

**Child Agency and Institutional Policy:
Experiences of 'Street' Children
in an Institution in Medellín, Colombia**

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the degree of

PhD in Anthropology

Goldsmiths College

University of London

June 2003



Abstract

The thesis concerns the experiences of boys in the context of an institutional programme for 'street' boys in Colombia, based on 14 months fieldwork carried out in Medellín, Colombia during 1998-1999. It explores issues of child agency within the normative structures of childhood, and considers broader questions of power and violence. The thesis suggests that children's agency, experience and knowledge inform their experiences at the institution. Based on boys' experiences of and reflections on the street and the programme, the thesis also examines issues of consciousness and resistance.

From the perspective of dominant models of childhood, 'street' children are 'out of place', outside the control of institutions such as family, school or church. Challenges to such negative constructions of 'street' children can portray them in terms of resistance or rebelliousness. However, the children in this thesis, emphasise that a lack of choice constrains their agency. Indeed, they explain their presence on the street as the result of violence related to civil war, family fragmentation, abuse, and other threats against them. This forces us to consider broader issues of violence and power as structural constraints impinging on these actors.

The institution that constitutes the focus of this study espouses another approach to 'street' children. The centres run by the Catholic order of Salesians simultaneously define the children as abandoned and morally deviant. The institution aims to bring about change in the boys through a six-month process of transformation that works on their bodies, minds and identities. Boys recognise advantages to life in the institution, but also react to what they perceive as stigmatising discourses and arbitrary practices. Disciplinary practices and the monotony of life within the institution contrast with the relative freedom outside its boundaries.

The contrasting views of agency held by the children and the institution provide a key to understanding the question of children living on the street and the relative successes of institutional interventions in this field.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	2
Table of Contents	3
List of Illustrations and Appendices	6
Acknowledgements	9
Chapter One	10
INTRODUCTION: ‘STREET’ CHILDREN AND INSTITUTIONS	
I. Introduction	10
II. ‘Street’ Children and Institutions	11
III. Outline of Thesis	19
IV. The Ethnographic Setting: Medellín, Colombia	24
Chapter Two	32
CHILDHOOD, DISCIPLINE AND VIOLENCE: CONTOURS AND CONCEPTS OF ETHNOGRAPHIC INQUIRY	
I. Introduction	32
II. Contexts	33
III. Risk and Structural Violence	37
IV. Masculinity and Violence: growing up male and poor in Medellín the late twentieth century	45
V. Agency and Childhood	54
VI. Institutions and Subjects	61
VII. Conclusion	67
Chapter Three	69
INTRODUCING THE FIELD	
I. Introduction	69
II. City of the Children’s Saint Today	71
III. Theorising and Studying Change	81
IV. Ethics and Consent	86
V. Proactive Engagements and Methods	95
VI. Epistemological Issues on Violence and Poverty	99
VII. Conclusions	104
Photographs Introducing the Field	106

Chapter Four	110
POVERTY, VIOLENCE AND THE STATE: LOCATING THE ORIGINS OF 'STREET' CHILDREN	
I. Three Stories	110
II. Children, Families and the State in Crisis	115
III. Rural to Urban displacement: the rural war	117
IV. <i>Barrio</i> Violence	122
V. <i>El Niño Maltratado</i> [The Abused Child]	127
VI. Family Crises	131
VII. Issues of Gender and Parenting	132
VIII. The Absentee State	136
IX. Conclusion	149
Drawings, Stills and Maps	151
Chapter Five	163
THE PATIO, STAGE ONE: BETWEEN THE STREETS AND THE INSTITUTION	
I. Introduction	163
II. On the Street: alternative relations and solidarity	164
III. Survival Strategies	173
IV. The Patio	179
V. Patio Attendance and Processes	189
VI. Conclusion	197
Photographs of the Street by Eleno	199
Drawings and photographs of the Patio	203
Chapter Six	207
'MOVING ON UP': SELECTION FOR AND INITIATION TO THE SECOND STAGE	
I. Introduction	207
II. The Selection Process	208
III. A Week Away: the Camping Trip	217
IV. Becoming 'New Men': the Initiation Ceremony	222
V. Structures, Subjects and Symbols in Initiation	227
VI. Conclusion	232
Photographs of 'Moving on Up': Camping and Initiation	234
Chapter Seven	237
'NEW MEN' IN THE TRANSITION HOUSE: DISCIPLINE, EMBODIMENT AND CHANGE IN THE SECOND STAGE	
I. Introduction	237
II. Daily Life in Five Months at the Transition House	238

III.	The Boys Appraisals	241
IV.	Embodiment and Change	251
V.	Conclusion	264
	Photographs of Life at the Transition House	266

Chapter Eight **271**
**GOING ‘UP’ TO THE THIRD STAGE AND ON TO THE FUTURE:
INTERNAL DISCIPLINE, EXTERNAL SUBJECTIVITY AND THE
RECONCILING OF NORMS**

I.	Introduction	271
II.	Moving On Up	272
III.	The Third Stage	278
IV.	The Third Stage System	281
V.	The Future and Experiences of Alumni	294
VI.	Conclusion	299
	Photographs of the Third Stage	302

Chapter Nine **307**
CONCLUSIONS

I.	‘Street’ Children	307
II.	The Boys’ Views	309
III.	The Institutions’ View	313
IV.	Childhood and Welfare	319
V.	Contributions to Anthropological Debate	320

	Appendices	328
	Bibliography	355

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS AND APPENDICES

PHOTOGRAPHS, DRAWINGS, MAPS AND FILM STILLS

Following Chapter One: Introduction

Diagram 1. CCS Programme Structure and Entry Methods	31
--	----

Following Chapter Three: **Photographs Introducing the Field** 106

3.1	Panoramic view of Medellín	106
3.2	View of <i>barrios</i> in eastern hills	
3.3	Streets in central Medellín	107
3.4	Tank on road to east of city	
3.5	Initiation ceremony, 1994, burning of <i>gamin</i> doll.	108
3.6	View from my window inside CCS campus, 1998.	
3.7	Map of CCS campus	109

Chapter Four

Graph 4.1.	Where boys attending the Patio were from	121
Graph 4.2	Colombian Government Social sector Spending	142
Graph 4.3.	Breakdown of ICBF Spending	145

Following Chapter Four

Photographs, Drawings and Stills 151

Drawings of Poverty and Violence

4.1	'Me and society series #1 – 'poor'	151
4.2	'Me and society series #2 – man shooting a child	
4.3	'Me and Society' series #3 - violence in Colombian society, 'out politicians'	152
4.4	'Me and Society' series #4 – the Convivir and children taking drugs	153
4.5	Illustrations of scars on two boys' bodies.	154

Stills from the film 'The Abused Child'

1.	Father beats child	155
2.	Boys talk to mother	156
3.	Boys leave home for the street	
4.	With new friends on the street	157
5.	Problems requiring revenge	158

Maps

Map

4.1	National political view with indications of industries and violence around places of origin of boys	159
4.2	Antioquia and southern Cordoba, with indications of industries and violence and places of origin of boys	160
4.3	Map of Medellín and nearby municipalities with places of origin of boys	161
4.4	Map of Medellín with number of boys from different areas	162

Chapter Five

Graph 5.1	Where boys went from the Patio	190
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Following Chapter Five:

Between Streets and the Institution

Photographs of the street by Eleno

Image 1.	'There was a little chicken there'	199
Image 2.	Taking drugs around the corner from the Patio	
Image 3.	Rolling a joint in the back of a truck	200
Image 4.	Drugs	
Image 5.	A moment of tension?	201
Image 6.	The <i>camada</i>	
Image 7.	The girls	202
Image 8.	In the Cambalache- morning? Amongst suitcases and shoes	

Drawings and photographs of the Patio 203

5.1	'The Colombia that I Like': a boy's illustration of his referents	
5.2	Drawing of Patio and environs by Cesar	
5.3	View across balcony	204
5.4	Inside the Patio	
5.5	Doing afternoon chores	205
5.6	An educator checks attendance	
5.7	Boys play at swimming pool at Las Palmas	206
5.8	Educators look on as boys play at Las Palmas	

Following Chapter Six:

Photographs of 'Moving on Up': Camping and Initiation

6.1	Boys line up to go on camping trip	234
6.2	Boys left behind look on at bus as it leaves the Patio	
6.3	Boys playing by pool during camping trip	
6.4	View out of bus window as boys leave for the Transition House	235
6.5	Boys celebrate their arrival at transition house	
6.6	Boys in new clothes and in lines before the initiation ceremony	236
6.7	During the 'New Men' initiation ceremony	

Following Chapter Seven:

Photographs of Life at the Transition House

7.1	Statue of Maria Auxiliadora and Points table	266
7.2	Taking a break during chores	267
7.3	A boy poses with view of Medellín in the background	
7.4	The hill and brushing teeth	268
7.5	Listening to talk on progress	
7.6	Playing football	269
7.7	Playing marbles	
7.8	Building shacks	
7.9	Becoming muscled men	270
7.10	Acting out buying drugs	

Following Chapter Eight:

Photographs of the Third Stage

8.1	Packing up to move on the third stage	302
8.2	Being welcomed by educators from the third stage	
8.3	Boys play football	303
8.4	Friday afternoon	
8.5	Waiting to buy clothes and other items	304
8.6	Fifth grade boys before class	
8.7	Talking during free time	305
8.8	At the weekend	
8.9	Formed in lines for a meal	306
8.10	Doing punishment	
8.11	Waiting to enter dining room	

APPENDICES 328

1.	Structure of International Salesian Community	328
2.	Institutional Overview and Project Structure within CCS	329
2a.	San Juan Bosco and the Art of Re-education	330
3.	Mission, Values, and Goals of CCS	333
4.	Staffing Structure of Programme for Street Minors	336
5.	Informants and Methods	337
6.	Questionnaire used in Transition House	339
7.	Questionnaire used in Third Stage	340
8.	<i>Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar</i> (ICBF, Colombian Family Welfare Institute) Summary of Programmes	342
8a.	Extracts from the <i>Código del Menor</i> (1989)	343
9.	Homicide Statistics, Colombia and Medellín	345
10.	Statistics on Children from report on Colombian National Household Survey, 1996 (ICBF)	349
11.	Third Stage Family and Referral Data	352

Acknowledgements

This thesis and the research process have involved support from numerous people, both in the UK and Colombia. Thanks must go to my maternal grandmother, Elsie Anthony, and Father Peter Walters, for making my 1994 visit to Medellín possible, and my parents, for taking me there in the first place, and foreseeing the technical needs I would have this time round.

To 'City of the Children's Saint' I give enormous thanks, for permitting this research and hospitality. Particular thanks are due to Darío Vanegas, Cielo, Sagrario, Mauricio, Angela, Franklin, Colega, Astrid R., Jaime Z., and Leonél Sanchez A. I also extend my gratitude to the Fundación Antioquena de Estudios Sociales (FAES), and to Carlos Galeano, Eumelia Galeano, Alexandra Uran, Juanchito, Jairo and Monica, and the Lopez Botero family.

At Goldsmiths fellow students provided a supportive and fun working environment, and many staff contributed to my learning curve, but particular thanks are due to Olivia Harris, Jenny Gault and Sheila Robinson, and to Judith Ennew for advice from places far and near.

I dedicate this thesis to the memories of A. S. Mendoza and R. Montoya, and to the futures of the boys of 'Promotion #39'; for friendship, for participation, for making it fun. They were and remain a source of inspiration. Closer to home, Victoria Goddard has provided constant and consistent guidance, and patience for which I shall always be grateful. This thesis is for them, and for Ruben, whose patience, humour and energy has made him a great companion.

The research was funded by grant R00429734621 from the Economic and Social Research Council.

INTRODUCTION: 'STREET' CHILDREN AND INSTITUTIONS

I. Introduction

This thesis describes and analyses the situation of boys passing through three stages of an institution for male 'street' children in the Colombian city of Medellín¹. It provides a new approach to a relatively unexplored area of research on 'street' children, by examining the relationships between such children and a welfare institution in detail. It also challenges the concept of "street children", and stresses the heterogeneity of the experiences of children categorized as such by others². By considering specific cases, the thesis shows that many of the children who become involved in the institution in fact have little or no experience of the street, its values or survival mechanisms. Rather, many are orphans, displaced by war, or in search of an education otherwise prohibited by their conditions of poverty³. This suggests that the contexts in which children are displaced are crucial to understanding their movements towards the streets and/or the institution, and their agency in these processes. The thesis offers contributions to the anthropology of childhood and research methods with children, as well as to anthropological debates about agency, power and violence.

Concentrating on boys' own views of the institution and its mechanisms for 'reforming' children into good Christians and honest citizens, the thesis highlights the ways children's agency is perceived and negotiated. The thesis is particularly concerned with how boys react and adapt to the institution and its portrayal of 'street' children as morally deviant, and how they evaluate the educational and

¹ Throughout the thesis I use the terms 'child' and 'children' to denote subjects under the age of 18, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

² I use "street' child/ren' in this way to problematise the concept of 'street children', and in particular the idea of a specific or lasting relationships to the street. As I show, for many children their relationship with the street is transient, and within such relationships exists a great deal of heterogeneity.

³ I use the term 'poverty' to refer to low and unstable income; to constraints on opportunities for generating income; the lack of wealth or reserve income; and lack of access to resources such as stable housing and education.

material benefits the institution provides. The participation of children in the research provides insights into boys' views, which demonstrate their rejection of discourses of individual blame. The children demonstrate a keen awareness of how poverty places them in conditions of social 'inferiority' and vulnerability where others seek to judge and make determinations about them. The thesis thus suggests that there is a profound disjuncture between the boys' reasons for being on the streets or homeless, and the institution's representation of them as morally deviant youth. The thesis shows that the institution's framework and attempts to discipline the children militates against children with significant street experience committing themselves to it.

II. 'Street' Children and Institutions

According to most modern child welfare expertise, residential institutions should be an option of last resort for children who are or need to be separated from their families. Institutions cannot provide necessary life skills or individual nurturance to children, tend to deprive children of affect and sources of identity, and are often seen to damage children's healthy social and psychological development, rather than aid it⁴. They have further frequently been exposed as hotbeds of abuse and violence⁵. As Tolfree notes, the ostensible purposes of such institutions is often in conflict with the realities of admissions policies (1995: 37). A parallel to this is that institutions often have, for reasons explored in Chapter Two, visions or missions based in paternalistic or punitive notions of welfare. While the philosophy of the City of the Children's Saint (CCS) is based on the work of Giovanni Bosco, a 19th century Italian priest who founded the Salesian order, I suggest in the chapters that follow that the deeply stigmatising and derogatory concept of the *gamin* also makes its presence felt within the institution's day-to-day functioning. *Gamin*, the Spanish word which most closely translates as 'street' child, carries with it strong

⁴ Tolfree (1995: 23) notes that the shift away from residential care in the West has been linked to a growing awareness of the damage of prolonged institutionalisation, producing for example emotional and behavioural "disturbances and cognitive impairment". For example of practitioner discussion on the subject see proceedings of the Institutions Working Group at Consultation on Children in Adversity (2000), www.childreninadversity.org

⁵ This has included revelations about care and conditions in orphanages and state care facilities around the world. One example is the abuse found across the system of industrial schools in Ireland, which functioned as workhouses training thousands of the children of the poor or morally sanctioned during much of the 20th century; see Raftery and O'Sullivan 1999.

connotations of dirt, disease and moral decay. A *gamin*, in many Colombians estimation, is a dirty young beggar and thief.

Such views correspond with the CCS approach, in which the children are in need of moral reform. To enter and 'get with' a project, boys must acknowledge that they are at fault in their behaviours, and in so doing, forgo aspects of their own reasoning and understanding. In the institution boys must subject themselves to types of power which can at best, offer protection, safety and education, and at worst, a sense of impotence in the face of injustice and arbitrary whims of power. Some 'street' children have a keen awareness of what they might be getting themselves into in such places, and a range of strategies for managing it. Aptekar evokes well the blatant indifference some 'street' boys in Cali display when confronted with messages from an educator on what a Salesian programme here could offer them:

“At this point the educator began to make a speech to the boys about how they shouldn't just come to Bosconia to get free food and a place to socialise, but that they should 'get with the programme, begin to think about making something of themselves and their lives and start acting more responsibly'. As if in reply to any pre-packaged program designed to 'help street children', Antonio and Roberto gulped down the last bit of food and walked out the door arm in arm” (1988: 64).

While some research mentions institutions and projects on offer to 'street' children, and how they may use such services strategically, institutions tend to be presented as largely antithetical to the freedom which characterises children's lives on the street. As Milne has observed, “If 'rescued' street children were happy in those places then statistics for escapes from institutions would not be as high as they usually are” (1997: 27).

Much research tends to treat projects and institutions as a part of the street landscape, rendered mere ethnographic backdrops, and so the difficult or antithetical relationship between children and institutions is rarely explored in depth. One study surveying projects for 'street' children in Latin America (Lusk 1988) proffers a paradigm for conceptualising the levels at which the projects work, which range from actions for social change to attempts to change individuals (Ibid: 67). Hecht (1998) offers an analysis of the various types of institution that work with

'street' children in and around Olinda, northeast Brazil, which breaks these down into three types (Ibid: 157). The first involves '*abordança*' – outreach, activities and advice on the street; the second the involvement of the children in vocational training in a rural setting; the third takes children into residential care in rural shelters. He also notes that there are actually more people employed to work with 'street' children than children themselves (1998: 152).

The orientations amongst various projects Hecht describes hinge on the theme of salvation, even those of a secular orientation (ibid: 164-165). Many of these institutions and projects for 'street' children are rooted in the charitable concept of '*asistencialismo*', paternalistic help which Hecht compares to Paulo Freire's concept of 'false generosity'. Thus they may provide short-term functional help, but do not act to resolve structural inequalities (ibid: 169). Indeed, the disjuncture between children and institutions often leads to the conclusion that children's futures are in no way related to institutions or projects, or that these institutions do not provide help to children in any important or long term manner. Such institutions can be contrasted with projects that work with concepts of citizenship, and participation in political processes, such as the well-documented National Movement of Street Children (Swift 1997, Hecht op cit: 171). This movement takes inspiration from Paulo Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed and liberation theology, with the goal of building consciousness of oppression, and uses strategies based on discourses of children's rights to highlight the civil and welfare needs of 'street' children (cf Swift 1997).

The institution dealt with in this thesis works from a paradigm which could be described as 'salvation through renewal', and in a notably different social and political context from that of Brazil. As I will show in Chapter Two, given conditions of war in Colombia, the realisation of citizens' rights faces many obstacles. Although there are many people and organisations involved in promoting children's needs and rights, the rights of 'street' and other poor children face stiff competition for priority on dominant political agendas.

Meanwhile, research on 'street' children has provided a growing body of knowledge about how children develop street 'careers' that take them between institutions,

home and the street (e.g. Lucchini 1997), how they survive on the streets (e.g. Hecht 1998), differences between children on the streets (e.g. Aptekar 1988), and the ways in which children understand the causes of their situations (e.g. Felsman 1989).

Fruitful interdisciplinary approaches to the subject have stressed the psychological dimensions of 'street' children, as in Aptekar's (1988) combination of psychological and anthropological approaches. Aptekar argues that children socialising themselves on the street in Cali were growing up within the independence-fostering practises of the matrifocal home. He also stresses the intellectual and emotional normality of 'street' children, as measured by various forms of psychological testing. Aptekar suggests that the children he categorises as *gamines* have strong coping and adaptive mechanisms, as opposed to the *chupa-gruesos* (younger 'pre'-*gamins*) who are deferential and likely to have a future as subjected and compliant workers. Hecht (1998) also considers the centrality of the mother-figure for children, drawing distinctions between the nurtured childhoods of dependent children, and the nurturing roles of children in less economically advantaged situations. His view however, contradicts Aptekar's, as he sees street-living children as defying the mother-focused affective and material ties that he considers the logic of the matrifocal home, summarised in the concept of 'motherdom' (1998: 94).

Meanwhile Felsman (1989) cites writers who find genius amongst the children on the street, and makes what I consider a crucial point regarding children's capacities to think about their situations. This is that the children he worked with (also in Cali), externalised the causes of their situations, rather than blaming themselves for their unfortunate circumstances:

"By and large the *gamines*... externalised the *causes* for their difficult situations, but internalised the active *choice* to be in the streets...[T]he majority of the *gamines* state that their difficulties are undeserved."

(1989: 77, italics as in original)

Through their peer networks, the children discuss the causality of their condition and emphasise that it is rooted in "unjust circumstances beyond their control" (ibid). As we shall see, this is also true of the children in this thesis, while other writers have stressed the mainstream moral concerns of 'street' children (e.g. Swart 1990 on South Africa).

For Lucchini, institutions may form part of children's street 'careers', as do issues of family and the split from family and home. What Lucchini analyses in detail are the relationships between family dynamics, children's biographies and senses of identity and their conceptions of the street (1993[1998], 1997). He argues that any coherent analysis of children's presence on the street must take into account the children's perceptions and evaluations of different actors and relationships, and changes which they experience as moments of rupture which produce other changes, for example to a child's sense of competence (1997: 7, 11).

This concept of 'careers' is also used by Baker and Panter-Brick (2000), in studying children's relationships to work and home in Nepal. They emphasise how children's work outside the home is in accord with wider social and cultural understandings of childhood. As Invernizzi points out, for children in Lima, work can be an important agent of socialisation. She shows how, through working on the street, one boy who had been abused at home learnt a new "life in society and learned to 'recognise people' to accept them and 'to negotiate'" (2000: 141). What children learn on the street is clearly often to their advantage in later life; as Ennew (1994a) suggests, they may form relationships which avoid the abusive power they have sometimes experienced at home.

Despite this growing body of research, 'street' children seem to occupy a tangential position to mainstream anthropological work. There are no clear lines of theoretical engagement within published anthropological literature on 'street' children in English, and the subject could even be said to suffer from an 'image problem', as a popular but insubstantial area of inquiry. In addition to the lack of a common analytical framework amongst studies of 'street' children, there is a noted absence of methodological rigour as well (Ennew 1994b, Baker et al 1997, Felsman 1989).

However, the problems encountered by children in institutions are not well understood, a lamentable situation given the estimate that there are up to 8 million children in residential care around the world, and most of them in the developing world. Hecht observes that there actually exists "...scant analysis of the institutions

that seek to represent, aid or even rescue these children” (1998: 174). Similarly, as Ennew (1998) has commented, documentation of projects for street or working children is often limited, even within charities, if it exists at all.

Substantial amounts of interest in, and funding for, programmes with ‘street’ children suggest the extent to which ‘street’ children are amongst the most visible of the young urban poor⁶. Indeed, they have something of an iconographic status as small ‘rebels’ surviving in urban poverty in the ‘Third World’. And while many projects for ‘street’ children increasingly reflect developments in children’s rights and research into the social, political and cultural contexts of childhood, the persistence of extreme situations of war and displacement mean that residential institutions will continue to play important roles in caring for children made vulnerable by such conditions⁷. Thus despite the evidence that institutional care is rarely the best option for children’s long-term welfare, residential care projects for ‘street’ children continue to constitute important instances of welfare provision for such children. The absence of information and analysis about them, however, leaves some important questions unanswered, such as who actually uses institutions aimed at ‘street’ children in the medium and long term and why they are there, how such projects are received and understood by children, and why children abandon them. The aim of this thesis is to contribute in this area, by providing a detailed and structured analysis of the processes of reform and assistance which one such institution provides.

The City of the Children’s Saint

The institution analysed in this thesis, which I call ‘City of the Children’s Saint’⁸, is run by priests from the Catholic community of Salesians. The City of the Children’s Saint (CCS) considered itself one of the most faithful replicas of the original programmes for working with poor and morally ‘stray’ youth developed by Saint Giovanni Bosco in 19th century Turin. An international order, Salesian policy

⁶ In Britain alone the umbrella non-governmental organisation The Consortium for Street Children has thirty-five member charities dedicated to managing and raising funds for projects, ranging from street-based education programmes to rural agricultural projects to AIDS awareness campaigns.

⁷ See UNESCO 1995 for description of a range of types of projects for ‘street’ children.

⁸ The names of the institution and of all individuals mentioned in the thesis have been changed in order to protect their identities.

towards the poor is partly derived from international and regional levels, but the community's internal hierarchies are allied to and must work closely with the national Catholic Church⁹.

The City of the Children's Saint has developed through a nearly 80-year history of working with poor children in Medellín, into a charity with a corporate ethos and international network of donors. Initially a dormitory for shoe-shine and newspaper boys run by two daughters of a prominent local general and politician in the early years of the century, situated on a family estate (*Quinta de Santa Maria*) in the centre of the city, it has evolved into a complex network of programmes, which in the period of my fieldwork in 1998-1999 involved some 1000 boys and young men and women¹⁰.

In accounting for the management and structure of CCS I draw on the anthropology of organisations (Wright, ed. 1994, Douglas 1987) and the anthropology of policy (Shore and Wright 1997). This body of work highlights the importance of understanding how organisations function as entities. I outline the vertical structure of the organisation in Chapter Three, and in Chapter Six consider how different discourses locate the boys as different types of subjects. While this highlights the ways in which certain types of knowledge are prioritised (cf Marsden 1994), I argue that the staff's understandings of internal power acknowledge both the presence of different discourses in the management structures, and the tensions inherent in such a system. Around such tensions an informal working culture or policy surfaces, often drawing on social positions and views from life outside the institution. Likewise, it is important to understand the changing social and political contexts in which CCS works. This is particularly relevant to the views of staff at senior levels. I argue that internal dynamics of power, the shifting nature of its client population and the wider circumstances of social upheaval and limited financial resources in which CCS works are important to understanding both how the institution moves forward as a corporate entity and how it conceptualises its mission.

⁹ See Appendix 1 for diagram of Structure of International Salesian Community. I discuss the political and historical nature of the Colombian Catholic Church in Chapter Four.

In this thesis I concentrate on the Programme for Street Minors (PSM), a three-project programme designed to take boys of ages seven to fifteen from the street into the residential care of the institution. The first project, or stage, is a 'Patio' day centre in downtown Medellín, which any boy under 18 can enter on a daily basis. While attendance here averaged between fifty to eighty boys a day, every six months about forty were selected to progress to the 'Transition House' on the campus proper, on a hillside overlooking the city. Here, in a complex at the side of the main campus, boys underwent a six-month long process of transformation, marked at their arrival by a ritualised ceremony where they became 'new men'. Upon completion of this process, they could enter the third stage, the core boarding and education programme, which also received children in situations of risk and danger directly. Here they could study through to high school, and through the subsequent fourth and fifth stages, learn a vocational skill (see diagram 1, page 31).

This process, conceptualised in stages, is designed to take boys from the street into an institutional life where they may receive education and protection. The first stage, the Patio, offered boys encouragement to think about the option the institution provided. It also served certain needs of street-based children, such as food, a night shelter, and a place to play and wash. Through a selection process in which staff considered each child's case, they evaluated whether or not the child matched the institutional remit of helping children in 'irregular situations' of 'abandonment or moral or physical danger', or involving a relationship with the street. These phrases are taken directly from the current laws pertaining to children, as contained in the *Código del Menor* (Minor's Code) of 1989, which defines these terms and sets out state obligations towards children in such situations. Given the minimal nature of state welfare, institutions like CCS are subcontracted to carry out much social service provision, issues which I explore in more depth in Chapter Four.

The other factor taken into account in this process is the child's perceived disposition towards the institution's goals. This is assessed on the basis of staff perceptions of their willingness and commitment, for the Patio is frequented by

¹⁰ Young women are only accepted for the workshops, and not any residential programmes.

many boys who have been through one or more stages of the institution before, and dropped out. Given the fluidity and heterogeneity of the population at the Patio, the reasons why children leave in later stages are complex. While staff try to choose on the basis of the likelihood of the child staying with the programme, because of the limited number of places available, it also becomes apparent at this stage that there are some boys don't seem to want to go at all.

Those chosen who go on to the second stage, the Transition House, will be initiated into institutional life, and then spend six months in this second stage¹¹. Here they will learn the rudiments of the institutional regime, such as timetables, working in groups to carry out chores, and they will attend school classes designed to prepare them for entering the class groups of the third stage. I will now explain how the structure of the thesis develops the analysis of the manner in which boys arrive at the institution, and their experiences of processes inside it.

III. Outline of Thesis

Chapter Two starts the thesis by introducing the context of the research, and exploring relevant debates and issues. The ethnographic data is presented as a sequence which follows the trajectories of boys from the events which displace them or force them onto the streets, through to their attendance at the Patio, and selection for and transformation inside the institution.

In **Chapter Two** I consider the theoretical debates which frame the thesis. These find their starting point in the conditions of violence and vulnerability to economic hardship that prevail in Colombia. Political and social violence and exclusion form the contexts in which children are exposed to multiple risks (Beck 1993, Caplan 2000) and structural violence (Cockburn 2001, Farmer 1996, Cassese 1991). Such severe constraints on their agency pose particular challenges for conceptualising child agency (James and Prout 1997), and for theorising violence. I also suggest that the context of gang violence which flourished in Medellín from the 1980s onwards

provides an important case in which to explore tensions to arise between child agency and child vulnerability, as well as for exploring the links between masculinity and violence. Exploring the history of disciplinary institutions as outlined by Foucault (1977), CCS is further contextualised in practices of governmentality which seek to make individuals more governable by making them self-regulating. Thus we consider how CCS fits into the spaces of disorder and social fear in modern Colombia, as it attempts to re-form these children into particular kinds of beings, while offering them much needed safety.

Negotiating relationships with, and between, educators and boys was a crucial aspect of the research process, as I outline in **Chapter Three**, where I discuss the routes of my ethnographic questioning. Here I outline the structure of the institution, and discuss the limitations and effects of working within an institutional environment, including negotiating internal power relations. The institution acted as a host for the research, and throughout the research period I maintained a dialogue with the institution about my work. However the research pursued my own questions and priorities, particularly the voices of the children, independently of the institution's concerns. I show how 'shadowing' one group of boys as they progressed through three stages of the institution allowed me to monitor and discuss with them the process of changes taking place. This suggested the need to consider the body as a primary source of ontological knowledge and political power, in a grounded anthropological analysis of situations where embodied changes are present (Csordas 1994a & b, 1999). This is particularly relevant to the boys and the institution, as childhood is a time when the unconscious 'habitus' of the body is formed (Bourdieu 1977, James, Jenks and Prout 1998).

Ethical issues are also addressed in this chapter, where I argue that working from a standpoint of boys' agency, including acknowledging the constraints upon it, which encouraged the use of innovative and participatory research methods (Nelson and Wright 1995, Ennew 1994b, Young and Barrett 2001). 'Street' children are often wary of researchers, for many good reasons (cf Hecht 1998), so the longitudinal

¹¹ This can vary between five and six months due to the need to fit with wider institutional timetables. During my fieldwork the group whose progress I followed spent just over five months in the Transition

dimension of the research allowed familiarity, regularity and trust to be established. Locating myself as an (mostly) impartial observer rather than as any kind of authority in the institutional processes was crucial. As a result, some boys became actively involved with the research, and participated in activities such as photographing the street at night (shown in Chapter Five), keeping a journal of events within the institution (discussed in Chapters Seven and Eight), and filming videos which the boys themselves designed and acted in (Chapter Four). I conceive of this as participants' 'pro-active' engagement with the research, and discuss how other strategies, such as surveys and recording of events, were also pursued.

Situations of violence and instances of crisis within families are a feature of many boys' trajectories toward the street, as outlined in **Chapter Four**. These trajectories vary, given the variety of forms of social and political violence in Colombia. There are boys who have been orphaned by the paramilitary and guerrilla, and boys who felt compelled to leave home because of abuse, because of threats of violence within their neighbourhoods, or how poverty had fragmented their households. The street is an option of last resort for boys which, they emphasise, they do **not** come to by choice. While sometimes romanticised as a place where children escape the shackles of adult control, the street in Medellín is a violent terrain, where different social actors and groups vie for limited space and resources. These trajectories are juxtaposed with the state's approach to 'irregular situations'. This approach, supported by a 1989 Minor's Code, is one in which children's rights, as ratified in the UNCRC, have yet to be integrated. This is but one example of the insufficient nature of state responses to poverty, contextualised within what I call the 'absentee' state apparatus.

In **Chapter Five** I consider how the street can shape boys' attitudes towards the institution, and how the CCS Patio operates as a functional space for many who live on the street. The Patio is one element of their survival strategies on the street, which I discuss in the first part of the chapter. The functional ethics of solidarity and sharing that children form on the street are in contrast to the individualistic ideologies of the institutional programme, and such peer solidarity may be

important as an emotional support system throughout the institutional experience. I suggest grounds for comparison of 'street' children's social organisation with band societies, for ways in which power is dispersed (cf Clastres 1977, Silberbauer 1982). This is one of the reasons why, contrary to the institution's objectives, rather than enticing children off the street, the majority of children who visit the Patio never progress to become part of its programmes. This can be partly explained by the fact that the institution can be seen to reproduce ideas about the contamination of street culture and its links with 'delinquency', which it aims to rid the boys of. While some refuse this characterisation and leave, and other return home after a brief spell away, other boys arrive at the first stage in search of security and an education.

Those children at the Patio who staff consider suitable for and interested in the institution are selected to progress to its second stage, the Transition House. In **Chapter Six**, I follow the selection process, from staff discussions about selection to the ritual of initiation into the institution. A crucial feature of the selection process is the enactment of institutional policy, which involved defining and constituting individuals as particular kinds of subjects (Shore and Wright 1997) and allows for reflection on how institutional vertical power structures privilege certain types of knowledge over others (cf Wright 1994, Marsden 1994).

The ritual through which the boys are introduced to the institution offers an elaborate presentation of the institution's goals and values. In a ceremony based on a mass, boys pledge to renounce all that they have been and done on the street, and promise to become 'new men'. These 'new men' have been cleansed and purified, and blessed by the officiating priest, transformations which I compare to Poole's (1982) work on male initiation. Discussing the concept of 'ritual commitment' and the levels on which religious discourses of obedience work (Humphrey and Laidlaw 1995, Asad 1993), I show how children's reactions to this process and event vary.

Children's recollections and analyses of this ritual event are discussed in **Chapter Seven**, where we see how they subsequently adapt to life in the institution. Importantly, the positive incentives provided by new material conditions and objects, from education to footwear, are of primary importance to the boys. The

boys also demonstrate consciousness of their poverty, and these material and embodied elements combine with rhetorical devices to motivate a re-thinking of their relationships to the street. They thereby demonstrate their own 'normality' in terms of their relation to dominant social values. If the confined space of the Transition House and the generally friendly and warm approach of the staff are appreciated, boys also demonstrate awareness of the ways in which they can be manipulated and rendered powerless in the face of the institutional regime.

Just over half of the boys reach the main boarding stage of the institution, where they can stay for several years, studying through high school to earn a diploma. In **Chapter Eight** we see how those who do remain with the programme in the 'third stage', understand and react to the rules of the programme. Here they are simultaneously re-confronted with the issue of the world beyond the walls of the institution, which is suddenly closer and more apparent, and reside on a campus that permits less surveillance by staff. However, use of stigmatising rhetoric about the disorders of the street is again apparent, as are questions of boys' longer-term futures. Considering cases of alumni of CCS, it becomes clear that CCS's task of changing boys' relationship to society is large indeed, and that many of the arguments it has tried to put across to boys remain counteracted by their own thinking and logic.

In **Chapter Nine**, the closing chapter, I conclude the arguments about the structural constraints on children's agency. Reviewing the ethnographic material, I contrast the views of the boys of their experience, with the position of the institution. I further suggest how this ethnography contributes to areas of debate within anthropology, including childhood, agency and violence, suggesting how subtleties of power and violence as articulated around children and in conflict situations must be examined carefully.

IV. The Ethnographic Setting: Medellín, Colombia

The situation facing Colombia at the end of the 20th century was, according to one national political scientist, more than a crisis of politics, or a crisis of the state, though both are noted; it was “a crisis of society” (Sánchez 2001: 14). In the late 1990s violence by guerrillas and paramilitaries riddled the countryside, the FARC¹² guerrillas secured a zone of distension from the government, and unemployment and emigration grew, as did a sense that things would get worse before they got better.

If the state is in crisis, this is partly an effect of changes at global levels, in the context of the diminishing relevance of the state in an era of transnational corporations and flows of capital and culture (Held 1991, Trouillot 2001, Cassese 1991). Globalisation has also produced changes to violence with “even more disturbing effects” than during *la Violencia* (Sánchez 2001: 1-2), the twenty year period when violence erupted all over the country, following the assassination of Liberal presidential candidate Gaitan in 1948. However, a fundamental aspect of the current conflict is the failure of the state to resolve the issues raised by *la Violencia*, and the failure of state policies to “accomplish all the necessary tasks of economic and social reconstruction in the regions most affected by *la Violencia*” (ibid: 16). This, Sánchez argues, has left the road paved for the revival of armed struggle (ibid).

For it is largely at national and local levels that the conflict is understood, and its forces are social and economic, as well as political. However as a country of regions, a product of the geographically divisive effects of the three ranges of the Andes that stretch from north to south, the particular historical patterns of conflict alluded to by Sánchez (above) must be taken into account. This thesis focuses on Medellín, where particular concern has focussed on the connections between the cultures of youth gangs and the rise of the ‘culture’ of the *narco-traficantes*, and thus about the impact violence and drugs have had on the young (e.g. Sánchez 2001, Gutierrez de Pineda n.d.). Through the figure of the *sicario*, the young contract killer, and *bandas*

¹² *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia. See Map 1, page 158, for national political view with zone marked.

juveniles (youth gangs), youths have been seen to develop their own cultural responses to a society where values and norms seem to have been displaced beyond recognition of old firm meanings. They too wanted to be consumers, but meanwhile seemed to be apprehending the conflicts and contradictions inherent in the values of the society. Thus for them death could “permit flight from a useless life that is replete with privations and injustices” (Sánchez op cit: 7).

Medellín

‘Medellín, ciudad de eterna primavera’

(“city of eternal spring”; local billboard and tourist guide)

‘Metrallo’¹³, ciudad de eterna plomacera’

(“city of eternal gunfire”, local saying)

Medellín is often described as Colombia’s second city, after Bogotá the capital. It is situated in the northwestern department of Antioquia, and nestled in the lush *Valle de Aburra*. Its beauty is contrasted with its legacy as a violent city, whereby the saying of permanent spring was re-interpreted by youth to signify the continuous sound of bullets, as cited in the epigraphs above. During the reign of legendary drug trafficker Pablo Escobar, signs of both the wealth and violence associated with the drugs trade were more clearly manifest in Medellín than anywhere else in the country. From the bombed out wreck of a half completed building on the Avenida El Poblado, or the apartment blocks not far away where every flat has its own swimming pool, integrated into room-sized concrete balconies, a local level of knowledge functioned around the drugs trade and its wealth comparable to legend, and suggesting social parameters and conditions of the ‘banditry’ of *la Violencia*. Indeed, there are comparisons to be made between the quality and sense of moral revolt comparable in different instances throughout Colombian history. Infringements of basic notions of justice fuelled the so-called bandits of *La Violencia*, and around whom legends arose due to the marginal social and legal

¹³ ‘Metrallo’ is derived from the word for machine gun, *metralleta*. This also plays on another nickname for Medellín, ‘Medallo’ [medal].

character of their operations (cf Hobsbawm 1969; see Sánchez and Meertens 2001) and the *bandas juveniles* such as those of Medellín.

Medellín is also something of a provincial city, a legacy of the regionalised nature of Colombian culture produced in part by the mountainous geography and its effects on transport. There are no international flights direct to Medellín's old airport, the Olaya Herrera, now functioning as a regional airport and local aquatic theme park, because the mountainsides are too steep and close for jets to land safely. Thus its contact with the world is often via Rionegro, where a large international airport was built with World Bank money in the 1980s. Planes fly in over industrial-scale flower greenhouses, small *fincas* (farms) that dot the gentler hillsides, and the messy sprawl of Rionegro with its one-way streets and outlying free trade zone factories. To downtown Medellín is an hour down a twisting road that cuts along the steep mountainsides that are carpeted with thick semi-tropical foliage, past the lone roadside cheese vendor and shiny new multinational petrol stations and, near the end, a massive billboard with a bare-breasted woman advertised jeans on the side of a bungee-jump scaffold. At the bends in the road, Medellín and neighbouring municipalities come into view below, with the river running through the centre of the valley, and urbanisation sprawling through the valley floor and up the slopes of the mountainside (see photograph 3.1). The needle-shaped spire of the Coltejer building in the centre is an apt indicator of the textile industry that helped the city grow, and the two gleaming lines of the Metro which cut through the valley an up-to-date sign of regional 'Paisa'¹⁴⁷ pride, financial acuity and commitment to the idea of progress.

Downtown, where 'street' children can be found, is busy, the pavements lined with vendors, from indigenous Ecuadorian economic migrants selling woollen jumpers, to old men with wooden trays strapped across their bodies, containing open packets of cigarettes and small sweets, who compete for space with large wooden trolleys piled with avocados, oranges and tomatoes. Brightly painted US-made buses and swarms of yellow taxis (25,000 in one count) with drivers wearing a sleeve on their

left arms to keep sunburn at bay, ply the streets (see photograph 3.3). Horns go off at traffic lights as soon as red begins to fade, and at an intersection of the Avenida Oriental two children sit on the thin strip of concrete that divides the lanes, playing with matches until the light goes red, when they will again try to sell sweets through open car windows.

Up from this intersection is the old neighbourhood of Niquitao, where some crumbling signs of 1930s art deco architecture mingle with more recent decay, children play in the streets, and young men stand near doorways surveying the scene. Niquitao was once described to me as a 'black' *barrio*, not because it has a high population of blacks, but because it was old, dangerous and dirty, blackness in this case being a metaphor for danger and vice. On another occasion an educator said it was virtually a breeding ground for children who would one day end up at CCS, suggesting the intransigence of epidemiological formulations of poverty. It was home to several of the boys mentioned in this thesis, and was where I attended the wake of an eight-year-old boy on a previous visit to Medellín. On the top floor of a tenement building, several women and numerous children were gathered around a small coffin, placed on top of the only table in the communal cooking area. There were tears, but they were subdued. There was no-one with a rosary or saying prayers, just grief and sadness that a security guard had thought the boy dangerous enough to shoot him. Such poor children do not fit into myths where childhood is a metaphor for innocence. Here, being young is just another marker of 'delinquency', difference and impotence.

This Medellín is a world away from that further up the Avenida Oriental, which eventually turns into the Avenida el Poblado, becoming a tree-lined avenue bordered by luxury hotels of international standard, and several chic shopping malls where ladies who lunch park their four-wheel drive all-terrain vehicles and boutiques sell imported sandals costing half the monthly minimum wage. Of course, difference and inequality are not unique to Colombia, but there is a strong and visible contrast

¹⁴ The term Paisa is used to describe the region and culture and used to identify a person's place of origin. The cultural 'complex' is centred in Antioquia but extends to cover areas considered to have been colonised by Antioqueños, such as the south lying departments of Caldas and Risaralda.

between the comforts and culture of one end of this road and the middle of it; perhaps because wealthy Colombians scour the world in their search for taste, and differentiate with distinction. *Cultura* is something one has, a product of one's breeding and social class (cf Bourdieu 1973), class thus being still largely a product of birth, confirmed by patterns of consumption. While the accent of English that parents wish their children to cultivate forms the basis of decisions on which private schools to choose are concerns for the upper classes¹⁵, in Niquitao there are no schools at all. Childhood, then, is a possibility related to class. The playgrounds, toys such as motorised tricycles, and swimming pools of the upper class apartment complexes in El Poblado, where uniformed nannies watch over their charges, are broadly coterminous with childhood in Europe and North America. The lives of children in *barrios* like Niquitao point to radical differences of reality and expectation.

The 'street' – '*la calle*' – is a profoundly complex concept, which refers to more than the roads that form the grids of the city centre. The word that denotes a route of transit has very different meanings for those that live or spend much of their lives on it. *La calle* in Medellín may be where parents work, but it is also where parents fear their children going; for the street is also a cultural space, with meanings, values, symbols and attitudes all its own. Locally, within the spaces of city streets there are differentiations between people and how they use them. From families of recyclers who push large wooden trolleys and work and stay together, to the lone men sleeping under or near bridges, to the newly displaced arrivals to the city who sleep at roundabouts and hold up placards to drivers around the university area explaining their plight, the street is heavily populated by people with nowhere else to go. Likewise in *barrios* like Niquitao, the young people who gather on the street corners during the day or in the evenings, do so because they have nowhere else to congregate.

For the 'street' children who lived outside the institution's Patio, a walled courtyard next to a church, the street had a meaning that was existential, ontological. The

¹⁵ As one engineering consultant explained to me, she sent her child to the Columbus School because it was British English they taught there, and not the less-historically-valid American English.

*parche*¹⁶, whose population was fluid, was the space in which many of the boys in this thesis had their experiences of street life. It was where they slept, where they came back to with drugs, where they made friends, and where they learnt elements of how to survive on the street. Passed by pedestrians and countless cars and trucks, monitored by security forces, the street was not only where they lived, it was the source of a stigmatising identity forced upon them by society and where they experience first hand the general perceptions of the street as a place of anti-social and deviant behaviour.

The street as a social space is characterised fundamentally by the limited collective power of its inhabitants. While space is sometimes disputed amongst residents and workers, the bulk of the power lies with the police and other state security forces, and the *Convivir*¹⁷ urban paramilitaries who patrol the centre¹⁸. For boys, however, the street is also space and a social environment that provides refuge from other forms of power, that of abusive or indifferent parents, the power of poverty to fracture families, or the violent power in places where memories of their deceased parents lie. But amongst themselves, as I will show, the corruptions of violent power are distanced, and ethics of solidarity and sharing convene to protect them from the powers around them. The sharing of space and the non-differentiation evident in the way they bunch together to sleep at night will be challenged by the institutional order some will enter, where power as a resource is carefully distributed and monitored, and where spaces are enclosed and invigilated and have functions ruled by routines.

¹⁶ *Parche* is a term in wide use on the street in recent years, which denotes the physical space or place where a group gathers. This prioritises the physical space over who is there, and has been observed to replace the previous emphasis on *galladas* or groups of friends. The gang, according to some authors, has seen a diminished role on the street because of the dangers associated with both being identified as a group, in terms of visibility to security forces and vigilantes, as well as internal mechanisms of obligation that some children (and adults) reject in favour of more autonomy (Garcia Suarez 1998, Ruiz et al 1998). The word probably derives from the rural agricultural practice of sharing a *parcela* (small plot) of land with another man.

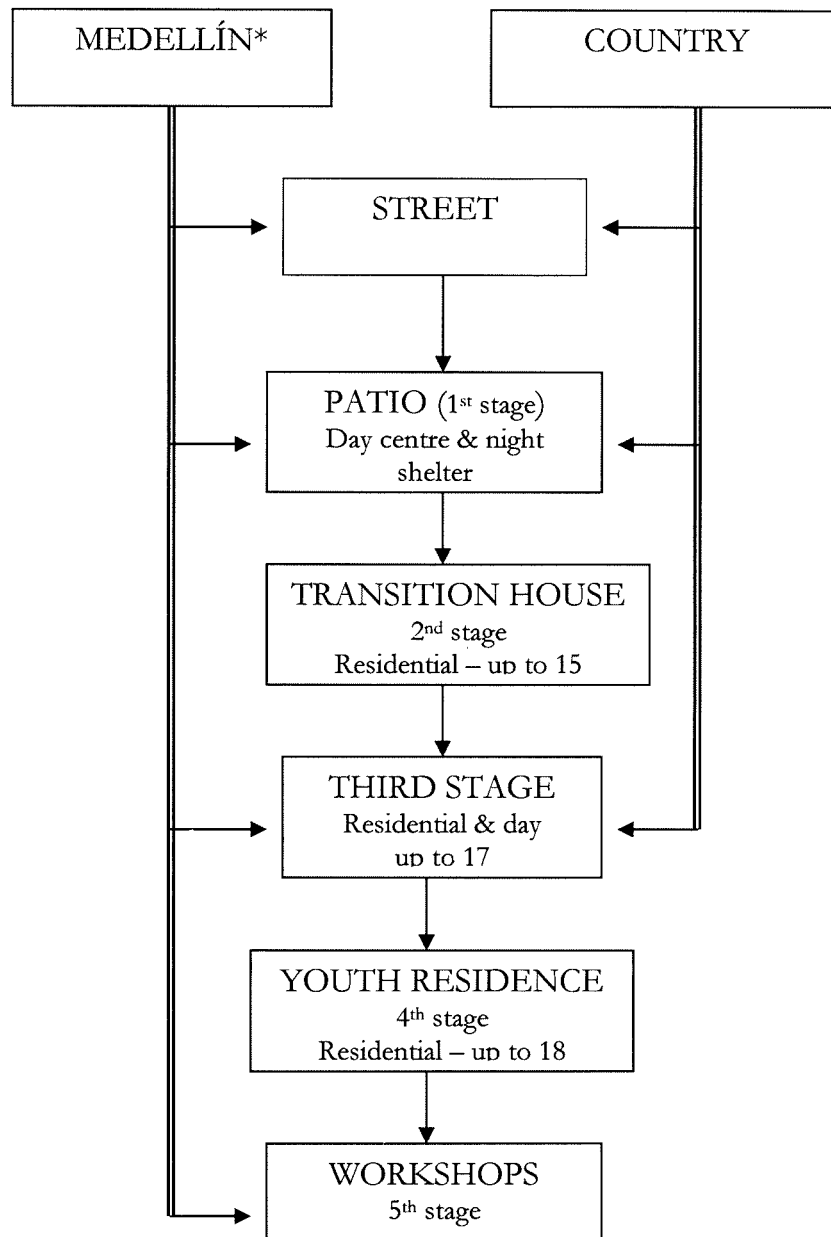
¹⁷ The *Convivir* (sometimes spelt all capitalised) were given legal status in the early 1990s as rural self-defence groups, in response to what was perceived as the spread of guerrilla action and the impotence of the state to protect the population. They have since become active in the cities, where the term is also used to refer to other paramilitary groups functioning in similar ways.

¹⁸ During the construction of the metro in the mid 1990s, when city centre stations were being built the fire department was called in to literally flush out homeless people and others who congregated in the streets.

The Church aspires to bring the children who are the subjects of its welfare programmes into a new relationship to society, by transforming their relationship to God and morality, and thus neither its methods nor its objectives are secular (as the state's would be, given the 1991 Constitution¹⁹). As the self-regulating subjects formed by the programme, the children should learn to function and behave with new values and moral structures for evaluating their actions. This suggests the relevance of a Foucauldian approach to questions of state-craft and governmentality (esp. 1977, 1991), and involves considering the trajectories through which concepts and spaces of norms and deviance are established. Thus the point to be examined is not which laws or norms place people 'outside' society, but how the centre defines, creates and legitimises those margins, and the ways in which these are invigilated. In the following chapter I shall explore how issues of poverty and discipline form fundamental theoretical spaces in which these processes are articulated. Childhood, poverty and violence are examined as factors which shape and constrain the realities and agency of 'street' and other displaced children.

¹⁹ Which disestablished the Catholic Church and recognised Colombia's multi- ethnic reality. This is discussed further in Chapter Four.

Diagram 1. CCS PROGRAMME STRUCTURE AND ENTRY METHODS



* 'Medellín' and 'country' refer to place of origin of a boy. This has particular relevance to the fifth stage, which is open to young men and women from Medellín.

Chapter Two

Childhood, Discipline and Violence: Contours and Concepts of Ethnographic Inquiry

“*Gaminismo* is the great cause of delinquency. All the problems of the child are born there”

- Director of Colombian Institute for Family Welfare (ICBF), 1994¹

“The amount of poverty and suffering required for the emergence of a Rockefeller, and the amount of depravity that the accumulation of a fortune of such magnitude entails, are left out of the picture, and it is not always possible to make the people in general see this.”

-E. Guevara, 1965²

I. Introduction

This ethnography explores the lives of marginalised children involved in a disciplinary institution. The dynamic between structure and agency has recently been given particular salience in the study of children, given the need to counter the efforts of earlier approaches and the facts of children’s marginality to the social order (James, Jenks and Prout 1998). In this chapter I explore the issues raised by this literature, focusing on the specific case of Colombia. At the time of fieldwork, conditions in Colombia demanded consideration of the relationship between risk and violence, as forces which shape children’s agency. Indeed it is these factors which force children to approach the disciplinary institution that is the focus of this study. In its complexity, the Colombian context suggests new questions in the theorisation of the spaces of childhood. I argue that any account of children requires contextualisation in material, economic and social circumstances as key factors shaping both social constructions of childhood, and the experiences of children themselves. Furthermore, through contextualising, we can create a grounded approach through which to explore the many contributions children’s studies can make to some of anthropology’s core concerns about the structure and dynamics of society and culture.

¹ As spoken during interview in documentary on social cleansing in Colombia, *The disposables*, presented by Emily Buchanan, produced by Giselle Portenier for ‘Assignment’, BBC, 1994

² From “Notes for the Study of Man and Socialism in Cuba”, Havana. Available at www.che-lives.com/cgi, from *Che Guevara Speaks: Selected Speeches and Writings*, Pathfinder Press 1967.

II. Contexts

In the late 1990s Colombia was gripped by unprecedented recession, while the longest running internal conflict on the continent, between insurgent guerrilla forces and the government, dragged on with no conclusion in sight. Ruled by an oligarchy whose hold on state power has been maintained by the use of violence, and with the continent's most conservative Catholic church wielding a unique influence over social issues, the constrained space in which civil society operated, between exclusions from legal processes and the threat of violence, seemed paralleled by how the twin influences of violence and discipline exerted their pressure on boys.

Formally a democracy, Colombia is perhaps better conceived of as a state in which two parties have shared control over political processes and state apparatuses since the difficult decades of the inception of the republic in the middle of the 19th century. While there have been divisions within the oligarchy, or as they are referred to locally, '*la clase política*' (the political class), reaching a peak in the 1950s with the period of inter-party warfare known as *La Violencia*, even this bloodshed and turmoil resulted in a power-sharing pact known as the National Front. Indeed this war between the Liberals and Conservatives was largely fought by peasants with a sense of birthright allegiance to the parties, in what Sánchez and Meertens (1999) suggest constituted an effective strategy of divide and rule.

Economically Colombia is one of the most unequal countries in Latin America, and social differences are mirrored in the racial hierarchy of whites ruling over the *mestizo* (mixed race) majority, and Black and indigenous minorities (Wade 1993). These situations of inequality, apparent in the manner in which the poor refer to themselves as (simply) 'the poor' (*los pobres*)³, have been maintained through the state's use of multiple forms of violence, both those tied to the state (such as police repression and the declaration of states of siege in which the army is given extended powers) and those outside this, through paramilitary and other forms more opaque social control. This can be related to the weak state presence in many parts of the country, made possible by what Sweig considers a deliberate underdevelopment of

³ See drawing 4.1 on page 151, following Chapter four

the state by the elite, so that in the absence of a local army or police presence they could make use of resources unhindered by army or police interference (2002: 125).

Violence is used against members of leftist political organisations, populations who do not hold the state in high or legitimate regard, and those who are seen as obstacles to economic 'development'. Such uses of violence seem to confirm the state's "incapacity ... to apply the principles upon which it legitimises itself" (Pécaut 2001: 13). These situations have helped violence to become an aspect of many types of relationships, from those pertaining to rural power to political processes, from gang turf wars to the settling of inter-family feuds. Violence has also been the means by which organised resistance movements have mounted challenges to the state since the 1960s, challenges which have been met with fierce repression rather than invitations to power sharing. The country's largest remaining guerrilla group, the FARC (*Fuerzas Armadas de Revolución Colombiana*, or Colombian Armed Revolutionary Forces) dates from this period (with a Marxist ideology). Joined in the 1970s by the ELN (*Ejército de Liberación Nacional*, or National Liberation Army), these and other, since disbanded, guerrilla forces have entered countless negotiations with the government. All of these negotiations failed to bring any semblance of a lasting peace, and so the challenge to the state has been maintained. This is also as a result of successive governments' failure to take up any of the guerrillas' social or economic agendas as national policy.

There is speculation as to the continuation of their struggles through funding by drugs monies⁴, and it is certain that the struggle between state and insurgent forces was deeply complicated by the war against drugs. From Pablo Escobar's war against the Colombian government over extradition to the United States in the early 1990s, to the USA's war on drugs fought on Colombian soil, the drug wars have contributed to the world's highest homicide rates and the debilitation of a justice system through which a negligible proportion of crimes are prosecuted. This has

⁴ Suspicions which were set into public consciousness as fact by a US ambassador's coining of the term 'narco- guerrilla' in the mid 1990s. This helped set the course for US involvement in fighting the guerrillas, now legitimised under the rubric of the US's 'war on terror'. However, as Steiner (1998) has shown, only a small proportion of the total revenues from drug sales actually return to Colombia. Most are laundered through major international banks.

created a vacuum of justice, and accountability, and undermined the legitimacy of the state.

In this vacuum of state accountability and with the dominant presence of a conservative Catholic church, civil society has struggled to mark out its own terrain against the backdrop of violence. Unable, or unwilling, to govern in the best interests of the whole society, a ruling elite perpetually in fear of subversion and relying on repression and violence, has allied itself to the social views and strength of the Church to control the country, described by one authority as “more tenacious in its hold upon national and civil life in Colombia than in any other Latin American country” (Meacham 1966: 115 in Wilde 1980: 207).

Formally a Catholic country until the 1991 Constitution was made to reflect the country's ethnic and religious diversity, the institutional Church has been one of Latin America's most orthodox in terms of doctrine, and most conservative and resistant as an institution (Levine 1985, Wilde 1980). The Church has, through its careful management of political relations since the Concordat of 1887 (considered a model of its kind by Rome, according to Wilde 1980), maintained itself as a close ally of the Conservative party, and held a critical position as the provider of moral, cosmological and political orientation for the majority of the population. In rural areas, throughout the history of the republic, the priest has played a crucial role in the local triumvirate of power, along with the landlord and appointed mayor, and always, particularly when threatened with strong Liberal candidates, instructed and brought out their flock to vote Conservative (Deas 1996). This model of power is linked to relations of patronage, rather than those of power sharing or democracy. The church has simultaneously always opposed the development of participatory tendencies within the church that flourished elsewhere in Latin America, such as liberation theology⁵, and upheld the need for priests to act as mediators between laity and God.

⁵ When, during the 1960s revolutionary priest Camilo Torres posed challenges to the church by re-reading the gospel and arguing that justice was a Christian goal, the institutional church remained firmly opposed, and continued to take a passive stance to the structural and class violence which characterised the country. A position removed from engagement in the politics and causality of poverty remained the position of the City of the Children's Saint at the time of fieldwork. While its literature made reference

Such power relations have contributed to the development of value and identity systems in which status is located within rigid hierarchies. These hierarchies inform the ways in which Colombians understand their own and others' position, status and rank in society, status thus being ascribed more than achieved. There are several 'axes' to the structures which differentiate, crucial amongst them being 'race', class⁶, economic status, family position, and religion⁷. Add to this the dynamics of vengeance and identification with different actors in the war and we come closer to understanding some of the underlying dynamics of Colombian society. To graft onto this fabric ideals of equitable and free citizenship is a complex task that could only be done by undoing crucial aspects of identity and many people's sense of who they are as individuals and in relation to each other⁸.

Inevitably, it would seem, the effects of the short-termist vision of the political class are now evident. The absence of a comprehensive social security network, the existence of widespread corruption, evasion of what is anyway one of the lowest tax rates in Latin America, decades of failure in addressing the role of economic and social inequality in fomenting conditions of conflict - elements of a state which I explore in more depth in Chapter four- are all crucial aspects of the panorama of

to the 'structural causes of the situation, which are much wider', neither advocacy on behalf of those it served nor challenging the conditions which produced their need were part of its remit.

⁶ In a broad sense as suggested above, class differentiations are made by ordinary Colombians between people of elite social categories (*los ricos, gente de categoría, la clase política, la élite*), the ascendant middle class, and the poor (*los pobres*) majority, rather than bearing particular relation to identification with ownership and effects of industrialisation. Such identifications are salient at other levels, as it is common knowledge that four major conglomerates, some linked with notable families, own most of the country's valuable companies; and social and business elites direct industry and exert powerful influences over government policy through *gremios*, or industrial and agricultural pressure groups. Particularly important amongst these are the national coffee federation (*Federación Nacional de Cafeteros*), the ANDI (*Asociación Nacional de Industriales*, national association of industrialists) and FENALCO (merchants association), amongst others.

⁷ Suggesting continuities between current violence and the period of *La Violencia*, Roldán (2002) has noted how racial identification, sense of shared kinship and values, and religious and political conservatism played a significant role in the manner in which dominant and socially heterogeneous groups managed to avert the worst excesses of *la Violencia* in Antioquia, by lobbying government, whilst those perceived as marginal to this dominant society were considered, lazy, barbarous rebellious and licentious, and much more likely to be killed. Although the components of Antioquian concepts of identity are particular, the categories through which they identify themselves were little changed in 1998, and remain salient to the structures of Colombian society.

⁸ It is commonly understood for example that President Uribe and the leaders of the paramilitaries, the Castaño brothers, have all been inspired to their political positions by personal vendettas against the guerrilla for the murder of blood relatives. The trope of revenge thus occupies an important place the political imaginary of many Colombians, and has a particular links to visions of masculinity, as I will explore below.

chaos and social genocide which have characterised the country in recent years. It is in these contexts that risk and violence manifest themselves as fundamental elements shaping the nature of survival.

III. Risk and Structural Violence

Risk is a central feature of the manner in which the boys in this thesis evaluate their lives, and how they are evaluated by others. It is also a defining feature of the combination of violence and poverty in their lives, which produce situations where survival is the goal to which people make reference: *'el rebusque'*, the daily search for work, for money, for food and shelter, let alone clothes, medical care or other necessities, is a phrase which sums up what life is about for all too many poor in Colombia. This is particularly poignant in the case of the displaced, who must search out all of these things simultaneously in what are often strange and hostile places. Risks of overt violence are stacked against those with fewer economic resources, as are the chances of becoming even poorer during recession⁹. Violence is experienced according to broad categories of class: the poor are the victims of massacres and forced displacement, the rich of kidnap threats and the loss of land to guerrillas. Given this harsh and crisis-ridden context, I explore how the concept of structural violence flows from analysis of economic risk and uncertainty, and suggest that in analysing violence we sometimes need to look further than the immediate surroundings to find the cause.

In considering how risk envelops the lives of these boys in different ways, I draw on concepts of risk as developed by Beck (1986 [1992]). In order to ground his meta-theory of the ecological risk which threatens European society, however, I follow some of the lines traced by anthropologists such as Caplan (2000), which allow for risk to be considered from grounded analyses to produce more nuanced angles. And while in agreement with Nugent's apposite observation that Beck's risk "is not so much an inappropriate notion as an incomplete one" (2000: 246), especially for its deficiencies in relating risk to material and political inequality, there are clearly

⁹ A recent World Bank study showed that those whose incomes suffered most (in terms of a percentage fall) during the recession which began in 1997 were the poorest of the poor. The risk of being poor is also highest for households with less educated (primary school only) heads (72%) (2002:51-52)

possibilities for exploring an anthropological reading of risk in the context of the children at CCS.

For reasons stated above, the concept of risk is apparent in many ways in this ethnographic material. Boys are cognisant of and constantly managing risk on the street, and in many senses make explicit choices about risk in leaving home, and in deciding to forfeit the freedoms of the street, for the risks associated with enclosure in an institution. Risk also provides an opportunity to contrast positions, and see the divergences of views of risk according to status, class and power relations. How different people see the risk that children on the street either confront or constitute, provides some interesting insights into the social forces around them. Three levels or groups seem worth distinguishing, as their positions and views are manifest in the material presented later in the thesis.

The first is the state, which, through its policy towards children in need (1989 Minor's Code, discussed in more detail in Chapter four) suggests that they are children in 'moral and physical danger'. However, we also see, given the nature of the legislation which operates around them, that the state considers these children a risk to society. Indeed as the opening quote of this chapter suggests, for state officials, *gaminismo* is seen as a risk for the future of a child and for the country and people around them. In the legal tradition of 'compassion-repression' (Garcia Mendez 1998), problems diagnosed as caused by the disordered poor are addressed in laws which combine paternalistic welfarism with methods of social control and discipline which underscore the manner in which children are seen as deviants to be punished, rather than victims to be aided.

While there was significant variation in the sorts of views held by priests within CCS about their charges, this sort of punitive vision of the 'errors' of the poor can also be found in some of the priests' discourses about the children's plight. Mention of parents who were disorganised in their relationships for example was sometimes made as a salient causative factor. Indeed a congruence between the institution's and the state's views of parental irresponsibility was apparent in the conditions of contract by which CCS exercised its protective functions, as since the mid 1990s the

state required such institutions to carry out social work interventions and remedial therapies, such as parenting workshops, with parents, as part of what was seen as a coherent approach to tackling the causes of child risk and 'abandonment'.

