KU LEUVEN

FACULTEIT PSYCHOLOGIE EN
PEDAGOGISCHE WETENSCHAPPEN

Research Group Clinical Psychology

EXPERIENCES OF SELF-ESTEEM IN STREET CHILDREN

Development of an Assessment Tool

Master's thesis submitted for the degree of Master of Science in de psychologie by
Ann Van Hellemont

Supervisor: Prof. Nicole Vliegen
Co-supervisor: Prof. Hilde Colpin
With the collaboration of:
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Summary

Millions of street children worldwide, roam the streets to survive or contribute to the family income under hazardous and risky circumstances, living in poverty. Mobile School is an organisation that develops educational materials to support local partner organisations worldwide with their interventions and activities on the streets with street children. Their main objective is to encourage the development of talents and potential in these children, in order to support and promote a healthy sense of self-esteem. This thesis attempts to provide further theoretical foundation for the vision and self-esteem theory of the organisation (Chapter one), and develop an assessment tool to explore the impact of their interventions on the children's self-esteem.

This research was divided into two separate, though intertwined studies, the first of which entailed the development of a new narrative story stem technique for street children. This process, as described in chapter two, consisted of a preliminary survey involving 54 street educators in 12 different countries, giving their input regarding the behavioural indicators of self-esteem as observed in the street children they work with on a daily basis on the streets. Once these detectable indicators were defined, a story stem battery was developed, based on these indicators, which took into account the special circumstances of these children and their reality on the streets. The resulting ten story stems was further complemented by a user-friendly manual and visual aids. The second study, described in the subsequent chapters three and four, consists of the pilot testing of the newly developed tool, in two different cultural settings with three subsamples of street children. Each subsample consisted of fifteen children. The two Bolivian subsamples included working children in the street. One subsample were children with several years of experience with mobile school activities, the other subsample had only recently been introduced to the mobile school and hence had not benefitted from its interventions yet. The third subsample involved children of street families in the Philippines. These children had also experienced several years of mobile school interventions. After administering the tool with 45 children, 42 interviews were able to be transcribed and translated for further analysis. The analysis was carried out on the narratives of three children from each subsample, and focused on two important pillars supporting the development of self-esteem, namely *mentalizing capacities* and *self-agency*. The general trend observed in the analysis of these two indicators was an overall positive relation between the two. Narratives that were highly indicative of high level mentalizing capacities tended to be rife with signs of self-agency. These narratives also often demonstrated signs of several of the defined behavioural indicators defined in chapter two. Chapter five discusses these trends that generate hypotheses and pose questions for further analysis and research.

Acknowledgements

These past years completing my Master's degree has been an incredibly intense period in my life on several fronts: academically-speaking, work-related and family-oriented. It has opened a world of opportunities for me, which sometimes resulted in me struggling to combine them all. This Master's thesis would not have been possible without the input and support of a multitude of people. Amongst them, I would like to thank:

… Prof. Nicole Vliegen and Prof. Hilde Colpin for their openness and enthusiasm for the project. For their intense involvement, advice and endless patience. And for reading and re-reading countless times to help me get it just the way I wanted it…

… Arnoud, for introducing me to the world of street children and their talents and potential…

… the Mobile School team and volunteers for their selfless work and commitment for the street children. And for their support of my studies and contribution of their expertise to this research…

… the local partner organisations of Mobile School for their daily struggle to provide a safe haven for these street children. And for their participation and valuable input in this study…

… the street children who participated for sharing their stories and a small part of themselves. It is an honour to be allowed a glimpse into their rich inner world…

… the voluntary researchers Griet, Julien and Rose for the administration of the tool in the field; Marie and the Mobile School volunteers in Belgium for the translations; Mobile School colleagues Saskia and Hunter for their support in obtaining and double checking the translations; Rob for his help in spreading the online survey to our partner organisations…

… last but not least, my family and friends, for their unconditional support every step of the way. And for babysitting our baby girl during the hours I retreated into the inner world of the street children… especially my parents who were not only available as grandparents, but as caregivers whenever we needed them…

… in particular, Klaas, for encouraging me to embark on this journey and motivating me in the most difficult of times. And for his constant loving support…

… and of course, our beautiful daughter Zanna, who came into our lives during this process and has been an overwhelming source of inspiration everyday allowing me to revel in the wonders of life as I also once did as a child… you are my star, you are my sunshine.

Clarification approach and own contribution

This Master's thesis consists entirely of a new set of studies but builds further on prior research conducted with and for Mobile School by several contributors over the past two decades. It is inspired by my experience in the field with the street children I have had the chance to work with, as well as the seasoned street educators who have taught me everything I know. As co-founder of Mobile School and having been part of the growing organisation for the past fifteen years, I was in the privileged position to undergo this journey and conduct this research thanks to my access to all the necessary resources. Having implemented several mobile schools in different countries, trained various teams of experienced street educators and followed up our international partnerships, I not only had access to our partner organisations in the field, but had close personal contact with many of the street educators. Thanks to this trusting personal relationship, I was able to reach 54 street educators for the preliminary survey of study 1, and 45 street children for the pilot testing in study 2.

The approach and study design put forward when suggesting my own thesis topic was largely decided upon based on my previous research for Mobile School. However, the decision to find inspiration for the new narrative assessment tool within the MacArthur Story Stem Battery was a joint decision with my supervisor, Prof. Nicole Vliegen, who advised me on all matters concerning narrative story stem techniques and qualitative research.

The literature review is based on books and articles read over the past years and prior research conducted with interns and colleagues at Mobile School, but also includes many new sources sought out for this thesis, with the help of my supervisors.

All data for both studies was gathered by myself, in collaboration with Mobile School colleagues and street educators (preliminary online survey of study 1) and volunteers (administration of tool, transcription and translation for study 2). The construction of the narrative story stem tool (study 1) and the analysis of the narratives resulting from the pilot testing (study 2) was carried out by myself, with the guidance of my supervisors.

In the analysis of the results and the discussion thereof, I have based my reasoning on the data presented combined with the extensive literature reviewed. However, I have also expressed impressions and opinions influenced by personal experience with our target groups in various cultural contexts.

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Introduction

I have had the privilege to be a part of the Mobile School project for over fifteen years. As co-founder of the organisation, I have witnessed its growth from a voluntary project of a few kindred spirits with similar ideals, to a professional organisation, with all its successes and failures along the way. The ideals that coaxed me into this adventure fifteen years ago, drive me still today. Hence the motivation for this study.

The reasoning and driving force behind this research is two-fold. Firstly, after actively implementing street-based interventions in the form of a mobile school in 23 different countries, there is a need to further understand the impact these interventions have on the self-development and (self-) perceptions of these street children. It is crucial to understand to what extent these interventions facilitate the children's behaviour change or changes in their perceptions of themselves and the impact they have on their environment. Therefore, this research aspires to seek out what impact Mobile School has on street children's sense of self and self-esteem, and in which way this process of self-development manifests itself.

Secondly, after fifteen years of experience working with street children worldwide, it has come to my attention that there is an inherent need to understand the inner world of these children. Aside from bearing the burden of poverty, neglect, and a lack of education, their problems are complicated further by the confrontation with exploitation, psychological trauma of abuse, the detrimental effects of substance abuse, and the violent encounters with law enforcers and rival peers as part of their street life. However, despite these hardships, they are surviving mostly independently in this harsh reality, using all the creativity, entrepreneurship and street skills they can muster. So how do they rhyme these two contrasting worlds? What is their view of the world around them and with what attitude or motivation do they face these challenges? This research strives to discover more about the inner world of these children, who are difficult to reach due to several factors: distrust of adults, compromised cognitive development, illiteracy and lack of reflection and communication skills.

Poverty exerts a negative influence on the development of children through lack of hygiene, malnourishment, migration, illiteracy, lack of stability in family structure and violence (Bello, Pinto & Torres Llosa, 1995; Thorne, 2005). Families with low socio-economic status (SES) do not have access to sufficient cultural, nor material means to stimulate their children, neither do they have the time to respond appropriately to their psychological needs (Thorne, 2005). Sameroff, Gutman and Peck (2003) demonstrated that being poor and growing up in a poor community have a harmful influence

on the cognitive, intellectual, social, and emotional development of children and on their physical health (Yearwood, 2014).

Many of the street children we encounter, suffer from a very negative or limited self-image. After many years of being treated as third class citizens, or outcasts of society, these children have developed a warped sense of self. This often negative self-image holds them back from believing they are worthy of a better future and in turn effects their decision-making processes. According to Leary and Downs (1995, p. 126), "the functional value of the self-esteem motive is that high self-esteem motivates people to pursue their goals and to persevere in the face of obstacles and set-backs". Moreover, Baumeister and Tice (1985) posit that individuals with low self-esteem are likely to withdraw from success because initial success increases the potential disappointment of future failures. Low self-esteem can restrict our ability to develop a positive future orientation and therefore limit our choices to immediate and present situations. By not being able to picture a positive future for ourselves, we are in fact stifling our potential and denying ourselves the free choice to change our situation. This form of self-doubt is associated with heightened anxiety, emotional distress and lowered self-efficacy or perceived control, and sometimes even diminished feelings of global self-esteem (Cantor & Norem, 1989; Harlow & Cantor, 1994; Langston, 1990, as cited in Harlow and Cantor, 1995). These consequences of self-doubt can lead to compromised motivation that has the potential to impair performance. Conversely, the strategies used to overcome self-doubt reveal the "individuals' capacities for creating agency in their daily lives, because such strategies represent the individuals' efforts to take control of a task where we might otherwise expect self-defeat" (Harlow and Cantor, 1995, p. 173). These are important perspectives which underlie the vision and approach of Mobile School's activities, interventions and desired impact.

In fact, most major cities in the world have organisations and projects offering street children opportunities to change their situation and choose a different life style. However, due to the negative consequences of societal exclusion and the influence of the streets' subculture, many children are unable to grasp or fully develop these opportunities. Perceptions of social exclusion may lead to dramatic changes in self-esteem (Leary & Downs, 1995; Bhukuth & Ballet, 2015). Within the framework of Leary and Downs' sociometer theory, the relation between exclusion and self-esteem seems to be a two-way street. "If one examines the sorts of events that are most likely to damage self-esteem, they are precisely those events that are likely to result in social exclusion" (Leary & Downs, 1995, p. 130). Mobile School attempts to bridge the gap between the streets' influence and

the opportunities available within social projects, which involves supporting the child's self-development process.

In order to understand the underlying elements crucial to this self-development and self-actualisation process, we must first define both the meaning and significance of self-esteem and its related aspects. Chapter one is dedicated to analysing these fundamental concepts underlying the theory on which Mobile School's vision rests and which guide the development of the assessment tool developed to evaluate the impact of their interventions. This Master's thesis encompasses two Studies, the first of which tackled the development of a new narrative assessment tool for street children. In order to assess indicators relevant to both the objectives of this pilot study as well as the reality of the target group, a preliminary investigation was necessary. Since the indicators we wanted to measure involved the behaviour change or perception change observed by street educators working with the mobile school interventions on the streets, it was essential to get the input of these street educators who have first-hand experience with both the target group as well as the intervention tools.

By conducting an online survey questioning the street educators of the active Mobile School partner organisations, a comprehensive overview was obtained of observed changes which could be indicators of an overall shift in global self-esteem. Fifty-four street educators from twelve different countries participated in the online survey by sharing their experiences and insights. The assessment tool was based on these identified indicators. The second Study involved (a) the actualisation of a narrative assessment and (b) an exploratory analysis with this tool in two different cultural settings and with three varying target groups of street children, all ranging between six and twelve years of age.

Chapter two describes the first Study, which entails the development of the narrative assessment tool specifically for street children, involving a Narrative Story Stem Technique (NSST). The rationale for this choice of technique and the process of its development is described in detail. Chapter three introduces the second Study which describes the pilot project testing the developed instrument in Bolivia and the Philippines with street working children and children of street families respectively. The target groups had varying degrees of contact with mobile school interventions. Chapter four follows with the results of the pilot study and the initial analysis of a number of the gathered narratives. Subsequently, chapter five discusses both the process and results of these two studies, forming recommendations for further research.

Chapter 1: Theoretical background and objectives of the studies

"Whatever abilities a child may have,

a healthy sense of self-worth

differentiates him/her who faces the world

with an attitude of 'I can'

from the one who faces the world with 'I can't'."

(Carandang, 2010)

In this first chapter, the organisation Mobile School shall be described along with their target group, vision and interventions. Subsequently, the focus of the literature study will be primarily on defining the most important concepts underlying Mobile School's approach in their work with street children. These concepts include self-efficacy, locus of control and attributional style, all of which are influential or closely related to self-esteem, the core concept pertaining to Mobile School's vision. As this Master's thesis attempts to develop an assessment tool, which could potentially aid in evaluating the impact of Mobile School's interventions on self-esteem of street children, it aims also to further describe, clarify and theoretically support the project's aims and vision.

By discussing the relevant concepts, this thesis shall provide theoretical support for Mobile School's Self-Esteem Model, developed in 2010. This model illustrates the processes underlying the vision and intervention objectives of the organisation. The chapter concludes with a description of the narrative approach underlying the two studies conducted within the framework of this Master's thesis. These studies will be described in more detail in the subsequent chapters.

1.1. Mobile School for street children

Mobile School is a Belgian social profit organisation that develops and produces educational materials and teaching methods for street children worldwide. By offering these tools to local partner organisations to implement within the scope of their own outreach programmes, Mobile School is able to provide psychosocial and educational support by means of more than 40 'mobile schools' in 23 different countries spread over four continents (Van Hellemont, 2015).

A 'mobile school' is a box on wheels, with extendable blackboards that can be pulled out through a

telescopic system (www.mobileschool.org, 2015). When closed, the box is approximately 1.50m in length and can easily be manoeuvred by street educators along pavements, in parks or through slum areas of any city. When fully extended, the mobile school becomes six metres in length. As all surfaces consist of blackboard, the mobile school provides twelve metres of educational space. On any of these surfaces, there is a system allowing educational panels to be attached (Van Hellemont, 2005). The Mobile School also supplies an educational package of approximately 300 panels per mobile unit, which can be changed regularly to suit the target group they plan to work with (www.mobileschool.org, 2015). This makes for a very adaptable tool that can cater to different target groups of different ages. The educational panels cover a range of topics from literacy to healthcare, creative expression to conflict prevention and social skills. The main objectives behind the use of these panels are geared towards (self-)reflection, (self-)awareness, (self-)development and ultimately increasing self-esteem. The mobile school is fully weather resistant and theft-proof. All materials are sustainable and attached to the blackboards, whereby they cannot be removed easily. This makes it the ideal tool to work with on the streets, where it is exposed to unpredictable conditions (Raskin, 2014; www.mobileschool.org, 2015).

1.1.1. Street children

The term 'street children' is a controversial one as its definition is broad and all-encompassing (de Moura, 2002). It covers a wide variety of characteristics and circumstances, making the number of street children worldwide difficult to quantify (Bhukuth & Ballet, 2015). According to UNICEF (2002, p. 37), "the latest estimates put the numbers of these children as high as 100 million". However, an identical estimate was already made by UNICEF in 1989. "The exact number of street children is impossible to quantify, but the figure almost certainly runs into tens of millions across the world. It is likely that the numbers are increasing as the global population grows and as urbanization continues apace" (UNICEF, 2005, p. 40-41). One can relativize these figures due to interchangeable and vague definitions (de Moura, 2002). Most common definitions into which these children are categorised are the following (Bhukuth & Ballet, 2015; de Moura, 2002; Franieck, Günter & Page, 2014; UNICEF, 2001):

- **Street-living children** or children **of** the street: these are children who live night and day on the streets, fending for themselves with few to no ties to their families. This is the minority of street children.
- **Street-working children** or children **on** the street: These children are predominantly children working on the streets to contribute to the family income. They spend most of their day on

the streets, but often go home to their family, predominantly living in makeshift housing or slum areas near the city. Some of these children go to school part-time.

- **Street-families**: these are the children of families who are living on the streets. Though they may be partially supervised, often their parents are working on the streets themselves, leaving their children to fend for themselves on the streets for most of the day. Few of these children have access to formal education.

A vast number of street children have been forced to grow up quickly in order to look after themselves and their siblings. They are often given responsibilities from a young age to contribute to the family income or pull their weight in the household chores whilst caring for younger siblings (Van Hellemont, 2006). Children with little to no contact with their families carry the burden of looking after themselves and all their basic needs. Many of them have at one point in their lives been abandoned, rejected or abused in some way (Raskin, 2014). Some are orphaned due to conflict, war, disease or natural disasters. Others have been abandoned due to poverty. Many have left home due to domestic violence and abuse (Bhukuth & Ballet, 2015; Thomas de Benitez, 2011). Their troubled past combined with the constant insecurity associated with life on the streets, subjects them to the risk of emotional trauma (Franieck, Günter & Page, 2014).

Severe chronic or traumatic stress will harm the vulnerable and developing child (Perry, 2009; Franieck et al., 2014). Even before these children took to the streets, they often experienced parental rejection or neglect, which has been shown to be a major contributor to low self-esteem (Coopersmith, 1967). Adverse events can have a hugely negative impact on the development of the brain and can alter the potential of the child. The age at which such traumatic events occur is one of the most important determinants of functional outcome after maltreatment (Perry, 2001). The earlier in life the traumatic event occurs, the greater the impact on the further development of the child (Perry, 2009). Anda et al. (2006), describe converging evidence from neurobiology and epidemiology that suggests that early life stress such as abuse and related adverse experiences cause enduring brain dysfunction that, in turn, affects health and quality of life throughout the lifespan. Traumatic experiences in early childhood impact all future emotional, behavioural, cognitive, social and physiological functioning (Perry & Pollard, 1998). According to Weinberg (2004), traumatic experience also disrupts the development of mentalization capacities. A consequence of traumatic interference with mentalization could be a lack of ability to distinguish between mental experience and reality (Weinberg, 2004).

Although it is a common adult misinterpretation that children are better at coping with stress than adults, according to Perry and Pollard (1998), the contrary is true: children are more vulnerable to

trauma than adults. As the higher parts of the brain are not yet fully developed, children do not use words easily to describe the terror they are experiencing. This silence can be easily misunderstood as resilience to trauma (Yearwood, 2014). The inner world of children is not easily accessible as they do not always have the words to express themselves, nor the reflective capacities to find thoughts to think about themselves. Moreover, they may not have a frame of reference for their early life experiences, to know how to deal with the impact and consequences of these experiences.

As many street children have experienced traumatic events from an early age, they are vulnerable to long-term effects. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to reach these children as early as possible in order to support the development of their self-image and resilience. This idea is at the core of the Mobile School interventions. This study intends to develop a way in which to investigate and ascertain indications of resilience and positive self-image in these children.

1.1.2. Vision and mission

According to Dubrow (1992), "institutional violence removes the trust children have in adults and adult society. Once this is lost, it is not surprising that these children show hostility, suspicion, low self-esteem and feelings of rage" (Bhukuth & Ballet, 2015, p. 143). Mobile School seeks out street children in their own environment and creates positive meeting places where the child is unconditionally accepted and respected. The street worker visits the children to listen to them, build up a trusting relationship and offer opportunities to develop a positive self-image (Van Hellemont, 2009). Mobile School believes in the potential of these children and therefore strives to confront them with and increase their awareness of their talents and abilities. According to the findings of a study involving Brazilian street children, Franieck and Günter (2012) conclude that street children, despite having areas of vulnerability, also have considerable psychological resources. Against all odds, there are some children who not only survive on the streets but also manage to thrive on particular talents, whether it be artistic or in a street business.

The curriculum of more than 300 educational materials targets the discovery and development of talents, interests, personal development and reflections. The primary goal here is to stimulate and develop a positive self-image and solid sense of identity (Van Hellemont & Dieleman, 2014). The educational materials provided are not meant as a replacement of a formal education curriculum. By guiding children to discover their talents and potential, and providing opportunities for mastering experiences, they can become empowered to take steps toward a future they dare to imagine for themselves (Raskin, 2014; Van Hellemont, 2009). The main objective is therefore to build a solid foundation of self-awareness, self-confidence, personal agency and motivation, all of which are

necessary elements for further self-development processes (Van Hellemont & Dieleman, 2013). According to Bandura (1994), "the most effective way of creating a strong sense of efficacy is through mastery experiences. Successes build a robust belief in one's personal efficacy. Failures undermine it, especially if failures occur before a sense of efficacy is firmly established" (p. 72). In our experience with street children, many of them have been exposed to countless experiences of being treated as failures, whether it be on the streets in their current situation, or previous to their street life, often in abusive home situations. The encouragement provided by the street educators during mobile school activities, serve as a counterweight to the sense of failure and inability.

Furthermore, in order to effectively carry out this mission, the provided materials need to be utilised by the local street educators to their full potential. Mobile School therefore also developed an extensive training programme for street educators working with street children. Through these workshops, Mobile School trainers prepare the prospective local mobile school team to work with the provided materials within the specific pedagogical vision on the streets (Van Hellemont & Dieleman, 2013).

1.1.3. Mobile School as an intervention

The mobile school is designed in such a way to allow access to children on the streets who are most vulnerable and difficult to reach. It is adapted to the environment of the street and the circumstances of the street children, allowing a flexible and attractive method to fulfil their educational needs and support their self-development.

The educational materials included cover topics from basic literacy to healthcare education, children's rights and citizenship, entrepreneurship and creative expression (Van Hellemont & Dieleman, 2014; Raskin, 2014). All materials are adapted to the reality of street children and designed to be attractive. The use of colourful illustrations and game formats make the materials self-motivating and fun. The purpose is to spark interest in education and confront the children with their potential, abilities and talents. All the materials are geared towards stimulating their self-development and self-esteem. By providing insight into their possibilities and strengthening their identities, Mobile School strives to empower them into making informed and conscious future-oriented decisions to shape their lives on or off the streets (Van Hellemont, 2009).

In order to reach these street children, Mobile School also targets the local street educators who conduct the educational activities with these children. By providing intense training and coaching, Mobile School is able to support their work in the field whilst imparting the latest developments of materials to be implemented. Local street educators are trained in (a) aspects of child development

(e.g. importance of self-esteem, importance of play), (b) skills to scaffold children's development (e.g. technical use of the mobile school, use of games and educational materials, counselling skills), (c) use and stimulation of creativity, entrepreneurship and innovation (e.g. Creative therapy, street business toolkit, creating activities), (d) organisation and methodology (e.g. Vision, strategy and methodology, project management and evaluation methods, team dynamics and intervision), and (e) understanding street culture and street children (e.g. principles of street work, child abuse & disclosure, children's rights, resilience) (Raskin, 2014; Van Hellemont & Sweldens, 2013).

1.2. The central role of supporting Self-esteem in Mobile School

1.2.1. Mobile School's Self-Esteem Model

In 2010, Mobile School developed a model (Hetmanek, Van Hellemont & Sweldens, 2010) to support their vision and theory on how their interventions had an influence on the self-esteem of the street children they worked with. This theory is illustrated by a model that represents the self-sustaining self-esteem cycle.

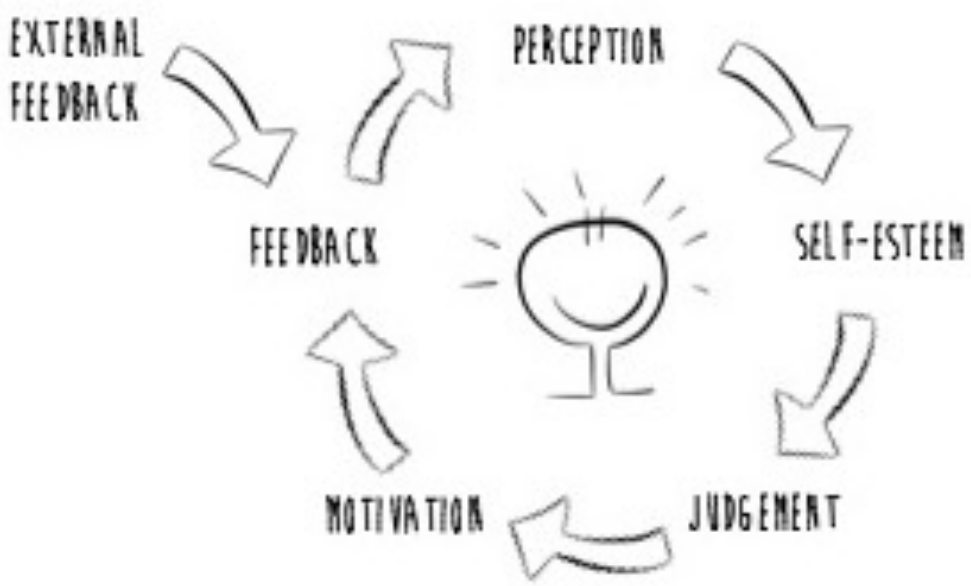

Figure 1. Self-sustaining cycle representing Mobile School's Self-esteem Model (Hetmanek, Van Hellemont, & Sweldens, 2010; Van Hellemont, 2014, in Raskin, 2014, p. 105).

According to Mobile School's Self-esteem Model (Hetmanek et al., 2010), an individual's self-esteem influences their perception of their environment, therefore also influencing their interpretation and in turn judgement of it. So, how one deals with one's situation depends on one's perspective on things, and therefore, outlook on life. The individual's perceptions are influenced both by a predisposition and by past experiences, derived from cause-consequence associations. These experiences form the base for the interpretation of everyday situations and for judgment of and decision making on these daily situations. This interpretation can be encouraging or demotivating, depending how the individual sees the possible outcome of their (re)actions. If they believe their action will not lead to positive results, they are unlikely to take on the challenge and invest energy in tackling the situation. So, if a situation is seen as a risk, one is more likely to shy away from it, whereas a situation interpreted as likely to result in a positive outcome motivates and encourages action (Hetmanek et al., 2010; Van Hellemont, 2014, in Raskin, 2014). As stated by Bandura (1994, p. 78) in his social cognitive theory:

> *People avoid activities and situations they believe exceed their coping capabilities. But they readily undertake challenging activities and select situations they judge themselves capable of handling. By the choices they make, people cultivate different competencies, interests and social networks that determine life courses. Any factor that influences choice behaviour can profoundly affect the direction of personal development.*

According to Locke, McClear and Knight (1996), "A person with a high self-esteem will view a challenging job as a deserved opportunity which he can master and benefit from, whereas a person with low self-esteem is more likely to view it as an undeserved opportunity or a chance to fail" (p.21). The meta-analysis of Dodgson and Wood (1998) supports the idea that people with high self-esteem tend to remain optimistic in the face of failure, allowing future success to become more likely. Furthermore, according to Bandura (1994), "People with high assurance in their capabilities approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than as threats to be avoided" (p. 71).

This judgement of a situation activates one's motivations and hence reactions, which in turn bring about results which can be perceived positively or negatively. In other words, these results of one's actions again leave their mark on one's perception, making it a self-sustaining cycle. This accumulation of experiences leaves traces on one's outlook on the world (Van Hellemont, 2014). According to Baumeister and Tice (1985), "the discrepancy between high and low self-esteem may arise either from differential levels of ability or differential patterns of selective perception and memory," (p.451). This cycle, however, can be self-sustaining, both in a positive and a negative way. Negatively tinted perceptions which lead to negative outcomes or experiences can further taint

perceptions engraining the negative outlook in further perceptions of situations. On the other hand, positive mastering experiences can have the opposite effect by sustaining a healthy outlook and therefore encouraging positive actions which lead to more positive experiences making the cycle not only self-sustaining but also self-motivating (Van Hellemont, 2014).

According to Baumeister and Tice (1985), "trait self-esteem predisposes behavioural responses to success and failure" (p.450). Individuals with high self-esteem tend to emphasize their abilities, strengths, and other positive qualities, as opposed to low self-esteem individuals who focus their attention on their deficiencies and weaknesses. Distinguishing between primary and secondary control systems, differing in goal and pattern as a function of self-esteem, Baumeister and Tice (1985) underline that "primary control involves efforts to change the world (presumably including self-improvement) to fit one's needs and wants, and it is seen in active, instrumental behaviour" (p. 451). This concept is comparable to the empowering effect of self-agency, also closely related to self-esteem. Secondary control, on the other hand, aims at avoiding disappointment through submission to fit in with seemingly unchangeable realities and is expressed in more passive behaviour. Consequently, high self-esteem individuals are accustomed to success, so their primary control systems are designed to cultivate talents and maximize successes in order to excel. This gives support to the idea of a self-sustaining cycle, which in turn highlights the importance of successful mastering experiences in the development and maintenance of self-esteem. Moreover, and according to Judge and Bono (2001), Korman's self-consistency theory (1970) predicts high self-esteem individuals are likely to perform effectively in order to maintain their positive self-image. Furthermore, the learned helplessness model poses that optimistic individuals with positive self-evaluations will be less likely to display motivational deficits under unfavourable circumstances, as opposed to those with a pessimistic explanatory style who are likely to display symptoms of helplessness (Peterson and Seligman, 1984, in Judge and Bono, 2001).

