Freeing the Elephant-eating Boa: Theorizing Children in Philippine Social Science Research

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Both the child character and the child audience contribute significantly to the body of research on childhood studies. How children think, learn, and behave have been researched in many studies on psychology and education. Meanwhile, the social sciences have also become a home for childhood studies due to the richness of content for children in broadcast and print, which is the focus of this literature review.

The paper explores how children are theorized in social sciences in the Philippines. Through a survey of prominent journals such as *Plaridel*, *Humanities Diliman*, *Social Science Diliman*, and *Kritika Kultura*, this paper identifies the discursive roles that children play in research concerning their communicative styles, and text and media consumption. In addition, the paper also analyzes how children are represented in literature on childhood studies.

This review encourages providing a more active role for children in research and literary works about and for them published in the social sciences, the arts, and the humanities. Children can have a wide and insightful imagination the way the *Little Prince* has. Children are not petty participants. Children matter. Children are powerful.

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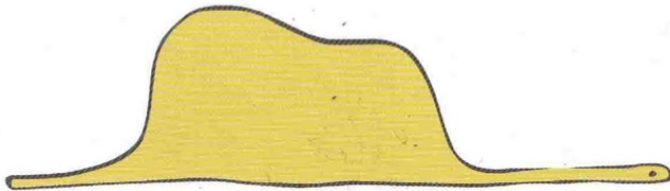
The image central to Antoine de Saint-Exupery's *The Little Prince* (1943) also reveals his cleverness and elevates the worldview of children in literature to a whole new level. In the story, the image is interpreted superficially by an adult looker, while the child expresses a novel, imaginative, and progressive perspective: the adult only sees a hat while the child sees a boa constrictor that has eaten a whole elephant. The Little Prince, in a titular role, narrates his journey of staying, leaving, loving, and longing while simultaneously illustrating the transience of youthful imagination unavailable to adults.

Beyond the empowerment that the Little Prince receives, both the eponymous character and the young reader have the capacity to contribute significantly to the body of research on childhood studies. For instance: how children think, learn, and behave have been researched within the disciplines of psychology and education. The social sciences have become a home for childhood studies because of the rich content for children in broadcast and print, the focus of this literature review.

There is a continuous progress that children's literature and studies have achieved through the efforts of many writers, researchers, and critics over the years, some of which have been included here. Children's literature published by Adarna House, Lampara, Anvil, and Tahanan, among others, has been recognized worldwide. These books stock bookstores with a bountiful collection of children's storybooks: slim books that capably express literature's endless possibilities to young readers. This diversity demands to be recognized both as essential to the education of young readers and as part of a new paradigm mindful of the context in which literature creates a more holistic study of children's literature and childhood studies.

For instance, Rosario Torres-Yu (2011a) writes about childhood studies to situate the relationship among children, their development, children's literature, and the responsibility to educate children. As opposed to the way North American and Western European universalism approaches childhood studies, Torres-Yu's approach to the same discipline challenges scholars to discuss the Filipino child and the perspectives that elevate the body of knowledge about children and their nature. This includes integrative research on children across different disciplines, the historization of the concept of childhood, the sociology and psychology of the Filipino child, and children's literature production and criticism, among others.

However, the child has long disappeared. Neil Postman's (1982) claim that childhood has disappeared in several varieties and from different sources describes today's technologically driven generation. According to Postman, the unseating of childhood through form and context can be attributed to the merging of taste and style of children and adults, as shown in various media forms such as TV content where language, appearance, interests, and even adult sexuality are no longer distinct from those of the children. To illustrate: the gag show *Goin' Bulilit*, which first aired on ABS-CBN in 2005, showcases children dressed as adults and performing funny antics to create a picturesque image of adults. In fact, according to director Edgar Mortiz, the show was created for adults, and child actors deliver "drama, comedy, narratives—even political jokes" to service the adult's need for humor (Cruz, 2015). In many telenovelas and movies in the Philippines, children are also used entertainment, especially when they act like adults

for comedic effect or to play a character with a wealth of anchorite wisdom to aid adult protagonists.

