"Walay Sakit... Dili Himsog..." (Not sick... Not Healthy...)

KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCES OF HEALTH, ILLNESS AND WELL-BEING OF STREET CHILDREN IN ZAMBOANGA CITY, PHILIPPINES

An Exploratory Study

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SUMMARY

KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCES OF HEALTH, ILLNESS AND WELL BEING OF STREET CHILDREN IN ZAMBOANGA CITY: An Exploratory Study

This research is an exploratory, descriptive and qualitative study, which focuses on street children's knowledge and experiences of health, illness and well being. The study was done in Zamboanga City, a city in the southwestern part of the Philippines.

Ethnography as a multi-approach method was employed. Participant observation was the main tool combined with having conversations with the children, doing drawings, having a play dough session, as well as discussing pictures of them and having them take pictures of themselves. Conversations were also held with service providers both from government and non-government organizations.

The study is based on some premises. First, that health is not merely the absence of disease but the state of physical, mental and social well being. Second, children have agency, who have knowledge about their situation. Third, recognizing that they have knowledge, this study was undertaken taking the children’s point of view.

The stories of children’s everyday lives provide insights about their knowledge of health and well being. The children’s definition of health emphasizes wholeness, taking into account the physical, mental, emotional and social aspects of their lives. Children’s health experiences are not limited to their physical bodies but also include their social relationships. Their situation is a result of conditions not of their own making, but these same conditions, constraining they may be, also provide the venue for them to harness their strengths, enabling them to continue ‘living’ in the streets the best way they can.

Programs aimed at helping street children should involve street children – not just by working for them but more importantly, working with them, in ways that would strengthen their agency instead of constraining it.

The study was done in coordination with the Katilingban sa Kalambuan, Inc. (KKI), a non-government organization based in Zamboanga City. As part of its services, KKI runs the Akay Kalinga Center for street children. Fieldwork was undertaken in six months.

Funding for the research is part of the grant the researcher received for her studies. The research is in partial fulfillment towards a master’s degree in medical anthropology.
I. INTRODUCTION

Years ago I watched a documentary film about children in three different areas in the Philippines. The film, *Minsan Lang Sila Bata,* showed children working in the slaughterhouse in Cebu City, in sugarcane fields in Negros, and in a wharf in Zamboanga del Norte. The images and themes most vivid to me are:

- A boy trying to sleep on top of a table in the market. The boy just finished carrying large chunks of meat most of the night. He was given a few pesos, barely enough to buy himself some food.

- Boys unloading sacks of cement from a ship. After two days of work, they jump into the sea to clean themselves and, later get themselves drunk on tuba (coconut wine), singing their lungs out.

I saw poverty, lost dreams, exploitation. I saw helplessness and powerlessness. I have watched the film several times since then and every time, I have always felt anger and disgust at the child exploiters, whomever they may be. Children need to be protected, I thought. How could they possibly be healthy in such poor conditions? How could this be allowed to happen? Children should not be in situations that endanger their safety and their health. They have even started to drink.... They’re so vulnerable!!!

*Fast forward to 2000-2001. Amsterdam, the Netherlands.* One of the concepts I learned as a participant to the AMMA program is the concept of agency. Agency or human agency is the capacity of human beings to affect their own life chances and those of others and to play a role in the formation of social realities in which they participate (Barfield 1999:4). This is a concept I could relate to, having been involved with women and men in the labor and women’s health movements in the Philippines. But agency in the context of children, health and well-being? This was something new, even with my experience having to continually negotiate with my own children, DM (male, age 21) and Jen-jen (female, age 11) and the twelve other children of various ages in the household I belong to.

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1 Translation: They are children only once. Unfortunately, I do not remember the name of the filmmaker.
2 AMMA. The Amsterdam Master’s in Medical Anthropology.
The module on children, health and well-being gave me a chance to 'review' the film from another perspective. And to ask myself some questions. *What other images does the film show about the children? Are the children really as helpless and vulnerable as they are 'portrayed' to be, or do I 'see' them as such because I have always thought that children are vulnerable anyway? If I feel comfortable at the way women are portrayed as forever victims of circumstances, always accepting of their helplessness and powerlessness, why do I accept such portrayals of helplessness among children.*

'Reviewing' the film made me see other images of the children. I still see poverty and exploitation. I still see the children getting themselves drunk on *tuba* and singing their lungs out. But I now 'hear' them, too. They drink *tuba* "*para mahilis ang nahanggab namo nga semento*"—to dissolve the cement particles that we have inhaled. They drink *tuba* not to waste hard-earned money, but to try to keep themselves strong, healthy and fit, so that they can continue working in order to live.

I have decided to do my study with street children in Zamboanga City, where I live. I have always wondered about them, having encountered them in streets and other places and in differing circumstances. Doing my fieldwork with them will hopefully enable me to have a glimpse of the world they are in, and to see them other than just being 'vulnerable' but as persons who do know a lot about their situation and making decisions about their lives.

**Relevant Environmental Context**

The Philippines is an archipelago of about 7,107 islands. It is predominantly an agricultural country with a total land area of approximately 300,000 sq. kilometers. The Philippine population is now 76.4 million based on the government census completed in May 2000 (Health Alert, 2001). Based on the 1998 data, nearly forty-five percent of the population is composed of children (below 18 years of age). About half of its population lives in the urban areas.
The Philippines is considered a middle-income developing country but compared to other countries in South East Asia, it has lagged behind in economic growth. In 1970, the per capita GDP was slightly higher than Thailand’s while in 1994, the Philippines’ GDP occupied the last position. This current situation may be attributed to several factors including political instability and the huge foreign debt incurred during the time of Marcos as president (Kaur, 1997: 115).

The Philippines is a nation in transition with urbanization as one of the major trends. This is brought about by several factors that include, among others, industrialization and decreasing income from agricultural-based economies.

**Industrialization.** Thirteen key areas are identified as regional industrialization centers. This has resulted in certain agricultural areas being transformed into industrialized zones, with farmers losing their primary source of livelihood. A consequence is displacement of rural people and the tendency to migrate into urban areas.

**Decreasing income from agriculture-based economies.** Shifts have occurred in the kind of crops that were grown in the country. From traditional varieties, high yielding varieties of rice and corn are being grown. These require large amounts of fertilizers and biocides that cost a lot, too much for small-lot farmers to cope with. Farmers have lost their lands to pay off debts. On the other hand, huge tracts of land are planted with cash crops that are mainly for export (banana, pineapple, rubber) with men and women working as paid laborers. Men and women leave rural areas for the urban centers in the hope of finding gainful employment.

The process of urbanization has become so rapid that urban populations grow at about twice the rate of their respective total populations. However, while the cities' populations grow at such an alarming speed, accompanying services and facilities vital for the well-being of their population are not always able to keep pace (Torres,

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3 The five major countries that belong to the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) include Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, and Philippines.
1996:1). There is shortage of living space, public health facilities, recreational areas and opportunities for formal and informal employment.

The deteriorating economic situation in the country especially in the 1970s and 1980s, together with the implementation of structural adjust programs resulted to the deterioration of the social situation in the country. Besides impact to health and education, a consequence of the development and economic changes occurring in the Philippines is the phenomenon of street children.

**The Street Children Phenomenon**

*Batang lansangan. Batang kalye.* Child, children of the street. The phenomenon of street children is a worldwide phenomenon. They have been a focus of concern for aid agencies and governments for a little more than 15 years. They have first been recognized as a major concern with the declaration of 1979 as the International Year of the Child (Lalor, 1999: 759).

In the Philippines, the street children phenomenon started to be felt in the 1970s, persisted through the 1980s and has grown to alarming proportions by the mid-1990s. The number of street children is difficult to estimate. The Child Welfare Council states that it is difficult to determine the correct population of street children because of their mobile nature (http://www.childprotection.org.ph:2001). In 1993 there were approximately 250,000 street children in the country. Recent estimates seem to support that there are less street children than previously thought of. The same source also states that in a survey done in 2000, there were around 44,000 highly visible street children in the whole country.

The increasing number of street children has generated varied responses from both government and non-government organizations. In 1985 the UNICEF began work together with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the Council

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4 Children: 0-17 years of age.
5 The Child Welfare council (CWC) is the apex organization for children's protection, welfare and development in the Philippines.
of Welfare Agencies Foundation of the Philippines, Inc. (CWAFPI) and the National Economic and Development Authority to look into street children's needs (Kaur, 1997: 114). Currently, the National Project on Street Children implemented by the DSWD and a network of NGOs under the National Council for Social Development, covers twenty cities and five urban municipalities. Programs include, but are not limited to, education and vocational training, livelihood, legal protection, providing shelters for street children, skills training, and preventive education on substance abuse and sexually transmitted infections.

Poverty is cited as a major reason for the presence of street children. In the Philippines, the economic crisis which has been troubling the country since the middle of the 1970s, has caused rising unemployment which in turn has led to the increase in children forced onto the streets to earn money to help their families or to support themselves (Child Hope 2000). Besides poverty, rapid urbanization, population growth, degradation of family situation, and peer influence also contribute to the increasing number of children going to the street (Tambayan, 2000; Council for the Welfare of Children, 2000; Poria, 1994).

Perceptions about street children.

Literature (researches and newspaper accounts) describes children in general as vulnerable who could be deformed or made dysfunctional by adversities in life. Perceptions about children’s vulnerability come from associating childhood with innocence, dependence and malleability. Because of this, they need to be protected from ‘bad elements’. These bad elements range from cold winds and the rain that would make children sick with flu, to ‘drugs’ that would distort children’s minds and destroy their future, to rapists and killers and kidnappers. Children need to be protected by parents and other adults. Children’s rights to protection from abuse should be upheld by the states. These are feelings that is shared by a lot of Filipinos (Bautista, et.al. 2000:1; Poria, 1996:42)

The studies on children in general have focused on victimization, injury and learned helplessness (Bautista, et al, 2000:1) Concepts like walang malay (without
insights), *walang muwang sa buhay* (without knowledge of life) and *alagain* (needing care) suit this perspective.

This perception of children as vulnerable negates the context in which children live. Children's vulnerability is not an innate quality that they have. Christiansen (2000:38), in a study about vulnerability of children states that the vulnerability of children is a "constructed status, embedded in cultural understandings of the child as a social person."

Street children are perceived in a similar way. They are a "social time bomb, waiting to explode... because they will become future criminals unless we do something about it" ( Philippine Daily Inquirer, March 29, 2001). They are also described as neglected, lost souls, troubled souls (Mendoza, M: 2001).

There are however, shifts in the ways children in general and street children in particular are viewed. A perspective that is gaining ground is the resiliency paradigm. Resiliency is the capacity to withstand, recover and even to grow from negative experiences. Resiliency recognizes personal strengths, which "depend on life skills acquired largely through having had to overcome the odds" (Vaillant, G. cited by Schepier-Hughes, 1992:447). In the Philippines, efforts have been done to explore the experiences of abused children from the resiliency paradigm (Bautista, et. al: 2000). However, an over emphasis on inner strengths has its limitations, too. This may mean taking for granted the environment in which street children live, and not challenging the conditions that causes the children to be in the streets in the first place.

**Situation of street children.**

Studies and newspaper accounts on street children generally provide similar descriptions of their situation (Miranda, 2001; Ortega, 1998; Porio, 1994; Protacio-Marcelino et.al, 1998; Rivera, 1985; Tambayan, 2001; Torres, 1996). There are more male street children than female. Many are migrants from the rural areas. They come from large families, sometimes exposed to family violence. Many choose street life as the alternative to poverty or violence at home.
Children are exposed to the hazards and dangers of the street. They are exposed to gangs, sexual activity and have suffered arrests. They are prone to substance abuse: alcohol, tobacco, pharmaceuticals, inhalants, illicit drugs and other psychoactive substances. They spend many hours in the streets, which they use both as a workplace and a playground. In other cases, the streets become their living place as well. Street children often have no access to adequate food, health care, education and shelter. Because of their association with criminal behavior (stealing, pick pocketing) they are subjected to arrests and detention. Attendance to school is intermittent, in some cases totally interrupted. The city streets also expose children to high risks of accidents, brawls and mugging. They also become victims of brutal pranks. An account by Porio (1994: 44-45) tells of a boy circumcised for fun by drunks.

Street life prevents these children from attaining their basic human rights as set down in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. They are denied a childhood free from exploitation and abuse (Child Hope 2000).

**Street children and health.**

The streets are perceived by most adults, including myself, as unsafe and unhealthy for children. The heat, the cold, the pollution, the grime make them susceptible to poor health. Street children suffer from poor health and malnutrition as a result of poor diets and long waking hours. Their growths are stunted, they are underweight and are susceptible to infectious diseases (Torres 1996:97). They also have poor dental health. Involvement in sexual activity increases their risks to sexually transmitted infections. Continued substance abuse among street children usually has serious health and social consequences: acute chronic health and emotional problems, disruption of interpersonal relationships, school failure, social marginalization, and criminal behavior.

Few studies deal with street children’s knowledge and perceptions about their health and well-being. These tend to focus on their physical well being and less on other aspects of health nor on their health seeking behavior. One study dealt with street children’s perceptions of abuse (Protacio-Marcelino, et al: 2001). One account describes street girls using Perla, a coconut oil-based laundry soap to wash themselves with and, taking antibiotics without medical consultation, to deal with reproductive tract infections
Another reports about the various health problems the street children are treated for or are addressed by Medicins San Frontiers, an NGO that provides health services to street children (de Leon-Miranda, 2001). These include respiratory tract infections, skin diseases, wounds, trauma and burns, anemia/malnutrition, pulmonary tuberculosis, sexually transmitted diseases, teenage pregnancy, septic abortion and substance abuse. The last four have been prioritized as meriting immediate attention. Health services include free medical consultations, provision of medicines and vaccines (tetanus toxoid) and the conduct of medical fora on street children’s health with various agencies.

Unanswered questions

The studies do not describe what street children know about the hazards and risks of being in the streets. What do street children know about health and well being? What does being healthy, being well, mean to them? What do they consider as illness experiences? Under what circumstances do they get sick?

How do they cope with their illness experiences given the circumstances they are in? What influences the decisions they make about their health? What do they perceive as factors associated with their situation as well as the programs aimed at helping them?

These are the questions on which I focus in my study. I intend to gain insight in these aspects of the lives of street children in Zamboanga City. I intend to do this based on some premises. First, that health is not just a medical issue; that health is influenced by cultural, gender, political and economic determinants. Health is not merely the absence of disease but the “state of complete physical, mental and social well-being” (WHO).

Second, I intend to take the children’s point of view. Children’s voices and experiences, like women’s (and those of other marginalized sectors), have often been negated in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of health programs that claim to address their health needs. I hope to do research that would allow for space for street children’s stories to surface. Caputo, citing Suransky (1995: 33) states that
understanding the child from his or her perspective is to recognize the child as an actor constructing one’s life with consciousness, that he or she is a maker of history, a “meaning-maker involved in the praxis upon the world.”

Which brings me to the third premise. Street children have agency. They are social actors who are not just reproducers but producers of knowledge as well. I would want to explore how the concept of agency applies to the lives of street children. I must remind myself, though, that agency, like resiliency, could also be overemphasized. A person’s capacity to influence one’s environment is also influenced by the environment one finds oneself in. Agency interacts with structure and the interactions are always within a context.

OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

With the above premises in mind, I have set the following objectives.

General Objectives:

1. To describe street children’s knowledge, perceptions and experiences about their health and well-being and what they see as factors associated with their situation.

2. To formulate recommendations that would benefit programs and services addressing street children taking into account their point of view.

Specific Objectives:

a. To describe street children’s images about themselves.

b. To describe street children’s knowledge and experiences about health and well-being, their health status, their illness experiences, their health seeking behavior.

c. To describe street children’s experiences and views about their living and working conditions as well as other mechanisms employed to cope with life in the streets and how these impact on their health and well-being.

d. To analyze, from the children’s point of view, factors contributing to their health and well-being.
e. To describe street children's knowledge and perceptions about their needs for support and protection.

f. To describe the services available to street children, and their experiences with and perceptions of these.

g. To make an inventory of street children's suggestions on how programs addressing their situation could be enhanced.

II. DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH AREA

Zamboanga City is the place where the study was conducted. Zamboanga City is located at the southernmost tip of the Zamboanga peninsula. The city has an inland area of about 1,420.899 sq. km.

Zamboanga, then known as Samboangan, was the center of barter trade among the Chinese-Malays and its inhabitants as early as the 13th and 14th centuries. The inhabitants then were the Subanons along the riverbanks in the hinterlands, and the Samals and Badjaos in the coastal areas.

In 1953, during the Spanish occupation in the Philippines (which lasted for three hundred years) the Spaniards established a Catholic mission in what is now known as Recodo. Christianity was introduced in Zamboanga. The Archdiocese of Zamboanga at that time included the whole of Mindanao, except Sulu, where Islam was introduced much earlier.

It was in November 22, 1983 when Zamboanga was declared a highly urbanized city in accordance with the provision of the Local Government Code of 1983 (BP 337) (Zamboanga City website).

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6 Second largest island in the Philippines
Zamboanga City, a rapidly urbanizing city, is one of four cities in Western Mindanao, the ninth region in the country. It has been identified as one of the key regional industrialization centers, with the economic zone located approximately twenty-two (22) kilometers from the center. Its estimated population based on the latest census held in May 2000 is 601,794, about half of whom are children. The city's population includes migrants from nearby provinces. The number of households is 11,152 with an average household size of 5.12 (National Statistics and Census Board).

Chavacano is the predominant medium of communication in Zamboanga City today. It is Spanish-based, a result of a combination with various other local and international languages (www.zamboanga.com). It is one of the oldest spoken languages in the country. Other languages spoken in the city include Tausug, Cebuano, Yakan, the languages spoken by other inhabitants who belong to these groups with the same name. English is also widely spoken around town, and is the main language of education and international commerce.

The country just had its recent elections in May 2001. In Zamboanga City, the Hon. Maria Clara Lorenzo Lobregat was re-elected into office. Within the City council is a committee on women and children that addresses issues pertaining to women and children. The city has recently joined the quest for the child-friendly city in the Philippines.

**Street children in Zamboanga City.**

A study in 1989 (http://www.Childprotection.org.ph) conducted by Child Hope about street children in Zamboanga mentions that most of the children used their hangouts (the streets) to earn a living. Most frequently mentioned problems were money-related. The same study also noted that "despite their being always in the streets, only a few of them reported going against the law".

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7 The other three are Pagadian City, Dipolog City and Dapitan City.
8 0-24 years old, based on documents from the City Social Welfare Development Office Drop In Center for Children.
9 Pursuant to Executive Order #184, series of 1999.
The street children in Zamboanga have become a familiar sight in the streets. The 1999 Street Children Situationer mention that their presence is "alarming and a problem on our city's population."

Street children are seen engaged in various activities like pushing garbage carts, shining shoes, scavenging for scraps, watching and washing cars and other vehicles. The same document also mentions that the children beg to earn, with some "ending up working for crime syndicates like pick pocketing and snatching, shop lifting and even prostitution, while others are forced to sniff solvent to imagine that they are satisfied."

The overall health condition of street children in the city is described as poor. They are malnourished, sickly (with PTB, bronchitis, anemia). They are also described to have poor hygiene with most of them having skin diseases. (Street Children Situationer, n.d.)

**Addressing the issue of street children in Zamboanga City**

Current responses to the issue of street children include the organization of the Zamboanga City Task Force on Street and Urban Working Children (SUWC) and the establishment of the Office of the City Social Welfare and Development Office Drop-in Center. Some non-government organizations have also been established that aim to address the issue of street children.

**Zamboanga City Task Force on Street and Urban Working Children (SUWC).** The Task Force on Street and Urban Working Children (SUWC) hereon referred to as the Task Force, was organized as part of an ongoing national project addressing street children, which is funded by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID). The Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) is the lead agency in the implementation of the Australian-Philippines project for the street and urban working children in the country. Other agencies involved in the project are the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), the National Food Authority (NFA), local government units (LGUs) and non-government organizations (NGOs).

In Zamboanga City, the members of the task force include the agencies, aside from those mentioned above, like the Philippine National Red Cross, Commission on
Human Rights, Philippine Information Agency, Philippine National Police, Department of Education and Culture, the Zamboanga City government (with different sections represented in the task force). Non government organizations like the Human Development and Empowerment Services (HDES), St. Francis Home for Children, Katilingban sa Kalambuan are also represented in the Task Force.

Task Force activities include, among other things, the following: identification of sponsors to support the task force activities; monthly check-up for street children and the provision of free medicines; education programs (street education, center-based sessions, formal education for some children), parents effectiveness sessions; regular round-up of street children (January-May, 2001 Accomplishment Report). Community-based social workers talk about the issue of children in communities, with particular emphasis of the responsibility of parents to care for their children. As part of the ongoing Australian-Aid Assisted Street and Urban Working Children Project, rice is given to the children and their families.

In July 6, 2001, the Task Force spearheaded the conduct of the Zamboanga City Congress on Street and Urban Working Children. Street children in the city participated in the congress. One of the highlights of the congress was a workshop to identify issues and concerns affecting the children.