Meanwhile the ways in which the children articulated their sense of risk and identified and confronted risk in their daily lives brings other frames of reference into view. One issue which suggested itself as a kind of existential anxiety was war, manifested through drawings and discussions about boys' hopes for peace, as well as being evident in their articulations about specific kinds of violence and the prevalence of violence in the society around them. For the boys, the effects of this war included situations in home neighbourhoods or communities where the conflict between guerrillas, paramilitaries and the army was being played out, as well as the war composed of localised battles involving urban paramilitaries, youth gangs, police and other security forces. In the violence of both these wars, social class and risk collided, as the majority of the victims are poor civilians whose relationship to the conflict is nothing more than one of social, political and geographic vulnerability.

A third arena of risk was, for many boys, the street, a place they were pushed to by the combined effects of conflict and poverty. Children who lived or had lived for any period of time on the street worried and talked about the risk of violence on the street, as well as the dangers presented to them by more mundane issues like hunger, not having anywhere to wash bodies and clothes, and not having enough money for *sacol* (glue) or other drugs. Drugs, with their effects of alleviating the acuteness of hunger and other symptoms of ill-being, were a primary preoccupation for some boys during entire days, which could be spent begging and working for coins with which to purchase small amounts. Risks of violence came from other street inhabitants, the police, and urban paramilitaries, whose plainclothes operatives constituted a constant source of anxiety for the boys. Boys made evaluations about different kinds of risk, apparent in later chapters when they talk about who was responsible for different sorts of events and problems, and which underline children's awareness and negotiation of violence as well as their active moral reasoning.

How boys confronted and spoke about the risks of the street was a good indicator of how long they had been there, as well as how they had fared in adapting to its demands. How to confront risk with action was an element which differentiated the boys, and which made the street and the **knowledge** necessary to survive on the street a pole of differentiation. It also meant that risk could sometimes be evaluated positively, consciousness of risk growing with experience, and providing an opportunity to demonstrate male mastery and bravery, in ways which highlight their aspirations to emulate older males as I discuss shortly. If you had managed to learn these things, to learn the street 'smarts' and skills in perceiving and predicting the behaviour of others, skills in negotiating in argument and conflict, skill in defending your *parce* (friend) against enemies, then you were of value on the street. As explored above, the issues of agency in adversity implicit here demand further thinking about the social construction of childhood. It is important to learn about how children confront and manage adversity – be it poverty, conflict, personal crises – because we learn about what they think and do, rather than assuming that we know what is best for them, two radically different ontological positions.

Such approaches bring us back to another social construction of risk, however. For politicians, many members of the middle class around them, and some of the priests who worked with them, the children were considered to be at risk of social contagion, as well as being contagious, or carriers of social ills, and therefore constituting a threat to the moral order around them¹⁰. For the priests, responsibility for incorporation into the culture of street and all the risks that it presented lay with the children, as did the responsibility for shedding that identity, through acts such as the initiation ritual (described in chapter six).

There is a parallel here with the risk that prostitutes present as a pool of potential infection (Day 2000), in the way children on the street are seen as a latent threat of delinquency, as in the quote at the start of the chapter. However they are also seen as active and current delinquents, but there is the possibility of curbing this view with notions of childish irresponsibility, ignorance or innocence. Some children,

¹⁰ There are interesting parallels here with the way in which Williams (1999) suggests concepts of innocence are suspended for socially marginal children, as she contrasts in the case of the shock at the white middle class boys who carried out the Columbine (Colorado) high school massacre, when compared with black inner city children who are constantly the objects of police attention.

particularly the younger or smaller boys, played with such ideas, eliciting reactions based in such assumptions, and which played on the possibility for change inherent in certain views of both the human mind and the condition of childhood. This confirms a tension around agency discussed above, but which often seemed, in its irreconcilability, to be stacked against the children.

Children on the street, then, are seen as a risk because they are out of place, far from the control of parents and school relationships which 'civilise' the child, and inculcate in it certain norms of behaviour. In seeing children take drugs and who are imagined to be engaged in stealing, notions of innocence in childhood as an essence showing the goodness of human nature are dislocated and disturbed. The problem is that for many young people, their nightmare is a society which fails to guarantee them a future, and where their few life chances require responsibility and skill to negotiate. Such conditions of suffering for the many form part of the context of structural violence which these arguments lead me towards.

Reconsidering Violence

Structural violence poses a number of challenges to certain approaches to violence within anthropology. As Harris notes, anthropology has had a rather ambivalent position towards violence, wherein violence tends to either be analysed as functional or not mentioned, and those carrying out violent acts have tended to be characterised as 'other' (1994: 40, 41). Analysis of violence also often starts from positions where violence is seen to suggest the "use of force, usually unlawfully" (Parkin 1986: 204), necessitating consideration of issues such as the attribution of blame and responsibility, as well as legitimacy, and placing violence at the margins of legitimate social processes.

As a concept, structural violence encompasses acts and effects which may not have hitherto been considered overt violence, but rather conceived of as unfortunate effects of market forces and political relations. Within an approach considering structural violence, suffering and systemic poverty are not considered accidental, but the predictable effects of existing arrangements of power. As such, structural violence necessitates tracing lines of causality to areas within legal frameworks rather

than outside them, and understanding how constellations of social, political and economic relations produce and reproduce suffering and risk for the many. This requires the symbolic realm to be related to the material relations which produce it.

These characteristics suggest how the quest to apportion blame for actions of violence as suggested by Parkin (above) can be complex. In Colombia even around specific acts of violence there are often deliberate demonstrations of ignorance. In Medellín, for example, accounts of a murder usually involved the phrase '*lo mataron*' (they killed him). To the question of who had killed the victim, the reply was usually '*¿quién sabe?*' (who knows), accompanied by a shrug of the shoulders¹¹. In the atmosphere of *la ley del silencio* (the law of silence), it was always prudent to feign ignorance¹². These facts highlight how the power of fear functions in the absence of an effective justice system, as a system through which silence is imposed on people, and perpetuate conditions in which impunity is the norm for homicides and massacres.

Recent anthropological work has sought to consider violence from a number of other angles, such as the role of symbolic representations in constituting culture or society¹³, whereby violence is understood to have "the effect of a 'creative' or at least constitutive force in social relations" (Abbink 2000: xii). This approach proposes recognising the perpetrator's intentions as well as the position of the victims. Violence, as we will see, constitutes a code or language of symbolic meaning that expresses relationships of power, that has direct impacts on how many boys

¹¹ This is particularly true of conversations about violence in urban areas that involve issues of gangs, crime or the Convivir. In rural areas where the positions of actors are potentially more visible and identifiable this can be different, and conversations with individuals who had fled violence in rural areas often involved identifying the perpetrator, as a member of the guerrilla or paramilitary as this was more apparent. However, the contexts in which utterances are made are necessarily carefully monitored.

¹² In Moser and McIlwaine's study, the maps drawn by participants in one Colombian group about the fears created by paramilitary violence suggest links between 'keep[ing] your mouth shut', lack of trust, lack of solidarity and individualism (2001: 184-185). This invocation of silence and fear gripping a community finds resonance with Dorfman's evocation of the *Imbunche*, a child-like figure with its bone and skin re-arranged so that the head faces backwards and its perceptive functions are sealed. This old folktale of what witches do to the children they abduct becomes an allegory for society under the effects of Pinochet's regime of terror in Chile (in Taussig 1987: 4).

¹³ There is an argument that the symbolic realm must also be integrated into an analysis of structural violence, for example by Kleinman, who advocates a position derived from Scheper-Hughes (1992) identification of the 'violence of everyday life', as multiple and normative, and occurring 'wherever power orients practice' (Kleinman 2000:226-228, 238). However I find explicit disregard of economic differentiation and violence in this position unhelpful in mapping the realities of inequality and suffering.

understand the dynamics of the society around them. And as Meertens has shown, violence creates understandings and leaves markers for future generations through the mechanisms of its execution. As she has explored in Colombia (2001a & b), the methods of perpetrating violence are a clue to the actors' intentions, where the symbolic and material content of killings and displaying bodies are an indicator of the particular goals of the actors.

Weber's delineation of the state as monopolising violence has often served as a parameter for anthropologists, and as a consequence has confined analysis within the bounds of territorial entities. For example, Martin's (2000) sociological analysis of a 'tradition of violence' in Colombia does not include within its scope external pressures from entities like the United States in the Cold War or the war against drugs, much of it fought directly in Colombia¹⁴. Such approaches disregard the crucial role violence has played in processes such as European colonisation and expansion since the 16th century, as I will explore shortly, or the ways in which local wars may be manifestations of battles which are global in scope. The points to which violence is traced are crucial. Further, in Colombia today the state clearly does not have a monopoly on the use of force, and its claims to legitimate use are undermined by many events and connections with paramilitaries, and the sources of conflict are not bound within the territory of the state. Rather, this is a war whose tentacles, finances and arms reach far beyond the borders of Colombia, as cocaine, arms and oil are all international industries.

The concept of structural violence both builds on and disrupts some of these aforementioned elements of violence, but importantly takes in implications of unequal power at a global level in understanding violence. The concept has increasingly been used by observers of inequality at the international level, as produced by multiple forces, amongst them multilateral institutions, international markets and accompanying geo-politics, which are seen to create conditions of

¹⁴ Between 1997 and 2002, US military and police aid to Colombia increased six-fold, to \$1.5 million per day in 2002 (Isaacson 2002). 'Plan Colombia' was developed during this period by the Pastrana administration as a national four-year strategy in which military expenditure was raised significantly, mostly with money from the US.

suffering to the millions of poor who are disenfranchised from such processes¹⁵. It starts from a position whereby poverty is not considered accidental nor inevitable, but the product of particular social, economic and political relations.

Definitions of structural violence emphasise the often distant nature of the causation of suffering, “killing slowly and invisibly” (S. Kim 1984: 181 in Cassese 1991:258), “with no identifiable actor at whom to point one’s finger (Galtung 1988: 272 in *ibid*). Bolivian researchers at CEDIB point out that the difficulties of visualising the origin or actors in structural violence (making reference to the diverse effects on the US’s war on drugs as carried out in Bolivia) has disorienting effects, but that this violence does come from “determined structures created by people” (1993: 18). These structures consist of established patterns of relations, and the internal mechanisms which form patterns within industries and societies, economies and cultures. The term violence drives attention to dynamics, and actions which are violent, instances of damage, contexts of conflict, and dramatic curtailment. As Farmer’s account of Haiti suggest, a focus on structural violence aims to find

“... some of the mechanisms through which large-scale social forces crystallise into the sharp, hard surfaces of individual suffering. Such suffering is structured by historically given (and often economically driven) processes and forces” (1996: 263.)

Structural violence is thus about the ways social, economic and political forces combine to predict the likelihood of multiple kinds of suffering, and is best understood by looking at a vertical slice of decision making, action and results. It is international in scope, as outlined above, and is visible in the unequal power relations between nations, for example the coercion a strong state can exercise over a weak one in trade negotiations (Cassese 1991: 268). It also often follows lines or axes of discrimination, racism and internal colonialism, thereby being both geographically broad and historically deep, as Farmer (1996: 263) suggests; and considers inequality in access to resources and power structures, as forces which “conspire... to constrain agency” (*op cit*).

¹⁵ See for example Galtung 1988, Cassese 1991, Cockburn 2001, Farmer 1996

This echoes the issue of constrained agency and unequal power which as I have suggested above, has multiple implications for considering the context of the young economically and socially disadvantaged children in this thesis. Poverty exists because of unequal and exploitative relations, not just of production but of access: to markets, knowledge, social and cultural capital and other integral components of a system, the lack of which creates situations of restricted choice or alternatives. Culture, race, and gender form some of what Farmer terms 'axes' or social factors which can influence and produce violence (1996: 274). In considering the lack of options in situations of poverty, attention must be paid to some of the myths which capitalism and democracy produce about themselves, such as education always being a vehicle for social improvement, merit being the prime consideration in employment markets, or that the laws of market forces are more important than the injustice they create.

In many ways structural violence maps itself onto inequities in exposure to risk, as outlined, but not pursued, by Beck when he argues that there is a "systematic 'attraction' between extreme poverty and extreme risk" (1992:41), as the sale or transference of risk is internationalised. As in the case of Bhopal, India, or villagers forced off their land in mining or oil development areas in Colombia, the needs, rights and views of local peasants are scant match for the power of multinationals to influence the shape of laws, by-pass responsibility through technicalities of corporate constitutionality, and purchase the allegiance of local elites or other influence.

Suffering may not be restricted to those at the bottom of the social order, nor to that caused by material want, but there are conditions of variation and differences in the kinds and depths of suffering that need to be addressed. In the context of modern Colombia, both specific or overt violence and structural violence are, and indeed have been for most of its history, dominant features of the status quo. This combination of suffering and persecution has been, as suggested earlier, met with resistance for at least the last five decades. When we trace relations between masculinity, violence and economics, a long history become apparent, since the era of the colonisation. This is a necessary backdrop for understanding the ways in

which structural violence has been manifest in the lives of the poor, and relevant to the ways in which a generation of young men in Medellín made instrumental use of violence to solve their economic plight.

IV. Masculinity and Violence: growing up male and poor in Medellín the late twentieth century

Changing social constructions and structures of childhood must not be studied in isolation from the social realities around them, as I suggested above. Rather account must be taken of the changing social world 'above' them, and how children relate to particular aspects of it. Little sense could be made in this thesis for example, of the ways some boys understood risk on the street without reference to the generation above them which had pressed relations between masculinity, risk and violence to new extremes. It was a reality that made strong impressions on boys, particularly older ones, and through them was made apparent to younger ones for example when we filmed ad hoc sketches which were led by older boys with more street experience and involved drug dealing, police arrests, and murder. In so far as children are 'becomings' they are becoming male and female. We need to look at not only the 'microhistorical' sense of how children are making meaning of the world around them, but which elements of that world they are focussing on specifically.

Violence in Colombia follows gendered patterns of performance (Meertens 2001 a,b,c), and the majority of perpetrators and victims of homicide are male. As in Colombia, masculinity and power are linked in various ways in numerous anthropological contexts¹⁶. The language, symbolism and potency of violence are

¹⁶ Associations between masculinity and power are often tested through and in acts of physical aggression and violence, as Cornwall and Lindisfarne point out, this can be "part of a continual process of negotiating relative positions of power" (1994:15). Indeed the association between violence and masculinity has a long historical trajectory. During the period of European expansion and colonisation, a hegemonic vision of masculinity was being created, in which violence was a fundamental instrument of power: "Empire was a gendered enterprise from the start...the *conquistador* was a figure displaced from customary social relationships, often extremely violent in the search for land, gold and converts" (Connell 1995: 187).

Connell's point was famously made by Fray Bartolomé de las Casas whose denunciations of the brutalities of conquest in 1542, which simultaneously marked important moments in the history of masculinity, and capitalism: "Insatiable greed and ambition, the greatest ever seen in the world, is the cause of their villainies" (quoted in Connell, *ibid*). In the context of the growing individualism of the

often directly related to metaphors of male performance and virility. Masculinity, or the behavioural, physical, mental and linguistic qualities associated with being a man, is notably about power: the adjective 'masculine' as "having the appropriate excellence of the male sex; virile, vigorous and powerful"¹⁷. In such a polarized construction, men are to women as reason: emotion, strength: weakness, tough: vulnerable, aggressive: passive, and strong: weak. Interestingly, just as many of the adjectives used in war-talk are 'perfectly' male ('tough' positions, 'brave' and 'heroic' actions etc), many of the qualities associated with children are mapped on to women¹⁸.

Marginalised men are subordinated by different masculinities; the power of one version of masculinity over others can be witnessed in ideas about the 'dangerous' virility of black or poor men, and the 'un-male' character of men whose sexuality deviates from a normative heterosexual version (Hearn and Morgan 1990:96). Such marginalisation means that different masculinities, or points along a spectrum, imply "...differential access to power, practices of power, and differential effect of power" (Haywood and Mac An Ghail 1996:51)¹⁹.

This was quite clearly the situation for young men growing up in Medellín in the late twentieth century. While economic 'success' denoted the goal of a dominant form

age, greed was becoming the common motivating factor among men; and violence was occupying a central role in the methods for obtaining the objects desired by that greed. As Bartolomé de las Casas complained to the Spanish crown, this greed was restrained by neither fear of God nor sense of civilisation, as the barbarians were the colonisers:

"Fear of God, duty to the Crown, and respect for their fellow men were all discarded in their blind and obsessive greed...devising new and even more refined methods of cruelty and duplicity to obtain the gold and silver they craved..." (1542 [1992]: 96).

The association of masculinity and violence plays strategic roles in many different cultural moments, such as in Theweleit's (1989) analysis of fascism and masculinity in Nazi Germany. Theweleit argues that young men growing up in this period "could see only the military as models for emulation". Thus "only war offered them the prospect of being adult and being given adult responsibilities" (1989: 351). The task of becoming male can also demand a boy's distancing from any female qualities and environments, and the increasing identification of the self with things male and manly, such as violence

¹⁷ The Oxford Dictionary definition (1973), cited in Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1994:11.

¹⁸cf. Askew & Ross 1988: 3 As Wade (1994) suggests in Antioquia, frustration in the fulfilment of dominant role expectations in the domestic sphere may also make violence an option for asserting masculinity against femininity. The man's role as provider in the domestic setting is meant to underpin his dominance over the woman, but when this is unattainable, violence can represent another means of asserting masculinity and dominance.

¹⁹ As Askew and Ross (1988) observe of British schoolchildren, associations between male performance and social class are also crucial in the developing processes of childhood. The sorts of behaviours valorised in the contexts of the wealthier classes may be significantly removed from, and indeed explicitly differentiated from, the actions of children growing up in poorer circumstances where different sorts of skills, abilities and characteristics are valued.

of masculinity, those unable to access economic power through traditional means, youth in Medellín in the 1980s entered into an often deadly strategy to survive: by becoming involved in organised crime.

Several further elements of context are important to underline here. One is the regional, Antioquian, self-aggrandising mythology as a ‘race’ of pioneers, explorers and colonisers who brought economic development through their colonisation of large segments of north-western Colombia²⁰. As Salazar observes, the model of the ‘*guapo*’, from the regional (Antioquian) genesis myths of mining and colonising Paisa culture, stands as an historical antecedent to these newer incarnations of masculinity (1990b: 43). Allied to this colonising view are observations of the Antioqueños as demonstrating a Protestant work ethic, and of being “the self-styled Yankees of Latin America” (Parsons 1968, in Wade 1993; Fajardo 1966²¹).

If in modern times any one person came to embody these forward driven entrepreneurial values, and combine greed and violence in unprecedented ways, it was Pablo Escobar²². By the late 1980s he was one of the world’s richest men, feeding the consumer capitalist boom in the USA and Europe with the decade’s drug of choice for the upwardly mobile. His power made him one of the most wanted men on the planet, and while local forces received help from US intelligence to track him down, eventually incarcerating him in a prison of his own design, he fought a war against the Colombian government over extradition to the USA for drugs trafficking offences²³. While Escobar and the cartels offered rewards for the

²⁰ The regions of Antioquian colonisation are held to include departments to the south including Caldas, Risaralda, Norte del Valle and Quindío, at the heart of the country’s wealthy coffee growing zone.

²¹ This idea originated in Parson’s 1968 sociological study of Antioquian entrepreneurialism, and was subsequently picked up by local writers such as Serna Gomez (1972) and Bronx (1972).

²² The son of a local school teacher, Escobar started off his criminal activities in the 1970s by selling stolen bicycles and gravestones with inscriptions rubbed off. In the early years of his empire formation he was feted by an important national weekly as a ‘Paisa Robin Hood’. His astounding wealth was portrayed here as a matter of sound investment in property and hard work, avoiding any mention of drugs, Strong 1995: 70-71. Indeed this article is just one symptom of Escobar’s connections to elite political and economic interests, proof of which later shamed President Ernesto Samper (1994-1998)

²³ A vast literature has been produced in Colombia and abroad about Escobar and the cocaine industry in Colombia. See for example Fabio Castillo’s two volumes, *La Coca Nostra* (1991) and *Los Jinetes de la Cocaína* (1987); Charles Nicholls’ journalistic-fiction work *The Fruit Palace; Whitewash* by Simon Strong (1995); the recent *Killing Pablo*, by Mark Bowden (2001), based on CIA documents.

heads of policemen in Medellín, blew up aeroplanes and had judges and politicians assassinated, a new breed of killer emerged: the child *sicario*, or contract killer²⁴.

The work of the *sicario* was at the centre of what came to be known as a ‘culture of death’, where youths were described as nihilistic, and were seen by much of society as entangled in contract killing for the prospect of fast and easy money²⁵. Between these infamous *sicarios* and the gangs which formed with and around them, youth came into disrepute as the city became increasingly dangerous, and national political attention focused on Medellín as the country asked itself what was happening²⁶. The behaviour triggered a rage of moral panic in Colombia, in which delinquency was seen to be of dramatic dimensions and on the rise. Developed through functionalist and positivistic sociology in the USA, the concept of delinquency suggested that deviance and associated delinquent acts were carried out by youngsters who lacked “affinity” with the dominant culture (Matza 1969). This lack of adherence to the values of the dominant order was correlated to the marginality and disorganisation of the poor, such that poor youths were (unsurprisingly), found to be more likely to be ‘delinquents’ than their middle class counterparts (cf McDonald 1969²⁷). Despite its dubious theoretical value, politicians all over the world still frequently expound on ‘delinquency’ and petty crime amongst the young as the root of crime and disorder which must be controlled.

²⁴ See graph in Appendix 9, where the peaks of homicide rates represent this period of Colombian history, as well as illustrating something of the scope of violence in the country over a 20-year period.

²⁵ Working for cartel intermediaries, youth from the poor *barrios* of the northeast (the *NorOriental*) of the city acquired a new visibility, brandishing cars, fast motorbikes and carrying large quantities of cash. The terms ‘*un malo*’ (a bad person) and *pillo* came to be used to describe these youths. *Pillo* in particular suggested the blurred edges of different types of criminal gang activities, which came to include extortion, kidnapping, armed robberies, and contract killing. These were also referred to generally as ‘*cruces nerviosos*’ (nervous, edgy dealings).

²⁶ The image of youths on motorcycles carrying guns, as portrayed on the cover of Salazar’s *No Nacimos Pa’ Semilla* (1990a) spoke to fears about how the drugs industry was luring the young into dangerous and violent forms of economic activity. Child *sicarios*, often under 16 because they could not be prosecuted as adults, became an infamous symbol of youth connected to death, described by Harding as a “reserve army of nihilistic children” (1996: 58). Indeed, phrases from the introduction to Salazar’s book capture something of the moment: “We live in a city at war. A war where many powers participate... and where the protagonists are the young. It is they who kill and die” (1990a: 17). Amongst various indicators of this attention was the establishment of a presidential commission for Medellín, and the convening of an academic and political seminar dedicated to exploring the issues (findings published in 1990 by a local research organisation, *Corporación Región*). A fuller list of these is also found in Salazar 1998: 115 footnote 9.

²⁷ See Sumner 1994 for an account of the life (and death) of deviance as a useful sociological category.



But the concepts of deviance and delinquency are of little value in this context. In the 1980s, the young in Medellín were subjects in a regime where work was the way of achieving success. But economic success was unattainable for poor young men from the NorOriental, whose educational status was often poor (given the dearth of schools in the area), and who lacked any kind of viable social or cultural capital²⁸. Often the children of widows who struggled in situations of acute poverty, they shared the aspirations of the dominant classes. As Salazar observes,

“In the *sicario* the culture of consumption has been incorporated. The real objective of his ‘work’ is satisfying needs that the social environment has created, but at the same time denies him” (1990b: 44).

As Appadurai notes, consumer capitalism draws individuals into the use of “a sign in a system of signs of status” (1986: 45). And in Medellín consumption had a great deal to do with the ways in which the wealth gained through the use of violence became visible through ‘global’, but particularly US, consumer goods. So the *pillos* drove cars or rode luminous motorcycles, commodities far beyond the reach of the majority of the population. Indeed a consumer boom was evident in the 1980s and 90s amongst a wide section of the poor who had contacts with the world of drugs. Incomes were spent not in the discreet ways of the rich, accustomed to being cautious about demonstrating the extent of their wealth, but were displayed, as people who had never had any claims to visible social status before.

But other than becoming a *pillo* or *sicario*, young men faced a stark situation, where their choices were minimal, conditions exemplifying the structural violence of economic and social exclusion. In 1994, in a *barrio* in the NorOriental, I met ten young men, mostly in their early twenties²⁹. They had been part of a gang of eighty formed in the mid 1980s. A decade later, the rest of the gang were all dead, killed by inter-gang feuds, the police and security forces. When I returned for fieldwork in 1998, I discovered that the majority of these ten survivors were also dead, as was

²⁸ Such concepts seem to have a particular salience in Colombia, which according to a World Bank study (2002: 47) has one of the highest levels of skill-wage differentials in Latin America, and given the description of the way status functions I outlined above. A further salient point is that discrimination functioned on the basis of where people were from, such that any young man from the NorOriental could still, in 1999, have problems getting work in for example the construction industry, because they were expected to steal tools or other equipment.

²⁹ During undergraduate fieldwork as referred to in Chapter three.

Ramón, the local youth worker who had given me an explanation of their circumstances:

“They stand there on a street corner, with no today, no yesterday, no tomorrow. Right they’ll say, I’d rather live three or four years well than fifty or sixty of this misery”.

These young men could see few options for survival other than to risk death while achieving the goal of not dying in the state of poverty in which they found themselves. The only way young men in Medellín could see to be alive effectively involved an inversion of the concepts of life and death, suggested by Salazar (1998) as evident in the wakes led for gang members, which are turned into a dance and a celebration. For these young men, death was proof they had been alive; they had been alive because they’d been fighting, rather than passively accepting a slow death in the poverty without a future into which they were born. As Sánchez argues of other fictionalisations of the *sicario* culture, death and life are inverted because death “permits flight from a useless life that is replete with privations and injustices” (2001: 9).

To be male and respected, to have a status, was achievable through the use of violence, as a means to achieve a measure of economic success³⁰. One crucial element here is ‘respect’, a term with important implications for visions of masculinity because of its links to the use of violence to uphold it, as an extension of the concept of honour. Salazar cites a 12-year-old boy in Medellín who has appropriated ideas about the demonstration of respect through fear:

“I would like to be a killer³¹ but one who is respected and whose family is respected. Like Ratón, whom they already killed, but he was quiet and killed those who wronged him. He hung around on his patch, with a 9 mm and if they looked at him he’d ask: ‘what are you looking at?’ and if they answered back at him he’d kill them and spit at them and go off laughing. I would like to be like that” (1990b: 46).

‘Ratón’ demanded others’ respect for him, and managed it through threats and acts of violence. Importantly, the youngster writing the above (the extract is from an

³⁰ Although it is notable how since then middle class young men in Medellín have appropriated some of the *pillo* vocabulary (e.g. referring to male friends by certain terms), which seems to offer a more virile version of masculinity than their own class-based models of ties and suits.

³¹ *Un matón*

essay) sees no contradiction between respectfulness and violence. Rather, violence has come to play a role in gaining and maintaining respect, and its power is keenly perceived by youngsters.

There are parallels between ‘street’ children, youth violence, and other ‘primitive rebels’, including the bandits of the later periods of *la Violencia* (cf Sánchez and Meertens 2000, cf Hobsbawm 1969). The crux of the parallel lies in the issue of morality, and reactions to assaults on what are perceived to be norms of moral behaviour. Furthermore, all of these forms are linked to ideals of masculinity, that are concerned with protecting honour -which can in turn be linked to safeguarding access to material resources. Blok’s reconsideration of banditry involves a critique of Hobsbawm’s argument that social banditry was always a response to class oppression. As Blok notes of more recent research on banditry in Latin America,

“What animated banditry was the quest for honour and respect... Social causes were attributed to them by others, if they did not deliberately promote them themselves. The late Colombian drugs baron Pablo Escobar is a recent case in point” (2001: 22).

Escobar’s greed and power made him famous, but the idea that he was also motivated by social conscience was and remains popular amongst some sectors of the local population, who benefited from his investment in social housing and local football clubs. But perhaps more wanted him to be their Robin Hood³²; as Blok notes, the role of myth is thus important: “Even if the social bandit did not exist in Latin America, the conditions to make him a believable and significant symbol to the rural masses did” (ibid³³).

So how people die, and the associated memories of their death, are often causes to be avenged for honour, producing spirals of violence. This again invokes the question of structural violence, and how the young identified the state as an

³² See Deas’ (1994) obituary of Escobar (*Narco Nabobs*) for an authoritative assessment of his life.

³³ Richard W. Slatta (1987: 196), ‘Conclusion: banditry in Latin America’, in R. Slatta ed. *Bandidos: the Varieties of Latin American Banditry*, New York: Greenwood. While Pablo Escobar may be remembered for brutal murder or for supporting local football, perhaps what was more important was the legendary level at which he could be remembered: as someone who became rich and respected, and most definitely feared, despite having been born (at least relatively) poor. In this regard, Escobar serves a critical role because of the manner in which he broke through the barriers of class to be richer than the elite, and then, when they rejected him and sided with the United States over the issue of extradition, declared war on them.

oppressor, particularly in the form of the police and the F-2, who, as the ex-gang members said in 1994, ‘disappeared’³⁴ many of their friends. If violence is a tactic that will be used by the powerful, how can its adoption as a means of survival be resisted? Indeed, as Sánchez and Meertens suggest, adolescents formed an important contingent of members of the bandit groups in the second period of *La Violencia* (1958-65) joining because they had “grown up in an environment of terror, had seen their houses burned, their families massacred, their fields destroyed” (1999: 21-22). Their motivation was simple:

“the only meaning of their actions was retaliation and vengeance, which they felt was not only explicable but justifiable in light of the criminality officially protected or promoted in the first years of *La Violencia*” (ibid: 22).

Similarly, the youths who were growing up in the 1980s in areas like the NorOriental had little occasion to witness the state doing anything positive for them or their families. Rather it was the entity which sent corrupt police to murder them and which overlooked their poverty with indifference, as I will show in Chapter four, is still apparent in state reactions to poverty. The boys in this thesis also experienced were contradictory perceptions of child agency that were brought to the fore by these associations of youth with violence and criminality. Shorn of their associations with innocence, poor children seen begging are imagined to be one step away from deadly organised crime. As I will now explain, children’s abilities as social actors are a crucial element in the study of childhood.

V. Agency and Childhood

As one of the children said, this thesis is about the boys, for they are its “protagonists”, as he put it. Significantly, the boy’s assessment of their place in the research draws attention to the manner in which I seek to understand their situations, seeing them as actors, thus raising questions both about the nature of agency, and the social construction of childhood. This is important because of the extent to which children, and their actions, have been fairly marginal within social theory. The omission is serious, for, as the stories of these boys show, their experiences and the conditions in which they manifest their agency as children,

³⁴ The way this was used as a verb, *lo desaparecieron*, suggests how the hand of power can literally make people disappear. In addition to this, every year the police mortuary receives hundreds of unidentified bodies.

contribute to a growing body of work which explores children's lives as a key area in which to explore central issues of social theory, such as social control and cultural reproduction.

Children, according to James, Jenks and Prout (1998), pose threats and challenges to the social order, because the latter has to be explained to them. They do not understand it because they are not yet a part of it, but rather exist at its margins. However, learning is by no means a one-way process. Children make meaning through their own embodied and socialised experiences. Indeed, the ways in which they do so may be considered what Toren (2002) calls 'microhistory in the making', because children challenge, change and adapt socially dominant meanings to their own schemes of meaning, based on experience. This tendency to challenge or reconstrue meanings gives children 'anarchist potential' (James, Jenks and Prout 1998: 198), both testing adult reasoning and questioning the status-quo.

This potential to re-write, to re-frame, and to question, when combined with growing 'regimes of truth' and bodies of scientific knowledge based in discourses of psychological, educational and moral development, underwrites the logic for the constitution of childhood as the period of quasi-quarantine. This has been achieved with the advancement of modernity and its myriad institutions for ordering individuals. The spaces and times for childhood, such as the playground and the school, have been designed to make childhood as uniform as possible. Informed by theories of medical, psychological and educational development such as that outlined by Piaget³⁵, the views of children which grew out of European processes of industrialisation, urbanisation and governance have created very particular conditions for childhood. The modern 'northern' understanding of childhood has several key characteristics, which Hockey and James (1993) outline. These include the separation of the child in time and space from the surrounding society, as manifest in institutions such as the school. The school builds on the idea that children have a special nature, including degrees of innocence. This is correlated to ideas of children's vulnerability, need for protection and dependence on adults.

³⁵ See Burman (1995) *Deconstructing Developmental Psychology* for a particularly good critique of Piaget's thesis.

These, the authors suggest, “structure the ways in which children are thought about in Western cultures” (1993: 60). Despite the late modern tendency to romanticise childhood as a time of carelessness and freedom, it is a paradoxical freedom in Rose’s sense. It is a freedom whereby the best interests of the child and their development constitute the grounds for “a kind of despotism over the child” (Rose 1999: 106), based on children’s internalisation of doctrines of discipline and self-regulation.

This goal of self-control has been progressively elaborated through the development of arts of governance in Europe between the 16th and 18th centuries, as the domestic space and family authority were increasingly identified as particularly important areas for the moral formation of children (Foucault 1977, Procacci 1991, Donzelot 1980, Ariès 1962). Children who were in the streets, with its ‘insubordinate’ pauperism and promiscuous mobility, were a particular affront to growing norms of and spaces for morality, the street being seen as a polluting and dangerous terrain from which children ought to be removed (Procacci 1991, Boyden 1997³⁶). Institutions such as the school have since become spaces and indicators of economic and social ‘development’, means of ensuring as Ennew suggests, the terms through which “childhood becomes a period of preparation for the labour force” (1989: 66-67).

As understood through developments in psychoanalysis and psychology, childhood has, as Giddens (1991:152) argues, become isolated as the period when the “moulding of the infrastructure” of the person occurs. At the same time, the insecurities of ‘post-modern’ lifestyles mean that children are vested with unique emotional significance by parents (Jenks 1996). Indeed, childhood’s ‘emblematic’ role in late modern society, invoking links with the past, present and future for parents and for society at large³⁷, is indicative of its place within wider social contexts. Such a construal of childhood and children is specific to certain kinds of

³⁶ See for example Henry Mayhew’s (1855) observations on the London poor in the mid 19th century in which expresses humanistic horror at the sights of the boys there, whom he calls ‘street Arabs’, amongst other things

³⁷ cf Jenks 1996 [‘The post-modern child’, in J. Brannen and M O’Brien eds *Children And Families: Research and Policy*, London: Falmer Press] quoted in James, Jenks and Prout 1998: 198

societies, and perhaps even classes within them, where notions of linear time, evolution and progress, are linked to particularly Christian notions of existence.

The sentimental value of children in such a social context requires particular kinds of investment, and is one of the reasons for an 'urgent' focus on children today (James, Jenks and Prout 1998: 197). Science and technology as well as the social and political arts have advanced to a stage where an extraordinary range of knowledge about children is available, and these feed into complex methods for engineering society by manipulating the members at the earliest, and most formative, stage. So children are not only the objects of intense individual investment - affective, emotional, and financial- but are the targets of state programmes aimed at the efficient reproduction of the status quo and ever-improved versions of it, where particular kinds of practices are recommenced or supported through policy in order to achieve specific desired outcomes. If this is particularly true of northern nations with historically larger welfare structures and more expansive state apparatuses, both particular policies and general programmes of governance are exported to and adopted in southern countries, often through 'development' programming and policy (Boyden 1997).

In this context, it is strange to note the silence which existed around children in anthropology for so long (cf Caputo 1995), with functionalist and structural functionalist approaches usually writing children off as the passive subjects of a process of socialisation. Indeed, recognition of the historically situated nature of childhood stems from work such as that of French historian Ariès (1962)³⁸ which disrupted the notion that childhood had always been considered distinct from adulthood, and characterised by qualities such as innocence. Informed by such reconsiderations, more recent sociological theory postulates children as social actors who are active agents in the processes of their learning and socialisation (James and Prout 1997). Thus a new understanding of childhood as a social construction, differing between and within cultures, and times, and having enormously varied

³⁸ Although much noted for his claim that "in medieval society childhood did not exist" (1962: 125), Ariès was also making important points about the family and responsibilities subsequently placed on the family as the guarantors and regulators of children's moral condition.

implications for the real lived lives of children, has come to the fore. For Prout and James, the trajectories of this new sociology of childhood, require a “view of how structure and agency complement each other” (1997:27). In their call for the recovery of children as social actors, studies which “explore the ways in which children act within and upon the constraints and possibilities that the institution [of childhood] creates” are central (ibid).

In Giddens’ (1979) formulations of ‘structuration’, or the duality of structure, “the structural properties of social systems are both the medium, and the outcome of the practices that constitute the system”, structure thus being both “enabling and constraining” (1979: 66, 69). This suggests the ways in which structures are reproduced, through the broader ‘system’ (ibid). These structures encompass systems vested in class, economic, political, cultural, educational and other institutions. However Giddens gives us few clues as to how structure and agency are played out in the real lives of those in weak structural positions (Gledhill 2001). What is required then is a more nuanced approach to the variations between subjects according to their differentiated access to power, and their ability to participate in and to influence the processes of structuration around them. This is a crucial question when considering the methods of constituting and forming subjects that are the central features of the dynamics of childhood, because of the contingent yet important manners in which children may effect and interact with the processes shaping them as subjects.

Through a focus on agency, we are also able to reflect on the processes of the constitution of the subject, and the subject’s constitution of knowledge, as I suggested above. As Toren notes, “Children bring ... ideas into being for themselves in a way that at once maintains and transforms” the cultural ideas proposed to them (2002: 113). Anthropology is necessary for such an enterprise, because it will recognise and ‘embrace’ complexity (ibid), and thus afford a view of the complex ways in which children constitute knowledge for themselves through their social experiences with others. This is an argument I am in full agreement with, and in the following chapter I explore some of the ways in which research with children in relation to topics as abstract as ‘power’ or, as in Toren’s work,

'hierarchy', requires sustained fieldwork and participant observation in order to link children's observations with those of others, as well as differentiate from them.

This draws our attention to the contexts in which children make meanings, and demands questions about how different social environments afford different experiential opportunities for children. This is not only an issue for those concerned to create an ordered society, as suggested above, but also constitutes an opportunity to see children making meaning amongst themselves, questioning for example the moral legitimacy of police actions. As 'street' children outside the influence of parents and school, for at least some period of time, they are also freed of some of the conditions in which they are obliged to obey adult authority, and submit to certain norms which constitute the socialising processes. This can include specific areas of behaviour which are deemed to denote increasingly social nature of the child, such as the acquisition of eating manners and aspects of personal hygiene. It is against some such standards that observers are particularly aghast at 'street' children's apparent asociality. However the conditions for children's survival also demand that they become effective learners of other behaviours, as we will see.

Indeed it seems a consequence of the nature of childhood in late modernity that children's agency should have been denied so long, given that since the introduction of compulsory schooling and measures for the 'protection' of children from certain kinds of working conditions, the realities of children's work and other kinds of active contributions to both family and society is usually hidden (cf Cunningham 1991, Davin 1982, Morrow 1994). As I have suggested, anthropology is particularly well placed to study the ways in which children reflect and interpret their surroundings, and there is significant potential for studies of children to contribute to mainstream debates within the discipline.

While childhood must be understood as a social construction, and thus base itself on a 'radical relativism' (James Jenks and Prout 1998: 212-214), it is crucial that theory allows us to make the link between children's realities and other social dynamics. As such, childhood as a changing structure must be studied in relation to the other changing structures in society (cf Qvortrup 1994:23 in James, Jenks and

Prout 1998: 209), including those of a material, ideological and institutional nature. The advent of accessible and affordable education, for example, brings many changes to children's and families' lives, not only in terms of a child's time, as in their participation in the household economy, but also new concerns, needs and pressures which change the social meaning attached to childhood, such as the idea that education is an investment for future social and financial success. It is also often allied to a denigration of previous traditions in society, and shame starts to accrue to those without literacy skills: formal education is a means of modernity making its mark on society, as children become enmeshed in distinct value systems which are linked with yet other values. Thus children must not be studied in splendid isolation as distinct cultural units as some approaches in the past have done (e.g. Opie and Opie 1977, on the lore and language of school children, in James Jenks and Prout 1998). Their lives are neither politically nor analytically separate from their society, but rather reflect changes and pressures in the constitution of society around them.

But despite the promises of these relatively new areas of study, they take place at a time when standards for childhood are increasingly being globalised, and the model being exported and used to judge other societies is that of industrialised 'advanced' societies. The 'best interests of the child' approach which underlies the current UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, is derived from a British social work tradition. Often dissociated from its roots in western liberal political philosophy, formulations of rights can, as Boyden argues, "tend to play down the impact of wider social, economic, political and cultural conditions in the shaping of social phenomena", and instead prioritise individual causation, dysfunction and pathology (1997: 197).

The growing emphasis on rights discourses must not be allowed to shift our gaze away from the material contexts in which different childhoods are produced and located. A concern with the rights of the individual all too frequently downplays the question of community rights, and the ability of communities to make children's rights real, particularly when the child is held up as exemplary of what should be sacrosanct in society. Cultural difference remains a central concern within

anthropological approaches to rights, but as I discuss later in this chapter, inequalities of power between states must also be taken into account when considering the conditions of children. Rather, in considering issues such as making states take their responsibilities as duty bearers of rights seriously, attention must also be paid to the international circumstances, such as external debt and structural adjustment policies, which make fulfilment of certain rights (such as education and access to healthcare) particularly problematic. Rights approaches can lead to a 'ranking' of states according to the ways children exist within them, which is not necessarily helpful, and may not be revealing as to the inequalities within individual states or the possibilities that exist for improvements to be made to children's welfare.

The assumptions implicit in these approaches are further complicated by the question of the extent to which childhood is held to be a formative period by different cultures and societies. For example the idea that childhood ends at 18 clearly contrasts with societies in which children are considered able to work and act as adults in many other ways from the age of 12 or even younger (see for example Boyden 1997). Legislation which condemns child labour frequently makes the mistake of failing to acknowledge the significant contributions children make to families and communities as workers. Anthropology can offer critical insights here into questions of the development of consciousness and how such processes are held to function by different societies.

These are some of the questions I will seek to ask within my examination of the possibilities of boys' agency within the institution, seeing what happens when subjects live in and interact with disciplinary processes aimed at creating and re-creating subjects. I will look next at some of the issues raised by a Foucauldian approach to power and the context of a disciplinary institution, underscored by some of the ways in which children test the boundaries of their power in the institutional setting, an unmistakable theme in the data and the ethnographic chapters which follow. These are dimensions of the complex processes of success and failure of the institutional method.

VI. Institutions and Subjects

As suggested above, the creation of specific institutions for childhood has a long trajectory, linked to the arts for the efficient management of society. Given the under-development of the Colombian state's welfare apparatus, the places in which boys separated from their families are most likely to find assistance are church-run institutions. Such spaces are suitable because of the ways in which the boys are seen to need authoritative moral guidance, to correct what are perceived as their errant relationships to the street. Such views have been central to Colombian notions of governmentality, as Obregón *et al* argue, in a Foucauldian review of Colombian educational philosophy in the early twentieth century:

“The moralisation of the Colombian people was... a priority of the modern intellectuals. ...The hopes of the regeneration of youth and of the race were pinned on the school, on the school doctor and teacher; the school, more than a place of instruction, was to be a place of moral formation, observation, diagnostics, control and vigilance of children's morals, and what's more of correction, straightening and orientation; in sum, of what was termed 'moral orthopaedics'” (1997, vol. 2: 41).

In considering an institution whose methods involve the reformation of child subjects in what is a near 'total' institution, Foucault's work on the history of discipline and punishment, as well as his observations on the nature of power and governmentality, are necessarily central to informing my approach. In *Discipline and Punish* (1977), Foucault outlines the development of the carceral system and of techniques for creating self-governing subjects. Towards the end of the book he makes a little cited statement regarding what he considered a critical point in the development of techniques for remoulding the subject: “Were I to fix a date for the completion of the carceral system... [t]he date I would chose would be 22 January 1840, the date of the official opening of Mettray” (1977: 293). His reason for choosing to focus on Mettray, a juvenile reformatory in the countryside near Tours, is that:

“It is the disciplinary form at its most extreme, the model in which are concentrated all the coercive technologies of behaviour. In it were to be found 'cloister, prison, school, regiment'” (ibid).

The parallels in the techniques employed by Mettray and the City of the Children's Saint are striking. At CCS, the confession and other elements of religious practice

are combined with a school-based education, with systems of troops for the organisation of chores borrowed from the army (via the Boy Scouts), within an enclosed compound whose architectural features are in many ways correspondent with those of a prison, and echoing elements of monastic space organisation. Also at CCS, as in Mettray, within these troops boys were to invigilate each other's behaviour, in a system of 'mutual surveillance' designed so that "the eyes of the whole society [are] awake to prevent the offence from coming" (Driver 1994: 124)³⁹.

These technologies for disciplining subjects were developments within the field of arts of government and governance, through which the subject has increasingly been the object of instruction in a variety of methods of self-management. Tracing the shift from violence and public displays of punishment to the orchestration of more sophisticated and economical techniques for social regulation, Foucault considers how the confessional, the Panopticon prison and methods of surveillance were examples of how power became more subtle, and more effective in regulating the populace. The Panopticon provided perhaps the most elegant example of this. A prison in the round designed by Jeremy Bentham, within the edifice prisoners would be unaware of when they were or weren't being watched in their cells, and so, in order to minimise risk of further punishment, avoid any devious behaviour. A changing understanding of economies of power is central to this, violence is expensive, and as the Colombian case shows, messy. Rather, concurrent with the rise of industrialisation and its great institutions were economies for managing humans⁴⁰.

Correctional institutions provide a unique setting for observing such techniques at work, as a concentrated instance of the goal of creating of self-regulating subjects. As James and Prout note of spaces such as the school, "ways of thinking about childhood fuse with institutionalised practices to produce self-conscious subjects

³⁹ See appendix 3a for further detail about the comparisons between CCS and Mettray, as well as the Salesian method.

⁴⁰ The three key elements of a resulting formula of governmentality were the self and morality; the family, which came to be synonymous with economy (see especially Procacci 1991); and the state (Foucault 1991). If the state worked well, it would follow that the head of family would run the family well, and thus instil in family members, particularly children, an understanding of the necessity of being an ordered and self-regulating person.

who think about themselves through the terms of those ways of thinking” (1997: 23). This then means that the self, the individual, has to negotiate a consciousness from a position where identity is created through experiences, and through messages about the character of herself as a subject and in relation to others.

As Rose (1988:2) observes, in contemporary contexts personal and subjective elements are incorporated into the scope and aspirations of public powers, through measures such as public policies, as the technologies and the goals to which the self should aspire are offered to subjects so that we may “act upon our bodies, souls, thoughts and conduct” (ibid: 11). If for example, as Rose suggests the adoption of metaphors provided to the subject ought to be central to the re-construction of subjectivity, a central question is whether or not children take up the metaphors for thinking about themselves that they are provided with within the institution. I address this question at different points as the CCS process takes the boys gradually through different steps in the re-configuration of their lives; for example boys are invited to make judgements about themselves in the public confessional setting of the nightly self-evaluation meetings. Here they judge themselves against three main criteria: love for the institution – as manifested in their participation in chores and other duties; respect for others, as exemplified by good behaviour and a lack of altercations with others; and good self-presentation or appearance, which is seen as an indicator of self-esteem. Central questions in this thesis thus become the precise technologies through which CCS functions and whether it achieves its goal of creating honest citizens and good Christians of the miscreant youth who arrive at the gates of its street youth programme every six months.

There can be some difficulties in putting Foucault’s theories into ethnographic practice, however. As Hacking (2003) has observed, although people may apparently populate his books, they never speak nor are they spoken to, and Foucault never delves into the minutiae of the sociology of power. This sometimes seems to result in the failure to grant his ‘subjects’ agency. It is of course central to understanding Foucault’s work that his subject is a historically constituted one, thus breaking with the Enlightenment concept of the subject as the source of truth and knowledge (for example in ‘Truth and Judicial Forms’, 1974). Knowledge, as Foucault shows (1980,

1969 [1972]), is a social product, and thus the schemes of meaning through which the subject can 'know' or think about the self are dependent on different elements of time and power. Thus as Rose (1999:54) points out, the concept of agency is prefigured by other arrangements of power – such as discipline- which permit agency within the confines of apparent 'freedom'.

Such obstacles notwithstanding, the manner in which disciplinary processes attempt to (re) mould the subject who is perceived to have strayed to (or been born at) the margins of the social order, not (apparently) participating or playing the appropriate role in reconstituting (and validating) the structure, can be assessed. The techniques through which selves are invited to re-cast themselves are part of the daily practices of life in CCS.

As I show in the ethnographic chapters, in some ways these techniques seem too obvious for some of the more sophisticated boys, who are all too aware of how power is used by others against them, and also of how they too can be powerful, resisting in different ways. But what comes through very clearly in this context is that for others, the techniques do work, such that they take up the metaphors supplied and apply them to themselves ('I am no longer a thief', says one young boy earnestly, although he seemed not to have ever stolen anything other than the spare change from an errand). Others seem steadfastly disengaged, and a range of active engagement, passive and active resistance, as well as apathy, are apparent amongst the boys.

Two issues are particularly relevant to this theoretical perspective as applied to this context. One is related to the issue of the body, and embodiment, the second to the question of discourse as a manifestation of power, and analysed as policy. Foucault privileged the body as a site of central importance to political configurations, and as suggested above, the embodied nature of experience is a crucial element in the constitution of knowledge. We thus see in children's evaluations of the process their own awareness of how the techniques of change manifest themselves at a material level, on and through their bodies. Boys are drilled on routines, expected to stand in

line and to attention, sleep in beds at a certain distance from each other, their bodies being controlled in infinite ways.

Foucault links these technologies for the self to other practices and elements of the constitution of knowledge and power which shape both ways of knowing and the substance of what is to be known. Foucault highlights the role of discourse, an example of particular power arrangements in the shaping of knowledge, and whose relevance thus lies in its constitutions as “an ordered set of polemical and strategic facts” (1974)⁴¹. A focus on discourses as ‘regimes of truth’ informs analyses of policy, seen as an arena where cultural symbols are orchestrated and operationalised to become ‘charters for action’ (Shore and Wright 1997: 7-8). With regard to the institution’s Salesian philosophy and religious outlook and orientation, a policy approach allows us to highlight some of the categories and concepts from which legitimacy and a sense of order are derived. As we see in chapter six, when the boys formally enter the institution, the priest in his sermon brings a variety of categories and metaphors into play, which clearly position the children as particular kinds of subjects. These subjects are at once religious and secular; if there is a religious goal of transforming the children into good Christians, the secular goal of making them honest citizens is equally salient. But religion provides the metaphors, the lessons, whereby thieving is explained as an act against God, and elevated to a symbolic plane. Toren (2002: 120-122) suggests ritual’s crucial role as an arena in which the symbolic is confirmed and made real, and thus superimposed over the material and concrete. Thus the ultimate site upon which the institution’s metaphors play is that of the self with a soul – which the priest helps the boys imagine and locate within their bodies during the initiation ceremony. The institution’s task then, is rendered as sacred, and the ultimate responsibility for complying with its mission, rests with the boys, in their inner selves.

In considering policy, we must also take account of the ways policy plays itself out as an ethnographic reality, including contradictions in the ways policy is understood

⁴¹ James and Prout give the following more comprehensive definition of discourse as “sets of concepts and the language through which they are thought as inseparable from and fused with social practices and institutions. Ideas, concepts, knowledge, modes of speaking etc codify social practices and in turn constitute them. Within these discourses subject positions (such as ‘the child’) are created” 1990: 25 (first edition of *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood*); in James Jenks and Prout 1998: 213).

and enacted, which suggest tensions around its very definitions and goals. On the one hand, policy formulates and situates the boys as worthy objects of state investment⁴². They are simultaneously ‘abandoned’, socially and morally at risk, physically vulnerable, uneducated, and can thus be constituted as subjects denied of their most basic rights and meriting protection as legal minors. On the other hand, they are potentially a risk to society, they have been exposed to ‘immorality’, such as the criminal and illicit activities of other street inhabitants, they are petty thieves and pickpockets, they could, particularly in Medellín, become *sicarios* or new recruits to other elements of the criminal or guerrilla resistance. So the boys are simultaneously constructed as passive and vulnerable victims who merit attention, and deviant delinquent subjects who demand reformation. My argument is that this tension underlies much of the day-to-day existence within an institution, and that such contradictions are created by the particular arrangements of power within which the institution exists.

This raises a third related issue about power, and that is to underscore the salience of Foucault’s observations about the ability (and necessity) of power to be positive. This stems from his view of power as a diffuse entity and element, rather than a finite, static or necessarily concentrated substance. Rather it becomes something which can be used by different groups and people at different times. Punishment is to a certain extent obscured and displaced from its central place in the logic of this process as attention is diverted to the positive things on offer, including new clothes, proper food, warm beds, a certain kind of safety.

Indeed, safety is something many of the children are looking for, as we will understand more clearly through their stories in Chapter four. But the element of enclosure and methods of discipline also raise questions about risk from the institution’s point of view, suggesting a great deal about the ways in which the children are considered not only at risk of various forms of harm on the street, but a risk to society.

⁴² The state, through the family welfare institute (ICBF; explained more in Chapter four) supplied 75% of CCS’s income, CCS being subcontracted to carry out the care required by protection orders under the 1989 Minor’s Code.

VII. Conclusion

The challenges facing the boys who are the agents and protagonists of this thesis are immense. In chapter four we will learn in more detail of their trajectories towards the street. However above I have shown some of the ways in which we can ask questions about their realities, and that of the institution which will seek to transform them.

The concept of agency is uniquely helpful in understanding the nature of these boys interactions with various environments, and indeed such analyses are indicated as the way forward in the study of children and childhood (cf James and Prout 1997). Studies of children's learning processes and particularly of how children at society's margins interact with particular institutions offer unique perspectives on social and cultural reproduction. I address these questions in the ethnography which follows, looking particularly at children's participation in the construction of their subjectivity, as subjects in a disciplinary institution. As I have suggested, Foucauldian concepts of power, discipline and the subject are crucial to developing the ethnography, as they position us to examine the ways in which boys encounter and negotiate power relations within CCS. As we will see, the policies which I outlined as functioning in the institution prove necessarily flexible to the challenges posed by the context in which the institution operates, and the diversity of experience which the boys represent.

I also looked at some of the ways in which conservative forces in Colombian society can be seen as allied to a position which views consciousness as something which can be moulded for the greater good, and with the assistance of what I have described as a highly conservative Catholic Church. This helps us locate the disciplinary institution in which the ethnography is set, and to understand the history and the logic of the goal of creating self-regulating subjects. This occurs within what I also characterise as a unique constitution of identity in Colombia, and the ways in which notions of socio-economic class, race and religion form principal axes of locating and relating socially. The vertical structures that underlie these conceptions are linked to axes of discrimination which I suggests are elements

which regulate structural violence, as well as various kinds of risk which the poor confront. I discussed how these conditions of marginalisation created particular tensions for young men in Medellín, and how this was linked to injustices and violence from the state.

Such factors underlie the boys' vulnerable presences on or around streets of Colombia. I have suggested that high levels of risk and conditions of structural violence shape and control their life chances, and considered the view that as children they are also agents with some ability to effect their own destiny. While the issue of agency has many nuances, I have argued that a critical awareness of the ways in which power operates over and around people in structurally vulnerable positions needs to be very fully understood before conclusions about agency can be drawn. In the next chapter, I will describe how and why these questions and this context seemed ripe for exploration, and how I went about it.

INTRODUCING THE FIELD

I. Introduction

This thesis addresses the hypothesis that boys' experiences in and of the institution would demonstrate that they actively challenged the meanings and visions produced by the Church about their lives, and that the extent to which they could articulate and act upon such views would be indicative of constraints upon their agency and powers. In this chapter I describe the research process and methodology, addressing questions of power and engagement, subjectivity and representation. I will also consider how the organisational structure, policies and goals of City of the Children's Saint provided a formal framework for staff interactions with children, and how the research was situated in relation to the complexities of the institution, such as internal power relations, policies and constructions of the subject (Shore and Wright 1997, Wright 1994, Marsden 1994).

Research with children is held to require particularly careful consideration of ethics. Although all research must consider the welfare of the participants or 'subjects', research with children is usually held to entail particular ethical dilemmas derived from children's age-based status as minors, and the different types of structurally-created vulnerability inherent in this position (Alderson 1995; Young and Barrett 2001). In this chapter I will demonstrate that my concerns about ethics and the principle of 'informed consent' with the boys were influenced by several factors, one being an active consideration of the limits of their agency. I will also discuss how the framing of a concept or question is fundamental to the manner in which we approach it. In trying to approach the conditions of violence and material poverty in which boys lived on the street, an epistemological approach grounded in notions of embodiment and in the subjective nature of experience proved to be essential (cf Csordas 1999; Shilling 1993).

Questions and Memories

The original research questions were derived from previous experiences at the institution, during a four-month period of undergraduate fieldwork in Medellín in 1994. My research hypothesis was that the perceptions and views of boys within the institution would depart from the institution's official rhetoric, and challenge its practices, suggesting a lack of fit between the views of the institution and those of the boys that originated in the institution's misperceptions about the boys' pasts. Two particular events lingered in my mind for months, indeed years, after my visit in 1994. The first was the official initiation ceremony, held when a new group of 'street' boys enter the Transition House, the purpose of which was to change boys into 'new men'. This ceremony centred on a mass that involved particular symbols and rituals to stimulate the embodiment of ideas of renewal and purification. At its climactic moment an effigy of a 'street' child was burnt - a larger-than-life doll made out of old stockings and stuffed with newspapers - on a gas-fuelled pyre (see photograph 3.5). While this effigy burned, the boys looked on. All eyes fixed on the pyre, their facial expressions suggested reflection; but their thoughts about this symbolic destruction of the street persona remained unknown to me.

The other memorable incident occurred during one otherwise unremarkable afternoon *haciendo locha* (being lazy, relaxing) in the Transition House. At that time there was a metal gate in the middle of the large concrete wall that separated the compound from the *barrio* outside. Having wandered around the back of the Transition House compound, I watched as a boy slipped out through the gates - being thin enough to fit through the gaps in the rails- as a couple of his mates looked on. I walked back around the front of the main building, and mused over the incident, suspecting the boy was off to buy drugs, in clear violation of the rules of the programme. Although I subsequently became aware of the regularity of drug taking within the Transition House, I had until then not witnessed this kind of activity.

A short while later, having been informed that I had witnessed this incident, a 14-year-old called Freddy with whom I got along well singled me out. "You're not going to say anything, are you?" he asked. "No", I replied. At that time -and it is

important to note that the Transition House changed during the intervening four years- the project had an oppressive atmosphere. Rules and routines shaped most of the day; when there was free time boys seemed bored; and when anything 'bad' happened the educators would lecture the boys, in what I later discovered the boys call '*cantaleta*' ('scolding', 'telling off'¹). In a way, I was relieved to see that they broke the rules, even if the purpose was not especially healthy.

II. City of the Children's Saint Today

The institution changed and grew during the intervening years. In 1999, the City of the Children's Saint was one of the best-known social welfare institutions for poor and 'street' children in Medellín². On its large campus and at satellite facilities, some 1000 young men, women and boys were enrolled in its programmes (see 3.7 in photo plates for campus map). Staff numbered over 200, and included professionals such as psychologists, social workers and medical and dental staff. Three quarters of the children in its programmes were there under the auspices of contracts for child protection with the state, funds from which covered seventy five percent of its operating costs. These contracts had been held for a number of years, and every five years CCS entered a competitive bidding process to undertake subcontracted social work with youth. Children were placed under CCS's legal guardianship, which included all of those entering through the 'street' child programme, through a determination of the legal status of being in an 'irregular situation', a category I discuss in the following chapter.

The institution has sought over the years to develop its economic base. It owned a variety of properties in and around Medellín, and working cattle ranches in the eastern Llanos region. Its reputation and networks meant that students from a variety of local universities carried out placements there, as a required part of many undergraduate degree structures. It also received visitors from entities in Europe

¹ The slang word *cantaleta* may come from the verb '*cantar*' (to sing); if listened to in terms of rhythm and flow a long stream of admonishment from an adult could sound like a song, but the term was used widely to refer to a lecture on behaviour and the need for behavioural change.

² This fame is both local and international. CCS is in fact cited in reports by UNESCO (1995), which look at examples of working with 'street' children. Locally, my informal polling of taxi drivers suggested that about 40% had heard of it, many having taken passengers there before. They largely expressed that they considered it a noble and worthy effort, although some also refused to go to it at night because of the locality, in a *barrio* with two warring gangs (which I will describe later).

that helped support its work, and during my fieldwork received several students visiting from Spain under an arrangement with the government of the Basque region.

CCS's work was divided into five programmes which were defined as stages³. The Programme for Street Minors (PSM), founded in 1979, encompassed the first and second stages, and was originally the main feeder into the boarding school, which was referred to as the third stage. The first project and stage which boys could attend was a 'Patio' day centre, in the centre of the city. If their presence was regular and staff considered they would benefit from the project, they could be invited to enter the Transition House. Here a six-month process was designed to transform boys from 'street' children into institutional children, who could function with the demands of the system such as time management, discipline and control of the self, and submission to authority.

At the core was the 'third stage' boarding school, with some 325 boys, 200 of whom resided in the dormitories. Boys from the street programme constituted some 30% of these, the rest having been remitted directly to the boarding programme, largely on grounds of 'irregular situations'. Of the 200 boarders, about 140 were '*internos*' (weekly boarders) while a minority of about 60 were referred to as '*reque-internos*', "doubly interned", lacking family or anyone else to visit at weekends or holidays. These could be described as 'social' orphans. Any living family they had were unable, sometimes unwilling, to care for the boys, but often contact had been lost, as families were sometimes situated in remote parts of the country. This core of boarders rarely left the campus for more than day outings or camping trips.

The education on offer for the boys in the third stage was primary and secondary school. After this they could enter the fourth stage and finish their secondary education for a high school diploma (*bachillerato*) whilst living in the youth residence, a building at the edge of the campus where boys and young men enjoyed a greater degree of independence. This residence housed some forty youngsters between the ages of 16 and 22, who studied apprenticeships in the various on-site workshops by

³ See Appendix 2 for Project Structure of CCS.

day, and in the afternoons were taken by bus to a Salesian high school on the other side of town, where they studied until 10 o'clock at night.

The non-residential workshops that constituted the 'fifth stage' were also open to young men and women from poor *barrios* all over the city. Where high levels of violence and a lack of opportunities characterised neighbourhoods, CCS had started offering young people training in a skill or trade, thus widening the scope of its client population. Some were from the *Comuna NorOriental*, a part of the city which produced many of the boys on the street and who attended other projects of the institution, and had been an epicentre of the rise of gang culture, as described in Chapter Two. The workshops produced commercially, the metallurgy workshops having made the roofs for the stations of the city's metro system. In addition to providing training and a small stipend to those in these apprenticeships, the workshops were envisaged as providing CCS with greater financial security and independence in the long term⁴.

For reasons of limitation of scope, this thesis does not discuss the workshops in depth, but the apprenticeship-like training they offered was something discussed by boys amongst themselves, and constituted a stage to which boys were encouraged to aspire. While the workshops offered training in carpentry, lithography, metallurgy, gas, electricity, clothes manufacture and machine engineering, it was the then-new automotive mechanics workshop which boys from the Transition House seemed most excited by. It spoke to commonly appreciable forms of male occupation, as seen on television or in films, and one boy mentioned that he wanted to learn auto mechanics because his uncle was a mechanic, and was doing reasonably well. Indeed, the young men from the workshops were around the campus during the day, and boys certainly seemed to look up to them. Children's consciousness and awareness of difference of size and age (cf. James 1995) seemed manifest in how the boys appeared to enjoy watching the older boys and young men play football and flirt with the girls from the workshops during breaks.

⁴ One priest wanted to develop them into the financial support system of the rest of the institution long-term, as well as providing employment for parents or other family of boys here. However, shortly after my fieldwork finished he left the priesthood altogether. To what extent this was due to his ideas of the social mission of the institution being out of step with that of the hierarchy is hard to say with precision, but he also informally disputed the Church's position on the marriage of priests.

These young women were amongst the few females at the institution. The Programme for Street Minors (PSM) which is the focus of this thesis accepted only boys. This is a legacy of the division of labour between nuns and priests of the Salesian order such that the Salesian sisters ran a boarding programme for girls in the southern district of Caldas, named after Don Bosco's mother. Direct work with girls on the street in central Medellín got under way in early 1999, when the sisters opened the first day centre for 'street-living' girls. This however ran a strict regime whereby girls had to be at its gates at 8 am, in order to spend the day in informal classes and recreational activities (there was an outdoor swimming pool in the grounds) and it offered no nocturnal facilities. When Nancy, a girl I'd met one night in the streets⁵, took me up on my offer to show her where the patio for girls was, we were greeted by a nun who was quietly dismayed at the girl's obvious exhaustion from having been up all night, whispering to me that she looked as though she took drugs. When I asked what night facilities were available, the nun said that all the girls went home at night, and Nancy spent half the day there and never returned.