This adultification of the child is rooted in the correspondence between popular art and social reality (Postman, 1982) where adult characters critique audience behavior. Media present what Postman calls "miniature adults" who portray the realities of adult behavior to entertain adult viewers. Furthermore, the child's adultification is simultaneous with the disappearance of the child in media content, clothing style, computer-mediated games that appeal to all ages, and even in terms of vocabulary where children and adults use the same language. This paper wonders if the same can be said for academic research.

Attempts to return the child to childhood studies occur via literature similar to *The Little Prince*, and literary criticism and research. The goal of this paper is to explore how children are theorized, and how they are regarded in relation to both the adult researchers and the adults around them in Philippine social sciences. Through a survey of prominent journals such as *Plaridel*, *Humanities Diliman*, *Social Science Diliman*, and *Kritika Kultura*, this paper aims to determine children's discursive roles in research, their communicative styles, and their text and media consumption. In addition, the paper also analyzes how children are represented in seminal texts used in childhood studies.

There is a dearth of published research work about children in the aforementioned journals. A biannual journal on communication, media, and society by the University of the Philippines College of Mass Communication (UP CMC), *Plaridel* published eight articles, aside from interviews. In its 12 volumes compiling 200 research works, only 12 articles discussed children and their sensibilities.

Of the 13 volumes published biannually by *Humanities Diliman*, each with an average of five studies, sometimes with a review, only 8 of 150 articles are considered for this literature review.

Social Sciences Diliman has 11 biannual volumes with 5 to 6 articles per issue, while *Kritika Kultura* has already published 26 issues with 6 articles per issue, excluding literary works. However, only 3 articles from both of the journals involved children as part of their theory and research, despite the published articles of around 140 and 150, respectively.

The fact that there are only 26 articles out of approximately 600 articles in the above-mentioned journals only shows how children have not become the focus of much theorizing, presumably because of the automatic assumption that the children are too inexperienced for researchers to examine them without adult supervision. Of course, the importance bestowed to children

in these research works is another matter that this paper attempts to investigate.

Using the repository of research works and analyses found in the aforementioned journals, I looked into the roles assumed by the child in the framework, the methodologies used by different qualitative research works, and the interpretation of children's portrayals in selected literature. This paper studied research where children were part of the study, and articles that explored and situated the child as an audience in the communication model. This study likewise includes works that included the term *bata* or child. In choosing the papers, studies that collectively referred to young people, children or teens, as the youth are also considered. Literature discussing only adolescent experiences are beyond the scope of discussion.

Ultimately, this paper hopes to promote literature about and for children, and social sciences research focusing on child development, reading, and behavior. Discussing the role that children play in research and their contributions to our collective understanding of human experience can help childhood studies to bear more significance on wider academic discussion.

Special Regard for Children

There is a special distinction bestowed on children. They are considered a special type of reader, a position emphasized in some of the literature discussed. For Wennielyn Fajilan (2014), children's literature calls for a special kind of communication. Fajilan explores a linguistic perspective in child empowerment in award-winning literary works, noting that young readers need a special kind of language. The language that gives children resonant voices becomes evident in literature for children, particularly in books about parenthood and its attached issues including overseas work, separation, and even parents that break the traditional concepts of a family. Specific languaging and teaching communicate messages effectively to the child reader.

Eugene Evasco (2011) also discussed the nature of the child as audience. Discussing the directions and aesthetics of children's literature in the Philippines, Evasco described how children's literature has become audience-oriented to cater to different age groups. These groupings reveal characterization and distinction of their respective needs. For instance, Evasco notes that children between 3 and 12 years old are more influenced by family, while from ages 13 to 18, young adults live in a cultural space with various dominant influences such as family, peers, mass media, school, religion, government, and other superstructures that perpetuate certain ways of seeing.

Fajilan (2014) and Evasco (2011) both emphasized how children are not merely readers that can be generalized. There is a successful attempt to make sure that children are not regarded as mere readers but the characteristics by children and even by each group of children are clearly regarded as a vital consideration in exposing them to literary forms tailorfit for them.

Children can also be the creator of the message that is passed on and consumed by the audience, an example of which is the Kabataan News Network (KNN). In a published interview, Dale Ruestein, former UNICEF Communications Chief, described how KNN positions young people as creators of the program: although guided by adults, young people run KNN from concept to production staff to artists (Sumagui, 2008). According to Ruestein, the show was created by young people for adolescents specifically in an attempt to broaden the show's marketability. Used loosely and interchangeably, the term "kids" and "young people" tend to represent children separately from the adolescent. KNN was created by young people aged between 13 and 16, which is part of Evasco's grouping of children, as well as the definition of children by the United Nations to encompass children 0 to 18 years old.

