site.

Research Sites

In addition to the social, economical, and political context of each site, I will also include my perception of each country. The research sites are FETJABEN in Haiti, members of CONNATS in Paraguay, and Generación in Peru.

Haiti



Figure 1, Map of Haiti, www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/haiti.pdf

Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, has been plagued by political violence for most of its history (Skinner 2008: 5). After an armed rebellion led to the departure of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in February 2004, an interim government took office to organize new elections under the auspices of the United

Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. Haiti inaugurated a democratically elected president and parliament in May of 2006 (Dupruy 1997).

With 8.8 million inhabitants, the literacy rate in Haiti is the lowest in the region at 52.9%. The country has 15,200 primary schools, of which 90% are non-public and managed by the communities in which they are located, religious organizations or NGOs. The enrollment rate for primary school is 67%, of which less than 30% reach 6th grade. For secondary school the enrollment rate is only 20% (Metz 2001).

From my past experiences, I do not recall anything similar to the situation Haiti. I had to cancel my trip to Haiti twice due to the hurricanes, so I was expecting some destruction due to the torrential rains and high winds. While the plane was getting ready to land at the Port Au Prince airport, I could see the beautiful coast of Haiti, but when the plane got closer to the land, the poverty and floods from the hurricane aftermath were visible.

My guide and translator picked me up from the airport. Sarge is a nice man who has worked as a translator for several years serving the people visiting Save The Children in Haiti and who do not speak Creole or French. Sarge booked a room for me at Oloffson hotel. The hotel was run by a musician who is half Haitian and half North American. It is a place well known for its music concerts and for people gathering to play drums once a week. One night I heard the drummers playing all night. The next morning several of them were still on the patio. I could not tell if they were drunk, hung over, or just tired.

Before going to Haiti, a friend told me about the different groups of people that like staying at the place. She even mentioned that people from the military from different countries, including CIA agents, like to stay at Oloffson.

Even though Sarge has met a lot of people that visit Haiti and work for human rights organizations, he is still doubtful that the social conditions of his country will change. He considers that non-profits in Haiti are not doing their work but only talking about it. Every time after I had a conversation with my research partners, Sarge had to tell me his doubts about the work that the organizations was doing. Living in the poorest country of the western hemisphere and seeing the amount of people visiting his country with the idea of helping without seeing concrete changes has made him be cynical and lose hope.

In Hait I also met Sarah, a student of anthropology and vodou leader, who joined us in our city tours. She is from Gonaives, a city that was badly hit by the hurricanes. As a leader, she had the responsibility of sending help to her town, and she gathered mainly food and medicines. She brought the supplies with her every time she went to visit her town.

I met at the hotel a nurse working for an international organization whose job was to fly in a helicopter to areas that were still inaccessible by land and rescue the people that needed help. When I met her she mentioned that she had rescued six children who were malnourished and that many others were already dead. Benjamin Skinner explains that “the annual budget for the health care of the UN peacekeepers in Haiti is greater than the annual budget for the country’s Health Ministry” (Skinner 2008: 4). Even though international organizations are channeling help to Haiti after the hurricanes, my translator mentioned that the population still have very limited access to health care.

During my visit to the city hall, I experienced a sense of lawlessness, a feeling I had never had before. Because of my work, I have frequently traveled to poor areas.

Many of these places were very volatile so I had to be ready to take cover or do something to protect my self if problems started. Since I started working with street children I learned to think about the worse case scenarios and develop an exit strategy if I were in circumstances that I could not control. In Port Au Prince, while visiting the city hall which was empty due to civil unrest, I realized that if something went wrong, I did not have many chances to make it out: I did not speak the language, or know the city where the central government or police were in control. Embassies were afraid of the mobs, I looked like a foreigner, and I could not think of a group of people who could protect me. My concern became a curiosity once I started thinking on the poorest children since there was not a formal social system that could truly protect them. Skinner explains the conditions of exploited children in Haiti:

There are more than 10,000 street children, mostly boys as young as six, some selling unprotected sex for \$1.75. Haiti has the highest prevalence of HIV infection outside sub-Saharan Africa, and Haitians who believe sex with virgins protects against, or even cures, AIDS have driven up the price of such intercourse to \$5.00” (2008: 4).

Children in Haiti have not gain as much rights as in the other countries in the western hemisphere. Slavery is still culturally accepted in Haiti, and the children slaves are known as restavek.

Paraguay



Figure 2, Map of Paraguay, www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/paraguay.pdf

Fernando Lugo, a Roman Catholic bishop, won the 2008 presidential election and is therefore the president of Paraguay. Having spent many years working with the poorest population in Paraguay and Ecuador, Lugo has become a light of hope for the majority of Paraguayans who have experienced persecution and marginalization. In order to understand the importance of Lugo's presidency, it is necessary to understand the most recent political and social history of Paraguay.

Paraguay, officially the Republic of Paraguay, is a constitutional Republic with an

estimated population of nearly 6.5 million and an area covering 157,047 square miles located in South America. Paraguay is bordered by Bolivia on the north and west, Brazil on the east, and Argentina on the south and west. Administratively, the country is divided into 17 departments and the capital city. The capital and by far the largest city is Asuncion (Kolinski 1973: 14).

Most Paraguayans are mestizos, but there are much smaller groups of American Indians and people of African, European, and Asian ancestry. The two official languages are Spanish and Guaraní. (Rubin 1971: 1). The Jesuit missions, active from the late 16th to the 18th century, were instrumental in the blending of Spanish and Guaraní cultures (Palacios 1991: 42).

Paraguay ranks as the second poorest country in South America with a 2007 gross domestic product per capita of US\$4,000. Approximately 2.1 million, or 35%, of its total population is poor and approximately 1 million, or 15.9%, are unemployed. It is also an unequal society. The top 10% of the population holds 43.8% of the national income, while the lowest 10% has only 0.5%. The inequality of land ownership of the Paraguayan countryside is one of the highest in the globe: 10% of the population controls 66% of the land, while 30% of the rural people are landless. This disparity has caused a great deal of tension between the landless and elites (Klaiber 1998).

European influence in Paraguay began when explorers, like Juan Díaz de Solís (1516) and Juan Cabot (1527), reached the Paraguay River, which was thought to offer access to Peru. One of the main reasons for the voyages of later explorers was to seek a way across the continent. As a result, a Spanish colony developed and Asunción became the nucleus of the La Plata region. Río de la Plata province included Paraguay and

Argentina, but Governor Hernandarias separated the administrations of both regions in 1617. Real independence from Spain was asserted when in 1721 José de Antequera led the comuneros of Asunción in a successful revolt and governed independently for some 10 years. In 1776 the region was made part of the viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata (Warren 1949: 144).

Paraguay achieved their independence from Spain in 1811, and since then many autocratic dictators have helped shape the country. Gen. Alfredo Stroessner engineered a successful coup in 1954 and stayed in power by repeatedly suppressing opposition. He was elected president in 1958 and 1963, but after 1967, the constitution permitted him to be reelected numerous times (Lewis 1980: 73).

At the moment that Stroessner went into power, Juan Perón, a promoter of a socialist nationalist Sui Generis system – with ideas taken from Mussolini, Hitler, Francisco Franco, Stalin and Lenin – was president of Argentina. The president of Brazil, Getulio Vargas, committed suicide a few days after Stroessner went into power. Bolivia had Víctor Paz Estenssoro as president, who promoted the rights and well-being of the native indigenous people of his country. Dwight David Eisenhower, the president of the United States since 1952, later provided strong support of Stroessner in order to consolidate his power. The economic support from the US became essential for the improvement of the Paraguayan economy (Farina 2003: 87).

Stroessner, aware that the interest of the United States with Paraguay was based on their fear that communism may infiltrate Paraguay and that could continue to Brazil and Argentina, made a law where communism was against the law, and, therefore, their followers were considered criminals. This law also became an obstacle for any kind of

social, civic, or political movement that wanted to use public manifestations, vigils, and protests in order to achieve a determined objective. For Stroessner, the war against communism started as a strategy to bring the attention of the US, and ended up as the characteristic of a repressive system that lasted almost 35 years (Farina 2003: 87).

As part of the cold war, US president Eisenhower made decisions to intervene in Vietnam and isolate Cuba – through promoting its expulsion of the Organization of American States and planning the invasion of the island. These decisions marked the international policies of the US with the rest of the world. These policies were then administrated by the National Security Council (NSC) chaired by the US president, and attended by the FBI, CIA, special forces, and so on. In this context the Doctrine of National Security was created in order to affirm the hegemony of the US in the planet, with emphasis in Latin America (Boccia 2002: 37).

Under the inspiration of the Doctrine of National Security and sponsored by the United States, on November 25, 1975 in Santiago de Chile, the leaders of the region's military intelligence service started Operation Cóndor - a campaign of political repressions involving assassination and intelligence operations officially implemented by the right-wing dictatorships of the southern cone of South America. The program aimed to repress the left-wing influence and ideas and to control active or potential opposition movements (Farina 2003: 178).

Under Stroessner rule the national economy improved and financial relationships with other countries were strengthened. Although Stroessner was elected in 1988 for an eighth term, Paraguayans wearied of his domineering administrative style. He was overthrown in a coup in February of 1989. The coup leader, Gen. Andrés Rodríguez, was

elected president, and he gradually began moving the country away from its authoritarian past into democracy (Miranda 1990: 142).

The country is trying to move forward but there are still many challenges. A couple of stories that I wrote in my journal reminds me of the new challenges. Paraguay's border city with Brazil, Ciudad del Este, is quickly improving economically. Due to their trade agreements with Asian countries, the items are much cheaper to purchase in Paraguay, and in less than a thirty-minute-walk a person from Brazil could buy the latest computer in Ciudad del Este. Brazil, to protect their economy, has designed a strict control so every item that passes into their country pays taxes. There is so much control for items, that the border patrol forgot protecting people. While I was observing the cars and people that crossed the border, I noticed that anyone can bring into Brazil several young women, and the border police probably will not questioned them about the passengers. It seems that is easier to trade people than CDs.

My next story has a better ending. As previously described, a group of homeless children were recruited to work at a shopping mall to help the customers carry their bags and to also clean the bathrooms, the floors, and parking lots of the mall. They were promised compensation from the shopping mall but what they got were only the tips from some of the costumers. The children were afraid of saying something to the owners because they knew that they could lose even the tips from the customers. However, a small group of courageous kids protested for their salary.

The owners immediately fired the protesters, cleared them out of the area, and did not pay them for their work. They made sure to tell everyone that letting the children receive a tip and stay in the mall during the day is more than enough because the streets

are dangerous. CONNATS, the social movement of children run by children whom I met, decided that it was necessary to take this case to court because there is a corporate culture in Paraguay (and in the rest of the world) that makes children consent to unpaid work due to their necessity to subsist.

In order to compete, businesses may find ways to justify the use of coercion. Giving a street child something to eat is an act of charity. But we cannot ask a child to work for eight hours as exchange for food when s/he has no other option. The recruitment of children by the abuse of a position of vulnerability for the purpose of gaining from their free labor is challenge that Paraguay needs to face.

The current elected president, Fernando Lugo, is committed to create a stable path towards democracy and trust. Even after Paraguay became a democracy nearly 20 years ago, the country continues to be dominated by corruption and the rule of influence instead of transparency and the rule of law.

Peru



Figure 3, Map of Peru, www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/peru.pdf

The Republic of Perú, in western South America, is bordered on the north by Ecuador and Colombia, on the east by Brazil, on the southeast by Bolivia, on the south by Chile, and on the west by the Pacific Ocean. It was home to the Inca Empire, the largest state in Pre-Columbian America. Spain conquered the region in the 16th century and established a Viceroyalty, which included most of its South American colonies. Since achieving independence in 1821, Perú has undergone periods of political unrest and fiscal

crisis as well as periods of stability and economic upswing (Pease 1995).

A developing country with a poverty level of about 45%, Peru's main economic activities include agriculture, fishing, mining, and manufacturing of products such as textiles (Hudson 1993). The population, estimated at 28 million, is multi-ethnic. The main spoken language is Spanish, although a significant number of Peruvians speak Quechua and other native languages. This mixture of cultural traditions has resulted in a wide diversity of expressions in fields such as art, cuisine, literature, and music.

In 1958, the University of San Cristóbal in Ayacucho, reopened its doors, after one century, for students.

For the first time, in a place of big economical gaps, the children of the rich and professional shared classrooms with the peasants, visited the bars to drink together, and got to know each other. This encouraged a big revolutionary effervescence in Ayacucho: students created revolutionary fronts, the US Peace Corp was expelled from Ayacucho, the agrarian reform. The world was changing and all the signs pointed out that the system that we knew was ending (Roncagliolo 2007: 48 – 49).

In this context Abimael Guzmán, the future leader of the Shining Path, started teaching at the School of Education. “From the seventies until mid eighties the political work of Guzmán wasn't going to be to control guns, unions, or organize protests, but to own the heads of the student from all the region” (Roncagliolo 2007: 52). The tipping point to train students with ideology was through “highlighting the social differences in society” (Roncagliolo 2007: 53). Teachers lead the most sanguinary group in Peruvian history.

In the 1980's and 1990's Peru witnessed one of the most devastating conflicts in Latin America: a war that fought mainly in the rural areas (Koonings 1999). An organization called Shinning Path started a story of destruction that generated thousands of deaths (Jara 2007: 11 - 12). Entire towns were in the middle of the violence not

knowing if they were going to be victimized by the Shining Path or by the Army. The violence became even worse after a savage terrorist attack, which encouraged the masses to ask and justify the devastation of the aggressor with terrorist methods as well (Jara 2007: 11 - 12).

The conflict generated two consequences that are important for this research. First, this conflict created a migration of peasant communities to the capital (Klaiber 1994). Thousands of people moved into the cities and the people living in the new towns had to face a completely different context. The majority lived in extreme poverty, since there was no land to cultivate, and the people from Lima did not like the migration from the mountains. Marginalization and poverty made the children live in split homes with stepfathers where violence became common.

The second consequence was the revival to control social movements and persecution of any groups that were seen as leftists. In the mid seventies, “the Peruvian military were in an unholy alliance with Argentina’s armed forces. The Peruvians were helping to disappear some of the leftists Argentine rebels known as Montoneros who were on the run or hiding in Peru” (Bowen 2003: 84). The dirty war of the 80’s and 90’s went even to target journalists, trade unionists and leftists. The police chief in the nineties, Vladimiro Montesinos, and a death squad, The Colina Group, had a list of targets of elimination in order to get rid of these undesirable elements (Bowen 2003: 138).