The state's temporary holding facility for runaway youth, the *Diagnostico* (diagnostic), did take in girls, and when in November 1998 a group of about eight girls ran away from it and came to perch outside the Patio, the CCS staff were forced to think hard about how to deal with them. This was not because they wanted to expand their work to include girls, although this was mooted, but because lots of the boys stopped coming in to the Patio, preferring to hang about outside with the girls. So the girls were invited in, but had to go back to the street at night, although one educator took it upon himself to offer four of the girls a place to stay in his home while discussions were held as to where they might be allocated a place to spend the nights.

Although CCS grew out of a project for working children, through the decades the street-based population in need of attention has been seen to change, and the

⁵ On 'operation friendship' with staff, as I will describe later.

institution has responded in numerous ways⁶. As I will describe in later chapters, staff at the Transition House maintained an open and critical eye on how the institutional process should be structured, because of changes they perceived in the street-based population, such as the fact that ever-younger children were presenting themselves for care. Indeed, the complexities of histories of the boys at third stage hint at a very much larger population of children with a variety of needs stemming from war and poverty. The third stage, for example, accepted boys referred to it by state social workers, from families who came personally to its doors asking for help to feed and educate their children, and received demilitarised boys who had been involved in the armed conflict. During my fieldwork, the institution was also growing outside of the city, as it responded to calls from various state and international entities to reduce the population of children working in the coal mines in areas to the south of the city⁷.

Organisational Structure

CCS functioned with a vertical hierarchy for policy-making and major operational decisions. Its overall director had the principal role in determining the outlook of the institution, and chaired the executive committee, which met once a month. This was composed of the six priests, the head social worker, head psychologist and the directors of each programme (the PSM, the third stage and the workshops). Here overall institutional strategy was developed, and formal institutional values and objectives decided upon.

Priests were charged with supervising the management of projects and programmes, as well as playing pastoral roles, while the director of each project had a certain amount of autonomy in day-to-day functions. Priests' managerial roles seemed to take precedence over their religious role on a daily basis; for example they did not wear robes except for religious ceremonies⁸.

⁶ In 1997 for example a new project was opened under the auspices of the city government, a dormitory for young men from fifteen onwards. At 15 they were no longer eligible to enter CCS through the Patio and Transition House, but were to be integrated into the educational programmes of the third, fourth and fifth stages.

⁷ This was a programme in its own right which offered an education and vocational training to child miners.

⁸ As members of the Salesian community, the priests would all have been assigned to CCS, one of numerous 'houses', as the community calls its projects, by the national directorate. Other projects

This formal structure can be contrasted to a certain extent with the informal mechanisms of action and immediate decision-making by staff, and the informal working culture created by relationships between staff (cf Wright 1994a: 17⁹). Within the Patio and Transition House stages, there was a great deal of continuity amongst staff views of the process and how best to achieve objectives. These emphasised personal attention that was neither excessively coercive nor stigmatising, but involved patience and understanding. The informality of the relations of staff who worked directly with boys could be contrasted with the approach of those in administrative or professional positions who had little or no contact with the street or the Patio, areas in which the informal working culture of the institution was most apparent. Staff could also be helpful or obstructive towards one another in their work, and qualities of work relations were shifting¹⁰. While much of the time staff worked on friendly and helpful terms, there was also a constant stream of gossip circulating which was to some extent the motor of the informal culture.

A further element of the informal culture and sense of institutional history could be termed the stories or 'myths' of the organisation, which seemed to reflect abiding issues in the relationship of the campus with the world outside. The institution managed mostly good and respectful relations with the *barrios* outside the campus, as

amongst the 44 in Colombia include a network of patios and homes for 'street' children based in Bogotá known as Bosconia, schools serving middle-class populations in various cities, and missionary projects in remote areas with indigenous and isolated groups. The Colombian territory was divided into six provincial inspectorates, and new priests are trained at the seminary in Bogotá. Colombia, to which the Salesians first arrived in 1890, is part of the Inter-American region which includes Latin and Central America and the Caribbean. At a meeting of some 100 representatives from projects all over the region in August 1999 in Bogotá to discuss how the community should respond to evidence of growing social marginalisation and poverty within the region, it was clear that although views of a range of political persuasions could be expressed, in drafting a final statement of the conference's findings, the hierarchy directing the encounter was cautious to avoid overtly political wording. It was also suggested to me by several members that the hierarchy was adept at managing dissenting voices within the community, such as by sending those with controversial views to remote projects. Directors of houses often have a primary responsibility for the public profile of an institution, and are responsible for managing political relationships and networks.

⁹ Wright points out that the concept of informal culture has been applied in organisational studies to reflect how individuals relate to each other within an organisation, in ways which link such patterns of relating to the environment outside the organisation (1994a: 17-18).

¹⁰ One example was when boys from the Transition House were sent back there by the doctor up in administrative centre. The doctor complained that there was dirt under their fingernails. Lydia subsequently expressed frustration at evidence of such detachment from operations of administrative staff.

many of the women who worked in the kitchens and other members of staff lived there, and on Sundays the swimming pool and football pitches were opened to the *barrio* for use by families or groups wanting to swim or play a match. However, an important myth related to the gang that operated in the *barrio* immediately outside the gates. Its leader was particularly famous amongst the boys, and they called him 'Nine Lives', because he had lived through some six assassination attempts, the last of which had left a bullet lodged in his spine and consigned him to a wheelchair. Other myths included the fact that the gang apparently had tried to come for lunch at the institution¹¹. The fact that boys found Nine Lives a subject to be discussed in tones of awe and almost superstitious reverence suggests the impact such forms of masculinity could have on some boys, as well as the very immediate proximity of gang culture. This includes the challenges it posed for any aspired disruption of links between masculinity and violence.

The possibility of affecting developments and changes to policy within the institution was conditioned by the different discourses used by staff at different levels, which sometimes seemed to militate against shared or common ways of analysing and categorising the clients of the programmes. This was compounded by the difficulties of knowing the client population well, given its fluid and often transitory nature. Inevitably this was also a product of the wider social and political circumstances in which CCS operated, as I have suggested, and to which it has tried to respond¹². These same circumstances also made social impact, or evaluative assessment of the institution's fulfilment of its objectives, difficult if not impossible. Demands on staff time made analysis of the vast quantities of different types of information held by the institution, both in formal records and collectively held in staff experience and knowledge, difficult. However the vertical organisation and decision-making structures also implied a hierarchy of knowledge which was linked to the status of the knowledge-holder - an issue whose salience is apparent in the ethnographic material.

¹¹ I heard this from both staff and boys, but rarely with details such as dates or frequency; once the gang had apparently arrived for lunch and several of them were armed. Padre Luis, the accountant and disciplinarian, was said to have received a call from the guard and gone straight to his bedroom to collect a gun he kept there. Apparently the gang retreated and decided to abide by the priest's rules.

¹² If, for example, any movements towards peace in the future involves the de-militarisation of children currently active in conflict, CCS would be well placed to receive de-mobilised child soldiers, and would probably do so by creating another adjacent project structure.

This large organisation had in one sense become an entity with the objective of self-perpetuation, and strategies for growth and development were based on senior staff and management's appreciation of long-term strategies. Here another interesting fact of the way staff related to wider circumstances of work was apparent. Senior staff worked hard to maintain good relations with the ICBF, its main source of funding and private donors with a view to growth and future financial security. Meanwhile educators and auxiliary staff were concerned by such relations because of their potential implications in terms of jobs losses, a concern that was widely mooted when in late 1998 ICBF re-organised its funding methods for CCS and other sub-contracted providers of social services¹³.

Official Permission, Structure and Methods

Doing research in an institution, particularly one of this size and visibility, implied a number of important qualifying factors. Firstly, official permission had to be sought and obtained, and assessment of the value of my project was, I must presume, in some ways affected by the institution's relations with European donors and its reputation as a transparent and accountable organisation. However, official permission addressed ethical issues only in so far as the institution's management was concerned, and this was in no way related to the process of seeking consent from the boys. To the contrary, it was necessary for me to negotiate my relationship with boys from a neutral position with regard to the institution's regulations and power structures. On the basis of previous experience it was clear to me that my adult status would in all likelihood lead the boys to associate me with the educators, or an educator-like status. I wanted to avoid this as far as possible, so that the boys would understand that I had no vested interest in the institution, but was interested in boys' reactions to it.

As the formal schooling component of the institution took up large parts of the boys' time, and was structured in time and space under the authority of teachers and

¹³ This was due to cuts and rationalisation of spending discussed in Chapter Two. At the Patio for example, the ICBF had paid CCS money for each place (i.e. attendance by child) available for use, but after the changes only paid for the places actually used, and these were rationalised down to half days. Reporting on this constituted a hefty new administrative burden.

project managers, I deliberately only carried out research activities which involved the boys' attention in their spare time¹⁴. So while I was around the facilities all day, and occasionally observed in classrooms, all research activities other than participant observation took place during the boys' free time.

Secondly, carrying out research in what is a busy and complex organisation where people were carrying out paid work as professionals meant that I had to be careful as to how I went about my work. Staff had varied reactions to the idea of a foreign researcher making a detailed study of what went on in the institution, and perceptions of my partiality demanded that I be seen to comprehend a variety of viewpoints, as well as the wider conditions within which the institution functioned. Some staff found my presence uncomfortable because of the professional nature of their work and the sense that I might be judging it; others found my presence unacceptable for political reasons which framed my presence in a post colonial context. But as individuals, many staff also became friends whom I would see outside of work time, and I knew some of the staff from my earlier visit.

To some extent the above factors constrained what I could and could not have access to, know about, and ask about, although limits primarily operated at the higher levels of the hierarchy¹⁵. I was also keenly aware of internal rivalries and perceptions with regard to the distribution of and access to power within the organisation. Indeed, many staff were happy to share - off the record- their views about what was wrong or incoherent within the institution's functioning¹⁶. While many interviews with staff were carried out 'on' the record and in their official capacity, some PSM educators also spoke from personal experiences about the conditions of 'street' children. While such dynamics are clearly commonly found in institutions, being aware of the internal politics of the institution also proved an energy- and time-consuming task, for the reasons related to the need for transparency as outlined above.

¹⁴ Only once did I use this 'official' time for active research purposes, on an occasion when the role plays I was interested in getting boys to carry out coincided with a session set aside for a class project.

¹⁵ I had to present an initial proposal to the executive committee in the first weeks of fieldwork, but after my presentation was asked to leave while the matter was discussed.

¹⁶ The extent to which they were willing to do so seemed to be inversely related to rank.

One early decision related to ethical and practical implications of my position was to accept the offer from friends to move into a flat in the city centre, after living in the institution for the first two months¹⁷. As I wanted the research to be about the boys' experiences of the institution, I decided to 'shadow' one group's progress through two stages of the Programme for Street Minors (PSM) and then into the main boarding stage. This was just feasible to carry out within fourteen months of fieldwork, and allowed me to get to know one group of boys in particular, and establish a small-scale longitudinal dimension to the study. In many ways, as is apparent through the organisation of the chapters, this study is the study of a process, and the progress of one group of boys through various stages of a reformatory regime.

This thesis attempts to privilege boys' opinions, Chapter Six being the only chapter dedicated to the institutional view. This view is contrasted with boys' potential reactions to it, which have to be understood in the context of staff interactions with the boys. These are difficult to summarise. Every educator was viewed as a different personality by the boys, and they almost always referred to specific individuals when praising or complaining about staff. In addition to physical displays of affection, staff roles as carers had a certain parental quality, based on their age status and concepts of kinship, which I discuss in more depth in later chapters. Staff also had to respond to boys' needs for affection and encouragement at a level which was implicitly emotional, but also part of their professional role and tasks. This included for example giving hugs and cuddles to boys, physical displays of affection being widely acceptable between members of both same and opposite genders¹⁸. As such this attention was also meant to apply to group as well as individual scenarios, such that whenever the boys were addressed as a group, the fact that staff cared about them as individuals and children was reinforced, with reminders that the staff cared for the boys a lot (*recuerden, los queremos mucho*; remember we care for you a lot), and

¹⁷ See photograph 3.6 for view from window of my room in the institution. I was fortunate to have made friends with two academics from Medellín in London prior to fieldwork, and through them developed a group of friends who helped me in innumerable ways. Living outside the institution also permitted me access to other spaces and times in important ways as I describe.

¹⁸ The extent to which this contrasts with British views about displays of affection was made apparent to me by anthropologist friends who contrasted this affectivity with a 'typical' British display of affection that would, they said, at most involve a slap on the back. They mockingly called this '*el fino cariño inglés*' (a fine English demonstration of affection).

that they would always be there for the boys, if they had problems at any other subsequent stage.

I remained aware then of the extent to which my presence and research activity could be seen to be fostering discontent while encouraging boys to talk about their experiences in the institution. This would not only have been unethical, it would have not have been received well or necessarily permitted to continue. In practice such issues seemed to resolve themselves with time, and by the boys themselves, as I will discuss below. The institution's commitment to openness was made real, and I was given access to many spaces, areas, and staff time. My debt of reciprocity thus lies not only with boys but also with staff and the institution, part of which includes giving a copy of the thesis to the instituion¹⁹.

III. Theorising and Studying a Process of Change

Anthropology implicitly searches for regularities, those things and actions which are most visible, and reproduced regularly in people's actions and theories. These relatively static objects and processes, what Giddens calls 'recursive' social activities (1984: 2), are by definition what is rendered observable during short periods of research, and are thus open to evaluation by scientific methods. As Blok suggests, the emphasis in the social sciences "has long been on system, structure and stability, rather than on process, motion, flow and the movement of people and culture" (2001: ix). This is partly because "in the conceptualisation of society, the bounded, integrated and pacified nation-state has long been a major paragon" (ibid)²⁰.

These issues are clearly salient when studying Colombia, where no research can be adequately framed by such assumptions. Conflict, process, movement and change have to be at the forefront of considering how a national society, or any part of it, in this thesis's case children, responds to violence, displacement, crisis and uncertainty²¹. Indeed, looking at a process also makes possible consideration of the

¹⁹ I hope to be able to provide more relevant information from my *findings* to them in due course.

²⁰ And it would be hard not to note in at least a footnote the fact that Geertz managed to reduce to a footnote the violence in Indonesia which took thousands of lives, as Blok (2001: 104) notes.

²¹ See photographs 3.3 and 3.4, of city center streets and army presence

minutiae of that experience: how certain elements work and are adopted, how different stakeholders perceive different moments in a process, and how discourses shift and change during a process.

Phases, Spaces and Time

In attempting to make a study of elements in processes of change, then, I spent the first five months in and around the Patio day centre, and when a group of forty boys was selected from here to progress to the Transition House project, I accompanied them, shifting my daily fieldwork site accordingly. This second stage lasted another five months, and when those remaining in the programme were ‘promoted’ to the third and subsequent level, the boarding project, I again followed them.

As will become apparent, the fieldwork ‘site’ was primarily that of the institution’s main campus, and its satellite projects and houses. This aspect of the ‘field’ was required by the research question, but in order to balance this focus with a sense of the wider context of the institution’s role in the city, I did not limit fieldwork to the institutional areas. Rather, other spaces and times in Medellín were crucial to “constructing the field” (Amit 2000), which was aided by living outside the institution. A multi-sited approach is important, given that children are mobile and their lives involve different spaces and areas of interaction, as Lucchini notes (1996: 168), and making observations verifiable through different spaces and times. Thus I saw children working at night when out with friends, struck up conversations with boys around the sports stadium on Saturdays, and sometimes came across and talked to boys who had left the institution while walking around the city.

The first phase of research was in and around the Patio day-centre in the heart of the city, described in Chapter Five, which I went to on a daily basis during the week, and sometimes at weekends. The Patio had a relaxed atmosphere, and initially much of my time was spent just sitting on the metal benches or the old tyres that are sometimes used as toys, talking to, listening to and ‘watching’ the boys. I also had to respond to their inquiries as to what I was doing there, and I was initially a matter of some curiosity to them. They asked where I was from and we discussed the recent

World Cup, and other subjects on which common ground readily made itself apparent. Relationship building and getting used to the atmosphere and various personalities took a while, and was not a process I wanted to rush; to the contrary, it was enjoyable and seemed to have its own rhythm. In my first month I wrote the following in my notebook, describing a typical moment at the Patio:

Read to some boys for a bit - we were all sitting in the shade corner of the top balcony of the Patio, on the concrete. – Juan David, Carlos, etc. after which Jason and Juan David started fighting. Juan David was putting broken up stick into the holes of a small tyre, making a pattern, and Jason, who's 13 kept hitting the tyre with a larger stick. Juan David said '-stop, stop' etc. but Jason didn't. Then Carlos joined in the game of destruction, pestering until Juan David gave up. Then Jason started poking and hitting Juan David with the sticks he was holding. Juan David would giggle and pull away.

Time amongst children has different parameters than it does for adults, and indeed, as I will explain in Chapter Five, on the street. I necessarily had to work at their pace and according to what was comfortable for them. As boys got used to my presence, they started asking at the end of the day if I would return the next day. This initial time was thus about building trust. The boys were sizing me up and checking me out; as is said locally, *mediendo el aceite* (checking the oil). I discovered the limits of 'participation' at this stage, such as confirming that I did not know how to play football. I also went on walks through the city at night with the Patio staff, when they carried out visits to areas of the centre where children are known to gather and encourage them to come to the Patio. This was an important opportunity to see the children in this social terrain and engaged in night time street activities, including smoking *basuco*, a derivative of the cocaine refining process, and interacting with street-living adults, as well as to observe the institution's strategy for making contact with boys in the street.

In early 1999 the process of selecting boys for the next group to go to the Transition House began at the Patio, discussed in both the formal weekly staff meetings and informal gatherings of staff at the Patio, which I was allowed to attend and participate in²². The selection was in principle done according to certain criteria, but the possibility of observing the dynamics of these meetings was crucial

²² I should note that I did not attempt to contribute any information that boys had disclosed to me nor in any other way influence proceedings.

to understanding the difference between stated policy and acted practice, as I will discuss in Chapter Six. The 40 boys selected from the Patio were then taken on a week-long trip to a rural house owned by the institution. For the boys, the swimming in the pool and fishing in the lake were combined in that week with discussions with, and occasionally punctuated by lectures from, the educators as to what was going to be expected of them at the Transition House.

The progression to the second stage Transition House was marked by a ceremony, also discussed in Chapter Six which again I was able to attend. I also attended the prior one, in the August of 1998, which gave me a further source of comparative material on the various manners in which the ceremony was organised. Importantly, the ceremony had changed since my earlier visit, and it no longer involved the burning of an effigy of a street child. Instead pieces of card with words describing certain activities associated with the street on them were burned, an important change suggested by the new director of the Transition House.

Once the boys were ensconced in the Transition House, my daily routine was to go there and continue participant observation and other activities with this group. I re-developed good relations with the principal bus driver, and sometimes waved to him to catch a lift on his way back up to the institution, or caught the 7.30 a.m. bus that took staff up from the centre²³. This period, from February to July 1999, constituted perhaps the most intensely productive stage of the research. The boys and I got to know each other much better, I was inside the institution and participating in regular institutional events, and was able to apprehend aspects of the institution's functioning in greater depth. My relationships with staff grew too, partially because of the larger proportion of female staff here. I spent a lot of time chatting with the director, Lydia, and sometimes took over her classes when she had to take phone calls. I also visited some families with the social worker Yolinda, as circumstances

²³ The commercial buses that plied the route between the centre and the *barrio* often took an hour or more to make their way up the steep mountainside full with people. This made transport an issue that kept me to institutional routines, as well as the fact that it was necessary for me to demonstrate the seriousness of my approach by being continuously present, unless I had to undertake some work outside the institution (such as visiting a university or library).

permitted²⁴. The staff here were overwhelmingly sympathetic to my presence, and the manner in which my activities and questions were tolerated was fundamental to the success of the research.

The final phase of the research started with the progression of twenty-one boys from the Transition House to the third stage. In the days leading up to the move, they anxiously discussed rumours of the strict regimes run 'up there'. Indeed, things were very different in the third stage. While a closeness and ease of interaction characterised the relatively confined but often convivial atmosphere of the Transition House, the third stage project was much more of a challenge. The boys who had come as a group from the Transition House were distributed between different dormitories and classrooms. Some made new friends, and all entered different routines. Whilst in the Transition House I could enter a classroom discreetly but without special or prior consent, now permission had to be sought from the head teacher and then individual teachers. Again, while in the Transition House my relationship with the boys was accepted and unproblematic, and not even a cause for thought to the educators, in the third stage I occasionally found myself in uncomfortable situations as the object of suspicion.

In addition to four educators on duty in the third stage, there was Padre Luca, an elderly priest and symbolic head disciplinarian. He was a widely respected figure with white hair and a stooped back, and had been at CCS for as long as most people could remember. He was also known for being stern and for having an extremely keen eye for everything that went on in the project. So I was once not too surprised to see his head duck behind a wall when I was talking to a boy one day, and reaching into my bag to give him a metro ticket for him and another boy to use that weekend²⁵. Quite possibly the priest was concerned as to what I might be handing over or retrieving from my bag. Such suspicions seemed to hinge around the feeling that I was too 'pally' with the boys, too informal and not educator-like enough. I thus might do things educators would not. The incident also illustrates the watchful

24 About half way through my fieldwork, and Yolinda's process of visiting the families of as many boys as possible, she was required to take with her a social work student who was carrying out a placement and the opportunities for me to accompany her diminished.

25 During the Transition House period a visiting student and myself started inviting boys who had no family locally out at weekends, with staff approval, to have lunch or visit us at our respective homes.

eyes that follow the boys; as Foucault observes, disciplinary power is not a ‘triumphant power’, but a ‘modest, *suspicious* power’ (1977: 170, my italics), which I occasionally here felt myself to be the object of.

IV. Ethics and Consent

As Foucault observed, “ethics is a practice”²⁶, but the process of making ethical positions work at the level of daily routines can be surrounded by complex questions of position. The parameters of the research outlined above framed the process in a general way, and I have explained my positioning with regard to power relations and how I tried to manage them. As I stated at the outset of this chapter, an understanding of boys’ agency as constrained by their age and situations informed the questions of my research, and this clearly had practical ethical implications. While it would be unethical to force or oblige children in any manner to participate in research, possibilities for this are frequently created by the very nature of children’s constrained agency. As Young and Barrett (2001) suggest, the ethics of research with structurally vulnerable young people create additional requirements for ethical consideration. In a process which was partly conscious and partly an instinctive reaction to the different personalities and ages of the boys, the research was carried out in ways which avoided any coercion. I think these issues can be described in two ways. On the one hand, time was fundamental to boys to gain confidence in and trust me. On the other hand, research which involved boys directly was always carried out on the basis of prior consent, which was as informed as I think it could have been, for reasons I will discuss shortly.

‘Street’ children are famously wary of researchers whose ethical considerations and provisions for reciprocity are often limited. The street teaches many things, one of which is that apparently well-intentioned researchers ask questions with a sympathetic smile, and then disappear and never help children in any way, as Hecht reports in Brazil (1998: 18). Indeed, their wariness is a function of their awareness of their powerlessness, as well as their limited agency in denying access and information to those they distrust. I had ethical dilemmas about whether or not I might fall into this category. However, I felt that for the boys, this was slightly

²⁶ Foucault 1983, in Rabinow ed 1984: 377

mediated by the fact that I was a regular presence in their lives. Over time this became a more important issue and the boys I had regular contact with grew to understand my neutrality towards the institution, and treated me with friendliness as well as providing me with assistance²⁷.

I also regularly visited the group on the street outside the Patio, and most of them knew who I was. They were helpful in trying to locate one child when I searched for him to take him to a doctor, and respected the friendships I had with some boys whom I had met before. They sometimes seemed to have overly hopeful ideas about my power and wanted me to act on their behalf²⁸, but were always friendly and helpful.

'Street' children are known to protect those they know and trust, as reported to me once by a British priest working in Medellín. Once, having just been robbed of his bag on a crowded street, children he knew suddenly materialised and chased down the robber to return the item²⁹. I too had an interesting experience in this regard, which alerted me to certain potentials of the street in terms of gender. Leaning against the wall one day I was looking on as the *parche* group engaged in an amusing banana-peel-throwing fight, when a man selling bags of water and lemonade out of

²⁷ Of course such friendships and the ethical implications of research do not end with the end of fieldwork or a thesis. However, contact with the children who participated in this research has been difficult for a number of reasons. As for the future, my intentions and objectives do involve doing what I can to publicise the clearest findings of this research to relevant parties and entities.

²⁸ One incident that showed this was on a Saturday morning in September 1999 when, passing by the Patio, I came across an incident between the traffic police, the *parche* children, and the police. It took a while to ascertain what had happened, but a passer-by had aggressively reprimanded the group for taking drugs on the street. One older guy had stood up to retaliate, but passing traffic police intervened. Other police were soon on the scene, and dragged him away round the corner to a station there. They quickly shut the gates on us, as we'd followed them round, and a couple of them said to me 'Do something! You're rich, they'll listen to you!' One girl of 11 had climbed up to a broken window to try to look in to see what they were doing to her friend, and was crying. When the traffic police emerged I asked them what had happened, and possibly embarrassed that a foreigner had witnessed the manhandling of this young man and his detention for no obvious offence, one mumbled something to me and sped away on the moped with the other. The police later emerged with the man on a motorbike, handcuffed and squashed between them. I discussed what to do with the kids, and pointed out that we wouldn't be allowed in the station they'd taken him to. In reality I could do nothing, but they had hoped that I could.

²⁹ Father Peter Walters, personal communication. Fr. Walters also recounts having been inspired to work with 'street' children after receiving help from them in Cartagena when he was robbed as tourist. He now runs his own charity, Let the Children Live!, with projects in Medellín. Indeed one psychologist working at CCS suggested to me that for him, 'street' children tended to be relatively open and relaxed with animals, educators' children and foreigners. This may be because of the relatively unformed state of such peoples (and animals) views of 'street' children.

a plastic barrel on a trolley approached. It was hot and I bought some water from him, and then he asked me how much money I had in my pocket. I replied that not much, which was true, and he suggested that he knew how I could earn some money and get off the street and away from the other *gamines*. I did not have a chance to confirm that he was suggesting he could get me work in prostitution because a man in his early twenties who was often around the *parche*, and was standing nearby listening, came forward and said “She’s not a *gamin*, she’s from England”. This incident raises several interesting issues, not least of them the speed and ease with which girls can apparently be enticed into prostitution on the street, although it perhaps also suggests the level to which my behaviour and dress had adapted to the conditions of participant observation at the Patio³⁰. If I was mildly frustrated at not being able to pursue the conversation further, and perhaps learn more about girls on the street and prostitution networks, the intervention by the young man was designed to protect me, as an innocent on the street, and an English female, from the darker or potentially dangerous elements of the street. His actions underlined issues of solidarity, as well as gender.

Another issue of doing research with children on the street is what has been referred to as their 'myth-making' (cf Aptekar 1988, Hecht 1998, Swart 1995, Ennew 1994). Some researchers call it lying, but what a 'street' child - or any child, for that matter - may tell you of her or his life is rarely entirely make believe, but rather a creative mixture of their own and other seen and heard of lives, a blend of fact and fiction. Thus a boy may have had parents killed by stray bullets, rather than as a result of direct involvement in gang wars; he may have visited his uncle with the guerrilla in the mountains for only a few days rather than months, but there is usually an underlying element of fact. One educator who had spent most of his youth on the street observed that this blending of fact and fiction was due to the fact that their actual lives were dull and depressing, and that they thus felt the need to elaborate or embellish when recounting them to another person. This could be because they judge that the listener expects to hear an exciting story, but accounts

³⁰ My dress and personal presentation remained largely the same as in Britain (e.g. jeans, sweatshirts, no make-up, hair not neatly styled, no jewellery), and while this was largely coterminous with what many Colombian university students wear, it was significantly less elegant than that of middle class Colombian women

can be modified according to who is listening. This same educator recounted that at one institution for 'street' children, he had smoked marijuana before an interview and then told a psychologist "what she wanted to hear; so she kept writing down all these things and looking at me sadly". It was another game, and real tragedy was interwoven with imagined, the listener's perceived prejudices and stereotypes being played on mockingly or for fun. However, it importantly indicates that children are aware of power and some of its modes of articulation, and not naïve or easily duped into telling their stories. Rather they are all too aware of how their 'lives' are construed and represented by others.

Ethics and Sexuality

The point about children's negotiation of power and the subjects which researchers can and cannot touch on is relevant to the topic of sexuality and sexual activity. The boys' experiences of sexuality are not discussed as a specific subject or area of analysis in this thesis. This is despite my awareness and recognition of the shortcomings of denying children's sexuality as current in modern constructions of childhood (cf Foucault 1976 (1990), Montgomery 2000). As Foucault (op cit) and Ariès (1962) document, sexuality was an area of adult practice and life that was gradually shrouded and veiled from children, children's consciousness of which and acts of were gradually controlled. It is also an area of bodily practice regulated by Christian views about the body. These see the body "as weak and sinful and in need of strict control and regulation by the mind" (Shilling 1993: 55, cf Brown 1988).

The complexity of the boys' approaches to the subject of sexuality cannot be underestimated, but I had to start by acknowledging their sensitivities about the topic. What knowledge I have was only partly derived from conversations with and observations of the boys in this thesis, and my approach to the subject was based on caution. This is partly explained by my previous visit to Medellín, when I learned about how boys might hide issues which might cause shame or embarrassment. This was partly through a 14 year old from the southern areas of the country with whom I used to talk. A philosophical and kind young man, he had spent years on the streets. We were catching up on news one day when he mentioned having spent the previous night in a room rather than sleeping on the street. When I asked him

where he got the money to rent a room for the night, he gave me a knowing look and said '*tu sabes*' (you know)³¹. Some boys were embarrassed when I tried to raise the subject in conversation; others made brief references to, for example, how they avoided sexual advances on the street. A few referred to how, when the girls turned up outside the Patio in the November, 'other' boys were clearly interested in trying to experiment sexually with them.

It is probably fair to say that most of the boys were aware of sex and sexuality as a generally taboo subject, and thus children's activities in this area would necessarily be contentious. And as we will see in Chapter Six, sexual and other bodily functions are amongst those which the institution explicitly marks as dangerous, clearly expressed to boys when they are inducted into the Transition House.

While their discussions were undoubtedly affected by my position as an older female, I think two general frames are relevant to the topic in this context. One is that of experimentation. Boys may well have had experiences of a sexual nature with other boys and with girls on the street. Felsman (1981) has analysed such relationships between boys through the term 'chumship', a close friendships between two boys that can include such experimentation. There was one pair of boys I sometimes thought might have had this kind of a relationship. They spent quite some time apart from the *parche* outside the Patio, living for several months on the streets of a middle class neighbourhood, until a nearby lottery stall was robbed and the blame shifted to them and they were forced to go. There were moments of interaction between them that reminded me of a married couple. They would argue and one would cross the road so as to be apart, both defiant, and after some time of a heated stand off, be reconciled with arms round each other. Indeed, for the most part they seemed very happy together, and made a good team because although of similar age, one was slighter than the other and could be more effective begging, while the bigger one could offer to look after cars and motorbikes.

³¹ Indicative of the place of sexuality on the street, the verb *conocer* (to know) is here used to refer to sexual knowledge of someone, such that the verb *distinguir* (to distinguish) is used in its place in contexts such as asking 'do you know someone?' with reference to whether you recognise or have met them before. If you use *conocer* you will be asking about sexual relations.

For the institution however, separating 'big' ones and 'little' ones was a fundamental feature of dormitory organisation. On the street exploitative sexuality on the basis of physical size may well have been an issue, such incidents never came to light amongst the Patio *parche*, or indeed inside the institution, certainly not on the scale as shown in the film *Pixote* inside a Brazilian state detention centre. At the Transition House staff would occasionally half murmur comments about empty beds, but educators on night duty slept in rooms at either end of the dormitories, indicating a state of continuous surveillance. In practice this location was also useful because they also had to wake younger boys up during the night so prevent them from wetting their beds. Boys too would sometimes mention the fact that beds got 'visited', but there were no connotations of malice or hurt in their remarks.

During my fieldwork, staff views of exploitative sexual relations with adults were revealed in two separate cases. On one occasion when the psychologist let me sit in on an informal interview with a relatively new boy at the Patio, with the boy's consent, the boy almost immediately started making jokes about the toys the psychologist had to hand having penises. It later transpired, through the informal mechanisms of information sharing between staff, that the boy had a relationship with a male shop owner up the road, and that the man seemed to give the boy food in exchange for sexual favours.

The boys would often refer to such relationships with the expression of 'having a *barbado*' a bearded [person], as in 'he is your *barbado*'. This expression was mostly used in a joking, teasing way, as if by saying 'you've got a big bearded man' you were insulting the other boy's masculinity. This hinged on a tri-partite construction of sexuality prevalent on the street and in wider sections of society, also observed by Ruiz et al in Bogotá (1998:105)³². According to this schema, a man (or boy) who is the passive partner in sexual acts is the weakest, *un marica* or 'gay boy'. Indeed the term is widely used in slang. A man who penetrates women is of average or standard sexual potency, but a man who penetrates other men is considered to be of the most

³² See Paternostro 1999 for journalistic investigation of sexuality in Colombia and other Latin American countries, where she suggests that many married and apparently heterosexual men engage in sexual affairs with other men, but that because of social taboos on homosexuality it remains a deeply hidden practice. The triangular model I suggest seems in evidence, and penetrative same-gender sex is seen as affirming the masculinity of the 'active' partner.

potent sexuality, by displaying superior masculine virile power. As such, having a *barbado* meant you really were a *marica*, as opposed to being called *marica* jokingly by friends as an insult, or because of exploratory sexual relations with other boys. However, given these constructions, where relevant – because there were some boys who seemed to neither know nor care for such discussions – sexuality was a complex topic and intrusive questions about it didn't really have a place in the research.

Meanwhile the institution's official policy on sexual education – required by the government - was going through a lengthy examination process, with an interdisciplinary team meeting regularly over the course of a couple of years to develop an appropriate pedagogical strategy. Whatever this was to eventually mean for the Transition House, Lydia invited a local NGO to talk to the boys about sexually transmitted diseases. She made a point of introducing the session by discussing how homosexual and heterosexual activities ought to be treated with equal respect, emphasising that personal choice was personal freedom and that this warranted respect. What Padre Carlos or indeed any of the other more senior staff might have made of this half-day event I don't know. At the Patio the boys had already been given one lecture on STDs, during which, memorably, most fell asleep, and they had also been shown a movie about AIDS specifically designed for 'street' children. This they took great interest in, as the principal characters were well designed and had very plausible friendships, while the rich man who infected one of them was portrayed as not caring for the child's welfare. In discussions afterwards, he clearly identified by the boys as a dangerous and nasty figure.

Power and Partiality

Boys who had never lived on the street or had done so for only short periods were more likely to view my research and presence with ambiguity, without the tendency to wariness that other children developed. This seemed to manifest itself in the younger ones and those with no street experience, who had less coherent views of power meant. This meant that they saw my project and me in different ways. Some seemed to see me as someone who would read to them, or ask them questions sometimes. Others put it more broadly as someone comparable to a social worker

or educator. Some of the younger ones called me *'tia'* (aunt), a term frequently applied to women who worked in the PSM projects. This suggests that for some of those whose understanding and experience of different forms of adult power was more limited, the association of me with typical female roles was unsurprising. However, to older boys who were more likely to take an active interest in the research, I was more easily distinguishable from the typical female roles in their environment; one of these identified me as someone who was writing a book in which “we are the protagonists”.

These comments about me and my research activities highlight the ambiguity of my position. In some ways, ambiguity was necessary, for as I have explained above, every adult on the campus had a position of power over the boys. But it was also, in part, methodologically necessary. If my primary interest was the boys’ experience of the institution, it seemed to me from the outset fundamental to also try to account, in a mirrored and perhaps more marginal fashion, for the views of representatives of the institution on particular and general processes and events. This was not to take a position of ‘conscious partiality’ to the boys (cf Schrivers 1995: 22 citing Mies 1983: 122), but to incorporate awareness of partiality into the research design. The research demanded that I take a balanced approach to the views of each side, and explored them at different points when the different angle had particular relevance. So while I carefully followed the selection process carried out by staff, it would have been counterproductive to attempt to study the boys’ views on this process because they were excluded from it, and judgements were being made about them without their knowledge. Likewise, in the Transition House, time spent chatting to the cook, a particularly popular figure amongst the boys, provided a comparative source of reflection on boys’ responses to various figures. My primary concern was the boys’ experiences, derived from a position of sympathy to the children’s situation as one of structural powerlessness and social marginalisation³³. However understanding the variety of views staff held of them, as expressed casually and implicitly in conversation, was an important aspect of methodological integrity. Indeed, the

³³ I have suggested this above in explaining how the research came about, as a result of my previous experiences at CCS several years before. As a white, middle class British woman educated as a Quaker, I was particularly interested by how these children’s situations seemed to involve so many elements of inequality and injustice, as well as the problems of violence in the country as a whole.

situation was far more complex than an approach based on simple opposition between staff views and boys' experiences would have allowed for, and so while attempting to retain a prioritisation of boys' views, I also had to take account of the ways adult power was constrained, and where links existed between different instances of powerlessness.

Consent and the Possibility of Informants Being 'Informed'

Boys' views cited above of the purpose of my presence suggest a range of awareness that necessarily has implications for the possibility of 'informed consent'. It would be dishonest as well as fruitless to say that all the boys in the institution whose words I heard and activities I observed had consented for me to do so. Rather, it was a function of their powerlessness within the institution that I was allowed to be doing what I was without them even being asked, even if at the same time my curiosity was about their lack of power. An implicit understanding of issue of power informed my activities, as well as an explicit understanding of the afore-mentioned possibility of even inadvertently forcing children to take part.

'Participatory' methods (cf Nelson and Wright 1995) stem from a commitment to make research processes inclusive and responsive to the views of those being 'researched'. Thus I went into the field with a range of methods in mind, but also aware that the methods I would use and their success in producing the quality of information required was going to be largely a function of how the boys reacted to them. So methods would have to be adapted, discarded or implemented according to the reactions of the research participants. As I have suggested this would particularly imply alertness to how power dynamics were playing themselves out.

Informed consent is a difficult proposition because of the fundamental inequality of power and knowledge which puts the researcher in that position in the first place (cf Gledhill 2000). Many of the boys had their first experience of formal education in the institution, and it was impossible to expect them to understand how a university functioned, or what a thesis was. And whatever steps of simplification I could have taken (and I did try) to explain could easily be said to be distortions of the truth. As Ennew (2001) asks, is informed consent ever really possible? What can research

participants know about the outcomes or effects of research, if they cannot control or predict how a researcher plans to disseminate the information? Do researchers always know how all the information they gather will eventually be used, by themselves or others? Temporality seems to frame these issues, and to this end, I can say that I tried my best to make sure that as many boys as possible knew that I was doing research on the institution, and that all information would be used in a manner which protected their confidentiality.

This has implications for the way I present the material in this thesis. Despite the potential richness of individual stories presented through case studies, I have tried to avoid complete profiles with personal details, so as to make identification difficult. This has also meant that I have not used names with any photographs. While this may detract from the reader's sense of comprehension and the level of engagement which the text can produce, I believe these are minimal ethical necessities.

V. Proactive Engagements and Methods

To the extent to which children can have different appreciations of the complex and possible ramifications of research activities, I think it fruitful to introduce a differentiation between aspects of the research which could be called 'pro-active' and 'passive'. While above I have described the ethics of participant observation, participatory research methods included boys' responses to a questionnaire, to being interviewed, and taking part in filming skits and other dramatic productions.

It is also crucial to underline the fact that a variety of methods were used in the research, such that data collected through different techniques could be compared. In Appendix 5 I outline all the participants in and informants of the research, and describe what methods were used with different people. Lucchini (1996) has emphasised the importance of sourcing data in multiple manners in relation to studying children with complex street 'careers', because reflections about different elements and institutions in a child's life can be subject to variations, depending upon the contexts in which they are being discussed. To this end, Lucchini recommends a research strategy that involves triangulation, making use of a plurality

of methods open to social scientists, and avoiding the pitfalls of anecdotal approaches.

Some of the boys who took part in the research process did so at their own initiative. This is important to the issue of representation that has come to the fore through anthropological debates about the nature of authorship (e.g. James *et al* 1997). Some boys were keenly aware of the possibilities of influencing what I understood and knew, actively demonstrating their awareness of their agency, and the broadly political nature of their situation and condition. These were nurturing circumstances for what Van Beers calls a “child-centred approach” (1996:199), which emphasises children’s subjective experiences (even though this thesis does not consider the children involved in isolation from the circumstances which surrounded them). Some boys did seem to have identified me as a neutral and therefore potentially sympathetic ear and voice, and were willing to engage in discussions about how they could help the research process.

As we will see in subsequent chapters, one boy kept a journal during several months in which he noted and described events within the institution. Another offered to take photographs of the street for my research. Out of the interest other boys showed in this, we developed a photography project, in which some 14 boys took a roll of film each. They took shots in the institution, on the street and at home at weekends. Each boy was given a copy of the developed pictures, and in so far as I could maintain their attention on the task, they explained to me what the photos were about. A few of the images produced by this process are reproduced in the thesis. The boys who took part seemed excited by their first chance to use a camera, and by the possibility of having visual records and memories of their friends, educators and time in the institution, and so the exercise served a purpose for the boys themselves. Interestingly, many of them said that the photographs were for *recuerdos* (memories), suggesting their views of potential limits of their time at the institution together.

I have deployed as much visual material as technical resources and practicalities of size will allow in the thesis, in the belief that it provides detail which no level of

'thick description' can capture. Furthermore, visual methods tended to be very successful with the boys, who enjoyed hamming it up for the camera, acting out robberies and drug taking, and visual data allows a unique record of moments of the research process. It also allows the reader access to the field other than through my written account. While issues of photographic truth have certainly been displaced in the era of digital imaging (all the photos and drawings here have passed through computers, for manipulation of size), there are good reasons to pursue a visual anthropology³⁴. As Barthes suggested, photographs can "yield those details which constitute the very raw material of ethnographic knowledge" (1980: 28). Children and people who do not know how to read or write can show anthropologists their views of spaces and relativities by mapping or illustrating them³⁵, and a map of one boy's referents is included here (drawing B. 5.1). Of course there are also limits to the use of a large and obtrusive video recorder. It would not probably have gone down well at all if I had wandered around the third stage area of the campus with it, nor was it wise to use it near the street (and I had not acquired it at the time of being at the Patio). While there are other angles I wish I had caught on film, I have added text to the images to help explain them (following Chapter Four).

Two surveys which I carried out in the institution on particular aspects of boys' experiences were done with a flexible approach (see Appendices 6 & 7). In this instance, the survey was a strategy, rather than a method, to elicit information regarding particular issues (Robson 1993: 123). For example, in the questionnaire carried out in the third stage, I wanted to get at two kinds of information: firstly the biographical details of the child's relationship with the institution (mode of entry, time in the institution and so on), and secondly, boys' subjective experiences and opinions. In practice, I found both of these structured exercises productive, and managing them was greatly aided by the fact that these were methods implemented in later stages of the research process, which meant that boys had had time to assess me. The surveys were not uniformly or rigidly applied, and I omitted questions that were not relevant to particular boys (e.g. about the street for boys who'd never been

³⁴ See Edwards, ed. 1992, Hamilton 1997. Tagg (1988) notes how Dr Barnardo used photography in 1874, to identify boys in his Stepney home for destitute boys.

³⁵ E.g. in Participatory Urban Appraisal techniques as used by Moser and McIlwaine (2001).

a part of it), or when a participant was beginning to look bored, we simply moved on or stopped.

I suspect, however, that for many it was the first time they had been asked about their opinions of and experiences in the institution by a third party. In other ways, reflecting on the process of institutionalisation was also novel, for as I will show, although the street is almost the *raison d'être* of the institution, it is also the 'ghost in the machine', a subject about which there is no official reflexive discussion, only negative declarations. So although the manner in which the surveys were carried out was flexible and responsive to particular circumstances, both surveys provided a small set of comparative data which allowed me to verify impressions obtained through other methods (cf Baker *et al* 1996), and which I discuss in the relevant chapters.

Role-playing was a useful interactive element of the research. In one session, the boys devised three sketches and took on the roles of mother-and-son, educator-and-'street' child and father-and-son. The session turned into a discussion on how parents might suffer anxiety about their children's welfare, particularly around the issue of drugs, with several boys expressing sympathy for their parents' views. It was a particularly fruitful method, which suggested the potential utility of role-playing as a facilitator of discussions, particularly of complex arenas of experience such as leaving home or life on the street.

A short film the boys and I made at the Transition House became an opportunity for acting in which boys were able to express their views on particular subjects in a creative way. '*El niño maltratado*' [The abused child] was filmed one afternoon after several days of having the video camera at the Transition House and during which the boys had acted out skits they scripted themselves. In groups orchestrated by the boys, they formulated a basic plot, assigned roles and then improvised the dialogue. These skits were almost exclusively about drug dealing, police bust-ups of crime scenes and robberies. In a scene filmed one Sunday, a loaned plastic gun became the centre of attention, and Lydia's son, who was visiting that day, the willing target of a robbery (he was selected on the grounds of having a watch and a nice sports shirt

on, and was identified teasingly by the Transition House boys as a *gomelo* – a trendy and neatly dressed boy, inevitably from a nice home). As the scenarios were always of the boys’ own devising, their repeated dramatisation of scenes of violence and crime was striking. In some senses, these topics were selected by those with the most influence on other boys, and these tended to be the older boys with more experience of the street such as Otoniel, Saul, Cesar and Julio, although the two factors of age and street experience did not necessarily coincide. The main protagonist of ‘the abused child’ was one of the boys who at the Patio stage had been a regular in the *parche* outside, and was physically small for his eleven years. The fluidity of the proceedings and the fact that the dialogue never paused suggested the proximity of the topics they selected to their own lives, and the boys stopped for only brief moments for technical discussions. Indeed, the spontaneity with which Julio stood up to denounce the beatings which the abused boy and his brother describe in this film seemed to emanate directly from his own experiences and evaluations of his own life.

VI. Epistemological Issues On Violence And Poverty

“Gradually I realised that the hardships and pains
were connected with motherhood in a life of poverty”

Schrivers 1993: 151

It was through boys’ drawings that some of the starker impressions of boys’ relationships to society were formed. How researchers engage with issues of poverty and suffering is, it seems to me, very much a function of their research agendas and the nature of their engagements with their subjects, as well as chance and opportunity. Throughout this thesis the issues of violence and poverty are closely linked, as they were in the boys’ lives. Of course I cannot claim to be able to represent or render the links as they are experienced, but I hope not to re-present any of these experiences in a manner which objectifies or naturalises the existential conditions in which the boys live. Rather, it is fundamental to recognise that how we frame the problems of ‘poverty’ or ‘violence’ is crucial to our methods, and hence our results.

I did not go into the field with a particular vision of how to approach the existential elements of these boys' lives. However, empathy and emotion are crucial to appreciating the subjective understandings and experiences through which lives are lived. Boys often seemed to me to be appealing to my relative power to re-present their views. This was particularly true when it came to issues such as the stigmatisation they experience on the street, and the generalised injustice that forced them to live in poverty and hardship, while others, as they would point out, lived with plenty.

In many ways my previous visit to Medellín prepared me for different aspects of the issue of violence in the field. The memories of the earlier trip formed an unconscious body of knowledge, as well as being the source of explicit questions, as I suggested at the beginning of this chapter. I made friends, through accidents of exploration, with people who showed me physical scars from bullet wounds, who told me how they cried to Ruben Blades' song '*Los desaparecidos*' (The Disappeared) because it reminded them of their lost friends, and learnt what not to say to other people about some of these individuals. A cautious approach was expedient, however I largely felt confident about managing potential dangers in the field³⁶, as through this first experience I had also gained ideas about the subtexts of life, and where and when to discuss what with whom.

One afternoon of a long day spent sitting on the pavement with two boys, a conversation started around the multiple scars on their bodies (drawing shown following Chapter Four). This drew my attention directly to their lack of access to medical treatment, and the inherent harshness of living on the street. It is not just the cold, nor the concrete, nor even the indifference of others to their suffering which informs bodily and mental appreciations of their conditions. On another occasion, when evening arrangements to meet a Patio educator had failed, I found myself watching the boys from the Patio *parche* standing at the edges of a nearby street festival, enjoying the music, then scamper for blankets and bits of cardboard when the skies suddenly opened into a downpour. Several saw me and asked me to

³⁶ Lee-Trewek and Linkogle's (eds., 2000) volume explores some issues of risk and danger in the field from a sociological perspective.

take them home, and I uncomfortably explained to them that I shared an apartment with three others and couldn't guarantee their consent; although one boy followed me home anyway and refused to listen to any such reasoning. What is obvious is that professional ethical stances of objectivity and non-engagement are ultimately political, and act to pre-empt instances in which we might confuse our emotions with those of the 'other'. This is complex, and I willingly admit that emotions of affect and the desire to in some way alleviate suffering were confronted by feelings of impotence and the reality that my interactions with the boys were transient. Ultimately 'objective' 'reason' has many limitations, not least its incompatibility with reactions to obvious suffering.

Bodies Are Not Texts

The research material suggested the need to consider the body as an ontologically fundamental site of experience, and as an object of power. A crucial aspect of the development of theory about the body, as discussed by Csordas (1999), has been to re-work certain dualisms which characterised many approaches to the body, multiple legacies of the Cartesian separation of mind and body, object and subject, sex and gender, and most importantly, body and embodiment.

Acknowledging authorial subjectivity and position is clearly important, but the 'metaphor of textuality' (Csordas 1999: 182), as expounded in the work of Geertz (e.g. 1973) and which became a major anthropological trend in the wake of Clifford and Marcus (1986) and others, has limits as an approach (Wolf 1992, James et al 1997). While the gendered self in fieldwork has been explored in ways which highlight how this aspect of selfhood may affect the researcher's concerns and access to knowledge (Bell, Caplan and Karim 1993), more precise or general autobiographical aspects of the researcher's engagement with his or her subjects is often seen as self-indulgence or narcissism. Another way of challenging the apparent impartiality of research was by writing the 'self' into the text, to dissolve the grounds between self and other and situate the researcher in the field itself, but again this may be seen to distract from the real subjects of research.

It is, I think, of less relevance to the research how I reacted emotionally in the field to different aspects of what I saw or engaged with than how the children or other 'subjects' concerned did. It seems that the state of our dealings with such issues of epistemology and subjectivity is still constrained by the multiplicity of manners and levels at which researchers relate to their subject and subjects. Thus, reflexivity does not seem to 'solve' anthropology's problems with itself at a stroke, but potentially distracts attention from more material matters.

Social life is about more than representation, and if we agree that meanings should not be reduced to signs, because what is the value of a sign of pain when the pain is real, the problem is one of how to study these experiences, if they are expressed and mediated by language? A phenomenological approach can be useful, as allied to Merleau-Ponty's views of perception "...as a basic bodily experience, where the body is not an object but a subject, and where embodiment is the condition for us to have any objects" (Csordas 1999:183).

As Merleau-Ponty made clear, "The outline of my body is a frontier which ordinary spatial relations do not cross" (1962: 98), and thus space is experienced first through the body. The body becomes a social object in its confrontations or encounters with the space that is the social world it inhabits. As Shilling (1993) examines in detail, our bodies are inscribed in social practices, and by them. The habitus which is developed through experience marks bodies according to basic social structuring elements such as class and health, but the expressions we allow to come across our faces and our manners of controlling and exercising our bodies are the cultural repertoires which the body develops (Bordo 1990).

Thus, "the gesture *does not make me think* of anger, it is anger itself" (Csordas 1999:184, italics in original). If we concentrate on expression we lose the vitality and importance of the cultural implications of that show of anger. In Csordas's view, "...culture does not reside only in objects and representations, but also in the bodily processes of perception by which those representations come into being" (1999: 183). Thus the body "...can be construed as both a source of representations *and* as a ground of being-in-the-world" (ibid: 184, italics in original).

Children are in a relatively disadvantaged position with regard to the development of theories to explain their being, but -as we will see in Chapter Seven- when I asked boys how life had changed for them in the institution, most of their reflections prioritised their bodily conditions, which were contrasted with the particular existential conditions of life on the street. Indeed, as suggested in Chapter Two, the issue of bodily habitus is crucial to the construction of childhood as a process whereby culture becomes incorporated into the body. As James, Jenks and Prout point out, embodiment and childhood have a special relationship, for childhood in the west for example, is the period when the body becomes social:

“What marks off a child from an adult is taken to be the successful practice and performance of internalised, even unconscious, control over the body and its functions. This means therefore that young children who have not yet learned the specific (and historically variable) techniques of bodily control are culturally uncivilised” (1998: 160).

This highlights the importance of Bourdieu’s approach to habitus, and suggests the way in which the ritual alluded to above, and described in Chapter Six, is about transformations of and to the body. At the Transition House, in Chapter Seven, these become material and acknowledged changes in children’s lives. This is a fundamental dynamic, both intentional and realised, of the process. It is considered important, and possible, because of the ways in which “crucial aspects of habitus embodiment take place” during childhood (James, Jenks and Prout op cit: 161). This also suggests why some children are considered to be a-social by the public, when their clothes are dirty and hair unkempt.

As Shilling (1993: 124, cf Block 1988) observes, bodies sometimes express what people do not articulate in words, and can be the site of changes in life that coming to terms with is a reckoning process, which can take time. Indeed, CCS aimed implicitly to change the children’s habitus, and to instil in them new practices of discipline, framed within new material conditions. Inside it, they no longer felt cold, nor hunger, nor the hard surface of concrete when they slept. Their bodies were being offered the accessories for defining them in a new relation to society, with prominently labelled clothes and shoes that positioned them, in their view, in a new way vis-à-vis the wider society. And when boys denounced the characterisation of

gamines as unclean, they emphasised that they were in fact clean, that their bodily practices were not those of people somehow 'outside' society, but reflected mainstream values about hygiene and decency.

The body then is a crucial part of the experience of suffering, because it is where many types of material poverty and forms of suffering are experienced and manifested. Scars, clothes, hygiene and other bodily features all demonstrate aspects of a person's social positioning within a society. Indeed, the distinguishing of *gamines* by the public takes place largely on the basis of visual stimuli. One of the most potent symbols of the *gamin* is the bottle of sacol. This household item for fixing materials becomes the 'street' child's addiction, and comforter, often cuddled like a small furry toy animal³⁷. But it is not only the children being on a grimy city pavement with globs of yellow near them from spillages of sacol, but distinct as they walk down a road amongst a crowd because they have glue in their hair and on their clothes. Prolonged use of glue can also lead to distortion in the shape of the nostrils. Their clothes are also likely not to fit, as they are bought from second hand merchants in the Cambalache, and so on. The physical manifestations of poverty on their bodies are obvious. Violence is embodied, as is the experience of poverty.

VII. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have accounted for the institution and the sources of my research questions, as well as a variety of factors which affected my approach to the research and delineated the field. I have argued that a grounded approach to the body is a necessary to consider questions of how violence and poverty are experienced. Anthropologists may still be divided about the effects of the 'writing culture' debate, but if the generation that followed the publication of Clifford and Marcus's volume was exposed to challenges to the idea of truth in representation, perhaps by then the notion of truth had been de-stabilised anyway, the post-modern disenchantment with structures and rigidities of identification well underway (cf Hall 1996). For if

³⁷ Of course, as the boys point out, there is hypocrisy in this vision of their abnormality: other people take drugs, it's just that they do so behind doors, because they have homes.

objective truth cannot be said to exist, only partial representations, these need to be as grounded as possible.

The way in which a researcher relates to the subjects of their research is varied, and as I have suggested, ideas about partiality, ethics and representation frame some of these issues. Power relationships with the boys have been outlined as an area which was treated with caution, and an awareness that consent to participate in research may not be informed. Rather I have suggested that time was crucial to permit boys to decide for themselves to what extent to contribute to forming my understandings about their lives, and that they contributed in significant and creative ways to this, demonstrating what excellent research participants and informants children can be. While their active participation qualified issues of consent, reciprocity is an issue framed by time. Change was a crucial dimension of the subject being addressed in the 'field', as well as the broader context in which the field sites were situated.

In the following chapter, I explore how the children discussed in this thesis came to be at the institution. Trajectories of forced migration and being orphaned by war lead some boys to the streets or institution, while others decide to leave home because of abuse or mistreatment. As will become apparent, while there are subtleties to their decisions and I try to emphasise the ways in which they reasoned through their choices and experiences, these are also, fundamentally, the stories of children growing up in a country where violence has many manifestations.

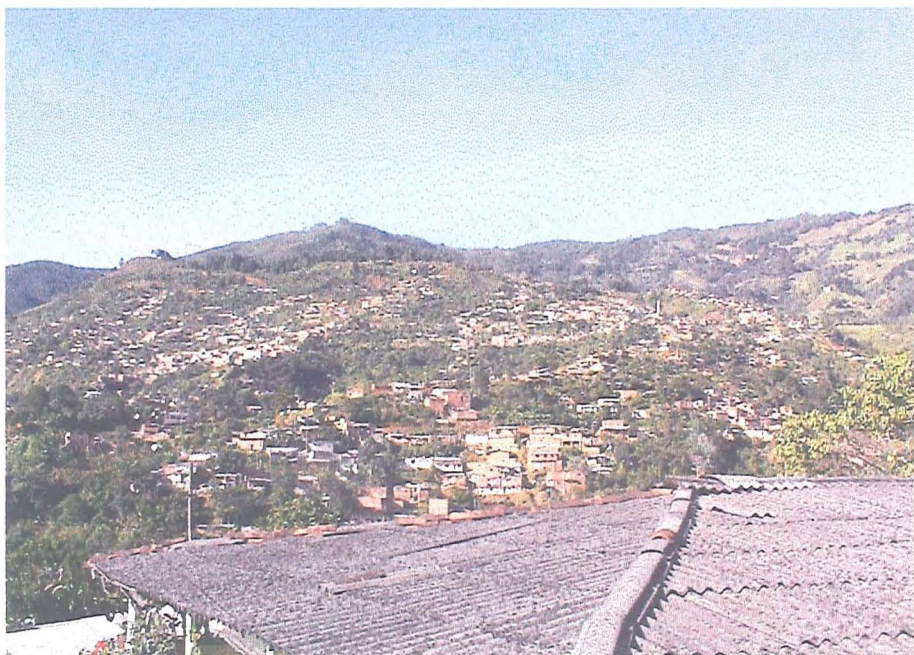
Chapter Three

PHOTOGRAPHS INTRODUCING THE FIELD



3. 1. Panoramic view looking from the east at the southern area of Valle de Aburrá and metropolitan Medellín.

3.2 View of *barrios* across eastern mountainside from inside valley.





3.3 Above: A view of a city centre street, November 1998, prior to clearances of pavement vendors.

3.4 Below: A tank near the road to the Salesians' farm to the east of Medellín, October 1998. The army presence was a response to growing guerrilla activity in the area. A nearby bridge was dynamited by the guerrilla two years later.



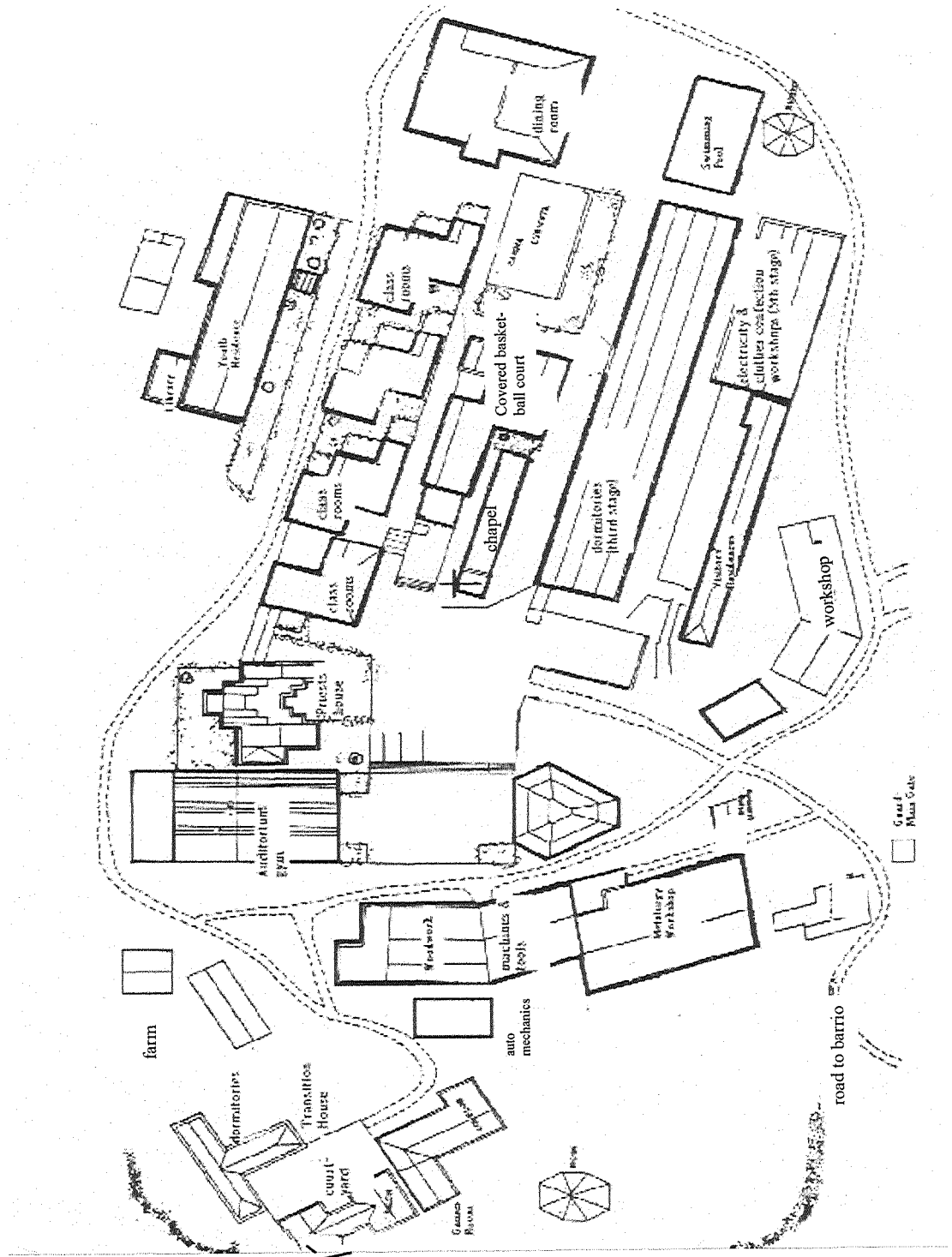


3. 5. The burning of the 'gamin' doll, initiation to transition house, 1994. The houses visible in the background behind the concrete wall are in the *barrio*.

3.6 View from the window of the room I was given on the CCS campus, August 1998. In the foreground a local bus is departing the campus, in front of some workshops. In the distance is Medellín, and the mountains at the other side of the valley.



3.7 Map of CCS Campus



Chapter Four

Poverty, Violence and the State: Locating the Origins of 'Street' Children

I. Three Stories

Cesar

Cesar had just turned fourteen when I met him at the Patio in September 1998. He had come to Medellín from the department of Tolima, to the south, where he lived with his mother, sister and uncle¹. He had had many different jobs there, and had been forced to stop going to school because of the fees and because his earnings were needed in the household. His father had been killed, Cesar wasn't sure by whom, as it happened when he was a baby. But his mother had once said to him that his father had been a 'bad' man, and Cesar thought he might have been a *guerrillero*.

Cesar's jobs had included shifting stock in the storeroom of a grocery, scraping the surface of coca leaves to extract the main ingredient for cocaine, pushing an ice-cream trolley up and down hilly streets, and selling medicinal herbs door-to-door, at what he reckoned was a good business practice of 800% mark up. When an older half brother who lived on the coast came to visit Tolima in 1998, Cesar left with him, out of a desire to see more of the world and spend some time with his older brother. Cesar later recounted to me with some bravado how they had travelled clinging to the back of a lorry for eight hours, which made his hands hurt, all the while hoping the driver wouldn't see them, and how when they had stopped at a café, people bought them food. This delight in adventure was, however tempered by a constant and strong concern for his mother, whom he cared for a great deal. During his time at CCS, he would call her every time he had the chance to make a long distance telephone call.

¹ See map 1, at end of chapter.

In the later months of his stay at the institution, he worried more about his mother and how she was faring, after she lost her job on a farm. His brother, who was about 17 and remained on the streets in Medellín for a while, came to visit his little brother once at the Transition House. But a few months later he left town fearing for his life, after being involved in a stabbing on the streets, and went to his mother in Tolima. But he also only managed to find some casual work on a farm, which soon ended, and Cesar also once said that he couldn't go home because there was no-one working, and there were enough mouths to feed at home already.