Meanwhile, Eulalio Guieb III (2010) recognizes the children as source in the literary sense as he explores the *tablay*, an oral literature by young Tagbanua Calamianen in Taytay, Palawan. Seen as a communicative element, the Tagbanua tablay portrays and bridges social practices by the fishing life in Taytay and the rise of various contemporary media representing the cultural practice of the young Tagbanua Calamianen. Guieb III (2010) argued that some media cannot truly emanate the meanings constructed by the traditional, such as in the case of the tablay and how it has been used as an oral discursive strategy to make sense of the world and assert their rights. A Tagbanua term that describes crossing land and water forms within the community, the tablay is a four-verse literary piece about love that is sung by children, the youth, and even adults, during and after work, as well as in social gatherings. The tablay also reflects the social practice of carrying out a journey—one where young people take part as the source of message.

The aforementioned studies provide space for the distinctive role that children play in the communication process and for exploring the dynamics message negotiation. Interestingly, authors find value in the messages created by children; these messages reflect children's power in media and the social practices of the community's way of life.

Part of the conscious appreciation for the children's role in childhood studies is the emphasis on their becoming the source of data. Evasco (2000) interviewed students from Philippine cities to research urban mythologies and legends, which confirms that young people can provide valuable stories that shape community consciousness, both in rural and urban areas.

Alexandra More San Joaquin (2005) used secondary data from a survey conducted by Bicol University students in a workshop at the UP CMC in a study that explored the consequences of heavy, moderate, and light television viewing habits of children on their food and nutrition attitudes and preferences. This one-shot survey collected data from 8- to 13-year-old children of lower- to middle-class socio-economic status. Children provided data as opposed to studies that solicited data from adults around the children.

On the other hand, Chryssa Celestino (2015) referred to children and adults as readers because her study compared human and nonhuman characteristics in fables. While anthropomorphic characters are often used to teach moral lessons, the lack of distinction of the special and important nature of children is blurred by the comparison that is speciesist at the core. The kind of distinction here is thus different from the two previously discussed papers. The child is present but the focus is the grander discourse of humans and nonhumans in children's literature. It is as if the child is considered so present that the child reader and learner has become a staple presence whose sensibilities are relegated to the background due to the overfamiliarity and obviousness and in light of another perspective. The children are just there. They just so happen to be there. It is reminiscent also of Postman's (1982) proposition of how children disappear as they are mixed with adults in terms of their characteristics and how they are treated. Still, Celestino (2015) does not totally remove the child from picture and does not fail to discuss the learning processes of the child who reads short stories for children, which falls under another theme later in this paper.

Thus, either children are featured prominently in studies or the focus shifts and displaces children in research narratives.

The Child's Visibility in Research

This section discusses the role of children in the creation of cultures and subcultures, including social practices governing the Tagbanua's use of the tablay. Based on analyzing the literature cited in the succeeding paragraphs, this paper argues that cultures are born and enculturation springs because of and through the help of children.

Children are exposed to online gaming and are therefore involved in the creation of a "virtual subculture" (Gubagaras, Morales, Padilla, & Zamora, 2008, p. 63). Gamers create their online identities and develop a language that leads to symbolic convergence and interaction. At the forefront of this subculture formation and recreation are children aged 11 to 23 years old who participate in the online gaming community.

Children are also exposed to a lot of animated programs on television, mostly in the comforts of their home, and accompanied and guided by members of the family. To understand the influence of animated programs and family on the behavior and interactions of children, it is necessary to involve children themselves (Acosta, 2005). In the study, parents and the children were interviewed, while the children were observed during recess and play time. The aforementioned study did not use the term "culture" but emphasized how children's behavior was affected by television shows and the interaction of children. This culture is the product of symbolic convergences based on the animated shows and the underlying virtues and consciousness in each. The language used in these shows reveal "gender-guided play preferences" and "reciprocal identification, since familial/parental influences show strongly in the pre-school children's judgment of positive and negative traits and behaviors of animated characters" (p. 19). Isn't this how culture is formed? This phenomenon is reminiscent of the concept of habitus popularized by Pierre Bourdieu (1984), i.e., how the disposition created by the environment and society in which an individual has been part of helps in creating culture and consciousness, and how these are also changed by society and culture.