Enrique Vásquez (2007: 62 – 63) explains that during the civil war, Peruvians from all ages were targeted. The Shinning Path is responsible for 49% of the violence against children, and the State with 37%. These two groups used kidnappings and

executions as their most prominent form of violence against children. It is even more shameful that the State had torture and rape as a very common practice during the war. The Revolutionary Movement Túpac Amaru, a guerrilla created in 1980, is responsible for the 1.6% of violence against children, which in their particular case is, in the majority of cases, forcing children to become soldiers.

The State won the internal war, and this context of disrespect for the lives of the poorest children and of suspicion for all movements that are considered leftists has been, unconsciously, passed down. The government has developed a national plan of action in favor of the children and adolescents of Peru in order to improve their condition (PNAIA 2002: 26).

The state has a lot of work to do for the children and teenagers of Peru. For example, Marissa, a teenager who was juggling school and her low paying job as a nanny, the nebulous offer of a high-paying job during her lunch break was seen a possible positive break.

Marissa's story is all too familiar in Peru. She had been abandoned by her parents when she was a baby and grew up in a home run by nuns. When she was in her teens, and without any prospect of being adopted, the nuns trained her to take care of the newborns. In time she decided to use her skills by going to Lima, continuing her education, and taking control of her own fate.

At first, Marissa did not accept the job offer, but one of her classmates kept talking to her about the chance for a better job, the possibility of making more money. Soon thereafter, while out with the fore-mentioned classmate Marissa was drugged. The same 'friend' had given her bubblegum that had been laced with drugs.

Exploiters have an eye to recognize people that are naïve or vulnerable. If the victims have any social tie with a group or person that would speak up on her or his behalf they find ways to break that connection.

The drugs made Marissa feel like a zombie, hyper, aggressive, wild, and reckless. Her boss, without knowing that she was drugged, noticed the strange behavior and fired her fearing that she would harm her child. Marissa had lost the only family that could speak up for her if necessary. After doing some research, my research partners - Generación - found out that the person who offered Marissa a job, runs a sex trafficking ring in the city by recruiting kids from local high schools. Marissa is currently in a temporary home run by Generación where a social worker is caring for her.

Peru is where I was raised and where I learned to see the world with its possibilities and challenges. It is where I learned to establish relationships with people that live in marginalized situations. Every time I go to Lima, I visit my friends that I met in the streets and hope that they are doing better than the last time I visited them. I cheer their developments and cry with their suffering. They are children, adolescents, and adults that are struggling mainly because people do not give them a chance, and if they have one, people make an effort to take their opportunities away.

Peru is mainly a Catholic country, and for many people it is a moral duty to follow the values of the Catholic Church. On one occasion, some youth that were street children and were living in Generación wanted to be baptized, but the priest of the local Church did not accept. He said that he would never baptize thieves, robbers, and drug addicts. For me it was incredible that a representative of the Roman Catholic Church marginalizes the same people that Christ called brothers and sisters.

There are endless stories of people denying the street children of Lima the opportunity of living and participating in the construction of their own and of the society's destiny. My perception is that people want street children to adjust to the world instead of adjusting the social structures to welcome the poor. The intention of the democratic majority is to make street children live in a situation of surveillance where they have their behavior, attitudes, and their thoughts controlled.

If the rights, dignity, and identity of street children are not recognized by the society, then the appropriation of the world for this population is difficult to achieve. On the contrary, acts of prejudice, discrimination, harassment, and violence against the poorest and weakest people will be common and accepted. These attitudes are also repeated against those who care for the poorest. Organizations that work with the poor can be considered a threat to the social order if they fight against stigma.

In every visit to Peru, I asked why do people turn their backs on situations of exploitation and marginalization. I wished people in my country wanted to work towards changing unjust social, political, and economic structures. We should aim towards making people accountable for their acts of hate, but in order to reconcile.

Summary

Part Two provides a brief highlight on children in developing countries concerned about their rights and an overview of the research sites. Each of these sections is included in order to provide an overview of the areas being studied as they relate to this research topic.

CHAPTER THREE: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The first category of this literature review focuses on the lives of street children. The second category examines the history of the children's social movement. Finally, in the third section, I will discuss Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

Street Children

Street children are at the very bottom of the social discrimination and marginalization ladder (Tejada Ripalda 2005). One of a number of groups most at risk and requiring urgent attention (Panter-Brick 2002: 148), they are also not a homogeneous group. The ages of street children vary from as young as 4 up to 18 years old, and all of them experience very different circumstances and lifestyles. Welfare agencies and NGOs that work with these children have tried to identify appropriate service categories that match the population with which they are working (Panter-Brick 2002: 150).

The term 'street children' represents the population that uses the streets as a source of livelihood, though not exclusively (Panter-Brick 2002). There is accumulated evidence that children move fluidly on and off the streets and that 'the street' does not represent the sum total of their social networks or experiences (Panter-Brick 2002: 151). Street children are those for whom the street, more than their family, has become their real home (Ennew 1994: 15), due to the absence of proper contacts or links with adults in the family home and care from society.

The term 'street children' – used in Latin America to evoke disaffiliation, transience, and marginal economic work, rather than notions of lack of home or abode (Hecht 1998: 103) – does little to serve the interests of the children in question. Even programs of intervention for street children can result in discrimination and stigmatization which is the same situation that these children experience in the streets (Panter-Brick 2002: 152).

The interaction that street children have with the rest of the society is also essential for understanding their identity, for they are affected by poverty and social exclusion. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child emphasizes all children as citizens and recognizes their capabilities to change their own lives. However, society is not interested in giving these children the opportunity and responsibility for changing their own lives. According to Panter-Brick (2002: 154), the term “street children” serves to highlight a set of working and living conditions that diverge from accepted norms about children.

Exclusion refers to the action of ejecting a person from the place he/she was occupying. This includes attitudes of rejection or negation of their possibilities of having, doing, or saying anything. All of this is the separation of the individual from his/her family, the group or community (Tejada Ripalda 2005: 35). But this is not an exclusion that comes from one direction, but from different directions that aim at the same population. People can be excluded physically (racism), geographically (ghetto), materially (poverty), from social and cultural values, and from love. Street children suffer all of these kinds of exclusion, but they are not only socially excluded, but they are also marginalized. Tejada Ripalda (2005: 36) states that “street children survive in the social

margins, away from the dominant social values, but at the same time, united to them, because they carry with them the sign of the norm that they do not respect". The fact that these children do not respect social norms is seen as a fundamental justification to mistreat and dehumanize them.

For Paulo Freire (1970), dehumanization is a distortion of the vocation of becoming more fully human. In some countries, groups have been paid by the central government to shoot street children (Scheper-Huges 1998: 352). These activities have occurred because the majority of the general public do not believe these youngsters have something to offer society. Consequently, their deaths (in Peru, Brazil, and Guatemala, among other countries in Latin America) have been called social cleansing. The reaction of the public to these tacit policies has been disinterest, neutrality or simply silence (Scheper-Huges 1998: 391): a response to the suffering of children that would not occur if a majority of the public recognized the dignity and equal rights of all people.

The hostility against street children puts them in the category of social pariahs, and does not give them the opportunity to use their talents. The UN Convention recognizes that promoting the best interest of the children is not just a matter of protecting and providing for them, but of listening to them and fostering their participation. There is a careful balance to be struck between the three broad categories of rights in the Convention: rights to protection, provision, and participation (Panter-Brick 2002: 156). But this is difficult to achieve in societies where there is rejection of the poor. Methods for combating this rejection have been undertaken by a number of individuals and groups: a topic to be discussed in the following section.

Children's Social Movement

Children who live in situations of poverty and marginalization are the primary concern of my research topic. It is important to recognize that they “are a significant sector of the population and if we add the condition of poverty, gender, and ethnicity they become the critical and analytic lens to understand the social, political, and relational dynamics that characterizes our societies” (Cussianovich Villarán 2003: 12). The challenges and opportunities available to children parallel those available to the communities in which they live.

Appropriating the world is being connected to who we are, and “all discourse about becoming social and political actors refers to the individual and communal identity” (Cussianovich Villarán 2003: 14). Therefore, children appropriating the world are immersed in the construction of a social and individual identity that enables them to be recognized as a group capable of actions in pursuit of better life conditions. Every time vulnerable children attempt to speak out in public and fight together against exploitation and discrimination, they are representing their own experiences and hopes (Liebel 2004). The burning question is if it's possible to speak of children appropriating a new world when they face poverty and other conditions of marginalization. Cussianovich Villarán (2003: 13) reflecting on this question regarding working children, writes “the big challenge is on how to achieve, from a condition of poverty, of marginalization, of objective and subjective exclusion, and being a victim, becoming an actor.”

Appropriation is not about adopting a behavior taken by foreign expectations, but is about acting and participating in the transformation of the world. For Schibotto (1994: 92)

working children could represent not only a pathological episode of Third World Folklore, but also an aware and active dynamic of the movement for liberation and social change.

Children who are facing marginalization and poverty wishing to appropriate a new world need to envision their efforts as part of the children's social movement narrative. To talk about a social movement, one needs to talk about the social space that is affected. Cussianovich Villarán and Mendez (2008: 25) write "the issue is to visualize the social space that the movements are called to dispute, the ones that are taken by the dominant sectors with all the social, economical, and technological resources to their reach." The social space is important because it is the territory where – by social movements – a new way of life is proposed: where the subject is able to make a consistent contestation to the status quo and operate as an engine for social change (Cussianovich Villaran & Méndez 2008).

For thirty years, generations of working children have been trying to form a movement that responds to their needs and the needs of Peru. They have been trying to carry not only their own message as workers, but the message of all children and adolescents (Cussianovich Villaran & Méndez 2008). To better understand the identity of this movement, one must first become familiar with its history in Peru. In the 1970's, the children of peasants and miners had a predominant presence in the rallies and protests at which their parents were demonstrating. Together with their mothers, these children were in the front lines of the protests that had been organized by the worker's unions (Cussianovich Villaran 2003: 36). These young people learned fairly quickly that in order to be valued for who they were and the activities that they did, they had to connect with

other people and speak up.

Cussianovich Villarán (2003: 37) explains that in 1976 many young adults were fired from the companies where they worked. The majority belonged to the group of Youth Christian Workers (YCW) who were union leaders at these businesses. As a result, YCW convoked an emergency national meeting, where members decided to answer the question: “what kind of youth are we going to have in ten years if the situation continues as it is today, where being youth, laborer and a student is an object of political persecution in the social and working areas?” They answered: “we will have youth without working experience that will not understand the struggles of their parents and other sectors, and that are not socially and politically unionized.” Continuing they said, “therefore we have to start early with children and teenagers. We started working when we were children in homes, in plazas, in our parent’s business and on our own” (Cussianovich Villaran 2003: 37).

The essential points of a movement of working children – decided by the former children workers of the YCW – was to be autonomous and not merely the youth section of another organization. They believed only children and adolescents should run the organization; that all working children and adolescents could be members; and that the group should aim to develop content for both a national and international presence (Cussianovich Villarán 2003).

In this brief history of the movement, there are two aspects that are particularly noteworthy. First, the experiences of children participating in the labor struggles with their parents allowed some children to realize that they were also an important sector of the society. The second aspect – the belief that initiated the movement – was an

awareness of the profound value and dignity of all workers for being daily fighters against poverty, hunger, misfortune, and so on, in addition to their commitment to protect their children (Cussianovich Villarán 2003).

Though all labor movements acknowledge worker dignity, Cussianovich Villaran (2003: 40) explains, in the case of working children, the dialogue about dignity should respond initially to their way of life and to their constant and global struggle. The search for appropriating a new world in the children's social movement is connected to the claim for dignity. Currently, the movement of working children has expanded to other continents. This phenomenon could not have occurred without the commitment of individuals and different institutions in civil society – including non-governmental organizations, which will be discussed in the following section.

Non-Governmental Organizations

Globalization endangers the existence of traditional cultures. But it also “creates new possibilities to know other ways of life and cultures, in order to expand our own horizon of information and to establish a dialogue with people from other places around the world” Liebel 2004a: 19). Due to the incapacity of many states and governments to take care of the poorest of their people who may be members of marginalized communities, organizations have been created in order to channel resources from various countries to these populations in need, and to allow their participation in decisions that affect them. Since the 1980s, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have emerged as an important force on the world stage working to democratize decision-making processes, protect human rights and provide essential services to the most needy (Krut 1997). As a

category of organizational entities, NGOs were created at the founding of the United Nations. The category was invented in order to describe a specific relationship between civil organizations and the intergovernmental process, and since then, the term has been loosely applied to any organization that is not public (Krut 1997). With the support of the international community, developed countries decided that the creation of the NGOs was a very effective way to use the civil force for issues that affect all human beings.

NGOs may also be called Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Krut (1997) has written “civil society may be considered as a sphere of social interaction between the household and the state, characterized by community co-operation, structures of voluntary association and networks of public communication.”

For understanding within this research, an NGO is an organization that independent of working or not with the government, acts in solidarity with a sector of the population and creates an environment where the affected population makes decisions to participate in changing their own struggle. The NGO is a non-profit organization and the funding comes from private sectors and not the government.

Summary

When the environment allows vulnerable children to engage in conversation among themselves, they can begin to bring meaning to their world. While suffering have been part of the past, social movements of children have a voice and a way to imagine new ways of being. This is manifested in language, where new meaning can be constructed. Herda (2002: 97) postulates “a story about ourselves only makes sense if we participate in an authentic interpretive manner in its creation.” Part Four of this proposal

introduces the research protocol of my investigation.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH PROTOCOL

Introduction

This research project is guided by participatory inquiry protocol within a critical hermeneutic tradition. As a result, the creation of the research data was intended to take place with and for the participants towards creating new understandings. This portion of the document is divided into three sections. The first section discusses the theoretical framework for this endeavor. The second section focuses on the data collection and analysis process that guides this project, and the final section includes a description of the researcher's background.

Theoretical Framework

In order to explore this research topic from a hermeneutic orientation, the establishment of theoretical categories helps to shape the data collection and findings. Therefore, the theoretical framework is divided into three sections: narrative identity, memory and imagination, and the ethical aim.

Narrative Identity

Ricoeur suggests that in order to elaborate upon the notion of a narrative identity, we need to establish the connection between the activity of telling a story and the temporal character of human experience (Ricoeur 1992). Therefore, if there is such a thing as a story or stories of children appropriating a new world, it is because there are children who act and suffer, and people around them who are witnessing it. In other words, the story telling introduces us to narratives of children, prompting us to ask: Who

has done this? Who has behaved in this way? or who made such a thing happen?

The notion of a narrative identity pays attention to the temporal dimension of a being who, by existing with others, transforms him (her)self in the course of a life history (Ricoeur 1990b: 247). Ricoeur distinguishes two dimensions of identity: identity as sameness (*idem*); and identity as selfhood (*ipse*) (1992: 116). He writes that

the mediating function performed by the narrative identity of the character between the poles of sameness and selfhood is attested to primarily by the imaginative variations to which the narrative submits this identity. The narrative does not tolerate these variations, it engenders them, seeks them out (Ricoeur 1992: 148).