Visiting Juan David's Father

For weeks at the Patio it was unclear where Juan David, a small and sturdily built boy of about seven, had come from, save 'a village'. He skilfully avoided talking about himself much, making use of a combination of shyness and giggles to effectively fend off unwanted questions. After some weeks at the Patio day centre, however, it transpired that his father was living in the city, in an area of recent invasion² settlements in the eastern hillsides. Eventually, a couple of months later, Yolinda the social worker managed to convince the quiet boy to take her to his father, and I went along too.

Juan David set off at a brisk pace from the Patio, heading east through the centre with his purposeful stride and soon leaving Yolinda and I behind. Eventually, having walked for about forty minutes and long left the centre behind, Yolinda paused and asked him where the nearest bus stop was for the route to his barrio. "Bus?" he replied. "I don't know how to get there by bus". As Yolinda and I looked at each other in exhaustion, Juan David seemed to suffer no such sensations; other boys teased him that he walked like a *montañero* (mountain person), a stride perhaps developed during his earlier years living in the countryside and through his work picking coffee. We did manage to find a bus, however, and another forty minutes later, having wound our way up the mountainside of the central eastern hills, arrived

² This refers to building homes on otherwise unoccupied private land, and us the process whereby many of Medellín's poorest *barrios* have come into existence.

at the end of the route. Juan David had roamed the nearby *barrios* enough to know where he was, and so Yolinda and I set off behind him.

We followed him and walked, up, and up, past new shanty towns and through old ones, and up some more, and then a bit further, at one point going up a virtually perpendicular concrete street where we thought the *barrios* must be coming to an end, as we seemed always to be nearing the peak of the several hundred metres of mountain, but around the corner we would find Juan David waiting for us patiently. Half an hour later, when we had almost climbed to the summit of the mountain, and in a settlement of tin roofed houses built with sticks and mud, Juan David stopped next to a cleared space. “That’s where my house used to be”, he said, indicating the patch of earth. A few moments passed and a woman called to Juan from a nearby wooden house, in front of which she was standing with a small child in her arms. He looked back at her timidly, so Yolinda approached her. The woman told us that the father’s house had fallen down a few months before, and that he had built a new one in the last row of houses further up the hill. She dispatched an older daughter to find the father, who she said was working down the mountainside, helping a friend re-build a house.

The father eventually appeared, and took us to sit outside the wood-walled and corrugate iron roofed home, the door of which was secured with a chain and padlock. It soon transpired that Juan David was not eight, nor seven, but six- or so the father thought; and he confirmed his surname as something other than what Juan David had said at the Patio. During the twenty minutes or so we sat on the bench outside the house, while Yolinda explained that Juan David was attending the Patio and could be offered a place at the institution, the father was distant and formal with his son, never addressing him directly, nor touching him. He nodded as she spoke and said that the arrangement was fine with him, and explained that the boy’s mother was in a rural town in Antioquia. He had brought Juan David and seven other children with him to the city, as Juan David’s mother was with a new partner.

The father had to leave the house locked all day to keep their few belongings safe, and to keep the children away from the gas canister used for cooking. Juan David's older sister, who was about 15, had a baby when we visited, and she and the other children spent their days wandering around and playing in the *barrio*, which had no running water nor paved streets, much less a school. Visiting this house, it became easier to understand how Juan David came to be picked up by police for wandering the streets, apparently carrying a knife, and why the father was satisfied that his son would be cared for, educated and protected elsewhere.

Julio's Story

Julio:

"I'm from Turbo³, well... I am... since I was small, and my father hit my mother a lot, so it was there, then that I started to sleep on the street, there that I started taking *sacol* (glue) and marijuana. So from there – my mother came here, so that my father couldn't hit her again; my mother lived up there [a *barrio* high up the mountainside in Medellín] so I had to be on the street. They would receive her, but only her. So what did I have to do? Ah, sleep on the street. From there I found a friend from before, and he said to me come on let's go to the Patio, so he took me, '*tan*'⁴, to me it seemed pretty cool (*muy bacano*⁵), I stayed there.

Caitlin: How did you start on the street in Turbo?

Julio: How did I start? In Turbo, well, I mean, me and Mauricio⁶ [used to] arrive at the house when [I was] small and my father hit my mother '*tan*' and my father would kick us out.

Caitlin: How do you mean?

Julio: He threw us out onto the street. So my mother had to go to my grandmother's house, and there – there were lots of people there, and so they would only take her in, so...

³ A town in Urabá, see map 2 at end of chapter.

⁴ This is an onomatopoeic expression used by Julio and other boys, which represents the sound of a quick movement, e.g. to say '*tan* we hit him', is to include the sound of the object hitting the body.

⁵ I translate *bacano* as 'cool' because of its referents in popular youth culture, as something generally agreeable and even potentially 'trendy' or fashionable. Dydzinski's travel guide spells it with a 'v', and suggests it is translatable as 'fantastic or great' (1997:526).

⁶ His younger brother.

Caitlin: And your father? Why do you think he threw you out?

Julio: What do you mean?

Caitlin: Well, were you very naughty or rebellious? Or what, did he hit you and say to you 'get out of here'? What did he say to you – do you remember?

Julio: Yes, he would say 'bastards' (*malparidos*) ...ahh, and he would say a whole bunch of things to us. ... its that he always arrived drunk, so,...so I wandered around the centre, and night fell, and I had to sleep on the street, and then a bunch of kids (*peladitos*⁷) arrived, and they gave me glue, marijuana.

Caitlin: And what did they say to you?

Julio: Huh?

Caitlin: Do you remember what they said to you? 'hey *parcero*,⁸...'

Julio: 'Ooh, *chino*'⁹

Caitlin: huh! And they shared the *sacol* and everything with you?

Julio: They said 'ooh, what are you doing here brother? And they gave me *sacol*. in a little bag. And with that I went like this – [holds fist to mouth as if clenching something and laughs] and well, and I went around with a *chino* all over the place, and I didn't go back to the house. I would go but to visit my mother. When I went, I would take some little thing.

Caitlin: And what did she say to you?

Julio: That... 'Where are you son?' and I [would say] 'Oh, round and about on the street'. So... my mother would start crying 'Oohh, you're taking *sacol*', and so that she wouldn't cry any more I would leave again. And erm, so my mother had... ermm, my father in a drunken state went to my grandmothers' house and said to her ...said a whole bunch of things to her, '*tan*', and what did she do...she had to go and beg money to be able to come here [Medellín]. Well, so my mother said to me, 'Son, I haven't got the money for your bus fare! But, can you go...?' So I came on foot with some mates, from there. We came with marijuana, with marijuana and pure glue. And.... and

⁷ *Pelado/a* is a common term for children in Colombia. It suggests baldness, and may derive from the fact that some new-borns are hairless.

⁸ *Parcero* is a term used widely for friend amongst children and young people, particularly on the street. It may also relate to sharing a *parcela* or small plot of land, as in the word '*parche*', or patch of land where youths congregate and call their own.

⁹ '*Chino/a*' is used commonly to refer to children, particularly in Bogotá.

*ruedas*¹⁰ as well, and we would hang onto cars.. and we would mug men.. hee hee...”

II. Children, Families and the State in Crisis

This chapter seeks to explore the forces which push children towards the street. As suggested by the above extracts, different forces propel children towards the street. While these causes are underscored by a lack of resources at the household level, patterns emerge which also link these cases to particular economic and political conditions at a national level. These issues provoke questions not only about the role of the state in such conditions of crisis, but also about the help and assistance offered to children experiencing the types of crises faced by Julio, Cesar, and other children who become displaced following eruptions of the armed conflict and who are left parentless because of violence.

In the literature on ‘street’ children there has historically been a tension between explaining the individual causes of children’s separation from home as a function of the immediate family surroundings and relationships, and their wider social and economic circumstances (cf Lucchini 1997). An emphasis on the former accounts in part for the tendency in the 1980s and 90s to try to find universal definitions for ‘street children’, with various attempts hinging on their relationships to home, street subcultures and other elements. For example, the terms coined by UNICEF in the late 1980s, ‘on’ and ‘of’ the street, sought to distinguish between children who had at least some links with home and family while working or begging on the street (children ‘on’ the street), and those who had somehow become rather more attached to street lifestyles and/or having severed relations with home (‘of’ the street)¹¹. While such attempts were part of a search to find solutions to the suffering of children, the maintenance of a focus on the street as a child’s defining characteristic has been partly responsible for the continued use of the term ‘street’ children, and the reification of this category, rather than its abandonment in search of terms

¹⁰ ‘*Ruedas*’ refers to prescriptive drugs in pill form. These could be amphetamines or sleeping pills.

¹¹ See Cosgrove 1990 and Glauser 1997 for two useful discussions of problems of nomenclature.

which link children's presence on the street to other macros or meso level causative factors, such as forced displacement.

As such the focus on 'street' children has tended to divert attention away from the suffering of other children. Because 'street' children have been considered outside of and away from the social conditions which produce them and create their plight, the situations of other children and the environments in which they were growing up are almost always ignored. This is particularly evident in accounts of violence against 'street' children in various countries, perhaps most notably Colombia and Brazil. Allied to representations of street children as suffering in particularly grotesque conditions of inhumanity¹², depravation and violence are often extracted and considered outside of the broader and more generalised conditions of conflict and poverty in these societies. This attention, combined with the complications of estimating numbers of children as a result of definitional problems, leads to what has been aptly termed 'the numbers game' (Ennew nd). Although the reliability of these figures is limited, the numbers have important implications for resource allocation.

Thus, locating street children within broader conditions of violence and poverty is crucial if we are to avoid essentialising the situations of children on the street, and if we are to understand the broader contexts in which actions and circumstances have led them towards the street as an option of last resort. Below I explore the circumstances of a core sample of boys which demonstrate how boys came towards the streets, in circumstances that are clearly linked with macro economic and political structures. As I suggested in chapter two, we must try to situate children within wider structures and movements related to social-economic class and change, including processes of displacement, and within histories where actors and violence are linked to these issues in particular historical, regional and economic ways. To

¹² Such as children living in sewers in Bogotá, needing to be rescued by a man in diving equipment, as witnessed by British television audiences in 1991 ('The Visit', BBC1). Young men I spoke to who had been on the street in Bogotá during the late 1980s and early 90s suggested that living in sewers was actually rare, and usually a response to specific threats from paramilitaries, rather than a normal living place. The man rescuing the children, Jaime Jaramillo, later launched a bid to become Bogotá's mayor. His foundation for children received more than £1 million in donations from the UK during the 1990s, largely because of the TV programmes, and despite investigations for fraud carried out by the Colombian attorney general's office.

focus on the street as the defining characteristic of the children whose circumstances are approached in this thesis would be to fall into the trap I suggest CCS does- of considering the children in terms of their deviance from core societal norms. Rather, I show how children's situations are affected by poverty and forced displacement from rural areas, violence in urban neighbourhoods, and problems and critical economic situations and experiences of abuse within families.

III. Rural to Urban Displacement: the rural war

In chapter three I explained how this research was motivated by events in 1994. One of the starkest changes between the Medellín I came to know in those months and Colombia in 1998 was the scale of the civil war. The role of conflict in pushing children towards refuge in the streets was an increasing trend during the second half of the 1990s, as most of the displaced flee to either nearby municipal capitals or the big cities, Bogotá, Cali and Medellín. By the end of the decade more than two million people had been displaced in Colombia; the majority of these were women and children¹³. The cases I present below suggest some of the ways in which families cope when they are displaced, making use where possible of extended family networks. These cases exemplify the flows of children and families who, fleeing violence, arrive in Medellín because it is the nearest city, where they have a relative or friend, or sometimes simply because it was where the bus happened to be going (cf Meertens 2001a).

In areas such as Urabá and the Magdalena Medio in the department of Antioquia, which had been centres of conflict for decades, actions between guerrillas, paramilitaries and security forces were intensifying in the late 1990s¹⁴. A mapping of the conflict suggests the connections conflicts have with particular economic

¹³ By 2002 relief agencies and human rights observers estimated the number of displaced at 2.5 million, suggesting a continued and aggravated escalation in conflict and forced migration; Gonzales Bustelo 2001, Meertens 2001a. There has also been significant variation amongst numbers used by different institutions, as Gonzales Bustelo notes.

¹⁴ See map 2 following chapter. For reasons of expanding the sample, the maps are based on a total sample of 154 boys, from three stages of the institution; although in the third stage boys from Medellín constitute a majority, while in the first and second stages there are significant proportions boys from different areas of the country.

interests, as well as how this aggravates displacement. In a summary of developing trends of violence in 1998, Peñaranda *et al* make the following observations:

“The escalation of conflict and the greater territorial presence of armed actors affects the population, which in some areas in dispute have been *converted into military targets*. [The number of displaced] “tends to increase in areas of agricultural conflicts and of economic importance in which there are *concentrated strategies of territorial control on the part of armed actors*. The actions which most affect the population are massacres produced by paramilitaries, military operations with indiscriminate aerial bombardment, and attacks by insurgent guerrillas” (1999: 4, my italics).

This gives an idea of the ways in which resident populations are seen as obstacles to economic progress and the consolidation of land ownership, suggesting a fine line between development-induced displacement¹⁵, where violence is used or threatened, and forced migration, as a result of armed conflict, in such areas. Paramilitaries are responsible for the majority of human rights abuses such as murders of civilians, and violent and intimidatory actions such as massacres of peasants, that lead to forced displacement (Sweig 2002: 3, Carrigan 2001¹⁶), while guerrillas tend to target state representatives and economic infrastructures. In the Magdalena Medio, paramilitary ‘self-defence’ groups funded by landowning elites emerged as early as 1983 against alleged guerrilla actions in an area of cattle ranching and petroleum exploitation, and paramilitary attacks on civilian populations in Urabá, another area of long-standing conflict, have produced thousands of displaced people from this region.

Guerrilla action against an oil pipeline in north-eastern Antioquia is the starting point for the migration story of one boy at CCS. Dario, a slender and mild mannered boy of 12, came to Medellín on his own after his mother was killed in what became known in the media as the ‘*tragedia de Machuca*’ (tragedy of Machuca) in October 1998. Located in the corridor of a major oil pipeline, a recurrent target of the ELN, in the attack the guerrilla exploded the pipeline at Machuca and set much of the village alight. Dario had been with his mother at the time of the incident, and had tried to save her. His biological father had died some time before, and after his

¹⁵ Development induced displacement is a term used to refer to movements of people occasioned by a shift in the use of territory as part of planned economic development programme, as the result of construction of dams, for example.

¹⁶ Sweig takes her figures from Human Rights Watch

mother's death he left his stepfather and step-siblings because he didn't get on with the stepfather. Brought to the Patio by the police, Dario developed no links with the street. When I visited in January 2001, he was spending the Christmas holidays in the Transition House. He had no known family in Medellín, and CCS was likely to be his home for years to come.

Saul and his little brother Chucho came from the Magdalena Medio. They became orphans when their father was assassinated by paramilitaries in an attack on their village. As occurs in many paramilitary massacres in villages where numerous people are murdered, it is because they are alleged to be guerrilla sympathisers, in the ample terms the paramilitaries use¹⁷. Their mother had died some time before, and when they lost their father, they sought out a paternal aunt in Medellín. She was extremely poor however, and lived in Moravia, a *barrio* by the side of the river towards the north of the city. Constructed on top of the old city rubbish dump and first settled by recyclers, the decomposing waste beneath the settlements presented extreme risks for public health. Saul explained that she was too poor to feed them every day, and that her house was too small to accommodate them, so they were forced to seek an alternative source of food and shelter.

Saul and Chucho were already attending the Patio regularly when I arrived in August 1998. Highly sociable boys, Saul, the oldest, was friends with the street crowd outside, as well as a popular figure inside the Patio. They were both amongst those who rarely went to the night shelter, preferring the sociability of the street at night. In later months Chucho was amongst the first to abandon the institutional process upon reaching the third stage, when he left with a number of other boys. Saul stayed, and when I visited in on New Years Day 2001 he was reported to be visiting family but was expected back at the end of the holiday. Given their circumstances as orphans, and with extend family unable to provide for them, Saul and Chucho were amongst many who were resourceful in seeking out alternatives. When their first option, of going to their aunt in Medellín – probably recommended to them by

¹⁷ The manner in which paramilitaries act on unverified statements by locals as to who is an 'enemy' was attested to by the leader of the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC), Carlos Castaño, in his recently published memoirs, *Me Confieso*.

other relatives or friends in their village- turned out to be difficult, they sought out another place in which to find the means of survival.

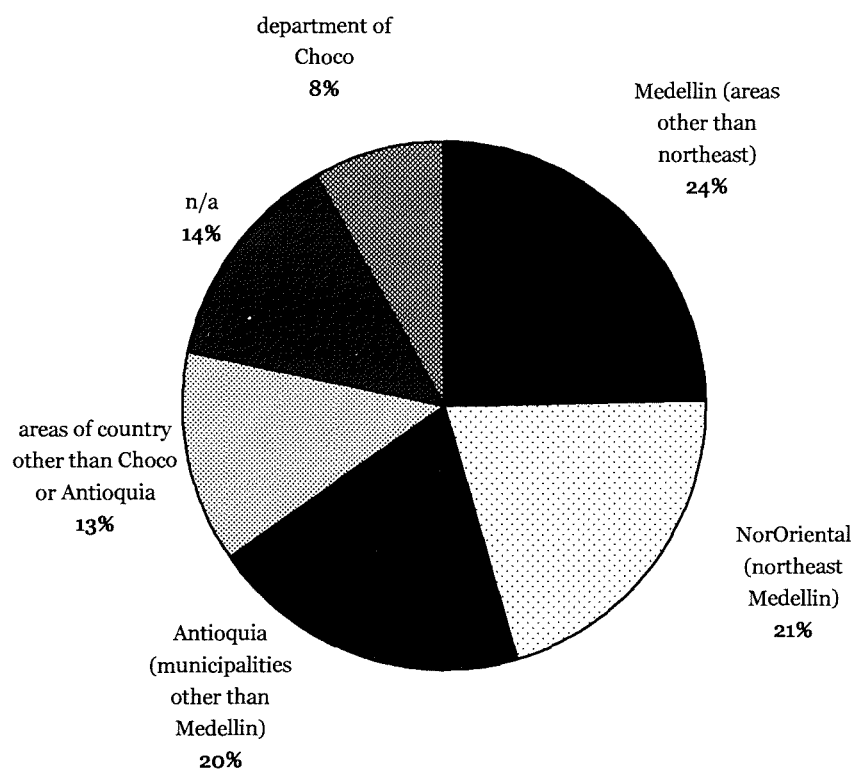
Other children who were displaced along with family members also adjusted to new familial situations and roles, as well as taking advantage of family links for support. Andrés' family was displaced by paramilitary violence in Urabá. When, during an attack on their village, Andrés' mother was raped and left pregnant by paramilitaries, she fled to a sister in Medellín with Andrés and a younger daughter. Her decision not to have an abortion, an option suggested to her by others, was, she said, partly due to the support she drew from Andrés' commitment to help with the baby and his other siblings. She also said that his behaviour had changed, that whereas before he had been '*travieso*' – childish and naughty-, he was now committed to going home dutifully every weekend to help her care for the new baby. From her account of events, it was as if through these, Andrés had developed a new understanding of the family, and adapted to new and different responsibilities within it¹⁸. He was clearly anxious to support his mother both emotionally and practically, and she was at the centre of his world. Once in the second stage Transition House, Andrés cited his family as being a motivating force for 'coming out ahead'. The example also confirms the relevance of Meertens' (2001 a& b) analysis of the gendered aspects of violence. This suggests the use of sexual violence against women as a way of defiling the family's integrity. In earlier epochs of Colombian violence, sexual attacks were sometimes more elaborate and extreme, including a variety of symbolic ways of demonstrating power over victims, marking it out for living and future generations¹⁹.

The life-stories of the children living on the street of Medellín also illustrate the claim, made in chapter one, that the phenomenon of 'street' children – in the most ample sense of the term- is the consequence of the broader national context. Far from being a by-product of 'dysfunctional' families in the city, the streets of Medellín are- as the maps and graph show- a space of encounter for children from

¹⁸ Indeed, in research with war-affected children there is increasing evidence of children's creative and resilient responses to conflict situations, including being extremely perceptive and responsive to adults needs (e.g. Hinton 2000)

¹⁹ Amongst these was the practice of removing the foetus from a pregnant woman's womb and placing it on her stomach.

all over the country fleeing different situations of violence, poverty and families fracturing in crisis. The geographical areas of origin of the children who visit the Patio project are illustrated in maps following this chapter and the graph below. As noted above, over 40% (and possibly more than 50%) of the boys were from areas outside the city's metropolitan district, while many of those from Medellín came from the northeastern sector.



Graph 4.1. *Where boys attending the patio were from*²⁰
Sample of 100 from January to August 1998

In the sample illustrated above, 21% of the boys from Medellín who visited the Patio were from the *NorOriental*, the term widely used to refer to the north-eastern area of the Medellín (see map 4), almost as many as came from the rest of the city

²⁰ See map section for geographical illustration.

combined. This area, as described in chapter two, was a focal point of gang and *sicario* related activity during the 1990s. It is home to many of the city's poor, who live in precariously built homes perched on the hillsides, in *barrios* which are cross-cut by labyrinthine networks of passageways and steep steps.

Most of these *barrios* were settled from the 1960s onwards, usually through 'illegal invasion' by families in search of new economic opportunities in the city, or fleeing the rural violence since *La Violencia*. Conditions of life in these steep and cramped neighbourhoods are difficult and services inadequate. While some of the older *barrios* here do have some public utilities (water, telephones, electricity and paving), population densities are high, and facilities such as recreational areas and school places are insufficient (Giraldo Naranjo 1992). The more recently settled areas, such as where Juan David's father lived, were still inaccessible except on foot. And much of the NorOriental, as described above, bore the infamous stamp of violence.

IV. *Barrio* Violence

The issue of *barrio* violence relates not only to the NorOriental but many sections of the *barrios populares* of the city²¹. Two boys in my core sample were forced to abandon their homes because of threats from the Convivir [urban paramilitaries] within their home *barrio*, or threats of bringing in the Convivir within the neighbourhood. These urban paramilitaries have been referred to as social cleansing squads and have developed in reaction to high levels of crime and violence in different *barrios*, as well as in the city centre. As we shall see in the following chapter, children living on the streets outside the Patio are extremely vulnerable to them.

In *barrios* all over Medellín, organised social cleansing groups such as the Convivir are contracted to 'clean' the *barrio* of people, often young, considered undesirable and problematic elements. They are sometimes contracted by groups of concerned

²¹ Ceballos Melguizo (2001) summarises the development of different armed groups in Medellín. Arantes (1994) also discusses how the streets become spaces of conflict, and populated by those who are 'fugitives' from other spaces

neighbours, and often financed by local businessmen. Lists of ‘undesirables’ often referred to as *listas negras* or black lists, are drawn up, and handed to the mercenaries for them to find and execute (Perea Restrepo 2002: 16). Children and young people who steal things, smoke marijuana, or stand on street corners whiling away their time are often seen as a ‘problem’ by such “social cleansing” squads (see drawing 4.4). They have been identified as a new category of displaced persons on the streets of the city, as boys sometimes

“...cut the links with the family because of problems with drugs, which leads them to steal in the *barrio* and then be expelled from the *barrio* by popular militias or organised security forces” (Galeano and Velez 1996: 50, my italics).

This is what happened to Otoniel. Otoniel was forced to leave the *barrio* after allegedly stealing two cases of liquor from a local shop. In such instances, young males like Otoniel are perceived as active and dangerous, and the historical links between youth and crime are strong enough for age not to carry any assumption of innocence, but rather for youth to easily be associated with crime and ‘delinquency’ (see pages 41, 49 in chapter two).

Otoniel was understandably sensitive about talking of his past. He had clearly made many friends on the street and within the project he cultivated his image as a street-wise drug taker and as a leader. He was possibly the youngster who most closely fitted the stereotype of a street child as a rebel and one of ‘society’s ultimate outlaws’ (Ennew 1995: 202), and rather relished aspects of this reputation, brandishing his fearlessness like a medal of battle, a token of his experience and his survival skills. But however much Otoniel had adapted to life on the street, the fact remained that he could not go home, to his father and stepmother, because of the threat made against his life.

He also commented that his father’s work as a carpenter brought in very little money. This may have been a factor behind the robbery that Otoniel was allegedly involved in. Like many young men, Otoniel was conscious of his poverty, and seemed to aspire to the gang-member figure of the *pillo*, whose intermittent but large incomes were often spent on fast neon coloured motorcycles, international brand-

name trainers and other items which showed their ability to transcend their birth into poverty. Indeed, for Otoniel and many of the older boys, the new items of clothing on offer in the institution would prove to be alluring, if not compelling, as we will see in chapter seven.

The paramilitary presence is directly linked to the manner in which the police are widely considered to be corrupt and inefficient; as well as having been usurped by the paramilitaries in carrying out the role of vigilante justice which public scrutiny no longer permits the police to do so brazenly. In 1999 the police seemed to be undertaking a major public relations exercise to improve their image, emblazoning all their vehicles with the slogan '*cambiamos para servir a la gente*' ('we change to serve the people'), which rather begs the question of what they were doing, and whom they were serving, before. Indeed it underlines the conditions in which distrust of police is endemic, and through which the sense of a state being against society takes form (cf Bayart 1989 [1993]). In *barrios* of the NorOriental such as Villa del Socorro, the police were widely held to be responsible for rapes, disappearances and murders of local residents²². In the *barrio* outside CCS, the police made irregular visits, sweeping up the hillside lanes in open pick-up trucks with heavily armed men in the back.

During an informal discussion about violence Otoniel was asked who he would shoot at, he immediately replied 'the police'. But it was not only boys like Otoniel who like 'street' children in Brazil (Hecht 1998) develop extreme senses of the police as enemy both near home and through experiences on the street. Nelson, an extremely mild-mannered boy whose mother had once had her street vending stall removed and destroyed by the police, echoed similar feelings of frustration. On another occasion, when talking about idols and who they aspired to be when they grew up, Otoniel said 'Pablo Escobar'; his explanation was, 'he killed policemen.' Even if Otoniel exaggerated his loathing of the police for effect, his feelings were no doubt allied to his experience of the police as agents who harassed 'street' children, and his perception of the law as something which did not serve his interests in any

²² From personal communications, 1994; but see also HRW 1994, 42-43 for account of massacre involving children and youths said to have involved members of police intelligence unit, the F-2.

way. It may have been further linked to conceptions of Pablo Escobar as a popular hero, mythologized into a Robin Hood-like figure (as discussed in chapter two, page 52), as someone who acted where the state did not, building football pitches and even entire neighbourhoods to house the poor, thus becoming someone who reached out to those in contexts of total 'exclusion' (Pilotti 1998).

Gangs are also a major cause of fear in *barrios*. As Moser notes, "In some communities, gangs protect their neighbours, committing crimes elsewhere; in others, they prey on their neighbours, creating a climate of fear" (2001: 45; cf Rogers 1999 on Nicaragua). Both of these effects were in evidence in Medellín. While in the NorOriental some gangs were seen to protect their territory against attacks by rival neighbouring gangs, others, like those near the CCS campus, also taxed and extorted their neighbours, as well as occasionally depriving the *barrio* of a bus service.

In the *barrios* around the CCS campus there were two gangs, as mentioned in chapter three, who had been at war for over five years²³. Extortion of bus drivers working local routes by one gang, where they were forced to pay \$80,000 pesos²⁴ every Monday or be killed, took a toll of six drivers' lives during fieldwork. Later a scheme was enforced whereby each household was forced to pay taxes of \$5,000 pesos monthly. The climate of fear created by their activities forced people to take longer routes to bus stops to avoid particularly dangerous corners and streets where shootings had taken place or gang members were known to congregate. When the bus service was cancelled on the days of drivers' funerals (when buses on nearby routes put purple ribbons across the bonnets in mourning and solidarity), many people had no means of transport to the centre. In one of their rare incursions, and after several months of this taxation regime, the police came in, and in a gun shower (*balacera*) that lasted several minutes and could be heard high up at the CCS campus, killed two of the leaders of one of the gangs.

²³ They were active in the *barrio* in 1994, and still in 1999.

²⁴ £28 at average 1998 exchange rates; about a third of the minimum monthly wage (then approximately \$275,000, or about £90).

The issue of gangs and their presence in *barrios* and in the imaginations of young men and boys highlights the issue of masculine role models, and the legitimacy of armed actors, as explored in chapter two (pages 50-52). Figures such as Pablo Escobar, or indeed the leader of one of the gangs around the CCS campus, nicknamed 'Nine Lives' for the manner in which he survived successive assassination attempts, had heroic and legendary qualities. This suggests that boys' understandings and evaluations of violence could take place through these mythologized figures. Otoniel's apparent desire to be associated with the qualities of the *pillo* underscores the extent to which such figures were role models for some of the boys, and how these children reckoned with shifting but historically linked actors in Colombia's conflict. These include figures dating back to *La Violencia*, in the 1950s and 60s, such as the *pájaro*, a contract killer of the Conservative-allied death squads, who may be considered an antecedent to the *sicario*, and further evidence of a pervasive masculinity-violence complex as outlined in chapter two. However, as we will see below, certain educators within the institution whose attitudes to and links with violence contrasted with such ideas also became admired figures whom the boys talked of emulating.

Bernardo, a skinny nine year old, was also threatened by *barrio* retaliation for acts of petty theft. His case was complex, and harder to ascertain because of his own silence about himself. His mother was a street vendor, who sold whatever her distributor gave her, from small umbrellas to plastic bra straps. A five-year-old daughter had already been taken from her and placed in state care for having her with her on the street as she worked, an illustration of the repressive legal framework which operates around the poor, as I will explain shortly. She was upset and angry about this, and whilst engaged in the complex process of trying to recover her, did not want the same to happen to Bernardo. She was one of a number of mothers and relatives who saw the institution's projects as a safe-haven for the children. Where parents are unable, for economic reasons, to support a child – and in almost every case boys had siblings- welfare institutions have been seen as a short-term solution to the problem of caring for a child²⁵.

²⁵ The use of institutions by parents in this way has been observed in Europe since the Middle Ages (Viazzo et al 2000), and more recently in Brazil (Rizzini 1985 in Tolfree 1995: 39).

Bernardo's mother had tried leaving him with a neighbour, after it became impossible to keep him on the street with her during the day, but he had disobeyed her, and started stealing milk from neighbours. This earned him threats in the *barrio*, so she sent him to the Patio, where she used to come and visit him to make sure he was behaving appropriately so as to be accepted for the residential programme. When she came to visit him, she would bring a change of clothes, and he played up to her attentions, nodding acquiescently and smiling and saying *sí mamá, no mamá, claro mamá*. It was possible, however, that the threats against him for stealing milk in the *barrio* were something of a fabrication on the mother's part, a tactic to justify his need to be at the Patio and ensure his acceptance on the project.

V. *El Niño Maltratado* [The Abused Child]

If we are to adopt a really child focused perspective, when discussing abuse what matters is to focus on what children themselves consider inappropriate treatment. Children, as Kitzinger suggests, react to and assess all types of abuse; and failure to appear to react is often “a reflection of their experience of powerlessness” (1997: 180). When we listen to children's experiences, we can detect the types of power which operate around children, as experienced by them. *Maltrato infantil* (mistreatment of children²⁶) is the generic term used in Colombia to refer to what in English is called child abuse, and can involve hitting, punching, slapping or other forms of physical or psychological assault on the person. In the cases of these boys, the term ‘*maltrato*’, was used by the boys themselves, and was also the term found in social work files. The actions boys referred to as *maltrato* interestingly involved more than physical abuse. In conversations on the topic, boys would mention incidents which involve what they considered instances of injustice, including verbal attacks, as abuse.

Interestingly, *maltrato* was also in the title they gave to a short film we made together, as I described in chapter three, entitled ‘*El Niño Maltratado*’ – ‘the Abused

²⁶ ‘*Infantil*’ is often used to refer to children all ages, not just to describe issues relating to infants or babies.

Child' (see stills at the end of this chapter). The film tells the story of two brothers who leave home prompted by their father's violence against one of them, and despite the tears of their mother. They wander out onto the street sadly and arm in arm, and soon meet some other boys, who quickly welcome them, and offer the new arrivals drugs and sympathy. These new friends ask them sympathetically what has happened. In obvious empathy the 'street' boys listen to them, one commenting as they tell their sad story, "That's so unjust!"

What was interesting about their decision to make this the story line for a film was that it was not the precise story of any one boy, nor was it representative of all their cases, but one which they agreed represented the issues which force children onto the street. Although it shows the boys deciding to leave the house, thus using their agency to remedy their situation, the episode of violence within the home is portrayed as brutal and unjust. When one boy returns home 'late', his father leaps up and says that the boy 'will respect his house'. The boy does not get a chance to respond before the father is beating him, and the boy is on the floor curled up in an attempt to protect himself. When the mother enters, and finds her son being hit, she reacts to this in a display of anger and sadness; sobbing, she pleads with her husband not to hit their son. The mother and son embrace, before both sons say they're leaving, and the mother again sobs and falls to the floor in front of her husband pleading with him not to be so violent. Importantly, the scene suggests the mother's impotence in the face of the violent father, and solidarity between the children and the mother against this domestic violence. It also suggests that what children find on the street is solidarity and empathy.

In conversations with boys²⁷, they described being hit at home with different household or industrial items. Parents sometimes used electric cables; one boy described his mother putting a hot iron on his arm, suggesting that such violence against children is not exclusively from fathers. One 15 year old, who liked to be known as '*el rapero*' (the rapper), was more philosophical than most about his treatment at the hands of his mother. 'Its what happened to her when she was a

²⁷ These include conversations which took place on the street, at the Patio and in the Transition House.

child, so she thought it was okay', he mused, adding however that he had explained to her that this didn't make it right.

Both Pedro, 12, from Bogotá and Diego, 11, from a rural village, decided to leave their homes because of their fathers' abuse. Their reasoning with regard to the abuse they had experienced was clear and interesting. Diego was clearly upset by the treatment he had received at his father's hands, saying that his father had hit him much more frequently and harder than his siblings, explaining to me sadly in a soft voice, 'It's because he doesn't love me' (*Es que no me quiere*). Pedro's most memorable reference to the issue was that he thought his father wasn't his real [biological] father, because, Pedro reasoned, no "real" father would treat his child in that way. Both Diego and Pedro questioned their father's actions, one finding a possible flaw in the natural link between father and son, the other reasoning, with an obvious sense of emotional loss, that his father lacked love for him. These two boys' accounts suggest that they make an association between biological ('real') paternity and love and affection, assuming as is often done of maternal love, that paternity necessarily involves certain kinds of emotion and behaviour. They also seem to overtly contrast love and violence. To care for someone is not to be violent towards them. Such a view of kinship and the innate qualities that a father-child bond should embody contrasts with another view, commonly found amongst older boys, teenagers and young men. This focussed on the mother-son relationship, and isolated paternity as, at best, an irrelevance, as I will explain below.

A third case involving paternal abuse was Julio's, recounted at the start of the chapter, and again, the emotional impact was large. Tears began to well in his eyes when he recounted to me how his father had 'shouted a whole bunch of things' at him, and kicked him out of the house. Similarly to the portrayal of the boys in the film, Julio ran onto the street in tears, and as he sat on the pavement on his first night on the street he was befriended by other boys who offered him glue to sniff.

The boys' reactions and options varied according to their circumstances, and their perceptions of the scope of actions open to them. Pedro sought out a friend of his father's who was a bus driver and asked him to take him wherever he was going,

and as soon as he arrived at the Medellín bus station he was picked up by the police and taken to the Patio. Neither Diego, who latched on to a visiting cousin and came to Medellín to live with an aunt, nor Pedro, had ever spent a night on the street. In Diego and Pedro's cases, they clearly took positive action to remedy their situations. That they had decided the circumstances they left behind were unbearable is obviously significant.

Diego was one of the few boys to have extended family in Medellín who were willing and able to accept him into their household on a regular basis, and it was obviously enormously important to him. Every weekend out, Diego went to visit his aunt, who was very fond of him and clearly felt sorry for him. She said to me that Diego's father, her brother, was very aggressive. She and her family had fled to the city because growing paramilitary violence had made their home area tense, particularly the terror of arbitrary accusations of solidarity with the guerrilla²⁸. The accusations could occur, said Diego's aunt, "if you had so much as given the guerrilla a cup of *agua panela*" (sugarcane water)²⁹. She and Diego seemed to have agreed it was better for him to be with boys his own age – and in the safe and free care of priests – than around her home during the week. The aunt's home was in a dangerous *barrio* of the NorOriental, which probably added weight to the idea that it was better for Diego to be elsewhere, particularly as he was a quiet and shy boy, who spent most of the weekends watching television in a small backroom of the house with his uncle.

Crucially, what boys emphasised was not so much their physical vulnerability as their structural powerlessness. Discussions rarely involved allusion to the physical wounds inflicted, rather the underlying emphasis was on the inequality of a relationship, and the injustice which this could engender. In the film, the father prefaces his beating of the child with a reminder of the 'respect' due to him, as head of the household, a respect which he tries to invoke through violence and fear. In

²⁸ Rural paramilitary violence is often associated with the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC; united auto-defence of Colombia). 'Self-defence' groups have been associated with rural violence since *la Violencia*. The AUC originated in the cattle ranching areas of the Magdalena Medio, eastern Antioquia (see map 2).

²⁹ Meertens (2001c: 139) describes how women she interviewed talked about the risk of being placed on a paramilitary death list of guerrilla sympathisers simply for winking at a *guerrillero*.

conversations with boys on the subject of hitting in general, they usually concurred that it was permissible for an adult to hit a child ‘if the child deserved it’. This logic, however, was never applied reflexively to their own cases, and may well have been expressed because of the context of speaking to me as an adult, who might have been expected to think that physical punishment was an acceptable method of child-rearing. This may also have been because such expressions were made within the institution, which necessarily tried to mark out parameters when punishment was feasible or just. However boys often expressed significant frustration with treatment they considered abusive, and never overtly proclaimed any punishment just. According to the institution’s guidelines, physical punishment was never to be used against the children, but it was in practice, almost exclusively by young night-time educators whose outlook on their roles was more as volunteers than professionals³⁰. However, as we will see, for the boys punishment and abuse also took place within the utterances of staff who described them in derogatory terms – as *gamines*. Again the issue of injustice involved more than physical punishment, and was a key factor in determining the quality of their experiences within CCS.

VI. Family Crises

A number of boys were separated from their families by crises. In two cases, the crisis originated with the death of a family member. Orlando’s family was split apart by the death of a child, which caused the separation of the parents. Then, after his mother’s breakdown, Orlando and his sister found themselves apart from both their parents. Several years before, Orlando’s family had been ‘normal’, even ‘well-off’, according to his maternal aunt, whom we visited one Saturday. She described how they would come in their car to visit her as a family; and it was, she said, a nice car, a ‘Mazda or Nissan’. Orlando’s father had a steady job in the wood industry, and they lived in an established neighbourhood, unlike the aunt, who resided in a invasion settlement on the fringes of the southern municipality of Itagüí. Then one day,

³⁰ These volunteers – there were two working night and weekend shifts together during fieldwork in the Transition House – were usually recent graduates of the institution in still studying their high school or starting college degrees. They received food and board and a small stipend in exchange for their work at the TH. Their roles were taken on as a result of an agreement with the directors, rather than being an advertised or open position. Footnote 6 in Chaopetr seven addresses a process of professionalisation which started while the boys were at the Transition House.

when Orlando was playing with his younger brother on the balcony of the house with a kite, the kite sailed off, and the brother leapt off the balcony after it.

It seemed clear that the psychological impact of the tragedy was devastating for the parents, and led to their separation. When Orlando was in CCS, the father was living in Bogotá, his mother was pregnant and living on the street, and his sister was in the local reformatory, 'La Pola', after being arrested for severely wounding someone on the street with a knife.

Nelson's family seemed to have been fractured by both death and material poverty. The youngest of several children, Nelson ended up living on the street with his brother, following their father's death. Nelson's mother tried to earn a living begging for clothes and then selling them in the Minorista market place, and had had other informal vending jobs. When contact was re-established with her by Yolinda the social worker, the mother was living with a married daughter. While the social work file suggested that the family had suffered from an 'absence of clear authority', it was also the case that relationships had been difficult to maintain because of the material conditions in which they all lived. Indeed, in chapter seven Nelson reflects with sadness on his older brother's condition on the street.

For brothers Alejandro and Tulio, home life seemed to have become complicated by their mother's new partner, who apparently hit them. They were amongst the best educated of the boys and seemed keenly aware of the possibility of receiving an education in CCS. While it was hard to ascertain the exact nature of their home life – they did in later months go out at weekends to visit their mother and her new baby, and were clearly close to her – it is probable that the search for an affordable education played a large part in bringing them to the Patio.

VII. Issues of Gender and Parenting

The above cases illustrate the great diversity of what boys were able to refer to as family, although mothers, if alive, always featured prominently. Mapping the family in Colombia is generally complex. The history of family models in Colombia

demonstrates the historical trajectory of issues about families as places where gender and age are important factors in determining relative power, as well as suggesting the importance of the issue of diversity in real family patterns. As in other Latin American countries, idealised models for the family in Colombia have been heavily influenced by the Catholic church, for whom marriage is one of the seven sacraments and which regulates both property and sexual activity (Cicerchia 1997). In Colombia, as elsewhere, the private realm of the family was patriarchal, where the father was supposed to be the breadwinner, the disciplinarian, and model for his sons (Pachón and Muñoz 1991).

However this ideal was also subject to historical and regional variations. In the regional model of family which Gutierrez de Pineda (1997) terms the '*complejo cultural antioqueño*' (the Antioquian cultural complex), she suggests the relevance of the expansionist history of Antioquian colonisation of the western range of the Andes, and southwards to include what is now Caldas and the rest of the coffee producing region, as having led families to have a matrifocal tendency within this patriarchal structure. While the ordering of the family was done in the name of the father, the practicalities of men's absence from the home due to work meant that life within the home, and children's lives, were centred on the mother (Henaó Delgado n.d.: 85). Women were seen as the moral repositories of the family and charged with the moral education of children as 'good Catholics' (Pachón and Muñoz 1991:83), not only in Antioquia which was known for its religious conservatism but more generally in the country. This positioning of women as 'moral' and the parallel lack of attention to male morality – and tolerance of promiscuity - is indicative of the double standards which have existed in terms of gender relations and constructs. This placing of moral responsibility exclusively on women seems to have been maintained despite the perceived diversification of family types within Colombian society, particularly in urban areas (Henaó Delgado n.d.).

The strength of ideal and normative models of the family is apparent when issues of the family 'in crisis' are raised within Colombian discourses on the subject (Rojas Ruiz 1999). However the perception of crisis has more to do with the recognition of a diversity of forms than their actual novelty. Female-headed households have

existed since colonial times, as has the active role this family form has played in social reproduction (Momsen 1993, Cicerchia 1997, Henao Delgado 1998, Moore 1994). Indeed what the issue of normative models raises are questions about how particular models have been related to economic and political power, particularly in cases of states such as Colombia where families and their networks historically played a crucial role when the state was still 'embryonic' (Cicerchia 1997: 121-122, cf Hareven 1982). The dominance of the Catholic sanctioned views of the family within government strategies for social order and control should not be underestimated, particularly since in Colombia the church was only disestablished in 1991.

For example, debates regarding changes in women's roles, where they are seen to step out from the private sphere to participate in the public sphere, are rarely extended to a parallel questioning of men's roles in the domestic sphere. As Henao Delgado suggested, men have failed to adapt their models of paternity to changing social circumstances (1998: 84). Tracing what is a generally dominant line of thought, Gutierrez de Pineda argues that women's work outside the home leaves children vulnerable to socialisation by others, including institutions and the street. She also suggests that the mothers of children taken into state care are likely to have had twice as many unions [partners] as neighbours whose children are still living with them (1998:46, 47), implying a link between female-headed households and 'street' children. Views such as this place the responsibility for raising children on women, and also blame them whenever children become the focus of a moral crisis. Henao Delgado's indication that the likelihood of men finding new stable partners is twice that of women (1998: 82) illustrates the extent to which women are left with double the responsibilities and burdens, of production and reproduction, as they maintain undertake responsibility for childrearing and economic maintenance of the household.

Indeed, while the families that the boys have come from tend to be fracturing under the strains of poverty and crisis, one estimate suggested that 41% of all households in Medellín were female headed (Vamos Mujer 1999: 12-13). Such households are three times more likely to be subsisting on less than half a minimum wage a month

(ibid). And while, as Chant (1997) has shown, women may fare better at managing the household budget on their own than with male partners, the cultural and social complications of paternal responsibilities are a frequent source of complaint by women. Given the fact that women have access only to lower paid jobs and are faced with a dearth of childcare facilities, women's burdens are significant. Through the family welfare system in Colombia, women raising children on their own are in theory availed of the support of the state to reclaim money for food and basic support costs from the father of the children, but, this is extremely hard to put into practice³¹.

In this kind of situation, the mother figure becomes the principal socialising force and affective referent for children, even if she spends time working outside the home, so that '*la cucha, la vieja*' (mum, the old lady) is central to their lives (Rojas Ruiz 1999: 7-8). Although, as we have seen, children may feel sadness about fractured relations with fathers, Chant also suggests that the "sons of lone mothers seem to learn something of value from their hardship, as well as being actively taught by their mothers to be respectful" (1997: 245). There was ample evidence from Andrés, Cesar, Julio and indeed almost all the boys who had a mother alive that she was the centre of their affection, and also a source of motivation. And there was a saying in Medellín, '*Mamá es única, papá cualquier hijo de puta*' (mother is only one, father is any son of a bitch), which suggests that paternity is an irrelevance in practice, even laughable or worthy of insult.

³¹ The state may make a *retención de fuente* (retention at source) and retrieve such monies from a man's weekly pay cheque, but relatively few men have stable jobs with such weekly pay cheques from any company. And if they do, they often have strategies to avoid paying (Lawyer for Bienestar Familiar, personal communication, 1999). One such case was Bernarda, who had two children by a man who had left her when the children were seven and four. For a time, the older boy went to live with the father but the father soon kicked the boy out. Living with his mother again, he had to take four buses every day to get to school, which cost her \$2000 pesos, nearly a quarter of her \$9800 peso a day minimum wage (The minimum wage during my fieldwork was about \$275,000 pesos a month¹). Another brief relationship then left her pregnant. The boy was then two, and the father refused to acknowledge any financial responsibility. Bernarda told me that she knew that the boy's father worked as a grounds maintenance in an apartment block in a wealthy area of the city but she did not know where. She had tried to get the father of the other children to pay maintenance, but as he was self-employed it was in vain. When I suggested to Bernarda that she see a lawyer about retrieving financial support from the father of her youngest, she said she could not take the time off work. She said he called every few months, but claimed he wouldn't give her any money unless she slept with him.

VIII. The Absentee State

For the state, its role in children's welfare begins only where parents are seen to fail in their duties toward a child. However, it is tempting to characterise the Colombian state as an 'absentee' state, for its failure in protecting the welfare of its vulnerable citizens. While the model for the Colombian state was that of a liberal democratic republic³², the Colombian state apparatus has a particular form, including weaknesses in its territorial and military control over the country. Important questions of legitimacy also arise as a result of the state's apparent inability to abide by its own legislation (cf Pécaut 1991), particularly for its often-repressive interference in some domains of national life, and its links with illegitimate forms of violence.

Political time in Colombia is usually reckoned through the periods of successive presidents and their national development plans. This process lends a particular character to the Colombian state, as leaders attempt to leave their mark with their own agendas for development, peace, agriculture and so on. This emphasis on presidential power, projects and patronage dates from the National Front period (1957-1968³³), at which time civil society was also forcibly excluded from representation (Villar 2001: 63). The distinctive agendas also have the effect of creating a lack of continuity and the duplication of administrative efforts. And although not ruled by a homogenous elite, being a country of regions and where different interests groups have pursued their own goals³⁴, accommodation and pragmatism have sheltered Colombia's elites from many challenges.

³² As other Latin American nations established following the wars of independence and inspired by French and US revolutions

³³ 1968 is the date of a constitutional amendment which called for the phasing out of the power sharing agreement. However power sharing in different forms continued until 1986 (Bushnell 1993: 225)

³⁴ Early in the 20th century Antioquian elites decided Bogotá's political elites were so removed and detached from their reality that they took the initiative in areas of public interests such as the construction of roads and initial sewerage systems. Such works laid the foundations for the *Sociedad de Mejores Publicas* (society for public improvement) (Botero Herrera 1996). A certain self-identification of a national elite is, however, in evidence in one example (although there are many more): a special issue of *Jet Set*, a social magazine published by *Semana*, a respected political weekly, dedicated to the ancestry of Colombia's most important families, often tracing their origins to Spanish nobility (complete with heralds and crests). The issue is divided according to regions and cities of Colombia, but the introduction sums up a great deal of conservative Colombian thinking and seems to underscore the manner in which a few significant families are considered the centre of the nation's powerbase:

"We want to use this opportunity... to rescue the old values which our grandparents inculcated in us: honest work, the value of someone's word, the importance of family and of traditions;

These factors, combined with gross levels of corruptions within the state's apparatuses (Pearce 1991), are elements which have contributed to unevenness in the development of state presence. As is notable in the stories of the children fleeing outbreaks of violence across a significant area of the national territory, the Colombian state is weak in its military and territorial control of the terrain. For some analysts this is not an accident. Sweig argues that the decision to leave large parts of the country relatively un-tethered to the state, with little administrative or security coverage, was a deliberate strategy on the part of the political and economic elite to allow them to exploit the country's vast resources with fewer obstacles:

“It is no accident that Colombia lacks a state apparatus or effective institutions outside its principal cities. Neglecting such development was a conscious decision by the country's ruling class, which realised long ago that limiting the reach of the army and the police was the best way to guarantee that the elite could exploit the country's riches, which realised long ago that limiting the reach of the army and police was the best way to guarantee that the elite could exploit the country's riches” (2002: 125).

The strength of the guerrilla presence in rural areas where the state has little representation beyond a police station – and these were favourite targets of the FARC during 1998-99- meant that the state was failing to make its presence felt in a way that demonstrated its sovereignty. Pressures undermining the sovereignty of the state also come from outside the nation's boundaries, through the tentacles of the USA's 'war on drugs' and the revenues from the international drugs trade which have helped sustain the conflict in recent decades. Colombia is a case where, as Held suggests, changes in the international order of the late 20th century (and certainly the early 21st) pose severe challenges to the “viability of the independent democratic nation-state” (1991: 197). The issue of state sovereignty is also affected by multinational and multi-lateral institutions, as suggested in chapter two.

Recent conditions of conflict in Colombia also mean that the state does not have a monopoly of the use of violence. Its ability to control insurgency has been proven inadequate. Although the army has been seen to play a less political role than in other Latin American countries, authoring only two minor coups which had relative

and precisely to pay homage to those Colombians who in spite of the difficulties have come out ahead: ...Families who have made the country” (2000: 17)

public support during the century, it has been supported by degrees of autonomy to deal with insurgency and financial allocations, both from national and international sources (Pearce 1991). Military service is compulsory for those not able to either buy their way out or defer it through education, and in practice involves only a fraction of the eligible young men. Its failure to stem internal resistance may be linked to the deliberate strategy of under-development of the security forces as suggested by Sweig in the quote above, but is also related to the sheer numerical strength and increasing financial power of the insurgent movements, with both guerrilla and paramilitary forces using drug monies to bolster their work (The paramilitaries also function with support from landowners and elites).

The army is meanwhile believed by many to collaborate with paramilitary forces, through actions such as sharing airstrips, and occasionally executes massacres of its own, which tend to result in light punishment for leaders. These issues highlight a problem which reverberates around the state apparatus, and results in problems of legitimacy, as I suggested in chapter two. The failure of the state judicial system to ever punish paramilitary activity is seen as tantamount to evidence of its complicity, a view echoed widely amongst analysts (e.g. Pearce 1991, Sweig 2002, Pécaut 1991), and results in a distrust of the functioning of the apparatuses of the state. For Pécaut such actions (and inactions) relate to “the incapacity of the state to apply the principles upon which it legitimises itself” (1991: 13).

This sort of corruption and violence indicates what Pearce terms the state’s “inability to look after the interests of society as a whole” (1991: 7), and as Gamboa asserts, this lack of security and the lack of respect for human life “is seen by the common people as the fault of the state, and for this reason it also loses legitimacy” (2001: 104). The state is not seen to act for the people – whatever the police PR says – but rather to represent the interests of an exclusive elite.

This impression of managing the country for the benefit of the few could have been expected to shift with the 1991 re-drafting of the Constitution, a move designed to help the country recover from the instability produced by the drug trafficking and insurgency conflicts of the 1980s. Yet opposition groups including guerrillas were

excluded from the Constituent Assembly convened to draft the new Constitution, and amendments to the power of the traditional parties in the resulting legislation failed to produce change and instead underlined their “historical tendencies toward pragmatism, fragmentation and clientelism”, rather than face real change (Bejarano 2001: 65). And in the implementation of the reforms and projects underwritten by the state there is once again, evidence of only a shadow of a state emerging, a state which does not exist in sufficient institutional strength to make any significant reality out of the principles of this Constitution (Bejarano op cit). Rather, the appearances of political innovation and reform proved more apparent than substantive.

Indeed, the ruling elites’ duplicitous management of the state is also evident in the instigation of Plan Colombia, the Pastrana administration’s 1999-2002 development plan. While the Plan faced opposition for its content, which emphasised military and drug control expenditure over social investment, exiled senator Piedad Córdoba³⁵ (n.d.) draws attention to the manner in which this national development plan was created, without the consultative processes required by the Constitution³⁶. Indeed, Córdoba concludes, the entire process of creation and implementation of the Plan was illegal. Plan Colombia supplanted a previous plan which had been duly approved by Congress, ‘Change to Construct Peace, 1999-2002’, passed by Law 508 of 29 July 1999. However, these facts were scarcely common knowledge or much debated in Colombia at the time.

This limited and limiting state further demonstrated its lack of will to consider civil society or its needs in its scant attention to social security. Having relied on growth through much of the late 20th century to lift the population gradually out of poverty, the recession which hit in 1997 unmasked the weakness of the economic structure of society, and the extent to which the population was vulnerable to the effects of market fluctuations. This includes an overwhelming proportion of the population who are self-employed in the informal sector, such as Bernardo and Nelson’s

³⁵ A left wing Liberal senator for Antioquia, Córdoba was forced into exile in 1999 after repeated death threats and a period of kidnap by the paramilitaries.

³⁶ Excluding all national and international political actors other than the United States, whose Congress was lobbied with exceptional determination by diplomatic representation in Washington, according to Sweig (2002). The plan was drafted in English, becoming known in Spanish only some time later

mothers. Such workers have no protection, being largely without health or pension rights, and were amongst those most likely to see a drastic fall in their incomes during the recession. Such workers, and rural labourers, accounted for a large proportion of the 64% of the population living in poverty by the end of 2001 (World Bank 2002a).

Colombia's low tax income is partly due to low tax rates³⁷, but also to high levels of evasion and the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. The lack of a basic social security net, let alone any system of welfare, may be traced back as far the beginnings of *La Violencia*. While in other countries in the 1950s populist politics, such as Peronism in Argentina, saw benefits secured for the working classes, the attempt by left wing Liberal Jorge Eliecer Gaitán to introduce a populist platform resulted in his assassination, and the outbreak of conflict³⁸. Consequently, even before the country's adaptation in the 1980s to the structural adjustment policies favoured by the world multilateral lending institutions, Colombia was lagging significantly behind other Latin American nations in public social expenditure (World Bank 2002a: 68). It did however undertake specific adjustments in line with neo-liberal³⁹ political and monetarist economic theory to reduce the size of the state and bolster market freedom, including the privatisation of publicly-owned companies and the flexibilisation of the labour force⁴⁰.

³⁷ E.g. under Lopez Michelsen (1975-1981) taxes on income and wealth fell from 4.3% of GDP to 2.7% (Pearce 1991: 104).

³⁸ Some in Colombia speculate that the CIA, desperate to push forward its Cold War agenda in this strategically important country, was responsible for his assassination.

³⁹ The concept of neo-liberalism is associated particularly with a strand of right wing conservative political thinking in the United States in the 1980s which saw the state's interference with market forces as detrimental to the natural laws for the functioning of the market, identifying welfare, for example, as a disincentive from finding work. It thus justified cutting the role of the state and state spending drastically, by privatising state owned companies and cutting social security programmes. Such policy measures were inaugurated by the Reagan administration in the United States and Margaret Thatcher in Britain, and continued under the guides of the Third Way by 1990s New Labour administrations. See Rose 1999 for an excellent discussion of how the concept of freedom is utilised in such theory.

⁴⁰ Elements of the neo-liberal model which have been undertaken in Colombia include (cf Pelaez and Rodas 2002): Cuts in social spending (e.g. ICBF 'rationalised' the way in paid subsidises, only for children who had **used** places and not for places available, in late 1998); Privatisation of public services (e.g. rubbish collection in cities; transport lost its subsidises in 1980s); Privatisation of health (Law 100 of 1993 brought in pre-paid medicine, via EPS or health insurance companies, who functioned as intermediaries between patients and healthcare providers); Privatisation of state enterprises – (selling off of electricity, telephones etc. 1998, new companies were opening and advertising on t.v.); Fiscal Adjustment Plans (conditions of IMF loans include reduction in state expenditure. Structural reforms or 'adjustments' as the World Bank calls them, were begun in the late 1980s; central to this process is the 'downsizing' of the public sector⁴⁰. Since then, conditionality of loans [including restructuring] from the IMF have been dependent on these goals being pursued. They include improved balance of payments

Welfare

It is the context of this disordered state, of structural violence and de facto inequalities, that we must locate welfare services for children, and to discover the realities is not an easy task⁴¹. Social security and legislation for children in Colombia is minimal, amounting to piece-meal responses to identifiable vulnerable groups.

Duties which might have been expected to count as public responsibilities, such as education and welfare, were historically often undertaken by the Catholic Church, and its still significant influence in society is in many ways a product of this power. While the precise points where the state should supersede Church control in areas of public interest were key areas of debate between Liberals and Conservatives, this historical role has combined with an emphasis on economic liberalism to leave much welfare provision to the private or charitable sectors. This is further linked to strong social conservatism amongst the ruling classes, and paternalistic notions of charity that have been prevalent in charitable welfare provision. In their survey of the development of assistance and protection for children in twentieth century Bogotá, Muñoz and Pachón suggest that relations between the wealthy patrons and humble recipients of charitable action were based on clientelistic inequality (1991: 383⁴²). As such, rights to welfare or other notions drawn from a conceptual field of a civic contract are entirely absent. Rather, what social policies do exist have been the result of specific and limited actions, and as we will see below with regard to children, the state seems to have never undertaken a comprehensive examination of the needs of the population during periods of shifting economic conditions.

and lowering of inflation, key ingredients according monetary policy for sustained growth. These adjustments in have been characteristic of World Bank project loans, such as a 1999 Financial sector Adjustment loan, which promoted bank privatisation, and a 1999 loan to bolster and 'protect from political interference' the privatised water supply sewerage and environmental management project in Cartagena. Structural adjustment continues to be a key feature of World Bank growth policy; and Informalisation of labour and losses of workers rights (begun under Samper [1994-1998], see Urrego 2000: 173) and continued under Pastrana (1998-2002) and most recently by Uribe Velez. The minimum wage has been kept at what trade unions consider half of the amount required for a basic basket of family goods (ENS 2002). See www.ens.org.co/publicaciones especially *Revista Cultura y Trabajo*

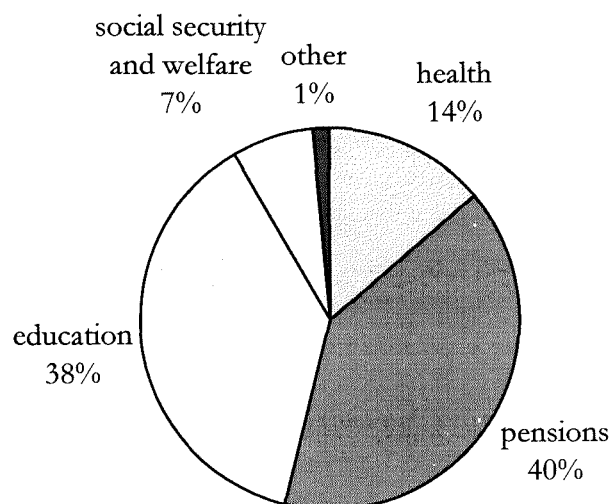
⁴¹ There is very little published material on the shape or nature of the welfare system in Colombia. Even data on actual spending is hard to come by.

⁴² Drawing a comparison between rural landowners and their renting tenants, the poor of the cities who received clothing, food and medical treatment thanks to the charitable inclinations of the rich were positioned in a situation of eternal debt. The beneficiary was put in a position of permanent submission to the use-needs of the benefactor, and often in the case of female servants this involved them being the objects of rape and sexual abuse by the male household members (and see Paternostro 1999 for examples of the modern incarnations of such abuses)

Neglect of basic development ties in with observations made above about the way political elites have perceived their task of governing, and evoke the conditions which Sweig (2002: 133) comments on, such that “incompetence, corruption and accommodation have kept Colombia’s masters from accepting the reality of the disaster they helped create”. Indeed, it is striking that such poor social policy is not more frequently taken into account in reflections on violence⁴³, as evidence of the ruling class’s failure to respond to, or even recognise, the conditions of misery endured by many of its citizens.

Pension and health policies developed during the 1940s and 50s for state and certain private sector workers today provide less than half the population with coverage, leaving the majority of the poor with no support. Furthermore, statistics on access to basic services suggest that 57% of households in the country are without connections to the sewerage system, 16% of the people lack access to water (World Bank 2002a: 73), and 41% of the population has no health insurance, making health and infrastructure developments urgent priorities for public spending.

Graph 4.2 Colombian Government Social Sector Spending



⁴³ For example, Bergquist *et al*'s otherwise quite comprehensive coverage of the conflict in the last decade of the twentieth century gives only one chapter to social movements, where only brief reference is made to social policy (Urrego 2001).

Source: authors own calculations on basis of data in World Bank 2002a and 2002b for 1996 proportions of GDP.

Health and education combined account for nearly 50% of public social expenditure (World Bank 2002a), with pensions taking up another significant chunk of public social expenditures⁴⁴. Spending on welfare, therefore, is only a small proportion of overall spending, estimated at between 1 and 4% of GDP which, with other social security spending accounts for only 7% of all social spending.

Notably absent from the programmes under these allocations is any significant help for the displaced. By 2000, some 2.5 million people were calculated to have been displaced during the previous decade, and by 2002 were being uprooted at a rate of some 200,000 a year, or 42 people every hour. In its first public acknowledgement of the problem facing its people and its responsibility to act, in 1997 the government passed law 387, relating to the 'prevention of forced displacement' and attention to those affected. However, this nominal attention has resulted in very little practical support to the displaced (Gonzales Bustelo 2001)⁴⁵. Even though it is better funded, accounting for half of the social security budget at an approximate \$800 million (US) a year, children's welfare suffers from some of the same problems of being a low priority on political agendas and inefficiency.

Welfare for Children?

⁴⁴ In the early 1990s a health support scheme known by the acronym of the means testing system which determined its application, SISBEN, was established, and while this was meant to support health care access for the poor, by the end of the 1990s it was being re-designed. In 2003 the Uribe administration was bringing in an overhaul of the way the means testing was carried out, arguing that some 15% of the poorest were not enrolled, and that some 3 million individuals were fraudulently included.

⁴⁵ The official support which is open to those who register their status as displaced person with the appropriate officials, including all details for the incidents which forced them to flee, presentation of identity cards, present address, etc., is three months family food supply. Given the nature and scale of the displacement, this is derisory. Further it often entails more threats of violence and fear for those concerned. In a report looking at the implementation of this in practice, Gonzales Bustelo shows that many peasants are unaware of their rights to this help (actually only put into place by a 2000 decree), the laws which established it do not provide for a specific budget, and perhaps most cynically, many of the public ministries where people must register are infiltrated by paramilitaries. This is just a sampling of what the issue involves, and suggests strong continuity in the disinterest of the government for the suffering of its poorest people. Recent assessment of the system as evolved by 2002 observes that IDPs who do not claim assistance within 15 days of the event of their displacement must appear on a register of IDPs to subsequently qualify for assistance, but that the register contains only about 100,000 names (2002b)

The most vulnerable to the effects of this lack of development of basic services and security provision are children, according to the latest World Bank assessments (2002a and b). What assistance and protection does exist for children and families is largely administered through the national family welfare institute, the *Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar* (ICBF). However, even at the time of the founding of the institution, through Law 75 in 1968, it was not clear what needs or goals the institution was meant to address⁴⁶.