The level and quality of exposure contribute to how the child is affected by television content. San Joaquin (2005) does not refer to culture specifically, but her use of Cultivation Theory explains how children's exposure to television affects their food preferences and understanding of and attitude towards nutrition. However, San Joaquin emphasized how social realities are shaped with the presence of the child viewer. Media, specifically television, propagate a change or the lack thereof in the beliefs and attitudes of the viewers. Children develop a culture that reflects their food and nutrition attitudes at various degrees of exposure.

Torres-Yu (2011a) proposes that children who read fiction are more resilient and more agentic. Stories that introduce new gender norms discover a contemporary and progressive perspective regarding real-life social issues, which can lead to a new generation with fresh and judicious perspectives on human experiences. However, Torres-Yu positions these stories as an attempt to shape the future generation.

Previous studies explored children's contributions to the process of culture formation (Acosta, 2005; Guieb III, 2010; Gubagaras et al., 2008; San Joaquin, 2005; Torres-Yu, 2011a). However, their role should be studied *vis-à-vis* media. Culture and subcultures are formed in media spaces; media change and shape cultural phenomena. On one hand, culture formation and transformation can be in the hands of the children or the media; on the other hand, culture is formed and transformed through the interplay of media and its young users.

Cultures are not only formed and transformed in spaces and places; with the advent of inevitable phenomena such as migration, displacement, and globalization, cultures also become hybridized. Hybridization is a "cultural by-product of globalization" (Lanuza, 2012a, p. 56) where de-territorialization and fragmentation have become a commonplace due to the "accelerated flow of people, capital, and information" (p. 56).

David Chaney and Hilary Pilkington believe that younger generations cannot help but be hybridized (as cited in Lanuza, 2012a). For instance, Filipino Muslim students whose families relocated to the National Capital Region have no choice but to enroll in public high schools. According to Lanuza's study, Muslim students living in in heterogeneous spaces blend into the mainstream culture of urban high school, while operating under their own processes of self-making and joining subcultures: the "Gangsta" (students who imitate the hip-hop culture); the "Emos" (individuals with baston jeans, one-sided hairstyles, body-fit uniforms); and the "Kikays" (girls who fancy themselves with makeup, accessories, and boyfriends). Muslim students were able to penetrate these high school subcultures just like any other student.

Lanuza (2012a) also observed that not all Muslim students wear their hijab (veil), which renders many of them physically anonymous as Muslims. People only discover their being Muslim based on their names, their language, or when asked. Muslim students can join cliques and avoid the general negative stereotypes if they are not visibly Muslim. Given their awareness of high school culture and how they negotiate it with their own towards hybridization, these children become active agents of culture formation.

Teresita Ang See and Carmelea Ang See (2014) also confront the issue of hybridization on the verge of migration in their attempt to use their own lineage of three generations in creating diasporic accounts in identity formation among Chinese Filipinos. In narrating their family history, children played a big role in passing on, retaining of, and mixing their Chinese roots with the Filipino way of life. Their work includes childhood experiences, such as how Teresita Ang See grew up in the Filipino tradition only to realize that she has to be Chinese when she entered a Chinese primary school where she found herself different from all other students. The paper tells stories of three generations with different experiences, but there is always a recounting of colorful childhoods. It is through their upbringing that their identities as individuals and as part of a Chinese Filipino family have flourished.

Thus: culture formation is a matter of navigating and negotiating who one is with where one is, the way the Muslim students come to terms with

predominantly Catholic high school cliques, and how Chinese Filipinos form identities based on their heritage. The child who is a newcomer, a foreigner, and an immigrant has to respond to the call of the times by adapting to their "objective environment" (Ang See & Ang See, 2014) while naturally retaining their cultural roots and creating an identity that is a mix of different cultures and a culture on its own. In these experiences, the task of culture formation falls on the children themselves.

To recapitulate, children can sail through the currents of shaping a culture, while media tend to provide the direction towards which the current flows. Either way, positioning children not only in the formation of cultures but also in the sense making process in research is evident as their roles are recognized.