The Office of the City Social Welfare Drop-In Center for Street Children - Special Unit. The city's drop-in center for street children, from hereon referred to as the special unit, was established in January 1994. This was part of the city's commitment to continue programs for children with the phasing out of UNICEF's assistance in Zamboanga City. The special unit, which the center is popularly called, currently houses thirty children, twenty-four boys and six girls, all of whom go to school. Currently, funds from the city cover the salaries and maintenance of the special unit. Funding for the schooling of the children now comes from civic organizations as donors. This includes school uniforms and allowance.

NGOs in Zamboanga City include the Human Development and Empowerment Services, the Street children Development Center and the Katilingban sa Kalambuan Inc. In this section, I will describe in more detail the program of the Katilingban sa Kalambuan, Inc., with whom I coordinated this study.
Katilingban sa Kalambuan\textsuperscript{10}, Inc. (KKI). KKI is an NGO that primarily works with the urban poor sector in Zamboanga City. As part of its Child and Youth Development Program, it established in 1996 the Day Center for Street Children of Zamboanga City, hereon to referred as the Center. It was to continue the work, started by social workers at one of the universities in the City, of what was then known as the Social Development Center. The Day Center's services included the conduct of street education as well as center-based sessions for children who visit the children during the daytime, specifically from six in the morning to six in the evening.

Recognizing the need for a center that is available to children at all times, the KKI decided to operate its center twenty-four hours a day. This need was made even more urgent, when, according to one house parent, "I would reach the center in the morning to see children sleeping on the steps of the center stairs." This also led to its present name of Akay Kalinga Drop-in Center for Street Children. The center has facilities for bathing, sleeping, dining. A team of house parents (one female, two males), a social worker, a street educator and some volunteers, manage the center.

Its services include social, educational, socio-economic services as well as advocacy work and networking. Its social services involve activities that address children's need for shelter, health, sleeping and recreation. Its health services include provision of medical care for children with wounds who come to the center, referrals to medical institutions including dental services, provision of food, and nurturing. It also includes paralegal services, counseling for both children and parents and the conduct of case studies.

Educational services include both street-based and center-based functional literacy classes as well as the schooling of some children. Currently, the Center helps send ten children to school, eight of who stay in the center. Center-based education includes tutorial for the children who go to school as well as for some children who stay or visit the center from time to time but do not go to school.

\textsuperscript{10} *Katilingban sa Kalambuan,* literally means, Community for Development.
Its socio-economic services currently include providing capital for some center-based children who opt to sell peanuts during weekends. It also supports the ice candy vending activity of one boy who does not go to school. In the past it has supported a few children who wanted to sell *balut* by providing the boys with bicycles that they could use. It plans to conduct vocational skills training among children in need for such training.

Advocacy work is done among different groups to promote greater awareness about the situation of street children. Part of this is the photo exhibit featuring pictures of street children, which was held in December 2000. The center also has established links with local agencies that address the issue of street children. It is currently a member of the Task Force on Street and Urban Working Children. The center also has links with some members of the private sectors, some of who have contributed to the center in goods, cash and services.

Children are welcome to come and stay in the center; however, children who sniff glue have not been allowed to stay overnight, to lessen their contact with the children who do not do so. There seems to be an open policy, where children come and go as they wish. Some have opted to stay permanently, while others come just to visit. Those who come to visit also attend the street-based education sessions held at different areas in the city. At the time of the fieldwork, street based sessions were held at a park in the city center. The center has decided to reach out to the younger children, those who are below ten years old, hoping that the earlier they are 'served' the better the chances of these children avoiding the risks in the streets.

Katilingban as an NGO is aware that its services are not enough to address the issue of street children. For the time being, however, they hope that the various activities they conduct, especially the availability of the center to the children, would provide the children some time off from the streets.

11 *Boiled duck embryo*
III. METHODOLOGY

Study type and design

The research is an exploratory, descriptive and qualitative study, which focuses on street children's knowledge and experiences of health, illness and well being. Ethnography, as a multi-method approach, was employed.

Doing ethnography for the first time, and with street children, too, I recognize that I had my own apprehensions. Will I be 'accepted' enough for them to talk with me? Will I hear enough stories to base my data on? Which approach and tools will I use?

I also had 'vague' notions about street children based on what I had read so far - who they are and what they do - which mostly depicted them as *kawawa* (pitiful) and if not rehabilitated, would grow up to be criminals. In seeking out their stories, will I be aware enough to suspend my own views about them and to allow myself to listen and hear what they say? Will I be able to grasp their views as children? Will I be able to register their stories as closely as possible to what and how these are shared with me? How do I bridge the gap between 'researcher' and 'researched', recognizing that there is a difference in power relations because of my status as an adult and also because of my background coming from a more privileged class compared to them? How do I address these issues?

Pia Christiansen, during one of the lectures on Children, Health and Well-being\(^1\), raises some questions about doing research with children. *Is it any different to study children (than other social groups)? Do we need any special methods? What kind of methods and tools are suited for research with children? What considerations do we need to think about?* Four approaches in the social study of children are mentioned: *child as object, child as subject or the child centered approach, child as social actor, and child as participant or co-researcher.*

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\(^1\)The module on Children, Health and Well-being is part of the Amsterdam Masters' in Medical Anthropology (AMMA) program. AMMA students as well as persons who are interested in the issue of children and health participate the module in. Pia Christiansen was one of the lecturers.
Christiansen suggests different methods that may be used in the study of children. Participant observation will be the core method. This is combined with doing ethnographic interviews; doing life stories, diaries, narratives; conducting focus group or peer group interview and discussions; using questionnaires; making use of drawings, pictures, video-recording and photographs; using vignettes; doing dramas; reviewing documents. She also mentions the kind of role the researcher assumes which could either be the least adult role or an other adult role.

As mentioned in the introduction, I hoped to do research that would explore how the concept of agency - street children as social actors- applies to the lives of the street children in Zamboanga. Different methods need to be employed in order to learn the culture of children, in this case, the culture of street children in my city.

But first is to challenge my self to recognize and affirm that children have knowledge, experiences and opinions about their lives and that they have a right to be listened to. They also have the right to refuse to share their stories.

The fieldwork experience

Getting in touch with the children.

It was primarily through the Center that I first met some of the children. During the early part of my fieldwork, one center staff introduced me as an amiga, a friend, to some children who were staying in the center and to some children who were playing in the park. These same children introduced me to some of their friends. I also met children on my own, all of whom I would find out later, know about the Center.

The children in my household also introduced me to the street children by showing me their hangouts or describing where these children may be found. My daughter and son, nephews and nieces had encountered street children as they go to school or hangout in malls or fast food restaurants. One nephew brought me around the city several nights on the motorcycle to show me the places where he has met these children, including the nanay (mother) who takes care of some children.
Learning from the children.

The work of describing a culture is to learn from the people (Spradley, 1979:3). This is what I tried to do - learn from the children. No specific technique was used. Although I did prepare a guide - data collection tools (see appendix _) as part of my proposal, I did not know if I would be able to use any or all of the tools. I consulted with some children (including the children in my own household) and was largely guided by them and the staff who work at the center. My previous involvement in health and gender work with men and women from different sectors in my country also served as a reminder that the methodology would have to depend on actual conditions in the field. What these actual conditions were, I did not even have a clear picture of. I would have to find out when I get to the field. My aim was to be able to learn from the children in ways that I hope would not be threatening to them. This required flexible use of a wide range of tools.

Doing anthropological research, which is a learning process, includes cerebral as well as emotional involvement (van der Geest, 1996:338). Participant observation was my means to 'learn from people', in this case children, requiring the learner to become involved in the lives of the children. Becoming involved is to somehow feel what it is like to be 'street child' living and working in the streets, being made fun of, making friendships. This will then make the learner make descriptions closer to the children's experiences.

The center staff were at first concerned about the length of time allotted for my fieldwork. They felt that six weeks was quite short, and not enough time for me to be able to 'integrate' with the children, a process they felt was necessary for the children to open up and be comfortable enough to share their lives with me. In retrospect I realize this apprehension maybe stemmed from their experience with previous researchers' methods of getting information from the children- through structured or semi-structured interviews that had researchers engage children in one-on-one interview sessions, or questionnaires left for street children to fill up. They were aware that the children might not be available - this unavailability to include not only their mobility, but also the length
of time they could spend to answer questions. They were also concerned about having different people ask the children the same questions all over again.

At first the children, some of whom had been interviewed before by other people, were wary about my presence. Questions like, "Cosa tu ta ase aqui kanamon?" ("What are you doing here with us?"), or Asa man ka gatrabaho, sa Katilingban... Ateneo.... WMSU\(^3\)?" ("Where are you working, Katilingban.... Ateneo... WMSU?") were asked of me. Ateneo and WMSU are schools in Zamboanga City who have sent their students to do practicum work on street children, whether as social work or as development communications students. Upon learning that I was spending time with them to know about their experiences, and doing this as a student, the next questions were "Ta entra pa tu eskwela? Bieja ya gani tu!" (You're still in school? You're already old!) and "Maita, way ka makatalos?" (Why, didn't you pass / finish?) It helped that I was introduced as a friend, most of the time the children called me "Ma'am" Chic-chic; sometimes they would call me 'Auntie' Chic-chic\(^4\). Being introduced as a friend also helped dispel some apprehensions about "Pangutan-on unya dai-on kay ibaligya." (Being asked questions then they bring us to be sold).

I feel it helped that the process of data gathering allowed for a lot of flexibility, although I did not realize this at first, too conscious perhaps about the 'amount' of information I would get. I tried to used methods using materials and activities which I hoped fit in their lives.

This section will describe how I learned about the children, from them.

Conversations with children. I had a series of conversations with the children, at least two sessions per child. The duration per conversation varied from as short as ten minutes to as long as an hour. Conversations happened in the park, the street, the bodega\(^5\), the center, by their swimming pool and at the boulevard. Conversations were

\(^3\) Ateneo de Zambaonga is a private school run by the Jesuits. Western Mindanao State University is the state university in the city.

\(^4\) Chic-chic is my nickname.

\(^5\) Storage place. In this place I refer to the place where some of the children live – an area where bottles of all sorts are bought, stored, and sold.
either with one or two children at the same time or with a group of children. Children come in and go out of conversations.

There were no fixed times for conversations. Once, an 'appointment' was made with Sheryl, who told me to wait for her the next day in the office of KKI. I was there on the appointed time, at eleven o’clock, she said, but she did not show up. Later in the afternoon, she told me by telephone she wasn’t able to meet me as she had to take care of her nephew and couldn’t leave her mother’s place. She also told me she couldn’t go to where I was waiting that afternoon because "Ma mud na ako plastic iban metal ha jambatan" (I will now pick up plastic and metal in the wharf).

Some conversations occurred 'late' at night, with some children telling me, after sometime to “Volve ya tu Ma’am. De noche ya.” You should go home. It’s nighttime already. When I asked them why I should go home and "Kamo gane, taqui pa na apuera..." How about you, you’re still outside. They would answer, "Na!, Dialo lang, manada kame, tu, solo... dos lang kamo.” Na! It’s alright, we are many, you, you’re alone... there are only two of you.” These late night conversations gave me an idea of what they considered was safe for whom and where.

Except for the discussion on sexuality, topics of conversations were usually not chosen before hand. Topics were usually related to whatever was happening at the moment - while watching TV, doing school assignments, packing bottles into plastic sacks, resting on the grass, making bead necklaces or bracelets, washing clothes, selling peanuts, eating, playing, coloring mandalas. When I did initiate conversations, I asked questions like "Naunsa man ni?” Literally this means ‘what happened to this’, when referring to a scar or a wound. The discussion would then evolve into a ‘show and tell’ activity. And, of course, I also showed them some of my scars. Sometimes I started conversations by pointing out their sip-on (mucus) coming out of their noses, or the

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16 Sheryl is one of the children, who at the early part of my fieldwork ‘shifted places’ from streets to center to staying with mother (who also lived on the street). Sheryl got to call me when she met two of the social workers at the city center who told her I was still waiting for her

17 ‘Late’ means between 10:30 pm to 1:30 am.
kuto (lice) on their heads. This, too, led to discussions on how they got the sip-on (runny nose)\(^{18}\) and where, or whether or not having kuto is a problem.

I planned to tape as many conversations as I could, whenever possible. However, during fieldwork, I realized that taping the conversations would not be very helpful. I found out early in the fieldwork, and as mentioned earlier, that most of the children had been interviewed already. In my early interactions with them it was apparent that they knew what questions would be asked, and what answers they should give. Draw, age fourteen and one of the older children, in terms of age and time spent in the streets, told me "Dali lang mag-interview sa ila. Nakaagi na sila ana." (It's easy to interview them. They've already experienced it). I did try having some children interview each other on tape, and this confirmed the center staff's comments and my observations about the children's experiences with interviews. Note the following ‘interview sessions’.

First interview session. J, male, eight years old, as interviewer, interviews Wisa, female, age eleven. We were still in the park one early evening, after the street education. The rest of the children have left. Jul and Wisa were still in the park. J felt it was still early to go home, while Wisa was still waiting for her mother who was selling candies nearby. Wisa also planned to go to "Mimpro" (Mindpro, a shopping mall about three blocks away from where we were) after our ‘session’ to beg. J chanced upon my tape recorder when I was putting the su/ocf9 back inside my backpack. The conversation was in Tausug, as both children are Tausug.

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\begin{align*}
J: & \text{ "Uno in ngan mo?"} \\
Wisa: & \text{ "Wisa ...."} \\
J: & \text{ "Pila in umol mo?"} \\
Wisa: & \text{ 10} \\
J: & \text{ "Maita yari ka ha dan?"} \\
Wisa: & \text{ "Ma mud metal, man lemos..."} \\
J: & \text{ "Hain in ama mo?"} \\
Wisa: & \text{ "Awon siya hinang"} \\
J: & \text{ "Uno in hinang sin ama mo?"} \\
Wisa: & \text{ ..(unclear)} \\
J, laughing: & \text{ "Pamparon!".}
\end{align*}
\]

\(^{18}\) Naa koy sip-on may mean two things. It could mean I have mucus coming out my nose when one has a runny nose. It could also mean I have a cold or a runny nose.

\(^{9}\) Sulod is a fine toothed comb made of bamboo. This is used to comb out lice from people's heads.
Translation:

J: "What is your name?"
Wisa: "Wisa..."
J: "How old are you?"
Wisa: "Ten years old."
J: "Why are you here in the streets?"
Wisa: "To collect metal and to beg."
J: "Where is your father?"
Wisa: "He is working..."
J: "What does your father do?"
Wisa: "..." (unclear)
J, laughing: "Liar!

Second interview session. Nitoy, male, age fifteen, interviews Sheryl, female, age eleven. The conversation takes place in the center. Chi has been staying in the center for quite some time and goes to school. Chi is in the first grade. Sheryl was in the center during one of her early visits. Sheryl saw the tape recorder in my backpack while getting the sulod to use on herself and Chi. The conversation is also in Tausug.

Nitoy: "Uno in ngan mo?"
Sheryl: "Sheryl..."
Nitoy: "Pila in umol mo?"
Sheryl: "Hampu tag-isa."
Nitoy: "Maita yari ka ha dan?"
Sheryl: "...di mabaya in ina kako... kadena"
Nitoy, turning to me, speaking in Chavacano: "Deversan se ma'am. Noay lastima de suyo nana conele."

Translation:

Nitoy: "What is your name?"
Sheryl: "Sheryl..."
Nitoy: "How old are you?"
Sheryl: "Eleven years old."
Nitoy: "Why are you in the streets?"
Sheryl: "...my mother does not like me...she chains me...."
Nitoy, turning to me, speaking in Chavacano: "It is true, ma'am. Her mother has no pity for her."

The interview sessions show that children do know which questions to ask and which information to give. This was one reason why I did not continue taping conversations with them. The 'presence' of the tape recorder was somehow a suggestion to the children to ask and give information that was considered 'correct' and to be expected by interviewers. However, I still value these taped conversations and find them very important because they gave information more than just the name or age of the children or the reasons they are in the streets (standard questions to ask).
also provided insights into several things about the children. First, that the children decide which information to share or not. Second, that the children knew a lot about each other as shown by the way J called Wisa a “pamparon” and Nitoy confirming to me Sheryl’s relationship with her mother.

There were also other reasons why I decided against recording the conversations. Conversations between me and one or two children were seldom. Most conversations were group conversations, with me as just one of the participants. I would have found it difficult to decipher what was being said with several children talking at the same time or making sense of what is being said amid the noise of the traffic (if in the streets) or the sound coming from the TV (if in the center). Taking notes during conversations would have been helpful; however it wasn’t feasible in my case. I couldn’t tape nor take notes when playing or selling peanuts with them.

Note taking usually happens during times I would be back in my home or during lulls in the activities (which means the children have ignored me or have left to do other things). Note taking involved reviewing scenes, conversations that occurred during the day or night. I tried to be as meticulous as possible, which was not very easy. I knew I might have left out some things in my notes. It helped that I reviewed my notes together with the people who were sometimes with me when I was with the children. The center staff helped me counter check my notes by reviewing with me the previous day’s, night’s or just-a-while-ago activities. My husband and one nephew, who were with me several times, would help me write notes by reviewing with me what happened during the times we were together. My children and the rest of my nephews and nieces would ask me where I have been and what I did. We would also talk about feelings theirs - and -mine about street children. Describing and talking to them gave me the chance to ‘recall’ to them what I did and where, and what I felt. In a way, they also became my co-learners.

Having conversations with the children was a very effective way of learning about them from them. However, I also recognize its limitation. I mentioned earlier that participants to conversations were very fluid, with children coming in and going out of these sessions, or by just not being there when the sessions happen. This meant
that invariably there would be instances when some topics would be talked about more extensively with some street children and not with others or with some children sharing some information during the early part of the conversation but not being present later when I would want to ask more questions about something they said. I tried to ‘bridge’ this gap by starting some conversations with the children, who were not part of earlier conversations, mentioning some observations and statements, that were made earlier, and wait for whatever responses they may have.

In the previous paragraphs, I mainly focused on how I held conversations with the children. I already mentioned that these were usually done in places where they were and during things they engage in. In the succeeding paragraphs I will give more detailed information about the children’s activities I participated in and where these were held.

Participating in some of the children’s activities. I knew before doing fieldwork that there would be activities that I won’t be able to participate in. Begging, for example, would not be appropriate for me. I knew that I wouldn’t fit in, but also because I knew that I would not feel comfortable begging.

I also felt that there would be some activities that I might be able to do with them. After having been told by some children about some things they do, I asked if I may participate in some of these activities. I particularly asked if I may go with them to collect bottles or scrap metal as I was curious where they got these and how they negotiate with the buyers when they sell these items. Collecting bottles and scrap metal is an activity done by the children, mostly boys, in the center and those who live at the bodega. However, I was refused. I illustrate this by presenting two instances when I attempted to ask if I may go with them. One incident happened in the center, while the other incident happened at the bodega.

Discussions at the center:

- Pogi: “Layo kaayo among adtuan, kapuyan lang ka.”
- Chic: “Kaya man nako molakaw og layo”
- Pogi: “Kaya nimo moagi sa pilapil, moagi man mi sa may Palayan?”
- Chic: “Dal ng man na.”
- Pogi: “Ambot lang”.

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Robin: "kapuyan lang lagi ka."
Pogi: "Dako na gani ka, mamotelya pa ka?"
Chic: "Naa man ko'y nakita nga dagko na, mamotelya gihapon.
Ngano man diay, dili ba puede mamotelya ang dagko na?
Robin: "Basta dako na, magtarbaho na."

Translation:
Pogi: "We go very far, you'll just get tired."
Chic: "I can walk far."
Pogi: "Can you walk on the *pilapil*, we would be passing through the rice fields."
Chic: "That will be easy."
Pogi: "I'm not sure about that."
Robin: "You'll just get tired."
Pogi: "You're already big (old, adult), you'll still go and collect bottles?"
Chic: "I've seen adults collecting bottles... Why, can adults not collect bottles?"
Robin: "When you're an adult, you should work already."

First, I wasn’t allowed to go with them because they felt I would not be able to cope with walking long distances, or walking on top of the rice paddies. Second, because I am already an adult and that adults should not be collecting bottles, they should be working.

With the other group of boys, I wasn’t allowed to go with them, not only because I may not be able to cope with the distance, and the heat - "Maudtuhan ra ba mi usahay galakaw, init kaayo..." (We usually walk till noon, it's very hot), also because I am adult, and because "Babaye ka..." - "You’re a woman".

The above account is to illustrate that participating in street children’s activities depended on how they saw me as a person and what they thought was appropriate for me. Beyond just the physical requirement to walk long distances or the capacity to withstand the heat of the sun, they also saw that as an adult, collecting bottles is no longer appropriate. Added to this, they also feel that collecting bottles is not for women.

The activities I got to participate in were activities that were done both in the

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30 *Pilapil* – levy or dike
center and the park. In the park I could participate in games that they play, or just by sitting next to them, watching other children play.

