Earning Childhood in Manila, Philippines: Working children’s agency in their everyday life

Yuko Kitada

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This thesis is the original work of the author except where otherwise acknowledged.

Yuko Kitada

Department of Anthropology
Division of Society and Environment
Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies
The Australian National University
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Abstract

This is an ethnography of working children in an urban low-income neighbourhood in Manila, the Philippines. What does it mean for the children to be working? In answering this question, I aim to bring in the children’s point of view in understanding childhood in order to account for their agency. Previous studies of working children have focused on social structures in accounting for the situation of working children, and laid less emphasis on the capacity, agency and power of children to craft their own lives under difficult conditions of poverty and deprivation. This thesis tries to give a more balanced picture of working children’s lives than was often the case in previous reports of child labour, that is, children as victims of poverty.

Studies of childhood in social sciences have largely been characterised by the ‘socialisation’ paradigm which viewed children as blank slates to be written on, and as objects of adult activities. Since the late 1980s, a new paradigm, often referred to as the ‘new sociology of childhood’, emerged. This called for recognition of children as social actors with their own view of the world that may be different from adults.

A particular concept of childhood emerged by the early 20th century in industrialising countries that childhood is a special period in one’s life characterised by innocence and dependency. Within that concept, study and play are deemed appropriate for children, but not work or adult-like responsibilities. One main argument condemning child labour is based on this particular concept of childhood which sees working children as being denied childhood.

However, work is an important part of childhood in the context of poverty in Paco and Pandacan, Manila. I argue that contrary to the imagery of ‘lost childhood’ of working children, working children in Paco and Pandacan, in fact, ‘earn’ their own childhood through working. Work makes it possible for the children to have what they consider important in their lives, namely education and being part of the family.

The particular concept of childhood with the image of children as vulnerable and dependent, and in need of protection, has increasingly become an ‘international gold standard’ for childhood. However, this thesis argues that denying children work
marginalises them from production of value and hinders us from recognising children’s active contribution to their own lives as well as to others.
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Glossary of Tagalog words

aliping namamahay slaves who can own property
aliping saguiguilid slaves who are property of the household
anak child, as in one’s offspring (‘daughter’ or ‘son’) 
até ‘elder sister’ (a term of address)
balut boiled fertilised duck egg
baon daily pocket money to buy food and/or school supplies
(barangay) the lowest political administrative unit of the Philippine government
barangay tanod community watchman of a barangay
basahan rag for cleaning various surfaces
basura rubbish
basurero rubbish collector
bata child, as in very young person
bibingka sweet rice cake
champorado chocolate-flavoured rice porridge typically eaten for breakfast
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>chicharon</td>
<td>deep-fried pork rind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>Chinese jump rope (children’s game)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dinuguan</td>
<td>pork blood stew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jeepney</td>
<td>passenger vehicle and common public transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kaldereta</td>
<td>meat stew</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kanin</td>
<td>steamed rice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>komunidad</td>
<td>community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>labandera</td>
<td>laundry woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>looban</td>
<td>literally ‘interior’, referring to the residential area enclosed by the main streets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lugaw</td>
<td>savoury rice porridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mag-Japan</td>
<td>to go to Japan to work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mami</td>
<td>soup noodles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meryenda</td>
<td>a morning or an afternoon snack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mongo</td>
<td>savoury mung beans dish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nanay</td>
<td>‘mother’ (a term of address)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>obras pias</td>
<td>work of piety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pa-extra-extra</td>
<td>people who gets to work in construction only when they are called</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pakikisama</td>
<td>a Filipino social value meaning ‘co-existing peacefully and pleasantly together’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>palabok</td>
<td>a type of fried noodles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>palamig</td>
<td>cold drink made with brown sugar and small pieces of jelly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>palamunin</td>
<td>a term for someone who does not work or help others, but who simply ‘eats and sleeps’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pan de sal</td>
<td>small loaf of bread in the shape of a bun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>piko</td>
<td>a version of hopscotch (children’s game)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>planchadora</td>
<td>a woman who irons clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>santol</td>
<td>citrus fruit from the sandor tree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sari-sari store</td>
<td>a local corner store which retails various items of daily needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sinigang</td>
<td>sour soup with fish or meat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suki</td>
<td>a regular customer or client</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tatay</td>
<td>father (a term of address)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tindera</td>
<td>a (female) shopkeeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tinolang manok</td>
<td>chicken soup cooked with herbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tito</td>
<td>‘uncle’ (a term of address)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trabaho</td>
<td>work; job; employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>turon</td>
<td>banana and jackfruit wrapped in spring roll skin and deep-fried</td>
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<tr>
<td>ulam</td>
<td>a meat, fish, or vegetable dish to be eaten with rice at a meal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>utang na loob</td>
<td>a Filipino social concept, meaning ‘debt of gratitude’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>walang hiya</td>
<td>a Filipino social concept, meaning ‘shameless’</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
List of Acronyms

AusAID  the Australian government’s overseas aid program
BBK    *Bantay Bata sa Komunidad* (community child-watch centre)
CRC    United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
ILO    International Labour Organisation
IPEC   International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour
IYC    International Year of the Child
NGO    Non-Governmental Organisation
PO     People’s Organisation
UN     United Nations
UNICEF United Nations Children’s Fund
UP     University of the Philippines
Introduction

Prologue

Bong is a 10-year old boy living in rural Philippines. His father is injured and cannot work, and his mother does not have work either, so Bong decides to go to the local plantation and do some weed cutting with a big sickle. It is backbreaking work under the glaring sun, and he only receives 40 pesos\(^1\), or just over one Australian dollar, a day. He sometimes cuts himself with the sickle and bleeds, but he has to go back to work the next day because he is now the sole breadwinner of the family. When his father was well and working, Bong used to go to school. He wanted to continue studying, and had a dream of becoming a teacher, but he had no choice and had to give that up in order to support his family.\(^2\)

Today, there are said to be 250 million\(^3\) such 'child labourers' in the world, 'toiling their childhood away' in agriculture, fishing, bonded labour, prostitution, and so on. Stories of children such as Bong have become familiar to us through the media coverage over the years. It is frequently reported as a depressing story of poverty, exploitation, and lost childhood. Bong is a victim of poverty, a vulnerable child who needs to be protected and be saved. But what does Bong say about his life? How will he tell his story? Will he describe himself as a victim?

I first became interested in 'child labour' several years ago when I saw a television documentary about child scavengers in the Philippines. At that time, I thought of the children as pitiful for having to rummage through garbage heaps. But watching the interviews with the children, it struck me that they were very articulate and seemed to have a very good understanding of the situation that they and their families were in. Contrary to my expectation, they even appeared

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\(^1\) Throughout the thesis, I will use the conversion rate of 30 Philippine pesos to 1 Australian dollar, which is roughly the average rate during 2002 when I conducted fieldwork.

\(^2\) Bong is an imaginary character and this story has been reconstructed by me, based on the stories of child labourers living near large sugar estates in the Visayas region (central Philippines), as presented in a documentary film called *Minsan Lang Sila Bata* (Children Only Once) (1996, directed by Ditsi Carolino and Sadhana Buxani, and produced by Ditsi Carolino, Ateneo Center for Social Policy, Archdiocese of Manila Labor Center).

\(^3\) This estimate was published by the International Labour Organisation in 1996, and has been quoted in various publications since.
cheerful and had hopes and dreams for their future. They left an impression on me.

I wanted to learn more about child labour and so wrote an MA thesis on this topic. It was a review of the literature about child labour in the Philippines and a discussion of strategies to combat the problem. I learned that there was still much to know about child labour, and that is why I wanted to continue working on this topic for my PhD. My approach to 'child labour' however has since changed. In the beginning, I started with the premise that 'child labour' is evil and needs to be eradicated. In other words, I took the concept of 'child labour' for granted. Later, I became interested in what it is that we are referring to when we say 'child labour', how it came to be seen as a problem, and how the debate about 'child labour' is related to our ideas about what a proper 'childhood' is.

I argue that 'child labour' has come to be seen as a problem with historical specificity. Additionally, the concept of 'childhood', which is a socially constructed, modern concept that sees study and play, rather than work, as appropriate for children, has influenced today's debate on child labour. Subsequently, the term 'child labour' can be seen as a label applied to conditions of childhood that are perceived as contradictory to the ideal of childhood found in the industrialised, economically privileged countries.

I always thought 'child labour' was a problem, but I have also been impressed by children's ability and inner strengths to make the best of what they have. The image I carry with me in my research is that of a hope amidst harsh reality, or children thriving in a complex mixture of heaven and hell. My studying the lives of working children has been motivated by wanting to understand, and give credit to, children's inner strengths that are often forgotten or overshadowed by moral outrage.

My thesis is an attempt to understand children's lives better. Are working children living miserable lives as the media portrays, and are poverty and misery the predominant characteristics of their lives? If there are joys in their lives as well as hardships, what are they? What is the most important thing for these working children in their lives, from their perspective? To explore these questions,
I spent a year in Manila, and in my thesis, I try to tell the children’s story about their life from their point of view, as best as I can.

**Research Site**

![Location of the Philippines and Manila](image)

**Figure 1: Location of the Philippines and Manila**

The Philippines consists of largely rural areas and several major urban centres, of which the capital city Manila\(^4\) stands out as by far the most populous. There are 9.9 million people in Manila according to the 2001 census\(^5\) whereas the

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\(^4\) In this thesis, I use the term ‘Manila’ to refer to the National Capital Region (NCR), or what is often called Metro Manila, which is a conglomerate of 4 municipalities and 13 cities. There is also ‘City of Manila’, but this is one of the 13 cities of Metro Manila, and is not what I am referring to.

\(^5\) National Statistics Office, Republic of the Philippines, 
second biggest city, Davao, in Mindanao, has 1.1 million people\textsuperscript{6}, or only one-ninth the size of Manila. Because the agricultural land in rural areas is monopolised by a handful of landowners, and there is a lack of alternative livelihoods for most of the rural population, rural-to-urban domestic migration has been a long and continuous trend in the Philippines. The country's urbanisation can be seen in these statistics: In 1970, 31.8% of the country's population lived in urban areas. Ten years later, in 1980, the percentage increased to 37.5%, and 10 years later, in 1990, 47.0% of the country's population lived in urban areas.\textsuperscript{7}

Being the biggest urban centre in the country, Manila attracts many domestic migrants every year, resulting in urban crowding and lack of housing. As a result, people have settled on whatever piece of land they could find, erecting their own houses with available materials ranging from cardboard to cement, making the people what is often known as 'squatters'. There are said to be 4 million urban poor settlers (Weiss 1990, cited by Racelis 2000) in 600 'squatter' settlements in Manila (Racelis 2000). Most of these communities are inhabited by the residents for as long as three generations. My research site is one of many such communities, spreading over two areas in Manila called Paco and Pandacan (henceforth, referred to as 'Paco-Pandacan').

\textsuperscript{6} National Statistics Office, Republic of the Philippines, \url{http://www.nscb.gov.ph/activestats/psgc/listcity2.asp} (accessed on 3 November 2002).
The residents of the Paco-Pandacan community came to Manila in search of livelihood, but life is not as easy as they had hoped. Unemployment and irregular work for the ‘breadwinner’, or the father in the nuclear family, is widespread. In addition, the mother’s ‘side-line’ job, typically a small-scale food-selling business within the community or being a laundry woman, can barely
sustain the daily running of the family which has an average of 4.6 children\(^8\), sometimes as many as 13 children. Families experience a chronic lack of cash, and it is common that a family cannot feed all the members adequately, let alone provide for other material needs. In this context, children try to earn money to sustain themselves as well as to help their families.

As aforementioned, the plight of some working children, as exemplified by Bong, is familiar to us through media coverage. Some of the hazardous forms of child labour in the Philippines include prostitution, indentured labour (typically agricultural work or domestic work), deep-sea fishing, mining, and making firecrackers. The children in Paco-Pandacan, however, are not involved in these types of work, but they run errands for their neighbours (such as disposing of rubbish or buying drinking water from a nearby store), help in the small family business, or perform domestic work for the neighbours, for payment. Mila\(^9\) is a typical working child in Paco-Pandacan.

Mila is a 12-year old girl, enrolled in Grade 6 at a local public elementary school, and goes to school from 6am to 12 noon. When she returns from school, she has some lunch, takes a nap, plays with other children in the neighbourhood, but also goes around the neighbourhood knocking on people’s doors, asking if they needed any errands to be run. She earns small change each time she carries people’s rubbish to a collection point, or buys potable water from a nearby store for them. With the money she earns, she buys snacks for herself, and keeps the rest to take to school the next day. When she earns more than usual, she gives some to her mother. Her contribution is much appreciated as her father is what they call in the community ‘pa-extra-extra’, who gets called for a job in construction only once in a while, and the family does not have a stable source of income.

Compared to Bong, Mila seems to have more of a ‘childhood’; her family may be poor, but at least she has access to education, and she has time to play with her peers. Such children are often called ‘child workers’ instead of ‘child

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\(^8\) This average was calculated from the 150 membership forms of Bantay Bata sa Komunidad (BBK), or Community Child Watch, a people’s organisation affiliated with the Visayan Forum. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to BBK and Visayan Forum for giving me access to the data.

\(^9\) All the names which appear in this thesis are pseudonyms.
labourers', the terms which I will discuss below. ‘Child workers’ work, but their work is seen as less hazardous than that of ‘child labourers’ and therefore, is seen as less of a problem. But is it? Mila knows how unstable her family’s financial situation is. She lives in a sense of urgency to survive, just like Bong. It is cases like Bong, not Mila, that are more likely to be taken up by the media, but there are said to be more children like Mila, classified as ‘child workers’ and often unproblematised. In my thesis, I will be reconsidering the distinction made between ‘child labour’ and ‘child work’.

I found that the working children’s experience and practice of everyday life in Paco-Pandacan is different from the image of ‘childhood’ as an age of innocence and sanctity. (Such an image will be examined in more detail in Chapter 1.) Making an active contribution to the household economy has been dropped from the expectation of a child in the idealised childhood. However, it is a big part of many working children’s everyday life, as the example from Paco-Pandacan will show. In an attempt to understand what ‘work’ means for the children in their ‘childhood’, I have the following question.

**Research question**

My research question is: What does it mean for the children of Paco-Pandacan to work, in the totality of their living conditions and everyday life?

By asking this question, I also attempt to examine working children’s everyday life as children themselves see it. Too often, working children are depicted as victims of poverty and inequality. While such views do illuminate some children’s situations, they tend not to address the children’s perspective on their situations. So what is the childhood of working children like when it is seen from their point of view? In order to get a more complex but balanced picture of such childhoods, I try here to understand and include the perspective of those working children themselves.
Definition of terms

Definition of 'children'

The definition of a ‘child’ may differ from culture to culture and also from context to context. For example, Boyden (1990: 198) notes that in Britain, it is illegal to leave small children in charge of people under 14 years old. In Peru, in contrast, there are people aged between 6 to 14 who are heads of households and breadwinners of the family, and they are sometimes the only persons caring for people who are even younger than them.

In my research site, there was no clear consensus as to who is a ‘child’. When I asked a 15-year old girl, she said a child is someone who is 12 or 13 years old. When I asked another girl, 12 years old, she said a child is someone from 8 to 15 years old. When I asked some adults, however, especially the ones who are related to the NGO (Non-Governmental Organisation) I was associated with, they told me a person is a ‘child’ until he or she turns 18 years old. This is because the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most widely ratified UN human rights convention in history, defines a ‘child’ to be person below 18. The Convention had to take a rather arbitrary choice of biological age as the basis for its definition, in the difficult task of having to come up with a definition despite cultural differences as to who is a ‘child’. The International Labour Organisation’s Minimum Age Convention (1973, ILO Convention No.138) establishes age 15 to be the general minimum age for employment, provided that the compulsory schooling is completed by then, and age 18 for the minimum age for hazardous work. The NGO I was affiliated with used ‘people under the age of 18’ as the definition of ‘children’ in defining its service, and in turn, adults in the community who participated in the NGO activities adopted this definition. It was the only definition with some consensus available in the community.

One factor, which I think helped the acceptance of the UN definition in Paco-Pandacan, is that people finish high school education by the age of 16 or 17. College education is desired, but rarely afforded, so for most people, their

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10 There are some problems with this definition as discussed elsewhere (for example, Karen Moore, 2000, “Supporting children in their working lives: Obstacles and opportunities within the international policy environment”, *Journal of International Development* 12: 531-548).
education is over by the time they reach 17. In Paco-Pandacan, education is seen as the main activity of a child, and having the age 18 as the cut-off point between adulthood and childhood makes some sense in the local context.

So ‘people below 18’ was the guideline I used for identifying a ‘child’ in my fieldwork. As it turned out, the majority of working children I met were around 12 years old (ranging from 11 to 15, but many were 12), even though children ‘work’ in various ways starting as early as 2 years old (being trained to wash the dishes - see Chapter 4). So the descriptions and findings in this thesis may not apply to 17 year olds or 5 year olds.

However, having spent a year in the Philippines, I believe the most important factor in Paco-Pandacan (and in the Philippines generally) in deciding whether a person is a ‘child’ or not is the person’s status of economic independence as well as marital status. Until one is married and forms a separate household, one’s primary social role is that of a ‘child’ in relation to his/her parents. Once one becomes a parent, the fact that he or she is still a ‘child’ to the parents remains, but the responsibility of taking care of one’s own child can be seen as more important in defining the person’s role in society. But having one’s biological child is not enough to make a person an adult, as I met an 18-year old girl who had a baby but still lived with her parents, and her baby was incorporated into the care of her parents. She was not considered quite an adult yet, but more of a ‘child’ for being under the care of her parents together with her baby. Once she takes up the role of caring for the child independently of her natal family, she will be seen more of an ‘adult’, rather than a ‘child’.

**Definition of ‘child labour’, ‘child work’ and ‘children’s work’**

The term ‘child labour’ is used today by different persons to refer to a wide range of activities, work arrangements and working conditions (Myers 2001). For some, the term evokes an image of extremely hazardous work by children such as forced prostitution, and for others, it is associated with sweatshops in Third World countries producing for transnational corporations. Some people think of it as a problem of developing countries, while others rightly point out that it is also found in so-called developed countries. In the Philippines, for example, the various types of work undertaken by children include: street activities such as vending and shoe shining, domestic work, factory work in
various kinds of industries, outsourcing, agricultural work and fishing, construction work, and forced prostitution. These can be in various arrangements such as self-employment, employment, living with relatives or strangers, helping out a mother at home to fulfil a certain quota, indentured labour, and so on. In any of these situations, the term ‘child labour’, as Myers points out, is used today to carry negative connotations, and has become an emotive word for many (2001).

The term ‘child labour’ was first used in the campaign against the working conditions of children in factories in England, in the 19th century. The concept of ‘child labour’ was later taken up as one of the concerns in the 1979 International Year of the Child (IYC), which became the first opportunity for the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and other agencies to draw a global attention on the issue of child labour. The Director-General of the ILO stated in his declaration of IYC that: ‘[A] child is not a ‘small adult’ but a person entitled to self-fulfilment through learning and play so that his adult life is not jeopardized by his having to work at an early age’ (Fyfe 1989: 134). Here, we can see the idea that childhood should be a different experience from adulthood, characterised by study and play, but not work.

The UN produced a special report on child labour in 1981, which subsequently called for an international campaign against it. The cause was taken up by several UN organisations, especially UNICEF and the ILO. However, since the foundation of the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) at the ILO in 1992, the ILO has been the major force in the campaign.

While there was a renewed awareness about exploited children on the international scale and a call for a campaign to eliminate such practices, there has also been recognition that not all children’s work is detrimental to their well-being. In the attempt to distinguish between the detrimental and the positive, the concepts of ‘child labour’ and ‘child work’ have come into use in the literature since the 1980s.

‘Child labour’ refers to hazardous work done by children, that is hazardous for their physical, mental and moral well-being, and ‘child work’ refers to work with positive consequences for the children, for example, acquiring
social and occupational skills, socialisation, gaining a sense of pride and being part of the family and society (Fyfe 1989: 2-3). Advocates for the distinction between ‘child labour’ and ‘child work’ have called for elimination of ‘child labour’ and the exploitation of children, while recognising ‘child work’ as part of children’s lives across cultures and time, which has beneficial effects for children (for example, George 1990). However, the problem is that it is often hard to categorise cases into either the positive or the negative because many activities can have both impacts on the child. The criteria against which a case is judged as ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ are also unclear, and they differ depending on point of view. I will discuss this issue in more depth in Chapter 5.

In this thesis, I will use ‘children’s work’ and ‘working children’ to mean any work done by people under 18, without implying whether it is positive or negative for the child’s development.

What might constitute ‘work’ can cause considerable debate. Sociology of work has considered different ways of conceptualising ‘work’: as paid and unpaid work, inside and outside the domestic sphere, working for an employer and working for oneself, ‘formal’ work versus ‘informal’ work, work as separate from one’s private life, and work that intermingles with one’s whole sphere of life such as that of a farmer, and so on (James, et al. 1998: 102). For Braverman, inspired by Marx, there is work that makes us human and work that alienates us from our humanity. Work is our innate activity to transform what is in the nature into something useful. What distinguishes human work from other animals’ work, however, is that we purposively conceptualise the outcome and work towards it. There is the worker’s will and his whole person involved in human work and therefore it is inseparable from that person, for the person to be human. The problem is that work can be conceptualised by one individual and performed by another (creating social relations), and the worker is alienated from his work and humanity (Braverman 1974: 45-51).

By the term ‘children’s work’, I refer to:

the participation of children in a wide variety of work situations, on a more or less regular basis, to earn a livelihood for themselves or for others [or to contribute to the well-being of the family, for example, by performing domestic chores or caring for siblings]. Children’s work may be paid or unpaid, and remuneration for their efforts may be made to
adults rather than to themselves, or assessed in non-material ways (such as food, education, shelter or clothing) (Institute for Labor Studies 1994: 4).  

I choose this definition because it does not incorporate a moral judgement, and it encompasses a wide variety of situations, including various social relations, and types of work. I would like to add the clarification that children sometimes work not exclusively for livelihood, but to have dispensable income (Morrow 1994; White 1996). However, whether children themselves regard their income-generating activities as ‘work’ needs also to be considered.

Children in Paco-Pandacan do not refer to their income generating activities as ‘work’, or in their language Tagalog, ‘trabaho’  

They normally refer to their activities by the simple description of what they actually do, for example, ‘disposing of rubbish (pagtatapon ng basura)’, or ‘vending (nagtitinda)’, and not as ‘work (trabaho)’, except in cases where I referred to these activities as ‘trabaho’ in our conversations.

This is because the word ‘trabaho’ is normally used to refer to income-earning activities that they can speak of proudly, since the word is associated with paid employment and has a positive connotation in this community where unemployment is common. Children’s money-making activities do not have the same privileged status as ‘trabaho’, and that is why, I observed, they did not refer to their activities as ‘work’ unless I did. Children are not proud of their money-making activities per se, even though they are proud of the fact that they are making positive contributions to their families. Rather than using the term ‘trabaho’, children occasionally refer to their income earning activities as ‘making money (magkapera)’ or ‘earning (kumikita)’. This suggests that children do not regard these activities as a ‘proper’ or ideal way to earn a living, but it is rather a way to ‘make do’, something they do as a practical necessity.

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11 Please note that this definition is originally found in the report by the Institute for Labor Studies (1994) to define ‘child labour’. The addition in [ ] is mine.

12 ‘Gawain’ (employment, work, chore to be done, assignment) is a synonym to ‘trabaho’ in Tagalog, but I have not heard this word used in the community in relation to children’s income generating activities or formal employment. They use the word ‘trabaho’ instead.
Methods of research

This research consists of three main activities: studying the existing literature (working with secondary data), carrying out a one-year fieldwork (collecting primary data), and writing (a process of analysing materials gathered in fieldwork, in dialogue with the existing literature). While all three are indispensable and they intertwine, it is the fieldwork which I relied upon most as materials for analysis and for examples to support my argument. However, the data collected during fieldwork does not represent unmediated 'truth' or ultimate 'reality'. Anthropology always involves an interpretative analysis of the fieldwork experiences. So the same social phenomenon observed by two researchers will be different, depending on the nature of social relationship the researcher had with the local people and how the researcher positioned himself/herself (and how the local people perceived him/her) in the field. The data I collected have been inevitably filtered through my senses and ideas, as well as my social position in the field, and therefore it is necessary to describe how I carried out my fieldwork.

Research strategy

As a way to get to know some working children, I chose to be affiliated with a local NGO and meet children through them. The reasons were as follows. Firstly, I read in existing studies that children may be very suspicious of strangers especially if the stranger asks them questions. I thought it would be better for the children and their families if they had a solid point of reference for me, a foreigner and a stranger. Secondly, in case I should meet children who were abused or in especially difficult circumstances, I would have a contact to refer the children to.

During my fieldwork, I was a volunteer of a Filipino NGO called Visayan Forum. Visayan Forum has worked in the Paco-Pandacan area for more than 7 years, has established a People’s Organisation in the community there, and works in partnership with it. The People’s Organisation (PO), called the Bantay Bata sa Komunidad (community child-watch centre), or BBK, has ‘Adult Members’ (the parents), ‘Youth Members’ (14 to 25 years old), and ‘Kids Members’ (6 to 13 years old) from the community. There are also ‘PO leaders’ who are female
community leaders representing each neighbourhood, or barangay\textsuperscript{13}. BBK's objective is to prevent child abuse in the community, including child labour. It provides educational assistance grants to some children of school age, as well as emergency assistance such as at the time of bereavement. It also provides recreational and educational activities for children such as swimming or days of games and sports. Visayan Forum also organises training sessions and seminars for the BBK members on parenting, drug abuse, legal matters, and any other issues of concern to the community. Working children or abused children can benefit from various services such as shelter, counselling, and seminars which guide them to identify their weaknesses and strengths.

Visayan Forum and BBK have been most understanding towards my interest in researching the issues concerning working children, and greatly facilitated my research by giving me access to the community. However, the findings and opinions expressed in this thesis are mine and do not represent the positions of these organisations.

\textbf{Structure of fieldwork}

My fieldwork was conducted from February 2002 to January 2003 in Manila. The 12 months in the Philippines can be roughly divided into the following stages:

Stage 1: After arriving in the Philippines, I spent 1.5 months exploring Manila, looking for a specific research site and an NGO to affiliate with. I met more than ten local NGOs of different focus, size, and structure. I travelled to different parts of Manila and saw a cross-section of the society, from lower-income classes to middle class, as well as upper class. This period served as a geographical and sociological introduction to Manila within which my specific research site was to be situated.

Stage 2: Once I made a formal affiliation as a volunteer with Visayan Forum, I spent about three weeks mainly helping in their office, learning about the organisation's programs and services offered in the Paco-Pandacan community.

\textsuperscript{13} Barangay is the smallest administrative unit in the Philippines.
Then, I started to visit the community on a daily basis. The PO leaders took me around the community, introducing me to the people they knew. The PO leaders typically introduced me as a volunteer of their organisation, a Japanese studying in Australia. It would have been extremely difficult for a stranger to go into such a tightly-knit community and start asking questions, so being associated with these women gave me legitimate reference points for others within the community. In the beginning, I was accompanied by them whenever I walked. This was for safety reasons as well as for the practical reason that the paths in the community are complicated and a visitor needs a local guide, and also it is a Filipino customary practice of keeping company whenever a person goes somewhere. After doing this for some time, not only the people who associated with the NGO, but also other residents recognised my face and knew who I was. Then, I was able to start walking around in the community on my own. I spent time at certain spots outdoors where I felt comfortable (either because they were near houses of children I knew, or there was a food stall with a bench to sit on and chat with passers by). During this period, I would talk to anyone about anything, to engage in informal conversations and to get to know the community and the residents. It was also a way to present myself to the community in an open manner, hoping that people would get used to my presence. I also hoped that in this way, I would learn the residents’ daily concerns as they were brought to my attention, rather than imposing my preconceptions and expectations about the residents’ lives. During this period, I got to know many children through my participation in the activities organised by Visayan Forum and BBK and by walking around in the children’s everyday life settings.

I explained to people that I was a student in Australia researching child labour. Later, this changed somewhat as I learned that the term ‘child labour’ was taken in the community as almost synonymous to ‘child abuse’, and what I was interested in, for example, children’s running errands for their neighbours, was not covered by this term. Then I told the residents, adults and children alike, that I was interested in learning about the everyday life of children. If anyone wanted to know more, I shared with them the questions that were on my mind at that point of my fieldwork. This sometimes proved a useful way to generate informal discussions with people.
Stage 3: When I became familiar with the conditions and the rhythm of everyday life in the community, I started visiting certain people (children, their friends and families) on a regular basis. I focused my attention on 10 working children, chosen for gender and types of work. Focusing on these 10 children meant trying to get to know their siblings, friends and families, so it practically meant getting to know at least 30 children in some depth, both working and non-working. However, of course, my contact was not limited to these children and I continued to explore, getting insights into children’s lives from any children I met and had a chance to talk to, collecting at least some information from approximately 147 children.

Research methods

Participant observation

My principal research method was participant observation. In practical terms, my activities ranged from being present when people were talking about something, or were doing something, walking with children to their schools, and being at food stalls tended by children after school. More specific activities that I conducted are discussed below.

Informal discussions

Once I became familiar with the daily life of the community, I had certain questions and issues I wanted to know more about and carried them in my head wherever I went during that day. Sometimes, I would write these down on a small card as a reminder to myself and take it to the community. I would then start asking these questions when I sat on the bench with certain people I knew, or once I knew some families, I would visit them and talk to them about these issues. There were always people around other than the specific person(s) I was visiting, be it outside on the paths or inside someone’s house, so these sessions normally took the form of informal discussions among several people rather than informal interviews. I used this method with children and with adults, and sometimes a group of both.

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14 Most houses in Paco-Pandacan have very limited space inside, and residents typically use the alleyways outside their houses as extensions of their domestic space, for social interaction as well as for domestic activities like laundry.
Group discussions

The most structured research method I used was group discussions. I would invite a group of children from the same barangay, one group at a time, from different barangay, for a one to two-hour session consisting of games, drawing, some snacks, and ask them questions on a particular topic. I used the office space of BBK for these sessions, as it was located in the vicinity and easily accessible for the children. At the beginning of each session, I made a point of making explicit my purpose of conducting the session (i.e. that it was for my doctoral research on their lives) and asked for their permission to record our voices on a cassette tape. Afterwards, I would have the tapes transcribed by someone outside the community who was a native speaker of Tagalog. This was particularly useful in finding out what the children were saying in case I did not understand all of what they said. I did this with several groups of children about different topics, and some sessions worked better than others.

Sometimes it did not work well, because there were too many children (more than 15, for example) and it was difficult to get everybody’s attention while there was a lot of distraction as some children kept coming into or going out of the room, not to mention my inexperience in conducting such sessions. Even then, however, I felt that the session was worth holding because I found that it was very important, when working with children, to have fun together. It is also a Filipino customary practice that whenever there is a gathering of people, there are some snack foods and the atmosphere is friendly and gay. Playing games was a common ice breaker used by various NGOs in conducting seminars with children as well as adults, as I had observed. So even if I could not get a good discussion going, I was at least providing some diversion for the children, and it also brought me closer to them, which was important in establishing rapport with them. It is also when children were having fun that sometimes they unexpectedly said something which led me to consider important issues, or gave me insights into their more serious concerns.

The time when it worked the best was when I let the children hold the tape-recorder and pass it around among themselves as they spoke. I started this in a particular session because the noise coming from outside was loud, and I was afraid that none of our voices would be heard on the cassette tape later. As the
recorder had a little microphone inside it, I showed the children which part of the recorder to speak into. As a result, children started to hold the machine as a microphone, and as they answered my questions, they also asked the same question to their peers or came up with their own questions to me or to their peers. This way, the session went on in an atmosphere of mutual participation, with everybody asking questions as well as answering them.

**My position within the field**

It would have been impossible for me to do research if I had walked into the Paco-Pandacan area one day by myself, randomly introducing myself as a student wanting to learn about children's everyday life for my PhD study in Australia. Nobody would know who I was, I had no means to verify what I wanted to do nor why I came, and frankly, who would care about my PhD? I am not exaggerating to say that I was absolutely nothing to the people in the community if I were not associated with the Visayan Forum and BBK. As noted previously, in the Philippines, people rarely travel or go to places alone. They always seek company. Therefore, a common question is 'Who is your companion (Sino ang kasama mo?)'. Having company was not only for safety, but also for verification. If I was seen in the community with one of the PO leaders, other residents would immediately know with whom I was associated.

In the beginning of my fieldwork, I expressed my interest in living inside the community if possible. The NGO did not recommend it to me on the grounds that some people might take advantage of me, besides it was not considered safe for a woman to live alone in Manila. Even though I did not understand exactly what 'taking advantage' implied, I followed their advice, and unlike many early anthropologists who set themselves right in the heart of things by living in the villages they were studying, I never got to live inside the community. I was allowed to live inside the office of the Visayan Forum together with a few staff whose homes were too far for them to commute to work. It was an ideal place for me to observe the lives of the children and to ask questions about their daily activities.

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15 For example, children asked me about my experience in the Philippines (eg. what I have been learning from the children in the Philippines; if I was happy to meet all the children in the Philippines; if the men in the community are rude to me sometimes) and about Japan (eg. if there are working children in Japan throwing away rubbish like them; about my family in Japan; if it is cold in Japan). Among themselves, they asked each other questions when there were conflicting opinions. For example, one girl was answering my question, and another girl had a different opinion, so the latter asked the former why she thought that way, and expressed her own, different opinion.
arrangement for me because I was able to participate as a volunteer in their activities and programs that involved children from the community. I was also able to ask the NGO staff members questions regarding the community and get insights into how a Filipino person would interpret what I saw, or to discuss some aspects of Filipino culture in general. It was also helpful that with the NGO staff, I was able to use more English, of which I had a better command than Tagalog. In the community, most people know some English, but are too shy to speak it, and in order to avoid intimidation, I refrained from using it. Instead I used their daily language, Tagalog, which I had previously learned during my Master’s studies at University of Hawaii up to the 3rd year level, covering practical communication skills training (oral and written) and formal Tagalog literature. I was far from being fluent, especially at the beginning of fieldwork, but I never doubted that it was very important for me to interact with the people in Tagalog, no matter how limited my skills. My fluency improved as I used it as my main means of communication while in the field. People regularly commented that it was very good that I knew some Tagalog so that they could communicate with me directly. They would tell me that they occasionally received foreign visitors, but there was little direct communication with them because of the language barrier. I hardly acquired native fluency and accuracy even at the end of my fieldwork, but I tried to make up for this shortcoming by asking people to explain, and asking someone for an English word whenever it was possible. I also recorded some interviews and group discussions on cassette tapes, had them transcribed by a native Tagalog speaker, and tried to understand the written script with dictionaries or with the help of Tagalog-speakers.

I found the people in the community very kind, friendly and hospitable. The social behaviour of the people there is characterised by the concept ‘pakikisama’, which roughly means ‘co-existing peacefully and pleasantly together’. I learned that it was good manners to make jokes, make each other laugh and make each other comfortable. The people in the community welcomed me in this spirit, except for one woman who made explicit her discontent with my privileged presence. She showed me a degree of open antagonism that is rather rare in the community. For example, when she used to see me walking down the street in the community where she sold banana cue (fried snack of sweet banana
on a stick) and some ready-to-eat food, she would make a sarcastic comment that I was walking around ‘smiling and waving like an actress’. I do not blame her for having such feelings towards me because it is true that I am much more privileged than them at least materially, and just the fact that I could afford to fly on an airplane and come to the Philippines and spend my days walking around in the community apparently doing nothing important, was a sure sign, in their eyes, that I was ‘rich’. It might have made her angry to see me do that while she herself was struggling everyday just to have enough to eat for her family.

In fact, regarding me as ‘rich’ was not only a unique characteristic of this woman, but it was also a common way for the people to perceive me. A foreigner is almost automatically regarded as ‘rich’. As my fieldwork progressed, I came to understand that when people in the community meet outsiders (non-residents of the community), the first thing they seem to want to know is the person’s socio-economic status, so that they know how to position themselves in relation to the stranger. It happened to me a few times that a woman would talk to me in the polite language appropriate for speaking to an elder, even though it was clear that I was much younger than she, and therefore I should be using these forms of address to her, not the other way round. I always felt embarrassed to be treated as a ‘rich’ person. However, I once had a conversation with a woman I was close to, when she said out of the blue, ‘Yuko is rich (Mayaman si Yuko)’. I denied it, but soon became interested in her perception of myself and asked, ‘Nanay, am I rich? (Nay, mayaman ba ako?)’ She said I was indeed because I was able to take my brother around when he came to visit me in the Philippines, I was able to travel on an airplane, and I could buy my own food. According to her criteria, there was no denying that I was ‘rich’. As I realised the people’s perception of me, I became more conscious about my different status as a researcher, foreigner, and temporary visitor to the community.

Despite my perceived status as ‘rich’, most people in the community also treated me as a young unmarried woman, who is not a ‘child’ anymore, but not quite a full ‘adult’ yet. This probably helped me position myself in between adults and children in the community. PO leaders and other nanay16 in the

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16 Nanay in Tagalog literally means ‘mother’. However, it is also a respectful term of reference for adult women of varying ages who have children.
community were the legitimation of my presence, so in this sense, I was more strongly associated with adults, but children invited me in their games and activities in which they do not seek the participation of adults.

Nevertheless, being a young woman limited my interaction with adult males in the community. I would talk to male children, young and older ones, and some male youths in their 20s, but I was not in regular contact with men older than that except for one man in his 40s whom I regularly visited. I talked to this man often, but not with many others, especially compared with the number of adult women I talked to. There is a problem for any young unmarried woman, Filipino or non-Filipino, in approaching men. I have had many incidents in Manila in general, and also in the community which, in my way of seeing things, are instances of harassment, but in the local practice are regarded as ‘normal’ male behaviour and therefore accepted and seen as commonplace. So there was a realistic limit as to how much I wanted to associate myself with males in the community. However, this one man whom I called ‘Tito’ (literally, ‘uncle’) was an exception. He owned a food stall where I frequently visited. It was in an excellent location as it was on a street corner situated in the middle of the community and there was a bench to sit on, so it was an ideal place for me to observe the people passing by, see the children playing, chat with the residents and be part of the everyday scene of the life in the community. With his quiet, but thoughtful and often humorous manners, Tito was a safe male person to chat with in public, and was someone I regard with great respect and amity. He understood what I wanted to study, and was keen and open to discuss the questions I had about the life in the community and plight of the poor in the Philippines.

Indispensable as adults were to my study, however, I regarded children as my main informants. Initially, I had to gain access to children through adults, but many children saw me at the NGO activities, and being a foreigner, I attracted their curiosity. We may not have met personally, but numerous children in the community knew my face and name, and recognised me as I walked in the community. Some would yell my name ‘Yuko!’ as I walked past, and while this was not particularly polite behaviour in the local practice, neither was it motivated by hostility. The closest analogy I could think of was that I was akin to a cartoon character, someone you know and everybody knew, but with whom you
did not have a personal social relationship. To the children whom I got to know personally, I was an ‘ate’, or a young, but older woman, and they treated me with casual friendliness, as well as the occasional distance and respect that Filipino children are socialised to show to any elder persons. They invited me into their play and chat, as well as demanding from me some spontaneous entertainment in the form of songs or teaching them Japanese.

**Limitations of the study**

The limitations of my study is that it is a study of children’s lives within the community and not beyond, even though some children went out into the wider Manila area. Hannerz’s study on cities (1980) pointed out that residents of urban areas often interact with certain people in a certain way at one location, and interact with different people in a different way at another location in the city. It may well be the case with the children I met. But in this study, I deal only with children’s lives as led in the geographical and social confinement of the community in Paco-Pandacan.

Another limitation is that children and their families told me only what they could tell me, or chose to tell me. Some children could not tell me freely about their feelings. It may be that they have never articulated their inner feelings into words or told another person about them. Perhaps they did not want to speak against their own mother, for example, even if their own mother hurt them. In such cases, I tried to respect the child’s privacy. There are a few points in my thesis where I indicate in the text that I made this decision and inferred things rather than pushing the child into telling me what he or she did not feel like. This was for ethical reasons, as well as practical ones. Even if I insisted on it, the child would not and could not have told me the truth.

**Ethics**

The ethical issues for my study mainly arose out of unequal power relationship between myself and the people in the community. First of all, my fieldwork can be seen as an exercise of power by a ‘rich’ outsider to the people in the community by going into their lives, asking questions and obtaining information, all to satisfy the purposes of the researcher, not to the direct benefit of the people. Children, as expressive as they are, continuously told me that they were happy to have me around. The fact was, I was happy to be around them, but
to have them say that was very sweet, and it kept me going even at difficult moments. Once, a group of children asked me why I came to the community. It was clear to me that children did not think of their community the most pleasant destination for a visitor. They must have wondered why on earth I as a foreigner came to spend some extended time in their world. When I tried to explain to them that I was doing doctoral research on child labour and children’s life, the closest thing I could think of to conducting research and writing a report about it in the children’s lives was ‘I was doing a sort of assignment’. I immediately noticed it was a poor choice of words because when children heard the word ‘assignment’, they must have misunderstood that someone else forced me to come there, rather than I wanted to come there, and they looked disappointed. From this experience, I think it mattered to the children that I ‘cared’, and that they were the reason why I came. I cared about them and I hope that I showed them that enough while I was there.

The next point relates to how much I should be directly involved in the people’s lives, especially in their need for money. The issue was, am I just observing, asking about and listening to their hardships and not doing anything about it in an immediate, direct way? It was pointed out to me in the Philippines that when one becomes close to someone, there will come a time when you will be asked to help with money, and in my context, once I extended such help, it would set a precedent, and other people would ask for help, too. To say yes to one and no to another would be very difficult, especially in a community where practically everybody would know whom I helped with how much money. There was one time when I had this dilemma of being asked for help by someone I was close to and I respected very much. She said, and I also knew, that she would not have asked me for help unless she could think of no other source of help. Being affiliated with an NGO helped because I was able to refer her to an appropriate emergency help scheme by the NGO to which she was entitled. The NGO also had a policy that it preferred its volunteers not to give out money to people, so it helped me, too, to have this clear guideline.

There was also a problem of depicting children as ‘child labourers’. For example, I knew a 10-year old girl who tended a small food stall, and one day, I asked her whether she had ever heard of the term ‘child labour’. She did not
know the term, and knowing how intellectually keen she was, I thought she would try to find out what people meant when they say 'child labour'. I would hate to imagine that her feelings might have been hurt when she found out that it was used as a negative term and thought that I, her frequent visitor and a friend, was thinking of her work in such negative terms. Children's work has been problematised, not by the children themselves, but by others, and using the term to characterise a child seems an exercise of power in the manner addressed by Said with his sense of Orientalism. There is much more to a child's life, or the child's self-perception of her life, than being termed a 'child labourer'.

A similar point can be made about calling the people 'poor'. Even though the people in the research site called themselves 'poor' and their community a 'depressed area', I think it is a different matter if I called them 'poor'.

Another ethical issue involved the use of photos in my thesis. I wanted to use some photos in order to give a graphic image of people's everyday lives to enhance the texts and stories. Whenever I found photos in other people's theses, they helped me understand that there were real people's lives behind the textualised analyses. In my own research, I only took photos of people I knew fairly well. This was because even though I was interested in the most ordinary scenes of people's everyday activities, the people themselves may not regard these as the ways they want themselves represented. Photos can be misused to represent something the model does not want. Whenever I took photos, I gave the reprints to the people as gifts, and before I left the field, I picked out some pictures I might want to use in the thesis and asked the people in these photos for their explicit consent to publish these in my PhD thesis. However, even with their explicit consent, children, for example, might wish later in their lives that I did not use their images. This concern has made me refrain from using a few photos I would have liked to use.

For example, there was one photo of a girl tending a food stall. It is the girl mentioned above, who did not know the term 'child labour'. Even though she gave me an explicit consent to use the photo in my thesis with the caption 'selling food', I decided not to use it because she might one day flip through the thesis and feel that her image was used to represent 'child labour', a concept that she was not aware of. Another photo I decided not to use was a portrait of a girl
sitting on a tree branch. It was a positive image of the child, and I thought of placing it at the beginning of a chapter in which I talk about children's perspectives in general. However, in that chapter I discuss the life of another girl in some detail, and there was a risk that the reader would associate the story with the girl in the picture. Even though the story does not contain confidential information about the child nor does it give a negative impression of her, the subject of the picture may not appreciate the association. So I decided to avoid the risk by not using the picture altogether.

