

**A DESCRIPTIVE CASE STUDY OF THE EARLY ENCOUNTER
PROJECT IN COCHABAMBA, BOLIVIA WITH EMPHASIS ON
*PROTAGONISMO INFANTIL***

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ABSTRACT

This study concerns itself with a qualitative single case study of the Early Encounter (EE) Project for children at risk of entering into a street lifestyle in the city of Cochabamba, Bolivia. This included the use of participant observation, informal and formal (focused) interviews, focus groups and documentation from the EE office and several of the projects involved in the strategy. While the primary focus of this study is the place of empowering children within the EE strategy, a general descriptive approach of the EE methodology is also presented. Several key tenets of the approach are described in detail in order to place the study within an organizational context. What was originally a pursuit of child empowerment evolved into a deeper investigation of *protagonismo infantil* (sometimes weakly translated into English as child protagonism). As the study progresses the issue of *protagonismo infantil* takes on a definitive influence over and above what many child agencies consider to be child empowerment or even participation. The role of this issue is significant in that the very idea of childhood is perceived as a phenomenon that incorporates human agency, dignity and equality. The report includes several practical recommendations for the implementation of city-wide strategies that involve some form of EE methodology in other regions and concludes with highlighting future research issues that have been identified as a result of this study.

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¹ Several future writings and articles are in the making given the similar research that was conducted by my colleagues. Potential results will look at the involvement of local churches within the city-wide strategy and motivational factors for local church engagement with children at risk.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
EE	Early Encounter
ETC	<i>Encuentro Temprano de Cochabamba</i> (Early Encounter of Cochabamba)
MANTHOC	<i>Movimiento de Adolescentes y Niños Trabajadores Hijos de Obreros Cristianos</i> (Movement of Child and Adolescent Workers of Christian Workers)
PAR	Participatory Action Research
POA	<i>Plan Operativo Anual</i> (Annual Operating Plan)
SEDEGES	<i>Servicio departamental de Gestión Social</i> (Departmental Service for Social Administration)
SMC	<i>Sistema de Mejoramiento de Calidad</i> (System of Quality Improvement)

INTRODUCTION

Prior to flying in to Cochabamba, Bolivia, reports began circulating of the potential for an interrupted trip given the political climate in the country. The Bolivian president and his administration were preparing for a constitutional reform before the year ended and as a result, some opposition leaders were bent on preventing this from taking place. On December 25, 2005 winning by a 25 point margin, Evo Morales became the first indigenous leader to win the presidency in Bolivia (Eaton 2007, 73). Since his election, some regions have sought more autonomy, seeking to reduce the control that the central government has over their departments.² Santa Cruz is one such region. In the case of Santa Cruz, autonomy has meant both a desire for political freedom to elect regional leaders and for some, according to Kent Eaton, professor of politics at the University of California, Santa Cruz,

autonomy goes far beyond the holding of elections to include (1) regional control over natural resources (e.g., land, timber, gas, and oil), (2) the right to retain control over two-thirds of all tax revenues generated in the department, 21 and (3) authority to set all policies other than defense, currency, tariffs, and foreign relations. (2007, 74)

Preceding my arrival in Cochabamba, President Morales won a recall vote election with a 67% victory solidifying his presidency and his plans to bring about revolutionary changes to the country in the form of a constitutional reform. A number of disturbances were in effect before I arrived, including some several dozen blockades throughout the country. These continued for the entirety of my research time in Cochabamba, essentially dividing the nation into sections (EFE 2008). At the height of the disturbances nearly 30 people were killed in Pando, a border town near the Argentine border. The majority of those killed were indigenous supporters of Morales. A state of

² Especially what is referred to as the “half-moon” region, which includes the departments of Santa Cruz, Beni, Chuquisaca y Tarija.

emergency was declared in that region and the rest of the country was at high alert waiting to see if more violence would occur in other departments. As a response to what Morales called “U.S. interference,” U.S. Ambassador Philip Goldberg was declared *persona non-grata* and expelled from the country on September 11, 2008. Subsequently a number of U.S. expatriates and missionaries were either forced or voluntarily chose to evacuate the country. These evacuations were highly reported by the local news media. Due to the violence and state of emergency which was called in the department most affected by the violence, the constitutional reform referendum date was postponed from December 7th, 2008 by the *Corte Nacional Electoral* (National Electoral Court) to the new date on January 25, 2009.

Given the circumstances, there were some intense moments during my time in the country. Despite the occurrences there was very little interference with the research process. The exception to this was when both natural gas and gasoline became scarce and moving from one project to another became difficult. This happened on two occasions. One of the project visits was canceled while the other was simply postponed for a later date.

I found my participation in some of the *Encuentro Temprano de Cochabamba* (abbreviated as ETC from this point forward) team devotionals to be very therapeutic and calming given the state of crisis that the country was going through. A frequent concern among those present was the outbreaks of violence and political crisis that the country was undergoing. Prayer was dedicated to interceding for the country and those affected by the violence. Despite the difficulties, the ETC team was in the office prepared to work each day under complex conditions. It became obvious to me during my time there that the children and their welfare was the priority despite the uncertainty of the times.

CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH STRATEGY

This case study research report concerns itself with ETC (also referred to as “Red Alert” or the “Early Encounter of Cochabamba” by Toybox Charity in English). The research was conducted in its entirety in this location and focused on a city-wide strategy approach to working with street-living and working children and other children at risk.³ Priority at all stages of the data collection was given to protecting children and adults in the research process and giving them the opportunity to tell their stories.

Before leaving for Bolivia I was impacted by the notion of participatory action research (PAR) given its action emphasis within qualitative research. I was drawn to the notion that PAR moves beyond a traditional research approach that views the informants as only objects to be studied. PAR emphasizes action results as part of its research emphasis. The last thing I wanted to do was conduct research on a group of children without providing something that can bring about change to children at risk. The 180° Alliance and Viva – Together with Children, have given me this very opportunity to study an innovative approach to working with children and to impact the work of others through writing about the results and in the near future including the findings in the

³ In referring to “children” I am primarily thinking of anyone under the age of eighteen. I will, on occasion, also use the term youth or adolescents when making specific reference to young people usually over the age of twelve. That being said, we must certainly recognize the developmental differences between those children in early childhood stages, middle ages and that of adolescence. In my own experience in working with street-living children on the streets of Caracas, Venezuela, the majority of “children” actually living on the street are older children (8-12) or adolescents (13-18). It should also be noted that I am intentionally using the term “street-living and working children” given that I find it more descriptive than the frequently used “street children” nomenclature. It is also of my opinion that categories such as “children of the street” as is used in literature as part of a never ending pursuit of defining homeless and abandoned children, is not helpful to the child. A term that I have used in the past is that of “community children” given its emphasis and responsibility that society has for such children. I have gone to great lengths to express why I feel this way in other writings (see Burch 2005), but I also recognize that it is not as precise as the term “street-living and working children” which I will primarily use in this report.

training of other children at risk workers around the world. I along with Desiree Segura-April and Joanna Kretzer were invited by Viva-Bolivia to collaborate together in the research. The data collection was divided up into two primary divisions: (1) ETC methodology and the issue of empowering children at risk, and (2) Best practice models within local church engagement with children at risk. I was to primarily focus on ETC while my colleagues were to research the involvement of the local church in the care for children at risk. It is our intentions in the future to create an integrated document that will support the work of God's people everywhere in their care for vulnerable children.

Ultimately, the final word belongs to the children. On several occasions as I concluded focus groups with child participants I asked them: How do you think I should use this information I am gathering? The children responded almost always by encouraging me to make available this study to help others care for children at risk. This will come in the way of: (1) Training others about the early encounter model, (2) Presenting the results via a case study report directed to the 180° Alliance and Viva, and (3) Publish articles and eventually a book related to the findings.

The city-wide strategy in Cochabamba is a missional response that has been developed over several years with input from a variety of organizations including Viva International and the Latin American regional office in Costa Rica, Toybox Charity (U.K.) and 180° Alliance–Global Action with Street Children. The project is known as a “city-wide strategy” in English due to its attempt to bring together interested parties in responding to the issues that street-living and working children face within one particular city. ETC is only one of a few city-wide strategies taking place in the world.⁴ In the words of Angela Murray the approach seeks to pull together a “comprehensive network across the city” (2008a, 1).

The justification for choosing this project was based upon informal interviews, literature review and an interest as to the extent of the empowerment strategies within the mission structures in the city. Prior to the data collection phase of my research I was growing more interested in the Latin American notion of *protagonismo infantil* that I had

⁴ Several city-wide strategies are being implemented with varying degrees of success in Mexico City, Oruro and Potosi, Bolivia, Lima, Peru and Cape Town, South Africa.

come across in my literature review. Some of my initial findings pointed toward the idea that empowerment seems to be highly connected and intertwined with the notion of *protagonismo infantil*.

ETC as a city-wide strategy was chosen given its innovativeness and potential impact in the lives of the children that are being cared for by the affiliated organizations. There are seventeen Christian organizations (hereafter referred to as “projects”) and sixteen local churches that are connected to the city-wide strategy. In addition to these members, there are also governmental bodies and non-religious NGO’s that are cooperating with the strategy. The following information concerns itself with the specifics on issues related to the research strategy.

Time Frame

Data collection was conducted from August 27th – September 21st (2008).

Methodology

The methodology is that of a qualitative case study design. This method includes an embedded approach given the multiple projects found within the ETC strategy. This case study included the use of participant observation, informal and formal (focused) interviews, focus groups and documentation from the ETC office and several of the projects involved in the strategy. Focused interviews were chosen given the limited time I anticipated in Cochabamba. This method, while still allowing for open-ended questioning, provided me with a necessary time restriction. The research questions were first designed during the case study protocol that was elaborated prior to leaving for Bolivia. Yin states that the interviewer will be “following a certain set of questions derived from the case study protocol” (2003, 90). The protocol included the central research focus, purpose statement, central research questions, issues concerning the methodology, interview/focus group questions and theoretical propositions. Prior to use in the field, I received feedback on the interview and focus group questions from Desiree Segura-April, Joanna Kretzer and Claudia Ponce de Leon of ETC. This allowed me to go

back and re-word certain questions that were too leading or reflected my own personal bias. During my research I focused on probing the interviewee. Bernard says that probing is used “to stimulate a respondent to produce more information, without injecting in yourself so much into the interaction that you only get a reflection of yourself in the data” (2006, 217).

Focus groups proved to be especially helpful as I attempted to develop a forum where I could interact with children. One on one interviews can be intimidating for children, thus focus groups allow for access to children in an environment where they are comfortable. According to David Stewart and Prem Shamdasani “focus groups may be one of the few research tools available for obtaining data from children or from individuals who are not particularly literate” (1990, 16).

Another key source for data collection was participant observation. Chosen affiliated ETC projects were visited at least twice, sometimes three or four times depending on data collection needs. These times were especially helpful as I informally discussed issues with leaders and children. Danny Jorgensen makes a case for using participant observation as a complimentary approach within the case study methodology. He says that it is “generally practiced as a form of case study” (1989, 19). This method helped in describing a case in general and exhaustive terms. Jorgensen mentions, “during the early stages of inquiry, you generally concentrate on gaining entrée, developing and sustaining field relations, participating, observing, and gathering information while engaging tentatively in analysis and theorizing” (1989, 107).

Documentation was also collected on all relevant affiliated ETC projects and from the ETC office itself. Yin suggests that “documentary information is likely to be relevant to every case study topic” (2003, 85). Despite the usefulness of this data, Yin reminds one to be wise in its use saying that documents “are not always accurate and may not be lacking in bias” (2003, 87). These comments were noted and provided a good filter from which documentation has been analyzed. One of the more important aspects to this data collection is the use of documentation in corroborating evidence from other sources in the case study (Yin 2003, 87). The literature review prior to the study indicated that some quantitative and qualitative research had already been conducted by Viva and Toybox

Charity. Such research will be cited and integrated with caution given the potential bias inherent in the findings.

The variety of methods employed has created what is referred to as “triangulation” in the research process creating ample data for reliability purposes. According to Yin, triangulation leads to a “converging line of inquiry” and this is perhaps the most important reason why I chose to use multiple sources in the research process (2003, 98) (see figure 1). Prior to all observations, interviews and focus groups, relevant literature such as institutional reports and concept papers were reviewed and noted (see 180 Degrees Alliance 2007; Murray 2008a, 2008b, 2008c; Sexton 2004; VIVA - Bolivia with Encuentro Temprano Cochabamba January, 2006). It is important to highlight that this is a qualitative research study. My primary intent here is primarily descriptive and to understand a particular city-wide strategy in a specific context (Cochabamba, Bolivia). My intent is not to evaluate or in any way to critique one or more of the projects associated with ETC. I intentionally chose not to focus on quantitative aspects in the methodology given that several studies already exist on that issue (see VIVA-Bolivia with Encuentro Temprano Cochabamba 2008a; Voces para Latinoamérica 2006; VIVA - Bolivia with Encuentro Temprano Cochabamba January, 2006; Defensa de los Niños Internacional-Bolivia 1997). As a qualitative research project my primary concern was to understand and then describe the ETC from the perspective of the very participants themselves. Both adult and child participants were consulted.

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to identify and describe missional engagement that takes into account the city-wide strategy with special focus on the place of empowerment in its response to street-living and working children.

Central Research Issue

The central research issue that I address in this case study is the place of “*protagonismo infantil*” as a missional response to street-living and working children in the ETC.

Significance

The city-wide strategy is an innovative approach to ministering with street-living and working children and is of special interest to those concerned with this population of young people. The field research piece is significant in that it takes into account some of the innovative approaches to working with this population. Of special note is the issue of *protagonismo infantil*.

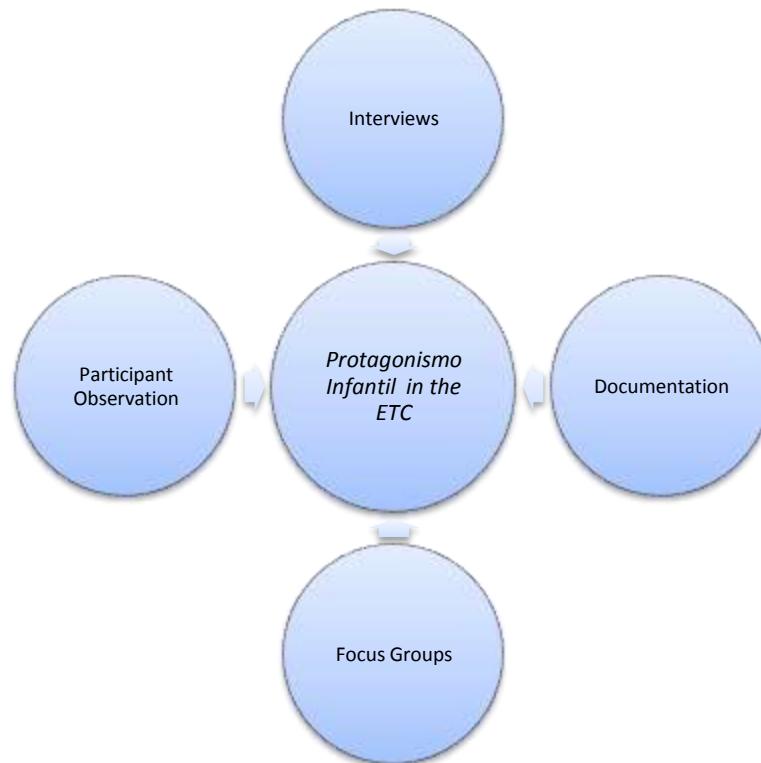


FIGURE 1

CONVERGENCE OF EVIDENCE

General Research Questions for Case Study

How does ETC perceive *protagonismo infantil*?

- Sources:
 - Documentation
 - Interview with coordinators of ETC
 - Interview with site coordinators

How does ETC promote *protagonismo infantil* among street-living and working children?

- Sources:
 - Observation (notes)
 - Documentation
 - Interview with coordinators of ETC
 - Interview with site coordinators
 - Focus group with ETC leadership
 - Focus group with child ambassadors

How do the children involved in the programs of the city-wide strategy perceive *protagonismo infantil*?

- Sources:
 - Interviews with children
 - Focus group (child ambassadors)
 - Focus group (selected groups of children)

How is ETC missional?

- Sources:
 - Observation
 - Interviews with coordinators of ETC
 - Interview with site coordinators
 - Documentation
 - Focus group with ETC leadership
 - Focus group with child ambassadors

How are the children encouraged to be active participants in the kingdom of God?

- Sources:
 - Observation
 - Documentation
 - Focus group with ETC leadership
 - Focus group with child ambassadors
 - Focus groups (selected groups of children)
 - Interviews with ETC coordinators
 - Interviews with site coordinators

What follows is a list of the specific affiliated projects and outreaches that I visited and conducted research at.

Prevention Work

Tío Erik/Esperanza Feliz (Uncle Erik/Happy Hope): Tío Erick/Esperanza Feliz is a project that functions as a day center for working children. There are close to 70 children who attend the center on a daily basis from Monday through Friday, 12:30 – 5PM. Staff workers visit the schools and the homes of children in the morning in order to follow up on a wide range of issues concerning the children involved in the programs. *Esperanza Feliz* is its counterpart that focuses on spiritual teachings and discipleship on Saturday afternoons. Close to 250 children arrive on Saturday afternoons for this program.

