

## **Re-visiting the Children of Smokey Mountain: The Past Still Speaks for the Present**

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Using an in-depth clinical and phenomenological approach, the original research looked into the relevant demographic characteristics of the scavenger children, their experiences of scavenging, family and community life, their wishes and aspirations, and other factors affecting their moral or spiritual development. Findings on the relevant demographic data and the children's work experiences are consistent with existing literature on child labor. However, scavenger children suffer more inner wounds than what most people ordinarily think. Surrounded daily by domestic and communal violence, scavenger children feel helpless underneath an external behavior of helping their families survive. In the midst of these dire conditions, the most effective avenue for hope and change may be in school, the only institution that the children look to positively. Finally, the inner hope, wisdom and moral clarity that scavenger children demonstrate are remarkably admirable.

This study sought to understand the total phenomenological world of the scavenger child through six research questions:

1. What are the family-related demographic characteristics of the scavenger children of Smokey Mountain?
2. How does the child experience his scavenging lifestyle?
3. How does the child experience his family?
4. How does the child experience his community life?
5. How does the child experience himself in terms of his self-image, his dominant socio-emotional needs, and his wishes and aspirations?
6. What issues possibly affect the child scavenger's moral development?

In answering these questions, it was essential to listen to the children's answers and remain faithful to their viewpoint at all times. Drawing the answers from the children's own words put the focus of the research on *their* vantage point, and *learning from them* was the crucial element that gave this research a distinctive character.

To properly situate the significance and context of the research, it is important to first understand that child scavengers move around in two contexts. First, they live within the larger context of urban child labor. And second, they also live within the more specific context of scavenging communities.

*The Larger Context: Urban Child Labor.* The rise of urban child labor undoubtedly continues to accelerate even at this moment. In the last three decades of the past century, the number of urban child workers reached overwhelming proportions, particularly in developing countries. In 1976, the International Labor Organization estimated that there were already 56 million child workers in the formal sector alone (ILO, 1979, as cited in Rodgers & Standing, 1981). More than twenty years later in 1997, the figure had already ballooned to 250 million workers, 120 million of whom were fulltime workers in the 5-14 year-old age bracket (ILO, 1998). Of this number, more than 60 % of child workers are estimated to be living in Asia, probably even more (ILO, 1998).

The impact of child labor on the physical, psychosocial, and intellectual development of children is another widely known fact among researchers, policy-makers and child rights advocates.

There is strong, consistent evidence that child laborers suffer physically from excessively long hours of work, dangerous working conditions, and malnutrition. Children as young as 6 or 7 years old work an average of 8 hours everyday to earn miniscule incomes, and even longer when they hit adolescence (Abdalla, 1988; Bequele & Boyden, 1988; Boyden & Holden, 1991; & Salazar, 1988). Long hours of work also combine with hazardous working conditions, such that many children suffer from dislocated bones and torn muscles, and from diseases like malaria, anemia and piodermis (Abdalla, 1988; Guillen-Marroquin, 1988).

Beyond the physical exploitation are the adverse effects of work on the psychosocial development of working children. Children on the streets hardly receive any emotional protection from nurturing adults (Bequele and Boyden, 1988). They constantly have to endure all forms of violence, whether or not they are in paid labor. These include verbal violence, frequent harassment and arrests by the police, and being socially ostracized at school (Abdalla, 1988; Onyango, 1988; Myers, 1989; Salazar, 1988). Indeed, one survey showed that streetchildren feared violence above all things (Myers, 1989).

Finally, working extols a high price on the intellectual development of urban child laborers. Majority are unable to enjoy any formal schooling, either because their families are poor (Guillen-Marroquin, 1988) or do not see the relevance of education to their work (Kanbargi, 1988; Salazar, 1988). Some try to attend school irregularly, but the additional cost of school materials and the need to work eventually wipe out the children's motivation to study (Guillen-Marroquin, 1988).

*Filipino Child Workers.* The issue of child labor in the Philippines is so overwhelming that sheer statistical estimates remain problematic. In 1985, the Philippine government officially identified 5 million child workers, 1.1 million of who worked in the urban formal sector (UNICEF, 1985 as cited in the Philippines Free Press, 1989, August 12). But the Bureau of Women and Young Workers (BWYW), itself a government agency, gave unofficial estimates of 5 to 7 million child laborers in that same year (BWYW, 1985 as cited in Malaya, 1988, September 19). Fourteen years later, the statistics still seem underreported: the Philippine National Census and Statistics Office claims that there are currently 3.7 million child workers, of which 60% or 2.2 million are in hazardous jobs (ILO, 1998).

Despite these varying estimates, child labor in the Philippines shares many similarities with the international scenario. Consistent with international studies, the Filipino child laborer today works due to poverty and chronic adult unemployment (Manila Chronicle, 1988; Malaya, 1988). They, like many child laborers all over the world, also suffer from severe exploitation. They work long hours

for very little pay. They constantly put up with hazardous working conditions and the vulnerability to disease. And they suffer from malnutrition.

In the midst of all these, there is a notable dearth of research that delves into the intellectual and socio-emotional impact of work on children. Only two studies touch on these aspects, and even then discuss them only in general terms: Castañeda (1953) says that child labor leads to a delay in the intellectual and moral growth of working children, as well as to juvenile delinquency and disruptions in family life. Fidelino (1961), on the other hand, implies that street child workers suffer emotionally: they often deal with violent police apprehensions, and stand a greater chance of becoming juvenile delinquents if they also come from broken families.

*The Specific Context: Scavengers and Scavenger Communities.* Only a handful of literature exists on scavengers and scavenger communities. Since Carolina Maria De Jesus published her autobiography as a former paper picker in the slums of Latin America, (De Jesus, 1963), more than ten years elapsed before systematic research on scavenger communities surfaced. At the time of this research, there were only five known studies on this topic. Four of them looked into Filipino scavenger communities, while a fifth tackled the life of rag pickers in India. It is indeed ironic that efforts to systematically understand scavengers have been limited, given that scavenger communities are a widespread urban phenomenon in many developing countries (Boyden & Holden, 1991).

Nevertheless, the limited research on scavenger communities does offer some understanding of the typical profile of scavengers, and the difficulties that they face.