Furthermore, individuals are not merely influenced by their experiences, but also by people around them. According to Leary and Down's (1995) sociometer theory of self-esteem, one's self-esteem is contingent on positive or negative feedback from the social environment. Self-esteem then becomes a component of self-regulation, instigating behavioural and cognitive strategies for self-concept maintenance or enhancement, making it both an input to and output of goal-directed behaviour (Rhodewalt and Tragakis, 2003). Furthermore, Korman's theory (1970), predicts high self-esteem individuals are likely to engage in a broad range of behaviours and cognitions that reinforce their self-concept. Conversely, individuals with low self-esteem "tend to lower their standards or completely withdraw from the task when given negative feedback" (Brockner, 1988, in Judge and

Bono, 2001). The way in which one's environment reacts to one's behaviour can determine whether it be a positive or negative experience. In the case of street children who, due to lack of opportunities, are unable to read or write and may believe they will never be able to, small steps of encouragement can prove them otherwise. If, for example, they are guided step-by-step in simply copying the letters of their name allowing mastering experiences and a hugely satisfying outcome (of seeing their name written in full by their own hand), this could give them just enough courage to take on the difficult challenge of learning to read and write at a later age. In the model, this stage would be the positive feedback experienced by seeing their name written by their own hand, combined with encouraging external feedback from the street educators. This feedback could consequently change their perception of their inability to write, into a hopeful feeling of possibility. This in turn could affect their sense of self-efficacy, agency and ultimately self-esteem. Subsequently, their initial judgement of something that appeared to be an impossibility now being overturned into a reality, stimulates motivation to take further steps. By stimulating their motivation and allowing them to see their own potential, one can break the self-sustaining negative cycle and turn it into an upward positive spiral of self-affirmation leading to a more positive self-image (Van Hellemont, 2014). Organising activities to offer these opportunities for mastery and positive feedback is Mobile School's core mission. Their materials and pedagogical vision is adapted to the reality and needs of these street children, which is an essential prerequisite to increasing chances of success. As Bandura (1994, p. 73) stated:

> *Successful efficacy builders do more than convey positive appraisals. In addition to raising people's beliefs in their capabilities, they structure situations for them in ways that bring success and avoid placing people in situations prematurely where they are likely to fail often. They measure success in terms of self-improvement rather than by triumphs over others.*

Moreover, activities encouraging the acquisition of skills and creative achievement promote and provide a more durable basis for self-esteem (Harlow and Cantor, 1995).

In order to develop a better understanding of self-esteem, this chapter shall also address related concepts such as self-efficacy, locus of control, attribution style and self-agency. Moreover, it shall further explore underlying processes of mentalization capacities, such as self-awareness, which allow the further development of self-agency and self-esteem.

1.2.2. Historical background and current definition of the concept self-esteem

In 1890, the American psychologist, William James, first coined the term 'self-esteem' and introduced it as a concept referring to a predominantly affective phenomenon. He regarded self-

esteem as a dynamic process constantly being affected by successes and failures and as such hence open to enhancement. Self-esteem has the qualities of both a personality trait as well as a psychological state, whilst fluctuating when people experience success and failure (Crocker, Brook, Niiya and Villacorta, 2006). The reason for this fluctuation is that succeeding in one's goals brings about positive affect and boosts self-esteem. On the other hand, failure brings with it negative affect which negatively affects self-esteem (Carver, 2003; Carver & Scheier, 1998, in Crocker et al., 2006). This is a crucial stance which supports the vision of Mobile School whose main mission is the enhancement of self-esteem through mastering experiences (Raskin, 2014; Van Hellemont, 2009). High self-esteem has been reported to be one of the strongest predictors of well-being (Cheng & Furnham, 2003).

Other prominent contributors to the concept of self-esteem include Rosenberg (1965), Coopersmith (1967) and Epstein (1985). Research conducted on the concept by abovementioned authors in the 60's and 70's revealed a wide variety of perspectives and fundamental issues regarding its definition. The word itself consists of two parts: the 'self' and 'esteem'. The 'self' refers to the self-construct which is widely debated and generates a range of different interpretations. 'Esteem' on the other hand, finds its roots in the Latin word 'aestimare', meaning appraising, valuing or calculating. Translated to English, this became known as a sense of 'worth'. Though the exact definition differs depending on cultural context, for purposes of this discussion involving a cross-cultural identity, the broadest definition shall prove adequate. That is why we chose the definition of Sedikides & Gregg (2003) who describe self-esteem or self-worth as referring to a person's *subjective appraisal of himself or herself as intrinsically positive or negative.* This definition poses no claim on what the appraisal is based on, but simply states it is a subjective judgement of value. Important to note, is the position they take that insinuates the appraisal to be internalized in some way. In order for one to internalise feedback and appraise one's worth internally, one must have a sense of self-awareness. This is a crucial stance when it comes to detecting and identifying self-esteem constructs in children. In order to quantify a child's self-esteem, one must in the first place prove their ability to self-judge, which is a process largely reliant on the ability to be aware of their inner self. As Kernis (2003) explains, self-esteem encompasses components of self-awareness. Self-knowledge is a critical component in considering how one appraises a situation and one's perceived competence at tackling a particular task at hand (Harlow and Cantor, 1995). Research conducted by Rhodewalt and Tragakis (2003), illustrates a clear connection between self-esteem, self-knowledge and the process of self-regulation. They go even further to propose that "self-esteem evolves through its ties to self-knowledge and self-regulation" (p.69). Therefore, in order to develop such an internal judgement of one's value, one must have the ability to identify such internal states. Self-awareness and a notion of

self-worth is therefore largely dependent on mentalization capacities. Mentalization is described by Fonagy and Target (1995) as the active expression of the psychological capacity intimately related to self-representation (in Fonagy, Gergely, Jurist and Target, 2002). This insight into one's own being is thus made possible largely through the ability to mentalize. It becomes clear that the foundations on which the self-esteem model is built, rests on the ability to mentalize. As self-perception and therefore appraisal is dependent on a certain degree of self-awareness, this implies that the capacity for mentalization lies at the foundation of our ability to develop any sense of self, and therefore self-esteem and self-agency.

1.2.3. A developmental perspective: From mentalization and self-awareness to self-esteem

Mentalization capacity allows people the ability to understand their own and others' behaviours and inner feelings associated with specific mental states and intentions. This in turn allows one to recognise the effect one's behaviour has on others, enabling a sense of empathy (Leiner & Ataalla, 2014). Where mentalization capabilities and self-awareness are underdeveloped or compromised in some way, a sense of self-worth is bound to be distorted or lacking somehow. Perceptions of worth or self-esteem develop from a person's global self-perception or self-concept (Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006), which is largely dependent on self-awareness and insight into the self. As Silvia and O'Brien (2004) state: "Without self-awareness, people could not take the perspectives of others, exercise control, produce creative accomplishments, or experience pride and high self-esteem" (p.475). Therefore, self-awareness underlies several human processes such as agency, empathy, social competence and a sense of self-worth. As illustrated in Figure 1, this theoretical framework suggests mentalization capacities, otherwise known as reflective functioning, are at the foundation of further self-construct processes (Fonagy et al., 2002).

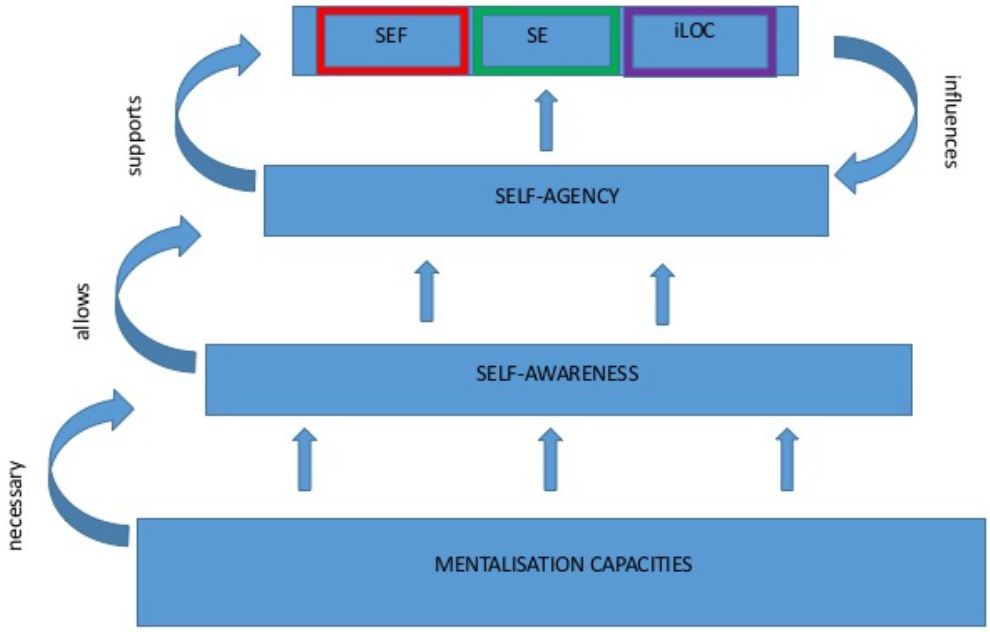

Figure 2. Suggested model representing prerequisites for developing a sense of self-agency, crucial in the development of self-efficacy (SEF), self-esteem (SE) and internal Locus of Control (iLOC).

Research (Judge & Bono, 2001; Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2002) suggests that the dispositional traits, generalized self-efficacy, self-esteem and locus of control be closely related and therefore indicators of a broader construct, namely core self-evaluations. These appraisals are born out of self-awareness and determine perception of competence or agency. However, in order to develop self-insights or self-awareness, it is necessary to be able to mentalize. According to Bandura (1994), "perceived self-efficacy is defined as people's beliefs about their capacities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives" (p. 71). Essentially this relates strongly to a sense of self-agency. The concepts self-agency and self-efficacy are intertwined as they influence each other. According to Zimmerman and Cleary (2006), self-agency encompasses the ability to originate and consciously direct one's actions for given purposes or intentions. They believe it to be influenced by one's belief in one's efficacy as well as one's actual skill (Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006). Therefore, we propose the model in Figure 1, illustrating the build-up of the self-construct: through mentalization capacities which are necessary to become self-aware, one gains insights into the self which in turn allows the formation of a sense of agency. This self-agency is supportive of the further development of self-efficacy, self-esteem and an internal locus of control. Hence, a sense of self-esteem is reliant on a number of psychological processes that need to be developed in order to make it possible. At the foundation of these processes lies mentalization, a capacity that begins to develop in early childhood (Fonagy et al., 2002).

This is a fundamental necessity in order to become self-aware of one's own goal-directed actions, intentions, emotions and thoughts. Mentalization is a form of mental activity which allows us to perceive and interpret human behaviour in terms of intentional mental states such as needs, desires, feelings, beliefs, and reasoning. It emphasizes a certain sense of agency, as it involves both implicitly and explicitly interpreting one's own actions, as well as others', as meaningful on the basis of intentional mental states (Bateman & Fonagy, 2012). According to Fonagy et al. (2002), "Reflective functioning involves both a self-reflective and an interpersonal component that ideally provides the individual with a well-developed capacity to distinguish inner from outer reality…" (p.25). They further describe it as the capacity of young children to interpret their own and others' behaviour by attributing mental states. Furthermore, this ability underlies the capacities for affect regulation, impulse control, self-monitoring and the experience of self-agency (Fonagy et al., 2002). These capacities are in turn defining of self-efficacy (cf. infra 1.2.4.1).

1.2.4. Important concepts related to self-esteem

There are several concepts related to self-agency and self-esteem that are worth taking a look at. One of these is self-efficacy (SEF) which influences the appraisal of one's competence and can thus affect our motivation. The concepts 'locus of control' and the closely related 'attributional style', concern the way in which we judge our actions and their subsequent results. The impact of our actions can be judged as having an internal or external origin. All these factors contribute to our appraisal of ourselves.

1.2.4.1. Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy (SEF) is a notion introduced and widely studied by Bandura. SEF beliefs influence the perspectives, feelings, motivations and behaviour, ultimately having either an empowering or disempowering effect. Thus, these cognitive, motivational and affective processes will have an impact on how one perceives situations and challenges one is confronted with. This more specifically has an influence on whether or not we perceive these as positive or negative, and therefore whether we approach life situations pro-actively or retreat from them as one would from threat. According to Luszczynska, Gutiérrez and Schwarzer (2005), "Perceived self-efficacy is not only of a task-specific nature, but it can also be identified at a more general level of functioning. General self-efficacy (GSE) is the belief in one's competence to tackle novel tasks and to cope with adversity in a broad range of stressful or challenging encounters" (p.80). Hence, this perception can ultimately influence future-oriented perspectives and decision-making, and therefore also the results generated by our actions, thus influencing our internal feedback. Furthermore, their cross-cultural study shows an association

between perceived general self-efficacy and optimism, self-regulation and self-esteem to be the highest in comparison to other factors (Luszczynska et al., 2005). The fact that this evidence was consistent and stable across cultures and samples from five different countries suggests the construct of perceived general self-efficacy and its relation to the other psychological constructs to be universal in nature. Consequently, perceived self-efficacy is considered to be of a prospective and operative nature, "characterized mainly as being competence-based, prospective, and action-related," (Luszczynska et al., 2005, p.81). Furthermore, self-efficacy is related to future orientation: "Those who are highly future-oriented believe in their own ability to produce a desired effect and lead a more active and self-determined life. Therefore, they should also be more self-efficacious" (p. 82). This stance also illustrates an association between self-efficacy and self-agency. Following Bandura and Locke (2003) "Among the mechanisms of human agency, none is more central or pervasive than beliefs of personal efficacy" (p.87). People with high SEF approach arduous tasks and problems as challenges to be mastered rather than threats to be avoided (Bandura, 1994, 1997; Gutkin & Curtis, 2009; Luszczynska et al., 2005). For people with a low SEF regarding the same task their perception and outcome expectation leads to the opposite effect. So, following differences in appraisal, there are differences in both goal setting and commitment to a specific task – especially in the face of failure and setbacks. According to Luszczynska et al. (2005), "highly efficacious people invest more effort and persist longer than those low in self-efficacy. When setbacks occur, they recover more quickly and remain committed to their goals. High self-efficacy also allows people to select challenging settings and explore their environment or create new ones" (p81).

This creates a kind of self-sustaining or vicious cycle: the higher SEF you have the better can you protect yourself against setbacks and disappointments, the lower SEF you have the more susceptible for heavy criticism and self-destruction you are. This suggests perceived self-efficacy to be an indicator of resilience as these beliefs in coping capabilities determine their experience of threatening or difficult circumstances (Bandura, 1994).

Bandura (1994) claims there are four major sources of self-efficacy, the most important of which concerns *mastering experiences.* Success is an irreplaceable aspect in the build-up of a robust and authentic belief in one's capacities, more important than gaining successes easily. What is of much more value is the overcoming of obstacles, mastering difficulties and perseverance in the face of failures or setbacks by investing more effort instead of giving up.

The second source is through *model learning.* If one is observing a person with recognizable similarities to oneself mastering something in a way you believe you could have, this observation is likely to enhance your own SEF. Thereby the similarity to the model is the crucial factor, not the

actual observation itself of a successful action. So, observing and learning from such a model can improve our beliefs in your own capacities.

The third source is *social persuasion*, as positive feedback and empowerment help to overcome obstacles and difficulties. Social standards to judge your own capacities help to improve the trust in yourself. Social influences due to the selective perception often work as intensifiers of already existing intrinsic beliefs. High SEF people take the positive out of their social surrounding and feedback, whereas low SEF filter out the negative (Bandura, 1994).

The fourth source leans on this issue of *perception*: the attribution of physical reactions of the body likewise feeds one's SEF beliefs. If we interpret bodily experienced stress arousal as negative or threatening in some way, avoidance will be the behavioural outcome. This is an indicator for a negative SEF belief.

Each of these sources described by Bandura (1994), are relevant to the vision behind the Mobile School approach to street children. Their pedagogical methodology hinges upon creating opportunities for mastering experiences which are harnessed through positive feedback and empowerment. By creating a positive, constructive and safe space with trusted adults as role models who encourage and respect each step in the process, slowly but surely their perception of themselves and their abilities can change for the better.

To conclude, feedback appears to play a major role in creating our SEF beliefs – either externally (through modelling and social persuasion) or internally (through mastering experiences and perception). Evaluative reflective processes are key to SEF and these evaluations consist of affective and cognitive aspects. Important to keep in mind is that SEF always refers to a specific task. Global self-efficacy, on the other hand, refers to the general belief that one has in one's capacity to deal with upcoming tasks regardless of what they are. This more general perceived self-efficacy enhances motivation and performance attainments (Bandura and Locke, 2003).

The conceptualization of SEF has many similarities to our understanding of self-esteem (SE), especially in that it is influenced by similar sources. In both cases the concepts concern 'perceived' self-constructs rather than 'factual' ones, making them subjective concepts. However, a major difference between the two is thought to be that SEF relates more highly with motivational factors, whereas SE on the other hand tends to be linked more to affective ones (Gilad Chen, Gully, & Eden, 2004). Nonetheless, SE does appear to have an indirect impact on motivation. Though self-esteem is primarily thought to promote positive affect, it is also claimed to promote and support goal achievement which has an undeniable motivational aspect. "People who feel worthy, able, and

competent are more likely to achieve their goals than those who feel worthless, impotent, and incompetent" (Harlow and Cantor, 1995, p. 127). This in turn can affect one's decision-making concerning goal-setting and hence one's future orientation.

Self-beliefs of efficacy play a crucial role in motivational processes, in particular the self-regulation of motivation. "Self-efficacy beliefs influence causal attributions. People who regard themselves as highly efficacious attribute their failures to insufficient effort, those who regard themselves as inefficacious attribute their failures to low ability. Causal attributions affect motivation, performance and affective reactions mainly through beliefs of self-efficacy" (Bandura, 1994, p. 75).

1.2.4.2 Attributional style and locus of control (LOC)

The attribution during a retrospective evaluative reflection is therefore very much reliant on the state of SEF. As high SEF people tend to attribute failures to insufficient effort, they can consequently generate motivation for new tasks and challenges from their attribution style. Low SEF people, however, attribute failures to their capacities and in doing so undermine their abilities and feed their self-doubts. Bandura (1997) stated that "those beset by self-doubts become the early quitters rather than the successful survivors" (In Bandura and Locke, 2003, p. 92). In order to explain this phenomenon, he argued, "when faced with obstacles and failures people who harbour self-doubts about their capabilities slacken their efforts or give up quickly. Those who have a strong belief in their capabilities exert greater effort when they fail to master the challenge" (Bandura, 1994).

Locus of control (LOC) research (Davis and Davis, 1972) explores whether the control and attribution of responsibility for successes or failures is seen as an internal or external process. The difference between individuals who have an internal rather than external locus of control is that the former see themselves as central actors in their own lives, creating the outcomes of their actions themselves. In other words, they have more of a sense of self-agency. Those with a more external locus of control are likely to regard themselves as more passive victims of circumstances beyond their control. They, therefore, have less sense of self-agency. Zimmerman and Cleary (2006) describe the related concept *perceived control* from a dualistic perspective, suggesting that an internal locus of control promotes self-directed behaviour, whereas external locus of control inhibits one's agentic abilities (Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006).

According to research by Gordon (1977), high self-esteem is related to an internal locus of control orientation. Likewise, a study by Abdallah (1989) indicates a significant relationship between self-esteem and locus of control. Judge, Erez, Bono, and Thoresen (2002) carried out a meta-analysis

revealing the strong relation between the constructs of self-esteem, generalised self-efficacy, and locus of control. According to them, their findings indicate a common core construct connecting the three phenomena, called core self-evaluations, defined as "basic conclusions or bottom-line evaluations that individuals hold about themselves" (Judge & Bono, 2001, p.80). They believe self-esteem to be the "most fundamental manifestation of core self-evaluations as it represents the overall value that one places on oneself as a person" (Judge & Bono, 2001, p.80). A second indicator of positive core self-evaluations they described is generalized self-efficacy. Thirdly, internal locus of control is likewise considered a manifestation of core self-evaluations since internals (iLOC) tend to believe they have control over a range of factors influencing their lives and circumstances (Judge & Bono, 2001).

Furthermore, Judge, Erez and Bono (1998) posit that generalised self-efficacy, defined as a judgement of one's ability to perform across various situations, should be highly related to self-esteem and locus of control as it also involves "the appraisal of one's successfulness as a person" (In Judge, Erez, Bono, &Thoresen, 2002, p. 694). These findings suggest a possible association between these concepts and self-agency, wherein one believes in one's ability to exert control over one's situation. Wallace, Cunningham and Del Monte (1984), likewise discussed the relationship between self-esteem and locus of control. Their meta-analysis revealed not only a strong positive relationship between self-esteem and internality, but also between self-esteem and assuming responsibility for success. This again indicates a link with agency.

Seeing oneself as the cause of successful actions may lead to positive feelings of pride, hence creating a basis of self-esteem. "Self-awareness boosts self-esteem following success because it increases the tendency to attribute causality to self" (Duval & Wicklund, 1973; In Silvia and O'Brien, 2004, p. 481). This attribution to oneself rather than to external factors, is referred to as internality. According to Silvia and O'Brien (2004), self-attributions mediate between the positive success feedback and resulting increased self-esteem. A study conducted by Duval and Silvia (2002; in Silvia and O'Brien, 2004) illustrated that self-awareness increased internal attributions for success, which in turn increased self-esteem, suggesting self-awareness and attribution style be critical in experiencing a sense of pride.

Abramson et al. (1978) were the first to introduce attributional style as a personality characteristic. According to them, individuals vulnerable to depression differ from their non-vulnerable counterparts in their habitual causal judgements of positive and negative situations in their lives. They tend to view negative events as being "caused by factors that are internal (personal), stable (permanent), and global (pervasive)". This type of attribution puts them at risk of developing a sense

of helplessness and disempowerment. However, the reverse is also true and gives a hopeful perspective, especially in the light of the vision and objectives of Mobile School. A study by Needles and Abramson (1990) illustrated that depressive people who had a combination of an enhancing attributional style for positive events and experienced more positive events showed dramatic reductions in hopelessness (in Cheng & Furnham, 2003). Hence the focus on mastering experiences in the Mobile School interventions seeks to empower the street children and attempt to reverse learned helplessness.

According to a study by Zautra et al. (1985), in which the association between attributional style, self-esteem, depressive symptoms, and general distress was examined, internal attributions for positive outcomes were primarily associated with high self-esteem (in Cheng & Furnham, 2003). According to their study, Cheng and Furnham (2003) found that attributional internality (in positive situations), in comparison with attributional stability and globality, was the only dimension which was significantly correlated with self-esteem and positive affect. It seemed that attributional internality predicted happiness mainly through self-esteem as the latter has been consistently found to be one of the main factors contributing to happiness (Furnham & Cheng, 2003).

1.3. Understanding street children in their inner world and the impact of Mobile Schools

In order to evaluate the impact of Mobile School interventions on the self-concept of street children, one needs to access their innermost (self-)reflections and understanding which guides their behaviour and interaction with their surroundings. Gaining access into their inner world is no simple feat as it poses several challenges, especially with a target group that harbours suspicion and distrust due to past trauma. In addition, the fact that this target group is largely illiterate and culturally diverse amplifies these difficulties Finding an appropriate tool to assess the sense of self of these vulnerable children in their specific reality is the first step in achieving this goal. Henceforth, the main challenge in developing such an instrument is choosing the appropriate approach which takes into account all limiting criteria within its parameters. Some of the concerns to take into consideration involve specific yet diverse characteristics of the target group.

1.3.1. Characteristics of street children and their context

When working with young children whose main learning environment is the street, we must take into account that their development is influenced by their surroundings. This includes limited to no access to education, adult supervision, psychological and physical safety, hygiene and healthcare.

Their needs are not met in the same way as those of more sheltered children who enjoy a more secure environment with the warmth of a caring family and economic stability. "All children of the street are subject to some form of institutional violence, which denies them the right to live and to develop fully in a secure environment" (Bhukuth & Ballet, 2015, p. 134). Although the majority of children are forced onto the streets due to economic difficulties (Bhukuth & Ballet, 2015), domestic violence and abuse is reported to be the most significant factor in many countries (Densley & Joss, 2000). Once on the streets, vulnerability to abuse and victimisation by police or the general public are a primary reason for children to form 'gangs' (Densley & Joss, 2000; Bhukuth & Ballet, 2015). This social structure, often seen as their 'family of choice', operates similarly to that of the biological family whose function is to protect, nurture and sustain the members physically and emotionally. And like the family, the gang serves as a vehicle through which psychosocial development occurs (Bhukuth & Ballet, 2015). Moreover, as a result of spending an extensive amount of time on the streets and being viewed as a societal threat, these children are vulnerable to victimisation, humiliation, degradation and other forms of abuse on a daily basis by a wide range of actors (from general public to authority figures or rival gang members). The long-term effects of this widespread victimization can have serious consequences to their self-development, physical and mental health. In many cases their life on the streets can lead to substance abuse, violence, criminal activity and in some cases prostitution and other forms of exploitation (Bhukuth & Ballet, 2015). However, it is likewise of critical importance not to lose sight of the positive aspects that define the target group. Though they are "at risk for physical, emotional, social, and cognitive violation, these children are in need of interventions that appropriately address their needs in the context of their environment, and build upon the positive survival skills that they have developed as a result of street life" (Densley & Joss, 2000, p.217). Their striving for survival also develops specific abilities that are otherwise less developed in their peers who are not left to their plight to survive independently. These 'street skills' could be defined as an extraordinary resilience and resourcefulness (Aptekar, 1988; Aptekar & Stocklin, 1997). Street children are often described as being characteristically independent, positive, creative and entrepreneurial.

1.3.2. Finding the appropriate methodology

A preliminary exploratory research (carried out by Serafeim & Van Hellemont, 2013) reviewed a variety of existing psychometric tools and instruments developed for tapping into the inner world of children and assessing self-esteem measures. These included different types of self-report instruments from written to visual forms. Each of the measurement instruments were vetted for developmental and cultural appropriateness, as well as issues such as required cognitive level, native language, attention span of respondents, avoidance of biases and psychometric issues (see Serafeim

& Van Hellemont, 2013). The investigation into the suitability for use with this particular target group concluded that there were no appropriate resources that fulfilled the criteria necessary to work with street children. Several valuable attempts were made (Desimpel, 2007; Gadeyne & De Smet, 2006; Utz, 2009; Willems, 2006) each leading to a similar conclusion, whilst gathering priceless input along the way from the target group on which to build further. These steps undertaken have lead us to this new study, where we conclude that adapting an existing tool is not sufficient, and that a new tool tailored to the target group needs to be developed. Most measures of self-esteem are reliant on self-report questionnaires which are dependent on a certain level of literacy or understanding of complex terminology describing notions of the self. They also rely on a truthful representation of the self and can therefore easily be manipulated. As mentioned earlier, our experience proves many street children are prone to answering in a socially desirable way in order to acquire what they need to survive, even from trusted street educators, as long as they have something to offer (Desimpel, 2007; Gadeyne & De Smet, 2006; Willems, 2006). As Franieck et al. (2014) explain, "in the face of instincts toward self-protection, caused by the circumstances of living on the street, self-report and/or interview assessments can trigger mistrust and therefore misleading, false or even no information" (p.2). Moreover, such self-report measures of emotional or behavioural issues are generally designed for ages above 11 years (Franieck et al., 2014).

To summarise the findings, one could state that most instruments were unable to fulfil the many criteria imposed by the specific characteristics of this particular target group. Due to methodologican and measurement problems, there is also notably a lack of research including younger children between the ages of 6 and 12 (Franieck et al., 2014). However, it became clear that a qualitative method was most viable or feasible to eliminate the impact of the many challenging issues discussed above. At first, projective techniques were considered as these relied less on level of cognitive development and avoided social desirability biases. According to Bosson (cited in Kernis, 2006), their main strength is indirectness, so that one cannot manipulate one's image. These techniques tap into people's automatic, spontaneous self-associations. Later it became clear that a visual methodology would circumpass the issues of literacy level as well as language (semantics). In addition, a narrative approach proved to diminish the impact of cultural diversity, as the children would be able to tell their stories from the perspective of their own cultural experience and understanding. A narrative technique with visual triggers appeared to be most feasible given the circumstances. Narrative techniques can circumnavigate around these issues through their indirect and implicit approach allowing access to their inner worlds (Emde, Wolf & Oppenheim, 2003; von Klitzing, Stadelmann & Perren, 2007). In addition, a story-telling method as a qualitative participative methodology can capture the subjective experience of children and how children process and

resolve experiences in difficult circumstances (Haritas & Seshadri, 2012). Unfortunately, few narrative instruments have been designed with this particular target group or themes in mind. Street children have been exposed to a very particular reality, and it is of crucial importance that given scenarios reflect aspects of their world in order to allow for a reflection process. The development of a tool, specific to capture aspects of the world of the target group of street children, and to the aim of assessing the impact of mobile school interventions on their self-concept, became inescapable.

1.4. From theoretical background to current study

In line with these thoughts, the objective of this study concerns the development of a specific narrative story stem technique to capture aspects of the experience of self-worth of street children in different cultural settings. Considering this target group is found in a variety of different cultural contexts, yet maintain the globally similar characteristics of a particular subculture (of the street), any tool developed for this target group needs to take into account this subculture. Likewise, the fact that the majority of this target group have low levels of literacy due to lack of access to education, this assessment instrument needs to cater for these specific characteristics and take into account these limitations. That is the rationale behind the choice to develop a narrative instrument, which takes into account the reality of street children.

The underlying clinical approach enables us a glimpse into the child's inner world, giving paramount importance to the child's own point of view (a frame of reference no researcher can ever claim to fully understand) on how they experience themselves and the world around them. By working with narratives, one can also evade socially desirable answers, which is a skill of manipulation many street children have perfected in their struggle to survive in their reality. Swindling adults into giving them what they need to survive (whether it be a tourist for money, a passer-by for food or a social worker for a night of protection) is an essential skill to develop in their fast changing, high-risk, challenging environment (Raskin, 2014). This fact in itself poses a major dilemma for researchers who are trying to uncover a vulnerable truth behind the strong façade of these masters of survival.

To conclude, a narrative story stem technique (NSST) appears to provide an answer to all these concerns and is therefore deemed to be the most appropriate approach. The development of this instrument for street children is described in the following chapter.