Working Children

Proyecto Jireh (Project Jireh): The project is a day center, open from 1:30-5PM, Monday through Saturday and focuses on working children (shoe shine children etc.). On average there are 35 children daily. During the week children are tutored in homework assignments by volunteers. On Saturday's children are invited to participate in fun activities and are provided lunch.

Proyecto Josias (Project Josiah): *Proyecto Josias* is a day center open on Friday and Saturday for counseling and tutoring. On Saturday the children are provided a more extensive program including lunch. On average, attendance is 25-30 children between the ages of six and sixteen. *Proyecto Josias* is a ministry of a local church affiliated with the Christian & Missionary Alliance denomination.

Residential Homes

Pequeño David (Little David): This home focuses on receiving orphaned and other children from dysfunctional homes. The home has been in existence for five years and there are currently 20 boys between the ages of five and sixteen years of age.

Corazon Grande (Big Heart): This home works with girls (ages 0-13) who have been orphaned, come from dysfunctional families or have been abandoned.

Rehabilitation

Esperanza Viva (Hope Viva): This project has been functioning for 9 years and focuses on families at high risk. There are approximately 22 people (children and adults) living at the shelter. There is a detoxification program to help adults and adolescents with drug problems. The primary methodology that is adhered to for rehabilitating those involved in the program is called *Teoterapia (Teo-therapy)* and is primarily focused on biblical counseling.

Child Ambassadors

Proyecto los Embajadores (Ambassadors Project): All seventeen projects involved in ETC choose through a democratic election the two children from the project they wish to have represent their project. The ambassadors not only represent their own projects but also develop community projects in which they participate in outreach on issues such as child abuse, HIV /AIDS prevention, etc.

Street Outreach

Street outreach was a new focus within ETC that was observed. Limited research was conducted. I had several opportunities to visit with the ETC appointed street educator and several other missionaries outside of ETC focused on working specifically with street-living and working children.

Research Logistics

The children and adults interviewed were recruited via recommendations. Some of the interviews and focus groups were coordinated with the ETC director. Volunteers were contacted at the different centers while I was participating and observing. The children and adults were approached by me and presented (and or read) a letter of informed consent. A large majority of the interviews were informal (during observation) while others were focused (formal). I chose not to pay anyone for their interviews or participation in focus groups. All children received a gift (either a toy or candy), in consultation with the adult leaders, and adults received a non-monetary gift as well for their help.

Theoretical Propositions and Units of Analysis

The overall research strategy follows a basic pattern that consists of data collection, data categorization, coding, analysis and presentation of findings (see figure 2).

As part of the data categorization and coding, interviews and focus groups went through a literal transcription process (Spanish recordings to Spanish transcription). During times of participant observation I was allotted time to informally converse with directors, leaders, volunteers and children. In total there were 67 informal interviews that occurred during the observations stage. The data from these informal interviews was collected via hand written field notes which were inputted into a word document upon returning to the guest center where I was staying.

In addition to informal interviews there were 18 focused interviews lasting between one and two hours. These interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed literally and completely. As part of the triangulated research process, four focus groups were conducted and transcribed literally and completely. Some additional questioning, where needed, was followed up via electronic mail in the weeks and months following the field research. These follow up questions will be noted as personal e-mail communication in the bibliography.

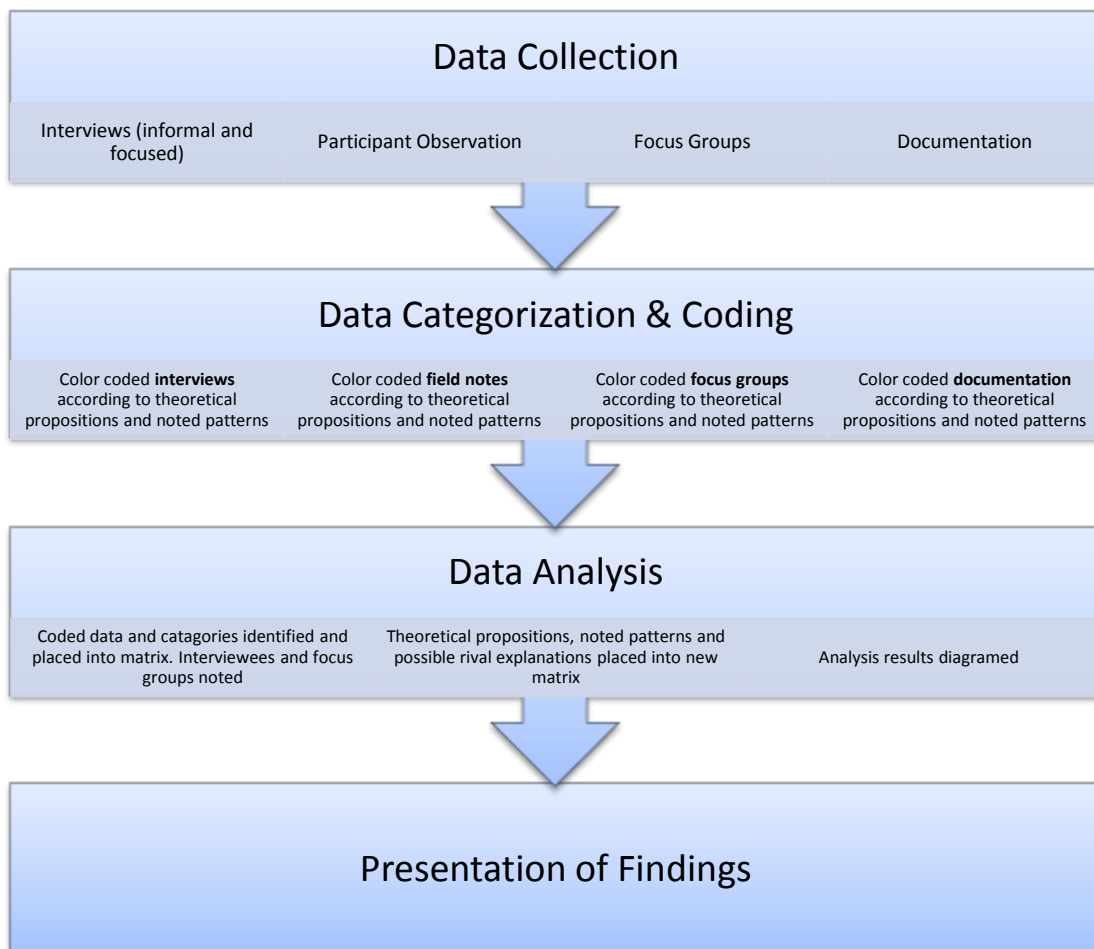


FIGURE 2

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS STRATEGY

Additionally, documents, such as internal manuals, protection policies, by-laws, project papers, brochures, pamphlets and other documents were collected and organized into units of analysis. All transcribed interviews and focus groups, field notes and documents were categorized and coded. Upon concluding the categorization and coding, the texts were translated, either literally (a literal translation is identified with quotation marks) or in paraphrase and placed into a matrix that identified the method of research and analyzed unit associated with the column. Upon concluding the original analysis matrix, analysis of the data continued by matching patterns with the original theoretical

propositions (see table 1) and placed into a new secondary matrix that highlights the results and any rival explanations or extra comments (see appendix E). The theoretical propositions were developed into units of analysis. Yin encourages the researcher to develop propositions prior to the field research based upon the literature review and previous research. Yin remarks, “each proposition directs attention to something that should be examined within the scope of study” (2003, 22). Ultimately it is these very propositions that are used to develop the analysis strategy and to help shape the data collection and the analysis (Yin 2003, 111-112). Based on the propositions, the data was organized around the following seven units of analysis: (1) The place of dialogical relationship and empowerment, (2) Asistencialismo, (3) The place of *protagonismo infantil* in the ETC, (4) Paternalism, (5) Child protection and *protagonismo infantil*, (6) Empowerment and, (7) Dignity.

Theoretical Propositions of Case Study - Early Encounter Project						
Recognition of <i>Protagonismo Infantil</i> encourages "dialogical relationship" leading to empowerment	Reduction of <i>asistencialismo</i> through case file sharing and cooperation encourages empowerment and participation	Recognition of <i>protagonismo infantil</i> leads to relinquished control by adults and increased voice and participation for children in projects	Paternalism results when child is not consulted in decision making process and <i>protagonismo infantil</i> is not respected	Child protection is correct and biblical when <i>protagonismo infantil</i> is understood	Empowerment is a means to creating <i>protagonismo infantil</i>	Children are created in the image of God and are thus to be treated with dignity, which includes acknowledging human agency.

TABLE 1: THEORETICAL PROPOSITIONS

The primary goal is for the reader to understand the flow of the research strategy and analysis. What follows in the pages ahead is an integration of findings from the analysis of the data, literature review, practical recommendations and ideas for research with on-going city-wide outreaches.

CHAPTER 2

STREET-LIVING AND WORKING CHILDREN

It was early morning when I set out to visit with the children living on the streets near where I was staying. I was invited by two missionaries who have been making regular contacts with children in two different areas of the city for nearly a year. As we made our way toward the location where the children sleep we noticed small plastic bottles on the ground which contained dried up glue. This is the “*clefa*” that I had heard about from other child-care workers associated with the ETC. There were dozens of small bottles littering the ground for several blocks. After walking up a couple of blocks along a footpath between a grass corridor and a rain channel, we noticed five boys sitting on a bench. Two of the boys were sniffing *clefa*. Several of the boys recognized the missionaries. They all appeared to be between the ages of nine and twelve. Two of the five boys were high on glue, while the other three were more responsive. We spoke for quite a while about their lives on the street. It turned out that three of the boys had just left a group home called *San Benito* that was established to help children living on the street. Upon asking the boys if they worked, they told us they sometimes clean the windows of cars at intersections.

After spending about an hour with the boys we headed toward the next location just a few hundred feet up the footpath. This is where we ran into another group of children sleeping under a bridge in a dry rain channel. We climbed down under the bridge and walked into a dark space where I was able to make out a few faces. There were three dogs under the bridge and six young people sleeping. I could not make them all out, as several were under blankets. We moved on, after attempting to wake them up with no success. We hiked up another block and found another six boys and girls. Two were half asleep and the rest were sniffing glue with glossy eyes. We spent a half an hour with the young people talking about life on the street. The missionaries seemed to have

established a solid relationship with the children and young people. Later that day, we contacted five more young people about ten blocks from these first contacts. They were living under another bridge.

Visits such as the one described above, while not part of my original research plan, helped to underscore the importance of an early street encounter in the lives of children moving toward a street lifestyle.

Street Lifestyle Development

In using the phrase *street lifestyle development* I hope to emphasize that most children who live on the street (and those who work in a street environment) develop a lifestyle of street-living and working.⁵ Typically, most children do not just decide to go to the street one day and remain there. Most children, who either work or live on the street grow in their existence on the street rather than becoming instantaneously a street-living or working child. This was apparent in the children I talked with on the streets of Cochabamba as well. In other words, there is a progression which includes an introduction to earning money on the street, sleeping on the street, disregarding family ties (but certainly not always), drug abuse (in some cases), delinquent behavior, etc. Many who work with children on the street recognize this street lifestyle development process. In some cases one can witness this process in a very short period of time. While in Cochabamba I had the opportunity to visit with a boy named Jorge (age 12)⁶ on several occasions and have kept up with his status since leaving through my contact with the missionaries working with this young boy. Over a period of several weeks we witnessed as Jorge became more and more entrenched to this lifestyle on the street. We were told⁷

⁵ In some cases, the term “*callejización*” is used in Spanish to refer to the idea of a Street lifestyle development. The term literally means a “streetization” process. (VIVA-Bolivia 2005, 4).

⁶ A Pseudonym has been used to protect the young person’s name. From this point onward, pseudonyms will be used for any child named in this paper unless otherwise indicated.

⁷ One of the key challenges that are faced in interviewing a child who lives on the street is gaining access to the truth. Children who live on the street are frequently accused of manipulation. It is understandable that a child must manipulate to survive on the street. This includes saying what they need to say to get what they want. As one author has put it “thank God they manipulate” for it is through creative manipulation they are often fed, clothed and cared for (Dipaolo 1997, 157). It is reasonable to acknowledge that Jorge was not always responding with truth in his story, but it is also reasonable to draw some

by him that he had only turned to the street after recently running away from a shelter. He originally turned to look for help in the shelter because of the abuse he received in the home of his uncle and aunt, whom he lived with. Over a period of several weeks we met informally (in group settings and individual conversations) with Jorge. During the meetings with him we noticed a progression that moved him toward a street lifestyle that included going from clean clothes to dirty ones, from being a non-*clefa* user to beginning the use of *clefa*. Street lifestyle development is a term that captures the progression that most children have in turning to the street. A key understanding that underscores the need for an early encounter methodology focuses on understanding the factors that are connected with the development of this lifestyle.

Contributing Factors for Street Involvement

A number of theories exist as to why children turn to the street for survival. While this is not the place to develop this topic at large, several ETC documents have been consulted as to the conditions that children face on the streets. I also was given the opportunity to visit with children on several occasions and observed some important conditions that have contributed to the factors for why children turn to the street in this context.

There are some early theories that suggest children developed a street lifestyle in Latin America primarily due to poverty and abandonment. Many children in pre-independent Latin America were forced, due to abandonment, to turn to scavenging and begging and were frequently referred to as “*niños vagos*” (wandering children). If a child was of mixed race, black or indigenous, there were virtually no institutions where they could turn to receive help (Milton 2004, 103). Mixed race children faced more difficulties than European children and were thus more exposed to the development of a street lifestyle if combined with other contributing factors such as severe poverty, abuse and abandonment (Premo 2005, 122).

conclusions based on anecdotal evidence. In addition to this, other children on the street verified parts of Jorge's story.

Children living and working on the street in Bolivia is not a new occurrence and has been traced back to colonial times (Domic 1995). In the case of Jorge and others who live on the street, the research, both that of others, as well as the concerns of this one, point to multiple factors for why children go to the street.

One matter that is frequently overlooked entails structural issues that are commonly found on economic, political and even religious levels (Linthicum 1991, 11). As I approach this issue I do so with an assumption that not all who participate in society have the best interest of children in mind. Despite the fact that Bolivia was the eighth country to ratify the convention on the rights of the child (CRC), there is a large breach between child rights law and implementation of the law in daily life. There appears to be a lack of understanding by the general public that children have rights. Many in Bolivian society (and beyond) view children as property (VIVA-Bolivia with Encuentro Temprano Cochabamba 2008a, 7; UNICEF 2003). Not all children are deemed in this way, but when they are, physical punishment and even abuse are likely to follow. This intention to harm children comes sometimes from a personal individual decision but can also be a collective decision based upon the idea that unproductive people are worthless to society. Public perception of children, while not a primary research focus, became a topic that was discussed on several occasions by respondents. While I did not personally witness violence against children during my time in Bolivia, several accounts of mistreatment by police and others were relayed to me by those working directly with the children (Burch August 27th - September 21st, 2009). Violence against children has also been documented by Viva – Bolivia and others (2005, 4).

Children and Power

Another theme overlooked in the area of contributing factors is that of powerlessness. While I will, in detail, discuss the issues of power and childhood under the chapter “Empowering Children,” it is important, given the issues that arose in Bolivia to discuss it as a contributing factor for why children develop a street lifestyle. The question of power within society is not a new concern among sociologists; however, there

has been little discussion of powerlessness within the area of missiology, particularly among street-living and working children. Powerlessness could be understood within this context of childhood as the forceful or unconscious removal of the ability to make decisions that affect the child and those around him or her.

While holding a focus group with children that had been elected as representatives (ambassadors) of their projects, there was a significant sense of frustration focused on the issue of powerlessness. A comment by Josue who was twelve years old, was particularly eye opening as he discussed his feelings about this issue: “Te sientes oprimido, ya no tienes ganas de hacer nada, las ganas que has tenido se te van” (you feel oppressed, like you don’t have a desire anymore, the desire that you had is now gone) (Translation mine) (Josue (pseudonym) child ambassador September 11, 2009). While Josue was discussing the specific incident at a Christian camp, another young child ambassador, Jacquie, spoke up saying “Pero es cuando no te dejan opinar también . . . Cuando tú quieres aportar una idea los más grandes piensan que los pequeñitos no pueden opinar” (But it is when they do not let you share your opinion as well . . . when you want to contribute with an idea and the big people think you are too small to share your opinion) (translation mine) (Jacquie (pseudonym) child ambassador September 11, 2009). Jacquie pointed out the understanding that it is the “big people” that prevent (via social power) the “small people” from participating and making decisions.

There appears to be a sense among some adults that children should not be permitted to voice their opinion. This captures the idea of powerlessness and could be perceived to be another factor in the multi-faceted understanding of why children choose the street lifestyle.

Stigmatization

Stigmatization is a frequent problem that children living and working on the street encounter. While serving in Venezuela, for a number of years I was in charge of the street outreach program. Most children on the street were called “*huelepegas*” or “*chupapegas*”

meaning glue sniffers, by the general public. They were not referred to as children, but rather by names that society had attributed to them.

In Bolivia, terms have also been invented for children who live on the street. Children on the street are frequently referred to as the “*cleferos*” because of their use of glue. Both other children who work on the street and adults in society use this term to distinguish between children who work on the street from those who live on the street. The ETC street educator, Maximo Plata, also identified the common usage of negative terms on the street for children as one more contributing factor in a long list of concerns (September 12, 2008).