Scavengers are the poorest of the poor: they live in shanties made from scrap material, their household income is below subsistence level, they hardly own any assets, the quality of their food intake is often less than substantial (Fernandez & de la Torre, 1986). They also come from poor families. Often, they are the children of uneducated, unskilled, rural-migrant parents (Fernandez & de la Torre, 1986; Paquero-Balleascas, 1987). In scavenger communities like Smokey Mountain, high levels of population density and job instability are further signs of the people's extreme poverty (Abad, 1990).

Scavenging is physically dangerous. It impedes the intellectual growth of children and the opportunity to break the cycle of poverty. And it is psychologically very stressful.

First, picking through garbage is obviously a health hazard. Scavengers thus often suffer from a variety of skin and respiratory illnesses like scabies, skin infections, tuberculosis, pneumonia and whooping cough (Fernandez & De la Torre, 1986).

Second, families sacrifice the education of their children. The issues of survival often force children to drop out of school to help their parents earn more money (Fernandez & De la Torre, 1986). Since scavenging gives the immediate economic gratification that school cannot provide, children also lose interest in furthering their education (Abad, 1990).

Finally, scavenging creates deep wounds in the scavenger's psyche. Scavengers report deep feelings of insecurity (Rosario, 1988), pessimism and despair (Fernandez & De la Torre). They describe themselves as "walking garbage" (Fernandez & De la Torre, 1986), and believe that other people look down on them with great suspicion (Fernandez & De la Torre, 1986; Paquero-Ballescás, 1987).

Forced to live a dehumanized existence, scavengers sink further into having feelings of persecution, fear, anxiety and guilt that all the more cripple their mental health and often lead them to rebellious and violent outbursts against individuals and institutions (Rosario, 1988). Ostracized due to their extreme poverty, many scavengers are driven to violence in a desperate attempt to survive psychologically.

Despite the obvious fact that it is the child scavenger who stands to suffer the most from work – physically, intellectually and psychologically – no one has attempted to learn from her feelings, from his worldview, from her innermost thoughts. All the studies on scavenger communities have focused only on adult samples and adult perspectives. This study is unique in that it is the first study that elicits the child scavenger's point of view. It is the first study that learns from the child scavenger.

Nearly all of the studies on child laborers and scavenger communities have used surveys to gather data. Hence, while past studies do offer extensive information, they lack the depth necessary to understanding the inner world of people, especially the inner world of child scavengers. This study adopts, for the first time, a phenomenological, clinical approach to learning from scavenger children. It is an approach that allows us to encounter the child scavenger deeply and personally, the child that may have a different perspective from the adults, the child that breathes behind the statistic. Carandang (1989) says:

“The clinical approach allows us to penetrate deeply into the inner world of the child and his family. It gives us the opportunity to know the child more intimately, to dig into the “guts” of the family, and in a sense, to get a glimpse of the culture’s soul.” (p. 47)

### **Conceptual Framework**

In order to understand the inner world of scavenger children deeply and totally, it is necessary to adopt a conceptual framework that is both clinical and wholistic. The Rubic’s Cube Approach of Carandang (1981), a multi-dimensional clinical model for working with children, best satisfies the intended goals of this study. It is thus the conceptual backbone that guides this research.

The Rubic’s Cube Approach views the child from four dimensions: the child as a total person, the developmental perspective, the contextual perspective, and the child’s inner world or phenomenological perspective.

*The Child as a Total Person.* First, the child is a multi-faceted being who develops in several aspects, all of which are equally important and interrelated. Thus, to see the child as a total person, one must look into his physical, intellectual, socio-emotional and moral/spiritual facets of development all at the same time.

*The Developmental Perspective.* Second, the child is a dynamic being who co-exists with other children. The developmental perspective therefore allows us to evaluate the child vis-à-vis the other children in his age group. In so doing, we can better formulate

strategies that will help propel the child to the next developmental stage.

*The Contextual Dimension.* Third, the child also lives within the context of family, community, and culture. It is thus important to elicit how the child experiences the relational dynamics within her context. The contextual viewpoint is essential to understanding how a child tries to integrate her family, her community, and her culture with her own emerging identity.

*The Phenomenological Dimension.* Finally, a dimension absent in most research studies is a phenomenological perspective of the child. How does the child experience his world? What is his point of view? What does he think? What does he feel? What does he say? What does he wish for in life? Acknowledging the value of the child's point of view, and remaining faithful to the essence of the child's words is at the heart of the phenomenological dimension. This last perspective clinches our understanding of the child's inner world from an in-depth perspective. It is the integrating inner-core in the multidimensional approach.

## **Method**

The challenge of course, is how to translate the above framework into a method that captures the inner and unique world of scavenger children. In this research, the multiple case study method fits in well with the multidimensional framework. The conduct of case studies is the first step that researchers often take to explore phenomena that have not yet been studied, and is a valuable, irreplaceable tool for understanding individuals in a rare or unique situation (Kazdin, 1980). Since this is the first study that delved into the world of child scavengers, the case study approach became the natural tool for understanding the world of the child scavenger.

*Sampling.* The children for this study were purposively selected, based on criteria set by the funding institutions for the educational component of its joint project, *Samahan ng mga Batang Nananambakan* or SABANA.

Children had to meet four criteria in order to qualify for the study. First, all child respondents had to be residents of Smokey

Mountain and active scavengers who had been going frequently to the drop-in-center of SABANA for at least one month. Second, they had to be anywhere from 7 to 15 years old at the time of the study. Third, none of the children should have received any form of educational intervention from SABANA prior to the research. And fourth, they should have gone through the medical examination under SABANA's medical research program.

Twelve children initially qualified for the study, but two of them had to be dropped midway due to their difficulties with responding to the research instruments. The final sample thus consisted of ten scavenger children.

*Research Instruments.* It is important to emphasize that another unique feature of this study is its use of several local and original-research instruments to capture the richness and depth of the child scavenger's experiences. Carandang (1989) pushes this point, stressing the need "to innovate and invent new methods...or to reassess methods that have been devalued for a long time" because "our present methodologies have become unimaginative and inadequate in capturing the rich data of experience" (p. 46).

The research instruments for this study consisted of a main battery and a second set of supplementary data-gathering tools. The main battery consisted of a clinical interview, selected cards from the Philippine Children's Apperception Test (PCAT), and two nonverbal intelligence tests. Supplementary instruments, on the other hand, consisted of a parent interview guide, a modified version of the Sack's Sentence Completion Test (SSCT), and a locally-made questionnaire to elicit children's styles of moral judgment.