On the contrary, some studies on parenting and learning, or parenthood and pedagogy, tend to silence children and render them invisible. For instance, Maria Corazon Aspeli-Castro (2002) explores the communicative competence of the children in a longitudinal study on linguistic development of child subjects, but she focused on the mothers. While the child is of course present in the course of research, the study analyzes the mother–child interaction but focuses on the mothers' questions. The child's verbal and nonverbal communication strategies are all the effect of the mother's discourse styles, as these "strongly influenced the quality of responses from children" (p. 1).

The same is the case of the study on "communicated parenting" among Filipino mothers in diaspora by San Pascual (2014). She explores how Singapore-based Filipino migrant mothers use communication media and technologies in their attempt to establish and manage parenting teenage children despite distance and borders. The study also profiled and investigated mediated parenting styles, with few references on the shared experiences of the children affected in the process. The children are invisible since researchers referred to their parents when attempting to understand them. The study of Maria Perlita De Leon (2012)'on the methods and practices of parents in teaching *mabuting asal* [good conduct] to preschool children, and Excelsa Tongson's (2014) study on the teacher's interaction styles to promote reading and writing among preschoolers through sociodramatic plays display the same effect. In these studies, the go-to respondents are the parents and the teachers, even if the children are actually involved in the process being studied.

However, this is not to blame the authors for their respective research endeavors. It just so happens that their fields of expertise are more inclined towards the teacher than the learner, more with the parent than the child. Research scope and limitations probably box the authors to target only one side of the process.

How children are recipients of lessons from parents and teachers is somehow parallel to how children receive content disseminated through various media forms. Interestingly, the treatment of children in studies involving them, as well as the content that they are uncontrollably exposed to, is also similar to those of parenting and teaching.

Menard Edu Molina (2008) located the parent in the exposure of children to television shows that are rated Parental Guidance (PG); Molina conducted focus group interviews among parents and observed the interaction between guardians and the children. Again, it is the side of the parent that was emphasized in the study.

Sir Anril Tiatco and Amihan Bonifacio-Ramolete (2015) presented a preliminary study on Philippine Puppet *Sinakulo* (a dramatic narrative performance that features the life, passion, and death of Christ in the Catholic faith)] for children to create theater content inspired by local folktales across the archipelago. The study focuses on the content and less on the child audience, although the length of the play was shortened into an hour and a half to sustain the interest of the children.

Meanwhile, Jose Gutierrez III (2010) analyzed the animated film *RPG Metanoia* in terms of cinematic realism and Filipino experience. Apart from the discussion of the cinematic elements and Hollywood-patterned plots, the study focused on story and character development. The child is mentioned when their actions affect the plot. In that sense, the child is visible. However, what becomes invisible in the analysis is the power of the child. Although the child is the protagonist, the focus remains on the child's role instead of the child's being a child. In addition, the film and the review both highlight the mother being responsible for the catalyst, and the heroic father. The review also mentions many of the Filipino symbols in the film, including traditional Filipino games, but there was no mention of children in these cultural experiences.

The tendency to disempower children in research is not a conscious decision, but it is unavoidable to look into these research works with more child-centric perspective and expectations in mind, given the aim of this literature review is to situate the representation, empowerment, and theories confronting children as characters, respondents, and participants in the communication process, and childhood studies discourse. The issue of power is therefore also a concern in theorizing children in research. There is a divide between empowering children and disempowering them through adultification.

The Child in a World of Adults

Children tend to be treated like foreigners in a world they are born in. They are different, they are othered, they are considered unfit to survive in the world. It is somehow ironic that children are considered as the hope of the nation, but it only seems that the way for these children to become the only source of salvation is by becoming adults. This adultification is evident in the nature of many research works in the social sciences, which is discussed in this section.

As already previously discussed, Aspeli-Castro (2002), Molina (2008), San Pascual (2014), and De Leon (2012) focus on adults in their respective studies on language acquisition, parental guidance in television watching, communicated parenting, and value formation. In their studies, learning and guidance come from the adult. Aspeli-Castro (2002) points out that children learn language based on how their parents talk to them. Molina (2008) points out the need for parents and guardians to strictly guide children in watching PG-rated television content. San Pascual (2014) points out the need for overseas parents to still guide their children, but it seems that there is lack of trust that children can understand the situation. De Leon (2012) points out how adults play an important role in teaching good conduct to children. All these studies revere the adult. These studies emphasize how children are educated by adults. The morals come from adults who are the bearers of goodness in life.