Participating in center activities wasn’t much of a problem. I could join them during or when they prepare meals. I could watch TV with them. Or I could simply sit nearby their washing area and participate in their conversations. In the center, I participated in ‘peanut repacking’ sessions, too. On Friday and Saturday afternoon until evening, the children in the center would sell peanuts. One or two of the boys would buy several large bags of toasted peanuts in shell. These peanuts would then be re packed in smaller plastic bags. During these sessions, discussions would mainly be about the route they would take when selling peanuts, which areas had the most dogs, what customers want, which area at what time there would be a lot of people. Discussions would also include computations on how many small bags of peanuts would be needed to reach a certain amount and what they would do with the money they earn. It is also a time when the children would decide who would go with whom and where; a time to negotiate among each other about the number of bags of peanuts that each child would sell. It happened that some discussions would become heated and would turn into fistfights. This may be settled by themselves or with the mediation of other kids or the center staff.

Once I negotiated with some boys for me to go selling peanuts with them one evening. They agreed to this, saying we should meet in the center the following day at around four thirty when school is finished. I was in the center the following day but the two boys I made arrangements with had left already. One boy was still there however, and we went out together. We passed through a seemingly endless snaking alley until we reached the main street. We met some of the boys at the boulevard, by the beach, when Akn, the boy I was with at the moment, decided to stop and draw on the sand saying, “Wala pa man kaayo tawo... magdrowing sa ko.” There aren’t too many people yet... I’ll just draw. And draw he did, of some cartoon characters. It was during this walk with Akn that I learned about his fear of the “iro og ang sementeryo sa mga Bisaya.” Fear of dogs and the cemetery of the Bisayans. Bisaya, a term he used to refer to Christians.
I was excited having had the chance to be with at least one boy during one of his activities. This excitement had to be contained however, when at one point, when we met the two boys who I earlier made arrangements to go with, he attempted to leave me with them. He had to go back when the boys told him, "Ayaw biya-i si Ma'am Chic-chic. Kauban gud mo." Don't leave Ma'am Chic-chic. You're supposed to be together. However I could sense that Akn wasn't feeling too comfortable having me around anymore but at the same time he couldn't leave me alone as we were supposed to be Kauban21. So I asked him if maybe I should go back to the center. Akn agreed, also telling me that "Wala'y gapalit sa akoa, siguro kay uban ta." Nobody's buying from me, maybe because we're together. It then dawned on me that we must have looked like an odd pair, a very small boy with his peanuts, and an older woman. So back to the center I went and talked to some children who were there. After a while, some of the boys arrived, including Akn. Akn told me he got to sell several bags of peanuts. So.

Later that night, after dinner, some of the boys decided to go back to the streets to sell peanuts and invited me to go with them. Sheryl, who was in the center at that time, wanted to come, too. After some negotiations, she was allowed to come along with them. However, there were some 'rules' that we had to observe. First, "Ayaw lang mo paduol kaayo". Don't stay close to us. Second, "Kung mosulod mi sa imnanan, ayaw mo og sulod." If we go inside the drinking place22, don't come in.

Going around with the children selling peanuts allowed me a view of where they sell their stuff. This also allowed me to view how they negotiate with some guards to allow them access to some drinking places, the ways of convincing possible customers to buy their products.

My participation in the children's activities also depended on some rules set by them - staying at a distance, not going inside certain places. Or in some cases, being able to withstand possible ridicule that may result by just going out with them. As Elena, a girl of about eleven (11) said, "Quiere tu sige kanamon? Puede lang se. Hinde tu ta tiene huya sige kanamon?" You want to come with us? That's possible. Won't you

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21 literally, companion
22 This is where people, mostly men, spend evenings, drinking beer or other alcoholic drinks. Peanuts are popular in these places because they go well with the drinks.
feel embarrassed coming with us? I asked why I should feel embarrassed. “NA! Baka tiene quien ayla contigo 'Malagko na kao, maiba ka ma mud metal!'” Na! Somebody might ask you, "You’re already big (adult), why are you collecting metal". Again, I may go with them but I should be prepared to hear such comments from bystanders.

To summarize this section, I could participate in some activities so long as I follow some guidelines, and that these are considered as quite appropriate for me, taking into consideration my age, my physical capacities, my gender, and my capacity to withstand ridicule or criticism.

**Taking walks with them.** Aside from the walk I had with some of the children selling peanuts, I had the chance to walk with some others - to go on a tour - to some of their hangouts. Elena, Soraya with Rahman and Sheryl showed me the different places they would sleep - those that are alright when it’s not raining or places which would give them protection from the rain; places they would take a shit; their swimming places; places they would go to when they need food. Once, Soraya suddenly jumped on to the back of one jeepney, hanging on to it while the vehicle was cruising fast. It was also during one of this walks that I learned that Soraya’s father also begs near one of the malls - this was one place we deliberately avoided. Amima didn’t want her father to see her as he might make her stay with him. One boy took me to his swimming area in the wharf. During this walk he pointed out to me and told me stories about the different street children, based on where they are and what they do. At his swimming place, he took some time to swim in the sea. We played a game, too. I would throw metal bottle caps into the water and he would dive to retrieve these.

These walks with the children gave me a glimpse of other things they do (beg, sleep, play) and the places they have claimed their 'own'.

**Doing pictures.** This means several things. One, is reviewing some of the pictures of street children taken by a Spanish photographer and which were put on exhibit in December last year in the largest shopping mall in the city. This was done in the center with mostly children who were based there. They were excited to show pictures that had themselves in it. Be these pictures of children playing, lying down on the streets, begging, sniffing rugby, some said they were "Sikat". Popular. Through
these pictures, they introduced me to some of their hang outs, pointing out some of the boys and girls they knew, describing what they were doing. At times they would also compare scenes in the pictures (begging, for example) to what they actually do. Beautiful pictures, I thought.

Second, I introduced them to the disposal camera I brought with me from Amsterdam. This happened in the park. The children thought it was a toy camera, thinking too, that I was playing a joke on them. I explained to them how the camera works and told a group of them in the park that they may use the camera to take pictures of each other while they were in the park. Things that they do. This particular session was quite chaotic in the way that all the children, about ten of them, all wanted to try 'shooting' each other and to have their picture taken, too. There was competition among them. With one camera having only twenty-seven shots, it was quite a challenge to have all of them have at least one try with the camera. Another group with whom I introduced the disposal camera was the group of children (six of them) who are based at the bodega. After having shown them how the camera works, and after several tries, I requested that they take pictures of themselves doing whatever they do. One asked, "Apil bisa nag talang?" Even including doing talang? I replied, "Naa ra ninyo, kung gusto mo..." It's up to you, if you want. The objective of the camera-sessions was to give them the chance to take pictures of themselves, with themselves deciding on what pictures they would want to take. Since, as mentioned earlier that I was not allowed to go with them when they collect bottles, we arranged that I come back to the bodega several days later to get the camera. At first the boys were hesitant to have the camera with them. "Malingal unya sila nganong naa mi ani, maalaan unya..." Other people might wonder why we have this, we might be suspected..., referring to the possible that some people might think they stole the camera. When I asked who sila, they, is, they replied, "Silang Auntie", referring to the owner of the bodega who has allowed them to make the place their base for now. After the boys have left to collect bottles, we talked to the Auntie. The social worker that was with me explained that she knew the boys when they were still young, having met them in the streets. Several of them had stayed in the center for some periods. Having said

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\[23\] Talang: a form of gambling using some chips.
this, the social worker told 'Auntie' about the camera-activity, informing her, casually that the camera was from us.

The pictures from these camera-sessions were shown to the children who took them and to those who were present when these pictures were shown. A lot of discussions resulted from this sessions. For those who took the pictures, they felt proud having had the chance to take pictures of each other. One picture in particular caught the attention of one boy. The picture showed some children in their 'swimming pool'. One of the children in the picture was a boy naked and wet. Tatting commented that he wouldn't want his picture taken if "way pa ako ma-islam". If I wasn't circumcised yet. This led to discussions on who gets to be circumcised, why and when.

Another activity was using a single reflex camera. I wanted to explore having some children take pictures using such a camera. It was quite complicated for some as there was quite some focusing to do. I tried this with the boys in the bodega with some of them taking pictures of each other sorting out bottles. With some boys and girls in the center and the park, it was more of trying to focus the camera at each other. I used this camera to take pictures of the children in different places, but deciding together beforehand which pictures they would want taken. Some children requested 'solo' pictures of them taken. Jose, for instance, asked that a picture of him be taken so he would have one to give his mother when he meets him. Jose doesn't know where his mother is; not having seen her for a long time, Jose expressed that "Gimingaw ko kaayo sa iya." I miss her so much.

Some children would ask me to take pictures of them begging, even when they don't beg anymore, or while pretending to sniff rugby. I would always ask if that's what they really want. They'd always say, "Dili, pero di ba mao na imong kinahanglan?" No, but isn't this what you need? I'd say no. I told them I have two guidelines for taking pictures. Only if these are what they want to have pictures of, and preferably if these were not posed, or staged. This led to them requesting me to take pictures of them while selling peanuts or washing their clothes, everything else they do in the center, or the park, except begging.

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24 The children's swimming pool is a pond at one end of the public park.
I admit I broke this self-imposed rule once. I haven't seen Soraya, one of the park girls, for quite some time. When I did see her, she was by the shopping mall begging. I was on the motorcycle with my camera. I called out to her. Upon seeing me, and the camera, she waved. I couldn't resist taking a picture of her. Soraya wasn't one of the children with whom I made some arrangements about which pictures of them were to be filmed or not, but still I felt uncomfortable having done taken her picture. Later, when the pictures were developed, and when I showed these to her, she said she didn't mind. She then ask if it was also possible to have a picture of her together with her father. However, this didn't happen because several days before fieldwork ended, she had gone back to her hometown with her sister who came to the city looking for her.

Taking pictures reveal a lot about what the children see of themselves - their image of themselves. It also reveal which images they want projected or not. One arrangement we had was for me to give the children copies of their pictures. I promised them I would do this when I come back from school telling them I needed these pictures when I start writing my 'story' (referring to my thesis). For them, September seems to be such a long time before they get their pictures. One did ask for the picture of him on the bike, to give to his "spenser" (sponsor). At that time, the center staff was looking for people who could sponsor some of the children for school. This included spending for the child's school requirements like some fees. However, a picture is necessary so that the child's sponsor would know how the child looks like, even before they would meet.

I have used pictures before during workshops with men and women from the labor and health movements. Pictures depicting certain situations were discussed, to some extent, became points for analysis, relating this with what participants experience. In this case with the children, pictures became springboards for discussing their situation. Taking pictures of themselves gave them some space to decide on which images they want to project of themselves or of each other. For some, it was the sense of accomplishment of being able to take pictures of the others.
Kuto sessions. This activity wasn't planned at all. It just happened. I learned most of the children, whether they are children in the center, the streets or the bodega, have kuto. Lice. Since then, I would have the sulod, a fine-toothed bamboo comb used to comb out the kuto, with me all the time. It has become part of my 'tool kit' together with a small notebook, a pen, the camera, the tape recorder, the crayons, paper. Having kuto can be both a nuisance and 'nice'. Nuisance because it means having an itchy head most of the time, depending on the number, not that one can count all the lice on one's head, but the more kuto one has, the itchier the head becomes. For some it could also be nice, as a kuto-gathering session makes one feel relaxed with somebody going over your head as in a slight massage. But for most, it is more annoying than nice. At first, I used the sulod to comb out the children's kuto. Later, the children would use the sulod on each other. Several times in the park, Wisu would borrow the sulod for her mother to use. It was standard procedure that every time I meet with the children, some of them would ask for the sulod. Some did prefer that I go through their head with my hands to look for nits, which couldn't be combed out using the sulod.

These kuto sessions were for the most part, conversation sessions, too. These were held wherever possible - the center, the park, the sidewalk. A lot of topics get to be talked about, kuto-related or otherwise. And yes, I had kuto myself several times. And no, I didn't bring any of them to Amsterdam. I do have a sulod with me. Just in case.

The Experiment Cum Stereoscope sessions. The kuto sessions led to the stereoscope sessions, what Jose calls 'the experiment'. Some children wondered where the kuto came from. Some told me kuto comes from the sun. Some children do know that kuto could be 'transferred' from one person to another - "Tan tapon". Several children didn't relate the lusa (lice eggs) to the kuyamad (baby, young kuto). They do know that the kuyamad would eventually become nana kuto (mother kuto). It was Jose who first expressed the possibility of seeing a kuto up close.

The Experiment was fun for the children. It gave them a close look of the kuto. Some other things they put under the microscope included mud. I mention mud in
particular because it generated discussions on about *ulod* (worms) and germs. As in the case of the camera, they had fun manipulating the stereoscope, too.

*Making drawings, coloring mandalas.* The first drawing session I had with the children resulted from a discussion with one boy, Audi, about children’s places (Appendix §). He was trying to describe the places and the proximity or distance these places were from each other. This eventually led to a discussion on the possibility of making a map. Audi and I, with some other children, bought large sheets of manila paper and several colored pentel pens (felt pens).

The first drawing session had some children in the center draw a map of where the children’s hangouts were. Two children worked together on one large sheet drawing the boulevard and the activities they do there - shitting and swimming. This led to discussions on not swimming near the shitting place. Some boys had one partner lie down on the large sheet and an outline of the boy is made. They then ‘filled’ out this outline with some body parts - the head, eyes, and the penis. One illustration had a drawing of a penis growing - "*Se ta queda grande, ta queda largo tambien el pototoy*". The older one gets, the longer the penis becomes. One drawing showed children in a house with fruits and vegetables, sleeping by eight p.m., shaking hands with one another and the word *Malusog*, Filipino for healthy. This was the first drawing that showed their knowledge about health (Appendix §).

Some drawings were done on smaller sheets of paper, both in the center and in the park. One drawing session was done in the KKI office, when we felt it was going to rain. Some of the children’s drawings were about their sleeping places, their bodies, and cartoon characters they see on TV.

Not all children are used to crayons. Some expressed apprehension about being able to draw or color “properly”. “*Marayao, auntie?*” Is it good, Auntie? Or “*Baka mankamali yo...*” I might make mistakes. Later sessions found the children more ‘relaxed’ while doing their mandalas. Some children not used to the crayons were together with those who have used crayons before. They would discuss the colors, making the session an identify-the-color session, too.
About mandalas (appendix 24). I first encountered mandalas when I co-facilitated several sessions of a three week workshop on sexuality for care givers working with abused children, both sexually and physically abused. The mandalas were introduced as one therapeutic activity. Since then, I started using mandalas as part of the workshops I would facilitate. These workshops were mostly among adults; in some cases, these were among adolescents. The adults and younger ones enjoyed the mandalas. Their use was less for therapy. The aim was just to let adults enjoy the use of the crayons and coloring again, which in a way was therapeutic, too 25.

The children who participated in this research enjoyed the mandalas so much; we had to photocopy one set of about twenty different kinds, several times. One thing of particular interest to them was seeing the same pattern colored differently by different children. These mandala-coloring sessions were done at the KKI office, at the center and at the park. During these sessions, children may be engrossed in coloring, but some would eventually start some discussions with each other. Elena told me she will show her ‘work’ to her father. This was how I learned she has contact with him.

Making bead bracelets, necklaces. Some of the children saw I wear bracelets made of beads. Several wanted me to give my bracelets to them. I told them I couldn’t because a friend made them for me. They ask if I knew how to make bracelets and if I could teach them how. So a ‘bead session’ was held in the center, together with the center staff. The children chose the colors themselves. It also became a ‘conversation’ session as a lot of topics were discussed, including size of neck and arms. The session also showed how children related with each other when they shared beads or taught each other different styles or designs.

Play dough session. Play dough made from flour (mixed with salt and water), was shaped into a boy or a girl, depicting different ages as there are children. This led to the discussion about the body, changes associated with puberty, sex and sexually transmitted infections, sexual violence. It was the only session that was planned. This activity was done during the last week of the fieldwork. The center staff wanted to initiate a discussion that would focus on sexuality and relationships among the children.

25 Some felt it was like being children again.
This was planned after 'review' sessions with the staff, when we discussed some girls’ experiences about their breasts being squeezed by older boys.

I now feel that maybe it wasn’t a good idea to use flour. Flour is associated with bread and pancakes - a very important food ingredient - and now used for a “play” session. Would it have been better if we did our session on beach, where sand is available and would have been shaped still? Or would the beach distract them from the topic? But given the circumstances, the play dough session / sexuality session in the center was still a good idea. Comments about flour as a food ingredient should have been addressed before hand - by explaining that yes, flour could be used for learning sessions like the one we had, and that yes, it would have helped, too, if there was extra flour made into pancakes - prepared by them. Clay would have been an alternative, except that it was more expensive.

Only one play dough session was held, mostly with center-based children. One boy from another center who was over for a few days' visit did get to participate.

Learning about the children from service providers

Most of my fieldwork was spent with children, the primary focus of this study. I also spent some time with service providers from both government and non-government agencies, primarily to learn about their programs. Two conversation sessions were conducted with the center chief of the City’s drop-in center for children who provided information about the city’s programs for street children. This was done at the City Special Unit.

Conversations were also conducted with a member of the Task Force, other services providers from both GO and NGO including one other NGO aside from KKI that has recently started working with street children. These were done during the congress for street and urban working children. These service providers, all of whom are women, I have met previously because of my involvement in gender and health work.

The conversations and sharing with staff, board and volunteers of the KKI with whom I coordinated this study, was done in various settings - the park, during street education, the center, the NGO office, during meals together.
Learning about the children from three mothers

Information about the street children was also obtained through chance encounters with three mothers. These chance encounters occurred at the park or the center. I met Benhur’s mother when she was looking for him one Thursday evening at the park during the regular street education, hoping to find him there. He was there, alright, but didn’t want to go with his mother to their house. Benhur, age eight, who sucks his thumb while sleeping, opted to sleep at the center that night. It was from Benhur’s mother that I learned about his age.

The mother of Ibs, male, age 14, and Wisa, female, eleven years old and Saida, age six, I met at the park. Ibs has started to stay in the center sometime after school started. Wisa goes to school but goes back to her parents at night. Saida stays with her mother who sells candy at the pharmacy near the park. The children’s mother would usually sit some distance from us during street education on Thursdays. Several times Wisa would borrow the sulod for her mother to use. Once, when the children have left after the street ed she came to us and inquired about her son Ibs - “How is he doing? Is he doing fine in school?”

The mother of Sheryl I encountered on several occasions in the park and in the center. The first time I saw her, she was waiting by the fence at the park, waiting for the ‘street ed’ to finish. After the session, Sheryl and her mother walked arm in arm towards what I presumed was their home. The next meetings with her were also at the park, as she was trying to catch Sheryl’s attention; Sheryl has not stayed with her for a few nights, having stayed with some children in the boulevard and the park at nights. A few times I see her in the center, trying to convince Sheryl to stay with her; or when Sheryl finally decided to stay at the center, to leave Sheryl’s nephew at the center for Sheryl to take care while she tends to her own economic activity of selling vegetables at the marketplace.

These encounters with the three mothers I found to be very valuable because it gave me a glimpse of what the children’s family situation is like; more importantly, it made me appreciate the struggles that some mothers go through, trying to keep family
together, but also learning to let go if these children feel they are better off away from them.

**Attendance to congress on street children**

A congress on street and urban working children was held on July 6. This was participated by children in Zamboanga who were part of the programs implemented by both government and non-government organizations. It was a one-day activity, a highlight of which was a workshop on issues and concerns of street children. Attendance to this congress gave me the opportunity to see how children get to participate or not participate in discussions affecting them. It was also an opportunity for me to meet other people from different organizations who work with street children.

**Review of documents and literature**

Literature on street children in general and street children’s health in particular, as well as methodology in doing research about or with children, was reviewed. Documents from the Zamboanga City Social Welfare and Development Office and the Katilingban sa Kalambuan, Inc. (KKI) were valuable in providing information about the services provided for street children in Zamboanga City.

**Ethical considerations**

Permission to conduct the research in Zamboanga city in coordination with KKI was obtained long before fieldwork started. This happened when the chairperson of KKI’s Board, with whom I had worked with in the Philippines, was in the Netherlands in January 2001. When I met with him, we discussed how I will be able to continue getting involved in NGO work even while I am studying. We explored the possibility of me doing my fieldwork on street children, with whom KKI has worked with the past four years. Back in the Philippines, the study’s objectives and the data collection tools were discussed with the KKI, in particular with the center staff. As mentioned earlier, the staff’s primary concern was how I would be able to ‘integrate’ with the children given the short time frame I had.
Children’s participation in the study was done by introducing me as an *amiga* (friend) who wants to spend time with the children to know about their situation. It was explained that learning and writing about them is part of my studies. The children in the center and most of the children I met in the streets have come to accept this. An indicator of this is illustrated by the following incident. We were watching a noontime TV show that featured a woman dancing with other male dancers. She was wearing a skimpy skirt which, during some movements, would get raised to reveal what the children call V’s\(^{26}\) ‘panty’. One boy remarked, *"Ese de suyo mga uban hombre ara, ta para ya el pototoy."* "Porque man?" asked one other boy. "*Na, kay ta sale el panty de V..."* replied Ibs. "*Para panty lang se, ta para gale dayon...."*. Translation: “Her male companions would now have erect penises.” "*Why?*, asked one other boy. “*Na, because V’s panty is ‘coming out’ (from under her skirt),” replied Ibs. “It’s just a panty, why should it (referring to penis) stand up....” During a lull in the conversation, I took my small notebook out and started jotting some notes. Draw asked what I was writing and I replied that I was taking down notes of their earlier conversation. “*Cosa clase interview se, bastos!*” “What kind of interview is this, it’s obscene!”. This led to another discussion on what is *bastos* and not *bastos*. The point of sharing this particular incident is to illustrate the children’s awareness of my presence, not as a staff of the center, but as somehow who wants to know about what they know.