Race Issues

In the case of Bolivia, it seems plausible that certain racial prejudices are a factor that should be considered when discussing contributing motivators for why children go to the street. The majority of Bolivians are indigenous, making up nearly 62% of the population. In some rural areas, 72% of the people speak indigenous languages other than Spanish. Yet it is the minority, (those of *Mestizo* and European decent) that are paid better, more educated and less impoverished (VIVA - Bolivia with Encuentro Temprano Cochabamba 2008a, 5-6). Indigenous children are four times more likely to work than non-indigenous children. In 2002, 31% of all indigenous children worked in comparison with 8% of the non-indigenous children (VIVA - Bolivia with Encuentro Temprano Cochabamba 2008a, 7). Despite the fact that the 1994 constitution recognized the nation to be multiethnic and pluralistic, free and independent, continual racial strife is apparent (Arocena 2008, 2-3). This is not only true about Bolivia today, but its past as well, where those of indigenous backgrounds suffered terribly under the minority *Mestizo* and European domination (Winn 1999, 250-251).

Street Children Population

Like most cities around the world, it is difficult to know how many children live and/or work on the streets in Cochabamba. Many children are nomadic, preventing an actual count of them. Tobias Hecht also encountered this problem in his research on the streets of Olinda, Brazil (1998, 99-102). Statistical counts of children living and working on the street are frequently inaccurate. In the words of Joel Best, “numbers tend to be treated as facts, regardless of how they came into being (1993, 45). One example can be found in the estimates that UNICEF has published about street children in Bolivia. According to UNICEF, the numbers have ranged from 72,000 children on the streets (1994) to at least 2,500 in the major cities (2004) (Eggen 2004, 1; UNICEF 1994, 103).

One possible explanation is that the amount of children on the street have simply been reduced, but given the conditions, this seems to be unlikely. Another plausible reason is that we often confuse what we mean by street children. Do we mean children who live on the street? Do we mean children who work on the street? The lack of specificity in the use of the term, *street children*, has frequently led us to conflictive numbers when counting such children. Unfortunately it is quite common to have such discrepancies. Children who work on the street are frequently mistaken for children who live on the street and vice versa. In the case of Cochabamba, SEDEGES, in concluding a census of children in the city, identified 400 children and adolescents living in the street either full-time or part-time (Vásquez 2007). Based upon my observations and corroborated with other such census taking (see Voces para Latinoamérica 2006), the estimates appear to be congruent with the street-living population.

According to a study conducted by Viva – Bolivia:

- 60% of the children left their homes because of violence in the home.

- 20% left their homes due to lack of food in the home.
- 20% left home because they were abandoned by their parents.
- 90% of the children and youth have used inhalants of some type. (January, 2006, 2-3)

In respect to children who work on the streets of Cochabamba, the numbers appear to be much higher. On several occasions I observed as children worked on the street shining shoes, selling candy and carrying products to client's homes in wheelbarrows.

One of the first projects I was invited to visit, alongside of Ines Caballero (Andean regional director for Viva) and others, was *Proyecto Josias*. Upon finishing up our visit at *Proyecto Josias*, some of us walked down the street to a restaurant called Dumbos on the famous Prado. Dumbos is a restaurant where I observed primarily middle class families going to eat lunch, drink coffee and eat ice cream. The children of the middle class patrons laughed and grinned as they rode the mechanical cars out in front.

As we sat down several young girls came by our table selling DVD's and musical CD's. Many of them were known to Ines given her past work with girls in a project called *Moso Yan*. While we were sitting there I also watched as several boys, who appeared to be living on the street lay and sat on the sidewalk just near to where we were sitting. They did not come up to us, but rather sat with other older street people and talked. They appeared to be high, given their unusual way of dancing and lying on the sidewalk. As this was taking place, three boys walked up to us and attempted to sell gum. One began shining Ines's shoes. Our conversation mostly focused on bargaining over the price of the gum and whether or not the boys were in school. Two of the boys said that they attended school. One boy hesitantly said he was in the first grade, but upon probing, his friends said he was not studying. Ines believed he was one of the boys that was moving towards a street lifestyle, given he was no longer in school and preferred not to go home because of his step-father. The boy did not elaborate on why he disliked his step-father. We bought french fries and hot dogs for the boys called *salchipapas*. They moved to a new table next to us. I was actually surprised that the waiters and workers at Dumbos

allowed them to eat at the table. While they were eating two other boys who were working shining shoes of the customers showed up. The three boys were hesitant to give the other two their food, but then quietly slid a plate over to the other boys without saying a word.

Boys and girls working on the street make up the majority of children surviving on the streets of Cochabamba. According to a 1999 International Labor Organization report on child labor in Bolivia, there were 7,633 children between the ages of 7 and 14 working in Cochabamba (IPEC Sudamérica 1999, 15). It is unknown whether this number has increased or decreased.

Whether children live on the street, work on the street or both, their presence in Cochabamba is obvious. The streets of Cochabamba appear to be filled with children playing, working and living. According to the most recent census in 2001, conducted by the National Institute of Statistics, Bolivia has a population of 8,274,325.⁸ Forty-five per cent of this population consists of children and adolescents under the age of eighteen (Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2001). UNICEF notes that “there are an estimated 1,529,689 children aged under 6, with a majority living at risk with respect to the vulnerability of their rights” (2003). Children appear to be everywhere, because they are. Viva - Bolivia has chosen to respond to the large population of children living working (and in some cases living) on the street with a city-wide outreach known as the Early Encounter project.

⁸ The World Factbook estimates that the population, as of 2008, was 9,247,816 (World Fact Book March 5th, 2009).

CHAPTER 3

EARLY ENCOUNTER METHODOLOGY

The city-wide strategy in Cochabamba has been implemented through the EE methodology. This methodology incorporates a number of techniques in its intervention in the lives of children at risk. The methodology has been developed over many years by organizations on different continents. It is to the understanding of this methodology that we now turn.

History of Early Encounter

The EE methodology was first implemented during the post-WWII era by those seeking to help children living in railway stations in Europe. In particular, the Banshoffsmission in Germany and its work among displaced refugee children has been identified as an instigating model for EE (McDonald 2009; Sexton 2008). The strategy was later developed by Railway Children, a British charity that is concerned about caring for street children in the UK, India and Africa. Railway Children focuses their work primarily in the area of early intervention. Patrick McDonald, founder and international director of Viva, communicated with me in a personal e-mail about the origins of the strategy within Viva:

The seed for EE came from a quiet cup of coffee at Liverpool Street Station in the centre of London [circa May, 2001]. I think the Holy Spirit inspired it. I walked away from a meeting I had just had with David Maidment of Railway Children suddenly knowing what to do. It took years of prayer before we could move further; years spent discussing the concept at various Cutting Edges with Johan Lukasse, Jeff Anderson, Steve Bartel, Brian Wilkinson, Alfredo Mora, Paul Stephenson and many other advisors. Eventually Toybox and Andy Stockbridge felt this could be the answer to their search for an enhanced operational model. (2008)

After the idea of early encounter, McDonald, along with Andy Sexton of Oasis International, worked to develop an early encounter strategy that was applicable to the work that Viva was dedicated to fulfilling through regional networks starting in Latin America. An early document, written by Sexton, was attached to a larger strategy that involved the forming of an alliance, now in existence, called the 180° Alliance- United Global Action with Street Children. The EE document, as written and proposed by Sexton, incorporated several key ideas from earlier understandings of the EE perspective and some new approaches which lead to a synergistic city-wide strategy approach. The EE idea is backed by the understanding that children must be prevented from developing a street lifestyle or be removed from the street at an early stage in the development. According to Sexton:

It has been proven again and again that the longer a child is on the streets, the harder it is for them to leave the streets. Also if a long-term street child can leave the streets, then the longer they have been on the streets, the stronger the pull to return. (2004, 10)

The issue of encountering street and working children at an early stage of their street lifestyle development has long been an area identified by researchers and practitioners as a key intervention (see Lusk 1989; Mickelson 2000; Hecht 1998; C-C Huang 2004). It has been very difficult, however, to identify the means for carrying out such a practice. ETC has narrowed the gap between theory and practice.

It seems that one significant motivating factor for the implementation of such a practice is, in part, politically triggered. McDonald explains:

There has for the past decade or more been a clamor – mostly from City Mayors – to create ‘solutions’ to the challenge of street / community children. Kiev, Cape Town and other cities have elected public officials on a platform of ‘dealing with the problem of street children’. In both Kiev and Cape Town the city turned to Viva for a solution. The challenge of course is that such solutions are expensive, complex and require an alignment of strategy, provision, standards and capacity building and with that a comprehensive approach to prevention. This led me to prayerfully pursue some avenue through which the church could respond to these city

opportunities and be ‘good news in the city’ as it responded to the needs of children dying on the doorsteps of our churches (in the case of Rio de Janeiro that is quite a literal statement). Hence EE. (2009)

The Cochabamba case is not the first to implement such a project, but based upon the literature review and my experience in working among street children populations, the general understanding is that it is the most significant intervention to date. As has been noted by McDonald, the idea that the church is to be the representation of Christ and his good news in the city is a key idea in the contemporary EE model as promoted by Viva and Toybox Charity.

During my visit to Cochabamba I observed several young people that appeared to be moving toward a street lifestyle. Having worked with this population in the past, I was all too aware of the signs of movement toward this lifestyle. Early on in my field work, I was invited by the ETC street educator, Maximo Plata, to accompany him on a street outreach to children working in an outdoor market on *Avenida América*. The market just happened to be several blocks from where I was staying and proved to provide ample opportunity for interactions with a group of NNATS (*Niños, niñas y adolescentes trabajadores*) (children and adolescent workers). The following text from my field notes describes my first encounter:

Woke up this morning at 5:45AM to meet Maximo who is the street educator with ETC. We met just a few blocks from where I am staying. I met up with him a little after 6AM. In getting to where Maximo and the boys were, I walked through the market area where the boys work. All of the stalls and booths were mostly up. Maximo and a group of boys were already playing *futbol* by the time I arrived. Several other boys were leaning over a fire to stay warm. I joined the game and was quickly reminded that “*futbol*” at 8,500 feet is not the same as 3,500 feet in San José. I was panting up and down the field. As the game progressed I got to know a few of the boys. Most of them had arrived very early in order to be the first to get a wheelbarrow in order to help carry groceries for those who would later be coming to buy their items. Some of the boys arrived at 3AM in order to get the best pick of wheelbarrows. After the game we sat around and chatted with a few of the representatives of the project that is working with the children in the market. (Burch August 27th - September 21st, 2009)

As a result of this and other visits with NNATS at *Avenida América* and other places throughout the city,⁹ I observed, with consultation from Maximo and others, the importance of the EE methodology. Detection and prevention appeared to be the two primary approaches to carrying out the strategy.

Implementation of Early Encounter Methodology

Prior to the implementation of ETC, Viva – Bolivia invited twenty organizations and their leaders to a focus group to discuss the needs they were encountering as individual projects. Fifteen of those projects accepted the invitation. As a result of the meetings and discussion of the plausibility of establishing the EE approach, several advantages and disadvantages of initiating the strategy were recognized. The advantages that were acknowledged by those present were:

- All were Christian organizations.
- There would be coordinated effective work.
- There is enough experience to implement the methodology.
- It is best to rescue the child prior to involvement in vices.
- Working together will motivate the work of all the participating organizations.
- Methodology will create more local church support.

Some of the disadvantages recognized were:

- Lack of financial resources to implement the strategy.
- Many of the individuals in the projects are already taxed.

⁹ On Saturday mornings, throughout my time in Cochabamba, I accompanied Maximo and several other workers with an organization called *Audio Visuales Educativos* (known as AVE), to plazas and markets located throughout Cochabamba. Our first visit each morning was at the *Avenida América* market where they are in contact with some 250 children working in the America Market, but specifically work with a registered 154 of them. These children have formed into labor unions. There are 19 unions of child and adolescent workers (*NNATS – Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes Trabajadores*) in Cochabamba that are active politically (Burch August 27th - September 21st, 2009).

- They are lacking in the area of human resources.
- Lack of organization.
- They are not trained in this area. (VIVA - Bolivia with Encuentro Temprano Cochabamba January, 2006, 8-9)

Despite the perceived disadvantages, all agreed on the importance of implementing the work. Fifteen organizations agreed that the methodology would only be effective if they joined forces to work together: Hence the city-wide coordination. In April of 2006 the ETC (originally known as PET or *Proyecto Encuentro Temprano*) was began (Caballero 2009).

Eventually the ETC team and affiliated projects developed vision and mission statements. The vision of ETC is of a “Cochabamba con entidades sociales modelo, capacitadas y comprometidas, con la niñez y adolescencia en situación vulnerable para que alcancen los propósitos de Dios en sus vidas” (Cochabamba with model social organizations trained and committed with the vulnerable children and teens so they can reach God’s purposes for their lives) (translation provided by ETC) (Redviva de Bolivia 2007).

The mission of the ETC is: “Promover procesos de trabajo en red con las familias, iglesias, ministerios, instituciones, gobierno y comunidad para lograr que la niñez y la adolescencia alcancen plenitud de vida” (Promote work processes by networking with families, churches, ministries, organizations, government and community, to achieve reaching vulnerable children and teens so they can reach their lives’ potential) (translation provided by ETC) (Redviva de Bolivia 2007).

In addition to the vision and mission of the ETC, they have established the following values as a social project: *Oración, Amor, Servicio, Integridad, Cooperación, Unidad* (Prayer, Love, Service, Integrity, Cooperation and Unity) (translation mine) (Redviva de Bolivia 2007).

The four primary objectives they have as an organization are:

- Sensibilizar a la Iglesia local con el fin de empoderarla en su misión integral (Sensitize the local church resulting in empowerment for holistic mission).

- Fortalecer a las instituciones, asociadas a través de la aplicación del Sistema de Mejoramiento de Calidad SMC (Strengthen the associated institutions with the quality improvement system).
- Desarrollar el protagonismo en la niñez y adolescencia (Develop *protagonismo* among children and adolescents).
- Implementar la “Metodología de Encuentro Temprano” (Implement the Early Encounter methodology) (translation mine). (Redviva de Bolivia 2007)

The vision and mission statements of the project, along with the values and objectives, provided a helpful lens as I pursued an understanding of the ETC. As a result of the research conducted, several important factors have been identified. The ETC methodology seeks to pull together interested parties by incorporating a city-wide strategy in responding to the issues that street-living and working children (and other at-risk children) face and call the Church to a commitment to care for children at risk. The strategy involves several verified key components. These are:

1. A facilitating body
2. Affiliated projects
3. Kingdom centeredness
4. Prevention
5. Detection
6. Quality care
7. *Protagonismo Infantil* (see figure 3)

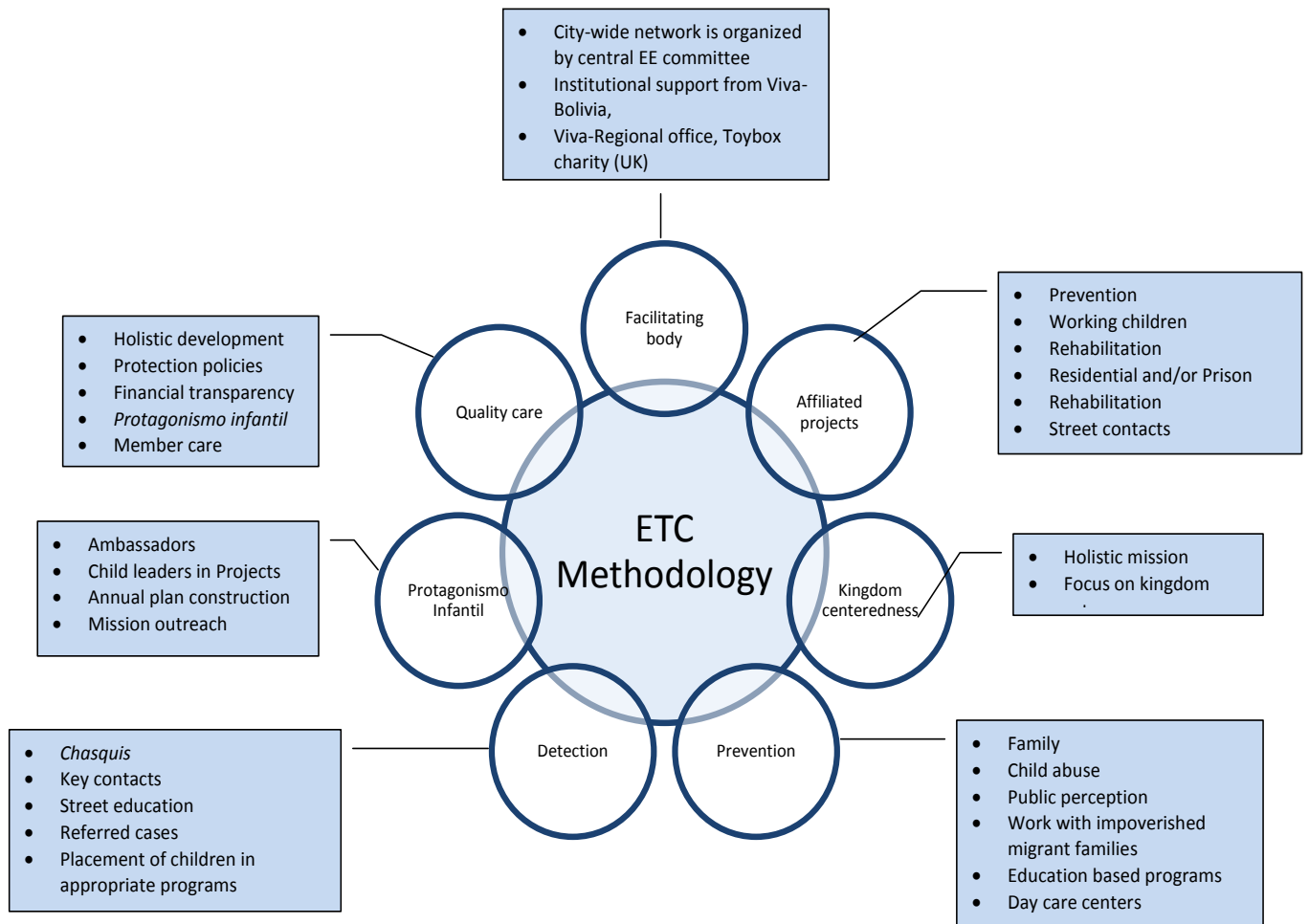


FIGURE 3

ETC METHODOLOGY

As of September, 2008, there were seventeen child-care projects committed to impacting children at risk in the city that have agreed to work together in a city-wide strategy. In addition to the seventeen projects working directly with the children, eleven local churches are also involved, praying and supporting these projects (and in some cases involved directly with their own projects).