Narrative identity is responsible for mediating between the two poles of personal identity: the *idem*, referring to character – a set of innate or acquired attitudes and capacities; and the *ipse*, including trustworthiness and faithfulness to oneself, despite all the deviation and transformations which mark the path of life (Ricoeur 1992: 124). The dialectical relationship involved in being true to oneself also makes it possible for the self to be true to others.

Narrative identity has to be considered from the standpoint of its contribution to an understanding of the self, but the self understands itself by being open to otherness and affected by it. Thus, narrative identity presents itself as the essential structure of human identity and so of human self-understanding (Ricoeur 1990b: 247). Two other elements inform the understanding of oneself – memory and imagination. These are discussed in the following section.

Memory and Imagination

Ricoeur (1982: 93) writes,

The mode of being in the world opened up by the text is the mode of the

possible, or better of the power-to-be: therein resides the subversive force of the imaginary. The paradox of poetic reference consists precisely in the fact that reality is re-described only insofar as discourse is raised to fiction.

Imagining what could be is essential for changing from who we are to who we wish to become. But this process has to start from reinterpreting our past. As Ricoeur (1982: 75) has written “he who is unable to reinterpret his past may also be incapable of projecting concretely his interest in emancipation.” Critical awareness, participation and reinterpretation of people’s past and vision of the future are the foundations for the expression of our own desires. According to Ricoeur (1982: 100) “it is the task of philosophical reflection to eliminate deceptive antinomies which would oppose the interest in the reinterpretation of cultural heritages received from the past and the interest in the futuristic projections of a liberated humanity” (Ricoeur 1982: 100).

Rethinking our past and envisioning a better future is still a struggle for people who are marginalized because they reach a point where they may accept this as their fate. Suffering should not be considered an eternal condition. Ricoeur (1982: 430) argues that “the process of composition, of configuration, does not realize itself in the text but in the reader, and under this condition configuration makes possible reconfiguration of a life by the way of the narrative.” Creating healthy spaces where people are not impaired by oppressive structures are, therefore, important. Stigma should not prevent people from reconfiguring themselves because they are the ones responsible for interpreting their world.

A ‘creative imitation’ between history and fiction - of a good life - is not a temporal comfort or escape from the harsh reality, but a goal that will shape people’s

actions. As Ricoeur writes (1982: 431) “the result is that the reader belongs to both the experiential horizon of the work imaginatively, and the horizon of his action concretely.” This creates a meaningful place in the world for the individual, where his or her participation is valued as indispensable.

Ricoeur (1982: 293) tells us that “productive imagination refers to reality not in order to copy it, but in order to prescribe a new reading.” This means that the idea of justice is not in maintaining the current universal equilibrium of the status quo, but on transforming the systems that do not allow people to dream and pursue a good life. Imagining the good life changes our perception of the world and our interactions with it: “the world of fiction leads us to the heart of the real world of action” (Ricoeur 1982: 296). We could recreate our lives, but without being able to formulate our future we will not be able to define our actions and participate in our own destiny. Passivity is not an option when active participation can give us the key to a better life. Therefore a liberated humanity – that recognizes the dignity of all – is in the heart of a healthy society, but achieving this requires adherence to an ethical intention: a topic to be discussed in the following section.

Ethical Aim

Ricoeur's conception of ethics is directly tied to his conception of narrative. For him, the narrative coherence of one's life can be lost, and with that loss comes a lessening of self-esteem and the inability to regard oneself as the worthy subject of a good life. Self-esteem means being able to accept that we deserve having a good life, where "good" is defined in relationship with others.

Ethics is concerned with the overall goal of a life of action. Ricoeur (1992: 262) describes the ethical perspective that arises from this view of the subject when he says “the ultimate aim of action is to be a constituent in a ‘good life’ with and for others in just institutions.” His view of selfhood is based on the idea that we depend completely upon each other. Ricoeur (1992: 262) emphasizes that we are "mutually vulnerable", and so the fate of each of us is joined to the fate of others. This situation implies a duty to care for each other and to guarantee self-respect and justice, all of which are necessary for the creation and preservation of self-esteem. Therefore, the only guide to proper conduct is the ethical aim demonstrated through moral actions.

For Ricoeur (1992: 170) “morality is the articulation of the ethical aim in norms characterized at once by the claim to universality and an effect of constraint” which means that we have as our ultimate goal a good life that incorporates all people. In order to act morally (one’s duty), one must first have the capacity to hear and respond to the demand of the other. That is, there must be some fundamental openness and orientation to others. Prior to duty there must be a basic reciprocity, which underlies our mutual vulnerability and from which duty, as well as the possibility of friendship and justice, arises. Ricoeur calls this phenomenon "solicitude" or "benevolent spontaneity" (1992: 190).

The fundamental reciprocity of benevolent spontaneity is prior to the activity of giving. Ricoeur argues that "from the suffering of others there comes a giving that is no longer drawn from the power of acting and existing, but precisely from weakness itself" (1992: 188-9). People who suffer give to others, who in similar circumstances share this same suffering, the knowledge of their shared vulnerability and the experience of the

solicitude required to bear that knowledge.

For Ricoeur, love and understanding for others, and love and understanding for oneself, are closely intertwined. One becomes who one is through relations with the other. Reciprocity forms the basis of productive and self-affirming relations of friendship and ethical justice. Its corruption leads to the destruction of self-esteem, which is linked with harm to others and injustice.

For Ricoeur, friendship and justice have an essential role in the well-being of selfhood, and thus, in maintaining the possibility of selfhood (Ricoeur 1992: 183). Friends and just institutions protect against the suffering of self-destruction to which one is always vulnerable, and provide the means for reconstructing and redeeming oppressed and marginalized people. We are mutually vulnerable, and unless we stop the suffering of others, our fate will be tied to theirs.

Because the marginalized and the most vulnerable lack the power to increase self-esteem in all sectors of society, the challenge is for persons with access to the economical, social, and political power to assist the marginalized in this endeavor: to create a story that includes everyone. As Herda (1997: 37) writes “our responsibility [is] to help write a story that gives dignity to all, to enable people to critique with power to change ourselves and others for the better.” We may then be able to pursue the good life, with and for others, in just institutions.

This research incorporated a research medium grounded in a participatory inquiry informed by critical hermeneutic theory. The conceptual themes of narrative identity, memory and imagination, and ethical aim helped to establish a foundation for the research process, which is further introduced in the following pages.

Choice of Research Topic

This study is relevant to my work, vocation, and professionally important as I hope to make a contribution by introducing new understandings of children's active participation and appropriation of the world. For 19 years I have been connected with an organization that promotes and protects the rights of street children. This organization also believes that children deserve to actively participate in all the decisions that concern them. In all the years that I have been working for street children's rights, I have noticed that working with them is much easier than working with the people and governmental organizations that have the power to control street children's destiny. I have also learned that if they find a free and healthy environment to live and interact with others, street children have the potential to dialogue with each other, to organize, and to make important decisions that will affect their own lives. Social prejudices are the biggest obstacles to their efforts to appropriate a new world.

In general, society understands that children are the future and that we need to generate the best environments to allow children to achieve their dreams. But there is not a common understanding on how to achieve this, especially if we believe that marginalized children should also be part of the creation of a new social text. My research emphasizes the opportunities and challenges for street children to appropriate a new world on their own. To say this in another way, as Ricoeur (1992) explains, the moral aim is a broad-based ideal that may direct our social values; our ethics represents our everyday actions of the adult working with street children who match their realities in such a way as to bring them with integrity into their new world.

Research Categories

The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of the initial research categories that guided the conversations, the overall research inquiry and data analysis for my study. The three categories selected for this study are narrative identity, memory and imagination, and the ethical aim.

The first category, narrative identity, illuminates stories of organized children who bring their past and future to the present. Ricoeur (1992: 3) argues that “selfhood of oneself implies otherness to such an intimate degree that one cannot be thought of without the other.” This is a significant point in the discussion, that an organization of children recognizes the identity of the members of the group and understands their relation with the other. This category, based on Ricoeur (1992), includes the children’s stories, the present time, and the potential for collective identity in order to create a newness that leads to the future.

Category two, memory and imagination, serves to highlight the force of the imaginary opened up by the text. When children organize, they can enter into the mode of the possible and experience the power-to-be. There is a subversive force of the imaginary that opens up tensions and possibilities with the other. Remembering and retelling the past as part of the present entails recognizing future possibilities in what Gadamer (1988) calls “effective-historical consciousness.” Imagination, then, can be understood as a faculty for moving from one experience to another with the opportunity to create a better future. Ricoeur writes:

The role of imagination is evident both on an individual level, where action is projected in accordance with an anticipatory schema, and on a social level, where individuals relate to one another and to their collective tradition through figures of

ideology and utopia (1982:16).

Thus, imagination influences the course of action.

The third category, ethical aim, highlights the work that the children are doing to create a story that gives dignity to all, to enable people to critique with power to change ourselves and others for the better (Herda 1997: 37). It is important to develop a connection with others in terms of respect and care, as it implies that one cannot have esteem for oneself without holding the highest regard for others. As Ricoeur (1992: 193) writes “solicitude adds the dimension of value, whereby each person is irreplaceable in our affection and our esteem.” As organized children develop relationships with each other for a common cause, solicitude should be at the core of their narratives.

Research Questions

The following table contains the guiding research questions that I addressed to my research partners: adults working with children. These questions have guided my conversations.

Category	Research Question Guides
Narrative Identity	How do children tell their stories? How do children create their own narrative?
Memory and Imagination	What are the experiences of children before they organizers/leaders? When do children want to tell their stories? How do children represent their future?

Ethical Aim	<p>Why do the children decide to organize and work together?</p> <p>What is their experience with the local community?</p> <p>How do non-profits work with children’s decisions and accomplishments?</p>
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Table 1: Research Questions

Pilot Study

During the fall of 2007, I conducted a pilot study to test the research categories. The experience provided me with an opportunity to reflect on the implications of this study in organizations and society.

My conversation partner for the pilot study was Lucy Borja, the director of a Peruvian organization called Generación. Lucy is my mother and I was a volunteer for this organization as a street educator for five years. I have had contact with children who live in the streets since I was 14 years old. Even though I have known the struggles and hopes of vulnerable children, our research conversation provided me with new insights into the nature of children’s experiences. I learned that the three categories that I selected create a space for understanding the narrative of children and their influences when they actively participate in the construction of their own narrative.

My pilot study also demonstrated that the best ways to capture data within the conversation is to have adults working for non-profits for the protection of child’s rights telling me children’s stories. These stories allowed me to understand the experiences of the children before and after they joined a human rights group. Lucy recognizes that she can say more through stories that affect or empower children than through articulating an

intellectual discourse.

The pilot study conversation reinforced my interest in the research topic, and the importance for children and organizations to tell and share their stories (See Appendix E for the complete pilot study and transcribed conversations).

Entrée to Research Sites

Because of my work with the Not For Sale Campaign and my parents' work with different children's rights organizations, I was fortunate to have access to individuals that were open to my research. I also contacted organizations with good stories to tell who had experienced some form of repression from their government or their community, so they were eager to share their narratives and to find an ally.

It took me four months to meet with all of my research participants and to have conversations with them. First, I visited Paraguay, then Peru, and later Haiti. As I mentioned earlier, my visit to Haiti had to be postponed due to circumstances that I could not control.

During a visit to Peru in March, 2008 I confirmed meetings that I later held in July. The July trip was an opportunity to engage in formal conversations, and to visit different locations that helped me to better understand the environments where street children appropriate new worlds.

I visited Paraguay in June, 2008 and had conversations with two different groups, both members of CONNATS (National Group of Working Children and Adolescents). The groups also took me to different locations that helped me understand their narratives. Columbia University of Paraguay invited me to do a presentation about my research at

their conference about street children and public policy. All of my research participants and colleagues attended the event where they learned more about my research topic. My father, Juan Enrique, was one of the main speakers at the conference, so he learned about my research prior to my conversation with him in Peru.

After being pounded by a series of three hurricanes and a tropical storm in less than a month during the 2008 Atlantic hurricane season, my trip to Haiti did not occur until October of 2008. Haiti and its people are still struggling to cope with the disaster, and my contact person there was working to alleviate the situation, so it was very difficult to make plans to meet with her. As a result, I was able to confirm meetings with the participants only after I arrived in the country.

Participant Selection

Participants for this study (Appendix B) were selected based on recommendations from people employed by children's rights organizations. My conversation partners work at one of the three research sites selected for this study: Generacion (Peru), FETJABEN (Haiti), and CONNATS (Paraguay). The participants located in Peru and Paraguay were invited through formal letters (Appendix A). Participants who were selected through referral were initially contacted by email, and upon their acceptance of the invitation a formal confirmation letter was mailed to them. After our meeting, participants received a thank you letter (Appendix C) with the transcript of our conversation. This provided the opportunity to clarify any comments or suggest changes that they felt appropriate. The entire transcription of my pilot conversation can be found in Appendix E.

In Haiti, I selected my participants after I arrived in the country. Since my father

works for Save the Children Canada, they gave me a list of all the organizations that they support in Haiti. I spoke on the phone and used emails to contact the regional office of Save the Children in Haiti. Since they are constantly solving emergencies, they were able to connect me with service providers that work with street children, but only once I arrived in Port Au Prince. At the office of Save the Children in Haiti, the secretary gave me the names and phone numbers of the people who were interested in speaking with me. Serge, my guide and translator, scheduled the meetings.

Data Collection

Research Conversations

In order to explore the active participation of children in the construction of their own identity and appropriation of a new world, I had nine research participants. In the majority of the conversations there, were two or three participants, all of whom work directly with street children and/or working children. The stories told by adults, in general, reflected the influence of children on the organization's life. The conversations in Paraguay and Peru were in Spanish and were translated into English. The conversations in Haiti required the assistance of a translator who was fluent in Creole and English. Members of the organizations introduced me to the people that they support, which also helped me to understand the relationship that they have with the children and youth. Even though I had a translator with experience working with non-profit organizations in Haiti, it was difficult to establish a dialogue and to understand the context and the narratives of people. Consequently, of all the countries that I visited, Haiti has the least amount of data.

Introduction of Research Participants

So that I might better understand the experiences that children have before and after they come together to participate as an organization, my research plan included travel to Haiti, Peru, and Paraguay to connect directly and have conversations with groups that support children and children's organizations. In this section, I introduce my research participants.

Paraguay

Fr. Nilo Marmol



children in Ciudad del Este.