In this chapter, the foundations of the Mobile School philosophy, intervention vision and strategy were presented. The underlying concepts of Mobile School's mission aims were explored and discussed. This forms the basis on which this research study is built. Subsequently, the rationale behind the chosen approach of this study was proposed.

Chapter 2: Development of a Narrative Story Stem Technique for Street Children

This first study involves the development of the new instrument, a Narrative Story Stem Technique (NSST) for Street Children. This chapter consists of the reasoning and process behind the development of this new narrative assessment tool specifically designed to probe for notions of self-concept in street children. In order to develop such an instrument, one must take into account the target groups' characteristics and how the challenges of their particular situation can be overcome within a research technique. Furthermore, the children's subculture (of the street) and the geographical culture influences the manifestation of their self-concept, therefore requiring an alternative definition of indicators that can be observed. This chapter describes the process of determining the appropriate indicators of self-esteem and the development of new story stems adapted to the reality of these children. The instrument is designed for street children between six and twelve years of age.

2.1. Framework for a narrative approach

2.1.1. The meaning behind a narrative

People give meaning to their lives and the world around them through stories they construct (Van de Putte, 2014). These stories are often highly influenced by past experiences or are interpreted through stories that have had an impact on our lives. Even the development of identity is rooted in the interpretations and related insinuations or conclusions of these stories. In a story line, events from the past are connected with the present. Furthermore, a link is made with the future in the same way as the past influenced the present. In other words, conclusions or interpretations we make in the present are both influenced by the past and in turn will exert influence on the future (Van de Putte, 2014).

Moreover, we are not the only authors of our own stories, as our subjective experiences are created within a social context. Family and friends, as well as the groups and community we belong to, influence the way our narratives get their shape and content, as does our environment, the media, politics and Zeitgeist. The norms of society dictate what is desirable and what not (Raskin, 2005), what is good or evil, normal or abnormal. These value judgements have an impact on how we view our past, our future, and ultimately our identity and sense of self. Though it is difficult to pinpoint precisely which factors have an influence on which stories, it is clear that they have an inextricable

influence on our personal reality (Van de Putte, 2014). And this personal reality is then expressed in the stories we proceed to tell, which often confirm our developed subjective biases, or internal working models. They have an influence on which experiences we consider to be relevant, and therefore base our judgement of ourselves and others on. These internal narratives shape our aspirations in life, what we expect from ourselves and our future. That is why, for example, narrative therapy attempts to use this understanding to create new and alternative plots with which to break through the vicious cycle of confirmation and inflation of the interpretations which lead to self-destructive thoughts, choices and behaviour (Van de Putte, 2014).

2.1.2. Particular challenges concerning research with street children

Lifestyle factors of these children are crucial to the approach chosen in development of this tool and are connected with the diverse cultural and subcultural background of these children, which is formed by the street context. (a) Due to their lack of access to education, their cognitive development level can vary immensely and can therefore not be attributed to age categories (Van Hellemont, 2009). (b) Assessment of 'self-esteem' is not as easy as one could be lead to believe. (c) There is the aspect of possible biases to take into consideration. Of particular concern regarding this target group is that of social desirability when it comes to collaborating with even trusted professionals. Research would be advised to be conducted only by professional street educators who are familiar with the children and entrusted with their care. Even so, in such a relationship where trust is built up over time, there still remains an unequal relationship in that one party has a service to offer and the other party finds itself on the receiving end of that service. In order to receive the offered help, children will often act in such a way that is expected of them as a consequence of the deep respect and at times admiration these children feel for the few trustworthy adults in their lives. They do not want to let them down or disappoint in some way. Furthermore, in their struggle for survival, many children master the skill of manipulation, whether it be from begging or con artistry.

2.1.3. A narrative technique as a response to the particular challenges of street children

Capturing aspects of the inner world of young children, whose main learning environment is the street, implies particular challenges (cf. supra, 2.1.2.). The use of purely verbal techniques is likely to go beyond their capabilities whilst posing a dilemma regarding language and culture-specific experience. In addition, the use of concrete loose materials such as toys is not possible on the streets for practical reasons (also see further). According to the results of a study investigating

mental representations in Brazilian street children aged six to eleven (Franieck & Günter, 2012), "the story stem technique seems particularly well suited to understanding mental functioning in street children who in most cases are not willing to fill out self-assessment questionnaires or similar instruments and who by definition generally do not have adults who know them well and can provide an account of their functioning" (p. 3). They used such a technique with the aim of increasing their understanding of the way street children think, feel, and perceive the world around them.

Due to the specificity of the reality to which street children are exposed, participatory research is recommended in order to tap into their own experience of their surroundings (Haritas & Seshadri, 2012) and how this affects their development. Through participatory research, such as story-telling techniques, one can draw from their own competencies and perspectives, thus taking into account their own experiences and priorities (Haritas & Seshadri, 2012). In a study carried out by Haritas and Seshadri (2012) to document the prevalence of violence against children in India for UNICEF in 2005, they used "story-telling as a participative methodology, which responded substantially to our mandate of creating an easy-to-use research methodology that could be used by field workers working directly with children and lacking formal research training" (p.86). Moreover, such forms of participatory research allow us to challenge our adult perspectives on the experiences of children.

In the case of the development of such a tool for street children, we must be aware of the importance of a familiar and trustworthy street educator being the one to take on the role of researcher. Since our target group is unlikely to open up to adults they do not have a trusting relationship with (Dubrow, 1992), we must accept that this tool will likely be implemented by people working in the field.

This reasoning lead us to consider story stems as a suitable methodology for our target group. Story stems consist of predetermined narrative themes which are given to children in the form of an initial story prompt. The child is therefore given the first few sentences of a story and then asked to complete the story in their own way. Existing story stem batteries offer an interesting basis but often have restricting factors. One of these is the fact that most are developed to assess attachment issues, and in particular the lack of parental availability. Though this is likewise the case in this target group, it is not the object of this study, which is geared towards assessing the perceived self-concept of these children. Other limiting factors in several revised story stem techniques is the use of dolls or toys. For example, in the study conducted by De Haene, Thorup Dalgaard, Montgomery, Grietens & Verschueren (2013), whose target group of refugee children comes closer to our target group, they were able to use a validated attachment doll-play procedure developed by Verschueren, Marcoen, &

Schoefs (1996). This procedure, though of great value and interest to us, is difficult to put into practice when working on the streets. Such loose materials are not only difficult to handle, maintain and transport on the streets, they are also an attractive target as an income-generating material to many street children who survive by selling stolen goods on the streets. Moreover, Mobile School's policies advise against the use of materials of value which cannot be attached to the mobile school itself.

Thus, taking into account all the above-mentioned restrictions and challenges, the best fitting solution that remained was to develop a new target-specific tool based on existing participatory narrative methodologies such as story stems.

2.1.4. Narrative Story Stems as technique

Narrative story stems (NSST) are used as a technique to tap into the inner world of young children who are unable to consciously verbally express the intent or understanding of their mental representations. However, narratives can bring out implicit understanding of intent through various indictors which will be described in more detail in Chapter 4. Narratives can reveal the presence or absence of mentalization abilities as well as notions of self-concept which these children are not yet able to express explicitly. NSST use play and other non-verbal means alongside language to seek access to and understanding of mental representations. According to Hodges and colleagues (in Tang, Bleys & Vliegen, 2016), narrative stem assessments provide a more direct means of assessing the child's internal working models (IWMs), a "window" into aspects of their underlying scripts for human relationships. By using a child's natural form of self-expression one is able to access their inner thoughts, expectations and mental representations. Not only is this a non-intrusive method, but one that can eliminate the chances of social desirability biases by being indirect in one's assessment. By offering fictitious though familiar story stems, one can conjure up real life reflections and expectations without confronting them with exact recollections of life events in their reality. These narratives allow us to explore what children have made of their past experiences and how these influence their view of the world and events around them. According to Hodges and Steele (2000), narratives tend to reflect how the child reflects on reality and its experience thereof. These reflections can be considered 'a combination of representations of underlying expectations of interactions and indicators of emotion and emotional regulation' (Hodges et al., 2005, as cited in Tang, Bleys & Vliegen, 2016).

Narrative story stems provide a specific yet familiar starting point to a story, allowing diverse possibilities for further completion. Each hypothetical situation or dilemma in the different story

stems strive to trigger interpretations and solutions in the ensuing narrative which potentially uncover underlying mental representations revealing some fundamental understanding of their views or IWM's. Though fictitious scenarios allow a certain distance from reality or a form of depersonalization of sensitive themes, they can still implicitly evoke the distress and coping mechanisms these themes would bring about in real life situations. This allows us some insights into defence strategies, problem-solving capacities and responses to such emotionally challenging scenarios. These include indicators of important aspects of a child's functioning and sense of self-worth or agency. Moreover, McCullough et al. (2014) reason that story stem techniques capture ideas the child has about the motives and intentions of the figures recounted, which gives us an indication as to ability for mentalization. Mentalization in turn can be regarded as a pre-requisite for the development of self-awareness and a general sense of self.

2.1.5. Existing narrative instrument as source of inspiration

MacArthur Story Stem Battery (MSSB)

As a template to guide the creation of such a narrative technique for the assessment of impact on street children, the MacArthur Story Stem Battery (Emde, Wolf & Oppenheim, 2003) provided the necessary foundation. Though it was originally designed to gain insight into attachment-related themes and applied to young children between the ages of 4 and 8 years old, it has been adapted and expanded in its use over the years by several contributing authors and researchers. In its original form, the MSSB consists of a battery of story stems which reflect several types of family relations (parent-child, marital and peer conflict, parent-child attachment, the oedipal and other triads), moral rules (do's and don'ts), moral emotions (guilt, shame, and empathy), and competence (pride). Whereas each story stem was created with a particular theme or dilemma in mind, the open-ended nature of the task meant that children could address many of the stems in more than one way (Emde et al., 2003).

The MSSB is generally used with children aged 4 to 8 and uses doll play to assess children's representations of relationships. It aims to evaluate not only attachment-related indices, but also aspects of moral, emotional and social development including affect expression, affect regulation, themes of aggression and conflict as well as the involvement of parents (Emde et al., 2003). It has been used widely in both clinical work and research, including studies of the internal representations of children from normative samples, maltreated children, children exposed to parental conflict and children with disruptive behavioural disorders. It has been shown to predict behaviour problems and anxiety in children. The administration of the battery can take over an hour and usually includes the following (Bretherton & Oppenheim, 2003):

1. Rapport building: the assessor has to engage the child in a playful interaction.
2. Materials: Use of doll families, Playmobil, Duplo etc.
3. Warm-up: To begin the task the interviewer introduces the family members one by one and then checks that the child can recall the identity of each figure. Then he/she provides an example story stem to familiarise the child with the dolls and the props.
4. Test administration: The administration process involves telling a child the scripted stem of a story, using simple dolls as props. The child is then asked to 'show and tell' the assessor 'what happens next'. The child's completion of each scenario is recorded on video and analysed later by a trained evaluator using a scoring template. Usually 8 to 12 story stems are used for rating. Stems depict a range of moral and relationship dilemmas. For example, in a stem titled *Lost Keys*, the administrator describes Mum and Dad in the kitchen, using dolls. The script goes as follows: Mum: 'You've lost my keys!' Dad: 'I have not!' Mum: 'Yes you have, you always lose my keys!' The administrator then hands the child the dolls saying 'show me and tell me what happens next.'
5. Prompts: At predetermined points in the child's narrative, the administrator interjects with scripted prompts. For example, at the end of the *Lost Keys* scenario, when the child appears to have finished the story, the administrator asks 'What happened to the keys?'

Approaches to coding (Robinson & Mantz-Simmons, 2003; Warren, 2003) have emphasised four domains: (1) Story content or themes, (2) Theme organisation or coherence, (3) Emotional expression and (4) Interaction with the interviewer. As there is a variety of coding systems, the authors suggest that the choice of coding method should be governed by the specific aims of each particular study, as well as the age of the child participants and the size of the sample (Emde et al., 2003).

Two broad domains of response were identified and scored: the content the child created and the performance features or the manner in which the story responses were delivered (Robinson & Mantz-Simmons, 2003). Each story was summarised in terms of the presence or absence of themes and performance features. Content themes are organised within five domains: Interpersonal conflict, empathic relations, dysregulated aggression, moral themes, and avoidant strategies. Ten areas of performance were highlighted: intensity in the responses, presence of controlling behaviour by the child, repetitions, investment in performance, inclusion of parental characters, child responsiveness, use of direct performance style, ignoring the story conflict, understanding of the conflict, level of coherence (Robinson & Mantz-Simmons, 2003).

Culture-specific and sample specific adaptations are important to consider in applying the battery to any sample. Depending on the culture or the circumstances the stories can be altered. In this way, it's ensured that the examiner and the child are able to share meaning within their culture about the events (Robinson & Mantz-Simmons, 2003).

2.2. Construction of the Story Stems for Street Children, a narrative technique

2.2.1. Phase 1: Determining Indicators of Self-esteem

In order to develop an assessment tool to shed light on the impact mobile school interventions have on street children, we first needed to establish what impact we wanted to measure. Although raising self-esteem in street children is the main objective of all mobile school activities (cf. supra 1.1.2.), we needed to look into which defining features are specific to the target group and the mobile school's impact (Willems, 2006; Desimpel, 2007). Due to the complexity of defining self-esteem, it occurred to us that not only is self-esteem comprised of several different components, but there are also several factors interlinked and closely related to self-esteem (cf. supra 1.2). These aspects, such as mentalization, self-awareness, self-agency and/or self-efficacy, either form the foundation to allow for a healthy self-esteem to develop, or are in fact crucial in stimulating growth in self-esteem. In order to determine which elements to measure, we decided to do some preliminary research involving actors in the field who come into contact with the impact of mobile school on a daily basis: the street educators.

An online, user-friendly questionnaire was developed (see Appendix A) and sent to all the active Mobile School partners to have completed by their street educators. The street educators are the ones who are implementing the activities on the streets with the street children, and therefore bear witness to any behaviour changes or manifestations of self-esteem. This questionnaire was sent out in both an English as well as a Spanish version, depending on which language region the organisations were active. Organisations spread over 12 countries returned 54 completed questionnaires. We received 23 responses on the English questionnaire (11 online and 12 via email) from 9 different organisations in 5 different countries (Ethiopia, Poland, Greece, Romania and the Philippines). We were able to receive 31 completed Spanish questionnaires from 11 organisations in 7 different countries (Nicaragua, Bolivia, Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Ecuador).

The questionnaire inquired about visible behaviour change of the children detectable over a period of time when working regularly with a mobile school. It also asked the local street educator's opinion on what constitutes 'self-esteem' in their own cultural context and how it is manifested. These

inquiries were aimed at getting an overview of which elements of self-esteem were deemed instrumental in their particular context, as well as discovering which behavioural changes in their target group are considered as positive impact.

All responses were recorded separately, then arranged according to country. Each response was translated and incorporated into standardized terminology whilst being careful not to lose its meaning. The reasoning behind this was to distil the meaning behind anecdotes or long-winded answers into concrete terms which captured the underlying concepts or underlying mechanisms.

After listing all the concepts mentioned, they were clustered according to semantics and then related concepts were clustered under umbrella terms, in order to organize the indicators. The umbrella terms are general concepts that are composed of the different elements which are clustered under them (see Appendix B for clusters). We consider these umbrella terms as the indicators of self-esteem as defined by the street educators of Mobile School's partner organisations. These indicator terms were scrutinized several times before coming to a definitive set of indicators which represented the input received by the partner organisations. The initial 6 identified indicators were defined as:

1. Problem-solving skills
2. Socialisation skills
3. Self-worth
4. Future-oriented attitude
5. Positive attitude
6. Self-efficacy

Once having clustered the different elements under 6 compact umbrella terms, I started to take a deeper look into these terms in order to establish their relation to self-esteem. On closer examination and having familiarized myself with some literature related to these umbrella terms, I opted to breakdown the encompassing indicator 'self-efficacy' into 2 separate components, namely 'personal agency' (to emphasise the empowering aspect in which children feel they exert some kind of control over their own lives or influence on their surroundings), and 'coping/resilience' which entails their ability to deal with and handle set-backs and problematic situations in their lives. This includes problem-solving capacities as well as their ability to process negative events and find the strength to bounce back with a positive attitude). Since the terms 'problem-solving skills' and 'self-efficacy' incorporated too many different elements they needed to be broken down into 3 different concepts: pro-active behaviour, empowerment (or control/influence) and coping capacities. Hence, the initial 6 indicators were revised to include 7 indicators to differentiate further:

1. Pro-active behaviour
2. Personal agency or Self-agency (comparable to the term empowerment)
3. Coping/Resilience
4. Self-worth
5. Social/relational competence
6. Future-orientation
7. Positive focus

After further literature research (cf. infra 2.2.2) it came to my attention that self-agency or a sense of empowerment appeared to be more of an underlying pre-requisite for the development of the other indicators, influencing them rather than being an indicator on par with the others. The term self-agency, otherwise known as personal agency, can be described as the feeling or realisation that one can exert influence on the direction of one's life. This feeling can be compromised by several factors, such as struggling with personal difficulties, a history of trauma or being trapped in a disempowering situation (Van de Putte, 2010).

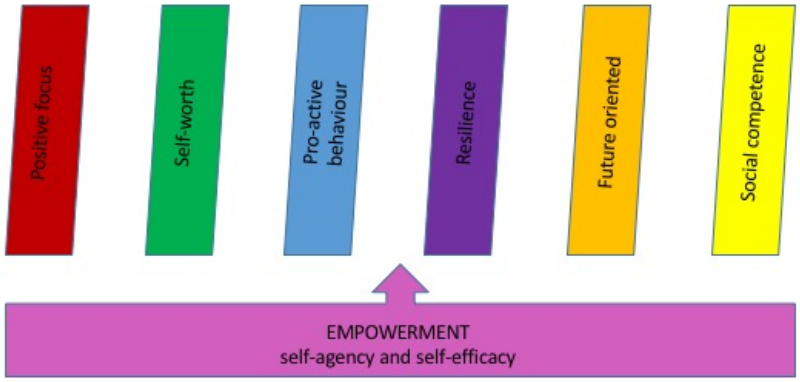

Figure 3. Model illustrating how the defined indicators are reliant on a fundamental sense of empowerment fuelled by self-efficacy and self-agency.

2.2.2. Self-awareness, self-agency and self-esteem

As our model (Fig. 3) illustrates, self-agency and self-esteem are assumed to be dependent on a certain degree of self-awareness. Self-awareness allows the formation of self-constructs based on one's self-knowledge. This self-knowledge represents one's understanding of oneself through inner

experience, influencing one's self-esteem and therefore directing actions and intentional behaviour (Tafarodi & Ho, 2006). Hence, one could stipulate that self-awareness is translated into goal-directed action through the mediating effect of self-esteem. In their description of the two-dimensional approach to understanding self-esteem, Tafarodi and Ho (2006) state, "As social objects, we hold moral significance to ourselves and others; as agents, we exert influence upon the world according to our plans, and sometimes in spite of them" (In Kernis, 2006, p. 111). This duality of self-esteem describes the interaction between self-competence, as the ability to affect the world through our intentions (comparable to self-efficacy and agency), and self-liking (moralisation of action which influences personal value and significance, representing the affective element). Together, these highly interdependent constructs constitute global or general self-esteem. "Self-competence and self-liking are the twin valuative themes in our ongoing personal narrative." (In Kernis, 2006, p.113).

"We are more than mental microcosms of our societies. The difference lies in our agency, our capacity for willed action and the biologically rooted satisfaction that derives from it" (p. 112).

Though self-esteem (as the experience of personal value) and self-efficacy (as the belief in one's ability to exercise control over the environment) are not the same, "the same successful efforts and outcomes that increase self-efficacy over time also amplify our sense of personal value by causing us to experience ourselves as strong and capable agents" (Tafarodi & Ho, 2006, In Kernis, 2006, p. 114).

Regarding self-awareness and self-knowledge, "High self-clarity is correlated with both high self-esteem and stability of self-esteem… In contrast, individuals with lower self-concept clarity tend to have lower self-esteem" (Showers and Zeigler-Hill, 2006; In Kernis, 2006, p. 220). From a cognitive perspective, this could imply that self-knowledge constitutes the building blocks of self-esteem. "There is a strong connection between having a clear sense of who you are and liking yourself" (Brandt & Vonk, 2006; In Kernis, 2006, p. 224).

To summarise the interaction between self-awareness and self-esteem, Tafarodi and Ho (2006) state, "Both dimensions of self-esteem are the result of ongoing synthetic interpretation that renders complex configurations of evaluative thought and feeling meaningful within a unified narrative identity. Integrative self-symbolic activity of this sort can occur only within the field of self-consciousness" (In Kernis, 2006, p. 115). Hence, self-awareness is a pre-requisite for the development of self-constructs and therefore self-agency and self-esteem.

2.2.3. Mentalization and self-awareness

Continuing the reasoning presented by Tafarodi and Ho (2006), they describe "The ability to apprehend ourselves as moral objects follows from the internalization of the perspective of the other, a developmental transition that splits our consciousness and endows us with the reflexive awareness that is the signal feature of the human mind" (p. 112). This suggests mentalization and self-awareness to be crucial in allowing a self-concept to be formed. The initial foundations of mentalization capacities begin to develop at a very early age, in interaction with one's caregivers. It is through these interactions with a caregiver that reflects on his mind, that a child develops as coherent sense of self and identity (Fonagy & Target, 2006; In Ensink, Normandin, Target, Fonagy, Sabourin & Berthelot, 2015). This dependence on early interactions with caregivers, however, also exposes its development to a certain vulnerability when considering children whose early childhood experiences could be described as being compromised by poverty, abuse or neglect (cf. supra 1.1.1). According to Ensink et al. (2015), "it is not surprising that deficits across a range of mentalization capacities have been identified in maltreated children" (p. 205). They claim in particular intrafamilial sexual abuse to undermine the development of mentalization. In general, it is assumed that abuse and trauma during early childhood is associated with a negative impact in several domains including self-understanding, social cognition, and emotional understanding (Cicchetti & Toth, 1995; In Ensink et al., 2015), which could be traced back to the development of mentalization capacities. Findings of their study suggest children who have experienced sexual abuse have difficulties mentalizing regarding themselves and others. "These difficulties are likely to contribute to subsequent difficulties with identity, sense of self and intimate relationships" (2015, p. 213).

Hence, one could conclude the underlying importance of mentalization capacities be essential as the foundation on which the further development of self-awareness, self-agency rests. Following the model (Fig. 3), the identified indicators (as described above in 3.1) rely on a healthy sense of self-agency and self-esteem to further develop and integrate into our self-concept.

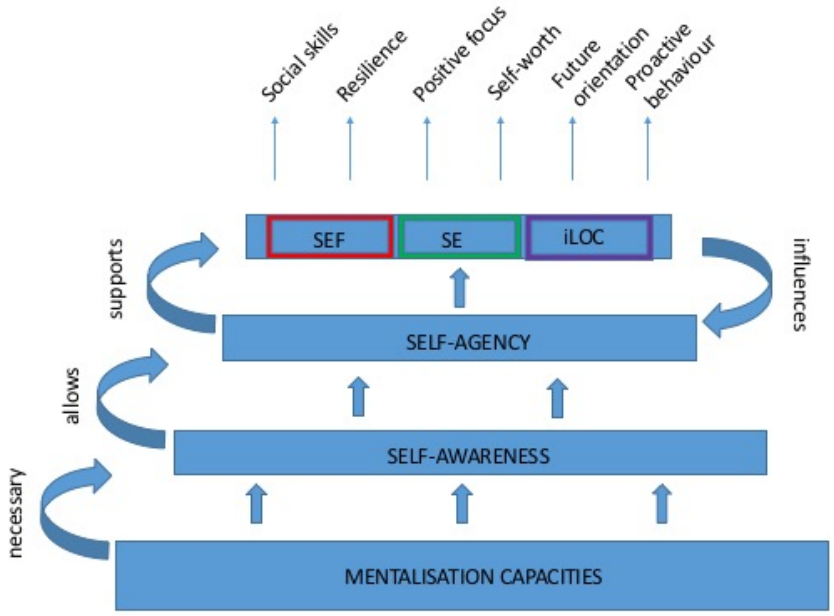

Figure 4. Model illustrating relationship between mentalization abilities and the pre-determined indicators.

2.2.4. Impact of mentalization capacities and self-agency on remaining indicators

We have established that mentalization capacities, self-awareness and self-agency, all have an influence on self-esteem, self-efficacy or locus of control. All these concepts further exert an influence on the development and manifestation of the other six pre-determined indicators: social competence, resilience or coping skills, positive focus, a sense of self-worth, future orientation and proactive behaviour. According to Ensink et al. (2015), evidence suggests high mentalization capacities to be associated with resilience. Zimmerman and Cleary (2006) also claim a strong sense of efficacy to be related to more resilient individuals. This resilience could be construed to grow out of a solid sense of self-worth and a positive focus supporting one's ability to cope with adverse events.

Fonagy et al. (2004) and Weinberg (2006) describe the influence of mentalization on empathy and hence ability to interact with social competence. The faculty of mentalization is therefore closely related to the development of social cognition and social interaction (Leiner & Ataalla, 2014).

According to Vallacher and Wegner (1989), research indicates "high levels of personal agency represent the tendency to understand one's action in terms of its consequences and implications, whereas low levels of personal agency represent the tendency to see one's action in terms of its

details or mechanics" (p.660). Being able to judge the future impact of one's actions is a crucial prerequisite for a future oriented attitude but also promotes pro-active behaviour.

2.3. Story Stems for assessing perceived self-worth in street children

2.3.1. Phase 2: Development of story stems

Once we had determined the seven main indicators to investigate, we needed to adapt the existing story stems of the MacArthur Story Stem Battery (MSSB) in several ways. Not only did they need to be adapted thematically in order to probe for our indicators of impact on the children's sense of self-worth instead of attachment issues. We also had to adapt the story stems to the reality of our target group, namely street children surviving on the streets of developing countries. Their reality vastly differs from the reality of the children for whom the MSSB was initially developed. In collaboration with other Outreach colleagues at Mobile School, we pooled together our vast experience of the past 15 years working with street children across four continents (Latin America, Asia, Africa and Europe) and developing educational tools and trainings for interventions on the streets. Their knowledge and understanding of the reality of these kids in diverse cultural settings give them a unique insight into the subculture of the streets. Therefore, their experience was of crucial importance in developing adapted story stems for this target group in this particular context.

I presented to them my suggestions for 12 possible story stems, each of which posed a dilemma familiar to our target group and could be associated with several different indicators. After some discussion and fine-tuning, we decided upon 10 story stems tapping into different aspects of a street child's daily experience, each of which probes for at least one to several of the predetermined indicators. These ten original story stems are presented below, each with a description of the underlying rationale and justification for its relevance:

STORY STEM 1: The Market

Story stem:

"<Child 1> goes to the market. At the market stall (s)he wants to buy a kilo of fruit. When the vendor hands over the fruit and tells him/her the price, <Child 1> looks at the money in their hand and realizes they don't have enough. What happens next?"

Prompts:

If the child runs away – "will (s)he ever come back to the market again?"

If the child gets more money but does not specify how or from where – "where did (s)he get the money from?"

This story stem is based on a location often frequented by many street children living in the major cities. Some children work in the market selling plastic bags or other goods amongst the customers, or offering to carry their bags. Others work for the market stall owners and help set up or break down the stalls after hours. Yet others use this terrain for begging or stealing. As several mobile schools are active in the market areas with this target group, street educators are aware of the temptations the market goods can create for these children. When they have earnings to spend, they are likely to buy their food here. If not, some street children may be tempted to steal and run with the goods they cannot afford to buy. In other cases, the children may negotiate with the stall owners and receive leftovers or agree to pay at a later date when they have money to spend. Therefore, the dilemma posed by this story stem is a familiar one and can tap into several indicators, including: *Pro-active behaviour and personal agency (problem-solving), coping, social competence, future orientation.*

STORY STEM 2: The Argument

Story stem:

"Two children are having an argument (fight) and are very angry with each other. <Child 1> walks towards them and looks at them. What happens next?"

Prompts:

If the child does not intervene – 'what happens to <Child 2> and <Child 3>?'

If the child seeks out an authority figure – 'what does he/she do?'

This story stem portrays a conflict between two other parties. The dilemma here involves whether or not to intervene, and if so in which way. As such conflicts are common amongst groups of street children and adolescents, the situation should be recognizable. The issue to be addressed here also includes whether or not aggression of any kind is seen as an appropriate reaction to solving a conflict. Therefore, indicators involving *pro-active behaviour, personal agency, coping, social competence, future orientation, positive focus,* can all play a role in the further sequence of the story.

STORY STEM 3: (Self-) Reflection

Story stem:

"<Child 1> stands in front of a shop window and sees their own reflection, thinking. In the reflection, <Child 1> notices the reflection of someone else behind them, looking at them. What happens next?"

Prompts:

If the child only mentions external features like appearance and clothing – "how do you think <Child 1> feels?"

If the child ignores the second child looking on – "what do you think <Child 2> is thinking?"

The third story stem tries to explicitly evoke a situation which allows a certain degree of self-reflection in order to explore the child's capacity to do so. Should they demonstrate this ability, one can deduce there is some sense of self-awareness present which may indicate a sense of self-worth and agency. Likewise, the second part of the situation suggests a bystander have an opinion or attitude towards the child. The interpretation of such thoughts can be an indicator of how the child feels they are perceived by others, therefore giving us more insight into their own self-perception. Mentalization is a pre-requisite for this level of reflection. Therefore, indicators such as *self-worth, social competence, positive focus* are likely to surface.

STORY STEM 4: Group playing

Story stem:

"<Child 1> approaches a group of children holding hands in a circle playing a game. They are laughing and having fun. What happens next?"