For this report, most children’s names have been changed. One of the girls told me to use her real name, which she is not popularly known with, and I have done so.

During fieldwork, I had close contact with the KKI Center Staff. Discussions were often held with them, one of which was to talk about children’s knowledge about their bodies and sexuality. The staff requested that a session on ‘adolescent sexuality’ be initiated with the children. This was done on the last week before I came back to Amsterdam. This session has been described in the previous section.

Aside from the session on adolescent sexuality with the children, one of the last activities during fieldwork was several sharing sessions with KKI. Initial findings were discussed first with the center staff and then on a separate meeting, with KKI’s Board |

\(^{26}\) V, first letter of the dancer’s name
Chairperson, executive director and one center staff. One issue that came up during the discussion was how the findings could be used to benefit KKI, in terms of program implementation. One issue raised was also sharing the research with KKI’s partners in Zamboanga City, and the participation of the children in the sharing process. This still has to be discussed in more detail upon my return to the Philippines.

iv. THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

I planned to focus on a group of children and from this group, choose two girls and two boys for in-depth interviews. However the children I met and have talked to during the first two weeks of the study, both in the center and in the streets, did not belong to a specific group that has a set ‘membership’. Some of the children whom I met as a group told me that “Uban kame”; we’re together, but the next time I’d meet one or two of them, they would tell me they don’t really belong to a particular group. I found out that groupings were not as bounded as I thought they would be. I did get to meet a group of six children, all males, ages ten (10) to fifteen (15) who would fit into a definition of the group having a more or less permanent membership, and have stayed together for quite some time, “Tarda ya’.

I realize that given the time frame for the fieldwork which is six weeks and not having encountered early on a group of street children with whom I could focus my study, I decided that I would consider as research participant any child who is willing to talk with me, regardless of whether I would meet the child in the center or in the street and also whether or not he or she belongs to a specific group or not. Eventually, I would find out that all the children I met had links with the center. This link includes having participated in street education activities, having stayed in the center for a period of days (or months), or having visited the center from time to time.

I encountered fifty (50) children, eleven (11) girls and thirty-nine (39) boys. (Refer to Appendix ____) By encounter I mean having talked to them at least twice and

27 By streets I mean literally the streets, but also the park, the entrances to shopping centers, the bakery and pharmacy.
observing them as they go about doing some of their activities. More than half of the children are Tausug, while the rest are Bisaya, Zamboangueño and Samal. Most of the children speak four languages quite well: Tausug, Cebuano, Filipino and Chavacano.

Of the fifty children, I had closer encounters with thirty. By closer encounters I mean having participated in some of their activities, having a series of conversations with them, having them participate in some of the activities I initiated with the children.

Age, mostly approximates, range from four (4) to eighteen (18) years old. Some of the children know how old they are and their birthrates while others do not. A usual answer to the question "Pila in umol mo?" or "Cuanto año ya tu?" (How old are you?) is "Inday ko", or "No sabe yo" (I don't know). Even the length of time they have spent on the streets was not easy to ascertain. They would answer "Tarda ya" or "Dugay na" ("Along time already"). Or "Diutay pa yo, ansina de alto pa lang". (I was still small, just this high). They would illustrate this by putting their hand some distance from the ground to indicate the height at the time they were first in the streets. Discussions about age and the length of time they've stayed in the streets would sometimes elicit laughter because as several of the children referring to some of them, said, "Biejo ya tu, noay lang tu crisi, hasta ara, ansina pa lang siempre tu de diutay." "You're already old, you just didn't grow, until now you're still this small." The closest information I have about the approximate time the children have already spent in the streets is asking the social worker at the center when these children have first made contacts with the center.

**Who are the street children?**

**Some definitions. De camino o de center, street children pa siempre. (of the streets or of the center, street children still).**

The term refers to a diverse group of young people, who spend majority or all of their time in the streets foraging an existence from the informal sector of the economy or living in inner city areas. They are inadequately protected, supervised, or directed by responsible adults (Wright, et al, 1993:280).
The UNICEF has classified these children into two main categories: children on the street and children of the street. Children on the street are those whose family support base has weakened and who must engage in productive work on the streets in order to help the family survive. They still return home most nights. Children of the streets live on the streets where they find shelter and sustenance. A subcategory according to UNICEF is that of abandoned children, which includes orphans and runaways. In terms of lifestyle and activities, abandoned children are similar to children of the streets in that family ties are non-existent either through death, displacement or abandonment (Lalor, 1999:760).

In Zamboanga city, the site of the research, street children are categorized into three: community-based, street-based, center-based (Street Children Situationer: Zamboanga City, 1999). Community-based children are those who work in the street at daytime, but go home to their families after working hours. Seventy percent (70%) of the street children belong to this category. Street-based children, comprising twenty-five percent (25%), are those who have less contact with their families. They stay in the street most of the time. The remaining five percent (5%) are street children who have no contact with their families, and the center have become their home.

To which of the above categories do the children whom I met fit? Or, do they fit at all?

In my experience, the term street children, and the corresponding categories are not without problems. Tambayan28, a Davao-based NGO that works with street children, also shows that classifying them according to their relationships with the streets or with their families is difficult since “their situation is not permanent”. Glauser (1999) also raised the issue of the terms and concepts used about street children as lacking operational value. The same terms are used in different parts of the world with varying situations, with the WHO recognizing that due to political and economic considerations, the criteria for defining street children vary from country to country (WHO, 1997). Glauser further states that “when talking about street children we may do so without having a clear idea about what we are talking, and in addition, we take the risk of

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28 Tambayan Center for the Care of Abused Children, Inc., based in Davao City, Region 11.
mutual misunderstanding.” Indeed I realize this, and which was evident during my fieldwork, when talking with people who work with street children in my country. This term has come to include children who spend more than five hours in the streets engaged in economic activities mostly with minimum supervision of adults, to child laborers who are ‘employed’ and work for longer hours.

The term street children have different meetings for different people. Akn, a boy of about eleven, and one of the participants to this research, told me that the biggest bulk of street children are found in the main market of Zamboanga City. These children are engaged in selling fish, onions, tomatoes, or carrying the things that people have brought from the market, to the terminal where the public transportation vehicles are parked. However, these same children may or may not be considered as street children by their own parents. According to one social worker, some parents of these ‘market children’ do not want their children to be identified nor classified as street children. These parents claim that their children’s presence in the streets is to work, to help the family economically, and that they have parents to whom they go home to. For these parents, the image of a street child is somebody who has no parent(s) at all. On the other hand, some parents approach the same social worker to have their children classified as street children, stating that the presence of the children in the streets is enough criteria to have them classified as such. For these parents, this classification affords their children some of the center’s services, like being able to go to school, for example.

The term “street children” has equivalents in two languages spoken in Zamboanga: batang lansangan (Filipino) and de camino (Chavacano). A variation is tambay de camino (one who hangs out in the streets). It is a term that the children who participated in this study have come to accept the public’s way of labeling them. They also use the term to refer to themselves. This acceptance has to be qualified, however. The term, broadly used, has come to encompass children occupying public places most of the time. These public places include streets, parks, the market place, and sidewalks - not the ‘proper’ places for children to be, as they are supposed to be in houses and to belong to homes. Hence, Akn’s reference to the children engaged in vending activities in the market as street children is based on the tambay de camino
definition of street children. The children, even if they do have parents and even if they go home are hanging out in the streets, even if they do so by vending. The children do share something in common, which is the streets, but they are also very diverse. This diversity is not only based on their relationship to the streets; the diversity and the differences which set the children apart from each other is also based on what they do to make a living, their appearance, and their relationships with each other. This diversity is indicated by the presence of other terms that the children use to refer to themselves. Again, each term may take on a different meaning, depending on the child who is talking or describing him/herself.

_Yagit_ is one such term, which the children use. The term refers to a group of poor, homeless, _marusingon_ (dirty, unkempt) children. The term _yagit_ was popularized in the 1980s when a television series, and later on a movie based on the series, was shown in the country. _Mga Batang Yagit_ (The Yagit Children) revolved around the lives of children who lived in a _kariton_29 (a pushcart). They earn a living by collecting bottles and other stuff, always moving, with no permanent place to settle in.

Among the research participants, the common image of the _yagit_ is one who is dirty, homeless, and _palaboy_ (always wandering because he/she has no permanent place to stay). It is the homelessness and being _palaboy_ which makes the children identify with the term. Terms referring to the opposite of _yagit_ are _de casa_ (literally, of the house), _de center_ (literally, of the center), which the children who now live in the center use to refer to themselves, having considered the center as their house.

Being _yagit_ - the image of being _palaboy_, homeless and dirty - makes one _hinde hente_ (literally, not a person). A child is a person if he/she has a home. Being clean is an indicator of permanence, of having a home. However, Audi says that "masking _yagit_, pero _hente_"- even if _yagit_, but a person.

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29 A _kariton_ is a cart made of wood; its' wheels may also be wooden but to protect it from wear and tear, a band of rubber may be ‘wrapped’ around it. Size may differ from person to person or place to place. It is usually used as a “container” for bottle and newspaper collectors to put their stuff in. For some, it has become a home. In Cagayan de Oro, another city in the Philippines, some street children are called _boys ala carte_ - referring to their way of earning a living - collecting bottles and newspapers and putting these in their _kariton_ or cart.
Some children refer to other street children as *yagit* because of the distinctions given earlier. Note the following conversation between Wisa and Lando. Wisa is Tausug and a Muslim. She is a first grader; she visits the center because she has been sponsored, together with eight (8) others, to go to school. She goes home at night. Wisa still frequents the streets to beg, her earnings contributing to the family income and to her own allowance. Lando is a boy of about fourteen (14). Lando is a ‘Chavacano’ and was baptized a Christian. He ‘lives’ on a bench of a vulcanizing shop. He visits the center from time to time. It was one of those times he visited the center when the following conversation took place.

Lando, teasing Wisa  "*Samal kao, ye, Samal...*"
Wisa: "*Di ako Samal, Tausug ako...*"
Lando: "*Maskin, igual lang se, Samal... ye..*"
Wisa: "*Dialo lang, maskin Samal, hente yo. Y vo, yagit!*"

Translation:
Lando: "You are Samal... ye Samal...”
Wisa: "I am not Samal, I am Tausug...”
Lando: "So what, it's the same, Samal... ye...”
Wisa: "It's alright, even if I'm Samal, I'm a person. You, you are *yagit!*”

The same girl, Wisa, also refers to her older brother, Ibs, as *yagit*. Ibs is about eleven, and is in fourth grade. Ibs goes home occasionally (*"Ta volve tiene ves"*), spending most of his time in the streets. To support himself, Ibs engages in begging or selling plastic bags at a shopping center. He sleeps in the park or on the sidewalk near the bakery where he does most of his begging. I first met him in the park, when classes haven’t started yet. He was with a friend on their way to rent some bikes. About two weeks after school opened, he started staying in the center. His reason: "*No puede yo man lemos ara.. tiene ya klase. Noay yo sen, noay tambien sen de mio nana. Se volve yo, bien caro pa man el pamasave, kabar noay yo sen...na. bien lejos ga’t kamina. Se aqui yo queda, se camina man, serca lang. Puede pa yo baña*. (I can’t beg now, classes have started. I don’t have money; my mother also does not have money. If I go home, the fare is very expensive, and I have no money.. na, it’s so far to walk. If I

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*Chavacano is the language predominantly spoken in Zamboanga. People who are from Zamboanga are called Zamboangueño. I use the word Chavacano here as this was how Lando was referred to. Other children from Zamboanga also refer to themselves as ‘Chavacano’ instead of Zamboangueño.*

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stay here, and if I walk, it’s near. I could also take a bath.) Staying in the center means he gets enough food, has a place near his school and he gets to take a bath.

According to Wisa, Ibs is a *yagit* because of the impermanence of Ib’s place, shifting from street to center and back to street. Even his place in the street is not permanent. Sometimes he stays with an older boy, Titing, sleeping on the sidewalk near the bakery; at other times, he stays with a group of younger children, sleeping in the park or the boulevard by the sea. But for now, Ibs refers to himself as *de center*. And a *hente*.

*Yagit* is also a term used to refer to a group of six children, all boys, who have made the *bodegahan de bote* their place for now. The *bodegahan de bote* is a place where bottles of all sorts and sizes are bought, stored, and sold. These boys’, ages ten (10) to fifteen (15), main income earning activity is collecting bottles and selling them to this *bodegahan*. The owner of the *bodegahan* whom they call “Auntie,” has allowed them to sleep among the bales of plastic sacks used to put the bottles in, to use the toilet and to eat in the kitchen. They pay ten pesos\(^{31}\) per days which covers the three meals. Sometimes they help out in the *bodega* sorting out bottles and putting these in plastic sacks when some customers come to buy. They may have a permanent place for now, but still they are homeless, fending for themselves, living among themselves without their parents or other relatives. And yes, they too, are dirty most of the time. “Auntie” has tried several times to give these boys some clothes her children have outgrown. “*Gitagaan nako na si/a og sanina, para pagligo, ilis, limpio. Pero suoton gihapon, bisan hugaw na. Ingon ko sa ila ‘bisan yagit, basta limplo, para marespetuhan sa tawo.*” (I gave them some clothes, to change into after they’ve bathed, to be clean. But they use the same clothes, even if these are already dirty. I told them, ‘Even if you’re *yagit*, as long as you are clean, people will respect you.)

Other characteristics of a *yagit*, which may be added on to what has been mentioned earlier, are making *lemos* (begging) and *tan rugby* (doing rugby)\(^{32}\). Sheryl,

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\(^{31}\) One guilder is approximately 18.50 pesos.

\(^{32}\) Rugby is the brand of an adhesive which is commonly used to repair shoes. It is sold by the bottle mostly in hardware stores. Rugby can also be bought in smaller containers, making it more affordable to the street children.
a girl of about eleven, who is not in school, considers herself as a *yagit* because aside from living on the streets, being dirty and being homeless, she is also *ta man lemos* (begs). But she does have a mother with whom she has contact. Jul, eight years old, who goes home to his mother’s place everyday after school also does begging on the side. However he does not consider himself a *yagit* because "*Hinde yo tan rugby*" (I don’t do rugby). Wisa, who calls her brother a *yagit* does not refer to herself as one even if she begs. But as she told me, "*Street children siempre yo*” (literally, I am street children).

*yagit*, a term to refer to street children, has changed meanings and characteristics over time. The children I met are not old enough, nor were they even born yet, when *Mga Batang Yagit*, the TV series and the movie, were shown in the 1980s. Yet they identify with the term *yagit*. The movie highlighted the following characteristics of the *yagit*: poor, homeless, no parents, dirty. These characteristics are retained in today’s description of the *yagit*. There are no clear boundaries to determine what a *yagit* is or is not. However, there are some additions, like *tan rugby* and *ta man lemos*. In some cases, stealing and pick pocketing.

Some people other than the street children would call them *yagit*. The image they have of the *yagit* has a more negative connotation of the children beyond just being homeless, dirty, and poor. It brings to mind a child (or a group of children) who, because he or she (usually he) is homeless, dirty, poor has connections with people with vices, and therefore, it is not surprising that he or she will grow up to be a criminal or a drug addict. A college student’s definition of a *yagit* is *pagala-gala sa daan* (roaming the streets), *nagalimos* (begs), *marusingon* (dirty), *walay manners, kay nagalimos, hugaw kaayo, tapos sige’g panguhit* (no manners, because while begging, they’re dirty, and they’re always *panguhit*)33, *sige’g pangalaykay sa basura gapangita og pagkaon* (always rummaging through garbage, looking for food), *sa lansangan natutulog* (sleeps in the streets).

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33 I do not know the equivalent word in English, despite having asked my American friends about this. *Panguhit* is a way to attract the attention of somebody by using one’s fingers to touch that somebody.
The image of a *yagit* may evoke emotions of repulsion or pity, depending on who is looking at the *yagit*. A passersby may put some coins in the plastic glass of the child who begs, or may put a packed meal beside him or her.

Other terms to refer to street children include *rugby boys*. These are boys who are *lulung na rugby* - hooked on rugby. Most of the children, both girls and boys, I met have tried sniffing rugby at least once, some of them still sniff rugby sometimes, while a few of them are what the children themselves and some of the service providers I talked to would call the *rugby boys*. These are the boys who are high on rugby a big part of the day. I met three of them a few times; one time was when I was in the park at night with a group of younger children. Jameson, one of the *rugby boys* came over to us and started frisking the pockets of the younger children. At that time, he was high on rugby. A common perception of a street child is one who sniffs rugby most times. However, my experience shows that the children have tried rugby but not all of them get hooked on rugby.

**What ‘economic activities’ do children engage in?**

The use of the term ‘economic activities’ is to refer primarily to activities that children do which generates money. These activities are referred to as children’s ‘jobs’ in one document. I referred to these as ‘work’ in my objectives; some social workers raised the issue of the appropriateness of labeling what they do as ‘work’. Ibs calls what he does as "*Tan sacrifice yo, para puede entra eskwela.*" I sacrifice so I can go to school. ‘Sacrifice’ includes begging and selling plastic bags.

Street children, whether or not they have families to go home to, need to earn a living (*vosca la vida, manginabuh*). For those who have families, they earn money to contribute to family needs. Some refer to “earning a living” as work. Working to earn money is extolled as an activity that teaches discipline, endurance and skills (Porio 1994:44).

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Vosca la vida is Chavacano. Vosca means look and vida means life. Manginabuh is Cebuano. The root word buhi means life. Literally both terms mean To look for life.
There is a range of activities that the children engage in, in order to earn money. The money they earn is used for various purposes - to buy food, some clothes at the *ukay-ukay* (a used clothing area in the public market), mosquito coil against mosquitos; to rent a bike, to pay for an occasional movie; to add to family income (usually given to the mother). Some of them do use the money to buy rugby or to play *talang*, a form of gambling.

*Lemos* (begging). All the children have tried *lemos*, this activity usually the first thing they have tried in the streets. This includes begging for money and on certain times, food. It is a common activity especially among younger children, and for those who are in the streets for the first time. Common begging areas are entrances of shopping centers, pharmacies, and public transport parking areas.

Begging takes some time to get used to. According to one of the children, "*Ya imbita comigo si S. Tiene pa yo huya de aquel una, pero tan anad ya.*" (S invited me. At first I was ashamed, but I am now used to it). When one begs, one has to have the *palong-palang* (innocent) look, to be convincing enough for other people to take pity on the child and thus give the child money (or food). The children know that as they grow older, or bigger, the less *makalolooy* (pity) appeal they have.

Collecting and selling certain items. This include *mamotelya* (collecting bottles), *ma mud*\(^5\) plastic (collecting plastic soft drink glasses), *ma mud metal / lata* (collecting empty soft drink cans), *ma mud alloy* (collecting alloy). Metal may include empty soft drink cans. Collected bottles are sold at the *bodegahan sa botelya*, (storage for bottles); certain metals, in particular alloy or aluminum and the plastic soft drink glasses are sold at a shop, which recycles these items. There are more boys, who are usually bigger and older, who engage in collecting bottles and collecting alloy and other scrap metal. Collecting plastic soft drink glasses and empty soft drink cans are usually common among girls and younger boys.

\(^5\) *Ma mud* is a Tausug term. It literally means, “to pick up”. *Ma mud plastic, metal, lata* means picking these up from the ground where they have been thrown or discarded, making a “collection” of these items. When a certain amount / bulk is reached, these items are then sold.
Vending. Vende balut\textsuperscript{36} (selling balut), vende mani (selling peanuts), vende candy (selling candy). Among the research participants who stay in the center, two boys sell balut; they sometimes shift to selling peanuts together with the rest of the center boys who go to school or doing both. Selling balut and mani is done on Fridays and Saturdays. Selling time is from about 4:30 pm until 9 pm or in some cases, until the items are sold out. Selling balut is by commission; stocks are taken from a supplier. Capital for the peanuts is provided by the center. Selling areas are the boulevard / beach where people sit in the afternoon or evening to enjoy the sunset or the cool breeze, and 'drinking' areas in some small stores or the bars. Balut and mani go well with beer or soft drinks.

Selling candy is done by younger children. In this case, most of those who do this are children whose parents (mostly mothers) are selling the items in public transportation parking areas, school premises near the city center, near parks. Some of these children go to school and do the vending after school hours. Others stay with their parent (mother) most of the time but then go to other areas to beg. Both boys and girls do engage in vending, although there are differences. There are more boys than girls selling cigarettes and candies in street intersections while the reverse is observed among children selling snacks in transport terminals and passenger ships.

In the intersections, when the traffic light goes red, stop, these children approach people's vehicles or public transportation vehicles with their wares. Their movement seems to be 'ruled' by the traffic light.

Washing motorcycles and other vehicles. Older boys usually do this. Customers pay the children some amount, usually after some negotiations, to clean or wash their vehicles.