In the late 1990s it was running programmes which were not benefiting the poorest of the poor, and which tended to affect children either by identifying them with particular social ‘pathologies’, or through the limited coverage of day care centres. The three main programmes through which it attended to children were:

- ◆ *Hogares de Bienestar Comunitario* (HCB, Community Welfare Homes)
 - A system of community homes in which children under seven receive free day care and lunch while their mothers work. These are run by a local woman (known as a *madre comunitaria*) who cares for up to 15 children in her home. The ICBF claims to attend some 900,000 children in these centres (cf May 1996: 190).
- ◆ *Centro de Atención Integral al Preescolar* (CAIP)
 - Pre-schools in urban areas which tend to be for better off children; these facilities were never mentioned nor encountered during fieldwork⁴⁷
- ◆ *Bienestarina*,
 - Flour distributed to children in the ICBF’s programmes, for example CCS received large bags of this flour for its food provision.

(May et al 1996)

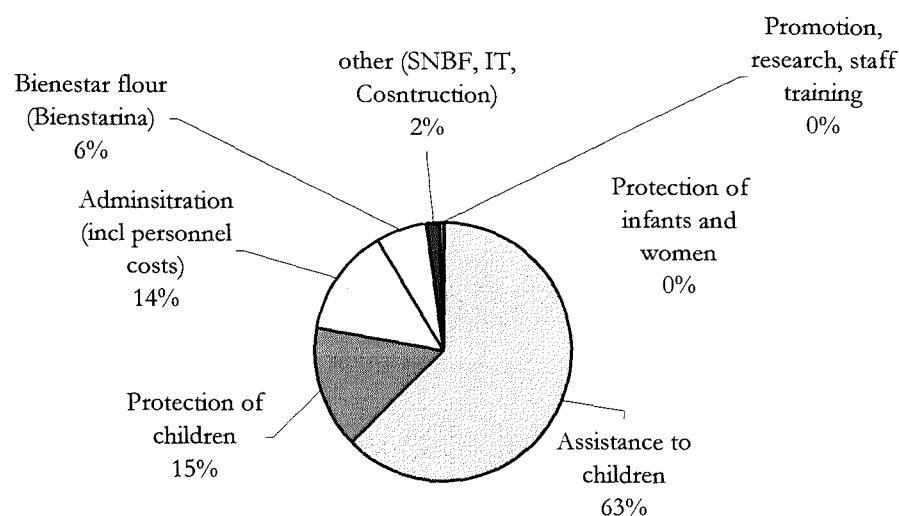
⁴⁶ According to an internal information document circulated in 1971,

“If we start from the creation and constitution of the institute, you find that the definition of its elements is not done in a specific manner, but rather a general and imprecise one: Family Wellbeing . The administrative instruments which the prior policy should [have] developed, were state entities (Instituto Nacional de Nutrición, today direction of nutrition of the ICBF, and the Division of Minors of the Ministry of Justice, today Legal department of ICBF) which fulfilled diverse roles towards particular objectives within the problems of the family; thus, as a result of Law 75, partialities were unified with the intention of covering the totality, in our case, the family. But no measurement had been made of the real problem, and as a result, how to use the administrative mechanisms” (quoted in Umaña Luna 1995: 173).

⁴⁷ It is important to note that despite the CAIP and HCBs, institutional childcare is unavailable for 66% of children (World Bank 2002a: 73).

Together, these programmes account for 63% of the ICBF's budget, yet involve a minority of poor children, and by no means constitute measures which ensure that children do not suffer from any of the multiple problems associated with poverty⁴⁸. Nor do they constitute a comprehensive system that provides a nation-wide childcare service. Yet in the late 1990s the ICBF was one of the better funded state institutions, uniquely funded by its own tax, a 3% levy on all salaries⁴⁹.

Graph 4.3 Breakdown of ICBF Spending



Administration (incl. personnel)	\$54,202,500
Promotion, research, staff training	\$1,663,257
Assistance to children	\$249,126,705
Protection of children	\$60,678,598
Protection of infants and women	\$454,545
Other (SNBF, IT, Construction)	\$6,384,205
Bienestar flour (Bienestarina)	\$25,553,296
TOTAL	\$398,063,105.05

*Source: adapted and converted from ICBF 1
figures are for 2002. US\$ at 2640 pesos.*

⁴⁸ Umaña Luna notes that one of the few publications about the ICBF is a big coffee table book with glossy emotive black and white photographs of children in HCB projects, which (in my view) implores the reader to understand the extreme concern the government takes for these little underprivileged children, and lauds the Barco government's efforts to expand the programme. *Por Nuestros Niños*, Presidencia de la República de Colombia, Villegas Editores Bogotá 1990.

⁴⁹ It must be noted that salaried employment constituted a minority in the economic climate of the late 1990s. Over half of those in employment are self employed in the informal sector, according to the 2001 statistics produced by DNP.

Approximately half of the ‘protection of children’ budget goes on services for institutionalised children, who have been judged to be in an ‘irregular situation’ by the Minor’s Code of 1989⁵⁰. Most of these protective functions are carried out through contracts with private non-governmental or church-run charitable organisations, founded during the course of the century in response to particular interests and identifications of need. This ad hoc assembly of care services has resulted in duplication, competition, and waste. Importantly, few studies exist of the ICBF and its functions, and none of them measure the impact on child wellbeing in a longitudinal manner (Umaña Luna 1995 and May 1996). Proper programme auditing is also non-existent⁵¹. Thus from the start the ICBF does not have a generalised mission regarding the condition of families in general, but only a mandate to assist those in extreme circumstances. Its statutory obligation to intervene in such cases comes from the laws for the protection of children as laid out in the Minor’s Code.

The Minor’s Code

The Minor’s Code is the legislation through which vulnerable children are taken into state care, and constitutes the most comprehensive legislation regarding children in Colombia’s history⁵². It is not, however, a charter for the welfare of children, nor does it address the conditions of children who live in what it defines by default as the ‘normal’ situation of living with parents whose incomes and behaviour is acceptable. Rather a significant part of the Minor’s Code applies only to children whose families have been seen to fail in their duties to care for the child, who is deemed to be in an “irregular situation” of “abandonment or moral and/or physical danger”. This is defined as occurring when (article 31, 2nd):

⁵⁰ See Appendix 8 for chart of overview of ICBF services.

⁵¹ For example, the HCBs are visited every three months and inspectors are under pressure not to report if attendance is less than 15 children as this leads to a reduction in the subsidy for the woman running the centre.

⁵² The law concerning children in Colombia grew up in an ad hoc manner during the 20th century. The position of Minors’ Judges for ‘children with behavioural problems’ in 1920 (law 98), the establishment of the Ministry of Public Education in 1926 (law 79), and protection for certain class of working children in 1931 (law 129) saw certain elements of a ‘modern’ childhood put into place.

“the people whom according to the law should provide personal care and education for their offspring are absent in an absolute or temporary way; or existing, they fail to comply with their obligations or relevant responsibilities, or they lack the moral or mental qualities necessary to assure the correct formation of the minor” (1999: 48).

Paragraph 1 explains this situation further:

“failure to comply as outlined in number 2...is assumed when the minor is engaged in begging or vagrancy, or when he does not live with persons called upon by law to care for him personally.”

Poor children like Bernardo’s sister can thus be taken away from their parents for simply being on the street with their parents as they work, because the street can be judged an improper or immoral place for a child to be.

The Minor’s Code was passed in November 1989, a few weeks after Colombia ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The timing was probably not coincidental. Drafted in 1988, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was subsequently adopted by all but two countries around the world, as charter for the minimum conditions which states should guarantee its minors, set out as persons under 18⁵³. Since then, it has become a cornerstone, if not an uncontroversial one, of efforts to improve the conditions of children’s lives around the world, and signatory states are required to make regular submissions to the Children’s’ Rights Commission which provide important updates and evidence on the welfare of children in each state.

The Minor’s Code soon became the target of efforts for reform to give child protection and rights an integral legal platform (Fundación Antonio Restrepo Barco 1999: 18). Drafted without any consultation with NGOs, academics or other experts on the subject, the Minor’s Code pointedly fails to take account of any of the requirements of the UNCRC. For example, even if a child passes through the legal mechanisms of the irregular situation, s/he becomes a ward of state without any due process (Cantwell 1998: 11). There is little transparency, as ‘legalisation’ meetings in which lawyers and social workers for ICBF meet with representatives of the institution which is putting the child forward for care, take place behind closed

⁵³ The only two countries not to ratify the Convention were the United States and Sudan.

doors and without the presence of either the parent or child concerned. Children are therefore not treated as subjects with rights to voice their opinions as provided for by the UNCRC (especially articles 12 and 13)⁵⁴.

As a code, it refers only to children whose situation is deemed irregular; it does not make any society-wide provision or regulations for children, establish any safety net provision to enable children to stay with their families, or provide support to extended families caring for children⁵⁵. Rather it refers only to those whose situation means that their parents or other guardians cannot care for them as the state sees fit. The 'irregular situation' doctrine for legal minors in Latin America had its origins in 1920s criminal law, was subsequently influenced by US criminology, particularly the concept of juvenile delinquency (Tejeiro Lopez 1998: 15-16, 59-60), and is a concept whose invalidity I discussed in chapter two. The principal measure open to child protection lawyers to care for a child in such a situation is to institutionalise the child⁵⁶. As a result of the historical arrangements between church and state, institutionalisation is often realised in voluntary institutions of a religious nature, such as City of the Children's Saint.

IX. Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown some of the forces which propelled boys towards the street and then to seek institutional help. I have shown that family structure and circumstances can only be understood in the context of structural violence, poverty and the continuing war in Colombia, and that patterns of causality in children's displacement towards urban centres are based in such realities rather than personal

⁵⁴ This 'silencing' and control of children is of course in most instances politically expedient, even in the supposedly communitarian and politically 'evolved' ethos of the UK government's 'third way' (James and James 2001).

⁵⁵ Tolfree (1995: 31) notes of worldwide studies, that child abandonment is rare in rural areas. This suggests the existence of traditional coping mechanisms such as patterns of obligation of extended family towards parentless offspring, which may tend to be weakened by processes of urban migration and shifting employment patterns. Unfortunately, extended family fostering, which we saw evidence of attempts at in the boys' stories, is one alternative to institutionalisation which the state fails to provide support for.

⁵⁶ Appendix 11 on mode of referral and entry data from the third stage social work files, shows that 28% of boys here were admitted because of 'moral or physical danger' or abandonment. Another 24% were remitted because a relationship to the street.

or family pathologies. The amorphous category of 'street' children needs to be understood as an effect and example of structural violence because most of these children are not apart from their parents because they want to be, but they respond and adapt with resilience to solving problems that place them at risk.

It is clear that many children adapt creatively, and that they are keenly aware of issues surrounding their welfare. Through their peer networks, the children emphasise and discuss the causes of their condition as rooted in "unjust circumstances beyond their control" (Felsman 1989: 77). In various different circumstances, the children make clear statements about their understandings of power, particularly that which they consider to be abusive, such as of parents, or corrupt, such as the police. This contradicts the strategy of the dominant discourses of discipline's attempt to define the individual as the subject or entity which must act through an individualised economy of discipline, sin and regret on the basis of a solitary morality. Indeed the validity of dominant approaches to discipline, which is enforced through violence, is thus undermined, and a complex field of moral reasoning set up in which children and others are often victimised because of their poverty, being judged as manifesting deviant cultural forms. This will as we see continue to be apparent during children's experiences on the street, and indeed within the institution.

I have also disputed the notion that children are necessarily passive in their encounters with the street. As I will show in the following chapter, there is bountiful evidence of children's alertness and constant negotiation of their welfare in whatever surrounding they find themselves. There are however continuities between both views of the children as passive victims, and of them as dangerous actors in the state's responses to the children's situations. Through the doctrine of the irregular situation, it places blame for the problem of a child's 'vulnerability' on parents, and by avoiding any analysis of conditions of children in Colombia as a whole, the state would seem to try to distance itself from any responsibilities therein.

I have suggested that the Colombian state is in other ways very weak, and that it also undermines its own credibility by its failure to guarantee basic rights, to life, for

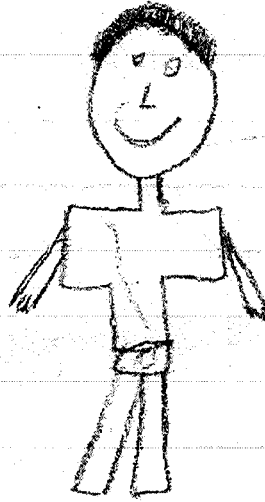
example, to many of its citizens. I have also shown that 'the state', while a shorthand for considering the apparatuses of government, does not imply a consistent or coherent project. Rather, the state is shown to be disjointed, inconsistent in its presence, and its agents, such as the police and army, often act in violation of the principles by which the state should organise itself.

With impunity for violence the norm, attacks on human life, even children's, combines with structural violence which sees families suffering in great economic poverty. The majority of the population live in poverty and without any social welfare or security from the state. In other words, locating the origins of 'street' children involves considering how they are produced by conditions which attack the survival chances of the family, and where the state is certainly not seen as an ally, but all too frequently yet another foe. In the next chapter we venture towards the street- based survival tactics of the boys, including the shelter of the Patio.

Chapter Four

DRAWINGS OF POVERTY AND VIOLENCE

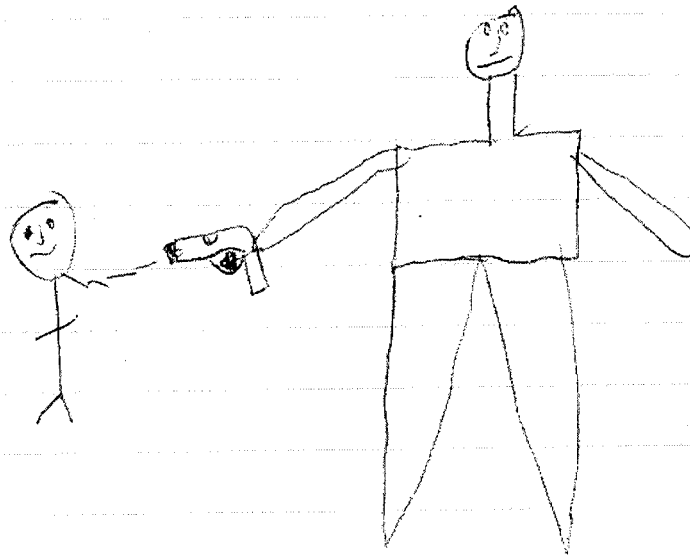
yo y la sociedad



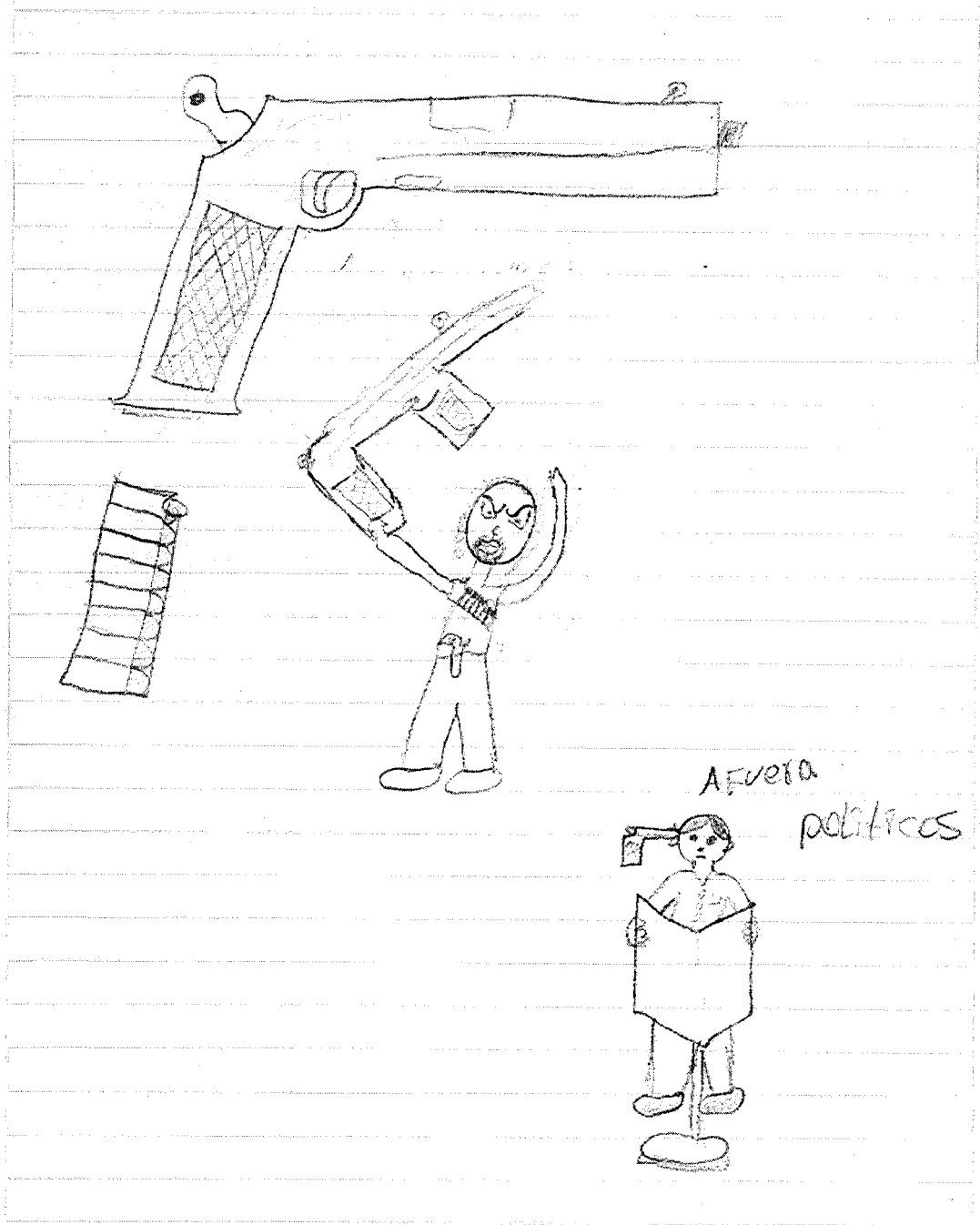
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4.1 'Me and Society' series (Remit was their relationship to society).
#1. 'Poor'. Drawing by 13 year old boy in 3rd stage, March 1999.

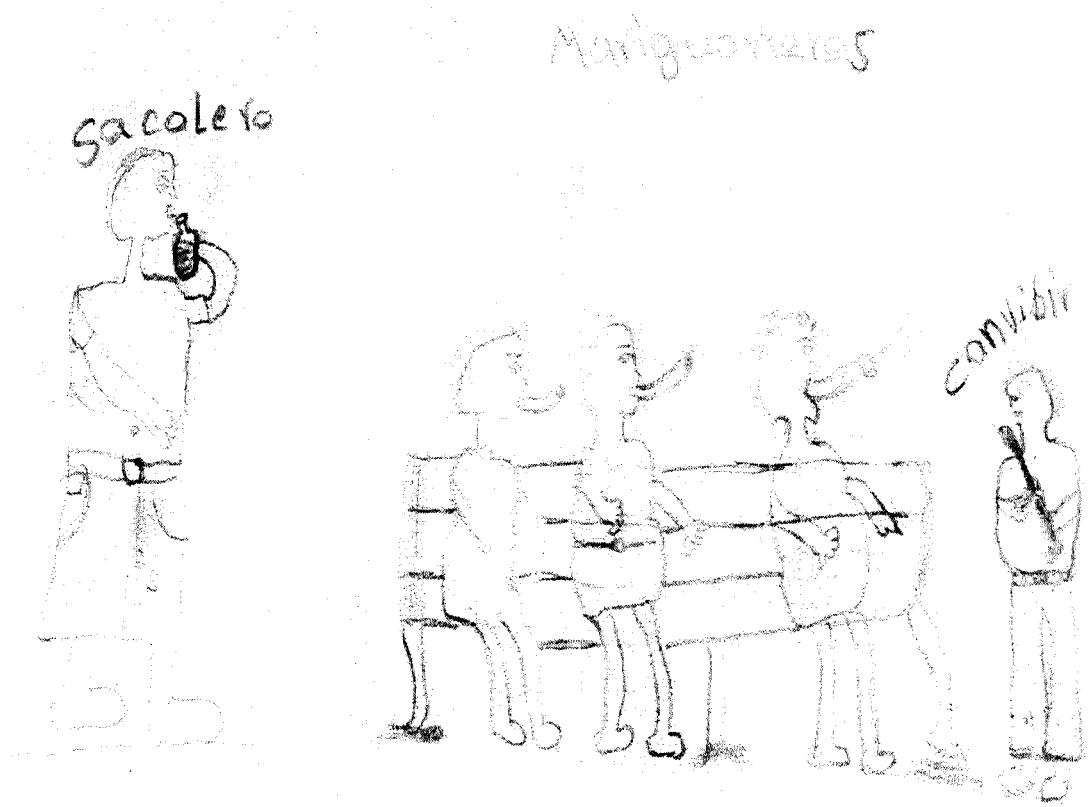
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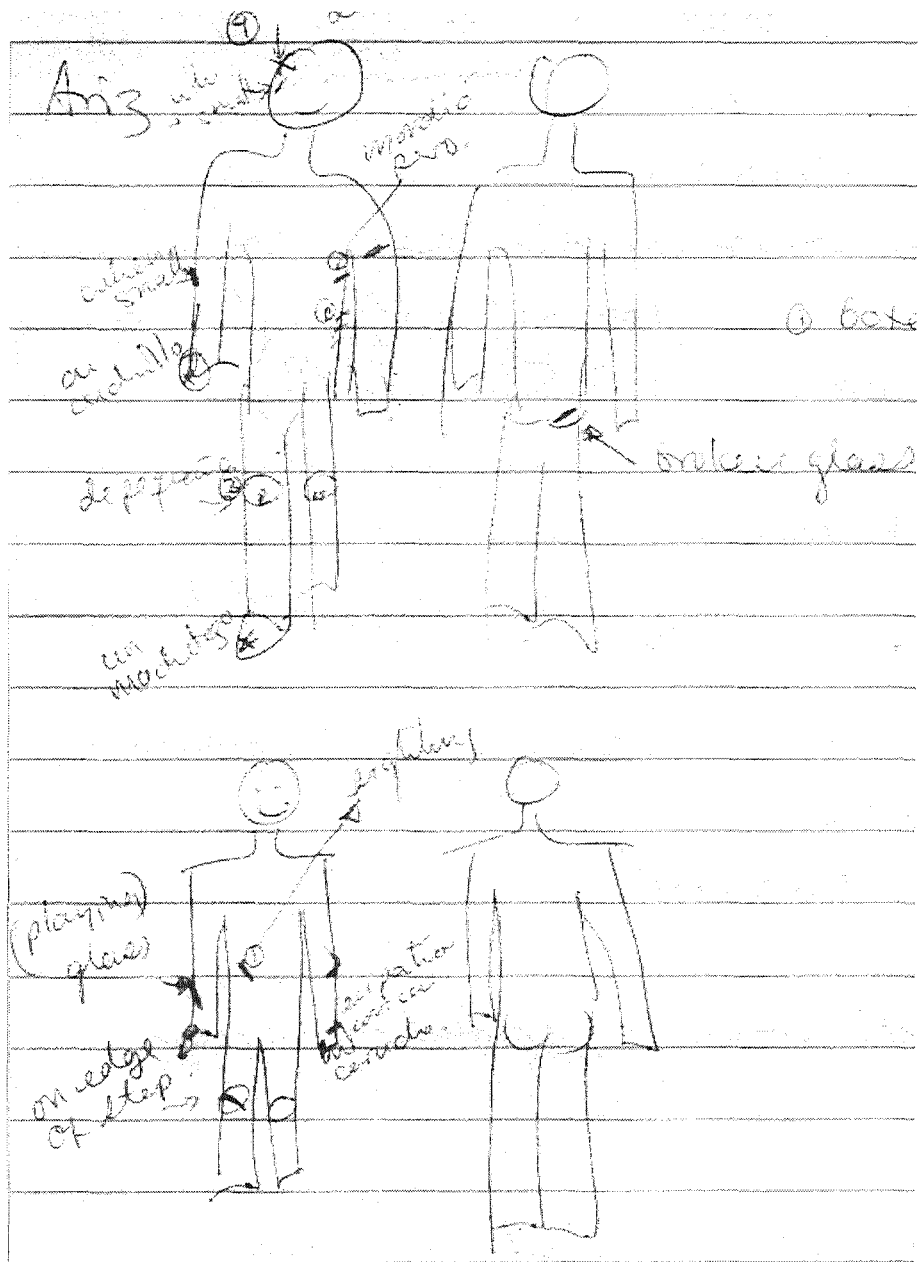
4.2 'Me and Society' # 2. Here the relationship to society is illustrated
by a man shooting a child. 15 year old, 3rd stage, March 1999.



4.3 'Me and Society #3. This boy illustrates wider issues in Colombian society, emphasising the role of guns. In the lower right hand corner he writes 'politicians out'. An invisible hand holds a gun to the politician's head. 14 year old boy, 3rd stage, March 1999.



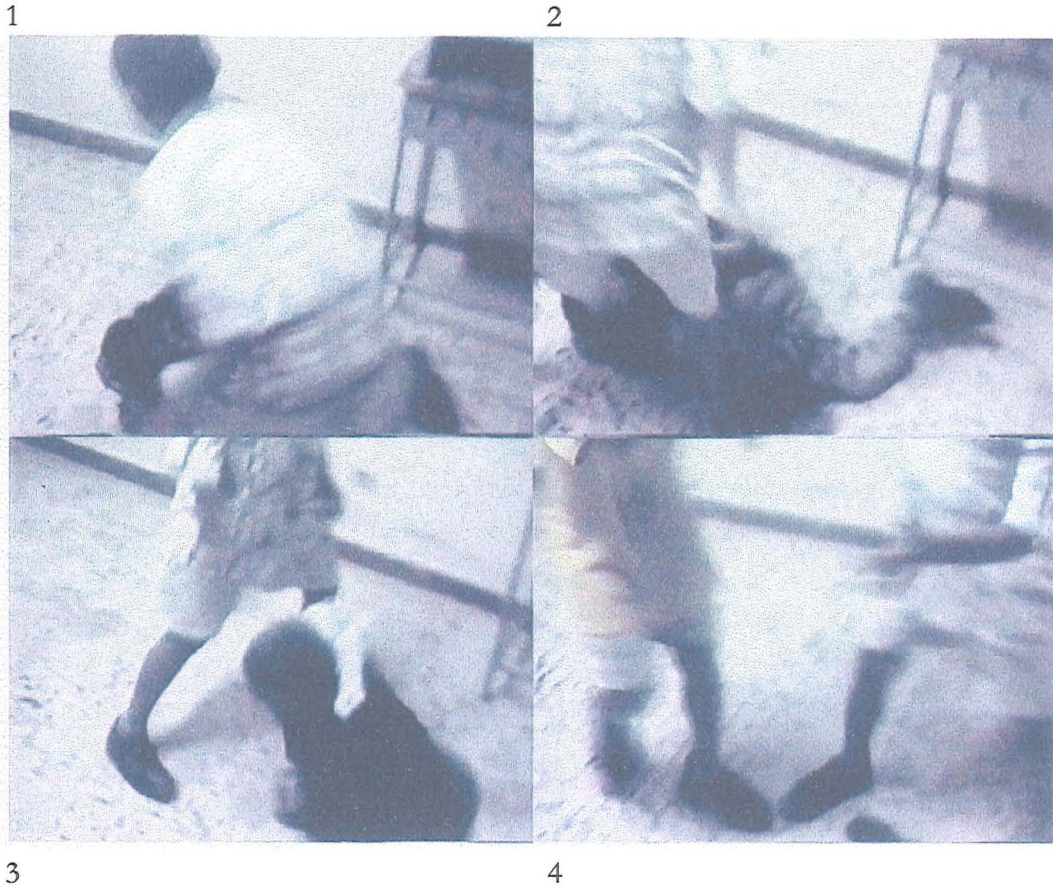
4.4. 'Me and Society' #4. This boy illustrates violence against children in a public space. An armed paramilitary (Convibir', sic) confronts three boys smoking marijuana on a park bench, as a boy sniffing glue ('sacolero', left) looks on.



4.5 Illustrations of scars as on two boys bodies, scanned from field diary. On the top figure, front, are dog bites; scars 'from when I was small', a knife wound, a piece of bottle, and 'a machete blow' (to foot). On lower figure, the scars on the hand are from a saw.

Chapter Four

STILLS FROM THE FILM 'THE ABUSED CHILD'



Scene 1. *'You'll respect this house' said the father as the boy entered.*
Frame 1. The father hits his son, who in frame 2, covers on the floor.
Frame 3: The father continues until (frame 4) the mother arrives (on left in yellow t-shirt).
(Frames at quarter intervals from one second of film.)



2. The boys talk to their mother

Frame 1. The son goes to his mother, seated on the chair behind the desk

Frame 2. The father has retreated as the second son joins his mother and brother as the mother puts her arm around her son as the other son looks on.

Frame 3. The son says 'No I'm going' 'Where?' says the mother.

Frame 4. The son pulls away, replying 'the street'.



3. Leaving home for the street

The brother having decided to accompany him, the boys head for the street and come across a group of children (in right hand corner).

1



2



3



4

4. With new friends on the street.

The boys are welcomed by the group, as frame 1. They make a space for the boy in white to sit, and frame 2. Offer him drugs (cocaine).

Frame 3. The abused child (in white) reaches out for a joint of marijuana.

Frame 4. Getting used to life on the street.



Scene 5. Problems requiring revenge.

The boys have had clothing stolen from them on the street and decide to score revenge (*cobrar venganza*) against the thief. Frame 1. The boys discuss their plans. Frame 2. The boy in red decides another boy (facing the camera in white) should carry out the attack and places the balaclava on his head.

Frame 3. The boy who must carry out the task prepares himself by donning the balaclava.

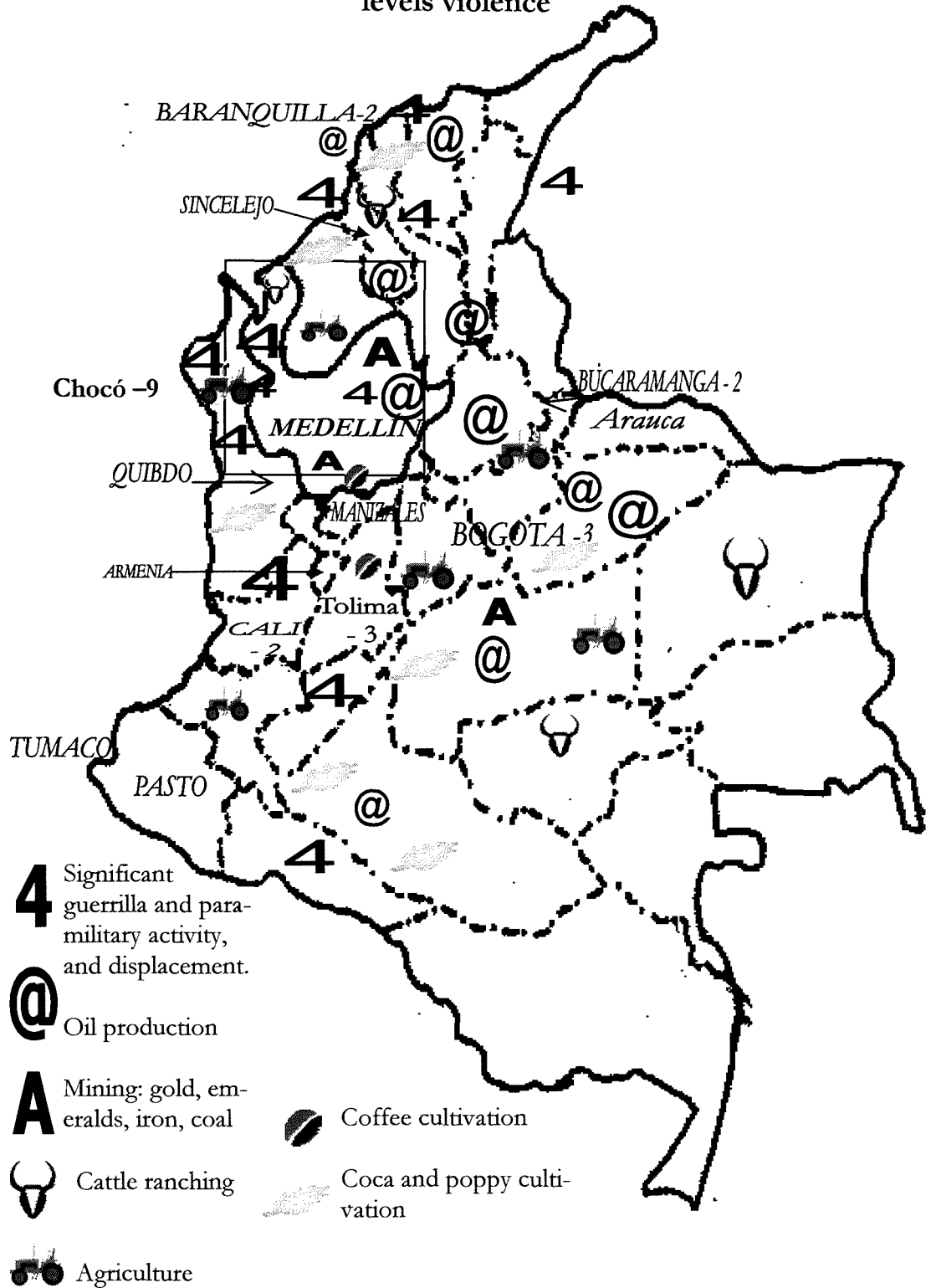
Frame 4. He approaches the suspect from behind and stabs him in the back of the neck with a knife.

After this, the boys are approached by an educator from an institution for 'street' children and they decide to leave the street and go with him.

THE END.

Chapter Four

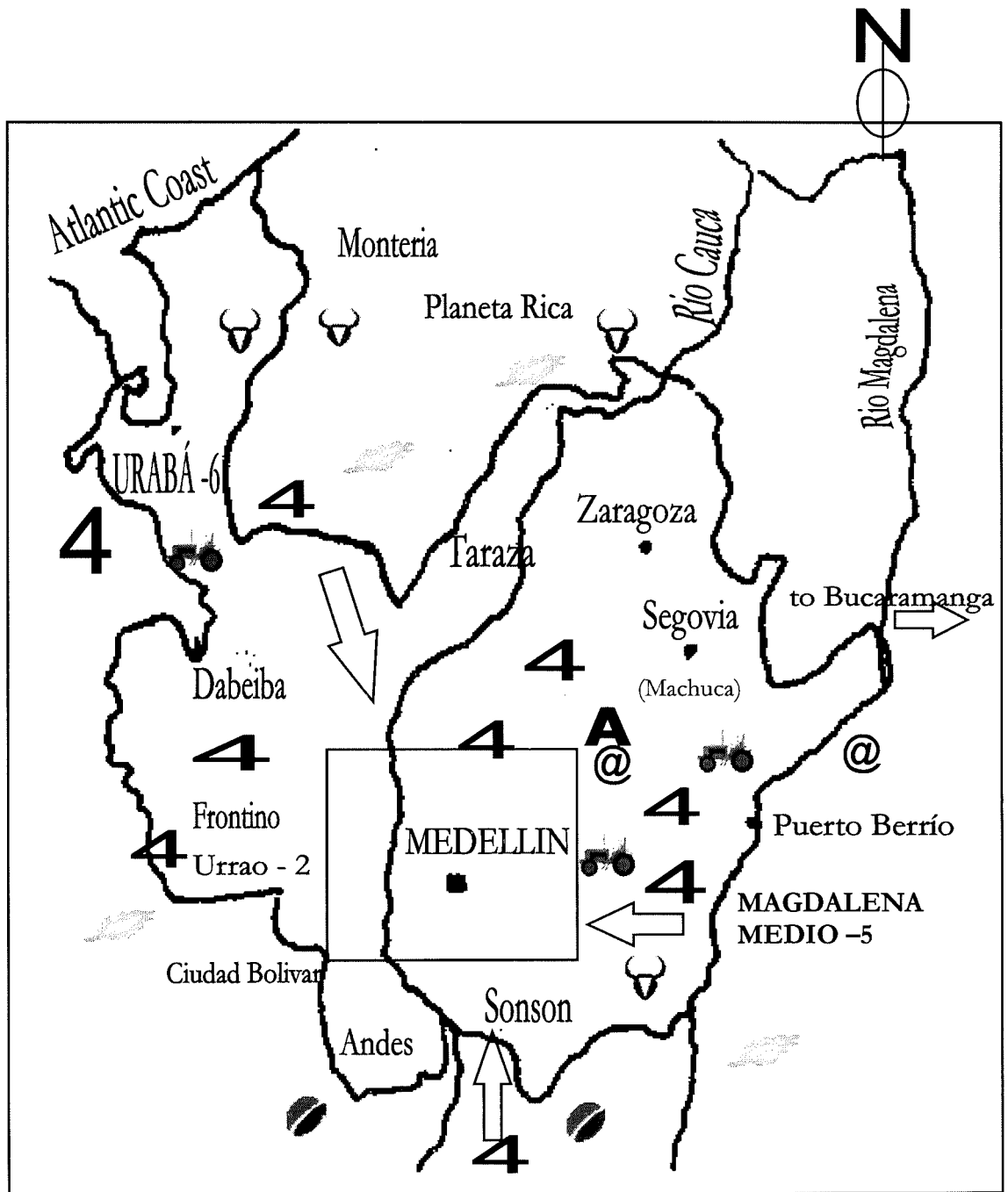
Map 1. National political view with places of origin of boys, indicators of principal industries and levels violence



MAJOR CITY, Department

Indications of industries and violence are approximate due to scale. All towns and cities shown were place of origin of one boy unless numeral indicates otherwise. For box, Antioquia & southern Córdoba see next map.

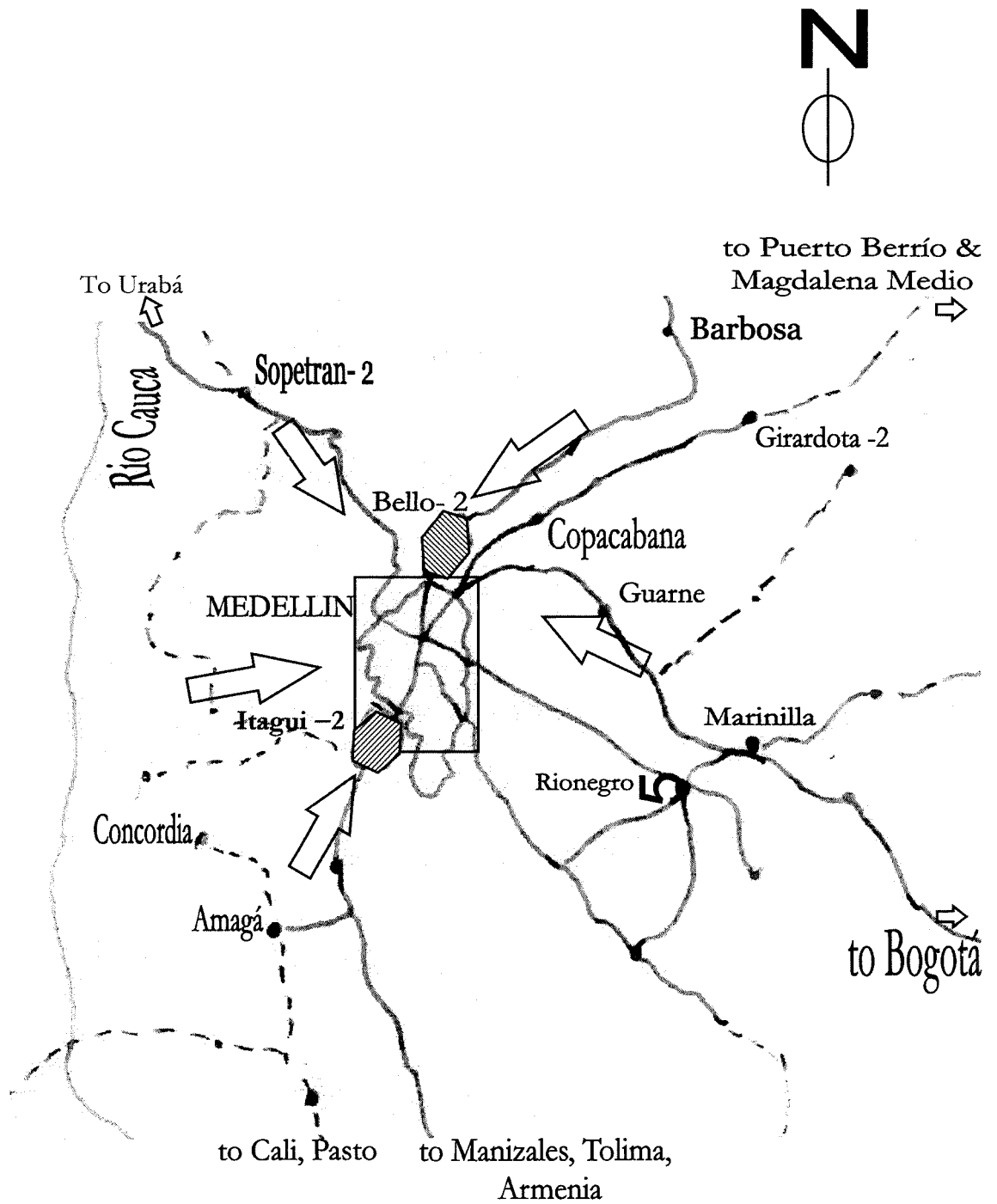
Map 2. Antioquia and southern Cordoba showing origins of boys



Town; REGION

All locations were place of origin of one boy unless numeral indicates otherwise. See following page for inset box, Medellín and neighbouring municipalities.

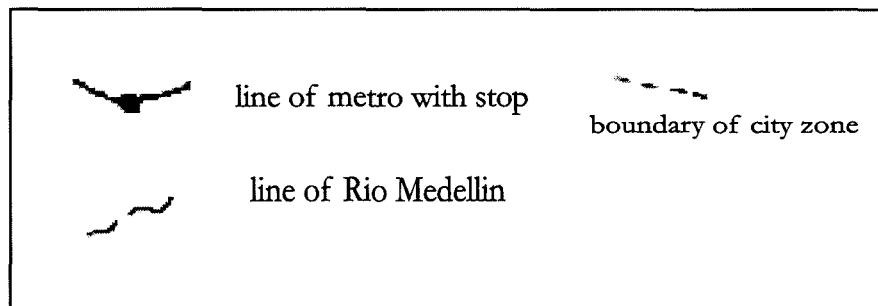
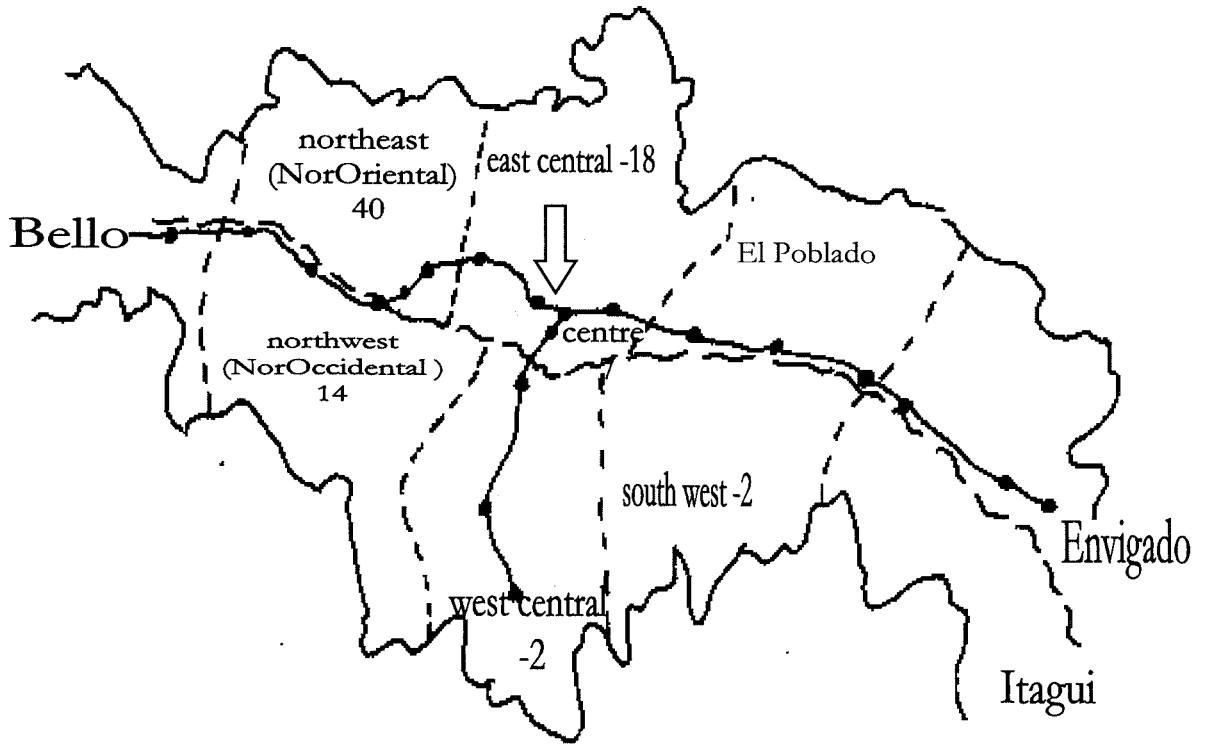
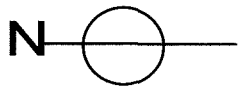
Map 3. Medellín and neighbouring municipalities with origins of boys



All locations were place of origin of one boy unless numeral indicates otherwise.

See following page for inset box, Medellín

Map 4. Medellín with indicators of zones and number of boys from each



THE PATIO, STAGE ONE: BETWEEN THE STREETS AND THE INSTITUTION

I. Introduction

As we saw in the last chapter, the boys whose experiences this thesis addresses come to the institution through varied means and for complex reasons. Not all of the children coming to the Patio for ‘street’ children have any experience of the street, nor do many boys who come into contact with the street want to be there. In this chapter I will consider elements of life on the street, particularly as observed amongst children of the *parche* outside the Patio. I explore how boys survive on the street, through the development of specific skills and relationships which offer particular kinds of support (Felsman 1981, Lucchini 1993, Ennew 1994a). While many of these boys enter the Patio, for some the ethics and values of the street combine with the embodied experience of street life in a manner which it can be hard for a project to interrupt. Values of solidarity in the face of discrimination and freedom from abusive authority, for example, sit uneasily with project rhetoric about individual projection, and the autonomy of the street contrasts with structures where children are subject to surveillance and disciplinary control. Indeed, to succeed, the project must force a rupture with the lessons acquired on the street. While the Patio constitutes an introduction to the values and methods of the institution, it is a flexible one, designed not to scare children off, and whose functioning draws heavily from the Patio staff’s awareness of the heterogeneity of the population who use it.

The relationship between the street and the Patio is complex. Some boys from the *parche* who are wary or even dismissive of the institution use the Patio strategically and functionally. Many of those who live outside the Patio have in fact been through one or various stages of the institutional project before, and have left. Meanwhile, children who have fled situations of violence such as those described in

the last chapter may find a comforting refuge in the Patio, where they can play, eat and sleep safely in its night shelter, and proceed to the more stable environment of the institution proper. These experiences suggest that one of the Patio's functions is a welfare centre for children who have been displaced or are passing through a period of contemplating a life outside home. Yet others are in search of a place for the access to an education the institution provides.

II. On The Street: Alternative Relations and Solidarity

As expressed in different moments, by boys and educators who had been 'street' children themselves, it is clear that important values were learned, shared and developed during periods of life on the street. Fundamental amongst them were loyalty (*lealtad*), solidarity, and sharing. Contrary to the views of institutions and others who stigmatise them, 'street' children demonstrate a concern with dominant norms, and exhibit stable codes of ethics and justice:

"Their world encompasses an order and a logic. They have clear notions of the just, the unjust, the correct and the incorrect; their morality is not fleeting but permanent and from this they define their universe and its rules..."

(Galeano and Velez 1996: 26).

The bonds and the qualities of the relationships which boys share on the street, including coming to terms with and exteriorising their experiences of abuse, suggest how resilience may be fostered here. In the film 'The Abused Child' and in interviews, boys expressed that the sharing of problems experienced in the home was a feature of street life. These peer bonds are created spontaneously, and seem to contrast with the military-style regimes of the institution, which puts relationships under distinct pressures. The street bonds help boys feel that the injustices they experience are not caused by any deficiency in themselves as individuals who have somehow 'won' or deserved such treatment. A sense of solidarity is compounded by the discrimination they experience on the street, when labelled and threatened as *gamines*.

In the film 'The Abused Child', discussed in the last chapter, the boys who abandon home because of their father's beatings are welcomed into the group on the street with a range of expressions of solidarity with their situation. Here Julio stands up

before the gathered group and denounces as '*¡que injusticia!*' [what injustice!] the incidents they recount. Indeed, in his story of how he first spent a night on the street and was befriended by boys there, Julio indicated that the street was where he had found sympathy and help. It seems clear that their experiences of what they term injustice are not easily forgotten: it is rather their primary motive for being on the street.

Types Of Groups: *galladas*, *parches*, *camadas* and pairs.

Survival on the streets requires the development of particular forms of sociality. The peer group takes on characteristics that are oriented towards practical needs as well as ludic activities. The types of groups children form on the street, including *galladas* or *camadas* (Felsman 1989, Aptkear 1988)- serve a range of important functions for boys, including emotional and social support. The organisation – or lack of it – particularly the fluid group of the *parche*, seems designed to limit potentials for danger and abuse. This can be compared to band societies and social organisations specifically reacting to the dangers of concentrations of power (cf Clastres 1977, Deleuze and Guattari 1988: 357-360). As Felsman puts it, on the street peer groups have an 'altered significance', because they are "directly impinging upon the quality of life, peer support is tied to survival itself" (1981: 62). Amongst the group of the Patio *parche*, certain ethics and values underlay this unity.

The first, and most important, was loyalty. This meant solidarity against forces like the police, and comradeship in the face of stigma, discrimination and violence, as suggested in the incident noted (footnote 24) in Chapter Three and the boys' drawings. While none of the Patio *parche* boys or girls I knew were killed during fieldwork, friends and young people known to them were¹. Death was an ever present and recurrent theme on the street, sometimes associated with police actions, others with the Convivir². The support received by such groups by merchants and

¹ Stabbings and shootings, the most common forms of violence on the street, were also most likely to take place when the Patio was closed, and thus when few third party witnesses were around.

² One unusual manifestation of this was when some boys from the Patio had come across a human hand lying on the street, severed from its owner. Whilst inspecting it they were seen by police, who took them to the police station and detained them on suspicions of being involved in what the boy who recounted the incident described as 'Marilyn Manson type stuff'. Satanism is conceived by some as a corollary to the 'culture of death' amongst youth (e.g Sanchez 2001: 7).

businessmen was rooted in the general perception that ‘street’ children are in part responsible for high levels of urban crime, which police seem unable to control.

The case of one boy who was a regular at the Patio *parche* here illustrates the problems that can be encountered when a child doesn’t want to abide by the ethic of solidarity. Pablito had an unusual street career. His family – he mentioned a mother and several siblings – were in Puerto Berrío, a town of notable violence in the Magdalena Medio region, on the shores of the Magdalena River. It seemed that he had come to Medellín by himself, but it was hard to establish details with accuracy due to his significant speech and hearing impediments. On the street, he was well placed to do well out of begging, as his small slim frame and exaggerated mannerisms, necessary to communicate through the impediment, made him a delightful and innocent-looking character who could win the sympathy of passers by, his connections with the street (the constant accessory of a glue bottle) overlooked in light of his disabilities.

However, Pablito’s relationships with potentially conflictive adults was a source of concern amongst the *parche* regulars, as expressed to me by El Alemán (‘the German’). At 18 El Alemán was no longer eligible for another chance in the institution: he had been in the Transition House in 1994, but left after being given solitary work as a punishment. He was well respected amongst those of the *parche*, and was one of its older regulars.

The problem, said El Alemán, was that Pablito would go to the police when he had problems, even within the group. “That’s why we call him *sapo*³, said Alemán. El Alemán explained the difficult relationships with security forces, particularly the *Fiscalía*, or special security police. “They watch you, they clock you, they mark you, until they get bored.” In this violent context, loyalty had to be to the group of boys. Interestingly, despite breaking this fundamental rule of behaviour on the street, the group were still friendly to Pablito. ‘Yeah, we hang out with him’, said el Alemán. They were aware that he was even more vulnerable than most of them, and the

³Literally, ‘frog’; figuratively, ‘rat’, as in ‘to rat’ or ‘to tell on’ someone.

parche boys were adept and patient at communicating with him. This suggests how mutual support, tolerance and sharing were coexistent ethics on the street.

Different types of groups have been analysed amongst 'street' children, with important variables. In Cali and Bogotá for example, Felsman (1981) found young *camadas* in the former and more structured *galladas* in the latter. The *gallada*, however, is an ambiguous term. In common usage in Medellín, a *gallada* is literally a group or gathering of people⁴. It does not necessarily have the association of gang or group links which it is alleged to in the context of street culture. Rather, negative associations of *galladas* of 'street' children come from their presumed similarity to *bandas juveniles*, who were much more likely to be involved in crime or theft. The *bandas*, or gangs, were a fundamental part of the environment of the youth crime scenarios of the 1980s and early 1990s, as described above. They had names, locally known integrants, locations from which they operated, and territorial controls, as referred to in previous chapters. As Javier the PSM director said, the large *galladas* and gangs 'with chiefs and initiation rituals and so on' on the street had only ever existed in the minds of sociologists and fanciful journalists⁵. Rather, boys will tend to group themselves for the purposes of sleeping on the basis of the protection offered by numbers. The term *camada*, on the other hand, comes from the term 'brood' or 'litter' of small mammals. On the street, the children themselves used it to describe their sleeping arrangements; one child explained to me that the term came from the word for bed, *cama*, which seemed logical enough.

Interesting correlations or similarities can be found between so called 'band' societies like the G/wi of southern Africa, described by Silberbauer (1982), where decisions relating to the group are negotiated and taken by the group, and 'street' children's 'political' organisation. The collection of resources such as money and food and drugs was carried out according to a different logic, which maximises each boy's earning or begging power, often according to age and size, and aesthetic qualities such as 'cuteness' and associated perceived vulnerability. There are parallels between band societies such as the G/wi and 'street' children in terms of their

⁴ You could for example hear someone describe a group of university students gathered for an event '*que gallada de gente*', implying that there were lots of them.

⁵ Interview, September 1998.

internal dynamics. Amongst the G/wi, Silberbauer (1982) argues that decisions are suggested for the group by individuals who at different moments can make claims to having the most appropriate knowledge with which to make a particular decision that affects the group's welfare.

For Clastres (1977), the point was that small-scale societies seemed to exhibit mechanisms for controlling the accumulation of power, and this limitation of power was deliberate. Deleuze and Guattari (1988) suggest that this was Meunier's point in his study of Bogotá 'street' children in the 1970s. Where Meunier argued that characteristics such as limits on membership based on age and dispersal for different activities meant that such 'bands' of children exhibited "collective mechanisms of inhibition" against the accumulation of power, Deleuze and Guattari suggest this indicates an active "questioning of hierarchy" (1988: 358).

There are parallels here with the informal regulations of relationships and controls against abusive and predatory power amongst 'street' children in Medellín. While there is a risk of reifying the logic of solidarity, I suggest that the types of groups children form on the street vary according to context, age range and relations between integrants. Indeed, the very format of the *parche* is about fluidity and freedom to come and go, rather than constant organisation. The *parche* was somewhere you could be, and where drugs, food and clothing were shared. As Otoniel said to me one day, 'drugs are shared' because 'one day you have some, the next day your friend does', as he demonstrated handing out drugs to the boys in the film *The Abused Child*. The principal 'rules' were informal but recognisable ethics, of solidarity and sharing.

This social experience on the street seems to enhance a sense of justice, and awareness of power. Throughout their time in the institution the boys are alert to the possibilities of abuse of power. As one boy in the institution said, 'why should I allow myself to be hit here when I was barely hit at home?' He never mentions the possibility of violence from known entities on the street, because he is making an association between being subject to legitimised adult power and abuse and it is this that is being rejected.

‘We are not *Gamines*’: Rejecting Stigma

Some of the boys’ most significant experiences of discrimination involved the general public and the police, and in the boys words, ‘the rich’. Poverty was in itself seen to be a source or motive for discrimination. When one 14-year-old boy drew an image of how he saw his relationship to society, the most salient aspect he identified was the fact that he was poor (in drawing 4.1 following Chapter Four). However, when on the street children are exposed to new and more virulent forms of rejection, exclusion and discrimination. Even if people’s only action when passing by children sitting on the street is to ignore them, ‘street’ children perceive this as an indication of scorn or contempt. As one educator put it, thinking back to his days on the street, what angered him most was being ‘determined’ and judged by people who knew nothing of the facts of his situation, but judged him merely for being on the street. The sense of frustration he associated with practices of ‘defining’ and categorising was long-lasting, underscoring issues of limited agency in the face of structural inequality and violence.

The issue of being identified as *gamines* suggests that it encapsulates the experience of stigma and rejection. This is not something of which a researcher could have ‘participatory’ experience of, but it was observable, for example when walking down the road with a child, in the looks of disdain that came over the faces of passers-by⁶. The overwhelming sense derived from continuously receiving this kind of treatment is one of rejection, the subjective experience of which informs a view of above - from below.

One day, sitting around the old tyres at the side of the Patio doing nothing in particular, some boys and I had a conversation prompted by my question of ‘what is a *gamin*?’. The boys’ immediate comments included the following descriptions, spoken with ascending volume and energy as people chimed in their view on the issue:

- ‘A glue sniffer’

⁶ One day when two boys and I sat eating ice creams outside a middle-class department store, the boys were constantly and acutely aware of the looks they were drawing from passers by. We soon left to escape the feeling of hostility in the looks.

- 'He is dirty and sleeps on the street'
- 'He robs'
- 'Mugs'
- 'He is bad on the street' [pause], 'he is not bad but does bad things'
- 'He bothers drunks'
- 'He gets stoned with marijuana'
- 'Perico'⁷?
- 'Bazuca!'

And then another, older boy added the following eloquent commentary, in a reflective tone:

“One isn't a *gamin*, they call us *gamines* but we aren't. We live on the street because we cannot live at home. It's a name that others have for us with which to recriminate us. The rich take drugs but they don't live on the street, they live at home and have money but we don't. If they want drugs they just go out and buy them. We have to be on the street to take drugs.”

Another agreed: -“They call you *gamin* to humiliate you, so you get offended.”

And another added: 'More *gamin* is the one who calls you *gamin* - we wash three times a day!'

“More than them!” “The rich only bathe once a day!” chorused another two. And then a boy whose nickname was Banana added, in a more serious tone: “A *gamin* is a boy whose family has separated from him or who leaves home. He starts with drugs, stealing and can even kill”.

I asked if there were *gamines* in Medellín. Yes, they said. Lots? Yes, lots. Are there *gamines* in the Patio? 'No, one is no longer a *gamin* because one has entered to better oneself. What happens to *gamines* when they become adults? “They go crazy. They loose the habit of washing; they start getting *llagas* (wounded, infected or rotting patches of skin); from alcohol or *bazuco*. This makes them go all crazy, it makes them get thin.”

⁷ *Perico* is a term for cocaine, while *bazuca* refers to the cheaper product gathered from the refining process, as I will explain.

“A *gamin* is someone who walks around with a sack. No one is a *gamin*, but they classify them like that. That’s why we get offended, we’re all human beings,” added another voice. The conversation paused, and someone mentioned a shooting which had taken place outside that very morning. “They’re cleaning up for New Year!” joked someone.

This discussion of being identified as a ‘*gamin*’ underlines how the boys feel they are identified with the street in ways which dehumanise them, and which they find offensive – even if they can accept a joke at their own expense. Importantly, one also suggests that they are no longer ‘*gamines*’ because they have entered the Patio.

In many ways the boys’ arguments about rejecting these labels echo arguments presented by Goffman in his analysis of stigma (1990 [1963]). For the Greeks, stigma referred to bodily signs which exposed “something unusual and bad about the moral status of the signifier” (Goffman 1990: 11). On the street, the visibility of bodily cleanliness, or lack of it, ranks high amongst the elements which differentiate a *gamin* from others. Cleanliness is fundamentally linked to ideas of morality and order (Douglas 1984), and if this is one axis along which these children’s deviance is perceived, boys strongly reject the empirical basis of that perception. As we have seen, they claim superiority over the rich; the rich are actually dirtier, washing only once rather than three times a day.

There are also important issues of agency here. Fundamentally, the boys proclaim their innocence as to why they are on the street. The fact that they lack a place in which to carry out their lives is not their fault. The public and visible nature of life on the street creates the possibility of the stigmatising judgements made about them. So this is also about power, and visibility, or how morality and deviance are ‘determined’ on the basis of purely visual stimuli. Anybody can opine about ‘street’ children, because they are there for all to see, and those with power have many ways of perpetuating judgments and categorisations of ‘street’ children, through the media, charitable institutions and other means. What they do not know, because they don’t get close enough to ask, is why they are there. The ‘dirt’ and danger these boys are alleged to represent are elements of the façade behind which powerful

classes in society disguise the real causes of the problem. The boys protest their innocence, and assert their normality rather than their 'deviance', talking about washing and drug taking as involving people from all classes. They thus explicitly share some of the values which are being expressed in statements against them. But they reject the stigmatising process of labelling, which is seen as unfair; and injustice, in its multifarious manifestations, provokes anger. This is particularly true of the acts of violence and intimidation to which 'street' children are sometimes subjected.

The Convivir and other agents of terror have direct effects on children's lives⁸. The Patio *parche*, for example, shifted pavement space in the mornings, from in front of the church to the pavement diagonally opposite that was backed by the wall of a disused lot, apparently on orders from the Convivir. They were not supposed to sleep outside the blue doors because these were next to a church, nor on the pavement of the university, because this space, like the church, was 'cultural'. To sleep there would therefore be disrespectful, and involve their 'polluted' presence in culturally important space. What this paramilitary activity points at is the high state of tensions around anything perceived as disorderly. Lack of discipline, such as polluting cultural spaces, became a motive for violence, and the threat of violence used as repression. Indeed, there was also a rumour that the church's Salesian parish priest was in communication with the Convivir. Apparently Convivir checks took place as a Convivir 'agent' (*agente*) walked his girlfriend to work, at about the same time as early morning mass was held in the church. It would seem then, that the priest didn't want the children putting off church-goers, even though as a Salesian he was supposed to be sympathetic to the plight of poor children. In fact, he was a shadowy figure⁹, also associated with trying to keep 'black' children away from the project, as I will describe in Chapter Six.

⁸ One example of this was suggested by the death of one 'street' child in a grenade explosion at the Plaza Minorista market place, which was controlled by the Convivir. It is impossible to know whether the grenade was targeted at the boy or other 'street' children around there, or at a stall owner who had failed to pay taxes or rents. The boy's body was taken to the police mortuary as a 'No Nombre' (no name) and staff from the patio were called upon to identify the body.

⁹ He avoided acknowledging me on the occasion of an attempted introduction by a boy, but I did see him in the church once when I accompanied the female educator Imelda to ask him for some money to buy the girls underwear. He was sitting by the door which opened on to the car park, whittling a cross out of a small piece of wood. Imelda curtsied and crossed herself as we approached. Her explanation of the girls' need succeeded in getting the priest to reach into his pocket, from which he extracted a large wad of notes, and with what he gave us we purchased items for the girls.

III. Survival Strategies

As outlined above, groups such as the *camada* offered some protection from the dangers of the night. But gathering resources often obeyed a different logic. The children's main needs were food, money, drugs and clothes, and these were all acquired in different ways, as the objects of specific strategies. Thus they have a variety of mechanisms for achieving survival needs, which Galeano and Velez characterise well in local parlance when they describe *gaminismo* and *gamines* as 'toderos', and 'maestros del rebusque': 'all-rounders' and 'masters of searching out survival' (1996: 49). Being a successful 'street' child, then, requires creativity and resilience.

Food can be obtained through developing relationships with restaurant staff; hanging around near restaurants and asking clients or staff for spare food or leftovers; through institutions, such as the Patio; or it may be bought. In the city centre and particularly in the Cambalache, cheap food can be bought from vendors of meat, rice and other basic foodstuffs. Cheap rooms are also available for rent in this area. The Camabalache and Guayaquil, only a few blocks from the Patio, are historically areas of street commerce and activity; as Galeano and Velez confirm, 'street' children consider these areas as their own (1996: 37-39).