Prompts:

If child pro-actively attempts to join in the activity without explicitly mentioning how this action was received by the group – "how did the children react?"

This story stem portrays a typical situation every child comes into contact with at some point during childhood, even street children. How children interpret and deal with the situation can shed light on their self-perception and their perceived role within a group and possibly in society. It also taps into their ability to mentalize. Other indicators include: *Social competence, pro-active behaviour, self-worth, positive focus, coping, personal agency*.

STORY STEM 5: Dream for the future

Story stem:

"<Child 1> is drawing a picture of their dream for the future, on the mobile school with chalk. The street educator approaches him/her looking at their work and asks about the picture. What happens next?"

Prompts:

A. "What did <Child 1> tell the street educator about his/her dream or drawing?"
B. "How did the street educator react to his/her dream drawing?"

The 'Dream for the future' story stem likewise has a double purpose. In the first place (A) it attempts to stimulate the child to reflect on their hopes and aspirations for the future and communicate these in some way. Their ability to do so requires mentalization capacities, a sense of agency as well as future orientation. The second part of the story stem (B) is based on the familiar situation wherein children working with the mobile school receive feedback from the street educators. As all street educators working with the mobile school receive a training in which the constructive and positive

pedagogical focus is emphasized, this situation could uncover negative biases in the child's self-perception or attribution style/locus of control. This is naturally not a given since we cannot control for all approaches of all street educators. Relevant indicators would in this case include: *personal agency, self-worth, future orientation, positive focus*.

STORY STEM 6: Bus stop

Story stem:

"<Child 1> walks to the bus stop with their mother. The mother points to the bench and says 'Sit here, I have to go somewhere and I will be back later'." What happens next?

Prompts:

If child says that mother comes straight back – "what if the mother didn't come back straight away, what do you think <Child 1> would think or do? How would he/she feel?"

This story stem is based on a frequently recurring story based on true events. In several separate incidents, various street children have shared their experiences on how they ended up on the streets of the big city. Some children were put on a bus to the city by relatives hoping they would find a job there. Others were brought there by a parent or relative unable to look after them, and left them behind unknowingly. Though this would seem a potentially traumatic experience for anyone, the way in which children interpret or handle the situation as it appears in the moment, can say a lot about their coping skills and/or their perception of themselves and their relationship with their parent. Possible indicators which could be relevant to this story stem include: *Coping/resilience, positive focus, future oriented, personal agency, self-worth.*

STORY STEM 7: Angry customer

Story stem:

"<Child 1> sells fruit at a fruit stand in the market. An angry customer returns complaining about the quality of the goods and shows the rotten fruit to <Child 1> and shouts. What happens next?"

Prompts:

If child avoids the situation and does not go into interaction with the angry customer – "What will happen to the customer? What will he do?"

As many working street children either work in the market or are street vendors of some sort, they tend to be familiar with market dynamics and strategy. However, customer relations requires a certain degree of insight into social dynamics which are in turn based on an understanding of perspectives, empathy as well as self-awareness and emotional discipline. The ability to mentalize is therefore of crucial importance. Moreover, future orientation plays a role in business-mindedness when it comes to dealing with (un)satisfied customers. Relevant indicators for this story stem

include: *pro-active behaviour, personal agency, coping, social competence, future orientation, positive focus*

STORY STEM 8: Choices

Story stem:

"<Child 1> stands across the street in front of a school, hospital, market and bus station/terminal. He/she has to choose where to go. What happens next?"

Prompts:

If the child avoids making a choice – "what is <Child 1> thinking when he/she looks at those 4 places?"

If the child tells a story where the child does not make a choice and tries to go to all 4 places – "what if <Child 1> can only go to 1 place, what would he/she choose?"

This story stem involves four locations familiar to most street children, each of which carry a particular connotation or context with it. The story stem is not based on an actual real-life situation which they could realistically be confronted with, but rather a choice to be contemplated. The story stem is designed to instigate reflection on a fictitious choice. This reflection process requires specific insights which could potentially tell us more about their understanding of the consequences of such choices. Therefore, a future-oriented mind-set could be uncovered by this story sequence. Furthermore, self-worth and agency feature in this choice, along with a positive and pro-active attitude. Relevant indicators therefore include: *future-orientation, self-worth, personal agency, pro-active behaviour, positive focus*.

STORY STEM 9: Danger

Story stem:

"Three children go to the park and come across a tall tree with a 'danger' sign next to it. <Child 1> says "Wow, what a cool tree!" <Child 2> says, "Can we climb it?" What happens next?"

Prompts:

If the child avoids the dilemma altogether and walks away – "what do you think the others are thinking now?"

If the child gets lost in their imagination (fantasmatic storyline: eg. Climb in tree and fly, or bounce when fall out) – "what do you think would really happen in real life?"

The danger story stem pertains to risk-taking behaviour. It portrays the dilemma of an attractive, adventurous activity conflicting with a clear warning meant as a deterrent. Parallel to the content of the dilemma, there is also the issue of peer influence to take into account. In this story, the children are encouraged to form an opinion based on estimation and judgement of the consequences of a particular action, alongside potential peer pressure and insight into another's possible mode of

reasoning. The complexity of such an appraisal involves future orientation as well as social skills and a solid sense of self-worth and identity. Relevant indicators to be considered are: *social skills, future orientation, self-worth, positive focus, personal agency.*

STORY STEM 10: Exercises

Story stem:

"<Child 1> is doing maths exercises on the blackboard of the mobile school. The street educator corrects them and points out that 2 of the 3 exercises are wrong. How does this story end?"

Prompts:

Should the child ignore the fact that the majority of the answers are wrong – "how many answers were correct and how many were wrong?" and "what do you think <Child 1> is thinking now, or how are they feeling?"

If the child ignores the presence of the street educator/adult – "what do you think he/she (pointing to street educator) is thinking?" or "What might he/she do or say?"

This story stem is based on a frequently occurring situation for street children working with the mobile school. It would correlate with a similar situation in a classroom. The internal processes this situation may instigate relate to the child's appraisal of the situation (of having more incorrect answers than correct ones) and their expectation of feedback from the street educator or teacher (how they believe will be reacted). These insights could tell us more about the child's sense of self-worth, their attribution style or locus of control. Additionally, the story sequence could reveal more about how they believe others perceive them and are likely to treat them. Moreover, this story could bring to the surface an intrinsically positive or negative attitude toward oneself as well as others. Therefore, the indicators related to this story stem include the following: *personal agency, self-worth, coping, positive focus, social competence.*

2.3.2. Use of illustrations

A further crucial adaptation in our development of the story stem tool concerns its method of administration. Due to potential deficits in the cognitive development of the diverse range of street children between six and twelve years old, it is critical that any instrument should be assessed for its developmental suitability. A tool with a visual or pictorial format appears to be the most appropriate option as it engages the attention of the child in a playful manner and therefore leads to more meaningful responses. This could potentially also decrease stress-related behaviours or socially desirable responses. The MSSB is designed in such a way as to involve the children through play and enactment of their stories with the use of toy characters. Since the mobile school's policy is to

develop its intervention tools in such a way that they are attached to the mobile school and therefore theft-proof, we decided to comply with this reasoning. Most materials designed for the mobile school are therefore in panel form, which can be easily attached to its surfaces. Therefore, colourful and attractive illustrations are the main form of intervention materials.

As there are several story-telling panels already in the range of provided materials, this is a format familiar to the children they work with. Therefore, it seemed a reasonable supposition to further develop the story stems in a similar fashion.

The story stems were each portrayed by two consecutive illustrations designed by known graphical artist Gijs Vanhee. As he was also the freelance artist working together with Mobile School on their other educational materials, the story stem tool would also fit the same style as the other panels of the mobile school.

These illustrations were meant to be printed on the same PVC laminate material as the other mobile school panels. However, due to lack of time and funding for printing before the volunteers left for Bolivia, the illustrations were merely printed in colour on panel-sized paper and laminated as prototypes. In hindsight, this was in fact a blessing in disguise, as experience proved this PVC format not to be entirely appropriate. During administration of the tool, several children started to interchange the different story stems, either integrating the different story stems into one story, or jumping from one story stem to another. The fact that all story stems were visible at once made it confusing for the children. They did not always understand that each duo of illustrations was representative of one story. After discovering this setback, we decided to print each story stem (duo illustration) separately on an A4 laminated paper in order to avoid confusion.

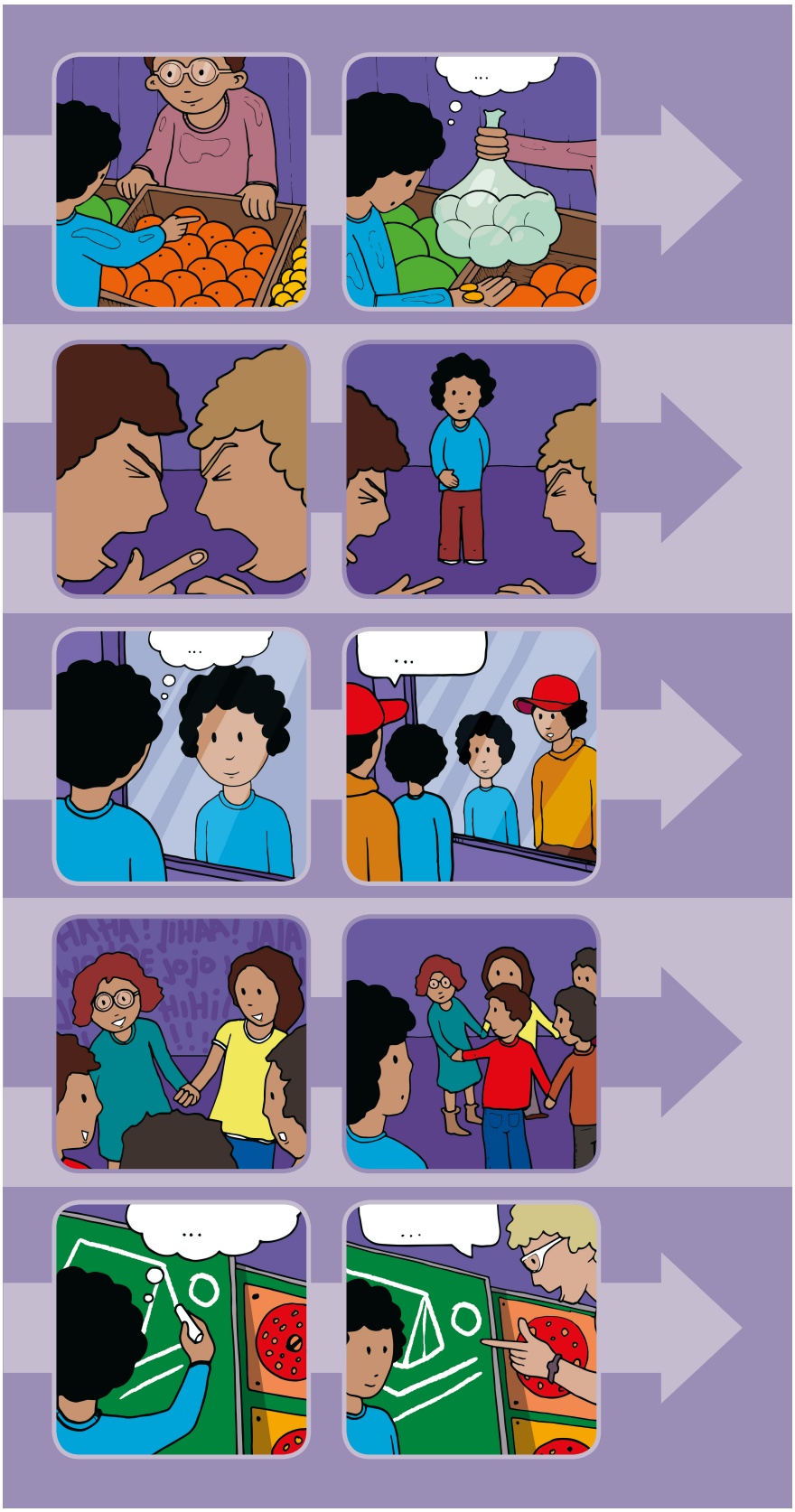

Figure 5. Example of one of the illustration panels portraying the first 5 story stems

2.4. Administration of the tool

2.4.1. Development of the Manual

In order to standardize the administration of the tool in the two different cultural contexts where several different volunteer street educators would be working with the different target groups, a manual was developed in two languages: English and Spanish. For the purpose of creating a user-friendly manual (see Appendix C), it was opted to divide the manual into 3 main sections according to the chronology in which administration would occur. The first section lays out the general guidelines as well as specific instructions on how to introduce the following activities to the children. The second section is a step-by-step guide through each story stem separately, supported by the illustration of the respective story stem. Exact instructions are given on how to introduce each story, elaborated with examples of possible prompts to be given under several different circumstances. In the third and final section, ideas are offered on how to wrap up the session in a safe way to ensure the children are not upset or emotionally disturbed by their recounted stories when they leave. A debriefing activity is also suggested. The development of the manual was inspired by Vliegen, Permentier, Viaene & Tang (2013).

2.4.2. Training and pilot testing with Belgian subsample

A pilot phase to test the new tool was organized in Belgium, before commencing the pilot study abroad. In order to gain experience in administering the story stems and subsequently fine-tune the instrument based on these experiences, a Belgian sample of six children were interviewed. Three were interviewed by myself and the other three by volunteer researchers, two of which by the volunteer who was to administer the tool in Bolivia. This allowed a brief training phase to get used to the tool. In order to make the tool appropriate for the Belgian sample, a number of adaptations were necessary. Amongst these were the translation of the story stems into Dutch, the adaptation of a number of story stems. Most noteworthy changes included in particular, the story stems featuring the mobile school, which was changed to portray a formal education school and teacher (see Appendix D for Dutch version of story stems). We opted to make use of playmobil dolls instead of the illustrations as these were not adapted for the Belgian pilot testing phase.

Taking into account both the feedback from the researchers administering the tool as well as the children interviewed, the instrument was further scrutinized to make it as user-friendly as possible for both the administrator and the subject undergoing the interview. The necessary changes were made to make it as suitable to the circumstances in which it is envisaged to be used, namely by several different investigators and with a range of children.

Chapter 3: Study 2 - Narratives of street children: exploration of the data

Chapter 3 covers the introduction and description of the second study. This entails the pilot testing of the new assessment tool, Narrative Story Stem Technique for Street Children, in two different cultural settings. The following paragraphs describe in detail the methodology of this qualitative study, including (a) the process of participant recruitment and data collection, and (b) the principles that guide the qualitative data analysis. However, the results of the data analysis will be tackled in the subsequent Chapter 4.

3.1. Objective of the study

This pilot study strives to understand the inner world of street children by giving these children a child-specific form of communication to express their self-perception, in order to (a) grasp the way these children look at themselves and their social world and (b) provide a preliminary basis for insight into what Mobile School interventions mean for street children's sense of self and self-esteem.

3.2. Method

We conducted a qualitative, explorative study making use of children's narratives. Through the use of story-telling as a qualitative participative methodology (Haritas & Seshadri (2012), one is able to offer street children a means to reflect on real-life dilemmas in an indirect and non-confronting manner. Via stories, children are able to express their thoughts and feelings in a non-threatening way, whilst overcoming a number of previously mentioned obstacles (regarding age and literacy levels, social pressures and inhibitions).

For purposes of intercultural use of the instrument (Narrative Story Stem Technique for Street Children) in the long run by Mobile School partner organisations, it was opted to carry out the pilot study in two different cultural contexts and with two differing target groups, namely working children or *children on the streets* in Bolivia, and children of street families in the Philippines.

3.3. Context and participants

The study was conducted in three subgroups (Table 1), each subgroup consisting of fifteen street children between six and twelve years old in two cultural settings. Two subgroups of children were recruited in Sucre, Bolivia, the third group in Manila, Philippines.

The Bolivian subgroups consist of children that spend most of their day on the streets working whilst returning to their parent(s) living in the slum areas outside the city centre in makeshift housing. The majority of these children have limited access to formal education. The first subsample in Sucre consists of working street children who have several years of experience working with the mobile school. Mobile School interventions have been conducted frequently and on a regular basis with these children at these locations. The second subsample in Sucre consists likewise of working street children, however, in a location where the mobile school has only recently been introduced. These children have only been exposed to preliminary mobile school interventions for two months and are therefore at the beginning of the intervention process.

The Philippine subgroup represents children of street-dwelling families who live with their parent(s) on the street in the city centre, night and day. Some of these children work or beg to contribute to the family income, others attend school part-time as part of the partner organisation's aid programme. The children in this subsample have been exposed to mobile school interventions for a longer period of time. Many are enrolled in school thanks to the programmes of Virlanie Foundation, at different stages in the formal education system. Unfortunately, we were unable to gain access to the second subsample we planned to engage in Manila, namely a group with limited or no experience with mobile school activities. The street children that are not reached by the mobile school, were unwilling to participate in a study without being paid for their engagement. These children were unfamiliar with the volunteer researcher (Marie) which therefore hindered her ability to gain their trust.

3.4. Recruitment of participants

The children were approached and contacted by the local partner organisations of Mobile School. These local partner organisations were engaged to conduct the interviews with the children and obtain the data for several reasons: (a) There is a need for a good rapport between the child and the adult interviewer and a trusting relationship, enabling the children to feel free in creating and telling their stories. Most street children distrust adults due to past experiences at the hands of abusive parents, relatives, law-enforcers, exploiters or strangers on the streets. (b) The interviewer has to be

familiar with the local language and culture of the children. (c) For ethical reasons, it was important to guarantee the safety and integrity of the children involved. Working within the framework of trusted professional organisations that carried both legal and moral responsibility towards their target group and intervention activities, allowed us to approach the sample target group respectfully and with ease, therefore also reducing any potential for possible stress or psychological harm. The street educators were not only familiar with the children, but also aware of their background and current situation. This allowed for informed consent to be established in both verbal and written form by these trusted individuals. The pilot study was thereby approved by the Ethical Committee of the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of Leuven University.

The Bolivian children were contacted by Rene and Gladys, street educators of local partner organisation Centro de Recursos Pedagogicos Intergrales (CERPI), and interviewed by Griet and Julien, volunteer researchers working on the streets with these children for the organisation. They interviewed 30 Bolivian children. One of the interviews of the first subsample (children with long-term exposure to mobile school activities) had to be discarded due to poor quality audio recording on the streets. The children of the Philippine subsample were contacted by Mobile School's local partner organisation, Virlanie Foundation. Fifteen children of this subsample were interviewed, of which thirteen interviews were suitable to be transcribed. Two interviews showed poor quality recordings which made transcription impossible. These interviews were conducted by Rose, a local street educator of Virlanie Foundation, working with these children for many years. Guidance and facilitation was provided by the organisation's psychologist.

Table 1. Number of children interviewed and transcribed narratives

		Data	Gender
Bolivia	Working children w/MS experience	15 interviews 14 transcribed	6 boys 8 girls
	Working children w/out MS experience	15 interviews 15 transcribed	7 boys 8 girls
Philippines	Street family children w/MS experience	15 interviews 13 transcribed	7 boys 6 girls
Total		45 interviews 42 transcribed	20 boys 22 girls

3.5. Data collection

3.5.1. Story telling

To administer the Narrative Story Stem Technique for Street Children (cf supra 2.3. and 2.4.), the children were interviewed on the streets, in their familiar environment. Their daily reality is street-based and they have not (yet) decided to leave the streets or had the opportunity to do so. This is in line with the mobile school's perspective which states that these children need to be approached with respect in their own environment where they feel most at home, rather than removing them from their comfort zone (Raskin, 2014). For that same reason, and in order to avoid distrust, we only audio recorded the stories rather than make video recordings. Many street children experienced abuse and exploitation at the hands of adults, making them suspicious towards adults in general. That is why taking photos of children or filming them should be avoided as much as possible in order to protect them from further exploitation. By discussing issues of consent and approaching them respectfully, one contributes to increasing their awareness of practices which could lead to abusive situations, hence strengthening their resilience (Van Hellemont, 2013).

3.5.2. Transcription and translation

In order to process the data analysis, the narratives were characterised through verbatim transcription (Savin-Baden, 2013). The interviews were transcribed by the volunteer researcher that conducted the interview, in order not to lose important nuances in meaning, especially as there was no video recording made to capture non-verbal sources of communication. The volunteer who administered the tool is the only witness of the non-verbal cues which could influence the semantics of the stories being told. These were diligently noted. Body language or intonation and pauses were only included if particularly noteworthy and explicit. The focus of the analysis was primarily on content of the narratives.

Concerning the Philippine sample, the transcriptions had to be translated from Tagalog to English, which was done by another member of the local Outreach team in close collaboration with the administrator. All translations were double checked and verified by the researcher who directly administered the tool. Translation of the Spanish transcriptions into English, were done by ten Belgian volunteers, all familiar with Mobile School's target group and intervention activities. Likewise, these translations were proof-read and verified by the volunteer researchers who directly administered the tool and transcribed the interviews.

3.6. Data analysis: A fine lens on a first sample of narratives

3.6.1. Coding and analysis of narratives

This study will cover the first phase of the analysis in preparation of further analyses from different perspectives. It was decided to commence with the analysis of the more fundamental processes underlying the indicators of self-esteem, in order to fine-tune the instrument for the next phase of analysis, which falls outside the scope of this study. The preliminary and exploratory analysis was therefore confined to the narratives of three children from each of the three sample groups. This totalled in data obtained from nine children. The nine data sets were randomly chosen out of the forty-two available sets, and included two boys and one girl from each subsample. Age was not a factor taken into account when assigning the nine data sets.

Within the confines of this Master's thesis, it was decided to restrict the analysis to two main themes, rather than all seven indicators identified (see Chapter 1), It was deemed essential to start with the more fundamental underlying capacities of **mentalization** and the presence of **self-agency**. As these are prerequisites for the further development of self-esteem and related indicators identified (cf supra 2.2.), the presence of these themes form the foundation for further analysis. The results of this exploratory study would therefore provide insight and a more refined lens to form a solid basis for further research into the seven indicators in all gathered data, allowing analysis in the following phase to be improved.

As discussed earlier (cf supra 1.2.3 and 2.2.), through mentalization one is able to conceptualise a sense of self and understand others' inner intentions and motivations. This process by which we implicitly and explicitly interpret our own actions and those of others as meaningful on the basis of intentional mental states (Bateman & Fonagy, 2006), ultimately leads to more empathy and understanding of our interactions and our own ability to influence our own lives. This lays the foundations for the further development of social competence and personal agency, hence encouraging pro-active behaviour. Furthermore, this sense of empowerment and agency promotes a healthy positive focus, an attitude of future orientation and the belief in one's coping skills. A strong feeling of self-worth is likely to arise out of these positive elements. To capture the participants' mentalization capacities, elements within each of the stories were coded that indicated the presence of a certain degree of insight into the characters' emotional state of mind or thought processes underlying their actions. This could be either pertaining to the main character introduced in the story stems, or the secondary characters interacting in the further storyline. Likewise, the

deeper understanding of the quality of interaction between the characters are treated as further signs of mentalization capacities.

Regarding the theme of self-agency, the narratives were scrutinized for signs which demonstrated the main character taking control of their situation in a manner in which they exert control over the outcome of their actions. This type of empowering behaviour indicates a psychological state of mind in which the individual sees itself as a central actor in their lives that can make a difference and exert some form of control over their immediate environment, rather than taking on a passive role and accepting what overcomes them as irreversible or unchangeable.

3.6.2. Categorisation and scoring

The scoring was done by myself according to a coding system described below (cf infra 3.6.3.), and guided by scoring manuals of instruments which inspired the development of this tool. These were the coding templates of the MacArthur Narrative Coding Manual (Robinson, Mantz-Simmons, MacFie, Kelsay, Holmberg and the MacArthur Narrative Working Group, 2007) and the Attachment Stories for Children from six to eight years old (Vliegen, Permentier, Viaene & Tang, 2013). These scoring manuals served only as a source of inspiration and did not prescribe the actual scoring criteria used.

When scoring the ten story stem narratives of each of the nine children, the themes were categorized according to degree of either the presence of indicators of mentalization capacities and indicators of self-agency or the lack thereof. As there are several ways in which mentalization and self-agency can be expressed or interpreted, any elements indicating their presence or absence was identified and discussed from a qualitative perspective. In the case of mentalization, the lack of capacities was presumed to be indicated by more superficial narratives which did not address or reflect underlying inner processes (either cognitive, emotional or motivational). In these narratives, the children would recount situations and actions at face value without addressing intentionality in any way. For the theme of self-agency, the lack of such a sense of agency was assumed to be illustrated by a more passive attitude portrayed by the characters in which they were recounted as purely undergoing whatever situation came their way. This lack of agency or belief in one's own ability to exert influence on external situations either indicated a lack of self-insight and awareness or a lack of belief in one's own capacities. Either way, this lack of self-agency can be seen as an obstacle hindering one's development of self-esteem and self-worth (Schwarter & Fuchs, 1995).

Next, the transcriptions of the narratives were cut through highlighting according to thematic relevance. Where sentences or words were deemed indicators of mentalization capacities or signs of

self-agency, they were highlighted in the colour corresponding to the theme. So, through the use of open coding (Savin-Baden, 2013), we were able to identify, and later categorise, relevant themes relating to the indicators, in order to establish whether or not there is sufficient evidence of the presence of these capacities.

3.6.3. Thematic Content Analysis

In this current first phase of analysis, it was opted to focus on two perspectives. As described above, mentalizing capacities and self-agency form the foundations of further self-development processes.

3.6.3.1. Coding indicators of mentalizing capacities

Only recently, research is trying to picture mentalizing capacities and coherence of mind in children's narratives (Pace, Cavanna, Velotti, & Zavattini, 2014). According to a study by Ensink, Normandin, Target, Fonagy, Sabourin & Berthelot (2015), it is possible to reliably measure mentalization (Reflective Functioning) in children aged from 7 to 12 years old from the narratives they produce. Hence, we decided to base our analysis on the coding principles they described. According to the Child Reflective Functioning Scale, as described in an initial study of its validity (Ensink et al., 2015), there are different levels of mentalization. In their scale, the level of mentalization capacities are coded according to degree of reference to mental states. Their coding ranges from -1 to 8, with 8 being the highest score and an indication of complex and *"unusually nuanced understanding of reactions of self and other that also incorporates a sense of feelings and reactions changing over time"* (Ensink et al., 2015, p. 209). The lowest scores are attributed to responses where mentalization is lacking (0) or even avoided (-1) or lacking. Examples of low value scores (1-2) include: self-description in terms of behaviour or non-mental characteristics, and descriptions given without explicit reference to mental states. In this analysis, narratives with such responses are not regarded sufficient to warrant being coded as specific signs of mentalization capacities. Where Ensink et al. (2015) assign 3 points on their scoring scale described as basic but unelaborated references to mental states, our analysis likewise considers these indications as portraying basic yet fundamental mentalization capacities. These include examples as "I'm responsible as I enjoy taking care of others".

When children come to recognise the link between their affect, their behaviour and their effect on others, we considered this as a solid understanding and use of mentalization. This is attributed a score of 4 on the Child Reflective Functioning Scale (CRFS). Furthermore, descriptions illustrating a clear and fundamental understanding of mental states or the association between affect, affect-regulation and intentionality portrays a more in-depth capacity to reflect on one's inner world and

make inferences about that of others. These are clear signs of mentalizing functioning and are therefore awarded a high value in our analysis, as they do in the CRFS where they are attributed high scores between 5-8. Moreover, where descriptions reflect theory of mind through an understanding of different perspectives, this is considered to be well-developed mentalization skills. Though our analysis does not use a scoring system based on points, it is guided by the same principles as described above. When coding the narratives for content recognising mentalization capacities, we opted to use the following indicators as general guidelines:

1. Presence of affect words
2. Signs of ability to regulate affect and/or arousal
3. Recognition of affect within self or others

A lack of mentalization capacities was deemed to be illustrated by narratives containing merely action-reaction thinking, and the absence of the indicators mentioned above.

In order to analyse the ninety story narratives (nine children, each having received 10 story stems to complete) and detect patterns or trends, each narrative was meticulously analysed for any of the abovementioned indicators. These were subsequently highlighted and coded according to low or high value in mentalization capacities, following the principles described above. This process was repeated a second time in order to identify any omitted signs or to reconsider a value judgement where necessary. Lastly, the entire narrative was considered as a whole in order to get a sense of whether or not there were sufficient indicators to conclude how in-depth their understanding of mental states was. This included categorisation, such as:

- Quantity: many vs. few indications of mentalization capacities
- Range: broad vs. narrow range of mentalization capacities displayed
- Quality: in-depth vs. superficial understanding of mental states

The final step was to write out the analysis step-by-step, highlighting the most noteworthy examples illustrating the presence (or absence) of mentalization.