Father Mármol, born in Uruguay, is a Catholic priest who is part of a congregation called Pobre Ciervo de La Divina Providencia. He is the Executive Director of Hogar Santa Teresa, which is the only organization that works to promote and protect the rights of street children and working

Fr. Marmol and his team run a shelter and a vocational center that benefit primarily street children, and a small clinic that also serves people that live in the neighborhood. They additionally support a political platform for children called CONNATS which is the social movement of working children in Paraguay. Fr. Marmol believes that the government and international organizations make laws that do not respect the identity of working children. As a consequence, there is repression against

these children and their supporters.

Fr. Nilo, as well as his team, has been labeled a subversive and has been persecuted by the police and governmental officials, resulting in a withdrawal of support by other NGOs. The only group that supported Nilo and the rest of the team was CONNATS. Nilo recognizes that the majority of NGOs favor their own interests rather than the interests of children, and because they are companions in the struggle for children's rights, Nilo's team continues to assist children regardless of the consequences.

Carlos Flecha



Carlos Flecha works as an educator for Hogar Santa Teresa, and was involved in grassroots community organizing before joining the organization. Well-aware of the social issues in Paraguay, he had to be very careful on speaking up about sensitive issues due to the political persecution of anyone critical of the central government while Stroesner's was in power.

Carlos is one of the leaders of Hogar Santa Teresa and member of CONNATS. He works with Fr. Nilo developing the political, educational, and social strategy of protection and promotion of children's rights.

Francisco Estigarribia



Francisco Estigarribia, age nineteen, is the adult representative of the CONNATS in the Social and Popular Front, which was created as an answer to a request by Paraguayan President Fernando Lugo, that all social movements should work together.

Francisco has worked since he was six years old selling empanadas. At the age of ten he started to help his mother sell fruit. One year later, when he decided to sell candy on public busses, he became familiar with the organization of working children. His leadership skills were evident, and in 2001 the Paraguayan movement asked him to represent them in a meeting held with other working children. Representatives from eleven countries in Latin America participated in this international forum. He was the representative of the social movement CONNATS for two years starting in 2003.

Víctor Villalba



Victor Villalba is a member of CONNATS and uses his leadership and experience with groups, like Calle Escuela, to create healthy environments where working children can participate in the creation of their own future and identity.

Victor started working at the age of six helping his mother sell items on the street. At the age of eight, he began working alone on public busses, selling bread, candy, ice cream, and sodas. His work gave him the resources that he needed to go to school. To eat lunch, he went to Calle Escuela, which provided food

for working children. He learned about CONNATS when he was 15 years old and divided his time working, going to school, and participating in the social movement. He liked CONNATS better than school because it was a place that allowed him to discover who he was, express himself, and develop leadership skills. He became the representative of CONNATS when he was 17 years old.

Peru

Lucy Borja



Lucy Borja is the Director of Generación, an organization that promotes and protects street children's rights in Lima, Peru. She is a social worker and sociologist who has worked for several international human rights organizations, including CARE International and UNICEF. After she founded Generacion in 1998, Lucy

started visiting Peru's prisons for juveniles. The children shared their personal stories of life on the streets, where they faced the threat of daily violence.

The president of Peru at the time, Alberto Fujimori, declared that his government would "cleanse" the city of street kids. The dead bodies of several children showed up in city parks shortly thereafter; many more children went missing. Lucy's children's rights work includes facing unjust structures – corruption, marginalization, racism, and so on – which has proved difficult for her in terms of observing the so-called law.

Lucy has faced more than 40 charges against her in court, and has won almost all of them. There are some charges still pending, but the most important for her is against re-

opening the shelter. The neighbors, with the help of the local government, closed the street children's home saying that, among other things, the presence of poor children devalues the real estate in the area. All legal avenues in Peru, even the Peruvian Supreme Court, has denied Generación of reopening the house, so they are appealing the decision to the Inter American Court in Costa Rica.

Juan Enrique Bazán



Juan is a sociologist and educator who works for the Swedish Save the Children and is advisor for Generación. His expertise is to establish relationships with different communities and help them develop educational projects.

He has opened educational centers in marginalized areas that helped the locals access services that improve their quality of life. For Save the Children, Juan coordinates the promotion of a masters degree program in Childhood from the sociological perspective – as opposed to the perspective taught in the school of Law or in the discipline of Psychology. The masters degree in Childhood is being taught in eight countries of Latin America, and in three universities of the European Union. Juan is also working to promote a doctoral degree on juridical sociology of childhood in Peru.

Desiree Castamán



Desiree started volunteering her time in Generación when she was an undergrad psychology student. She established a close relationship with the women that were rescued from sexual exploitation, so after she graduated, she began working as an educator and psychologist supporting the women. Currently, Desiree works for a high school in the counseling center, but still volunteers for Generación. She meets with the young women and children every day.

Haiti

Cebien



Cebien is in charge of education for Centre de Compassion Pour Les Enfants Demunis. He studied social work at the state university of Port Au Prince. He also works for an organization that supports army veterans. He advises people who lost their job when president Aristide disbanded the country's army, and also gives counseling to victims of sexual exploitation.

Sintyl Wilson



Sintyl Wilson is the founder of Centre de Compassion Pour Les Enfants Demunis. He studied business administration at the college level. He works for the government and has a community-based organizing background,

which he used to help communities organize politically. He left politics in 2002 and started working with children.

Mahens Tertulien



Mahens Tertulien coordinates FETJABEN, which is a federation run by former street children working with current street children to broaden their ability to participate in their own lives and future. Founded in April 2005, this federation brings together five associations of street children and adolescents (130 boys and 75 girls) who have experienced street life in the metropolitan Port-au-Prince area. It plays an active role in the capacity building of its

member associations to help the children fight marginalization and stigmatization. In addition FETJABEN works to develop social reinsertion options for its members and other children in difficult situations. Centre d'Appui Familial (CAD) is one of the organizational members of FETJABEN.

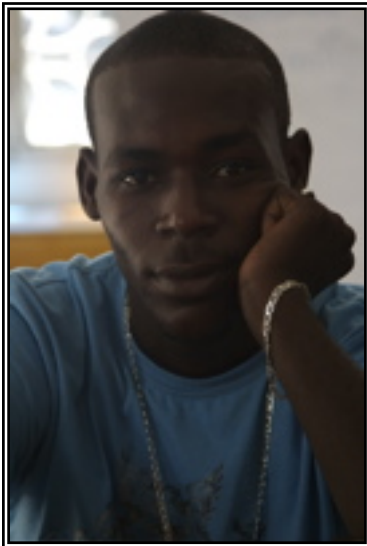
Saintfleur Romario



Saintfleur Romario is a 18 year old who works for Centre d'Appui Familial (CAD), which is a reception center for street children and former domestic children, situated in an impoverished area of Carrefour

Feuille, Port-au-Prince. CAD supports children with education, health care and a set of integrated activities, which ensure their survival and development. Saintfleur used to be a domestic slave (restavek) and a street child.

Fenol Remy



Fenol Remy also works for CAD (Centre d'Appui Familial), protecting and promoting the rights of street children. He lived in the streets for many years, but with the help of CAD, he was able to transform his life and, graduating as one of the best students in his high school, became the poster child for the organization. A newspaper from Port Au Prince has written about his story. Fenol wants to pursue a college education.

Researcher's Journal

I visited research sites in three different countries and recorded the experiences in a journal, which includes stories, ideas, and reflections. This information is part of the data for this research project. Photographs and notes from my journal are also part of the data collection. Examples of the photographs, and my notes are found in the appendix.

Data Analysis

The research methodology for this study utilizes a participatory inquiry process using critical hermeneutics (Herda 1999). The data was collected on a tape player. After collecting the data, I transcribed the conversations, and searched for meanings that merge from the text. A follow-up discussion with the research participants allowed for a deeper analysis and understanding of the narration appropriated. Three categories were selected to guide this research: narrative identity, memory and imagination, and the ethical aim.

Herda (1999:98) states that:

data analysis is a creative and imaginative act. In data analysis the researcher appropriates a proposed world from the text. When we expose ourselves to a text, we come away from it different than we were before.

The following steps, as suggested by Herda (1999:98-99), guided me through the preliminary data analysis:

1. Fix the discourse through transcription, enabling the researcher to live “through the conversation experience again from a different perspective,” (Herda 1999:98). Listening to the conversation brings to bear nuances,

further ideas and the opportunity for reflection on what was said. Reading the conversation transcriptions allows for the development of an overview of the issue at hand and one can begin the appropriation of a new world.

2. Pull-out significant statements, themes, quotes and create relevant categories (possibly changing one of the original categories).
3. Substantiate the themes with quotes from the conversation transcripts, observational data or from the researcher's log.
4. Examine the themes to determine what they mean in light of the theoretical framework of critical hermeneutics.
5. Provide opportunity for continued discussion and conversation with participants using the developing text when appropriate.
6. Set a context for the written discussion.
7. Develop the text within each category in light of the theory and the problem at hand. Often themes may fit into more than one of the categories. If so, this will be indicated in the discussion, bringing in more than one dimension to the theme or grouping themes.
8. Discuss the research problem at a theoretical level.
9. Ferret out implications from the written discussion to provide insight and new direction for the issue or problem under investigation.
10. Highlight areas that need further study.
11. Give examples of learning experiences and fusion of horizons. It may happen as a result of a conversation, text, or symbol and allows for an orientation toward a new understanding on the part of participants during

the research process.

Research Timeline

This research began in June of 2008 and continued until January 2009. I traveled to Paraguay in early June, to Peru in July, and to Haiti in October. Data Analysis took place in November and December with writing and editing completed in December. Final adjustments took place during the month of January 2009.

Background of the Researcher

My interest in this research is based on a deep respect for children living marginalized lives, but who are able to organize and revision their lives with and for others. Both of my parents have worked their whole lives for human rights, and specifically for children's rights. I have also been involved in promoting human rights since I was 15 years old, and my education goal has been to become a person with and for others.

When I was 14 years old, my mother started working to promote and protect the rights of children and teenagers that lived in the streets of Lima, Peru. Through her work I learned about children's harsh realities. Every afternoon, before our soccer games, there was at least one child that did not come because was wounded or killed. I am still very good friend with many of the survivors, and I have seen that these people managed to improve their lives and the communities where they live.

I currently serve as the Executive Director of the Not For Sale Campaign – an international campaign against the global slave trade – and as associate director of University Ministry at the University of San Francisco in charge of the social justice

programs.

SUMMARY

This document introduces my study and interpretation of issues related to children appropriating a new world in Haiti, Peru, and Paraguay. The research describes the employment of a hermeneutic and anthropological foundation to understand the issues associated with my inquiry. My intent reflects solicitude toward the unknown about children who appropriate the world and the opportunities that their actions open up to the rest of society. The literature that I have reviewed, and the conversations that were held with my research participants, indicate the need to narrate the stories of children appropriating a new world.

CHAPTER FIVE: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

The data collected, based on an anthropological interpretive study grounded in critical hermeneutic theory, calls on the researcher to interpret the world encountered during the research and bring to light a new story. In order to appropriate this story, I visited Haiti, Paraguay, and Peru searching for organizations that promote and protect the rights of street children, and individuals who have witnessed children's appropriation of their destiny. The story I tell is the result of my conversations with twelve successfully individuals who have committed their lives to help these children realize their identity.

This Chapter is divided into three main sections: narrative identity, memory and imagination, and ethical aim, as relate to the research categories outlined previously. It is my hope that the analysis within these categories will help the reader understand the themes that emerged from the research. The narrative identity section contains a majority of data related to the journey of children who are served by the three organizations featured in this research.

Independent on the external perception of the street children and working children, I wanted to know how they see themselves. Kearny & Doodle (1999: 26) have said,

historical communities are constituted by the stories they recount to themselves and to others...one cannot remain constant over the passage of historical time – and therefore remain faithful to one's promises and covenants – unless one has some minimal remembrance of where one comes from, of how one came to be what one is. In this sense, identity is memory.

I am presenting and analyzing the stories of street and working children who I encountered in Paraguay, Peru, and Haiti in order to understand their appropriation of the world.

Narrative Identity

The social movement of working children, which includes street children as well, has an understanding of their own identity that conflict with the perception of transnational and governmental organizations. My conversations highlight the challenges and opportunities that the social movement of working children constantly faces with regards to appropriating a new world of hope.

Ricoeur affirms that self-understanding is an interpretation, which finds in the narrative a privileged form of mediation of the self. In other words, in the notion of a narrative identity, we establish the connection between the activity of telling a story and the temporal character of human experience (Ricoeur 1992: 114). Father Nilo supported this belief when he observed that understanding the role of children requires interpretation. He says, “the understanding of children is a social construct, and their own understanding of who they are influences children’s roles.” Since 2002 I have visited organizations that partner with working and street children in Latin America, Africa and Asia, and I have noticed that usually the services they create for the children depends on the organizations’ understanding of what the children need. For example, if an organization thinks that the children need education, then a school is built. If they need a home, a shelter is constructed; if they need food, a soup kitchen is built; if the children need discipline, juvenile halls are established; and so on. Organizations usually build

what they think children need, and the interpretation of children's roles by adults mandates the opportunities that these children will have.

From the critical hermeneutical standpoint, we need to approach our work with children from a different perspective. Organizations will need to do so initially without a pre-conception of what working and street children need. Ricoeur's meaning of identity helps us to better understand how to accomplish this.

The meaning of identity differs depending upon whether one is referring to ipse (selfhood) or idem (sameness), within the framework of narrative theory (Ricoeur 1992: 114). The narrative of working children is essentially connected to appropriating the world. Alejandro Cussianovich, who has been accompanying working children and witnessing their appropriation as a movement in Latin America since 1974, said "working children have been lobbying to have a more active participation in political and social decisions that affect their lives" (2003: 37). I have also noticed that the street children connected to the movement, recognize that working organizes their lives. Independently of their age, work is a permanent part of their identity. Even for street children, there are moments in the transition process – from marginalization to connectedness – where they decide to make a radical change in their lives. At the beginning, we thought this meant going to school and doing what other children did, but they were referring to changing the way they get their money. The experience taught me that the core difference between working children and street children is employment. Once the children are employed, it is easier for them to connect with who they are and organize their lives around their work. Working turns street children into working children, which may not seem a big difference, but for these children is a step forward in

the search for representation and participation.

While the social movement of working children, and their supporters, are claiming that work is essential to their identity, participation, and representation, International Labor Organization (ILO) and The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) have been lobbying to end child labor, arguing that to end child exploitation, children should not work.

The thought that children should not work comes from the industrial revolution. Workers were under harsh and often inhumane working conditions, with no social or economic security. Therefore, in April 1919 a Labor Commission was established to look into this question and, as a result, they decided to prevent the exploitation of young people, among others (Roy & Kaye 2002: 4). The Labor Commission decided, as a principle, to abolish child labor in the industry, agriculture, fishing industry, and non-industry employment. ILO and UNICEF argue that children's role is to go to school and to play. But if poverty is not eradicated, then children will continue to work in order to survive. Fr. Nilo mentioned that these international organizations lobbied for a law in Paraguay where children could not work if they are younger than 14 years old.