Some children also manage to develop what are often short-term relationships with members of the public, who perhaps take pity on them, think that they are cute and so on, and give them food. This was the case for two boys from the Patio *parche* who spent some months living around a middle class residential neighbourhood, as discussed in Chapter Three. Across the street from where they slept lived a middle-aged woman who, over a period of at least a month, brought them a home cooked lunch every day. In research on children in Brazil, Hecht (1998) explores this kind of situations as a form of client relationship, as children use the general term for clients ('*fregueses*') to refer to the people who help them with food and other needs, and thus help ameliorate conditions of life on the street. In Medellín people are inspired to help children for a variety of reasons, including moral ones. The regular development of such short-term relationships may be important in the long term as

well. Sometimes middle class families offer to have children come to live with them, for what is usually a matter of weeks or months. These relationships can provide a suspension of the experience of hardship on the street, allowing a 'respite' after which a child is more than ready to return to the freedom of the street. Having someone who brings you home cooked lunch (the main meal of the day in Paisa rhythm and diet) is definitely a bonus.

Money is perhaps the hardest resource to come by, and what money 'street' children get hold of is often spent on drugs. These are a high priority because drugs are the one thing that no-one gives to them. Here their resourcefulness is particularly tested, as begging is an option with limited returns and which depends to a large extent on the perceived vulnerability and innocence of each individual child. As many writers on 'street' children have observed, age is a constraining factor here (e.g. Aptekar 1988, Felsman 1981), to the extent that once a child is too old and physically too large to be associated with endearing child-like qualities of innocence vulnerability, he may face the end of a street career.

This issue of innocence brings us back to the fine line between petty crime and juvenile delinquency, a line which has to be trodden carefully by children. But they sometimes resort to stealing, and have ingenious methods of practice. Skinny twelve-year-old Carlitos explained one technique to me. He recommended Friday or Saturday nights, when men who came to drink in the centre's bars were likely to have their weekly wage packet on them. This, Carlitos said, was usually kept in the breast pocket of the shirt, or the right hand pocket of the trousers. At around midnight or in the early hours of the morning, whenever the men were drunk enough to stumble outside onto the pavement, two boys would approach. By kicking a thin leg in between the drunken man's wobbly ones, one boy could make the man fall, while the other grabbed the money. Carlitos said that if you were lucky [and the drunk person hadn't drunk too much of the money], you could collect up to 15,000 or 20,000 pesos.

If there is one symbol that *gamines* are associated with, it is glue, although they also smoke marijuana, and some smoke *bazuco*. The word *bazuco* is derived from the

Spanish for rubbish, *basura*, and *basuco* is almost literally that: the product of the first filtrations of cocaine after adding chemicals to refine the coca base. These leftovers are then mixed with anything from crumbs of brick to cigarette ash, and sold in wraps for a few hundred pesos around the Cambalache. Glue and *basuco* are both considered physiologically addictive, and some people on the street who smoke *basuco* are referred to as *basuqueros*, for the manner in which *basuco* addiction takes over their lives.

Glue is also messy: it gets stuck in hair, spills onto clothes, and onto the skin. Reminiscent of Douglas's evocation of Sartre, stickiness involves an "aberrant fluid or melting solid", glue's stickiness is "a trap" (1984: 39). For the boys, though, glue staved off hunger, and produced a brief euphoric high – the brevity of which required that the glue bottle be kept close to the mouth for repeat hits. The short-term stupors produced by inhalation lead to accidents, which on the street can result from all sorts of dangers. It was also the cheapest drug available to them, and the *sacol* common in Medellín also has an attractive odour which has long been removed in many countries, given its extremely damaging qualities¹⁰. The boys also suggested that different drugs made people aggressive, and fights between boys, if not common, were not rare either.

There are plenty of dangers for boys on the street, but no clear routes to obtaining help. When ill or hurt or injured, boys can obtain some help from other welfare projects, which are usually able to provide some basic medical attention, but this also depends on them being open. Emergency treatment can be obtained in one of the local state hospitals. At home, boys might receive basic treatment from family members. On the street, however, children often have wounds that go unattended, sometimes because they do not know they can become dangerous, and they have scars from different experiences on the street.

I once asked a couple of boys about the origins of their various scars (drawing 4.5; following Chapter Four). Every scar tells a story, and is a reminder of an embodied

¹⁰ *Sacol* could be bought easily from a variety of types of shop, and while there are strong arguments for controlling the sale of glue, to the best of my knowledge no such attempts have been made in Colombia.

experience of the body's confrontation with the world. Ariel explained that the scar he had over his right eye came from 'falling into a drain when I was small'. Also on the right side of the body, he had a cut on his elbow, also from younger days. On his right hand he had a cut, 'from a knife'. On the left hand side of his chest, a scar marked the place where a dog had bitten him. On the left side of his stomach were marks left by 'a bottle'. On his left and right knees were various scrapes and cuts, also from 'when small', and on the right foot, the impact of 'a *machetazo*', where he was struck with a machete. Finally, on his buttocks he said he had a cut from sitting on broken glass, an accident that can happen easily on the street.

Freddy was less interested by the prospect of discussing his scars, but he had scars from: playing and falling on glass (right forearm); cutting his knee on the edge of a step (right knee); on the right hand side of the stomach, a stab wound 'from fighting'; on the left arm, cuts 'from a saw at the Patio'. Street life was thus dangerous for a variety of reasons. Rubbish, including broken glass and discarded bits of metal, was dangerous, as were other aspects of the hard surfaces and angles of the street: drains, steps, and particularly cars, especially when under the influence of drugs like *sacol*. But other 'wounds' were from fighting, or being attacked, and confirmed the extreme conditions of life on the street.

Working and the Street

In a study of minors who use the street as a primary space for survival strategies in Medellín, nearly three quarters of those counted as 'street' children actually dedicated themselves to working, often around the Plaza Minorista, carrying shopping and tending vehicles, and other informal sector activities (Galeano and Velez 1996: 43, 45). This meant they did not participate in the activities of *gaminismo*, a different life style with distinct survival strategies. My investigation showed that many children on the street who were working were not interested in welfare projects, and maintained strong links with their families, to whom they returned every night and for whose benefit they worked. Thus '*gaminismo*' is a lifestyle that precludes regular involvement in work activities. One of the obstacles children suggested they faced to starting a working life was capital; as most of their money went on surviving and drugs, they rarely had spare change to invest in some sweets

on which to make a profit. Some tried, like El Aleman, suggesting how ‘street’ children can become integrated into informal sector as adults, if they haven’t been so as children.

One boy who worked and showed no interest in the Patio was Juan, who was about 12 when I met him. He worked for his family, which included ten siblings, by begging and singing *trovas* (rhyming songs) around a middle class neighbourhood which was a centre of nightlife for students from the nearby university. As Juan lived in Bello, twenty minutes by bus to the north, he returned there late every night, after trying to increase takings in the nightlife of the *barrio*. His mother was ill and couldn’t work, and his father was recovering from a work accident on a building site. His father eventually was able to work again, and in January 2001 the family were building a home with the help of neighbours so as to get out of the trap of paying rent. On a couple of occasions I mentioned CCS and the possibility of a free education to him, noting down the phone numbers and who to speak to if he was interested, but he never was.

In a sense Juan did utilise some of the strategies used by ‘street’ children, in that he begged. But his referents were different, as he remained focused on his family and returning to them every night, and never took drugs. As Lucchini observes, such referents are important factors in determining children’s relationship to the street (1993: 15, 18). But opportunities for children have decreased. While 30 years ago children worked as shoeshine boys and newspaper vendors, these jobs are now carried out by adults (Galeano and Velez 1996: 49, footnote 8), an indication of the growing pressures on the informal sector¹¹.

Language

The language used by children on the street often overlaps with the idioms of the urban poor, but is differentiated from it as well. This is an indication of the position of street culture at the margins of the poor working class. The children’s language –

¹¹ In Medellín, children could be found working at many major intersections, where they would work their way up a line of traffic that had stopped for a red light, putting sweets through all the open windows. They would then work their way back down and collect any coins in exchange for the sweets, or have these returned to them.

for friends, relationships and police – suggests they identify with the urban youth subculture, even though the people with whom they interact in daily life will not normally use this language. Friends are *parceros*, *ñeros* [from *compañero*], parents are *cuchos*, *la cuch* (mother), *el cucho* (father). The police are variously known as *tombo*, from ‘*tumbar*’, to make fall. Some of these terms, such *cucho* and *tombo* are part of the general lexicon of the urban poor, but important differences also emerge, particularly in the area of insults. Insults widely used by ‘street’ children include *marica* (‘fagot’), *guevon* (from *guevas*, ‘balls’; testicles), and *gonorrhoea*. An educator once commented to me that this last word was an indicator of the children’s low self-regard, in that they could refer to each other as venereal diseases. However it was not an entirely unusual slang word, and his comments suggested the influence of psychological approaches to understanding ‘street’ children.

Perhaps most indicative of differences between themselves and others in *el rebusque* on the city centre streets is what *la calle* means to them. The word ceases to be a reference to strips of asphalt where work or transit takes place, and is a cultural space with which they are associated, as well as being the site of their social interactions.

‘La Calle’ (the street’): A Photographic Portrait¹²

Eleno was a defiant *gamin*. He was intelligent and perceptive, and interested in helping to shape my understandings of street life. So I was very happy when he offered to take photographs of the street for me, which he gave me verbal permission to use. He offers a view of street life as it takes place on an ordinary afternoon, and throughout the night. Needless to say, he had access to moments and situations that I did not have. Eleno was one of the most self-aware and politically conscious boys – conscious, one might say, of the drama which he lived.

This is reflected in his choice of images, which show the sharing of drugs on the street (images 3 and 4), and the way children use a variety of space, such as the Cambalache (images 1 and 8). Several of these images show aspects of street life after the Patio, as all the images are of the principal regulars of the *parche* outside,

¹² See photograph pages immediately following chapter.

after a day inside the Patio. They also suggest something of the boys' relationships to the street as a public space, as something they share with many others. Some seem staged, perhaps where boys were playing up the idea of representing street life through fearless and defiant masculinity. This may partly explain why the girls who were around at the time sometimes kept to themselves (image 7). The boys may well have sensed that an exaggerated image of street life would ironically play on viewer's stereotypes of the street. Other photos show more dramatic aspects of street life – the tension of a potential fight (image 5), the small life of a baby chicken stranded in the middle of the concrete jungle of the Cambalache (image 2), and the *camada* huddling together for warmth (image 6).

A comment made one day by Eleno on why he was in the Patio explained why he was a good informant, and photographer. The Patio was an important complement to the street because, Eleno sighed, 'the street is tiring' (*la calle cansa*). The rhythms of street life demanded constant vigilance, attention, sharpness of wit and exerted multiple pressures on the body. Eleno was one of those least likely to voice any desire to change. As far as he was concerned he knew how to survive already, and one of the 'myths' surrounding Eleno was that he had spent some time with an uncle in a guerrilla movement. But for others who passed through the *parche* to arrive at the Patio, or came straight from home, the prospect of the future and the safety the Patio offered were an extraordinary temptation. Below I will look at life in the Patio, what the programme involved, and how its staff employed both individualised attention and rhetorical strategies to try to convince the boys to leave the street and become one of its converts.

IV. The Patio

The Patio occupied an important place in the life of the group who lived in the *parche* outside, as an instance of the almost symbiotic relationship between street and institution that has been well observed in other studies of the street (Ruiz *et al* 1998, Hecht 1998, Lucchini 1993). As Ruiz *et al* argue, institutions can become "part of the management of the street... part of the culture of the street", in a relationship of mutual nurturance (1998: 48; see photograph 5.2). What I will show here is that in addition to servicing the needs of children living on the street, the Patio also attends

to those who move between their homes and the streets, part of the flows of children that I described in the previous chapter. The Patio is thus a space which demonstrates the ambiguities of the institution's objectives in practice.

In theory, the Patio is the breeding ground of new recruits to the institution, or as the institution's hymn put it: "Your patios are today fertile grounds, where Mary scatters the fruits of her love". The process of 'breaking' children into the routines of the institution starts here. This is achieved gradually, and there remains a fluidity between the Patio and the street which is vital to children's process of acculturation to institutional life. Street culture, idioms, and habits persisted inside the Patio, and to a certain extent were also employed by staff to enhance their credibility, and thus position themselves as sympathetic to the children's situations. Furthermore, almost all the male educators were products of the institution themselves. However this was not sufficient to grant legitimacy to their arguments in many boys' views, and accepting their viewpoints and arguments was more straightforward for some than for others, as we will see. The more the street remains and exists as a referent, a relevant space of and for social life, and one in which skills for survival have been mastered, and fails to be, the less likely it is to be displaced by the institution, or the child to forgo the liberties and joys it represents for its comfortable submission. For other children, it was one of several important spaces, as suggested by one boy's drawing of 'the Patio', 'home' and 'village' (see drawing 5.1).

The "Patio of the *gamin*", or 'Patio of City of the Children's Saint' as the name was slowly being changed to, to reduce the stigma attached to it, is located near the centre of the city, where streets are busy with vendors and traffic, timber and fabric shops. Opposite is a university, and next door is the church of San Juan Bosco (see drawing 5.3). Next to the church, outside which the children who attend the Patio often beg, is a parking lot, where some of the older inhabitants of these streets earn money directing cars as they reverse out of the lot, and use it to pay for rooms near the centre, available at nightly rates. Many of these have had connections with CCS in the past, and the Patio is fairly well known in this area of the city, and amongst the street population, being part of what Galeano and Velez identify as key sectors of the city for street living and working children (1996: chapter 2).

Inside the Patio, the spaces are centred on a concrete courtyard with surrounding rooms (see photograph 5.4). On the back wall is a mural in bright colours with cartoon images from Disney's 'Jungle Book', painted by one of the priests, perhaps in the hope that it would animate the more innocent aspects of children's selves. Another wall is the boundary with the church next door. Various offices were occupied by the Patio director Guillermo, the PSM director Javier, the psychologist Miguel, and Yolinda the social worker. There was a kitchen and dining room on the ground floor, and above it the 'art' room, which doubled as a television room. A female educator, Imelda, managed the clothes room (*ropería*) where boys could store small bags of clothing, and where toothbrushes were lined up in slots on a wall hanging, each boy having to remember his number to retrieve his bag or toothbrush (see photograph 5.5).

The Patio occupied the building of the original dormitory for shoeshine boys founded in the first decade of 20th century, and was in a considerable state of decay. The physical state of the Patio building became a particular source of concern in the rainy season, as during the heavy rains (*aguaceros*) various rooms were repeatedly inundated, with water coming down through the staircase and into the entrance hall. Boys and staff would gather brooms and sweep it all down to the doorman, who pushed it down drain holes or out onto the street. As the concrete of the building was old, the director and various educators had requested the CCS accountant for some major repairs. A large room above the art room was particularly dishevelled, with all the windows facing the street and Patio missing their glass (see photograph 5.4).

The politics of the physical state of the Patio are interesting in other respects. Sometimes the staff used it to back up their assertions of that the Patio was the poor relation of the institution. It was CCS's 'Calcutta' said one, pointing to evidence of this dangerous state of disrepair in the structure of the building. Amongst evidence put forward included the lack of shelves for art materials and books, which the art teacher fashioned himself with scrap boards he searched for in the nearby wood shops, and odd bricks he picked up on his regular walks around

the Cambalache and Patio environs. 'There is a wood shop up at CCS', he pointed out, but added that he thought this state of affairs was a deliberate plan on the part of the powers that be 'up there', because visitors would more immediately recognise the resource needs of the institution, if they saw the straight-off-the-street *gamins* in these dilapidated surroundings. But I doubt the boys themselves would have recognised these points of view; those who had already been to the upper stages of the institution and seen the campus swimming pool and the workshops, and who fell into the perpetually awkward category of '*repitentes*' (repeaters) never complained about the Patio's physical state. Rather, they seemed to praise the freedom it allowed, although on more melancholic or regretful days they might mention the fact that they had thought being in one of the workshops up at the campus might have been good, and try to find a member of staff to have a word about being given another chance at the institution.

Flexible Routines

The Patio's timetable was a flexible one, designed to meet certain conditions of street life, such as a sometimes reversed sense of time. The Patio opened every weekday morning at about 8 a.m., and services ended and the facilities shut at six p.m. Attendance averaged between about forty and eighty boys a day, some ten to twenty of whom would have come from the night shelter by bus, which arrived at eight. The night shelter was housed in a relatively new purpose-built complex some 20 minutes drive to the west of the Patio, on the lower slopes of the mountainside which led up to the main CCS campus. The night shelter was an adjunct to the Patio, albeit an important one, run by young staff and generally attended by those boys who had no experience of, or desire to sample street life, such as Pedro, Diego and Juan David. But not all boys went to the night shelter and thus couldn't be counted on to know the time, so they were allowed into the Patio until about 11 a.m., with some margins, at the discretion of the doorkeeper or other staff. Breakfast was served at about 10.30 a.m., up until which time boys could engage in various activities.

During these morning hours boys filtered in and washed clothes, or played ad-hoc football games, or sometimes an educator would organise a baseball match. When

breakfast was ready, the call came from the kitchen for the lines to be formed. Whichever educator was in charge of breakfast would blow a whistle and shout about the Patio for the boys to form in their '*tropas*' (troops).

This militaristic method of organisation was apparently borrowed from the Boy Scouts. Lines were formed in ascending order of height, with the smallest at the front. Before a prayer was said for breakfast, the head of each troop had to make sure that his boys were standing quietly and orderly in line, and then come forward to present the troop to the educator with a salute. After the prayer, which was sometimes said by a boy at the educator's request, the educator chose which troop would enter first, or apply another method of organising the entrance, for example by height, such that the tables would fill up with boys of similar sizes. While the format was militaristic, it was also not necessarily produced in this way by the boys who composed the formations, and lines often took 10 minutes to form with stragglers slipping into place while others engaged in play fighting, finished putting on clothes, or talked.

The food was already on the long wooden tables when the boys entered, placed there by the day's kitchen assistants; three boys helped the cook every day. These and other chores were referred to as '*aseos*' (cleaning tasks) and were organised in the morning by troop or by the decision of the educator. If a boy was being disruptive in line he could be assigned to a duty outside the tasks given to the troop he was associated with. Breakfast normally involved bread or crackers, cheese, rice, and possibly cold meat and/or eggs, served in plastic bowls with milk or hot chocolate. Roving educators monitored activity at the tables. They did not interfere with food swapping, a common occurrence, as they would later in the Transition House. As they finished eating, boys would go over to the two sinks on the far wall and wash their plastic dishes and spoons.

Football matches between troops started as soon as breakfast clean up was complete, involving one educator as referee and another two playing. The troops were chosen at the beginning of every month, and were often larger than the number required for the team, so other boys played their own games, slept, or sat

and looked on at the games. Others got straight to the task of washing clothes, and by mid morning the railings of the upper balcony area were often completely hung with clothes. The boys got the soap from Imelda, commonly referred to as 'the aunt', by going to the *roperia* and pressing their faces against the metal railings to get her attention, and washed clothes in sinks next to the showers and toilets.

Games depended on age, size, and the relationships different groups of boys had to the street. Younger boys (aged seven to ten), played a coin-throwing game called '*cuartas*' (fourths) amongst themselves; whoever got his coin closest to the chosen coin over a series of repetitions won. A group of generally older boys (about ages 14 - 18) played cards, sometimes with money at stake. They seemed to emphasise their maturity with this and other aspects of their behaviour, hinging on the issue of not considering themselves inferiors to the educators, and organised themselves independently (see photographs 5.6 and 5.7). Other boys from the *parche* who'd been awake all night slept in the shady areas of the balcony where the others played, or in a corner under the balcony which also offered shade.

Meanwhile in the art room, creative activities were on offer. Boys came and went from the room, but there was often a core group who regularly took advantage of this space. They tended to be younger ones, aged between seven and fourteen, were less likely to have the street as a referent, and usually slept at the night shelter. Examples of the creative work they did included making cardboard ships and castles painted bright colours and paintings on cardboard of a variety of subjects.

Before lunch, those who had not washed their clothes would be reminded to do so, either by Imelda shouting that soap would soon be unavailable, or by educators looking at particular items of clothes on boys' backs and suggesting, jokingly or otherwise, that they could do with a wash. Then came washing bodies, which could involve some nudging and use of threats to alert sleeping boys; I once observed an educator wielding a stick and using it. The boy's reluctance was, however, to do with exhaustion, sleep deprivation and the imposition of timetables rather than a desire to avoid washing. Usually an educator would stand at the entrance to the showers and monitor entrance and exit, and the clean boys would wander out into the Patio

to dry in the sun (still in their now wet underpants). Sometimes an educator got a hose pipe out and stood in the middle of the Patio on a chair and sprayed the boys in turn, which was popular especially amongst the younger ones, as it made a game out of the process. The climate of Medellín is ideal for such watery sports, with daytime temperatures of around 25-30° Celsius.

Lunch was usually at about 1.30 p.m., and the formation of troops for breakfast was repeated, as were the routines inside. As lunch is the most important meal of the day, it consisted of rice and meat or a soup dish and juice. After lunch and the cleaning of the dining room, the morning's activities were repeated, although with the added possibility of watching t.v. or a video if it was raining. During the afternoon an educator sometimes opened the games room above the art room, where boys played on an old go-cart and with some roller skates in various states of disrepair.

Before an afternoon snack was distributed at 5 outside the dining room, the cleaning of the entire Patio was undertaken. This involved sweeping the Patio and collecting rubbish; anything from clothes to bits of broken toys and scraps of food landed in the large plastic rubbish bins in the carport (see photograph 5.9). These afternoon chores would push the tolerance of boys eager to get back out onto the street. Boys had to have signatures on their arms from an educator to indicate to the doorman that they had completed their assigned tasks, and only then could they leave, scampering out the door to recover their stashed glue bottles. Boys who took advantage of the night shelter, those with no desire to stay out on the street or take drugs, would wait for the bus to come down from the main campus at about 5.45. Boys from the *parche*, such as Eleno, also sometimes joined the bus if they wanted a quiet night. The bus also brought employees down from the main campus to leave them closer to the *barrio* buses, all of which left from the centre. With the children and night-duty educators bound for the shelter went the doorman, and behind him the Patio was shut until the next day.

As I have shown, boys used the Patio facilities, including the night shelter, differently according to their interests and needs. Those who were tired after a long

night on the street often slept much of the day. They also played 'adult' games, such as cards, and were usually less likely to play in the football matches. Conversely, those who went to the night shelter and were unlikely to ever sleep on the street were also those who participated in the art room activities. Age was an important factor in defining what activities were pursued.

Sometimes the Patio would be invited to attend cultural events, or have them organised specifically. Two instances during my time at the Patio were a trip to a theatre production, and a trip to an NGO dedicated to cleaning up the River Medellín. When invited to see the theatre production, twenty tickets for the boys and two educators were made available, and an educator and myself accompanied them. The theatre wasn't far away, about twenty blocks in a fairly straight line through the city centre, but getting there was interesting. Most of the boys had never been taught to cross roads. Instead, they would dart between cars and never considered looking at the lights to see if the traffic might stop. The children were forced to live next to traffic, but learnt how to move through it on their own, and with mixed results: during fieldwork, four children were hit by cars, two of them on Patio outings.

The trip to the river institute was interesting for other reasons. Situated in innovative purpose-built facilities on a bridge spanning the river, the group from the Patio was invited to receive a chat about the importance of the river and of recovering the river's ecological system. However, the staff of the river institute soon realised they had pitched their eco-talk wrong, as boys started sliding off chairs onto the floor, falling asleep, and otherwise demonstrating little interest in the lecture. Someone thought of an alternative activity, and the boys spent the rest of the afternoon enjoyably, painting egg cartons and making paper kites, which they then flew off the bridge. However, during the afternoon, to go to the toilet the boys had to go up to the second floor of the building, where there was a large reception room with a table laid out with an impressive buffet for invited dignitaries. When one of the boys who went up the second floor saw this, he said, "What? Did they invite us here just to humiliate us?" The boys had clearly not been invited to share in

the food, and took exception to the fact that free food was being given to adult dignitaries but not to underfed children such as themselves.

The phrase *'cuando no hay Patio'* is how boys who spent much of their time on the street described times when the Patio was shut. It is interesting that when it was shut, boys didn't say 'the Patio's shut' (*el Patio está cerrado*), but that 'there isn't Patio'. This refers directly to the sense that the Patio offers services, and the interest they have in it is primarily about actions inside, rather than the closure of the physical space. The Patio closes infrequently, but over some festive periods it is necessary, to give the educators a break. During the period of fieldwork, Patio educators occasionally complained about working Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, as they didn't get any compensating increase in their salaries. Operations on such days were also complicated by the logistical problems which often occurred, such as the bus failing to arrive at the night shelter to bring children to the Patio, collect them in the evening, or bring food down from the campus. If the staff felt neglected because of the physical state of the place, such events seemed to confirm that their work with 'real' 'street' children was the poor relation of the main campus. There was however a sense of urgency in keeping the Patio open, not just for the day-to-day welfare of the children, but because those who weren't well versed in street life might be tempted to join boys they had met at the Patio, if there was no Patio service available.

Time and Space

If 'street' children are almost by definition 'out of place', their use and appropriation of spaces – the areas of the city centre where they locate different resources – and concepts of time are notably their own. Hecht comments on 'street' children's concepts of time in an end note, in which he clarifies that "The confusion [in one interview] between 'four months' and 'a year and four months' suggests that both estimates should probably be read as 'a long time'" (1998: 242, note 2). Through children's confusions about time during interviews I gradually came to realise that their sense of time has rarely been developed in the context of school calendars, working days or weeks, clocks or watches. In short, they do not keep 'industrial' time. Indeed, instilling a sense of time in the boys, through the blowing of whistles,

the regularity of meals, and class hours is one of the institution's major disciplining tasks. But as is apparent in the ways boys use time on the street— the night time, for example, to take drugs and stay awake, and the day to sleep – they function with quite different markers of time to those that organise the society around them.

This was evident in some early questions I posed to boys as to how long they had been on the street. Talking to a boy from the coast, I asked him how long he had been in Medellín. His reply was “Two months – or... two years”. When he seemed unable to define a month, I asked him what a week was. ‘It’s that the days are passing quickly.’ And a day: ‘I don’t know’, but he did say that today was a day, and tomorrow another (*Hoy es un día y mañana otro*). Another boy, Tulio, who clearly had experience of formal education, said that a week was “five days”. Another boy, nicknamed ‘Blondie’, said it was six days, while the afore-mentioned boy from the coast said that Saturday and Sunday were apart from the week,

“because it’s a strange week. The week is only from Monday to Friday, and Saturday and Sunday are for rest. Because the week is when you work”.

To this Tulio responded “But there are some [people] that work on weekends”. When I asked them how many hours there were in a day, Blondie said ‘twelve’, and started counting from the number six¹³. Again Tulio responded with observations about actual working lives: “But some people get up at 4 [a.m.]”. So Blondie recalculated and said that night was twelve hours, so that plus the day, there were “2 days in 24 hours”.

As this discussion was coming to an end, I asked Blondie how long ago he’d left home. “The second of February of last year”, he replied, adding that he remembered because he had been at school. He left, he said, because he was going to be hit for stealing from his mother [*me iban a pegar una pela*]. At which point Tulio laughed out loud and said it was a pack of lies, saying ‘I more or less know his story by now’, adding to me later that ‘he is ashamed of the truth’. [Why? I asked. “Because he was very bad”].

¹³ This was quite possibly because, as it is located near the equator, in Medellín it is light from six am. to six p.m. year round, and thus many people’s working days start at six a.m..

On the street, time is centred around satisfying needs. Galeano and Velez describe the sense of immediacy with which needs are met, saying that the children of the street are ‘fleeting, like butterflies’ (1996: 31). The most significant way in which the Patio began to affect these rhythms was by removing certain needs and thus the necessity of searching out the ways of meeting them, like food, washing, bathing, and so on, and also giving them time in which they could do nothing: relax, play cards, watch television, and often, sleep. The sight of sleeping children was a regular one in the Patio, and those who slept didn’t necessarily participate in other activities. Some, like Eleno, cultivated relationships with educators selectively, for example ingratiating himself to the cook by often volunteering to work as an assistant in the kitchen. This got him out of participating in all the militaristic lines and routines, and gave him access to the more homely world of the kitchen, as well as to any spare food.

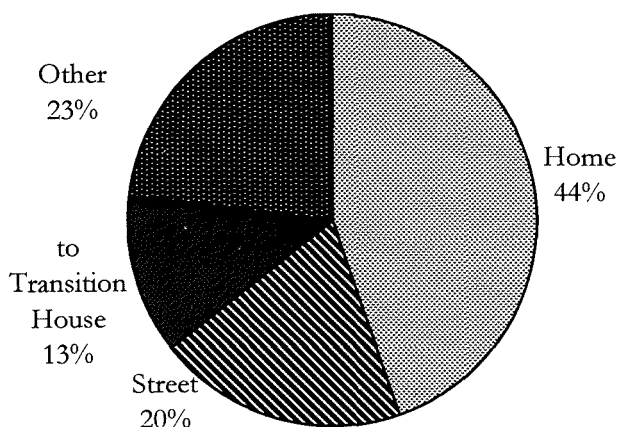
These aspects of thinking about time illustrate the variety of knowledge found amongst the boys. Someone like Tulio would have no problems adapting to the routine of schedules in the Patio and subsequent phases, because he had already been to school and wanted to attend more. But the manner in which children try to reason about what time might mean, and how long a day or a month were, demonstrate the partial exposure they have to ‘telling’ time through, clocks, hours and routines. It also suggests one of the challenges the boys will face when confronted with the routinisation and organisation of time and space inside the institution, which would transform fundamental features of their habitus.

V. Patio Attendance and Processes

The boys whose trajectories towards the street and the Patio I outlined in chapter four arrived at the institution in different ways. Julio, forced to live on the street in Medellín because his mother had nowhere for him to stay, came to the Patio with a friend. Cesar had been travelling with his older brother, who seemed to know how to travel and where *parches* were in different places. Brothers Tulio and Alejandro, like Bernardo, were sent to the Patio by their mothers. Juan David and Pedro were both brought to the Patio by police.

Thus some boys avoided significant exposure to the street. Within the Patio it was easy to deduce where boys came from by the way they dressed, spoke, and interacted with others. Few 'real' *gamins* with a long street career seemed to attend regularly, but used it in a similar way to the teenagers of the *parche* outside, coming into the Patio to organise themselves, and occasionally 'rest from the street'.

The average age of a regular was twelve years. The majority of the boys who attend the Patio never go on to seek or explore a future in the institution. In data from Patio entry records for 101 boys who came to the Patio at least once in six months¹⁴, only 13% ever went up to the 2nd stage. In fact, the average attendance was of 29 days over a period of two and a half months, with nearly half of the boys surveyed attending for less than ten days in total. The log book gave indications of where the child had gone¹⁵.



Graph 5.1. Where boys went from the Patio.

Figures for six months of 1998

¹⁴ Data was for entries between January and July 1998. Compilation of relevant data for the time period I was present at the Patio was still taking place when I left, as it involved going through daily records for every month for every boy and then collating it onto sheets for individual boys.

¹⁵ This information came from the doorman's conversations with boys themselves and other boys. While I was initially unsure what this meant for its reliability, his physical position, usually at a desk behind the entrance gates of the Patio, meant he constantly had conversations through the gates and kept informed about the movements of boys. The data thus represents one of the most informed views available.

At the end of the six-month period, 23% were either still attending the Patio or their whereabouts were simply not known. Nearly half (44%) had returned home, while 20% were on the street. A further 13% had gone on to the Transition House.

These figures correspond loosely with the data about maintenance of relations with family that were entered elsewhere in the log book. They suggested that 49% of boys maintained some relation with their family, while 35% were said to have none. Of the rest, nothing precise was known.

However, these data also suggest some important and little perceived facts about the fluidity of the street-Patio population. While there were some regular faces in the Patio, and most of these would be invited or at least considered for selection for further stages, many boys seemed to come to the Patio during periods of crisis, frustration or boredom with their families. In the period when I attended the Patio daily, I often talked with boys who came from different areas of the city, or outlying villages, who talked about conflict in their families which they hoped to resolve in the short term.

Santiago was one of these. He was 14 and lived in the gold mining regions of northeastern Antioquia, near the town of Segovia, where he had worked with his father in mining. He described how he had come to Medellín with friends from his neighbourhood, after yet another a fight with his father in which he'd been hit. At this age, he seemed to be beginning to reject his father's domination. After being a regular presence around the Patio for a few weeks, he disappeared again, presumably having returned home to his family.

Two other boys had followed their older brother to Medellín, and he was later selected to go on to the Transition House. But his little brothers seemed a bit scared by the whole adventure, and perhaps found the street culture outside the Patio's gates daunting and foreign, as they always used the night shelter. While their brother quickly made friends with some of the *parche* boys, the younger ones returned home after about a week. The pull of home was also strong for the oldest boy. Although he seemed happy in the Transition House, when his father came to collect him

some weeks into his stay there, he left with him. He was the only boy to be collected in this manner, and seemed very happy at his father's sudden appearance.

One boy whose family lived in a 'hotel' near the Cambalache said he liked coming to the Patio when he wasn't working. The boy said he got bored watching television in the tiny room where his family lived, but his father wouldn't let him even discuss going on to the institution, because he said that he paid for the room for the family to be together.

Many other children, as discussed in the previous chapter, may well have been fleeing situations of violence and also using the Patio temporarily while they considered what to do in the longer term. Others might have been using the Patio as they travelled between cities, which 'street' children and other poor youths do, taking off to the Caribbean coast for a few weeks, like many other Colombians do on holidays.

Views On The Patio and Alternatives

The Patio was useful for boys experiencing short-term crises in conflicts with their families, and provided a resting place during an adventure. But it did not have a lasting attraction for many of the boys from Medellín, who came for only a few days never to return. Some found it not to their liking at all. The Patio also faced competition from other centres for 'street' children in the city. The most direct of these was another Salesian project some ten blocks away, and was best summed up in the comments of one young boy, who, noting the sunshine one morning said to his friends "Let's go to the other patio! They have a pool there!" and they all swiftly left.

In Medellín, I met plenty of boys who didn't have good things to say about the Patio. Two boys who were begging in a haphazard, opportunistic manner in between playing around the stadium on a Saturday afternoon said "That's where the *gamines* go, isn't it?", with a look of some contempt on his face, while the other said "I went there once, but wouldn't go back". His reason was that it was 'full of *gamines* who stole'. This is of course more than a comment on the project as such, but also

of the image of *gamines* amongst sectors of the urban poor. One woman in her fifties who worked as a domestic servant said to me that her biggest fear was of her children getting into street life, and that she thought her neighbour's children might be liable to do so. While this woman worked very hard to provide for her family, she also encountered periods without work, and the possibility of being unable to keep providing an income and maintain the household that risked children being pushed towards the street, was a regular source of concern.

Another boy I spoke to remembered having been to the Patio, and what triggered his memory were “the lines in troops”. The random cross-section of boys I encountered whilst going about my daily life outside the institution – running errands, going food shopping and so on - presented an interesting counterbalance to the perception one could gain inside the institution. Many of the boys who were regular presences on Medellín's streets knew of the institution, and had been to the Patio at least once. Others, including the majority of the young adults who lived outside and around the Patio, had been through one or several stages of the institution.

One of the institution's strategies for recruiting – or keeping - children was to carry out regular night –time walks through areas of the city where children were known to be¹⁶. This ‘outreach’ activity was meant to be an opportunity for Patio staff to detect new faces, touch base again with old ones, and for staff to extend an invitation to all those eligible (males under 18) to come to the Patio. Staff from the Patio were well known on the street, and many boys, despite the dazed state they were often in by the night time hours, talked with them and exchanged news and views, as well as asking what drinks, sweets or biscuits they were offering. Some years ago, these walkabouts were referred to as ‘*gamineadas*’; now, in line with the change in the name of the Patio, they have dropped the *gamin* reference and called them ‘operation friendship’.

¹⁶ This usually meant walking through the Cambalache, up to area near the Avenida Oriental, down via Sucre, or through the Plaza Bolívar, and ending up back near the patio.

To summarise, for some of the most street-wise and experienced boys, the Patio and the institution seemed to be part of a game, a pawn in the strategies of life they were working out for themselves. As Eleno said, the Patio was a good place to take a break from the hard grind and constant tension and alertness produced and demanded by the street. To them, the Patio offered a place to wash their clothes, fill their stomachs with good food, wash their bodies, have any cuts or wounds attended to, play football, and live a different life for a day or a week. There were even *paseos* (outings) sometimes, most regularly involving trips to ‘Las Palmas’, a ranch-type house next to the night shelter, where the boys could spend the day flipping into the swimming pool, climbing trees (sometimes to smoke marijuana), and playing on the swings. At ‘Las Palmas’ you could forget you were at all near a city, and the boys were no doubt attracted by the possibility of having regular access to such facilities (see photographs 5.10 and 5.11).

Educators, Discipline and the Metaphor of Friendship

Given the fluidity of the population, and the desire to make children feel relaxed and welcome in the Patio, staff attention was largely focused on carrying out routine tasks, and less concerned with practicing the pedagogical theory of the institution (see photograph 5.8). This was highlighted in an observation by Padre Carlos, the priest charged with supervising Patio and Transition House management, that you couldn’t have a set policy of punishments that corresponded to different misdemeanours by boys because of the heterogeneity of the population with whom they worked. This underscores the view of the Patio as a flexible and varied space that attends to a variety of children.

As I have indicated, there were also important ways in which Patio staff sometimes felt unappreciated by the rest of the institution. While, as they saw it, they carried out the most urgent work with the children in immediate need, staff at the main campus tended to see this as ‘dirty’ and somewhat accessorial to the rest of the institution, with its well-developed campus and array of facilities.

Some mentioned how they were strongly motivated towards their work for particular reasons. The cook, for example, went to work there after losing her only

son to gang violence. The male Patio educators were all ex-‘street’ children themselves, and while some were motivated because they wanted to offer the next generation the helping hand they had taken advantage of, others seemed to see it as a logical job in the face of a dearth of alternatives. It was physically and emotionally demanding work, which could be termed ‘emotion work’ (Shilling 1993 cf Hochschild 1983¹⁷) for the multiple demands it placed on staff, and it paid only the minimum wage.

In the daily life of the Patio, acts of discipline were minimal, and the routines of troops and chores were supervised in a gentle, coaching manner. In these and other instances, staff attitudes and approaches seem to relate to the philosophical and political views they expressed about the streets and the urgent need to attend to the children there. Staff would only intervene in fights, for example, if and when they had taken on a particularly dangerous or life-threatening character, and to this end were somewhat akin to referees. Work was also gendered. Male educators spent a lot of their time playing football with the boys or refereeing matches, while Imelda spent most of her time doing work a female family member might do, such as attending to medical emergencies from the street, taking boys whose illnesses she couldn’t treat to the doctor, and otherwise being responsible for issues of health and welfare. On a case-by-case basis, educators might discuss individual circumstances and urge children to take advantage of the upcoming opportunity to progress. Importantly, *progresar y salir adelante*, the two ‘lemas’ (mottos-cum-slogans) of progressing and coming out ahead, would come to be conflated with the institution’s projects, in the weeks prior to the uptake of a new batch of boys for the Transition House and second stage.

If the responsibility was on the boys to reject certain ways of the street, the educators’ role was to show them how, and implicitly why. If, at the Patio, the emphasis was on being sympathetic to the hardships of the street and reminding boys that there was an alternative, there were many other ways in which views of the street would be challenged. Through discourses which encompassed social, moral,

¹⁷ From Shilling: “Emotion work refers to the management of feeling to create the facial and bodily displays expected from employees”, 1993: 118.

physiological and psychological dimensions of the street, the institution would reinforce the hegemonic view of the street as a place of deviant behaviour. But the street also presented challenges to priests, educators, social workers and psychologists, and was the source of the institution's largest operational problem: how do you convince a child to come off the street? The solution to this question was, in part, to reverse it, and make the boys responsible for wanting to come, and change and progress. But, as I will show, many boys resented the depiction of the street used by the institution, when employed as a double-sided weapon with which to humiliate the boys. The recalcitrant *parche* lads would not listen to an educator with the same receptivity as a child fresh off the bus from Bogotá who had no idea how to survive on the street.

Within the context of Salesian programmes such as CCS, the friendships of the street are to be displaced by closeness to educators, who will act as amiable 'friends' who offer guidance and act as the effectors of the discipline of the new regime where these values will be changed. The educators must distil and pass on the messages of the institution without alienating the children. While the dynamics of this process inevitably involve the child as an active and participatory subject, the manner in which boys relate to educators can be determined by their previous knowledge of the institution, such as that shared on the street, including views about power.

As Ennew (1994a) observes, one problem with the formula of the educator as friend is that it assumes that children do not already have friends, or that displacing these relationships is a matter of the child accepting the educator's viewpoint. It is difficult for individuals in positions of authority to be simultaneously engaged in the reciprocal and equal relationships of friendship, and exercise authority. As one document observes, this figure is described as someone who must, through the bonds of friendship, be

“an ever firmer presence, because he lives harmoniously the relationship between the authority he represents and the freedom of the children.”¹⁸

¹⁸ O. Lopez, 1987 'An innovative approach to learning', *Our Child Our Hope* 1(1), 3, cited in Ennew 1994 a: 424.

If this simultaneous embodiment of authority and friendship seems an implausible combination of relationships, as Amit-Talai observes

“These kinds of contradictions are embedded in organisational structures which bring people together in close and daily proximity but also attempt to confine sociability to tidy, controllable compartments of the work or school day” (1996: 165).

Such contradictions are thus crucial to organisational structures which position people in relative roles designed to achieve particular institutional goals. Thus, at the Patio, educators are simultaneously meant to be friends to the boys, and to encourage them to abandon their way of life. The strong bonds of the street are to be displaced by the authority of educators and the organisation of boys in time and space.

VI. Conclusion

The institution deliberately avoids exercising too much discipline and imposing too much structure so as not to antagonise the boys, and give the Patio a relaxed atmosphere where boys coming for a variety of reasons will feel comfortable. Between the extremes represented by Eleno, whose photographs we saw in the last chapter, and Juan David, the smallest and most innocent face at the Patio that year, were the majority of the boys, with varying levels of what the programme director called ‘*vinculación a la calle*’, links to the street. While at the Patio the educators cannot emphasise the disciplinary goals overtly, what they can do is try to ‘win over’ boys by exhibiting confidence-inspiring and sympathetic views about the hardships of the street, as well as being seen to extend comfort and guidance. As I showed in the first part of this chapter, the street in Medellín is a difficult and violent space, in which boys form strong relations of solidarity in the face of violence. However, as the Patio attendance data indicate, the Patio was used by a wide range of boys, many of whom had little knowledge of or interest in the street culture and the Patio *parche*. Those with greater experience of the streets could use the Patio with ease, as it was flexible and not designed to cause rupture with street life.

It also functions as a reception project for children who are either novices on the street or are displaced by various kinds of violence, a reality not necessarily

perceived when the emphasis by staff is meant to be on issues of the street. The boys who make decisions to stay 'with' the programme indeed often express gratitude towards and acceptance of educators, as individuals who are trying to help them find a 'better path' in life. The processes of changing boys' paths to come on to the route of the institution starts by choosing those who are likely to take to the route, and stay on course. This is the subject of the next chapter.

'LA CALLE':
PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE STREET
BY ELENO

November 1998



Image 1. 'There was a baby chicken there'

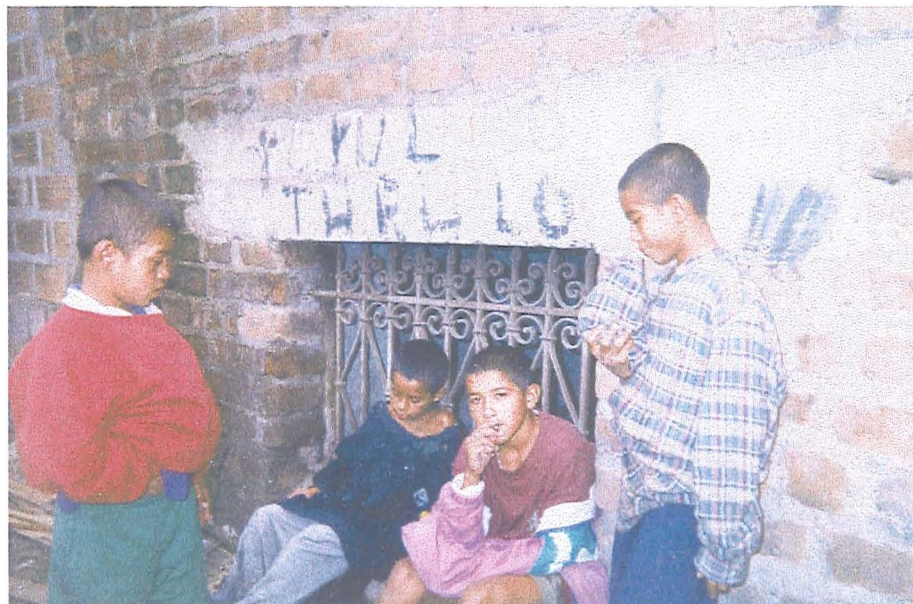


Image 2. Around the corner from the patio.



Image 3. Rolling a 'bareto' (joint) on the back of a truck.



Image 4. Taking drugs



Image 5. A moment of tension?



Image 6. The *camada*



Image 7. The girls



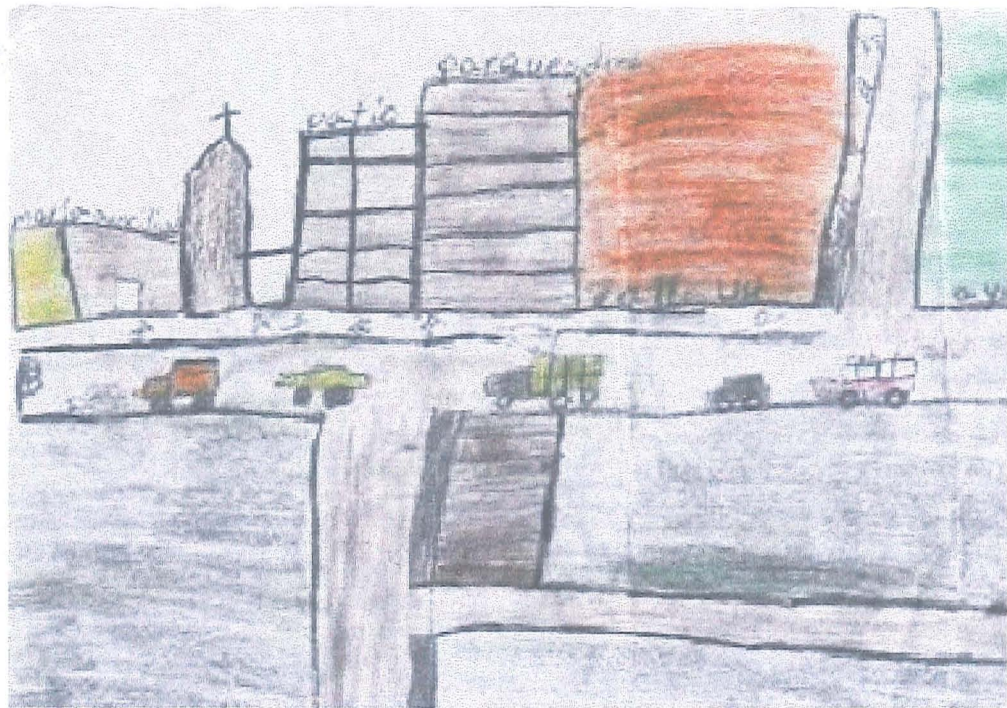
Image 8. In the Cambalache -morning?
Amongst suitcases and shoes

Chapter Five

THE PATIO



5.1 'The Colombia that I like' (*la Colombia que me gusta*): one boy's illustration of important places for him, from left to right: the Patio, Home, Village.



5.2 View of the Patio drawn by Cesar, and (below) detail of pavement in front of the Patio showing 'street' children with glue bottles in their hands.





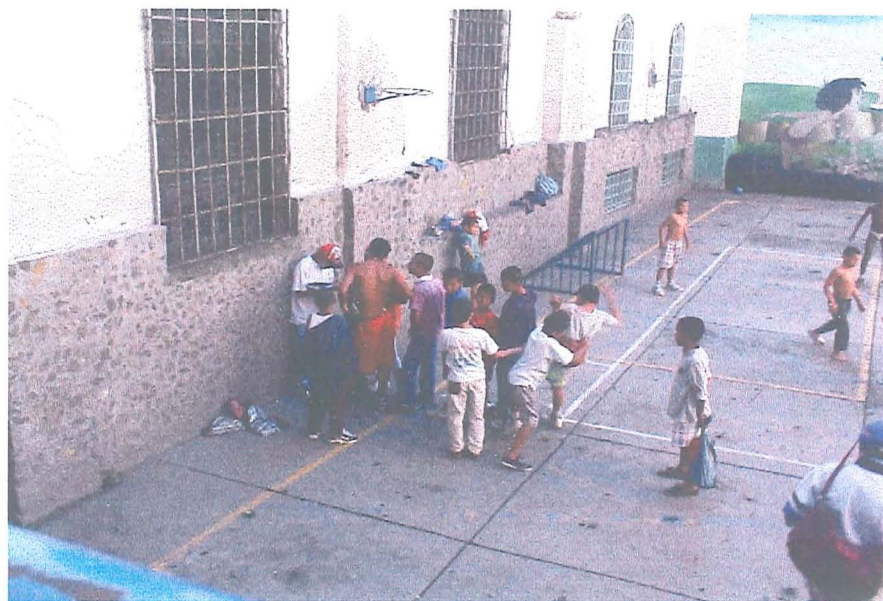
5.3 View across balcony to where boys from the *parche* play cards and, in the far corner behind the clothes, sleep the night off.



5.4 A view of the rest of the balcony inside the patio. The windows above the balcony are of the building where the original dormitory was housed. The coloured 'pinnies' are football and other sports, and have been hung to dry.



5.5 A boy does cleaning chores at the end of the day.



5.6 An educator (in red cap) goes through an attendance roster with boys.



5.7 Boys play at the pool at Las Palmas recreation centre



5.8 Educators look on at the boys from the gazebo at Las Palmas

MOVING ON UP: SELECTION FOR AND INITIATION TO STAGE TWO

I. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the institution's methods and discourses, during the series of events that mark the movement of a group of boys from the Patio towards the Transition House. It analyses how staff approach the process undertaken of every six months, of selecting a group of boys on the basis of varied knowledge about each child's case history, and in the context of their own different working discourses and experiences. The forty boys who are selected and placed on a provisional list are taken 'camping' for a week, at one of the Salesians' rural retreats. Afterwards, they are told whether or not they have been selected for the Transition House. Staff argued that their selections were based on each boy's own will and desire to engage with the process of reform the institution offered. I suggest that this positivistic emphasis on boys agency shifts attention away from the institution, as well as from the questions of why some boys who appear to exclude themselves by lacking the 'will to change' might do so.

The boys' arrival at the Transition House is marked by an initiation ceremony, as described in Chapter Three, which articulates the formal institutional view of the children. Don Bosco's privileging of the soul and spirit as affected and potentially transformed by Catholic ritual makes a first appearance in this practice, and heralds the boys' entry into a system which links body and soul that secular reform would not address. As they listen to the sermons and the priest's explanation of the function and purpose of the ritual, elements representing the street are burnt, and the boys declare that they are 'new men'. This transformative ritual operates in a manner which I compare to the *ais am* initiation ritual for making 'new men' (Poole 1982). I also discuss how a theory of 'ritual commitment' (Humphrey and Laidlaw 1994) which consider the extent to which individuals engage with the logic and process of ritual. The efficacy of the metaphors the institution provides for the

process of transformation is compared with monastic discourses of change (Asad 1993), as a way of exploring the extent to which metaphors penetrate and are appropriated within individual consciousness.

During this process, boys were aware of some of the methods being used to judge them, but were excluded from participating in conversations about their suitability for the process on offer. Rather, they were the subjects of a serialised and continuous discourse about why they should aspire to participate in the institution. One metaphor suggested to them for marking out new paths towards the future was with a train and its journey, which should be 'stayed on' because it would bring boys out 'ahead' – almost as if of a tunnel and into an unknown and undefined position. This analogy is perhaps ironically apt. Children who are less likely to have had prior knowledge of institutions, or who are deliberately seeking an education at CCS, are more likely to be boarding the train without, as it were, asking how long or what kind of journey it was. Many of those who had heard stories about institutions on the street, used the institution strategically, remaining aware of the opportunities to 'jump off'. Staff were wary of such a lack of respect for authority and doubted their suitability to the process.

II. The Selection Process

As the feeder project for the second stage of the street minors programme, the Patio always seemed to have an oversupply of potential candidates for the Transition House. With an average daily attendance of up to eighty boys, there were always more than forty attending regularly and expressing the wish to be 'chosen'.

The selection process at the Patio began to be informally discussed over Christmas 1998, the last 'promotion' having ascended to the Transition House in July. During January, the staff met to consider the candidates more formally. Their family situation, as described to and investigated by the social worker Yolinda, would be discussed. The psychologist Miguel would present his point of view, which was based on short interviews and general observation around the Patio. The male educators, Imelda, and the doorman Alberto could also comment on children's participation in sports and troops, and attendance patterns, which Alberto could

confirm by checking his entry rosters. However, as I will show, the procedures for considering each case did not correspond to any highly structured formula. Nor were they to everyone's liking, and occasionally a poor selection, in the form of a boy from a prior selection who had run away from the Transition House after two days, would be mentioned and produce criticisms and reflection on where they had gone wrong. But, given the complex nature of the processes, a margin of error seemed probable, if not inevitable.

Formalising Relations

The formality required by the legal implications of this process introduced a change to the Patio working culture, and in the ways in which staff thought about the boys. As custodial rights over the child would be granted to CCS once a situation of 'abandonment or physical or moral danger' had been declared, the boys' proper names had to be identified and used in all documentation. This was in contrast to Patio practice, where boys were generally known by their nicknames.

Nicknames were often related to physical characteristics, seemingly confirming James' (1995) suggestion that children are keenly aware of physical differences and use them to differentiate amongst themselves. Thus, a boy with a cleft palate was known as 'Half kiss'; a boy with a limp was 'Odd leg'; a boy with prominent front teeth was 'Rabbit' to most boys; and a lad with fair hair was known as 'Blondie'. Others had more particular nicknames. One boy, for having fairly delicate 'feminine' features, became 'Natalia' to the others; a regular street based smoker of marijuana was known as (simply) 'Marijuana'; another who bore a resemblance to a character from a film was 'The Headless Priest'. Several from the coastal regions were simply 'el Costeño', amongst their friends.

This meant that many staff such as the social worker and psychologist first learnt the boys' proper names during this period. The doorman, responsible for taking down nickname, full name and both the mothers and father's surnames (where known) as boys entered, often knew both names. But staff who carried out administrative or professional duties, and had less constant contact with the boys,

had to learn their proper names¹. In January I often stood with Miguel the psychologist at the edge of the Patio courtyard, lists in hands, discussing who might be who.

Selection: Criteria and Policy in Practice

The principal time allocated to selecting the boys were the weekly staff meetings, held on Friday afternoons. These were usually presided over by the Programme for Street Minors director, Javier, or in his absence Guillermo, the Patio director. One Friday in mid January, Padre Carlos, the priest in charge of the PSM, attended the meeting. Padre Carlos' presence lent a new formality and evidence of the role of hierarchy to the discussions. His first explicit guidance to the process was to delineate and remind staff of what the selection criteria were meant to be. The premises were not new, he said, but he wanted to remind staff of what they were.

1. Choose preferentially children *of* the street, not *on* the street.
2. The children must be minors of less than 15 years of age, "...because if they are over 15 they are less likely to be able to adapt to fulfil the requirements of CCS."
3. The children should have "a minimum of intellectual normality"; 'social not mental backwardness [is within our remit]'. "A boy with mental retardation will suffer in CCS", he explained.
4. "A new condition" was also introduced: - "Don't exclude boys solely for not coming regularly, if they demonstrate an affinity for us. Because I worry that the children of *mami* and *papi*² come in November, December if they have failed at school, and Mum waits round the corner at the end of every day for her boy. For example the brothers Alejandro and Tulio – they told me that their mum said to them that CCS was a really good place to study and that this [an education] was more important than anything."

Padre Carlos's use of the terms 'of' and 'on' the street (*'de'* and *'en la calle'*) echoes attempts to introduce distinctions to characterise children's relationships to the

¹ In one Brazilian institution, the use of nicknames amongst boys was noted to reinforce peer bonds, and helped to counteract the dehumanising effects of the staff's use of numbers to address the boys (in Tolfree 1995: 69).

street, as discussed in earlier chapters. However, Padre Carlos's use of these terms represents one of largest contradictions about the Patio. This is that, as indicated in the last chapter, boys with strong links to the street (his 'of the street) were unlikely to be seeking promotion to the institution, and tended to use the Patio strategically. However, children with parents and little relationship to the street were also using the Patio strategically, about which Padre Carlos expressed concerned.

In everyday operational contexts, Patio staff used terms of '*vinculación a la calle*' (links to the street) or *callejero* (strong connections with the street) to describe a child who might be seen as being 'of' the street. The use of such terms reflects an experience-based appreciation of the cultural impact of the street. Some experienced staff lamented that sociological or other analytical categories (such as Carlos' 'of' and 'on'), were given more credibility than their experience-derived categories. This hinted at another feature of the relative power relations among staff, where academic or other professional qualifications were seen as carrying more weight than length or depth of experience in the hierarchical structure. I will return to this issue below.

The boys Padre Carlos called *hijos de mami y papi* (children of mummy and daddy) in his fourth criteria were conversely amongst those most likely to be seeking admittance to the programme, and usually for economic motives regardless of whether or not they had done badly in their previous semester at school. Padre Carlos' reference to boys in this way was mocking, and on various occasions he expressed a concern with the manner in which some parents seemed to think of CCS as a boarding school for poor children. This was illustrated by his invocation of the mother standing around the corner waiting to see how her children were progressing.

Meanwhile, the issues of age and intellectual 'normality' were relatively technical points. At that stage, possibilities for a new project for older boys were being actively discussed at CCS, but the cut off age for the Transition House stood at 15.

² This was a term used to imitate what middle class and rich children might call their parents. It was not used exclusively by people in the street-child business, but by members of the 'general public' as well.

While older boys were present in other CCS programmes, the Transition House had been designed for children in mid childhood, most boys being between ten and fourteen years of age. As for intellectual ‘normality’, what Padre Carlos seemed to mean, in effect, was the absence of major learning disabilities. Minor ones could be coped with by teaching staff, but the institution’s remit of working with issues of the street was to be prioritised over other kinds of need. However his use of the term ‘social backwardness’ suggests evolutionary views of society, and underlines the extent to which boys were seen to be in need of reform, rather than social assistance.

Negotiating Hierarchy and Criteria

Whatever they made of Padre Carlos’s observations, staff never publicly disagreed with him or with any other visiting priest. It seemed that the principle of not questioning an employer took on extra relevance when the employer was a priest, who was used to having his opinions treated with reverence. At meetings where no clergy were present, issues were often discussed more fully and informally, with greater scope for opinions and contradictions. This suggests how the views of lower ranking educators -despite their greater knowledge of the subtleties of children’s relationship to street culture, past, present and potential- were marginalized in these discussions. The institutional objectives prioritised certain discourses, borrowed principally from social work and psychology, partly because they were seen to provide the profiles that the institution would need to present to the ICBF for the legalisation process.

The events and proceedings of one January meeting illustrate the general processes at work. The meeting began with the case of Alejandro, and Javier spoke first. He was a strong presence, and when Padre Carlos was not there Javier dominated the room as he sat astride a chair in the centre of the room while the educators crowded round the table or sat near the door. He also articulated his views through discourses developed through his university education in social sciences, and took stances on different arguments presented in social science and other literature.

Alejandro, Javier said, should be removed from the list. Javier's reason was that he did not come from an abusive home, but had been abandoned by his father. This conflicted with information given to Yolinda, and so the case was left open pending her further inquiries. The second case was Pedro, from Bogotá. Padre Carlos reckoned he should stay on the list but a note should be made of how long he'd actually been coming to the Patio. Next was John, who had a brother in CCS. Imelda said he was coming nearly all the time, although he disappeared for a while, possibly to his grandmother's. His mother, added Yolinda, lived in a *barrio popular* in northwestern Medellín, and the rest of the family was in a rural Antioquian village. He was left on the list.

The next case, of Julio and his brother Mauricio, whose story we heard in Chapter Four, caused controversy again. According to Javier, their mother had brought them and said she would withdraw Julio if he was not taken to be a boarder at the second stage. Padre Carlos responded, "Well, then let her take him". Padre Carlos's patience with parents he felt were trying to convert the programme into a childcare service seemed tested again by the case of Tulio and his little brother Alejandro. "Call their parents with urgency and tell them their children are missing school", he said, somewhat sarcastically.

The situations of these pairs of brothers became clearer when they were all eventually taken to the Transition House. However, my conversations with staff and boys often brought up conflicting information about the boys' families, and the circumstances through which they ended up in the Patio. The situation of 'street' children suggests some of the difficulties of the 'policing' of families by social workers amongst the lower classes, and reveals the limits of the reach of bureaucratic and governmental forces in urban Colombia (cf Donzelot 1980). How case files were built up by Yolinda depended on factors as diverse as the location of the family, their proximity to a public telephone, and other material and logistical factors which meant that only with time and gradual trust would the boys' cases be fully revealed by themselves – usually months later in the Transition House.

While Javier and Padre Carlos objected to Julio's mother's approach, the information I had from Julio was that they had fled Urabá because of Julio's drunken father's abusive treatment towards him and his mother, as discussed in Chapter Four. He never mentioned his mother bringing them to the institution, nor hitting him. Yet when she later attended a Transition House parent's day, with a young daughter, she spoke of her regret at having hit the children when she returned exhausted from a long day at work. What Yolinda ended up writing on the brothers' social work information sheets, then, was a blend of different stories. In a formal sense, it didn't matter: Julio had definitely spent some time on the street, and his quiet but friendly presence at the Patio made him a good candidate for progressing to the Transition House. He was eventually taken, when Yolinda's investigations began to uncover the issues of the abusive father and the flight from Urabá; and she and her judgements were respected by Carlos.

If any case involved conjecture, it was little Juan David's, the visit to whose father I described in Chapter Four. Physically one of the smallest boys at the Patio, he clearly had no experience of street culture, but was brought in to the Patio by the youth police, after being found wandering in the street with a large knife. At the meeting, Padre Carlos quickly said he was too young to go through the process. Various educators expressed how well they felt he was adapting at the Patio, and that despite being small, Juan David knew how to defend himself against larger, older boys. Carlos wasn't convinced, and suggested that another institution might be more appropriate, although he didn't say which. In the event, Juan David, too, made it through to the Transition House.

The next case was Freddy. There was little discussion about him, and Padre Carlos's commented, jokingly, that he had already cost the institution enough money, after an accident for which he had been hospitalised and which required surgery. This did not conflict with any educator's view of him as a worthwhile candidate. Finances would, however, count against Pablito. In addition to his hearing and speech disabilities, Pablito had been identified as having a heart condition, later diagnosed as congenital heart disease. CCS's remit did not, and in the opinion of many staff could not, include working with children with such physical difficulties as well as

street issues. Pablito fell between the gaps, as no other institution in Medellín was equipped to handle the needs of a child with both medical problems and a history of street life.

While the cases discussed that Friday in January were specific, the process of analysis demonstrated some of the recurring issues raised in trying to decide which boys to take further in the institution. On the one hand there were the *hijos de mami y papi*, as Padre Carlos called them, children whose parents were alive and actively involved in their lives, and who urged the boys (directly or less so) to ‘get’ a place in the institution. For women such as the mothers of Bernardo, and Alejandro and Tulio, CCS afforded a rare opportunity for their children to have an education they could not otherwise afford. Such strategic use of institutions for childcare could be considered an element of the survival strategies employed by the urban poor, as discussed in Chapter Two. But to Padre Carlos, they were attempts at manipulating the system, theoretically dedicated to ‘real’ street children.

How “real” ‘street’ children, with stronger connections to the street, felt about the institution was a parallel theme which emerged in debates and discussions amongst some staff: the fact that the majority of children who were more deeply integrated into street life didn’t even want to go to CCS, or that many had tried it and left. While the knowledge educators had of how to communicate about the street was important to the institution, in so far as it helped boys living on the street feel comfortable at the Patio, this same knowledge was neglected by discourses of those further up the hierarchy. Some of the educators who felt they understood what boys outside -like Eleno and El Alemán, who’d already given the institution a try once and left- might want, did not even try to discuss what they thought with more senior staff.