A Facilitating Body

The first key component to the on-going success of ETC is the *facilitating body*. In the case of ETC, Viva - Bolivia is coordinating the strategy with help from Toybox Charity and the regional office for Viva in San José, Costa Rica. Sharing a building and office space with Viva – Bolivia is the ETC team. The ETC office is located several blocks from the center of Cochabamba and directly across the street from a park. Children live and work on the street in the neighborhood (Burch August 27th - September 21st, 2009).

The team is made up of the following members: (1) executive director, (2) system of quality improvement coordinator (SMC), (3) *protagonismo*/ambassadors coordinator, (4) street educator, (5) psychologist and EE methodology coordinator, (6) transitional housing coordinator & (6) administrative assistant. The team is a multidisciplinary team that is intentionally formed to direct the work of ETC from their respective disciplines.

Affiliated Projects

A second area that is critical to the makeup of the ETC and certainly important to any city-wide strategy is the *affiliated projects*. Each project that has joined the ETC has agreed to the central vision and mission of the ETC and is in agreement with the core values of the strategy. All organizations affiliated covenant together with the facilitating body (noted as the ETC in the agreement) to commit to the objectives as promoted by the ETC, fulfill the responsibilities as laid out in the inter-institutional agreement (which include, among others, attendance in meetings, participation in the SMC, election of child ambassadors, application of child protection policies etc.) (see table 2).

TABLE 2**AFFILIATED ETC PROJECTS**

(Adapted by author from Toybox - Viva - Bolivia with Encuentro Temprano Cochabamba 2008)

Project Type	Name of Organization	Target Population
Prevention based Intervention	OESER: Escuela Nuevo Conocer	Impoverished (migrant) children, adolescents and families
	Centro Cristiano Evangélico Infantil La Retama	Impoverished children of migrant parents with daycare up to age six
	Guardería Mayorazgo	Impoverished children of migrant parents with daycare up to age six
	Centro Infantil Pequeño Moisés	Children of working parents (Pampa and migrants markets) with daycare for children between the ages of two and six
	Proyecto Centro de apoyo Tío Erik – Esperanza Feliz	Children and adolescent workers coming from impoverished families
	Proyecto Casa de la Amistad	Children and adolescents of imprisoned parents in Cochabamba jails
Street Working Children	Proyecto Jireh	Street working children and adolescents (shoe shining etc.) coming from impoverished migrant families.
	Proyecto Josias	Street working children and adolescents coming from impoverished migrant families.
	Fundación Pequeño David	Children and adolescents coming from impoverished dysfunctional homes.
	Fundación Corazón Grande Casa	Girl children from

Residential Projects	Baste Fanebust	dysfunctional and impoverished homes
	Hogar de Niños y Adolescentes ALALAY Regional Cochabamba	Children and adolescents from extreme poverty situations and dysfunctional homes
	Hogar de Niños y Adolescentes Valle Hermoso	Children and adolescents who have been abandoned and/or orphaned
	Fundación Niños con Valor (Hogar Corazón de Pastor)	Children and adolescents who have been abandoned and/or orphaned
	Bolivian Children’s Mission	Children and adolescents who have been abandoned and/or orphaned
	Hogar de Niñas Evangelina Booth	Children and adolescents who have been abandoned or neglected and/or orphaned
	Hogar: Fundación Sarita	Children and adolescents who have been abandoned or neglected and/or orphaned
Rehabilitation	Comunidad Benefica Esperanza Viva	Families and older youth living in the street

Kingdom Centeredness

A third focus that has been identified as a central tenet is that of *kingdom centeredness*. God’s reign and the extension of his kingdom is a common value held by those participating in the ETC. The majority of those interviewed, identified the importance of carrying out holistic mission to children at risk. This value highlights the significance and application of the objectives established by the ETC (Redviva de Bolivia 2007). The implementation of a social project that is guided by recognized kingdom principles appears to create an exclusive community, but we should be mindful that exclusion does not imply isolation. ETC has found ways to work with other organizations, including governmental, inter-governmental and secular bodies. The relationship that ETC has with SEDEGES (Departmental Service for Social

Administration), the *Defensoria de la Niñez y Adolescencia* (The Defense for Children and Adolescents), non-religious groups, and others demonstrate that they have intentionally created an alliance with other social agencies that might not share their faith, yet share their common goal of creating an environment where children's lives are valued. As a group of organizations and causes dedicated to extending God's reign in society and among children at risk, the ETC and the affiliated projects have not isolated themselves from other institutions that are essential in providing care for children. In fact, they have established some important ties that were lacking prior to the implementation of the EE methodology. In the case of ETC, all seventeen representative projects are Christian organizations committed to holistic ministry with children.

Prevention

A fourth component of the strategy includes the place of prevention. Prevention could be described as the primary method for understanding the EE. In describing the methodology themselves, Toybox, together with ETC make the following comment, “Se espera que . . . se pueda prevenir que mas niños y adolescentes salgan a las calles y eviten el proceso de callejización” (Our hope is that we can prevent more children and adolescents from going to the streets and avoid becoming part of the street scene) (translation mine) (2008, 2). In the case of *Proyecto Josias*, most of the children that attend the project are street working children. The larger focus here is on preventing children from developing a street-lifestyle. Children are cared for while their mothers are working in and around *el centro* (downtown). Most children, if not enrolled in *Proyecto Josias*, would be exposed to other children on the street and could be led toward developing a street lifestyle. This is one project, out of many, which was observed as a representative model for what is taking place in the city-wide strategy. According to Susan Yucra, psychologist and EE methodology coordinator, prevention has been a strong focus recently within the affiliated projects. ETC and the affiliated projects have focused on sensitizing the public on the importance of family unity and strengthening the family unit. This includes conducting workshops on prevention.

Detection

A fifth method is that of *detection*. When children are detected in an at-risk situation vulnerable to turn to the street, ETC responds to the needs of the child. In some cases this includes voluntary removal of the child from the street situation and placing them in a residential program associated with ETC.

While conducting an informal interview with Ines Caballero, she discussed a method for detecting children who have recently arrived on the street. She used the term “*chasqui*,” which in Quechua means something equivalent to a messenger. I was told that a *chasqui* was a trained runner in pre-colonial Latin America that would relay messages and news from one Inca settlement to another. They would frequently make use of key points of interchange between settlements to communicate their messages. The messages that they delivered commonly included an alert of coming trouble. ETC approached the idea of an early encounter from a historical and contextual concept identifying modern *chasqui*'s in town that would be in a position to communicate the needs of children. They primarily identify new children arriving on the street or those heading towards a street lifestyle development. The local churches and their members are frequently the ones who identify the children. The churches are in *key points* throughout the city where the children live and can identify problems occurring within their families (August 30, 2009).

The main idea behind the term *chasqui* is to find key contacts in the city that are in a place to identify children who are at risk of a street-living situation. According to Daniel Cuaquira, director of ETC, the term “*contacto clave*” (key contact) has developed as the primary term used for those who are detecting children that are “*recien llegados*” (recent arrivals). The key contact is a person who is in a fixed position throughout the city (thus differing somewhat from the original idea of a *chasqui*). They respond when they witness a child in a high risk situation. Upon being notified, Maximo Plata (ETC street educator) responds to the child and interviews him or her (September 17, 2008). Of those listed as key contacts with ETC are: (1) Churches (including pastors and congregants), (2) Families (parents), (3) Other children and adolescents, (4) Authorities, (5) Neighbors, (6) Teachers, (7) Project workers and educators, (8) Taxi drivers and, (9) Street workers (Toybox - Viva - Bolivia with Encuentro Temprano Cochabamba 2008;

Burch August 27th - September 21st, 2009; Alba September 10, 2009). One example of this approach can be seen in the Saturday market outreach that I observed. The street educator (as a key person), in working with an outside organization (AVE) responds to the needs he witnesses (or is alerted to by other key contacts) with those children working in the market. If a child is found moving toward a high risk situation the ETC educator can respond to that child (Burch August 27th - September 21st, 2009).

In some cases pastors and church members have been key contacts that have alerted the ETC team of a child at risk. (Burch August 27th - September 21st, 2009). Upon evaluating a case, follow up intervention begins by placing the child in one of the affiliated projects (prevention, child workers, residential or rehabilitation). According to Murray, in 2007, ETC oversaw the placing of 341 new children into affiliated projects:

- The ETC team themselves detected 11 new children in need of care
- 212 children were allocated places in prevention projects
- 65 working children began to attend projects specifically designed to help them
- 30 children were placed in residential homes
- 23 children entered a rehabilitation process. (Murray 2008a, 3)

While researching the ETC, I did not observe any placements of new cases, but did, on several occasions witness investigations of new detections that were being followed up by the street educator (Burch August 27th - September 21st, 2009).

Quality Improvement

A sixth area that has been identified is that of *quality improvement*. Within the ETC, this function is referred to as *Sistema de Mejoramiento de Calidad* or SMC (quality improvement system in English). This implies several concerned targets involving (1) holistic development, (2) protection policies, (3) financial transparency, (4) child participation and (5) member care. Quality improvement takes place gradually and

progressively and has emerged to be a major emphasis within the implementation of the strategy. On my visits to the affiliated projects, I observed that most of the offices contained certificates and diplomas awarded by the ETC SMC program. In one case, the director of *Pequeño David*, proudly pointed out each and every certificate that they had been awarded in connection to the SMC program (Burch August 27th - September 21st, 2009). These policies affect the care of children in both residential and non-residential programs, personnel issues, volunteer placement and relationship with donors. Quality improvement is developed through planned capacity building workshops and training sessions which include inviting outside experts who specialize in the different themes. Projects can identify their own needs and bring attention to these needs through inter-governmental meetings conducted by the ETC team. The ETC and affiliated organizations regularly ask: What is it that we are doing? How are we? Where are we at? Where do we need to improve (Ponce de Leon September 10, 2009)? Part of the quality improvement program includes regular monthly meetings between directors of the affiliated projects. At one such meeting (on September 5, 2008) I observed the following:

Most of the directors (12 out of 20) were present at the meeting that the ETC leadership had called. This was primarily a business meeting of the directors. They come together on a regular basis. One of the items on the agenda was prayer and they also discussed a convenio that was drawn up between ETC and the individual project sites. Each director stood up to receive the convenio and say a few words. Most spoke gratefully about Toybox and Viva for their support. Towards the end of the meeting they read a declaration on the family that discusses several key points on the family from a Biblical perspective. At the end they all agreed upon it being a valuable document. (August 27th - September 21st, 2009)

In addition to this, I noted that

Daniel Cuaquira (ETC director) expressed the need for the projects to support one another. This was especially seen in that he highlighted the needs of *Pequeño David* and the upcoming bake sales that they would be having. A key variable that seems to be holding all of the projects together is found in the ETC leadership. The contact between the organizations is found through the coordination of ETC. This also includes the function of the Ambassadors project which joins together the projects. (August 27th - September 21st, 2009)

The SMC has required that participating organizations be committed to meeting on a regular basis for training purposes. In some cases, the training has rescued the affiliated projects from being forced to close down their programs by SEDEGES (Caballero September 17, 2009).

The director of *Proyecto Jireh*, Rodrigo Sanarbia, highlighted the benefits of the SMC program. In responding to the question, “What role has the ETC had in helping *Proyecto Jireh*?,” the response was: “Revisando la historia y los papeles por este sistema de mejoramiento de calidad que tiene PET se han visto las falencias que tiene este proyecto” (reviewing the history and documents through the ETC’s quality improvement system, we have noted some deficiencies that the project has) (translation mine) (September 11, 2008). The SMC provides a critical link in fulfilling the objectives of the EE methodology being employed in Cochabamba.

Protagonismo Infantil

The seventh detected area of the EE methodology is that of *child and youth protagonismo*. All projects elect (via child led democratic elections) two ambassadors to represent them. In addition, child leaders are also elected within each project to assist the adult leadership in their tasks. This appears to be highly connected with the idea of *protagonismo*. Viva-Bolivia and ETC have come to realize that the very children and youth that they are targeting to help, must be involved with the design, plan and implementation of the projects. Caballero, in responding to the question: “What role do the children play in ETC?” said, “Viva a nivel Nacional en Bolivia y a nivel como centro regional tiene una propuesta de fortalecer todo lo que es el protagonismo y la participación activa en el niño” (At the national level in Bolivia and the regional level, Viva has a proposal to strengthen anything that includes protagonismo and the active participation of the child) (translation mine) (September 17, 2009). This is not to say that all of the projects give the same priority to *protagonismo*, but there appears to be a progression of *protagonismo infantil* in place. Some projects have recognized and support the place of *protagonismo*, while others are still seeking to understand the concept. This

was particularly seen in several visits and interviews. Upon visiting the project *Pequeño David*, the director was apparently confused by the term *protagonismo*. While there was a connection to the idea that the ambassadors and leaders were *protagónicos* (protagonist in their function), there was doubt that the other children in the home were somehow connected with the notion of *protagonismo* (Calle September 15, 2008). Caballero was quick to say in our interview time that in the area of *protagonismo*, “*había que trabajar con los directores y pastores, en el cual un proceso lento pero creemos que efectivo*” (We have had to work with the directors and pastors; this has been a slow process, but an effective one) (translation mine) (September 17, 2009).

A primary tool within the ETC to encourage *protagonismo* is the child ambassador program that has been initiated. The ambassadors are elected to help represent and speak up for the children in each project. Monthly meetings are carried out by the ambassadors and are organized with the help of an adult facilitator who provides training and general orientation for the children. The ambassadors have represented their projects before governmental bodies, professional athletic departments as well as churches and NGO’s. In a document called, “*¿Qué es un Embajador o una Embajadora?*” (What is an Ambassador?), several key aspects of the projects emphasis on *protagonismo infantil* are revealed. The document, written in conjunction with the children, states:

- Somos un niño/una niña (o adolescente) que representamos a nuestros compañeros de Proyecto y a todos los de la Red P'unchay frente a nuestros amigos de Toy Box (We are a child or adolescent that represent our companions in our project and everyone from the P'unchay network [now known as the ETC] before our friends at Toy Box).
- Como embajadores favorecemos a los niños, niñas y adolescentes de nuestro proyecto (As ambassadors we give priority to the children and adolescents of our project).
- El propósito de Dios para que nosotros seamos Embajadores es que alcancemos Plenitud de Vida (The purpose of God is that as ambassadors we reach fullness of life).
- Como Embajadores colaboramos para que cada uno de nuestros Proyecto alcancen más calidad en sus servicios, reflejando así, la excelencia a la que

Dios nos llamó (As ambassadors we collaborate with each of our projects so that they reach quality in their services reflecting the excellence in which God has called them) (translation mine). (VIVA - Bolivia with Encuentro Temprano Cochabamba n.d.)

The EE methodology is not something that was developed over night. The history of the approach goes back to at least the years following World War II. The idea has been developed by Europeans, North Americans, Latin Americans, Africans and Asians. In the case of ETC, the methodology has been developed by Bolivians with insights from previous experiences. While the ETC methodology as a whole provides a critical intervention needed by children and adolescents in Cochabamba, my concern with the idea of child empowerment in this study is the primary research focus and it is to this issue that I will now turn.

CHAPTER 4

EMPOWERING CHILDREN IN COCHABAMBA

The issue of empowerment has long been an intriguing concept in the study and practice of caring for street-living and working children. My original understanding of how empowerment strategies play a part in encouraging young people in the street to move toward a healthier lifestyle has been altered as a result of this study. Empowerment has traditionally been understood as a form of enablement. That is, you have one (the powerful) handing over control and power to another agent. A classic understanding is provided by Robert Weissberg in his critical look into the concept. He says “to ‘empower’ or ‘to be empowered’ then becomes the acquiring of power” (1999, 16). This has become a common understanding in development work.

The Dominate Outreach Pattern

In Christian mission to children at risk today there appears to be two primary paradigms that stand out as visible examples of how children are understood in society. One method contains empowerment strategies that focus on the creativity and innovativeness of the child, while the other one is primarily concerned with protection and tends to be highly influenced by the notion that children should be recipients of care and not necessarily involved in adult-like decisions. Both of these methods are potentially found in what I call the dominate outreach pattern (DOP). While these paradigms may appear to be polar opposites, most mission outreaches to children contain some form of each perspective.