Thus whenever I use photos in this thesis, I do so to show the aspects of people's everyday life which I judge they themselves would also regard as positive.

**Structure of the thesis**

To answer my research question 'What does it mean for the children to work?', I have the following structure for the thesis. In Chapter 1, I examine the relevant theories and thinking related to 'child labour' and 'childhood', and set up a theoretical framework for my study. In order to see children's work as embedded in the everyday life of the community and families, I first describe the general conditions of life in the community in Chapter 2, and then examine children's work in more detail and how it fits in with their schooling in Chapter 3. Education is seen as very important by the children and is one of the main reasons why children work. 'Education' is often seen as an antidote to 'child labour', but is it? I will also discuss the relationship between 'education' and 'work' and their roles in the making of a 'childhood'. Chapter 4 examines another main reason why children work, that is, to help their families. The institution of family plays a fundamental role in the lives of the Filipinos and also to the working children I met. However, this chapter points out the possibility of family being a site of exploitation for the children. Chapter 5 asks the question 'how useful is the dichotomy of "child labour" and "child work" as a framework for understanding children's work?' with the empirical example of Paco-Pandacan. Chapter 6 shows that inquiring into children's perspective about their lives can add valuable insights to our understanding of their work and lives. It leads to the
conclusion that contrary to the view that working children are denied their childhood, work is a means for the children to make childhood possible.
Chapter 1: Childhood of working children: Theoretical perspectives

The most common reaction I get when I tell people that I am studying ‘child labour’ is, ‘Oh, how depressing’. I also notice that some people are offended when they themselves are called ‘child labourers’ as if they were branded a criminal. For example, one person who attended a presentation I gave in Australia said dismissively, ‘I worked when I was fifteen. I was a “child labourer”, then!’ Why does ‘child labour’ evoke emotional responses in some people? One reason, I argue, is that ‘child labour’ contradicts some people’s ideas about what childhood should be. In this chapter, I examine the relationship between the ‘child labour’ debate and the concept of childhood. I also situate my thesis in anthropological studies of childhood and studies of child labour in the Philippines.

Concept of ‘childhood’ as a social construct

In this thesis, childhood is viewed as socially constructed (James and Prout 1990). This means that there can be many different childhoods depending on time and place, and other factors such as class, ethnicity, and gender. The idea of social construction of childhood has been stimulated by Ariès’ study (Aries 1962 [1960]), based on evidence from France. Since then, historians have examined ideas about childhood and how they have changed over time, mainly in Europe.

Philip Ariès, using examples from French history, claimed in his book Centuries of Childhood (Aries 1962 [1960]) that the concept of childhood did not exist in Medieval Europe. Jenks similarly said that in the medieval world, ‘[t]he infant who could not participate in the adult world simply did not count’ (Jenks, cited by Fyfe 1989: 12). But in saying so, Jenks pointed out that the concept of ‘childhood’ as we know it today did not exist. Ariès’ conclusion has been challenged in other studies, which argue that there was some concept of childhood in the Medieval period, but children had different expectations and social roles from that of today. The consensus, however, is that Ariès was the first to put forward the thesis that the ideas about childhood are socially constructed (Thomas 2000).
Historical studies of childhood have focused on European societies. Cunningham shows that in Europe, there were different ideas about how children were viewed, depending on the period and the different influences from religion and other social movements. In the Renaissance period, for example, especially in 15th century Florence, he found that children were seen as the key to the future of the state, and therefore it was believed that their upbringing should be tightly controlled by an authoritarian father; Protestantism regarded the child as having original sin, and therefore it was believed that they were naturally disposed to evil and in need of correction. In Catholicism, on the other hand, authority stayed with the church and priest as mediators between God and human beings, so the family or the father did not acquire the same elevated status in moulding the child into pious beings. It was in the 18th century, Cunningham asserts, that the romantic ideas about childhood as an age of innocence and the best time of one’s life emerged. The belief that the child carried the original sin and therefore was inclined to evil declined over time, and children came to be seen as angels. From the Renaissance through to the Enlightenment periods, fathers were the key players in shaping the child into an adult, but with increasing romanticism, mothers came to be seen as more important in raising and nurturing the child. Writings of John Locke and Rousseau, as well as poems of Wordsworth and William Blake, influenced and instilled romantic ideas about childhood in the minds of people who had access to the literature (Cunningham 1995: 41-78).

Relationship between child labour and childhood

The campaign against child labour in the Western countries in the 19th and 20th century was influenced by this emerging ideology (Cunningham 1995), and the campaign contributed to and strengthened the idea that children should be free from the drudgery of work, and should be in school instead.

The beginning of ‘child labour’ debate

In England, use of children in factories as apprentices was common even before industrialisation. Work was even compulsory for some children: ‘[I]n medieval England following the plagues of the fourteenth century, the concern had been that there would not be an adequate supply of child workers. A statute
of 1388 prevented boys and girls after the age of 12 years from abandoning agricultural occupations’ (Fyfe 1989: 28).

Employment of children was also common after industrialisation that began in England between 1780 and 1850. In the late 18th and early 19th century, factory owners commonly hired children rather than adults in order to be economically competitive in the industry. Children worked 14 to 16 hours a day from as early as 6 years of age, in cotton factories, mines, pottery production, textile factories, and domestic work (girls and women) (Fyfe 1989: 28-33).

It was in England in the 1830s and 1840s that the term ‘child labour’ was first used and campaigns against it were waged (Fyfe 1989: 2). From about 1780, the assumption that children in poverty must work came to be questioned in England by people such as Jonas Hanway and S.T. Coleridge\(^\text{17}\), and the analogy of child workers as slaves became a tool of the campaign against child labour which peaked in the 1830s. Evangelicals and those people who saw utilitarian values in children did not object to children’s working \textit{per se} as long as they did not work too many hours and they were also attending school. However, the romantic idea of childhood as a time of sanctity, the period before the loss of Eden, and the idea that children had the right to not work was increasingly contesting such utilitarian views.

This change of view about what is a proper childhood first happened in England, but was also seen in other industrialising countries such as France, Prussia and New England. Cunningham asserts that by the 1880s, all industrialising countries had taken measures against use of children in employment. However, rather than the legislation on employment which people found ways to get around, it was schooling, coinciding with the change in economy which reduced the demand for child workers, that ended widespread child labour in England (Cunningham 1995: 138-144; Fyfe 1989: 28-33).

Child labour was also common in America. English immigrants to America in the 17th century passed laws to put children to work, especially in the textile industry. From the beginning of European settlement in America, there

\(^{17}\) Jonas Hanway wrote a book, ‘An Earnest Appeal for Mercy to the Children of the Poor’ in 1766 and S.T. Coleridge campaigned for legislation to control work of children which was passed in 1802 (Cunningham 1995: 138-139).
was a labour shortage. As men cleared land, manufacturing was carried out by women and children, and their employment continued to increase in the 19th century with the opening up of new markets in the West. In the U.S., the concern about child labour was mainly driven by the Puritan belief that people needed to read the Bible to be in touch with God, yet working children did not have the time to read, which was seen as a problem. As a result, some northern states passed laws that required factory children to be educated in literacy and numeracy. The period 1880-1914 saw a rise of public concern about vagrant and gang children in towns and cities, and education was seen as a way to redeem children. During the economic depression of 1893-1896, the campaign against child labour developed. The first organised campaign occurred in the South, in Alabama, where in 1903, a minimum age (12 years old) and a maximum working hours (66 hours per week) were established. In 1916, a federal law was passed to regulate work by people under 18 (Cole 1980: 201-204; Fyfe 1989: 57-60).

A similar transition happened in Canada. Work was very much an expected part of any child’s life for the labouring class until well into the 20th century. But beginning in mid-19th century, some Christian and middle-class reformers started to construct a proper childhood, to be characterised by prolonged dependence, vulnerability, and in need of protection from the adult world. By the turn of the century, all children were expected to have a common experience of childhood, consisting not of work, but of play and study (McIntosh 1999).

The loss of an economic role marked a major transition in childhood in some Western countries. Zelizer argues that the economic value of children (14 years old or younger) declined and was replaced by sentimental value between 1870 and the 1930s in the United States. In an increasingly commercialised world, children were reserved a non-commercial place and were made ‘sacred’. The economic and emotional value of children are declared to be highly incompatible, so, only insensitive parents violated the boundary and accepted the wages or labour contributed by a child (Zelizer 1981: 11). Zelizer sees this emergence of the economically worthless but emotionally priceless child in this period as the essential condition of contemporary childhood.
Cunningham also sees the loss of economic role as the major shift in childhood in Europe. He argues that during the first half of the 20th century, the child lost its role as an earner for the family and increasingly became a consumer. Children became a target of advertisements, and supermarkets arranged certain items at the eye level of children so that their mothers would buy such things, but the children were also given pocket money and had significant purchasing power. Cunningham regards this transition as most important in the history of childhood (Cunningham 1995).

As seen above, the campaigns against child labour by the 20th century were influenced by the emerging, modern Western concept of childhood at that time, which increasingly detached the child from the responsibility and expectation to actively earn the family livelihood, and designated home and school as more appropriate places than work for children. As Fyfe puts it, these campaigns ‘mark a historic shift in thinking about the proper role of children and childhood itself. Out of the moral crisis presented by child labour emerged the view of the ‘innocent child’ [...] whose rightful place was in the school room. [...] This Western notion of childhood has now become a pervasive one through cultural transfer to the developing world’ (Fyfe 1989: 2).

'Child labour' and childhood in global discourse

The particular ideology about childhood, established in a few industrialising countries by the first half of the 20th century as a period of dependency, age of innocence, and protected from adult responsibilities, filled with studying and playing, but not work (James, et al. 1998: 101-102) is being spread to other countries as a ‘standard’ model of childhood, and has become today’s normative childhood. Nieuwenhuys points out that even though such an idea about childhood is more of a myth than a reality to even most children in industrialised countries, it has come to serve as a ‘yardstick of modernity’ (Nieuwenhuys 1996).

The association of modernity and economic development on the one hand, and the realisation of this particular ideology of childhood on the other, can be seen as a legacy of the European and American experience of child labour in the 19th and 20th century. The assumption is that once a country is economically developed, child labour should disappear, and children’s human rights based on the particular idea about childhood should prevail.
Child labour, modernisation, and a ‘proper’ childhood

Seen as a result of poverty, and a part of the drudgery poor children endure, child labour is often associated with underdevelopment (Nieuwenhuys 1996). The underlying assumption is that if a country is developed and poverty eradicated, child labour should disappear, which relates to the ‘modernisation theory’, one of the theories of economic development. Modernisation theory assumed an evolutionary linear path for economic development where different countries are seen as being at different stages of development, becoming increasingly like the advanced industrial countries in the West (Webster 1990: 41-64). ‘Child labour’ tends to be thought of as something Western countries had, but eventually managed to eliminate as the countries ‘developed’. Therefore, to combat child labour, Third World countries are prompted to follow the same path of development.

However, it is important to note that child labour in industrialised countries is far from having been eradicated, as in the cases of Mexican-American children working on New York state farms in the United States (as cited by Bellamy 1997: 20), British children working illegally (before the legal school-leaving age) in accident-prone conditions (McKechnie, et al. 1998), and piece workers in Australia (Bessell 1998). Moreover, there is a counter-view to the above argument that child labour actually results from the expansion of capitalism, in which local industries as well as transnational corporations exploit cheap labour (see for example, Ballescas 1991; Burra 1986). This view relates to ‘dependency theory’, a counter theory of development to ‘modernisation’. In this theory, poverty is seen as a result of the polarising effect of capitalist development on the global scale, giving rise to and perpetuating the gap between the haves and have-nots (Hout 1993; Webster 1990: 65-97), and child labour is seen as the result of the capitalist pursuit to maximise profit.

Therefore, the argument that child labour should disappear as a country economically develops, modelled on the experience of the Western industrialised countries, is not valid. Even so, the global discourse of modernisation and development had the effect of condemning child labour found in non-industrialised countries and promoting a particular notion of childhood as the ideal all over the world.
Normative childhood of global discourse

Boyden also points out that a certain ideology about childhood has been proliferated all over the world. This has been done firstly by colonial rule, and later by international instruments which cover different areas of intervention in children’s lives such as social work, education, and anti-labour regulations. With the ratification of these instruments, certain ideas about childhood are exported to different countries, translated into national laws which even penalise children and practices which do not conform to the globalising concept of childhood (Boyden 1990). White also argues that the international pressures and global standard-setting, through conventions and recommendations regarding child labour, spread around the world adult ideas about what a proper childhood should be like and what kinds of activity children should undertake (White 1996).

In regards to the campaigns against child labour throughout the history, Myers (2001) says that ‘the labour market perspective’ is the dominant international paradigm for intervention, especially by governments. This perspective regards the employment of cheap labour provided by children as a potential threat to adult employment. Child labour intervention based on this paradigm is most closely associated with the ‘abolitionist’ stance to child labour, which seeks to ban at least children’s full-time employment until they have finished compulsory education.

There are different schools of thought regarding child labour, and the ‘abolitionist’ school is one of them. Other schools include the ‘protectionist’ school which consents to children’s part-time work, but argues for protection of children while they work, and the ‘child liberation school’ which focuses on empowering children, affirming their right to decent work just like adults have a right to it. Within these general categorisations, there is a gradation of approaches (Bessell 1998). In my thesis, I will refer to the general ‘abolitionist’ approach as the most persistent and dominant one (Myers 2001) to child labour intervention. It is also the general principle maintained by international agencies, labour unions and other organisations (White 1994: 853).

Behind the ‘abolitionist’ position to child labour is the ideology about childhood that it is an age of innocence, separated from the world of work. In Myers’ words:
The labour market perspective takes a particular view of children, envisaging them as essentially innocent, ignorant of the world and incompetent to fend off its evils or even to recognise their own best interests. They are depicted as helpless victims, or potential victims, dependent on protection and rescue by adults. This is primarily a modern Western urban, middle-class notion of childhood. This notion is historically and anthropologically unusual not only for the radical division it draws between childhood and adulthood, but also for valuing children's helplessness rather than usefulness (Myers 2001: 31).

The abolitionist stance and the ideology about childhood that supports it have remained until today (Myers 2001: 30-31).

Childhood, as constructed in the modern period in Western societies, now forms a universalising force, and many researchers point out that this is now assumed to be the 'standard' and the normative model of childhood that all children in the world should be entitled to enjoy (Ennew and Milne 1989; James 1998: 52; Boyden, cited by James, et al. 1998: 140-141; Nieuwenhuys 1996; Stephens 1995). What child labour represents is contradictory to this ideal, and therefore, it is often depicted as a denial of childhood.

**History of 'childhood' and 'child labour' in the Philippines**

The above debate about 'child labour' and normative concept of childhood has focused on Western countries. Research on the history of child labour in countries other than those mentioned above is limited (White 2004 is a notable exception). Reconstructing the history of child labour in the Philippines requires a major scholastic project in itself, and is beyond the scope of this thesis. Such a project may reveal the relationship between the Filipinos (possibly including young people and children) and the Spanish colonialists, use of Filipino labourers in plantations, and Filipinos involved in the running of Catholic Church. Some studies may be able to trace back to pre-Spanish period. For example, Oebanda, et al. mention that the treatment of domestic workers in the Philippines today can be traced back to the practice of slavery in the pre-colonial period. At that time, there were two kinds of what can be considered domestic workers: *aliping namamahay* (domestic slaves who can own property) and *aliping suguiguilid* (domestic slaves who are property of the household), both of whom were often war captives or persons indebted to the tribe. During the Spanish era, under the guise of *obras pias* (work of piety), free labour of Filipinos was extracted, including Filipino women conscripted to be servants for clerics and
officials of the colonial government, as well as for clergymen (Oebanda, et al. 2001: 11-12). It is not indicated whether these slaves and workers involved children and young people, but this is a possibly fruitful area of inquiry.

In terms of policy and regulation on child labour, the Philippines can be seen as having embraced the international debate about this topic as it has ratified all the international instruments related to child labour to date. It even made national laws on child labour as early as 1923\(^1\) as a result of the ratification of the ILO Convention No.5 on ‘Minimal Age for Admission of Children to Industrial Employment (1919)’ (Butler, and Volksraadstukken, cited by White 2004).

The history of the concept of childhood in the Philippines has not been given scholastic attention in its own right. The importance of children in the lowland Christian Filipino family has been emphasised and re-emphasised in numerous studies on the Filipino family, which will be referred to in Chapter 4 of this thesis. My ethnographic study, as well as the vast body of literature on the Filipino family, confirm the centrality of the concept of family in understanding Filipino children. However, I have been unable to locate a body of literature which examines the historical shifts in Filipino people’s conception of what a child is.

The childhood in Paco-Pandacan is different from the normative childhood of global discourse as a period of innocence and dependency. The children in Paco-Pandacan are keen observers of their families’ situations and are proactive actors to survive their plight. Far from being dependent, they are active contributors to their own lives. The claim that child labourers are denied their childhood motivates me to explore what kind of childhood working children have, and what role ‘work’ plays in their childhood.

**Children in anthropology**

Besides the historical studies on childhood that have mainly focused on European societies, there are other studies on childhood in anthropology and other

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\(^{18}\) In 1923, the Philippines was known as ‘the Commonwealth of the Philippines’, under the American colonial government.
disciplines that add to our understanding of the concept and of that period of one’s life.

Anthropological studies on children have traditionally concentrated on the concept of ‘socialisation’. This has been driven by the question of how cultural norms and practices are transmitted from one generation to another, to understand the way a culture is successfully reproduced and perpetuated. Psychology has shared the same interest, with the view that despite the biological universality of a newly born infant, human beings in different parts of the world grow up to exhibit different beliefs and behaviours. Within anthropology, this school of thought is referred to as the ‘culture and personality’ school, for which Margaret Mead is a main proponent. In this paradigm, the main actors of a society are adults, and children are seen as incomplete beings. As a theoretical orientation for a book, Mead (1955) wrote:

In the study of personality in culture we start with a recognition of the biologically given, of what all human beings have in common. In every human society, human infants are born helpless and relatively undeveloped, dependent upon adult nurture and adult transmission of the great body of culture – beliefs, practices, skills – which make it possible for any human group, and for this human group in particular, to function as human beings. Humanity as we know it is not merely a matter of our human physique, […] but of our capacity to accumulate and build upon the inventions and experience of previous generations. A child who does not participate in this great body of tradition, whether because of defect, neglect, injury, a disease, never becomes fully human (1955: 6).

Here, we can see the view of a child as *tabula rasa*, a blank slate to be written on, and dependent on adults to transmit culture. The focus is on the adults to socialise children, and children are seen as passive receptacles. Without socialisation, a child is not considered a full human being. A child, therefore, is seen as ‘not yet a full human being’. Mead also says:

And to the adults, children everywhere represent something weak and helpless, in need of protection, supervision, training, models, skills, beliefs, “character.” […] Because of these recurrent biological similarities – of growth, of parent-child relationships, of needs and fears, and resonances – it is possible to compare childhood in one society with childhood in another (1955: 7).

It can be asserted from this passage that children in all societies are seen as helpless and in need of protection. Children all over the world are also seen to share some ‘biologically given’ whereas some social factors in their socialisation
will vary from culture to culture. The same view is shared by studies of children in social psychology, child psychology and developmental psychology (see for example, Earle 1958; Leiderman, et al. 1977; Ritchie 1957) where socialisation is taken to mean ‘the process whereby the new born infant is transformed into the functioning adult personality’ (Ritchie 1957: 13).

Similarly, studies of child rearing practices in different cultures, sometimes treated under the label ‘education’, have also focused on children as objects of adult activities, rather than studying children’s experiences and practices of growing up as seen from their point of view (see for example, Raum 1940; Read 1959).

Children in anthropology also appear in studies of rites-of-passage. Children are again seen as ‘on the way to becoming adults’. Rites of passage mark the transition from an incomplete social being towards a full-status member of the society (see for example, Ottenberg 1989; van Gennep 1960 [1908]).

The view that children were the ‘other’, and were ‘on the way to becoming like us (adults)’, has resulted in the marginalisation of children from theorisation about personhood and society. Children have been largely invisible in anthropological theories.

Despite the interest in children as an object of study in social sciences, children have been characterised as silent, having been neglected as the subject of study. According to a Dutch anthropologist, van der Geest:

Children may take a central value in a culture (in fact, they do in many cultures), not as human beings, but as future human beings. They are near-objects, extremely precious, but mute. Their position is not much different from that of cows in a Nuer village, canoes among Trobriand men, or marbles in a group of Dutch children: cherished, omnipresent, and without words (van der Geest 1996: 340).

He says, ‘[o]f course, we do have studies about children, for example about child-rearing practices in various cultures but ethnographic work which

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19 I would like to acknowledge, however, that within the studies on ‘socialisation’, some researchers took the ‘interactive perspective’ which saw children not only being constituted by adults in passivity, but also constituting themselves actively, such as Helen Morton, 1996, *Becoming Tongan*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, and Simon Ottenberg, 1989, *Boyhood Rituals in an African Society: An Interpretation*, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press.
attempts to grasp the child’s point of view is extremely rare’ (van der Geest 1996: 339).

Amit-Talay and Wulff state, ‘[...] because of the traditional socialization perspective, youth (and children) still tend to be viewed as incomplete adults, not real, full persons who have understood what life is actually about; that is mainly the responsibilities and hardship that come with adulthood. According to this view, they know less than adults, as opposed to knowing something else that has to do with their particular situation and surroundings’ (Amit-Talai and Wulff 1995a: 11). Caputo also points out that anthropology’s concept of culture privileges adults’ activities while children tend to be seen as ‘partially cultural’. She calls for a concept of culture as ‘a multiplicity of signifying practices’ and a recognition of children’s construction of what is meaningful to them as existing alongside adults’ construction of culture (Caputo 1995).

Among the earlier studies on youth in social sciences is a series of sociological studies that came out of University of Birmingham (‘Birmingham School’), which focused on white working-class youths resisting the dominant culture in Britain by building their own subcultures (Hebdige 1996 [1976]; Jefferson 1996 [1976]; McRobbie 1991; McRobbie 1996 [1976]). While these sociological studies recognised young people’s autonomy and agency (their ‘subcultures’), they focused on themes of delinquency and marginalisation. Amit-Talay and Wulff point out that studies of youth tended to focus on themes of deviance and resistance20, and they call for more studies of youth as social agents, not limited to these themes (Amit-Talai and Wulff 1995a).

Anthropology’s lack of attention to children as social actors in their own right has been pointed out by several anthropologists (Harris 2000; Morton 1996; Panter-Brick 1998; Scheper-Hughes and Sargent 1998). Gottlieb, an anthropologist, who wrote an ethnography of infants, commented that she found only two full-length ethnographies that treated infants as subjects of research, even though there were more ethnographies on children than infants or babies. She believes that neglecting the study of children and infants will result in a

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20 Paul Willis’ study, *Learning to Labour* (1977), about how children position themselves in the class structure, is an exception.
partial view of that society, just as feminism has taught us that neglecting women will distort our understanding of that society (Gottlieb 2004: 38-46).

**Children as social actors**

A very different way of seeing the child has been proposed in an area of study now called the ‘new sociology of childhood’. As opposed to the ‘old’ or traditional sociological view of children as part of the family and socialisation and therefore evading special attention, the ‘new sociology of childhood’ calls for a view of children as ‘being’ here and now, not as ‘becoming’ (James, et al. 1998; Morrow 2003). In this paradigm, ‘[t]he child is conceived of as a person, a status, a course of action, a set of needs, rights and differences – in sum, as a social actor’ (James, et al. 1998: 207).

One of the challenges in such a paradigm is related to the dichotomy that sociology as a discipline has struggled with, that is, to locate children between structure and agency (James and Prout 1990: 27-29; Morrow 2003). Are children being structured by social institutions or are they seen as agents, that is, being able to act and change the world around them? This thesis is my attempt to present a more balanced view of working children’s lives other than children as ‘victims’ of poverty and other social forces. I aim to bring in the perspective of children themselves in order to elucidate what children are doing in their situation, to show that they are social actors. However, I also try not to fall into another stereotype of showing children as creative, resisting revolutionaries because, in my empirical study, they were not. Children seemed to be just as obedient as rebellious, just as unimaginative as imaginative. I try to give a balanced picture of children as influenced and shaped by social structure, yet exercising some autonomy and successfully engaging in deviation from social norms.

The ‘new sociology of childhood’ has made a radical departure from the traditional social sciences’ view of children as incomplete and ‘becoming adults’. However, the studies inspired by this paradigm tend to focus on children in Western cultures (for example, James 1995; Morrow 2003; and Prout 1992 on England; and Solberg 1997 on Norway) although, of course, are not limited to them.
The proposition of a 'new sociology of childhood' to see children as social agents in their own right should not constitute a surprise to anthropologists who, from the beginning of the discipline, have been encouraged to understand the world from the 'native's point of view' as Malinowski said. Even though anthropology has viewed children as objects rather than subjects, just like the 'old' sociology of childhood and child psychology, in response to the call of a 'new sociology of childhood', I hope anthropology can make a contribution in developing case studies of childhoods from non-Western, as well as Western cultures. However, to this date, anthropological studies focusing exclusively on children's lives remain few.

Nieuwenhuys argues that the modern ideology of childhood rooted in Western bourgeois history has made children a category of people excluded from the production of value, and the separation of children from valued work has become a yardstick of modernity (Nieuwenhuys 1996). A childhood similar to the normative childhood of global discourse and the view of children in the socialisation paradigm can be seen in the example below:

In the 19th and early 20th century Bengal, colonised by India, children came to be isolated from the wider kinship system and confined in the nuclear family. Family was seen as a refuge from a competitive and brutal outside world. A child came to be seen as 'an inferior version of the adult - as a sweet, endearing, tender, impulsive being who was at the same time dependent, vulnerable, unreliable, and wilful, and thus a being that needed constant guidance, supervision, care, and surveillance' (Bose 1995: 120). Children came to be the source that could be used to achieve colonial and national aspirations. This view of the child is described as 'the theory of progress applied to the individual life-cycle' (Ashis Nandy, cited by Bose 1995: 120). I suggest that the idea of development and progress is also inherent in the Western idea of child as underdeveloped and incomplete, on the way to becoming like us (i.e. adults).

This exclusion of children from the production of value enshrined in the normative concept of childhood can be seen as rare and peculiar rather than universal. Among the few non-Western studies about childhood, there are case studies that show children as having a different yet equally respected status as grown-ups, and are seen as independent human beings. Below are some examples.
Gottlieb describes how the Beng of Côte d’Ivoire believe that children are the incarnation of dead people and come from the ‘afterlife (wrugbe)’. As they newly arrive from the afterlife where they used to lead a full life, babies in this world are also regarded as full beings with their own memories of the other world and having their own needs to be pacified. When an infant is in discomfort for an unknown reason, adults need to bring him/her to the diviner and have him interpret the baby’s particular needs. Parents do all they can to make the babies’ life in this world comfortable so babies are not tempted to go back to the wrugbe. Infants, even when they can only babble, are seen as being capable of expressing themselves. It is believed that in the afterlife, people from different parts of the world come and live in peace, and everybody understands all the languages of the world. Therefore, babies are believed to still possess this ability. Adults speak to babies as they would to adults, and babies’ babbling is not dismissed as an inability to articulate, but rather, it is seen as the lack of enlightenment on the part of the adults. The Beng view of the infant and child is consistent with their value of independence. Children have a great degree of independence from an early age, and it is common for the parents not to know the whereabouts of their two-year old daughter during the day while she walks about the large village, or goes deep into the forest to join her older siblings and cousins working and playing, returning to her house for lunch and dinner. Children of all ages are given respect from older members of the society, and intergenerational friendship is common (Gottlieb 2004).

According children with a degree of independence from a very early age is not unique to the Beng. Among the Aka pygmies of the western Congo Basin, too, children are independent and autonomous. According to Hewlett:

Infants are allowed to crawl or walk to wherever they want in camp and allowed to use knives, machetes, digging sticks, and clay pots around camp. [...] It was not unusual, for instance, to see an eight month old with a six-inch knife chopping the branch frame of its family’s house. By three or four years of age children can cook themselves a meal on the fire, and by ten years of age Aka children know enough subsistence skills to live in the forest alone if need be (Hewlett 1991: 34).

He further describes that children are not taught to be obedient to elders, and there is a certain degree of intergenerational equality among the people. Adults have difficulties in getting children to help with tasks such as collecting
water or firewood, and even when children of one to four years old teased an elder so persistently that the elderly man had to escape into the forest for three days, children were not punished (Hewlett 1991: 34-35).

Among the Ijaw in Niger, Leis says that children are respected as individuals and are not seen as socially or politically inferior. Children are believed to have memories of the time before they were born when they were still in touch with Wonyinghi, the female creator, which lasts until they are five years old. They are believed to be able to see the spirits, decide to go back to that world, and then to be reborn. Children are believed to have certain powers such as the ability to make a woman conceive or kill future siblings out of jealously. What children do or say is taken seriously, which is consistent with the egalitarian social relationships that permeate Ijaw society, that people are basically independent individuals, and authority in a political sense is considered immoral. Children, with their special ‘power’, are respected as individuals with their own abilities (Leis 1982).

In the Canadian Arctic, Inuit three-year olds are taught to be observant of the world around them and learn the harsh reality of life. Children are not dependent or incompetent, but are respected for their ability to understand and to use their own lives (Briggs, cited by James 1998: 50).

In these examples, children’s agency is accounted for. So what is the ‘childhood’ like for some of the working children in the world when they are seen as possessing certain competencies and the ability to act on their own account? What is the experience, practice and concern of everyday life for the working children seen from their perspective? What are the important concerns for children in their everyday life, and what do children do to address them? And how does their work fit in with other activities in their everyday life?

Some anthropological studies have shown that ‘work’ is part of the everyday reality for childhood in some places. White has shown that teenage members of the household in a rural Javanese village in Indonesia are just as productive or more productive than adults. Younger children also make a great contribution in freeing older members of the household from tasks around the house so that the older members can engage in productive activities contributing
to household subsistence (White 1975). Reynolds shows various forms of ‘work’ as part of everyday life for children in Zimbabwe, citing a girl who said she had performed ‘nothing’ that morning when in fact she had done a range of household tasks (Reynolds 1991). Additionally, Nieuwenhuys’ study in Kerala, India shows girls’ household chores are a common, expected part of their everyday life, even though the researcher questions the acceptance of such work (Nieuwenhuys 1994).

Previous studies on child labour in the Philippines

The treatment of children in the social sciences as mute, vulnerable, in need of adults’ teachings and protection, also characterises studies of child labour. Studies of child labour in the Philippines are written from the adults’ point of view, seeing children primarily as victims of poverty. Furthermore, studies that have inquired into children’s own views on what they do are rare (exceptions are Porio 1994, Ballescas 1991 and Torres 1996 as mentioned below) (Kitada 1998).

The majority of reports and studies about child labour in the Philippines have been prompted and funded by international organisations such as UNICEF and the ILO. The Philippines is a signatory to all the international conventions regarding child labour, and this in turn creates the need to research and report on the child labour situation, implement programs of intervention, and report again on what has been done about child labour. Therefore, it is not uncommon for a study on child labour to be conducted in a relatively short time, that is, not longer than several months at most. This has much to do with the characteristics of the previous studies on child labour. I would like to discuss four characteristics that emerged from the studies of child labour in the Philippines, and show how these characteristics inspired me to conceptualise my research.

Lack of Ethnographic Studies

First of all, there are few ethnographic studies of child labourers’ lives in the Philippines. Existing studies tend to be quantitative research based on surveys, although some combined surveys with qualitative data obtained from interviewing children. However, beside the studies discussed earlier in this chapter, there are few studies which document children’s lives in totality, based on a long-term relationship with the children and the researcher and extended
observation of their daily lives. The majority of studies on child labour tended to
deal with children’s work in isolation. My research focuses on what it means for
the children to work within the totality of their everyday life.

**Children as victims and passive beneficiaries**

Secondly, children, in previous studies from the Philippines, are often
described as victims of poverty and passive beneficiaries of intervention
programs. The image of children one gets from these reports is that children are
vulnerable and incapable of protecting themselves. Even though these documents
are supposed to be about children, one does not get a sense of children as social
actors. What children think of what they do is often simply not inquired into. I
wish to shed light on the experience and attitudes of working children. They may
be vulnerable and they may be victims at times, but they also possess strengths,
resourcefulness, creativity, talent and potential. They can also be seen as actors
and active agents in their lives, or creators of culture.

However, there are some studies that are exceptions to this. Porio (1994)
documents street children’s own life stories in Manila and Cebu, and shows that
children regard their income-generating activities as the performance of duty to
their families. According to Ballescas (1991) and Torres (1996: 60), children
often take the initiative to work. They hear about work from a peer and start
working with that friend. Parents initially resent their working, but as the children
bring in income on a regular basis, parents come to approve of it. This way, they
showed, albeit briefly, that children are decision makers. 21

**Local specificity of child labour?**

Thirdly, a question arose from these studies: Is there anything Philippine-
specific, or local specific about child labour? I have read reports and studies from
the Philippines and also from other countries, but comparing the accounts of child
labour, there is nothing that appears to be specific to the Philippines, nor are there
many studies which focus on cultural specificity of child labour. One exception is
Delap’s study on urban slums in Bangladesh. She argues that economy (poverty)
alone does not explain child labour; cultural determinants such as gender norms,

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21 There are other studies which suggest that it is the parents who prompt children to work, for
example, Institute for Labor Studies (1994: 5) and Siddiqi and Patrinos, cited by Sakellariou and
age subordination and the cultural importance of avoiding idleness are also important (Delap 2001).

The hardship experienced by child labourers in the Philippines has been reported in many publications, but despite the variation of types of work and geographical regions, the accounts are very similar. I look for local specific characteristics of children’s work by focusing on children’s social relationships with the family and household, and other factors such as gender and age.

‘Working children’ as one category

Fourthly, most reports from the Philippines treat ‘working children’ as one category. Neera Burra’s study on India (1989), however, argues that girl working children need to be studied in their own right because they tend to be found in low-skilled jobs where they have no opportunity to learn additional skills, whereas boys tend to get apprenticeships and acquire some skills. In the case of India, parents also invest less in girls because they are expected to leave the house on marriage and, as a consequence, they are rarely sent to school. Therefore, differences among ‘working children’ may be found in gender, age, socio-economic status, and family structure (female-headed households or male-headed, for example, where the mother is away as an Overseas Contract Worker), number of siblings and birth order. I explore if these differences among children influence the kind of work they get, what they experience during work, or how they perform the work.

Lack of ‘children’s voice’

In addition to the above, I also try to identity what may be considered the ‘children’s voice’ that is needed for future policy and program implementation. Since the 1980s, the problem of child labour has received a surge of international attention. However, the debate around the issue of child labour (how to abolish extremely hazardous child labour, and how to protect child labourers from occupational hazards in the meanwhile) has not incorporated children’s voices, despite the fact that ‘participation’ is one of the fundamental rights of children stipulated in the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Woodhead’s 1998 report is a rare exception in reporting children’s perspectives on their working lives in multiple countries (Woodhead 1998), and there have also been working children’s congresses which published public
declarations on what children want in their working lives (Liebel 2003). Children have a right to have a say and be heard, especially in a debate which directly affects their lives. I would like to join these movements and listen to what they have to say about their lives.

Conclusion

Childhood is a social construct, particular to the time and place, and is different for different children, depending on gender, class, ethnicity, health status, family circumstances and other factors.

Among the different childhoods to be found in various cultures and periods, there is an idealised, 'globalising' concept of childhood as a special time of life which should be reserved for education, innocence, carefreeness, protection, for children to have rights of their own, to not have to work or be burdened with adult responsibility.

International instruments such as ILO Conventions regarding child labour and the UN Convention on Rights of the Child can be seen as tools by which some ideals for childhood are being spread to cultures all over the world. The particular concept of childhood has, therefore, come to be the normative childhood of global discourse.

This normative childhood condemns work as a pathology of childhood. Working children are said to be denied childhood. However, based on the understanding that childhood is socially constructed and that there can be many different childhoods beside the normative one, my study aims to understand childhood which has 'work' as an important component. I do not take up the dominant view of children in social sciences as clay to be moulded, shaped and constrained by social structure, but view children as social actors exercising their agency in shaping their lives. This way, I try to give a more comprehensive view of working children’s lives in the Philippines than previously demonstrated.
Chapter 2: Everyday life in the community

Working children's lives are embedded in the living conditions of their families and community, and this chapter gives an overview of everyday life in the Paco-Pandacan community and the residents' daily concerns.

A day in the community

As early as 5am when it is still dark outside, some children and their mothers wake up to prepare for school, which starts at 6am. School children start walking towards school hand in hand with their mothers, crossing what is called the 'Hi-Way', or the six-lane road that lies between the community and the school.

Between 7 and 8am, a rubbish collection truck comes along the Hi-Way and stops at the entrance to the community. As the truck arrives, the rubbish collector hits the 'gong', a piece of iron they carry on the truck to signal the truck's arrival. The rubbish truck comes twice a day, in the morning and afternoon, and as they hit the 'gong', many children come out of the community with sacks and plastic bins full of rubbish, and carry them to the truck. Children do this either as a household chore, or for their neighbours and get paid for it.

Inside the community, on the 'main alleys' that branch off perpendicular to the Hi-Way, some food stalls are quickly set up to serve breakfast. Residents bring out small tables, place pots of food on them, and the stalls are ready for business. A common breakfast menu available from these stalls includes lugaw, or savoury rice porridge garnished with fried garlic pieces, and mami, or soup noodles. Some people buy pan de sal, a popular type of bread typically eaten for breakfast, fresh from the bakery. Many people in the community, however, simply drink instant coffee at home to start the day. By 10am, these food stalls will disappear as quickly as they appeared.

High school students leave home by 10am. Some of them get up as early as their elementary school siblings in order to help them get ready for school.

22 There are so many children enrolled at local public elementary schools that the classes are run in two shifts: 6am to 12 noon for the morning batch and 12 noon to 6pm for the afternoon batch.
High school students come home in the afternoon between 3 and 6pm, depending on the classes they take and whether or not they ‘cut classes’ (as they say in English), or skip classes.

Elementary school students in the afternoon batch get up around 10am or later, bathe by scooping water with a pail out of a large plastic tank where each family stores a daily supply of water. Some children walk up and down the alleys in the community to run errands for neighbours, for example, buying a kilo of rice from the local corner stores to earn some money before going to school. They will use the money as baon, or daily pocket money, which they will use to buy food (elementary schools have a short break during the day when they can buy food from the school canteen) and for any other school expenses needed during the day.

Towards noon, as elementary school students change shifts, there is an influx of school children in the community as they come home from the morning session or leave for the afternoon session. There is also a crowd at the school gate at this change-over period as parents of the morning batch wait for their children to come out while children of the afternoon batch swarm outside around the gate, waiting to get in.

Towards lunchtime, there is a new range of food stalls on the community’s main alley. The same people who sold breakfast may be back in business with a different menu, and there are also new stalls. There are many food stalls along the main alley of the community. On the main alley, about 50 metres long, there can be around 10 stalls selling food. There is a wider choice of food for lunch than for breakfast. A meal in the Philippines normally consists of kanin, or steamed rice, and ulam, a meat, fish, or vegetable dish to go with the rice. Steamed rice is pre-packed in small plastic bags sufficient for one person and sold for 5 pesos. Typical ulam available are dinuguan, or pork blood stew, tinolang manok, or chicken soup cooked with herbs, kaldereta, or meat stew with vegetables, and sinigang, or sour soup with fish or meat. A small plastic bag of vegetable dish costs about 10 pesos while a meat dish can cost between 15 and 20 pesos. However, it is also possible to ask for the soup or stew only without any meat, for only 6 pesos. One stall may sell rice and a few types of ulam, and another stall may have no rice, but six different types of ulam. So the residents of
the community shop at one or more of these stalls to make an assortment of dishes for their lunch. People either bring their own containers to buy the food, or ask the vendor to put it in a plastic bag to take-away.

Photograph 1: Neighbours and researcher (far right) get behind a food stall

Children who come back from the morning school shift change clothes, have lunch, and then take a nap. Some children go out to play instead of sleeping, or tend the food stall run by their families. Others may start running errands for their suki, or 'regular clients', for example, asking if they need any drinking water bought from a store, or walk around in the community selling sweet cakes to make some money to buy themselves a snack, or to keep for tomorrow's school money.

In the morning, as well as in the afternoon, there are children outside playing. Piko is a popular game for girls although boys play it, too. It is a version of hopscotch played on a matrix drawn on the ground. The person who completes all the boxes first wins. Another popular game, more for girls than boys, is called Chinese (Chinese jump rope). Two girls stand 2 to 3 metres apart facing each other with a large elastic ring stretched out at knee height. Another girl positions herself beside the two strands of elastic and performs a series of movements with her feet hooking onto and releasing the elastic. She performs until she makes a
mistake, and the girls take turns to perform the sequence of movements. Children also go to the ‘island’ to play, as one of the traffic islands on the Hi-Way has been made into a park with swings and see-saws. Boys like to play basketball at the community basketball court even though the court tends to be occupied by older males in their 20s. Alternatively, they hang a hand-made goal on the wall of the main alley and use a ball of any size that they have. Going to an ‘arcade’ is another favourite pastime. An ‘arcade’ is a game house in the community with some coin-operated video games. A one-peso coin is good for only a minute or two, so one has to keep inserting money in order to continue. There are shooting games, martial arts fighting games, as well as a horse-racing game with which you make a bet. Some children are said to be addicted to this video horse race and play all day while their parents assume that they have gone to school.

Some barangay set a curfew for children. In one barangay, it is 9pm. If a child is found outside after this hour, he or she is taken to the ‘prison’ which is the barangay hall, and they then need to be picked up by a parent or guardian. Otherwise, children go to bed early, especially those who start early the next morning. Children I met in Paco-Pandacan in general think that it is dangerous to walk around at night even in one’s own barangay, citing cases of rape that they have heard of directly from people they know. When I asked Leilani (16-year old high school student) if she would go out and walk outside on her own at night, she said she would not unless there was someone accompanying her. She said there were rapes in which people grab your arm and pull you into a secluded space. This perception was reinforced to me by another girl telling me of an incident where an elementary school girl I also know was pulled by the arm by a man when she was walking near the community in the dark. Luckily, she was able to run away. Leilani said she met a child who had shared her story of being raped once. That there are rapes in the area is a known and admitted fact in the community. There is an equivalent of ‘community police’ at the barangay level called barangay tanod, but I have no data on how many rapes or assaults are dealt with by them.

Even so, there are some children of elementary and high school age who ‘hang around’ with peers on the main alleys at night, and Cody, whom I will talk
about later in the thesis, sells a popular night snack called balut, or boiled duck egg, on the main alley until as late as 1 o’clock in the morning.

**Physical structure of the ‘community’**

My research site of Paco and Pandacan spreads over 7 barangay. There are about 16,000 people in the 7 barangay, residing over a land area of approximately 150,000 square metres (National Statistics Office 2000). A rough map of my research site looks like this:

![Figure 3: Physical structure of the community](image)

Each barangay typically comprises a ‘main alley’ or the widest street that runs in the centre of the barangay connecting the community to the ‘Hi-Way’ which is one of major arteries of Manila. The next ‘main alley’ is another barangay. In each barangay, there are numerous smaller alleys that branch out of the main alley and run like a maze into an interior area called ‘looban’ (literally, ‘interior’). These components of the physical layout of the community are explained below, one by one.