This suggests the means by which different types of knowledge and their partiality (cf Marsden 1994:45) are evaluated. On the one hand, Padre Carlos’ views had to be listened to in silence and not immediately contradicted because of his seniority, and thus his right to articulate views about policy. But staff were also aware that his knowledge was partial, as a result of his limited presence in any one project. While

senior management and their categories for children articulated formal policy, the process of selecting boys demonstrated the limitations of academic or other professional categorisations, when superimposed on such fluid entities and relationships. The power of formal policy was also refracted by the practicalities of the selection process. This was apparent in the way the final list was decided. Many last minute decisions were made when various educators gathered together in Guillermo's office. Thus, despite Padre Carlos' position in the hierarchal structure, his opinions and views could be displaced by other knowledge and opinions held by the staff as a whole. The status of his opinions did not, however, shift.

As Ruiz *et al* observed in Bogotá, 'the street as such is not dealt with'³ by projects and institutions 'for' street-based populations (1998: 48). The culture, meanings and needs of the street are instead submerged or denigrated by institutional thinking and frameworks, such that "the street ceases to be an autonomous space, to become a justification for institutional altruism" (ibid). Hierarchies aside, re-thinking the institution's negative views of the street was not part of any agenda, and the

Likewise, those who were too erratic in their comings and goings between street, home and institution, like Eduardo, a small blonde presence with a memorable manic laugh, never came into consideration. Rather, their names would elicit reactions from senior staff which could be described as dismissive. Once, Padre Carlos referred to the problem explicitly: the boy being discussed lacked 'respect for authority'. Explicit reference to children's autonomy was rarely made, because the onus for 'affinity' with the programme was on the boys anyway. What the selection process was partly doing then, was ensuring that those who attended regularly and were well-behaved could actually be considered as being in need; although as we have also seen, it involved many problems of knowledge: whose it was, how it was obtained, and how it could be articulated.

If deference to authority and need were assessed in these meetings, one factor which was never mentioned was race. The population of boys were largely '*mestizo*', mixtures of white, indigenous and black in varying degrees, to the extent that on the

³ *No se trabaja la calle cuanto calle.*

surface 'race' did not manifest itself as an important marker of difference amongst the boys. However on the final list of those to be taken on the camping trip, there were nine boys from the department of Chocó, whose population is largely black. But one day in late January, all these nine and a few others had suddenly disappeared. At the Patio it was whispered that the priest from the church next door had given them all the bus fares for Quibdo, the capital of the Chocó, and told them to go home to their mothers. As the bus ride was some nine hours away, it was some time before a few of them returned to Medellín.

III. A Week Away: the Camping Trip

By early February, the list was complete. One step remained between the boys and the Transition House, and that was for the boys to be taken camping and for their behaviour and commitment to be assessed. To ensure boys were not coming to the Patio only for the trip, the date was not announced. Only the selected boys were allowed in on that day, and almost all those from the still-flexible list turned up. Ordered into lines in the Patio courtyard, Guillermo was there to explain that a list of candidates for the Transition House had been drawn up, and that they were going to be taken away for a five-day trip during which their suitability would be assessed. Two representatives from the youth police also turned up for the event, as did an educator from the night shelter (see photograph 6.1). Those left behind, still outside the doors, gathered to wave goodbye to the bus and the smiling boys onboard (see photograph 6.2). Amongst those on the pavement there were a few tear-stained faces, and a sense of injustice was palpable. Why were they not on it? They were perplexed, as they had been told they were responsible for not being chosen, but they had not been invited to debate or know about other reasons for exclusion.

The group of forty boys were taken to a farmhouse owned by the institution, in a village about an hour and a half's drive east over the mountains from Medellín, in the municipality of 'San Fernando'. The large house was sparsely furnished but had large windows overlooking a swimming pool, beyond which lay a large lake (see photograph 6.3). Interestingly, an increased appreciation of how spaces and times

were important for keeping boys in the project seem to inform the period between the Patio and final selection for the Transition House. Whereas four years before⁴ it had been a relaxed affair, appreciated by boys as a fun camping trip with time to walk along old railway lines and swim in pools formed by waterfalls on the mountainside, the trip had clearly been re-thought as an important moment for re-enforcing the values and objectives of the institution and the programme. This policy and programme change seemed to have been inspired by an assessment of the weakness of different stages of the programme, and of how the camping trip could be used for formal discussions with boys, in a context which seemed to underline the promise of a brighter future.

Nevertheless, at the farm the boys could play in the pool or descend down the hillside to fish in the lake, and otherwise have fun, and boys and staff did interact in a relaxed atmosphere. However, the usual drills in troop lines were accompanied with discussions which punctuated the calm and easy atmosphere. Throughout the week, the boys were constantly reminded that they **might** be soon entering the Transition House, and this incentive was reinforced by the staff. Boys were left in little doubt that they had to behave well on the camping trip if they were to go on to the Transition House, their place in which had not yet been won. So, while it was largely a treat for the boys, a relaxing break from the heat and bustle of the city, they were also keenly aware that they were being scrutinized. The boys returned from their week in the country to spend the weekend at the night shelter, and on the following Monday would find out whether they had ‘passed’.

Chosen and “On the Train”

Back at the Patio on the Monday morning, the all-important meeting took place in the art room. The boys sat on the floor, showing excitement and fears; the educators stood around them and listened, and Guillermo stood in front of the boys to address the gathered crowd. He started by saying that earlier that morning, the educators had got together to decide on the final group for the Transition House.

⁴ On my previous visit to Medellín, when I was invited to go on the camping trip.

This had in fact resulted in few alterations to the original list⁵. He said the educators who had been on the camping trip "...told us which ones of you had stayed on the train – do you remember the train?" "Yes!" the boys shouted back. The boys made comments to each other, and the excitement in the room was palpable. The event had to reinforce the lessons, so Guillermo continued:

"So, look, for example, there are lots that get on, lots get on but few arrive. If only it were all. But we're still not sure, we don't have the guts to be able to get off the street...so, if some say 'No, its that I'm going to go home, I'm going back to my family', well that would be good. But if it's to stay here, in the streets, to not leave the glue and the friends and everything, that's the problem of the individual.... How sad that the children.... that think they're going to be something in life, and who promise.... don't fulfil that. It's a great disappointment for the educators...

We're not here to.... to give you food, so that you can go to the toilet, so that you can sleep, no. We fulfil that [need] but the idea of all of us educators and CCS is to take the boys out of the street, but not stop there. To give you everything and let you stay on the street? Never. You can forget that idea. But if you want...to follow the message, that's in the dining room downstairs, remember: we care for you very much. Anyway, the effort you made to go to San Fernando, to say 'I want Transition House, give me Transition House', and that's not easy. It's not a decision made by anyone. It's not a decision for little kids or children...

Right, it wasn't easy for us to do this because if only we could we'd take all of you. But it can't be done because, they say [raising his voice to mimic being shouted at from afar]: 'only bring us 35!'. And those 35 is what we take...if they tell us to take 70, we'll take 70...".

As the boys began to lose concentration, Guillermo regained their attention by shouting '*Tra?*' and on cue they all suddenly shouted back animatedly '*tra!*'⁶. "Right", he started again, "do you remember the group that went up six months ago?" A loud affirmative '*Si*' rang out.

This 'train' was a metaphor for progress, of the journey which they could make from the street to a distant destination where things might be very different. This

⁵ Two boys who were repeaters were taken on the camping trip so that they could enjoy it, while other changes were based on replacing people who had disappeared over the weekend. For example Cesar did not go on the camping trip because he had been away with his brother, but had been on the list and was considered a good candidate.

final destination, however, could not be glimpsed from the boys' vantage point, and so, the metaphor of some boys getting off before the train reached its final stop was used to remind them that they had to stay with it - whatever the temptations to get off. Guillermo, echoing what many of the educators said in regular interactions with the boys, reiterated that neither the Patio nor its staff were there to make their street lives more comfortable. Guillermo reminded them that many of that group hadn't stuck it out at the Transition House, because '*...no fueron veraquitos, fueron mas bien flojitos*' [they weren't gutsy, they were lazy], and reminded the boys that in this situation, their places would be forfeited to other boys from the Patio who hadn't been given a chance the first time round. 'The train, Guillermo says, requires guts (*verraquera*), because that's what's needed to leave the street. Going home is a different matter; it is also a good option, but Guillermo appears doubtful that boys who say this actually return home, when he says 'well that would be good'⁷.

The inability of some boys to give up *sacol*, however, is a source of sadness; *que tristeza*, he says, that the boys who promise or say they're going to be something in life, don't fulfil that promise. He makes the discourse personal, by adding that this is a disappointment for the educators, who have implicitly invested something in each boy's development. *Repitentes* (repeaters) were boys who had, as Guillermo put it, got off the train. It was boys like them, like Edwin, that Guillermo said were the cases that made staff sad. Edwin had been taken to the Transition House on a previous occasion, and had made it to the third stage, where I met him in the first few weeks of my fieldwork. He was later a regular and cynical presence at the Patio, having got 'off' the train because he found 'it' "boring". This was in fact a complaint uttered by many boys, as we shall see in the next chapter.

And then Guillermo started reading out the names of those selected. Friends slapped each other on the back and in the air 'high-five' style, and called out to each other, celebrating their newfound status, and the commotion gradually petered out, as everyone's status was clear. Guillermo wound the session up with a pep talk and a

⁶ These expressions '*tri*' and '*tra*', which I had not heard in day-to-day Patio interaction, seemed to have been drilled by Guillermo for the occasion, probably on the camping trip, and played on the boys' frequent use of onomatopoeic expressions such as '*tan*'.

⁷ *Pues muy bueno sería*, in the subjunctive tense, this indicates conditional possibility.

reminder about how all the educators had taken communal decisions about every boy.

“So, don’t say ‘Oh, its that Guillermo’s got it in for me, he didn’t want to take me’. I am the director, and in charge of things, but I don’t say ‘him, him, him’.... So those that aren’t going, don’t go blaming anyone.”

However, no amount of talk from Guillermo was going to convince certain boys that it wasn’t ‘the tia, because she said she’d help me’, or others from believing a certain educator they did or didn’t particularly get on with was responsible for their name not being on the list. At the end of the talk, the boys whose names had been read out roamed round the Patio whooping and slapping hands with each other and sharing ideas on what it was going to be like. It was palpably a big day, and a big event, and demanded discussion, celebration and excitement. But there were also a few sad faces, as boys contemplated the fact that they had failed to gain a place on the programme.

Soon after the end of the meeting I found Bernardo, who had not been selected, standing sobbing in the carport⁸. “What’s wrong?” I asked. “My mother’s going to hit me, she said I had to get myself a place... That hurts a lot!” he hiccupped. His situation came to the attention of educators, and correcting an administrative error, Guillermo put him back on the list, and Bernardo was soon smiling broadly.

“Are you very pleased then?” I asked another smiling boy rhetorically. “Yes”, he replied, still grinning. Another volunteered, possibly for the sake of the tape recorder I was carrying “They’re going to take me up to the Transition House”. “And why, what’s going to happen to you there?” I asked. “Mmm...” he hesitated, “because I’m going to come out ahead”, he replied matter-of-factly. “Oh, how’s that then?” “By studying, mmmmm...and being obedient”, he said. The first boy confirmed this: “Obeying”, he said. “And why do you have to obey?” I asked. “Because that’s how you get ahead. The educators take notice of you to take you up to the third stage”, he replied.

⁸ This was an area to the side of the Patio where Padre Carlos and Javier parked their cars, also used for playing as it was covered by the first floor.

These comments suggest a certain instrumentality in boys' views of the process ahead of them. The boys were led to think that they had got this far by demonstrating their 'will' to be chosen, their 'guts' (*verraquera*), and also mentioned education and the proverb[ial] 'coming out ahead' (*salir adelante*). But there was a strong indication that boys learned these mottoes parrot fashion, and were aware that one had to maintain oneself in the 'good books' of the educators. This could be achieved by being obedient, and this was the real key to progress within the institution. Importantly, at this stage they do not challenge the myths or process, nor enter into questioning or debates about how their transformation will occur. Nor do they question themselves as to whether they will tolerate the system, or stay there, even if it is for 'coming out ahead'. Many had only positive expectations.

Both subtle and dramatic changes would take place in all aspects of their lives once they entered the Transition House. Here more concrete experiences of institutional life would provide a better basis for them to form impressions and opinions of the system they had entered. They would experience not only material changes to their welfare – new clothes, new shoes, regular hot meals, a warm bed, as well as drug-free bodies -but a rethinking of their lives on the street, and of the youth culture of the poor to which many had been exposed.

IV. Becoming 'New Men': The Initiation Ceremony

In the afternoon of that same Monday, the big blue bus arrived at the Patio at three p.m. to take the selected boys up to the Transition House. As it left, twenty minutes later, those not selected but who had accompanied the others to the bus, and boys from the *parche* who had gathered to look on, watched the bus pull away (see photograph 6. 4). Another half hour later, having cruised away from the centre of town and wound its way up the steep slopes to the campus, the bus arrived at the gates of CCS, and went straight down into the central courtyard of the Transition House.

The boys were greeted here by educators and visitors with hugs and smiles⁹. A big welcome banner hung from the wall read ‘we welcome you with love’ (see photograph 6.5). Ushered into the main room of the central ‘house’ of the Transition House, the boys sat on the benches around the room, against the walls, and the educators took their places amongst them. Padre Carlos stood to address them first. He reminded them of the purpose of the Transition House, repeating the mottos of progressing and coming out ahead. Then he introduced the staff, one by one, and introduced the staff and the boys to each other, by reading out the name of each boy, after which each boy stood and stated his age. There were smiles and the odd giggle as Juan David stood up and declared that he was five years old. Padre Carlos then briefly explained the order of the afternoon’s events. They would each be given a new set of clothes, ordered on the basis of a list of sizes sent up from the Patio, and then there would be a mass.

The distribution and changing into new clothes took more than an hour. After this the boys should have been equipped with shoes, socks, a t-shirt, jeans, pyjamas, underwear, swim trunks and a toothbrush. In the dormitories, educators sat on beds and helped boys to fold and put things they weren’t wearing into the cupboard assigned to each of them, and helped thread laces through trainers. Outside, other staff, volunteers and visitors congratulated the boys on their appearance, as the boys showed off their new finery to each other. A few roamed around in jeans that were far too big for them, and Orlando, one of the biggest and oldest, was in tears over the huge size of his new black trainers. This quickly suggested some of the boys’ dominant concerns, as some were unhappy with shoes that didn’t fit, and one complained that he’d [already] had his shirt stolen.

Then they were told to form lines in their troops, but dispersed again quickly as they were told by Javier to go back and collect something old from the dormitory to burn, before lining up again (see photograph 6.6). Federico said expectantly “All those that brought drugs... what? They’re going to burn them!” In fact, they weren’t

⁹ The visitors included a Capuchin priest who worked in a nearby *barrio* and students carrying out university placements in CCS.

going to burn the drugs, but written symbols of them, in the ceremony of the ‘new men’.

Filing through to the back of the compound, the boys were told to sit on the benches around the inside of the *kiosko* (kiosk), a hexagonal brick meeting room with low walls and a tiled roof. At the front, Padre Carlos stood in white robes, next to a statue of the Virgin Mary, in the form of Maria Auxiliadora cradling Christ in her arms. When all the boys were sitting in their places, Padre Carlos began:

“New men. I see everyone here in your t-shirts, very pretty¹⁰, trousers, your new shoes; we’re all very well, thanks to God. And it makes us very happy. It makes us very happy. We’ve had some difficulties so today you could be new men, but we’re here as new men. How nice it is to be new men. And we’re going to start our mass, and we’re all going to stay seated. We’re not going to move until I call you. Each one of you is going to do something special.

“When you go to a party, the first thing you do is get yourself very clean, very well dressed, if you can wear something new, wear something new. Secondly, if the party is for a very important man, you take a present to that person. A gift, because when someone turns 15, you take him a present. We are first going to clean ourselves. You already washed the body, so you are all very pretty, clean and well dressed. But in there on the inside, there inside we are not clean. Why aren’t we clean? Let’s see. Who wants to tell me why we’re not clean?”

One boy spoke up hesitantly: “*Sacol* (glue)?” “Because of drugs”, said another, and “because of stealing!” added yet another. “Because of impurity!” added a fourth voice. The metaphor of dirt clearly had resonance for many boys, and after each boy spoke Padre Carlos repeated the word slowly and loudly back to them, ensuring the mnemonic effects of his slow and persuasive voice.

“So the first thing we’re going to do in our mass is –let’s put ourselves to the urgency of the Lord and we’re all going to sing.” And they sang

“What joy when they told me, we’re going to the house of the Lord.... Our feet are already stepping, the places of Jerusalem...”

¹⁰ In this speech Padre Carlos used the word *bonitos* various times. Although ‘pretty’ and *bonito/a* is more commonly associated as a feminine trait, the word is also used widely to refer to things we might more ambiguously describe as ‘nice’ in English.

And Padre Carlos continued: “We’re going to start our Eucharist, and we’re going to ask Andres, one of the educators and he’s going to put alcohol on the fire that we’re going to make, to light it in a moment. So, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen. Today the Lord Jesus Christ is with us, and so we’re going to say “The lord be with us”, and the boys repeated his words.

“We’re going to celebrate a very important party”, he continued. “I’m going to ask each of you at this moment, a favour – we’re going to ask the Lord for forgiveness, for all the bad that we have inside. For all the bad that there is in us, we’re going to ask the Lord for forgiveness. And we’re going to start like this. We’re going to say to the Lord, each one of you comes here [to the altar] and picks up one of these cards., and you should shout ‘I don’t want to be’ and I’ll tell you what it [the card] says. I don’t want to be this – ‘gamin’, so from here on we’re no longer that. So we’ll all say the same ‘I don’t want to be a gamin!’ Right? Let’s start and see.”

Padre Carlos then called out the name of the first boy, and it was Pedro the Bogotano. “Come here, and then put this on the fire”, which was by this point sputtering in the metal container in the centre of the kiosk (see photograph 6.7). As the boys discussed the proceedings amongst themselves, Padre Carlos had paused for Pedro to come up to the altar. “I don’t want to be a *gamin*”, Carlos instructed him to say. Pedro answered: ‘I don’t want to be a *gamin*.’ Then all the boys said it, but Carlos called for them to repeat it again more loudly, and they did, so that “I don’t want to be a *gamin*!” rang out from the kiosk in thirty-seven voices. Then Pedro placed the card with the word ‘*gamin*’ written on it on the fire. And so it continued, until all the vices had been thoroughly burnt:

alcohol, jealousy, egotism, robbery, dirtiness, *sacol*, *bazuco*, *ruedas*¹¹, marijuana, *perico*, *Roche*, pipe, beggar, the street, weapons, fights, disrespect, litter, anger, rude words, laziness, calumnies, bullying, carelessness, lethargy, lack of love, gossip, *pepas*, ugly words, disobedience.

One by one the boys went up and said: *no quiero ser* [I don’t want to be] – *ladrón* [thief], *gamin*, *limosnero* [beggar] or *no quiero* [I don’t want] *drogas* [drugs], *perico* [cocaine], *las armas* [weapons], *suciedad* [dirtiness]. As each boy placed the placard on the fire, he then threw in his item of street memorabilia as well; in most cases this consisted of a very worn t-shirt or pair of shorts; no boys had decided to burn any drugs they might have had on them.

Once this process was complete, and every boy had participated, the boys started chatting amongst themselves until the noise grew into a loud din. After a couple of minutes, the raised tone of Padre Carlos' calm but firm voice rose above theirs, calling out '*!No quiero los vicios!*' (We do not want vices!). The boys responded, loudly, affirming this renunciation of alleged vices in reference to themselves, with the use of the first person singular. Padre Carlos repeated his call, and the boys' response was louder and firmer, although some of the louder voices were raised in a playful manner, which suggested this exercise in shouting was quite enjoyable: the boys were rarely asked to shout. Padre Carlos then continued:

“We must ask the Lord for forgiveness for all these faults. We know... what these... faults are...”

He pronounced these words as separate parts of the phrase to rehearse their gravity and importance. Meanwhile the boys resumed talking amongst themselves, and a lone voice rang out '*¡No quiero calumnias!*' (I don't want calumnies!) perhaps bemused or entertained by the apparent sophistication of this new word. But Padre Carlos soon re-imposed himself, calling out '*Silencio, silencio*', sternly, then adding by way of explanation, *silencio que estamos en misa* [silence, we're in mass]. 'We're going to say to God, 'Forgive us, Lord!'" Having now got the hang of this, the boys responded 'Forgive us, Lord!' and so they continued:

Padre Carlos: we have sinned! [*Hemos pecado*]

Boys: we have sinned!

Padre Carlos: we want to change! [*Queremos cambiar*]

Boys: we want to change!

Padre Carlos: give us your blessing! [*Dadnos tu bendición!*]

Boys: give us your blessing!

Padre Carlos then continued alone: 'Almighty God, have pity on us all, forgive us our sins, and take us to the eternal life, Amen'. The boys chorused this final Amen, and then fell silent again. After a brief pause, Padre Carlos said 'Let us pray', and the boys were silent. Padre Carlos then began the prayer, his tone solemn and reverent: 'Dear God' – but before he managed to utter the second line of the prayer, about

¹¹ *Ruedas* and *pepas* referred to various sorts of pills, as described in Chapter Four, *roche* being a pill referred to by the manufacturer's stamp on the tablet.

three boys repeated after him, shouting in the rehearsed parrot fashion '*Señor Dios!*', but unwittingly interrupting the formality of the ritual process. Then he continued, thanking God for the fact that each year brought joy with the festival of Saint Juan Bosco, and gave thanks for his memory and for the wisdom of his teachings. Reminding the boys of the need for silence, he instructed: 'You are going to listen in complete silence to the lesson which Roberto is going to read to us now'. And then Roberto read out loud an extract from Saint Paul to the Ephesians, (Ephesians 4:17) where Saint Paul instructs the Ephesians to live no more as the pagans¹². 'Put off your old nature which belong to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful lusts' (4:22) and 'Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labour doing honest work with his hands...' (4:28) were particularly resonant passages¹³. In being invited into the community of God, and to discard their old ways, particular references to pagans and thieves construct the boys as subjects as yet outside of the kingdom of God. But the question is what the participants made of this ritual and the meanings inscribed in it.

V. Structures, Subjects and Symbols in Initiation

In this ceremony, where the boys renounce the street and ask for God's help to change, a number of structural elements of the social relationships in the institution and symbolic meanings of its cultural environment are enacted. This includes a specific list of acts which boys renounce, which reveal some of the categories of thought and forms employed by the institution. These are supported by metaphors for the process, for all the steps leading up to and including initiation into Transition House life. As Asad (1993) suggests, the provision of metaphors and interpretations can be an important technique for disciplining souls. The metaphors may bridge the conceptual gap in boys' minds between their grounded experiences and their hopes for the future at the institution, and be a less abstract way of accounting for the validity and benefits of the process. While the symbolism of the

¹² In an English text of the St. James Bible consulted this is 'Gentiles' rather than pagans.

¹³ Indeed, in subsequent passages St Paul reveals many of his opinions about hierarchy and subordination: On women: 5:21 "Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church...let wives be subject to their husbands in everything'. To children, Paul has the following advice (6) "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for

ceremony was sufficiently clear for all ‘participants’ to apprehend, I suggested in Chapter Three that what boys actually made of the ceremony and its messages was a complex question, which depended on boys’ existing understandings of their recent lives.

In the cards that Padre Carlos hands the boys to burn, symbolic destruction is made of the concepts referring to a wide variety of activities and apparent errors of behaviour. While the words are presented in the context of an engaging mass, much of what they refer to has little relationship to common facts of street life. Indeed, the attitudes and wide range of drugs referred to are general and stereotypical views of the street, which emphasise deviance from a wide range of norms. Padre Carlos’ cards include many drugs, but as I suggested in Chapter Five, the drugs the boys got hold of were generally modest and few, depending as it did on what money they could beg for, in the context of widespread hostility to children. The cards and words include other aspects of behaviour that are also not necessarily representative of life there, such as ‘egotism’, ‘anger’ and ‘laziness’. As I have also suggested above, the social relationships boys formed on the street seemed to emphasise solidarity rather than egotism, while it is also difficult to describe children here as lazy. To the contrary, the street demands alertness and movement.

However, Padre Carlos does not necessarily limit himself to the street, but it was clear that many of the boys had little knowledge or experience of the street, or drugs, as we hear some explain in Chapter Seven. But the most important general characteristic, and the last to be burnt, was disobedience (*desobediencia*). This was crucial to the systems of discipline the institution was asking them to engage with. By asking the boys to renounce all these activities, and providing spaces and symbols of the changes they have started to undergo, the children are brought into the fold of the institution’s thinking. Purified of contaminating influences, they were ready to become ‘new men’.

this is right’, and for slaves, few words of comfort: “Slaves, be obedient to those who are your earthly masters, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart.”

The issue of purity is critical to conditions of maintaining a conceptual order, as Douglas (1984) shows. By denouncing what is 'inside' as dirty, the sermon invokes embodied experience, which is then externalised and symbolically burned. The purification by fire is thus meant to be operating on the inside of the boys, not only of their bodies but their souls. For help with this, boys are told to appeal to God. The sins they have committed are also shown to be in the Bible, as acts which St Paul professed to his followers that they must 'put off' (for example, 'Let the thief do honest work').

This initiation ritual is a unique event, orchestrated by a particular private entity to bring the children into its domain of thinking and control, by highlighting what the parameters and basic tenets of its system are to the boys. It invokes religious ideas about cleanliness and purity, and positions priest, staff and boys in their relative spaces and statuses. What it cannot do, however, is ensure that the boys have any commitment to what they are acting out, particularly when it involves such a sweeping array of sins and sources of pollution and of distance from the moral norms. If actors' intentions are displaced by the ritualisation of acts, it is because rituals take on an 'object-like existence', being "ontologically constituted beyond individuals" (Humphrey and Laidlaw op cit: 267). Thus boys do not need to have a clear sense of what they are doing or why, only perform the ritual as they are told, because the meaning of the ritual lies beyond them and their intentions.

Becoming Men

Poole's research on one ritual of manhood, the *aim an* ceremony in Papua New Guinea, provides some interesting comparative material for this ceremony of initiation to a 'new' masculinity. Poole notes that for Van Gennep, two changes were effected by rituals of initiation: changes to the social identity of the initiate, and "the presentation of the self to the self" (Poole 1982: 104, cf Harris 1978: 146). The "emergent identity of 'becoming new men' which labels novices on completion of the *ais aim*" is completed by a two stage process which arches over the details of the ceremony. Poole describes this as moving "from a negative emphasis on the female nature of the boys to an increasingly positive concern with masculinity" (1982: 115, 109). Poole also notes in detail how the initiators must make boys

scared of the polluting fluids and associations to be externalised and destroyed; similarly, Padre Carlos is unequivocal about the street's polluting qualities, and the varieties of pollution to be eschewed. This has systemic equivalencies with the manner in which Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) describe the changes wrought by 'deculturating and reculturating techniques' in prisons and other institutions. In the CCS initiation ceremony, we see precisely the ridding, shedding and destruction of polluting material (street, drugs, begging) and the progression to emphasise the new and desired qualities (purity, maturing masculinity, obedience, a place in God's order). Through the stages of the ceremony and the events, new symbols of change have been distributed (the clothes) and new possibilities of purity have been symbolically enacted.

Poole suggests that the efficacy of the ritual lies not in the intellectual understandings boys have of it, although the boys in the *ais am* are already well-versed in the symbolic codes of gender, but in the experiential quality of the lengthy ceremonial processes which are simultaneously symbolic and physically embodied (1982: 136). However, cognitive and physical elements of boys' readiness are taken into account. Experienced *ais am* initiators suggest that if they are too young, boys will be too weak to withstand the exigencies of the ceremony, while if they are too old, "are prone to rebel against the ritual authority 'inside the heart' in ways that are inimical to ritual efficacy in its subjective dimension" (ibid). While the boys at CCS are not put through a physically violent process, Padre Carlos had invoked the age limit of fifteen during the selection process, because past this, he suggested, boys would be "less likely to adapt". This suggests the potential power of symbolic imagery correlated to participants' age or stage of childhood.

However, the issue of boys' malleability and engagement with the Salesian system was addressed by Don Bosco, who was very clear on the importance of a "well listened-to mass", as I noted in Chapter Two. During this whole process and series of events, Padre Carlos worked to keep boys' attention, and his ability to command, with his voice and white-robed presence, was fundamental. However, throughout CCS, every effort is made to make masses participatory, emphasising their pedagogical role.

Humphrey and Laidlaw's (1994) approach to ritual mentioned above has a crucial relevance here. If we accept that ritual practice does not depend on the intentions of the participants, but only on their completion of certain acts, then churchgoers who attend mass and participate in its actions are completing its functions fully. While boys may have had an idea of who and what God was meant to be, they did not necessarily have to believe in the ritual or the particularities of its message; and anyway had no choice but to participate. Most of the boys in the Transition House group I shadowed knew many of the hymns and could recite the *Padre Nuestro* (Our Father), and although some had not actually been registered with the authorities at birth, most had been baptised. Those who had not were to be baptised in a special collective ceremony which was still being planned when I left.

The mass begs some other questions about how power is represented and orchestrated. Participants and officials take on structurally defined roles of power; there are, of course, symbolic features, which discipline common urges (eg. in Turner 1967). In the mode of Padre Carlos's communication we can see the relevance of Levi-Strauss's concern with modes of communication that involve "parcelling out and repetition" (1981:672 in Asad 1993:129), or rote learning, which Humphrey and Laidlaw also emphasise as an important element of the enacting of ritual without particular intent (1994: 138).

Asad's (1993) analysis of medieval European monastic rites suggests how certain religious modes of communication function. Although CCS uses modern social science and psychological discourses, its primary goal and method is to form good Christians. To achieve this it can draw on centuries of religious experience in the disciplining of selves and souls. As Asad explains, in medieval monasteries the goal was to make obedience the will of each monk. All the monasteries had programmes for the formation of dispositions, and a variety of mechanisms were employed to achieve disciplinary goals. Amongst these were continuous observation, periodic correction and confession (1993: 147, 159-160). Asad considers, in the work of Bernard of Clairvaux, the subtlety and creativity of disciplinary mechanisms, as a ritual dialogue through which monks were formed:

“The sermons that give authoritative exegesis of biblical texts provide a new vocabulary by which the monks themselves can *redescribe*, and therefore *in effect construct*, their memories in relation to the demands of a new way of life.” (1993:144, emphasis added)

While Padre Carlos had no hesitations about chastising the boys for their previous ways of life and associated sins, he also had to instil them with a new vocabulary and set of concepts and perspectives with which to apprehend and come to terms with their own changes. Like Bernard, Padre Carlos’s pedagogical task was to create “...a new moral space for the operation of a distinctive motivation” (Asad op cit: 144). Here the CCS mottos of ‘progressing’ and ‘coming out ahead’ come into their own, verbs and phrases which construct a different future. The children’s pasts have been destroyed and their souls and bodies are on the path towards purification, through praying and repentance, and a new set of options is being made available to them. Symbols of their potential new identities are given as gifts (the clothes), and symbols of their past selves are destroyed. Institutional power has shown its positive side that can compel and persuade. From the experience of fishing on the lake or swimming at Las Palmas, to the metaphors of the train and the new spaces opened for the children to imagine themselves, the institution provides a set of means for the new boys to become ‘new men’.

VI. Conclusion

I have described above how boys come to be at the second stage of the institution. ‘Chosen’ on the basis of a combination of factors such as perceived need, submission to authority, will to change and commitment to the process of change, boys are constantly offered new ways of thinking about what they are going through. On the camping trip they have something to look forward to and work towards. When they are told whether they have been chosen they are presented with the metaphor of the train. Here, Guillermo constructs the situation as one in which responsibility for progress lies squarely with each boy. Wanting to leave the street, or other situation they have come from behind, is a matter of showing male qualities, as supported by his allusion to manly ‘guts’ and bravery. This construction of agency leaves behind other accounts of the limits placed upon their choices. However, the boys themselves recognise that this ‘coming out ahead’ is largely

dependent upon behaving as the educators wish them to, obediently and compliantly.

When they are initiated into the institutional programme, boys are told that they are 'dirty' 'on the inside' because of the sinful acts they have been involved in on the street. This invocation of their sinful acts does not correspond to boys' reasons for being there, which they understand as forced beyond their personal control. And only about a third of the group had been involved in street culture. However, what is important is the extent to which these metaphors –for progress, for impurity, for sinful acts – become systems of conscience, in boys' consciousness. Modes of communication are tied to the authority of the communicator, such that Guillermo's words at the Patio are backed up and developed authoritatively by Padre Carlos as a priest. However, as stated in the discussion, the individual experience and interpretation of these messages varies considerably, and frequently diverges from the intended outcome, as discussed in Chapter Seven. In the next chapter we will see what boys remembered of the mass months later, and how they adapted to the process of being transformed.

Chapter Six

PHOTOGRAPHS OF 'MOVING ON UP': CAMPING AND INITIATION



6.1 Boys chosen to go on the camping trip are organised into groups at the patio. Representatives from the 'Youth Police' are on hand. The patio director, in white shirt, talks to boys while another educator looks on, and a third places a friendly arm on a boy's shoulder.

6.2 Boys left behind by the process look on as the bus prepares to depart to the rural farm.



6.3 One afternoon during the camping week. Boys play in the pool at the farm while educators talk and watch from the shade.



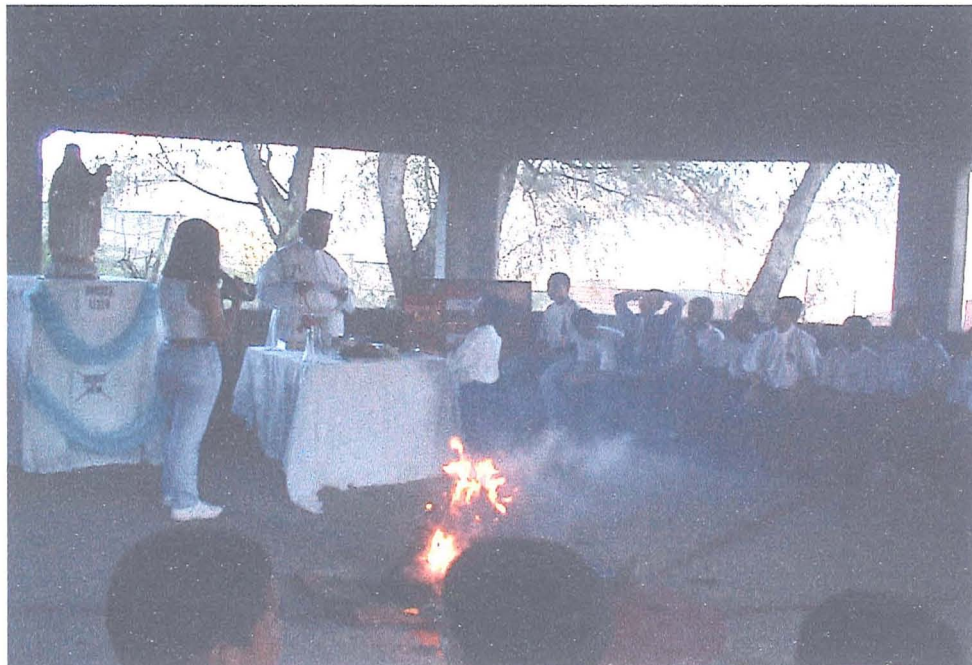
6.4 View out the back of the bus window, as the bus departs for the Transition House with selected boys.



6.5 Boys celebrate their arrival at the Transition House, under the 'Welcome' banner. Some hold small bags of belongings. In the background are staff and visitors.



6.6. In the central courtyard of the Transition House, dressed in their new clothes, boys stand in lines saluting the educators and priest before the start of the initiation ceremony.. The woman with the video camera (right) is the priest's niece, and filmed the ceremony.



6.7 Padre Carlos addresses boys during the 'New Men' initiation ceremony, as a boy comes forward to collect a card bearing the name of an activity associated with the street.

“NEW MEN” IN THE TRANSITION HOUSE: DISCIPLINE, EMBODIMENT AND CHANGE IN THE SECOND STAGE

I. Introduction

The boys had now been initiated into institutional life, supplied with both metaphors for the changes they were to undertake, and an account of what was wrong with their condition: their moral impurity and sinful pasts. Boys' appreciations of the events surrounding their initiation and the process of change they undergo in the Transition House are addressed in this chapter. The changes the boys go through are experienced in the orchestration of spaces, the discourses of the self, and routinised activities, as they adapt to the new physical environment of the Transition House with its regulated schedules and disciplinary mechanisms.

If they felt new in their new clothes, this positive change was allied to a fearful new interpretation of the street. In self-analytical mode regarding the changes both realised and resisted, they talked about how they no longer stole, how they felt better for not taking drugs, of how they were now scared of the street and the *gamines* who inhabited it. When asked about their experiences and what they liked and didn't like about institutional life, boys talked about the injustices they felt they suffered, the educators they liked, and aspects of the routines that bored them. This suggested the extent to which material conditions may be seen to have inspired changes in their thinking. The boys felt the effects of these changes on a variety of levels, physical, psychological and emotional, that had implications for questions of identity. Indeed, the boys' descriptions of the changes they had gone through and their new conditions of life are in many ways about the body, as the ultimate site of practice of these new disciplining and forming regimes. They became 'new men' as their bodies became new.

But it also became apparent that the Transition House and its techniques and slogans for producing change were contested. While parts of the institutional rhetoric for change were absorbed and internalised by some boys, such that they started to judge themselves in terms of the values expressed and symbolised in the initiation ritual, for others a questioning of the occurrences and methods in the institution meant their views were less easily changed. Positive and negative views were constructed against the boys' heterogeneous backgrounds, experiences and values. These changes and the manners in which the boys expressed their experiences of them suggest the importance of issues of embodiment.

II. Daily Life at the Transition House

Meals and chores punctuated the daily routines of the Transition House. In the first three days, boys were taught how to respond to Manuel's whistle and where to form their lines according to the activity to be performed, and Doña Nelda gave then an animated session on personal hygiene, invoking emotional and physical proximity as motivating factors for an awareness of bodily odours. After the first few weeks of getting used to the routines, during which teachers carried out academic evaluations to split them into three groups covering first to fifth grades, classes occupied the morning hours. Afternoons were dedicated to sports with Manuel, and in the evenings, after dinner and before bed, there were nightly self-evaluation meetings.

These meetings were the clearest manifestation of Don Bosco's emphasis on confession, although importantly modified to take place in a public context. This added a public sense of shame to forces compelling the child towards the institution's expectations. During these sessions, lasting an hour or more, the night-time educators made each boy comment on his behaviour that day, according to three different criteria: love for the Transition House, personal presentation, and behaviour towards peers. Boys replied in turn how they felt they had 'done' in each of these areas - for example, bad on love for the Transition House, because of trying to get out of a chore; good on personal presentation because of wearing clean clothes in a tidy fashion; good on behaviour, no fights or problems with other boys or staff. Meanwhile, other boys would fidget, doze, listen bored or try to interrupt.

The points – one could be gained for each area of behaviour -were tabulated each week by an educator, who put them up on the wall inside the main room, where all the meetings were held, and where they had gathered the first day (see photograph 7.1). But if other boys sometimes interrupted, particularly over issues like who was to blame for starting a fight, the educators often made up their minds on what each boy deserved points for, on the basis of discussions with daytime staff. This confessional practice was one on which boys did not keep their own records of points, but, as we shall see below, they picked up on other equivocal manifestations of power.

Meanwhile, the chores involved boys carrying out work in the troops. The head of a troop (this position rotated between members) was responsible for distributing tasks amongst his troop and after doing his own, checking that others had performed theirs adequately. Boys rarely complained about being made to do this work – as I have suggested many had experiences of paid or unpaid labour, and they had done chores on the same basis in the Patio. However, in cases where the head was considered to be abusing his power, recourse was sometimes made to Manuel as an arbiter over the fairness of the division of labour. As in Mettray, the troop system of accountability placed the boys in situations where they were forced to monitor each other's actions, in accordance with institutional criteria. Making boys take turns as leaders was intended to give them experience of leadership and responsibility, while the chores themselves were meant to discipline the boys into routines of work.

However, the ethics of solidarity and friendship of the street were not quickly or ever totally displaced amongst many boys. Fights were rare, although play fighting was ubiquitous, and many helped each other out with chores and remained loyally silent in front of educators about events in other's daily lives which could bring admonishment. Boys also often tried to minimise their chores, or assumed the role of head of troop with a relaxed attitude (see photograph 7.2), which suggested one form of passive resistance.

Spaces for Bodies and Souls

The new conditions in the House offered boys a new perspective from which to analyse the street. The transfer to life in an annexe of the walled compound of the institution symbolised and made material changes not only to their social and biological selves, but also brought that more nebulous part of the self, the soul, under the pastoral tutelage of the church and priests. This represents a unity between the different elements of which the self is composed, even if in practice, their bodies initially received more attention. This was true for reasons of time and the complex organisation of institutional life, but perhaps reflected a pragmatic belief that if their bodies were changed, their souls would follow. 'Their bodies' and souls' new existences were conducted behind walls three-metres high and half a metre thick, patrolled 24 hours a day by an armed security guard. These walls existed both to protect the institution and its possessions from the dangerous classes resident outside, and keep the boys from the temptations of activities there¹.

The boys had come 'up here', both literally and metaphorically. Situated high on the mountainside, the campus offered a panoramic view of Medellín, spread out on the valley floor below it (see photograph 7.3). The Transition House was also intermediary in terms of spaces on the campus. The cluster of buildings was situated down a steep lane from the rest of the campus, like a small satellite island within the compound (see photograph 7.4²). The boys were not allowed up the hill without permission. This also meant that the boys still had to 'go up' one stage further. Their progress was thus conceptualised not only through changes in themselves but through their upward movement through space.

Here the issues of how habitus (Bourdieu 1990) is formed and formal learning takes place are relevant. The process of change undertaken in the Transition House is not just about organising the boys into formal education. This is important, for their futures, for the institution, as a preparation for participation in the workforce. But it is secondary and dependent upon changes in the boys' everyday habits and routines, inculcating into daily habits thinking about the self as part of an order, a subject who

¹ Curiously, this perimeter wall extended only two-thirds of the way around the campus, the back of the complex being open to the steep mountainside. If it was true that intruders rarely came in through the back (a branch of the guerrilla who came into the institution for a few days in the late 1980s), it nonetheless seemed to suggest where the Salesians thought real dangers lay.

² A map of the campus is in photographs following Chapter Three.

learns whom it must obey. They are also subjects who are being taught to discipline their own bodies, to exercise control over their behaviour, and, of course, ways of evaluating that behaviour.

III. The Boys' Appraisals

Boys soon developed strong opinions and views about the institution. As we shall see, amongst their likes were appreciations of the facilities and the educators. Dislikes included the ways these same educators called them *gamines*, and suggested they were incapable of change. The boys resented what they perceived as the staff's abuse of their position, conscious as they are of the boys' powerlessness.

Orlando:

“Here the educators make you feel bad, for example Freddy said yesterday, ‘You all seem like a bunch of *gamines*’; it didn’t hurt me, but it did others.”

‘Why, is that a form of insulting you?’ I asked.

“Yes, [Freddy said] ‘Come what may you are practically the same *gamines*’, and someone in the other line said ‘hey, how come he’s talking to us like that?’ Once when [Freddy] was in the dormitory, he threw two of my shirts out onto the courtyard, and I said ‘why, Freddy?’ and then he hit me too. Instead of giving me a good reason, he hit me. There’s no point in me calling the children’s defence lawyer (*defensora*) because they could kick me out of CCS. Cesar said to me once, ‘call the defence lady’, and Lydia said to me that I could if I wanted to but that I would be the one that lost out.”

The boys’ responses to the questions of what they liked and didn’t like about everyday life in the Transition House offered an opportunity to see what issues and matters were of importance to them, and thus offered a glimpse of their worldviews from inside the compound walls. What becomes clear is a sense of the very fragile nature of justice and well-being some of them experienced. The following is a list of likes and dislikes identified by the boys³:

³ All items listed here were mentioned by at least two of the 15 interviewees, and listed as ranked in results, in descending order.

LIKES

Support
Advice
Education
The female educators
And some male ones
Playing
Warmth

DISLIKES

Being called *gamines* derogatorily
Being hit without a reason
Not being allowed to question or 'talk back' (*contestar*)
Not being believed
Long meetings (see photograph 7.5)
Being told off a lot (*cantaleta*)
Being punished for the actions of others
Nothing (i.e. they couldn't think of anything they actively disliked)

As the list shows, the children appreciated the support and care they received. But their powerlessness, and the fact that this was made manifest to them, was the main source of frustration. Underlying this is a strong sense of fairness and justice and it is the boys' perceptions of injustice that causes anger or resentment. Indicative of this is how support and offence are juxtaposed as important likes and dislikes.

Likes: Educators and Playing

As Carlitos said, amongst the things that he liked about the Transition House was the fact that "...here they help us progress, they teach us lots of things. To read, to play, I didn't know how to play marbles - Manuel taught us. They teach us not to take things that aren't ours." One immediately striking feature of the appraisals is that most refer to the power of the educators to shape and affect the boys' daily

lives. Issues such as the support, advice and education the staff provided suggest a good deal about the general quality of daily life in the Transition House. Life in the Transition House was physically comfortable, with well-kept buildings and plenty of trees surrounding the buildings and a field to one side, all within the walls. There was an asphalt playground on which to practice and play football, and behind and next to the dormitories were areas of smooth dirt on which they played marbles (see photographs 7.6 & 7.7). Behind the main building was a sloped area of trees and plants. Over one week in May this became the site of the spontaneous and clearly enjoyable construction of playhouses or shacks, in which many of the boys participated (see photograph 7.8).

Although most of the boys had had some years or months of formal education before arriving at the Transition House, for many there had been a long gap, sometimes a matter of years, between their last day at school and their first classes in the Transition House. The characteristics of the three classrooms, led by Doña Nelda, Sylvia and Lydia, varied according to the content of lessons, the dynamics between the particular boys in each set, and the teachers themselves. In Doña Nelda's *salón* the boys practiced basic and fine motor skills such as cutting pieces of paper and gluing them, and practiced writing their names, many for the first time. Here, where boys were being prepared to enter the first grade, their mixture of abilities in maths (commonly high amongst street-living children because of their experience with handling money) and lack of concentration (a consequence of little experience of sitting still for long periods of time and possibly affected by substance abuse) made this class the one in which issues of life on the street were most apparent.

Meanwhile, in Lydia's class they practised multiplication, worked with history textbooks, and had group discussions. In Sylvia's class they drew pictures of Colombia, talked about the environment, and practised addition, subtraction and multiplication, developing the skills needed to enter the second and third grades in the third stage.

Although there were moments when the boys clearly felt challenged by some of their coursework, and feared failure⁴, the Transition House education process was designed to bring the boys up to a standard where they could join existing classes in the third stage. And while some seemed to explicitly value this instruction - Cesar who cited the education afforded by the institution as one of his main reasons for staying in CCS- for others it was probably less relevant, simply another aspect of the texture of life in an institution. They understood education as a part of the programme, within the frame of progression that was a reason for coming to the Transition House.

While the staff sometimes lamented that, as a whole, the group was further behind academically than the previous one, the teachers also commented with pleasure on the fact that some would stay behind after the morning's lessons or go in early from the mid morning break to complete tasks or get started on the next lesson.

Clearly, as suggested earlier, the power of the educators to condition the quality of life was immense, and the encounters, relationships and rapport the boys had with them was a source of both pleasure and frustration. In this period of fieldwork I found the Transition House to be a more caring and relaxed environment than the one I had found when I visited before, as mentioned earlier. Lydia, the new director, confronted her role in a manner that seemed to have had an effect on the general atmosphere of the Transition House. It was Lydia, for example, who suggested that the practice of burning the effigy of a street child should be abandoned in favour of something less direct and less offensive. In general, the relationships the boys had with female staff tended to invoke something of the relationship of mother and child, and were based on qualities of care, affection and gentleness, to an extent that made them qualitatively different from those with male staff. Nonetheless, the attitudes of male educators varied. Manuel was a patient man with a gentle voice, and Miguel, the psychologist, was playful, and was always composed with the boys.

⁴ Cesar used to help his friend Julio with maths as he was in a higher grade, and other would manifest concern or even embarrassment about the quality of their work (Juan David once tried to cover his cut out shapes glued to a page when I tried to take a photo of him at his desk)

The performance of the role of educator - or indeed of professional or support staff - in the boarding setting often invoked these adults' moral, philosophical and emotional perspectives. Many staff spoke of choosing to work here explicitly because of the social nature of the work, with children who were perceived and constructed as subjects who had suffered unduly in many ways. The need for affection and close relationships, given the boys' condition as interned subjects, created complex tensions with the staff's long hours⁵. Indeed, the work was considered difficult by many not only because of the long and often unsociable hours, but also because of the tension between extending affection and emotional support, and exercising disciplinary functions, and the constant efforts to try to make the boys understand the educators - and institution's- views of the reasons they should stay and work at adapting their behaviour to the institution's norms. Staff sometimes discussed the fact that this type of work was hard, but invoked social commitments to their work as corollary motivating factor⁶.

While most boys expressed appreciation for the staff's efforts, and found the combination of support, advice and encouragement part of a positive experience in the Transition House, there were also moments when adults' power became a cause for complaint.

Dislikes: Humiliation, Being Hit, Long Meetings

Orlando mentioned various aspects of life in the Transition House that irritated him (see above). Cesar echoed Orlando's complaints about being referred to as *gamines*. For him, the Transition House was also generally 'okay', but

⁵ Lydia's two sons, for example, usually came to the Transition House after school rather than go home to an empty house.

⁶ The work of educators was in the process of being professionalized at CCS, where educator-level staff were obliged, as of July 1999, to undertake a diploma course developed by the institution in conjunction with a local university. The perceived need for this seemed to stem from concerns that staff's different manners of relating to their jobs and subjects create a multiplicity of approaches, rather than a continually coherent institutional pedagogy. However the design of the course also highlighted the emphasis on certain kinds of discourse (it included pedagogy, sociology, psychology) which would further consolidate the position of boys as particular kinds of subjects. This has particularly implications for Patio staff's interactions with boys and other spaces and times when staff seemed to best relate to boys through evocation of personal experiences. This kind of knowledge would be displaced by the new standardised discourses. However it was too early to detect the precise effects of this process during the period of my fieldwork.

“what I don’t like is how the educators keep on saying to us that we are like *gamins*. Yesterday the *cucho*⁷ said to Orlando, ‘don’t do this, or that to me’, telling him off, well we don’t like it much either. They’re like that with the others and with one⁸.”

These public and collective accusations of the boys still being *gamins* had the implicit corollary that they had somehow failed to assume or succeed in the process of becoming ‘new men’. These sorts of *regaños* or reprimands were not included in any formal representation of the pedagogical process, but if the educators’ goal was to make the boys listen, they achieved that – the boys listened with anguish. They were the low points of daily life, when as a group, they felt humiliated and chastised.

Orlando also mentioned meetings as being problematic. The Transition House in general was “fine”, he said,

“but what’s hard are the meetings. The one I like is the nighttime one and the review of agreements. You can see the point, you see what is not right, I am not doing well for example on the question of bullying. But the weekend meeting is *carreta* (rubbish). If you’ve had a problem, you go find an educator and tell them. But in front of everyone..?”

He objected to the manner in which educators would hold public discussions about individual matters, as the weekend meetings required boys to account for their time out of the institution, visiting family, the Patio or elsewhere. He seemed to accept the nightly self-evaluation meetings as moments for thinking about his own behaviour and relationships with other boys, but objected to the public confessional when it had to do with things outside the institution.

Orlando was well aware of what the staff saw as problematic aspects of his behaviour. On more than one occasion during the months in the Transition House, he (and he alone) was made to sign agreements (*compromisos*) where he declared that he would try to change his behaviour; principally, controlling his anger. He was once called into a staff meeting to present his version of an incident. His behavioural ‘problems’ were thus on one level being dealt with in a fairly confidential manner, because of staff awareness of his sensitivity, but they were also brought up in public

⁷ Male educator

⁸ I use ‘one’ where Cesar’s said ‘*con uno*’, which is not exactly ‘with ‘you’’ or ‘me’ but a personal pronoun in the first person.

discussion, in front of the other boys. His complaint about such exercises in public shaming seems to hinge on the duplicity of the mechanisms, and the ability of educators to determine at whim the manner in which issues would be dealt with, and in which he was powerless. He could do as they told him and then they could re-write the rules at whim.

A sense of injustice could also be expressed by younger boys. Diego, the quiet boy who as I noted in Chapter Four spent weekends at his aunt's house, was rarely in trouble, but complained about how he once got sent out of one of these night time meetings.

‘...[O]nce they sent me out of the meeting and they left me waiting on the pitch and so I went to the kiosk because it was very cold. And Freddy gave me a *calvazo* (knuckle in the head).

‘Did it hurt?’, I asked.

‘Oof, of course.’

‘And what did you feel?’

“Angry - because it was very cold.”

‘And do you think its okay for adults to hit children?’

“Yes”.

“Do they have the right?”

‘If they have a reason, yes.’

Of course, institutional policy and the teachings of Don Bosco were against hitting children, but it was one area where policy and practice seemed to diverge; mostly at the hands of the night-time educators who were alumni of CCS and worked as volunteers⁹. For the boys, recurrent incidents of being hit caused enormous frustration, and demonstrated their impotence to defend themselves against the powers of the institution. As Cesar put it, one of the worst things about the Transition House was “the educators shouting at you all the time. And many educators are developing the vice of hitting you, slapping.” Interestingly, he used the term *vice* (*vicio*) implying that the educators’ use of force is an immoral addiction or habit. Younger [night-time] educators, who had been through the process

⁹ In exchange they were given rooms on campus, and one of them was finishing high school.

themselves, were seen to be giving the boys the treatment they had received. Ideas about physical masculinity being 'formed' through self-defence may have been relevant, or perhaps they felt that if they had suffered so should these boys. In the journal that Cesar kept between June and October of 1999, his first two entries relate to problems with one young educator.

"Saturday 12 June:

Difficulty with Roberto. He started to say that all Rolos¹⁰ were *guey*¹¹ and the Rolo got angry and hit him with his cap and Roberto punched him twice in the back and the Rolo started to cry and punched him back."

That the educator should make such comments treaded the wrong side of a line between playfulness and insulting the 'Rolo'. In fact, Roberto seemed often to resort to this sort of behaviour with the boys, as Cesar's subsequent entry reads:

"Saturday 12 June:

Difficulty with Roberto. He started to grab me by the hair and I yanked my head and it hurt when he pulled my hair and I didn't eat lunch because I was so angry and I punched him once in the stomach and he started elbowing¹² me hard."

That Cesar should refuse to eat lunch could be a direct effect of his anger, or a physical manifestation of resistance to power (cf Bordo 1990). He was also symbolically rejecting the protection and care which the institution offered. He was not alone in this tactic. Lunchtime was often a messy affair, with educators standing outside trying to coax a child in, or talking amongst themselves and deciding to let the boy in question go without lunch because he knew the rules and would thus have to go hungry until dinner time. Fernanda, the cook, was a stable figure for the boys, particularly because of her measured responses to incidents of conflict. She was also popular with them¹³, and sometimes would keep food aside for them out of sympathy.

¹⁰ *Rolos* is a common term in Antioquia for people from Bogotá; Pedro's nickname was thus 'el Rolo' and it further stuck he was the only one from Bogotá in the group.

¹¹ 'Guey' is what Cesar wrote down, although it is not a widespread form of insult –it literally refers to cows or bovines–and it may have been because Cesar had never seen insults written down that he misspelled some other insult here.

¹² My translation of *me encendió a mancazos*, which means 'beating up', by hitting with elbow in sensitive point in arm or leg muscle (*un mancazo*).

¹³ One indicator of her popularity, the quality of the food and homeliness the kitchen represented (even though it was full of industrial machines), was that some boys would regularly do more than their chores in the kitchen out of appreciation for her and the neutral space the kitchen represented.

Whenever boys mentioned such incidents, I also asked them about how they felt about hitting more generally. Their views suggested that the use of physical force against children was not wrong in principle. It was the unfair misuse of punishment that caused offence, or when punishment was meted out for a wrong doing that was neither explained nor obvious to the child. Orlando said that yes, a child could be hit, if he had been disrespectful. Diego was particularly thoughtful on the subject, concluding that “When they have [the] reason, yes”¹⁴, it was acceptable for this punishment to be applied. As the conversation continued, I asked if he missed his parents, and he nodded. “In spite of the fact they hit you a lot?” I asked. “It doesn’t matter. Because they hit you it’s not a reason to leave them altogether.”¹⁵ And he added that an ideal arrangement for him would be to see them at weekends, although this was sadly impractical because they lived far away.

Cesar likewise brought the question of home and parental relationships into a discussion about hitting. “Why should you let yourself be hit here if you were hardly hit at home?” he asked indignantly. The tension that builds during a series of events that lead to a beating by another educator, Freddy, was recorded by Cesar in his journal. The tension in his unpunctuated sentences is palpable:

“Sunday 20 June

We were watching the film and Juan David took off his shoes and all the boys drew away and the *cucho* called him disgusting pig (*cochino*) and hit him on the head and Juan David went out and later some others went to sleep and Freddy had said that no-one was to sleep and Freddy sent us out and outside José [another boy, also sent out with Cesar] started being noisy and Julio said some words to him and José called him a son of a bitch and Julio punched him and they took him out of line and José kept messing around¹⁶ in line and Nelson told Freddy and Freddy came out all angry and took off his belt and gave José three whippings and they told us that on Sundays there weren’t going to be any films.

Sunday evening films were supposed to be a treat, and as something the boys obviously liked, the threat of cancellation was supposed to induce proper behaviour. This incident of ‘whipping’ with a belt echoes the comments in Chapter Four about

¹⁴ *Desde que tengan la razón, sí.*

¹⁵ *No le hace. Porque ellos le pegan a uno tampoco tiene que irse de todo.*

¹⁶ This is my translation of his word ‘descontrolando’; out of hand, acting up.

the role of the belt in inducing the right behaviour and respect in children in many families. The belt becomes an instrument for imposing order, an extension of the person's authority that avoids direct physical contact with the subject¹⁷. It is also potentially extremely painful, depending on how hard the person is hit. Cesar does not tell us how José reacted. He was one of the younger and quieter boys, with no experience of the street.

Sometimes, the frustrations were about other types of manipulations and injustices perpetrated by educators, even if they did not use physical violence against the boys. Alejandro complained once about being reprimanded by Manuel for his management of his troop:

“...last week, I told Dario to get in line in the troop, and he started crying and walked off. Later Manuel said to me ‘the leader wants to give it to them’. The educator can say what he likes to you...? No! - but Manuel said ‘Yes because I’m the educator.’”

Alejandro complains that Manuel has unfairly accused him of wielding his power as head of the troop unjustly, which Alejandro takes as an insult. But he is particularly incensed by the fact that as an educator, Manuel can say what he likes and even insult, without any possibility of Alejandro defending himself against the charges.

In his journal Cesar also recorded an encounter with Lydia over a pair of trousers, where he similarly complains that educators are beyond accountability or redress. This raises issues about the capacity of children to seek justice, and the frustration they experience when running head on into adult intransigence.

“Saturday 26th of June

Lydia, you go to claim something you need with your points and Lydia had said to me that if I cut my hair she would give me the trousers and I said but that's what I've got my points for and she said well we'll talk later and lots of boys say to her they need this that or the other and she'll say there aren't any and a few days later she'll give to those she's already given to, she'd already given to Dario but because he was going for the weekend to a volunteer's house she gave him shoes and socks and Otoniel had asked her for some socks and she'd said I don't have any and I asked her for some shoes and she

¹⁷ In a household survey, 22.4% of parents in Medellín responded that they used the belt (*correa, correaço*) as a form of punishing their children. See Appendix 10.

said they're all gone and how come if she's taken them out to lend she says they're all gone".

This discretionary lending of clothes was an aspect of policy which reflected the fluidity of the programme and its method, such that if children were going out or visiting the doctor, Lydia would try to ensure they looked smart. There was also often a genuine lack of resources, when Lydia's formal requests for more shoes of particular sizes, for example, were caught up in the bureaucratic system, which in turn was under other pressures¹⁸. But for the boys it represented yet another instance in which the powers of educators were applied in a discriminatory manner, or even at whim. They get punished for things they haven't done, sent out of watching films for being sleepy, get told they have to have haircuts as well as earn their points for new trousers.

IV. Embodiment and Change

It is possible that limits placed on the agency and actions of boys within the institution are tolerated because of the material benefits. As we shall see, different material conditions provide a new vantage point from which to consider the street, and for some, the ways of thinking about their pasts that were put forward at the initiation ceremony have come to have personal relevance.

Do Rituals Make 'New Men'?

When, some months into the Transition House process, I asked boys what they recalled of the initiation ceremony, children thought about it on a variety of levels. For some it had been a religious occasion, appropriately, for others a nice day with new clothes, while for others, it was an elaborate symbolic display of fictions.

Young Juan David's response was the most apparently straightforward¹⁹: "When you're going to come to a Transition House, you say 'We're new'". His perfunctory interpretation of the ceremony seemed appropriate for the youngest child there. Juan David made a statement about something he saw and experienced, which he seems to understand as a practice which happens, but for reasons that were beyond

¹⁸ A buyer in the administrative centre purchased all of the goods for boys in the Transition House.

¹⁹ They were all asked what same questions, through an interview based on a questionnaire; see Appendix 6.

his understanding. Thus he did not offer an evaluation of the event. Perhaps he had experienced certain rituals before: a baptism, a wedding, or other religious event, or a civic occasion such as a town fair, or *feria de pueblo*, which are common in rural and urban Colombia. But to establish the difference between a regular practice and a special occasion might have depended on frameworks of thought and experience that many boys did not have.

The experience of witnessing, celebrating or marking occasions such as birthdays and deaths was probably common for most, but to what extent they understood what was being marked, and why, is difficult to ascertain²⁰. Juan David, who seemed to have spent much of the two previous years wandering around the hillside settlement to which his father had brought himself and seven siblings, was unlikely to have had much in the way of an authoritative or orientating presence in his life²¹. Juan David's conditions and sources of knowledge were thus quite different from those of boys who had spent a considerable amount of time on the street. Although again lacking in authoritative guidance on interpreting and understanding the world, the sharing of experiences between boys created a space for the discussion of these issues, and for the construction of explicative theories.

The fact that the highlight of the ceremony had been a mass was memorable and appropriate for Mauricio, Julio's little brother, who even offered a comment on the priest's performance: "It seemed good to me; I liked it, the mass. The priest was good. Some got bored, that it went on so long, but for me [it was] good because we'd just got here". Its possible that Mauricio had been exposed to religious practices more than some other boys, as he seems to consider it appropriate that a mass should be used to mark this moment of transition and arrival.

Others had mixed responses, which seemed to downplay its significance. Nelson, the oldest here at 15, said: "I don't remember what the ceremony signified..." Then,

²⁰ Toren (2002: 119-120) suggests that before a certain age, children do not read the symbolic meanings of ritual onto behaviour; it is simply how things are.

²¹ This appreciation is based on a visit to the father at the home with the social worker, as discussed in Chapter Four, and subsequent conversations with both her and Juan David about his life. There was no church nearby either.

his memory triggered, he added “you come like a *gamin*, and now you’re going to change... good”.

For others it was a more personal affair that hinged on them making a choice about whether or not they liked it. Otoniel remained ambivalent, as well as asserting his agency and selfhood: “It was a day when you came to try it out, and I came to see if I liked it here”. He went on to mention that he had left in the first few days, but “they brought me back” (*me volvieron a traer*). He had gone to the street, where he said that the cold had been tough, and that the effects of the marijuana he smoked on the street were stronger after a period of abstinence. His recounting of his return to the Transition House as ‘*me volvieron a traer*’, implying a lack of agency, fits with his declared ambivalence about the project and its intentions²².

Cesar wasn’t sure the mass or any of the new conditions of the Transition House were especially important for coming off drugs, and he seems to reject the interpretation that he might need the strict conditions of the Transition House to either stop taking drugs or become a ‘new man’. “I didn’t pay that much attention”, he said of the ceremony, in a dismissive tone, “it was a mass. Even if you come from the street, you’re going to be a new man when you don’t take drugs. You don’t even have to be here to be a new man, because as long as you leave drugs you are one.” For Cesar, to stop taking drugs -not being in an institution- made you a new man, even if this marked a change from the street in other ways. In Cesar’s eyes the institution was creating a certain amount of fiction around the whole process, and he considers himself capable of authoring such change. He and Otoniel had participated in the ritual, then, but without any intentions of commitment to the symbolic acts it involved. Both emphasised their own agency and ability to resist the interpretations of the institution, evaluating the moments and processes in their own terms.

²² As the group had only just entered the Transition House, Patio staff would have noted the presence of any of these boys and talked to them, as well as reported it to Transition House staff. Patio staff could not have forced Otoniel to return, but the offer was made and transportation to the Transition House offered and accepted.