*The Clinical Interview.* The clinical interview is an individually administered, semi-structured guide that was designed to elicit individual and family data from each child. It is called a 'clinical' interview (as distinguished from the usual interview guide) because the questions are integrated with clinical tools such as projective cards and stories. It is also called 'clinical' because the child's responses are probed in a respectful, non-threatening manner, within an atmosphere of safety and openness that the clinician-researcher creates.



The first part of the interview elicited individual data from the child. Here, questions on relevant demographic information and the child's experiences of scavenging were asked. Three original clinical instruments were also administered in this portion. These were: first, the Smokey Mountain Kinetic Community Drawing (SM-KCD), a two-part drawing activity that elicited the child's perceptions of and wishes for the community; second, the Smokey Mountain Thematic Apperception Test (SM-TAT), a projective where the child was asked to make stories about six (6) picture cards depicting different scenes in the dumpsite, designed to elicit the child's inner feelings and underlying processes in relation to scavenging; and third, the Story Completion Test, consisting of two unfinished stories that the child himself had to end, designed to elicit the child's wishes and prayers. These three clinical tools were designed after an initial pilot test revealed that scavenger children could not relate to the culture-bound stimuli in traditional projectives like Murray's Thematic Apperception Test (TAT). Hence, culturally relevant clinical projectives more attuned to the scavenger children's context had to be developed in this case. Murstein (1963) notes that this adjustment is often necessary when one has to study a unique or specific culture.

The second part of the interview elicited data on the child's family. Data on family size, occupation and/or educational attainment of family members were established, as well as composition of the child's current household unit. The Kinetic Family Drawing (KFD), another projective tool, was also administered to elicit the child's underlying experiences of family dynamics. The child was asked to draw all the members of her family, including herself, doing something together. After identifying each family member and her depicted task in the drawing, the child was asked a series of questions to find out her perceptions about family life and family dynamics.

*Philippine Children's Apperception Test.* To probe into the child's experiences of family dynamics, eight (8) selected cards from the Philippine Children's Apperception Test (PCAT) were administered. This projective technique, patterned after the Children's Apperception Test (CAT) of Bellak and Bellak (1952), was developed by Lagmay (1975) for Filipino children 12 years old

and below. Again, the local flavor of the PCAT's stimulus cards seemed more culturally relevant to the child scavengers' situation. It was thus expected to elicit a greater variety of apperceptive responses from the children.

Just as in the SM-TAT, the child was asked to weave a story about each PCAT picture card. Each story's dynamics was then probed, in order to elicit the child's underlying experiences of family life and processes.

*Nonverbal Intelligence Tests.* Two standardized tests of nonverbal intelligence were included in the main battery to obtain a general, culturally valid baseline of the children's current intellectual functioning. These were the five performance subtests of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC), and the booklet form of the Raven's Colored Progressive Matrices (CPM). These tests were chosen since they require a minimum use of expressive language, and are thus relatively culture-fair compared to other intelligence tests. The WISC in particular was also deemed more culturally appropriate, given the limited cognitive stimulation in the daily life of scavenger children.

*Parent Interview.* Mothers were interviewed to supplement and clarify other family information derived from the children. Through a semi-structured interview guide, mothers were asked other relevant demographic information on the child's family, the child's schooling and scavenging activities, and the family history of migration to Smokey Mountain.

*Other Supplementary Instruments.* Finally, two instruments were used to supplement the main battery for children. The first was a modified version of the Sack's Sentence Completion Test (SSCT), a 60-item projective test that looks into the child's family relations, interpersonal relationships outside the family, relationships at work or school, and self-concept. The second was an instrument which elicits styles of moral judgment among Filipino urban children (Jimenez, 1976). The original scoring guidelines for these tests, however, was not used. Instead, responses in both instruments were used only to enrich data that were already elicited in the main battery.

The child instruments were pretested on August 8, 1991, at the DOLE-ILO SABANA office, primarily to gauge how long one entire assessment period would take.

### **Data-gathering Procedures**

Data-gathering proceeded in three phases: first, there were group rapport-building sessions with child participants and their mothers; second, child participants were individually assessed; and third, parent interviews were conducted.

*Rapport-building with the Groups of Children and their Mothers.* Building rapport with the children and their mothers was essential to smoothening out the flow of the research procedures. In the case of the children, rapport-building was done in the context of group play. This helped create an atmosphere of warmth and openness between each child and the researcher even before the individual interviews were carried out. A separate rapport-building session with the children's mothers was also done.

*Child Interviews and Assessment.* In the second phase, children were interviewed and assessed individually. All individual sessions began with building or re-establishing rapport with each child and explaining again the reasons for talking with him. The instruments were then administered using a recommended standard flow: the clinical interview, WISC Performance subtests, SSCT modified version, CPM, stories on moral judgment, and the PCAT cards. When necessary, however, the standard flow was modified to suit each child's temperament, in line with practices acceptable in the clinical assessment of children (Palmer, 1983; Peterson, 1968).

Parent interviews were held individually, also in the same office where the children were assessed.

### **Results**

Three kinds of data were collected in this study: demographic characteristics, the children's typical activities with a special focus on scavenging, and data from the projective tools.

Demographic data and the children's typical activities were organized into descriptive summary tables to facilitate analysis. In the case of the nonverbal intelligence tests, responses were scored and summarized according to standard test scoring procedures, and then reported as part of the demographic data.

As for data from the projective tools, two kinds of analyses were used. A thematic analysis of the stories in the SM-TAT and PCAT was conducted using the clinical-intuitive styles of Holt, Lagasa and Symonds (Schneidman, Joel & Little, 1951). Three trained child psychologists (including the researcher) acted as clinical judges to draw out the theme of each story in the SM-TAT and the PCAT, as well as rank the three most prevalent themes that ran across all the stories in each test protocol. Inter-rater reliability estimates were then computed before the researcher grouped the themes into categories for analysis.

In the case of the drawing projectives (i.e., the KFD and the SM-KCD), the researcher used the clinical method to draw out deeper psychological issues conveyed in the children's drawings. In addition, the children's responses to follow-up questions in the tests were organized into meaningful categories for analysis.

Finally, the children's wishes and prayers were allowed to speak for themselves, and then organized also into meaningful categories for analysis.

A wealth of data was uncovered from the children, but it is quite impossible to capture all that richness in this paper. For purposes of greater focus, therefore, this paper presents only the findings that best highlight the conditions and the inner world of the scavenger children.

*Relevant Demographic Data.* Table 1 shows the distribution of the sample.