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23 The symbols of houses in this figure are placed in Looban areas in order to indicate that that is where most houses are located in the community, and do not represent the actual shape of the houses or reflect the actual number of houses.
Hi-Way

This is a busy street with three lanes in each direction. The residents of the area call it ‘Hi-Way’. There are large trucks, as well as jeepney (the most common public transport in the Philippines, and originally, American Jeeps converted so that each can carry about 20 passengers), taxis, and private cars passing by, day and night. On the Hi-Way, there are sari-sari stores (local corner stores that sell packaged snacks and small items of daily needs such as shampoo and laundry detergent, as well as rice), bakeries, car parts stores, pharmacies, as well as residential houses. The residents of my research site come out to the Hi-Way to buy daily needs, to walk to a neighbouring barangay, or to catch jeepney to travel to other parts of Manila. This road being one of many major roads in the city, there are many people who do not live in this area passing through on Hi-Way in their private cars, as well as by public transport. Hi-Way is a space in my research site where residents of the community as well as numerous non-residents are found.
Branching off from the Hi-Way are what I call ‘main alleys’. They are the widest streets within the respective barangay, and are a little wider than a car, and here, you can find public facilities such as the barangay office, barangay hall, barangay chapel, as well as bakeries, sari-sari stores, and some residential houses. Residents of the barangay come out to the ‘main alley’ to buy ready-to-eat food and snacks, or to sit around on wooden benches to chat with neighbours or to watch people walk by. Some residents bring out large washtubs to the ‘main alley’ to wash clothes as the space inside the house is limited. Main alleys are also the space where children can play safely within reach of their parents and neighbours. The residents seen on the ‘main alleys’ are in relaxed attire. Some men wear no shirts, while a few men even walk around with only a towel around their waist. Women wear loose one-piece dresses which they rarely wear when they go outside the barangay. Once you step off the Hi-Way and enter one of these ‘main alleys’, the atmosphere is different. It is a space occupied almost
exclusively by the residents of the respective barangay who know each others' faces. Unlike Hi-Way, where all kinds of people pass by, main alleys are of a more exclusive nature. Strangers do not walk into these alleys unless they have specific business with someone who lives there. It is primarily a communal space shared by the residents of the barangay, and for anyone who does not live in the area, it feels like stepping into someone else’s private space.

**Looban**

![Photograph 3: An elderly member of the community on a looban path](image)

The sense of stepping into someone else’s private space is even stronger in looban. Many narrow paths originate between two houses on the ‘main alley’, and inside the looban, they turn, branch out into different directions and meet again, like a maze, and are too complicated to be drawn on the map above. These paths are irregularly shaped and do not look like they were designed as paths in the first place. In fact, for people who are not familiar with the place, it is hard to tell which gap between the houses is the start of a path. The looban paths look
rather like a result of building houses very close to each other, leaving a minimal gap between them so that people can still get to their houses in the interior area. For two people to pass each other on such a path, one has to stop to let the other one go first. It is usually dim on these narrow paths because you are sandwiched between two houses built close to each other that are usually two-storeys high, and people hang their laundry on lines above the path. The ground is unevenly cemented and usually wet because children bathe or women wash clothes on these paths. There are many houses built inside looban and they cannot be seen from the 'main alley'. In fact, it is in looban that the majority of the residents of the barangay live.

Photograph 4: Daily chores being performed just outside the house

In looban, many residents keep their doors open, bring out a washtub and do some laundry on the path, or put out a bench just outside the door to sit around and talk. The outdoor space on the looban paths is used as if it is an extension of one's house.

Residential crowdedness and physical proximity

The houses are made of cement, wood, sheets of tin, or any combination of such materials, occasionally supplemented by cardboard which is used as a temporary cover for an open window in case of rain, or for anything else that needs covering. This is because most people build their houses gradually, in
stages. For example, they make the walls with cement, and then place a tin sheet as a temporary door, and when they have some money again, they will have a proper door of thick wood. Inside the house, the space tends to be limited. It is not uncommon for a family of seven to sleep in a space 3 x 4 metres.

As an example, one family’s house is a one-room residence with the floor area not exceeding 4 x 4 metres. It has a door made with a wooden plank, one wooden-shuttered window, and a back door leading to a little backyard surrounded by a corrugated metal wall where the family hang laundry. They have put up a plastic sheet hanging from the roof extending towards the backyard to make a small shaded area so that the laundry hung outside will not get wet in the rain. The roof of the house is made of plastic and metal, and the walls are made of cement.

Inside this 4 x 4 metre space, there is a TV, an electric fan, a fluorescent light on the ceiling, and a fridge. There is one bed at the corner of the room where people sit, or lie down to watch TV, or relax during the day. There is an extra mattress leaning on the wall, to be placed on the floor at night for people to sleep on. There is one big cupboard and one or two smaller plastic cupboards to keep clothes and other possessions, and a plastic bench for people to sit on. The room is not big, but at least 5 adults and a baby sleep there each night. An arrangement like this is not at all uncommon.

Another observation about the houses and the limited space is that people keep them very tidy. Items are neatly placed, and people creatively make use of the small space. For example, in one house, they ran a string across the wall just below the ceiling to hold pillows during the day, so that they had space on the floor. Another example I saw in a few houses is that they build a platform, about an adult’s chest-high, creating an effect very similar to a double-decker bed. Some can sleep on the platform and others can sleep in the space underneath it.

People in Paco-Pandacan appreciate a spacious residence if it is possible, but they make efficient use of what is available and cope very well with the limited space. When I asked two teenage girls what it was like to live in a big family (more than ten people sleeping in the same house), one said, 'Parang
sardinas (Like sardines)’ and the other said, ‘Ok lang (It’s okay)’. In other words, overcrowding did not seem to be one of the most pressing concerns.

An environmental psychology study investigated why the residents in urban poor communities in Manila do not seem to mind such crowded conditions. Mataragnon was interested in whether people feel ‘overcrowded’, that is, whether people feel they are still in control over the limited space that is shared by so many people. She was surprised to find that in general, people seem to cope very well with the crowded environment and she argues the reason to be this way:

The value of control within a culture may also be attenuated simply because it is overshadowed by other more important values. For instance, while the concept of privacy for Westerners is closely linked to personal control and is highly valued, it is relatively less important to Filipinos who are likely to put kinship and kin-like relationships over and above the pursuit of privacy (Mataragnon 1980: 26-27).

She further points out:

The fact that a majority of the respondents who are believed to live under the most crowded conditions in the city do not really feel crowded may be partly explained by the Filipino’s personalized and diffused orientation to social space (Bonifacio, 1977). It does not matter very much that his own home is only a few square metres [...] when he practically considers the whole neighborhood as his home (Mataragnon 1980: 84-85).

People in Paco-Pandacan do seem at home not only in their houses but also in the looban and alleys in their respective barangay, and inside the supportive network of kin and kin-like relationships with the neighbours.

In addition to the importance of kin or kin-like close relationships, I would like to mention the physical proximity of Filipino people in their everyday life. From my point of view, with my background of growing up in Japan and a few English-speaking countries where people are sensitized to keep a certain bodily distance in public space, I could not help noticing the physical closeness among people in the Philippines. Children always hold the hands of their younger siblings, pick them up in their arms, put their arms around each other’s shoulders, put their hands on your friend’s lap when sitting down, and so on.

What goes hand in hand with physical proximity in the Philippines is communicating physical and emotional warmth and affection to others. When I accompanied some children on their outing to a swimming pool, one of the
teenage boys accidentally kicked a little boy in the head and the small one started to cry. The teenage boy saw it, came and stood behind this little boy, rubbed his head, kissed him on the cheek and said gently, 'It's okay now (Wala na)'. I found it a sweet, caring gesture. Throughout my stay in the Philippines, I continued to be impressed by the kindness and warmth people expressed to each other, often accompanied by touching.

A sense of 'community'

I refer to my research site, which comprised several barangay, as a 'community' because people in my research site, both adults and children, referred to it as such.²⁴ It was a 'community' in several different senses which I describe below.

'Community' as opposed to 'subdivision'

Manila has what are called 'subdivisions'. They are gated areas with houses of well-off people where security guards check the identity and purpose of visitors 24 hours a day. On the other hand, a 'community' in Manila, is usually a settlement of lower-income class residents such as my research site. Once a child asked me whether I lived in a 'subdivision' or a 'community' in Japan. This example indicated that 'subdivision' and 'community' are separate and opposing concepts. There are middle-income class settlements in Manila which are not gated nor guarded, but the residents do not call their neighbourhood a 'community' nor do they seem to interact with their neighbours as intimately as the 'community' in Paco and Pandacan. By calling their neighbourhood 'community', people in Paco-Pandacan regard it as an urban poor settlement where the residents share a similar socio-economic status.²⁵

'Community' as the generalised area of everyday life

The term 'community' may be used for one's own barangay as well as the generalised area around it. Local people do their daily grocery shopping there,

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²⁴ People used the English word 'community' even when speaking in Tagalog, or used, less frequently, the Tagalog equivalent 'komunidad'. These two words were used interchangeably.
²⁵ This is not to say that in Manila, a sense of community is felt only by the residents of lower-income settlements. Identification with one's area of residence is also possible in middle-class neighbourhoods and upper-class subdivisions.
and where most things needed in daily life are available within five to ten
minutes’ walk.

‘Community’ as one’s network of social relationships

In Paco-Pandacan, residents have a social and emotional attachment to
their barangay. The barangay is one’s home community where everybody knows
everybody else, and where one generally feels he or she belongs and is safe.
People are likely to know other residents of their own barangay well, and are
more likely to engage in friendly and supportive relationships with fellow
residents. It is an insiders’ place where one tries to get along with fellow residents
because otherwise, it will be difficult for a person to live there.

This leads me to the last, but the most important defining feature of the
‘community’, that is, human relationships. Using Hannerz’s analytical concept
for urban social relationships, the community of Paco-Pandacan can be
characterised to some degree by ‘encapsulation’, or a situation where a city
dweller lives in a more or less self-contained network of people for most of his
needs for living (Hannerz 1980). Indeed, the residents’ daily lives tend to be
focused in the community where they have family, kin, neighbours, and contacts
for various help for the fulfilment of daily needs. People do look for jobs outside
their own barangay as will be illustrated later in this chapter, but I seldom heard
of people who actually kept a regular job at a location far away from their
residence.

People in my research site share a feeling of ‘community’ in their area of
residence because other residents are of similar socio-economic status, and they
are likely to have gone through similar hardships in life. For example, their
families are likely to have migrated to Manila from the provinces after the
Second World War in search of a livelihood, and are likely to have experienced
unemployment, sickness of a family member, or similar types of jobs. They also
talk about each other (they ‘gossip’) a lot, so they know what problems their
neighbours have, and ask each other for help in times of need. People have

26 For example, one man among 153 reported to be a stevedore, in answering a survey
administered by the People’s Organisation BBK (see Chapter 2 for more information about this
survey). Being a stevedore, he was working outside the community, in Manila Bay. Another man I
met worked as a janitor in a department store in a different part of Manila, one jeepney ride away
from the community. Both locations are commutable from Paco-Pandacan, but people who had
regular jobs outside the vicinity of their residence were in a minority.
reciprocal relationships in the area: for example, if someone comes to you for
help, you try to help them in the way you can, and this means when you need
some help in the future, you can turn to them. Mauss (1970 [1950]) shows how
the reciprocal acts of giving and receiving keep people in on-going social
relationships with each other. He also points out that it is an obligation to
reciprocate once you accept someone’s gift or generosity. Gregory has said that
people who participate in such gift economies are in a state of ‘reciprocal
dependence’ (Gregory 1982: 42). The same can be said of the reciprocity of
helping in Paco-Pandacan. Neighbours tend to engage in such reciprocal
relationships because it is considered important to get along with the neighbours
and maintain smooth interpersonal relationships, referred to as pakikisama, one of
the principal Filipino social values. This cultural norm makes it difficult to refuse
when someone comes to you for help, but if you help, you can expect to be
helped when you are in need. People normally resort to their families and
relatives inside and outside the community for help, but friends in the
neighbourhood are also an important source of assistance. A similarly strong
ethic of reciprocity among neighbours and kin in a squatter community in Brazil

People know most of their fellow barangay residents despite the large
population in each barangay. The community leaders who took me around, for
example, seemed to know most of the adult residents in their respective barangay,
and even if there were people they did not know directly, they could identify
them by associating them with the people they already knew. In this vein, even if
a middle-aged woman in a community may not know the name of a particular
child, once she knows the child’s family name, or where in the community the
child lives, she can place the child in its proper place within her mental web of
how people are related in the community. In this sense, the word ‘community’
refers to a complex web of working human relationship spread over one’s
barangay, but also possibly extending into some neighbouring barangay.

This invisible web of human relationship makes the visible geographical
area of main alleys and looban an ‘insiders’ place’. Even though there is no
physical boundary, as in a ‘subdivision’, the community is shielded by the
cognitive boundary between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’. An insider is someone
who lives there and therefore has a place within the web of social relationships, and an outsider is someone who does not have a place in the web. It is this invisible boundary that an outsider can sense when they turn the corner from the Hi-Way onto the main alley of a barangay.

Inside this web of relationships, one is safe. There is a sense of security for the residents in the community. Because one person in the web is connected to other people in the same web, another person in the community is not likely to harm you. If an insider harms another, it makes it very difficult for the offender to live in that community because he/she has also offended other people inside the web. This characteristic leads to rumours that urban poor communities provide a haven for criminal offenders. Some residents are said to commit criminal acts outside the community (outside his own web of relations), such as snatching bags, mobile phones and jewellery. They are reported to run back into the community where the police cannot follow because of the complicated paths that run like a maze, and that once inside the community, the neighbours are more likely to protect them than to turn them in.

However, this safety net is operational mainly for the adults, and children remain vulnerable members of the community. Even though theoretically, children should have their places in the web of relationships (i.e. all children in the community must be related to some adults in the community) and adults should treat them with care so as not to offend the adults children are related to, I doubt children feel as secure and confident in relating to some residents. When I walk in the community with an adult, I sense the approval or acceptance of other residents by the way we exchange short greetings or make friendly eye contact. When I follow children on the narrow paths of the community, I notice that they not only choose the paths that are more familiar to them, but also avoid certain corners, for example, where adult men are drinking all day, so as not to attract their attention. Of course, I tended to attract people’s curiosity as a foreigner, so if the child had been walking alone, he or she could have enjoyed more anonymity. And adults might also choose more familiar paths and avoid drunken people just like children would do. With children, however, it is a more cautious walk than a confident walk.
I believe this is due to the belief in the community that adults are physically and socially more powerful than children. Reports of child abuse can be seen as one manifestation of this belief (see Dela Cruz, et al. 2001 for discussions on child abuse in Paco-Pandacan area), and children’s concerns about rapes in the community is another result of it. Another reason is that children’s web of human relationships is much smaller than adults’, comprising mainly their own families and relatives. Children are very comfortable walking around the immediate surroundings of their houses where their own web of human relationships is based. They also seem to find it comfortable enough to walk on main alleys and other common paths everybody walks on. However, such an area is a small part of the barangay, and children may feel nervous walking in other parts of the community, even if they are in their own barangay.

This had some implications for me in entering my research site. As noted in the previous chapter, an outsider needs a legitimate reference point or someone well-known in the community that he/she can be associated with, in order to establish identity and benign intentions. The NGO introduced me to the adult women leaders of the barangay, and these women took me around in their respective barangay, introducing me to their friends and acquaintances in the community.

‘There’s no place like home’

People who do not live in Paco-Pandacan regard it as an area notorious as a haven for drug addicts and drug pushers, as well as a site of youth gang fights. These sometimes lead to deaths and are reported in the local tabloid papers. Even though the residents are well aware of such problems in their community, it is, of course, ‘home’ for them, and regardless of outsiders’ perceptions, they feel safe and comfortable. Nevertheless, they acknowledge the need to exercise a certain degree of caution, such as children not walking about in their own barangay at night.

I did find some residents perceiving Paco-Pandacan in the same way as outsiders do, that is, full of drug users and violence. In such cases, however, they tend to think of it more as a problem of the neighbouring barangay and not in their own. One woman said to me that people in her own barangay are nice (mababait), but people in the neighbouring barangay are not very nice. She heard
that a girl was raped in the adjacent barangay the day before, and as we walked passed there, she caught the attention of one resident she knew and asked him if the rape really had happened. The man could only tell us that he had heard about it, too, but it had not been verified. On another occasion, I was walking on a main alley with one nanay from that barangay and, as we passed a food stall, we heard that their portable cooking stove had been stolen. The nanay immediately blamed the residents of the adjacent barangay, saying that it was ‘full of snatchers and drug users’.

I learned that people normally think that their own barangay is safer than an adjacent barangay even if it is only one narrow path across from their own. This can be understood in the sense that residents of one barangay interact with each other more often than with people of other barangay. Once you get to know your neighbours, you are likely to try to make things comfortable for each other, offer information, patronage, and protection. For a person, therefore, the immediate neighbours in their own barangay are usually ‘nice’, and safe to be with. However, people do not know the residents of the adjacent barangay very well and the only stories they hear about them tend to be the sensational ones such as about drug addicts and rapes. In this way, people start to think of their adjacent barangay as worse places than their own barangay (see Raftos 1999 for an elaboration of the idea that in an urban poor community in Manila, one is safest in his/her own neighbourhood and danger lurks as one travels farther away from home).

The same notion that one’s neighbourhood is safer than other areas extend to other parts of Metro Manila. I lived on the campus of the University of the Philippines, or ‘UP’, in the north of Manila for one month and commuted to Paco-Pandacan. When people in Paco-Pandacan heard that, they told me how dangerous it was for me to go back to UP at the end of the day when it was getting dark. They said there were only a few people walking on UP campus and I would never know who would be waiting to attack me. On the other hand, people who did not live in Paco-Pandacan continuously told me the opposite, that is, how dangerous it was for me to go to Paco-Pandacan.
Conditions of everyday life

How the community started

Today, these 7 barangay of Paco-Pandacan have about 16,000 residents.\(^{27}\) But in the early 1950s, there were said to be only a handful of houses along the pathway which is today the Hi-Way. The residential area, the looban area, used to look like a small mountain, and was also a dumpsite for a shoe company. Thus, the area used to be called ‘Tambakan’ (literally, a dumping site). The Hi-Way was only a small street then with two rows of wood boards on which horse carriages passed by. The main livelihood of the local people was selling grass for the horses which passed through the area.

Aling Carmen, who is 80 years old, has lived in this area all her life. She recounted her memories of the war years:

There was a Japanese camp during the Japanese occupation [1942-1945] where I used to sew a kind of apron for the Japanese soldiers, and I was paid in rice or goods. When the war ended, the Americans came and said, “The war is over”. The Japanese left. My father used to sell grass for the horses. Sometimes I helped collect grass, but I went to school everyday, to the local elementary and then to high school, and I would help with the household chores after I came home. It was very quiet. There were only a few houses, few people, and at night, you didn’t have to worry about anything if you walked outside. Today, I’m too scared to go outside when it’s dark. Before, you didn’t have to close your windows when you slept. Today, even if you lock them, someone might break in (pers. comm.).

The original residents of Paco-Pandacan observed that since the early 1950s, people started moving into the area. The impression of these long-term residents is that the population kept on expanding year after year. People came from all over the Philippines; from Ilocos, Bicol, different parts of Visayas, and Mindanao. They came to Manila in search of livelihood. Nanay Lyn from Leyte told me that in the provinces, you can farm under the strong sun from 9am to 5pm and you only get 50 pesos (A$1.70) a day. ‘You cannot live like that’, she said. Tito Dio from Quezon Province told me, ‘You can eat in the provinces if you are hard working, but you don’t have the means to earn cash, and you really need cash. In Manila, even rubbish can give you cash’. He is referring to people called basurero and scavengers who collect plastic and metal pieces from other people’s

rubbish and sell them by the weight to junk dealers. Several youths who were born in Paco-Pandacan told me that they enjoy going to the provinces for holidays, but prefer living in Manila because the education is better. However, they also described Manila as 'puro pera (just money)', meaning, everything is about money.

Pinches notes that the people he studied in an urban poor community in Manila, who had migrated from a rural area, generally viewed their life in the city as better, but 'the experience of living in Manila, alongside the nation's most powerful and affluent minority, promotes a greater sense of deprivation. In turn this prompts an even stronger pre-occupation with [...] money' (Pinches 1987: 123). I had a similar impression in the Paco-Pandacan community.

One incident at a funeral gave me an insight into the way money is viewed in the community. The man's body was laid in a coffin and was kept at his home for a viewing, and for people to say their goodbyes. I noticed that the man had a ten-peso note in his hand. When I asked Filipino friends later, they told me that it was a custom of the Tagalog-speaking region (which Manila is part of) to symbolise that the money he is holding will bless the people he is leaving; in other words, the family of the dead will not have difficulties with money after his death. However, I recall that the explanation of a 22-year old woman in the community was: 'It means that the last thing he grabbed in this world was money'.

In general, the residents in the community were of the opinion that even though their life in Manila is difficult, they were still better-off than in the provinces because of the wider range of opportunities available for earning cash. Nanay Neneng was in a minority in saying that it was the same whether she lived in Manila or in the provinces because they are both easy and difficult in different ways. Another minority opinion was that the life in the provinces is much better than in Manila, with a wish to return to the home province, as in the following example.

One nanay talked favourably of Aklan province where she came from. She said life is hard in Paco-Pandacan ('Mahirap dito'), but in Aklan, selling food is a good business ('Masarap magtinda doon'). She said that in Kalibo, the
capital city of Aklan province, her palabok (fried noodles commonly eaten as an afternoon snack) would be sold out in ten minutes. When all her children finished school, the following year, she would move back to Aklan and find a house. It seemed to be another dream, the same sort of dream as the people in the provinces have, wanting to move to Manila.

Other people came to Manila as live-in domestic workers when they were as young as 14 years old. In the case of one couple I interviewed, the nanay came to Manila as a domestic worker when she was 14 years old, from Sorsogon, Bicol; she said it was because life was hard in the province. The tatay came from Tacloban, Leyte, when he was 15 years old to work as a house boy (male domestic worker) in Bulacan province, north of Manila. The mother of tatay was working at the same place as nanay, so the two met and married in 1975 and stopped work. They moved to their current home in 1983. Tatay now is a jeepney driver.

Some studies on urban poor communities in Metro Manila such as that of Adem (1992) and The Share and Care Apostolate for Poor Settlers (1983) pointed out that urban poverty is a direct result of rural poverty; people cannot make a living in their home provinces, so they migrate to urban areas, but they often have to live in squatter settlements and experience difficulties finding employment. Tito Dio had the same view, as he once said: 'To solve the problem of urban poverty, there should be more jobs in the provinces so that people do not have to leave in the first place'.

Land tenure and rent

People in the community either own or rent their houses. For a very small house, some people pay 1,500 pesos (A$50.00) per month, and it is not uncommon to share with 6 family members or more. Others build their houses by themselves on rented or public land. Some people are aware that the land they live on is owned by the government. Some pay rent to private landlords who may live elsewhere while others have the land ‘awarded’, but pay tax to the Manila City Hall.

28 Tatay literally means 'father', and just like nanay, is used as a term of respect.
29 I have heard of public land 'awarded' or 'granted' to some residents of squatter areas, but have not been able to find out how or when this happens. Similarly, I did not understand, in this case,
Nanay Terma owns her house, but is paying 550 pesos (A$18.00) per month for the land of 78 square metres to a private landowner who lives elsewhere. On the other hand, Nanay Tern in the adjacent barangay is paying only 70 pesos (A$2.33) per month. The rent had gone up from 45 pesos (A$1.50) per month in the past, she says, but it is still much cheaper than for Nanay Terma.

Even in the same barangay, land tenure and the residents' understanding of it can vary, and the best possible way to describe the land tenure for the residents in Paco-Pandacan is 'unclear'. A resident of another low-income community in the northern part of Metro Manila told me they had been living on public land for a few generations already and feel that the place is theirs. In Paco-Pandacan, some people admitted that they were 'squatting' on public land whereas those who paid rent to 'private land owners' strongly felt that they were legitimate renters and would not call themselves or their neighbours 'squatters'. They are threatened with demolition and eviction every few years, however. Gilbert (male, in his early 20s) had studied architecture and was proud to be building his own house with cement. Someone asked him if he was going to make it three storeys high and Gilbert said, 'No', with a sorry look on his face, 'because there is no point if it gets demolished some day'. His reluctance to invest in his housing because of possible future demolition may be a common attitude among many low-income urban settlers. Porio and Crisol (2004a) found in a survey of urban poor in Manila that people invest more in improving their houses once they have a secure tenure of the land.

Squatting was not acceptable to everyone in the society. Some opinions from middle-class Filipinos in Manila included envy (a middle-class middle-aged woman said squatters do not pay rent, and she wished she did not have to) and irritation (a middle-class middle-aged man said, 'Is this Philippine democracy? These squatters take over public spaces, use them for their own gain, taking advantage of the public resources, thus depleting more responsible citizens of their access to these public resources'). On the other hand, Nanay Terma, who

why some people with 'awarded' land still had to pay tax to the City of Manila. The complexity of land tenure issues in Manila is explored in more detail by Porio and Crisol (2004a).

30 One nanay who paid rent to a land owner believed her landlord was the 'historical' owner of the land around the area. However, I have heard of some squatters in other parts of Manila who charge rent to other squatters while they move elsewhere. They are sometimes referred to as 'professional squatters'.
pays rent to a landlord and does not consider herself a squatter, said, ‘People are made to live on the land on earth as God willed it, and why do some people own chunks of it and others don’t have right to it?’

**Water situation**

Water is difficult to get hold of in the community and people spend considerable time and effort to secure water everyday. A few better-off people in the community have water faucets in the house connected to an electric pump, but such households are a minority. Some people have a faucet, but they have not turned on the electric pump to save on electricity, or the pump is broken. Others do not have a house connection. An 18-year old woman told me that there is a public hand pump close to her house where people bring water containers in a carton and queue to get some water until 1am to 2am. People are lucky if they have a water source nearby, and if it is drinkable.

Some barangay halls have a public faucet where residents can buy water cheaply or obtain it for free. Everyday, there are long queues of containers outside the barangay hall. It can be a few hours wait until people get their water containers filled. People leave their containers in the queue and come back when it is their turn. Children, as well as adults do this for their own families. People have to do this everyday in order to bathe, do their laundry, wash the dishes and to cook. Besides the barangay hall, there are several public water pumps randomly scattered in the community, as well as some intercepted water pipes in the ground, where people can get some water for free. However, the flow is often weak and the quality of water is said to differ from source to source and also according to the time of the day, ranging from potable to non-potable, from clear to a little dark with some dirt. If it is undrinkable, the household may still use it for washing, and buy purified water for drinking from a commercial store nearby.

Some people do their laundry directly at the source late at night to avoid the queue. It was close to 1am when we saw a nanay washing clothes at the entrance of the narrow dark looban path leading to her house. I asked her if she normally did laundry this late at night and she replied that the water came out more strongly (out of the pump) at night. Martina, a 23-year old woman from the community, explained to me that during the day, there are many people trying to
get water at various nearby sources, so the water flow is weak. At night, there are fewer people trying to get water, so the water flows more strongly.

Whatever the source, people spend much time and energy in getting water. Collecting water takes time, physical labour, patience and trouble everyday.

**Cost of electricity**

Electricity is said to be the most expensive utility for the households in Paco-Pandacan. I was at May-Ann’s (a 19-year old woman) house when she received her monthly electricity bill. It was more than 1,000 pesos (A$66.00), which seemed a lot for a small house like hers with few electric appliances. The cost of electricity is high in the Philippines even for middle-class households, and this is due to the system set up by the government.

Tito Dio told me, ‘Filipino citizens are paying double what they really should be paying’ because of a certain contract made between the government, during the time of the former President Ramos and IPP (Independent Power Producers), or private companies which produce power supply. The IPP and President Ramos made a contract that the government-owned company (National Power Corporation) would buy the electricity generated by the IPP whether the government could sell all the electricity or not. This contract is still valid today, and so when a citizen receives a bill, there is an item called PPA (Power Purchase Adjustment) that is an additional payment to cover the cost the government has to pay the IPP, even though the customers have not used the electricity. According to the BBC, this makes the ‘electricity prices in the Philippines […] among the highest in the world’\(^{31}\). So if a citizen uses electricity worth 1,000 pesos, because of PPA, he then will be billed for 2,000 pesos. If you use electricity worth 5,000 pesos, you then pay 10,000 pesos. ‘It is unfair for the people, isn’t it?’, Tito said.

**Emergencies (Fire, Health, Funeral)**

There are occasional fires in different parts of the community. The common causes are irons and cigarettes, although I was told there are also cases of arson motivated by personal conflicts. A few houses were completely burned down during the time of my fieldwork. The combustible materials used to make houses and the lack of access to water contributes to the gravity of the fire.

Death is a frequent event in the community. I often heard of deaths in the 7 barangay, at the rate of one death every week at one point. Some died of sickness while others were killed in accidents. A funeral costs money, and emergency situations such as fire, medical costs, and funerals put strains on the family financial situation.

Livelihoods of the residents

Walking around in the community, one nanay said to me that many people were unemployed: Men who had jobs were likely to be drivers and women tended to be labandera (laundry woman) or planchadora (ironer of clothes). There were many young unmarried high school graduates who had no jobs and just ‘hang around’ all day. Below is some information on the livelihood of the residents as declared by 153 women across the research site.

Men’s jobs

Table 1: Occupations of a sample of male household heads

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number (N = 153)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Driver</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>18 (9 regular and 9 irregular)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other jobs</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No job</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(No answer)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Deceased)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘Driver’ includes taxi driver, jeepney driver, tricycle driver, pedicab driver, or hired as a company driver or a private driver. They may own their vehicles, or rent them from someone else.

Construction work can be either regular or irregular. Irregular workers are often called pa-extra-extra, and they work only when they are needed at a construction site. Carpentry is another common occupation for men, and this can also be a regular or irregular job.

32 This information was taken from the 153 membership forms submitted by the residents of Paco-Pandacan to the people’s organisation called Bantay Bata sa Komunidad (BBK), affiliated with Visayan Forum (VF). BBK membership is drawn from 7 barangay whose total population amounts to about 16,000 (National Statistics Office 2000). I thank BBK and VF for giving me access to this information. All the membership forms used here were filled in by married women.

33 Other jobs include janitor, security guard, vender, cashier, government, and stevedore.
In the same survey, men's highest declared monthly income is:

Company Driver: 8,000 pesos (A$266.00) (with 6 children in the family)
Driver: 7,750 pesos (A$258.00) (with 7 children in the family)
Carpenter: 7,280 pesos (A$243.00) (with 4 children in the family)

The average income for the whole of the Philippines is 9,838 pesos (A$328.00) per household per month according to the 2000 census. So, all are below the national average. There are, however, chances that women who completed the forms may not have declared the correct amount, and that the income fluctuates from month to month, so these data give only a rough indication.

**Men's difficulty in finding a job**

There are many men, young and old, 'hanging around' all day in the community. Finding a job is very difficult, they say. To apply for a job, there are many conditions that one has to fulfil, including age, height, and education. Even if a man finds a job, it is normally contractual work that lasts for five or six months maximum and after that, he is unemployed again.

Gilbert (male, in his mid-20s) was telling me how difficult it is to get a job. I mentioned an advertisement I had seen that day at a fast food restaurant, which specified the eligibility for application to be 'at least 1st year college, and 5 feet tall for women and 5 feet and some inches for men'. I thought that '1st year college' would be a high hurdle for people in the community because many finish high school, but not many enter college for financial reasons. The condition '1st year college' immediately excludes many people in search of work, even for a low-skilled job like this one. The height specification seemed discriminatory to me. Gilbert, too, seemed to think of it as discriminatory and said that a small person could be more hard-working than a taller one. Tito Dio, on the other hand, seemed to see the logic in it and said that there are many requirements in getting a job: They ask for 1st year college because the employees need to be able to entertain customers; they sometimes specify height because there may be machines that cannot be operated unless you are a certain height. I did not think

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this applied to this particular job, however, because they did not specify a certain height for everybody, but instead, a different height was set for men and women. As my Filipino friends explained to me, a height requirement is common for jobs involving direct contact with customers such as this advertised job, and also those of secretary, receptionist, and so on because companies are concerned with the image they project to the customers through the appearance of their staff.

Age is another obstacle often mentioned in the community. Being 40 years old is considered ‘overage’ for applying for a job. One father said to me that he is 35 now, and many jobs specified age up to 30 for applications. Tito Dio, and another man in his 50s both said that 18-25 years old is the best time for a man to find a job.

People do look for work, of course, especially younger men who are said to have a better chance. Tory (male, in his 20s) looked rather cheerful when he saw me sitting on the bench at one of the food stalls on the main alley, and started to tell me about his current job search. He was hoping to work as a dish washer at one of the top-end hotels in the Manila’s business district, Makati. In two weeks, he would have an interview, he said. He had to get some documents such as a birth certificate, a barangay and/or police clearance to show that he had no criminal record, in order to apply. He would have to go to Caloocan (northern Metro Manila, not very close to Paco-Pandacan) where he used to live. The documents would be ready in a few days, and he said he had to go back all the way to Caloocan to pick them up, which was a nuisance, but he seemed cheerful all the same. He also said that his mobile phone was being recharged, saying that if his phone was broken, he would not get a telephone call about his job, and would not get this job, and in turn, he would not be able to maintain his mobile phone. The way he talked about these things was pleasant, even though the content of his talk was about difficult things, such as having to go to Caloocan and the possibility of losing his mobile phone, as well as his prospective job, as if he was enjoying letting his imagination run into the future. I guessed the reason why he was in such a good mood was the prospect of getting a job in two weeks. He said that without a job, you cannot eat, and if you are hungry in the stomach, your head also starts to go wrong. Then, he said, ‘Oh, I’m so hungry now’,
then added happily that he would wait until later to eat, as if the prospect for a job filled his stomach.

Lauren (male, early 20s) works as a security guard at a shopping mall. He works 12 hours a day and gets only 180 pesos (A$6.00) per day. It seemed a very small salary for the number of hours, especially when the legal minimum daily wage is around 300 pesos. He said he wanted to save money so he could study customs clearance because it would give him a good job. This is not an uncommon idea in the community; that when one finishes high school, a person may not have enough money for college, but hopefully will find a job and study further, and then get a qualification leading to a better job.

Tito Dio told me that there was a time when men in the community had regular jobs, often outside the community. I asked when that was and he said in the 70s; by the mid-80s, there were many cases of unemployment. Even though I was unable to verify this in the national statistics data, I would like to refer to Pinches’ work that shows that despite some analysts’ distinctions between wage labourers (regarded as working class) and urban poor (associated with unemployment), it was common that residents of a squatter community in Manila were employed in corporations in the so-called formal sector in the late 70s (Pinches 1987). My interviews in the community support his findings, in that I met adult males and females who once had jobs at factories or large corporations outside the community. However, in 2002 when I conducted my fieldwork, unemployment was more common than employment in corporations.

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35 The legal daily minimum wage in the Philippines varies from region to region, occupation to occupation, and is revised from time to time. The most recent minimum wages in Metro Manila (effective 10 July, 2004) can be found at http://www.nwpc.dole.gov.ph/pages/ncr/cmwr_table.html (accessed on 3 May, 2005) and range between 263 pesos and 300 pesos. At the time of fieldwork, in 2001, the legal daily minimum wages in Metro Manila was also around 300 pesos, and it was the amount people remembered and quoted in their daily life.

36 The unemployment rate from 1985 till 2004 as shown by the National Statistics Office on http://www.nscb.gov.ph/secstat/d_labor.asp (accessed on 28 December, 2004) does not show a significant difference between 1985 and 2002, the year my fieldwork was undertaken. Moreover, even if there was a significant difference, it would still be difficult to infer the employment status of my research site from the national statistics.
Women’s jobs

Table 2: Occupations of a sample of Paco-Pandacan women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number (N = 153)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Labandera</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tindera</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vendor and ‘buy-and-sell’</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other jobs</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Job</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(No answer)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Labandera, or ‘laundry women’, find people residing outside the community who will pay them to wash their clothes by hand. Tindera means ‘a shopkeeper’, and it can either refer to running a sari-sari store in the community or tending someone else’s store in or outside the community. ‘Vendor’ normally means someone who sells newspapers and/or small candies on the sidewalk, either within the community or elsewhere in Manila. ‘Buy-and-sell’ is a local term for someone who goes to a big public market elsewhere in Manila to buy items wholesale (for example, small children’s toys, girls’ hair accessories, ballpoint pens, or bags of coffee), and resells them as they walk around inside and outside the community.

The mother of Leonika (female, 16-year old high school student) is a ‘buy-and-sell’. She brought out a bag of her merchandise, containing plastic bracelets, rubber bands for the hair, and hair clips. However, the volume of her merchandise was quite small. She sells these in Paco-Pandacan from 10:30am to 12:30pm, and then comes home to rest. She said that Leonika helps in the house, cooking, doing the laundry for the family and other chores, when she comes home from school.

In the same survey, women’s highest declared monthly income is:

- ‘Buy-and-sell’: 7,500 pesos (A$250.00) (with 6 children, husband deceased)
- ‘Buy-and-sell’: 3,000 pesos (A$100.00) (with 2 children, separated)
- Tindera: 3,000 pesos (A$100.00) (with 6 children, husband no job)

37 The source of this sample is the same as that of the occupations of male household heads previously mentioned, in footnote 32.
38 Judging from the large number of women who declared ‘No job (Wala)’, and the small number of women who declared vending as an occupation, the 89 women possibly include housewives and those who run small food stalls in the community as women may not regard these as ‘jobs’ or ‘employment’.
In the family, the fathers are expected to be the breadwinners, but their income often is not enough for the family to eat. Then, it is their wives who find supplementary jobs to earn additional income. The most common occupation is selling food within the community, or as laundry woman.

Women's job search outside the community

Like men, women also look for jobs outside the community. Kate (female) is an 18-year-old high school graduate and is now working at a catering business outside the community for 35 pesos per hour. Martina (female, 23 years old) and Pat (female, just turned 18) are applying for jobs now. Now that Pat is 18 years old, she can work at a factory. Martina used to have a job at a factory, but that is already finished after a few months, so she was applying for another factory job. However, she eventually found a baby-sitting job in a community one jeepney ride away. Age is also a factor in women's search for a job. Nanay Polly said that she is almost 30 years old now and she cannot get a job anymore because most jobs specify the ages for women as 18 to 25.

Women, like men, seek employment outside the community. When they do not find any, they try to make a living within the community.

Food vending as a self-sustaining mechanism for the families and community

Food vending inside the community is one of the most common ways for the residents to supplement family income. For some families, the wife starts a food business as a ‘sideline’ to supplement the husband’s income, and for others, if the husband has lost his job, the food vending business run by the wife becomes the principal source of income.

Tito Dio said that before, when people had jobs outside the community, there were not as many food stalls. He added that the number of small-scale food vending businesses increased in proportion to the rise of unemployment during the 1980s. He himself started his current food vending business back in 1985 when he lost his job at a factory. Before that, he had formal employment. He has worked since he was 19 years old, first as a housing quality inspector, and then at a large company for three years; he also worked at San Miguel Corporation (a major Filipino beer manufacturer) at one time.
Another family started their food business when the father lost his job. ‘Why food business?’ I asked, and they said, ‘It’s the easiest thing to sell (Madaling ibenta)’. The kinds of food sold at these food stalls are ready-to-eat food, cooked rice sold at meal times (breakfast, lunch and dinner), and cooked dishes and treats for afternoon snacks (meryenda): savoury or sweet porridge, fried noodles, fried banana cue (a snack of sweet banana on a stick), sweet rice cake, hotcakes, turon (banana and jackfruit wrapped in spring roll skin and fried), and fresh citrus fruits.

Most food businesses are simple, small food stalls set up on the side of the main alley where most residents of the community pass by several times a day. The business owner brings out a small table to the main alley and simply places the food on it, or fries some bananas on the spot. There are so many of these food stalls in each barangay that towards lunch time, for example, one can find a food stall every few metres along the main alley. Partly because there are so many food stalls in the community, the competition is quite intense. Prices cannot be set very high as the customers are low-income people of the same community who will simply buy from other stalls if your food is expensive. As a consequence, these businesses do not make much profit. Many run out of capital and are forced to close. Some take out loans from various micro-finance programs run by NGOs just to keep their businesses alive. However, the advantage of having a food business is that the family members can eat everyday.

I asked a nanay the advantages and disadvantages of food businesses for the owner and for the customer. She could not think of many disadvantages except for the fact that many run out of capital and discontinue the business. The advantages for the vendor are: 1) the family will have additional income (on top of what the father earns); 2) people enjoy doing it (nalilibang sila); it is seen as a positive alternative to having nothing to do at home or getting into gambling; and 3) they learn things, for example, discovering new recipes.

The advantages for the buyer are that they save time by buying cooked food. Two other nanay commented that if only one or two persons were eating, they would buy ready-to-eat food, but if the whole family was eating, buying cooked food for all would be too expensive, or there would not be enough food for the whole family, so they would cook at home. Both nanay said that for lunch,
they might buy food, but for dinner, they usually went home and cooked for the whole family.\footnote{I wondered if cooking facilities were a problem for the families. Some people in the community use a LPG gas tank with a stove attached on it, costing 300 pesos per tank, which is not cheap, but affordable for some households. A cheaper alternative is a kerosene stove called \textit{kusinilia}. Kerosene costs only 11 pesos for a 1.5 litre bottle. Other people who have neither a gas nor kerosene stove use wood or charcoal to cook. However, I have never heard a resident complain about the fuel cost being too high or refer to the fuel cost as a reason for choosing ready-to-eat food.}

Another advantage for the customers is the price. For example, a dish with meat can cost up to 25 pesos per portion (that fits in a small plastic bag, enough for 1 to 1.5 persons) and one can also buy the same dish, but without any meat pieces for 6 pesos. Vegetable dishes are cheaper and \textit{mongo} (savoury mung beans) costs 10 pesos a portion. To save money, a light meal with a portion of steamed rice (5 pesos), three small spring rolls (3 pesos), and a \textit{palamig}, or a cold drink with brown sugar and small pieces of jelly (1 peso), costs as little as 9 pesos in the community whereas any combination meal at a cafeteria outside the community would cost at least 25 pesos.

The food business allows the family to at least eat food everyday, but it does not usually allow the family to make a profit or improve the financial standing of the household. The businesses are appreciated by the fellow residents for the convenience of ready-to-eat food and its low price. They can be seen as a self-sustaining mechanism for the families and the community as a whole.

\textbf{Other ways to make ends meet}

However, the income from a food business may not be enough for the family in most cases. So, how do families survive? Women take out credit from the neighbourhood stores to buy rice, sugar, soap, and other daily necessities, and pay back when they have some income. They are very careful to make sure that they repay the debt because once word gets around that certain persons do not repay debts, the neighbourhood stores will refuse credit and such women would lose a valuable means of survival.

Because most families survive on a daily basis with little savings, they are vulnerable to emergencies, such as illness of a family member, death of a family member, or house fires. I observed that even in the poorest communities in Metro Manila, households commonly have at least a TV and an electronic fan.
have an iron, and a few even have mobile phones. One study pointed out that these luxury items are a saving mechanism for the residents in urban poor communities (Adem 1992). According to Adem, when a family gets a sum of cash, it is very tempting to spend it, so they buy some home appliances. They enjoy the comfort while they have the TV and electronic fan, and in times of emergencies, they sell or pawn it to neighbours and friends. I have seen a mobile phone used this way once. Monica (female, 18-years old, high school graduate) had to sell her mobile phone to a friend as her family needed some money. However, by selling it to a friend, she still had access to the phone when she really wanted to use it.

The most preferred way to ensure family survival, however, is to send a family member abroad to work. This topic will be covered in Chapter 4 on family.

It is in this context that children live. There is chronic lack of cash in their families, and regular meals are not guaranteed, let alone their school expenses.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have drawn a general picture of the everyday life in the community, for adults and children.

The residents of the community of Paco-Pandacan have originally migrated to Manila from the provinces in search of livelihood. Money is regarded as important and necessary for life in Manila, even more so than in the provinces. Despite some difficulties residents face in their everyday life, including unemployment and emergencies, people have established close social networks of people who help each other in times of need. Children see and experience all these life events that go on inside the community, and take part in them, as described in the following chapters.
In this chapter, I explore the relationship between children’s work and education. In particular, I consider whether work and education are compatible. In doing so, I also examine the concept of ‘work’ and ‘education’.