Bisya / parking. Bisya means 'to watch'. Done by both boys and girls, but mostly by boys, watching cars or motorcycles is done in parking places near shopping malls, bookstores, eating areas, the airport, and the wharf. For a fee, children watch parked vehicles left by customers who frequent these establishments.

\textsuperscript{36} Balut. A favorite delicacy, balut is several days old duck embryo, which has been boiled.
Not every boy or girl may be allowed to “bisya” just anywhere. These parking areas are usually “owned” by a group of children. Draw himself “owns” the parking space near a restaurant. Ever since he stayed in the center because of school, he hasn’t gone there to watch vehicles. He has ‘turned over’ the place to two boys who are now ‘incharge’. He doesn’t get a share of whatever is collected by the boys now that he stays in the center. However, neither does he have any intention of ‘selling’ the place over to others, “Inkaso manginahanglan diay ko...”, in case I would need..., referring to times that he might need some money himself.

Sometimes a group of children are ‘in charge’, but do not necessarily ‘own’ the place. They take shifts in ‘watching’ the vehicles. Tating, a boy of about eleven who is a parking boy near a shopping center told me that a certain amount of whatever is collected is given to the ‘owners’ of the place. In some cases, when it is the ‘owners’ who do the watching, they keep the money to themselves.

_Kundok._ To kunduk is to serve as a conductor for jeepneys. Boys do this. The conductor’s main job is to collect fare money from the passengers. It is not an ‘economic’ activity that is as regular as collecting bottles or watching vehicles. I once saw Grande _ga-conduct_ (serving as conductor) one afternoon but the next time I saw him he was watching motorcycles near one of the schools. I asked about his ‘conducting’ activity and he replied, "Noay, tiene yan una comigo." None, somebody beat me to it.

To ‘conduct’ takes a lot of skills, not only to remember ‘how much money was paid for how many people from which place to what place’ but also to be able to hold on to the jeepney while it is moving, taking care not to fall off.

_Shiner._ Boys do shining shoes. None of the children I have talked to now shine shoes, although a few of them, like Pogi, have tried this before. _Shiners_ do this to customers at barbershops while they have their hair cut or to passengers at public transportation terminals.

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37 A jeepney is a vehicle that is smaller than a bus. One or two passengers sit in front with the driver. At the back is where most passengers sit facing each other. Passengers get in the jeepney from the rear. The
**Kargador.** A *kargador* carries people’s things, usually bulky, heavy things, for a fee. They are usually found in market places, in the wharf, and in shopping centers. Rahman sometimes earns his money this way. He carries shoppers’ things from the shopping center to where ever the shopper’s vehicle is or to the passenger terminal. Rahman, age eleven (11) is quite a small boy and I wondered if he is able to carry people’s things. "*Ta puede lang. Hinde man tanto pesao... hinde igual na pantalan...*" "I can do it. It’s not really heavy, unlike in the wharf".

**Abri bag.** This means to open bags. Some children have done this. Sheryl tells me it takes a lot of skill and practice to open people’s bags. She has never been caught doing this but says she will not do it again. "*Umalin se...*” it’s bad, she says.

**Nakaw.** Stealing is more than just opening people’s bags, which for some is also a form of stealing. But in this case, this involves getting cooking pots and pans made of alloy which could be sold at the junk shop, or clothes off clothes lines of houses they may pass, especially if the clothes are hung near the gate or the fence. In some cases, there are no fences at all. Whether or not these clothes fit them, they take them anyway "*Kung naa diay makaigo-an*" - In case it fits somebody, referring to a fellow street child who might need clothes.

Many children do not stick to one particular activity but may shift activities or do several things at a given time. This shift sometimes depends on the time of day. Begging, for example, may be done near entrances of shopping centers usually starting at five o’clock in the afternoon, when most people have left their jobs and have time to shop. Earlier than this, some of the children may beg at pharmacies, or collect plastic soft drink glasses or soft drink cans. At night, some children may be found begging for money or food at the entrance of bakeries. *Parking boys*, especially in schools and business establishments watch vehicles during the day, but may shift to begging during the night.

The activities described above are similar to the activities children in some studies, engage in (Porio, 1994:46-47; Rivera, 1985:12, 14-16; Tambayan, 2001:4).
Engaging in money-earning activities has both an "exploitative as well as a liberative aspect" (Porio 1994:44). Children need to engage in such activities in order to eat, to contribute to family needs. But on the other hand, what ever they 'earn' may also give them a sense of power, sometimes over their parents and other sibling, as this allows them access to certain goods - a bike ride for example, an occasional movie, inhalants - which they would otherwise not have access to in the absence of money.

Some activities are 'acceptable' while others are not. Some older boys, even if they beg, would prefer not being associated with it. They associate begging as something to be done only by younger children. As older boys, and more fit, doing more 'respectable' forms of earning money, like collecting bottles, for example, is considered more appropriate for them. Hence, no pictures of them begging were taken. Among the younger ones, it is considered appropriate to beg. Saida, along with Lamej and Sirdi, had a picture of them taken at the shopping mall. Saida was begging at that time, with a plastic soft drink glass as container. They wanted their picture taken, but only with Saida holding the glass.

Even if most of them had done some stealing, this is one image that they do not want pictures taken of. Neither do they want drawings depicting them as pickpocketers done of them. A fist fight once occurred between Rashid and Pogi. They were drawing pictures of what they do. Pogi did a drawing of Rashid with the following caption: Sir Bashir, Rashid magnanakaw ng wallet. Sir Bashir, Rashid, stealer of wallet. Rashid wasn’t happy about this portrayal, saying it’s not true that he steals wallets.

Sheryl was quiet when Ibs related to me that she used to open people's bags. She didn’t deny Ibs’ story. All she said was Antes quell. That was before.

'Undesirable activities' are 'undesirable'. However, in some cases, necessary.

The presence of children doing their 'economic activities' in certain places, somehow gives us the impression that these are the only places the children stay. However, aside from earning money, children do a lot more other activities in other places. These places they have claimed as spaces, which would allow them such activities.
Children's places, children's spaces.

One hot afternoon, Loida, the center social worker and I, with Audi, one of the boys from the center, were on our way to the shopping mall to buy some materials to use for a drawing session we planned to do later. In the park, which was near the shopping center, we met several children. One was Sheryl with her plastic bag almost full with empty soft drink cans. With her were several younger girls who had taken time off from limos at Mimpro. "Noay tanto hente, kaliente pa" (There aren't too many people, it's still hot). We wanted to talk with them but Sheryl said she wants to go to the swimming pool - "Baña anay yo, kaliente gayut" (I have to bathe, it's so hot). The others agreed. Excited, I asked if we may go with them. The children led us to the other end of the park, to a pond, which was partly filled with greenish brown-colored water with water lilies in it. An iron grill fence about a meter high fenced off the pond from the rest of the park. One boy took his clothes off and jumped right into the swimming pool. Sheryl and the other girls just jumped immediately in still clothed. They were so happy and enjoying themselves very much.

Loida and I couldn't help but be amazed at what the children were doing - not that they were swimming in the pond, the water was about three quarters of a meter, enough for them to waddle about, and with the water too murky to our eyes - but that they called the pond a swimming pool.

I asked one of the boys if they ever got driven out of the swimming pool at times. "Si, se cohi canamon el pulis, ta geria piedra." (If the police catch us, he throws stones at us). "Cabar.." (and then...), I asked. "Sale lang kame." (We just leave). And while we were there, it did happen. A police man saw the children - we must have created quite a commotion, with two adults and pictures of the children being taken by another child - he told the children to leave, but didn't throw stones. Maybe because we were there?

After the children have come out, I asked how they felt about swimming. "Presko ya" (Already fresh). What I really wanted to know was what they thought about swimming in water which I know hasn't been changed for a long time. But I was too embarrassed to ask. Instead, I asked why Ibs didn't swim at all. "Raska se,
mabuling gani el agua." (It's itchy, the water is dirty). "Hinde gani, bonito..." (It's not, it's nice), Sheryl countered.  

The above incident illustrates that children create their own spaces. We related the incident to some friends, showed them pictures of the children too, which Audi took. "Swimming pool ba se, na plaza se!" (You call this a swimming pool, this is at the plaza!). Of course, it was a pond - to us - but for the children, it was THEIR swimming pool. In this section, I will describe a few more of the children’s places and spaces.

The plaza is not just where the swimming pool is. Certain areas in the plaza have been designated as sleeping areas. The open stage at one end is popular especially during a warm night, with several children sleeping directly on flattened cartons spread on the floor or on the benches at the sides of the stage. Benhur and some children like to sleep in the plaza because it is very bright. They prefer the lighted plaza to the sidewalks nearby which are quite dark. According to Soraya, "Beuno aqui... tiene luz.. alla parte noay, tiene daw lutaw...". "It's good here", she say. "There is light. Over there (gesturing with her pursed lips towards a section behind the open stage), there's no light. They say there is a ghost..." When it rains, the children transfer to the casa-casa, the gazebo at the other end, just next to the swimming pool.

The plaza is popular not only to children who are based mostly on the streets. It is also popular for the boys and girl at the center. The children spend a lot of time playing here, doing acrobatics on the grass, riding their rented bikes, or just to sit in between their other activities. It is situated right in the center of a business area. Several shopping centers, some restaurants, a bakery, a pharmacy, a school, is just across the road from the plaza. It is a very strategic place to earn a living, to play, to rest or to sleep. It’s also a nice place to just hang around.

The boulevard is also a popular place. It is a long stretch of beach that is very close to the wharf. At a place near where small fast watercrafts dock is where children swim, too, using the pier as their diving board. After their swim, they may or may not rinse off the salt water. If they do, they rinse off in one of the passenger boats docked for the day, or at the fresh water tank nearby. Another swimming place is at another spot in the boulevard. They don't swim just anywhere. They swim in the area which is
quite some distance from where a sewage canal spills off water from what some children think is waste from the hospital in front of the boulevard. "Manada se sakti" (It has diseases). They also swim some distance from the rocks where they take a shit sometimes. It is also in the boulevard where the children sometimes get some food from small food stalls along one part of it. "Ya pide kame dukot" (We asked for dukot). The boulevard is a favorite place for people to just hang around, too. From late afternoon until evening, people sit on the benches to watch the sunset or to just enjoy the sea breeze. It therefore becomes a place for some children to sell their peanuts or their balut. When most of the people have left, the benches also serve as sleeping places for the children; some sleep on the grass park ('island') in the middle of the road.

_Sidewalks_ are also favorite places. It is not just any sidewalk, but sidewalks near a bakery, pharmacy, and shopping centers. This is where they sell their plastic bags or do _lemos_. Some sidewalks become alive at night when makeshift food stalls are set up. Mostly catering to late night tricycle drivers and some nearby guards, it is also a source for an occasional drink of water or some food. At night some of them sleep near these food stalls, the presence of the food stall owner providing some protection for them. Different people view children sleeping in sidewalks differently, especially if these children are found sleeping well into mid morning when the streets have become busy. But some people leave them alone, too. One morning at about six, I chanced upon Dean and Mike sleeping on the sidewalk. An early morning street sweeper was doing her rounds of sweeping the streets and sidewalks. She was very careful not to hit the children with her long broomstick. At other times, they are driven away by guards because their presence, especially near fast food restaurants, might drive customers away.

Street children, by their presence, have claimed some places and spaces as their own - the sidewalks, the park, the boulevard. It is in these places that they provide themselves with spaces to beg, to sell, to sleep.

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38 _Dukot_ refers to the rice, usually burnt rice, at the bottom of the rice pot. Customers at the food stalls are not served _dukot_. Food stall owners give _dukot_ to the children when they ask for it.
Children’s mobility is not limited only to the different places and spaces in the ‘streets’. They also ‘flow’ from ‘street’ to ‘center’ to ‘house’. For Sheryl, for example, she goes to her mother’s lugar (place) for some clothes, to the center for food or to take a bath, and goes to the streets "Para tiene yo sen." (So that I will have money). These different places serve different functions at different times.

Other activities done by children.

A note on rugby use. Glue sniffing is often introduced among the children. They are believed to provide street children with a good feeling - to allow them to forget problems and feelings of hunger. Porio (1994:48-49) relates that glue sniffing is a means of escape and survival, with the inhalant helping one cope with hunger. Sniffing glue is also a way of establishing one’s memberships to the group, with children having to do as the others do.

Already mentioned in the section that dealt with the terms used to describe children and the meanings attached to these terms, I mentioned the use of the term rugby boys with the term referring to those who are hooked on rugby. I also mentioned that most of the children I met have tried rugby at least once or twice. I say most because two of the children emphatically denies having tried rugby.

"Tiene power," (it has power), says Rashid, when I asked him about his use of rugby. "Daw igual na dragonball". (It’s like Dragon ball). Dragon ball is a TV show popular among the children. They get to watch the series on TV. It basically shows a fight between bad people who wreck havoc over other people’s lives and the good - group of dragon ball characters - that come to the rescue. "Morag galupad", feels like you’re flying, is also one effect.

According to Pogi, "Kung makatira, mara ka og isog kaayo". "When you ‘hit’ (referring to using rugby and getting high on it), it seems you are very brave." "Dili ka mahadlok." You don’t get afraid. However he also says that there were times he felt like he was always "init ang ulo, dali ra mag lago". Init ang ulo literally means hot headed. When one is hot headed, one easily gets angry. "Dili na mao". It’s not right anymore, Pogi remarks. It’s one reason why he stopped sniffing rugby. Sheryl relates
that the times she sniffed *rugby* she felt like everything was turning. "Tan tum gayot". Other experiences include "Makalabad og ulo, makahubog tungod sa baho. (It causes headache, makes you ‘drunk’ because of the smell) and “Dili pud dayong masakitan, dugay-dugay pa” (You’re don’t feel pain right away, only after a while).

I asked about *rugby* helping them cope with their hunger. I received a laugh from several boys. "Dili na tinood uy! Kung mag-rugby ka, gutomon gani ka. Lami lang."It’s not true, uy! If you sniff *rugby* you get hungry. It’s just nice". The center staff made the same observation. There were times when some children who have started sniffing rugby would visit the center. Some of them stay on till lunch. The house parent would literally feed them a lot, hoping a full stomach would prevent them from turning to rugby. However, she says, "No sabe gale kame, ta sale aqui kabar come kay man snack na rugby.” We didn’t know, but when they leave after eating they have snacks on rugby.

A child who is *nakatira og rugby* (high on rugby) is *marag gihilantan* (seems to have fever), *marag hubog* (seems to be drunk), *bisan unsa ang istorya, dili seryoso,* (talks about anything, not serious), *kolor pula ang mata* (eyes are red), *nawong, green-green* (face, greenish), *dugay makatulog* (takes a while before can sleep).

Sniffing glue may have different effects on different children. But common among the children I talked to was the sense of having a certain kind of power, being brave, not feeling afraid, perhaps feeling less ashamed, too. But once the effect wears off, some admitted to having headaches. The feeling of having some power even for a moment is one reason why some children sniff, but the head aches and the fear of getting angry easily is also reason enough for them to stop. Some of the children say *rugby* also affects the *utok* (brain) - *makabuang ang rugby* (makes one crazy) and *mopilit ang utok* (the brain gets sticky or gets stuck). *Rugby* also makes one *niwang* (thin) and causes one to *suka og dugo* (vomit blood).

Though I had on several occasions met the *rugby* boys, I did not have the chance to talk to them about their experiences with the use of *rugby*. Some of the children were quite open discussing their experiences with rugby, but emphatically
stating that they're not 'doing' rugby anymore; some were quite hesitant, joining in only when some of the children would refer to them.

**Making and breaking ties.**

A very important aspect of street life is making new and maintaining relationships. Ties are established with persons that may not include family members. They make relationships with fellow street children, with institutions that provide services to street children, even with the public. These ties have an instrumental value necessary for survival in the streets. They are a form of social capital (Gigengack 2000:122).

In this section I describe some of the children's experiences of making (and breaking) ties with fellow street children, with institutions providing services for street children, and their relationships with some sectors of the society.

*Ties with fellow street children*

Early on I mentioned my intention to focus on a group of children for this study. In my proposal I even mentioned the word *gang*. A gang is a group of children who have banded and bonded together. Levinson and Ember (1996:515) define gangs as "groups of inner-city, low-income adolescent males who congregate for anti-social and criminal endeavors. Although gangs fulfill many other functions - socializing and counseling, courting, dating, sports and recreation - it is the mayhem, violence and other destructive and illicit activities that have capture attention, especially that of media and law-enforcement authorities." The word gang is also used by Tambayan (2001) to describe a group of children who decide to stay together. In their experience, the composition of gangs may include some girls. Also according to Tambayan, the gang is the support structure that provides street children the needed emotional and material support. It also provides companionship and protection. Especially among street girls who, because of their gender, are more prone to assaults and brutality, the gang is the only support structure they can run to. It is also through the gang that the street children learn the ways of street life. It teaches and transmits "norms and a subculture that may not be in accordance with the prevailing dominant culture" (Tambayan 2001:6)
Among the children I worked with, however, the word gang is not used. Children who have banded and bonded together are referred to as "grupo" or "uban". Group or companion. Several ubans may constitute one grupo. Groups are named according to where they commonly hang out. Hence there are Bata Camins/Sta Cruz, Bata Pantalan, Bata Fermen, and Bata airport, Bata pueblo. Bata means child. Membership to groups is not very bounded. Membership is very fluid, with one child being part of one group today and staying with another tomorrow.

Sheryl used to hang out with the rugby boys. Later she hang out with the younger girls but because of a discussion over some money, she split up, later to be back with them again. At the time of fieldwork, she has spent more time in the center than in the streets. Her uban, four girls and three boys, continue to stay in the streets but visit the center from time to time. The girls split from the boys when one of them squeezed one of the girls' breasts. "Ya ase puga de mio dede... bien duele gayot..." (My breasts were squeezed... it was so painful). They were encouraged by Sheryl to stay in the center where they slept for a few nights. However, several nights later they were back in the streets.

Most of the older boys, especially those who have been in the streets for a longer time, have established some bonds with several others. The boys in the center used to be part of such groups. Some of their former 'group mates' visit the center. One boy, Lando, who continues to stay in the streets, has no one with him now. Two of Lando's group mates now stay in the center while some have moved on to the bodegahan. Some center boys remarked that L is "looy" (literally pity). Lando is to be pitied, because is alone by himself at the vulcanizing shop. The boys at the bodegahan don't want him with them "Salawayon kaayo na si Lando. Makaulaw kang Auntie. Silang Amping gipaapil namo kay bag-o pa man, looy sad." (Lando is very salawayon. It's very embarrassing to Auntie. With Amping, it's okay, because they are still new, we pity them).

Membership to a grupo usually starts with an invitation to join one. Once invited, a child becomes an alalay, assistant. He or she will be asked by the others to

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39 Salawayon refers to somebody who is naughty, who always makes mischief.
do several things for them including carrying one’s things, for example. It wasn’t clear to me, though, when this status ends. What Draw did tell me was “Kung kaila na... tanan, apil na dayon ka sa grupo” “When you know everybody, you’re part of the group.”

Children new to the streets are usually noticeable, not only because of the ‘newness’ of their faces (bag-o og nawong) but also because “Duna pay sapatos,” says Draw, “Unya kung matulog na, dili motupad kay dili pa anad. Tugnawon siya. Kami, safety kay daghan mi carton.” ‘Still has shoes’, says Draw, ‘and come sleeping time, will not sleep beside us because not used to it. He’ll feel cold. Us, we are safety because we have plenty of carton.’

The group provides some emotional support and protection, too. The group provides each other warmth during rainy and cold nights. ‘Magtupad, magdungan og lukob sa karton”. Sleep together, and we huddle under the karton together. A karton is a flattened cardboard box used as a mat or as a ‘blanket’.

How about the children in the center? I’ve heard some children call out to them “Bata center!” This was also observed by the social workers. A child in the center is a bata center and the rest of the children become his or her uban. The children in the center do provide each other with emotional support.

Sheryl used to be shunned by the boys in the center because she was always mabuling (dirty). Her nickname rhymes with buling - dirt. She is called thus. She used to be chained by her mother and this stopped because of the intervention of the social workers. Sheryl does not like staying with her mother in the sidewalks in the market. Sheryl’s early attempts to spend nights at the center were not successful because her mother would always come and get her, coming quite late and disturbing the children. The mother would always get Sheryl and bring her back to their lugar - place. The disturbance her mother caused angered the children. Not feeling welcome in the center, not wanting to stay with her mother, either, Sheryl would sleep in the streets.