The children belonged to large families on the whole, with an average of 7 members occupying each child's living unit. The families of the children were also relatively young. On the average, each child scavenger had three other siblings, two of them being 10 years old and below.

**Table 1. Distribution of Sample of Scavenger Children By Age Group and Gender**

<b>Age Group (In Years)</b>	<b>Boys (n=6)</b>	<b>Girls (n=4)</b>	<b>Total (n=10)</b>
7-9	1	2	3
10-12	3	1	4
13-15	2	1	3
Total	6	4	10
Mean Age	11.33	10.75	11.10
SD	2.73	2.06	2.38

With a large household occupied mainly by young children and parents who were either jobless or earning from erratic-paying jobs, someone in the family eventually had to share in the economic burden. That someone was the child scavenger, who happened to be the functioning eldest child 70% of the time in this sample and, half of the time, a young boy. This finding suggests that it is the functioning eldest child who takes on the economic role of a parent, even if he is just a child.

Despite shouldering part of the economic burden for the family, scavenger children remarkably persisted in getting an education since only two of them were out of school.

Sadly though, going to school did not seem to have a positive impact on the academic skills of scavenger children for mainstream, traditional classroom education. As their nonverbal intelligence scores indicate (please see Table 2), the bulk of the children were within the mental defective to dull normal range in the WISC Performance subtests, and within the intellectually impaired to definitely below average range in the booklet form of the CPM.

It must be noted that the tests themselves may be culturally-biased and limited in drawing out the practical intelligence of the children. While the CPM results did offer a rough validation of the WISC scores in this sample, the test content and possibly even the scoring system of both tests may still have been inappropriate for the scavenger children. The tests measured the extent of the children's academic knowledge. But they did not capture the scavenger children's other learned skills, such those involved in surviving a highly dangerous occupation.

*The Scavenger Children's Typical Week.* As a group, the children consistently mentioned three activities that occupied their time the most: scavenging, going to school, and doing household chores. Based on their own estimates, the children devoted an average of 43.8 hours (S.D. = 12.47) to these three activities in a given week — an active time equivalent to the fulltime load of working adults.

Table 2. Nonverbal Intelligence Scores of Scavenger Children On the Performance Scales of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (WISC) And the Booklet Form of the Raven's Colored Progressive Matrices (CPM)

	Mean Test Age (In years & months)	WISC Results		CMP Results	
		Performance IQ Score	Intellectual Classification	Percentile Score	Intellectual Classification
Berto	7.8	82	Average	81	Average
Maricar	9.9	80	Dull normal	13.75	Definitely below average
Janet	9.10	74	Borderline	17.50	Definitely below average
Dencio	10.7	58	Mental defective	Below 5 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Intellectually impaired
Jojo	11.0	69	Mental defective	Below 5 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Intellectually impaired
Amalia	12.8	72	Borderline	16.25	Definitely below average
Venon	12.8	55	Mental defective	Below 5 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Intellectually impaired
Ferdie	13.1	71	Borderline	12.14	Definitely below average
Rowena	13.3	62	Mental defective	Below 5 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Intellectually impaired
Arturo	15.1	47	Mental defective	Below 5 <sup>th</sup> percentile	Intellectually impaired

Scavenger children worked 63% of the time in a typical week, either by scavenging in the dumpsite (40%) or helping at home with the chores (23%). The rest of their active time (about 37 %) was spent going to school or studying.

*The Experience of Going to School.* Four factors emerged from the children's description of what they like most about school. First, they learned skills and felt competent ("*marami akong natututunan, nakakasagot ako doon sa itinuturo nila*"). Second, they believed that going to school would enable them to help their parents better ("*para tutulungan ko nanay ko magtrabaho*"), as well as prepare them for their future roles as parents ("*hindi maganda 'yung walang pinag-aralan, 'yung mag-asawa ka tapos walang pinag-aralan rin ang asawa mo...walang makakain ang mga bata*"). Third, school was a peaceful place ("*tahimik*"), and a place where they had the opportunities to play and enjoy the company of other classmates ("*'yung mga kaklase ko niyayaya akong mag-enjoy, maglalaro kami*"). Finally, going to school assured them of a better future, of upward economic mobility for themselves.

As for their negative comments about school, children enumerated being spanked by the teacher and getting into fights with other children as the experiences they liked the least. These reiterated the children's need for peace and their dislike for violence.

*The Experience of Doing Household Chores.* On the whole, children talked about doing household chores as a natural part of their routine. Very casually and quite unemotionally, they mentioned being involved mainly in tasks like cooking (*nagsasaing/nagluluto*), dishwashing (*naghuhugas ng pinggan*), fetching water (*nag-iigib*), taking care of their younger siblings or their mother (*nag-aalaga ng bata/ nanay*), house cleaning (*nagtatapon ng basura; nagpupunas ng sahig*), and doing the laundry (*naglalaba*). Interestingly however, nearly all the older children in the 12–15 year-old age group hardly talked about allotting time for household chores in the interviews. They talked more spontaneously about the amount of time they spent on scavenging. In contrast, children who were below 12 more readily talked about time *both* for scavenging *and* household chores. This response pattern suggests that as the children got older, their role in helping was taking on a more financial nature. More and more, they

were expected to help in the family's survival through tasks that generated more economic rewards.

*The Experience of Scavenging.* Socialization into scavenging started out at an early age. Of the nine children who recalled their initiation into scavenging, 7 remembered starting out at 10 years old or even younger. Of these children, four were quite certain that they started between the age of 8 and 9 years old.

Majority of the children (7 out of 10) initially tagged along with scavenger friends or relatives to the dumpsite, either out of curiosity or the need to ease their mother's economic burden. Eventually, they learned the tricks of the trade and became regular scavengers. A few (three children) claimed to have started out independently: they simply went up to the dumpsite by themselves, observed what other scavengers did, then learned to do the same eventually. Two of these three children, however, had family members regularly or occasionally engaged in scavenging. Thus, just like the majority, they may have also learned scavenging by modeling after other family members who were already involved in the trade.

Once they learned the process, the children said that they decided to continue with scavenging for the following reasons: to help their family, and to earn for themselves. They were encouraged by their mothers and it gave them a sense of competence.

The wide range of their daily earnings, however, also suggests that the erratic incomes from scavenging may have reinforced the children into returning to the dumpsite time and again. With earnings then falling anywhere between P5.00 and P100.00 daily, the children may have learned to live with some very good days, and some very bad days. This process of variable reinforcement could have thus turned scavenging into a regular habit for the children, a habit they eventually found hard to break.