**Education and child labour**

Policy makers have tended to assume that education and child labour are incompatible, that they are two opposing choices for children. Free compulsory education is believed to attract children away from work, and is argued to be the antidote to child labour (Weiner 1991). This assumption is grounded in the historical experience of a few industrialised countries. Studies acknowledge the role of compulsory education in removing children from work in 19th century England and early 20th century United States, even though education was far from the only factor in reducing child labour (Daglish 2001; Lassonde 1996). This assumption has roots in the modern concept of childhood which came to construct school as a proper place, and work as an improper place for children (Aries 1962 [1960]). However, I found the relationship between education and child labour to be more complex.
Even when tuition fees are not charged, as in the case of the Philippines, there are other costs in sending children to school, such as buying textbooks, stationery, and school uniform. There are also transportation cost, daily pocket money for children to buy food at school (Bequele 1991: 13-14), and the opportunity cost of children's labour contribution to the household.

Sometimes, there are problems on the part of the schools. Even though school and education are believed to be so crucial to children that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 28) states that children should be required to attend primary school (Woodhead 1998: 64), school can be costly to the families, and the poor quality of education and its uncertain benefit to the children deter parents from sending children to school (Boyden 1990: 207; Woodhead 1998: 16).

The relationship between education and work as in competition to each other is not readily apparent because some children need to work to go to school. In fact, this seems to be the general case in the Philippines. When asked to choose a way of life for children of school age, both parents and children prefer to combine work with studies, rather than either work or study all the time (Institute for Labor Studies 1994: 79-83). My study supports these findings.

Other studies from other countries also report that children often combine work with school (see for example, Myers 1989; Nieuwenhuys 1996; Sakellariou and Lall 2000; Woodhead 1998). In many cases, working makes it possible for children to attend school, as in the case of my study. In Paco-Pandacan, how does children's work fit in with going to school?

**Children combining work and education**

In Paco-Pandacan, education is a major motivation for children to work. As children know that their parents do not have enough money, they know they cannot depend on them for baon, or the daily allowance to cover the necessary expenditure at school. They try to earn their own baon.

Most children in the community are at least enrolled in local public elementary and high schools. Due to the large number of students, schooling for elementary school children is divided into two half-day batches, either from 6am
to 12 noon, or from 12 noon to 6pm, depending on the grade. High school students start in the morning and finish in the afternoon. When children are not at school, they normally spend time in the community or in the nearby neighbourhoods. Smaller children play on the main alleys or in the looban area, as well as going to the ‘island’ (the elevated divider in the middle of the Hi-Way). However, many children also help tend the food stalls run by their families, or run errands for their neighbours and earn money.

**Children’s work in the community**

Children’s work is embedded in the everyday life of the community.

*Rubbish disposal*

I was on the main alley one afternoon when there was a sound of metal being banged on and someone said ‘*Basura!* (Rubbish!)’ It meant that the rubbish collector was here. Katy-Rose’s mother was there, and she called to her 15-year old daughter, ‘*Basura!*’ and Katy-Rose quickly went back to her home to get the rubbish. She came back in no time, with a plastic bag with rubbish in it. There were more and more children coming out of the houses walking up the main alley towards Hi-Way. Some had plastic bags while some small children were dragging large sacks, such as 10 to 30kg rice bags. Others pushed or carried plastic rubbish bins. One boy carried a plastic bin in his arms while crying. It seemed that the bin was too big and too heavy for him to carry, and some of the rubbish was flying away in the wind and he had to pick it up as he walked, so he must have felt helpless. I helped him carry it across the street to the rubbish collector. Plastic bags can be left there on the ground whereas those people with plastic rubbish bins have to go up to the rubbish collector, hand him the bin, and he will hand back the emptied rubbish bin.

The residents in looban will not hear the gong, so they have to bring the rubbish to the designated place on the Hi-Way just before the truck’s arrival. But that is difficult to do because the truck arrives at slightly different time each day, and one is not supposed to leave rubbish piled on the side of Hi-Way waiting for collection. So, many households pay a child to move out their rubbish. While some children do this before the truck comes, others run around knocking on neighbours’ doors frantically at the sound of the gong. When the child comes back to the house with the empty container, the adult pays him or her small coins.
This is a very common way for children to earn some money. Most such children have suki, or regular customers, and they visit their houses to ask if they need any rubbish moved out. Children earn small amounts of money for performing this service, ranging from 1 to 5 pesos or even 10 pesos, depending on the size and condition of the rubbish, such as how dirty it is and how smelly it is. For the residents in looban, this is a useful service.

Most children who perform this activity, however, are rather ashamed of doing it because it is dirty and smelly, but they do it in order to make money. Some children have fun doing it with friends, and enjoy interacting with their customers, arguing with them ‘why 2 pesos only, it should be 5 pesos’, etc. Children make some money before or after school, and use the money earned for baon, or pocket money, to take to school the next day.

**Buying water**

Another common way children earn some money in the community is to run errands to a nearby store to buy drinking water. This type of work is also embedded in the living conditions of the community. As mentioned previously, most houses in the community do not have a working water faucet. People try to obtain water from the barangay or other public sources, and it is considered lucky if you have access to a source with drinkable water. People without such access need to buy purified water from commercial stores which sell filtered water and can be found all over Manila. Children go around in the community knocking on the doors, asking if they need drinking water. They get two to three containers from the house, go to a nearby store, have them filled, and return to the house, earning 5 to 10 pesos depending on the amount of water.

Some children do this in the morning before they go to school in order to have enough baon to take to school for the day. Other children run errands in the afternoon when they are back from school, or when they are hungry and want to buy something to eat. It was raining when I saw Jessy (female, 11 years old, but still in Grade 2 due to missing many school days) go back and forth on the main alley of the community. She came back with two large containers of water, one on her shoulder, the other hanging from her arm. She went inside looban and came out without the containers, but with some coins in her hand. With that, she bought herself turon (fried, sweet snack of banana wrapped in spring roll skin).
and ate it. Running errands is done on the children’s own initiative and is a way for them to have some money for themselves for baon and for snacks, as well as providing a useful service for many residents. If children earn more money than they need, they will give it to their mothers to help with household expenses.

**Selling sweets made by other residents**

The most common type of sweets sold by children is bibingka. It is a treat made with rice, and some adults in the community cook some tray-fulls for children to sell. Some children go to these adults, get one tray in exchange for a school ID card (the way for the business owners to make sure that the children will come back), and walk around wherever they want to sell the sweet cakes. One tray is divided into 48 small triangles at 1 peso each. When the child has finished selling all the pieces, he goes back to the adult. The adult gets 30 pesos (A$1.00) and the child gets 18 pesos (A$0.60). This can be the child’s baon for the next school day. If the child cannot sell all of it, he or she will eat it, so this activity becomes a combination of making some money as well as buying snacks for themselves.

When I was sitting on a bench on a main alley with a few children, a small boy came by with a tray. His name is Karl, a 9-year old elementary school student and a friend of Cindy (12 years old, elementary school girl). It was a rectangular wooden tray, about 40cm x 25cm in size and 1cm deep. Inside the tray, there was a thin sheet of plastic (a plastic bag cut and opened to make a single layer sheet) neatly placed, and on it was a layer of rice (which should be sticky rice according to the traditional recipe, but in the community, normal non-sticky rice was used) topped with a thin layer of coconut-caramel. The rectangular tray-full of bibingka was then divided into 48 triangles by drawing lines on the topping with a knife. His tray of bibingka already had a few holes. The customer can choose a particular triangle he wants, depending on the size; they are almost the same size, but the hand-drawn lines make slight differences in the size of the triangles. I decided to try one. Karl asked me which triangle I wanted, I pointed to one and he cut it out following the lines already marked on the surface and gave it to me. Besides the tray and the small knife, Karl carries a plastic bag in which he puts his earnings and also small pieces of plastic sheet (plastic bags cut into small square pieces) which he uses to place the piece of
bibingka on, and then hands this to the customer so that the rice cake will not stick to the fingers.

It tasted good. I decided to have one more piece. Cindy bought one and got her friend Annie one, too. She paid Karl two pesos, but before she or Annie got a triangle, two older children came by and took a triangle each without paying. For Karl, it was the right money for the right number of pieces sold; he sold two pieces and got two pesos, but for Cindy, it was not right. She fiercely protested to Karl saying that she should get two pieces for the money she had paid. She was serious and protested strongly to Karl. The older children saw that and paid two pesos, so the matter was settled, but I thought if not for Cindy, the two older boys would have had their pieces without paying, making Karl shoulder the cost. It must be quite easy for Karl to lose money when older and stronger children who know Karl come by and just take pieces without paying. I think that is why Karl was very serious in the next incident (described below), trying to defend his rightful earnings.

Soon, Leo (16 years old, high school graduate) came and sat next to Karl. Cindy decided to buy all of us a piece each. It was 6 pesos all together, 2 for Cindy, 1 for Annie, 1 for me, 1 for Leo and 1 for Tito Dio. Karl said ‘Seven pesos!’ while Leo and Cindy said ‘Six!’ Cindy counted for Karl, starting ‘Two’ (for herself), ‘Three’ (pointing at Leo), and she continued until she counted all of us at the end of which made six, not seven. Karl, Leo, and Cindy were all serious, saying ‘Six’ or ‘Seven’. Cindy said to Karl, ‘Ano ka?! (What are you?)’ proving that she was right. Karl’s strong protest may be a result of being frequently taken advantage of, for example, as with the two older boys who had tried to get away without paying.

Another boy with a similar wooden tray passed by. He looked at Karl with many customers (i.e. us) with an envying eye and a slightly bitter smile on his lips. Karl said he sells bibingka everyday after school and on Saturdays and Sundays, and that he can sometimes sell two to three trays, which can be a lot of earnings.

This story illustrates not only an example of children’s work in the community, but also children’s sense of justice and trying to get the numbers and
earnings right, and the importance for the working child of defending their earnings.

**Helping the family in small business**

Another common type of children’s work in the community is tending a food stall. As I mentioned above, selling food within the community is a very common way for women to supplement the household income. Children help tend these stores run by their families after school and on weekends. The earning of the food stall does not go directly to the children, but they know that their *baon* and daily needs are paid for by the income made in this joint effort.

Alice, for example, is an 11-year old girl who goes to school in the morning, comes home and as soon as she changes clothes, comes out to the small street in the community to tend the food stall run by her mother. Alice, as well as her brother Michael (15 years old, high school student), who also tends the stall from time to time, seem to have a very good relationship with their family. When their father lost his job, their mother suggested they start this food stall. Their mother normally tends it, but she needs the children to tend the store after they come back from school so she can go to the market, or instead she sends them to go buy sugar, flour, etc.

Children engage in parallel activities while tending the stall: they can do some homework, play with friends, and engage in friendly conversation with neighbours. For example, one day, Alice brought out crayons, a pencil and a ruler to the stall. She also had a drawing of two flowers with different colours on a sheet of paper. It was her art project. She said it was ugly (*pangit*), so she was going to redo it. Both Alice and Michael play with their friends while they tend the stall. Their friends know Alice and Michael are usually at this food stall, so they come and play in the space in front of the stall. They play *Chinese* or basketball on a small scale with a hand-made goal hung on the wall. Children are a necessary part of running this food stall, and helping the family in this way seems to affirm the children that they are an important part of the collective effort for family survival.

In Paco-Pandacan, children’s work and education are highly compatible, and work makes a positive contribution to children’s lives by enabling them to
pay for their education, as well as gaining a sense of responsibility and making a positive contribution to their families.

The importance of education

In the Philippines as a whole, people are very enthusiastic about education, and the school enrolment rate is high. A study by the Institute for Labor Studies (1994), which is part of the Department of Labor and Employment of the Philippines government, reports that in the Philippines, almost all children have a chance to enter the first grade of the elementary school with some exceptions in remote rural areas. Education to the end of elementary school is compulsory. The average Filipino family is said to have high aspirations for children’s education. Both urban and rural families constantly express the view that the future of their children hinges on their educational attainment. This is why children work in order to have money for transportation and school supplies (Institute for Labor Studies 1994: 79-83). The enrolment rate for elementary and high schools has been high and steady since the 1980s. The gross enrolment rate for elementary schools for the country during 1998-1999 was 98.1%, and for high schools, 69.3% (see Table 3 below). While the enrolment rate does not indicate the quality of education nor the number of years these children stay in school, it does show the willingness of the overwhelming majority of the Filipino families to have their children in school. The willingness of Filipino families to send children to school even when they live in poverty is also reported in the literature (see, for example, Romero, et al, and Catalla and Macavinta, cited by Go 1993: 49).

Table 3: Elementary and secondary education enrolment rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>98.8</td>
<td>98.3</td>
<td>98.5</td>
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<td>1996-97</td>
<td>98.9</td>
<td>99.2</td>
<td>99.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-98</td>
<td>97.6</td>
<td>100.8</td>
<td>99.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-99</td>
<td>97.7</td>
<td>98.5</td>
<td>98.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Secondary Education Gross Enrolment Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995-96</td>
<td>76.5</td>
<td>82.1</td>
<td>79.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-97</td>
<td>76.5</td>
<td>81.7</td>
<td>79.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-98</td>
<td>73.4</td>
<td>80.7</td>
<td>77.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-99</td>
<td>66.8</td>
<td>72.8</td>
<td>69.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Both adults and children in Paco-Pandacan believe that in the Philippines, diplomas, certificates, and degrees are very important in finding a job. For example, Leilani (female, 15 years old, high school student) went so far as to say that in the Philippines, it is not the ability of the person, but the certificates and papers that are important. If person A is a high school graduate and B is a college graduate, even if A is more capable than B for a certain job, B will get the job because of the diploma. She compared it with America, saying that there, if a person can perform a certain job well, he will be given credit, whether he has a diploma or not. ‘In the Philippines, it’s not like that’, she says.41

From the adults’ point of view, Nanay Neneng, a mother of three children, told me that she came to Manila from the Visayas region as a domestic worker when she was only 10 years old. She worked around the clock, washed clothes, cooked, and she did ‘everything’ in her employer’s household. ‘I was a child labourer (*Child labor ako*), she said. She told me she did not want her children to have this experience, so she wanted them to go to school and study. In Nanay Neneng’s view, education stands for hope and chance for a better future.

People in Paco-Pandacan hope that through the educational attainment of a family member, not only the member himself/herself, but the socio-economic status of the whole family will be uplifted. This idea of education as a way of raising the socio-economic status of the whole family has been found in surveys

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41 In Paco-Pandacan, I did not find any non-formal education programs (except for free, voluntary group tutoring by older children for smaller children organised by the NGO); nor did people seek non-formal education even when sending their children to formal education proved financially difficult. I guessed this to be partly because of the importance of obtaining a diploma or certificate from formal education.
of the larger Philippine society (see, for example, Bautista and Arriola 1995: 58; Medina 1991: 194; Szanton Blanc 1994: 357).

In Paco-Pandacan, despite the fact that people lack money to eat adequately everyday, the vast majority of children are enrolled in local public schools.\(^{42}\) Children need some money to take to school to buy food, to pay for photocopies distributed in class, to buy school supplies needed to complete homework, and to pay for transportation cost if necessary (most children walk to school to avoid cost of transportation). This daily allowance for children is called \textit{baon}, and together with the daily food, constitutes the major expenditure for the families. Below is an example.

One mother explained to me how she would budget 300 pesos (A$10.00), which is the minimum daily wage in Manila\(^{43}\), for one day.

\begin{center}
\textbf{Budgeting 300 Pesos (daily minimum wage in Manila) for one day}
\end{center}

\textit{(For a family of 7 persons: parents and 5 children)}

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{l}
\textbf{BAON} \\
50 pesos – eldest child (college) \\
20 pesos – second child (high school) \\
20 pesos – third child (high school) \\
10 pesos – fourth child (elementary school) \\
(The youngest child is not yet in school.) \\
\textbf{Total for \textit{BAON}: 100 pesos}
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{l}
\textbf{RICE} \\
20 pesos/kg \times 2\text{kg} \times 2\text{times/day} = 80 pesos
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\(^{42}\) Those few in the community who can afford it attend private schools where the learning environment is believed to be better. At private schools, the maximum number of students per class as recommended by DECS (Department of Education, Culture and Sports), which is 35 students per class, is being followed. However, at public schools, each teacher has to look after 50 to 70 students. The tuition fee for private schools, of course, is higher in private schools. For a private Kindergarten, for example, it may cost 11,000 pesos per year. But for public elementary and high schools, the tuition is free. In the Philippine educational system, elementary school education is from Grade 1 to 6, or typically age 7 to 12 or 13, and high school education is from 1\textsuperscript{st} to 4\textsuperscript{th} year, or typically from age 13 to 16.

\(^{43}\) Here, I mean ‘Metro Manila’, or ‘National Capital Region’. In the Philippines, the minimum wage is set differently in different administrative regions.
Total for RICE: 80 pesos

**ULAM**

10 pesos of *ulam* per person x 7 persons = 70 pesos
Total for **ULAM**: 70 pesos

Total for *baon*: 100 pesos
Total for food: 80 + 70 = 150 pesos

100 + 150 = 250 pesos for **BAON** and **FOOD**
The remaining 50 pesos are for miscellaneous (rent, electricity, etc)

There are seven people in the family: The mother, father, and five children. Four children attend school; 50 pesos goes to the eldest child as *baon*, 20 pesos each for the second and the third, and 10 pesos for the youngest student. Therefore, 100 pesos out of the 300 pesos goes to *baon*. The mother said that one kilo of rice is good for 3 people in a meal, so even though there are seven in the family, the youngest child is not yet in school, so she discounts that, and calculates that she would need 2 kilos of rice per meal at 20 pesos per one kilo of rice, so that is 40 pesos for the rice in a meal. She counts that the family would eat at home twice a day, so that is 80 pesos allocated for rice for the whole family in a day. She also allocates 10 pesos of *ulam* (a dish to go with the rice) per person which makes 70 pesos. So that means 150 pesos in total goes to food for one day. The remainder is 50 pesos which will be used to pay for the electricity, rent, and so on.

This is how the mother estimated the breakdown of a budget of 300 pesos a day. *Baon*, or the money that enables the children to go to school everyday, is given as much importance as daily food in the family budget.

However, if the family is on a very tight budget, food takes precedence over *baon*, that is, children do not receive *baon* for the day. Without *baon*, most children would not go to school. A few children told me they would go to school even without *baon*, saying they are used to not eating, but when it comes to completing assignments, they really need money to buy coloured paper, glue, and
other school items. One Guidance Counsellor at an elementary school told me that some children who go to school without assignments are scolded by the teacher in front of the class. They gradually start to miss more and more days of school, and eventually drop out.

If the family is under strong pressure to earn money to meet the basic needs of the family, a child may be asked to leave school. I asked three mothers how they would decide who, among a group of siblings, would be asked to leave school if a family could not afford education for all. Nanay Tem (mother of 7 children) said that the parents will ask their children who really wants to study and who does not mind dropping out. It also depends on which of the children are doing well at school (marunong) and are studying diligently (magsikap sa pag-aaral), as these children will be encouraged to continue schooling. A similar point is made elsewhere about the families of urban working children in the Philippines that ‘parents tend to pin their hopes and chances for mobility on their children who show potential for coping with the demands of formal school’ (Szanton-Blanc, cited by Bautista and Arriola 1995: 58).

None of the three mothers mentioned gender or birth order, so I asked if these factors came into consideration in deciding which child would continue schooling. They said, ‘There is no preference for girls or boys, eldest child or not (Walang pinipili sa babae o lalake, panganay o hindi)’. I also asked one father which child would drop out when the family does not have the money, the eldest child, the youngest child, a girl or a boy. He said that all children should be studying, but when the family has nothing to eat, whoever of the siblings can work and earn would leave school, and there is no preference on the basis of sex or birth order. That educational opportunities do not depend on gender is also reported in studies about the Philippines (for example, Liwag, et al. 1999: 25; Porio, et al. 1994: 116). This is in strong contrast to many parts of the world. For example, Burra (1989) argues that in India, parents are less willing to invest in girls’ education because girls will leave the family upon marriage. Bequele and Myers’ study in rural Botswana report that the eldest son is not sent to school because the custom is that he will inherit the family herd, so he is kept at home to tend it while his siblings go to school (Bequele and Myers, cited by Boyden 1994: 16).
In the Philippines, however, sometimes a child will leave school without being asked, even though I did not witness this while I was there. However, Noelle, in her late 20s, told me that was what she had done. She is the eldest child of five siblings in the family. When she was 14 years old (2nd year high school), her brother in Grade 4 was not able to enrol at his school because her parents did not have enough money to buy necessary school supplies. Without her parents' knowledge, she stopped going to school herself and went to her grandmother's place to work as a domestic helper. She asked for her salary in advance - 500 pesos for one month - and brought it back to her family. Her parents were surprised. With that money, her brother was able to buy his notebooks and other school requirements, and was able to enrol. Nanay Alma, who was also the eldest child among her siblings, and was present when this conversation took place, told me that children, especially eldest children, are trained to really feel the needs of the family. They pick up the family situation from subtle hints and signs, and are keenly aware of the family problems without being told directly. In the Filipino family, the eldest child has a certain role to play, whether it is a girl or boy. The eldest child is expected to fulfil the role of a parent for the rest of the siblings in the absence of the parents. Noelle's voluntary dropping-out can be understood in this light. She felt responsible towards her siblings just as parents would feel responsible towards their children. Even though her parents were alive, I interpret that she saw her parents as unable to fulfil the parental roles, and therefore she regarded herself to be the next in line and voluntarily took up that role.

The concern of the children is that they are able to attend school day after day, that is, they have *baon* everyday. Children are aware that their parents do not have regular income and cannot be relied upon as a source of their *baon*. So combining work and school becomes very important for them, in order to continue their education.

Boyden, in her review of studies from different countries (1994), pointed out that part-time schooling allows children to combine education and work. In some countries, there are so many children enrolled at a school that the children have classes in two or three shifts as in Paco-Pandacan. This system allows children to combine work and school successfully, even though it is not the original aim of the shifts. Children do their assignments while tending the food
stall, or baby-sit after school. For example, Alice (Grade 6), as we saw, tended the food stall while working on her art assignment. One may argue that Alice could not have done more attention-demanding homework such as solving maths problems, but other children also told me they can do their homework while baby-sitting (another type of work for female children in Paco-Pandacan, discussed in detail in the next chapter), and saw no problem in combining school and work.

**Concepts of ‘work’ and ‘education’**

In this section, I examine the interplay between the two concepts ‘work’ and ‘education’. According to the particular ideology of childhood which renders ‘work’ inappropriate for children, ‘work’ is seen as opposite to ‘education’. A child is expected to study (and not work), and then find an employment upon finishing (compulsory) education. ‘Education’ and ‘work’ can be seen as mutually exclusive activities, in a linear progression from one to the other as a child grows up into an adult.

In reality, however, a mutually exclusive relationship between ‘education’ and ‘work’ is not apparent. For example, in Paco-Pandacan, children combine the two; they work in order to go to school, and going to school necessitates them to work. The two activities are complementary.

In contemporary Western societies, too, such as in England, combining ‘education’ and ‘work’ is quite common. For example, many high school students take up part-time jobs to earn some dispensable income (Morrow 1994). In the United States, too, many children work while studying, some to be independent and to earn their own pocket money, other to help their families (Cole 1980). Therefore, the rigid separation between ‘education’ and ‘work’ as seen in the idealised concept of childhood is not the reality of many children.

Another point is that formal education has become such an expected part of childhood that ‘education’ for some children has become ‘work’ for them. Prout pointed out, in his 1992 study of English children, that what children do at school conforms to almost any definition of work which extends beyond paid employment. Certainly it is not at all unusual for children themselves to see it as
work (Prout, cited by James, et al. 1998: 119). Similarly, some ‘work’ performed by children can be seen as a form of education and socialisation, as argued by Bey (2003) in the case of Mexican children performing agricultural work, or in the cases of children helping in household chores or in the family trade.44

In this way, it can be said that the two concepts ‘work’ and ‘education’ are not quite the opposites that they are constructed to be. Rather than being mutually exclusive, they can be understood to be in close relationship with one another. For this reason, Fyfe argues that universal education and child labour should be treated as related issues in order to make any meaningful outcome in either of the campaigns (Fyfe 2001).

**Education may fail to give children what it is expected to give**

In Paco-Pandacan, contrary to the expectation that education will lead to better job prospects and future, not many children can afford to attain a high enough education to give them a stable, well-paid job.

Even if children have to repeat a few years of schooling, many families manage to let their children finish high school. However, job requirements these days are demanding and a high school diploma is not enough for a stable, decently paid job such as office work. Just to apply for a job at a fast food restaurant, an applicant needs to be at least a first-year college student, as has already been noted in Chapter 2. Job advertisements increasingly ask for a college degree, and for this reason, children wish to go to college. However, the cost of attending college is considerably higher than public high school. Not only is there the tuition fee, but also transportation costs and *baon*, which are bigger than that of high school or elementary school students. Nanay Alma said that to send a child to high school is ‘okay’ and manageable, but to send her to college, the tuition fee could possibly be managed (because there are public colleges with

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44 Similarly, during fieldwork, I did wonder if ‘work’ was seen as ‘real education’ (by parents and/or children themselves) and started to investigate this question, but found that in Paco-Pandacan, it was not the case. Children (as well as adults in the community) regarded children’s income-earning activities as a basic survival strategy and something they did out of immediate necessity (i.e. therefore, it was something they would not do it they did not have to). It was not valued as ‘real education’, but it was seen as a positive predictor of the child’s future survival, which I discuss in Chapter 5.
lower tuition fees than private colleges), but the daily expenses for lunch and transportation are harder to meet, so it is difficult. It is the regular expense rather than the one-time payment of tuition fees that is the real burden on the family finances and that acts as a deterrent to college education.

The belief in the community is that if children study hard or if they are smart, they can attain high levels of education. However, that is in theory, and in reality, the socio-economic status of the family largely determines the opportunity for educational attainment, that is, it is much easier for rich and middle-class children to attend college than for poor children. There are some scholarships available for poor students, but these are scarce and the student has to be exceptionally smart to win a scholarship to attend a college of good reputation such as the University of the Philippines (UP). UP is a public university and has an excellent reputation, so academically competent students from less privileged families such as those in Paco-Pandacan would like to attend, knowing that it can greatly enhance their job prospects. However, even the fee of 200 pesos (A$7.00) for taking the entrance exam is enough to deter children from some families from applying, not to mention the tuition fees and baon. Instead, less competent students from upper and middle-class families have a higher chance of attending UP.

Bourdieu and Passeron have talked about the French educational system as dividing social classes. They say that in France, excelling in the educational system appears to be independent of one’s social class, but in fact, people of richer class are much better positioned to excel in the system than people of poorer classes. The system appears to be equal and fair, i.e. it is based on academic excellence, not how much money a student’s parents have, but it is actually a system which keeps the privileged class privileged and the less privileged lower in the social ladder (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). In a similar vein, Paul Willis’ study (1977) shows that rather than providing the student with better economic opportunity and upward social mobility, schooling reproduces the working class youth to stay working class. The Philippine situation can be interpreted similarly. For poor Filipino children, going to school represents a fair path towards a better future. But in reality, education for many turns out to be an obstacle to the upward mobility it promises.
Even though education does not give them what they want, people still try to attain the highest level they can in education, in order to open up possibilities for the best job opportunity available. Moreover, even if education fails to provide people with what they hope to attain, people still find value in education itself: going to school is seen as a privilege of being a child.

**Importance of education in children’s childhood**

If education does not necessarily lead to well paid jobs that might raise the living standard of the family, then what is it worth for the children?

Schooling is not only about excelling in their studies and enhancing future prospects for children and their families. For some children, school is a place where they find a sense of belonging and self-fulfilment. For example, when I visited an elementary school and stood about waiting for the Guidance Counsellor to arrive, I met Alice. She found me and ran towards me, which was a little surprising because when I see her tending the food stall in the community, she keeps a calm mature face. Even when she meets me, she might put a suppressed smile on her lips, but does not show such exuberance. She seemed more lively at school than in the community. Her face lit up and she had a wide smile on her face. Similarly, the contrast of the two different faces of children, one at school and another in the community, is reported by Nieuwenhuys in her study in Kerala, India:

Learning brings swarms of children, both boys and girls of about the same age, together at regular intervals: in the early morning by 6 a.m. in the madrasa [Koranic school], between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. in the governmental schools and colleges, and some even at night in the ‘adult’ literacy classes run by volunteers. Their clean shirts, richly anointed hair and a small pile of notebooks, all contribute to contrast their status of learners from that of workers. One may encounter working children half naked, sweating and covered with dust, walking briskly with heavy loads and exchanging but a few furtive glances with those who cross their way. When going to school by contrast, the children display the detached attitude of the scholar and walk with dignity in small groups, conversing gaily in low voices. [...] Childhood in Poomkara has therefore two faces: one is the time spent with peers in the classroom, the other is the time spent working with elders at home and in the neighbourhood (1994: 53).

Therefore, school can be seen as offering a different experience from that available in the community.
For Nanay Alma, being at high school in her province was remembered as the best time of her life. Her family was poor, so she had little hope of continuing her studies after elementary school, but her school teacher suggested she take an entrance exam to a private high school, and she was awarded a scholarship. She told me she used to dream of going to that high school with a pretty school uniform, and dreaded going to the public high school where the campus was muddy and damp. Her family situation would not have allowed her to go to either of them, but because of this scholarship, her dream came true. She remembers her high school days as being filled with friends, and everything seemed bright. When she was a child, she used to sell home-grown vegetables at the market to help her family. For her, the opportunity to attend this school seemed to be cut off from the reality of poverty. It was a special privilege given to her, almost being in a different world. Today she is very poor, as her husband’s work as a carpenter is intermittent, and she herself cannot work because her sick child demands her care all-round the clock. Everyday is a struggle for survival, but the memories of her high school days remain bright. There was probably nostalgia when she told me this story, but I was convinced that this period means much to her life, even now.

School is a space that allows children to experience the freedom from worldly responsibility, which is a defining characteristic of an idealised concept of childhood. Cunningham says that according to the Western concept of childhood which was established in the late 19th to mid-20th century, compulsory education came to be a marker of a person as a ‘child’ (Cunningham 1995: 174), and in this regard, Paco-Pandacan example is in accordance with the normative childhood. Children in Paco-Pandacan perform adult social roles in contributing to the family, and taking care of themselves by earning enough for their own education and food. School is one of the few spaces, or maybe the only space, left for children where they are privileged to be learners, and not earners.

Conclusion

From the Paco-Pandacan example, education and work can be said to be highly compatible, which is opposite of how the normative childhood constructs them to be. Children find no problems in combining education and work. Work
allows children to make sure they can continue their education, and keep alive the hope for a better future.

Policy around working children too often proceeds from a negative stereotype, derived from the particular construct of childhood as a time of dependency. However, the study of children's work in the urban Philippine community of Paco-Pandacan illuminates the complexity of the issues. Far from being opposites, the concepts of 'work' and 'education' intertwine and converge.

In sum, education is very important in children's motivation to work, as it is expected to lift up the financial standing of the family. This ideal does not materialise for many children in Paco-Pandacan, but education still has a value in children's childhood because it is space reserved for them to be 'children'.
Chapter 4: Working for the family

From fieldnote:
I asked the children what was the most important thing in their lives, and Michael seemed to have a very clear answer and said right away, ‘Magulang (Parents)’. His friend Tommy said, ‘Pamilya (Family)’. Lina, too, said, ‘Pamilya (Family)’ and so did the other girls.

In this chapter, I focus on the institution of family as, together with education, it plays a central role in children’s decision to work. What is the relationship between the institution of family and children’s work?

There has been an assumption in the past that children helping the family in the house or in the family context (in the household, family business or on farm) are not considered as ‘child labour’ (for example, Bequele 1989, as mentioned by Fyfe 1989: 71). However, this assumption has since been questioned and negated as there is evidence to show that exploitation can occur in the family context, too. Such exploitation can be equally as severe as that by an employer outside the family. Furthermore, exploitation within the family can be even harder for children to escape from (Fyfe 1989: 71-73).

I argue that family is very important to the children’s desire to work, and the family’s recognition that children are making a contribution to the household gives children enormous satisfaction and self-esteem. At the same time, the family can be seen as a regime to normalise unequal power relationships where children’s work can result in severe exploitation. Paradoxically, the idea that the family is inherently benevolent and ‘sacred’ sets up the family as a site with a vulnerability to exploitation.

What is the family?

Family as the beginning of social relationships

Family is the entry point to social relationships in the Philippines. To get to know a person, Filipinos usually ask about the person’s family. This is because in the Philippines, it is assumed that a family is something everyone has and everyone is familiar with, and something that is easy for anyone to talk about. Asking about family, in fact, is thought to make the person comfortable because the person will be talking about something that is close to his or her heart. In
Paco-Pandacan, people always asked me about my family as they first tried to get to know me. They asked me how many siblings I had, if I was married, and if not, whether I had a boyfriend and if we were going to get married. Unlike in many Western cultures where family is considered to be too personal and private to ask strangers about, in the Philippines, it is considered a ‘good’ personal topic to ask about, to get to know the person intimately and on a personal level. Or perhaps it is simply a cultural habit to ask these questions; even a 4-year old girl asked me if I was married and how many children I had. As your family is considered a big part of who you are, to know your family is to know you.

It is not an exaggeration to say that family is the most important social unit for the Filipinos. The importance of family in the Philippine culture has been noted by many Filipino scholars (see for example, Go 1993; Jocano 1995; Lacar 1995; Mendez and Jocano 1979; Mendez, et al. 1984; Ramirez 1984; Sevilla 1982). The family weighs a lot in a Filipino person’s life.

It is necessary to comment on what constitutes a person’s ‘family’ in the Philippines and in Paco-Pandacan. Central to the concept of ‘family’ in the Philippines is the nuclear family, made up of parents and unmarried children. This is the core of one’s ‘family’ and it often constitutes a household (Castillo, Weisblat, and Cillareal, Nartatez, Castillo, De La Paz and De Guzman, Feranil, and De Guzman, cited by Go 1993: 12), though there are some variations to it. For example, there may be additional persons living with the nuclear family such as adopted children or relatives, or the nuclear family may be missing the father or mother, or the couple does not have children (Arce 1975: 208).

The extended family is also important. Studies on the Filipino family point out that Filipino families are typically nuclear in residence, but are functionally extended (Castillo, cited by Nelson and Guino 2001: 555-556). At least among the lowland Christian Filipinos, one is equally part of both mother’s

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45 Here, I am referring to the lowland Christian Filipino culture, the dominant one in the Philippines. The studies on Filipino families that I cite in this chapter also refer to this culture when they say ‘Filipino culture’ and ‘Filipino families’.

46 ‘Household’ is taken to mean ‘a group of persons who sleep in the same dwelling unit and have common arrangements for the preparation and consumption of food’ (definition used in the 1980 Philippine Census of Population and housing, cited by Go 1993: 5), and is ‘concerned with activities, such as production, consumption and reproduction directed towards the satisfaction of human needs’ (p.106 in, Elizabeth Croll, *Endangered Daughters: Discrimination and Development in Asia*, 2000, London and New York: Routledge).
and father’s families (bilateral kinship) (Fox, Carroll, Brandewie, and Yu and Liu, cited by Go 1993: 6). One’s extended family comprises the nuclear family plus its relatives extended vertically (through the parent-child relationships) and horizontally (through sibling relationships) on both mother’s and father’s sides (De Guzman, cited by Go 1993: 5; Arce 1975: 208). Kinship in the Philippines is not only based on ‘consanguinity’ or blood-ties, but also on ‘affinity’, that is the closeness determined by patterns of interactions, marriage relatives, and also ‘ritual’ relationship such as the godparent system (Go 1993: 6-7). Murdock says that a person can turn to extended kin for help if the immediate family cannot meet their needs, but he adds that if the ties between the family and the extended kin are weak, ‘other persons or institutions such as friends, neighbours, or welfare agencies, may have to step in’ (Murdock, cited by Arce 1975: 209-210). Among the help sought from kin are ‘food and money given for free, cash loans, help in household chores, assistance in times of emergency and family illness, and assistance in sending children to school’ (Go 1993: 14).

In Paco-Pandacan, when a child says he or she wants to help the ‘family’, the reference is most likely to be made to the members of the nuclear family and/or household. In Paco-Pandacan, too, as mentioned above, a household is based on the nuclear family, that is, a married couple and their unmarried children. A frequently seen variation is that the father is missing; either the couple is separated, with the father living elsewhere, or the father is deceased. In such a case, the nuclear family tends to extend to the female line, incorporating the grandmother in the same household, for example. One household had a grandmother (separated from her husband) living with her three daughters (whose husbands had either died or left them) and their children. One of those children is a teenager who has a baby but is separated from her partner. It is becoming a four-generation household with no male partners. While this household composition is far from being representative of Paco-Pandacan, it is not unusual to find households that are mainly composed of female ties, extended vertically (mother-daughter) and horizontally (sisters).

**Family as ‘sacred’**

The family occupies a central part in the motivation for people’s actions. I observed that Paco-Pandacan residents frequently assume that ‘helping the
family' is a virtue and one can justify any action if it is to ‘help the family’. For example, a mother told me that ‘child labour’ is ‘very very bad’ and she gave prostitution as an example. However, she added that even prostitution can be good if it is to help the family. She said her second daughter was pretty and used to work as a prostitute in Manila. She did that to help the family. ‘How can helping the family be bad?’ she said. ‘It can be good if that is to help the family. I know it because my daughter was one’.

However, it was not clear from this example how old her daughter was when she worked as a prostitute. I estimated her to be in her teens to 20’s, and even though prostitution is viewed negatively regardless of the age, the mother may have held a different opinion if the child’s age was, say, 10. Yet, this still tells me about the importance of ‘helping the family’ that is placed above otherwise morally repulsive activities. In another occasion, a 21-year old man in the community told me about a person he knew who married young in order to escape the problems in her family. (Marrying, as this chapter later explains, is a legitimate way of leaving one’s natal family.) She had left her family to make a separate household, but her marriage broke up and she was left with a small child. She then worked as a prostitute. The man used this story to illustrate the point that people undertake such activities as prostitution not because they want to, but because they have to (dapat). His comment implied some moral condemnation towards prostitution, but personal and family survival somewhat justifies such a decision. 47

Family is the basic social unit for survival. Interdependence of family members in helping each other has been noted in the literature (see for example, Ramirez 1984: 42). Some people are willing to take the risk and engage in undesirable or dangerous work in order to help their families. Family is ‘sacred’ and its value is inviolable. People first turn to their families for help, as family is expected to be the first line of defence between an individual and the outside world, and one normally cannot live without family. Michael (15 years old, high

47 Opinions on this matter can be divided among different individuals in the Filipino society. I did meet a social worker who is poor, mother of three children who told me that as a parent, you need to give strong moral guidance to the children that they can follow in their lives. She believed that you can never use poverty as an excuse for not giving education to your children or for allowing children to take up hazardous occupation such as selling drugs, or prostitution. She shared her opinion very passionately with me and made clear that she would never accept prostitution no matter how poor the child’s family was.
school student), who said that the family was the most important thing in his life, explained that it was because the family will always be there for you no matter what, in whatever situation.

**Gender and age hierarchies within the family**

Despite the interdependence and mutual helping exercised within the family, the institution of family entails hierarchies. In this section, I examine how gender and age hierarchies place female children at the bottom of the ranks and how this influences girls' everyday life.

**Gender hierarchy: Women as the managers of household, but not the ‘breadwinner’**

In the Philippines in general, as well as in Paco-Pandacan, fathers are expected to be the breadwinners, but in most families in Paco-Pandacan, they have either no jobs or irregular income, and do not earn enough to support the family. Often, families cannot survive without the women taking up a job, the most common type of which is running a food stall in the community. Women not only undertake supplementary jobs, but also buy food and toiletries on credit and borrow money from their contacts. In other words, many women manage the household and ensure that all the family members will have at least the minimum of the basic necessities. While there are fathers who actively share the responsibility with their wives in caring for the family, lack of fathers’ cooperation in managing the family and attending to the children’s needs and the subsequent overburdening of women as wives and mothers in the Filipino families has been noted in the literature (see for example, Illo 1994; Parrenas 2001; Tuason 1994). The discourse about gender roles in Paco-Pandacan families is that husbands are the ‘breadwinners’ and are accorded a more dignified status than their wives who perform supplementary, ‘sideline’ jobs. The reality, however, is that it is often women who are earning a livelihood for the entire family.

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48 Although it has been pointed out in the literature that the wife’s earning more than the husband could undermine the husband’s status as breadwinner and is seen as undesirable (Mendez, et al. 1985: 13-16; Illo, cited by Go 1993: 43), it was not seen as a problem in Paco-Pandacan, in the same way that Mendez, et al. mentioned was the case in some low-income urban communities (Mendez, et al. 1985: 13-16). In an interview with three male children aged between 15 and 17 in Paco-Pandacan, they told me that when they married, they would like their wives to also have ‘sideline’ jobs.
I pointed out to a nanay that women seemed to be the ones filling the gap between the husband’s income and family’s needs. She agreed that is what most women do. Her husband earns 150 pesos (A$5.00) per day (where the legal minimum wage in Metro Manila is 300 pesos a day), and they have five children to feed. I asked her what men do to increase their earnings, and she explained that it is hard enough to find a job, so if you have a job, you accept whatever it pays you, rather than to complain and be fired. It was much better to have a job, even if the salary is not enough to feed your family, than not to have a job and just ‘stand-by’, which is a local expression to mean ‘hanging around doing nothing’. Another study of an urban low-income community in Manila also pointed out the importance of women’s and children’s contribution to the household economy especially when their husbands do not earn enough (Hollnsteiner 1973).

Nanay Alma manages a household of six people. Her husband is a carpenter, but does not work regularly. If he works, he can bring home 200 to 300 pesos a day. Two female family members are working abroad, but contrary to the family’s and society’s expectations towards Filipino overseas migrant workers, they do not send money home regularly. Nanay Alma may receive about 4,000 pesos every two months or at longer intervals, so it is not a reliable source of income. Nanay Alma herself cannot work because she has to care for her daughter who has been sick for a long time. Three children in the family go to elementary and high schools. She gives 3 pesos each to two elementary school children every morning for champorado (chocolate-flavoured rice porridge typically eaten for breakfast), and 40 pesos for the eldest child so that she can pay for transportation and lunch, to go to high school. I asked her if there were days when the family could not eat three times a day. She nodded deeply, and said there were days when the family did not have any money for food. When she has nothing, and she cannot take out any more credit from the nearby stores⁴⁹, she goes to her mother-in-law in the neighbourhood or the sister of her husband who lives just outside Manila to ask for help. They may be able to give her 100 pesos

⁴⁹ She buys daily necessities from these neighbour stores on credit, and tries to keep the debt under 100 pesos to keep the amount repayable for her. The neighbour stores can sell things to you on credit, ‘if they trust you’, she says. People in the community do their best to repay their debts because otherwise, stores will not give you credit and the family cannot survive.
at a time, for example. Nanay Alma remembers how much she got from whom, and returns the amount when she has the money.

**Child domestic work**

Chid domestic work is the type of work where the age and gender hierarchies of the institution of family can potentially exert very negative influences on the lives of female children. Girls in Paco-Pandacan work as part-time domestics for their relatives and neighbours while living with their own families. This is done without problems, mainly because the girls work only part-time and live with their own families and do not have to be dependent on the stranger’s family. However, I will also refer to other child domestic workers found outside Paco-Pandacan who move into the employers’ houses as full-time, live-in child domestics as it illustrates the contradictions of the institution of family, contradictions that are there for all children.

**Child domestic work in Paco-Pandacan**

In Paco-Pandacan, it is common for girls to engage in paid part-time domestic work, at a relative’s house or a neighbour’s house. Among the many chores to be done in a house, the most common tasks children perform for payment are baby-sitting and cleaning. As in the case of Joyce (to be discussed more in detail later in this chapter), who went to her aunt’s house in the neighbourhood to ask if she could baby-sit the 6-month old baby, households that are a little better-off in the community will always be requested to take a domestic helper. Sometimes children directly request such employment, as in the case of Joyce. Other times, the arrangement is made between adults, as in the case of another elementary school girl whose mother asked another woman with many connections in the community to act as a go-between in finding someone in the vicinity who needed domestic help. As with other types of work that children take up, it could be done by the initiative of the child herself, or the child may be told/asked by her mother to engage in paid domestic work.