From the narrative identity perspective, ILO's understanding of working does not reflect ontological being but the temporality (ipse) of becoming and being an adult. The notion of a narrative identity pays attention to the temporal dimension of a being who, by existing with others, transforms him (her)self in the course of a life history (Ricoeur 1990b: 247). Therefore, the existent disagreement – whether working is an essential part of children's identity or not, or if working corresponds to the ipse or idem of human beings – becomes a conflict of interest because it affects the lives of others.

Being from Peru, I grew up believing that working is part of who we are because the appropriation of the world goes hand in hand with its transformation. ILO's campaign to eradicate child labor is not recognizing work as *idem* and as essential to appropriate the world, but we see in practice that working children are entrepreneurs who have already created businesses of subsistence for themselves and their families. Even though they did face extreme conditions of poverty, these children have survived mainly through their own efforts and resilience.

'I am', 'I can', 'I do' is connected to being a whole, authentic human being. Authenticity is having opportunities to be and do. It is centered on the connectedness of life where we are able to restore to the understanding of our stories of life (Ricoeur 1990b: 72). For some cultures, working children have existed for centuries and in healthy environments, and this is part of the connectedness of life for those cultures. Working is a component of the articulated unity of "coming-towards, having-been, and making-present" (Ricoeur 1990b: 71) that makes a person a whole. Eradicating the work in children, or allowing it only after the age of 14, is not understanding the constancy and permanence of things present at hand. Allowing children to work only after they are 14 years old conflicts with the understanding of Dasein (being-there), "the kind of Being who asks the questions of Being (Ricoeur 1990b: 70). How can we explain that working is bad at a certain age, but the next day, when you turn 14, it becomes good? If transforming the world is inherent to people, the culture of work cannot be interrupted. The problem is that the ILO's perspective does not take into consideration the cultural importance of work.

There is a cultural value of work that is not connected to age. Working exists as

part of the narrative identity of millions of people, therefore the focus needs to be on the conditions of working and not on the activity of working. The shift to recognize the activity of working as the idem of human beings will require a change in the ipse of the international organizations.

Common understanding is achieved through a unique logos of communication.

For Ricoeur (1982: 76)

prejudice is the horizon of the present, the finitude of what is near in its openness towards the remote. It is only in the tension between the other and the self, between the text of the past and the point of view of the reader, that prejudice becomes operative and constitutive of historicity.

This unique logos of communication gives us the platform to start a dialogue. But for a dialogue to occur, both participants – the marginalized and the non-marginal - have to find a common understanding. If this shift takes place – meaning that both parties accept that working belongs to the idem – ILO would need to work with the social movement of working children to guarantee healthy working conditions and eliminate exploitation.

Through my conversations I noticed that local NGOs do not think that a shift of paradigms will occur anytime in the near future. Some people on the frontlines believe that transnational organizations' interests are not to align with working children's identity. Fr. Nilo believes that the real intention of the transnational organizations is power and domination. This would be a mistake, since focusing on power and domination are like using a broken lens that does not let us see the commonality that we have with the people we promised to serve. Ricoeur (1982: 84) explains,

In Habermas's terms, the phenomenon of domination takes place in the sphere of communicative action; it is there that language is distorted as regards its conditions of application at the level of communicative competence. Since the distortions of language do not come from the usage of language as such but from its relation to labour and power, these

distortions are unrecognizable by the members of the community.

There is a problem when children are judged through communicative incompetence: when they, together with the mentally-ill, the poor, the marginalized, are not respected as much as they should be. I believe that currently these groups are not socially recognized as valuable in relation to labour and power.

Ricoeur says that “the distortion of communication which are linked to the social phenomena of domination and violence also constitute phenomena of desymbolization” (1982: 85). Society erases the dignity of the marginalized from the social conscience, which perpetrates their marginalization. In Peru, people call street children piranhas to portray them as savages.

International organizations also do the same. Nilo mentions that “UNICEF and ILO consider the social movement of working children dangerous, and the adults supporting the movement, ideological manipulators.” Carlos, one of my conversation partners who collaborates with CONNATS, mentions that the adults who support the social movement of children “are called revolutionaries, manipulators, and communists. Organizations that make policies for poor children do not believe that the children have the capacity to articulate their ideas.” In this conflict, the distortion of the communication and dehumanization, is to control identities.

An important step in recognizing the validity of all identities is to allow the victims of any form of stigma to recognize their innate value. As Ricoeur says, “self-reflection is the correlative concept of the interest in emancipation” (1982: 86). Once the victims recognize that they do not deserve to be marginalized, given the chance, they will speak up in order to participate and to be considered in public decisions.

To criticize the current system of beliefs that seek to perpetuate marginalization of any group of people is “a proud gesture of defiance directed against the distortions of human communication” (Ricoeur 1982: 87). Any action taken that tells the children that they – as a group – are worth less than other groups, is challenged because they recognize the value of their own narrative.

Narrative can move us to action when it reveals the fact that people deserve a dignified life: “Where the hermeneutics of tradition sought to extract the essence of authority and to connect it to the recognition of superiority, the interest in emancipation leads us to change the world” (Ricoeur 1982: 87). This occurs because interpretation of the world, and emancipation from dominant points of view, allows us to construct our own stories. Ricoeur (1982: 91) explains,

What the text signifies no longer coincides with what the author meant; verbal meaning and mental meaning have different destinies. The work de-contextualizes itself, from the sociological as well as the psychological point of view, and is able to re-contextualize itself differently in the act of reading

Nilo’s organization, Don Bosco’s House, asks people to find their own narratives. He said, “the children recreated their perspective of rights. They are not objects, but subjects of rights. The realization that children can speak and think generated a necessity to do community-based organizing in order to transform their neighborhood.” Continuing, he said they found in their peers, a group of people who are alike and that together they can achieve better things and improve their life conditions.” Taking into consideration their own narrative changed their understanding of the world in many aspects of their lives. Nilo explains that during a reflection, in a religious context, the group that was meeting realized that if they are not living well, it is not because God is mean, but because people

have created unjust structures. They decided to start re-claiming that which belongs to them. “To be companions with the working children” Carlos, from Paraguay, mentions “is to confront the structural system.”

What is presented to us should not tell us how to think, but should encourage our experiences to mediate the understanding of the world and of other people’s point of view. For Fr. Nilo, “collaborating with working children is not only about interacting with children but with workers. This is a pedagogy that deals with the presence of children who are protagonist participants in their micro environments.” Protagonist children are the ones who have the main role in their own development and in the development of their community, in order to reach the full realization of their rights.

Recognizing that children are active protagonists of their own lives and of society requires a redefinition of the roles of the different components in society. Children, youth, adults, family, society, organizations, and so on, need to re-interpret their social, economical, and political role in relation to children’s participation in all aspects of society. Children’s central participation in the appropriation of the world, means that their experiences are essential in order to innovate practical elements that can be used by all sectors to appropriate a world of hope.

Children’s protagonist experiences, when interpreted through the hermeneutical process of understanding, allows them to change their view of who they are. For Ricoeur “it is the task of understanding to bring to discourse what is initially given as structure. The matter of the text is what it mediates. Then truth and method do not constitute a disjunction but rather a dialectical process” (1982: 93).

The challenge of a dialectical process for children with any sector of society is to

have people and organizations recognize that working children have the capacity to appropriate a better world. Culturally, this may be very difficult since children are considered the future and not the present. Also, in past social movements in Paraguay, they have been persecuted. This challenge requires children, and the organizations that support them, to propose a new interpretation of the world from the children's perspectives. Interpretation opens a new world: "the power of the text to open a dimension of reality implies in principle a recourse against any given reality and thereby the possibility of a critique of the real" (Ricoeur, 1982: 93). The work of interpretation opens a world of hope that cannot be predicted, but that can be constructed and accepted. Self-understanding and emancipation will re-formulate the world.

Imagination

The children that participate in the social movement of working children, including former street children, recognize that work is an essential element of their identity. Therefore, the reinterpretation of their own past, the imagination of their future, and what they do to fulfill their dreams is viewed from the child worker's perspective.

A couple of years ago, an exchange organization in Peru that sends young leaders without economical resources to a university in Scandinavia, had an eighteen year-old boy as an applicant. This teenager had worked since he was six years old, and he had shown his leadership skills through organizing his community in order to achieve better working conditions for him and his peers. The selection committee had already sent a former working child the year before to participate in this experience, and with this new applicant the majority of the members of the selection committee had also identified the

leadership abilities for which they were looking. One of the judges, who disagreed in sending the applicant to the experience, asked the other committee members to not take into consideration the applicant's working as part of his resume. Without that aspect of his life, the applicant wouldn't have a distinguished leadership experience.

I never followed-up to see if the applicant was selected to participate in the Scandinavian experience, but a request to disregard portions of life experience diminishes who he as a person and transforms him into someone without importance. Ricoeur argues that "he who is incapable to reinterpret his past may also be incapable of projecting concretely his interest in emancipation" (1982: 75). Something similar happens if we erase somebody's story, because to disconnect someone from their history, tradition, sense of self, and from one another is, then, an attempt to freeze their capacity to imagine and to act. Working children recognize themselves as workers, and erasing this experience from their history and stories is trying to erase who they are. The narrative identity of working children is closely connected to labour. Victor, one of my research participants and a former working child currently employed by a children's rights organization, mentions that

we [working children] see that we have things in common: (1) all the people that are part of the organization of working children come from economically poor families; (2) we want to move forward and to improve our conditions; (3) we all are workers.

The members of the social movement of working children remember where they come from, their common history, and stories. These elements are essential for their critical awareness, participation and interpretation of their past and vision of the future. They become the foundations for the expression of their own desires. According to Ricoeur

it is the task of philosophical reflection to eliminate deceptive antinomies which

would oppose the interest in the reinterpretation of cultural heritages received from the past and the interest in the futuristic projections of a liberated humanity (1982: 100).

These children see their working experience as a positive activity in the formation of who they are. In this sense, Francisco's experience mirrors Ricoeur's analysis. During our conversation, Francisco said

When I started working as a child, it was by necessity. Once my family improved their economical situation, I wanted to continue working. The work was a satisfaction, so I do not believe that with having the opportunity to only play and study I would have the desire to quit working.

Working was a positive experience for Francisco when serves as a basis for his present and future life, but he also recognizes that there is suffering that comes from being poor.

He said that the identity of working children is of "actors impoverished within the society" and therefore they "speak up for the rights of poor working children."

Francisco's dream is for children to have the opportunity to work without the necessity created by poverty. The social movement of working children proudly remembers their capacity and joy to work, and their imagination allows them to envision healthy working environments.

Even though working is a valuable aspect of working children's lives, and the Convention for Children's Rights says that all children have the right to an identity and a memory of their life based on that identity, some people underestimate the importance of their working experience. Francisco explains that

When a child assumes a class identity, he raises a series of ruptures... Our paradigm is that the children, can play, study, work, and participate in community organizing... We view the issue from the perspective of a class, therefore we network with the farmers and the natives, and we propose another ways to administer and to govern the country. We want to break the idea of domination in order to have the people that have been excluded eternally participate in this administration. This is the macro paradigm that we propose.

The strength of their political, social, and economical proposals comes from the experience of these children. In this sense, Kearney writes, “the capacity to project future possibilities itself requires to be supplemented by the capacity to ground such projections on examples from the past” (1991: 220). These former working children bear witness to circumstances that propelled them to imagine a new circumstance. Kearney (1991: 220) identifies this as testimonial imagination. He writes that “the power to bear witness to exemplary narratives legaced by our cultural memories and traditions.” An awkward situation exists in regards to the experiences of street children and poor working children who have the capacity to project new possibilities, for their experiences are not ones that people will necessarily view as exemplary.

Imagining the world through the experiences of street and working children creates conflict, because it does not correspond to the interests of people controlling the status quo. Francisco recognizes that the issue of working and street children is complicated because their group identity is closely connected to being poor, marginalized, and politically active.

In order for working children to be allowed to project their future and participate in issues that are socially important, other groups will need to acknowledge their past, support their imagination, and eliminate the antinomies which oppose the interest of the children. If other groups want to keep the children away from participating and imagining, then they are erasing aspects of the social class' memory. Ricoeur (1992: 115) explains that “in many narratives the self seeks its identity on the scale of an entire life; between the brief actions, to...the connectedness of life.” Working children cannot let

people deny their their experiences as workers, or erase them from public memory because this will cause them to grow disconnected from themselves and from one another. Shahide is taking the same into consideration when she writes that “it is the lack of configuration of our past stories/history that creates our powerlessness today” (2004: 54). Working and street children who are trying to utilize their imagination are restricted by to a culture of marginalization that does not allow them to reclaim their past. Working children are speaking up for their right to memory and narrative imagination.

Francisco explains that

People do not want to recognize that we can develop a productive activity or a shared contribution with our families. There are organizations that do not recognize the value of the activities that we realize. They do not recognize it by law. The common vision is that the children and adolescents must only play and study.... [which] is a paternalistic vision of our culture towards children and adolescents.

The problem described by Francisco occurs because international NGOs do not acknowledge the experience of working as a platform for children to imagine and appropriate a world of hope. Therefore, it is extremely important that the social movement of working children maintains a strong position against anyone who wants to disregard their identity as workers, because what is at stake is their capacity to act.

In order to protect their memory and identity, the working children are trying to speak up and to stay focused on their mission. They are even challenging the groups that are trying to abolish their identity and erase their history. In Francisco’s words

the social movement has certain characteristics: The identity of a social status; to identify the enemy, or the opposed policy that we want to break; and to demand vindication. As the working children assume that vision, then they become political actors, in relation to political, social, cultural, pedagogical, economic, and environmental contexts. Working children break with the vision that children need to be protected. Working children have greater autonomy. There is a predominant fear that leads to believe that children will get hurt, that will make

mistakes, and so on.

The child and teenage workers react and protest against the obstacle or enemy preventing them from imagining a better future and fulfilling their dreams.

The actions encouraged by the social movement of working children are responses to the criticism of their past and also as a response to the criticism of their desired future and present. These actions occur in what Ricoeur (1990b: 118) calls “historical time.” Because there is a creative force within children’s ability to imagine what intrinsically connects them to their past and future, the retelling of the re-interpreted past as part of the present reality entails always recognizing future possibilities in what Gadamer calls “effective-historical consciousness.” Imagination, then, can be understood as a faculty for moving from one experience to another with the opportunity to create a better future. This process of creation gives the children the strength to respond to the obstacles, independent of the consequences.