Whether they earned much or little, the children did use the money to help their families and themselves. Average daily earnings ranged from P17.50 to P98.00, and all the children gave these to their mothers who in turn bought the family's basic necessities like food and medicine. Half of the children said that they were able to save some money for themselves based on what their mothers gave them back, enabling them to buy some cold drinks or clothes later on.



Despite the monetary benefits from scavenging, one thing remained very clear: the children themselves rejected scavenging. Out of a total of 21 attitudes they expressed towards scavenging, 17 or 81% referred to a disdain for scavenging as a whole, or a strong dislike for the tradeoffs from scavenging. Only two positive experiences about scavenging were mentioned: that scavenging enabled them to help their parents and themselves (3 responses), and scavenging gave them the opportunity to play (1 response).

The children disliked scavenging because it was a threat to their health and physical well-being, it forced them to contend with violence, and it offended their senses. The children's own descriptions were quite graphic:

*"Ako, ayoko sa bulldozer, baka ako masagasaan. Pag naglalaro kami sa taas, masagasaan ng bulldozer, tapos itutulak ka pa roon."* ("I might be run over by a bulldozer. When we play up there, a bulldozer could hit us, and people still push each other around.")

*"Napapagod ako, eh. Nakapagod ang magbuhat ng mga kuha tapos ibababa mo. Nakapagod maghalukay ng mga basura."* ("It is very exhausting. It is tiring to lift and lower the garbage.")

*"...Nagsasaksakan, ganoon. Minsan nga may kutsilyo silang dala-dala, minsan may dalang baril. Sana, huwag na nilang gawin 'yun, kasi natatakot ako, ninenerbiyos ako, hinihimatay ako."* ("Sometimes people bring knives, guns. I wish they wouldn't do it because I get scared, nervous; I faint.")

The children's voices were very clear. They did not want to be scavengers. But they *had* to be scavengers in order to keep their families alive.

### **Delving Deeper Into Their World: The Results of the Projective Tests**

The results from the projective tools greatly enriched and elucidated the children's responses to the interview questions. Through these instruments, the children's deeper perspectives

regarding scavenging, family life, community life and personal aspirations were drawn out.

The presentation of findings for this section begins with the reliability statistics between clinical judges on the projective stories, and then moves on to discuss the results of all the projective tools. For purposes of clarity and organization, these findings are presented under four headings: deepening the perspective on scavenging, experiences of family life, experiences of community life, and the children's wishes and prayers.

*Reliability of Thematic Analysis of Projective Stories.* The Spearman's Coefficient of Rank Correlation ( $\rho$ ) was obtained to measure the reliability between judges' thematic analyses of the projective stories (please see Table 3).

Table 3. Spearman's Coefficient of Rank Correlation ( $\rho$ ) between Pairs of Clinical Judges For the Overall, First and Second Most Prevalent Themes Drawn Out From The Smokey Mountain Thematic Apperception Test (SM-TAT) And The Philippine Children's Apperception Test (PCAT)

Paired Clinical Judges	SM-TAT Correlations			PCAT Correlations		
	Overall (N=20)	First Theme	Second Theme	Overall (N=20)	First Theme	Second Theme
Judges 1 & 2	.972*	.952*	.824*	.980*	.958*	.885*
Judges 1 & 3	.993*	.988*	.958*	.985*	.968*	.914*
Judges 2 & 3	.971*	.952*	.812*	.976*	.921*	.861*

\*Significant at  $p=.01$ .

As indicated in Table 3, overall agreement between all paired judges for both the SM-TAT and the PCAT were highly significant at the .01 level. Likewise, rank correlations for the first and second most prevalent themes in both instruments were also highly significant at the .01 level. All in all, the clinical judges had in common 31 themes drawn out from the SM-TAT, and another 31 themes drawn out from the PCAT.

*Deepening the Perspective on Scavenging: Prevalent Themes from the SM-TAT.* As a projective instrument, the SM-TAT successfully generated a variety of themes from the children (please see Table 4).

Table 4. Story Themes in the SM-TAT Commonly Drawn Out by All Clinical Judges

Category/Themes	Frequency
Themes directly referring to scavenging	15
- Scavenging is a source of survival for oneself and one's family	6
- Scavenging involves facing harsh realities, risks, danger, and pains	5
- The dumpsite stinks	1
- One has to have practical coping skills to survive the difficulties of scavenging	1
- There is happiness from a lot of garbage	1
- Scavenging helps one to imbibe the value of hard work	1
Themes related to the child's feelings	7
- Helplessness	4
- Hopelessness	1
- Self-pity and self-rejection	1
- Self-abasement/feelings of being bad	1
Themes related to ways of seeing/coping with the general situation	4
- One has to deal with the reality of living with poverty and deprivation	3
- One has to deny one's difficulties	1
Family-related themes	3
- There is a role reversal: the child assumes a parent role, or the role of a <i>mananalo</i> (compulsive helper)	2
- The child is the shock absorber of the parents' anger	1
Community-related themes	2
- There is sinfulness and violence in the community	1
- The reality of drugs and theft in the community exists	1
<b>Total no. of themes</b>	<b>31</b>

Five categories best described the themes drawn out from the SM-TAT: scavenging-related (15 themes), feelings-related (7 themes), coping-related (4 themes), family-related (3 themes), and community-related (2 themes). Given that the SM-TAT was meant to probe deeper into the experience of scavenging, this variety of theme categories suggests that the children did not see scavenging in isolation from the other facets of their lives. For the children, scavenging was intimately interwoven with their personal, familial and communal life. Scavenging was part of their personal, familial and communal identity.

The themes directly related to scavenging echoed the children's previously documented responses. Consistent with the previous section, the SM-TAT themes on scavenging focused mainly on its survival value despite the harsh realities it entailed. But the feelings that the children could not talk about directly in the interview came to light in the SM-TAT. Negative feelings pervaded their emotional life: feelings of helplessness (mentioned 4 times), hopelessness, self-pity and self-rejection, and self-abasement/being bad (mentioned once each). Negative worldviews and coping tools also dominated. There were three themes on the need to deal with the reality of poverty and deprivation, plus one other theme dealing with the need to deny one's difficulties in order to cope. These deeper personal processes suggest that the children may have been functional in performing the daily rituals of scavenging. Inside, however, they were nursing deep emotional wounds.