3.6.3.2. Coding Self-Agency indicators

According to Zimmerman and Cleary (2006), self-agency, otherwise known as “personal agency, refers to one’s capability to originate and direct actions for given purposes. It is influenced by the belief in one’s effectiveness in performing specific tasks, which is termed self- efficacy, as well as by one’s actual skill” (p. 45). Clearly, one’s self-concept is reflected in self-directed actions which is influenced by perception and belief. An important component of self-agency is therefore consciously directed actions and behaviours of intentionality which are driven by the belief in a successful

outcome. The resulting outcome is entirely attributed to one's own action. This belief that one can exert a substantial influence on one's environment or one's future, implying an internal attribution style, can be described as a sense of agency, closely related to perceived control. As Zimmerman and Cleary (2006) describe, the construct of perceived control, pertains to general expectancies that outcomes are controlled by either one's behaviour or by external events. "This dualistic view of control suggests that an internal locus of control promotes self-directed behaviour, whereas external locus of control inhibits one's agentic abilities. Perceptions of control and perceived self-efficacy are similar in that they both deal with how individuals can act in agentic ways on their environment" (Zimmerman & Cleary, 2006, p. 50). Individuals with a high sense of self-efficacy and/or an internal locus of control are likely to exhibit more self-directed behaviour than their low self-efficacious counterparts or those with an external locus of control. Vallacher and Wegner (1989) claim personal agency manifests itself in a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of one's actions, including causal effects, consequences, socially conveyed meanings and self-evaluative implications. These are reflected in self-regulated and reflective behaviour. Ibrahim and Alkire (2007), describe indicators of agency and empowerment in an international context, on an individual as well as collective level. The indicators they proposed concern four possible exercises of agency, which if increased could lead to empowerment: choice, control, change and communal belonging. Choice pertains to decision-making and autonomy. Control refers to power relations and personal decision-making allowing one to take control over one's own destiny. Their perspective on change as a form of agency refers to the belief in the power within, to instigate change in oneself or one's life situation. The last indicator involves the ability to change things collectively at a communal level, through the ability to engage others or set in motion a collective movement.

Walls and Little (2005) describe what they call 'action-control beliefs' in their perspective on human agency as individuals with volition, intention, and self-referencing. Both action-control theory and self-determination theory share the fundamental assumption of the person as an active, goal-oriented, and self-regulating organism (Little, Hawley, et al., 2002, In Walls & Little, 2005). Action-control beliefs are views about competencies and the potential means perceived to be at one's disposal for the pursuit of a particular goal (Little, 1998; Little & Lopez, 1996; Skinner et al., 1988; In Walls & Little, 2005).

Inspired by the indicators of agency described by the above-mentioned authors, we distilled five behavioural manifestations of self-agency on which to base our analysis. Hence, the general guidelines for indicators of self-agency include the following:

1. Reflective behaviour: motivated with intention, control and understanding of consequences.

2. Action or decision-making reflecting belief in a positive result of own behaviour.
3. Belief in the influence of own behaviour or actions on surroundings or environment.
4. Choice and action to instigate change.
5. Self-regulation and autonomy.

General indicators for the lack of self-agency include:

- Action-reaction behaviour without prior reflection or clear intention.
- Lack of goal-orientation or belief in positive outcome.
- Lack of taking control (i.e. leaving decisions or actions to others) or autonomy.

We decided to incorporate another related element into this part of the analysis, namely the perception of the 'other', to further clarify perspectives of self-agency. On the one hand, when looking at self-agency, we are looking at the confidence a child has in the self. However, after analysing the narratives it came to our attention that the way a child perceives others also reflects elements of their own self-concept. So their representation of others can be telling of their self-concept. Hence, the further analysis of the narratives was driven by the following considerations: How much confidence do they have in other people and their availability? What is their perception of significant others in their lives? Do they feel they can rely on them? Do they have a safe haven or attachment figure in their lives? Is there a relation between their perspective of themselves and that of others? Does self-confidence inspire confidence in others? Or on the contrary, does lack of confidence in others tend to be associated with a higher confidence and autonomy in themselves, out of lack of a support system?

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter described the rationale and process behind the pilot study in which the Narrative Story Stem Technique for Street Children was tested in two cultural settings with three subgroups of street children.

Chapter 4 presents the results and analysis in great detail. The ninety narratives produced by nine children from three subgroups, are analysed and discussed according to the concepts of mentalization and self-agency, in the light of representations of others.

Chapter 4: Analysis and Results

All the narratives of the nine children were examined and interpreted according to the guidelines described in Chapter 3. To aid the readers understanding and facilitate a user-friendly analysis, an overview of the story stems and characters discussed can be found in Table.2 (see Appendix E). For purposes of readability, the three child characters in the story stems will receive the same names throughout the analysis, despite the fact that each participant child was asked to assign the characters in their narratives with their own chosen name. The main character will be referred to as Pedro in the case of a boy, and Maria in the case of a girl. The second child character will be referred to as Oscar and the third as Miguel for the boys, and for the girls they will be represented by the names Ana and Isabel respectively. The participants are also each given a pseudonym, though also being labelled as Child 1, Child 2 and Child 3 of each subsample.

The first narratives to be discussed are those of the Bolivian subsample of working children on the streets who have several years of experience with mobile school activities. The second set of narratives to be interpreted, is that of the Bolivian street children who have yet had very few mobile school interventions. The last subsample to be considered is that of the Filipino children of street families, who have also been exposed to the mobile school for several years. Narratives of three children from each subsample were randomly selected out of the available sets of data for scrutiny. The first thematic analysis concerns indicators of mentalization capacities (cf infra 4.1). The second thematic analysis concerns that of self-agency (cf infra 4.2). The identification and interpretation of these indicators is described in a narrative manner.

4.1. Analysis and discussion of narratives concerning mentalizing capacities

4.1.1. Street children in Bolivia working with mobile school for longer period of time.

Charlie, Child 1 (9-year-old male):

In the first story concerning the market place (The Market), the narrative of Charlie shows merely action-reaction thinking. The short narrative displays no mentalizing processes and merely reflects what is seen on the illustrations. Likewise, the second story stem (The Fight) elicits little reflection and consists mainly of recounting what is seen in the pictures. It is also told in an indecisive and avoidant manner:

> ***C: They're going to fight?***
> *I: He as well? (points to Pedro)*

C: Yes! No! Yes! No!
I: It's your story, you can decide.
C: Here, they're doing. What is it that they're doing, but here in … Pedro is coming. He comes and then leaves to his place.
I: And what will happen to the others?
C: The two?
I: The two, with the two children.
C: They'll argue, they're going to fight.

The third narrative (Reflection), however, involves more interpretation of the presented story stem with an aggressive undertone. To complete the story, Charlie refers back to illustrations of a previous story stem (The Market), thereby presenting a chaotic and confusing ending:

C: He's going to hit him. And then he'll leave.
I: Does the boy say something to Pedro?
C: Yes, he says: 'Why don't you have three coins instead of two?', and he says: 'And why are you looking at yourself in the window of a shop when you're one coin short?'. 'Thank you but', says the boy: 'I don't have more money. Maybe you could spare me a coin?'. 'No thanks'.

In the story, the other boy says to Pedro, ***"And why are you looking at yourself in the window of a shop when you're one coin short?"*** implying that looking at one's reflection is merely an action related to time and money, rather than a reflection process. Again, this could indicate an absence of mentalization capacities. He does, however, make an inference with regards to what the boy might say to Pedro; yet the interpretation remains superficial with no affective depth.

Likewise, for story stem 4 (Group play), the narrative sticks to the storyline already displayed in the illustrations. The only interpretation made is one of rejection. He says the playing children shoo him away and don't allow him to join in the game, but gives little explanation as to why this would be the case.

C: They didn't want Pedro to join the game, he only looks at them and they are looking back.
I: Uhu
C: And they never let him in on the game.
I: No? Why is that?
C: Here's why (points out the second illustration of the children watching the main character and vice versa) (…) Pedro says: 'I'm just passing by over here, why are those children playing in the circle over there laughing?'. 'Hey you boy, go away, we're not playing with you. Leave. Shoot! Tss!'.

The fifth story stem (Dream of the Future) involves a drawing which could represent the child's dream of the future, which is drawn on the mobile school and shown to a street educator. In this narrative, the child cannot explain what was drawn, nor why, repeatedly answering with ***"I don't know".*** Again, this is a clear indication of low mentalization capacities.

In the story of the boy being left at the bus stop by his mother (Story Stem 6: Bus Stop), the storyline becomes confusing, as the illustrations of other story stems distract him from the presented dilemma. He starts involving non-related story stems making the story rather haphazard and incoherent. He seemed to want to involve as many illustrations as possible but without going into any depth, just mentioning what he sees on the pictures. The only response directly related to the story stem in question was, ***"She doesn't come back,"*** referring to the mother. He gives no further explanation for this nor does he express any form of emotion in his narrative. All his responses are action-related and show no mentalizing processes. Noteworthy is the fact that he completes the story by saying that he goes to the mobile school instead of going to find his mother, indicating that for him the Mobile School is a place to find safety when distressed:

> ***C: Pedro will go to the street, looking for his mother, he doesn't know where to go, he only has one thing, and he's been searching up and down the street. Then he met some other children, they saw a tree and thought about three things: adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing fractions.***
> *I: He's doing exercises with the children?*
> ***C: yes***
> *I: and his mother?*
> ***C: She doesn't come back.***
> *I: He's not going to find his mom?*
> ***C: no***
> *I: and what will he do?*
> ***C: He goes to the mobile school.***

In the following story about the angry customer (Story Stem 7), the boy shows for the first time explicitly some form of empathy or understanding of why the customer could be angry, though the explanation remains rather factual (due to rotten fruit) as displayed on the illustration. Furthermore, by describing the action of crying, he indicates an understanding of emotional display, without explicitly naming the emotion. Though there seems to be a notion of understanding emotions, this is expressed only in actions.

In the narrative about Choices (Story Stem 8), Pedro makes a very decisive choice to go to school. Charlie mentions that ***"he thinks through a few things,"*** indicating a reflection process, however, he does not go into further depth as to what those thoughts may be. He adamantly states that he

recognises the school as being the mobile school, which he continues to be enthusiastic about, stating ***"I always want to go there, thanks".***

In the story stem involving the tree in the park (Story Stem 9: Dangerous Tree), Pedro appears to have insight into the dangers posed by climbing and potentially falling out of the tree, indicating a certain understanding of cause-consequence associations. He also mentions, ***"my mother would kill me if I'd climb it and fall down,"*** when referring to his explanation why Pedro would not climb the tree. Though this infers that he understands the mother would get angry, he again refers to an anger-related action rather than use affect words. It indicates a certain level of empathy but again remains superficial in his description. Once more, Charlie ends the story by saying Pedro would go to the mobile school instead of climbing the tree, despite the fact that the story stem is unrelated to any mobile school reference:

> ***C: And Pedro says: 'No, thanks. The tree is way too high, we could get injured if we fall down, my mother would kill me if I'd climb it and fall down'. 'Why?' 'Because it's too dangerous'. Thanks.***
> *I: And the others? What are they going to do?*
> ***C: They climb up the tree!***
> *I: Yes? They do, but not the boy?*
> ***C: Yes, he goes to the mobile school!***
> *I: Always. He likes it?*
> ***C: Uhu.***

In the last story regarding the math exercises, Charlie recounts literally what is going to happen or what is being said, rather than how it feels to be corrected or to get answers right. He does, however, end the story by admitting, ***"I don't know sums so well,"*** which could be interpreted as a sign of a certain degree of competence-based self-insight or perception. The response of the street educator being recounted as, ***"If you don't know, I'll teach you,"*** indicates his positive view of the street educator and of the boys' own abilities to learn. Moreover, this shows a belief in the availability of another, in this case the street educator.

In general, Charlie showed little to no understanding of the self or others, their intentions or motivations and used few affect words. We could conclude from this that he has low mentalization capacities. He appears to be quite preoccupied by the mobile school. It may be speculated that the fact of conducting the interview in the presence of the mobile school may have distracted the child or may have instigated socially desirable answers. On the other hand, this preoccupation with the mobile school could also be an indication of its positive connotation and the importance it plays in Charlie's life.

Carmen, Child 2 (10-year-old female):

In the ten narratives presented by 10-year-old Carmen, several stories indicated the use of affect words and understanding of an own inner world as well as that of others. Not only does Carmen recount emotion-related actions, she explicitly uses affect words to describe these emotions as well. For example, in the first story (The Market) she literally poses that the girl is *sad* because she has to return the fruit. In the second story (The Fight) she claims the quarrelling children are *angry* and they yell. Likewise, in the fifth story (Group play), she makes reference to several emotional experiences as well as intentions and motivations: ***"Maria doesn't want to play, and Maria goes away sadly because there is one boy who always gets mad at her, bothers her…".*** In the story regarding the bus stop (Story Stem 6), she describes the girl as feeling sad and links this to the behaviour of crying. In the 7th story (Angry Customer), she describes Maria selling ***"calmly"*** to begin with but after the confrontation with the customer who is described as ***"mad and drunk",*** she describes the change in affect as ***"Maria got really scared".***

The eighth narrative about 'Choices' was extremely interesting in its complexity. It showed this 10-year-old girl to be capable of using metaphor to describe an inner process whilst using emotionally-laden content and insight into the other (displaying empathy), in this case the mother:

> **C:** ***"Maria chooses between a nice path and an ugly path, it goes between darkness and sun. Maria does not know where to go to, I am going to the hospital, to the market and the bus, or better maybe to the school, I am going for the other side, she goes later on by that path and her mum is sad and looking for Maria and cannot find her and a man says to Maria to go to his house but they don't get there and Maria escaped, she escaped an abandoned house and arrived at her house when her mum asks her what she was doing during the night, that she was looking for her. A man took me to an ugly place, don't worry, her mum says, tomorrow we will interrogate this man. Here he is."***

One could conclude that Carmen has a high level of mentalizing capacities including not only self-insight but also an understanding of others' mental states. Any further interpretation regarding the meaning behind this story remains beyond the scope of this analysis.

Carlos, Child 3 (10-year-old male):

In Carlos' first four narratives, all stories are based on descriptions of action and reaction. There appears to be no depth of emotion or thought processes. Furthermore, each of the four stories contains some form of violence and aggression. But even these scenes do not address any underlying affect nor reasoning for the violence and are presented purely as factual and action-oriented. The absence of mentalization qualities is very apparent and striking. In the fifth story there

is again a clear presence of negative behaviour, in particular regarding the perception of others (the street educator) by the main character, Pedro:

> ***C: We'll see, and Pedro says it is his dream come true. The teacher: 'I don't believe you', that's what the teacher says, go sit, 'go sit in your seat' he says and then Pedro ignores it and Pedro is going to leave, he always ignores him and the teacher punishes him. That's it.***

Though he addresses some form of insight or belief of what others may think of him, this is again displayed in actions rather than affect states or mental states. Likewise, the sixth story illustrates a negligence or indifference on the part of the mother but again expressed in a purely behavioural sense, through ignoring. The only instance where any form of affect is expressed is in the seventh story (Angry Customer), where he states that his main character, Pedro, ***"got sad"*** due to the customer refusing to buy his fruit because it was too expensive. This affect response was not further elaborated upon, but rather resulted in the main character reacting to it by no longer selling anymore, in a way being discouraged and giving up easily.

When analysing these narratives, it is clear that Carlos lacks mentalization capacities or has limited ways in which to express them verbally. He relies very much on action-reaction thinking and behavioural responses.

In sum, we could conclude that Carmen's stories clearly display reflective functioning, emotional depth and empathy. Both boys, on the other hand, show very limited mentalization capacities. However, the main difference between the two is that Charlie (the younger of the two) presents a positive view of others and their availability, in particular regarding the mobile school. Carlos, on the other hand, exhibits a high degree of negativity and hostility. Moreover, his view of others is also tainted with a negative undertone, suggesting a distrust in the availability of others.

4.1.2. Street children in Bolivia working with mobile school only for a limited period of time:

<u>Cesar, Child 1 (12-year-old male):</u>

Cesar portrayed a strong sense of responsibility towards his family, especially regarding contribution to family income and future opportunities. His stories displayed several elements of future orientation, self-agency, positive focus, pro-active behaviour and social competence recurring in several narratives. However, most intentions and motivations were expressed through behaviour and action-reaction reasoning, rather than affect or cognitive reasoning or mental state. A few times

affect words were used (in stories 3, 5 and 6 – ***sad, happy*** and ***bored*** respectively). However, it was only in story 3 that emotion was explicitly linked to an inner representation of the self:

> *I: Ah yes. And how do you think Pedro feels, when he's looking in the mirror like this, at his reflection?*
> ***C: Sad.***
> *I: Sad? Why?*
> ***C: Because he isn't tall and he doesn't have nice clothes either.***

This statement reflects self-awareness and self-perception influencing affect. It does, however, remain predominantly external by nature, rather than explicitly stating mental states. Similarly, in story 5 (Dream for the Future), he says that the teacher reacts ***"happy".*** Here again an affect word is used without further elaboration to indicate its underlying motivation or drive.

In story 9 (Dangerous Tree), Cesar does however, display a form of empathy or theory of mind, in that he describes that the main character's friends believe he is not their friend because he leaves them behind. However, it turns out later in the story, that the main character had good intentions to buy them an ice cream, which his friends were not aware of. Therefore, he manages to differentiate between the actual intention of the main character and the differing perception of the friends:

> ***C: Eh, that, eh, he's, his friends think that Pedro isn't their friend.***
> *I: Ah no? He's not their friend?*
> ***C: Yes.***
> *I: Why?*
> ***C: Because he goes away, he leaves them behind.***
> *I: Aha.*
> ***C: Then, Pedro was going to buy ice cream.***
> *I: Ice cream, yes?*
> ***C: Then, for his friends he went to buy them. [He got them for his friends]***

Again, this interpretation of intention or motivation is illustrated through actions, rather than explicitly mentioning inner mental states.

One could conclude that there is a certain degree of mentalization qualities in this child's narratives.

<u>Chico, Child 2 (9-year-old boy):</u>

Chico appeared to be confused or uncertain about the story-telling. Having had only two encounters with the mobile school it would be reasonable to presume he had little or no experience with story-telling activities. His narratives remained largely action-oriented and on the surface. He needed much encouragement to come up with his own stories, independent of what was portrayed in the

illustrations. Most of his stories at the beginning (story stems 1, 2, 4 & 5) showed distinct elements of positive focus and future orientation. Stories 1 (The Market) and 2 (The Fight), both feature the concept ***'forgiveness'*** of the other, demonstrating a positive attitude and belief in kindness and/or understanding. Trust is another concept represented in these stories.

Story 1 (The Market), illustrates a positive view of the other, in that the market vendor appears open to trust Pedro to pay the rest the following day:

> ***C: He can, he can, ... take a loan / owe it to the vendor.***
> *I: Aha! And then?*
> ***C: He can take a loan... till tomorrow, whatever. And afterwards he can give back the money.***
> *I: Right. And then the seller will give him the fruit.*
> ***C: Yes.***

Story 4 (Group play) is all about inclusion and how all the children play and have fun together. Story 5 (Dream for the future) is less elaborate but commences with the teacher calling his drawing ***'nice'***.

Story stem 3 (Reflection) portrayed an element of problem-solving skills, indicating a certain degree of self-agency, social competence, future orientation and pro-active behaviour. It also suggests collaboration with another:

> ***C: They can be... They can be friends, they can buy, they can put their money together to buy****.*

In story stems 1 and 2, where he talks about forgiveness, which could be construed as an understanding of mutual perception and insight into psychological processes underlying behaviour, this could also be an indication of mentalization ability. However, the only narrative in which affect played a role is in the sixth story (Bus Stop), where he recounts:

> ***C: He can become afraid.***
> *I: How can he become afraid?*
> ***C: He could leave alone, but he could get scared.***
> *I: Oh.*
> ***C: He doesn't know where to go.***
> *I: So then he doesn't leave alone?*
> ***C: With his mum.***

In this extract, he does not only recognise an emotion which can be a consequence of a situation (being alone), but also recognises the fact that another person (in this case his mother), could influence this mental state by alleviating or regulating that feeling through her presence.

The last two narratives appear to become more negative in nature, lacking both positive focus and self-agency. It is difficult to be conclusive about mentalization capacities in this case, as lack of experience with story-telling appears to hinder his ability to recount a story which reflects his inner world in some way. There are hints of mentalization capacities, however, they are not particularly elaborate or in depth.

Carla, Child 3 (10-year-old girl):

Similarly, to the previously discussed child (Chico), Carla also seems rather uncertain when it comes to story-telling. Her responses are often in question form, seeking confirmation from the researcher. As she has only visited the mobile school for five weeks, one could assume she is not very familiar with such story-telling activities. Her stories remain rather superficial, referring mainly to what is seen on the illustrations or actions that could directly address the presented dilemma in the story stem. Nonetheless, the narratives do show a certain trend regarding indicators. Most of her stories have a very positive focus and display strong socially acceptable problem-solving skills. She shows a solid sense of self-agency throughout the narratives, albeit expressed in the form of behaviour, rather than affect. There are also elements of future orientation, pro-active behaviour, self-worth and social competence reflected in her short and to-the-point stories. Nonetheless, when it comes to indicators of mentalization capacities, these are less clearly detectable. The only narratives where affect is described is in stories 6 (Bus Stop) and 7 (Angry Customer). In the story about the bus stop, the question of how the main character would feel if her mother did not return immediately elicits the response ***"Alone".*** This could be construed as a reference to a feeling of loneliness, but could also refer more to a state rather than a feeling. The prompt by the researcher was a rather leading question which begs the question as to how natural her response is, especially as it was initially given in question form:

> *I: But what if her mother doesn't come back immediately, how would Maria feel?*
> ***C: Alone? Alone.***

In the seventh story (Angry Customer), she states that after the main character exchanges the rotten fruit with another better fruit, the customer is no longer angry:

> ***C: Hm, she gives him another fruit.***
> *I: Right.*
> ***C: Then the man is not angry anymore and leaves. And the damaged fruit... mmm, he just, he gives it back.***
> *I: OK. She changes it for another fruit.*
> ***C: Yes.***
> *I: And he's not angry anymore.*

C: Yes.

In this scene, though she does not elaborate further on the change in affect, the response does portray an understanding of desires and wishes of others, and how certain actions can influence affect. This could be an indicator of mentalization abilities, but also reflects social competence, pro-active behaviour, future orientation and self-agency. Another noteworthy element can be found in the fifth story (Dream for the Future):

I: Mhm. But she, what does she tell when the teacher comes?
C: Let's say: "When I grow up, I want it to be like this, my... how... I want my dream to come true."
I: I want my dream to come true.
C: Yes.

Here she appears to recognise an inner desire for something future oriented. However, she does not elaborate explicitly on what that could be. Perhaps the fact that this activity and the situation is unfamiliar to her, could possibly make it unsafe for her to fully express herself. She does, however, show certain traits which rely heavily on mentalization capabilities, which leads me to believe that under more familiar circumstances, she might display more explicit indications of mentalization qualities.

In sum, the children of this second subsample who have yet had very limited access to mobile school activities, appear generally not to be familiar with this methodology of story-telling. Perhaps it is not an activity common in these households, either due to cultural reasons, or reasons pertaining to poverty, such as lack of time or means.

Furthermore, the interviewing researcher in this case is not only new to the children, but the entire Mobile School team is new in the area and has therefore not yet had ample opportunity to build up a trusting environment. One could, therefore, ask oneself if there was enough of a feeling of safety for these children to express themselves fully? Or perhaps, they could have still been wary of expectations and feel their answers could compromise their access to the service being offered by the street educators, hence leading to uncertain or hesitant responses.

4.1.3. Children of street families in the Philippines working with mobile school for a longer period of time

Christian, Child 1 (12-year-old male):

Throughout the story narratives, it is clear that Christian is very self-aware and future-oriented, with a strong sense of responsibility, morality and respect. This is, however, typical in this culture to be brought up with respect for elders and for authority figures. Children are encouraged at an early age to take responsibility and think of their future in order to assist their family in the future. These values appear very much reflected in his stories. Most show elements of social competence, future orientation and pro-active behaviour. Several stories portray a character with a solid sense of self-worth, positive focus and self-agency displayed by socially acceptable problem-solving skills. When it comes to mentalizing capacities, these are also represented by the use of affect words as well as an understanding of others' perspectives and factors influencing interactions. For example, in the fourth story (Group play), Christian states that his main character (in this case a girl, Maria) will ask the playing group of children to join in. He further elaborates on this request by explaining, ***"I feel envious because you are happy".*** This clearly shows an understanding of how another's affect can affect oneself. Moreover, he later states ***"They were happy because Maria wanted to join them…"*** which illustrates how actions can influence affect.

In the fifth story (Dream of the Future), he carries on to explicitly describe an ambition for the future and immediately associates intentions that will help fulfil this desire:

> ***C : Because I want to be a policeman someday, that is why I did that drawing. That is why I will study hard so that I can finish my studies to be able to fulfil my dream.***
> *I: What is the teacher's reaction when she sees Maria's drawing and hears Maria's comments?*
> ***C: She was very glad.***
> *I: What did the teacher tell Maria?*
> ***C: I'm very happy with you. Study hard so that you can fulfil your wish"***

The use of affect words continues in the 6th, 7th and 10th story, in which feelings like sadness, anger and shame feature. For example, in the story regarding the Bus Stop, he recounts the following:

> ***C: She is sad and becomes angry. She will say "It takes mother a long time to come back. She told me that she would not be long".***

Here he describes a process of different emotions elicited by the mother's actions, indicating the association between the two. In story 7 (Angry Customer), he not only refers to an affect, but goes on to elaborate on a reasoning in order to obtain understanding from the other:

C: She will say "I'm really sorry, brother. We will just replace the rotten ones. Don't be angry with me because we also just buy them."

This kind of reasoning presents ample understanding of how one can influence another's affect, inner thought processes or behaviour through use of communication. The 9th story (Dangerous Tree), likewise shows inner thought processes being explicitly communicated:

C: Uhhmm…She prevents the two children from doing it. She tells them "Don't climb the tree; didn't you see the warning saying that it is not safe? Why don't you want to follow what it says? If you climb it, you might be in danger and worst happen you will die. You will give problems to your parents."
I: What will the children say?
C: Let's just follow Maria's advice because if we climb the tree, we might fall down and put our mother in more trouble.

Here the reasoning is not only expressed in stages, but also associated with consequences carrying a moral judgement. These thought processes are therefore not only linking actions, but also future oriented obligations to parental figures. Last but not least, the 10th story (Exercises) features the more complex emotion of shame:

C: Maria will say "Madam, I will do my best and study hard in the future to make the answers right".
I: What does Maria think about it?
C: She feels ashamed because she did it wrong.
I: What does the teacher think about Maria when she sees that two answers are wrong and only one is right?
C: She gets angry at Maria and tells her to make efforts to study well to be able to answer the problems properly.

Though two affect words are used in this excerpt, 'ashamed' and 'angry', it is in particular the former that carries the connotation of a more subtle emotion. Shame is not only associated with a feeling, but also carries a value judgement which requires an understanding of societal expectations and repercussions. This boy clearly shows an understanding of inner mental states underlying intentions, motivations and drives, and how they affect behaviour and interactions. Mentalization capacities are clearly present.

<u>Clark, Child 2 (11-year-old male):</u>

As with Christian, Clark also presents a strong sense of morality and several societal judgements, confirming the idea of a value-driven culture, in particular when it comes to the importance of education and respect for elders. For example, the sense of responsibility and respect shown to the parental or authority figures in stories 4, 7, 8 and 10:

- C: But when his mother needs him to do something for her, he has to follow before playing again. (Story 4 – Group play)

C: But do not shout at me because the barangay police officer are not far away and they guard the children who sell on the market and there are police too. (Story 7 – Angry customer)

C: …because parents are more important than money. (Story 8 –Choices)

In response to the mobile school teacher in story 10 (Exercises), he claims:

C: …he will do things better next time.

The importance of thinking ahead or of studying hard in order to secure a bright future is likewise mentioned several times (Story 5, 9 and 10):

C: …that's my dream to build a tent and live in it. That is what I want when I grow old because our house is too small. I hope that you will help me to fulfil my dreams. (Story 5 – Dream for the Future)

C: They think further before they decide if they climb or not the tree because they might have an accident. Because, for instance, the tree is slippery, then they would slip. It would be possible for Pedro to tell them not to climb the tree. (Story 9 – Dangerous Tree)

C: Pedro, you have to study well. Because if you do not study well, you won't be able finish your studies. For instance, you have a school project (assignment) to do, do it before playing. If you do not study well, nothing good will happen to you. You will just hang out with your group of friends. (Story 10 – Exercises)

Furthermore, manners and social rules feature several times in his narratives: saying sorry and reconciling. For example, in story 2 (The Fight), Pedro intervenes as follows:

C: He stops the fight of the two children and tells them not to fight. Both of you will get hurt. Just reconcile. Say sorry to one another and give each other a hug.

In story 7, it is the angry customer who apologises to Pedro:

I: What does the guy say when the rotten fruit are replaced?
C: He says sorry.

Also authority figures like the police are placed in a very positive light in several stories, where they are depicted as safe-keepers and protectors, such as the bus driver in story 6:

C: The driver will ask him if he will get a ride or not?... Then the driver says "ok, just take care because many children are taken away. "

Similarly, in story 7 (Angry customer), the community police officer is regarded as protector of the children:

C: But do not shout at me because the barangay police officer are not far away and they guard the children who sell on the market and there are police too.

Regarding mentalization, he uses affect words on different occasions, often linked to or followed by an explanation of reasoning for the emotion. In Story 4 (Group Play):

C: Then, after joining and the group suddenly dislike continuing the play, he also will not continue, because he is afraid.

Story 10 (Exercises):

C: Pedro will be sad because maybe his classmates will laugh at him.
I: What will the teacher say?
C: Pedro, you have to study well. Because if you do not study well, you won't be able to finish your studies. For instance, you have a school project (assignment) to do, do it before playing. If you do not study well, nothing good will happen to you. You will just hang out with your group of friends.
I: What does Pedro feel when his teacher says that to him?
C: He can be happy or sad. Happy because he was wrong and he will do things better next time. But he will be sad if his friends laugh at him. And Pedro will ask his teacher if it is possible for him to have a tutor so that he will be good and become top 1. The teacher will then say "Ok then it will be free for you, because you are not good (you do not know the lessons)."