While other common types of children’s work in the community, such as throwing away rubbish, buying water, and tending food stalls, are done by boys and girls alike, domestic work is almost exclusively a girls’ job. This is because household chores are seen as female jobs in the Philippines. Children are trained by their mothers from an early age to wash the dishes, do the laundry, clean the
house, cook, and take care of small children. In Paco-Pandacan, both boys and girls are trained in these household tasks from a young age. Go (1993: 32) also points out the absence of rigid sexual division of labour at home. But when it comes to domestic work as an occupation, it is girls, not boys, who are seen as more suitable.\(^{50}\)

Children’s unpaid work within their own families tends to be taken for granted. Both sons and daughters are trained to do some domestic chores such as fetching water, doing laundry by hand, washing the dishes, cleaning the house, and taking care of younger siblings. Such duties tend to fall more heavily on the eldest child, whether it is a girl or a boy, and their workload can be considerable. I knew a 16-year old high school girl, who was the eldest of six siblings and was able to do all domestic chores, as well as acting as a second mother to her younger siblings. However, her younger siblings are also taught to do their share. I have seen her sisters who are 2 and 3 years old, being trained to do the dishes. Their mother prepared a tub of water and placed some dirty dishes inside, and the two girls were instructed to rub the food residue off the plates. The girls looked as if they were simply dipping their hands in the water rather than doing the dishes, and if the mother was after efficiency, she would have had one of the four older siblings do the dishes more quickly and properly. It was training in progress. Children’s being trained in household tasks as young as 4 years old in the Philippines is also reported in the literature (Licuanan, and Lagmay, cited by Liwag, et al. 1999: 38).

Unpaid domestic work is regularly undertaken by children in Paco-Pandacan. I will refer to May-Ann (19 years old) as an example. She wakes up at 6am every morning. She first goes to the community hall to put the family’s water containers in the queue. Later during the day, she comes back to pick up the filled containers so the family has water for the day’s washing, bathing, doing the dishes, and so on. Next, she cleans the house, and she washes clothes for her family. Then, she makes some lunch for her father to take to work. She still has

\(^{50}\) Nation-wide, there are male domestic workers who are called ‘houseboys’, but overall, domestic work is predominantly a female occupation. When I asked former child domestic workers from the provinces who had come to Manila to live and work at the employer’s house if they thought boys were also capable of handling domestic work, they said boys were also capable, based on the example of some boys they personally knew who had done all-round household chores as ‘houseboys’. But they pointed out that it is just considered more appropriate for girls to undertake domestic work.
more laundry to do in the afternoon. May-Ann has not finished high school, because when she left her relatives in the provinces to join her parents in Manila, she did not get the necessary document for changing schools. She is not interested in high school anymore, because she has already worked as a paid domestic worker for a few employers, and knows that she can work and earn money even without finishing high school. For her to be doing full-time unpaid domestic work for her family is an interim arrangement before finding a paid domestic work elsewhere. In fact, at a later date, she found such a position, and went to live in the house of the employer in a different part of Manila.

Paid domestic work in Paco-Pandacan is typically done part-time, however. Children combine schooling and work while living with their own families, and they have no major problems to speak of in doing this type of work as they are used to performing these household chores at home since they were very young. As well, their working hours are limited (part-time), and they can do their homework while baby-sitting.

Is child domestic work unproblematic then? Far from it. It is a type of children’s work that highlights the unequal social relationships within the family and its negative consequences for female children.

**Full-time, live-in child domestic workers**

‘The other side’ of child domestic work is found in that of child domestic workers who live and work full-time at their employers’ houses. Even though they are not found in Paco-Pandacan, I would like to refer to such child workers’ experiences in order to show the paradox of the institution of family, thought to be a safe and good place for children, but with the potential of being terribly exploitative of children.

Domestic work is seen as both an easy and safe job for girls. This view is related to the idea that girls and women ‘naturally’ do domestic work at home, and paid domestic work is seen as merely an extension of what they do. But recent work\(^5\) by campaigners has exposed children’s domestic work as one of the most hazardous kind. I argue that this accessible and seemingly easy job leads to enormous danger for girls.

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\(^5\) The first NGO program in the Philippines for the child domestic workers was implemented by Visayan Forum in 1996 (Camacho 1999: 58).
Whereas such work is something girls do part-time in Paco-Pandacan, there are some children, typically from rural areas, who migrate to cities to work as full-time, live-in domestic workers in distant relatives’ or strangers’ homes. Due to the large gap of wealth between rural and urban parts of the country, rural families are willing to have a family member go to work in the city, in order to help the family financially and also to have one mouth less to feed. From the children’s perspective, they are also keen to go to the cities as they see it imperative, as dutiful children, that they help their families (Camacho 1999).

Children then live away from their own families, friends, and often have no outside contact where they can ask for help. Some recruitment agencies and employing families deliberately prohibit children from contacting their families. Many of them are not allowed to venture outside the house gates unless their duty includes going outside. They are invisible, isolated in the privacy of their employer’s home (Oebanda, et al. 2001: 6). In this isolated situation, the child is extremely vulnerable to verbal and physical abuse from the employing family.

Employers use pejorative terms for child domestic workers, for example, tanga, gaga, or bobo (stupid), batugan (lazy), tarantada (careless), walang pinag-aralan (illiterate), bastos (rude), malandi (flirt), and sinungaling (liar), and these demeaning words when repeated would almost certainly hurt the child’s self-confidence and self-respect. Many children are beaten, sometimes to the point of death. Some are tortured; one child domestic worker died from severe internal burns after being forced to drink a liquid used to unblock drains. Another child was forced to drink bleaching liquid each time she failed to wash all the laundry. Some are sexually molested, and others are raped. Additionally, an employer can easily have a child domestic worker jailed by accusing them of theft. Such child domestic workers work an average of 15 hours a day and are always on call. Days off are limited. Many are not paid the promised wage nor given the promised opportunity to study (Oebanda, et al. 2001: 5, 7). Anti-Slavery International sees child domestic work as a form of modern slavery because the child is often bonded to the work and is forced to be dependent on the employing family, ‘under the control of adults whose first concern is not the child’s well-being’ (Blagbrough and Glynn 1999).
Their abuse is an issue of gender that deems domestic work appropriate to women and children. However, it is also an issue of social inequality because girls from poorer parts of the country are hired to relieve women of better-off financial standing from what they are otherwise expected to do (Oebanda, et al. 2001: 135). The idea that domestic work is a female job and is given little appreciation further puts child domestic workers in a vulnerable position. That women are identified with the domestic sphere, serving for the family’s needs, providing nurturance and emotional support, and that girls are socialised accordingly, is reported by studies in the Philippines (Illo 1994; Liwag, et al. 1999; Parrenas 2001). The idealised female role is part of an ideology of the family as ‘haven in a heartless world’ (Lasch 1977). This ideology entails a gender hierarchy, depreciating women’s contribution in their skilful management of the household, leaving them as ‘side-liners’ and not as ‘breadwinners’ even when they are the major contributors of household income. Even though the actual gender roles are different from the idealised ones, it is the latter which have practical consequences on female children’s experiences and socialisation.

**A family member or a worker?**

The relationship between the child domestic worker and the employer’s family is ambiguous. Many employers claim that the child domestic worker is part of the family more than she is an employer. But the child domestic workers do not eat the same food as the employing household or wear the same clothes as the other children in the household. When they are sick, they are still expected to work. Nor are they treated as ‘real’ employees, either, in the sense that there is no contract to define the tasks and responsibilities of the child domestic worker. The rate of wage, how it will be paid and how often, number of working hours, holidays, how to terminate the employer-employee relationship are not stipulated anywhere. There is only a verbal agreement. This makes it impossible to prove the existence of any legal employment relationship, especially if the child is also the employer’s kin (Oebanda, et al. 2001: 54-55).

The ambiguous status of female domestic worker in Indonesia is also noted by Robinson:

Domestic service [...] is a contractual relation, like the wage labour relation, with personal services being performed in return for a wage. However, other aspects of the relation reflect familial assumptions not
usually associated with waged work. These assumptions of relations on a familial model are held by both householder and servant, and seem to replicate some of the assumptions underlying these relations in village society, where real kin ties were often involved in master-servant relations (Robinson 1991: 38).

Robinson also notes that in the city of Ujung Pandang in Sulawesi, young unmarried Torajan women live in the household under similar conditions to the children in the family, in that they are given food and clothing and their movements outside the home are restricted (Robinson 1991: 43-44). ‘Although they are formally free, assumptions about the familial nature of the relationship, combined with their low status, mean that they do not leave the house without permission. This is an aspect of the control of their labour power, but also reflects an assumption that they are part of the household, and as unmarried women are not free to go out and about in the world’ (Robinson 1991: 44). So, being a woman and being a part of the family controls the person’s behaviour even though it is being done as a contractual job. Domestic workers are placed under the control of the family regime.

Domestic work is seen as an easy, readily available, readily doable work for women and girls that they are socialised to feel familiar and comfortable with. However, the perceived benevolence of the institution of family, as offering trustworthy connections for employment, providing food and board to its members, is causing child domestic workers to be completely dependent on the employing family, making themselves vulnerable to abuse and maltreatment (Blagbrough and Glynn 1999). The idea of the family as a safe place ironically sets up the conditions for exploitation. Incidentally, ‘home’, together with ‘school’, is the place in society deemed to be ideal for children, according to the normative childhood. Parents often regard the domestic domain as a safe place for their daughters, but as a Filipino researcher points out, it is actually a dangerous place for females of all ages (Del Rosario 1999). Changing this misconception regarding family will be crucial to protecting children (Blagbrough and Glynn 1999).

The family can be seen as a regime to normalise unequal power relationships between male and female, between elder and younger members, and between higher and lower status holders. Child domestic workers serve not only
their natal families by reducing the number of mouths they have to feed and by contributing income to them, but they also serve their employing families with their services and be subjected to the low status given to them. As a girl and a child in the family regime, child domestic workers are subjected to the institution of family twice: once in her natal family, and again in her employer's family.

**Women and female children as workers to support the family: Going to Japan to work**

The gender and age hierarchies in the institution of family are manifested in another example, that is, the amount of responsibilities women and girls are expected to undertake in the service of their families. To augment family income, many people desire to work abroad. People in Paco-Pandacan, as well as in the Philippines at large, are keen to look for opportunities to work abroad in search of jobs and/or higher salaries. They would go abroad even if the work is not of the most desirable nature, for example, low-skilled and/or low-status jobs such as domestic work or sex work. From an early age, some children, especially girls, aspire to go abroad to work some day.

The Philippines is a major sending country of overseas migrant workers. According to the literature, '[i]n the 1990s, some 700,000 Filipinos (including sea-based workers) left the country to take up work in more than 100 destinations all over the world' (Asis 2002: 68) and the money remitted by the overseas workers contributed to some 4 percent of the country's GNP in 1993 (Gonzalez, cited by Hirano 2000: 366). Filipino people would go and work almost anywhere in the world rather than to be unemployed in the Philippines. There are various destinations for these Filipino overseas workers, but in this chapter, I focus on going to Japan because that was the destination people talked to me about the most. This was partly because of my Japanese nationality, and partly because of their enthusiasm to work in Japan, as it was explained to me that they believed the salaries are higher there than in other foreign countries.

People's desire to go to Japan was expressed in a joke they told me in Paco-Pandacan, even though it is a joke also well known in wider areas of the Philippines. It goes: Before, people were afraid of the Japanese and the parents told their children, 'Hide, the Japanese are here'. Now, parents tell their children, 'Go outside, the Japanese are here'. *(Noong araw, natakot ang mga tao sa Hapon.*
Sabi nila, ‘Anak, anak, tago kayo, may Hapon’. Ngayon, sabi nila, ‘Anak, anak, lumabas kayo, may Hapon.’ I understood that during the wartime, the Japanese were cruel and killed a lot of people in the Philippines. For example, people told me that the Japanese were said to pick up a baby, toss him into the air and thrust him through with a long gun with bayonet. So, upon seeing Japanese soldiers, the parents told their children to hide inside the house so that they would be safe. Today, however, many Filipinos would like to get to know a Japanese and if lucky, they might get a job in Japan or even marry a Japanese and go to Japan. It is believed that this would help the financial situation of the family greatly. So when Filipino people see a Japanese person, they might encourage their children to go outside and meet them. However, there is another level of interpretation to this joke. There were several adults around me when this joke was told, and one of them explained to me that during the wartime, Japanese soldiers raped Filipino women, so parents told their children, especially daughters, to hide inside the house when they saw them. Now, the Japanese are rich, and when parents see them, they encourage their daughters to go outside and meet them so the Japanese might sleep with them and take them to Japan.

I was told a similar joke elsewhere in Manila, but in a different version. It went: ‘Before, they said, ‘The Japanese are here. Duck!’ , but now, they say, ‘The Japanese are here. Lie down!’ (‘Nandyan na ang mga Hapon. Dapa!’ ‘Nandyan na ang mga Hapon. Hilata!’). Here, too, the suggestion is sexual.

One can argue that these are only jokes and sex is used to ‘sex-up’ the joke, but one can also argue that all jokes contain a grain of serious intent. The joke suggests not only the eagerness of Filipino people to go to Japan, but also the willingness of doing so even by offering sex (to find a husband, or to have a sex work in Japan). In fact, the common type of work Filipino women are recruited for, to work in Japan, is in the service industry working as ‘entertainers’, or singers, dancers, and hostesses in nightclubs and pubs, which is not explicitly sex work, but entails the likelihood of becoming sex work.

There are many in the Paco-Pandacan community who had worked abroad including in Japan, and there are even more people who would like to do so. For example, Lani is a 30-year old woman who had worked in Japan as a room maid in hotels for three years and speaks excellent Japanese. Monica is a 19-year old
woman and is keen to practise Japanese with me which she has been trying to learn on her own in the hope that she will go to Japan some day. Two of her high school friends have gone there to work, and she is hoping to do the same. Linda, in her last year of high school, told me that her elder sister is working in Japan now as an entertainer, and when she turns 18 years old, Linda, too, would like to go there to be employed by the same person as her sister.

Studies of Filipino men and women working abroad emphasise the centrality of supporting family as the motivation for working abroad (Hirano 2000). At the same time, studies of Filipino women working abroad identified additional motivations: Their desire to gain a sense of financial independence and wanting to choose one’s path in life (Tyner 2002); being curious about and wanting to experience the life abroad (Asis 2002); and a ‘flight’ from the strictures of the patriarchal family at home (Yeoh, et al. 2002: 4). In Paco-Pandacan, too, an 18-year old woman who came back to the Philippines for a short holiday from working at a nightclub in Japan said, ‘It feels good in Japan; there are no problems. Here, there are many (Masarap sa Japan. Walang problema. Dito, marami)’ and a comment such as this suggests that being able to leave behind the situation in the family and/or community is an incentive to work abroad. These studies point out that women took the initiative to work abroad, but their decisions were also supported by their families (Yeoh, et al. 2002). Here, family interdependence (i.e. obligation towards the family to help them) and personal independence and gain do not contradict each other. Rather, working abroad is an opportunity to fulfil both family expectations on the one hand and to realise personal aspirations on the other. As I show later in this chapter, the same point can be made about children’s work; the desire to help the family financially and wanting to be independent from the family situation are both present in children’s desire to work.

Not only young women, but also older women in the community in their 30s and 40s, told me they would like to work in Japan, not as entertainers, which they consider more appropriate for younger and prettier women, but as laundry women or domestic workers (even though these occupations are not common in Japan). Some mothers said half-jokingly that they wanted me to take their daughter to Japan to work because even providing daily meals is difficult in the
Philippines. One mother told me she wanted to sell one of her small twins to a Japanese person. Even though such a mother is in a definite minority, it still shows the possibility of viewing the child as an economic asset in extreme financial difficulty, as well as viewing the child as a burden, that is, an extra mouth to feed.

Children also hear about ‘mag-Japan’, a Tagalog verb to mean ‘to go to Japan to work’. When I asked 6 to 12-year old girls what they wanted to do when they finish school, ‘mag-Japan’ was a popular answer. They want to ‘mag-Japan’ to see abroad and to help the family.

While some children may pick up the idea to ‘mag-Japan’ from hearing about others going there, or from seeing a big house built in the community and hearing that it was because someone had ‘mag-Japan’ or had married a Japanese man, other children are given the idea from adults around them. I came across Gilbert (male, in his mid-20s) a few times, telling Alice (female, 11 years old, Grade 6) that she is going to ‘mag-Japan’ when she is older. Gilbert is Alice’s neighbour and a good friend of the family. Each time, Alice’s reaction was a refusal (‘Ayaw ko (I don’t want to)’). Her mother was present, but she did not say anything. In the case of Lisa (female, 11 years old, Grade 6), it was her mother who constantly told her half-jokingly that she will ‘mag-Japan’ when she grows up. I used to hear Lisa say ‘Ayaw ko (I don’t want to)’, too. I thought younger girls might not have a good idea of what ‘mag-Japan’ may entail, and it could be a scary thing to think, at this age, of going abroad alone, separated from her family. Nevertheless, after some time, Lisa started to show some interest in going to Japan. She started to ask me how to say different phrases in Japanese. I asked her if she wanted to go to Japan and she said she did. I asked why and she said she was just interested to see what it would be like over there. I also asked the mother on a separate occasion if she wanted her daughter to go work in Japan. She confirmed this, and I expressed my concern that work in Japan would most likely be ‘entertainer’ which is not exactly sex work, but has a potential of becoming so. I also pointed out that in Japan, entertainers are stigmatised, it is regarded as a low-status occupation, and there is also racism. She said that she wanted her daughter to have an office job in Japan, and this evoked a critical comment from a young woman (22 years old) who was present at that time that it
did not make any sense to say, ‘I want to work in Japan, but I do not want to be an entertainer’.

People are aware of possible unpleasantness and problems of working in Japan. Stories which circulate in the community include those of Filipino women who went there as ‘cultural dancers’, and were told to dance with little clothes on, or ordered to masturbate on stage.

A nanay told me about her neighbour who left the Philippines many years ago to go to Japan at the age of 15 and has not been able to come home ever since. The girl’s father died and her mother is sick, and their house burned down in a fire, yet she has not been back, and everyone wonders what happened to her. According to another neighbour who had gone to Japan, the girl was still in Japan, working as an entertainer, but cannot leave there as she has over-stayed, and has been hiding from the authorities. But there has been no direct contact of any kind from her to anyone in the Philippines since she left, and no one knows exactly where she is.

The nanay also told me that she heard that Filipino entertainers are given low recognition in Japan. Their customers at nightclubs tell them they are paying a lot of money, so they should be able to do whatever they want with them. Some Filipinas are said to come back after three months instead of the contract of six months because, even though they went through an audition to sing, and training to wait on tables and to entertain customers, once they get to Japan, their job is different from what they expected, such as performing naked. Some do it for big money, but others find it too much and want to come back. What the Filipinas want, nanay said, is to have a decent job because their families are poor and the salaries are big in Japan. Because most people who go to Japan are educated to college level, they expect to have a decent job. But they do not know that once they get there, they are like prostitutes, which they do not want. When they come back to the Philippines, they are also given low recognition. People in the neighbourhood talk about them as ‘having changed (iba na iyan)’, and ‘having lost it (wala na iyan)’, or ‘having lost her womanhood (wala na ang kababaehan niya)’, as if to say they must have been engaged in prostitution in Japan. They are looked down upon not only in Japan, but also at home. In spite of all this, nanay said, people still want to go to Japan to earn and send money home. Even if it
means that they miss their family at home, or risk terrible things happening to them, they will persevere because they hope to make the life a little easier for their families back home in the Philippines.\textsuperscript{52} Their families, too, despite what they hear about going to Japan, see that the potential for benefits is bigger than the risk, and want their daughters to go work in Japan and send money home.

It is hard to distinguish between the pressure from the family and the personal desire to go abroad to work. There is expectation from the family to help and there is subsequent pressure (which may or may not be articulated by the family, but which the person can sense), and this expectation is internalised in the person who makes ‘personal’ decisions, so the external pressure and internal desire mix and overlap in a manner that is not clear-cut. A study in a Filipino fishing village (Illo and Polo, cited by Asis 2002: 77-78) found that women’s individual and family aspirations were identical, rather than that the family’s interest was imposed upon women. Nonetheless, examples in Paco-Pandacan show that certain families do articulate some pressure and plant the idea in their children to go and work abroad. It is possible that children are socialised this way during childhood and when they grow up, they make their ‘personal’ decisions to work abroad both to help the family and to see what life is like in a foreign country.

Even though many Filipino men also go to Japan to work\textsuperscript{53}, it was mainly girls in Paco-Pandacan who told me they wanted to go work in Japan, or who were teased by people around them that they were going to Japan when they grew up. I did not notice any similar teasing of boys. If boys grow up and happen to find a job abroad, that will be welcomed by the family, but while growing up, boys do not seem to face the same expectations and pressure to work abroad. Nor is the pressure to contribute significantly to the family exerted on them as the girls experience it, especially in relation to ‘mag-Japan’.

\textsuperscript{52} The conflict of emotions between wanting to provide for the family and wanting to be with their children left in the Philippines, as experienced by Filipino women working abroad is documented, explored and analysed by Phacel Salazar Parreñas in ‘Mothering from a distance: Emotions, gender, and inter-generational relations in Filipino transnational families’, Feminist Studies, 27(2), 2001.

\textsuperscript{53} For example, I met two men in Paco-Pandacan, as well as a few others in the greater Manila area, who had lived and worked in Japan, in various occupations such as labourers, mechanics and builders.
This may be because in Paco-Pandacan, girls are seen as more ‘responsible’ than boys. ‘Responsible’ is the English word people use even when speaking in Tagalog, to mean that the person makes sure she/he fulfils the role of a good family member by helping the family financially. Two young women, both in their early 20s, said to me that they would like their first child to be a girl because girls are ‘more responsible’. Even though the expectation to contribute significantly to the family is there for the first child whether it is a boy or a girl, the two women had the opinion that they could count on girls more than boys on their dutifulness.

Such a view was also noted in a study of Filipino domestic migration from rural areas to urban areas. Trager points out that families do not discriminate between sons and daughters in giving them educational opportunities, and may encourage children of both sexes to migrate for better jobs for the family’s upward social mobility, but ‘[o]n the other hand, willingness to fulfill familial obligations also comes into play. [...] [P]arents may expect daughters to be more likely to remit money and aid in other ways. They tend to be seen as more likely to be obedient and less likely to spend money on themselves’ (Trager 1984: 1274). Trager analyses the fact that more young, single women migrate than men in Filipino domestic migration as a strategy of the family to ensure the long-term survival of the family. Lauby and Stark also point out that the reasons why more women than men migrate to cities in the Philippines are: 1) men’s work is more valued in the agricultural work in rural areas, and there are more women’s jobs available in cities (domestic work, sales and clerical jobs, and jobs in the garment industry), and 2) daughters are socialised to be responsible for the family’s needs and are more trusted than sons to send remittances (Lauby and Stark 1988). The same can be said about Filipino overseas migration, as the motivation for labour migration is the same for both domestic and overseas destinations.

The fact that there is more pressure on women and girls to work abroad may also have something to do with the nature of work in Japan. There are two intertwining power structures operating on Filipinas working in Japan. One is the gender hierarchy, that is, women are wanted to entertain men. The other is the global economic power structure, that is, Japan as the rich country and the Philippines as the poor. These two power relationships are behind the occurrence
of Filipino women going to Japan, and their unpleasant experiences there. Women, however, are willing to take the risk for the potential benefits to their families.

**Problems in the family and how they affect children in their everyday life**

So far, it has been shown that family can be a source of positive benefits to its members by providing support (family interdependence), protection (family will always be there no matter what), and affection. Besides these positive aspects, I have also shown that the social relationship within the family is not equal, and puts pressure on certain members of the family, such as women and children. In this section, I examine other negative impacts of family on children, as the family can be a great source of grievance when there are problems such as discord between parents, abuse of drugs or alcohol, addiction to gambling, illness of a family member and the associated medical cost, on top of chronic financial hardships.

Because the family weighs a lot in a person’s life, problems in the family affect and alter the everyday life of the family members. For example, a child starts missing school often when the father’s drug problem gets worse, or a child has to miss school and stay home to watch over his sick sister while his mother has to run important errands outside the community. The dominant discourse in Filipino society is that the family is inherently benevolent, positive, and protective to its members, and its value is endorsed by the Catholic Church. The view that the family is a negative environment for children tends to be refused and dismissed as an exception to the rules. However, I show here that children’s experiences of the family can be quite different from the uniformly benevolent image provided by the dominant discourse.

For the children in Paco-Pandacan, family is the most immediate and the most significant social environment in which they live. The family’s everyday existence greatly affects children’s emotional and material life. Children’s self-evaluation of happiness depends largely on the family situation, and in Paco-Pandacan, this often is difficult, involving issues such as loss of job, sickness or death of a family member, parents’ quarrels or separation. When I sat in on a
children’s ‘sharing circle’ guided by a social worker where twelve children between the ages 11 to 14 discussed events they had experienced during the course of their lives, it struck me how common it was for children in Paco-Pandacan to experience quite dramatic events in their families. More than two-thirds of the children shared stories such as these: ‘Before, we were happy. But when my father came back from abroad, he got drunk and hit my mother. He said he had a big problem’. Or: ‘Before, we were happy. But one day my father was shot by the police’. When the social worker asked the child where he was shot, and I guessed she was asking for the location where this happened, the child misunderstood and said, crying; ‘In the heart’. In another case, the child’s mother disappeared, and the girl was told that she had been kidnapped while riding in a taxi. She then had a stepmother, but her father abused her, so the woman left. Her father was always angry and told the girl’s elder brothers to leave the house and go away, so they did. The girl stayed behind because she did not want her father to be left alone. Sometimes, she said, he does not come home at night and she cannot sleep without anyone lying beside her. Other children are moved from one place to another, to live with an aunt or a grandmother, as their parents change jobs or more frequently, become separated. In these circumstances, children experience difficulties in transferring schools and grades. In order to change schools, children need a ‘Report Card’, the school document that records all the subjects taken, the grades given, and shows how much of the curriculum was already completed by the student. This is the card handed to the student at the end of each semester to communicate the academic grades he or she earned, which is then returned to the teacher. When children have to move because of the family circumstances, it is sometimes done at such short notice that they forget to ask for the Report Card from the school. At the next school, the child cannot enrol without the Report Card from the previous school, leading to a significant delay in the child’s education, or even causing them to drop out. This is a common problem experienced by children who have to change schools due to their family situation.

Children experience unfortunate family events without always having full knowledge of why or how they happened, and without their active participation
in the events. They are simply subjected to these events and do not have any control over them even though they greatly affect their lives.

Some children are verbally and physically abused at home. In the Philippines, it is common practice for parents to discipline children with physical punishment, and because of this, children tend to think the reason why they have been struck by parents was because they have done something wrong. Even then, both children and adults recognise some acts are beyond the acceptable limit (Dela Cruz, et al. 2001). Occasionally, some children are seen with physical signs of abuse. One nanay told us in the community that she had found a baby crying in her neighbourhood, bleeding from the eyes and nose. It seemed that someone grabbed the baby by the eyes and the nose. Other nanay listened intently, but no one said anything. I myself have seen one or two boys of five years of age or younger with two perfectly aligned small round scars on their heads. It made me suspect cigarette burns.

In the literature, it has been suggested that one way to understand child abuse is by the ‘ecological’ approach, or to see it as a result of the interactions of various social and cultural factors as well as individual behaviour within the community and the family, such as poverty, of which children are a part (Ghate 2000; Sobritchea and Israel 1997). However, there is ample research to suggest that rather than poverty, child abuse results from the father’s attempt to maintain a position of authority within the family especially when he does not fulfil the gender-stereotypical role of being a breadwinner, or when the wife earns as much or more than he does (Guerrero 1999; McCloskey 1996; Stark and Flitcraft 1994). Noting a significant correlation between men’s wife-battering and child abuse in the American families studied, McCloskey suggests that men’s abuse of the children is part of their efforts to control their wives (McCloskey 1996: 459). Even though the study was done in the United States, her finding can be applied to the case of Paco-Pandacan. If we interpret physical violence as an act of trying to establish a dominance over perceived weaker persons, then child physical abuse can be attributed to the adults’ (i.e. parents’ or relatives’) sense of helplessness and not being in control of their lives. Even though the ability to cope, and the good spirit of people in Paco-Pandacan in the face of various problems in life continuously impressed me, it is also true that there are enough
factors in their everyday life that would make them feel the loss of control in their own lives. In this sense, the ‘ecological’ perspective also offers an insight in trying to understand child abuse in the community. Commenting on the higher rate of reports of wife-battering and child abuse from lower income families than from middle and upper income families in the Philippines, Guerrero notes, ‘[w]hile poverty does not cause violence, it does, however, increase a family’s vulnerability to a host of stressors and aggravations that lead to abuse’ (Guerrero 1999: 203). Contrary to the expectation that the family is protective and benevolent to its members, is the point made by a few studies (Fraad 2000: 76; Ghate 2000: 396), that the family can, in fact, also be the most dangerous place for a child. This situation is applicable also to Paco-Pandacan.

**Children’s responses to negative experiences in family**

Some Paco-Pandacan children decide to leave home when they have problems in the family. One way of doing so is to run away from home. Another common way is to get married early. Other children join youth gangs to gain the companionship and support that he or she could not get from the family. Yet other children try to make things better and try to take care not only of themselves but also their families, by working.

**Running away from home**

Some children run away from the family. The events that made them decide to run away may differ, but they are related to family relationships, as explained to me by a 21-year old woman in the community. According to an NGO staff member who has worked in the community for more than ten years, children usually come back to the family after a while (pers. comm.). I presume that is because they find some benefits and conveniences in living with the family, for example, having a shelter and support from family members, as well as from good neighbours.

For example, a 12-year old boy ran away from home one day. His friend, who was the last person to see the boy, told us that he had said he was leaving because his mother had hit him. Rumour had it that it was over a discrepancy in the amount of money he was supposed to give to his mother from selling some snack food that his mother had cooked. His mother, together with another concerned woman in the neighbourhood, looked frantically for him in different
parts of Manila. For example, they went to Quiapo, another district in Manila, because another boy from the community who had once run away from home was found there sniffing glue. But the 12-year old boy was nowhere to be seen. Finally, after three weeks, the child returned home. According to him, he had left home, then met a kind man on the street, and had followed him to his place in a nearby province. In spite of this, his desire to return home grew, and this man was kind enough to take him back to Manila.

I once accompanied a nanay to visit another nanay, whose daughter in her early 20s had just run away from home, and the family was in distress not knowing where she was. Another case that I came across was that of a teenage girl who had left home for such a long time that her mother was no longer counting her in the number of her own children. Nevertheless, the family had some idea of where she might be living during this time, and towards the end of my stay, she had come back to the family.

**Marrying early**

Marrying at an early age is another way for children to leave home. Through marriage, one establishes a separate household and family, and this allows the person to legitimately leave his/her natal family. Marriage in Filipino society is something to be celebrated whatever the circumstance (for example, if the couple is very young, or if a marriage is required to legitimate an unplanned child). This is because it is endorsed by the Catholic Church as a sacred union between a man and a woman, an important step towards forming a family, again endorsed by the Church as fulfilling God’s will. After marriage, the couple is considered to be on their way to forming a family by having children and a separate household. A marriage represents a culturally approved break away from one’s natal family.

Two youths were discussing the topic of children getting married early. They said that some people (children) cannot stand it anymore in their own families and want to get away. They want to leave behind the poverty and the problems associated with it (parents’ fighting, uncomfortable family relationship,

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54 Even though, according to the custom, the couple may be allowed to stay in the house of the wife’s or husband’s natal family, it is not obligatory, and is certainly not the option taken up by someone who wanted to leave home.
parents' gambling, etc). The two were critical of such a decision and said people think ‘getting married’ will get them out of the situation, but they will have a very hard time trying to live on their own; they will also be poor. They are also not prepared to have families of their own because they are still too young to maintain them.

Tony (male, 24 years old, unmarried) told me as an example that he personally knew a case where a girl ‘got married’ when she was 13 years old. The girl’s parents were separated. Her father was a drug pusher. She ‘got married’ in order to get out of the life in her family. Her partner’s parents died, so the young couple had no support coming from anywhere. The young couple separated even though they have a child, and the girl now works as a prostitute.

**Joining gangs**

Joining ‘fraternities’, or youth gangs, can be seen as an exploration for adventure and what it is to be young, but it can also be seen as a search for family-like relationships and a circle of support in the absence of comfortable relationships at home. Jocano, in his 1975 study of 300 youth gang members in the neighbourhood of Manila not far from Paco-Pandacan, had this to say: ‘The importance of the gang to the individual often transcends that of the home. Living in a slum neighborhood and reared in a conflict-laden home, the individual finds in his gang the satisfaction of all his needs -- adventure, social, psychological, economic and so forth’ (Jocano 1975a: 141).

When I asked children about school, they often mentioned ‘fraternities’. I asked Jayson (male, third-year high school student) an open-ended question about what his high school was like, and he mentioned fraternities. There are many of them, he said, and different fraternities rival each other. Mina (female, Grade 6), even though she does not attend high school yet, joined in the conversation and confirmed this. She said someone once brought a knife to school. At a different time when I asked Mina and Mandy (female, Grade 6), they told me that different youth gangs, or fraternities, have ‘riots’ in the community. They told me that people throw bottles at each other and so on, sometimes resulting in deaths.

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55 When people say ‘mag-asawa (to get married)’ in Paco-Pandacan, it may not mean a legal marriage because some children may not have attained the legal age. People in the community use the same word ‘mag-asawa’ to mean both legal marriage and a couple living together.
Children are aware of the presence of weapons in the community and physical harm inflicted on some occasions such as ‘riots’. They are alarmed at the idea of violence, and view violence as a threat, and with negativity, but they are well aware that some people in their neighbourhood often get themselves in violent situations and accept it as a fact (this is not approval, but an acceptance of reality).

Membership of a fraternity is based on locality. For example, a child in community A will belong to fraternity A, and a child living in community B will belong to fraternity B, and not A. Fraternities are said to provide protection for some children. A child from community A, for example, may get beaten if he walked into community B. But if he is a member of fraternity A, he will not be beaten because the members of fraternity B know that he has other children behind him. However, this does not mean that all children in a community belong to a fraternity.

Here is what children said about fraternity and sorority:

Yuko: In your opinion, why do some people join fraternity or sorority? (Sa palagay niyo bakit nagiging member ang mga tao sa fraternity o sorority?)

Speaker 2: So that they have protection. (Parang meron silang proteksyon.)

Yuko: Protection? Against what? (Proteksyon? Laban sa ano?)

Speaker 3: Against fights. (Laban sa mga kaaway.)

Speaker 2: And also I heard that if you go to a place and you know some people, you won’t be threatened. (Tsaka para daw po pag pumunta ka sa isang lugar, may mga kakilala ka, hindi ka daw po babantan.)

Speaker 3: Sometimes, these people who join, these rebels, they have problems in their families. Because, sometimes their parents neglect them, so the children join fraternities to have some support. (Minsan po ano, kapag yung mga sumasali, yung mga rebelde po, problema po sa pamilya. Kasi po minsan yung mga magulang po nila pabaya, kaya kala po nila yung fraternity po yung makakatulong sa kanila.)

Speaker 2: And they are looking for something they can lean on. (Tsaka humahanap lang po yung iba ng masasandalan.)
Children recognise the need of those who join fraternities for their peers’ companionship, protection, and a supportive relationship that their families cannot provide.

**Children’s work understood in the context of family**

While there are some children who leave their families, others do not. For children who live with their families, work can be a way to help the family. However, the cultural expectation for a ‘good’ child to help the family can sometimes result in overburdening of the child.

*Helping the family* as the reason for working

Helping family is often cited by the children as the reason and motivation to work, as well as to support their own schooling. This is not only my own finding, but also of other researchers who worked in other areas of the world, such as Woodhead’s study on Bangladesh, Ethiopia, the Philippines, Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua (Woodhead 1998). In Indonesia, too, the concept of gotong royong, or working together to achieve common objectives, especially in the situation of poverty, is a major reason for children to contribute financially towards household economy (Bessell 1998).

Children in Paco-Pandacan cite two reasons for working; to help the family and to go to school. This was the consensus at children’s group discussion, and adults in the community also told me that children use the money they earn for school and to buy snacks, as well as giving some extra to their mothers. The two reasons are not necessarily separate because children’s paying for their own education relieves the family financial burden.

There are different kinds of help, including non-monetary help. Children, in fact, ‘help’ in the home in many different ways and by offering kindness and showing concern and love. These non-monetary forms of help are widely practised and abundantly offered. However, it is money that is hard to come by and therefore, it is a much appreciated and highly valued form of help. Children also know that most problems in the family and community are related to money.

For example, one child said she used to hear her neighbours quarrelling all the time. I asked what they quarrelled about and she said, ‘Money. All their
problems, money’. When I asked a group of children what were the common problems in a family, their answer also focused on money.

Yuko: What are different problems in a family? What are the examples? (Ano ba ang iba’t ibang problema sa pamilya? Ano ba ang halimbawa?)

Speaker 3: Money (Pera).

Yuko: Lacking money? (Kulang sa pera?)

Speaker 2: It’s money, really. Some parents physically hurt their children, and others gamble all the time and just get fat [from sedentary living] (Pera talaga eh. Kung minsan po yung pong mga ibang mga magulang nananakit po, tapos yung iba po sugal ng sugal, lumalaki yung bilbil).

Contributing money to the family can be seen as a way for children to help reduce problems in the family which are largely beyond their control or participation.

Some children also say that they like to do something useful and make some money no matter how small, rather than to spend the time playing. Similar opinions were found in a study with children in Bombay, India where a third of the children interviewed said they would rather work as they had nothing better to do (Singh, et al., cited by Boyden 1994: 13). Children in Paco-Pandacan also say they work ‘to be independent’. While this answer may seem contradictory to the cultural norm of family interdependency, it is not. It rather shows that children value having their own means of making sure they can go to school and they can eat without having to depend on the unstable present and the insecure future of the family. As it was mentioned earlier in the chapter in reference to female migrant workers’ motivation to work abroad, children in Paco-Pandacan, too, seem to find no conflict between helping the family financially and trying to gain financial independence from the family. The two go hand in hand, and earning some money successfully satisfy both needs. The following excerpts highlight the desire of children to help the family and also help themselves. It is taken from a group discussion with eight children, aged between 9 and 12:

Yuko: How did you start to do some vending or save money for baon [daily allowance to take to school]? (Paano ba nagsimula kayo na nagtitinga o nagipon-ipon?)
Speaker 1 (a 12-year old girl): It started when we [our family] didn’t have any more money, and we [children] really had to work to help our parents, and also to have some baon. It started there. Because, sometimes, my dad doesn’t come home because he doesn’t have any earnings, so, sometimes, he comes home in the early hours of the morning. So, sometimes, I cannot go to school [when dad cannot give me baon]. But even if I don’t have baon, I just use that money I have [from working]. (Nagsimula po yan noong kinapos na po kami sa pera, na kailangan na po namin talagang magtrabaho para matulungan yung mga magulang namin. Tsaka para magkaroon ng baon. Doon po yun nagsimula. Kasi po minsan po hindi umuuwi daddy ko kasi wala siyang kinikita minsan, kaya minsan, maddaling araw na siya nakakauwi. Kaya minsan po hindi na po ako nakakapasok. Pero kahit wala po akong baon, yung natipon ko na lang po ang ginagamit ko. )

Yuko: Did you guys make the decision to work, or your mothers or grandmothers told you to? (At kayo ba ang nagdedesisyon na magtrabaho para may pera o sabi ng magulang mo o lola mo?)

Speaker 1: No. It’s really us who did it. Because we want to help our parents. Because if they are the only ones working, I feel bad for them, because we should be helping them, too. (Hindi po. Kami Zang po yung gumawa noon. Kasi po gusto naming matulungan yung mga magulang namin.Kasi po kung sila lang po yung magtratrabaho, nakakaawa naman po kasi kailan din naman po na tumulong din kami sa kanila.)

Speaker 2 (also a 12-year old girl): Ate Yuko, it’s our decision to work because we need money, too, so even if our parents don’t have money to give us, we have our own money to use for baon. It’s not our parents who decided for ourselves. It’s our own decision to work because, of course, sometimes we need money, too, and in case we want to buy something, we’ll be able to, instead of always depending on our parents. (Ate Yuko, nasa amin na rin naman po yun na nagtratrabaho kami kasi kailangan din naman kasi namin ng pera para kahit man lang walang maibigay sa amin ang magulang namin na baon, may sarili kaming pera para yun na lang ang ipangbabaon namin. Hindi naman magulang namin ang nagdedesisyon para sa sarili namin. Sarili rin naming desisyon yung na magtrabaho kami kasi siyempre, minsan kailangan din namin ng pera, para kung sakaling meron kaming gustong bilhin, mabibili namin, hindi yung aasa lagi sa magulang.)

Social expectation of child in the family and the problem with filial love

Children not only want to help their families, but are also expected to help them. Children who work and help the family are described by other people in the community as ‘responsible’, or dutiful. On the other hand, children who do not help at all are termed palamunin which is roughly equivalent to the English word ‘parasite’, or one who simply ‘eats and sleeps’.

56 Ate, like nanay, is a term of respect and is used for an elder female person.
Interdependence of family members is often reported in studies of the Filipino family (see for example, Medina 1991: 194, 200; Ramirez 1984: 42), and there is a cultural expectation that children will help the family in any way they can. Porio reports that street children in Manila and Cebu, Philippines, understand their income generating activities to help their families as their duties as children and never question it (Porio 1994). It is said that children have utang na loob, or often translated in English as ‘debt of gratitude’ to the parents for being born into this world and for being raised. In general, when one has utang na loob, he or she is expected to repay the debt. Otherwise, he/she is termed walang hiya or shameless, which is one of the most derogatory terms for a Filipino person.\(^{57}\)

However, the utang na loob of the child to the parents is so great that it can never be fully repaid (Go 1993: 30; Hollnsteiner 1975: 219). So the child must make a continuous effort to show their gratitude towards parents and to repay the debt as much as possible.

I asked a 12-year old girl what was a good conduct of a child (magandang ugali ng bata) and she gave me some adjectives and illustrations.

**Good conduct of a child (Magandang ugali ng bata):**

- Respectful: always using po in the language, show respect to the elders, also to godparents (Magalang: palaging nag-oopo, nagmamano sa lolo at lola, pati sa ninong at ninang)

- Kind: give gifts to your friends (Mabait: nagbibigay ka ng mga regalo sa kaibigan mo)

- Obedient: always following parents’ orders (such as to go buy cooking oil) (Masunurin: sinusunod palagi ang utos (bumili ng mantika) ng magulang niya)

- Caring: to your siblings, taking care of your siblings. Do not leave your siblings uncared for (Mapagmahal: sa kapatid mo, inaalagaan mo ang kapatid mo. Hindi pababayaan ang kapatid mo)

\(^{57}\) Utang na loob and walang hiya are common Filipino social concepts, not pertaining only to the context of family, but extends to all social relationships.
- Smart: always thinking what is right, not the wrong (Matalino: palaging nag-iisip ng tama, walang mali)
- Thrifty: when your mother does not have money, you save money. Do not be wasteful (Matipid: pag walang pera ang nanay mo, mag- ipon ng pera. Hindi gastosera)

The last adjective she gave me was especially interesting because she gave some thought if there was anything else she should add to the list and came up with that one. The item ‘obedient’ has a direct implication to the expectation of a child by the family. If a child is instructed to carry out a task, or to work, it is their duty as a child to do it. Go says, about Filipino children in general:

Obedience is a prime value in child socialization and is an important quality characterizing the ‘good’ or ideal child. The child’s unquestioning obedience is perceived as an expression of the child’s gratitude for having been given life by the parents (Go 1993: 30).

It emerges from this list that working children are indeed ‘good children’.

A similar parent-child relationship and expectation also exist in Chinese family, based on the Confucian moral code of filial piety, or the concept of ‘xiao (hsiao)’. Children are taught from an early age through moral tales and in the school curriculum to show great devotion to their parents, often to such an extent that one has to obey his or her parents even if their request is unreasonable or inflicts great suffering on the part of the children (Wu 1981: 147). Ong, in her analysis of Hong Kong people’s desire to achieve economic success for the family, takes up the same concept of Chinese filial love, but deepens the analysis to say that the family can be seen as a ‘regime’ in the same way as Foucault identifies instruments and schemes to normalise power relationships. Ong says:

An individual’s sense of moral worth is based on endurance and diligence in income-making activities, compliance with parental wishes,

I also asked her what is a good conduct for a boy and for a girl. She came up with a short list one after the other, but her answers ended up more or less the same. Indeed, there does not seem to be a great gender difference in expectation:

Girls’ good conduct: Kind, caring, smart (Babae: magandang ugali Mabait, mapagmahal, matalino)
Boys’ good conduct: Kind, respectful, smart (Lalake: magandang ugali Mabait, magalang, matalino)
and the making of sacrifices and the deferral of gratification, especially on the part of women and children (Ong 1999: 118).