The DOP incorporates several interventions that are designed to meet the needs of children living and/or working in the street and progressing in a street lifestyle development (see figure 4). This model highlights the needs children have in regards to

shelter, food, hygiene and education. This is frequently presented as the methodology of choice among evangelical Christians (Anderson 2001; Kilbourn 1996, 1997; Derbyshire n.d.; Hecht 1998; Kilbourn 2006). While most ministries are not in a position to incorporate all such interventions, they seek to incorporate at least one with the vision to incorporate others in due time.

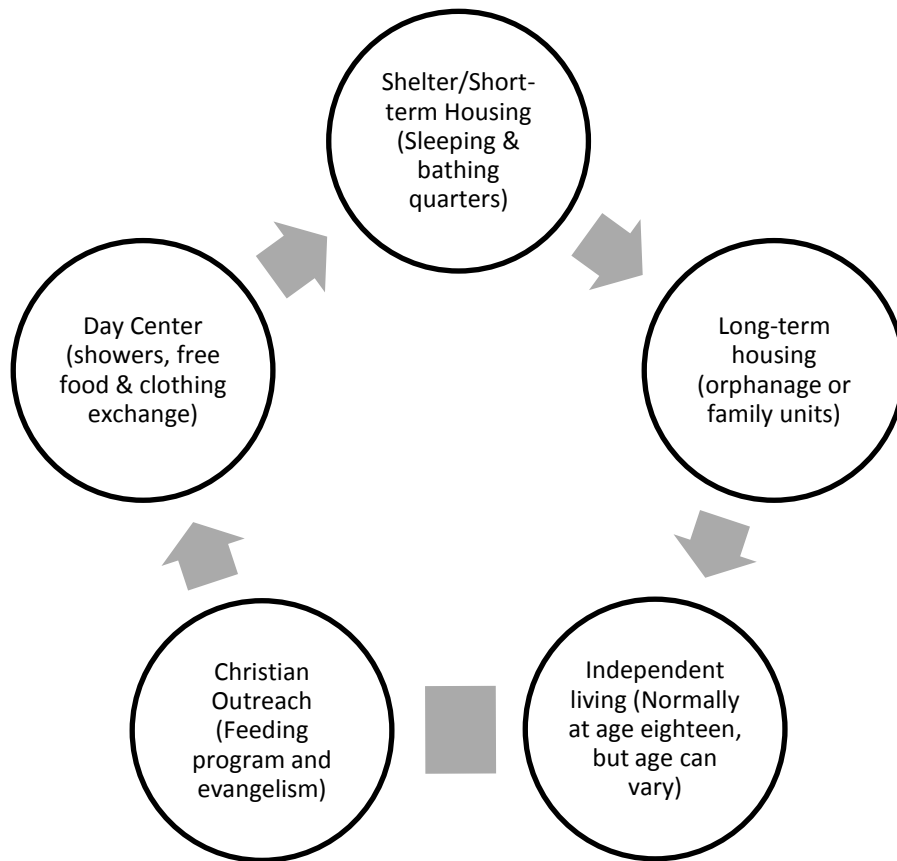


FIGURE 4

DOMINATE OUTREACH PATTERN (DOP)

The interventions as seen in the DOP are themselves simply a means to incorporate a specific response to street-living and working children. While this model and its individual parts (i.e. street outreach, shelter, long-term residential care etc.) are

most commonly reflected in Christian literature as best practices, the idea that they can be carried out via a city-wide strategy is infrequent. The DOP model helps us to understand the place of intervention to street-living and working children within the ETC context. Prior to joining the ETC, the affiliated groups were primarily concerned with carrying out their own methodology. Each and every project now associated with the ETC is fulfilling a calling or passion to care for children at risk via a recognized outreach program. Some of these programs could be considered street outreach, while others were more concerned with prevention or residential care for children. In coming together as a city-wide strategy, ETC now as a whole, appears to be a little closer to fulfilling the DOP in its entirety.

Empowerment and Children in the Early Encounter Project

The issue of empowering children and youth coming out of a street lifestyle has played a key variable in my research up to this point. Previous to this study, I imagined empowerment to be the means to creating what I vaguely understood to be *protagonismo infantil* (this is reflected in my theoretical proposal concerning this issue). I theorized that empowerment was the means to reaching *protagonismo infantil*.

As it turns out, the findings were not consistent with my proposition. Some of the results pointed toward empowerment terminology most commonly understood on an institutional level (i.e. churches are empowered). Some recognition of empowerment terminology was understood in political and class warfare discussion. Going into the research I assumed that I would find something on the issue of empowering children. As was mentioned above, I was intrigued as I began to find very little use of the term empowerment within EE by those I was interviewing. The term was also absent in the documentation that I was presented by both the ETC facilitating team and the affiliated projects. The actual word in Spanish for empowerment is “*empoderamiento*.” Upon asking about the idea there was mixed responses. In one case I was told that empowerment terminology was more appropriate on an institutional level (Cuaquira

August 29, 2008). In other words, churches can be empowered, or NGO's can be empowered in their work.

The director of Viva-Bolivia provided a helpful response to the issue. While acknowledging the word and idea as an important concept that can help in enabling young people, she carefully presented a case for why empowerment can become one more obstacle in providing help for children. In a response to a question that identified a child-involved political rally I observed and participated in, she makes the following comment:

“Parte donde los empoderan mucho pero no les muestran el otro lado que el empoderamiento también implica responsabilidades con el otro, comunidad y su familia, entonces hemos vistos procesos en los cuales los niños bien empoderados hasta se han escapado de sus casas porque se sienten demasiado suficientes . . .” (part where they empower them a lot but do not show to the children the other side of empowerment. Empowerment also includes responsibility toward the other, their community, their family, so we have seen processes where children have become so empowered that they escape their homes because they feel self-sufficient) (translation mine) (Caballero September 17, 2009).

Weissberg, in commenting on the apparent blind acceptance of empowerment by social scientists and others, affirms that “if this treatment were instead a potentially dangerous chemical or diet pill, not a social science nostrum, the need for closer scrutiny would be obvious” (1999, 6). Not only does he critique the lack of serious research dedicated to the topic, but in a similar vein as that of Caballero, is concerned by the potential outcome of empowering people in a reckless manner. Weissberg states that “considerable evidence also strongly hints that suddenly empowering society's have-nots may unleash forces detrimental to democracy” (1999, 41). It's not that Caballero was against the idea of empowering children, but rather in a way that is guided by Christian values. There were others in Cochabamba who recognized empowerment as a result of *protagonismo infantil*.

What I originally presumed to be empowerment leading to *protagonismo*, is understood by some of those participating in the ETC as *protagonismo* resulting in empowerment (Lino September 9, 2008). ETC documentation did not use the term in

reference to childhood, but rather on an institutional level (i.e. the church, project, etc.) nor did it make references to empowerment as a strategy. Given the variance of responses received by those interviewed, my original understanding of empowerment has been altered. A possible rival explanation to the lack of congruity in the response leads me to believe that some mistakenly took empowerment to be associated only in political terms. The context of Bolivia most likely blurs the concept resulting in an understanding that increased power results in oppression by the powerful.

Paternalism

My interest in whether or not empowerment and child participation were apparent in the ETC came out of a number of concerns that I have had with Christian mission to children at risk. I have frequently observed Christian ministries that have created models (taking into account the DOP as a whole or in part) where children are viewed only as recipients and subject to one way communication. Child protection is regularly cited as the primary motivation for why some organizations exist. Frequently the children and youth themselves are not taken into account during project development or planning. They are viewed as passive recipients to a number of rules and adult-made decisions. My interest in looking at the ETC model was to seek to understand what, via literature review, seemed to include an empowerment strategy that takes into account the place of children and adolescents in the decision making process. Prior to an understanding of *protagonismo infantil* within the context of ETC, an acquaintance of paternalism will be important. When children are not consulted or given a role in a social project aimed at caring for them, it could be considered a form of *paternalism*.

While the term paternalism was not referred to by the respondents often in their responses, the idea was frequently discussed. Interesting enough, it was primarily adults who made references to paternalism. Most children identified adult-centered policies as a source of frustration for them. It seems that paternalism occurs when there is lack of recognition by adults of children as social actors (Josue (pseudonym) child ambassador September 11, 2009).

While participating in a training event in preparation for a campaign against child abuse (attended by elected child leaders and ambassadors) I observed an interesting encounter between an adult leader and a teenage girl. The training consisted of several hypothetical situations where groups of children were asked to decide whether the treatment the people were receiving was positive, negative or just unclear. I was appointed by the child ambassador's coordinator to help with posting the decisions made by the children under their respective columns on a large piece of paper. My primary task in attending the event was to observe and become acquainted with the children, as I would be visiting many of their projects in the weeks to come.

One of the more vigorous discussions occurred between the adult leader and teenage girl (13 or 14 years old). This is the scenario that the group was given: A girl was walking down the street when a group of boys from behind her called out to her saying "*Adios belleza*" (Goodbye beautiful). The adult woman immediately expressed her opinion and stated that it was a nice gesture by the group of boys. It was of her opinion that it was good of the boys to comment on her physical appearance. Most in the group were silent and listened to the adult leader, not agreeing or disagreeing. The young teenage girl felt it was "*maltrato*" (abusive behavior) and made her opinion be known. The adult leader responded saying "¡No, es algo bueno, no es maltrato!" (No, it is something good, not abusive) (translation mine). After several minutes of discussing the issue, the adult leader came up with the idea that they should have a democratic vote. "Democracy would decide" she said. The children were then led to vote for what they felt was the appropriate response. The majority decided it was "unclear." It was apparent that the adult leader was going to have her way and continued to argue her point, even after the vote, using her power of persuasion to get the students to see her side. The young girl continued with her belief that it was inappropriate for the boys to call out to the girl in the hypothetical situation (Burch August 27th - September 21st, 2009).

I noted several paternalistic dimensions to this conversation: (1) The adult leader dominated the opinions of the children and adolescents, (2) The girl child's opinion was not welcomed or respected, and (3) The adult leader was observed using her power as an adult, despite the results of the democratic vote, to persuade children to understand her

perspective. *Protagonismo* was also observed as the girl in the meeting disagreed with the adult leader and communicated her opinions despite the adult not recognizing her voice.

Children involved in several of the focus groups that were conducted in the projects expressed the need to allow for children to speak freely into issues. The children present in these groups underscored that they have not, in the past, been able to share their opinions as frequently as now, or take part in the planning of the projects (Josue (pseudonym) child ambassador September 11, 2009). This underscores the success of the ETC quality improvement program in working with project leaders to understand the importance of such a paradigm (Cuaquira September 17, 2008). Children are now recognized as participants due to the reinforcement of *protagonismo* brought on by the ambassador model. However, it appears that children still have limited roles in designing and planning individual projects.

While a recognition of child *protagonismo* empowers, paternalism appears to take away the opportunity for children to bring about change to their own lives and situation. Two distinctions have been made about paternalism in literature. Manfred Liebel makes a distinction between traditional and modern paternalism. In discussing the subject, Liebel argues that traditional paternalism consists of the adult taking all actions on behalf of the child. This view perceives the child only as an object and too immature to participate in making any decisions on their own behalf (2007, 58). Liebel describes modern paternalism as the child's ability to participate within the limited world of childhood, but not beyond that. This modern type of paternalism has replaced the traditional approach to this adult centered perspective (2007, 58).

Unfortunately there are some Christian programs that would fall under what is considered traditional and/or modern paternalism. I am not suggesting that the DOP (as seen above) is *always* paternalistic. Most programs are neutral avenues for Christian outreach, with potential for either paternalism or a type of empowerment or *protagonismo*. Most of the adults interviewed agreed that children who are especially caught up in dangerous health and environmental conditions on the street should be

persuaded to leave such a condition.¹⁰ Despite a vigorous conversation on the issue of child protection vis à vis *protagonismo*, there was a consensus on not removing children and adolescents on the street by force (Cuaquira September 18, 2008; Plata September 18, 2008; Ponce de Leon September 18, 2008). The implications of such a view are an important aspect to the findings in this project and will be followed up in the following sections.

Dialogical Relationships

Given the emphasis Paulo Freire places upon the issue of dialogical relationships as a means to achieving empowerment and ultimately what he refers to as *conscientização* (consciousness-raising), the issue was one of my theoretical propositions going into the study. In regard to this, Freire says, “founding itself upon love, humility, and faith, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust between dialoguers is the logical consequence” (1993, 91). He promotes what could be referred to as a horizontal dialog between two humans wanting to understand a social issue (i.e. structural issues contributing to an increase of street living children). This is contrasted to what is a top/down approach, frequently referred to as the “bank deposit” form of gaining knowledge. While the issue is an important one, little data was collected on the issue. Bank deposit approaches to caring for children were certainly observed in my research, but there appeared to be a movement toward the dialogical relationship model. Dialogical relationship terminology was not used by those interviewed or in the focus groups. However I did observe some adult and child interactions and discussions leading to new paradigms. In addition, conclusions for 2008/2009 activities at an ambassadors meeting were arrived at through adult/child dialog. Dialog proved to be helpful as adults and children discussed issues of manipulation. Ines Caballero talked about the importance of negotiating with a child who is moving toward a street lifestyle. She said children cannot

¹⁰ The topic of protection over *protagonismo* was a theme that generated a lot of discussion among the ETC leadership during one of our focus groups. I observed several disagreements when the team was asked at what age children should be forced to leave the street. Most agreed that very young toddlers and infants should be removed from the street, but even then some did not agree with the idea of removing children from the street-living family.

be forcefully removed from the street. It must include dialog (August 30, 2009). I also observed child ambassadors and ETC leadership dreaming together about future plans. The dialog did not appear to be hierarchical based decision making, but rather horizontal (Burch August 27th - September 21st, 2009).

While the term that has been developed by Freire and others was absent from the responses that I received in regards to how child/adult relationships are formed, it became apparent in practice that some form of this type of relationship was developing. Children connected with the ambassadors program were observed conversing with the adult leadership over social and religious issues. On one occasion the children, through dialog with the adult leadership, appeared to have developed a sense of consciousness about an issue in regards to how they should portray themselves before government and other figures. During the first children's encounter (an annual ETC/Viva conference) the children conducted an interview with the prefect (governor) of Sucre. The prefect desired to hear from the children about their ideas on child abuse and prevention. The ETC leadership only facilitated the meeting and accompanied the children. Prior to the meeting the children suggested that they should cry in order to really get the prefects attention. The ETC staff conversed with the children about this in order to help them understand that Bolivia needs to move away from *asistencialismo*. In other words, there was an interaction about the traditional role that children have had in Bolivian society and the children's role as protagonists (Caballero September 17, 2009). This decision was not forced upon the children, but was rather discussed openly resulting in a positive outcome for the children and ultimately the country.

Protagonismo Infantil in Early Encounter

My interest in understanding the place of empowerment in Christian mission has led me to a new understanding of children as social actors. As was mentioned previously, empowerment appears to be a tenet within *protagonismo infantil* and not the other way around. There was a concern among the director of Viva-Bolivia that the concept can be misleading if there is not a full proper understanding in light of a positive *protagonismo*

understanding (Caballero August 30, 2009). The research points to another perspective on empowerment which will shed light on the concept. What I originally perceived to be comparable to child participation, has resulted in what could be interpreted as a meta-construction that, while incorporating participation, cannot be assumed to be equivalent with participation or even empowerment. I found that while *protagonismo infantil* is similar to child participation, *protagonismo* is identified as something superior than just participation (see figure 5). *Protagonismo infantil* includes the idea that children are defending their own rights and gaining access to speak into issues that affect the community (Rut (pseudonym) child ambassador September 11, 2008). It does not appear to be an external empowerment, as Weisberg understood the concept, but rather an endogenous empowerment. The data also points to the idea that *protagonismo infantil* goes beyond self promotion and touches upon issues of transformation of self and community. Cuaquira highlights the notion that *protagonismo* includes the idea that a child “*tenga la capacidad de construir su propia vida*” (have the capacity to construct their own lives” (translation mine) (September 18, 2008). Children as protagonists have a God-given competence and ability to act (participate).

There must be recognition of human agency if we are to have a proper understanding of *protagonismo*. A classic understanding of agency is connected to the early work of socialist author Edward Palmer Thompson. Agency is perceived as a conscious effort to create history and then to bring about change in that very history (1963, 12). One can note the notions of creation and change as essential elements in his definition.

In the case of British sociologist, Anthony Giddens, agency refers to a “continuous flow of conduct” by individuals in contrast to “discrete acts combined together” (1979, 55). The word “action” is the predominant idea that is connected with agency. Certainly if we were to look to the use of the concept by Thompson, action is needed to create history. Children in essence, as protagonists, are creating history.