The movement of working children does not want to imitate but to imagine themselves participating in the appropriation of a better world. Francisco says that the movement of working children

[proposes] an alternative vision. We do not want to copy. We aim to recover what culturally we have: that is to highlight the real value of work. It is not the economic-commercial value that now we have, but from the historical and cultural point of view that makes possible for us to have another vision of the world.

The other members of the movement voice the same wish. They believe that they already have much to offer society but that their perspective is not respected. The meetings that I attended to observe the children’s community organizing work shows a community that can come together to build a better future. As Ricoeur writes

The role of imagination is evident both on an individual level, where action is projected in accordance with an anticipatory schema, and on a social level, where individuals relate to one another and to their collective tradition through figures of ideology and utopia (1982: 16).

The connectedness among the members of the movement and their narrative imagination is even more evident when the group is viewed as a whole. The first time I went to one of the movement's meetings was in 1998. Six hundred leaders from around Peru met in Lima and they were discussing their challenges and opportunities in issues related to education, work, children's rights, and participation. Each of the participants, as young as eight years old, were sharing experiences from their own communities and their hopes for a better life. I have been following their activities since then, and I've seen that their imagination influence their course of action.

The imagination of children that live under extreme circumstances can make them act courageously. In the case of street children, imagining a better future lead them to leave their families and take a chance in the streets. Juan Enrique says

If they do not flee, they do not have the possibility of searching for protagonist participation. That is to say, severe violence and the indifference to the degree of the emptiness makes resort to the sense of their own protagonist participation. For that reason, they flee towards something that they do not know but that they intuit that it is their own.

Juan Enrique is referring to children who left their homes when they were six years old. How much violence does a child experience in order to make the decision to leave their home and not look back? Children who make this decision have reached the conclusion that their mother or father does not love them anymore. For any six year old escaping from home, this would be a traumatic experience. Only their intuitive wish for freedom from poverty and violence makes them take that step into the unknown. For Kearney

(1991: 228) “today we rely more than ever on the power of imagining to recast other ways of being in the world, other possibilities of existence.” It is the very act of imagining that give children the strength and courage to fulfill their dreams, hopes, and a new proposed reality. The role of imagination, in children who live in extreme poverty and violence, is critical in order to search and propose a more just world.

What these children know is an unjust world and their experiences of violence could lead them to repeat this violence. But the power of imagination can break that cycle. Juan Enrique says that

[street children’s] reaction is only intuitive in order to protect themselves against violence; with the hope that they will find a better world; and where s/he is going to have centrality. This is a reality that his/her social imaginary has produced. That is an intuitive search for a protagonist participation.

In my work with street children, I sometimes encounter children that are able to appropriate a world of hope. These children are usually the ones who remember that they initially left their homes searching for a more just world. Ricoeur (2004: 182) claims that the “use of imagination carries our minds far beyond the sphere of private and public memory into the range of the possible.” Once street children re-remember that they left their homes seeking the appropriation of the world, they transform their own beings.

Kearney (1991: 215) asks, “but how do we retrieve the betrayed stories of history if not through a critical redeployment of imagination?” Street children are called thieves, rapists, drug addicts, and so on. How they are perceived historically does not give them a possibility to imagine that they are capable of appropriating the world. The hermeneutic imagination is what gives these children the ability to discern “between reality as fact and existence as possibility” (Kearney 1991: 216). Without this capability in this context,

children remain hopeless and unable to imagine human possibilities within themselves and others. As Kearney states “everything that man [and woman] can become, everything he is capable of ... being-in-the-world understood as possibilities” (1991: 216).

Appropriating a different world is about the possibilities that a person has for being a whole, or being an authentic human being.

Some years ago in Peru, I was with a couple of homeless friends who were 13 years old, and we were on a pier looking at the surfers. One of the surfers was Sofia Mulanovich, world champion in surfing, and I pointed out who she was. Their impulsive reaction was to underestimate Sofia’s successes. I realized that this attitude is a defense mechanism in response to the success achieved by others: success that makes them feel marginalized. This defense attitude would protect them if they were to encounter Sofia, and the discriminatory attitude or words they believe she might use would not hurt them because it would not be coming from a worthwhile person.

I challenged the children and said that they have the same opportunities as Sofia. They only need the ocean, a surfboard, and their will. If they get to be as good as her, it does not matter what people say about them, because people would still recognize that they are among the best in the world. Several years later, these two children are currently among the best surfers in Peru. Imagination moved their existence to what they could be capable of. Surfing became an activity that allowed them to refigure their being and becoming. My research partner, Sintyl, observed that “... our children do not have the same dreams. Each child has their own destiny,” and we need to allow them to express their dreams, and encourage them to pursue them.

Imagination motivated the children to better themselves, giving them the power to

create new possible ideas and solutions to their social contexts. In the next section, the relationship between imagination, action, and ethical intention is discussed.

Ethical Aim

Combining Ricoeur's ethical perspective of "aiming at the 'good life' with and for others, in just institutions" (Ricoeur 1992:172) with the dreams of the social movement of working and street children, allows them to actively appropriate a new world of hope. However, fulfilling children's dreams and aspirations must be connected with wanting the good life for the other just as much as they want it for themselves.

An individual's Being and Becoming, informed by the *idem* and *ipse* within a social context, depends on one's relationship with the Beings of others. This means that we need to work together in order to act responsibly. The narrative coherence of one's life depends on recognizing our common vulnerabilities, searching for friendship, and working for justice. In this regard, Ricoeur puts benevolent spontaneity and self-esteem as the basis for being ethical. Ricoeur (1992: 190) mentions that

benevolent spontaneity, is intimately related to self-esteem with the framework of the aim of the "good" life. On the basis of this benevolent spontaneity, receiving is on equal footing with the summons to responsibility, in the guise of the self's recognition of the superiority of the authority enjoining it to act in accordance with justice.

The association of working children in Paraguay started meeting the needs of their group when they acknowledged responsibility for each other. Francisco explains that they "created a popular pot for lunch because people were going to work without eating." In Haiti, FETJABEN aims to prepare the children to serve the whole community, and in Peru, the children connected with Generacion want to change the culture of violence for a

culture of tenderness. Their experience of suffering, and their belief that they are worthy of a good life sparks a benevolent spontaneity aiming for justice. Ricoeur (2005: 221) has said that solicitude, which entails the reciprocity and just outcomes of spontaneous giving and receiving, means true friendship.

Aristotle's analysis of friendship...has to do with the conditions most propitious for mutual recognition, that form of recognition which brings friendship close to justice. Without constituting a type of justice, Aristotle says, friendship is akin to it.

True friendship, in the streets of Lima, Peru, is understanding and connecting with the other. My research participant, Desiree, a psychologist working in the streets of Lima, explains that

the children narrate their lives and they give you their history when they trust you... the 'empate' [tie] is that one who you tell your story of life... There is a relation between tie and empathy. When they give you their story is when they feel that it is not going to fall in an empty coat, but is going to generate a bond. Only when they feel a safe bond, they tell you their history/story.

Desiree's description helps me understand the relationship that I saw while working with homeless children in the streets of Lima for more than five years. Sometimes I called the teenagers I knew the most "empate" and they called me "empate" as well, understanding that we were friends. This friendship went from hanging out in the streets to protecting each other from people that wanted to harm us.

During the summer, I used to take a group of ten or twelve teens to the beach. We always had problems on the public transportation or at the beach with people saying offensive things or trying to push or hit them. I always defended them. In the streets at night, the children and teenagers always defended me when people said offensive things to me or tried to steal my belongings. It was an environment where I depended

completely on the people around me, and I had no cultural resources if I wanted to defend on my own. I learned that “empate” was the one who stood up for you when you were most vulnerable. The mutual recognition of our value as beings is understood through promoting and protecting the intrinsic value of each other.

The world where homeless children live is very violent. In order to survive, Tertulien mentions,

children need to find a way to integrate with other children. For young children it is very difficult to be alone. The children develop a technique when they live in the streets. The children that were there before teach you how to live in the streets. Children will belong to a group. If other people do not know which group you belong to, they will beat you up.

Lucy also expresses the same opinion about the children in Peru. She says that “these children have needs that they can’t face alone... when violence arises - when police arrest them, beat them up, and give them electrical shocks - they feel that they need to defend themselves and form a group of protection.” Independent of how violent their environment is, their imagination and relying on each other allows them to proceed with their lives. Lucy also says that “this [violence] is what causes them to organize as a movement. They soon create a movement to transform all these structures that are repressive.” In this sense, Ricoeur mentions that “from the suffering of others there comes a giving that is no longer drawn from the power of acting and existing, but precisely from weakness itself” (1992: 188-9). The children’s shared vulnerability allows them instinctively find friendship and search for justice. The remarkable aspect is that they, as children, can protect themselves in such violent environments, where I, as adult, could not defend myself without the protection of the groups of children and teenagers. As Herda (1999: 9) points out, “we are always in relationship... and are in the position of

[being] respondent to the other one.” Organizing children can take care of themselves and of vulnerable friends. Independent of age or gender, when solicitude is brought to the suffering or vulnerable other, there is an awakening to support and defend the other, so that an equalizing may occur.

Standing up for the children, or caring, is reconfiguring children’s stories and allows one to establish a relationship of friendship. For Juan, in order to do this, we need to remember loving children. He says “that love which families always transmitted from generation to generation is lost. The modern urban society has lost its fiber of welcoming the other because we have lost love for the children.” I have noticed that working in the streets of Peru with homeless children is much easier than working with the rest of society to respect children’s rights. Children and teenagers learn very quickly to respect each other and the rest of society if we guarantee their basic needs. On the other hand, it is very hard to work with police, governmental officials, and others since they are prejudiced against these children. This prejudice perpetuates the children’s marginalization. Many times, while I was with the children in the streets, police arrested us. They claimed that we were suspicious or that we made the streets look ugly. When we opened a shelter for the children, the neighbors, with the support of the mayor, gathered signatures and hired police to expel the children from the neighborhood. These experiences helped me realize that the most vulnerable children encounter unloving people all the time. As Juan says, “the problem is not the amount of street children. It is just a symbolic question of the degree of degradation at which the society can arrive.” Organizations are fighting the beliefs that justify the marginalization of these children, and in order to do this they are establishing communities where relationships of care can

be nourished.

To have their dreams fulfilled. She says “it is not that we imagine whatever and ask them to do it, but that we are creating programs and projects according to what they are soliciting, needing, and wanting.” For Ricoeur, in true sympathy “the self, whose power of acting is at the start greater than that of its other, finds itself affected by all that the suffering other offers to it in return” (Ricoeur 1992: 191-192). The people of Generación, like the other research participants with whom I had conversations, recognize the prejudice against the children and feel affected by the marginalization. They also recognize the transformative power of children when their dreams are supported by their community. Juan mentions that

Children can have received violence at home and escaped from home, but they can also remake themselves. That is how they can reconstruct their project of life. Socially, regrouping with others gives them meaning. In the Andean countries, citizen participation is not in individual form, but in practical terms the participation occurs in groups. Therefore the right to participation is expressed in the right to associate. And the right of opinion, as well as in the countries of the north is in favor of the individual right to express its opinion, in the Andean countries that expression is collective. Only westernized people express themselves in a personal view. But in the communitarian sense that opinion occurs in the scope of a community. Then the organization has the importance to channel the opinion, of the participation, and for as key in the educative processes, is by the exercise of social control, because democracy of a base organization is exerted in a community. And therefore if that community knows clearly their ethical platform, then it provides social control between his members.

The relationship with others – peers, organizations, and others who recognize their right for Being – empowers the children to stop the degradation of who they are. The current social control, in the case of working and street children in the cities that I visited, is of discrimination and disrespect to these children’s identity. The right for an identity needs to be respected since an ethical intention requires that people work with and for others in

just institutions.

For Ricoeur (1992: 170) “morality is the articulation of the ethical aim in norms characterized at once by the claim to universality and an effect of constraint.” Since our ultimate goal is a good life that incorporates all people, excluding the wishes and energy of children to fulfill their dreams is unethical. The organizations that support children’s efforts to appropriate a new world of hope, work to eliminate the suffering of self-destruction. Street children already know a world that does not accept them and tells them that they are worthless. But a new world, built with the help of organizations that respect their identity, allows them to rediscover their ipse and idem and opens new opportunities for Becoming. Fenol Remy, talking about his experience, says that “street children live in such bad conditions that they do not realize that they have a dream. We, the people that have formation, need to talk to them and help them discover their dreams. We help them understand that they are people... human beings.”

Elaborating further from the subject, Lucy says that

a child or teenager who understands that the violence that s/he has experienced is not normal is going to fight any vestige of aggressiveness that exists within him/her. This is going to allow him or her to not repeat the violence with their children. This is a struggle that allows him/her to secure a better life for themselves and their children.

Both stories emphasize the point that, once children see a possibility for justice, it becomes part of who they are and will transform them and the people around them.

Ricoeur says that

Tragedy does not merely describe action but presents it in a more favorable light, making it appear higher and nobler than it is in reality. The emphasis on the creative character of tragedy points to a further and more profound affinity with action, for the latter too is animated by the creative power of imagination (1982: 16).

The children have the possibility of changing a life of suffering or emptiness for themselves and others once they are recognized as beings. Lucy says that

Protagonist participation has to do with the capacity of decision of the child to search with new opportunities with his/her life. As children make the decision to leave their home, they can make the decision to search for their happiness. The protagonist participation, in this sense, is the capacity that children have to be associated with other children and to demand that society should have better behavior in relation with the children. All this is part of how children united in their decisions can help to transform the norms that prevail in society.

Lucy's remarks reminds me of the first group of street children that I ever met. It was in 1991 and they averaged 12 to 13 years old. My mother was part of a team of social promoters in downtown Lima who started working with street children to discuss HIV/AIDS prevention. These children did not have any problems understanding the issues they were discussing, but understanding did not necessarily help them from getting HIV. At night, while these children were sleeping in the streets, they were at risk for being raped. Several children got HIV due to this circumstance. At the same time, death squads were shooting and killing street children. Every time the organization went to the streets to do their work of prevention, they had to take children to the hospital or the morgue. One day a group of children talked to Generación staff members, and explained that they if they did not stay at their office they would be killed. Generacion did not have any other choice than to accept. That night 600 children arrived at the office.

These children saw an opportunity to fulfill their dreams with Generacion and they pursued. Generacion accepted the children's request because it was a fundamental part of their ethical aim as an organization. Ricoeur (1992: 193) has written

Similitude is the fruit of the exchange between esteem for oneself and solicitude for others. This exchange authorizes us to say that I cannot myself have self-esteem unless I esteem others as myself. As myself means that you too are capable of starting something new in the world.

Generación had to protect the street children's lives because these children needed the chance to participate in the appropriation of a new world, and they had to "help write a story that gives dignity to all" (Herda 1997: 37).