There is a certain degree of complexity in his explanation for the mixed feelings his main character could have, which indicates a deeper understanding of the influence thoughts have on emotions. This understanding of thought processes, intentions and drives is reflected in other narratives, too. In Story 5 (Dream for the Future) he tells:

C: that's my dream to build a tent and live in it. That is what I want when I grow old because our house is too small. I hope that you will help me to fulfil my dreams.
I: When the teacher sees Pedro's drawing, what does she think?
C: She sees Pedro's drawing is beautiful and hopes that Pedro will fulfil his dream.

Story 9 (Dangerous Tree):

C: They think further before they decide if they climb or not climb the tree because they might have an accident. Because, for instance, the tree is slippery, then they would slip. It would be possible for Pedro to tell them not to climb the tree.

He also makes inferences about others' thought processes, Story 6 (Bus Stop):

C: He waits for her until she comes back. And when a bus leaves, the driver will ask him if he will get a ride or not?... Then the driver says "ok, just take care because many children are taken away". Pedro is still confident that nothing bad can happen to him because the barangay police officer would help him.

We can conclude there is ample evidence of mentalization abilities reflected in these story narratives.

Cassandra, Child 3 (11-year-old female)

Cassandra likewise displays a strong sense of morality and affinity with social expectations. Several responses indicate a future-oriented attitude wherein current behaviour plays a crucial role in influencing future prospects. These examples also show a high degree of self-agency, problem-solving skills and pro-active behaviour. In Story 1 (The Market), she recounts:

> ***C: She reduces the number of fruit so that she has enough money to pay for it. Next time she will buy the right quantity of fruit she needs when she has enough money. And in the future, you should not have the exact money with you; you'd better have some excess so that, if you want to buy more things, you are able to do it.***
> *I: Where will the money get from?*
> ***C: If you are still a child, you still have to ask your parents. Sometimes, you need to find your own ways to buy your own food.***
> *I: Who will Maria ask for additional money?*
> ***C: In my opinion, she is the one taking care and make her own living.***
> *I: Where does her money come from?*
> ***C: From her work. For example, she sells fruit.***

Story 2 (The Fight)

> ***C: Maria will tell them that it is bad to fight with your peers. "The two of you have to discuss things together"***
> *I: What if the two children do not stop fighting?*
> ***C: If they do not listen to Maria, there might something bad will happen to them and their lives will be destroyed.***
> *I: What will happen to the two children?*
> ***C: They won't have a good future.***

In this example, she does not only show future orientation, but also a degree of reasoning skills. When stating "the two of you need to discuss together" as a means to stop the fighting, this could indicate an understanding of the effect of communicating and talking it through as a way of regulating emotions. In Story 6 (Bus Stop) she not only shows future oriented thinking, but also mentalization capacities when she explains that the mother figure could lose hope when looking for her daughter. Understanding what impact such a situation could have on another requires an understanding of another's' mental state.

> ***C: She shouldn't leave, she might get lost. Because, if she goes anywhere, she might not see her mother again. Maybe her mother will lose hope while looking for her.***
> *I: What do you think the mother is doing?*
> ***C: She is probably getting things she needs for the house or food for the following day.***

Story 8 (Choices) again, shows indicators of future orientation, and self-agency, but also self-worth and pro-active behaviour. Her understanding of the consequences of actions is portrayed, and her sense of self-awareness is likewise apparent.

> ***C: Maybe, she chooses school because she will learn good values. And if she is told that she did not learn anything from school, she will answer that (at least) she knows how to discipline herself. And maybe she will say "Anyway, I am hardworking and nice".***

Similar indicators are found in story 10 (Exercises):

> ***C: She will ask the teacher for a chalk again and will answer the questions properly. Then she will ask the teacher if the answers are right then. If it is wrong again, she will try and try again until she gets the way to answer the problems properly. If she cannot get the right answer, she will ask the teacher to explain to her.***

All in all, these story narratives appear to project a strong personality with a clearly defined sense of self, morality and reasoning. Moreover, mentalization capacities are necessary to give these kinds of responses. Regarding affect words, such as ***'happy'*** are expressed explicitly in stories 3 (Reflection), 5 (Dream of the Future) and 6 (Bus Stop). In story 9, she also makes inferences about others' thoughts and consequent feelings:

C: In real life, they would probably climb the tree. Because, even if you tell them, they will still get you annoyed. They will not believe you.

4.2. Analysis and discussion of narratives concerning indicators of self-agency

4.2.1. Street children in Bolivia working with mobile school for longer period of time

<u>Charlie, Child 1 (9-year-old male)</u>

This child shows an overall lack of self-agency and little confidence in others. Some narratives have an aggressive dimension of which the main character, Pedro, bears the grunt. Story stems 2 and 6 elicit an indecisive and disorganized narrative bordering on incoherent. Moreover, problem-solving skills appear to be absent. Examples of the lack of self-agency can be found in the following extracts:

Story 1 (Market)

> ***C: Uhm (...) they're not going to give him the fruit.***
> *I: Yes?*
> ***C: Because he doesn't have enough money.***
> *I: And what will Pedro do next?*
> ***C: He'll leave. He will not get the fruit.***

Story 3 (Reflection)

C: He's going to hit him. And then he'll leave.

I: Does the boy say something to Pedro?

C: Yes, he says: 'Why don't you have three coins instead of two?', and he says: 'And why are you looking at yourself in the window of a shop when you're one coin short?'. 'Thank you but', says the boy: 'I don't have more money. Maybe you could spare me a coin?'. 'No thanks'.

Though this last sentence "Maybe you could spare me a coin", could be interpreted as problem-solving behaviour, it is of a rather passive nature in its presumption that the solution could simply be handed to him. However, in the light of the survival strategies of many street children, this could be in reference to a daily or habitual activity of begging.

Story 4 (Group Play)

C: They didn't want Pedro to join the game, he only looks at them and they are looking back.

I: Uhu

C: And they never let him in on the game.

I: No? Why is that?

C: Here's why (points out the second illustration of the children watching the main character and vice versa) (…) Pedro says: 'I'm just passing by over here, why are those children playing in the circle over there laughing?'. 'Hey you boy, go away, we're not playing with you. Leave. Shoot! Tss!'

Story 7 (Angry Customer) shows a further lack of self-agency and a form of dependence:

C: The man is going to shout, and insult him (Pedro), he'll say: 'Hey kid, this fruit is rotten, I won't buy from you, this fruit is spoilt, bye!'. 'But ...' (Pedro), and he throws the fruit at him.

I: And Pedro?

C: He cries.

I: And what next?

C: And next he went looking for his mother, so he said: 'Mom! Mommy! Where are you, please?', that's it.

I: And will he sell fruits again?

C: Not anymore. He's going to look for his mother

This part of the narrative shows his lack of problem-solving and coping skills. The perception of the other is negative, except when it comes to seeking the mother for comfort. Her availability is not explicitly elaborated upon. He shows a lack of self-regulation or attempt to instigate change in himself. He demonstrates little belief in his own capacity to influence the situation through his own intentional actions.

Story 5 (Dream about the Future)

C: Hey professor (...)

Professor: 'That's a nice drawing, where did you get it from?' (referring to the street educator)
Pedro: 'From my imagination, why?'.
Professor: 'I don't know, why did you want to make it? And what's this?'.
Pedro: 'I don't know either'.
Professor: 'You don't know either?'
Pedro: 'No'
Professor: 'Thank you'.

In this narrative, though the main character is uncertain and undecided about his own drawing of the future, the teacher at the mobile school is portrayed in a positive light. In the following narrative, he also portrays the mobile school in a positive light as a place he would go, when the mother does not return. The mother, however, is portrayed as unavailable.

Story 6 (Bus Stop)

I: And his mother?
C: She doesn't come back.
I: He's not going to find his mom?
C: No.
I: And what will he do?
C: He goes to the mobile school.

The fact that he chooses to go to the mobile school shows a sense of self-agency and pro-active behaviour. In stories 8, 9 and 10, there are more signs of reflective decision-making and goal-oriented actions which indicate a basic sense of agency:

Story 8 (Choices)

C: Next, while he's going, he thinks through a few things. He sees a closed blackboard and says 'Hey I've been to those, to school, to the mobile school, I always want to go there, thanks.', done.

Story 9 (Dangerous Tree)

C: And Pedro says: 'No, thanks. The tree is way too high, we could get injured if we fall down, my mother would kill me if I'd climb it and fall down'. 'Why?' 'Because it's too dangerous'. Thanks.
I: And the others? What are they going to do?
C: They climb up the tree!
I: Yes? They do, but not the boy?
C: Yes, he goes to the mobile school!
I: Always. He likes it?
C: Uhu.

Story 10 (Exercises)

> ***C: He says: 'How much is two plus two? ... Five! That's wrong, ah, and here three plus three seven, no, one and one, three? No-o, two plus two is four, and three plus three six, and one and one is two, alright? Thanks, but I don't know sums so well'. 'If you don't know, I'll teach you'. 'Thanks'.***

Though he seems to have little confidence is his own ability to do sums, he persists in trying and accepts help from the teacher. The availability of and the confidence in the teacher, again portray the mobile school intervention in a positive light.

Carmen, Child 2 (10-year-old female)

At first, Carmen showed little self-agency or positive focus in the first narrative. However, as the stories progressed, so did the number and intensity of self-agency indicators. In the second narrative (The Fight), her portrayal of the others (the main character's friends) was very negative, also in their behaviour towards Maria. However, she does clearly approach them with a certain self-confidence to ask them why they are fighting, despite their negative attitude towards her.

In the later narratives, we see a similar pattern of portraying others in a negative and distrustful light, with the exception of the mother and the mobile school teachers. In these stories her self-agency appears to be quite high in that her self-belief and confidence in her decisions and behaviour are portrayed positively. She does, on the other hand, appear to rely on the mother figure for support and to sooth or comfort her. These are examples:

Story 4 (Group play)

> ***C: Maria says hi and what are you doing. We are playing, they answer, do you want to play along? And Maria says no, and the other boy says she cannot play well. Maria doesn't want to play, and Maria goes away sadly because there is one boy who always gets mad at her, bothers her and...***

Here some of the other children are portrayed in a negative light, whereas the main character does not seem to hesitate in sticking by her own decision to choose not to join in. She does, however, insinuate a negative self-image when recounting how the boys say she cannot play well.

Story 5 (Dream of the Future) illustrates the mobile school teacher being positive about her drawing, though she does not feel the need to explain herself.

> ***C: Maria is drawing a house and the teacher, he says, what are you doing, what a lovely drawing you are making there, is it your future? Yes, Maria tells him and she gets up and goes somewhere else.***

Story 6 (Bus Stop) shows a positive image of the mother, though also a certain dependence.

C: She is crying, she feels sad and asks where her mum is.
I: And she will go and look for her mum.
C: Yes.
I: And she will find her mum.
C: [nods]

Though initially, she shows a lack of coping skills and a strong need for the presence of her mother to soothe her, she does not remain helpless and decides to take matters in her own hands, suggesting a certain degree of self-agency. Her actions appear to have a positive result as she finds her mother. In the 7th and 10th stories, we again see a negative portrayal of the other, with the distinct exception of the mother and the mobile school teacher:

Story 7 (Angry Customer)

C: Maria is selling calmly, they buy everything from her, and there is a man who is mad and drunk, give me some fruit he yells! She tells him, the money Sir. What money he says, it's for free! And Maria got really scared and the man kept yelling and then her mum appears… asking why are you yelling at my daughter, you've got no right! And then... nothing more.
I: And what happens with the man? What does he do?
C: He runs off. Maria goes to her mum.

Story 10 (Exercises)

C: Maria, well Maria... Maria makes the teacher, Maria tells the teacher 'please let me do some exercises', 'of course my dear, I will correct them for you', and then Maria starts making them and two of them are not correct and when the teacher comes he tells her that the two are incorrect and that she will learn to do more of them.

There are again elements of a strong sense of self agency in both narratives, whilst simultaneously illustrating a need and reliance on others with whom she is familiar. When it comes to strangers, however, the sense of trust or confidence is clearly absent, as illustrated by the intriguing Story 8:

C: Maria chooses between a nice path and an ugly path, it goes between darkness and sun. Maria does not know where to go to, I am going to the hospital, to the market and the bus, or better maybe to the school, I am going for the other side, she goes later on by that path and her mum is sad and looking for Maria and cannot find her and a man says to Maria to go to his house but they don't get there and Maria escaped, she escaped an abandoned the house and arrived at her house when her mum asks her what she was doing during the night, that she was looking for her. A man took me to an ugly place, don't worry, her mum says, tomorrow we will interrogate this man. Here he is.

This story about 'choices' uses an interesting metaphor for good and bad. This contrast is likewise reflected in the role of the strange man who lures Maria to an abandoned house from which she

manages to escape. This illustrates both a mistrust in the intentions of the man, the 'other', and yet a strong sense of self agency and confidence in her ability to change her situation for the better. Here, again the mother plays a supportive role as a positive figure, whereas others less familiar tend to be perceived as negative. Surprisingly enough, the third narrative (Reflection) regarding an unknown man watching her in the reflection of a shop window, was interpreted in a positive sense:

> ***C: Maria is looking at herself in the mirror. As she is looking a man enters asking her what she is doing? Nothing she says, and you are pretty, thank you, and the man leaves and Maria has left as well.***

As the positive comment offered by the man pertains to herself, one could interpret this as a positive sense of self-worth.

Carlos, Child 3 (10-year-old male)

The narratives of this boy are particularly short and rife with negativity and aggression. As seen previously, there was also little to no mentalization apparent. The stories remain superficial and action-oriented.

Examples of aggression can be found in stories 1 (The Market), 2 (The Fight), 3 (Reflection) and 4 (Group Play). Though one would expect to find aggression in the narrative regarding a fight between two other characters, somehow the story takes a turn where the aggression is geared towards the main character:

> *I: Here the boys are fighting. And Pedro walks towards them and looks at them.*
> ***C: And they punch him.*** [note: the child is at this point nervous to say what will happen]
> *I: And what are they going to do? What is going to happen?* [the child is already talking]
> ***C: They take his money.***
> *I: Yes, and Pedro is going to do something?*
> ***C: Doesn't fight. They hit him, that's it.***
> *I: And the boys what do they do?*
> ***C: They discuss and punch Pedro.***

In Story 3 (Reflection), the aggression is focused on the stranger looking at Pedro's reflection. Distrust of the other is clearly present, and no remorse is shown for the incident:

> *I: It's not a mirror, it is the window from a shop. And he sees his own reflection. In the reflection Pedro also sees another boy who's looking at him. And afterwards?*
> ***C: Uumh .. Pedro punches the boy.***
> *I: And the boy? What does he say?*
> ***C: They both fight.***
> *I: Yes?*
> ***C: And Pedro takes the money from the boy. Afterwards Pedro leaves.***
> *I: And the boy?*

C: The boy is hurt and Pedro goes to buy himself some oranges. Done, that's it no further.

Story 4 (Group Play) shows aggression in both directions, toward the others as well as toward the main character. The aggression originating from Pedro, however, is claimed to be in defence:

C: They are playing, Pedro wants to play too, the children don't want him to play with them, they hit him.
I: And what does Pedro do?
C: He also fights with the children. They play afterwards and after that Pedro's money is taken. They take Pedro's money.
I: And the children, are they going to do something more?
C: And the children also punch Pedro and he defends himself. That's it, nothing more.

In Story 5 (Dream for the Future), the mobile school teacher is also portrayed in a negative light as he does not believe in the boy's dream and punishes him:

C: We'll see, and Pedro says it is his dream come true. The teacher: 'I don't believe you', that's what the teacher says, 'go sit, go sit in your seat' he says and then Pedro ignores it and Pedro is going to leave, he always ignores him and the teacher punishes him. That's it.

Again, distrust or negative perception of others is found in most narratives. Though there are a few examples of self-agency, most are associated with a form of rejection of others or as a result of not being able to rely on others. This could involve defending himself, or ignoring others who are negative towards him, deciding to leave a troubling situation out of spite. However, a couple of positive examples of self-agency are noteworthy:

Story 1 (Market):
C: And he's going to work.
I: Yes. And afterwards?
C: And he pays him, because he has enough money to buy.

Story 6 (Bus Stop):
C: The mother doesn't come back because there's like (...) Pedro goes where he wants. Pedro goes to the centre.

Here the mother (as the 'other') is portrayed as being unavailable. However, Pedro takes matters into his own hands and decides to go the the centre (meaning refuge centre of the organisation running the mobile school activities). This sheds a positive light on the interventions of the organisation.

Another noteworthy illustration of positive focus and confidence in self as well as trusted others can be found in the last narrative about mobile school:

Story 10 (Exercises)

C: What number?

I: Here it is two plus two makes five.

C: Four!

I: It is four, no? And the other one is one plus one.

C: Two!

I: So, two are wrong, no?

C: And this one, this number, what was it?

I: Euhm, ten.

C: Seven.

I: So two are wrong.

C: Two are wrong ...

I: And the other one? It is right, no?

C: Correct.

I: And what does the teacher say?

C: Come, sit down, he is going to sit down, Pedro is going to sit down on his seat.

I: And Pedro, what does he do, what is he thinking?

C: What's that, that isn't incorrect, the other one was wrong, both of them were correct, after that Pedro says, 'I want to do it again well'. That's it, nothing more.

This shows the willingness to learn and belief that he can complete the exercises correctly, suggesting a certain degree of self-agency. Whether or not this is directly associated with the environment surrounding the mobile school activities is uncertain. In general, there are few indicators of self-agency.

4.2.2. Street children in Bolivia working with mobile school only for a limited period of time:

Cesar, Child 1 (12-year-old male)

This boy appears to have a predominantly positive view of others and shows respect for family and a sense of responsibility. In several narratives, contribution to the family income through working plays a central role. Moreover, a sense of future orientation is detected in the form of working hard to be able to provide for a family and be self-reliant. Self-agency lies at the root of these concepts, as it is a crucial aspect of independence and goal-oriented behaviour. For example, in the first narrative (The Market), the main character shows a strong sense of autonomy by solving his problem by going to work first, in order to earn enough money to return to the market and buy the fruit he was unable to pay initially. Moreover, he now has enough money to buy vegetables and meat as well. He continues his story as follows:

C: Then he goes to work again, then he earns money for his family.

I: Hmm, he earns money for his family.

C: Yes, so that they will be better off.

I: Ah.
C: Then, then, he buys a field and there he grows all the products.

This attests of his ambition to become more self-sufficient and provide a brighter future for his family. This story shows clear indicators of future orientation and self-agency. A further example of this sense of responsibility can be found in story 5 (Dream of the Future), where he describes the drawing of the future as follows:

C: "It's my future", then... "When I grow up, I want to work and have a family", he says. That's it.

In Story 7 (Angry Customer), his focus to solve the problem of the angry customer is a positive one:

C: Eh, this fruit was rotten. Then, eh, Pedro buys other fruit that's fresh.
I: Aha.
C: He sells it very quickly and he has loads of money.

When it comes to making a choice in Story 8 (Choices), he again shows indicators of future orientation, positive focus and self-agency, as he chooses to go to school in order to learn what the teacher has to teach. He clearly believes in himself and his potential to succeed, showing a sense of self-worth:

C: Then Pedro goes back, she gives him other homework, then he does the homework, and... hm, he has better grades!
I: Aha, because he did his homework?
C: Uhuh. And then there's an exam.
I: Aha?
C: Aha. Hm, he does well on his exam, and he goes to the next grade.

Likewise, in the last story (Exercises), where Pedro works at the mobile school, he recounts that the incorrect exercises are repeated correctly:

C: Uhu. Then he does another one. This one, the one that's right, she doesn't erase. No, the teacher doesn't erase it, then, other exercises and he does them correctly.
I: Aha, so, afterwards he does them correctly?
C: Uhuh! Then, the teacher corrects them again and she says it's good.

In several of these stories, it is not only a positive view of the self that is apparent, but also a general pattern indicating a positive perception of the other. Especially when it comes to the family (parents) and the mobile school teacher. But even in the case of a stranger, like the angry customer in story 7, or the boy watching Pedro's reflection in Story 3 (Reflection):

C: And, he's, and, he's... hmm. Hmm, he's very tall, then... He has nice clothes.
I: Who?

C: Eh, this one [Points at boy standing behind Pedro].
I: Ah yes.
C: Then. This, the both of them looking, then, he talks to Pedro.
I: Pardon?
C: He talks to him.
I: Aha, aha. He talks to him, and what does he tell him?
C: You're so tall, and you have nice clothes, he says.

Story 4 (Group Play), similarly portrays a positive and trusting view of others, indicating a positive focus, self-worth and belief in social competence:

C: Hm, then, they play with him as well, with Pedro.
I: What?
C: They play with Pedro as well, the children.
I: Ah yes, he can play?
C: Uhu.
I: Yes.
C: Then they have fun.
I: Yes?
C: And they play all day long.
I: How nice. So, the children react well?
C: Yes.
I: Good.
C: They become friends.

So, in general this boy portrays a positive and solid sense of self-agency and belief in the other. There are but few instances of self-doubt.

Chico, Child 2 (9-year-old male)

This younger boy showed a tendency to be uncertain and reluctant in his story-telling. At first it was unclear whether or not he sufficiently understood the activity as he regularly seemed to be seeking confirmation whether his story was correct. One could assume he had little to no experience with this kind of story-telling activity as his narratives remained very superficial and action-oriented. His answers were short and he often answered with ***"I don't know"*** (Stories 1, 3, 5).

Story 6 (Bus Stop) is narrated in a disorganized fashion making it a somewhat incoherent story. Several elements recounted seem to contradict each other, illustrating his hesitation and uncertainty in telling the story. For example, at one moment he recounts that the boy takes a bus and leaves on his own:

C: Ah! Pedro has taken a bus and has left.
I: He has left on his own?
C: Yes.

I: Ah. His mother doesn't come back then?
C: No.
I: Why not?
C: Well, she just doesn't come back. And they both leave.

A little further on in the story he narrates the following:
C: He can become afraid.
I: How can he become afraid?
C: He could leave alone, but he could get scared.
I: Oh.
C: He doesn't know where to go.
I: So then he doesn't leave alone?
C: With his mum.

The confusion in this narrative suggests a certain lack of confidence in his own storyline, changing it whenever the researcher paraphrases or asks a question or confirmation of his story. One moment the story shows the boy resolutely decide to leave, displaying a sense of self-agency, whilst a little later on his fear of leaving alone displays quite the opposite.

In the last two stories, the lack of self-agency becomes more and more apparent and is paired with a negative focus. In the story with the Dangerous Tree, the boy recounts that all three boys in the story climb the tree and subsequently fall out and hurt themselves.

C: They can climb into it, and they can hurt themselves.
I: Yes? And?
C: And then... they can die.
I: Yes? So then, will they climb into the tree?
C: Yes!
I: And then?
C: They get hurt.
I: Really, the three of them?
C: They can fall out of the tree.

So despite his initial warning and realisation that they could die falling out of the tree, the boys still go ahead and do so all the same.

In Story 10 (Exercises), it is clear that he has a negative view of the situation and of the teacher:

C: "It's wrong", she can tell him and then... [...] "This one," she can say to him "Wrong." And she can punish him and then... she can, they can kick him out of school.

In sum, he appears to lack confidence in both himself and of the other. Throughout the ten story stories there is a general tendency of uncertainty, negative focus, and a lack of self-agency. There are little signs of independency and autonomy, nor of reflection, control, or goal-orientation.

Carla, Child 3 (10-year-old female)

This girl portrays a very different sense of self through positive narratives rife with confidence in self and others. Positive focus, self-agency and social competence are indicators present in most stories. Also problem-solving skills are present in several stories, as illustrated below:

Story 1 (The Market)

C: Mm, she can, she can ask for half a kilo!
I: Indeed... What else?
C: And then she gives him the money.
I: Ok. And she gets half...
C: Yes.

In this Story 7 (Angry Customer), Maria simply exchanges the rotten fruit for fresh fruit and the problem is solved:

C: Hm... He gives it to Maria.
I: He gives it to Maria?
C: Hm, she gives him another fruit.
I: Right.
C: Then the man is not angry anymore and leaves. And the damaged fruit... mmm, he just, he gives it back.
I: OK. She changes it for another fruit.
C: Yes.
I: And he's not angry anymore.
C: Yes.

The 'other' is also portrayed often in a more positive way. Both strangers as well as friends and family appear as reliable and friendly. For example, in Story 2 (Fight), she recounts not only how the main character stops the fighting (showing self-agency), but proceeds to reconcile the two fighting and become friends:

C: Hm... they are friends. They don't fight anymore.
I: Both of them?
C: Yes.
I: Or the three of them?
C: The three.

Similarly, in Story 3 (Reflection) and Story 4 (Group Play) respectively, everyone involved seems to become friends:

I: Anything. When she sees the other person arriving, in the reflection, what does she think?
C: Well, that they could be friends.
I: Maria thinks they could be friends?
C: Yes.

I: OK. What else?

C: Hm... they can go for a walk.

I: Yes, for example. Very well.

C: And after the walk... they go home.

…

C: She asks if they can play with her?

I: Mhm.

C: And then they play?

I: Yes, then they play.

C: Hmm, and afterwards they become good friends.

In all these stories there is evidence of positive focus, social competence, self-worth and self-agency, reflected in her deeds as well as her outcome expectations. This is further illustrated in Story 5 (Dream for the Future) and Story 10 (Exercises), where her belief in herself, her own capacities and future success is highlighted. Story 5 recounts the following:

C: Hm... the teacher says: "What a nice drawing".

I: Mhm.

C: Then she makes another drawing.

I: Really?

C: Yes.

I: About her dream for the future?

C: Yes.

I: And what does she tell the teacher about her drawing?

C: Hmmm, the teacher would tell her: "Very nice".

I: Mhm. But she, what does she tell when the teacher comes?

C: Let's say: "When I grow up, I want it to be like this, my... how... I want my dream to come true."

This last statement reflects a recognition of an inner desire which is not elaborated on explicitly, but which also insinuates a belief in possibilities.

Story 10 reflects her confidence in her own competence as well as a positive view of the other:

C: She corrects them.

I: Yes.

C: And then... she does it right and the teacher puts "well done".

I: Maria does it well? Or what?

C: Eh yes, she wipes out all the exercises she made, but one.

I: Who, her or her?

C: Maria.

I: Maria, yes.

C: And afterwards, after she corrects them she makes other exercises.

I: Ok.

C: And she makes them right.

I: Ok, she makes them right.

C: Yes. And then the teacher writes on the black board "well done", cause she did it well.

These stories not only show belief in self but also a positive perception of others (in this case the street educator or teacher). This positive view of the other is likewise illustrated in availability of the mother figure in the following extract for Story 6 (Bus stop), where Maria decides to take the bus to school when her mother leaves. This decisive act shows self-reliance and self-agency. Moreover, she returns to the bus stop after school and meets up with her mother, on whom she appears to be able to rely upon:

C: Hmm, afterwards she comes back from school and sees her mother, let's say, she meets with her mother.
I: OK. But when Maria sat down here, her mother told her: "Sit down here, I have to go somewhere and I will come back afterwards".
C: Yes, and they meet in the same place.
…
C: Ah, later her mother will come get her.
I: Ah, so, she comes back.
C: Yes. And then they go home.

The mother-figure's availability is clearly illustrated here.

As a whole, Carla's narratives seems to portray a solid sense of self and trust in her surroundings and ability to deal with situations. One could conclude a strong sense of self-agency and a positive focus and perception of others.

4.2.3. Children of street families in the Philippines working with mobile school for a longer period of time:

Christian, Child 1 (12-year-old male)

Almost all stories told by Christian (whose main character is a girl) portray self-confidence and self-agency. A positive focus and confidence in others is also very apparent in most narratives. Again, a strong sense of morality and clear future orientation and problem-solving skills are likewise displayed.

Self-agency and self-confidence are very much emphasized in stories 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 9. It is also in most of these narratives that a confidence in others is very apparent. To give a few examples:

In Story 2 (The Fight), the girl decides to pacify the quarrel and reconcile the fighting children, whilst teaching them that fighting is wrong. Story 9 (Dangerous Tree), shows similar self-confidence, sense of responsibility to show others right from wrong:

C: Uhhmm…She prevents the two children from doing it. She tells them "Don't climb the tree; didn't you see the warning saying that it is not safe? Why don't you want to follow what it says? If you climb it, you might be in danger and worst happen you will die. You will give problems to your parents."

I: What will the children say?

C: Let's just follow Maria's advice because if we climb the tree, we might fall down and put our mother in more trouble.

Story 3 (Reflection), not only shows Maria taking the initiative to approach the by-stander and ask him why he is watching her, but furthermore portrays the character in a positive light:

C: She will ask him "Why are you watching me?" then the guy will say "because I think you are pretty". Maria will thank the guy for telling her that she is pretty. The guy will say "You are welcome". Maria will leave and so will the guy.

Additionally, in story 4 (Group Play), self-agency, confidence in others, and a sense of self-worth can be detected:

C: Maria will ask the children if she can join. She will ask them "can I join you? I feel envious because you are very happy."

I: What will the children say?

C: Yes! You can join us.

I: When the children saw Maria and she asked if she could join, what was the reaction of the children?

C: They were happy because Maria wanted to join them. They are very willing to let her join.

Story 5 (Dream of the Future) not only displays a clear sense of self-agency in both reflective and intentional, goal-oriented behaviour, but also portrays clear future orientation and pro-active behaviour. The main character is clearly empowered and believes strongly in the ability to influence her own destiny, whilst feeling the support of another:

C: Because I want to be a policeman someday, that is why I did that drawing. That is why I will study hard so that I can finish my studies to be able to fulfil my dream.

I: What is the teacher's reaction when she sees Maria's drawing and hears Maria's comments?

C: She was very glad.

I: What did the teacher tell Maria?