40 In an earlier conversation, I asked Sheryl where lives. She replied “Na de amon lugar”. In our place. I assumed this to mean their house. The next time, I asked her where her house is, she replied “Ya abla yo contigo, tiene kame lugar. Pero noay kame casa!”. I told you, we have a place. But we do not have a house! Even as I write now, I still often make the mistake of writing home or house, to refer to Sheryl’s mother’s place in the market place. Some habits, and assumptions, take time to unlearn.
with other children. She shifts from sleeping in the park on some lighted sidewalk, in boulevard. But she persisted in coming back to the center. To avoid disturbing the children, and also recognizing Sheryl’s efforts to stay away from her mother, the center staff decided not to open the door to her mother when she comes to try to get Sheryl. Two successive nights, the mother did go to the center. Twice, the house parent didn’t open the door to her. The boys were still disturbed during these times because they were afraid the mother would make a scene. Draw and Nitoy narrated to me what happened. "Niadto ang mama ni Sheryl, gabii na. Wala abrihi ni Sir J. Hadlok kaayo mi kay duna siya’y dala nga bag... dunay sundang. Wala giud abrihi ni Sir. Pero kung giabrihan tu ni sir, unya manghilabot siya kang sir J, duol ra kaayo ang kusina." (Sheryl’s mother came. Sir didn’t open the door. We were afraid because she had a bag... there’s a sundang⁴¹ inside. But Sir J didn’t open. But if he did, and if she would make trouble for sir J, the kitchen is very near.) I asked what’s in the kitchen. They replied, “Naa didto ang kutsilyo. Matabangan unya namo siya.” The knife is there. We could gang up against her. I later learned that one of the boys had been sleeping with a long piece of metal beside him. Just in case.

After this incident, Sheryl’s mother wouldn’t come in the evenings anymore. Once I was there several days after the incident, I saw Sheryl wearing some of her own clothes. "Ya saka yo de mio ropa, hinde ya rabiao de mio nana comigo." I got my own clothes (from their place). My mother’s not angry anymore. Just before I left, Sheryl continues to stay in the center. She has made compromises with her mother, too. The mother brings Sheryls’ four-year-old nephew⁴² to the center for Sheryl to take care while she tries to earn a living herself. The boys still tease Sheryl, she’s a girl after all, and they still can’t get over that fact. She gets into fights with them, verbal fights, fist fights, kick fights, even with her falling flat on her stomach when her kick didn’t land on Ibs’ chest. But she manages to assert her continued stay in the certain. For how long, I don’t know. She still goes out at times to be with the other girls.

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⁴¹ A bladed weapon bigger than a knife.
⁴² Nadz, the nephew, the son of Sheryl’s older brother, is a constant companion of Sheryl during times she does lemos, not because the presence of Nadz is an added attraction, but simply because the mother can’t take care of the child during some times she has to sell her wares (vegetables) in the market.
This account illustrates the kind of support belonging to a group gives. It wasn't just the act of the house parent not opening the door to Sheryl's mother, but the knowledge she have of the boys supporting her, just in case.

Older boys tend to bully younger children, whether these are boys or girls. I was once with Elena and the other younger girls (ages about six to eleven) when an older boy came over and started frisking one of the girls' pockets for coins. "Tan delihensiya kanamori" This means getting something from us. Rashid has also experienced having his lemos earnings taken away. "Ya dale tu?" You gave (your money?), I asked. "Noay yo dale, ya SAKA sila!" I did not give. they GOT it!

It seems that some groups are also built around ethnicity. The bodega boys are mostly Cebuano. Some bata pueblo groups (city center children) are composed of either Chavacano, Tausug, or Samal only, while some groups would have a 'mixture'.

It also seems that the relationships the children have with each other has something to do with age, older having 'control' over the younger ones; size, bigger children being avoided by smaller children; 'seniority' in the streets, with 'seniors' asserting control and ownership on certain spaces and places over 'newer' children; 'seniority' in the center, with 'seniors' trying to prevent the continued stay of newer and younger children43; sex, with boys feeling more superior over girls; ethnicity, with the Samal boys not very much welcome among the other groups.

Conflicts may also occur among the different grupo. Draw related one incident when a grupo gusto mag-atake (group wants to attack). He also mentioned a place where "walaay makaagi nga bata nga dili makulatahan" - no child can pass without getting beaten. This was one of the places we went through one night, when Pogi, Sheryl, Robin, Akn, Audi and I were on our way back to the center from selling peanuts. Pogi pointed out to me one area in the street. A boy, about eighteen, was standing by a street lamp. Behind him was a dark alley. We were some distance from the boy, on

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43 This was evident in the rumors spread about the center having the ghost of a person who committed suicide in the house, long before it was rented to the NGO. The younger children believe this; hence some of them prefer to sleep in the well-lighted park. According to the social worker, this rumor started even before some of the present children have stayed there - a ploy to "drive" away others. To lessen competition perhaps.
the same side of the street, when Pogi told me to cross over to the other side. "Usa lang na siya dinha ga-tindog, pero diha sa ngit-ngit, daghan... pag-agl, mogawas dayon sila." He’s just one there standing, but there in the dark, plenty... when you pass, they come out. It was the territory of the group Draw related to me earlier.

Street children may collectively identify with other street children because of the 'streets' as their common referent; however, even among them, there also occurs the 'othering' of the 'other'.

Relationship with institutions providing services for street children.

By institutions I mean both non-government and government organizations. These organizations provide shelter; food; in some cases, clothing; skills training; the chance to go on excursions. The street children first knew of the existence of the center from social workers / street educators whom they meet in the streets or from other children themselves.

The relationship the street children have with the institutions is primarily with the persons associated with the institution - the street educator, the social worker, and the house parent. It is a relationship that affords them access to services like food, shelter, a bath, books to read, skills training, a trip to the beach, going to school. Some children may not stay for long periods of time but relationships are maintained.

At the time of fieldwork, ten children 'live' in the center. Eight live in the center primarily because they go to school. Some children come to visit, and get to participate in trips organized by the center. At other times, just to hang around. Rashid, a boy who has now gone back to her mother and goes to school regularly, visits the center on weekends. "Magbakasyon lang." For a vacation, he says. Sometimes he goes with some boys selling peanuts; at times he goes off to watch vehicles during the day but comes back to the center at night to sleep. Sunday evenings he goes back to his mother.

The bodega boys visit the center less often than the others. They now spend most times collecting bottles and helping out in the bodegahan. They visit to maintain ties with the center staff. "Bisita-bisita lang." (Literally, visit-visit only).
The rugby boys rarely visit the center. Some of them have stayed for some time in the center. Ties between these boys and the center are maintained, though, in the streets. They may visit the center, but are not allowed to stay for longer periods. They sniff rugby most of the time and tend to bully the younger children who visit the center.

"Umalin alla, ta pone uling kanaton se ta dormi kita. Ya manda pa kanamon sale." It's bad there, they put soot on us while we sleep. We were also asked to leave. Mike, one of the rugby boys remarked, referring to the center. I asked some of the boys about Mike’s comment. They admitted that ‘someone’ did put soot on Mike’s face. Possibly one of the younger ones who gets bullied by him.

Some children may shift centers, too. The boys in the center have stayed in other centers previously, be it the government drop-in center or privately owned. One boy whom I first met several times in the center wasn’t there the next times. Several reasons for ‘shifting’ centers include having conflicts with the other children, or complaints about some houseparents being too strict, or complaints about the food. Pogi used to stay in a center which was previously managed by a "istrikto kaayo ". Very strict person.  "Dili mi kagawas-gawas. Ni-eskapo mi. Tulo mi kabook bata. Sayo sa buntag, nikua’g kape ang guard... Nikatkat dayon mi sa pader." (We cannot go out. We escaped. There were three of us children. Early in the morning, the guard went to get coffee. We climbed up the fence).

Other children also narrate experiences of ‘escaping’ from other centers. One boy told me "Ya escapa yo... ya sale yo na detras." I escaped... I got out from the back. I asked him why he was in that place in the first place. "Ya cuhi comigo." I was caught. He was ‘caught’ during one of the ‘rescue’ operations done to take children off from the streets.

I asked some of the children why they decided to live in the center, at least for now, or visit the center. "Gaeskwela mi, duna mi’y kapuy-an." We’re in school, we have a place to say. "Ta puede come". We could eat there. Some go to the center as a respite from the streets. Lando stayed for several days at the center to recuperate after having been run over by a vehicle. Some also refer to the center as their home. I was once with Sheryl and another boy, when the guard at the fast food restaurant
called out to her. She told him, “Llego lang guard, volve anay yo na center.” Later, guard, I’m going home to the center.

Relationships with other sectors

Other sectors may mean a wide range of people. I will start with the children’s relationship with what I will call the ‘general public’. I define this as people who may have brief but repeated encounters with these children in markets, street intersections, the shopping malls, the bakery. The relationships made by these children with these people are a result of the activities they do in these areas - begging, watching cars, carrying luggage. It is not a personal one-on-one relationship despite the brief encounters that occur between individuals with, for example, a street child keeping watch over a shopper’s vehicle while the latter goes inside the mall. Rather, it is a relationship between the street children as ‘them’, ‘others’ and ‘us’ (‘general public’).

The relationship is a more lasting one. It is a relationship of establishing each other as ‘other’; a relationship based on exclusion, rather than inclusion. It is also a relationship based on ‘utility’ - "Bisya yo de tuyo motor, pero paga tu." I pay your motorcycle but you pay. This relationship is by no means equal, with both parties having some sort of power over the other. The motorcycle owner, because of his capacity to pay the street child a few pesos, has the economic power over the child. On the other hand, the street child, because of his capacity to ‘not-watch-your-motorcycle, hence-others-have-punctured-the tire’ has his (in some cases, her) power because of the fear he (or she) may generate on the motorcycle owner. These fears are not unfounded. "Wala siya mobayad sa ako-a, gilabayan nako’g bato ang bintana sa iyang iyang kotse." (He did not pay me, I threw a stone at the car window).

Another example of the existence of this relationship is illustrated by market goers and boat passengers (‘us’) needing the labor provided by the street children (‘them’). Without ‘them’, we somehow feel powerless. Who will protect my motorcycle from pranksters, (who may also be one of ‘them’?) Who will carry my luggage? ‘Them’ comes to the rescue. We cannot do without ‘them’.


The street children have also established ties with other people, mostly people who spend time in the streets earning a living, too. The food stall owner, the candy or cigarette vendor, the jeepney driver or conductor - these are networks with whom they could have some dukot or an occasional candy, even some money, too. One woman who has a small sari-sari store by the roadside is called Nanay by some of the boys. The boys get to eat some of the food she prepares, which the boys may pay immediately or later. Sometimes, the boys give her fish to cook, collected from fish trucks that pass along the sari-sari store. The boys have made ‘friends’ with the fish truck men. Knowing that the children would be waiting by the intersection, the men have prepared some plastic bags with fish in it for them. When they see the children, these are thrown to the children from the truck.

Security guards are part of the network, too. During one night I was with the children, I asked them when they would sleep. It was already 11:30 at night. And due to my ignorance, I assumed that they should have been sleeping at that time. They told me they’d sleep later. “Ta espera pa kame. Come kame donut liego.” (We’re still waiting. We’re eating donuts later.) I asked where they will get the donuts and how they will get it. “Alia na dunking, dale kanamon el guard.” (From dunkin45). “Compra elle para kaniño? (He will buy for you?), I asked. “Hinde, aquel hinde ya debe vende, ta dale elle kanamon.” Those that will not be sold anymore, he will give to us.

The relationships children make with one another, with institutions, with different members of society, are vital to their survival in the streets.

V. STREET CHILDREN AND HEALTH

“Descansa anay, antes laba mga ropa...” (Rest first before washing clothes), remarked Resty while he and Nobert were washing their school uniforms sometime after arriving from school one afternoon. “Why?” I asked them. “Makapasmo nang gikan ka galakaw, unya manglaba dayon ka. Mabasa gud ang imong tii!.” (You’ll have pasmo if

44 Sari-sari means different kinds, referring to the different kinds of things sold in the store: candies, cigarettes, sardines, etc.
45 Dunkin donuts.
you’re from walking and you wash immediately. Because your feet get wet). “What’s going to happen if your feet get wet?” “Mapasmo, dayon dunay mga beyna nga mogawas... kanang agianan ba sa dugo...” (You’ll have pasmo⁴⁶, and then the beyna will go out... that’s where the blood passes...) At this point Pogi arrives ready to wash his own dirty uniforms.

The day before, a group of boys, with Pogi as one of them, were discussing what it takes to be healthy. During that discussion, I asked Pogi if he could draw for me what it takes for him to be healthy. He did a drawing of a girl between a father and a mother, holding hands together, and a boy sitting on the shoulders of the father(Appendix 7). After he finished his drawing, Pogi gave it to me and left to play with the other children. As I did not have the chance to ask him what the drawing meant, I thought that it would be a good time to do so now, while the boys were discussing about pasmo even while washing their clothes. To continue the pasmo discussion, and to draw Pogi into it, I asked him, “Para dili mapasmo....?” (To prevent pasmo...) “Mopahulay usa gikan sa eskwelahan.. .sa dili pa manglaba o maligo” (Take time to rest after arriving from school... before washing clothes or taking a bath). I then reminded him about the drawing he gave me. “The drawing you handed to me yesterday, is it mine already? I requested that you make a drawing of what it takes to be healthy...” “Mao na man tu...” (That was it.), Pogi answered. “What does it mean?” “Mao tu, kauban mo familiya, mama, papa” (That’s it, the family is together, mama, papa) “Perd” interrupts Robin, “Bisan kauban mo, unya palahubog imong amahan... way ayo...” “But, even if you’re together, if your father is a drunkard.... it’s not good.”

Children’s definition of health.

How do the street children define health? The terms that the children use which correspond to the English word health are the following: Himsog (Cebuano), malasig (Tausug), tiene buen salud (Chavacano) and malusog (Filipino).
Being healthy means *walay sakit* (no illness, no pain), *walay problema* (no problem) that leads to one being *malipayon* (happy). If a person is happy, he/she *hinde keda loko* (will not get crazy). Having *marayao in baran - katan na* (good body - everything else) is also an indicator of being healthy. *Katan* - everything - implies not just the physical body, but includes other aspects of the self. *Dili sige'g away* (not quarrelling often) implies having good relationships with other people with the relationship allowing for some conflicts to occur, and to be resolved.

A physical indicator of health is not being thin, with some children associating a thin body with a *bangkay* or a corpse. Being *tambok* (fat, stout) is not a good indicator of being healthy either, as "*dunay tambok nga naay sakit*" (there are fat people who have diseases).

To be healthy one needs to *mokaon maayo ug gulay, prutas* (eat well vegetables, fruits) and *magtrabaho maayo* (work well) - *mag-guna, mananom* (gardening/farming). *Magtrabaho maayo* also refers to having a job or working to earn a living, so one could be self-sufficient and support oneself. Having *kaibigan* (friends) and a good family relationship are also necessary to be healthy. The children, most of who do not live with their families, emphasize that it is not just being together as a family, but a good family relationship, which is important for health. The story narrated earlier in this section illustrates the importance of a good family relationship. One boy also remarked "*Di magfangog-langog kako*" (Don't make fun of me) as this leads to "*hinde marayao in baran*" (not having a good body) and which further leads to "*keda plako*" (getting thin).

The opposite of healthy is having *sakit*. The word means to feel pain or to be sick. It translates into pain⁴⁷ and is also used to refer to illness in Filipino, Cebuano, and Tausug, three of the four languages the children use. The Chavacano word for pain is *dolor* and painful is *duele*.

The wholistic character of the children's definition is similar to that of the definition given by participants to the *Unang Pambansang Kongreso ng mga Batang*

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Lansangan (First National Congress of Street Children) held in April 1991. The congress focused on three specific needs of the children: health, education and legal protection. A workshop on health was conducted where children were asked "Ano ang kalagayan ng batang malusog?" (What is the situation of a healthy child?) Drawings of the participants showed the following: kumain ng masustansyang pagkain (eat nutritious food), naglalaro (playing), masaya (happy), matalino (intelligent).

Their definition is also similar to that of the World Health Organization’s. The WHO in 1946 defines health as the "state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." This implies that health is not limited to what one’s body feels but includes how this body relates with others and one’s environment. It also implies that health is not just a medical issue; that health is influenced by cultural, gender, political and economic determinants.

Children’s experiences of being unwell and their ways of dealing with them.

To generate information about the children’s experiences of ill health or being unwell in the streets, one question I also asked aside from pointing out their scars, was “Have you ever been sick?” (while in the streets). This received an answer of "Noay man" (None) or "Noay, duele cabeza lang... duele diente." (None, headache only, toothache). This at first surprised me because I thought that living in the streets wasn’t an ideal way to live a healthy life, and street conditions would invariably result to children getting ill.

I would probe by asking, "How about fever?" or "You have a cold now, how do you feel?" an answer is "Tiene ves, malo yo ta sinti.. pero hinde yo enfermo" (sometimes I would not feel well, but I am not sick) or "noay lang se" (that’s nothing). A fever for me is a sign of being sick, but for them it may be nothing.

The experiences they shared with me, following their own definition of health, reveal that their health experiences are not limited to what only their bodies experience. In the succeeding section, I will describe these different health experiences. For presentation purposes, I have categorized these into three: physical experiences, ‘mental’ experiences, social experiences. This ‘categorization’ should not be taken to
mean that each 'category' of experience is separate and distinct, because they are not. Indeed, each experience does not affect only one part of the body, nor just one aspect of the children’s lives. Each 'category' affects and is affected by the other 'categories', thereby affecting the whole person.

"Malo yo ta sinti pero hinde yo enfermo." I don’t feel well, but I am not sick. Some 'physical' manifestations.

Children’s common experiences include problems with the teeth - bulok ngipon (literally, rotten teeth), duele el diente (tooth ache), with one girl having gadugo ang ngipon (literally, bleeding teeth) all the time; duele cabeza (headache); sip-on or costipao (runny nose, colds); ubo (cough); duele bariga (stomach ache) which is related to kalibanga (passing stool frequently) or gutom (hunger); kalintura or mapaso in baran (fever). The above experiences are some of those that would make one not feel well, but not enough to get sick.

Duele cabeza (headache) may be caused by one or a combination of the following: "Por causa na sereno" (because of the dew) to which the child was exposed to while sleeping on the bench at night in the park; gutom (hunger); tan rugby (sniffing rugby); ulan (getting wet in the rain); sol (exposure to the sun); sipon (having a cold).

The children may or may not ‘treat’ the headache. Some of the children say they don’t do anything about it - "Noay." When they do, the treatment depends on what they believe has caused the headache in the first place. "Dormi yo na casa-casa" (I sleep in the casa-casa, literally house-house, referring to the gazebo at the far end of the plaza), says Audi, to protect himself from the dew. Avoiding getting wet in the rain or too much exposure to the sun are preventive measures against duele cabeza. For a head ache due to gutom (hunger), "Ta pide kame dukot" (We ask for dukot). During one occasion, J complained of headache and later asked if I have money to buy some bread. I did and we shared the bread on the sidewalk by the bakery.

Draw who does not know what causes his headaches, which he experiences from time to time and "dugay na" (for quite some time already), just sleeps off his headache (matulog). "Magpahilot unta," he said, hoping that someone would massage
his head. Sheryl, whose headache was caused by her cold and runny nose, also sleeps her headache off. Upon waking up, though, she asked the social worker if there was any Neozept. One of the boys bought a tablet for her from the nearby tienda (small variety store). After having taken the tablet, she went back to sleep.

What about head ache due to rugy? "Wala... mawala lang man.." Nothing... it just (headache) goes away....

*Si-on/sipon/costipao* (colds, runny nose) may also be caused by several factors. "Ta bana na aplaya, hinde tan banlaw" (Swimming in the sea and not rinsing with fresh water). To this remark, Rashid countered, "Kay ta bana kamo lejos na tanke". "Because you swim far from the tank", referring to the fresh water tank in the wharf. Sheryl had runny nose one day which she said was because "Ya bana yo na aplaya, ya puede yo toma manada agua salao." (I swam in the sea, got to drink too much sea water). "So what happens if you drink salt water?", I asked her. "Ara, ta sale ya el agua na naris." Now, the water is coming out through the nose. At this point I wasn’t able to ask further questions and failed to get back to her later. But I wonder how she associated drinking seawater with the runny nose. Because of the taste, perhaps?

Some children also talked about not getting too exposed to the sun because "Se anda na sol, queda manada et si-on" (exposure to the sun makes nose run more). If there is too much sip-on (mucus) "Ase sunga, hasta maurus." Blow it out, until there’s no more. Elena, whose younger sister, Ria has sip-on (runny nose) uses her shirt or her hand to wipe off the sip-on (mucus). One of the boys at the bodega also said "Gisip-on hinoon ko pag-undang nako sa rugy" (I got runny nose when I stopped rugby). "Mobalik diay ka?" (So, are you doing it again?), asked one of the girls in the bodebagahan. "Dili ba... kuan, kung mag-rugby man gud, mouga ang si-on." (Not ba... kuan, sniffing glue dries up the mucus).

Already mentioned earlier, taking ubat, medicine, like Neozept, is also one way to deal with the cold. In the case of Sheryl, she treated the sip-on (cold) to relieve herself

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48 Neozept is a cold preparation, which is advertised on television. The tablet contains phenylpropanolamine (a decongestant), chlorpheniramine (an antihistamine), paracetamol, salicylamide and vitamin C (Tan, 1999: 44, 78)
of the _duele cabeza_ (head ache). She knows that Neozep is primarily for colds, having seen the advertisement on television.

Teeth problems - _bulok ngipon_ (literally rotten teeth) and the resulting _sakit sa ngipon_ (toothache) may be caused by _walay tutbras_ (no tooth brush or not brushing teeth).