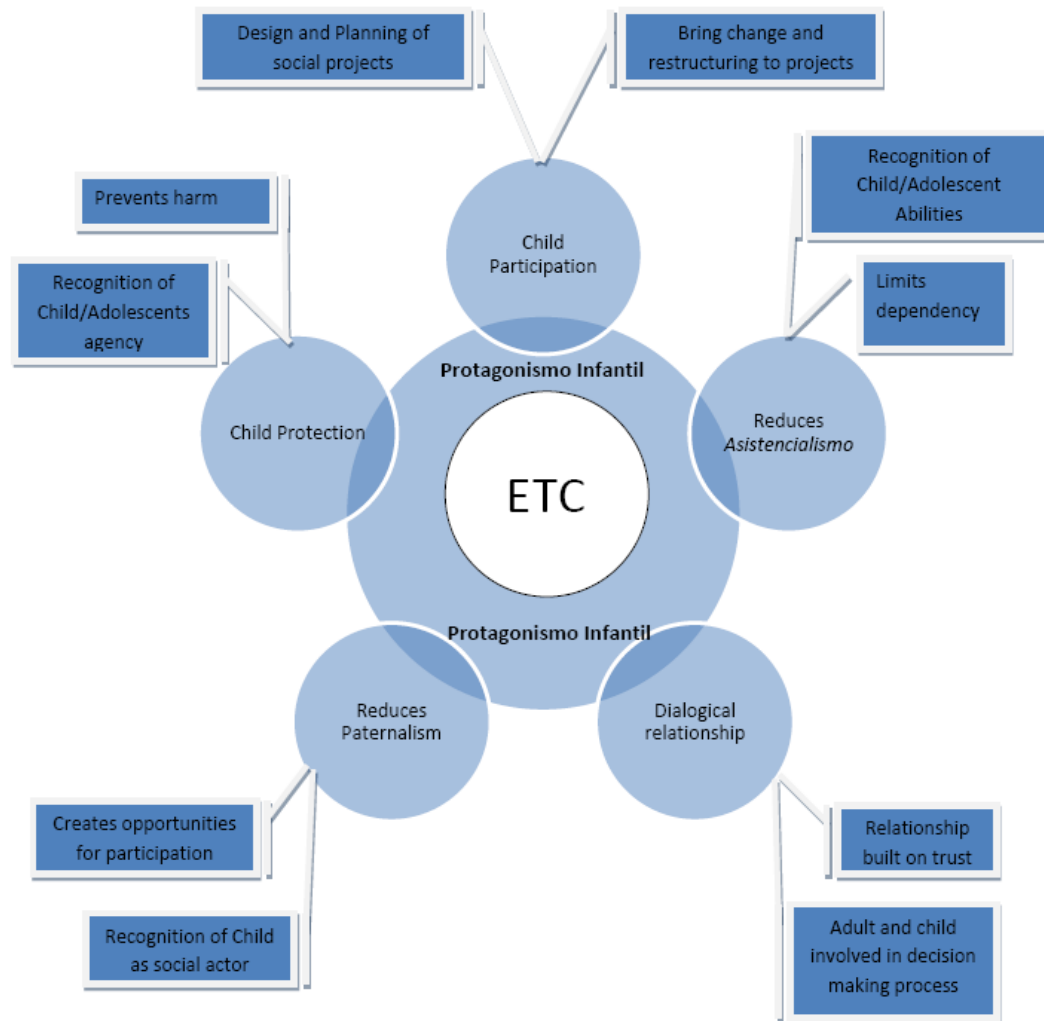


FIGURE 5

ETC PROTAGONISMO MODEL

One example of this understanding can be seen in the way of political participation. A number of the children, in discussing national politics, believed that they should be permitted to vote at the age of fourteen or fifteen¹¹. There was a general consensus that they should not have to wait until they are eighteen. In part, their conclusion was that some children have more abilities and sophisticated political

¹¹ The reader should note that most of the children in attendance were the ages of fourteen and fifteen.

opinions than some adult's. This underscores the desire they have to express their opinions in the area of politics and beyond. Nearly all the children (six in attendance) expressed a sense of discouragement when I probed about how they felt when their opinions were not taken into account. This was also echoed by subsequent focus groups in several of the projects that were visited (Angie (pseudonym) child ambassador September 11, 2008; Marisela (pseudonym) child ambassador September 11, 2008). Whether it is in the arena of politics or the design and plan of a social program that will benefit themselves and other children, young people desire to participate and bring about a transformation to their world.

While political and social transformation became an important discussion for children and adults alike, the issue of *protagonismo* within a kingdom perspective became especially intriguing for this study. In focus groups with children, several themes were oriented around the issue of transformation and missional engagement as protagonists. Children not only appear to take far greater interest in political discussions, but kingdom transformation as well.

Children involved in the ETC (specifically the Child Ambassador project) are change agents that focus on transformation in society: Just the fact that they exist and breathe point to their transformation of society. According to David Lino, coordinator of the Ambassador project, the children “tienen clara su posición como protagonistas de su generación que necesitan dar a conocer a la sociedad . . . transformación a través de todo esto, la generación de valores bíblicos y también la defensa de sus derechos” (The children have it very clear that they are the protagonists of their generation that they should make known to society that . . . there should be a transformation through biblical values and the defense of their rights) (translation mine) (September 9, 2009). As agents of change, the children have participated in global prayer campaigns where local politicians have been prayed for and interviewed. They have gone to those that exercise their influence over others. Even some athletic departments have been changed through their contact with the children. It is not only the ambassadors that are protagonists, but other children as well. This can be seen in the campaign against child abuse called the “*Campaña de Buen Trato*” (Good treatment campaign). Some of the child ambassadors

have taken part in HIV/AIDS prevention and have cared for other children by collecting toys, clothes and school articles (Lino September 9, 2009). The children themselves are not just recipients of care, but are caregivers as well and this is most obvious when childcare workers provide the space for children as social actors.

Asistencialismo

During my tenor as director of *Niños de la Luz* in Caracas, I was frequently concerned that our work with the children was creating dependency and maintaining some children on the street. This was the last thing we wanted to do. Yet frequently we caught ourselves feeling like the children were more concerned with the food and clothes we were giving them than moving toward a healthier lifestyle. Others have also identified this as a concern among projects working with children. Hecht describes it as “short-term paternalistic handouts shunned by most activist organizations, [that] are cherished by the kids” (1998, 187). While most activist organizations in the Brazilian context, at least where Hecht was conducting his research in Olinda, Recife, rejected *asistencialismo*, this is not always the case. Very little, if any, is mentioned in Christian literature focused on reaching street-living and working children. Most approach the children with some form of the DOP without any concern or awareness that some children are actually being maintained in the street. According to Caballero, the methodology of many of the projects prior to joining ETC was *asistencialista* (a form of over helping thus creating dependency). Caballero gives the following example:

Por ejemplo. ¿Tú conoces a Tío Erik si? . . . para ellos es el trabajo de atención a niños en el área de prevención o niños en situación de calle era darles chocolate dos veces a la semana, chocolate con leche . . . o proyectos que salían a la calle y les llevaban dos veces a la semana desayuno a los niños en situación de calle, venía otro proyecto en la noche y les llevaba la cena. ¿Entonces para que el niño iba a salir de la calle si les llevaban toda la comida? (You know Tío Erik right? . . . for them the work of preventing or children in the Street was to give them chocolate two times a week, chocolate with milk . . . or projects that go to the street would take breakfast tot eh children twice a week, while other projects would provide dinner two times a week, so why would a child leave the

street if they take them all of their food?) (translation mine). (September 17, 2009)

While I did not detect any obvious signs of *asistencialismo* among the projects, I noted several concerns in my field notes:

I witnessed the children being fed at several services for no fees. Food was free. I was concerned by free services at several of the centers, including *Jireh* and *Josias*. Would providing these services for a small fee help to reduce a help-ism that seems to be apparent in these two projects? Given the food at *Josias* and *Jireh* is free. Parents bring children to the project to feed them. Is it that the children do not have enough at home to eat? Or is it that the parents and the children take advantage of the free food and services? (Burch August 27th - September 21st, 2009)

Child Protection and Protagonismo Infantil

The issue of protecting children is a dominate theme in the ETC methodology and concern among the facilitating body. Child protection policies are compulsory among affiliated projects and a central quality improvement target. This manifests itself in the elaboration of a manual within each affiliated project that is focused on protecting children from internal and external abuse, negligence and/or manipulation. The coordinator of the SMC, Claudia Ponce de Leon, explains that “buscamos específicamente a través de ese modulo es dentro lo posible tener un documento elaborado de políticas de protección trabajar mucho este tema de protección como organización” (As much as possible, through the model, we are seeking to elaborate a document focused on a child protection policies in order to work on the issue of child protection as an organization) (translation mine) (Ponce de Leon September 10, 2009). Not all of the projects have developed thorough protection policy manuals, but they are moving in that direction.

How does child protection and *protagonismo infantil* connect when incorporated into an affiliated project? In other words, how might we preserve the concept of *protagonismo*, yet while not forfeiting child protection? Child protection is an obvious need and noted by both children and adults alike in interviews and focus groups. Child

abuse (in all of its forms) is recognized as an issue that must be addressed by the Church. The documentation and interviews conclude that child protection should be a priority yet should not take place over the child as *protagonista* (protagonist). According to the ETC facilitating body, children have a fundamental right to construct their own lives (Cuaquira September 18, 2008). ETC leadership disagreed with forced removal of children from street, but rather pointed toward dialog and persuasion over and above coercion (Cuaquira September 18, 2008; Ponce de Leon September 18, 2008). During a stimulating discussion on child protection and its relationship with *protagonismo infantil*, there were disagreements and contradictions on how children living in dangerous conditions should be cared for. There was a noted difference between how the ETC leadership focused on *protagonismo infantil*, and how the affiliated project leaders viewed the subject. Project leaders focused more on the idea that children need to be rescued. Given that project leaders are in direct contact with children in need of protection on a regular basis leads to the tendency to view rescues as necessary. The ETC leadership, while not emphatically, holds a theoretical position that identifies and gives priority to *protagonismo infantil* in most, if not all circumstances. In rare circumstances ETC leadership recognizes the need for rescue and forced protection (Ponce de Leon September 18, 2008).

The Bible and Protagonismo Infantil

Among the child participants in several focus groups, *protagonismo infantil* was recognized through biblical passages. A couple of the more predominate biblical references that were pointed to were the following: (1) David (and more specifically the David and Goliath story), (2) King Josiah and, (3) Jesus visiting the temple with his parents (Marisela (pseudonym) child ambassador September 11, 2008; Angie (pseudonym) child ambassador September 11, 2008).

In the case of David (1 Samuel 17), he was identified as a young person who acted and brought about change in society. David was portrayed as a biblical example to follow for young people who seek to find central roles as actors in society. One young

child ambassador described the story of David winning his battle with Goliath and used the passage to make reference to the idea that some children have opinions that are more thoughtful and accurate than adults (Josue (pseudonym) child ambassador September 11, 2009). The context of this statement was in reference to adult leaders within child-care projects. When children's ideas and thoughts are not valued, children frequently feel disempowered and look to stories such as David and Goliath for strength.

A second biblical passage was that of King Josiah (2 Kings 22:1-23:30). King Josiah ruled over the Israelites and "*he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and walked in all the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left*" (2 Kings 22:2). We are told that Josiah was age eight when he began his rule and that he died fighting against the pagan Pharaoh Neco, king of Egypt, ending his thirty-one year reign as king (Konkel 2006, 633) (see 2 Kings 23:29). Josiah was the supreme example of a king and "is the only king to turn to God 'in accordance with the law of Moses'" (Konkel 2006, 639) (see 2 Kings 23:5). The children and adults looked to Josiah as a positive example of *protagonismo infantil*.

A third passage that was mentioned is that of Jesus at the age of twelve teaching leaders in the synagogue in Luke 2:41-52. This story was frequently referred to over and over by both adults and child participants in the interviews and focus groups. Jesus was portrayed as the ultimate understanding of children acting in society with positive *protagonismo* (Josue (pseudonym) child ambassador September 11, 2009; Cuaquira September 18, 2008) There was no distinction made between the historical Jesus and children today. To many of those interviewed, he was simply a child, acting out in a way that was bringing about transformation in his community. These and other passages are seen through the eyes of children and adults who are concerned with child empowerment issues.

CHAPTER 5

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MISSIONAL PRACTICE

Many research reports have ended up cluttering bookshelves and collecting dust. It is my hope (and that of those who participated in this research project) that this work will speak into current best practices among street-living and working children today. While the notion of Participant Action Research (PAR) has influenced this project, it is certainly not in the purest sense *action research*, but it is my aspiration that this very study will bring about a new engagement with street-living and working children.

Several concerns have been identified as a result of the research analysis. These recommendations are not directed toward the ETC project as such, but are rather general recommendations for city-wide strategy efforts in the region and possibly beyond. That being said, the following recommendations could enhance the outreach being carried out in Cochabamba and other cities in Bolivia.

The Importance of Contextualization

While ETC is an important model to follow when pursuing a city-wide strategy, it is not the only model. The early encounter strategy has evolved as the ETC leadership has reflected on the process. This is common and valuable. It is through monitoring, evaluation, reflection and action that we improve outreach to children at risk. This has certainly been the case with ETC. The idea behind a city-wide strategy is to involve as many stakeholders in a community as possible as we intervene in the lives of children at risk. In most cases the process will not be a simple cut and paste exercise. The model must bear a contextual understanding of a particular city, community and society. One of my primary concerns with the DOP, as it is currently used, is the way in which it is

modeled without regard to culture or microculture. Glauser, in speaking into this issue, argues that it is unacceptable “that international organizations, policy makers, social institutions and individuals who feel entitled to intervene in the lives of children with problems, do so on the basis of obviously unclear and arbitrary knowledge about the reality of these children’s lives” (1997, 150). Unfortunately many Christian churches and organizations fall deservedly under this criticism.

One way to abandon a paternalistic approach to working with these young people is to include them as participants in Christian programs. For who better to know the context in which children live and survive than the children themselves? ETC and its leadership haven taken care to understand, via research, monitoring and evaluation, the needs that children in Cochabamba have (i.e. Murray 2008a; VIVA "Juntos por la Niñez" - Bolivia with Encuentro Temprano Cochabamba 2006, 2008a, 2008b). Given their careful and culturally sensitive intervention, they have for the large part avoided the criticism that Glauser attributes toward those working in situations that have been isolated from contextual knowledge.

Locally Constructed Relationship

As a Christian concerned about children at risk, I believe we must engage children with a missional response that is developed on a local level. This moves us toward what can be described as a *locally constructed relationship*. The outcomes from this type of relationship are unpredictable, but with input from both concerned children and adults as participants in the design and planning process we move toward a model that is both contextual and transforming. If we fail to include children as part of the development process of such a strategy, we lose the very essence of a locally constructed relationship between outside organizations, local leadership and the child participants. This relationship should be based upon the idea that childhood is understood in plural forms, not a singular one.¹² While this relationship and the methodology that results from this

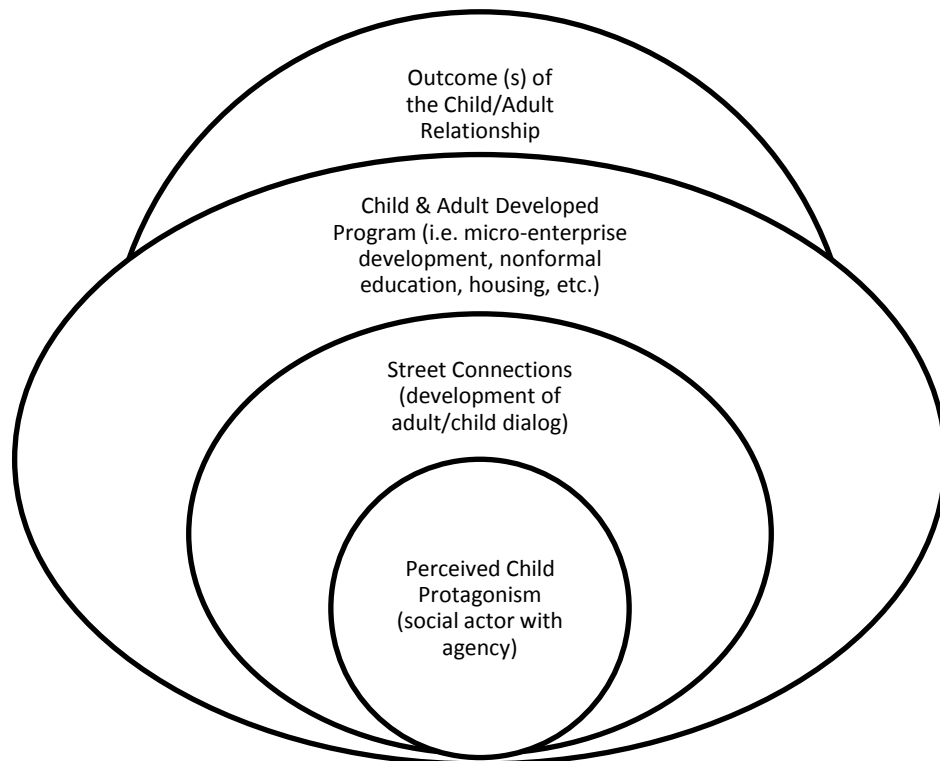
¹² In the book *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood*, Allison James and Alan Prout argue for a new paradigm in childhood studies. This study is largely based upon a social constructivist theory. This emerging paradigm can be described in several key elements that consist of the following: (1)

are dynamic, several central tenets of this approach are recommended. Among some of the elements of this relationship are: dignity, agency, protection and provision of basic needs, consciousness-raising and empowerment (see figure 6).

Toward an Understanding of Human Dignity

The locally constructed relationship must be based upon the notion of human dignity. This theme is primarily understood in looking to the *imago Dei* concept. Because human dignity is something that is God conferred, through the *imago Dei*, “its measure and norm is not in social convention but in God . . . [and] consists not so much in self-possession as in dispossession, not so much in entering into oneself but in reaching out in love and care to the other” (Soulen 2006, 6). Jesus is our example in caring for others who are made in God’s image. One clear example of the kind of human care that Jesus represents is read in Mark 1:40-45 as Jesus interacts with a leper. The passage clearly provides us with a great example of how to care for people as image bearers.