In another study, the news literacy of public high school students was assessed in terms of awareness of news, news consumption, news interests, relevance of news in their life as high school students, and handling variety of news (Kwan, Agapito, and Bascos, 2008). Young students need to be aware of social and political issues. At the same time, the standards of literacy are based on adult standards; the study used criteria usually applied to adults, which may not necessarily be the concerns of children in relation to news. In fact, the very concept of news may be different for children.

It is only natural for children to be cared for by their parents; at the same time, children must be educated. The education system is beyond the control of the children. Naturally, children would have to be under the auspices of the workings of the adult world. Children live in a world of adults, but is this truly the world where they should be in? Is this the world where we have to house them into?

Meanwhile, the advent of the *Lola Basyang* stories is part of the children's literature scene. Lola Basyang's storytelling format has become so powerful that it has traveled across different media, as explored in a study by Christine Bellen (2009). According to Bellen, Lola Basyang's stories have been adapted into picture books where her grandchildren are silenced

although Lola Basyang can still be heard; theater plays where the actors, including the grandchildren, may not necessarily be child actors anymore; television where Lola Basyang's granddaughter tells stories in parks and other spaces; ballet performances where child performers are scarce; and even radio dramas where Lola Basyang had different grandchildren per episode.

Across different platforms, Lola Basyang is central to the storytelling, and children are mere audiences who respond to stories or made invisible altogether. The research also uses the term *mambabasa* [reader] instead of referring to child readers or even children. Lola Basyang is the center of the research work, and is regarded as an institution in bridging stories to children. Children are the listeners, even if they can have stories, too.

Disempowering children by adults both in the research work and the researched work has to be called out. Danilo Arao (2004) analyzed the malice in the advertisement of the Napoleon Quince brandy's infamous catchphrase "Nakatikim ka na ba ng kinse anos?" He argues that the quote references and reinforces the exploitation of women and children. The research discusses patriarchy and sexism in liquor advertisements.

Adults are central source of power in relation to children, but it is most important to note that many studies empower the child, the child reader, and the child character. Among these are the works in the paragraphs that follow.

The child is empowered as the source of the message, as discussed in the interview of Sumagui (2008) with Dale Ruestein, and Tagbanua Calamianen tablay as explored by Guieb III (2010). These research works emphasized the trust given to young people in producing media and creative contents. Child empowerment is also portrayed in the research works that promote the role of children in culture formation.

There is a great tendency for children to grow up too quickly (Evasco, 2011) because of their exposure to the real world too early in their lives. However, there is no need for the world to be sanitized for the children. Instead, Evasco (2011) challenges writers of children's literature to supply the needs of the children for them to truly be ready to face the adult world as children. In another paper, Evasco (2008) believes that children can survive their adventures despite being considered voiceless and untrustworthy. Children should instead be informed, even of the traumatic and malicious experiences, as long as the goal is to empower. There is also no need to simplify the language and to belittle the child as a reader. The same readiness for radical contents is proposed by Fajilan (2014) as a result of her study on languaging childhood in short stories for children, discussing traditional, contemporary, and radical conceptions of motherhood and fatherhood.

This is reflected by Carla Pacis' (2000) review of three novels for children; she discussed how the selected novels presented real-life happenstances in fiction for children, particularly in stories of heroism, war, and disaster. Torres-Yu (2011b) also entrusts the child to have the capacity to handle contemporary children's fiction not only with readiness and understanding but also with a perspective that is different but equally significant. Despite the "rise of different forms of family structures such as single-parent families, mother-headed, father-headed, child-headed, blended families and many others," children are able to now handle the issues that come along, different from the presumptions in the past that children are not yet ready for such content (Torres-Yu, 2011a, p. 45). In spite of finding themselves with limited resources, children find a sense of agency as they create new meanings out of such challenging situations. According to Torres-Yu, children find a positive perspective and find magic even in the most difficult situations, including their parents' overseas employment and sexual abuse.