Several of the boys at the center others who I met in the streets complain of teeth problems. The center staff brought them to the dentist who pulled out their "bulok ngipon" (literally, rotten teeth). To prevent bulok which results in _baho'g ginhawa_ (bad breath), _mag tutbras_ (brush one's teeth). "Kung wala'y tutpes, gamit asin," If there's no toothpaste, use salt, says Atty. For Rashid who has no toothbrush, "Maglimugmog og asin sa init tubig" (Gargle with salt in lukewarm water).

Elena once refused the _pan mongo_ (bread with sweetened green mung bean paste as filling) I offered her one night. "Duele de mio diente, aque! cheese bread fang." I have toothache, just the cheese bread. She says she doesn't eat too much sweetened food because this gives her a toothache. However, on several occasions, I saw her buy herself some candy, some of which she shared with Soraya, the girl with the 'bleeding teeth'.

_Duele bariga_, stomach ache, is also common among the children. It seems that among the children, this is primarily caused by hunger. Buying or begging for food is one way to address this.

For one boy, the stomachache was related to _kalibanga_ (frequent passing of stool). "Naka-kaon og bulok," (I was able to eat spoiled food). More recently, he had _kalibanga_, which he blames on the _bagon gata_, shrimp fry cooked in coconut oil, that they once had for lunch. _Kalibanga_ made his buli (anus) feel _mahapdi_ (burning sensation). Nothing was done about his _kalibanga_ except to just shit in case he gets the urge to do so.
Every body has experienced *ubo* (cough) and *hilanat* (fever) or *mapaso in baran* (literally, the body is hot) at one time or another. No reasons for these were mentioned, however. There was no mention about doing anything for *ubo*.

For fever, "*Hilanat lang*" (literally, just fever, meaning it's just fever), was one answer I got. Some of the children do not do anything about it. Pao, one of the boys from the *bodegahan*, had fever but was out to collect bottles one day.

Cooling the body is one way to deal with a fever. According to the social worker, a child once had fever and she asked one of the other children to buy medicine. One child made the following comment: "*Saka lang agua frio, pone na tela blanco, kabar pasa na cuerpo.*" (Just get cold water, soak a white cloth in it and use this to wipe the child's body). "*Anda yo na Mimpro para queda frio el cuerpo.*" "I go to Mimpro so that my body would cool down," says Sheryl. Her nephew was once in the center and he had fever. I noticed Sheryl opening the center's refrigerator door several times and she would bring her nephew close to the refrigerator. It seemed like she was going to put her nephew inside the refrigerator and I commented on this to her. "*Para queda elle frio*". So that he'll cool down. Others would lie down for a while and, like the headache, just sleep.

What have been described above are experiences of not feeling well, but not of being sick. Getting sick is when one is *galuya* (feeling weak) to the extent of not being able to get up (*di!i ka bangon*). Having fever, toothache or a heavy cold shouldn't make one get sick. One may feel unwell, maybe even weak at times, but these shouldn't stop them from doing what they usually do or need to do. As related earlier, Pao, despite his fever, was still out collecting bottles. If one 'succumbs' to the urge to lie down when one has a fever, he may get teased. Lando was in the center one day and was sleeping most of the time. He seemed to me like he was sick, and having touched his forehead, I thought that he might be having a fever. I mentioned this to some of the children and they commented, "*Gihilantan.. ikaw gihilantan? Pahilanat-hilanat!* "(literally, Fever...

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49 I remember we did discuss *ubo*, and I reviewed my field notes but can't find anything written about what the children said caused *ubo* or what they did about it. This is what I meant when I related in the methodology section that I might have missed some information by not taping nor taking down notes during conversations, be they with a few or a larger group of children.
you have fever? Fever-fever! Meaning, pretending to have a fever.) To which Lando replied, "Wala uy! Para natulog lang ko."(It’s nothing uy! I was just sleeping).

A fever, cold, headache are what Pogi would refer to as mga sakit-sakit (instances of not feeling well) but not sakit (being sick or having a disease). In the Philippines, repeating the root word is common. In the case of pahilanat-hilanat and sakit-sakit, this connotes something not serious; in some cases, something not real, as in "Paubo-ubo ra ba." (You’re coughing-coughing. Meaning, the act of coughing-coughing is just an act - it’s not real, just pretend.) There are implications of ‘triviality’ or ‘unreality’ (Tan 1987:6)

For some of the children, sakit is related to having a disease - TB, cancer, AIDS. As preventive measure, the children avoid what they believe are sources of the sakit. Audi doesn’t ask for food from a ‘thin’ person. "Plako ya gani! Baka tiene pa elle sakit!". He/she is already thin! He/she might have a disease! A person, who is thin, mentioned earlier as being referred to as bangkay or corpse, is associated with some body who has TB.

At the beach, the children swim some distance away from the sewage canal at the boulevard because this is thought of as coming from the hospital. "Alla ta sale el estaba na hente, aquel tan opera sila, kabar tiene mga sakit... adentro na hente quel. Se man pilit contigo, amo quel tiene cancer, ayds." That’s where what’s from people comes out; when they are operated on, and then they have disease... it’s from people’s insides. If it sticks to you, it has cancer, AIDS.”

Another ‘physical’ manifestation of not feeling well are experiences of sakit (pain). Children’s experiences of sakit also include those that are associated primarily with pain. This category includes sakit ang til (painful feet), samad (wounds), and other experiences related to safety like naligsan sa jeep (hit by a jeep), and napaaan sa tro (bitten by a dog).

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Mindpro, a shopping mall in Zamboanga City.
Sakit ang tii (painful feet) may be caused by having a punctured wound due to having stepped on a sharp object because of walking barefoot (natunok kay waley tsinelas). It could also be due to walking on a hot pavement.

Samad means wounds, and the children, aside from the wounds they currently have, have lots of scars to show their experiences of it. Not all wounds have the same 'pain' intensity, with some wounds experienced to be more painful that others. Some wounds may be treated while others are not. Children who go to the center and have wounds are usually treated. After the wounds have been washed, an antiseptic is applied and in some instances, penicillin$^{51}$.

The boys at the bodegahan whose wounds are sometimes caused by stepping on broken pieces of glass say "Wala lang, pasagdan lang." Nothing, just leave it. For other children, wounds may be caused by other street children’s actions. Ria had a wound on her head, as a result of gidukduk sa ulo con bato, literally, ‘pounded with a stone on the head’, or, in Benhur’s case, giuntog ang ulo sa semento, whose ‘head was banged on the sidewalk’. Both Ria and Benhur are younger than the boys who ‘pounded’ and ‘banged’ their heads. Nothing was done about the wounds.

For another boy, Kardo, he came to the center one afternoon complaining to Lando that he was "gibunalan sa tubo sa tag-iya sa kotse... sa abaga" (hit with a pipe by the owner of a car... on the shoulder). Lando earlier stole the alloy hub of the car, and because of Ed’s association with Louie, he was implicated as well. However, Kardo had no knowledge about Lando’s earlier actions having left Lando at the vulcanizing shop before the act was done. What more, the wife slapped Kardo. To this, Lando remarked, "Ya puede ya tu prueba palmadia de tsino." (So you’ve now experienced a Chinese slap).

Rashid showed me wounds, those that have been treated or not. "Este, noay lang." This one, nothing. "Pero kani, gibutangan nako nescafe, gisagol sa gas. Sa Muslim ba, kahawa, isagol sa gas, piso lang, Ibutang giud sa ilalum sa sugat." But this one, I put nescafe, mixed with gas. In Muslim, coffee, mixed with gas$^{52}$, one peso only.

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$^{51}$ Penicillin powder from the capsule is spread over the wound.
$^{52}$ Petroleum
Put it deep into the wound. Rashied was referring to scars on his second and third toes on his right foot that he said was "hapit naputo!"—almost cut off. His wounds were a result of his right foot getting caught in the chain of the bike that he rented. I wondered if he did use nescafe mixed with petroleum. I inquired if he meant kahawa nescafe (nescafe coffee) or kahawa de Basilan (coffee from Basilan). He meant kahawa de Basilan. Nescafe is a popular brand of instant coffee. Rashid, who is Tausug, was speaking to me mostly in Cebuano, knowing that I don’t speak Tausug although I understand a little of the language. He used the word nescafe, to refer to kahawa which is Tausug for coffee. His use of the phrase Sa Muslim ba (‘in muslim’) meant he was referring to his Tausug language. All the Tausug children I met are Muslim.

On another occasion, one of the boys relates doing the same procedure for his wounds. Tating, a Samal, clarifies in Chavacano. "Ya pone yo gas y kape. Aquel kahawa, kape quel ya pone agua. Aquel ya meskla yo na gas, kape, polbos." For Bontoy’s wounds, "I put gas and coffee. Kahawa is coffee with water. What I mixed was gas and powdered coffee." I again asked if it is nescafe coffee or Basilan coffee. "Kape de Basilan". Basilan coffee, which is actually ground coffee beans from Basilan.

Ground coffee beans (from Basilan), mixed with petrol is used for wounds. When asked why, the children say, "Amo quel ya ensena de amon amigo." A friend taught us this. I inquired from some friends if they know about ground coffee, also referred to as ‘native coffee’ mixed with ‘gas’ for wounds. I know some people put, or literally pour gas into wounds, especially deep puncture wounds in the soles of the feet. This is believed to prevent infection, especially from tetanus. But use of ‘gas’ and ground coffee was something knew to me. Several people do know about this. They say that the ground coffee is to stop the bleeding, while the gas is to prevent infection.

The Cebuano boys mentioned malunggay as effective for stopping the bleeding. However, "sayon na sa bukid, pero diri lisud man..." It’s easy in the mountain (or farm), but here, it’s difficult. This implies that the use of a particular treatment is dependent on its availability or the children’s capacity to access it.

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53 Basilan is the island province across Zamboanga City. Coffee is one of the crops grown in the island.
54 malunggay is a plant that is also used as a vegetable.
Having burns, napaso is one ‘painful experience’. Sheryl relates experiencing having boiling water poured on her leg. This happened in their lugar (place). "Ya llora que llora lang yo. Bien duele gayot. Ya pone yo kamatis, kay manada se baytamins, ya able de mio auntie." (I just cried and cried. It was so painful. I put tomatoes, because this has many vitamins, my auntie said).

Another ‘painful experience’ is caused by naipit ang udat, which means, pinched blood vessel. Tan (1987:64), mentions naipit ang udat, as a concept of a “pinched nerve or vein”. Earlier, I mention a group of boys discussing about pasmo and its effect which is beyna, which is ‘veins’ or the udat where the ‘blood passes’ that ‘bulges’ and is visible through the skin. Sheryl refers to udat as onde ta pasa el sangre pati ta lleva de aton comida... de aton custombre (where our blood passes and also brings our food, ‘behavior’, ‘traits’).

Naipit nga udat also implies a displaced udat, channel, hence a manghihilot (person who does massage) is needed to bring the displaced udat back to its place, or in the case of a ‘pinched nerve or vein’, to ‘free’ or ‘release’ the vein.

Draw’s experience of sakit sa tiif because of naipit nga udat, is not literally pain of the feet. He actually refers to his left leg. He has difficulty walking and once, he asked if I know how to do hilot or massage. Draw says the naipit nga udat is caused by too much walking, and that he experienced this once before. Nitoy, who was part of the conversation remarked that it could also have been caused by Draw’s tumbling (tumbling over, like a gymnast). One other possibility, too, could have been when “nahu/og ko sa hagdan” I fell down the stairs.

Naapakan sa iro (Bitten by a dog). One Friday night I was still in the center to stay with the girls and boys, who spend most nights in the streets, but who, during this night, decided to sleep there. They were coloring some mandalas. Most of the boys,

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55 Either way, the udat is referred to as a channel through which courses blood, food, and ‘behavior/traits’. Sheryl and I were talking about mani - peanuts: and how this makes people ‘bright’ or intelligent. Sirdi was commenting that Sheryl is ‘bright’ kay manada elle sabe. Sheryl is ‘bright’ because she knows a lot. Sheryl attributes this to eating a lot of peanuts, especially when she was smaller. I asked her how peanuts could contribute to making one bright. Entra adentro na boca kabar para aqui na bariga... alla onde na nga udat kabar anda na brain, na utok de aton. It enters our mouth then goes here to our stomach.... there to the udat and then goes to the brain, to our brain. This was when she mentioned that the udat is not only for blood or food, but other things as well.

56 This is related to the concept of blocked energy flow.
the *bata center*, were out selling peanuts, and were not expected till later at night, around ten or as late as twelve. Akn was back in the center earlier than usual. He was bitten by a dog, which was "*mas grande pa conele*", larger than him. Akn was scared. His wounds (about two ‘shallow’ punctures and scratches) at his back were cleaned. The house parent at that time, B, and I discussed the possibility of bringing Akn to the hospital. We were worried about rabies. The board chairperson of the NGO was contacted and Akn was brought to the hospital for treatment.

The following day, the conversation was mainly about Akn’s and the other’s experiences of being bitten by a dog. One boy said, "*Se mira tu perro, sinta dayon, para pensa ta saka tu piedra.*" When you see a dog, sit down immediately, to think you will get stones. The previous Friday, a week earlier, I was with Akn, Pogi, Audi, Robin and Sheryl selling peanuts. I saw how Akn was quite worried about the dogs, but he was prepared with some stones inside his trousers pockets. This time, however, his preventive measure didn’t work. He still was bitten. Soraya narrates having been bitten twice; she was brought to the hospital for treatment. Others shared having been bitten, too, but that there was nothing done about it. Ria, who was sitting on my lap, told me she was bitten twice, too. She showed me a scar near her left wrist. "*Este, ya morde el perro.*” This one, the dog bit. Why? "*Yan agaw yo de suyo comida... yan rebatahan kame*”. I took its food, we were ‘fighting’ over the food.

Other problems include being *masarnas* or having ‘skin diseases’ in the head or the rest of the body. The *sarnas’ wounds* on the head are caused by *daghang kuto* (so many lice, *dili maligo* (does not take a bath). Sirdi had so much *sarnas* that according to Jose, "*Olor perro ya elle!*" He already smells like a dog, referring to dogs that haven’t been bathed. The pus that had developed on Sirdi’s head also caused the smell. Sirdi requested that his hair be cut short, to which the social worker complied. A penicillin tablet was dissolved in water, which Sheryl poured on Sirdi’s head after he had taken a bath.

Some children also had ‘skin diseases’ on the rest of the body. These are usually caused by mosquito bites. Sometimes *katol* (mosquito coils, repellant) are bought by

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57 Stray dogs are a common sight in the city.
the children; without the *katol*, they try to cover themselves with whatever is available to them - flattened cartons, or an extra piece of clothing.

Tating had fresh scabs on his body the first time I met him. He said he got it - referring to what he has - because *'Natug aho ha lupa, awon kagaw'* (I slept on the ground, where there are ‘germs’). For treatment an ‘auntie’ told him to soak *maras* (cucumber) in water. The water is drank three times a day, at six in the morning, twelve noon and then at six in the evening. Plenty of *maras* have to be eaten, too. *"Hindi kumaon madulas, di maigo 10 adlaw."* Do not eat oily food, do not take a bath for ten days. Or until the scabs have fallen off. Tating says he doesn’t sleep on the ground anymore, but on the benches at the boulevard. At one point, Ria interrupted, *"Pone era penicillin"*. Penicillin should have been put, referring to the lesions on Bontoy’s body. When asked what he had, he said, *"Tiene yo udtos."* I have *udtos*. Bontoy was relating his story in a mixture of Samal, his own language, Tausug, and Chavacano. Sheryl and several children who were nearby, helped translate what Tating was relating. However, they couldn’t translate what *udtos* was. Loida, the social worker who was with me, and who was doing most of the talking, remarked that what Tating had looked like chicken pox. Bontoy confirmed this, *“Amo ya se, ya habia de mio auntie, tiene yo chicken joy.”* That’s it, my ‘auntie’ said I have ‘chicken joy’.

"Kung walay problema, malpayon.... hinde keda loko“ (If there are no problems, happy... will not get crazy). ‘Mental or emotional’ manifestations.

Being happy is a very important aspect of health. Despite the incidents of children crying, or of fights between some of them, the children seem so happy most of the time. They play with each other, tease each other, go biking. In most of the pictures I took, there would be smiles. However, smiles and laughter alone don’t indicate absence of problems or feelings of uncertainty. Children do have problems. It is this particular aspect of the children’s lives that I have least knowledge of. Not that I did not want to ask about it. I just did not ask specific questions about this part of their lives, having learned early during the fieldwork from the center staff that based on their

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58 Chicken joy is a name that refers to the way chicken, in a fast food restaurant, is cooked and served.
experience, children don’t usually talk about this to people they just meet. I learned
about this aspect by deducing from some incidents that occurred during fieldwork.

Earlier I related the story of Jose requesting me to take a picture of him to send
to his mother, wherever she is. He hasn’t seen her for quite some time. He tells me
that he misses his mother very much, and would like to see her again. However, for
now this is not possible. Jose sometimes wets his pants at night, and for this he gets
 teased, especially since he is already fourteen years old. The social workers relate that
Jose has relatives, on his father’s side, in the city. He himself has told me that he has
lived with them for a while but had to leave because he couldn’t get along with his
uncle’s wife. The streets, for him, is better.

Several of the children I talked to, to use Scheper-Hughes words (1998:362),
“tend to be sentimental about their mothers“. J, whose father left them for another
woman (‘the second wife’) told me he used to sell plastic bags. Parts of the earnings
from selling the bags, and from lemos he uses to buy food to bring home. His mother
currently sells candies at a nearby parking place.

_Mingaw_ is a common feeling among the children. It is a feeling of missing a
person, a place, a time (good times). Robin misses his mother, but he can’t stand to
stay with his father, who he calls a _palahubog_, a drunkard. It saddens him that his
father beats his mother and hopes for the time that his mother would leave his father.
One Saturday morning, a few days after Robin left his parents’ place for the nth time,
his mother came to take him back. This incident happened a few hours before I visited
the center. The center staff narrated that Robin was so agitated, was crying and telling
his mother “_Glingnan ta ka nga biyai na lagi na si papa, dili pa gihapon ka!_ I told you
to leave papa, but you still won’t! Robin didn’t go back with his mother. Later in the day, I
was sitting next to him and heard one of the staff recalling the earlier incident – of his
mother’s hopes that Robin would be _buotan_, (good), and would try to do well in school.
I asked him if he misses his mother. “_Oo!_” he said, in a very emphatic tone. “_Si papa
lang bat!_” _It’s just papa!_ This statement revealed not only what he feels about his
mother, but also about his father. I later learned that Robin’s father hits him, too.
Pogi’s drawing of a happy family also belied the real situation. His father used to hit him, too. So his drawing may be an expression of both mingaw (missing) for the past and hope for better, happy times. As Amina, my fellow AMMA student said, “Even the sun (in the drawing) is smiling!”

Talking about children’s dreams also reveal what children feel about their situation. Once, in the park, one girl told Loida, “Bonito de mio sueño anoche.” (My dream last night was beautiful). “What was it about?” asked Loida. “Tu daw de mio nana.” (You are my mother). Sheryl also said she had a beautiful dream the previous night. “Ta entra daw yo eskwela.” (I’m going to school).

Children’s use of rugby may also be an indicator of what they feel inside. As related earlier, getting high on rugby make some of them feel like dragon ball characters, able to take on the world and everything bad in it. Even biking, and the thrill that goes with biking, gives them some kind of control. As one boy said, Bonito, tu ta manehe. It’s good, you’re the one driving.

The children in the center for now do not have to think much about where to get their next meal or where to sleep for the night. However, some are aware that the center might not be there always. Draw, the boy who ‘owns’ a parking space near one of the bars hasn’t given up this place in case he needs it.

Other examples of children’s experiences that I feel might “fit” into this ‘mental’ category are their experiences of being ‘slow’ learners, with ‘mental’ capacity related to the brain. Of the children who now go to school, and of those who don’t, they are conscious of the fact that they don’t know how to read. Bangak and bobo refer to one who is not capable of or is slow in learning. One indicator is not being able to read. Several children, who at their age of twelve or fourteen, are still in the first grade. Pogi was in grade three already, but because he cannot read, has to ‘go back’ to grade one. Some of the boys attribute their pagkabobo, being dull or slow, to their earlier rugby habit. "Nagpilit ang utok tungod sa rugby". Literally, the brain has become stuck or sticky because of rugby. This implies that when one’s brain is stuck, it doesn’t function anymore. However, I marvel at the efforts Pogi takes trying to be able to distinguish between L, M, N, O, P, such letters written on flashcards made from carton. Akn, one
of the boys who can read quite well, helped Pogi make the flashcards. Elena, Ria, and Soraya, everytime they visit the center, would request for 'lessons'. "Mag-school kita biyaon". Let's have school today, meaning let's have lessons today.

"Makahuya gayot, mabuling yo..." (It's so embarrassing, I'm dirty).

Several girls and boys, all of who looked dirty even after having taken a swim in their swimming pool, went with us towards the shopping center across the park. We were going to buy some art materials. Of the children, it was only Audi who was 'clean' looking, having changed clothes before leaving the center with us. Upon seeing that the other children were coming in with us, he remarked, "No ma manda kanila sige, ma'am. Makahuya gayot." Don't let them come with us, ma'am. It's so embarrassing. Audi was referring to the appearance of the children who were unkempt and dirty. I, too was concerned if they would be allowed inside. The social worker remarked that she thinks the children won't be allowed in. However, I was surprised that the guard let them in. I guess the guard thought it would be alright as the children were with two 'clean' adults. However, Sheryl had to leave her bag of empty soft drink cans outside.