Childhood must be understood as a social construction instead of a universal concept; (2) Childhood is understood as distinct from biological maturity (1997, 8); (3) Childhood must never be fragmented from other social analysis variables such as, gender, class or ethnicity (1997, 3-4); (4) The relationships of children and even their own specific cultures deserve to be studied independent of how adults think in regards to childhood. For this to be realized children must not be viewed as socially inactive objects, as is frequently found in structural determinism. (1997, 4); (5) There must be room for constructing and reconstructing childhood in society and children must be perceived as the primary actors in this role. (1997, 8); (6) Ethnography is the method of choice due to the place children are given in communicating their own thoughts and opinions (1997, 8) and; (7) “Childhood is a phenomenon in relation to which the double hermeneutic of the social sciences is acutely present” (see Giddens 1976, 1984). The double hermeneutic here, incites us to go beyond the engagement process of the new paradigm and to respond to the process of reconstructing a new childhood in society (1997, 8).



Locally constructed relationship based upon: Dignity, Human Agency, Consciousness-Raising and Empowerment, Protection and Provision of basic needs

FIGURE 6

LOCALLY CONSTRUCTED RELATIONSHIP

We are told that Jesus “*filled with compassion*” (vs. 41), while wandering the outside of the city, touches and heals a leper. It was precisely this kind of compassion that was keenly witnessed as project directors and team members reached out to children involved in the ETC. We are told that when Jesus saw the leper he did not look away, but rather responded to this deep felt need through a healing touch. This was a natural response for someone under the influence of God’s divine power (Mark 1:10). We must recognize that Jesus had much more than pity. Pity, looks, sees and feels but stops there. Compassion asks us to go where it hurts and to enter into the pain of those we wish to care for (Romans 12:15-16). Christian child-care agencies are in the best place to incarnate the compassion that was revealed in Jesus.

As the locally constructed relationship flourishes, the group that is responding to the needs of the children will seek to care for each child through a compassionate response. This response is based on human dignity. In the words of Dan Brewster:

God showed his respect for children by taking time for them and making them a priority—even when the disciples had no time for them. He valued them by making them examples of godly values (Matthew 18:6) and by giving them an understanding of his kingdom (Matthew 11:25). He valued them by accepting their worship (Psalms 8:2 and Matthew 21:16), and by protecting them—warning those who might do them harm (Luke 17:2). (2005, 26)

Including Child Participation

The perception of the child as social actor, capable of action and contribution must be understood. If those involved only view the child as a passive recipient, the process could lead to paternalism. If adults fail to recognize the child with agency, little trust will be established with unfortunate consequences. While agency is an important concept to keep in mind, it is important to acknowledge, as the child theology movement does, that “true worship and idolatry are very close together. Because humanity is created in the image of God, it is easy to slide into caring for and valuing humanity as God” (White 2006, 9). So while we seek to encourage agency in children, we do so with the notion that childhood must not be idolized in a way that is both disrespectful to the child or God. Acknowledging a child’s agency should be done without forgetting the *imago Dei* and the Creator. City-wide strategies that may or may not incorporate the early encounter approach should take caution to include the child as participant without creating an environment where it is only the child that is treated with dignity. The child is a key player in the development of the strategy, but it is God and his love which ignites the transformation in the community. Kingdom mindedness must continue to be apparent as we move forward in developing city-wide strategies.

Increasing Child Protection

Child protection has become a key development within the ETC. Children who are in danger must be given a priority in Christian engagement. In some circumstances young children may need to be removed by force in order to safeguard their lives. What I am suggesting is an exception, not a rule. City-wide approaches must be in contact with governmental authorities and be well versed in local law before trying to remove a child from the street. Much of this is dependent upon the age of the child and the law pertinent to safeguarding children in the local context. In most cases, if a child must be forcibly removed from an environment in order to protect him or her, it will be local child protection services that will enforce such action.

Another area of protection includes project child protection policies. All projects should establish child protection policies and ensure implementation in a transparent environment. This is an area that must be consistently monitored, evaluated and developed as needs arrive.

Meeting Basic Needs

Closely tied to protection is the responsibility that the Christian worker has in providing for the basic needs of the child. In most cases, this provision will consist of emotional support, food, medical care and shelter. If possible, it appears to be prudent to charge a minimum price for food and shelter in order not to create dependency. One of the concerns that were identified by the ETC staff was the issue of *asistencialismo*. In addition to what has already been discussed in chapter 4, *asistencialismo* can be understood as a false charity. John Perkins says “acts of charity can be dangerous because givers can feel good about actions that actually accomplish very little, or even create dependency” (1993, 23). While working with children in the streets of Caracas, Venezuela, our team frequently witnessed individuals giving money to young children on the street. This apparently appeased their need to help, yet created destructive patterns for the children. False charity is something that we must seek to prevent as we move forward in replicating such models as the ETC in the region and globally. *Asistencialismo* is an

issue that the ETC facilitating team is concerned with and is something that needs to continue to be part of a regular evaluation via internal and external monitoring.

One option that has been implemented by many projects around the world is the night shelter. Night shelters located throughout a city can help to provide for basic needs while keeping children safe. Most crime and violence occurs at night and opening a safe haven can provide for their physical, emotional and spiritual needs. Ennew reminds us that “they are not places for regimentation, hierarchy and authority. They are places where children can talk to each other and to project workers, knowing they will be both listened to and heard” (2000, 111).

Improving upon the Dialogical Relationship

In returning to Freire’s dialogical relationship, we are reminded that our aim is what Freire calls *conscientização* (social consciousness-raising). This consciousness-raising focuses on the development of a knowledge which seeks to “perceive, social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (1993, 35). In the case of street-living and working children, oppressive elements could be those in power (authorities or others who commit acts of violence against young people), economic factors, service oriented problems such as a lack of healthcare, neglect of the poor, etc. It is working together on multiple levels where an appropriate response will develop. This contextualized response should be incorporated into the strategy in the city.

Spiritual issues can also be uncovered as the young people and Christian workers come together to understand the place of God, prayer, healing, fellowship, etc. Conversation about God should be respectful and developed out of a genuine interest for learning that guards against manipulation and/or spiritual abuse.¹³

¹³ One concern among those advocating for child participation and protagonism is manipulation. If I were to have a criticism it would be this. In the name of participation it could be quite easy to manipulate children in a way that they feel is active participation but in the end their voice is not really taken into account. Hart focuses on this problem by noting: “One example is that of pre-school children carrying political placards concerning the impact of social policies on children. If children have no understanding of the issues and hence do not understand their actions, then this is manipulation. Such

Focusing on Empowerment

An appropriate outcome of the locally constructed relationship is empowerment. This is primarily perceived as an endogenous experience.¹⁴ A key understanding of endogenous empowerment is best understood when the term endogenous is contrasted with exogenous. These two concepts can be understood as both internal and external empowerment. Endogenous empowerment is something that is acquired internally and is something that the subject seeks out. Within some educational institutions children are either encouraged to grow in their agency or are encouraged to suppress creativity and rather respond with passivity in the learning context (bank deposit approach).

The term empowerment can have many meanings and is often disregarded as only a *façade* for adult manipulation. I explore the term empowerment, as endogenous, and complimentary to agency, not as a replacement. One way to possibly understand empowerment, in its connection to agency, is explored by Nelly Stromquist. While primarily concerned with nonformal educational models, Stromquist describes empowerment as that which “seeks to combine and expand both consciousness-raising [as a Freirean concept] and participation so that individuals not only may understand their society and the place they currently have in it, but may undertake efforts to modify social relations” (1994, 266). The author goes on to describe empowerment in holistic terms that includes psychological, economic and cognitive components. All components must be actively engaged in the empowerment process. The author concludes that empowerment as “a process is slow and very gradual; it needs the presence of a trained facilitator, capable of using the experience of participants and creating group dynamics that continue to grow over time” (1994, 268).

manipulation under the guise of participation is hardly an appropriate way to introduce children into democratic political processes” (Hart 1992, 9).

¹⁴ This term was developed as a result of my work in Venezuela and the reference during those years by the ruling government of Hugo Chavez to the endogenous development occurring within the country. Upon further reflection the term “endogenous empowerment” was developed. In research on issues of empowerment, I discovered that Kassey Garba (1999) had written about the concept several years earlier. While the research that Garba has completed is focused on women in Nigeria, I have gleaned a number of important principles from her work.

Children and adults alike can be “animated” by the facilitator (professional, volunteer, pastor, missionary, etc.) to think creatively about how to change their own conditions. As a father, my own children often look to me to accomplish a task for them. At times, simply for the opportunity to act with them, I accept their offer. However, there are times when I encourage my children to use their creative power, thus acting upon the creative factors of the *imago Dei* within them. For those committed to work with such children, the option of doing things for them is a tempting alternative, but research shows that allowing the children to participate and even lead on decision making (in accordance to developmental stages and maturity) can make all the difference in the outcome.

Future Research Ideas

What follows are several recommendations for further research in the area of EE methodology and *protagonismo infantil*.

The issue of protection has developed as an important practice for caring for children, but I am left with the question: What might protection that is based on *protagonismo* look like? How can we seek to protect children in a way that is in keeping in balance with them as protagonists? How can children themselves become part of the process of protecting those children who choose to remain, on the street (either working or living)? One example of this was found in the organized unions of the America market. Children in the market had organized themselves into a type of labor union. What place does child led labor unions have in Christian mission? These and other questions direct us to the need for a study in the area of protection and *protagonismo*.

A second area is *asistencialismo*. How do we provide for the basic needs of a child without creating *asistencialismo*? Little research has been identified on this subject. A fascinating study might look comparatively at projects that practice a form of *asistencialismo* with those that do not. What are the results when we lessen *asistencialismo* and/or paternalism?

A third area concerns itself with racial prejudices. As the research has pointed out, the issue of racial prejudices has seemingly marginalized some children and has been

identified as a contributing factor in motivating children to develop a street-living lifestyle. What place does racial reconciliation have in Christian mission to children at risk? What place might children at risk play in society in bringing about racial reconciliation?

The fourth area looks at the place of local church involvement. Given the involvement of sixteen local churches in the ETC, more research is needed on the impact that the churches are having in the lives of the children and the associated projects as well as how the children and projects themselves have impacted the churches and members.

As we approach these and other research topics in the future we will be in a place to better advocate and establish interventions that are truly in the best interests of the very children and young people we are seeking to care for.

CONCLUSION

The research conducted was in many regards an experience I will never forget. The process alone was intriguing as I met with ETC leaders who have a passion for seeing the lives of children transformed.

The day that I was to fly out of Bolivia I was invited to participate in an event that was to culminate months of planning by the adult leaders and child ambassadors. All seventeen projects slowly began arriving as we set up the stage, chairs and music in the parking lot of a local theater. This is what the children and youth had been preparing for during my stay in Bolivia. Upon receiving training from adult leaders, the child ambassadors in turn trained the other boys and girls that either live in their same group home or who attend a day project. The ambassadors referred to these training sessions as “*replicas*,” but they did not just simply copy what the adults had taught them, rather they added their own creative touches when it was their time to teach and train the other children. This came in the form of games and activities focused on encouraging the participation of all those involved. This speaks of their creativeness and agency as social actors who are committed to imparting teaching, and training others to care for their neighbor.

On the day of the event, after several child led prayers and activities, the children and youth who had been trained by the child ambassadors began to disperse and find people in the street to symbolically vaccinate against child abuse. It was quite a sight to behold as children, some as young as five years old, walked up to adults and children alike on the street to raise awareness about child abuse and neglect. Some of these very children, months and even years prior to the event, could have been seen approaching adults on the street to beg and sell small products. Children broke up into “brigades” in order to cover as much territory as possible. I was able to join several groups during the event. One of the groups I joined was a group of girls from one of the homes I had

visited. They set out a couple blocks away from the main event and began to approach men, women and families in the street. The girls asked people if they would like to be vaccinated against child abuse. They were quick to point out that it was not an actual shot! If the people agreed to the symbolic vaccination, they would go on to tell them about the campaign and several steps they could take to prevent child abuse. Upon concluding the symbolic vaccination, they filled out a card with the name of the vaccinated person on it, handed them a sticker to wear and a piece of candy. The vaccination lasts one year, but would become neutralized if they mistreat someone. The campaign not only took place in Cochabamba, but was also held in Sucre, Oruro, Potosi and La Paz. Thousands of people were targeted as children stood up for other children who are abused and neglected around the country (Burch August 27th - September 21st, 2009).

The *buen trato* campaign in some ways highlights the ETC and its attempt to recognize the place children have in society. Children, as protagonists, have a part to play in society as transformative agents. ETC seeks to channel their role as actors by providing them with the opportunity to speak into issues and decisions where children would normally not be accepted. As a result of this study, I believe there is great value in providing space for children to act.

It is evident in Scripture that God loves children who roam the streets of this world. In missiological studies, we are concerned about the *missio Dei*. This mission certainly includes the transformation of children who have been abused, abandoned and left on their own in the mean city streets of Latin America. Included in missiological study is “all that God has done, is doing and intends to do to accomplish his purpose” (Elliston 1997, 5). God is at work in the lives of children through his Church, seeking to bring about his purposes in the lives of humans that many consider useless to society. Those of us who have been working with this population of children know that the work is not easy, yet we also know that God is transforming lives, for we have seen the fruits of his work.

The Bible portrays children as a gift of God to humanity. Jesus’ love for young people is evident in the Bible as we see the emphasis he puts on children in his mission.

Not only do we witness Jesus blessing children, but we witness Jesus teaching adults by pointing out how children live. In Mark 10:15 Jesus tells his disciples “*Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it*” (TNIV). This is a shocking statement! “Nowhere in Jewish literature are children put forward as models for adults” (Gundry-Volf 2001, 39). To hold children up as an example for adults is a revolutionary idea that went far beyond what the disciples, or even society, felt was possible. Perhaps child empowerment is best found in Scripture as Jesus places the child in his midst and teaches adults a lesson or two. Jesus still works this way today by caring for children through sincere people who desire to reach out and bless children through Christian outreach.

As has been explored, Christian ministry to street-living and working children in Latin America is representative in diverse ways. In this study, contemporary methods have been explored around the theoretical framework that identifies children as participants and protagonists in history. Several predominate themes of this theory have helped us to expand the conceptual boundaries of ministry to street-living and working children today. We now understand that we must take into account that children are not just passive recipients with outstretched hands. Children are transformative actors who bring about change to society as they engage with social structures and even the very concept of childhood.

Another development in this report is the place of the *imago Dei* as it relates to human dignity and agency. Humankind, including children, has been made in God’s image. This has radical implications for missional engagement with children at risk today. There is nothing that can change the fact that children have been created in the image of God. This image has been imbedded within them. Because of this they are not only dignified, but they are creative and active beings. In part, our goal in Christian ministry is to encourage children to be bringing about transformative change to society, others and themselves. Agency can be used for God’s purposes as they go about transforming the lives of people and the very institutions and churches that are seeking to help them.

During my last Sunday in the city I was invited to attend a Baptist church service. Inside a large gymnasium were gathered several hundred people together to worship and fellowship. Prior to the sermon a woman stood up and addressed the crowd. She talked about the upcoming *buen trato* campaign that the children had been planning. Upon finishing her point, she invited a group of children to come up and said, “Los niños tienen algo de decir” (The children have something to say). She’s right, the children do have something to say and it is my hope that I have represented their opinions and thoughts in a way that not only identifies their voice, but ultimately their participation as agents in society who bring about change and hope.

APPENDIX A

ETC LEADERSHIP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. ¿Cuál es tu título y papel en ETC ? (What is your title and role in ETC?)
2. ¿Cuáles son tus responsabilidades en ETC? (¿o que han sido?) (What are your responsibilities in ETC?) (or what have been?)
3. ¿Qué es la filosofía ministerial de ETC? (What is the philosophy of ministry?)
 - a. ¿Como trabajan? (How do you work?)
4. ¿Cómo entienden los niños, niñas y adolescentes involucrados en los proyectos de ETC? (How do you understand the children involved in ETC?)
5. ¿Si tuviera que escoger una perspectiva que ETC tiene sobre los niños, niñas y adolescentes involucrados, que sería? (If you had to chose the view of ETC about the children you work with what would it be?)
 - a. Niños desamparados
 - b. Víctimas de pobreza
 - c. Actores de transformación
 - d. Agentes del reino
(Defenseless children
Victims of poverty,
Actors of transformation,
or agents of the kingdom)
6. ¿Qué papel tienen los niños, niñas o adolescentes en ETC? (What role do the children or adolescents have in ETC?)
 - a. ¿Cómo sirven los niños, niñas y adolescentes al proyecto/Iglesia? (How do the children serve the Project/church?)
7. ¿Cómo entiende ETC el protagonismo? (How does ETC understand protagonism?)