Lucy says that organizations like Generación "exist to create opportunities that allow children to fulfill their lives. Their goals are to access housing, school, develop their creativity like any other child," and to "transform conditions in all the contexts to make possible that the children in our country do not live in the conditions in which they are living at the moment." All organizations that work with children want the best for them, but without a dialogical relationship children's organization will be unable to help children appropriate a new world of hope. Herda (1999: 13) reinforces the importance of extending this concept to agencies, noting that "the critical point is to change relationships among members in organizations and communities. This change does not begin by our changing the other, but by changing oneself." This relates to all the organizations that assist working and street children. It is necessary for them to see working and street children from a new light that acknowledge their narrative identity and imagination.

Because each one of the street and working children are, in light of solicitude, "*irreplaceable* in our affection and our esteem" (Ricoeur 1992: 193), organizations have something to learn from these children. Stories that give dignity to all merge when organizations recognize the narrative identity of working and street children, and incorporate it into their educational programs.

Conclusion

For Kearny (1999: 26) historical communities are constituted by the stories they recount to themselves and to others. In order to remain constant, they have to have a minimal remembrance of their origins. My exploration initially focused on the remembrances of non-profit organizations in Haiti, Paraguay, and Peru that were helping children appropriate a new world of hope. It expanded to include the exploration of poor children's self understanding of themselves in connection with their own history and story.

Ricoeur's idea of self-understanding as interpretation of the self establishes the connection between the activity of telling a story and the temporal character of human experience (1992: 114). The self-understanding of poor children as workers is an interpretation used to mediate themselves from the being that they are to the being that they wish to become. My research suggests that the understanding of this interpretative mediation of themselves is essential for opening new opportunities in the appropriation of a world of hope.

In order to understand children's being and becoming we need to understand ipse (selfhood) or idem (sameness) within the framework of narrative theory (Ricoeur 1992: 114). The different understandings of the relationship between the activity of working to the idem and ipse are at the center of a conflict that involves working children and the non-profit organizations assisting them. While the social movement of working children and their supporters are claiming that work is connected to the idem, and therefore a permanent part of their identity, international non-profit organizations understand the

activity of working as an event that does not reflect children's ontological being but rather the temporality (ipse) that should be pursued when they are adults.

The activity of working would not be connected to the idem of children if it did not authentically contribute to their lives as human beings. If outsiders believe working children have developed only a temporal identity as workers, this is because they are basing their assumptions on their own adult identities shaped by their unique cultural context. This identity might be informed by the current state of crisis in certain regions and not by an awareness of community that have historically organized the lives of their members around work.

To recognize authenticity in children's lives means recognizing opportunities to be and do, and this is connected to their life stories (Ricoeur 1990b: 72). The activity of working, for the social movement of working children, is a component of the fulfillment of a person – the articulated unity of “coming-towards, having-been, and making-present” (Ricoeur 1990b: 71). The problem that the social movement faces is the distortion of their communication and the desymbolization of their identity, which is linked to the social phenomena of domination and violence (Ricoeur 1982: 85).

Because erasing their working identity is perpetuates their marginalization, working children are using their narratives to extract stories that carry an essence of authority and to connect it to the recognition of superiority. Their interest in emancipation from dominant points of view is leading them to live their own stories. These children are bringing to discourse what is initially given as structure, where “truth and method do not constitute a disjunction but rather a dialectical process” (Ricoeur 1982: 93).

The social movement of working children has an existential necessity to pursue a

dialectical process whereby structures arguing that children should not work are challenged. During this essential element of their identity disconnects them from their sense of self and from one another and is an attempt to freeze their capacity to imagine and to act. Kearney (1991: 220) has written that the capacity to project future possibilities requires “the capacity to ground such projections on examples from the past.” This concept supports working children’s efforts to connect with the historical experiences of their own communities. The configuration of their past stories and history, and imagining a faithful connection with the future, supports the appropriation of a world of hope.

The role of imagination is to project action in accordance with an anticipatory schema where individuals relate to one another and to their collective tradition through figures of ideology and utopia (Ricoeur 1982:16). Therefore, the imagination of working children is influencing their course of action and, in its unfolding, is reinterpreting their relationship with others. Working children’s imagination is motivating them to act because they realize that there are unfulfilled promises for those who live in poverty. As Kearney (1991: 228) mentions “the act of imagining is recasting other ways of being in the world, other possibilities of existence” and these children are speaking up because they are hoping and acting in order to appropriate the world with and for others.

An individual’s being and becoming, informed by the *idem* and *ipse* within a social context, depends on one’s relationship with the beings of others. Ricoeur (1992: 193) explains that esteem for oneself and solicitude for others authorizes us to recognize that my self-esteem depends on esteeming others as myself – recognizing in the other the capability of starting something new in the world. In this sense International

organizations should recognize the appropriating ability of poor children. For Herda (1999: 13), what is most important is changing the relationships among members in organizations and communities, and this change begins by changing oneself. Stories that give dignity to all merge when organizations recognize the narrative identity of working and street children, and incorporate it into their educational programs.

CHAPTER SIX: IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This Chapter may provide a new direction for non profits assisting working and street children: a direction informed by the stories and experiences of the people working with these children, as well as my own experience and interpretation. In the pages that follow, I provide the reader with a summary of the study, implications and findings, suggestions for future research, and finally my own personal reflection: all of which support the possibilities of children for appropriate a new world of hope.

Dissertation Summary

My familiarity in issues related to vulnerable children (due to my work and the work of my parents in children's rights) lead me to explore the identity of working and street children and their possibilities to appropriate a world of hope. In order to do this research, I traveled to Haiti, Paraguay, and Peru to have conversations with people who work with children that are economically poor, to see the context where three non-profit organizations do their work, and to understand the culture in each location.

The ethos of the organizations that I encountered during my visit to Paraguay (CONNATS) and Peru (Generación) were very similar. Both organizations had been exposed to repression, and are constantly reflecting about the relationship of children and society while supporting the local movement of working children.

During my visit to Paraguay, I learned that these organizations held join meetings every year and exchange ideas and reflections in order to overcome the challenges in their own contexts. They also meet with their respective local and international

movements of working children. The relationship between these organizations is a constant exchange of experiences that may allow other groups to build a common consensus and face their common enemy. It was fascinating to see that the identity and actions of both groups were based on the idea of working children as active participants in the construction of the world. From them I learned that their enemy is any organization or person who tries to underestimate the value of work during childhood.

In Haiti, the organization FETJABEN is run by people that used to live in the streets, a fact I did not know until we had our conversation. Some of these children were even slaves, for slavery is still part of the Haitian social structure. Even though they do not participate in the social movement of working children, the members of FETJABEN also have a narrative connected to children appropriating the world. In their case, education is central to their message, but they recognize that children cannot survive without working.

While the social movement of working children, and their supporters, is claiming that work is essential to their identity, ILO and UNICEF have been lobbying to end child labor, arguing that to end child exploitation, children should not work, but should go to school and to play instead. This conflict of visions has been analyzed from the critical hermeneutical approach.

The social movement of working children argues that work is part of their culture. Therefore, the narrative identity of the social movement of working children mediates between the culture of work (the idem) and faithfulness to their working culture (ipse), which are the two poles of their personal identity. Not recognizing that work is an essential element of the memory of the children is breaking the link of connectedness in

their lives, which inhibits their ability to imagine and act.

These children's strength to appropriate the world comes from their experience as workers. The capacity to project their future possibilities is supplemented by their capacity to base such projections on examples from the past. Work is at the center of the interpretation of the past for these children – including street children – who are sincerely projecting their interest in emancipation.

Today, working and street children are responding to a culture of marginalization that is not allowing them to reclaim their past. They are speaking up for their right to memory and narrative imagination and asking other groups to eliminate the antinomies that oppose their interests. These children are speaking up because denying their previous experiences affects the configuration of their past stories and makes their future powerless.

The organization of working children is allowing its members to express their identity, claim their rights, and work to appropriate a world of hope. They are relying on the power of imagining to recast other possibilities of being in the world. These possibilities are the children's dreams and aspirations for a good life with and for others, in just institutions.

From the ethical perspective, my conversations shed light on how children are able to reconfigure their stories and establish a relationship of friendship among themselves and with other groups. The critical point, I argue, is the willingness of international organizations to change their approach towards these children, however this change can only begin when these organizations decide to change themselves. It is important that they see working and street children from a new light.

The text created in this research is for leaders working to assist the most vulnerable children, so that they are better able to understand the relationship between the communal identity of these children, the creation of their own narrative, and their active participation in the creation of a better world.

Findings

1. International organizations policies affect the appropriation of working children's identity.

The policies of international organizations that deal with working children are not respecting working children's ipse and idem. While working to end child labor, international organizations are also taking away children's possibility to work and to recognize work as a valuable activity in their lives. Because these organizations have not taken the time to understand the identity of the children that they promised to serve, they are underestimating the importance that ipse and idem serves in the development of their lives and of society.

2. The repression of children's identity turns into a struggle to search for the connectedness of life. Dignity is widely discussed. Identity embraces dignity.

When an organization does not respect the connection of children's identity to work, then the social movement of children will channel their efforts in protest against them. There is no doubt that international organizations care about the dignity of the children. The problem is that understanding dignity – the intrinsic value of a person – does not depend on what we do, where we come from, or what our culture is like. On the other hand, identity depends on cultural context and life experiences. Recognizing their dignity is essential, since these children are in a situation of marginalization because of its non-

recognition. After recognizing children's dignity, then people need to have the willingness to understand children's identity and work with it. Respect of children's identity assumes the respect of their dignity.

3. Working and street children have a valid horizon.

The social movement of working children is a group that has a common understanding of the world based on their experiences through working, and the context that they lived: children impoverish within society. Even though they lived in poverty, which required that they work to survive, they recognize that work is formative and part of who they are and their culture. Working allows them to appropriate a world that validates who they are. There are many valid horizons in the world, and all of these horizons have been appropriated from a people's contexts and experiences.

4. There is an intuitive imagination in street children, even if they are not organizing.

Children that live in extreme circumstances of violence and poverty have an intuitive impulse to search for a different kind of life. Children as young as six years old listen to their intuition and decide to leave their homes, once they felt that they could not have the possibilities for being-a-whole or being an authentic human being. These children do not have a group of support in the streets once they decide to leave home, but wish that they can find what makes them able to identify their humanity. They are searching to find themselves and to love what they find.

Implications

1. In order to focus on opportunities, NGOs have to connect with children's identity

Working to end the exploitation of children requires focusing on two different aspects. One is an end to exploitation. The other one is to recognize the identity of working children. The goal of policies developed by these organizations is to end exploitation in order to open opportunities. Therefore, these opportunities can only become available if they are connected to the dreams of the children served by the organizations. The fulfillment of children's ipse and idem will allow vulnerable children to connect their life story to actions that aim to create a better future for all.

2. Respecting children's identity is as important as the respect for their dignity.

International organizations need to start discovering the identity of the children that their policies affect, especially the identity of the organization of working children. There is an assumption, for any organization working in human rights, that they recognize the dignity of every person, but organizations need to go beyond that. The next step is to understand the horizons of the people that organizations are serving. Understanding the identity of children, is being open to see a different world. Without understanding working children's identity, there is no serving the children. We are only serving ourselves. The organizations need to recognize the validity of children's horizons as a valid horizon to see the world, since there are infinite horizons that explain the world. Being aware of the validity of all horizons gives us the basis for establishing a dialogue which hopefully results in achieving a common understanding.

3. Children will find a way to fulfill their identities.

Children will search for participation in the fulfillment of their identity. If they do not find it in their homes, they will look for it outside. The search for their identity in life is unstoppable, therefore, in order to prevent children from escaping their homes in

search of their own fate, prevention work needs to focus on the development of people's identity in their neighborhoods, schools, and homes.

Recommendations for Future Research

Given that this study has had conversations with the people that work with children and teenagers, it would be interesting to do conversations with a group of middle age youth themselves and conduct a comparative analysis. This would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of children's appropriation of the world and allow for different generational understandings of the same topic.

A second recommendation for further research is to avoid translations. In this research we need to deal with the prejudices of the translator. When we are trying to find the present capacity of children to appropriate the world, the translator may already think that the children are the future and not the present. Without a pre-understanding that children can appropriate the present, the indicators may not be revealed when conversations are translated.

Further research is needed in the area of international organizations' ability to recognize and respect the dignity of the children they promise to serve, for they will probably encounter other groups of children around the world following their intuitive impulse for identity, just as the children of Latin America are doing. A future study may examine the identity of the people working for these international organizations.

In the following section I offer my own personal reflection and history related to this research experience. It transformed my own world-view and will influence my future endeavors.

Personal Insight

Even though I have heard about this issue since I was in high school, this research experience has shed light on elements that I could not see before. First, meeting remarkable people in different countries doing very good and innovative work with children was uplifting and encouraging. Their willingness to participate in my research, hoping that it becomes a venue to channel children's voices, showed me their commitment to the population that they serve. These people have an authentic desire to support the children and to give them the opportunity to live out who they are and all they wish to be. The majority of people with whom I had conversations, are devoting their lives to the welfare of these children.

The cities I visited and the different cultures that I encountered were beautiful. Even though street and working children came from the most impoverish areas of their countries, they were able to show the noblest aspects of their cultures. Children's friendship and tenderness for each other was shown in their passion to find their common meaning and identity. It does not matter how bad things seem to be, loyalty for each other is not negotiable. Here in the United States, the economic recession is making all sectors of society frugal, creating a tendency to only pay attention to ourselves. Our current state of crisis is testing our nobility based on how we respond to the neediest communities and our willingness to work with and for the other in just institutions.

Due to poverty, children in the developing world spend most of their childhood struggling to survive, without much hope for a secure, productive life. Therefore, dealing with poverty is a moral imperative of the highest priority. This priority has been

reaffirmed in the Convention of Children's rights when they say that decisions should be for the "best interest of children" (UNCRC Article 3). So we have moral and legal reasons to put an end to situations of poverty because it denies the identity of children.

However, for some of my conversation partners, the struggle begins with recognition that poor children have been destroyed. Ideally, the children discover the real causes of their condition and recognize that the status quo maintained by the majority is largely responsible for their living conditions. For Fr Gustavo Gutiérrez,

The exploited and marginalized today are becoming increasingly conscious of living in a land that is hostile towards them, that has no concern for their most legitimate interests and serves only as a tool for their oppressors, a land that is alien to their hopes and is owned by those who seek to terrorize them (1984: 11).

Therefore, for the Latin American partners, once poor children recognize the aggression that exists against their being, the social change can begin.

When we talk about social change, we are referring to using all the means necessary to transform a social reality. As Marx writes, "when social change comes from the poor, we think that they are uniting their forces to transform society" (Marx 1978). The radical transformation of society indicates that there is a break in the system of oppression and it allows all people to participate in the construction of history. Thus, the poor are potentially the generators of radical social change.