These emotional wounds and the perceptions about scavenging were also related to the children's emerging identity within the family and the community. In their families, children had to take on the role of being the *mananalo* (compulsive helper), as well as bear with their parents' anger. In the community, they had to bear with the reality of sinfulness, violence, drugs and theft. Only a few themes related to these two categories emerged in the SM-TAT. They were, however, elaborated on further in the PCAT and the drawing projectives.

*Experiences of Family Life: The PCAT Themes and the KFD Results.* The PCAT themes amplified the family-related themes that surfaced in the SM-TAT. Thirty one themes were identified (please see Table 4).

Seven categories best summarized the different facets of the children's family experiences: family life as a whole (9 themes), how they viewed both of their parents (7 themes), how they viewed their fathers (3 themes), how they viewed their mothers (2 themes), how they coped (7 themes), how they felt (2 themes), and how they viewed the world (1 theme). Looking closely at all the themes, one confronts a glaring, painful truth: only 3 out of the 31 themes clearly referred to healthy, positive family experiences. One stated that the child feels genuinely loved and cared for by both parents, a second viewed

the mother as a source of love and emotional security, and a third stated the belief that good deeds are rewarded while evil deeds are punished. But the rest of the 28 themes conveyed an overwhelming sense of sadness over family life and one's parents, and the difficulties in coping with all these.

For the children, family life on the whole was steeped in poverty and deprivation (8 themes), and marked by division and conflict (1 theme). And they generally did not see their parents as helping to mend these twin difficulties. Both parents neglected the child's physical and emotional needs (4 themes) and worse, used inappropriate physical punishment, sometimes to the point of physical abuse (1 theme). Understandably, the child felt uncertain over his/her parents' love (1 theme). As individual parent figures, fathers were also consistently portrayed in a negative light: the father would scold and hurt the child, was irresponsible and neglectful, and was a passive family provider but an active punisher (1 theme each). With their mothers, children seemed to feel a bit more ambivalent: on the one hand, she could be irresponsible and not love her child (1 theme); on another, she could also be a source of love and emotional security (1 theme).

In the face of all these, the child tried to cope, but in consistently unhealthy ways: he would become a *mananalo* or compulsive helper (3 themes), deny her feelings (2 themes) and escape from his situation (2 themes). Underneath these behaviors were feelings of being inadequate and being a burden to the family (each theme mentioned once).

Given this deplorable family situation, what kept the families of the children together? Were there any family alliances or relationships that offered some hope for their deep sadness in the family?

Some answers to these questions were provided in the results of another projective, the Kinetic Family Drawing (KFD).

The clinical analysis of all the children's KFDs show that work and household chores were the primary activity of nearly all able-bodied members in the family. Only the infants and the youngest siblings were given license to spend their time playing.

Table 5. Story Themes in the PCAT Commonly Drawn Out by All Clinical Judges

Category/Themes	Frequency
On family life as a whole	9
-Family life is steeped in poverty and deprivation	8
-There is division and conflict in the family	1
How the child experiences both parents	7
-The parents neglect the child's physical and emotional needs	4
-The parents use inappropriate physical punishment/physical abuse	1
-The child feels uncertain over his/her parents' love	1
-The child feels genuine love and care from the parents	1
How the child experiences the father	3
-The father scolds and hurts the child	1
-The father is irresponsible and neglects the family	1
-The father is a passive family provider but an active punisher	1
How the child experiences the mother	2
-The mother is irresponsible and does not love the child	1
-The mother is a source of love and emotional security	1
How the child copes	7
-The child becomes a <i>mananalo</i> (compulsive helper)	3
-The child denies her feelings	2
-The child prefers to escape from his situation	2
How the child feels	2
-The child feels inadequate	1
-Children are a burden to their family	1
How the child views the world	1
-Good deeds are rewarded whereas evil deeds are punished	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>

The consistent feature of household chores in all the drawings strongly suggests that from the children's viewpoint, the connections among family members were *primarily task-oriented and functional*. Family members connected with one another according to the task that he or she could do to help the family survive. This manner of connecting, no matter how functional and task-oriented, was the bond that kept the family afloat. It was the bond that held the family together under the stressful conditions of poverty, deprivation, and even violence among its members. For the children then, working together to survive was what made their family a family.

The children's responses to some follow-up questions in the KFD were also consistent with the negative family themes that surfaced in the PCAT. In the KFD, however, their responses were more focused and graphic. The children gave more emphasis to violence or abuse-related incidents as the main reasons for disliking a family member the most (please see Table 6).

Table 6. Children's Reasons for Disliking a Family Member the Most

Given Reasons	Frequency (n=11)
Violence/abuse-related reasons	9
- Hurts the child physically	4
- Often engages the child in fights	3
- Scolds the child	1
- Makes the child do unreasonable chores	1
Does not help at home	2

One 9-year old girl even made a heart-wrenching description of this violence: "*Pinapalo ako ng nanay ko dito sa mga buto. Pero minamahal niya rin ako kahit sinasaktan niya ako.*" (My mother spanks me but she still loves me even if she hurts me.)

Still, there were responses to KFD questions that provided some balance to the overall negative themes of the PCAT. First, children liked a family member the most because she helped in the survival of the child scavenger and the family (e.g., "*siya lagi kasi nag-aasikaso ng kuha ko;*" "*nagbibigay ng pera*"; "*katulong kaming magtrabaho*"). Such reasons, mentioned 8 times, complement the previous statement on work as a source of connection among family members. Second, children liked certain family members because they promoted peace (cited three times), and satisfied their personal needs (cited three times as well). This second finding is important to note. While life remained difficult on the whole, the children believed that they could still lean on at least one ally in their family. This was a source of hope for the sadness that ruled most of the children's inner lives.

*Experiences of Community Life: The Results of the SM-KCD.* What came to mind spontaneously when the children were asked to portray their community through the Smokey Mountain Kinetic Community Drawing (SM-KCD) Test?

One drawing captured the main elements of community life which children in the sample typically experienced the most: the presence of child and adult scavengers trying to earn a living, and the presence of negative feelings within families and between neighbors. The more prevalent experience they had of the general social environment was one of people fighting or having interpersonal tensions with one another.

Another drawing depicted the experience of interpersonal tensions in the community in more violent proportions. Figures were shown as "*nag-aaway*," "*nagsusuntukan*," "*sinaksak, kasi nagpapatay ng tao*," "*binaril, kasi tumakas sa kulungan, kasi gusto niyang makawala para gumawa uli ng masama*".