8. ¿Cómo promueve ETC el protagonismo? (How does ETC promote protagonismo?)
9. ¿Tienen los niños, niñas y adolescentes un papel en el desarrollo de los proyectos como el proyecto de los embajadores? (Do the children themselves have an opportunity to help design and develop ministry programs such as the Ambassadors project?)
10. ¿Tienen los niños y niñas oportunidades de expresar sus opiniones o pensamientos sobre el programa? (Do the children have opportunities to express their opinions or thoughts about the program?)
 - a. ¿En qué forma? (In which way?)
 - b. ¿Cómo responden los niños o niñas? (How do the children respond?)
11. ¿Es el protagonismo bíblico? (Is *protagonismo* biblical?)
12. ¿Tienen libertad los niños y niñas reclamar si no están de acuerdo con una norma o política en la organización? (Do the children have the freedom to express their protest or concern about a rule or policy in the organization?)
13. ¿Cómo hace la diferencia el enfoque en protagonismo de la niñez? (How does your focus on protagonism make a difference?)
14. ¿Los niños, niñas y adolescentes tienen oportunidades de ministrar a otros niños o niñas o adultos? (Are there opportunities to minister to other children or adults?)
 - a. ¿Puedes contarme algunos de estas oportunidades? (Can you tell me about a few of these opportunities?)
15. ¿Cómo describiría la relación que ETC tiene con los niños y niñas en los proyectos? (How would you describe ETC's relationship with the children in the projects?)
16. ¿Cómo previenen de no crear dependencia de parte de los niños o niñas a los proyectos? (How do you prevent from creating dependence on part of the children with the projects?)
17. ¿Cómo tiene ETC un enfoque misionero en el trabajo con la niñez y adolescencia? (How does ETC have a missionary focus in its work with children and adolescents?)

18. ¿Qué lugar tiene el evangelismo en tu trabajo? (What place does evangelism have in your work?)

19. ¿Cómo ha cambiado la percepción que tiene la sociedad (y iglesia) en cómo vean a los niños, niñas y adolescentes en situaciones de calle por medio de la estrategia ETC? (How has the city-wide strategy promoted a change in how society (and those belonging to local churches), view street children?)

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONS FOR ADULT LEADERS IN PROJECTS

1. ¿Cuál es tu título y papel en _____ ? (What is your title and role in _____?)
2. ¿Cómo es que llegaste a trabajar con este Ministerio? (How is it that you came to work with this ministry?)
3. ¿Cuáles son sus responsabilidades con este Ministerio? (What are your responsibilities in this ministry?)
 - a. ¿Qué papel ha sido ETC en el desarrollo de este proyecto? (What place has ETC played in the development of this Project?)
4. ¿Cuales actividades de ETC los han ayudado más? (Which activities connected to ETC have been most helpful?)
5. ¿Dirías que están trabajando para o con los niños, niñas y adolescentes? (Would you say you are working for or with the children in this project?)
6. ¿Qué papel tienen los niños, niñas o adolescentes en el programa? (What role do the children or adolescents have in the program?)
 - a. ¿Cómo sirven los niños, niñas y adolescentes a los proyectos/Iglesia? (How do the children serve the Project/church?)
 - b. ¿Tienen los niños, niñas y adolescentes un papel en el desarrollo de los programas en el Ministerio? (Do the children themselves have an opportunity to help design and develop the ministry programs?)
7. ¿Tienen los niños y niñas oportunidades de expresar sus opiniones o pensamientos sobre el programa? (Do the children have opportunities to express their opinions or thoughts about the program?)
 - a. ¿En qué forma? (In which way?)

- b. ¿Cómo responden los niños o niñas? (How do the children respond?)
- 8. ¿Tienen libertad los niños y niñas reclamar si no están de acuerdo con una norma o política en la organización? (Do the children have freedom to protest a situation if they are not in agreement with a rule or policy in the organization?)
 - a. ¿Cómo? (How?)
 - b. ¿Cómo es el proceso? (What is the process like?)
- 9. ¿Cómo previenen que niños no van a la calle? (How do you prevent children from going to the street?)
- 10. ¿Qué significa protagonismo para ustedes en el proyecto? (What does protagonism mean to you all in your project?)
- 11. ¿Como hace la diferencia el enfoque en protagonismo de la niñez? (How does your focus on protagonism make a difference?)
- 12. ¿Usan el término “empoderamiento” en el trabajo con los niños y niñas? (Do you use the term “empowerment” in your work with the children?)
 - a. ¿Por qué o porque no? (Why or why not?)
 - b. ¿Creas que el empoderamiento tiene algo que ver con el protagonismo? (Do you think empowerment has anything to do with protagonism?)
- 13. ¿Crean que el protagonismo infantil es participación o es algo más? (Do you think *protagonismo infantil* is participation or something else?)
- 14. ¿Tienen contacto con los otros proyectos que pertenecen a ETC? (Do you have contact with the other projects that are a part of ETC?)
 - a. ¿En que forma? (In which way?)
 - i. ¿Comparten casos de niños o niñas? (Do you share case files of children with each other?)
 - ii. ¿Como saben si uno de los niños o niñas que asiste aquí, no está buscando la misma ayuda de otros proyectos? (How do you know that some children who attend your project are not seeking the same help that you offer from other projects?)

15. ¿Qué los motiva en el Ministerio? (What is your motivation in ministry?)
 - a. ¿Puedes pensar en temas bíblicos que apoyen su trabajo? (Can you think of Biblical themes that support your work?)
16. ¿Cómo ven la imagen de Dios en las vidas de los niños, niñas y adolescentes con quien trabajas? (How do you see the image of God in the children and adolescents you work with?)
17. ¿Cuáles son los frutos que han visto en el ministerio? (What are the fruits you have seen in your ministry?)
18. ¿Cómo evalúan éxito en el proyecto? (How do you evaluate success in your Project?)
19. ¿Cómo describiría tu relación con los niños y niñas en el proyecto? (How would you describe your relationship with the children in the project?)
20. ¿Cómo entienden los niños, niñas y adolescentes involucrados en _____? (How do you understand the children involved in _____?)
 - a. Niños desamparados (Abandoned children?)
 - b. Víctimas de pobreza (Victims of poverty?)
 - c. Actores de transformación (Actors of transformation?)
 - d. Agentes del reino (Agents of the kingdom?)
21. ¿Cómo está su relación con las autoridades municipales o federales? (How is your relationship with municipal or federal authorities?)
22. ¿Cómo tiene el proyecto un enfoque misionero en el trabajo con la niñez y adolescencia programas de ETC? (How does the project have a missional focus in its work with children and adolescents?)
23. ¿Qué lugar tiene el evangelismo en tu trabajo? (What place does evangelism have in your work?)
24. ¿Cómo ha cambiado la percepción que tiene la sociedad (y iglesia) en cómo ven a los niños, niñas y adolescentes en situaciones de calle por medio de la estrategia ETC? (How has the city-wide strategy promoted a change in how society (and those belonging to local churches), view street children?)

25. ¿Cómo te cuides de no cansarse en tu ministerio? (How do you care for yourself in not getting over tired in your ministry?)

APPENDIX C

ETC STAFF FOCUS GROUP

1. Nombre, rol etc. y actividad favorita (Name, role and favorite activity)
2. ¿Quién me puede decir donde vino la metodología de Encuentro Temprano?
(Who can tell me where the strategy for EE came from?)
3. ¿Cuáles son las actividades bien desarrollado (los fuertes) y cuáles son los áreas hay que mejorar? (What are the more developed areas and which need to improve?)
4. ¿Cómo previenen que un niño o una niña no van a la calle? (How do you prevent children from going to the Street?)
5. ¿Están de acuerdo que el protagonismo es: Niños y Niñas construyendo sus propias vidas? (si o no) (Are you in agreement that protagonismo includes the idea that children are constructing their own lives?) (yes or no)
 - a. Si no, ¿qué es el protagonismo? (If not, what is protagonismo?)
6. ¿Están de acuerdo que como parte de protagonismo debemos dejar con los niños y niñas expresan sus opiniones y tener voz? (Are you in agreement that as part of protagonismo includes allowing children to have an opinion and voice?)
7. ¿Qué hacemos? Si un niño de 7 años quiere vivir en la calle ¿los dejamos? (What do we do if a 7 year old child wants t olive in the Street? Do we let them?)
8. ¿Que hacemos si un niño quiere marchar en una marcha política? (If a child wants to march in a political march?)
9. ¿Crean que hay momentos cuando la protección debe tener más peso que protagonismo? (Do you believe that there are moments when protecting children is more important than *protagonismo*?)

10. ¿Crean que el tema de dignidad tiene que ver con el protagonismo? (Do you believe that the theme of dignity has anything to do with protagonismo?)
11. ¿Qué significa ser ciudadano de un país? ¿Son los niños y niñas ciudadanos? (What does it mean to be a citizen of a country? Are children citizens?)
12. ¿Qué significa ser ciudadano del reino? ¿Son los niños y niñas ciudadanos del reino? (What does it mean to be a citizen of the kingdom? Are children citizens of the kingdom?)
13. ¿Cómo podemos sensibilizar la iglesia sobre la importancia de los niños y niñas en situaciones de calle? (How can we sensitize the church about the importance of caring for children in the Street?)
14. ¿Cómo podemos movilizar iglesias locales a ver la importancia de trabajar con niños y niñas en situaciones de calle? (How can we mobilize local churches to see the importance of working with children living and working on the Street?)

APPENDIX D

CHILD AMBASSADOR FOCUS GROUP

1. ¿Puedes decirme tus nombre, edad, comida favorita? (Can yo tell me your names, age and favorite food?)
2. ¿Que significa ser embajador? (What does it mean to be an ambassador?)
3. ¿Les gustan las actividades como parte de los embajadores? (Do you enjoy the activites being ambassadors?)
4. ¿Tienen reuniones? (Do you have meetings?)
5. ¿Cómo se sienten cuando los adultos abre espacio para que pueden ayuda? (How do yo feel when adults open up space so you can help?)
 - a. ¿O cuando no los dan? (Or when they don't give you space?)
6. ¿Que es protagonismo? (What is *protagonismo*?)
7. ¿Creen que el protagonismo es un programa? (Do you believe *protagonismo* is a program?)
8. ¿Cómo llegaron a ser embajadores? (How did you become ambassadors?)
9. ¿Tiene oportunidades de ayudar a otros niños o adultos? (Do you have opportunities to help other children or adults?)
10. ¿Cómo se sienten cuando tengan estas oportunidades? (How do you feel when you have these opportunities?)
11. ¿Cómo les han ayudado ser parte de los Embajadores? (How has it helped you being part of the ambassadors?)

APPENDIX E

DATA ANALYSIS MATRIX

Coded Units	Theoretical proposition	Summary of research data	Rival explanation(s) and/or additional comments
EMPOWERMENT	Empowerment is a means to creating <i>protagonismo infantil</i>	Findings were not consistent with the proposition. Findings point toward empowerment (empoderamiento) terminology most commonly understood on institutional level (i.e. churches are empowered). Some recognition of empowerment terminology understood in political terms and class warfare. Others recognized empowerment as a result of <i>protagonismo infantil</i> . Recognition of empowerment as a tool for social transformation, but these views were limited in the data. One interviewee identified empowerment as means to protagonismo, but comments were limited. Documentation did not use the term nor did it make references to empowerment as a strategy. Proposition is not upheld.	Given the lack of understanding of the concept, some mistakenly took empowerment to be associated only in political terms. The context of Bolivia most likely blurs the concept resulting in an understanding that increased power results in oppression by the powerful.
PATERNALISM	Paternalism results when child is not consulted in decision making process and <i>protagonismo infantil</i> is not respected.	Space for participation can also be closed by adults leading to paternalism. Paternalism occurs when there is lack of recognition of children as social actors by adults. Woman at ambassador event was observed dominating opinions of the children and adolescents. Too difficult to identify if she did not recognize <i>protagonismo</i> , but sought to close opportunities for child participation. This was not clear. Young girl in meeting disagreed with woman and communicated opinions despite adult not recognizing her. The interviews suggest children have not, in the past, been able to give their opinion, or take part in the planning of the projects or evaluations. It was perceived that they	

		should only receive. Children are now recognized as participants due to <i>protagonismo</i> paradigm. Children still have limited role in designing and planning of individual projects. Children feel bad when they are not allowed to participate in society. EE leadership recognizes importance of <i>protagonismo</i> , but some project leaders do not and thus limit child participation. Theoretical proposition is upheld given the results from the data analysis.	
DIALOGICAL RELATIONSHIP AND EMPOWERMENT	Recognition of <i>protagonismo infantil</i> encourages a "dialogical relationship" leading to empowerment. Adult leadership will enter into this decision making relationship with children if they recognize children as social actors.	Very little results from data. Dialogical relationship terminology not used by those interviewed or in focus groups. Observed some adult and child interactions and discussions leading to new paradigms. Conclusions for 2008/2009 activities at ambassadors meeting were arrived at through dialog. Dialog proved to be helpful as adults and children discussed issues of manipulation. Ines (Viva-Bolivia director) discusses importance of negotiating with child who is moving toward street lifestyle. Cannot forcefully remove them. Must dialog. Another identifies ambassadors and Early Encounter (EE) leadership dreaming together. It is not hierarchical based decision making.	I am unsure at this point if the poor results in the data reflect a lack of dialog taking place between adults and children or if the very questions in the interview process were deficient. Most of the dialog was identified through observations.
PROTAGONISMO INFANTIL IN ETC	Recognition of <i>protagonismo infantil</i> leads to relinquished control by adults and increased voice and participation for children in projects	<i>Protagonismo infantil</i> is similar to child participation, but <i>protagonismo</i> is identified as greater than participation. <i>Protagonismo</i> includes the idea that children are defending their own rights and gaining access to speak into issues that affect the community. Data points to the idea that <i>protagonismo infantil</i> goes beyond self promotion and touches upon issues of transformation. Children as protagonists have a God-given competence and ability to act (participate). <i>Protagonismo infantil</i> is recognized as Biblical and creates space for child participation. Biblical references that were pointed to were: Jesus at the age of 12 teaching leaders and the story of David and Goliath. David is representative of the idea behind <i>protagonismo infantil</i> . Adults must recognize place of children as protagonists. One example of active participation and <i>protagonismo</i> is: ETC invited some of the child ambassadors to highlight child abuse. Ines (Viva-Bolivia director) describes the	Some mixed results. Noted some varying opinions on differences between <i>protagonismo</i> and participation. Most concur with the idea that <i>because</i> children are protagonist, they participate in social projects.

		idea of a child highlighting the effects of child abuse as <i>protagonismo</i> , but includes the idea that active participation will focus on how to appropriately care for the child. <i>Protagonismo infantil</i> is viewed by subjects as necessary for participation to occur. Children are encouraged to be part of the decision making process (participate in) with their ambassadors. All children are social actors.	
ASISTENCIALISMO	Reduction of <i>asistencialismo</i> through case file sharing and cooperation encourages empowerment and participation.	ETC Staff and project leaders very familiar with <i>asistencialismo</i> terminology and issues. The debate over <i>asistencialismo</i> is a long running issue in Cochabamba. Identified limited case file sharing between projects. Leadership recognizes the issues, but as of yet, has done little to correct issue. Given geographical distance between majority of the projects, children usually do not go from project to project looking for handouts. Many of the projects prior to joining were <i>asistencialista</i> (focused on <i>asistencialismo</i>). Tío Erik and other projects in Quillacollo (town on the outside of Cochabamba) were overlapping assistance to children on the street prior to joining ETC. Empowerment in EE strategy seems not to be dependent upon case file sharing but on other factors. Observations and informal interviews with children living on street near Avenida America point to <i>asistencialismo</i> issues, but most cases outside of the scope of this research project. This does not seem to be the case with ETC. In general begging is noted as means to achieving handouts. Interviews identified begging as cultural issue. Children and adults alike are accustomed to positive results from begging in public and from welfare organizations.	Rival explanation: City-wide coordination between EE affiliated projects are organized due to financial benefit of being part of ETC. While it is impossible to rule out this motivation entirely, research data does not reveal any affirmation of this rival explanation, if anything, the data reveals the opposite. Financial gain is noted to be low as a motivational factor.
CHILD PROTECTION	Child protection, when applied with a proper understanding of <i>protagonismo infantil</i> , results in a beneficial relationship between project and child	Child protection is obvious and noted by both children and adults alike in interviews and focus groups. Child abuse (in all of its forms) recognized as issue that must be addressed by the Church. Church must focus on working with family to focus on preventing abuse. EE focuses heavily on prevention, believing the streets are dangerous. Documentation and interviews conclude that child protection should be priority but should not take priority over concept that child is protagonist and has	Project leaders in direct contact with children in need of protection which leads to tendency to view rescues as necessary. EE leadership holds to theoretical position that identifies and gives priority to

		<p>fundamental right to construct his or her own life. EE leadership disagreed with forced removal of children from street, but rather pointed toward dialog and persuasion over and above coercion. Some disagreements and contradictions on rescuing children in dangerous circumstances. EE leadership focused more on protagonismo infantil, project leaders tended to focus more on rescue issues. Basic theoretical proposition is upheld.</p>	<p>protagonismo infantil. In rare circumstances EE leadership recognizes the need for rescue and forced protection.</p>
DIGNITY	<p>Children are created in the image of God and are thus to be treated with dignity, which includes acknowledging human agency.</p>	<p>Image of God is seen in children. Patterns mostly point toward understanding that children are made in the image of God and nothing takes this away from them. Focus group discussions highlighted dignity issues as part of the understanding that children are made in God's likeness. Yet very little data to be patterned on this issue. No documentation or observations were noted. One interviewee believed children have lost this identity only to receive it once they come to faith in Christ.</p>	<p>Seems to be some theological confusion over issue of human dignity as it relates to imago Dei issue. Most interviewees were confused and limited documentation was noted.</p>

GLOSSARY

Asistencialismo

Asistencialismo is understood as a form of “help-ism” where the child is cared for in way that promotes his or her dependence in the street or in the at-risk situation. Often times, *asistencialismo* creates dependency instead of focusing on interdependence and frequently hinders the child in their development.

Protagonismo Infantil

Protagonismo infantil includes the place of children as central actors in their own development. As social actors, they are empowered to participate in the transformation of their own lives and that of society.

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