C: I'm very happy with you. Study hard so that you can fulfil your wish.

These concepts are again reflected in Story 8 (Choices):

C: She first goes to school. Because she has things to learn there. But she can also go to the other places afterwards.

I: What will Maria do afterwards?

C: She will go to the market. She will sell. Then she will go to the hospital. She will visit her mother who is ill. And when her mother's condition is fine, they will go to the bus terminal and visit places.

Most stories also show indicators of social competence, future orientation, pro-active behaviour, and a general sense of self-worth. The importance of working hard and studying hard to achieve a bright future is also present in several stories, perhaps indicating a cultural bias toward an upbringing focused on education and future-orientation.

Clark, Child 2 (11-year-old male)

In the narratives of this boy, there are again a number of indicators of future-oriented reflection, goal-oriented intent and a strong sense of responsibility. These are often paired with a solid sense of self-agency and a confidence in others.

For example, in Story 2 (The Fight), this Clark's narrative is similar to that of Christian (Child 1) in that the main character feels it's his responsibility to educate them:

C: He stops the fight of the two children and tells them not to fight. Both of you will get hurt. Just reconcile. Say sorry to one another and give each other a hug.

This sense of responsibility is again reflected in several narratives. For example, in Story 4 (Group Play), where he feels a sense of obligation to help his mother before playing:

C: …On the following day, as the children play again, he joins them again. But when his mother needs him to do something for her, he has to follow before playing again.

Similarly, in Story 8 (Choices) he states the importance of his elders:

C: He goes first to the bus terminal because, like for example, he has a long way to walk. He rides to go to school. When he trips and falls at school, he goes to the hospital. When he feels better, he goes with his mother to the market to buy fruit or chicken.

I: What if he can only go to one place?

C: To the hospital, because parents are more important than money. For example, his mother lost consciousness and then died…Of course, he would cry.

Additionally, Story 9 (Dangerous tree), illustrates how Pedro considers the consequences of certain actions and on the basis thereof concludes what to do:

C: They think further before they decide if they climb the tree or not because they might have an accident. Because, for instance, the tree is slippery, then they would slip. It would be possible for Pedro to tell them not to climb the tree.

I: In real life, what do you think would happen?

C: The two children climb the tree and fall down. Pedro tells them "I told you that it is forbidden to climb there!"

There is also evidence of a certain degree of confidence in others' availability and trustworthiness. For example, in the story of the Bus Stop (Story 6), though the main character is frustrated by the fact that the mother takes a long time to return, he remains confident she will return eventually. He goes on to rely on the community police officer for his safety:

> ***C: He waits for her until she comes back. And when a bus leaves, the driver will ask him if he will get a ride or not? ... Then the driver says "ok, just take care because many children are taken away." Pedro is still confident that nothing bad can happen to him because the barangay police officer would help him.***

Story 7 (Angry Customer) similarly illustrates a confidence in the local police for protection and support:

> ***C: Pedro says "Are those rotten? I don't think so. It's ok if we replace them even if they are not rotten. But do not shout at me because the barangay police officer is not far away and they guard the children who sell on the market and there are police too."***
> *I: What does the guy say when the rotten fruit are replaced?*
> ***C: He says sorry.***

In both cases, this confidence in others' availability appears to give him the necessary support to stand up for himself and be assertive.

Likewise, in both stories involving street educators of the mobile school (Story 5 "Dream of the Future" and Story 10 "Exercises), there is a clear indication of perceived support from them. For example, in Story 5:

> ***C: She sees Pedro's drawing is beautiful and hopes that Pedro will fulfil his dream***.

In Story 10 (Exercises), the narratives of both Child 1 and Child 2 show a feeling of shame and disappointment in themselves regarding the inability to get all the answers correct. However, both also portray the intent of studying harder and a belief that they are capable to learn and improve their studies. This striving motivation is a strong indicator for self-agency and a belief in one's own capacity to change one's situation.

<u>Cassandra, Child 3 (11-year-old female)</u>

The narratives of this girl illustrate on many levels maturity, independence and rational thinking. There is an abundance of reasoning, goal-oriented intent, future-oriented reflection and moral judgement. These go paired with a strong sense of self agency, self-worth and self-regulation.

Some examples of self-agency in problem-solving skills include the following:

Story 1 (The Market)

> ***C: She reduces the number of fruit so that she has enough money to pay for it. Next time***

she will buy the right quantity of fruit she needs when she has enough money. And in the future, you should not have the exact money with you; you'd better have some excess so that, if you want to buy more things, you are able to do it.

I: Where will the money get from?

C: If you are still a child, you still have to ask your parents. Sometimes, you need to find your own ways to buy your own food.

I: Who will Maria ask for additional money?

C: In my opinion, she is the one taking care and make her own living.

I: Where does her money come from?

C: From her work. For example, she sells fruit.

Not only does this story reflect self-agency, but also future-oriented thinking, pro-active behaviour, reasoning skills and a solid sense of responsibility and self-reliance.

The same can be found in Story 3 (Reflection) where indicators of self-worth, feeling very capable and autonomy are apparent. These aspects implying maturity, however, appear to be experienced as a heavy burden:

C: She asks the guy if it is possible to leave her alone. Because she thinks of the things she needs.

I: What is in the guy's mind as he watches her from behind?

C: Maybe, "that child seems to have so many things to do in life. Probably, she does everything to be a good girl because she works already and she also probably plays the role of the mother in her family."

I: What does Maria feel?

C: She is not happy in life because she does all the work.

Story 9 (Dangerous Tree) again expresses her mature sense of responsibility:

C: Maria will say "There is a notification saying that it is dangerous, isn't it? You have to follow it, otherwise you might have an accident. Let's follow it as it is for our own safety".

Maria's pro-active behaviour and determination are also expressed in Story 10 (Exercises), where she perseveres until she reaches her goal. Here she seems to be open to help from others as well.

C: She will ask the teacher for a chalk again and will answer the questions properly. Then she will ask the teacher if the answers are right then. If it is wrong again, she will try and try again until she gets the way to answer the problems properly. If she cannot get the right answer, she will ask the teacher to explain to her.

Aside from these indicators, there are a few stories that also illustrate self-regulation and self-worth. For example, in Story 8 (Choices) she clearly demonstrates a positive self-image based on values deemed culturally important:

C: Maybe, she chooses school because she will learn good values. And if she is told that she did not learn anything from school, she will answer that (at least) she knows how to discipline herself. And maybe she will say "Anyway, I am hardworking and nice".

Story 2 (The Fight) illustrates the presence of future-orientation and emotion-regulation through reasoning. The importance of communication is also highlighted not only demonstrating maturity but also the belief that one can have an impact on one's surroundings through communication. This self-agency and self-regulation appears to be associated with moulding one's future:

C: Maria will tell them that it is bad to fight with your peers. "The two of you have to discuss things together."
I: What if the two children do not stop fighting?
C: If they do not listen to Maria, something bad might happen to them and their lives will be destroyed.
I: What will happen to the two children?
C: They won't have a good future.

The following excerpt from Story 9 (Dangerous Tree), illustrates a high degree of assertivity, responsibility and reasoning showing an understanding of cause and consequence:

C: Maria will say "There is a notification saying that it is dangerous, isn't it? You have to follow it, otherwise you might have an accident. Let's follow it as it is for our own safety".

Furthermore, the following extract from Story 10 (Exercises) is a display of persistence and determination, indicating self-belief and self-worth:

C: She will ask the teacher for a chalk again and will answer the questions properly. Then she will ask the teacher if the answers are right then. If it is wrong again, she will try and try again until she gets the way to answer the problems properly. If she cannot get the right answer, she will ask the teacher to explain to her.

Not only are these clear signs of agency, but the latter narrative (Story 10) also indicates confidence in the availability of others (in this case, the teacher). And though this narrative suggests she can rely on others, she also appears to retain autonomy and self-reliance. This illustrates a healthy balance between self-agency and trust in the support of others. In general, the analyses of the Philippine subsample portray more signs of self-agency and confidence in others. The emphasis of these narratives illustrate respect for others and the rejection of immoral or hostile acts.

Though this overview of the noteworthy aspects one can distil from the narratives appears rather extensive, it is just the beginning. There are so many interesting elements in these narratives, that it is recommended to reinterpret them from the perspectives of the 6 other indicators identified, in more depth.

4.3. Conclusion: overview of general trends

In the first subsample, the narratives of Child 1 (Charlie) displayed little confidence in others, though the few positive perceptions of others referred in particular to the mobile school. Overall his narratives displayed little mentalizing ability, in particular regarding self-reflection. Perhaps his young age could explain the lack of self-awareness and the little mentalizing ability detected. In general, he also showed limited indicators of self-agency. Child 2 (Carmen), on the other hand, showed all round high mentalization abilities as well as plentiful indicators of self-agency. Moreover, her narratives reflected a positive view of the mobile school and the mother figure. She was, however, less positive about other characters in her narratives displaying a certain wariness. Strikingly, Child 3 (Carlos) displayed a lot of aggression in his narratives, with a general negative perception of others (and their perception of him). Moreover, signs of mentalization capacities and self-agency were mostly lacking. His narratives displayed a generally negative self-image of the main character and an apparent inability to rely on others. It was only in the last story (Exercises) that a hint of self-agency appeared, combined with a more positively tinted representation of the other when referring to the organisation's centre.

Noteworthy for the second subsample who were not familiar with mobile school activities, was the questionable story-telling abilities and overall hesitance. Though there were some indicators of mentalization detectable, these were not fully reflected in their narratives as they were represented superficially and not elaborated on. Therefore, it is unclear whether their limited indicators of mentalization have to do with their capacities per se, or their narratives themselves. In general, their mentalizing capacities were limited but present to an extent. However, they appeared to have a rather positive or understanding view of others. In particular, the female participant showed clear pro-social behaviour and a positive focus. Child 1 (Cesar) and Child 3 (Carla), displayed several indicators of self-agency, whilst Child 2 (Chico) did not. Chico was, however, the youngest of the group and most uncertain in his story-telling. Cesar also showed a very positive view of the mobile school.

The third subsample demonstrated the most mentalisation skills as well as self-agency indicators. Moreover, their narratives illustrated an abundance of other indicators such as future orientation, social understanding and self-worth. Their overall positive view of education and hence the mobile school, was noteworthy.

In general, it appears that self-agency indicators were most apparent where mentalization capacities were highly represented.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

The objective of this master thesis was two-fold. The first study entailed the development of an assessment tool specifically aimed at street children. The aspiration of this instrument is to gain insight into the impact that Mobile School interventions have on the self-development and thus self-esteem of these children. Considering the special circumstances in which these children have grown up, this was no easy task. In order to gain access into their innermost reflections and perceptions of themselves, there was a need to delve into their inner world through the use of a narrative story stem technique. The 'Narrative Story Stem Technique for Street Children' was developed on the basis of self-concepts discussed in the theoretical framework presented in chapter one, and the results of the survey conducted with Mobile School's partner organisations, described in chapter two.

The second study concerned the implementation of this newly developed instrument, in a pilot study with street children in Bolivia and in the Philippines. Three subsamples were reached: two in Bolivia, of which one sample had ample experience with mobile school intervention activities. The other had only recently come into contact with the mobile school and hence had limited access to their interventions. The subsample in the Philippines had also had many years of experience with mobile school activities.

In this final chapter, the process and realisation of these studies are discussed and the results are critically examined. The strengths and limitations of the research are also presented and final conclusions and recommendations formed.

5.1. Discussion Study 1 - Development of Narrative Story Stems for Street Children

5.1.1. Defining indicators of self-esteem

During the development phase of Study 1, a number of facets of self-esteem were considered. The importance of this concept lies in the fact that it is the central objective of Mobile School's vision and mission. The aim of all mobile school interventions centre around the support of street children's self-development in order to promote a healthy sense of self-esteem.

Out of the preliminary online survey carried out in collaboration with Mobile School's partner organisations in the field, seven indicators were identified which had a bearing on the manifestation

of one's level of self-esteem. These observable behavioural indicators were selected on the basis of feedback from 54 street educators in twelve countries working regularly with the target groups on the streets. These indicators included pro-active behaviour, self-agency, resilience, self-worth, social competence, future orientation and positive focus. However, as the research progressed, it was decided to restrict the preliminary analysis of the pilot study (Study 2) to the more fundamental and underlying indicators of mentalization capacities and self-agency, on which the other indicators rely for development or manifestation.

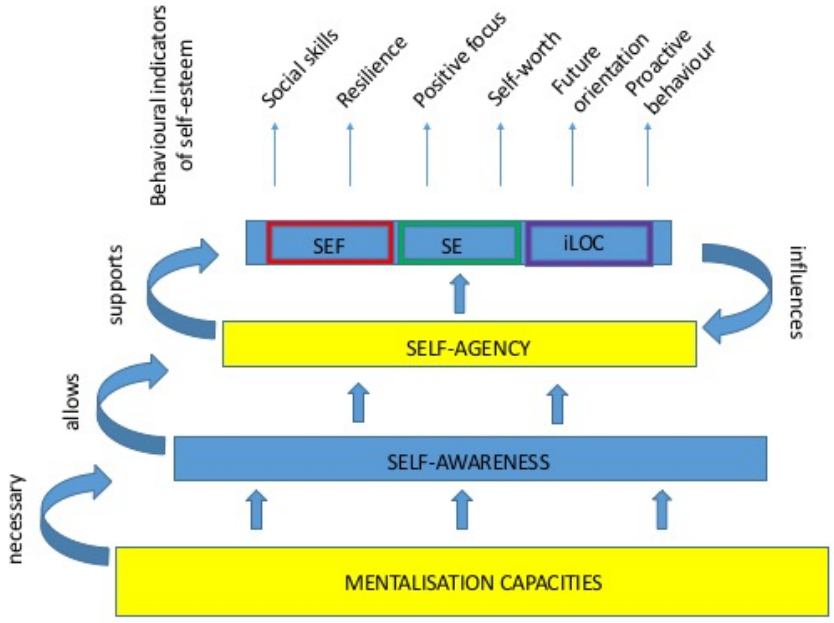

Figure 6. Mentalization capacities and self-agency as processes underlying the development of self-esteem and its behavioural indicators.

When considering the identified behavioural indicators of self-esteem, we were able to conceptualise ten story stems posing dilemmas which probed for these indicators. Of all the indicators, the most readily detected in the ensuing narratives were self-agency, social competence and positive focus. The indicator future orientation was also reflected in various decision-making processes detected in a few narratives. Resilience was more difficult to detect in the narratives but manifested itself mainly in the form of problem-solving skills. Pro-active behaviour could also be interpreted as self-agency, hence making it less distinguishable or differentiated. The indicator of self-worth tended to be an interpretation of other more observable behaviour, or when narration referred more explicitly to the self. That requires a relatively high level of mentalizing ability.

5.1.2. Developing the story stems

After pilot testing the Narrative Story Stem Technique for Street Children, it became clear that all ten story stems were familiar enough to be recognisable so that the children could identify with the situations. This appeared to be the case across both cultural contexts and the different subsamples. Moreover, though not all narratives were equally elaborate, all children appeared to enjoy the activity and did not have any adverse reactions or comments in response to the instrument.

5.1.3. Implementation and administration of tool

As the instrument was successfully implemented in two different cultural settings and administered by three different researchers, one could conclude that the instrument is applicable in the cross-cultural context for which it was designed and appears to be user-friendly for both the administrator and the interviewee. Though the visual aids needed to be adapted along the way, and training of administrators is an issue to be considered (cf infra 5.3), the instrument itself and its manual have been successfully implemented and therefore have potential for further development and administration. One could conclude that the Narrative Story Stem Technique for Street Children is sufficiently adapted to the target group and takes into account the particular challenges their context poses. The narrative approach appears to be an appropriate technique to create a window into the inner world of these children and gain insight into their self-concept, whilst avoiding biases such as socially desirable responses.

5.1.4. Conclusions Study 1

So, to conclude, study one resulted in a new narrative instrument adapted to the reality of street children, which can be used in different cultural settings. The tool is accompanied by visual aids and an elaborate manual. Though various interviewers were able to implement the instrument, there appeared to be variations in administration style, despite the standardised manual. Training of interviewers would therefore be advised. Furthermore, the actual analysis and interpretation of the narratives was only performed by myself. As these are the initial stages of its development, more research needs to be invested into standardising the scoring and coding system as well as the further interpretation of its results.

5.2. Study 2: Narratives of Street Children – preliminary data

5.2.1. Data analysis

Despite the initial goal of the developed instrument being focused on seven identified indicators of self-esteem, the choice was made to focus on the more fundamental aspects underlying self-esteem, namely mentalization and self-agency (cf supra Fig. 6). These are the foundations of the

further self-development process supporting and promoting self-esteem and hence the other six behavioural indicators. Therefore, we recommend a follow-up study encompassing all identified behavioural indicators in the next phase of interpretation, which could enable a more extensive analysis of the now readily available data of 42 children.

The exploratory nature of this preliminary analysis of the narratives of nine children (three from each subsample), gave rise to a number of possible hypotheses and allowed us to hone in on a number of compelling questions for further investigation. The results of this pilot study provide thought-provoking insights that warrant further qualitative and quantitative investigation. The main hypotheses generated involved questions concerning (a) age differences (b) cultural differences (c) gender differences (d) relation between mentalization capacities and self-agency (e) associations between self-agency and other indicators such as positive focus, pro-active behaviour, future orientation and self-worth.

5.2.1.1. Age differences

First of all, there were apparent differences between the narratives from the Bolivian subsamples and the Philippine one. This could be culture-related, but possibly also age-related, since the subsample in the Philippines consisted of slightly older children than those in the Bolivian samples. Since the development of mentalization capacities is clearly age-related (Fonagy et al., 2002), this may have influenced the stage of development of the children regarding the other indicators as it forms the basis of the development process.

5.2.1.2. Cultural differences

In most of the narratives from the target group in the Philippines, there was a clear emphasis on particular values, namely the importance of education and its association with a brighter future. This differed from the Bolivian subsamples which demonstrated no such distinct nor recurrent values. Almost all children from the Philippine subsample illustrated a sense of future orientation that was related to the need to go to school and study hard in order to secure a brighter future. Moreover, the typically traditional views of respecting one's elders and contributing to the family income were clearly present in the narratives of the Filipino children. These are values that are commonplace in the Filipino culture, and appear to also play an important role in the upbringing within the population of street families. According to Cai et al. (2007), child-rearing traditions shape the expression of self-esteem as they determine which values are considered of importance. Moreover, people internalize their society's standards, feeling pride or shame depending on whether they meet or fall short of these standards (Silvia & O'Brien, 2004). This was reflected clearly in the narratives of the Filipino children.

Furthermore, practical problem-solving skills seem to be present in this target group, and significantly less aggression. Whether this can be attributed to culture or the particular target group (children of street families are not entirely unsupervised throughout the day), their age or the approach of the local partner organisation working with them, is unclear and therefore inconclusive. Moreover, the fact that the Narrative Story Stem Technique for Street Children was administered by different volunteer researchers with differing interviewing experience in each location, makes it difficult to come to clear-cut conclusions. It does, however, generate additional questions which could be the focus of further research or analysis. For example, a study by Taubner & Curth (2013) claims that an understanding of mentalizing forms a protective factor for the relationship between early experiences of abuse and the development of aggressive behaviour. As many street children have suffered some form of abuse in early childhood, the lack of mentalization skills could result in the manifestation of more aggressive behaviour.

5.2.1.3. Gender differences

When it comes to gender differences, the comparison is of course rather limited. Taking into account that the sample size of this initial analysis is small, with a ratio of one girl to two boys in each subsample, it is not our intention to come to any conclusions. The observations made during analysis merely intend to generate possible hypotheses which could be further investigated at a later stage when the remainder of the data is examined. The initial observation, however, indicates that the female subjects that were included in this initial sample, appear to show more mentalization capacities and self-agency than do their male counterparts. This is in line with a claim by Sharp (2006, in Allen & Fonagy, 2006) that girls tend to be better mentalizers than boys. Again, this study was purely exploratory and therefore further research is necessary to investigate this hypothesis.

5.2.1.4. Relation between mentalization and self-agency

Other noteworthy observations from the preliminary analysis include the link between mentalization capacities and self-agency. Where there was a more in-depth presence of mentalization capacities detected, there appeared to be more indicators of self-agency. Moreover, perception of availability of others was more explicitly emphasized where mentalization was profoundly present. Whether this be as a consequence of mentalization capacities per se remains unanswered. Could it be related to verbal communication skills rather than (self-) perception or confidence? Perhaps it is related to an altogether other causal factor which has not yet been investigated. In any case, it is a worthwhile consideration to delve deeper into.

5.2.1.5. Association between self-agency and other indicators of self-esteem

Last but not least, the preliminary analysis begs the question as to whether there is a relation between the investigated indicators of mentalization and self-agency with the other identified

behavioural indicators of self-esteem such as positive focus, pro-active behaviour, self-worth, social competence, future orientation and resilience? At first sight, one could pose an association between self-agency and positive focus, pro-active behaviour, future orientation and problem-solving skills, from this analysis. Though the latter indicators were not systematically investigated, they were often observed hand-in-hand with self-agency during analysis. However, it is not my intention to jump to any conclusions, but rather to pose the question and encourage further investigation into these indicators. Nonetheless, though self-agency appeared to be less present when mentalizing capacities were limited, the other indicators were not necessarily absent. They did, however, tend to be detected mainly in action-oriented form or described as a behaviour rather than referring to mental states or intentional inner drives. On the other hand, the more abundant the indicators of mentalizing capacities were, the more evidence there appeared to be of the indicators of self-esteem, in particular self-agency.

5.2.2. Implications for Mobile School

Another interesting aspect this study shed light on, was the fact that there was a significantly positive perception of the mobile school in most narratives. Even in the most negative and hostile set of narratives (for example of Carlos, Child 3 from the first subsample in Bolivia), the mobile school and/or related interventions and street educators seemed to be associated with the positive feeling that they were available, even in times of distress.

Though there may be no direct conclusive evidence that mobile school necessarily has a positive causal impact on self-agency or other indicators, it does appear to have a more general positive influence as a safe haven with trusted adults and a positive atmosphere encouraging self-belief (e.g. Story 10 – Exercises). According to Verscheuren (2015), “Attachment researchers have argued that teachers can be regarded as temporary or ad hoc attachment figures for children, meaning that they play the role of a safe haven and a secure base for the children in their classroom” (cited in Bosmans & Kerns, 2015, p. 79). This could be the case when considering the interaction and relationship between street child and street educator within the confines of the mobile school interventions.

The tool developed within the scope of this study clearly provides crucial steps in the development of an instrument that could measure the influence of Mobile School interventions on street children and their self-perception. This could be of great value to the organisation, both to confirm their basic philosophy and give a more scientific foundation and justification for its reason of existence.

5.3. General challenges and limitations of the studies

On a more practical note, the development phase (Study 1) brought its own difficulties with it. Considering the two different locations of the pilot study (Study 2), all materials from the preliminary online questionnaire to the story stems, manual and translation of transcripts, had to be developed in two languages, English and Spanish. For the initial pilot phase of administration conducted in Belgium, the story stems also needed to be translated to Dutch and adapted to a different target group. Therefore, a number of volunteers were required to help in matters of translation. Moreover, there was a need for volunteer researchers to administer the tool in the field in the local language. As we were working with three different voluntary researchers in the field (two in Bolivia and one in the Philippines), it was practically speaking difficult to invest in the training of the researchers. Though a standard manual was provided, with an extensive explanation as to how to approach the children and carry out the administration, there was little time to build up experience with interviewing. Only one of the three researchers actually had the chance to do a trial run in administering the tool in Belgium. The other two were guided by myself (who also had a trial run in administration during the development phase) before pursuing the actual pilot study. In hindsight, it appears that training or a practice run could have helped a more standardised manner of administration. Upon analysis of the transcripts, there appear to be a few significant differences between the researchers. One researcher did not abide by certain details of the protocol, for example allowing one or two characters of the story stems to be of a different gender to the child narrating. Another researcher made the mistake of asking a few leading questions or prompts, thereby becoming somewhat pushy in the manner of encouraging narratives. The one researcher who had experience with administration beforehand followed the protocol diligently, but unfortunately, being the first to test the tool had the disadvantage of having to work with the ten story stems being depicted grouped together on two panels. During administration of the tool with the first two children, it became apparent that the depiction of several story stems simultaneously confused the children into integrating several elements of different story stems into one narrative. As a result, we decided to print each story stem separately in order not to distract the child from the current story stem.

The differing administration styles could also have led to the differences in how elaborate the stories were, and to what extent certain indicators revealed themselves. The researcher administering the tool in the Philippines, for example, tended to ask more questions, hence probing for further elaboration. Her questions often involved probing for emotion, which may have brought about the more numerous affect words used. Though the fact that these children were able to express affect so elaborately does indicate a high presence of mentalization capacities, one could question

whether the other children (of the the Bolivian subsamples) who did not elaborate so extensively on affect may have done so if they had been probed more. This poses the question whether or not this narrative story stem technique for street children should be a more probing tool or not. These are two different approaches and hence needs to be standardised throughout the tool's administration.

Another factor to take into consideration is the fact that trust issues may have affected the administration of the tool. Firstly, our intention was to obtain data from four subsamples, rather than three. Unfortunately, we were unable to attain contact with a second subsample in the Philippines which had little to no experience with the mobile school. The reason behind this was the fact that no new locations were being reached by the local partner in Manila, which meant that we would have to pursue a target group with no ties to the mobile school at all. Since that meant that a completely unfamiliar target group to the local partner organisation had to be reached, we were confronted with the problem of trust. These children did not know any of the street educators nor the researcher and therefore refused to participate without monetary compensation. Moreover, when comparing the subsample in Bolivia of children having limited experience with the mobile school, to the other two subsamples, we observed that their narratives tended to be shorter in length and less elaborated and at times more superficial. Whether this can be due to trust issues, story-telling experience or mentalizing capacities is rather unclear. Additionally, an interesting comment in the feedback from one of the street educators is that the tool could be too difficult to administer to children eight years old and younger, as the duration could be considered too long for their concentration span and their ability to recount ten whole stories in one session. Upon further investigation, Harter (cited in Kernis, 2006) claims that it is not until about the age of eight that children can comprehend that one can reflect on one's own affect, or appraise oneself as being overall happy or unhappy with oneself. Prior to the age of eight, they can only evaluate domain-specific aspects of their competence.

When developing the narrative story stem technique for street children, the idea behind using a narrative approach was partly due to the fact that several mobile school activities involved story-telling. The reasoning was hence that it would be a familiar activity which would put the children at ease and make them less suspicious of the research methodology. What quickly became clear was that though the children appeared to enjoy the activity, some were still uncertain and hesitant, wanting to do the task 'correctly'. Furthermore, the length of the stories and the degree of imagination incorporated in the narratives were significantly less than most of the pilot testing conducted with Belgian children. This could possibly indicate the lack of experience street children have with story-telling, which could be explained by culture and tradition. On the other hand, I

believe it more likely to be related to the style of upbringing and availability of their parents to instil a tradition of story-telling whilst raising their children in very difficult circumstances. As many families of street children struggle to survive due to economic poverty and lack of opportunities, it would make sense that their parents do not have the time for the traditional bedtime story or playtime to stimulate imagination and verbal expression (Conger & Donnellan, 2007). Moreover, this seems to be reflected in the limited mentalization capacities of several children in Study 2.

5.4. Overall strengths and accomplishments

On the basis of the extensive literature review in combination with the preliminary survey involving 54 street educators from 12 different countries, this research study has succeeded in providing further support for the self-esteem model of Mobile School's aims and vision and evidence of its relevance in the context of street children. By breaking down the concept of self-esteem into workable sub-concepts and behavioural indicators, we were able to build up a model which was a crucial step towards the development of a new qualitative impact-measuring instrument. Furthermore, the combination of personal experience with the input of seasoned street educators from the preliminary survey, and an extensive literature study of existing qualitative research and narrative story stem techniques, lead to the development of an applicable Narrative Story Stem Technique for Street Children. This tool could be of much value to Mobile School and their international partners worldwide. Not only is it relevant towards impact assessment for Mobile School, but it can be of inestimable value for street educators aiding in the case-management of their beneficiaries.

The pilot study (Study 2) provided a thorough testing of the instrument, contributing useful feedback for further fine-tuning, though also allowing the careful yet optimistic conclusion that it is a valuable and applicable tool in a cross-cultural context for this particular target group. As not much currently exists in this form for a target group that poses many challenges for researchers, its value cannot be denied. Therefore, I would consider this study a worthwhile and beneficial step in a long-standing process undergone to provide evidence of the relevance of Mobile School's interventions and further supporting their partner organisations in their struggle to make a difference in the lives of street children worldwide. All in all, one could proffer that this thesis has achieved what it set out to achieve despite the numerous challenges posed.

5.5. General conclusions and recommendations

The summarise, some general trends observed during analysis include indications of an association between mentalizing abilities and an increased sense of self-agency as well as the other six indicators of self-esteem.

Therefore, a potential recommendation for Mobile School would be to invest resources into developing ways to support the development of mentalization capacities through their activities, the positive relationship between street educator and child, and their ability to create a safe environment, as this forms an important foundation for the further development of self-agency and self-esteem. Though the educational package of Mobile School already includes certain activities pertaining to mentalizing capacities (e.g. such as understanding emotions and promoting empathy), this could be further elaborated on with special attention to the interaction between child and street educator, which could be included in the implementation trainings.

This could vastly contribute to the children's potential to increase their self-esteem. According to Harter (as cited in Kernis, 2006), though self-esteem appears to be fairly stable for most people, it does, however, change over the life course, and more importantly, self-esteem can be increased deliberately through planned interventions.