Children can also make sense of new gender norms and do not assume stereotypical roles assigned on the basis of gender (Torres-Yu, 2011b). On the other hand, Lanuza's (2012b) study on "childlore" or child folklore performances explored gender roles. Lanuza claims that living in a gendered world makes escape possible and that childlore offers "liminal spaces where children can suspend rigid gender roles" (Lanuza, 2012b, p. 49). The issue on empowerment is thus central to any content for children.

We have a tendency to see children as vulnerable. They need protection because they lack the physical and mental strength needed to survive. We shelter them believing that a child supervised by an adult can never be harmed. Efforts for children to inhabit an adult world is perceived as a delimitation of their capabilities. Children are empowered by being educated about systems and goings-on in an adult-dominated world. They are trained by playing adult roles. In a sense, they are being "un-child-ed" by unlearning what it is like to be a child and learning how to act like an adult.

While I do not question our responsibility to the young generation and that children cannot actually provide the needs for themselves, it seems that we are encapsulated in the long-standing culture of power brought about by growth and maturity, unmindful of the power despite the form, or in this case, age.

In believing that the children are our nation's saving grace, do we really believe in their promise as children or are we waiting for them to become adults in the future? Contemporary Philippine literature readies children for realities and radical ideas at a young age: yet, biblical and values-driven stories become the topsellers. Thus, the adult world needs to teach children moral lessons instead of exposing them to the harshness of reality. Children may understand these things without the adults sanitizing these for them.

While Postman (1982) seems to notice that the child is disappearing, children's literature attributes their disappearance to forced adultification. In this case, the line separating adults and children does not necessarily blur; instead, one is turned into the other, which Postman calls the "adultified child."

Towards Theorizing Children in Research

The studies on children and childhood, as discussed above, present twin binaries: visibility in culture formation and invisibility in research practices; and adultification and empowerment. Childhood studies cater to two perspectives on children. These perspectives arise from the axiological basis of independence of the researcher's values from the research, i.e., how the researcher, an adult, regards children. Traditions that surface from the understanding of the research works on children in this paper are categorized based on children's detachment or attachment.

One is the tradition of entrusting the adult to understand children. In this tradition, children become invisible, and because of that, the investigation of reality is through the presence of the adult either to guide the children, to make the children learn, or to speak on behalf of or instead of the children. Here, researchers' valuation of the research is based on the credibility of an adult respondent towards the truthfulness of the results, may it be qualitative or quantitative in nature. In these studies, children become passive participants who are involved in the research and communication processes only as recipients of information (e.g., Aspeli-Castro, 2002; De Leon, 2012; Molina, 2008; San Pascual, 2014).

A second tradition promotes an active child in storytelling and research (e.g., Acosta, 2005; Evasco, 2000; Guieb III, 2010; Gubagaras et al., 2008; Lanuza, 2012a). Children do not just become visible: they become empowered to enact roles that are equal to adults. The children's role in the construction of research objectives and data are fully appreciated and utilized towards the full potential of understanding their nature. In this tradition, the children's responses are valued as valid research data, and the children's response to the real world is validated without having to create a fantastic world for them that only tends to shelter them from the torrents of painful realities. The children contribute to the body of knowledge on childhood studies because these are discourses about them and their contributions are thus seen as significant.

These two traditions prove that there is promise in childhood studies. Children may be rendered voiceless and invisible in research, but this is only because of the limitations of the respective research works and their consideration in terms of their subject matter, specialization, and ethics.

These studies chose a certain point of view to investigate phenomena. However: this study proposes that children should naturally play an important role in any research about children. Fortunately, the dominant paradigm in childhood research is one where the child is active and empowered to contribute to nation building and culture formation.

This literature review promotes a more active role for children in both research and literary works about and for them in the social sciences, the arts, and the humanities. Children can have a wide and insightful imagination the way the *Little Prince* has. Children can answer surveys if researchers find creative ways to administer them. Children matter. Children are powerful.

It is the hope of this paper that the boa constrictors waiting inside the minds of the children be unleashed and used to their full potentials towards building a kind of childhood studies that finds value in children as the main stakeholder and the most reliable source of data and narratives, for the child's active imagination and perspective are a place of power waiting for recognition and empowerment.

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