Inside the shopping center I was very much aware of the 'spectacle' we created – with the children remarking at how beautiful the notebooks were, the wide range of pencils and pens, and the toys. Some store staff were watching us closely, I feel, too closely. I tried to be unconcerned as much as possible. All the while we were there, one of the girls did not leave my side. She was covering her face with her shirt, and at the same time muttering, "Makahuya gayot. (It's so embarrassing). Later I asked one of the girls why she felt embarrassed inside the store. "Na! Mabuling gayot yo." Na! I'm so dirty. I remarked that she wasn't covering her face while we were walking towards the shopping center. "Puede lang quel alla, adentro na (name of shopping center), makahuya gayot." It's alright there, but inside shopping center, it's very embarrassing.

The above incident illustrates that children know when being mabuling – being dirty - works for them or not. Being dirty is accepted of the children in the streets, while they beg, sniff rugby or just simply hanging out. However, being dirty is not allowed inside the shopping center.
The image of the dirty street child inside a shopping center may make some people uncomfortable. Not only those who work there feel they need to be watchful of what the children may do; customers may also feel uncomfortable. This was illustrated when we were at the counter to pay for the felt pens and the papers we bought. A woman and, I presume her daughter, came over to line up. Upon seeing us, the mother immediately pulled her daughter closer to her.

Protecting the interests of the customers is one reason why 'dirty' street children are not allowed inside business establishments. The children know this, having on a lot of occasions, been denied entry into such places.

One such place is a fast food restaurant which is adjacent to a shopping mall. In fact, both establishments are on the same block, with a passageway connecting the two within the building premises. At the fast food center, customers may avail of a meal or some food items for free or at discounted prices, if the goods they buy at the adjacent shopping mall reaches a certain amount. Receipts from the shopping mall need only to be presented at the fast food center. The children know about this. They wait at the two entrances of the shopping center for customers leaving and ask for the receipts. Some customers may not even have the chance to say yes or no, as the child has already grabbed the bag and pulled out the receipt. The image of a dirty child, presumably always hungry, is sometimes enough to convince the customers to do away with their receipts.

Collected receipts are then brought to the fast food restaurant. But here the children, even with the receipts they have, are denied entrance because of their unkempt, dirty appearance. This image of being dirty allows them the chance to beg, to ask for receipts at the shopping mall; but the same image denies them access to the fast food restaurant, even with the receipts they have collected. Elena showed me a handful of receipts one late night at the plaza. She couldn’t use these anymore, having been denied by the guard entrance into the fast food center. Sometimes, though, she may be lucky; she may be with a ‘cleaner’ child, someone who must have just come back to the streets from one’s house, and this child can enter the fast food center. However, at a cost, too, since the ‘clean’ child would demand part of the food. Sheryl
says, sometimes they ask some adults to get the food for them. Once, though, I saw Sheryl outside the fast food center with a cup of ice cream. I wondered how she got it and if she was allowed inside the fast food center. 'Habla el guard, okay lang. Hinde man yo malodo'. The guard said it’s okay. I am not muddy.

Being unkempt may isolate street children as a whole from the rest of society. But even among themselves, they get isolated, too. When Sheryl was still negotiating to stay in the center, every time she visits, she would always receive remarks from the boys about her appearance. And her smell. Once, she did not eat on the same table with the boys because she was dirty. She ate by herself on the porch.

Street children may sometimes be subject to violence by some people. Wisa was on her way to the mall to beg, when suddenly a man held her and push her away from him. It was late afternoon and the social worker, J and I were on our way to our respective transportation terminals. The social worker picked Wisa up who fell to the sidewalk. The man who continued to walk away shouted that Wisa shouldn’t have been in his way. At another time, some children and I were crossing a street when a man turned to the children and shouted "Mga kiangog!" You crazy! Sheryl replied "Ikaw sayan in kiangog! You’re the one who’s crazy!

Street children’s appearance is an eyesore to some sectors. They are literally and symbolically dirty. Douglas (1966:2) wrote, "As we know it, dirt is essentially disorder. There is no such thing as absolute dirt: it exists in the eye of the beholder."

Being dirty has ‘good’ and ‘bad’ sides to it. It may isolate children from other people, but at the same time, this isolation and the image related to this isolation is necessary for their continued presence and day-to-day survival in the streets.

It is not just the mabuling appearance of the street child that tends to isolate them. For the children who now live in the center, who regularly go to school and take efforts to keep themselves clean, being associated with the center for street children, sometimes invokes feelings of shame. School has started for some children and as part of the school’s activities, a parent-teacher meeting was scheduled. The children were anxious who would attend the meetings since technically, they are parentless in the city.
The center staff said they would be there, not necessarily as parents, but as their guardians. "Mahibaloan na karon nga taga-center mi... makaulaw" It would now be known that we are from the center... it's embarrassing. It was embarrassing now not only to their teachers, but especially to their classmates. Robin didn't want his classmates to come up the center one afternoon. One center staff remarked that their classmates are welcome to visit. But Audi countered, "Makahuya, se subi sila aqui, mira sila, noay gale nana, auntie y ma'am lang." (It's embarrassing, when they come up, they will see there is no mother, only auntie and ma'am.) Just before I left, I learned that some classmates have been to the center to visit already. The children must have gotten over the embarrassment of being identified with the center for street children. One boy said he doesn't mind if others know where he lives, since the center is now his 'home'.

Not being able to read is also isolating. Not only for Pogi who had to start again in grade one, but also for Bugsy, one of the boys at the bodegahan. A popular past time in the city, especially in drinking areas, is the videoke. Bugsy cannot join in the singing sessions, because he can't read. He can only watch and listen.

Another 'social' health experience is sexual violence. Violent sexual experience goes beyond the physical experience of it. It is a result of how girls are viewed by boys and how young boys are viewed by older men. Sexual violence is real for both boys and girls, but more for girls.

Sheryl and Elena related an incidence when an older man wanted to have sex with them. "Tiene biejo quiere man jobol kanamor". Ibs and several other boys also relates about the time an older man tried to undress one of their friends AL who was sleeping in the park. Threats of sexual violence do not come only from adults. Some older boys also are threats to the girls. "Ya agara de mio suso" (My breasts were held) or "Ya ase puga si Lamej de mio mama, bien duele gayut." (Lamej squeezed my breast, it was so painful.)

Sexual violence is also something that happens to boys. Draw told me about his friend who, one night, was invited to go on a 'tour' around the city. Instead, the man bought the boy to his house. Fortunately, the boy escaped by jumping out the window.
"Are you healthy"

This is one question I avoided asking the children. However, Pogi's drawing of the happy family and the smiling sun gave me the opportunity to do so. Referring to his *hinsog* ('healthy') drawing I ask him how he sees his current situation, if he thinks he is healthy. "*Dili, dili gud mi kauban.*" (No, because we are not together). But again, it is not just being together, but being happy together that matters.

Sheryl, on the other hand tells me "*Malasig ako biyaon.*" I'm healthy now. "*Aqui ya yo ta queda, ya sale ya yo na de mio nana.*" (I live here now, I left my mother/ mother's place). "But you still see her, don't you", I ask, referring to the times she'd leave the center to visit her mother. "*Siempre, nana quel de mio.*" Of course, she's my mother. For Sheryl, leaving her mother does not necessarily cutting ties with her.

Akn just smiled when I ask him the same question. He was the boy who remarked "*Di maglangog-langog kako*" (don't make fun of me), as this results to "*Di marayao in baran*" (Not having a good body) which further leads to "*keda plako*" (getting thin).

v. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Early in this report I mentioned that the study is based on three premises.

First, that health is not just the absence of disease but a state of physical, mental, and social well-being. Street children's health is not just a medical issue; their health is influenced by cultural, gender, political and economic determinants.

Second, street children have agency. They are social actors who have knowledge about their situation. They make decisions about different aspects of their lives, including their health. In this study I intend to explore how the concept of agency applies to the lives of the children.
Third, recognizing that children are to be studied in their own right, I learn about them from them. I try to seek their stories and relate this as close as possible to how these were shared with me.

In this section, I now make several points.

Through the stories narrated in the previous sections, we see that children’s definition of health goes beyond their physical bodies. Health is not just having marayao in baran, having a healthy body, but also, and perhaps more importantly, katan na, everything else. The children talk about their need for food, having a job, sleeping well. They also talk about having no problems and being happy, about not getting crazy, about having friends and good relationships.

The children’s definition of health, which emphasizes wholeness, is similar to the definition given by children who participated in the COMAC study. The study showed that children view health as wholistic, multidimensional with physical and psychological, mental and social elements in it (Helman, 2000:99).

The street children in this study and the children in the COMAC study are similar in that both view being ill in social terms. But this is where the similarity ends. For the COMAC children, being ill is often welcome, as this gets them more care than they are usually entitled to. For the street children, being ill is not welcome. It seems, it is not even allowed. They cannot afford to be ill, as this may prevent them from doing things that they should do, like collecting bottles.

Children’s experiences of health and ‘ill health’ are not limited to headaches, diarrhea or being bitten by a dog. Their experiences include mingaw (missing, longing) for their parents and being bangak or bobo (‘slow in learning’); it includes being mabuling (dirty) and being shunned because of it. Their experiences involve physical, emotional, mental as well as the social aspects of their lives as children.

Children’s ways of dealing with their (ill) health experiences are varied, influenced by what they have or do not have - food, shelter, family and friends; what

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59 Comite d’ Action Concerte. The study was about medicine use among children with the working title:
they do and do not do - claiming places and spaces, making and breaking ties; what they know and do not know about the cause(s) and effect(s) of their experiences - sniffing rugby giving them a high or causing headaches, or a cold caused by the sun or the evening dew; as well as their knowledge of how people around them perceive them - as vulnerable children who are *walang muwang sa buhay* (without knowledge of life) or children who have knowledge and make decisions about their lives.

The lives of the children, and as a result, their health, primarily revolve around and are influenced by their immediate environment - the streets. Hence the label, street children. However, “reducing street children to their spatial dimensions passes over their social relations” (Gigengack 2000:140).

Sjaak van der Geest during one of his lectures in the early part of the AMMA program said, “Talking about health and illness is talking about social relationships in another language.”

Indeed, the children’s health experiences reflect social realities. Their health is a continuous process of inclusion and exclusion, as influenced by being *mabuling* (dirty) and *limpio* (clean), when being either or the other would be advantageous or disadvantageous. Children may get included or excluded too, because of their gender, age or ethnicity. Being ‘new’ or ‘old’ in the streets also influences whether one belongs or not. Their situation is also a process of leaving and going ‘home’ - of knowing when to leave or go back; of making ties and breaking ties; of negotiations and compromises; of being ‘rescued’ from the streets and getting caught (according to some children).

Despite the difficult circumstances the street children find themselves in, they continue to be present in the streets. They do so because of what Scheper-Hughes calls the capacity for resilience and having a knack for life (1992:446). In other words, being smart - street smart. To paraphrase Gigengack, being street smart does not take away the inconvenience (or so it may seem) of living or being in the streets. Being

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The COMAC Childhood and Medicines Project.

Scheper-Hughes describing the way women and children in Sao Paolo, Brazil survive every day forms of violence.

Paraphrasing Roy Gigengack: “Being streetwise helps to live with fear but does not take it away.”(2000:126)
street smart makes one better equipped, more skillful, for living in the streets. They make decisions about where to go for food, whom to make relationships with, making contacts with people, when to stay in centers and when to leave (or in some cases, escape).

The stories shared earlier are attempts to illustrate how street children make sense of their life in the streets - by resorting to actions despite of, or rather because of the choices that they have. Their presence in the streets is a result of conditions not of their own making in the first place, but these same conditions, constraining they may be, also provide the venue for them to harness inner resources and strengths, enabling them to continue 'living' in the streets in whatever ways they can. By appropriating certain conditions to work to their advantage, they have not been passive receptors of their environment. Street children, by their continued presence and their refusal to be negated, have contributed to the formation of realities in which they participate.

Presenting street children as having agency does not mean negating the conditions that put them in the streets in the first place. Neither is there an intention to romanticize their expressions of agency. The stories illustrate that because they know about their situation and that they are capable of making decisions about their lives, then programs aimed at helping them should take this into account.

The challenge, therefore, is to work with street children in ways that would strengthen their agency instead of constraining it.

So what now?

During the early part of my fieldwork, I emailed one of my sisters about the emotional 'highs' and 'lows' I was going through while doing the study. Several years back, she was involved in the implementation of some programs under the UNICEF-funded Country Program for Children in the city where she lives. She wrote me back to encourage in my work, as well as to 'remind' me about the ethics of doing research with children. "Now that you know... so what?" How can the study be used to help the children at the same time "not raise false hopes of instant haw-as ('deliverance') from their conditions?"
This reminder was emphasized even more several weeks later. I was with Loida, one of the center staff, at about ten in the morning when we chanced upon Lemaj and Benhur sleeping on the sidewalk. We were wondering whether or not to wake them up. However, they woke up anyway as people started to gather around us. After the initial pleasantries of saying 'good morning', Benhur asked me for money. I asked him why. "Bibili ako ng tinapay. Kulang yung binigay mo sa akin kagabi." I will buy bread. It was not enough what you gave me last night, he said. He was referring to the bread I gave him and seven other children the previous night when I met them near the plaza.

Benhur's statement about the bread being 'not enough' struck home a point. Are the services and programs addressing the issue of street children 'enough'?

I am faced with a dilemma here, which is one reason why it took me some time to write this section. One aim of this study is to formulate recommendations that would benefit programs and services addressing street children, taking into account their point of view. I feel uncomfortable doing so. For several reasons.

First, because I realize I have more questions than recommendations. If the root causes of the presence of children in the streets are embedded in the economic and social conditions, how are programs aimed at helping children addressing structural issues? Are we ready to go beyond just the 'provision of bread' and the dropping of the occasional coin (read: charity) to address issues of poverty and unequal distribution of wealth? How do we address unequal gender relations in children's homes as well as among the children themselves who are now in the streets? What can programs do and not do?

Another difficulty in formulating recommendations is related to the issue of participation. If I recognize children's agency, then recommendations about issues affecting them should be formulated along with them. This could have been done during fieldwork; however, time was a constraint in this case.

And this is one recommendation I could make at this point. To continue working with the children involved in this study, as well as with KKI with whom I undertook this study. Recommendations that would enhance programs and services should take into
account street children's experiences, including their need to be in the streets, at the same time recognizing that their continued presence in the streets may be detrimental to them in the long run.
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APPENDIX 1: Children I met and learned from

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Legend:
* - approximates
/+ - is brought along by his aunt

translation:
lemos - begging
mamotelya - collect bottles
mamud metal - collect metal
mamud plastic - collect plastic
vende balut - sell balut
vende mani - sell peanuts
bisya - watch (vehicles)
vende ice candy - sell ice candy
konduk - conductor of jeepneys
### APPENDIX 2: Children I met and learned from

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Legend:

* - approximate age
+ - goes home at night
APPENDIX 3

Guide for Focus Group Discussions with Street Children

A. Themes. Several FGDs will be conducted with street children on several themes, which include the following:

1. Experiences of everyday life

   - what are their reasons for leaving home?
   - What is a day like?
     - what do they do every day and where?
     - What are their reasons for engaging in such activities?
     - With whom do they do these activities? Why?
     - What do these activities mean to them?
   - do they establish relationships with other people?
     - with whom and why?
     - how do they establish these relationships?
     - to what extent are these relationships?
     - What meanings do they give to these relationships?
     - What do they see as the impact of these relationships? In what ways?
   - where do they do their activities and why?
     - what processes are involved in establishing these places? (claiming places and spaces)
     - with whom do they do these processes?
   - what are their views about how their experiences of everyday life impact on their health and well being?

2. Concept of health, illness and well-being

   - what terms are used for health and illness?
   - What are their perceptions of their health status?
   - How do they keep healthy?
   - What are their illness experiences?
     - What do they perceive as illness experiences?
     - how does one get sick?
     - what happens when one gets sick?
     - Does anybody take care of them when they get sick? Who? How?
     - how do they recognize symptoms of ill health?
     - How do they decide on treatment?
     - how does one know if one is getting better?
     - How, where and from whom do they seek help for their illness experiences?
   - What are their notions of safety and risk?
   - How and where did / do they learn ways of keeping healthy or seeking help?
   - What do they see as causes and consequences of their health experiences?
3. **Factors associated with their situation**

- What are their experiences about the causes of their situation?
- What do they know about the public’s perceptions about street children?
  - how did they know about these perceptions?
  - How do they experience these perceptions?
- Are they aware of terms used to describe them?
  - what are these terms?
  - Who uses these terms?
  - What do they think about these terms?

4. **Care arrangement and needs for support and protection**

- what are their needs?
- What have they done to address their needs?
- How may these needs be addressed?
- Do they know of programs and services addressing their situation?
  - if yes, what are these programs?
  - How did they know about these programs?
  - What are their experiences with these programs?

5. **Initial results of research**

- an FGD to share initial results will be conducted with the street children. This will also be a venue for issues to be clarified.
- This FGD will also be a time for firming up the list of recommendations they may have on how programs addressing their situation could be enhanced. A list of things they may do by themselves may also be drawn up, identifying areas where support is needed and from whom.

**B. Participants** to the FGD will depend to a large extent on the street children. As they know whom the other street children are, they may suggest on the participation of others. It may be necessary to collectively draw up a criteria with the street children on who may attend and why.

**C. Venue.** Flexibility in the venues where the FGDs may be held should be exercised. Venues may include the streets or other areas where they congregate or the center for street children. The researcher will have to be guided by the street children themselves on venues that are appropriate and acceptable to both the researcher and street children.
D. Tools. The following are some of the activities that I may do as part of the FGDs. The appropriateness and effectiveness of these activities in generating information from street children with street children cannot be ascertained as of the moment. The researcher will have to consult with the street educators of the KKI as well as with street children who will participate in the pre-test of the interview guide, and the FGD participants themselves. Some tools may be developed in the field.

1. word association game

- to generate terms used to describe concepts like health, illness, sex, terms describing themselves (for example: rugby boys, referring to the type of glue they sniff).
- street children themselves may write the words on separate sheets of paper or the facilitator does this at first (especially when she doesn’t know yet who knows or does not know how to read and write)
- a free list of words describing some concepts will be made.
- A discussion on the words and what these words mean will be done.

2. drawings

- drawings may be done as starting points for discussion. the street children may be asked to draw certain aspects of their street life. The questions, "what did you do yesterday", "where do you usually hang out", may be asked. Drawings will then be done on what they do during the day, from the time they wake up until they go to sleep. These drawing sessions may help give insight on what street children do, where, when, and with whom. The drawings will give a visual representation of their living and working environments. A discussion on the drawings will also draw answers to why these activities are done.
- Drawing sessions may also be done to surface street children’s concepts of how their bodies look like. A session on "drawing my body" will be done. They will be invited to draw an image of their body, labeling the different body parts with their own terms.
- Drawings may be done individually, in pairs or in groups.
- Drawings will be presented to others and will be discussed. Clarifications will be made regarding the use of certain terms, the presence or absence of certain places (or body parts), or other issues that may arise during the sharing session.

Again, care should be done to allow for the participation of everybody, taking into account the comfortability or uneasiness of using art materials like paints, chalk or crayons. Researcher should be sensitive to verbal and non-verbal cues that would give insight on which children have used or not used such materials.
3. Body work exercise

- this is primarily an exercise, which involves the touching of certain body parts, a getting-to-know-my-body activity. The action song “Kini ang ulo...” (This is my head) will first be introduced. The song allows participants to
  Ø rotate their head
  Ø roll their eyes
  Ø “whirl whirl” their shoulders
  Ø “kiay-kiay” the waist (I can’t find an appropriate equivalent English word)
  Ø “igwad-igwad” the butt
  Ø bend the knees
  Ø shake the whole body
- another activity is doing self-shiatsu, which involves massaging one-self
  Ø rain falling on head
  Ø squeezing shoulders
  Ø tapping arms
  Ø rotating hips
  Ø fists “walking” down side of legs
  Ø bending forward, backward, sideways
  Ø reaching for the sky / reaching for the earth
- there are other variations, which may be evolved later on in the field.
- After each exercise, participants will be asked to describe feelings about their bodies
  Ø which part was easiest / hardest to move and why
  Ø which movements were easiest / hardest to do and why
- succeeding exercises will involve surfacing issues about what they like best or least about their bodies and why
- The bodywork exercises may be used as starting points for discussions on body image, adolescent health and sexuality.

4. Role plays / skits

- these may also be done to surface information about their everyday life. The street children will be acting out activities they do themselves. Prior to the conduct of role plays and skits, a body work exercise will be done to help lessen possible inhibitions about using one’s body to illustrate certain aspects of their lives.

5. Songs

- The street children will be asked to give titles of songs or sing songs, which they know. A discussion on what these songs are about and what is striking about these songs will be done.
- A next step will be to invite the street children to make their own songs based about their activities.
- This will then be the starting point for discussion on the theme “everyday experiences of street life”