There is a parallel situation in the Philippines where filial love is a cultural and moral value. As Hollnsteiner writes: 'a survey of rural, lowland Christian Filipinos, describes the ideal child as above all, considerate of his parents, which means, for the most part, being deferential to them' (Hollnsteiner 1975: 219-220). Another study notes: 'the primary parental expectation is the child’s internalization of filial love, obedience, and respect' (Mendez, et al. 1984: 35), and in another:

[Children] are taught to be respectful and obedient to authority, particularly to parents and elders, to be shy not aggressive, to maintain excellent interpersonal relations with neighbors and kinsmen, to be self-reliant and industrious, and to strive in order to achieve and improve their economic condition (Medina 1991: 200).

The list of characteristics given by the 12-year old girl indeed fits well with this profile of a ‘good child’.

I would like to point out that this cultural and moral expectation of being deferential to the parents and the resulting idealisation of children who go out of their way to help their parents can result in overburdening the child. The more diligent and sensitive the child, the more easily they are taken advantage of by their own parents, even if the parents are not consciously doing so. The institution of family entails power relationships within, and children are at the bottom of the hierarchy occupying the most vulnerable position. Some ‘good’ children indeed live under the pressure to provide for the family. Take, for example, Cody and Joyce.

**Cody**

Cody (male, 12 years old, Grade 4) works hard. His regular ‘work’ is selling *balut* (fertilised duck egg boiled and sold warm as a typical night-time snack) at the corner of the streets not far from his house. His mother cooks these

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59 Children are taught to be obedient not only in these two Asian cultures, but also in others including Western cultures. As Fraad (2000) points out, Adorno, *et al.* (1950, *The Authoritarian Personality*, New York, Evanston, and London: Harper & Row) showed some people are raised in authoritarian families which results in the children having more ethnocentric and fascist ideologies, and Althusser (1993, *The Future Lasts a Long Time and The Facts*, London: Chatto & Windus) wrote of the family as a site of living hell for his own childhood and he analytically regards it as an ideological State apparatus.
eggs and Cody sells them. He starts at about 6pm and goes on until 11pm, or often as late as 1am. Cody meets many people during these hours. There are other children from the community high on drugs coming to the corner and ‘hanging around’ with him; there is also Jim, an 18-year old person who comes to the same corner to sell roasted peanuts and to whom Cody talks as if talking to an elder brother; and there are some men from the community who come to buy balut, but are drunk, pressuring Cody to sell the eggs on credit. Later during the night when there are no customers, he sits alone on the street, next to the basket where the eggs are wrapped in a cloth to keep them warm, hugging his knees and watching a few cars pass by on Hi-Way. The next day, Cody has to go to school which starts at 12 noon. Sometimes he sleeps in as long as he can and is woken up by his mother right before he has to leave home, bathes quickly to wake himself up, takes his little sister’s hand to cross the Hi-Way to get to the local elementary school where they both attend. I have also seen Cody get up earlier than his usual school time, as early as around 10am, and walk around in the community, running some errands for the neighbours to earn some money. While he does this, he keeps a serious, busy look on his face, and does not want me following him around. He just tells me to go away and wait somewhere else. Cody also occasionally delivers cases of soft drinks to the retail shops nearby, on weekends, for example, pushing a cart from the little distribution centre near his house. I do not know any other child in the community who has paid work at a formal business like Cody does. It seemed to me at the time that Cody had hardly any time for himself to relax. I did see him playing basketball with other children in the community sometimes, or playing the local version of pool with his friend, and I liked to find him in the community, where he used to come up to me with a big smile, and nothing to say but ‘hi’. Otherwise, I found him with a serious or even stressed look on his face, more often than I have seen with most other children. To me, he seemed like a diligent child who, by his nature, could not be lazy in any task assigned to him.

I used to wonder why it was Cody who did so many different tasks to help his mother earn, especially when he has eight other siblings in the family. He is the sixth child of nine siblings where the eldest is 23 years old and the youngest is

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60 Some children seem to use drugs. Their exposure to drugs and involvement in the trade will be discussed in the next chapter.
1 year old, all of whom are spaced by one to a few years in age difference. Among so many possible vendors, I always wondered why it was Cody who sold balut. I asked a 23-year old woman in the community for her interpretation and she said, ‘Maybe because he is hard-working (Baka masipag siya)’. The reason for him to be doing the task, rather than his siblings, was attributed to his personal characteristics. In the same way, one middle-aged man in the community once told me ‘masipag na bata (diligent children)’ will work and help the family whereas ‘tamad na bata (lazy children)’ will not. In this case, too, explaining who actually gets to help the family was done in terms of the personality of the child. When I asked Cody’s mother, she said the older ones were too shy to sell on the street and did not want to do it, but when she asked Cody, he agreed to do it.

Even though Filipino children are expected to be helpful to the family, who actually gets to help, how much, and in what way, is up to each child, depending on the child’s personal characteristics. Because it is ‘up to the person (or ‘up to the child’, in this case)’, the children who happened to be more sensitive to the needs of the family, and more responsible to take up the role of supporting their parents and siblings, end up working more than other children.

To illustrate the point that it is ‘up to each person’ in deciding how much to help, and that this often results in overburdening that person, I would like to give another example. A 30-year old woman in the community, unmarried, told me that she is the main breadwinner in her family, supporting her mother and four elder and younger siblings. Because of this, she cannot save any money for herself, she complained, and she wished to marry so she does not have to contribute as much to her natal family. She will still help the family, but ‘not as much’, she said. This dilemma of having to contribute to the family and wanting to save some money for oneself is found not only in the community, but also in the wider Filipino society. When I shared this story with a female Filipino friend from another part of Manila, who is about the same age as this woman in community, she said, ‘That’s the problem’. That is, there is no clear indication as to how much contribution is enough, as ‘it is up to the person’, in her words. No matter how much or how little she contributes, the expectation for her to contribute will always be there, and she constantly does her best to meet that
expectation. As a result, she can end up contributing more to the family than to save money for herself.

**Joyce**

Joyce is 12 years old, and lives with her parents and her younger brother. I first met her at a gathering of child domestic workers organised by the NGO. She goes to school from 6am to 12 noon, and then baby-sits a six-month old baby for her aunt from 3pm to 10pm everyday. She earns 20 pesos each day, and uses that to buy food for the family: 10 pesos to buy half a kilo of rice, 5 pesos for a can of sardines to go with it, and the remaining 5 pesos is for her baon the next day. She says the rice (the staple in the Philippines) that she buys with her earnings is the only chance her family has to eat it, as both her parents do not have work even though her father is looking for a job. I asked her how she started to baby-sit and she told me it was her initiative to go to her aunt, who is better-off than her family, to ask if she could mind the baby and get paid for it. As I asked some more questions and she told me more about her circumstance, I could tell that she started to work the conversation around to solicit money from me. For example, she would say, ‘Today, since I came here for the gathering, I cannot baby-sit and my family won’t have rice to eat’. I asked, and she confirmed, that her mother allowed her to attend this gathering. I also asked if her aunt helps her family or not, and she says she does not, as she is ‘snobbish (masunog)’. Because I would not offer her any money, I could see increasing desperation in her face. In our subsequent encounters, too, she sought in me a possible source of charity. It taught me about the kind of pressure she had, to find money for herself and the family. When I asked her what her mother says about her contribution, her face lit up and said that her mother tells her ‘I love you’.

Some adults in the community told me that, ideally, parents provide for the children until they are married and form a separate household. However, others told me that in poor families, it is very common that parents cannot provide for the children and in such cases, it ‘automatically’ means that school age children have to help the family, even provide for the parents, and that this reverse of roles is accepted because it is so common. ‘Poverty’ and hierarchy within the family, endorsed by the cultural and moral values of children’s obedience and self-abnegation, legitimise this reverse of roles.
Not all children in Paco-Pandacan experience the same level of pressure as Cody and Joyce. In fact, children who appeared to be overburdened like Cody and Joyce are in a minority. However, the possibility of having children overburdened lies in the ideology concerning ‘good’ children to which all children are subjected. In this sense, there is a ‘risk’ of overburdening for everyone.

**Emotional labour of children and their exploitation**

I would like to introduce two analytical tools in considering children’s work in the family context. One is the concept of ‘emotional labour’, and the other is the Marxist idea applied in non-capitalist contexts.

Firstly, ‘emotional labour’ is a concept developed by feminist scholars. It was first used by Hochschild (1983) in the context of human emotions being marketed as, and becoming, an expected part of the commodity that workers offer to the customers. The concept is used to show how human emotions are being managed by employers and workers themselves, especially in service jobs taken up by women. Fraad (2000) further explored the concept to show that children in the family context often try to serve the emotional needs of their parents to such an extent that they neglect their own emotional needs. For example, some children recognise emotional turmoil in their parents, and try not to give them any more problems by curbing their own emotional needs. Similarly, children’s work in Paco-Pandacan can also be seen as a production of material as well as emotional labour. Children work to help parents and pay them not only with money, but with emotional value, or gratitude for being brought to this world.

Secondly, Gibson-Graham, *et al.* revisited Marxism, in order to apply Marxist analysis to the areas it has not been traditionally applied, namely, the non-capitalist contexts such as the family and household (2000). These authors show that the fundamental idea of Marx is that a worker produces the ‘necessary labour (value)’ which he or she receives in the form of wage to cover the food, clothes and shelter. Anything more than that he or she produces is ‘surplus labour’ which is appropriated by the capitalist, in the capitalist mode of production. The important point here is that the boundary between ‘necessary labour’ and ‘surplus labour’ is ultimately arbitrary, and where to draw the
boundary is laden with political implications (Gibson-Graham, et al. 2000: 4). They say that drawing of the boundary between necessary and surplus labor is ‘inscribed on the body rather than emerging from it, and the desire to move it can be seen to have motivated political struggles historically and to this day’ (Gibson-Graham, et al. 2000: 4). This point is also true of children’s work.

In the case of production of value (both material and emotional) by children for their families, it is also difficult to see where the boundary is between the ‘basic needs’ and ‘surplus labour (value)’. In Paco-Pandacan, children perform both basic and surplus labour (money and food) for the family. The border between the basic and surplus is unclear, as even if children did not work, families might still survive, and similarly, no matter how much children contribute to the family, the family’s perceived basic needs may be well beyond what they get from the child. So, under the ideology of ‘good child’ trying to repay the debt of gratitude to the parents for being born and raised, some children can keep on producing, without knowing how much are ‘basic needs’ or when they have produced enough ‘surplus’. Since utang na loob (‘debt of gratitude’) of a child to the parents is so big that it is unrepayable, there is an insatiable amount of value to be produced. It is up to each child to gauge how much material and emotional labour should be offered in the service of the family. Therefore, what happens is that the children who are more sensitive to the family’s needs, and who feel more responsible towards helping the family, are more likely to keep on producing labour (value) for the family without knowing the limit. This can result in overburdening the child to such an extent that the child is stressed, feels trapped in the situation, and finds herself/himself in self-abnegation, neglecting his or her own emotional needs.

The surplus labour (value) produced by the child is appropriated by the parents, and the child can be seen as being exploited, especially in the case where the parents completely depend on the child for survival. However, children may not feel exploited as long as their offering is reciprocated by the parents in the form of love, expressions of appreciation, and proper recognition of the child’s contribution (for example, being told ‘I love you’ in the case of Joyce). Children may even feel happy as they perceive themselves to be successfully fulfilling the
cultural expectation of a ‘good child’, and children might not feel exploited because they may not question whether things could be different.

In this way, opening up of class analysis to areas not traditionally applied opens up possibilities for different emotions that accompany the class process (Gibson-Graham, et al. 2000). Cameron, in applying Marxist class analysis to unequal distribution of housework in the Australian context, points out that exploitation among members of the family is possible without coercion and therefore without the accompaniment of negative feelings traditionally associated with class processes such as resentment and antagonism; instead, other emotions such as contentment and happiness can be present (Cameron 2000).

**Conclusion**

This chapter highlights the importance of family to children’s lives, both practically and emotionally. The family is not only the basic unit of everyday life, but it also occupies a central place in children’s motivation to work.

However, I have pointed out that the institution of family entails hierarchies that are reinforced by cultural norms and practices, and as the occupants of the lowest rank, children, especially girls, are subject to exploitation. This is contrary to the expectation in the Philippine society that family is inherently benevolent to its members.

Similarly, the particular ideology about childhood that came to be constructed by the early 20th century designated school and family as the place for children, but not the workplace. My study shows that the unquestioning acceptance of the assignment of family as the best environment for children can result in harming children rather than promoting their welfare.
Chapter 5: ‘Child labour’ or ‘child work’? Reconsidering the dichotomy

Children’s work in Paco-Pandacan is not the most hazardous kind of work children undertake in the world. Even in these seemingly benign types of work, exploitation of children can occur, as we have seen in Chapter 4. Is all children’s work ‘hazardous’? If some children’s work is more hazardous than others, how do we know that? Is it possible to measure the degree of hazard objectively?

In this chapter, I assess the usefulness of thinking about children’s work in terms of either ‘positive’ (as in the concept of ‘child work’) or ‘negative’ (as in the concept of ‘child labour’), and explore the complexity of how people in Paco-Pandacan and elsewhere think about children’s work. To this end, I organise this chapter into two parts. Part 1 discusses ethnographic materials on the topic, namely: whether children see themselves as ‘child labourers’ or ‘child workers’; whether adults view children’s work as positive or negative, or mixed and nuanced; and lastly, I assess the positive and negative aspects of children’s work in the lives of the children in Paco-Pandacan. Part 2 discusses the usefulness of the ‘child labour’-‘child work’ dichotomy more on the theoretical level. This chapter points out the difficulty of making a distinction between positive children’s work (‘child work’) and negative children’s work (‘child labour’) in any objective way.

Part 1: Views on children’s work found in the community

Children’s view about their work

Some children are taught the two terms ‘child labour’ and ‘child work’ by the NGOs which have worked in the community. These two terms are in English when they are taught and are used by the people in Paco-Pandacan, even if people are speaking in Tagalog. NGOs invite a certain number of children at a time for a seminar to help the children reflect on their lives and discover their inner strengths. A part of the seminar is to teach them what is ‘child labour’ and how it is different from ‘child work’. In one such seminar I attended, it was taught that
‘child labour’ is illegal, refers to heavy work, breaches children’s rights, and work that is carried out frequently. ‘Child work’, in contrast, is legal, refers to light work, does not breach children’s rights, and is done only occasionally. Children seem to understand and take up these two concepts quite easily, and in the seminar, a child said ‘too much working (sobra-sobrang pagtatrabaho)’ to describe ‘child labour’; and ‘easy, simple work (madali, simpleng pagtatrabaho)’ and ‘you have time for resting and eating (may oras sa pagpapahina at sa pagkain)’ to describe ‘child work’. In the seminar I attended, children also said that what they do is ‘child work’.

On a different occasion in a group discussion, I asked a group of children who dispose of rubbish whether they were ‘child labourers’ or ‘child workers’. They said they were ‘child workers’ because what they do is light and occasional, and they go to school. In this group of eleven children, aged between 7 and 15, most had already attended the seminar by an NGO and had learned to differentiate ‘child labour’ and ‘child work’. Interestingly, they did not remember which of the two terms was the ‘good’ kind and which was the ‘bad’ kind. This is quite understandable because the two terms in English are arbitrarily assigned to positive and negative, and they do not always translate easily into other languages (Boyden, et al. 1998: 19; International Working Group on Child Labour 1998: 36). Because the person who spoke first in the group was the eldest and had a

61 The NGOs refer to the rights stipulated in the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child when they refer to ‘children’s rights’.

62 George (1990) is an exception to this argument. Following the German philosopher Hannah Arendt, she argues that in several European languages, the equivalents of words ‘labour’ and ‘work’ come from two different word roots and only the former is associated with pain and trouble (1990: 14-15). George, however, makes the observation that the two words have
role similar to an opinion leader within the group, as soon as he had said that ‘child labour’ referred to light work, the rest of the group followed that definition even though he had reversed the terms. The children said that throwing away garbage was light work and therefore was ‘child labour’ (according to their definition).

Yuko: Have you heard of the term, ‘child labour’? *(Narinig na ba ninyo salitang ‘child labour’?)*

Speaker 2: Yes. *(Opo.)*

Speaker 3: Yes. *(Opo.)*

Yuko: What does that mean? *(Anong ibig sabihin noon?)*

Speaker 2: ‘Child labour’ is light work, like vending. *(Yung child labour po yung magagaang na gawain. Yung katulad nung pagtitinda.)*

Yuko: What is child labour? Please explain. What are some of the examples of child labour? *(Ano ba ang child labour? Ipaliwanag. Ano ba ang mga halimbawa ng child labour?)*

Speaker 2: Vending. Rubbish disposal, too. Helping the parents. *(Pagtitinda. Pagtatapon din. Pagtulong din sa mga magulang.)*

Speaker 3: Just working. *(Pagtratrabaho lang.)*

Speaker 2: No, that will be a ‘child worker’. *(Hindi ah. Worker na yun eh.)*

Yuko: What is a ‘child worker’? *(Ano yung child worker?)*

Speaker 2: A child worker does heavy work. *(Child worker po yung mabigat na mga gawain.)*

Speaker 3: They are working, even though they are still children. *(Yung nagtra-trabaho po sila, bata pa.)*

Yuko: What is a ‘child worker’? *(Ano ba ang child worker?)*

Historically come to be used interchangeably in everyday contexts. I argue that even though the two words may have originated from different roots and concepts, in today’s usage, they have lost the fundamental difference and come to be used almost synonymously. Within the child labour debate, the terms ‘child labour’ and ‘child work’ were taken up to differentiate the ‘bad’ and ‘good’ kinds respectively, but this does not mean that the speakers of English recognise this connotation when they hear the words ‘labour’ and ‘work’. Similarly, the difference is not marked in today’s French, Spanish, or Tagalog.
Speaker 2: Child worker does heavy work, for example, whenever children are working in construction, selling their bodies, and also stealing mobile phones. (Child worker po ay isang mabigat na gawain na kung saan ang mga bata ang nagtratrabaho tulad po ng mga pagiging construction nila, pagbebenta ng mga katawan, tsaka pagnanakaw ng mga cellphone.)

Yuko: Are there child workers in your community? (Meron bang mga child worker sa komunidad ninyo?)

Speaker 2: Yes. (Opo.)

Speaker 3: There are many. (Marami po.)

Yuko: Many? What do they do? (Marami? Ano ang ginagawa nila?)

Speaker 2: Stealing mobile phones for the father. (Yung nagnanakaw po ng cellphone para sa tatay.)

Speaker 3: Or doing hold-ups. These children who are not going to school. And their parents make them work from an early age. (Yung nangho-hold up po. Yung hindi na nag-aaral na mga bata. Tapos pinagtra-trabaho agad ng mga magulang.)

Yuko: Are there also child labourers in your community? (Meron din bang mga child labourer sa komunidad ninyo?)

Speaker 2: Yes. Rubbish disposal and vending. (Opo. Pagtatapon ng basura, pagtitinda.)

Speaker 3: There are many during vacation time. (Marami pa po pag bakasyon.)

What emerges from the dialogue above is that the major criteria for distinguishing 'good' and 'bad' kinds of work are the physical heaviness of the work and also morality. When I asked what were the examples of child labourers in the community, they said, 'mobile phone snatchers'. Mobile phones are very popular in the Philippines, and are highly desired possessions. They are, however, very luxurious items for lower income Filipinos, and are often blatantly stolen or snatched from someone’s hand in open, public areas, later to be sold second hand. It is regarded as an easy way to make money. Construction work is heavy, so it is 'child labour' (I am switching to the conventional definition now). Selling one’s body is an immoral activity, so it is ‘child labour’. Snatching mobile phones is not physically heavy work, but is a morally negative way of making money. Even
though morality was not one of the criteria taught at seminars, it was a locally added understanding of the term ‘child labour’.

When it comes to their own work, children usually have a positive view about it. In my dialogue with them, children recognised some unpleasantness in their work, such as the rubbish being smelly and dirty, or being ‘told off’ by the grouchy employer in the case of child domestic work, but other than those examples, they indicated no major problems they could see in their work. When asked if they were ‘child labourers’ or ‘child workers’, they said they were ‘child workers’. Because of the moral condemnation of ‘child labour’, children would not like to call themselves or be called by others ‘child labourers’. Not only do they think their work is light, but also their work is done to ‘help the family’, which is morally positive, so this fact reinforces their own classification of their work as a ‘child work’.

Adults' views about children's work

Some adults, as well as some children, are taught the distinction between ‘child labour’ and ‘child work’ by the NGOs. However, even those who have not been to the seminars have at least heard of the term ‘child labour’ and associate it with a great deal of negativity, almost synonymous to ‘child abuse’.

I was asking Alice (11 years old girl, has not been to the seminar) at a street corner in the community if she had heard of the terms ‘child labour’ and ‘child work’. She said she had heard the term ‘child labour’, but did not know what it meant. We asked a man in his late 20s sitting on a bench at the same street corner. He said he knew both terms, and explained to us the difference, even though his definitions were not the same as those taught at the seminars. This man had not been to a seminar, either, and his answer was based on his own understanding of the terms. But when I asked him to repeat his words so that I could take notes, his answer changed, showing that he did not have a clear understanding of the terms. He said ‘child work’ was work done by children 12 years old and below, and an example would be a child working at a factory. On the other hand, ‘child labour’ was ‘heavy work (mabigat ang trabaho nila)’, and he added, ‘They are only children, but they are working. They should not be working (Bata pa, pero nagtatrabaho. Hindi dapat nagtatrabaho)’.
He seemed a little confused about the definitions, but the fact that he had heard of both terms (as previously mentioned, people use the English terms ‘child labour’ and ‘child work’ even when speaking in Tagalog) and also his reference to the word ‘mabigat (heavy)’, would seem to be a result of international, national, and grass-roots level campaigning against child labour in the Philippines dating back to the 1970s. The term is by now widely known at all levels in the Philippines. It seems to have introduced a point of view that ‘child labour’ is negative in an environment where people might otherwise have taken children’s active contribution to the household for granted. I imagine that even prior to the introduction of the concept ‘child labour’ to the community, there must have been recognition that some work was very hard and heavy for children, as well as for adults. Given that most residents originally come from the provinces, they would be familiar with the physical demands of agricultural work, and also of construction work. Consequently, such recognition is likely to have been accompanied by sympathy and empathy, as well as admiration for the child who takes up such hard labour to help the family.

The way the man on the bench explained the term ‘child labour’ was also notable in that he said it was something that is happening even though it should not be happening. On a separate occasion, I asked a group of three nanay if the term ‘child labour’ was negative. They all said it was negative because ‘children should not be working, they should be studying and playing (hindi dapat magtrabaho, dapat mag-aral, maglaro)’. This is interesting to me because these adults were saying, here is one reality, but it is not the way it should be. This means that they have a concept of how children’s life should be, different from how it is now. Moreover, the rhetoric is the same as the global, normative childhood of global discourse: Children should be studying and playing instead of working. It seems to me that the campaign against ‘child labour’ has introduced a new concept (‘child labour’) and the normative concept of childhood to the community, that is, ‘children’s heavy work is bad. They should be studying and playing instead’. I also think this is a concept which did not exist before in the community. In other words, it is a concept that did not have any roots in the culture of the community (or culture of the Philippines), but was brought in and

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63 The type of work which tends to evade the recognition as ‘heavy’ even when the work is demanding is unpaid domestic work.
has been enforced by intervention programmes and activities, and is slowly taking root. It has introduced an idea that the situation should be different, that there should be a different sort of childhood than there is now.

As a result, when people, children and adults alike, talk about the term ‘child labour’, it is always seen as negative. In the community, ‘child labour’ is by definition terrible and something which should not be happening.

In addition to the adults’ understanding of ‘child labour’ as heavy work done by children who should not be doing it, there is another dimension to the local understanding of the term ‘child labour’. That is, when the child is forced by the parent(s) to work, it makes it ‘child labour’. In a discussion with three *nanay*, one of them said some parents wait in the house for their children to bring in income. I asked what they thought of such parents, and they said they were ‘irresponsible parents’ and they should be punished.

So the local understanding of the terms ‘child labour’ and ‘child work’ varies slightly from the way such terms are taught in the seminars, but the local adults understand that one is bad and the other is good. As I spent more time in the community, it seemed to me that the term ‘child labour’ was close to ‘abuse’ and ‘being exposed to physically and morally hazardous situations’. As one NGO staff explained to me, a ‘child labourer’ is a child in danger, and a ‘child worker’ is a child out of danger.

With this understanding of the terms, therefore, it is considered offensive if someone points to another family’s child and says that he or she is a ‘child labourer’. I asked if it was bad to say to a mother, ‘Oh, your child is a child labourer’, and a *nanay* said it was bad. I asked if it was better if I said ‘Oh, your child is a ‘child worker’ or ‘tumutulong (helping)’ or ‘nagtitinda (vending)’, and she said that was better than calling the child a ‘child labourer’. This suggests that the terms are about more than just types of work, but are social labels which carry some moral condemnation.

An important contradiction is that, even though ‘child labour’ is understood to be negative, in the community when children are understood to be ‘helping their families’, it is judged morally positive, and therefore the child is seen as engaging in a good, admirable act. People in the community admire a
child who works and helps the family. Such children are seen as ‘responsible’ and ‘diligent’, as mentioned in the previous chapter. I asked three nanay what people thought of a working child. One nanay said that he or she is admired. Another nanay said people would be impressed and think, ‘Even though he/she is still a child, he/she is already helping (Bata pa, tumutulong na)’.

On a separate occasion, I also asked a man in his 40s, if there was a child who was working to help the family, what other people would think of them. He said the child would be seen as having good discipline (may disiplina), as having learned good manners and right conduct, was ‘respectful (magalang)’, and the other people would hold them in high regard (mataas ang tingin sa kanya). So, the community’s attitude towards working children who help the family is positive and praising, which seems to make children proud that they are helping and their deeds are given proper recognition.

In addition, the parents of the working child are happy to know that the child can earn because it means they can survive, and will not starve. One woman told me that when her grandson was ten years old, he one day gave her 10 pesos. She asked him how he got the money and he said he earned 20 pesos a day from car washing. I asked her how she felt about it and she said ‘happy (natutuwa)’ to know that he knows how to earn enough to look after himself. After that, he would ask her from time to time if she wanted to buy a snack (meryenda) and gave her some money. He shared what he earned, which is also a respectful thing to do. Another woman who was present pointed out that not all children share the earnings because they might have to pay for their baon and buy food for themselves. This may be because some children try to support themselves in the absence of reliable financial support from their parents, before they can afford to show such kind and culturally appropriate gestures to others.

So, within the community, ‘child labour’ is seen as very negative, but the fact that these children are helping their families is seen as a positive and admirable thing. However, many children who are sometimes called ‘child labourer’ are also helping their families. Knowing that I was studying ‘child labour’, some adults did point out to me which children were ‘child labourers’. What these children did, however, would fall into the category of ‘child work’ because they were either tending a corner store owned by a neighbour, or doing
part-time domestic work in a neighbour’s house after school. They were helping the family, too. So, if I had asked another adult, the same child could have well been called a ‘child worker’. It seemed to me, that a nanay called a particular child a ‘child labourer’ because in her understanding, the girl was pressured by her parents into work and to help the family. Being forced to work and earn a living for the family, according to local understanding, qualifies for a ‘child labour’.

I recall Nanay Alma saying, prostitution in order to help the family is not a bad/immoral (masama) way of making a living. From her point of view, she highlights the aspect of the work, ‘helping the family’, which is positive and over-rides the immorality of prostitution. I imagine, however, the same girl could be called a ‘child labourer’ by another person if they chose to emphasise the nature of the activity. I asked Nanay Alma what were the examples of bad ways of making a living. She said ‘pick-pocketing’ and also ‘selling drugs’ because ‘if you are a prostitute, you hurt yourself only, but selling drugs is worse because you hurt other people’s lives, as well as your own’. For her, these activities were ‘child labour’, as she highlighted the immorality of hurting others and not just yourself. I imagine, again, that a child pick-pocketing could be called a ‘child worker’ by another person if the person making the judgement happened to know, for example, that the child’s earnings were used to pay for the medication for the child’s ailing father.

Calling a child either a ‘child labourer’ or a ‘child worker’, then, seems to depend on which aspect of the child’s situation is highlighted by the person making the judgement. In my observation of working children in Paco-Pandacan, there are both positive and negative aspects in most children’s cases. Where both are found, the ultimate determinant for distinguishing a ‘child labour’ from ‘child work’ is a subjective moral judgement, based on the person’s idea of what the child should be and should not be doing, and the person’s interpretation of what the child is doing. If it is seen as immoral, it is labelled as ‘child labour’, and if it is seen as moral, or the child is doing something which falls within what is expected of the child, it is labelled as ‘child work’.

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Assessment of good and bad aspects of work for the children's lives

In review, there are positive and negative aspects of children’s work in Paco-Pandacan, and each child’s case is a complex mixture of both.

Positive aspects

First of all, there are material benefits in earning money. As seen in Chapter 3, children can buy food and snacks for themselves as they desire, to meet their own basic needs, especially when the family cannot provide them with adequate food. Children can also buy what they need for completing school assignments, without which they cannot go to school.

Working children in other countries also emphasise the immediate material benefits work provides. Woodhead’s study (1998) on children’s perspectives on their work in six countries (Bangladesh, Ethiopia, the Philippines, Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua) found that among the 318 children (aged 10 to 14) who were interviewed, earning money was the main benefit of working, followed by helping their families (which is my next point discussed below):

The benefit of work to 76% of groups is about earning money, which ensures survival, security, food to eat, clothes to wear, helps pay for school. But earning money isn’t only or even mainly about personal benefit. 63% of groups viewed their work as about supporting family. Their earnings help pay for household expenses, medical costs, making sure there’s enough food for little brothers and sisters etc (Woodhead 1998: 62).

Secondly, another positive aspect of work in Paco-Pandacan is that when the child contributes some money to the family, it helps the family’s financial situation greatly. Even if their contribution is small in monetary terms, it is never insignificant to the domestic economy of their families as the family can use the money to buy rice, buy other everyday needs, or to cover children’s baon. A nanay said to me that if a child contributes 10 pesos (A$0.33) a day, that is 300 pesos (A$10.00) a month and is ‘a huge contribution (napakalaking bagay iyon)’. It has also been pointed out in the literature about child labour in general (not only pertaining to the Philippines) that a steady income from a child is a great benefit to a cash-poor family in which the parents’ income often fluctuates (Patrinos, cited by Bachman 2000; Moore 2000: 538).
Thirdly, this monetary contribution is also a way through which children try to improve the non-material aspects of the family situation. As mentioned in Chapter 4, children understand that most problems in the community and family are related to money. Children give all or part of their earnings to their mothers, even though the amount and frequency of the contribution vary from child to child and from day to day. Given the poverty of most families in this community, children’s monetary contributions could make the family more stable than otherwise, and this, in turn, may help reduce the incidence of negative family events experienced by the children (also referred to in Chapter 4).

Fourthly, monetary contributions can also enhance the family’s appreciation of the child, which gives the child a sense of pride and self-worth. Informal discussion with three nanay told me that the parents of a contributing child are pleased that the child shows he cares for the family by working and contributing. Contributing to the family also makes the child a ‘good child’, who fulfils the social, cultural and familial expectation that he/she will help the family in any way he/she can at times of hardship. Children are ashamed of handling rubbish because it is dirty and smelly. Neither do children in domestic work talk proudly about their work because domestic work is a low status occupation in the Filipino society. However, they are proud of helping the family.64

Children told me about the positive reactions they get from their parents. Katy-Rose (female, 15 years old, high school student) is a domestic worker in a neighbour’s house and gives the money to her mother. She said her mother gives her a back massage in return. Children are happy to have their contribution acknowledged and their importance in the family positively affirmed. If children are rather ashamed of their family’s poverty and their having to work, their sense of being appreciated and loved by their family compensates for this negative feeling, or even overrides it.

Becoming an appreciated member of the family may also have an implication for children’s welfare. Boyden cites two studies, one from Brazil and the other cross-cultural, ‘how in many households the position of children changes after they start contributing to household expenses. Child breadwinners

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64 Note that this positive aspect has also been used to rationalise existing familial arrangements bordering on child abuse, which I discussed in Chapter 4.
have fewer conflicts with their parents and are less frequently punished than their non-working siblings' (Gouveia, and Szanton Blanc and Contributors, cited by Boyden 1994: 14). In this sense, the importance of children's contribution to the family may raise the children's status within the family, which in turn protects them from certain forms of abuse from their families.

Fifthly, there is a very important benefit for the children. Working is one of the few means available for the children to take control of their lives, in an environment where many unfortunate events happen beyond their control. Invernizzi's study (2003) on street-working children in Lima, Peru, also points out that earning one's own money and managing it (paying for his/her education) generates a sense of independence and prevents feelings of powerlessness.

As pointed out in Chapter 4, children's lives are greatly affected by their family circumstances. Children do not have any control over many things that happen to the family, for example, their father losing a job, a family member falling sick, and family member dying from an accident. Working and earning money on their initiative is one way for the children to proactively ensure that they continue schooling and guarantee access to some food. Working gives children a sense of taking some control over their own lives, as well as being a mechanism for children to create a buffer between the circumstances of their families and themselves, and allows children to 'be independent' of these circumstances. Children do not work for the sake of working, but work to have some control over their lives, no matter how small because that is what they can rely on, to cope with the difficult situations they are in.

The importance of having some control over their lives is also reported in regards to prostituting children in Thailand. Montgomery reports the importance for the children to feel that they have some power to exercise, even in an exploitative relationship. Children do not like to call the exchange of sex for money 'prostitution', but they see it as building a reciprocal friendship with foreigners who will help their families in times of need. The fact that the children do not recognise the relationship as exploitation does not mean that it has not occurred. 'However, these children do explicitly reject the status of victims. They actively try to form reciprocal arrangements with their clients and the rejection of labels such as prostitution is not simply a denial of reality but a way of
manipulating that reality. They recognize the structural power their clients have over them and do their best to direct it to their benefit’ (Montgomery 1998: 146).

It is important for children to feel that they have some control in their lives no matter how small because that is the strength they rely on in their very difficult situations. Young women in Cartagena, Colombia, entered prostitution as young as 9 years old because of family neglect and hunger. Their clients are local men as well as foreign tourists, and the young women, most of them still in their teens, earn barely enough money to support themselves if they live alone, and one woman supports her parents and child. They do not enjoy the work, nor are they proud of it, but they work independently (without pimps) and exercise some control over the conditions of their work by negotiating beforehand what sexual acts will be involved and refusing clients if they do not feel comfortable with their demands. The study argues that it is very important to recognise the independence and coping strategies these young women developed in their work because if we see them as only victims, then we negate the only strength they can rely on for their survival (Mayorga and Velasquez 1999).

In Paco-Pandacan, work, and having their own money, gives them a sense of control over their own lives amidst the living conditions which are beyond their control. To be able to feel that they have some control in their lives is to have at least one certainty they can count on, in their otherwise very uncertain conditions of life.

This provides an important psychological benefit for the children. That is, working gives them the self-knowledge that they can survive even if their parents become unable to take care of them. It must be an enormous relief to gain this self-knowledge, given the insecurity of livelihood that they witness in the community day-to-day.

For example, Karen (13 years old) used to live with her grandmother in a neighbouring province for a year until she was 5 years old, while her parents lived in Manila. Karen’s neighbour was looking for household help, so she volunteered for the job at the age of 4. She told me she thought she should be able to work because she was ‘big enough (malaki na)’65. She said that she thought

65 The word ‘malaki’ normally refers to the physical size of things rather than the age of a person,
domestic work was one of the hardest of jobs, so she wanted to see what it was like and if she could do it, then whatever work she may have to do later when she grew up, she should be able to do it, too. It was a test she gave herself, and gaining the knowledge that she could handle it was an important one for her. This example also shows Karen’s (as well as the community’s) value in one’s ability to work, as a sign of the person’s social development. Morrow’s study (1994) among teenagers (11 to 16 years old) in England also points out that not only earning pocket money, but also feeling more ‘adult’ and responsible, and confirming their social maturity to themselves is the motivation for children to work outside school.

**Negative aspects**

Children’s work has many positive aspects for their lives, but it also has some negative aspects. The types of work found in Paco-Pandacan do not pose significant physical risks, but the negative aspects of work relate mainly to psychosocial risks. Boyden, *et al.* note that not much is known about the psychosocial impacts of work for children because ‘psychologists have largely ignored work in childhood’ (Boyden, *et al.* 1998: 90) and also because psychosocial impacts are mitigated by cultural contexts, result from multiple factors (i.e. not only work, but also poor living conditions) and are difficult to assess (Boyden, *et al.* 1998: 94-96). The psychosocial risks I observed in Paco-Pandacan are as follows.

First of all, some children have considerable pressure from the family to earn. As mentioned in Chapter 4, when the parents cannot earn for the family, it ‘automatically’ means that the children have to do something about it, that is, earn some income so that the family can eat. Joyce’s case as discussed in Chapter 4 is an example. Both her parents are out of work, so she is the one earning money in order for the family to eat. In this position, she bears considerable pressure to such an extent that she feels she must find some money in the ways she can, including soliciting charity.

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for which another word ‘*matanda*’ is used. Literally, the Tagalog expression for ‘grown up’ or ‘being of mature age’ will be ‘*Matanda na*’. However, I understood the expression ‘*Malaki na*’ to mean that the children regarded themselves as ‘big enough’ or ‘grown up enough’ to work and help the family, without acquiring maturity in terms of age.
Besides the societal and cultural expectation on children to help the family in times of need, there are also some mothers (though not all) who specifically tell their children to work and bring in some money. When I asked a *nanay* about this, she replied, ‘Oh, yes, it is the mothers who tell the children to do the vending’. The way she said it was as if it was always the mother who tells the children to work. In fact, a few *nanay* gave me the impression that it was always mothers who make children work, and not children making independent decisions to work. For example, Cody, mentioned in Chapter 4, is one of them. In such cases, the money the child earned would go straight to the mother (*direcho sa nanay*), one *nanay* said.

I also met children who said some mothers make their children work, even though their own did not; it was their own initiative to work. There were also children whose mother/guardian arranged work for them, but they did not feel they were forced into work. In Paco-Pandacan, there were also children for whom this subject was too sensitive. For example, when I asked a few children who initiated them into earning, whether they were told by their mothers to earn, some children could not talk about it at all. If they were forced by their mothers, it could be difficult for them to talk because it would hurt their feelings, having parents impose such a burden on them. Feeling the burden is one thing, but articulating it in words could make the feeling more concrete and real, and therefore more painful. Talking it through, if done in an environment of trust and support, can bring about relief, but I asked the question casually in their everyday setting where their neighbours and even parents might be around. It may also have something to do with the fact that it is not usual in the Philippines to speak openly against one’s family, especially when I knew their mothers personally.

Whichever is the case, I would like to point out that there is rarely a clear-cut way of knowing whether the child was forced to work, or started entirely on their own initiative. Bachman, in summarising studies of child labour from around the world, points out that while there are children who make the sole decision to work, children’s decision is often influenced by various members of the family such as parents, grandparents and others (Bachman 2000: 556-557), so it is not clear whether the child made the decision or other members of the family led him into making that decision. For example, Cody’s mother said she ‘asked
Cody whether he would be willing to sell the duck eggs. So she did not necessarily ‘force’ him, from her point of view. But given the fact that she had already asked Cody’s elder siblings none of who wanted to do it, and Cody’s younger siblings would be either too small (4 years old) or inappropriate for the task (younger sister, for being a girl), Cody can be seen as being ‘forced’ into selling the eggs by his mother or by the circumstance; it is hard to specify which. When I asked Cody whether his mother ‘told’ him or ‘ordered’ him to do it (inutusan), he gave me a quick, very small nod and disappeared as if to avoid any further discussion. I interpreted it as a small nod, but it was so faint and ambiguous that it could also be interpreted as no nod at all and that he simply disappeared in reaction to my question. One thing certainly was that he did not negate my question. In the community, he is seen as being told by his mother to do it, even though his diligence and obedience is also recognised as a factor that made him agree to his mother’s wish. In this way, the story is likely to change depending on who is telling it and which aspect of it the person wishes to highlight. The way I make sense of this contradictory evidence is that all children bear the expectation of contributing to the family, but the extent of the pressure on each child varies depending on the combination of many factors such as the financial situation of the family, personality of the parents, personality of the particular child, and his/her situation in the family such as his/her place within the sibling set. If the parents voice their desire for the child to earn, it naturally increases the psychological pressure on the child to ‘agree’ to earn, but the emotions and situation behind the decision is so complex that the child cannot discuss whether he was forced to do so or whether the decision was made all by himself.

Secondly, the child may lose interest in his/her studies once he/she knows how to earn money, or as one nanay put it, ‘has tasted the money (nakatikim ng pera)’. For example, May-Ann (female, 19 years old), as mentioned in Chapter 4, came to Manila several years ago from the central Philippines to join her parents who had found work there. When she moved, she did not bring her Report Card from her former high school, and for that reason, could not enrol in a Manila high school. However, she has worked as a domestic worker back in the province, as well as in Manila, and knows she can earn money even without school diplomas.
or certificates. It would also be difficult to work full-time as a domestic worker and go to school. She subsequently lost interest in returning to finish high school.

Thirdly, once a child starts to earn and brings in some money to the family, when the family financial situation deteriorates, the child may be asked to stop schooling, and work full-time. A nanay said to me, if the financial situation becomes very tight, she would first ask all her children who was willing to stop schooling, and work instead. So she will not dictate the decision, but practically speaking, it is likely that the child who is already earning will be the one to leave their studies and earn full-time.

Fourthly, there is a possibility that children start with easy work, such as rubbish disposal, and then go into more hazardous work as they get older. This is not the case for every child, but as long as the need for earning cash is there and as children become aware of activities which give them higher returns, they may take up these higher-paid opportunities. But such work tends to be more illicit, possibly involving organised crime.

Del Rosario, a child labour expert in the Philippines, argues that once you let children work, even if that work is not hazardous, the children may later go into hazardous work (pers. comm.). In the context of the Asian economic crisis of the late 1990s, she points out that certain types of work become unavailable, such as outsourcing work in the textile industry. Instead of stopping work altogether, she warns, children will shift to more dangerous, unprotected work, such as prostitution (Del Rosario 1999: 105-106). If working has led them to abandon school, as in the case of May-Ann above, their low level of education limits employment choices which also can lead to work in low paid hazardous occupations.

Another way for children to get into more hazardous work once they start earning is by couriering drugs. A social worker who has been working with street children in another part of Manila told me that children are sometimes used as drug couriers. This way, they are initiated and gradually drawn into the drug trade, and when they get older, they are likely to become dealers. The same situation is a possibility for Paco-Pandacan children, given that the vicinity is known for the wide circulation of narcotics. One study (Porio and Crisol 2004b) found that
almost all the children interviewed in Paco-Pandacan were familiar with people who used drugs (mainly, *shabu*, or methamphetamine hydrochloride, marijuana, and *rugby*, or solvent), and some of the children were involved in the trade themselves as runner, post or watcher, and courier. I myself have come across what might have been a delivery of drugs. I once met two children that I knew walking past, carrying a plastic bag with something small inside it. I asked them where they were going, just as I always would whenever I saw them (and it is also a Filipino custom to ask that whenever you see an acquaintance. It is equivalent to people’s asking ‘How are you?’ in English). They said they were going to the market, but they did not look like it at all to me, with their serious faces and mission-driven attitude. I suspected they might be delivering drugs, given that I had little doubt these boys were already introduced to the usage of it (as suggested by a third person once, in the presence of these boys who did not deny it). However, I refrained from verifying with the boys whether they were involved in the illicit drug trade because making them talk about it, or even just asking them about it, might put the boys in danger (they could be seen as letting out confidential information to outsiders), as well as myself (I could be seen as investigating on the individuals involved in the drugs trade, taking notes, and giving out the information to the authorities).