On the surface, the most obvious activity that occupied people in Smokey Mountain was the act of scavenging and working to earn a living. For the scavenger children, however, the most obvious reality of community life was the violence that ruled it.

How did the children feel about this community situation? A clinical analysis of their drawings indicated a bleak picture again. Out of a total of 37 feelings identified from the community drawings, 30 of them were negative feelings, mostly of helplessness, uncertainty/instability, being burdened/battered, and feeling intellectually or emotionally inadequate. Nevertheless, the children maintained some positive feelings (a total of 7), mainly that of feeling happy from playing with friends, feeling close to a brother, being pleasant and playful, and feeling confident in oneself. These feelings indicate that in the midst of negative community experiences, the children somehow still managed to lean on their peers and siblings for play and companionship, and even have a positive sense of self.

*The Children's Wishes and Prayers.* Given the adversities brought by scavenging, family deprivation, and family and community violence, what did the children wish and pray for? What did they hope for? What made up their transcendent life?



Tables 7 and 8 show that the children's wishes for their families and for their community carried two consistent themes: the desire for peace, and the desire for material and economic improvement.

In their families (please see Table 7), the children's wishes reiterated equally strong needs for peace and harmony and economic improvement (basic needs, and the parents' economic role). For the children, it was not enough to dream of material progress for their family. They also wanted to have peace in their homes.

Table 7. The Children's Wishes for Their Family

Category/Wishes	Frequency
Wishes related to peace and harmony	7
- To have peace in the family	3
- For a parent to stop hurting the child physically	3
- For younger siblings to stop swearing and fighting	1
To have more basic needs, including house improvements	4
Wishes related to parents' economic role	3
- For the father to get a job so that family life will improve	2
- For the mother to stop working too hard	1
Others	2
- For an older sibling to stop storming out of the house and avoid bad relationships	1
- For a younger sibling to study hard and not be absent from school	1

In a community where they experienced filth, fighting and violence, the children's wishes, not surprisingly, were also for greater peace and order. As Table 8 indicates, 7 out of the 10 wishes that children made about the people in the community were for more positive interactions with one another (mentioned 5 times) and for justice against violent actions to be carried out (mentioned 2 times). In addition, the children also wanted order in their physical environment. They dreamt primarily that Smokey Mountain may become clean and orderly someday (mentioned 5 times), and that it may experience material progress (mentioned 2 times).

Table 8. The Children's Wishes for the Community

Children's Community Wishes	Frequency
Wishes Regarding the People in the Community	10
- That there will be more positive interactions with one another	5
- That families may enjoy greater economic and physical well-being	2
- That justice may be implemented	2
- That people's vices may be removed	1
Wishes for the Physical Environment	9
- That the surroundings may become clean and orderly	5
- That there may be material progress (e.g., cemented roads)	2
- That there may be greater safety (e.g., putting traffic lights to prevent accidents)	2
- That the drop-in-center be made into a school	1

Below are some typical wishes that captured the strong emotional tone in the children's hopes for their families and the community:

*"Yung pag-uugali, kailangang baguhin. Minsan, awayan ng magulang...nag-aaway din 'yung mga bata dahil nakikita nila sa magulang."*

*"Dati, sinasaktan ako (ng Nanay ko). Sana, baguhin niya 'yung pusong marumi sa kanya."*

*"Sana lahat ng tao walang inggitan, saka walang awayan. Kailangan, kung nasa taas ka na, tulungan pa nilang maging matagumpay ang isang tao para ang bayan naman natin ay umunlad."*

*"Gusto ko 'yung basura, ipagawa na, huwag nang gawing tapunan ng mga basura. Ilagay na ang basura sa tamang tapunan ng basura."*

The children's words did carry a deep moral force, remarkable and profound for their age.

Finally, what were the children's personal aspirations? What did they dream of and wish for themselves?

Out of a total of 21 personal wishes and prayers that the children enumerated, four top aspirations emerged (see Table 9).

Table 9. The Children's Wishes and Prayers For Themselves

Wish/Prayer	Frequency
To develop or continue having positive virtues	8
To be able to study well	4
To have companions or friends	3
To rise from poverty and leave Smokey Mountain	2
To become physically attractive	1
To work for a good employer someday	1
To become a doctor and help heal the sick	1
To be happy at play	1
Total	21

The children's main personal hopes were: to develop or continue having positive virtues (8 responses), e.g., "*maging mabait, para hindi gumawa ng kasalanan,*" "*maging mabuti at saka matulungin sa kapwa;*" to be able to study well (4 responses); to have companions or friends (3 responses); and to rise from poverty and leave Smokey Mountain (2 responses). Many of these personal aspirations pointed to the children's desire for progress in life. But perhaps, most significant among their aspirations was their need to start a counter-culture. They wanted to nurture positive qualities in themselves in the face of experiencing exactly opposite behaviors from adult "models" in their family and in their community. Young as they were then, the scavenger children nonetheless displayed a moral clarity about the values they wished to cultivate.

### Discussion

After having gone through past studies, the group results and the in-depth write-up on the scavenger children, how do we now make sense of all these rich, intertwined journeys? It seems that four main points can capture and integrate the findings of the research.

The first and most obvious point is this: scavenger children share a similar demographic profile with urban child laborers here and all over the world. The jobless status of scavenger children's parents, vis-à-vis their vital role in the family's economic and social survival, all resonate with the studies of Bequele and Boyden (1991), Boyden and Holden (1991) and Rodgers and Standing (1981). The findings also affirm that scavenger children are part of the symptoms of poverty and chronic adult unemployment in modern times (BWYW, 1985, as cited in Malaya, 1988, September 19).

Second, the scavenger children's reported time utilization confirms the role of work and the work socialization process among Filipino families. But some findings also heighten and amplify other elements absent in previous research, among them: the impact of an in-depth approach to the children's attitudes towards work; and the relationship between scavenging and the children's emerging identity.

Work is certainly a major force in scavenger children's lives. The fact that work occupies nearly two-thirds of their time in a given week attests to this. As expected in typical Filipino families, the children in this sample are socialized into work to ensure the social and economic survival of their families (Jocano, 1975; Licuanan, 1970, 1979; Paquero-Ballescás, 1987). Children are also socialized into scavenging through training or modeling from relatives and peers, a pattern consistent with the findings of Paquero-Ballescás (1987).