The other sectors in society consider poor children useless. In societies like ours the poor, the one that is truly different, is the one who has nothing of interest to offer in exchange. The conscious or subconscious adoption and acceptance of negative feelings and attitudes about the poor is based on the majority's belief of what measures people's intrinsic worth.

Society sees an intrinsic incapability of poor children to exchange anything valuable, which becomes a representation of the lower or non value of a person. In countries like Peru, there have been groups sent by the central government who have shot street children. These activities have occurred because the majority and the public opinion is such that does not believe these children have something to offer the society, but rather, they destroy it. Their identity is not taken into consideration.

Poverty denies the street children of Latin America the opportunity of living and participating in the appropriation of a new world. This is especially clear when societies want street children to adjust to the world instead of adjusting the social structures to welcome the poor. The intention of democratic majorities in oppressive societies is to make street children live in a situation of surveillance where they have their behavior, attitudes, and their thoughts controlled by others.

If the identity of street and working children are not recognized by societies, then participation for this population are difficult to achieve. On the contrary, acts of prejudice, discrimination, harassment, and violence against the poorest and weakest people will be common and accepted. These attitudes can also be repeated against those who care for the poorest. The desire of people's identity will find a way to search for appropriation of the world, and this is independent of how much we can deny somebody's identity.

Oppressed communities around the world – indigenous people, women, blacks, and so on – at some point in history have raised their voice to tell their stories. These groups fought for their right to have an identity and appropriate the world. I really think that in our lifetime, we are going to witness several children's initiatives around the

world that are going to be as important as the civil rights movement. The strategies will be different, but the effect will be equivalent.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – Letter of Invitation

Date

Participants Name

Organization

Address

Dear Mr. / Ms.,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research inquiry which is focused on the active participation of children in the construction of their own identity and appropriation of a new world. I am interested in having a conversation with the staff of your organization who are working with children and who are willing to share insights and meaningful experiences. I intend to engage in research conversations during the summer of 2008 while I am visiting your organization.

As part of the participatory research protocol that I will be using, I am requesting your permission to record and transcribe our conversation. Once I transcribe the data, I will provide you with a copy of the conversation for you to review. At that time, you may add, delete, or edit any part of the conversation as you see fit. When I have received your approval, I will analyze the data. Please note that participation in this research, including all data, your name and affiliations, are not confidential, and before participating you will be required to sign a consent form.

To give you a sense of the conversation topic's we'll engage in during the summer, here are a few preliminary questions to consider:

How do children tell their stories and represent their future?

Why do the children decide to organize and work together?

What is their experience with the local community?

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research.

Regards

Luis Enrique Bazan
Researcher, Doctoral Student
University of San Francisco
Organization and Leadership, School of Education
lebazan@usfca.edu / cell: 650.430.6205

APPENDIX B – Sample of Research Participants

Name	Status	Organization	Country
Lucy Borja	Director	Generacion	Peru
Desiree Castaman	Psychologist	Generacion	Peru
Juan Enrique Bazan	Advisor	Generacion	Peru
Nilo Marmol	member	CONNATS	Paraguay
Carlos Flecha	Educator	CONNATS	Paraguay
Francisco Estigaribia	Social Promoter	CONNATS	Paraguay
Victor Villalba	Social Promoter	CONNATS	Paraguay
Sintyl Wilson	Founder	Centre de Compassion Pour Les Enfants Demunis	Haiti
Cebien Toussaint	Educator	Centre de Compassion Pour Les Enfants Demunis	Haiti
Cara Kennedy	Director	FETJABEN	Haiti
David Diggs	Liason	FETJABEN	Haiti
Guerda Lexima	Educator	FETJABEN	Haiti

APPENDIX C – Sample Thank You Letter

Date

Participant's Name
Organization
Address

Dear Mr. /Ms.:

Thank you for taking the time to have a conversation with me on _____. I greatly appreciate the time and energy you gave to my research project, and I know that our talk will add an important dimension to my dissertation.

I have attached a transcript of our conversation. Please take a moment to read through it and feel free to clarify any comments or to suggest any changes that you feel are appropriate. If you do wish to make changes, kindly let me know that you will be providing them by _____. Unless I hear from you, I will use the current transcript as data for my analysis. Also, just as a reminder, data from this research are not confidential.

Again, many thanks for your participation and for the lively exchange of ideas. I so enjoyed talking with you and I appreciate your reflections, which I believe will be a valuable addition to this project.

Sincerely,

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APPENDIX E – Pilot Conversation Transcript

Lucy Borja

Lima, Peru

November, 2007

Do you see that the children who you work with are appropriating a new world?

There are children able to enjoy the social process and opportunities that the world offers.

There are children in developed countries that do not imagine the abuses that children live in other countries because they have been born in a society that is organized around children's wellbeing. There are countries that focus on this, but our experience is with children who have been denied their right for wellbeing and participation in the construction of the society. These children are put in the margins, their only expectations may be to become part of the reserves military forces. These children do not have any level of active participation in their own wellbeing. On the contrary, they are marginalized. More marginalization, they get less opportunities to appropriate their development.

Do the children imagine a better future?

Of course. Their extreme situation makes them dream, wish, and hope. The majority of them, find ways to hallucinate what reality denies them.

Do you mean drugs?

That may be a reason why they do drugs. They look for ways to imagine new ways ...a

new life.

What are their dreams?

Their dreams starts with the basics. One child among the most marginalized said he dreams about his mother – that is so elementary in the life of anyone – and the ocean that implies greatness, deepness, energy, emotions, passion.

If the children are not represented, and they would like to have more participation, what are children doing about this?

They are struggling.

I just remembered the children working on landscaping. They lived in the streets and policed did not like them. Once there was an opportunity for them to fix the landscape of the area where they lived and get paid to do this, the majority of children living in the streets of that area got involved. Do you think that working on landscaping gave them the opportunity to appropriate a new world?

Yes. The children who started with the garnering program, were the ones that had already dream about transforming the filthy park that they habituated into a beautiful place.

People denied the children and those places because they were the ugly landscapes of the city, but they considered that the parks where theirs.

We created a partnership with the city hall to offer the children jobs to rebuild the parks where they lived. This allowed the children to build an organization among them. to

organize We wanted to engrave that children This made them feel that they had the opportunities to fulfill their dreams on making their environment a better place. This program has been part of a historical landmark of the reconstruction of a city from the children. This is a path that marked the possibility of active participation of these children in something that is so important like an organized city. The children actively participated, organized, and improved the lives of all children who lived in those areas. They had their meetings every weekends, about their work and who participated in the work,. They made sure that the people working were not robbing or using drugs.

This experience also opened new opportunities. The children started trying other activities. Currently they are no working in landscape any more. The governmental bureaucracy wanted to show that they were more than the assembly of children so they fired the first group in order to have absolute control the decisions on who was going to work in the landscape of the city. This decision affected the democratic elements of the program. As a positive note, the children learn that they can access to work that organize their lives and get better salaries. Playing music for example is getting them more money than the government ever paid them.

I understand that children transformed the vision of what they were able to do ...

based on the every day activities, on their practical experiences.

So if the children have the opportunity, they will make use of their abilities, right?

Exactly

And their work will not only serve children, but the community that lives around them as well.

Exactly

Then, how are these experiences affecting the work of your organization?

It makes us realize than more than the programs that we could design, it is more important what we learn from the children's experiences. We learned that children can organize their lives from their working experience. Generacion had to adapt to children's decisions. At the beginning of the landscaping program, Generacion selected the children and teenagers that could work, but the children's assembly decided to make the selection. So we gave it to them, and they improved the selections. The children know better than us who deserved working and who didn't because they knew the children who were not doing drugs and not going to the streets. The assembly decided that workers should not do drugs or go to the streets because it would affect the other workers.

So you guys learn important lessons from working with children, what about society? Did society learn anything from the experience of the landscaping program?

Children learned that they could participate actively in the transformation of their own lives. You guys learned that work becomes the center of children's lives...

And that children can help each other to improve their lives. If somebody wanted to work, they helped the interested in working to leave the drugs and the streets. The

collective experience of children were the fundamentals to find solutions to the problems. There was nothing more rich than their experiences. Not even a professional would have been able to do better in those meetings because they were using their own experience to suggest ways for improving their lives.

Are there other groups that learned from this experience?

All the non profits that are currently working with street children are participating of the landscaping program. The children from our organization do not work in this program any more. The majority of our children are currently working playing music in busses or the teenagers are part of the labor that builds homes because it gives them more money. But CEDRO, Mundo libre, and all the others are sending their children to this program. The only problem is that there is not anymore a self-organizing and control committee. The bureaucracy is who controls this project. Before, Generacion, as the major NGO stakeholder of the program, made decisions based on what the children had decided at the assembly. We do not have any position of the program anymore, so the governmental bureaucracy decided not to let the children control some aspects of the program.

Did the public opinion learned anything from the landscaping program?

The city hall organized a parade to inaugurate the new roads and parks. People working in Lima downtown were going to be at the event, and the Ecological Guys – that is how the program was called – wanted to be part of the parade, but the bureaucracy did not wanted them to participate. At the assembly, the children decided that they were going to participate.

The mayor of the city did a speech and right after he finished, the parade started. The different workers started walking. When the Ecological Guys made their appearance and the MC introduced them, all the people watching the parade stood up and started clapping. This shows you the meaning of this program for the civic population and as revindication of the children.

So you think that this was about re-vindicating the children?

Yes, this was about vindicating respect and admiration. No other group had as much admiration as the children.

Do you have videos of the parade?

All the channels showed the parade, so they may have it in their archives.

Why did the city hall did not want them to walk?

The bureaucracy did not want them to walk. A sector of the city hall consider them only as street children, so they did not value their offers. But the children decided to participate, and it was incredible.

The third part of my research is about opening new possibilities. It is about children re-creating actions to other organizations and society. With our conversation I am thinking that Generacion learned on how to create a platform where the children organize their own meetings; where other organizations learned that they could

work with children ...

Yes... currently other organizations offer the landscaping program as alternative, when at the beginning they denied it, because when the opportunity was created to work, we called all the organizations. The organizations told us that they disagreed with children working.

No way!

Yes... this was in 1998, but in 2007 all the organizations consider working with the landscaping program as part of their strategy.

Do the organizations call it children working or vocational training?

Ah! They call it occupational preparation, but we all know that it is paid work.

So...organizations learn and society re-imagines the life of these children. There are moments where society recognizes children's efforts.

Correct.

I'd like to tell the story of Generacion and its children. The past of violence and marginalization, the future that the children imagine, and how they act in their present to achieve their dreams. This is the narrative that I'd like to tell about Generacion and its children.

There is something that I'd like to tell you. We learn to interpret the feeling of children. When they were in San Martin's square and they said that they could make the square a

beautiful place, we formed a group to present the project to the city hall, and the person that received us asked me why did I bring this criminals. So nothing happened. The program started years later because you knew how to make it happen. The point here is that we were able to read what they wanted to do. It is important to search children's dreams.

You can find their dreams because there is trust in Generacion, correct?

Exactly. It is because we are close to them that we can read their dreams. Because we are close, we have a horizontal dynamic, the assemblies, constant dialogue.

Where does the motivation to clean the park comes from?

San Martin square had 600 children. They used it also as a bathroom, so the smell was horrible. The children knew that the conditions that they were living was not the right way of living. Other people called them beasts and animals. One time I said in a TV interview that they were children. And a women said, "Children!?! Have you seen have they come, how they dress?" This is the kind of thinking that people had based on the conditions that they lived.

Children worked to made changes in the parks and squares of Lima. Besides that the children are working in other activities.

For example, Daniel who usually plays music in the buses, went to a restaurant to play music with his partner, and a family wanted to hire them to play at night. In the restaurants they had already make 60 soles, and the family offered them also 60 soles. I

was surprised when Daniel and his partner did not accept. They had to get home early because Daniel had to give to his mother 60 soles.

Daniel is a teenager who worked for the landscaping program making 10 soles per day. Today he makes 60 soles per day and has a voluntary schedule to get home. This was a kid who lived in the streets for many years and could only get back home if he brought money home. The conditions have changed for him because he is the one that brings the food home.

For example Lupe. Her dad got sick, and she had to start working to buy the medicine of her dad, the food for her little sister and mother. We are talking about 50 soles per day that she was giving to her family only through playing music.

So they make \$700/month

Yes... it is a lot of money, but they jeopardize their health. They know how to solve the economical of their homes because they know how to work.

These are children who have lived the worst abuses that we can ever imagine. They left their homes when they were around 6 years old. For a 6 year old running away from home thinking that they father or mother does not love them anymore, it is a very harsh situation.

Even though they were victims of violence from their own families, they are capable to be in solidarity with their family. Daniel was a very good student, but he had to leave

school in order to support his family because he has a lot of brothers and sisters.

Before Daniel came to Generacion, he stole from us. He heard about us and went to visit us when we were camping with the children in the beach. Daniel and his group did not see anyone, jumped the fence, and stole all the paintings that we had to paint the house. They never came back, until we found him in the streets doing drugs. So Daniel went through his whole process. Years later Daniel told us that he stold from us. Today Daniel would not be able to steal from anyone.

What is the identity of these children? Even though they consider themselves as workers, there is still marginalization against them. What do the children feel that they are?

They are who they are. The children who pass through Generacion are Generacion, and we work with the children who are in the streets. We and the children fight against the stigmas. They call them names that comes together with aggression. Our children recognize that being a street children is not a thief. Before street children stole, but they did not call it to steal because they had to do it in order to eat.

Do the children have the opportunity to tell their testimonies?

Yes. Every time there is a presentation about children they tell their stories. They defend that they do not hurt physically others. People consider them as aggressive to others. The children had a lot of scars because they cut themselves to escape from police, but they would not hurt any other person. The children who formed a group to steal, had few who

tickled a person and the rest were taking their things. One time I got a phone call from the children because one of the kids had made an older person fall. So the kids were organizing a popular trial against the kid that hurt the older men.

Why there is so much hostility against children?

Because the press present them in destructive ways, and the government does not do anything to change this. The government prefers presenting that the jail is the option for these children. They have no idea this marvelous children.

Even though the children changed the parks, they do not recognize them?

They see this under the frame of a program of the city hall. They see it as an activity, not as a social problem. They are an oxymoron because they do not have a clear vision of social policies. The only saw the ecological guys, but they do not see the whole image of the children's social phenomenom.

I was reading a book written by Mary Richmond in the U.S. in 1922 about social work. Richmond said that the treatment for a person that did an infraction was in freedom, with access to the different public services. In our country, we are not doing what Richmond suggested. Here, people working in the government should go to jail because they are hurting the life project of these children.

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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