

Can Asset Mapping Be Used To Gain Insight Into Children's Wellbeing?

Abstract

In recent years, there has been an enormous growth in the literature that has focussed upon assets, in other words emphasising the positive attributes of both people and communities; these include children and young people's developmental assets, community asset mapping and public health, all of which have generated a wide range of literature. Although there has been some consideration of assets within a child health context, this is limited and no literature has previously documented the mapping of children's assets at an individual level.

It has long been recognised that wellbeing is an integral aspect of health. Children's wellbeing has been the focus of much concern at both national and international levels; this has resulted in the publication of key documents by prominent organisations, as well as the undertaking of a range of research. Despite this, studies have not previously sought to map the assets underpinning children's wellbeing – this research has addressed this deficit.

This study was supported by a theoretical framework that was specifically developed to guide the study. An ethnographic approach and a photo elicitation method were drawn upon to facilitate the gaze through the lens of 'Activities that I Enjoy'; this in turn enabled the mapping and emergence of assets that underpin children's wellbeing.

Two primary schools in the south-east of England were used to recruit twenty Year 5 children (aged 9-11 years of age). The participants, ten boys and ten girls, were given disposable cameras and asked to take photographs of the activities that they enjoyed. The children's photographs were integral to subsequent individual semi-structured interviews that sought to gain insight into children's wellbeing.

A constant comparative analysis technique facilitated the mapping of assets that underpinned the children's wellbeing; this process revealed one overall Stabilising Asset as well as eight internal and three external assets. Whilst some of the assets have been previously recognised, others have not; in particular, the study revealed 'When I Have Got Nothing To Do: Resourcefulness' as an internal asset that has not formerly been articulated. All of the assets are presented within the *'I'm Good': Children's Asset Wheel* [CAW], an original model that provides a new and important insight as well as being an integral component of the initial guiding theoretical framework.

As its contribution to knowledge, the study offered a number of key insights including: The presentation of an innovative guiding theoretical framework that not only has the potential to inform future research, but also professionals in relation to the practicalities of asset mapping. Secondly, the study developed and documented a detailed original approach to asset mapping at an individual level; thirdly, the research facilitated the design of the CAW which encapsulates the assets underpinning children's wellbeing. Appropriate dissemination strategies have been initiated, and will continue, in order to facilitate the study's contribution to the existing body of knowledge.

Acknowledgements

In completing the study which is presented in the following pages, I have received considerable support from a number of people. Although only a brief mention of this is possible, I would like to convey my appreciation for all the help and assistance which has been so generously given over the past six years.

Firstly, I am totally indebted to the children who agreed to participate so freely and so enthusiastically in this study; without their involvement the research would not have been possible. The children's contribution was supported by their families, in particular their parents; I thank them very much for making time in their exceedingly busy lives to allow me to briefly enter into their worlds.

I am extremely grateful for the advice and guidance which has been given during each stage of the study by my supervisors, Professor Sally Kendall and Dr. Wendy Wills – they have been true facilitators of my learning and their words of wisdom have been invaluable. I always felt so inspired after our supervisory meetings. Thank you both so, so much. Thank you also to the entire Doctorate in Health Research [DHRes] staff who have provided the support and education that has underpinned the whole Doctoral journey, I cannot tell you how much it has been appreciated. I have not been alone on this path, I must thank my fellow students – we have shared our experiences, our 'ups and downs' as well as our understanding of each other's challenges.

A huge thank you must go to my line managers at work for providing me with the opportunity, for facilitating the study leave that I needed and for the financial support that always accompanies any programme of study. An even bigger thank you, however, must go to my immediate colleagues in the Children's Nursing Lecturing Team at the University – I could not have asked for more support, I have had work removed from my very grasp and been 'told off' for answering e-mails instead of studying. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Thank you to the Association of British Paediatric Nurses [ABPN] who awarded me a small research grant in June 2009 to support the practical costs of the resources required for the study. The money has been very much appreciated and has been wisely spent.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family, especially my husband, Mark, and my parents for their patience, endless encouragement and practical household help(!) and of course, my children, Tom and Lucy, whose smiles have eased the most difficult of moments. I love you all very much. Thank you.