Further recommendations include more in-depth research involving the entire sample size of collected data, and their analysis from the perspective of the other six identified indicators of self-esteem: pro-active behaviour, resilience, self-worth, social competence, future orientation and positive focus.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A: Online questionnaire regarding self-esteem indicators from street educator survey

Mobile School street work impact on street children

* **1. What is the name of your organisation?**

2. What is your name?

3. What changes/improvements do you detect in the children you work with on the streets with the mobile school?

4. How do these changes manifest themselves in concrete, observable behaviour? How do you SEE these changes?

5. What components /elements /concepts make up SELF-ESTEEM in your eyes? What do you associate with self esteem?

6. How do these components / elements of self esteem manifest themselves (whether positive or negative) in concrete, observable behaviour of the children? How can you SEE and identify these components or elements?
(please give as many examples as possible)

7. What role does self-esteem play in your society? How important is it?

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APPENDIX B: Clusters of behavioural indicators of self-esteem obtained from online survey

ORIGINAL CLUSTERS: 6 INDICATORS						
Problem-solving capacities	**Socialisation**	**Self-worth**	**Future-oriented**	**Positive attitude**	**Self-efficacy**	
initiative	social interaction	pride	future perspectives	positive focus	skills	
pro-activity	cooperation	acceptance of self	responsibility	optimism	knowledge	
dynamism	respect (self & others)	comfortable w/appearance	future-oriented decisions	enthusiasm	focus, concentration	
confronting challenges	trust	confidence	plans & dreams	valorize efforts	competence	
perseverence	build relationships	brave	sense of direction	willingness	(cap)ability	
determination	seek contact	assertiveness	striving to achieve goals	ability to experience joy	potential	
coping	social rules/values	competitiveness	active rather than passive	ability to have fun	talents	
resilience	patience	openness to new (situations)	ambition	smile, laugh	education	
agility/flexibility	reduced aggression	secure about self	conscious decision-making	perceived control?	recognise strengths&weaknesses	
take control	helping out/others	attribution (self credit, see success	choices	feeling empowered?	complete tasks	
empowerment	mutual support/solidarity	showing self (eg public speaking)	reflection	well-being	motivation to continue/persevere	
commitment/involvement	improved communication	sharing	motivation	happiness	capable to face life	
seeking help / guidance	self-expression	well-being	interest		desire to learn	
perceived control	listening skills	express needs/desires	self-development		leadership skills	
influence on environment	dialogue	sense of identity	desire to learn & grow		entrepreneurship	
	self-control / regulation	stand up for self			perceived control	
	empathy	self-care			influence	
		self-expression				

REVISED CLUSTERS: 7 INDICATORS						
Pro-active behaviour	**Personal agency**	**Coping/resilience**	**Self-worth**	**Social/relational competence**	**Future oriented**	**Positive Focus**
initiative	empowerment	coping skills	pride	positive social interaction	future perspectives	ability to see opportunities
confronting challenges	commitment/involvement	resilience	acceptance of self	cooperation , sharing	responsibility	optimism
perseverence / determination	perceived control	agility/flexibility	comfortable w/appearance	respect (self/others)	future-oriented decisions	enthusiasm
seeking help/guidance	influence on environment	*creativity*	confidence	trust	plans & dreams	valorize efforts
participation	sense of responsibility	problem-solving skills	courage	build relationships	sense of direction	willingness
striving to achieve goals	striving to achieve goals	capable to face life	assertiveness	safety in relations	striving to achieve goals	ability to experience joy, fun
motivation	skills, capability, competence	*independence*	competitiveness	seek contact	active rather than passive	smile, laugh
interest	knowledge	*resourcefulness*	openness to new (situations)	understanding social rules/values	ambition	sense of well-being, happiness
complete tasks	focus, concentration	*healthy defence mechanisms*	secure about self	patience	conscious decision-making	*ability to put into perspective*
leadership skills	potential, talents	*sturdiness, stable*	attribution (self credit, see success	reduced aggression	choices	
entrepreneurship	education		showing self (eg public speaking)	helping out others	reflection	
	recog strengths/weaknesses		well-being	mutual support/solidarity	motivation	
	desire to learn		express needs/desires	improved communication	interest	
	independence		sense of identity	self-expression	self-development	
			stand up for self	listening and dialogue skills	desire to learn & grow	
			self-care	self-control / regulation	*ability to assess consequences*	
			self-expression	*empathy*		

APPENDIX C: Manual of Narrative Story Stem Technique for Street Children

Pilot study: Story Stems for Street kids

1. Materials

- ✓ Audiorecorder / Dictaphone
- ✓ 2 panels containing each illustrations for 5 story stems
- ✓ Observation Checklist
- ✓ Chalk (or sticker page)
- ✓ Preferably a stimulus-free/quiet area to reduce distraction

2. General guidelines

1. The gender of <Child 1> and <Child 2> is the same as that of the child being tested. The accompanying illustrations use a gender-ambiguous child in order to allow more open interpretation according to the gender of the child being tested.

2. Where <Child 1>, <Child 2> or <Child 3> is mentioned in the protocol, they need to be replaced by the names chosen by the child prior to starting the story stems. It is important that the child does not choose names of their real siblings or close friends, in order to maintain a more neutral interpretation.

3. It is important to encourage the child when recording their stories, however, maintaining neutrality is crucial. Examples:
"What a story"; "Good"; "Fine"; "OK"; "Great"; "Thanks".

4. Indicate which story stem you are recounting by pointing to the appropriate illustrations and the character you are referring to.

5. To provide a certain amount of structure or predictability in the procedure, check off each story stem on the blackboard next to the appropriate illustrations once the story is complete. This way the child can always see how many have been completed and how many are left to go. If conducting the story stem technique on paper, bring along a sheet of paper divided into 10 parts, each pertaining to one of the story stems. By pasting a sticker in each square corresponding to the completed story, the child can follow the process and not become distracted or frustrated. The child may take the sheet of stickers with them after completion of the test.

6. Whilst the child is telling their story, the tester must try to repeat or paraphrase parts of the story, especially in cases where it is unclear. Try to repeat parts of sentences rather than reformulate entire sentences in shorter ones as this could interrupt the storyline of the child. Use the

same words as the child uses, and check with them if you have understood correctly.

7. It is important to stick to the offered prompts of each story stem, using each one only once. In some stories, the prompts are more of an intervention and are only to be given at times when a child appears to be ignoring a part of the story. Other prompts are given when one has the feeling the child is ignoring or avoiding a particular element. Example: See individual story stems.

8. If a child does not address the initial problem or dilemma presented in the story stem, they must be asked to do so (see prompts).

9. Try not to take on a role in the story. Should the child explicitly ask you to play a role, then make sure you explicitly ask the child exactly what your character says or does. This way it is the child's interpretation that takes the leading role.

10. Use your intuition to judge whether a child has come to the end of their story. When appropriate, you can ask 'is this the end of your story?' or 'does anything else happen?' – however, only if you feel the story has come to an end or the child has got stuck or upset in some way.
Should the child continue for a longer period of time, it is up to you to make them aware of the fact that there are several more stories to be told, or ask in a neutral fashion if anything significant still happens.

11. Non-directive prompts can be used at own discretion to further clarify the story. Should the story be unclear, or if the child proceeds in a non-verbal fashion, then you can ask 'what is happening here?'

3. Test administration

3.1 Preparation

Find a relatively safe and quiet location where the child feels at ease and where it is possible to record the story stems clearly. Make sure you have the story stem illustrations and the manual containing the story stems. If conducting the test without a mobile school, try to provide a visual way for the child to follow the procedure so that they know how many more stories there are to go at any moment in time. This could be a piece of paper divided into 10 equal parts in which stickers can be stuck at the end of each story. A pencil/pen to note name, age, target group and any noteworthy observed behavior is also recommended.

3.2 Introduction

"Let me explain what we are going to do. We are going to tell 10 stories. I shall always give you the beginning of each story, and then I would like you to continue the story however you like. So, I begin a story and you tell the rest of the story. It's your story, so you tell me what happens next. Do you understand?"

"In the stories there are different characters. This character (point on illustrations) is the main character. He/she (depending on gender of child) needs a name. What should we call him/her? Choose any name that is not the name of your siblings or best friends." (This can later be repeated when <Child 2> and <Child 3> is being introduced).

"The first story is about a market. Here, on this picture, you can see <Child 1> buying fruit from a fruit stall…"

3.3 Debriefing

Some of these stories could cause some children distress or trigger strong emotions. Therefore, it is important to foresee some time afterwards to round off the session in a relaxed manner (+/- 10 mins). You may ask them how they experienced the storytelling or whether they enjoyed making up stories. You could ask them to tell you their favourite story, of something fun they experienced recently. Some children may prefer to wind down with a short game or other fun activity (eg. Drawing, mobile school activity, sports activity).

4. Story stems

1. The market

Characters: Child 1

Themes: Being in a social situation that poses a problem and requires problem-solving capacities as well as social skills. These are dependent on how the child prioritises and takes into account the consequences of current behavior on the future …

Indicators:
Pro-active behavior + personal agency (problem-solving), coping, social competence, future orientation

Illustrations:

Story stem:

"<Child 1> goes to the market. At the market stall (s)he wants to buy a kilo of fruit. When the vendor hands over the fruit and tells him/her the price, <Child 1> looks at the money in their hand and realizes they don't have enough. What happens next?"

Prompts:
If the child runs away – "will (s)he ever come back to the market again?"
If the child gets more money but does not specify how or from where – "where did (s)he get the money from?"

2. The argument

Characters: *Child 1, Child 2, Child 3*

Themes: *The following dilemma requires insight, tact and empathy (social skills), coping (conflict tolerance) and positivity. Should the child wish to intervene, this would require problem-solving capacities in order to seek help, compromise or a solution.*

Indicators: *pro-active behavior, personal agency, coping, social competence, future orientation, positive focus*

Illustrations:

Story stem:
"Two children are having an argument (fight) and are very angry with each other. <Child 1> walks towards them and looks at them. What happens next?"

Prompts:
If the child does not intervene – 'what happens to <Child 2> and <Child 3>?'
If the child seeks out an authority figure – 'what does he/she do?'

3. Reflection

Characters: *Child 1, Child 2*

Themes: Confrontation with self and self-image. Thoughts and feelings about the self. Confrontation with others perception of them, their thoughts and feelings about them, as well as their reaction and behavior towards them.

Indicators: Self-worth, social competence, positive focus

Illustrations:

Story stem:
"<Child 1> stands in front of a shop window and sees their own reflection, thinking. In the reflection, <Child 1> notices the reflection of someone else behind them, looking at them. What happens next?"

Prompts:
If the child only mentions external features like appearance and clothing – "how do you think <Child 1> feels?"
If the child ignores the second child looking on – "what do you think <Child 2> is thinking?"

4. Group playing

Characters: Child 1, group of children

Themes: Inclusion vs exclusion, social situation which can be tackled pro-actively and seen as an opportunity or be experienced passively and as a rejection

Indicators: Social competence, pro-active behavior, self-worth, positive focus, *coping*, personal agency

Illustrations:

Story stem:
"<Child 1> approaches a group of children holding hands in a circle playing a game. They are laughing and having fun. What happens next?"

Prompts:
If child pro-actively attempts to join in the activity without explicitly mentioning how this action was received by the group – "how did the children react?"

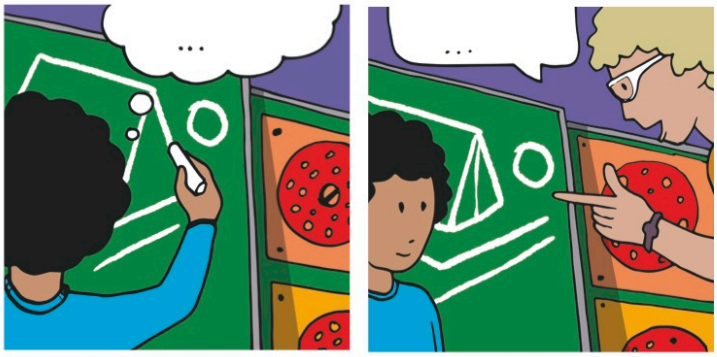
5. Dream for the future

Characters: Child 1, street educator of mobile school

Themes: This story attempts to encourage thought about their future and image of future possibilities. By triggering thought about what they see in their future, and an external reaction to those ideas from the street educator allows us insight into how realistic they feel this future image is.

Indicators: Personal agency, self-worth, future orientation, positive focus

Illustrations:



Story stem:
"<Child 1> is drawing a picture of their dream for the future, on the mobile school with chalk. The street educator approaches him/her looking at their work and asks about the picture. What happens next?"

Prompts:
A. "What did <Child 1> tell the street educator about his/her dream or drawing?"
B. "How did the street educator react to his/her dream drawing?"

6. Bus stop

Characters: Child 1, mother

Themes: themes of attachment, abandonment, separation-individuation, (dis)trust, expectations, coping with uncomfortable situation

Indicators: Coping, positive focus, future oriented, personal agency, *self-worth*

Illustrations:

Story stem:
"<Child 1> walks to the bus stop with their mother. The mother points to the bench and says 'Sit here, I have to go somewhere and I will be back later'." What happens next?

Prompts:
If child says that mother comes straight back – "what if the mother didn't come back straight away, what do you think <Child 1> would think or do? How would he/she feel?"

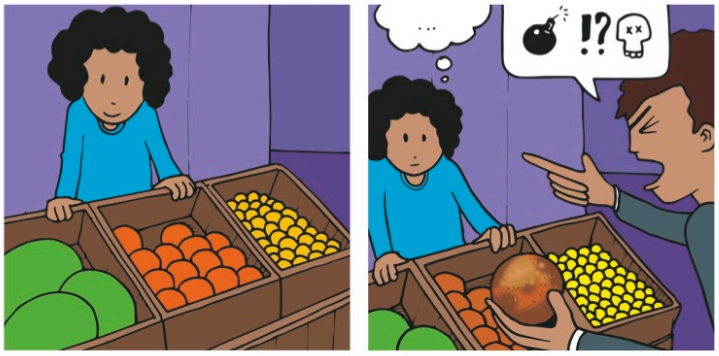
7. Angry customer

Characters: Child 1, angry customer

Themes: A challenging situation in which the child is confronted with negative emotions and a 'dilemma' situation requiring a pro-active solution on the part of the child.

Indicators: Pro-active behavior, personal agency, coping, social competence, future orientation, *positive focus*

Illustrations:



Story stem:
"<Child 1> sells fruit at a fruit stand in the market. An angry customer returns complaining about the quality of the goods and shows the rotten fruit to <Child 1> and shouts. What happens next?"

Prompts:
If child avoids the situation and does not go into interaction with the angry customer – "What will happen to the customer? What will he do?"

8. Choices

Characters: Child 1

Themes: This story is about priorities and choices. The child is forced to make a decision, which could reflect their interests and motives. This could possibly reflect on their vision for their future, and what they regard to be important in life.

Indicators: future-orientation, self-worth, personal agency, *pro-active behavior*, positive focus

Illustrations:

Story stem:
"<Child 1> stands across the street in front of a school, hospital, market and bus station/terminal. He/she has to choose where to go. What happens next?"

Prompts:
If the child avoids making a choice – "what is <Child 1> thinking when he/she looks at those 4 places?"
If the child tells a story where the child does not make a choice and tries to go to all 4 places – "what if <Child 1> can only go to 1 place, what would he/she choose?"

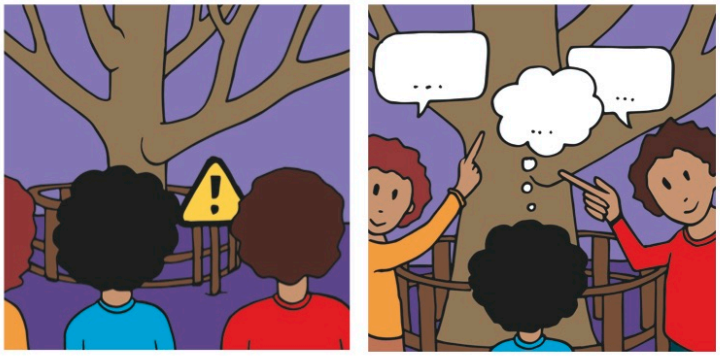
9. Danger

Characters: Child 1, Child 2, Child 3

Themes: The dilemma in this story situates itself in the tension between an attractive activity which is clearly rationally not a good idea. A choice is to be made involving the impulse to climb the tree or listening to common sense and taking into account possible future consequences. An added dilemma is that of peer pressure and the right to have an own opinion and having the courage to stand up for it.

Indicators: Social skills, future orientation, self worth, positive focus, personal agency

Illustrations:



Story stem:
"Three children go to the park and come across a tall tree with a 'danger' sign next to it. <Child 1> says "Wow, what a cool tree!" <Child 2> says, "Can we climb it?" What happens next?"

Prompts:
If the child avoids the dilemma altogether and walks away – "what do you think the others are thinking now?"
If the child gets lost in their imagination (phantasmatic storyline: eg. Climb in tree and fly, or bounce when fall out) – "what do you think would really happen in real life?"

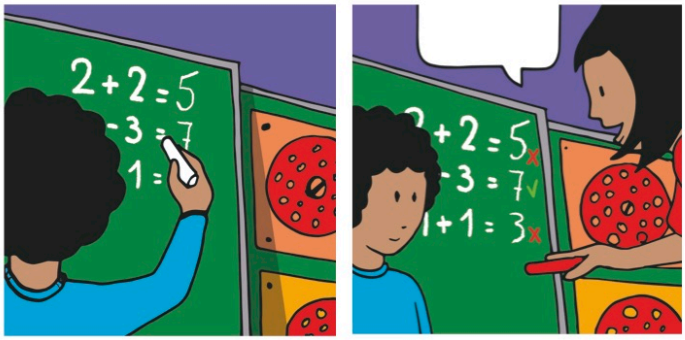
10. Exercises

Characters: Child 1, street educator of the mobile school

Themes: This story is about how a child judges himself/herself when confronted with a form of failure, and how they may react to it. It also poses the question of how the child believes someone else would react to the situation and judge them. The story should also indicate whether or not there is a form of trust or positive relationship possible with the adult figure.

Indicators: Personal agency, self-worth, coping, positive focus, social competence

Illustrations:



Story stem:
"<Child 1> is doing maths exercises on the blackboard of the mobile school. The street educator corrects them and points out that 2 of the 3 exercises are wrong. How does this story end?"

Prompts:
Should the child ignore the fact that the majority of the answers are wrong – "how many answers were correct and how many were wrong?" and "what do you think <Child 1> is thinking now, or how are they feeling?"
If the child ignores the presence of the street educator/adult – "what do you think he/she (pointing to street educator) is thinking?" or "What might he/she do or say?"

Consent form - cooperation research

I, ……(name), hereby confirm to voluntarily participate in the following pilot study:
The development of an adapted projective technique to assess the self-esteem of children on the street.
My cooperation involves consent for sessions consisting of maximum 1,5 hours per child. During these sessions, the children receive 10 'story stems' read to them (narrative approach) and supported by illustrations. The child is consequently asked to complete the story in any way they wish. Both the content as well as noticeable behaviour during the story telling will be observed. The stories will be recorded with an audio-recorder and later transcribed.

I understand that my personal information will solely be used by the researchers to contact me for the purposes of this research. This information, as all personal information concerning the child, will only be kept for the duration of the study and shall not be used for other purposes.
I likewise give permission to record the interviews (in the interests of optimal processing of the information). We hereby guarantee the necessary measures for discretion and confidentiality.

I hereby also receive confirmation that I am free to withdraw my voluntary participation at any point in time and for any reason. Moreover, the information gathered during this research study shall be processed entirely anonymously. Furthermore, I can always ask for further information regarding the research.

I herewith agree that the results of this research may be used for scientific purposes and may be published. My name will not be published, as anonymity and confidentiality of records will be guaranteed at each stage of the study.

I have read and understood abovementioned information and received answers to all my questions regarding this research. I give my full consent and agree to participate. [1]

This agreement is drawn up in 2 copies in …… (place), on …… (date)

Signature participant Signature researcher

For further questions, complaints or follow-up after my participation, I know I can contact the following:
Researcher: ann@mobileschool.org; Supervisors: nicole.vliegen@ppw.kuleuven.be; Hilde.Colpin@ppw.kuleuven.be
Ethical commission: smec@kuleuven.be

Toestemmingsformulier medewerking aan onderzoek

Hierbij bevestig ik, …… (naam), vrijwillig deel te nemen aan volgende pilootstudie:
Ontwikkeling van een aangepaste assessment instrument om zelfwaarde beleving bij kinderen op straat na te gaan
Mijn medewerking bestaat uit sessies die maximaal 1,5u gaan duren per kind. Tijdens deze sessies krijgen de kinderen 10 'story stems' voorgelezen (narratieve verhaaltechniek), ondersteund door illustraties. Het kind wordt vervolgens gevraagd om zelf de verdere invulling van het verhaal verder te bepalen en te vertellen. Zowel inhoud als mogelijk opvallend gedrag tijdens het vertellen worden geobserveerd. De verhalen worden auditief opgenomen om achteraf uit te schrijven en te coderen.
Ik begrijp dat mijn persoonlijke gegevens enkel gebruikt worden door de onderzoekers om contact op te nemen. Deze gegevens, alsook alle persoonlijke informatie over het kind, worden slechts bijgehouden voor de duur van het onderzoek en zullen niet voor andere doeleinden worden gebruikt.
Eveneens geef ik de toestemming om de interviews auditief op te nemen, met het oog op een goede verwerking van de informatie, hierbij wordt de nodige discretie en geheimhouding verzekerd. Het geluidsmateriaal wordt niet langer dan strikt noodzakelijk bewaard.
Hierbij krijg ik ook de bevestiging ten eerste, dat ik op om het even welk ogenblik en voor om het even welke reden mijn *vrijwillige deelname* aan dit onderzoek *mag stopzetten*. Ten tweede, dat de gegevens van dit onderzoek op een *volledig anonieme* manier verwerkt zullen worden. En ten derde, dat ik steeds om *meer inlichtingen* over het onderzoek mag vragen.
Hiermee geef ik mijn akkoord dat de resultaten van dit onderzoek kunnen gebruikt worden voor wetenschappelijke doeleinden en mogen gepubliceerd worden. Mijn naam wordt daarbij niet gepubliceerd, anonimiteit en de vertrouwelijkheid van de gegevens is in elk stadium van het onderzoek gewaarborgd.
Ik heb bovenstaande informatie gelezen en begrepen en heb antwoord gekregen op al mijn vragen betreffende deze studie. Ik stem toe om deel te nemen.

Opgemaakt in twee exemplaren te …… (plaats), op …….. (datum)

Handtekening deelnemer Handtekening onderzoeker

Voor eventuele vragen, klachten, verdere opvolging, weet ik dat ik na mijn deelname terecht kan bij:
Onderzoeker: ann@mobileschool.org; Supervisors: nicole.vliegen@ppw.kuleuven.be; Hilde.Colpin@ppw.kuleuven.be
Ethische commissie: smec@kuleuven.be

Appendix D: Dutch version of story stems for Belgian pilot testing

Narrative Story Stem Technique for Street Children: NL version for Belgium

1. **Kind op de markt**

   (kind 1) loopt rond op de markt en wilt een kilo fruit kopen. De verkoper neemt het fruit en weegt het. De verkoper geeft het fruit aan (kind 1) en zegt 'het kost € 15'. (kind 1) kijkt naar het geld in zijn hand, en beseft 'ik heb niet genoeg geld om het fruit te kopen'. Kan je mij vertellen en laten zien hoe het verder gaat?

   Benodigdheden:
   - Jongen/meisje (= geslacht kind)
   - Tafeltje met groenten en fruit
   - Verkoopster
   - Geld

2. **Ruzie**

   Twee kinderen hebben ruzie. Ze zijn zeer boos op elkaar. (kind 1) loopt op hen af en ziet dat de twee kinderen elkaar boos aankijken. Hij blijft van op een afstand naar hen kijken. Hoe gaat dit verhaaltje verder?

   Benodigdheden:
   - Jongen/meisje
   - 2 kinderen zelfde geslacht als hoofdpersonage

3. **Reflectie in het glas**

   (kind 1) loopt door de winkelstraat. Hij blijft voor een winkel staan en bekijkt de etalage. In het raam van de etalage, ziet (kind 1) zijn eigen spiegelbeeld. Hij ziet ook het spiegelbeeld van een ander kind dat (kind 1) aankijkt. Kan je me laten zien hoe dit verhaaltje verder gaat?

   Benodigdheden:
   - Jongen/meisje
   - Afbeeldingen winkeletalages
   - Kind 2

4. **Niet mee mogen spelen**

   Het is speeltijd en (kind 1) ziet een groep kinderen samen spelen. Ze staan in een cirkel en geven elkaar een hand. Ze spelen een spelletje. Ze lachen en maken veel plezier. (Kind 1) komt dichterbij. Hoe gaat dit verhaaltje verder?

   Benodigdheden:
   - Jongen/meisje
   - 4 à 5 kinderen in een groepje

5. **Tekening maken**

   Tijdens de speeltijd maakt (kind 1) een mooi krijttekening op de speelplaats. Wanneer de tekening klaar is loopt (kind 1) naar de leerkracht om zijn tekening te tonen. Kan je me vertellen wat er gebeurt?

   Benodigdheden:
   - Jongen/meisje
   - Krijttekening
   - Meester/juf

6. **Wachten aan de bushalte.**

   (kind 1) wandelt samen met zijn/ haar mama naar de bushalte. Mama zegt: 'ga hier maar op het bankje zitten. Ik moet nog even ergens naar toe maar nik kom straks terug.' Hoe gaat dit verhaaltje verder?

   Benodigdheden:
   - Jongen/meisje
   - Bushalte
   - Bankje
   - Mama

7. **Boze klant**

   (kind 1) staat met zijn fruitkraam op de markt en verkoopt fruit. Een boze klant komt terug naar (kind 1) en klaagt over de kwaliteit van het fruit en laat het rot fruit zien. De klant schreeuwt tegen (kind 1). Kan je me laten zien hoe het verhaaltje verder gaat?

   Benodigdheden:
   - Jongen/meisje
   - Tafeltje met fruit
   - Rot fruit
   - Klant

8. **Keuze maken**

   (kind 1) staat op de stoep naar de overkant van de straat te kijken. Daar ziet (kind 1) links een school staan, daarnaast een ziekenhuis en rechts is de zondagsmarkt aan het busstation. Kind 1 steekt de straat over en vraagt zich af waar hij naar toe gaat. Hoe gaat het verhaaltje verder?

   Benodigdheden:
   - Jongen/meisje
   - Afbeelding school, markt en ziekenhuis

9. Boom klimmen

(Kind 1) speelt samen met 2 vrienden in het bos. Ze blijven staan voor een hoge boom waar een gevaar teken op staat. Vriend 1: ' Wow, dat is een coole boom !' Vriend 2: ' Kunnen we erin klimmen?' Wat gebeurt er nu?

Benodigdheden:

- Jongen/meisje
- Grote boom
- 2 vrienden
- Gevaarteken

10. Oefeningen maken

(Kind 1) wordt in de klas naar voren geroepen en de leerkracht vraagt of hij de wiskunde oefeningen oplost aan het bord. (kind 1) maakt de oefeningen. 2 van de 3 oefeningen zijn fout. De leerkracht wijst op de fout gemaakte oefeningen. Hoe gaat het verhaaltje verder?

Benodigdheden:

- Jongen/meisje
- Stoelen met leerlingen
- Schoolbord met foute oefeningen
- Juffrouw/meester

Appendix E: Table of story stems and characters to aid analysis

Narrative Analysis Aid

Story Stem	Name	Content
1	The Market	Child (1) goes to the market. At the market stall (s)he wants to buy a kilo of fruit. When the vendor hands over the fruit and tells them the price, Child (1) looks at the money in their hand and realizes they don't have enough. What happens next?
2	The Fight	Two children are having a fight/argument and are very angry with each other. Child 1 walks toward them and stands between them (slightly away from them) looking at them. What happens next?
3	Reflection	Child 1 stands in front of a shop window and sees own reflection (Neutral expression). Behind one can see the reflection of another child/adolescent looking at him/her. What happens next?
4	Group Play	Child 1 approaches a group of children holding hands in a circle playing a game. They are laughing and having fun. What happens next?
5	Dream of the Future	Child 1 drew a picture of their dream for the future on the mobile school with chalk. A street educator stands next to him/her looking at their work (Speech bubble). What happens next?
6	Bus Stop	Child 1 walks towards the bus stop with their mother. Mother says "Wait here, I have to go somewhere but I will be back later". Mother leaves Child 1 at the bus stop and walks away. What happens next?
7	Angry Customer	Child 1 sells fruit at a fruit stand. An angry customer returns complaining about the quality of the goods (shows rotten fruit) and shouts at the child. What happens next?
8	Choices	Child 1 stands across the street in front of a school and hospital on the right side, and a market and bus station/terminal on the left (Thought bubble). (S)he crosses the road and decides where to go. What happens next?
9	Dangerous Tree	Three children stand before a high tree in a park (with danger sign next to it). Child 2 says "Wow, what a cool tree!" Child 3 says, "Can we climb it?" What happens next?
10	Exercises	Child 1 is doing math exercises on the blackboard of the mobile school. The street educator corrects them and points out that 2 of the 3 exercises are wrong. How does this story end?

Subsample	**Child 1**	**Child 2**	**Child 3**
TG1: BOL + MS	Charlie	Carmen	Carlos
TG2: BOL – MS	Cesar	Chico	Carla
TG3: PHILS +MS	Christian	Clark	Cassandra

Story stem characters	**Child 1**	**Child 2**	**Child 3**
BOY	Pedro	Oscar	Miguel
GIRL	Maria	Ana	Isabel