Other findings offer newer perspectives. For instance, the in-depth and balanced approach to the children's attitudes towards scavenging provides an interesting touch to the findings in this research. The children's reported dislike for scavenging is aligned with previous child labor studies on long working hours and hazardous working conditions (Abdalla, 1988; Guillen-Marroquin, 1988), and on enduring violence while on the job (Abdalla, 1988; Onyango, 1988; Myers, 1989; Salazar, 1988). In addition, however, the children's *specific, graphic* statements give a unique flavor to the *phenomenological* experience of child labor exploitation in this study, an element absent from most scholarly researches. Furthermore, the use of balanced questioning that asked children what they liked best and liked least about scavenging heightens their

clear, unequivocal rejection of scavenging. The overall results thus deliver a much stronger force and impact. It becomes unmistakably clear that children unwillingly engage in scavenging solely to survive.

Finally, the more subconscious processes of the scavenging experience indicate how scavenging permeates the familial, communal and inner world of scavenger children. Despite their clear rejection of scavenging, children identify themselves as scavengers on a personal, familial and communal level. One wonders: what is the implication of this emerging identity, given that it is primarily characterized by negative feelings, negative coping mechanisms and worldviews? Furthermore, what is the implication of this emerging identity, given that scavenger children clearly reject it but cannot seem to shake it off, at least in the short-term? The psychosocial theory of development (Erikson, 1950) predicts that scavenger children could be in for a greater challenge than most when they reach the stage of identity formation in adolescence. Unless there are nurturing adults or other forces that help them form the identity they freely choose for themselves, the great task and challenge of adolescence may turn into a turbulent inner storm. And that turbulence may very well continue even into the later stages of life.

Third point: scavenger children are in a far worse situation than what most people think. Most studies refer to child laborers and scavengers as carriers of the twin burdens of poverty and chronic adult unemployment (BWYW, 1985, as cited in Malaya, 1988, September 19). Abad (1990) identified the scavengers of Smokey Mountain as bearers of the double burdens of squatting and scavenging. But this study identified another heavy burden that scavenger children bear: the wounds of violence that have attained familial *and* communal proportions. Scavenger children suffer not only from *domestic* violence, but from *communal* violence as well. The results of all the projective instruments consistently point to this, and the children's own words dramatically magnify the inner wounds that these forms of violence create.

On the surface, scavenger children, unlike working urban streetchildren, have the fortune of living in the shelter of their intact families and community. Yet, the very institutions meant to provide

them with primary care, protection from danger, and emotional nurturance, are the very same institutions which are confusing, harming, perhaps even killing their spirit. As one reviews recent local in-depth studies on streetchildren (Carandang, Gonzales, et. al, 1993; Carandang, Nisperos, et. al, 1994; Sison, 1996), children in conflict with the law (Araneta, 1998), and child abuse in families (Carandang, Nisperos, et. al, 1999), it becomes apparent that scavenger children also share the inner world of many other children today living in violent family and community situations.

In coping with the overwhelmingly multiple burdens of poverty, chronic adult unemployment, family and community violence, the scavenger child feels helpless, uncertain, burdened, inadequate and empty inside. Yet, he learns to deny these feelings, a defense mechanism that economically disadvantaged children often resort to (Miller and Swanson, 1960; Weinstock, 1967). Interestingly, this denial occurs alongside behaviors of being a helpful, dutiful child, giving rise to what Carandang (1987) coins as the *mananalo* or compulsive helper syndrome, in Filipino family dynamics. The child acknowledges the reality of poverty and readily acts on it by becoming a helper, but denies his inner need for emotional nurturance. Even more interesting is that half of the *mananalo* children in this sample were the functioning male eldest child in their families, a trend that somewhat deviates from the common experience of the eldest female child (or the *ate*) as the traditional *mananalo* in the Filipino family.

All the previous main points progressively create a bleak picture for the future of scavenger children: Yet, the findings in this study also indicate clear sources of hope. This is the fourth main point of the discussion. Scavenger children can derive hope from proper education, and also from drawing upon their own inner strengths.

Scavenger children single out going to school as the one consistent positive experience in their lives. It is the only institution that provides a counterculture to the life of depravity and violence in their work, their families and their community. In their own words, school provides skills and feelings of competence, peace and enjoyment, and opportunities to realize future goals. Education is

thus also a major force in the scavenger children's lives. It is the *only* institution that *protects* them from a culture of violence, and *supports* their deeper need to grow in the right direction.

It is important, however, to go beyond traditional schooling methods that emphasize academic skills-building. The children's reasons for liking school are signals of their need for more wholistic education programs that integrate skills training with effective conflict resolution, and exposure to a variety of environments, career options, healthier lifestyles and positive values. Incorporating these broad goals into wholistic, alternative education programs for scavenger children plays a vital, critical role in supporting their total development and psychological health.

Finally, it is essential that we go back to the scavenger children themselves. No matter how difficult their situation is, the children somehow manage to find an ally in their families to nurture their own values for peace. In the midst of a violent community, they still find the time to play and connect positively with their peers. All of these are inner resources which caring adults need to recognize and enhance to increase the children's positive coping tools.

Most of all, it is important to *learn* from the children's wishes and prayers for the family, the community and themselves. For a group facing daily deprivation and violence, the children's words convey a deep moral force and moral clarity on the personal values they want to uphold. Robert Coles (1986) originally referred to this astonishing phenomenon as the existence of moral energy in children. More recently, he discusses it as moral intelligence that challenges the morality of adults — or the lack of it (Coles, 1997). Resiliency literature would identify this kind of thinking as part of the protective factors that help some children rise above extreme difficulties (Garmezy, 1983; Rutter, 1983). But whatever term is used, it is a great wonder how and where the scavenger children get their moral sensibility, their transcendent values, in a world where they confront tremendous moral and ethical conflicts daily. Is this moral clarity mainly the influence of positive family alliances, external institutions like the school, or other external factors? Or is it possible that their moral clarity comes from deep within, from a core that naturally, instinctively, genuinely knows good from bad? Coles (1993) theorizes

that moral maturity, even in children, is ever-present and is not something acquired over time in tandem with other cognitive abilities. However, he also adds that the relationships which adults foster can shape the lived moral conduct of children and enhance their moral stamina (Coles, 1997). Given that both are true, the *process* by which this moral sensibility develops, especially in children exposed to extreme conditions of poverty and violence, is still not very well-understood. The moral wisdom of the scavenger children thus leads us to look further into this part of their inner world, a future research direction which may very well have something to add to our own 'adult sensibilities'.

### Notes

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