**Difficulty in determining who is a ‘child labourer’ and who is a ‘child worker’**

It is hard to say which child’s case represents ‘child labour’ and which represents ‘child work’ because in most cases, children’s work is neither clear-cut positive nor clear-cut negative. For the children, there are different mixtures of positive and negative aspects, and the balance between the two can also shift over time as the family’s financial circumstance changes; for example, changes in the employment status of an income-earning adult, changes in the marital relationship of the parents (such as parental separation), or the degree of illness of a family member.

Some children go in and out of work as the family financial situation changes. When a *nanay* brought me to meet Elaine, she was selling small food items (bags of salt, pieces of garlic, some leafy vegetables, etc) at a local market and had stopped going to elementary school. She sat on a small sheet of plastic
with her aunt and cousin, almost in the middle of the alley where people must pass to get to the main market area. The three of them must have had to establish themselves there because one needs an official permit to sell in the main market area at a designated semi-permanent wooden stall. Elaine's family's 'store', on the other hand, looked like a make-shift, temporary one compared with others inside the market. However, within a few weeks, the family situation must have improved as their 'store' disappeared and when I met Elaine on the street, she told me she was back in school.

As another example, three cousins used to sell basahan (small pieces of rag sewn together to make a thick cloth for cleaning various surfaces) at a busy street intersection for two hours in the morning before going to elementary school. They did that for several months, more than a year before I met them. It was arranged by their grandmother, whom I met and interviewed. Their grandmother had a face with a healthy tan and wrinkles, and had the frankness and humility which I imagined resulted from numerous experiences of overcoming hardships in life. She admitted without hesitation that she made the three grandchildren do it because they needed money. In this case, however, unlike Cody's, even though the three children were 'forced' into working, they did not find the work hard nor did they feel bitter about having to work. As these two examples show, children can go in and out of work unexpectedly, and can also shift between 'child labour' and 'child work'. This makes it difficult to satisfactorily label a child with either of the two terms.

To add to the complexity of the issue, children whose parents prohibit them from working are not necessarily luckier nor happier. From the perspective of child protection, it could be seen as a positive thing if parents prioritise the child's education and safety over the prospect of added household income. However, if a child is prohibited from working, and the family still faces financial hardship, the child is deprived of the means to be independent from the family situation and to take control of their own life, as well as learning life skills. In order to fulfil their basic needs, instead of throwing away rubbish in the community, the child may have to take up more clandestine work or may have to find work outside the community where there will be no one to keep an eye on them. Such a situation applies to Mark, described below.
There was a child whom I suspected might be doing some income-earning activities, but who never admitted or wanted to talk about it. Mark is 12 years old and attends school, but is in Grade 3 instead of Grade 6 where other children of his age are enrolled. This is a result of having to miss many days at school, especially when his mother had to go outside the house and he had to watch over his sister who has been sick in bed for years. The family does not have regular income as the father only works a few days a week, and Mark’s mother admitted to me that there were days when she wakes up in the morning and has no money for food. She told me that Mark once came home with a swollen shoulder, but proudly announced that he could earn 50 pesos a day, or 1,500 pesos a month, by working at a local junk shop. He apparently carried something heavy on his shoulder and that caused the injury. His mother, whom I came to know as a very caring and responsible person, told him sternly that he was not to take on such hard work. She even went to the junk shop to tell them personally that she would not allow Mark to work there. Ever since, Mark never mentioned the junk shop nor any other work to his mother. Nor did he ever want to talk to me about any ‘work’, except for one day when he told me he had missed school for a few days because of ‘work (trabaho)’, helping his father with carpentry. He was full of pride and self-confidence when he told me that, because carpentry, as well as helping his father in his occupation, is legitimate and respectable work one can proudly speak about in public, unlike his prohibited work at the junk shop. Other adults in the community, however, observed that Mark sometimes joined his friend Cody to deliver soft drinks. Another adult who is close to Mark’s family told me that he sometimes goes off somewhere far; some said that he gets on a truck and goes somewhere, others said that he goes to central parts of Manila with his friends, which is not an uncommon thing for children to do. When I mentioned him to an NGO worker who has long-term experience with working in the community, he asked me what I would do if I were in Mark’s shoes. I thought hard and said that if I was hungry and not allowed to work, I would still try to make some money somehow. He said, that is exactly why some children decide to go to the street. On the street, there are dangers and annoyances, but there are also possibilities and opportunities for earning money which do not exist in the community. I never verified if Mark earned some money in ways his mother did not find out about, nor did I feel I had to find out everything about his life,
especially the things he did not want me to know. Nevertheless, it is understandable if he tried to work in ways that his mother did not know about.

Mark’s case adds further complexity to the issue of distinguishing between ‘child labour’ and ‘child work’ because he was ‘saved’ from getting into physically hazardous work by his concerned mother, but it did not necessarily help him. Judging from how proud he was when he told me that he had ‘worked’ with his father, I think Mark would have been proud and happy when he found the job at the junk shop. He is also caring towards his family as his mother admits. I am sure he had good intentions to help his family through his work. However, now he has been pushed into a position where he cannot tell his family about what he does if he wants to earn any money in other ways than helping his father. White argues that removal of children from work may not necessarily result in better welfare for the child (White 1996). This is a case where seeing ‘child labour’ as ‘bad’, and thus prohibiting it, does not necessarily improve the situation for the child nor the family.

Part 2: The ‘child labour’-‘child work’ dichotomy

The ‘child labour’-‘child work’ dichotomy has been the main guiding principle in the campaign against child labour at the international level, as well as in the Philippines. I found the binary concepts useful in allowing me to recognise the presence of both positive and negative aspects in children’s work. However, in practice, I found it impossible to apply these concepts to the working children. As pointed out in Part 1, there are both positive and negative aspects in each child’s case, and whether she/he is called a ‘child labourer’ or ‘child worker’ seems to depend on the person making the judgement.

In Part 2, I will consider the applicability of the concepts ‘child labour’ and ‘child work’ to the types of children’s work in Paco-Pandacan, and also to other types of children’s work found elsewhere. First of all, I consider whether there is any ‘child labour’ in the pure sense of the term, that is, work which only has bad aspects, or ‘child work’ in the pure sense of the term, that is, work which only has good aspects. I then consider the concept of the grey zone in between the two extreme opposites, representing children’s work with a mixture of positive and negative aspects, and argue that the dichotomous concepts of ‘child labour’
and ‘child work’ best serve as ideal types in the Weberian sense, rather than as categories into which real-life situations neatly fit.

**Concepts of ‘child labour’ and ‘child work’ as ideal types**

Are there any definitive cases of ‘child labour’, that is work which brings only bad consequences for the child? Child prostitution is often thought as ‘the worst’ of children’s work. Indeed, sexual exploitation of children does seem much worse than throwing away neighbours’ rubbish. However, prostitution, just like other forms of children’s work, can also be seen as having positive and negative aspects. Montgomery, in her study of prostituting children in Thailand, points out that children in the particular locality where she researched go into prostitution because there are practically no other means to earn a livelihood. The researcher believes that child prostitution is necessarily abusive to the children involved, but shows that such a view fails to tell the whole story. When Montgomery asked a girl if she did not think her work was a terrible kind, the child answered: ‘It’s only my body, and this is my family’, to emphasise the positive consequence of the work (being able to help the family) overriding what she saw as the more trivial matter of her body (Montgomery 2001). To understand her answer better, the point made by Kempadoo is useful. She says that the universalising moral condemnation of prostitution is based on the assumption that the sexual act involves the most private and intimate parts of one’s physique and psyche, and therefore a sex act without consensual intimacy necessarily entails an abusive social relationship. However, she points out that studies have shown that sex workers separate their emotions from the commercialised sex acts and are able to preserve a sense of integrity (Kempadoo 1998: 4-5). Montgomery’s study also shows that children separated their sense of self from the act of having sex with foreigners (Montgomery 1998).

What about child soldiers? Does it represent the absolute ‘child labour’, that is, work by which only bad consequences are brought upon children? Depending on the case, even child soldiers can be seen as children’s way of adapting to the situation and protecting themselves within the limited choices available. While some children are kidnapped and forced into joining an army, studies point out many children choose to become child soldiers, as it is considered the better of the bad options available in their circumstances. Some
would rather fight than to be at home and be afraid, feeling powerless and not
doing anything about the factors that control their lives (Brett and McCallin 1998:
63; Cohn and Goodwin-Gill 1994: 23, 40-41). Those who have lost their parents
in war will find refuge and protection by joining the army (Brett and McCallin
1998: 62), as well as seeking revenge for their family members killed (Cohn and
Goodwin-Gill 1994). By making decisions, children are exercising the little
power they have in the terrible situation. Children are not always victims, but are
also often agents, making choices in their lives. For some children, if they do not
join the fighting, they may not necessarily be better-off. Peters’ study in Sierra
Leone found that even though there are many very young child combatants who
are victims of forced conscription, this is not the case for most young people who
make up a large part of the combatants in armed factions as they indeed joined
the fighting voluntarily (Peters 2004). Characterising all child soldiers as ‘the
worst form of child labour’ may enforce the stereotypical image of children as
vulnerable and with no ability to exercise their power, no matter how small. Such
a view of children fails to tell the whole story, and stops us from understanding
children better.

This is, however, not to say that I think children should be involved in
prostitution or armed combat. There are truly intolerable, inexcusable abuses
involved in these types of work (see, for example, Flowers 2001). Children are
often physically hurt and mentally scarred. Some children are abducted or tricked
by adults into such abusive situations. In this case, the image of the exploited,
vulnerable child serves as an accurate representation of the children’s situation.
However, studies such as Montgomery’s (1998; 2001) and Peters’ (2004) show
that there are some children who choose to go into such forms of work, and yes,
children can be still seen as forced by the situation to make such a decision. But
the difference is whether we as adults or researchers are willing to acknowledge
children’s agency in making that decision. If we choose not to acknowledge
children’s ability to make conscious decisions for themselves, then children in
such risky occupations are all rendered victims. However, if we choose to give
credit to the fact that children want and need to feel that they are taking some
control over their lives, then the representation of children becomes different.
And it is the latter approach to children’s lives that is important to incorporate as
it gives us a lead into understanding children’s experience and practice of childhood as children themselves see it.

Both Montgomery and Peters say that there are the stereotypical miserable, depressing cases of children forced and tricked into prostitution or armed combat, but they are in fact a minority and far from being representative of the situation of all children in prostitution or armed combat (Montgomery 2001; Peters 2004). However, it is such an image of a vulnerable, exploited and helpless child that tends to be created and reinforced again and again, which Montgomery argues serves the NGOs and activists better than it serves children (Montgomery 2001). Similarly, there are stereotypical stories and images of a ‘child labourer’. I have been struck by how similar the accounts of ‘child labour’ are from different countries and occupations. As with child prostitutes and child soldiers, the account of ‘child labourers’ typically includes the following elements: an image of exploited, vulnerable children deprived of choice, education, freedom and future, trapped in a sweatshop, employer’s house, or in agricultural work, toiling their childhood away only to serve diligently and innocently someone else’s interests without complaint. Often, the accounts do not have a child speaking for himself/herself at all, and this adds to the sense that the child is a passive victim of the socio-economic conditions and social structure.

For example, a 1985 study of sweatshops in garment manufacturing and wood work in four different regions in the Philippines summarises the working conditions in these terms:

[the workplaces are characterised by] cramped space, a high level of sawdust and harmful pollutants permeating the air, and inadequate roofing and wall covering to protect the workers from the heat of the sun and rainfall. Child workers in the garment industry suffer from excessive noise, poor lighting and ergonomic hazards resulting from inappropriate working surface heights and defective chair design (Bureau of Women and Young Workers 1987: 5).

Reported ailments of garment workers include needle pricks, backache, eyestrain, finger and leg cramps, and infection of the urinary and upper respiratory tracts. These are suspected to come from bending the body while sitting on a bench without a back rest, too little lighting or too strong an

66 Namely, Metro Manila, Taytay, Laguna and Batangas.
illumination, poor air quality due to dust from the fabrics when cut or sewn, aggravated by poor ventilation, and children’s inability to leave work stations even to go to the toilet, all in order to meet production quotas (Bureau of Women and Young Workers 1987: 6). Just as how children have been treated as mute objects in the dominant ‘socialisation’ paradigm in anthropology, this study does not give the working children a voice because they are assumed to be passively subjected to these conditions of work in silence.

The most extreme, ‘worst’ form of child labour does certainly exist, but it tends to be used as a stereotypical image generalising ‘child labour’ than is a reality for most children. This may be the reason why the ‘child labour’-'child work’ dichotomy is difficult to apply in real-world contexts. The concepts are governed by stereotypes and moral outrage, and limit our understanding rather than opening up avenues for us to understand the complex situations of children, their points of view, and what they are ‘doing’ about it.

Are there examples of ‘child work’ in the pure sense of the term where only good consequences are brought upon the child? There has been much less discussion about defining the ‘best forms of child work’ because, as I understand, the idea behind the dichotomous model is to identify possible interventions, therefore, focusing on negative types rather than positive types.

Children engaged in light tasks to help at home, has been seen as a benign form of children’s work, beneficial in building social relationship within the family and fostering the children’s learning and development. However, domestic work cannot be assumed to always fit the model of ‘child work’ because severe exploitation within the family context can happen, as exemplified in the situation of child domestic workers in the Philippines (Oebanda, et al. 2001). Even if children’s work in the family and community contexts seem benign, it is based on the global structure of exploitation as Nieuwenhuys (1994) points out for Kerala in India. Additionally, in Boyden’s opinion, ‘work within the family cannot be viewed as appropriate when it does not prepare a child to participate in a society where subsistence production and agricultural employment are declining and higher levels of literacy and numeracy are skills essential for secure, well-remunerated employment’ (Boyden 1994: 18).
I suggest that the concepts ‘child labour’ and ‘child work’ can best be understood as ‘ideal types’. An ideal type, in Weber’s methodology, is a characterisation of a phenomenon by identifying certain, logically precise elements, thereby establishing a generalisation and at the same time, as a conceptual anchor, making comparisons across different cases possible (Gerth and Milles 1991 [1948]). For example, ‘work which is detrimental to the child’s moral, social, psychological and physical well-being’ establishes a generalisation of what ‘child labour’ is, and at the same time, makes possible comparison of various cases such as ‘deep-sea fishing which ruptures boys’ eardrums’ and ‘girls’ housework in the confinement and isolation of the employers’ houses’. As a logical construction, an ideal type is not necessarily to be found in real life exactly as it is, even though a few cases may be found to approximate the ideal type conception. As ideal types, the two concepts ‘child labour’ and ‘child work’ are useful for teasing out the positive and negative elements in real-life situations, but they cannot stand as accurate representations of the various situations children live in.

**The grey zone in between**

If ‘child labour’ and ‘child work’ are taken to be ideal types logically constructed as two extreme opposites, then all children’s work can be seen as falling somewhere in between the two. There have been discussions about this area in between, or ‘the grey zone’, where the cases present various elements of the opposing concepts and therefore cannot be easily identified as ‘child labour’ or ‘child work’. However, even if the two opposing concepts help us tease out the positive and negative aspects of children’s work, is it possible to rank different cases of children’s work in a linear scale ranging from good to bad? How useful is the idea of the grey zone in between?

Rather than thinking about children’s work as either ‘child labour’ or ‘child work’, White suggests that children’s work can be seen as a continuum, ranging from ‘worst’ to ‘best’. At one end of the continuum is the intolerable forms of children’s work, the examples of which are children in forced employment and in prostitution. Next gradation is children’s work which are hazardous, but can be changed to safer forms. Next on the continuum is neutral work that is neither particularly harmful nor beneficial. The next on the
continuum is the range of positive work. By using this model, White encourages us to identify what factors can be changed to transform one kind of children’s work so it is more beneficial to the children (White, cited by International Working Group on Child Labour 1998: 38).

White, however, says the problem with this continuum model is that ‘it is unlikely that we will be able to develop a set of clear, objective and unambiguous global criteria to allow us to distinguish between different points on the continuum. Although the model has universal application, the way in which it will be applied will reflect the cultural context’ (White, cited by International Working Group on Child Labour 1998: 39). In my research in Paco-Pandacan, different people judge the same case of children’s work differently, according to what aspects of the child’s circumstance they choose to highlight. It shows that arranging different cases of children’s work in a scale ranging from ‘worse’ to ‘better’ in a way obvious to all will be difficult.

Moreover, as Woodhead points out, whether children are affected positively or negatively by particular work depends on each young person’s vulnerability. He argues that it may be possible to measure physical trauma and injury, but when it comes to psychological harm, it ‘is mediated by the social and cultural context of their work, especially the value placed on their economic activity and the expectations for their development and social adjustment’, and children actively negotiate and try to make the best of the difficult circumstances in which they find themselves (Woodhead 1998: 19), therefore making it difficult to measure objectively. For the psycho-social development of children,

[their subjective] feelings about work, about school and about core social relationships that support or undermine their dignity and sense of security are vital indicators of hazard and harm. While an outside observer may focus on what seems to be the immediate impact of arduous or exploitative work, children’s perspectives are shaped by a history of past experiences, by the extent to which they identify with and find personal meaning in what they do, and by their beliefs about the place of work in their lives—in the present and in the future (Woodhead 1998: 20).

Therefore, the problem remains as to how one defines ‘harmful’ and ‘beneficial’, and whether the negative influences of work on children can be objectively measured.
McKechnie and Hobbs propose another model: a balance model. Recognising that any work will have both costs and benefits, the model encourages people to identify what they are, and then try to minimise the costs. Some examples of costs are: health and safety, limiting children's free time, and negative effect on education. Some examples of benefits are: autonomy, economic/business knowledge, and work experience. The variables will be different from case to case, culture to culture. McKechnie and Hobbs also acknowledge that the problem with this model is how to weigh the variables in the balance equation; some of the costs and benefits may be more important than others (McKechnie and Hobbs, cited by International Working Group on Child Labour 1998: 41). The problem I see with this model is that, again, it depends on each child's specific case. Even within the same occupational category of 'car washing', for example, depending on who controls the conditions of work, one child may gain business knowledge, but another child may not, if he is helping an operation controlled by another person. In addition, even for a specific situation of a specific child, there can be different interpretations as to who is producing surplus and who is appropriating it (Cameron 2000).

Another problem is knowing for whom the costs and benefits are – whether for the child (direct cost or benefit for the child), for the family (indirect cost or benefit for the child), whether it is for the present time or the future, and how to weigh each of these. My research shows that children's reasons and motivations for work are grounded in their families, so the ramification of their work cannot be abstracted from that context. Children also work for the future (for example, to be able to complete schooling at the highest level possible so that a better job can be obtained), as well as for the present (for example, to be able to buy daily food for themselves and for their families), and may anticipate certain future benefits while being fully aware of some present costs. Working children cannot be treated as 'children' taken out of context. To isolate costs and benefits from the social, cultural, and temporal matrix in any measurable, objective way will be difficult.

In order to know which children should not be working and which children should be allowed to work, one is necessarily making a moral judgement, based on criteria that may not be clear to all, and which can be loaded with
ethnocentric bias. White argues that trying to address which children’s work is ‘worse’ than others will necessarily face the issue of cultural relativism (White 1999). Children’s work and circumstances of childhood differ from place to place and time to time, and today are critically relative to underlying global economic inequalities as Nieuwenhuys (1994) points out, so any evaluative judgement must take into account the specific cultural context, time period, and global inequality. Comparing cases across cultures and time is impossible, according to the cultural relativist approach. However, to set a global standard on what is intolerable, as in the case of ILO Convention No.182, one needs a universal concept of childhood that transcends place and time. White says that this tension is not resolvable, but intervention practice should make a constructive use of this:

Relativism [...] becomes, in addition to the general principle of respect for the ways of life of others, a tool of learning and understanding, a useful corrective to pseudo-universalist notions, a way of shaking up and questioning supposed universalist ideas and opening up the possibility of others; in other words, a way of opening our eyes to the variety of human ideology and practice, but not a basis of legitimizing whatever we may see when we do this (White 1999: 137).

This argument can be seen as part of a more general argument and debate about the issue of universalist and relativist approaches with regards to human rights (see for example, Donnelly 2003; Renteln 1988; Wilson 1997).

As in the case of thinking about children’s work as either ‘child labour’ or ‘child work’, the grey zone approach contains the same unresolvable dilemma of determining which children’s work is ‘worse’ or ‘better’ than another.

The dichotomy and intervention work

As aforementioned, the ‘child labour’-‘child work’ dichotomy has been the main approach in intervention work against ‘child labour’. The conception of children’s work in these terms has allowed the campaign efforts to target ‘the worst forms of child labour’. In 1999, the latest international instrument concerning child labour, the ILO Convention No.182 on the worst forms of child labour, was adopted. The idea it promotes is to identify the worst forms of ‘child labour’ and immediately remove the children from the situation. However, given the difficulty of distinguishing what is ‘child labour’ and ‘child work’, and distinguishing ‘more hazardous forms of work’ from ‘less hazardous forms of work’, it may also be difficult to determine which are the ‘worst forms’.
The International Working Group on Child Labour points out, after considering 35 country reports and 4 regional reports, that it is difficult to apply the framework of ‘child labour’ and ‘child work’ divide in reality because the labour-work distinction is based on generalised terms and concepts. Such terms include ‘detrimental’ to the ‘growth’ of the ‘child’, children are ‘too young’ for the work, they have ‘too much’ responsibility, and the work is ‘too repetitive’ (International Working Group on Child Labour 1998: 34-36).

The Convention itself defines the ‘worst forms of child labour’ as 1) all forms of slavery-like practices (sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour), 2) prostitution and use of children in pornographic performances, 3) children’s work in production or trafficking of illicit drugs, and also 4) ‘work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children’ (Article 3). In addition to these above forms, each national government is to identify locally specific ‘worst’ forms to target and eliminate.

I agree with the intention of the Convention No.182 to target the worst cases of children’s work which need prompt intervention. I understand that the intention of the Convention is to prioritise our efforts on eliminating the ideal-typical ‘child labour’ which are, in fact, a minority of cases. White argues that ‘if we were to find adequate ways to define the differences, the majority of children’s economic activities would probably be defined as work (White, cited by International Working Group on Child Labour 1998: 37-38). The ‘worst forms’ may also include some of the ‘more hazardous’ kinds in the grey zone. However, as pointed out earlier in this chapter, it is unclear which forms are more hazardous than others, and once some cases in the grey zone are included and targeted, other cases of children’s work in the grey zone may also be identified as the ‘worst forms’. This may make it difficult for the signatory countries to identify which really are the ‘worst forms’, and prioritise their efforts on them.

Another reason why it may be difficult to identify the ‘worst forms’ is the broad definition provided by the Convention. Article 3 defines the ‘worst forms of child labour’ as work which is ‘likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children’. As we have seen in the cases of children in Paco-Pandacan, even seemingly benign forms of work entail possible dangers. All children’s work
except for the ideal typical ‘child work’ can be seen as having the potential for such hazards to some degree. This definition, therefore, can make the vast majority of children’s work the ‘worst forms’. This Convention, then, paradoxically defeats its purpose, as it could be applied to ban all children’s work. The difficulty of applying the concepts ‘child labour’ and ‘child work’ in reality is reflected on the difficulty of identifying what are ‘worst forms’ of child labour using this Convention.

In sum, the usefulness of ‘child labour’- ‘child work’ dichotomy and the grey zone in between is that it allows us to recognise that there are both positive and negative aspects in children’s work. As concepts, the distinction is clear and sensible enough to understand and agree with. However, when one tries to apply the concepts to reality, the cases which fit the concept of ‘worst forms of child labour’ are a few, and designating certain occupational categories as ‘the most hazardous’ may not be quite accurate. One realises that the concepts are defined by generalisation and can be seen as ideal types, but are inadequate to characterise the reality for most working children.

However, the debates about ‘child labour’, at least in the Philippines, have largely been based on the concepts of ‘child labour’ and ‘child work’, and it is difficult to think of ‘child labour’ in other terms than these concepts. Considering the child labour debate as a discourse is useful.

**Child labour as a discourse**

I would like to take a step back from this discussion and think about the issue of ‘child labour’ as a discourse in the Foucauldian sense. A discourse has historical specificity, and it is the way we come to talk about and conceptualise the real world in our minds. Once in circulation, a discourse has real world effects, and it is difficult to think about the reality in other terms than provided by the discourse.

‘Child labour’ can be seen as a historically produced discourse in a similar way to ‘development’ as argued by Escobar (1995). ‘Development’ is a discourse produced by the historical specificity of industrialisation which took place in certain parts of the world at a certain time in history. It was followed by the certain political power distribution favouring Western countries who defined their ways of life as more advanced and a model to be followed by the rest of the
world. The parts of the world which have not ‘developed’ to resemble the West came to be seen as a ‘problem’. In the same way, the historical specificity, such as the condemnation of child employment in factories in a few industrialised countries after the industrial revolution, the historical construction of a particular idea of childhood in a few industrialising countries in North America and Europe, and the subsequent spreading of this particular ideology as the ideal in the global context, produced both the concept of ‘child labour’ and its identification as a ‘problem’. Designing intervention programs, international conventions, and implementing these instruments have consolidated the discourse as a concrete ‘problem’. Today, the ‘problem’ of child labour has come to be firmly established. It is seen as a concrete reality and an urgent problem to be addressed. Our recognition of child labour as a problem calls for and makes international instruments, which in turn reinforces the discourse as a concrete ‘problem’, affirming our perception that we need to do something about ‘child labour’. We can identify the issue as an ideology and construct, but ‘discourse results in concrete practices of thinking and acting’ (Escobar 1995: 11).

Even if we understand ‘child labour’ and ‘development’ as historically produced discourses, it is very hard to completely demolish or, if not, modify the mental package that comes with these concepts and practices. According to Escobar, it becomes increasingly difficult to think of the ‘problem’ in any other way than that provided by the discourse (1995: 12). It is also true with reference to child labour. Today, with the proliferation of the discourse on ‘child labour’, international organisations, national governments and NGOs increasingly have difficulty thinking about the situation of working children in terms other than those provided by the child labour discourse, that is, as ‘deprivation of childhood’, and in terms of positive kinds (‘child work’), and negative kinds (‘child labour’).

Even if child labour can be seen as a discourse and it can be argued that it is not inherently a problem in itself, there are negative consequences associated with working children, and in order to address the negative practices, people still need a common language. It is hard to altogether reject the term ‘child labour’ until there is an alternative way to talk about it in a way that everybody can understand. In Escobar’s words, ‘[i]t is becoming increasingly evident, at least for those who are struggling for different ways of having a voice, that the process of
deconstructing and dismantling has to be accompanied by that of constructing new ways of seeing and acting’ (1995: 16). In fact, researchers on child labour issues, such as Myers (2001) and White (1996), have suggested that, since the term ‘child labour’ has come to be used for too varied situations, laden with emotional connotations and with institutional history, it may be better not to use it in future discussions. If the discourse of ‘child labour’ is to be deconstructed and reconstructed by new ways of seeing and acting, what will these new ways be?

Deconstruction of current development discourse, Escobar says, will be a slow and painful process without easy solutions or prescriptions (1995: 217). He says that rather than looking for grand alternative models or strategies, alternative representations [of the Third World] which will break down the basic organisation of the current discourse [of development] are needed (1995: 11, 216). In the same way, to break down the discourse of ‘child labour’, alternative representations of ‘children’ and ‘childhood’ are needed. If the current ‘child labour’ discourse is based on certain representations of ‘children’ and ‘childhood’ such as children as vulnerable, and children’s proper activities as studying and playing, but not earning a living, then exploring other representations may lead to new ways of thinking and acting in relation to children’s work. The alternative representations may be found in the perspectives of people whose views have been traditionally neglected or underprivileged.

Cameron (2000) says that sometimes, possibilities for new representations and political possibilities are found by shedding light on presently unprivileged representations. In analysing an unequal sharing of household tasks by family members in an Australian family, Cameron points out that beside a particular representation of women privileged by a dominant discourse, alternative representations are possible.

In a household composed of a married couple and their five children aged between 17 and 25, the wife Fran performs disproportionate amount of household tasks such as cooking, washing the dishes, doing laundry, ironing and cleaning the bathroom. Her husband does what is associated with the masculine such as maintenance of cars, garden and the yard, and he also makes breakfast for the children while Fran goes swimming in the morning. He also vacuums the carpets and makes the bed before going to work. The children clean their own rooms and
engage in other household tasks occasionally. In the ‘egalitarian feminism’, which seeks equal distribution of household tasks among the household members, Fran is likely to be seen as exploited by her family. However, there are other ways of interpreting the situation:

Fran’s husband is exploited by the children. He makes breakfast for children so children get to sleep in.

Another way of interpreting it is that Fran’s husband produces surplus labour and self-appropriates it, then distributes it to his children. Maybe Fran dominates the family interaction when she is around, so he gets to prepare the breakfast and gets to be with his children and shows his love to them. No one is exploited in this situation.

Another way of seeing is that the husband is exploited by Fran. He produces surplus labour which is appropriated by Fran, and she distributes it (children get their breakfast), reinforcing her position as the boss.

There is no one answer as to who is appropriating (or exploiting) and distributing the surplus labour. The above interpretations all call for different political possibilities. When one of these possible representations is privileged as a political project, other possibilities are lost. In Fran’s case, the politics of seeing women as exploited by men will privilege the view that Fran is exploited (as she still does most of the household task) and ignores or trivialises the fact that the husband makes breakfast for children and vacuums. The feminist politics of housework was important, but in spite of the introduction of this new discursive framing of housework, women still do the bulk of unpaid domestic work. This feminist politics has shown women as victims, and has reinforced that position.

Another possibility is to see women as subject. In this light, Fran can be regarded as a self-appropriating domestic worker. Her voice is content when she speaks about her household work distribution, which suggests that she is an ‘independent and self-guided, organized and self-rewarding’ (Cameron 2000: 57). She is an authoritative, acting subject. She self-appropriates and distributes surplus labour in the household as she sees fit. She also determines what needs to be done in the house and does them or gets others to do them. She is the decision-maker, and if she goes on strike, the rest of the family has no choice but to
comply with her will. In this way, she can transform the domestic situation if she wants to.

Using Cameron’s work as a guide, alternative representations of children can be explored. The representation of children as exploited and vulnerable has been privileged in the dominant discourse about childhood and ‘child labour’. This politics was important as it has increased public awareness about the plight of working children, but it has also reinforced the view that children are powerless and are victims. By privileging this representation, other possible representations are neglected and other political possibilities are lost. It is worth exploring alternative ways of representing what it is to be a child. One of the ways is to recognise children as subjects and shed light on the previously unprivileged viewpoint, that is, children’s own perspectives.

I suggest that bringing in children’s perspectives in understanding their childhood, as I will explore in the next chapter, may eventually lead to new ways of seeing and acting.

Conclusion

Children’s work is a complex phenomenon in which there are both positive and negative aspects. It is therefore no simple matter to judge whether a particular child’s case represents ‘child labour’ or ‘child work’. As concepts, the distinction between the two is clear, but the real-life situations which these concepts neatly and appropriately describe are rare. Whether a child’s work is categorised as one of these terms ultimately depends on one’s perspective. The terms ‘child labour’ and ‘child work’, then, are rather like labels that people place on a child’s case depending on their subjective understanding of the child’s situation and what the child should be doing.

The notion of ‘child labour’ has been based on the binary differentiation of positive and negative kinds of work, as well as on the view that working children are denied their childhood, and the discursive framing of childhood makes it difficult to think of and talk about ‘child labour’ in other ways. However, understanding ‘child labour’ as a discourse helps us to see that the issue has been constructed in these terms, as based on certain representations of ‘children’ and
'childhood', and exploring alternative representations may lead to reconstruction of new ways of seeing and acting.
Chapter 6: Bringing children’s perspective into the picture

I argued in the previous chapter that different points of view produce different accounts of and moral judgements about children’s work. In this chapter, I show that different perspectives about children’s lives also bring about different understandings of childhood, and argue that taking into account children’s own perspectives about their lives adds valuable insights to understanding childhood. To do this, I consider the childhood in Paco-Pandacan seen from a range of perspectives: 1) from the perspective of the children’s families and community, 2) from the perspective of the normative concept of childhood, 3) from the perspective of the socio-economically dominant classes in the Philippines, and 4) from the children’s perspective.

Childhood in Paco-Pandacan seen from the perspective of the children’s family and community

In the community, the concept of childhood is embedded in everyday life; in particular, the concept of childhood can be understood in relation to the family.

An ‘ideal’ childhood?

In my fieldwork, I tried to investigate what an ideal childhood is for the people in Paco-Pandacan. Each time I asked the question, ‘What is an ideal childhood (Ano ba ang ideyal na pagkabata?)’, people looked puzzled and did not seem to understand what it was that I wanted to know. If the people understood English, I asked in English, too, but they still did not seem to understand what I was asking.

I rephrased my question in different ways: ‘What is the ideal life of a child? (Ano ba ang ideyal na buhay ng isang bata?)’; ‘What is the ideal process of being a child? (Ano ba ang ideyal na proseso para maging bata?)’; and ‘What are ideal experiences for a child? (Ano ba ang ideyal na karanasan para sa isang bata?)’. None of these questions triggered any response, and people would give me their answers based on their interpretation of what I wanted to know. They answered that the ideal child is the one that studies hard, gets scholarships and gets a good job; or that they want the first child to be a girl because they tend to
be more ‘responsible’, that is, girls will work harder to bring in income to the family if parents cannot earn enough for the family.

When I asked Tito Dio about the ideal childhood, I first put my question literally; ‘What is the ideal childhood? (Ano ba kaya ang ideyal na pagkabata?)’, but the question did not seem to make sense to him. So I asked him ‘What are the ideal experiences of a child? (Ano ba kaya ang ideyal na kalanasan ng isang bata?)’ He must have understood that I was asking what was an ideal experience of having one’s own child as his answer was that the child is smart (matalino), or even if he/she is not so smart, the child is diligent and gets a scholarship from the government or an NGO, and the child will strive in his/her studies (magsisikap sa pagaaral) so that he/she will get a good job and his/her family can live well (para may magandang trabaho, para mabubuhay ang pamilya).

I asked three nanay about ‘ideal childhood’, and again, I did not get a direct answer. When I asked them, ‘What is the ideal life for a child? (Ano ba ang ideyal na buhay para sa isang bata?)’ all of them looked a little startled, as if my question did not make sense to them. Then, one nanay finally spoke and said that among rich people, children are given more than enough material things, but are not given enough love from the parents. Another nanay added that that is why the rich children prefer their babysitters to their own parents. Their point was that ideally, children should be raised by, and receive much love from, their parents. They also said that among poor people, ideally, money could be budgeted so that children can receive baon, and that ideally there are two to three children in a family.

When I asked some children in the community what was an ideal life for a child (ideyal na buhay para sa isang bata), they did not know what to answer, either, but with a different reason. Whereas adults did not seem to understand what I was asking, children seemed to know what I was talking about, but their hesitation had more to do with the unexpectedness of such a question. The commonality, though, is that children seemed to interpret the question as ‘what kind of life would you like for your own future children’ and not what they would like for themselves here and now. After a moment of contemplation, one girl (15 years old) said shyly, ‘Being fine (Maayos)’, meaning not ending up in the street. Another girl (16 years old) said, ‘Being happy (Masaya)’.
On a separate occasion, I asked girls between 9 and 12 years old what their aspirations are for their own future children. This discussion adds to children's ideal for their own, future children:

Yuko: If you have children of your own, what would you like for them? (Kung may anak kayo, anong gusto ninyo para sa kanila?)

Speaker 2: If girls? (Babae?)

Yuko: Girls or boys. If they are girls, what would you wish for them? (Babae o lalaki. Kung babae, anong gusto ninyo para sa kanya?)

Speaker 5: What I would like for a girl is that I would like her to choose a guy who has a job and money, so he can feed her, and that he is kind. If a boy, I would like him to have a job so that when he gets a girlfriend, he can feed her, and then marry her. (Ang gusto ko po sa babae, gusto ko po siyang pilian ng lalaking may trabaho tsaka may pera, yung mapapakain siya, tsaka mabait po. Yung lalaki naman po gusto ko po maghanap po siya ng trabaho para po kung may girlfriend na po siya, mapapakain niya na po, pwede nya na pong pakasalan.)

Speaker 3: For me, if it’s a girl, before my daughter starts going out with a guy, I will test him first, I will ask him, ‘Can you provide food for my child so you can have a trouble-free marriage?’ (Ako po kapag yung anak kong babae, bago ko po makikipag-boyfriend ang anak kong babae, susubukan ko muna po siya, sasabihin ko ‘Mapapakain mo na ba yung anak ko para pakasalan mo ng walang gulo?’)

Speaker 4: You know, it’s not that I’m meddling, but whoever your child likes, you have to accept it. Whoever it is that your child loves, that’s the one you’ll have to accept. You really can’t choose for her. It shouldn’t be your concern whether your child’s spouse is kind. It won’t really matter because whether he is poor or wealthy, if your child loves him, that’s the one she’s gonna go for anyway. (Alam mo, hindi naman sa nakikialam ako noh, pero dapat kung sino ang gusto ng anak mo, yung ang sundin mo. Kung sino mahal niya, ayun ang sundin mo. Hindi ka dapat mamili kung sinong gusto ng anak mo para sa iyo. Dapat, wag nya munang pakialaman kung mabait yung asawa niya, wag na niyang pakialaman kasi kahit naman mahirap o mayaman, basta mahal ng anak niya, yun ang sundin niya.)

Just like the 15-year old girl above who wanted her child to be ‘fine’ and not end up in the street, the children here were also concerned with the economic well-being of their future children. One girl in the discussion group, however, contradicted the other girls and said that if your child loves someone, whether the man is rich or poor, you will have to approve it because that is the person your daughter is going to pursue. Here, the girl is acknowledging the emotional needs
of her child, to choose her own spouse so that her heart is content. Similarly, the 16-year old girl above who wanted her child to be ‘happy’ emphasized the emotional contentment for her child. For the children, meeting the basic material necessity, as well as satisfying emotional needs are both important for an ideal life for a child. Therefore, whereas adults understood ‘an ideal life of a child’ in terms of the benefit of the whole family, children focused more on the personal well-being of the child, materially and emotionally.

The reason why adults understood my question as, ‘What sort of child is an ideal child for the family?’ may be because of the cultural and social primacy placed on the concept of family in the Philippines where each person is necessarily a part of his or her family. This is different from the concept of a child in many Western countries as complete and whole in one physical being, where each individual can be recognised as independent of and separate from his/her social contexts. The normative childhood of global discourse is also based on the idea that a child is an individual with their own set of rights. In the Philippines, on the other hand, when people say a ‘child (bata)’, it means a very young person, based on biological immaturity, but more importantly, it means being a ‘child’ to his or her parents. In Tagalog, there is a separate word, ‘anak’, to mean ‘child’ in the sense of ‘daughter’ or ‘son’ (i.e. offspring), but being a ‘child (bata)’ nevertheless seems to strongly invoke the whole family structure behind the child. In this sense, an ideal child in the Filipino cultural context, at least among the lowland Christian population, is the young person who helps the family.67

Childhood in Paco-Pandacan, from the perspective of families and community, is grounded in the ideology of family as the ultimate unit of life which includes matters of day-to-day life, social life, and life in terms of survival. It is a family-centred childhood, not an individual-focused childhood. Children are expected to actively participate in supporting the family and they internalise this expectation.

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67 It was the word ‘bata’ (not ‘anak’) that was almost always used by the people in the community and NGOs to talk about ‘child’ or ‘children’ in the everyday context.
Childhood in Paco-Pandacan seen from the perspective of normative childhood

There is, however, another idea found in Paco-Pandacan that is not as prevalent as the family-centred view of childhood. It is that an ideal childhood is the one where ‘children’s rights’ are fulfilled. Even though people in the community stared blankly into me when I asked them about ‘ideal childhood’, there are subtle signs that an idea of ‘the ideal childhood’, as found in the normative concept of childhood in the global discourse, may be growing. It seems that this was made possible by dissemination of ideas in the forms of posters, leaflets, and seminars.

While I was asking around in the community what was an ideal childhood, there were a few individuals who quoted the ‘Rights of the Child’, as stipulated in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). A 24-year old NGO worker stationed at the office in the community took out a sheet printed out jointly by UNICEF and AusAID for distribution to children and told me, ‘This is the ideal childhood’. It read ‘The Rights of Every Child’ and listed nine rights of the child in point form. Another person who referred to the Rights of the Child when I asked about ‘ideal childhood’ was also an NGO worker, and the other person who did so was a nanay from the community, also working with the NGO I was affiliated with.

Apart from the ILO Conventions dealing specifically with children’s work, there is another international instrument concerning children. It is the CRC adopted in 1989 (entered into force in 1990), and is the most widely ratified human rights instrument in history. It legally binds the 192 signatories to adhere to it, and the Philippines is one of them. This Convention recognises both children’s right to be protected from abuse and exploitation, as well as children’s right to participate in community and family life. Article 32 can be interpreted as prohibiting ‘child labour’:

States Parties recognize the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education, or to be harmful to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.
CRC provides for ‘children’s participation’ in expressing views and be heard, and take part in decision-making, as well as having freedom of association (see Articles 12-15). In sum, the international instruments can be characterised to target and prohibit ‘child labour’, while allowing working children to express their views about their work and be heard.

The Philippines is signatory to the CRC and the principles of the Convention are taught in the seminars conducted for the children by the NGO. To the surprise of the NGO staff, children were able to list some of the rights in such a seminar. They said in their own words, children were entitled to: ‘good future (magandang kinabukasan)’, ‘name and nationality (pangalan at nasyonalidad)’, ‘being able to play (makapaglaro)’, ‘going to school (makapag-aral)’, ‘being given attention (mabigyan ng pansin)’, ‘a place to live and be prosperous (magkaroon ng tirahan at mayamang)’, ‘be born (maisilang)’, ‘live together in one community quietly and peacefully (tahimik at payapang pamamayanan)’.68 A girl in the group said that she knew these because she had a small booklet about children’s rights. I remember having seen the booklet she was referring to piled up in the NGO office. It is a palm-sized, small publication compiling some of the rights stipulated in the CRC with colour illustrations and simple words in Tagalog.

These rights were enjoyed by the children in Paco-Pandacan to some extent; they do have names and domicile, live in a community and go to school as well as play. Whether children lived in a community ‘quietly’ and ‘peacefully’ was subject to debate as what ‘quiet’ and ‘peaceful’ mean depends of the interpretation of the Article as well as of the situation in Paco-Pandacan. It made an impression on me, however, to see children eagerly list these rights one after another in a confident and assertive manner. For the few individuals who cited the CRC as the ‘ideal childhood’, however, the current situation in Paco-Pandacan lags behind the conditions of life CRC is seen to represent. For them, the CRC is the model of childhood.

68 These are not necessarily the official Tagalog translations of the rights as stipulated in CRC. They are what the children said in the seminar and the social worker facilitating the discussion wrote down on a board. The first item ‘good future’ is not stipulated in the CRC even though it may be interpreted as being stipulated in the spirit of the Convention. The other items are found in different articles of the Convention.
As previously mentioned, Boyden (1990) points out that international instruments such as the CRC are vehicles for a certain model of childhood to be exported to countries world over. The global concept of childhood may be reaching communities at the grass-roots level. Whether the familiarity with the CRC will spread further, and more people in the community, especially people who are not associated with any NGOs, will start referring to the CRC as the ideal childhood remains to be seen.

Children in Paco-Pandacan, in comparison with the normative childhood can be seen as below:

First of all, the fact that children work makes childhood in Paco-Pandacan different from the normative concept of childhood as a period of dependency. What renders child labour illegitimate in the normative childhood is the idea that children should be completely dependent on parents or guardians. Children in Paco-Pandacan do have a period of total dependency, but only for a very short time. As soon as they are capable of walking around and understanding verbal instructions of parents, they start to help the family in non-monetary and, gradually, monetary terms. Both boys and girls help in the house from a small age. By 12 or 15 years of age, children of both sexes consider themselves as ‘already big (malaki na)’ or grown up enough to get around in the community and vicinity, and help out or earn money in the ways they can. They actively participate in the household economy, which is very different from the expectation inherent in the idealised notion of childhood.

It can be argued that not only children in Paco-Pandacan, but children in many parts of the world have long been contributing and participating in the economic activities in their societies. Zelizer’s study points out that in the late 19th to early 20th century in the United States, children’s economic usefulness was valued and was an expected part of childhood before it came to be devalued and the emotional value of children took over (Zelizer 1981). Morrow’s study also shows that children in England today perform part-time work and contribute to the family, but the social construction of children as dependent often makes this aspect of children’s lives invisible (Morrow 1994).
However, children came to be seen as non-productive, and as occupying a separate sphere of life from the valued activities of the society.

Children are no longer seen as productive and any work-like activities are rendered invisible: their employment for paid work is seen by adults as marginal, their contribution to domestic and household work largely denied, and school work is discounted as work altogether (James, et al. 1998: 116).

In this way, the concept of childhood which can be characterised by the dependence of children hinders us from recognising the contributions children are making and children’s effort to make life better for themselves and their families.

There are many different ‘childhoods’ in the world, as shown in Chapter 1. Work in the form of helping the family or participating in the daily running of the community is common in many societies. From this viewpoint, it can be argued that childhood as a time of total dependency is more of a myth and reality for only some children in the world, whereas for the majority of children, ‘working’ in different forms and helping the family is a common part of childhood.

Secondly, the idealised concept of childhood as a period of innocence, based on the premise that adults should protect children from the dangers of the world, has the consequence that children are excluded from participating in the everyday social life in any way that is valued. They exist on the periphery, and they are marginalised. The childhood in Paco-Pandacan, in contrast, shows us that children’s everyday life is not markedly separated from adults’ lives. In Paco-Pandacan, the world is shared by both adults and children. Children are far from removed from the reality. There is nothing ‘hidden’ from children about the ‘good’ and ‘bad’ practices and events that happen in the community.

Children in Paco-Pandacan hear adults’ quarrels about money, know that drugs are traded and used in the community, and are aware of rape and violence. Even their parents and family members do not form a buffer between them and the harsh reality of the world.

There are many societies around the world where there is little separation between children’s everyday life world and the adults’ world. For example, Chagnon discusses Yanomamö Indians in South America who live in kin-based villages, and anything that goes on in the village can be heard or seen by
everybody, including children, and adults make no effort to conceal anything. They explain to the children that most violence that goes on in the village is over sexual matters as a matter of fact (Chagnon 1997: 33).

Childhood in Paco-Pandacan can be seen as one of many childhoods found in the world, and is characterised by children actively participating in the daily running of families and the community. The everyday life of such children is not separated from the everyday life of the adults. The working childhood of Paco-Pandacan, while deemed a pathology of childhood, may in fact be a rather common childhood in this respect.

Childhood in Paco-Pandacan seen in the context of class divide within the Philippines

Within Manila, there are many different childhoods. As my fieldwork focused on Paco and Pandacan, I only had limited insight into other childhoods of children in other parts of Manila or the Philippines. However, I would like to reconstruct other childhoods in Manila and the Philippines the best I can, to place the childhood in Paco-Pandacan in the wider context of Philippine society.

The segregation of classes in Manila

What is striking in Manila is that gated wealthy communities and urban poor communities can often be located side by side, but the lives of people living in these places do not intersect. They buy their daily necessities at different shops, and their children do not grow up mingling with one another. Moreover, the divide is not only physical, but psychological. There is a rigid separation between the upper classes and the urban poor which I observed throughout my stay in the Philippines.

Among the middle and upper-classes people I met, the stories told by a teacher who comes from a rich Chinese family and works at a private college in Manila illustrate well the reasons why rich people avoid interaction with poor people. For example:

Once, there was a phone call at his house and the maid answered it. She was told that her employer was hurt in an accident and was in great danger. She was alarmed and tried to follow the person’s instruction to take out whatever she
could find in the house – jewellery and other goods worth 10 million pesos. She was told to bring those to a certain location, but she then noticed that her employer was back in the house, and thereby realised that the phone call was an attempt to rob some of the family’s wealth. There are many stories like this one which circulate in Manila, and rich families not only hear such stories, but they actually experience them, so they do not trust strangers.

On another occasion, this man’s father went to China on a business trip. A few days later, there was a phone call to the house informing him that there was a package sent from China for him to pick up. But to pick it up, he would have to pay a fee. His sense of caution prevented him from believing it, but it surprised him that the robbers knew his father was in China, which could have made the phone call credible.

He told me that the latest tactic of extorting money from the rich people is a hypnotizing technique which came from Thailand. A stranger will talk to you and there is a trick he uses with eye contact. At the next moment, the rich person is said to start taking off his watch and give everything he has to this stranger. ‘Don’t talk to strangers. Don’t even look at them’, he said to me.

As these stories suggest, life in Manila, as constructed by the higher-income strata of the Philippine society, is an alarming one. As a visitor from a foreign country, I was constantly warned by concerned, well-meaning people about kidnapping, hold-ups, snatching of bags and mobile phones, car-jacking using firearms, cutting off of fingers and wrists in public transportations in order to steal rings and watches, and taxi-drivers putting a substance into the air conditioning system to rob the unconscious passenger while the drivers themselves remain awake through having taken an antidote. When I ask Filipinos if these things really happen, they assure me they do, citing the cases which they themselves or their close relatives have actually experienced. In fact, some of them were nearly killed.69 The people who told me these stories were mainly from middle to upper-income classes, but as I mentioned in Chapter 2, people in

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69 The media, especially the local tabloid papers, write about some of these incidences in a sensational manner, so it may contribute to heightening people’s sense of danger. However, most people in Manila that I have talked to had their personal stories to tell, without having to refer to the media as an evidence of such events. In fact, one Filipino friend told me that there are so many crimes that most of them ‘don’t even make it into the papers’. 
Paco-Pandacan also believe that snatching and hold-ups are common in their areas. It is true that other types of crimes may not be applicable to Paco-Pandacan people because they are unlikely to own a car or to have to worry about kidnapping for ransom. Accounts of a date-rape by drugging, and kind strangers who befriend young women and eventually sell them into prostitution, are reported in a few academic publications (see for example, Jocano 1975b, even though he notes that he was not able to verify these stories confided to him by the young women he interviewed). So when I heard the teacher’s stories, especially the one about the latest tactic from Thailand, a part of me was bewildered by the strangeness of the story, but because of my ‘socialisation’ in Manila, the other part of me was able to accept and believe that this was the ‘reality’ as constructed, perceived, and lived by the people in Manila.

The teacher suspected that such criminals were not the poorest of the poor because they seemed to have access to guns and were well-organised. ‘But all the same’, he said, ‘why take the risk and go to poor areas or take public transportation?’ From the point of view of the rich and privileged, they avoid interacting with the poor because the threat of extortion, and tricking people to rob them is real for them.

The people from the upper-income classes that I met would not go near poor settlements, and would not be willing to socialise with the poor in their daily lives. Instead, they would send their children to exclusive schools with tight security, and they would not go outside their homes unless driven in a private car with their own driver, if they could afford such arrangements. Even though they live in the same city, the rich occupy a separate space from that occupied by the poor. 70 Even travelling on the same road, if you ride on a jeepney, you are exposed bare to the world around you, directly experiencing the air pollution, dust flying into the jeepney and then into your eyes, hearing all the honking from the vehicles around you, squeezing on the bench to fit as many passengers as possible, and feeling the sweat on the coins being passed around. If you ride in a private car, you can shut the windows and cut yourself off from all the noise and

70 The Manila’s many shopping malls may constitute an exception in that there are rich people as well as the poor who go there and walk around in the comfort of air-conditioning. I was told in the community, however, that the rich actually buy things in these malls whereas the poor will only walk around, do window-shopping, and if they buy something, they will be carrying ‘small bags only’. 182
dust, and let the scenery, and the segments of the life of the poor that you can see in the city, pass outside the window like a movie. This way, it is possible to live in the same city while poverty remains someone else’s reality in which you do not have to participate. The two ways of life rarely intersect with each other.

**Upper-class childhood**

Upper-class children in the Philippines are well protected and guarded. Because of the wide gap of wealth in the society, children of wealthy families are constant targets of kidnapping for ransom. Kidnappers are said to study which children belong to which family, and specifically target them, knowing exactly whom they are kidnapping, and their acts are well premeditated. Children of such families are privileged with material wealth, go to private schools, driven to school by private drivers, and go out with friends chaperoned. Their houses are located in subdivisions, or gated communities in quiet neighbourhoods. Their childhood is the closest to the idea of childhood as a walled garden.

A middle-aged Japanese man working in Manila told me about the first time he came to the Philippines. He was staying with a lawyer whose daughter, who was over 30 years old at that time, had never been outside the gate of their ‘subdivision’ without being driven in a car. So when he came back from a local sari-sari store with a bag of food, she would ask him what were sold there with curiosity even though the store was actually just around the corner from their house. The squatter areas and the poor shown on TV and movies, she believed, were fictions. This is not to suggest that all upper-class people are like she is, but it does point out to the extent of segregation maintained by the different socio-economic classes.

**Middle-class childhood**

Middle-class children have more independence than upper-class children in getting around outside their home. They attend public schools, and they take jeepney rather than being driven in private cars. Even though their parents will try to give them as much protection as they can afford, in the form of driving them to places and chaperoning, middle-class children have direct access and exposure to the wider society and opportunities for independent exploration. Middle-class people are not like the upper-class, but they also experience extortion, and feel they must guard their property and protect their children. Yet some work is
common in the lives of middle-class children, either helping in the house, family’s business or taking up part-time jobs in the city.

As seen above, the urban poor are segregated from the socio-economically privileged in the society, and Paco-Pandacan children’s views about life are rarely heard or inquired about by society except by concerned groups such as religious organisations, NGOs, school-based charity projects, and academic researchers. The childhood of working children in Paco-Pandacan, from the point of view of the socially and economically dominant classes in the Philippines, can be seen as an unprivileged childhood, and a socially marginalised childhood.

Childhood in Paco-Pandacan seen from children’s perspective

What is the childhood in Paco-Pandacan like, seen from the children’s perspective? The above perspectives make it possible for us to recognise children’s place in social structure: the institution of family; the global influence of a particular kind of childhood; and the class structure and social marginalisation within the Philippines. Children’s lives can be understood as being shaped and constrained by these different social forces, institutions and debates that are largely beyond children’s control. However, there is more to childhood than these perspectives can elucidate. Childhood seen from children’s perspective enables us to recognise children’s agency in a way the above mentioned perspectives do not. Bringing in children’s perspectives can enrich our understanding of childhood. Woodhead, in his study of children’s perspectives on their working lives from six countries had this to say:

Despite the limitations of this broad-based survey of children’s perspectives, one lesson is quite clear. As ‘insiders’, what children see as hazardous or benign, harmful or valuable, exploitative or educative, may not always be the same as how ‘outsiders’ view these issues. Children’s perspectives are not definitive any more than anyone else’s perspectives. But there is a strong case for paying very close attention to how children feel about their situation, when deciding how best to enhance their best interests (Woodhead 1998: 62).

Despite the various constraints placed on the children by different social structures, childhood from the children’s perspective is about: the tangible day-
to-day happenings and associations in the immediate surroundings; nurturing friendships that will last a life time; and exercising agency within the constraints of social structures. Work enables them to have what is important in their lives (i.e. education and family), and continue their everyday life without interruption in education or disruption in family relationships. Work and having their own money also gives them a sense of control over their own lives amidst the living conditions which are beyond their control.

**Childhood as the reality of day-to-day life**

First of all, I would like to point out that childhood seen from children’s perspective is the tangible day-to-day happenings and associations in the immediate surroundings which are concrete and real, not ideals and ideas constructed by adults. Below is my attempt to recreate the daily life a child lives, seen from the child’s point of view. It is a description of an afternoon I spent with an 11-year old girl Tin-Tin.

* * *

I walked to Barangay and went straight to Michael’s family’s food stall as I normally did. I saw Tin-Tin on the same street corner. She looked happy when she saw me. She seemed to have just got back from school, judging from the time of the day, just past noon when her classes finish. I had seen her at this same corner several times before. As I had often spent time with her close friends, she must have heard about me from them, and I suspected that she might be visiting this corner where she knew I frequently sat, to see if I was there.

Tin-Tin seemed to have been curious about me, and I had not had a chance to talk to her, so after exchanging hellos, I decided to follow her suggestion and go to her house.

Tin-Tin eats at her grandmother’s house and sleeps in another house nearby with her little cousin. One of the neighbouring houses had its door open and inside, TV was on. Directly opposite the house, on the communal path, there was a small bench placed in such a position that if you sat on them, you could look straight into that house and comfortably watch TV while being outdoors. I sat on it to watch the show on TV. Tin-Tin sat next to me and started talking. She would talk almost without stopping.

While watching TV, she asked me what ‘Mass Com’ was. I told her it meant the media of ‘Mass Communication’, such as TV and radio. There is also print media, but she spoke before I got to mention it. She said TV was better than radio. I asked her if she wanted to work in ‘Mass Com’. She told me that she preferred tourism. I did not understand what she meant by tourism, whether she wanted to be a tour guide, or wanted to work at a travel agency, but I refrained from asking such a detailed question as I was enjoying the free-flow of various topics of conversation as they came from her, not directed by me. I asked where
she wanted to go and she said she once saw a beautiful place on TV. She did not remember where it was, but that was one of the places she would like to go.

She asked me which languages I spoke, and I said Japanese, English, Tagalog and French. And she asked me what was ‘mayaman (rich, wealthy)’ in French. I could not remember; in my brain, I had only the Tagalog or English word for it. I thought it was an interesting choice of word on Tin-Tin’s part. Many children have asked me for equivalents in Japanese, and the most common words they wanted to know were maganda (beautiful), pogi (handsome), and pangit (ugly) besides expressions such as ‘good morning’, ‘good afternoon’, ‘hello’, and ‘good evening’, but never ‘rich’.

She said knowing languages was good for tourism, and showed me her school project in English. It was called a ‘home reading report’. I guessed that she was supposed to pick a book in English, read it and talk about it. What she showed me was a hand-made copy of a book. She had several sheets of paper with pictures (copied from the book and coloured) and the story (copied from the book). She asked me if I understood the story written in English. I told her I did. She seemed to be fascinated by the fact that I actually understood the story she had written out. It was ‘Alice in Wonderland’. She asked me what ‘shink’ (sic) meant. She had looked it up in the dictionary, but it was not there. I understood from the context that it was supposed to be ‘shrink’. I told her she could not find it as she was missing an ‘r’ and that it meant ‘to become small’. She told me that the project was not complete yet as she had not finished colouring the pictures, but it was due the next day.

We talked about different things while sitting there. After a while, it occurred to us to go to the new office of the NGO I was affiliated with as she did not know where its new location was. I did not know where her school was, either, so we decided to walk to the office and pass by her school.

While we were walking towards the office, she said something which sounded like I must be rich because I was able to come here. I did not understand exactly what she was saying, but she pointed out to me one of the stores on the road and asked me if I lived in a house as big as that. The shop was not particularly big (about 5 metres wide), but I think I nodded without understanding her question well. It was then that Tin-Tin said I must be rich, and I really must be because I was able to come to the Philippines.

Tin-Tin mentioned to me as we walked that her mother used to work at a beauty parlour, washing hair, giving manicures, and so on. Tin-Tin, too, used to go to the shop while her mother worked. She also mentioned something about Fairview (a part of Metro Manila that is rather far from Paco-Pandacan). Her mother used to work there, and the travel cost was provided by the employer. She also said that her father normally stays in Bulacan, a province adjacent to Manila. Tin-Tin also mentioned that she came to live in Pandacan when she was in Grade 2. She also mentioned that her father sometimes does not come home for two to three weeks, if I understood her correctly.

We walked and got to the NGO office. Soon, one of the nanay arrived. The nanay said she had a cold, and had one santol (citrus fruit from the sandor tree, believed to help people recover from colds) left which she gave me. I peeled it and shared it with Tin-Tin. She said she could not eat it because it is normally too sour for her. She had a little piece and gave me the rest. Then we looked at
the drawings on the wall done by children at a seminar with the NGO. Tin-Tin told me that she had not been able to participate in the seminar. She said she wanted to, but her father would not let her. I asked her why he did not want her to go to the seminar and I could see that she knew the reason, but she could not tell me because, I think, the nanay was there and she happened to be the community leader of her barangay. I noticed that she was about to say something, but decided not to, and I did not ask her about it, either.

Tin-Tin said her grade average was 7, but to qualify for a scholarship offered by the NGO, it had to be 8, and she was one point short.

She told me about her classmate who lives in the barangay where the NGO office was located. This classmate would not do assignments because he was addicted to video games at the ‘arcade’ (small businesses found in the community where there are several coin-operated video game machines). We decided to take a walk in this barangay, and found this boy playing with other children. He came with us to the arcade just down the street. Tin-Tin put one peso and showed me how the game worked. It was a shooting game where the player had to control the airplane to avoid missiles while trying to shoot other aircrafts. I put one peso, too, to try the same game. Tin-Tin seemed to be pleasantly surprised and excited that I would put in my money to try it. She even said I was good (Marunong ka, Ate Yuko!). One peso lasted for a very short time, maybe two minutes at most. In order to keep playing, one had to keep on inserting coins.

After that, we walked back the way we came, towards Hi-Way. We met another boy Tin-Tin knew, who went to St John’s high school, which is a private one. Tin-Tin told me as soon as we left him that the tuition fee was expensive at St John’s because it was a private school.

We walked into another barangay to pass by her school, chatting. When we passed one shop with desk-top computer games, she told me that there were often bad guys hanging out there.

We also passed a spot where she told me there once was a dead person. I asked her how old he was and she guessed about 17. She told me he was shot in the head and chest, in what she believed to be a gang fight. She told me that there was a pool of blood on the ground in that area. We could not see anything different about the place then, but she still remembered the blood and wanted to avoid getting close to the place. She pushed me to the side of the path to avoid stepping into the area where the blood used to be.

Then, we saw about five girls walking past. Tin-Tin told me they were a clique and she used to be part of it, but she got separated from them because they started to be mean to her. We also came across her classmate whom she referred to as smart (matalino). Tin-Tin asked the girl what her score was in the last maths test.

When we came to a wider path where there were many push-car vendors selling popcorn and chicharon (deep-fried pork rind, a popular snack), she said ‘Let’s buy some (Bibili tayo)’, and bought a pack of chicharon. We got some spicy vinegar, too, for dipping. We walked as we ate. For me, too, it was a pleasure to walk while snacking. What she felt like then fitted very well with my own mood. Tin-Tin and I shared a small joy then.
We passed a few more arcades while we walked. I was surprised that there were so many game arcades in such a small area. One game at one arcade was about two martial artists fighting. Tin-Tin said that such a game was bad as it promoted the idea of violence, but she soon offered me a second thought and said, 'But it could be good. In case you find yourself in that situation, you will know what to do'.

We passed two girls who were Tin-Tin's Bible classmates. Tin-Tin told me she went to Taft Avenue in the centre of Manila to a Methodist church every Saturday for Bible study.

We sat on a bench and drank cold water packed in plastic bags that we bought at a store. Thanks to Tin-Tin, who had been guiding me through her neighbourhood as seen from her eye level, it felt that the scenery from this bench was as close as I could get to the world as a child would see it. There was a nice breeze, and I saw some small stores just across with some small boys coming in and out, as they bought snacks. The scenery was different from the neighbourhood where I grew up in Japan, but sitting there, sipping water and chatting, felt as if I took a trip in a time machine and turned back to my own childhood. It made me nostalgic, despite the fact that our childhoods would have to be different from one another.

Suddenly, there was a man standing in front of us, talking to me. I recognised he said something about 'Australia'. I did not know him and I did not really want to talk to him. Besides he looked a little strange and I did not understand what he was saying, so I blankly stared at him, practically ignoring him. Some children came running towards him and chased him away. Tin-Tin told me 'Australia' was his name. Probably, he was telling me that his nickname was 'Australia' and was pointing out to our connection that I was visiting from Australia. I remembered then that I had met this man once before when I was walking in this area with someone else. I had talked to him a little bit then. Tin-Tin said that most people were either scared of him or they would tease him because he was supposed to be in a mental hospital, but he was harmless and actually kind. 'Poor thing (Kawawa)', she said. She thought that people should not bully him.

Tin-Tin showed me where her school was. I wanted to go near the school to have a better look, but Tin-Tin saw her previous music teacher coming out towards us, and did not want to meet her for some reason. She suggested instead that we turn our backs on her and walk away, which we did.

We headed back to her barangay. All of a sudden we noticed that the sky became very dark. We thought it would start to rain very soon. She asked me if I could run. I told her I hated running. She laughed. But she prompted me to run, laughing, as we felt some rain drops starting to fall already. We hurried to the entrance of the barangay and I told her I was going back to the area where I lived. We said goodbye.

* * *

This is a rather long description of an afternoon with different topics and events occurring in no apparent order or organisation. The reader may get a sense of not knowing where this story was leading them, but that is an effect I hoped to
create with this story, to make the point that childhood as lived by children may indeed be as such; it is about people, places, and events that the child hears, sees or experiences that happen in no apparent order, and trying to make sense of these.

Childhood as lived daily by Tin-Tin is about being curious about a stranger and the unseen, wonderful places in a foreign country. It is also about seeing some people as ‘rich’ while she is not. Things that concern her are friends, and how she relates to them and how she sees them, having the small joys of eating snacks, as well as knowing what goes on in the community including violence and maltreatment of another resident. Having her own opinions about these events and having a sense of what is right and what is wrong, knowing what is happening, but should not happen, are all part of her life. Childhood can be seen as a collection of events and personal observations in no apparent order, and the process of making sense of these events, learning about the world she lives in, and finding out how she relates to the social and physical environment. What I have tried to show here is what could well be dismissed by an adult as a purposeless, non-eventful stroll in the neighbourhood is, for a child, filled with her emotions, observations, memories, associations, social relations, thoughts and opinions, and reasons, all of which she does not necessarily elaborate to the world. This way, a childhood for a child can be seen as being made up of the concrete and tangible everyday life, but rich in meaning for the child, not an abstract or mental construct made of ideas and ideals.

**Importance of friendship for children**

The importance of family for the children has been already discussed in Chapter 4. From children’s point of view, friendship with peers of the same generation is also important. Below is an excerpt from the interview I conducted with three boys aged 15 to 16 who regard themselves as best friends. Two of them are in the last year of high school and one has finished high school, even though he has been unable to find a job. Since elementary school, they have helped each other, for example, when one of them was assisting his mother selling snacks on the side of the street, the other two came along and helped, too. They did not do it for money, but to keep each other company and to help each other.
Yuko: What is the most important thing in your life? (*Ano ba ang pinakaimportante na bagay sa buhay ninyo?*)

Speaker 2: My family. Friends. (*Pamilya ko. Mga kaibigan.*)

Speaker 3: Family, and friends. (*Pamilya, pati mga kaibigan.*)

Speaker 2: Because, it’s important to have friends, for example, we have been together for a long time, since we were small. (*Kasi po importante pong may kaibigan, kasi po halimbawa, matagal na po kaming magkasama. Kasi po kami, bata pa po kami.*)

Speaker 2: In the beginning, we were not in school yet, then we were in Grade 1, and he was in kindergarten. We always played together. (*Yung una po talaga, hindi pa kami nag-aaral, tapos nag grade 1 kami, eto kinder, nakalaro ko lagi siya.*)

Speaker 4: That piko [hopscotch], we used to play piko together. (*Yung piko po, naglaro kami ng piko.*)

Speaker 2: Then, basketball, just a small version of it. When I was Grade 3, I was made to go back to the province. I went to school there for one year. Then I came back here for Grade 4 and we became classmates. Then, we got to know each other there. So, since Grade 4 until now, we have been friends. That’s why some friendships are so valuable because it may be that you have been together for so long and yet your relationship can be so problematic. (*Tapos basketball, maliit na ano lang. Tapos po nung pagdating po nung grade 3 ko, pinauwi po ako ng probinsya. Doon po ako nag-aral ng isang taon. Tapos pagbalik ko rito ng grade 4, naging kaklase ko po siya. Tapos doon na po kami nakakilala. Kaya mula noong grade 4 hanggang ngayon, magkakaibigan pa rin kami. Kasi iyun po yung gaano kahalaga yung pagkakaibigan kasi po, baka po ang tagal ninyo nang nagsasama tapos nagkaproblema.*)

Speaker 3: We have been helping each other when there are problems. (*Nagtutulungan din po kami pag may problema.*)

Yuko: Sorry, what did you say about problems? (*Sorry, anong sabi mo sa problema?*)

Speaker 2: For example, like I’ve said, it would be a pity for long-term friendships to be destroyed by quarrels. (*Halimbawa po yung, gaya ng sinabi ko, yung mahaba na kaming magkakaibigan, tapos pag nagkagalit-galit po kayo, para po sayang din.*)

Speaker 4: It’s hard to get friends that you know for so long. (*Mahirap na pong kumuhah na kaibigan na ganoong katagal.*)
Speaker 2: For example, when he does something, you really know, you can really read what he is doing because you’ve known each other for a long time. You know your friend’s ways. So we know how each other will react to things. So, no matter what he says, we just understand each other. (Kasi po halimbawa pag kumilos siya, alam mo na talaga, nababasa mo na talaga yung gagawin niya, kasi tagal nyo na. Alam niyo na yung mga ugali mo. Kaya alam na namin yung mga ugali namin. Kaya kahit na anong salita niya, nagkakaintindihan na kami.)

They highlight the importance of the length of time they have known each other and also the fact that they have managed to nurture their friendship all this time unlike some long-term relationships which are destroyed by quarrels and problems. They know each other so well by now that they know what each other is doing at a deeper level than spoken words. They say that it is rare to have such long-term friendship, which they hope will continue in life.

Yuko: When you are married, and have family, what would you like for your children? (Pag may-asawa kayo, may pamilya kayo, ano ang gusto ninyo para sa mga anak ninyo?)

Speaker 2: We do talk about it among ourselves. For me, I want to have my own house, then, just like this now, like our houses are close to each other, because for example, if you have a big house and only a few people to live together, it’s lonely. We want our houses to be really close to each other, just like we are now. Like we are one family, but have three separate houses. Like we are close neighbours. (Napagusapan na rin namin yun pag kami-kami lang. Ako gusto ko po meron po akong sariling bahay, tapos parang ganito rin po, kasi masaya po kung dikit-dikit ang bahay, kapag halimbawa po malaki ang bahay ninyo, mansion, tapos sabay konti rin, parang malungkot din. Gusto namin yung dikit-dikit bahay namin, parang ganito lang. Parang isang pamilya rin, pero tatlo kami. Parang magkakalapit bahay.)

Speaker 3: It’s like we are brothers, we are also like a family. (Yung parang magkakapatid kami, parang pamilya rin kami.)

Speaker 2: If our houses are close, we’ll be happy, and we won’t be affected by problems too much. I want us to have a better life, have jobs. That my siblings and my children can be sent to school, because I’m the eldest child [so I have the responsibility to see to the welfare of my family]. And for my children, I hope they won’t have to experience a life like this. (Tapos yung bahay po na yun, masaya kami, yung hindi masyadong ma-ano ang problema. Gusto ko po maunlad kami, may trabaho. Yung mga kapatif ko’t mga anak ko napag-aaral. Kasi panganay po ako. Tapos gusto ko sa anak ko hindi danasin yung ganitong buhay.)
They expressed an ideal that they would like to stay close to each other when they are older and have their own families. Best friends will be their guard against problems and they want to help each other into a better life. Friends of the same generation with whom you have shared some experiences already and know each other very well are hard to find, and are valued by these young people. Such friends are also likened to ‘family’ and are treated as such. Friends from the same generation are the best company you can rely on, and to take on the future challenges in life together.

**Children’s agency within social structure**

Trying to understand children’s lives from children’s perspective leads us to see them not only as constrained and shaped by social structure, but also exercising agency within the constraints of social structure. Here, the concept of *practical reason* (Bourdieu 1998 [1994]) is useful. It is an empowering concept which allows people to see children’s inner strength and survival tactics. I think children are both vulnerable (to exploitation) and strong (to survive), and the concept of *practical reason* allows us to recognise both sides, not just one or the other. According to Bourdieu’s concept, people in society learn what is the culturally appropriate behaviour for them to exhibit, and they will behave in that way, but then they realise that it does not produce a desirable outcome for themselves. So the next time when a similar situation arises, they will behave a little differently, in a modified way, so they will still fulfil their culturally expected role, but they will also benefit from their action. To apply this theory to the context of children’s work, children will behave in such a way to become ‘good children’ (by working and helping the family financially as well as in non-remunerated tasks), but they find out that that is not practical (i.e. they can give their family what the family wants, but children are not gaining what they need to ensure their own welfare), so they will also do something to ensure they will get what they need (keep a part of their earnings for themselves and give some to their family, for example). Experience has taught the working children to comply

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71 I owe much to Dr. Olga Nieuwenhuys for our discussion and correspondence on this point.
with the culturally prescribed way of behaving, but at the same time, they can do it in a way that is more creative and even manipulative, but most of all, practical.

In this way, the working children in Paco-Pandacan can be seen as tactical social actors. They conform to the society’s expectation to be ‘good’ children, but they deviate from the model of ‘good’ children at the same time by earning money they can use at their own will. Children can be seen as part of the social structure, but exercising agency within it, and they make their own special space. This space, earned and created by their efforts, is truly their own and is a valuable part of their childhood. Children in Paco-Pandacan have a strong desire to conform to the culture and keep strong ties with their families. However, being an outright ‘good’ child is dangerous; the family’s dependence on the child can overburden the child. Some working children manage to act according to their ‘practical reason’, and seem to have the ability to both fulfil expectations but also to keep a healthy distance from the cultural expectations and constraints. This is the key to their survival. It is in this ability to both conform to the societal norm, and at the same time deviate from it, that children can be seen as tactical social actors exercising their agency.

Compared to other perspectives, childhood from children’s perspective can be seen as childhood as here and now, childhood as created and made possible by themselves. Children’s perspective shows us children’s agency.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has reviewed different approaches to understanding childhood in Paco-Pandacan. Depending on the perspective one takes, it can be understood as: childhood of obedient, helpful members of the institution of family; unprivileged childhood segregated from the rest of the society; a childhood looking towards the normative childhood, yet different from it in that children directly engage in the everyday social life of the family and community.

While other perspectives show the place of children within the various social structures, inquiring into children’s perspective on their work and their childhood can reveal what children themselves are doing about their own situations. This then enables us to recognise children’s agency. Bringing in
children's perspective, among other perspectives, deepens our understanding of childhood, and allows us to have a more balanced picture of childhood in which we can see children not only as constrained by various social forces and structures, but also as social agents in their own right. Shedding light on children’s perspectives also opens up the possibility of representing children in a way that is different from that provided by the global discourse, that is, children as subjects.
Conclusion

My research has been guided by the research question: What does it mean for the children of Paco-Pandacan to be working, in the totality of their everyday life? My findings, and the implications of my study to anthropology of childhood and the child labour debate, are as follows.

Findings of this study

A certain ideology about childhood that originated in the West in the late 19th to early 20th century has proliferated to other parts of the world through colonisation, international instruments, intervention work, and international campaigns regarding child labour. This ideology sees childhood as an age of innocence and period of dependency where study and play are appropriate activities, but work is an inappropriate activity, for children.

The phenomenon of working children is problematic according to this ideology; it is seen as denial of childhood. Because work, especially remunerated work, is seen as the exclusive domain of adults, 'abolitionists' of child labour argued for a ban on children's employment at least until the child has finished compulsory education.

As a separate issue, the dominant 'socialisation' paradigm of anthropology has treated children as silent objects of adult activities, and regards them as only partially cultured, incomplete social beings. A new paradigm referred to as 'new sociology of childhood', however, has called for the recognition of children as social actors with their own views and understanding of the world, and therefore treats children as subjects of research.

The present study uses this last approach, and attempts to understand the childhood of working children, and the role of 'work' in their childhood. Based on the qualitative data collected in an urban poor community of Paco and Pandacan in Manila, the Philippines, I found that far from being denied childhood, work makes childhood possible for the children.
Role of work in childhood for the working children in Paco-Pandacan

In the context of poverty, work is an important part of children’s everyday reality. However, ‘work’ is not the most important thing children consider to be in their life. Nor do they identify themselves with the work they do, such as ‘I am a car washer’, ‘I am a vendor’, or ‘I am a child worker’. It is only a means for other important things they do in their everyday life. Rather than being denied childhood, work enables childhood; it is a means to sustain what children consider important in their lives, namely, education and being part of the family.

The earned childhood: Education

Education is seen as very important by both adults and children in Paco-Pandacan, as well as all over the Philippines. It is expected that the higher the educational achievement of the child the better her/his job prospects which will, in turn, lift up the living standard of the whole family. Education is encouraged, as the more diplomas one completes, it is believed, the higher the chance of getting a better-paid job.

It is often assumed that children’s school attendance and performance are hampered by working. While this may be true for some working children in the world where they have no time to attend school or are too tired to go to class, children in Paco-Pandacan combine work and school successfully. In fact, they are complementary.

Formal education has come to hold a special place in the normative view of childhood originating in the West. In the childhood of Paco-Pandacan, too, formal education occupies an important place. Education does not only stand for a prosperous future; it is just as much about children’s present. Going to school can also be seen as having a generic value for children. For some, it represents the privilege of being a child, a space in which they most approximate the conditions of the normative view. The vast majority of children I met showed enthusiasm for attending school, unless they had unpleasant experiences at school, such as being scolded in front of class for not having completed an assignment.

By working, children in Paco-Pandacan get to continue their education, keeping their hope alive for a better future and enjoying the special status of being a child.
The earned childhood: Family

Experience of childhood in Paco-Pandacan is greatly influenced by family. The positive effects from family is that children are cared for, are fed, given love, and are protected from potential harm coming from outside the family. However, these are not always afforded to children, and the negative effects from the family can include children not being fed adequately, not being given money to go to school, and being moved from place to place or from relative to relative, all of which happen often in the Paco-Pandacan community. There is also a direct negative influence on children from the family if the parents quarrel often, gamble, abuse alcohol or drugs, or get separated. Other common experiences of family include father’s loss of job, a family member falling sick, or a family member dying in an accident. Children, most of the time, do not have any control over what happens to the family even though it greatly affects their lives. They are only tossed about by the family problems and family situations. Earning money on their own initiative is one way for the children to be proactive in protecting themselves from such uncontrollable factors. Working has many positive effects: children can be independent (even if the family cannot provide for them, they can eat and go to school); children can become appreciated members of the family because the family needs money and children can contribute; contributing money to the family improves the relationship between the child and the family and also potentially saves the family from disintegrating because of lack of money. Children’s work can be seen as a mechanism where children do not have to rely on their families, which are fragile and vulnerable to many crises and emergencies.

However, what is notable is that within the social expectation to help the family financially and/or materially, working children are affirming their role as ‘good’ children and they also manage to deviate from this role; children contribute toward the family as a cooperative unit of survival, and yet earn independence from their family at the same time.

The working children in Paco-Pandacan do not enjoy the normative childhood as a period of dependency and protection. However, it does not mean that they are denied their childhood. For them, childhood is not something given by someone else; it is something they earn.
Work is a means for living for these children. Therefore, the abolitionist approach, or removal of children from their work, can result in denying survival for some children and their families if applied dogmatically, without understanding the context of the children's work.

Answer to the research question

Therefore, my answer to the research question, 'what does it mean for the children to be working?' is, for the children in Paco-Pandacan, working means to be proactive in creating conditions for their everyday life. Children in Paco-Pandacan earn their own childhood. Children are constrained by social structures: there is a limit to what they can hope to achieve through education, and some children are overburdened by social and cultural expectations inherent in the institution of family, but they also manage to make some 'room to breathe' for themselves. They achieve this creatively, but at the same time, pragmatically. Seeing childhood from the children's perspective allows the researcher to see what the children are doing about their particular situation. In other words, it allows the researcher to see children as social actors.

Implications of this study

Implication of this study for anthropology of childhood

Unlike the dominant 'socialisation' paradigm in anthropology, this study has adopted the viewpoint that children are social actors. Compared to the view that children are objects of adult activities, when a child is seen as a full 'person' in his/her own right, there are more possibilities for understanding children's lives.

One of the possibilities is to recognise children's agency, as well as their position within the social structure. This thesis shows children both as being constrained by social structure and as exercising their agency; children are neither completely passive victims, nor social agents completely free of social constraints. By working, children pay for their own education because it is a way for a better future. However, the structural constraints of the socio-economic class structure keep them from attaining higher levels of education than currently
afforded them, and consequently, education does not readily allow children in Paco-Pandacan to break free from poverty.

The concept of ‘practical reason’ helps us see how some children manage to behave in ways that meet the social expectations placed upon them but evade some of the social constraints. In the case of children in Paco-Pandacan, they manage to fulfil the social expectation of being ‘good’ children, and at the same time, gain some independence from the institution of family which places such expectations on them.

There are more possibilities for understanding our society and the world, once we recognise children as ‘full’ human beings in their own ways and as social actors. This is not difficult to imagine when we take into account that recognising women as full human beings and social actors has generated much knowledge and discussions, deepening our understanding of the society and social relations.

‘Childhood’ is a fluid concept, as has been seen in history; the meaning of childhood has changed over time, and it can change again in the future. Different groups (parents, state, welfare groups, NGOs, international intervention programs) influence each other in defining and re-defining what a proper childhood should be like, who gets to decide what is good for children, and what ‘rights’ children should have. Children themselves have been mostly excluded from such discussions. However, if inquiring into children’s perspectives on their lives becomes a standard practice, anthropology of childhood will hopefully contribute to having children’s views and opinions heard in matters that concern their lives.

What is a child?

How do we define children? A combination of factors such as a person’s social roles, biological age, position in the family, all influence the determination of who is a child. In my study, the decisive factor in determining who is a child is one’s position within the nuclear family structure. A child can also be understood to be a learning, social being who keenly observes the situation around them (i.e. family’s need for money, concerns in the community), makes judgements as to where he or she stands in relation to the situation, and with best intentions, tries
to do something about the situation. Even when they find themselves in hardship, children try to take some control over their own lives, no matter how small.

**Implication of this study on research methods**

I found the ethnographic approach to be useful in capturing children’s views and understanding of the world. Participant observation is effective for establishing rapport with the children and for gaining insights into children’s experiences and practices. Learning the language is also crucial. However, positioning in the field is important because depending on with whom a researcher associates herself, children will relate to her in different ways. In my case, I was mainly associated with an NGO concerned with children and the female community leaders. It was through them that I got to know children. While this was an effective and appropriate way in the community to conduct my research, the inevitable consequence was that children might not have shared with me aspects of their lives that they would not voluntarily show to the NGO or to their mothers (for example, behaviour related to drug use and drug trafficking. It is, of course, possible that over time, some children will confide in the researcher about such issues.)

**Implication of this study for the child labour debate**

This study mainly discussed working children who are not in the most abusive work situations. But one issue related to the child labour debate, treated in some depth in this study, is whether one can make a judgement about which children’s work is more abusive than others. Indeed, how can one know if one child is suffering more than another child? Each child has their own ways of dealing with the abuse, understanding and articulating their situation, and it is impossible to objectively measure and know which child suffers more than the other.

However, I would like to call attention to the fact that abuse and exploitation of children can occur not only at work, but also at home, at school, in church, and in state institutional care. Therefore, rather than identifying the domain of ‘work’ as a specific site where abuse of children is likely to occur, I would like to point out that the belief about ‘children’, as found in the broader culture and society in which we live, may also play a role in giving rise to abuse of children. The ideas about children that circulate in the society, such as that
children are incompetent, incapable, weak and vulnerable, may indeed place children in positions where they are vulnerable to abuse. From a policy point of view, the issue of abuse is more significant than work in an abstract sense. By seeking alternative representations of children, as subjects and exercising their agency, this study contributes to developing new ways of seeing and acting, other than those provided by the dominant child labour discourse. Policy discussion on issues related to children's work can be usefully extended through reference to the different discourse of child rights, reflected in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Local specificity of child labour

While 'child labour' has been identified as a global phenomenon, and has led to concern on an international level, resulting in instruments like ILO Conventions, this study has shown the importance of understanding the specificity of local situations in terms of ideologies of childhood—notions of expected behaviour, appropriate activities and levels of responsibility—as well as local economic and social conditions and the 'niches' that are available for working children. For example, in Paco-Pandacan, there is a strongly held notion that 'good' children will help the family in any way they can and this legitimises and endorses children's work, even when it borders on exploitation. Local expectations impact also on the relationship of young people to the global economy: the expectation placed on girls and women to be reliable contributors to the family puts greater pressure on girls than boys to take up jobs abroad.

'Working children' as one category

Related to the local, cultural specificity, is the possible differences found within the category, 'working children'. In Paco-Pandacan, I found boys and girls to be treated the same in most respects whereas in a few respects, there are discrepancies. For example, both boys and girls are expected to help the family in any way they can, they are both given the opportunity for education, expected to do the best they can in schooling so that they would attain better jobs in the future and help the family. The types of work children perform are also similar for both boys and girls, with the notable exception of paid domestic work, which is predominantly girls' work. Another area where there was an obvious gender discrepancy was that girls experience higher expectations from their families to
be reliable source of help than boys, especially in relation to overseas migrant work.

In terms of the age of the children, this study has focused on children between 11 and 15, even though it found that children as young as 2 years old get training in helping with the household tasks. The expectation to help the family is there for children of all ages, including a person who is 30 years old, as long as they are not married and still live with their parents. Marital status influences the amount of responsibility one has towards helping one’s natal family. Because of this, some children who wish to leave their natal family choose to marry early.

The number of siblings and birth order influence the amount of work children do, to some extent. It is Filipino custom that the eldest child within the sibling set will take care of the rest of the siblings if their parents fail to do so. This is true for the eldest child of both genders. In that sense, there is more expectation on the eldest child to work and help the family in times of economic hardship. However, the expectation to help the family is there for any child, no matter how many children there are in the family, and the personality and capabilities of each child determined the amount of work/helping he or she did.

Whether socio-economic status influenced the kind of work children performed did not become clear in this study. The reason is that within the Paco-Pandacan community, there is not much difference regarding the socio-economic status of the families. Even then, it was clear at least with some children, that children worked when their parents did not have money, and once the family financial situation improved, they stopped working.

Family structure (female-headed households or male-headed households) did not seem to affect the kind of work children do or children’s experience during work. In Paco-Pandacan, whether the family was female-headed (quite common) or male-headed (much less common) did not seem to affect children’s work because whether there were men in the household or not, men’s income was often not enough for the whole family, and it was women who made sure that all family members survive.

For Filipinos, children ideally should not have to be responsible in supporting their family; parents should support the family members. In Paco-
Pandacan, even though children are proud of contributing to their families, they would not work if they did not have to. Children, as well as adults, try to make the most of what they have and the situation they are in. Their positive attitude towards life and the high spirit they keep amidst many hardships are remarkable and admirable. However, the conditions of life in the community as described in Chapter 2 is far from desirable or optimal, even from the point of view of the residents, and continual efforts to improve their overall life conditions are needed, from within the community and from outside.

The concept of ‘children’ as vulnerable and in need of protection calls for and justifies adults’ intervention. However, once it is established in anthropology and other social sciences that children have their own understandings and views about their own situation, children could be thought of more as equals, full (not partial) social beings with full participation roles in the society, producers of value, and agents for change. Then, the power relationship between adults and children may change to a partnership rather than that of a one-way relationship between ‘protectors’ and the ‘protected’. Rather than being the target of adult intervention activities, children may be recognised as a part of the complex web of social actors, and they may be consulted more often, and their views may be heard more often. Then, whatever change that is brought about in their lives will be more meaningful to children. Children’s participation in decision-making that affects their lives, as stipulated in the CRC, will be enhanced. For the working children in the world, the difference this could possibly make is the recognition of their status as working children, instead of stigmatisation or a blind prohibition of remunerative work undertaken by them. Denying children the option to work could result in denying them the few means they have to take control over their lives.
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Illo, Jeanne Frances I.

Institute for Labor Studies, Department of Labor and Employment, Republic of the Philippines

International Working Group on Child Labour

Invernizzi, Antonella

James, Allison


James, Allison, Chris Jenks, and Alan Prout

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Jefferson, Tony

Jocano, F. Landa


Kempadoo, Kamala

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