For Orlando, the premise of the day was amusing, but the changes he was feeling as a result of the process were embodied. “We’re new men!” he said with theatrical exaggeration. “Why?” “Because”, he responded, in a quieter and more serious tone, “we’re going to leave the drugs, the theft... here we’re going to change and we’re going to feel new. The body [feels new too]...in its actual physical, and mental state, because drugs can lead to your death. You do stupid things...Without drugs, you feel normal.” This reference to the different physical sensations experienced as a result of taking and not taking drugs echoes Otoniel’s experiences on the street when he left for a couple of days. Not only did the regime of discipline orientate their behaviours, but their bodies were adapting to the new conditions of existence in the Transition House. In fact many of the changes described are felt at, and expressed with reference to, the bodily level.

Others also emphasised the fact that a break had been made with drugs on that day, some suggesting that the difference was related to the space itself. Jhon said: “Now that you’re here it’s not like the Patio. There you went out and took drugs, and here you start leaving drugs.” Even for those who had never tried drugs, like Diego, their absence was an issue because of the danger of ‘catching’ vices that life at the Patio had involved: “The day we arrived?” he asked me rhetorically. “Very good, very pretty because we came to be new men.” “Why?” I asked. “Because when you came here it was to progress, of course I don’t take drugs but in the Patio you catch²³ them and its better to avoid them. Here you don’t catch those vices like at the Patio”.

This change in behaviour for them seemed to emanate not so much from the boys themselves, but was a product of the conditions of existence in the Transition House. Differing in their knowledge and experience of drugs, Jhon having been a regular night time presence in the Patio *parche*, Diego seemingly happy to have avoided drugs altogether, both seem to connect the change with the institution and its spaces.

²³Here I translate his use of the word ‘*coger*’ as ‘to catch’, as in ‘to take up’, to become involved in, because he seems to be implying that drug taking is a contagious form of behaviour.

For Milton, drugs were part of the past, and clothes were an enticing part of the future: for him the initiation day meant "...that you'd left the drugs, and are now new men and we've got to a new stage." "What did you feel that day?" I asked. "Cool (*bacano*), because they gave us new clothes." For Humberto, who was almost not selected on the grounds of having a father in paid employment²⁴, both new and old clothes were symbolically significant that day: "The day when we burned all the clothes? That was for us to change, that we had to change, and we burned all the clothes that we no longer needed. The priest said we had to try hard to be new men, and lots, lots left because they didn't want to change. Lots didn't want to take advantage of this". His feelings of sadness for the other boys who had for various reasons not persevered with the project hint at changes in the boys' views of the street, a crucial element of the process I will return to below. The fire and the destruction of clothes which were no longer of use was particularly memorable, and he recalls the point of the process, which required the boys to transform themselves, as being a challenge. In Humberto's terms, those who didn't want to take advantage (*aprovechar*) of the project were avoiding the challenge it presented, but in his – and the institution's- views, also lacked a desire to change.

His comments suggest an assimilation of the views of the institution, that the individual will Guillermo had talked about was important for confronting the challenges the process represented. Others also take the metaphors on board, as Asad (1993) suggests, becoming ways of rethinking their own pasts. Alejandro, for example, said the day was about "The change that... like when you're a thief, right? And they take you to jail and there you can't steal. And here you can't. I stole before, even from my mother. When she sent me on errands, and I'd keep the change." How much did you ever steal off her? I asked. "Oh, never coins greater than 50, 100, maximum 200 [pesos]." He describes himself as someone who has stolen, 'even' from his mother, but he seemed to want to qualify this, by explaining that he hadn't stolen much money. He also makes a correlation between the Transition House and jail, such that such acts of stealing are impossible in both jail and the Transition House because of the ways in which they, *gamins* and thieves, are enclosed and monitored. He thus alludes to two types of effects of power- one that

²⁴ He subsequently left the Transition House to rejoin his family.

constrains, through surveillance and confinement, and another which has made him, ten year old Alejandro, understand his own previous behaviour as wrong and perhaps meriting punishment. Perhaps he had listened carefully to the words of St Paul to the Ephesians in the mass, and now looked at his own acts with shame.

Pedro, who never stole himself, tags on the issue of stealing as an explanation of how other boys had changed. Of that first day, he said “We arrived, they greeted us in the mass, the priest blessed us and told us that we were coming to be new men”. “What does that mean?” I queried. “That we were going to overcome all our difficulties, coming to the Transition House was to better ourselves (*superarnos*), but now they’re barely robbing”, he said with reference to other boys.

For many the changes in lifestyle, actions and behaviours that the new regime imposed was reflected most clearly in the absence of drugs from their new environment. For some, such as Milton, Humberto, Diego and Jhon, this was a clear and largely positive change. Solvents were infamous amongst the boys not only for the direct effects they produced on the brain and body. Many boys seemed aware of their secondary effects, such as involvement in accidents or fights. The street demanded of those that inhabited it a high and constant state of alertness, such that in the Transition House some boys’ biological and nervous systems were adapting to new existential conditions, including a different state of consciousness. Although drugs were, at one level, no longer needed to stave off cold and hunger, their social relevance remained a testing issue at weekends. In the early days of the Transition House more than a few got lectures from Lydia after they were found to have brought drugs in with them, and later, when the boys reached the third stage, drugs became an issue again -as we shall see in the next chapter.

Not everyone responded to the prohibitions and limits imposed by the institution in the same way. In different ways Orlando, Otoniel and Cesar all seemed to want to dispute the premises of powers that were invoked in the situation. Their reactions were not *a priori* anti-authority, like those of the boys in Willis’s (1977) study of British working class youth. Rather, they were experiencing how certain adults attempted to circumscribe or set parameters for their own agency. The boys’

reactions were not of deliberate antagonism, but grew out of a prolonged existence in a particular context where they were constantly reminded of their weaknesses, in a way that contradicted their own experiences and understandings of how agency functioned. A ritual could not create the conditions of change in a boy, nor for Cesar were such specific conditions necessary to force a rupture with drugs. Rather, while the institution offered conditions for feeling new, boys also disputed the power the institution had over them.

The material changes to boys' conditions involved struggles, not only with educators, but also with themselves, as Alejandro suggests in the context of rethinking his previous activities. Those who resisted the accounts with which they were to re-write their views of the world, talked about changes of a material nature, less apparently ready to accept the entirety of Padre Carlos's judgements about their previous lives. Many still had friends and family who lived on the street, an issue that becomes a source of contrasting feelings.

Cesar offered a view of changes that emphasised his new-found, or regained, status as a non-street child. When asked what, if anything had changed about him, he said: "Lots of things... when I go to the centre now... I get scared (*me da miedo*). I'm no longer accustomed to seeing druggies (*viciosos*), I was dirtier. Here I study... now I am scared to go to the Patio *parche*." This newly established fear of his former haunts is linked to a new self identity which is related to personal presentation, dress and cleanliness. "Another thing", he said, "is that here we keep clean (*nos mantenemos limpios*), and we don't walk around Guayaquil barefoot. Now I'd be embarrassed to go barefoot." "Why?" I asked. "Because one was of the street; now it is as if you were in a family home."

For Cesar, then, the institution re-activated lessons from home, about decency and personal presentation, linked to ideas about presentation demonstrating self-respect, reflected in the embarrassment he said he would now feel if walking barefoot. But it also made him vulnerable in his old environment.

Positive Identity through Visible Status

The role of clothing as a marker of status has been suggested earlier in this thesis, and CCS's policy of trying to induce a positive self-image through clothing is coterminous with dominant social values, as Cesar and others recognise. It was a powerful incentive in the Transition House, as Orlando's tears at his ill-fitting new shoes on the first day suggested.

As Hansen points out in her discussion of clothing and youth in Zambia, practices around clothing consumption are "a form of bodily praxis which tells us something about 'being-in-the-world'" (2000: 32). Although boys in the Transition House did not have the ability to choose their clothing, many of them were already aware of the meanings it could convey. As I will discuss below, not all the boys were keen or interested in taking up these aspects of praxis, but those that had an eye on style and who were closer to adolescence relished the chance to be seen in new and relatively stylish items. For youth in Zambia - and Colombia - "...identities and desires ...are shaped in complex ways in interaction with people, commodities and ideas that stem from the world beyond home" (Hansen 2000: 34). And although youth in Medellín are not caught up in a culture that is quite as concerned with labels in, for example, Brazzaville (Friedman 1990), many were also overtly concerned with status, whilst probably sharing the preoccupations of the Zambian youth who Hansen describes as caring about "...affordable clothes that will fit Zambian bodies" (ibid, citing Hansen 1994).

Colombians are often extremely aware of the possibilities of clothing to mark status and their place in the world. This awareness amongst boys like Otoniel is also shaped by the legacy of the youth culture (see Chapter Two). The wealth acquired as *sicarios* (contract killers) or from being involved in gangs gave young men the opportunity to be 'someone' in their neighbourhoods. But while styles of clothing vary and resonate with social status and purchasing power, wearing clean clothes in a decent state of repair is something most Colombians aspire to. To appear dirty or messy would indicate a lack of self-respect; in the local phraseology *cuidarse* and *estar bien presentado* (to look after yourself; to be well-presented) are important, and caring for the self is evident in middle and upper class, who seek to maximise their

symbolic capital through particular codes of appearance and clothing. Amongst the poor, items that withstand wear are passed between family members.

Inside the Transition House, many boys looked after their clothes, lending items to friends, and washing things by hand, usually with a view to looking good outside the institution at weekends. While Olga, the cook's assistant, washed their clothes for them, most didn't have many items of clothing. While some used the weekly *estimulo* (pocket money) of \$800 pesos for bus fares at weekends, others spent it on clothes in the Cambalache, where old clothes were available cheaply. Such older and more worn items could be worn inside the Transition House where no-one of importance would see them, while others steadfastly refused to develop any interest in clothes and the ways in which they were worn on the body, and regularly forfeited points for personal presentation.

Cesar adds the idea that the Transition House is somehow like a family home, in terms of its effect on his identity. This new identity was constructed in part out of the 'positive' values offered by status as a non-*gamin*, as proposed by the institution, and was marked especially by the new clothes. But it was also based on a new sense of shame about and rejection of his former self. This was particularly relevant in the context of returning to their old stomping ground of the Patio, the *parche* outside it, and areas such as the Cambalache. While these expressions about new clothes, a cleaner self and more socially acceptable identity were largely positive, these feelings were also correlated with new fears. New material possessions such as clothes and shoes had suddenly placed the boys in the category of potential victims of crime, where before some of them had been perpetrators. This was true for Alejandro, whom we heard earlier elaborating a comparison with a prison to describe why he no longer stole. Now in the Transition House, he said "Since the first time [I saw the street differently]...after they brought us here, I was scared, to go near the Patio".

The fact that both these boys manifested fear of the places that had once been familiar (although more so for Cesar than for Alejandro) raises important issues about alienating the boys from their previous social environments and circles of

friends. This is of course a larger issue surrounding the effects of institutionalisation, but the tangible changes the boys describe suggest one way the institution causes children to sever links with previous networks. It is the flipside of the changes the boys mostly perceive as positive, and suggests the extent to which the institution succeeded in making the boys perceive their former selves as dangerous beings. After all, the people who were still around the *parche* outside the Patio had been their friends, their *parceros*. Institutions can clearly exacerbate children's vulnerability by cutting them off from their links with their families, friends and communities. This, however, is a crucial element of what CCS tries to do. Being re-united with parents was acceptable, as Guillermo had made clear before they left the Patio. Conversely, friends and the street were never anything less than a source of danger, corruption and pollution. For the boys in the Transition House, estrangement from the social environments (*entornos sociales*) was physical, symbolic and ideological. Many boys seemed to see their old friends as being in a bad state, and found the street a place full of fear-inducing people and spaces.

Carlitos also expressed fear, and said the street now seemed different to him. "I don't hang around on the street any more. You go to the centre and it seems kind of strange, sort of different, not like when you were there. Now you see it as kind of dangerous, they used to say that to you, but you didn't [see it that way]...and now you do," he explained. Fear of being robbed also stood out as an issue for Orlando: "Oooof...!" he said. "Look, before I used to go round the Cambalache like that, without fear, and now I am scared because they might steal from me." Milton also accused *gamines* of stealing: "Now those *gamines* rob you", he explained; from his new standpoint as an outsider, the *parche* boys were now 'those *gamines*'. The institution's view of robbing as a vice and an immoral activity had taken precedence over their own views and experiences, forgetting the logic of the street that you stole because you had nothing and no other way of obtaining what you needed to survive.

The status of non-*gamines* which differentiated them from their pasts, and for Nelson, from his brother, also seemed poignant. Nelson said: "I look at my brother now, who is a *gamin*, and I see that I am in a better condition than him, ...he didn't

want to progress.” He also commented that they looked in a bad way²⁵, and added “Well, they look very dirty, [their language is] very rude, with bad habits of robbing each other.” Carlitos aptly remembered, “They” (Patio staff) used to say to the boys that the street was bad and scary and dirty, but it was meaningless to the boys when they had no experience of alternatives. Three months down the line, the majority of them seemed to have come round to the institutional view – at least on this matter.

Their sadness and empathy for the condition of people on the street resonated throughout their comments, and was summed up by Humberto: “If only they had somewhere like we have here, that they took advantage of”, he lamented. Jhon, a small boy with significant street experience himself, commented on the friends he had seen recently on the street: “I saw...Satur...Monday, I saw Jaime and Julio (two boys who had left the Transition House), around Bosconia, with long hair full of sacol.” “What did you feel”, I asked. “Sadness, pity... because they didn’t take advantage.” And Orlando, perhaps thinking of his own family, saw more than just the boys. “Ahh, it makes me sad” he said. “Yesterday, for example, I saw a lady with two children and those children with hunger...it makes you sad, and pitiful (*da remordimiento*).”

On one level, the boys have an enormous empathy with those still suffering on the street. They clearly express a sense of relative well-being derived from being in the Transition House and not on the street. Now they noted that glue stuck in hair was unsightly; that the people still on the street were dirty, that they were hungry; and it was a space where they now felt fear. We have seen how the boys experienced embodied changes as well as new identities.

Although these changes were experienced as embodied, material and psychological, the relative authority of the educators could negate or diminish these perceptions. The label of ‘*gamin*’ flung back at them by an ill-tempered educator hurt because it suggested none of the changes the boys vividly describe were really true, and that their status as *gamines* remained immovable. This suggests the limits of boys’ agency, and the boys’ frustrations at trying to get adults to take their views seriously. As

²⁵ *los veo mal*

child subjects of this process, boys do not have the power to impose or argue their own views, and must instead accept the ways in which the institution defines them – even if they are evidentially wrong. Orlando and Cesar both ran into this problem. They knew they had seen and felt the punches and shoves of educators, but what was the point in calling the *defensora* (state-appointed child advocate) if they knew that she would be more likely to believe an adult’s version of events? Hypothetically, the adult could even argue violence was necessary or provoked, and even the majority of the boys seemed to think that adults had the right to hit them ‘if they had a reason’. Although this was their stated view, I never heard any boy declaring he thought he had been justly hit.

When the boys describe their new views of the street as a dangerous place, and construct a new identity around their embodied changes, they have been denied part of their identity. They come into conflict with the regimentation of life, the punishments, the surveillance, the enclosure, and sometimes, like Orlando, reject the need for public confessions and humiliation, in the context of ‘self evaluations’. While, as I have shown, some assimilate the rhetoric which justified the disciplinary mechanisms more than others, others find themselves contesting the powers that be, as well as the rhetoric. But for all the frustrations with the arbitrary and complete character of power in the Transition House, the third stage would demand different things of them altogether, as the boys that made up ‘Promotion #39’ would soon find out.

Bodies and Power

As Csordas observes, the range of contexts in which the body is transformed by violence are numerous: domestic, gang, sexual, ethnic and self-destructive (1994:3). The structures that shape the arenas of action in which such violence is possible can all be traced to political formations. And if the body were not the object and subject of torture, murder, attack and hunger, then where else can manifestations of power that is explicitly or implicitly political be found? As Foucault cogently observed, the body’s history involves numerous discursive formations that constitute it in different ways. In the clinic, the asylum and the prison, the body is the subject of multiple mechanisms that attempt to control it.

We see, however, that children do resist, with their bodies, with tactics such as refusing food, failing to dress correctly, using it to fight, in short. In the Transition House we see how the body is at once the object of power and normative practices that attempt to bring these bodies, defined as asocial, into line with certain socially sanctioned standards, and the ultimate site of resistance. For the boys, it is also the only site of resistance. At the same time Foucault's observation about the positivity and compelling force of power is useful, recalling that the boys' also appreciate many of the changes to their existential conditions: power can be positive. This is why it works, and why boys stay and submit.

We see then how the transformative aspect of the exercise of power can be both positive and negative simultaneously. If on the one hand they are given new clothes and access to education, they are also subject to the whims of certain powers, and denied freedom. The boys who chose not to even start at the Patio or enter the Transition House were rejecting what the institution had to offer, on the grounds that they understood the price would be a reduction in their autonomy. On the street they experience relative autonomy, but they are also persecuted and maintained under surveillance by state and para-statal security forces. Indeed, their presence on the street is itself a function of others of power relations which marginalize them: parents who lack employment, education and housing; political violence which has made them displaced persons, and cultural discourses which label them parasites and 'disposable'.

The boys had developed relationships with others and had learned, to varying degrees, to obey the schedules of Transition House life. They were also encouraged to think about the next step of institutional life, the third stage, selection for which was meant to be another stepping stone in their path to progress. Many had begun to internalise the values recommended by the institution and its staff, cleaning their teeth regularly and earning points for new clothes through good behaviour. Others had clashed in frustration with those in positions of authority, as we have heard, arguing with educators, talking about leaving, and complaining about educators' tactics to make them conform. As we heard through their words, staff tactics to

control the boys ranged from exclusion from leisure activities, to verbal assaults, to physical punishments.

V. Conclusion

Power is everywhere for the boys. It is behind their newfound ability to play marbles and have somewhere to play. It is invested in the food being offered, and in the clothes that make them feel like acceptable members of society. In the boys' own words we have seen something of how they experienced the institution's twin uses of rewards and punishments to induce its ideas of correct behaviour. They also display in their perceptions and views a degree of internalisation of the terms of reference used by the institution to encourage and discipline the boys. They describe how and why they are now different from the boys who arrived at the Transition House that February day to be 'new men', and how this has awakened feelings of decency and shame, as well as awakened new fears. This is particularly true of their views of the street, from which they now felt alienated. The institution could argue that in trying to 'empower' the boys to have different and decent futures, it had to alienate them from the street²⁶. While some of the boys accept the rhetoric which presents this trajectory of change as positive and virtuous, the construction of new bodies is done on the ashes of the old ones. In the initiation ceremony we saw how representations and symbols of every conceivable aspect of street life were ritually burned and destroyed. In terms of the Catholic ritual this might be about purification, but it had to start with the premise that these boys were somehow polluted. The institution thus objectified the views held by the general public of street living children, as anti-social and pre-cultural, and destroyed symbols of them so that the process of making the boys into social beings could start again. But no process of reform could be so clearly executed.

While they clearly appreciate much of what the institution offers in terms of facilities and staff support in experiencing life as 'new men', many also resist the institution's attempt to frame the changes that occur to boys' bodies and selves as a product of the institutional regime itself. This suggests how boys retain a critical

²⁶ See Cheater 1999 on complexities of concepts of empowerment.

awareness of their own well-being. It also shows that the boys have keen appreciations of how when power is invested in people in positions of authority, it can be abused. Boys demonstrate their desire to achieve a different relationship to society, but frustration when educators suggest they are incapable of actually changing, and will always be '*gamins*'. If boys have different views about the street, these views are submerged in behavioural changes, the objects of the process of change. This suggests the extent to which the street is a 'ghost in the machine', the *raison d'être* that is not open to discussion, but is a social and cultural space associated with delinquency, vice, immorality and criminality. As we shall see in the following chapter, in the third stage the association of these boys with the street still fundamentally marks the authorities' views of them.

Chapter Seven

PHOTOGRAPHS OF LIFE AT THE TRANSITION HOUSE



7.1 Statue of Maria Auxiliadora in the main room of the Transition House. Behind her is the score table of boys' points as won through the self-evaluation meetings. The words in the top corners of the poster, either side of a hand-drawn image of Christ, read: 'Jesus is with us' and 'resuscitated'. April 1999.



7.2. Above: a boy takes a break in the sun in front of a store room during chores while head of troop. To the left is one of the dormitories. His chore was to sweep the path.

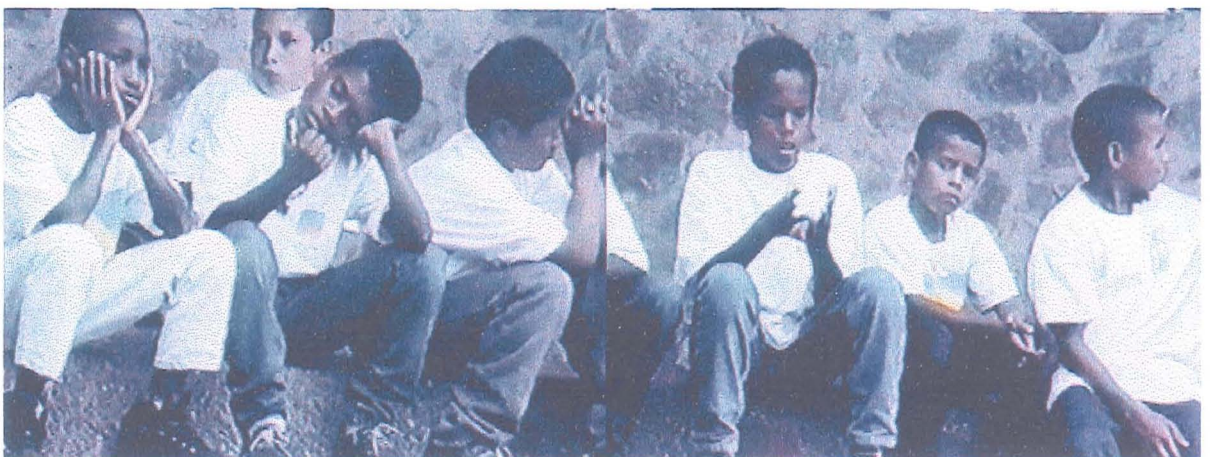
7.3 Below: view from the Transition House compound. The photograph was taken by a friend of the pictured boy during the photography project.

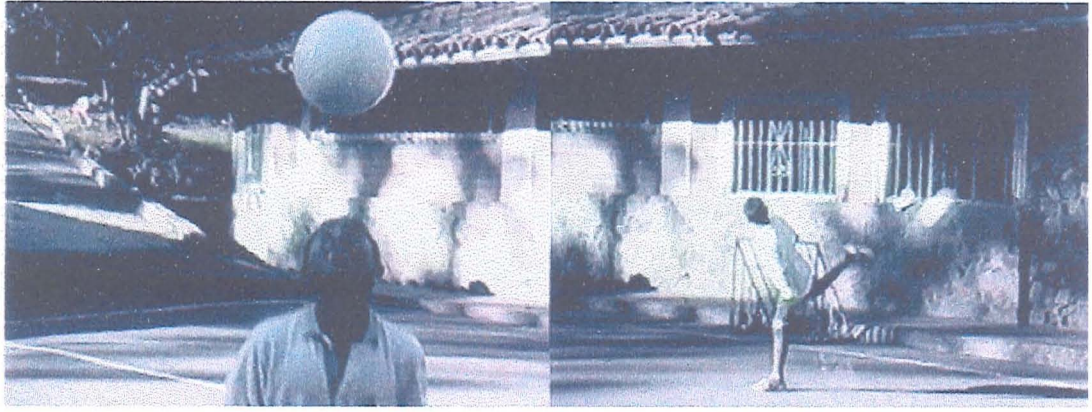




7.4 View across patio at Transition House to the hill leading up to the third stage and the rest of the campus. The boys could only go up this hill with permission. The psychologist (in a blue shirt) and a boy are brushing their teeth.

7.5 Boys listen to an educator during an informal outdoor meeting. .





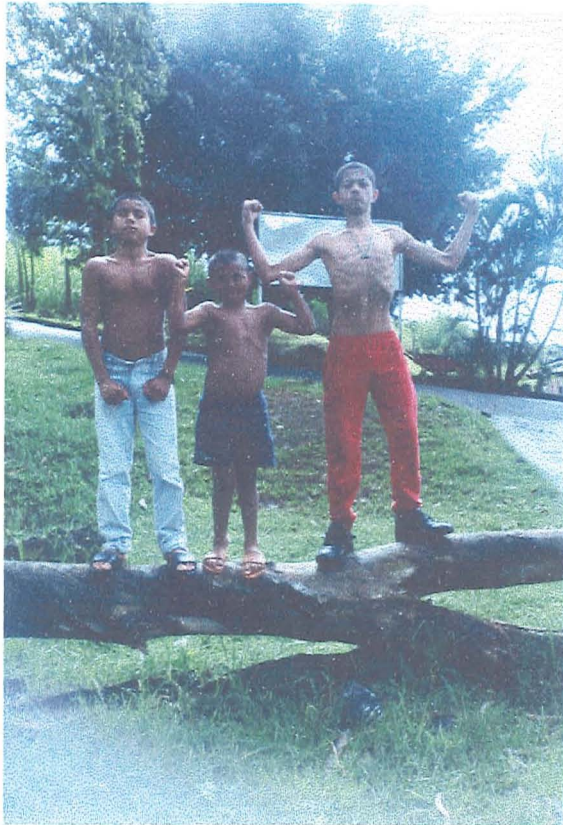
7.6 A boy heads the ball and then kicks it against the wall in the dappled afternoon light during break time (*merienda*).



7.7. Playing marbles on the smooth earth.

7.8 Boys play building shacks behind the Transition House. They did this over several days in May 1999, until they shacks were all ordered to be pulled down.





7.9 Three boys show off their muscles for the camera



7.10 Boys act out taking drugs on the street for the camera one Sunday afternoon. In frame 3 they are offered matches for their *bareto de marijuana* (marijuana joint), and in frame 4 light the piece of paper. Behind them is the kiosk where the initiation ceremony took place.

Chapter Eight

GOING UP TO THE 'CITY' AND ON TO THE FUTURE: INTERNAL DISCIPLINE, EXTERNAL SUBJECTIVITY AND THE RECONCILING OF NORMS

I. Introduction

Five months had now elapsed, and so the moment of progression that the boys had been waiting for, with both eagerness and apprehension, had arrived. Promotion number thirty-nine were 'going up' to the 'City' (*subir a Ciudad*), to the third stage and main boarding programme¹. In this chapter we will follow them through the brief transition ceremony into this new space. The views of boys already in the project, and of men who have passed through CCS in the past, provide useful insights for speculating about the futures of the boys, and in particular whether the reforming process seems to succeed in altering value systems and life chances in the longer term.

A parallel can be drawn in the way the terminology suggests their progression from a space outside a home, such as a patio; to the inside of one home (the Transition House); to a civic space, a member of a community living in a small scale 'City'. If their agency within the Transition House had been directed towards making them think, behave and embody their new status as 'new men', the purpose of this was to direct them in the third stage towards a positive desire to comply with the rules and avoid trouble. At each successive stage, boys' freedom and potential to engage in different activities are differently and yet increasingly contained.

The third stage represented a step forward and 'upwards' in the institution that would bring the boys into the more 'manly' and exciting teenage world of its inhabitants. This was because the main campus, the 'City', involved interactions with older boys from the fourth stage, and encounters with the young men and women

from the fifth stage workshops. At the very moment when they are expected to have internalised the values and rules of the institution, they are exposed to elements of the culture, including drugs, they are supposed to have left behind. Boys must also adapt to the staff, whose methods of operating systems of reward and punishment are different again. Here educators function with different understandings of boys' responsibilities, 'problems', and characters than in the Transition House, as becomes apparent when staff from the two stages meet to discuss the new group.

The boys had a trial run of the third stage during the week preceding the official handing over, attending school with their new classmates in the City and returning to the Transition House for meals. While they were somewhat excited about the move, some boys retained a dismissive attitude to the question of change, as implied in the concept of moving 'up'. Cesar recorded nothing about the formalities of the process in his journal. Rather in his diary there is simply a change in the names of those being discussed, as well as a note that the events described from one page forward were in '*tercera*' (third). As with other dramatic shifts and moments of change in their lives, most boys seemed to take the move to the City in their stride, evaluating the new staff amongst themselves, discussing the new boys they had come across, and speculating about the food on the basis of the snacks (*meriendas*) they had received so far.

The manner in which the boys seemed to play down the events of 'progressing upwards' through the institution seemed to hinge on their rejection of the meanings being evoked and imposed on the events. Indeed as Cesar, Otoniel and Orlando had commented about the initiation ceremony, they were asserting their right to determine what events in their life meant to them.

II. Moving On Up

The boys' move up to the City was marked by two special events. One was a ceremony, rather simpler than the one held at their arrival at the Transition House,

¹The terms 'City' and 'third stage' were used interchangeably, although City also referred to the campus as a whole.

which involved meeting teachers and educators from the third stage half way down the hill that separated the Transition House compound from the City. The other event did not involve boys. This was a meeting between staff of the two projects formally referred to as the '*acta de entrega*' (act of handing over), in reference to the document in which boys' details and staff evaluations of the individuals and the group were recorded. At the meeting where this document was read out, the new discourses and parameters of the system that would define the experiences of boys became apparent, to the concern of some Transition House staff. As we will see, this concern was foreshadowed by the holding back of three boys whom staff considered unprepared for the rigours of the third stage system. Such was the perceived disparity between the two projects' methods that the staff, as a group, even suggested a major overhaul of the system.

Preparations for the handing over ceremony started in the Transition House, when the boys packed their belongings (see photograph 8.1). When they had all finished clearing out their cubbyholes in the dormitory, they lined up in formation before Lydia and Padre Carlos for some parting words. Sylvia, the younger teacher of the second and third grade class, sniffed into a handkerchief to see them go, while others, including Doña Nelda, the other teacher, and Lydia, offered general words of advice.

At the handing over ceremony on the hill, Jimmy, one of the third stage educators, and Juan, the City music teacher and musician, brought their guitars with them and got the boys and staff to sing along. This was combined with some words of goodwill from Padre Carlos, and a welcome from a friendly and matronly teacher from the third stage. The boys then proceeded up the hill to put their bags of belongings in their dormitory places, with their new educators and teachers.

This 'ceremony' was markedly less formalized than the initiation the boys had had into the Transition House. This may have reflected the fact that the boys already had more knowledge and grounded expectations of the third stage than they had had of the Transition House. The boys were already part of the institution and were simply moving between sections of it. However, their presumed familiarity with

institutional methods and systems of discipline was a disputed issue when it came to the other event which marked their progression.

Definitions

The '*acta de entrega*', the hand-over meeting between staff, took place on a Monday morning in late July, in the office of Padre Luca, the head disciplinarian of the third stage. Present were the principal staff of the Transition House - Padre Carlos, Lydia, Miguel the psychologist and Yolinda the social worker-, and the four third stage educators – Ivan the head educator, Jimmy, Fernando and Abelardo. For the meeting, the Transition House staff had produced and signed a formal document. It named all the boys who had entered the Transition House as part of promotion #39 from the Patio, and were now entering the next stage of the institution. It also named those who had left the Transition House to return to their families, two boys who had returned to the streets, and the three boys that were being kept behind to 'repeat Transition House'. There were a couple of lines regarding each of those entering the third stage. Of Julio, for example, they had written: "He is tranquil and not conflictive, displays some apathy for academic activities; good sporting abilities". And of Cesar: "He is widely accepted by the group because of his leadership abilities, although he sometimes abuses this. He is intelligent and strongly interested in academic activities".

Lydia had spent some time composing these comments, as she was keenly aware that they were subjective impressions, but when committed to paper they became part of an official document and account. In the meeting, Yolinda read aloud a copy of the document, while the educators followed her comments on paper and looked over the sheets with passport style photographs she always brought to meetings, matching names and faces as Yolinda talked². As Yolinda read out the comments about each boy, Ivan interrupted with questions: "Is he as much of a trouble-maker as his brother?" "Is he very sensitive?" "He is rather undisciplined, isn't he?", as Ivan picked on traces of information he had collected about different boys, with a particular concern to identify potential trouble makers and those he called *viciosos*

² These photographs had been taken before the boys arrived at the Transition House, and beneath each boy's photo was his name. They were used by staff to verify the connection between a name and a face in Transition House staff meetings.

(drug takers). The Transition House staff came back with their views, clarifying biographical data about some boys, re-phrasing Ivan's words in less negative terms, and trying throughout to emphasise what they reiterated at the end: "We strongly recommend this group to you". They emphasised that many had been out of school for a long time, that some were quite young, and identified those who had families to go to at weekends.

Once Yolinda was finished, Ivan cut to the quick: "Right, so which ones are drug-takers or have problems with drugs?" he asked. Miguel immediately replied that perhaps it was better to talk about who had been working to give up their drug habits. As the meeting continued, Ivan's desire to identify leaders, thieves and drug-takers did not abate. His determination to categorise the boys set the stage for Padre Carlos's final words. He emphasised that in the Transition House, the team strove to give a personalised education, that problems were best resolved with calm, and, that boys' embarrassment at having done something wrong was often more than a substitute for punishment -an apposite summary of disciplinary power at work. Lydia added that it was important for educators to show humility and that they were human and made mistakes themselves. With a 'Well, that's all then', the meeting ended.

Shortly afterwards, the carefully-spoken Yolinda confessed to me her frustration – very apparently in common with the other Transition House staff - with the attitudes of the third stage educators. "They see 'street' child and 'thief' as the same thing", she said, "they want to define and judge the boys". Her use of the word '*determinar*' (determine; define) echoed the words of a Patio educator, who, when recounting to me his institutional days in Bogotá, had become passionate about the way in which professional staff labelled and categorised boys. For him, their words merely reinforced the stigmatising views that the general public had of the children on the street. If their professional position somehow legitimised these attitudes, this was even worse, for it confirmed and reproduced views of the child as 'outside' society, and served as a conceptual base for actions. A profound difference in attitudes marked the meeting, and the implications of this for the boys will be explored shortly.

The de-selected

Indeed, the case of the three boys who were kept behind for another six months at the Transition House raised broader concerns about how the institution functioned. Several boys had ‘run away’ during the Transition House period, returning either home or to the street. If this was par for the course, and children being re-united with families seen as a ‘good’ thing, the street being an ever-present luring danger as far as the institution was concerned, keeping three boys back at the Transition House was new³. The reasons that staff outlined during meetings and in the document they later submitted, seemed to stem from issues I have highlighted throughout the thesis. Boys did not easily internalise all the norms, as I showed in detail in the last chapter, and thus the process did not function as smoothly as it was supposed to.

The decision to retain the boys was taken after lengthy consideration, and highlighted a general concern that the children were arriving at the Transition House at ever-younger ages, apparently leaving home for the street earlier. In a formal letter to the directors of the third stage, they listed several sources of concern about the impending promotion of the group which remained.

Firstly, staff indicated that the average age of the group which formed Promotion #39 was 12, which seemed younger than before. They also stated explicitly that the pedagogical aims of the Transition House process had not been fulfilled. Exemplifying this was their comment that “the assimilation of the norm has required a very slow and personalised process”, and that this had generated only a minimal level of preparation for promotion. In addition, they mentioned that the boys’ relations with their families tended to be distant, a fact which had not helped the process. Finally, they argued that the educational system in the Transition House was specially designed to take them to the required levels gradually, and that the third stage system was not. By the third stage they had to be behaving according to the norms, rules and methods.

³ This conclusion is based on staff reactions, and my own experience.

In their letter the educators followed these points with three suggestions:

- 1) The whole of Promotion #39 should spend another semester in the Transition House.
- 2) There should be another level within the Transition House for the group.
- 3) An intermediate level should be designed between the Transition House and the third stage, in the longer term.

The fact that families were considered important if not vital to boys' progress with adapting to the Transition House could seem ironic. In Chapter Six I outlined the process of selecting boys for the Transition House, and neither Padre Carlos's criteria nor staff discussions took into account family as an explicit issue with relevance to the boys chances of staying with the institution. To the contrary, the 'irregular situation' is based on an assumption of the failure of families to provide for their children, or form them correctly in moral terms.

In the end, the most pragmatic option was the only suggestion which didn't involve a major re-think and change to housing boys, or to the system itself. The decision accepted by the directors of the third stage and Padre Carlos was for the three boys perceived to be most un-prepared for the third stage to be kept behind. This was recorded in the formal paperwork for the boys as 'not completing the objectives adequately'.

Of the remaining twenty seven boys who did go up to the third stage in July 1999, several left within a few weeks, mostly returning to the streets, and one was expelled for not attending class, getting in trouble and smoking marijuana persistently. In January 2001, nearly two years after starting the process in the Transition House, of the thirty-seven who were initiated as 'new men' nearly a year before, only 19 were still at the institution. In the remainder of this chapter, I will show reasons why this might have been so.

III. The Third Stage

In Chapter Three I noted that boys arrived to the third stage and its boarding and educational facilities through different means⁴. Of the three hundred twenty five boys enrolled in the third stage in 1999, 125 came on a daily basis to attend classes, effectively completing their secondary school education here. These included many staff children, as well as children from the *barrios* near the campus. The other 200 were boarders, half of whom had been referred directly to CCS by the ICBF. Another 30% had come up through the Transition House and Patio, while another 20% had been referred to CCS by other NGOs.

Their motives for entry suggested the variety of effects of poverty and violence that we saw mark boys' trajectories towards the street or Patio in Chapter Four. A quarter were recorded as having arrived at the institution because they were in situations of moral or physical danger, or partial or total abandonment; the criteria of the 'irregular situation'. Some 20% of the rest had arrived at the institution because of problems in the family, including simply 'poverty'. One of the social workers here explained to me that they sometimes had families arrive at the gates, and that the parents would explain they could not house nor feed their children, and appealed to the institution to take them in. A small proportion (6%) were at the institution because of threats against their lives – cases which could well have been similar to those of Bernardo and Otoniel, who had been threatened in their *barrios*. The majority of residents in the third stage were from Medellín. Eighty percent of them had little or no contact with their fathers, and 16% of these were dead, which suggests a possible representation of children who lost their fathers while these were young, amongst the thousands of men who die every year in Medellín⁵.

Exigencies and Internalisation

These data suggest the heterogeneity of the population in the third stage, as well as the fact that only a third of the boys had come to the institutions because of links with the street. However, as boys from the Transition House made new friends, and could be observed from gossip and interaction with boys, it was clear that the

⁴ This data is based on my analysis of a 15% sample of boys' files from the third stage social work office. See Appendix 11 for fuller presentation.

⁵ One boy I met in the third stage had lost both his mother and father to violence by gangs in his *barrio*.

existing residents of the third stage made no differentiations amongst themselves on the basis of links to the street. However, we saw above Ivan's determination to identify 'troublemakers' in the new Transition House group. Indeed, it suggests that Yolinda's reaction to his categories of thief and druggies was based on an appreciation of the extent to which the street was still a heavily stigmatised label in the third stage. If boys arrived at the City's third stage for a variety of reasons, Ivan had no hesitation in applying stigmatising judgements and 'determinations' if he thought it served a useful purpose.

A few days after the boys' progression to the third stage I managed to secure an interview with Ivan to get his point of view. He was adamant about the need for efficiency, and located his practices and discourses about the boys within a complex scheme for managing some 300 boys between four members of staff on a daily basis. Our conversation started with the *acta de entrega*, and Ivan explained why he had been so explicit when he asked the Transition House staff about which boys in the group used drugs. "The education [of the boys] has to be like that, I have to know who I am dealing with", he started. He then asked if I had noticed the "defensive position of the Transition House staff?" I agreed that there had been some tensions, and Ivan went on to explain the reasons why he thought this was so.

"Here there is a marked difference between the teacher and the educator. Not like in the Transition House. But count how many people work there, I count 10, that means 3.3 boys to each educator⁶. The other thing is space. The Transition House is a closed space and in one minute you know if someone is missing. But this is like a city, do you know a city with limits?"

These were important differences, not just for Ivan but visible on a physical-empirical level with important implications for surveillance. Where the Transition House had one formal way out – up the road towards the 'City' and its gated entrance- and one informal side route⁷ -the back of the City campus was open to the mountainside. Even if boys didn't leave the City campus, there was plenty of space within it for them to disappear. Ivan was suggesting that boys thus had to have internalised the rules of the institution by this point. Later on in the interview I

⁶ Ivan's counting of staff in the Transition House included Lydia, Manuel, Yolinda, Miguel, the two teachers, three night duty educators and Fernanda the cook.

⁷ This was up a dirt slope behind the dormitories and back down the hillside along the outside of the Transition House wall into the *barrio*; not recommendable at night or in wet conditions.

asked him about normativity and punishment. He explained, “This is *un cuento bien maluco*, ‘a bad story’. But he turned back to the question of the Transition House. “Do they police or teach conviction?” he asked rhetorically. “If a boy leaves here after two days because he smokes drugs, is that our fault or the Transition House’s? Where is the process? It’s not reflexive.”

Ivan went on to say

“There is a therapeutic model with concern for the body and mind. Like with drugs, you have to gradually diminish the drug from all to zero. In the social conditions of Colombia, the violence is like a sickness. And the street is violent. And often they [the boys] don’t or won’t respond to words. So it’s not about no violence or physical punishment, but diminishing it. Don Bosco himself said it was sometimes necessary. I slap them about, and slap them about hard sometimes. There are boys who prefer to do chores than be in class. There are some who, bored in class, will hit another boy to be sent out to do chores because they prefer this to being in class. But part of the issue is that from 1948 – 1973⁸, the child was a subject of work. People had large families and made all the children work. Then the child becomes the subject of rights, but the discourse of responsibilities is missing. If you eat, you have the responsibility to wash your plate. But without working for things, they don’t know how to value them”.

In contrast to the Transition House, where he alleged that policing and surveillance were responsible for the maintenance of order, in the third stage such surveillance were technically impossible, because of the architecture and layout of the campus. The emphasis therefore had to shift to a different kind of discipline, one that worked through subjects regulating their own behaviour. If the norms and values of the institution hadn’t been internalised, Ivan reasoned, the third stage could not work; although he also defends the educators’ recourse to violence, and suggests that even Don Bosco acknowledged that this was sometimes necessary. However, this also suggests the contradictions, as well as the limits of, the ‘official’ institutional attitude towards violence. For Ivan, the reasoning was that it was within the boys, and this legitimised educators’ recourse to it. It is unlikely that boys would see it this way, and rather, were keenly aware of such inconsistencies in institutional rhetoric and practice, seeing the violence as originating with the educators.

⁸ 1973 is date of first ILO convention restricting child labour, 1948 – Geneva Convention. It is interesting that he did not mention the UNCRC or what this meant for children’s rights.

IV. The Third Stage System

The campus was a complex space with a variety of resources (see map at end of Chapter Three). It included buildings for all the activities of the third stage, the juvenile residence and the workshop areas. It thus constituted an ample space for adventure and routine for the boys who lived there. The buildings and facilities included a dormitory building for 200, several asphalt pitches for sports, administrative headquarters with psychologists, doctors, dentists, accountancy and social work staff, the dining room, a swimming pool surrounded by a high electrified fence, multiple classroom blocks, and fields stretching behind the youth residence up the mountainside and across to a lake.

There were four dormitories within the block unit, each dormitory supervised by one educator who slept in an adjoining study-bedroom. The boys' day followed a structured routine. They were woken at about 6 a.m. and, following cold showers, formed lines for breakfast at 7.30. Lines for breakfast and chores were based on troops, based on the dormitories. Then there were classes. Each class had about thirty boys, and were organised by academic years (first through eighth grades were offered), some subdivided into two sub-groups (for example the fifth grade into a, b and c). Classes were held in the classroom, and teachers of different subjects came and went for lessons in maths, geography, Spanish and so on, with the exceptions of computing and gym, which were taken in separate purpose-built venues. With breaks at mid morning and lunchtime, classes were over by mid afternoon. Before lining up for bed outside the dormitories at 8.30, the boys were meant to study in the classrooms for an hour.

In between the different timetabled activities, and especially at weekends, there was plenty of free time, for hanging about, playing football, being bored, watching television, and anything else the boys could dream up as a manner of amusing themselves (see photographs 8.3, 8.7 & 8.8). The audio-visual centre was undoubtedly an important place for the boys, where Jimmy or another educator would show movies at the weekends. Round the side of the building was the shop,

from which Jimmy dispensed clothes and other items that could be purchased with points, and when Jimmy opened it boys would gather there and discuss and compare items of clothing (8. 4 & 8.5). In fact, they found lots of places to sit and talk or watch football matches or the world go by: round the side of pentagonal administration building, on the concrete steps that led down to the concrete area outside the gym, outside the library at the side of the juvenile residence, on the grass near the dormitories, and particularly on weekends, some would hang around the guards' hut at the entrance gates.

Teaching staff operated semi-independently of the boarding side of the institution. They were mostly women, and came each morning on the staff bus that drove people up from the city centre, and went back down on the bus every afternoon. At lunch and at break times, responsibility for organising the boys passed back to the educators, who, as in the Transition House, drilled them in their troops to line-up at breakfast, the midmorning snack, lunch, dinner and before bed. The control the teachers exercised over their classes differed in its intention, method, extent and efficacy. In the presence of different staff, the extent to which boys' respected different teachers' authority became very clear, as well as the extent to which this perception of authority determined how much they strayed from the rules of classroom behaviour.

During one day I spent with one fifth-grade group (see photograph 8.6), where three boys from the Transition House had been placed, I was able to sit with the boys and watched teachers come and go. The boys' reactions to them varied enormously. With an early morning maths teacher, the group's behaviour verged on anarchy. Two boys were sent out, there were repeated fights (throwing of pencils, papers, personal taunts etc) and eventually a boy was sent to get Ivan to give the boys a talking to and restore order. It was apparently not an unusual day. Another teacher, with ostensibly more experience, gave her class with an unrelenting energy and acute peripheral vision, such that any boy's attempts to not pay attention or stir up problems with another were dealt with in her continuous stream of instruction. Both these teachers were women, so gender was not a relevant factor in whether or not the boys paid attention or behaved. Later that day, when they were

supposed to go to computer class, the male instructor hadn't even walked them to the computer room before Ivan was called again to restore order. Whereas in the first incident he had leant forward purposively from behind the teacher's desk and reminded the boys of their reasons for being in the institution (such as getting an education), on this occasion they were threatened with having to carry stones down the mountainside and/or having computer classes cancelled for a week, if they continued to misbehave.

Discipline

In the third stage, the maintenance of order was characterised by tension. There were constant challenges to power from the boys. With the priests as charismatic but distant father figures, discipline tended to be the responsibility of the educators, who were supposed to act as 'friends', with charisma and the ability to bestow favours. The teachers turned all matters of discipline over to Ivan and the other three educators; but more often than not, Ivan was the one called. For Ivan, this was because the teachers simply lacked the necessary will and commitment to education. However, the majority of the teachers were on ordinary government contracts and had been assigned to the school without any particular training or preparation for what many of them considered a particularly difficult group of children.

While Ivan was called upon for classroom problems, discipline at mealtimes was Jimmy's responsibility. The head of each troop was responsible for organising 'his men' into line as quickly as possible (punctuality was important) and keeping them to orderly behaviour while they waited for their turn to enter the refectory, and stragglers got dealt with directly by Jimmy. Often they would approach him with a range of ironic grins and variedly plausible excuses, and end up doing squatting walks across the elevated asphalt area in front of the refectory, in front of the other boys (see photographs 8.9-8.11). However, boys often cut this short, by checking whether Jimmy was looking and running across behind his back, before approaching him to say they were returning to line because they finished their punishment. Jimmy rarely second-guessed this. Indeed, in contrast to Ivan's cultivated reputation for being strict, one boy said to me of Jimmy that he was 'like a mother' (*como*

una mamá). This separation of mothering from the mother figure is interesting, and suggests the warmth and affective qualities of the friendship implied in *amarebolezza* which coexisted with systems of discipline.

Other measures for disciplining the boys as a group raised issues about the labels which Ivan had sought to attach to certain boys, and about humiliation. On one occasion, the boys incurred the not inconsiderable anger of Padre Luis after equipment was damaged in the audio-visual centre, and boys had apparently been urinating in the corridors of the classroom blocks. Although the boys seemed to largely respect Padre Luis, they also picked up on the potential hypocrisy of his language, which was riddled with words they were told not to use. The following is extracted from my field diary where I wrote down as quickly as I could Luis's address to the boys, which, through his anger, seemed to rhetorically frame the choices of staying or leaving that were open to the boys. Luis stood facing the boys lined up in their troops, a long wooden pole clasped behind his back⁹.

“There are people here who want to be street people – who don't know what a toilet is, and shit next to it; who urinate in the corridors and near classrooms. When we have visitors and they ask ‘so are these gamines, *desechables?*’ (disposable people) and we say ‘yes, these are them’.

In another place, they have 20 Nintendo sets but here, no, it's impossible. You can't even respect the t.v. set and video which is yours. This is your house – respect it! But it's not all of you – five, six, 10, 20 –who bring it all down. By the time you're 20 you'll be lying under a bridge in your own shit.”

This ploy of trying to humiliate the boys by referring to their previous street careers had been used in the Transition House. But here Luis raises the spectre of the future for them, in gross terms meant to humiliate and ridicule the prospects which leaving the institution entailed.

It is unlikely that the boys really thought of the equipment as belonging to them, however, as access to the audio-visual room was strictly controlled by the educators, as was the choice of what they watched here- although it was true that for many the

⁹ If this was meant to indicate his access to instruments of force, it was symbolic rather than used.

campus was their home¹⁰. But in a subsequent scolding some weeks later, he again used the metaphor of possession and ownership to try to inspire a sense of responsibility in the boys. However, he simultaneously reminds them that there is little for them at home. This time the speech was addressed not only to the boarders but to all the boys who attended the third stage, as they stood in lines for snack at 11.30 in the morning. My field notes describe the scene:

‘Luis is in front of them and furious, he is gesticulating wildly and telling them various things’:

1. “There’s not much money; no-one in Bogotá is eating meat. Everyone is paying taxes to the *paracos* (paramilitaries) and guerrilla around their *fincas*” (farms) and “the [CCS] *fincas* are all for them - or do they think they’re not?”
2. “No-one here [in Colombia] is giving money”, not Santo Domingo¹¹ nor anyone else in the country with money. He goes on to ‘remind’ them that “at home there’s breakfast or lunch, but not both.”
3. “Drugs and alcohol will always get the better of you! Why do you need reminding?”
4. Women were “companions to be respected, not [to have] a different one every week.”

Home is equated with hunger here, and in the previous outburst, the street with shit (*mierda*). As well as being the institution’s most fearsome disciplinarian, Luis was its accountant, and was as such responsible for managing the cattle farms the institution owned in the Llanos region, as well as donations and other sources of income. His reference to women was indicative of the manner in which adolescent heterosexual interests, principally directed at the young women from the workshops, was an issue in the third stage in ways it hadn’t been in the Transition House. In a way, this reflected that the third stage was dealing with adolescent young men, a progression from the Transition House which was, in contrast, a space for sheltered childhood. I will return to this and related issues later when discussing the boys’ appreciations and views on life in the third stage.

¹⁰ The boys could also form a group to argue for something they wanted to watch. Sometimes, particularly at weekends, boys were left to watch t.v. or films on their own, while the educator on duty did other things on campus.

¹¹ A reference to the Grupo Santo Domingo, one of the country’s four largest conglomerate corporations, with brewing, financial, manufacturing and a wide variety of other commercial interests.

As outlined in Chapter Three, the possibilities of participant observation in this stage of the institution were rather different to those offered by the conditions and character of the Transition House. Space and time were two major reasons why the third stage was a very different place, as boys' time and activities were more spread out across the campus, and were more formal than they had been in the Transition House. It would have been considered inappropriate, for example, for me to sit with the boys at lunch, because in the large refectory spaces were clearly demarcated as either for staff or for boys, and nobody deviated from this arrangement¹². Relationships with staff were also subject to particular conditions. So, a lot of the contact time I had with boys, when I gathered a sense of the boys' experiences in the third stage, was sitting around during breaks, and during periods of relaxation, and in the evenings and at weekends. After a short period of this I began using more structured research techniques. Cesar and others who had come from the Transition House sometimes went out of their way to be helpful, and reassure boys who didn't know me as well as they did that I was acceptably trustworthy and could be talked to, that indeed it was okay to participate in what I was doing.

Norms and Rules

When I asked boys about what norms (*normas*) they had to comply with in the third stage, most mentioned studying and chores as the basic elements of the routines and regime¹³. Respecting teachers and companions (*compañeros*) also featured strongly, as did punctuality, expressed by one boy as "not arriving late to formations, sticking to what you say, for example arriving to appointments you've made." Others mentioned the need to avoid fighting generally, as well as bullying (*monopolio*). Not taking drugs nor stealing were also clear rules, and the stream which ran down the mountainside at the back of the campus - into a pond where it was possible to fish - was noted as out of bounds. But while it was out of bounds for some, for others with less respectful concerns for the rules it was terrain they headed to regularly, and it was a place frequently associated with random disappearances and absences from class. If such acts of rule-breaking were not uncommon, and suggested that some

¹² I sat with staff, and sensed strongly that to do anything else would have been considered conflictive.

¹³ See Appendix 7 for full list of questions.

boys were concerned with passing their time pleasantly, other rules mentioned by the boys demonstrate the institution's relationship to the world outside its walls. These included prohibitions on bringing in fire arms, 'fake or real', to the City.

The majority of boys I spoke to said they were generally happy in the City. But the rules, the boredom and the isolation of being confined to this space were also important drawbacks. Half of the boys had contemplated leaving at some point or another. As to why they had thought of leaving - and two actually had, only to return- the recurrent and imprecise reasoning of 'being bored' (*estar aburrido*) was given. The few who said they were not happy there, gave as one reason for this the work they sometimes had to do. Other reasons were interesting in the extent to which they pointed to contextual evaluations of the protection the institution offered. In response to the question of 'are you happy here¹⁴', one boy said "No, but on the street you get fed up, so it would be sad not to take advantage of the opportunity here". A third just shook his head rather sadly. When I asked if he had thought of leaving, he replied 'No, because I haven't got anywhere else to go.'

The problems experienced by the boys were apparent in the term *aburrido* (bored), which in the context of the institution revealed itself to be more complex than the English translation of 'bored'. If it was reflection on the regularity and limitation of things 'to do' inside the walls, it also seemed to necessarily contrast with the stimulating and hectic, if violent, world outside. As well as meaning 'bored', it seemed to mean fed up, not stimulated, not inspired, and to include frustration with the institution, particularly rules and educators who imposed them. Importantly, it may well have also indicated the frustration of the passivity the boys were forced into within the institution. There was little space or time in which they could engage in any activity other than those which complied with the rules. And because it was a ubiquitous term, used by boys on all sorts of occasions, it seemed to say a good deal about the quality of life generally experienced by the boys, as opposed to merely referring to a short-term lack of anything interesting to do.

¹⁴ I used the term '*amañado*', from *amañarse*, which means 'acclimatised, accustomed to', which is often used in Medellín to ask someone how they generally feel in a social context or new place.

Punishments

Only two boys thought the punishments were generally fair, one saying that: “You get punishments if you look for them”; the rules were known and explicit; and punishment was the consequence of breaking well-known codes of conduct. The view of most boys, however, was that punishments were both fair and unfair. They cited particular examples of educators having done things they [implicitly] considered unfair, such as violent actions of ‘hitting on the head, they give it to us with boards and kicks. In recent days Ivan beat one [boy] up with kicks; but sometimes they look for it.’ This reasoning is similar to the one the boys expressed in the Transition House, particularly the emphasis on the punishment being in proportions to the misdemeanour.

They argued that punishment, even physical, could be justified if the boy in question had done something wrong, but in practice no boy ever recounted to me any incident in which he thought he had been fairly or justly hit. While a certain amount of internalisation of educators’ logic was expressed, the boys also question it, and the supposed authority the educators are invested with. They dispute the educators’ reasoning and the authority of such reasoning. One boy recounted the actions of one educator when he had discovered someone had stolen something. “Lots of times he hits them”, the boy said. And why do you think he does that? I asked. “To show off, to impose his authority, that man wants to be one who rules most (*quiere ser el mas mandón*)”. This very direct questioning of the motivation and basis of the educator’s power, suggests that for this educator power was an end in itself.

While objecting to excesses of the authority of educators, the boys also suggested that in general they had good relations with them, describing qualities of friendship, respect, and being ‘like part of a family’, particularly those who had been there some time (see photograph 8.8). At the potentially desolate periods of long weekends and holidays, boys did seem to start behaving more as if the campus was their own space and home, using the space differently and comfortably. The quality of the facilities combined with the effectiveness of the Salesian strategy, and the relevance of Don Bosco’s concepts of *amarebolesza* and friendship, as companion ethics in the process of re-educating the boys. A constant positive rhetoric and presence seems the

flip side to the potentially punitive nature of the regime, and the positive exercise of power is fundamental to the successes of the entire project.

In the case of the boys in CCS, discourses of the self must be located within relevant cultural and social frameworks. Here the vectors of class are fundamental. The impact of discourses promoted by CCS which seek to motivate the individual to enjoy the fruits of social conformity is significant, even if they are also contested by the values of street culture and ‘marginalized’ populations’ understandings of the relevance of such images and discourses. And, as mentioned above, the structure of the institution offered few opportunities for agency, and these were narrowly defines in terms of the values and goals of the institution, such as good coursework and leadership.

In many ways, the institution’s vision of the boys’ future was difficult for some of the boys to imagine. There were the workshops, and the goal of these was to give boys the experience of working in commercially successful business enterprises, which some of the workshops were. Most of them had seen wealth, in Medellín invested in cars, clothes and housing, but knew that much of it was obtained illegally, rather than through continuous hard labour (such as working as a mechanic or printer). However it was not necessarily apparent to what extent they related the processes(s) they were going through to the future, which could be a vague and distant, if not uncertain, concept. This echoes all too closely the logic of joining a gang expressed by one of Salazar’s characters a decade before, when he states “they know that studying and working they’re not going to get anything” (1990: 27¹⁵).

The boys’ responses to questions of rules suggested when, where and how far the rules were relevant for them. They said the rules were variously intended to: “keep the house clean”; “to learn”; “to be obeyed”; “so that the institution functions better”; “for order”; “I don’t know, because this is private?” While one other boy said the rules were there “Because if they didn’t exist everyone would do whatever came into their heads¹⁶”, three did relate them to life beyond the institution’s walls,

¹⁵ “*Saben que estudiando y trabajando no consiguen nada*”, explains the character Tonio as to why younger boys were interested in joining a gang in the NorOriental.

¹⁶ *Porque si no existieran uno haría todo lo que le viniera a la mente.*

saying that they were for “getting a career” and “coming out ahead”. These comments are of particular interest in relation to ways boys do, or don’t relate them to the world outside the institution. Institutions have been noted to often leave interns with a lack of self-motivation, so used are they to simply complying with prescribed activities and routines. A final set of comments related the need for discipline to an absence of values in the boys’ lives, which had caused problems for boys before entering the institution. Homero¹⁷ said that the rules were there “so that the student knows how to become more disciplined, and forms himself as a person so that later in society they won’t look down on him, because he doesn’t have the society’s norms.”

This interpretation of the function of the rules was based on the logic which started becoming apparent at the Patio. If, as the boys at the Patio said, you were no longer a *gamin* when you entered the Patio because the very act of coming to the Patio meant you wanted to change, then you would have been open to suggestions as to how to become a respectable member of society, someone decent, not *desechable*. As Homero said, you needed to know society’s norms in order not to stand out because of your ignorance. Most of the boys had experienced society’s prejudice against people who were seen as dirty or poor, unimportant and almost non-human. Indeed, if we take on board their complaints about the police and Convivir, as institutions which somehow represent society, or an important part of the boys’ experiences of it, it is clear that some considered prejudice to be institutionalised.

But if the boys’ understandings of prejudice extended to include institutions – and staff confounded their hopes when they humiliated them by calling them *gamines* – class and marginality were also imagined as embedded in other sorts of social relations, or indeed embodied and immovable. Indicative of this were comments made by Cesar and Julio when they were given permission to spend the night at my house one long weekend. Some friends and I had been invited to a small birthday party, held in the birthday woman’s house. Her father was a successful businessman and the family lived in a walled compound of semi-detached houses in the wealthy

¹⁷ His choice of pseudonym reflects that the ‘The Simpsons’ cartoon was a popular television programme amongst many boys, another indication of globalised media culture.

area of El Poblado, '*estrato seis*' in local idiom and utility classifications¹⁸. As we approached the gates, Cesar and Julio stopped and said that the guard at the gates wouldn't allow them in. When we reached the door of the house without any problems, they both stepped back. 'What's the matter?' asked my friend. 'I'm embarrassed' (*Me da pena*), said Julio, 'we can't go in there.'

While they clearly sensed they were on unfamiliar terrain, where other values, and codes were relevant, their habitual experiences of exclusion and rejection also became apparent. At a broader level, the incident also suggests aspects of the problems of class in Colombia. Despite the fact that the two boys were well dressed, they assumed that the guard would identify them as dangerous children, a class-related problem which did not necessarily relate only to their institutional status as *ex-gamínes*, but suggested how they felt insecure and different in this alien environment.

Resistance and Departures

The institution needs to work on two levels, and expresses a paradigm of positivity as its guiding ethic. Rules are made clear, disciplines are drilled. And on many levels, this works, and a good number of boys are apparently changed, such that they come to value an education, and revile the street. But what becomes apparent from their reactions – expressed and enacted in a variety of ways and on different levels- is that the boys don't so much convert as adapt.

To begin with, not all values are taken at face value. Authority is bowed to under the majority of circumstances, as it has the power to withhold or give material goods, from food to shoes, but it is also resisted and challenged. In the Transition House boys slouched onto the floor and had to be told to get up in auto-evaluation, they talked to each other when the educator was speaking and fell asleep during presentations. They looked scruffy when they found it practical, and saved their smart clothes for outside, some refusing to ever see the point of dressing in a

¹⁸ These categorisations are made by *Empresas Públicas de Medellín* (EPM), the public utilities company, to weight bills, and divide all neighbourhoods of the city according to average income to determine the stratum. This starts at 1, which much of the NorOriental is classified as, while El Poblado is mostly five and six. Bill payers in wealthier areas pay several times more for their services than those in poorer ones, and the system results in generally good basic services.

conventional manner. Their actions vary with age, experience and values. In the third stage some were masters of disappearing, slipping unnoticed across the mountainside to sit by the lake, fish or smoke marijuana, although boys who tried to do this too much didn't necessarily last long in the institution. Others waged continuous campaigns of classroom disorder, refusing to sit on wooden chairs behind desks and in front of the teacher, or sit quietly through a film. They launched attacks on property, evaded classes, and tried to win over those in authority with their own charisma. Indeed, some repeatedly appeared in Cesar's diary for disturbing class, while others seemed to share responsibility for supplying drugs to the campus. While there were some systems of hiding acts from educators, it is interesting that they didn't develop lying as a major coping mechanism¹⁹, perhaps because the point of the self-evaluation system in the Transition House was designed to suggest the futility of it. What they do develop are broader systems of group solidarity, and in which the law of silence and other codes of solidarity and cohesion can persist. Others resisted in quieter ways, complaining on the side that what the priest said to them wasn't fair, that the manner in which the educator parcelled out clothes was unjust, and once, one boy tried to call the *defensora* when an enraged priest kicked him in the shins. But the clearest form of disengagement was to leave.

Many of the twenty-nine boys that went up to the third stage that July afternoon were soon gone. In the first three weeks, Otoniel, Carlitos and Chucho left for the street, along with Eleno, the photographer, who had recently been admitted to the third stage. He had been allowed to bypass the Transition House partly because of his age (15), but also because of his perceived maturity. He left with another regular face from the *parche* whose nickname was 'Little Devil', who had just started at the Transition House. By the time the news had filtered through from third stage to staff at the Transition House, it had combined with news from Patio staff that they had entered the Patio and stolen things from there. At around this time, Jhon also decided to leave and join them, and the word on the street when I went looking for them a few days after Jhon left was that they had all gone off to the coast. They

¹⁹ As Williams (2000) suggests pupils at British public schools do. Fruitful comparison could be made between these two types of institution, particularly as explored by Okely (1978) and Walford (1995) but I unfortunately do not have space to do so here.

eventually reappeared, reunited with their glue bottles and other drugs. Staff expressed frustration and anger, and the boys were all barred from entering the Patio for some time.

Otoniel always seemed to have struggled to make himself stay in the Transition House, and perhaps the absence of direct pressure and surveillance in the third stage gave his thoughts more room to manoeuvre. One Friday afternoon, a few days before his departure from the third stage, Otoniel had been down to see Lydia, and sat listening to her talk and give advice as she folded clothes in the store cupboard of the Transition House. Her comments were not new, and in fact rather repeated earlier advice about the purpose of an education, the scope of the facilities and services on offer in the institution, and the dangers of the outside world. Otoniel was clearly wrestling with his own mind at the time, shifting in his chair and looking around the classroom, avoiding meeting her eyes too much, as he listened. But Eleno's rebellious presence and street-wise attitudes may have rekindled the appeal of the street. It seemed that understandings between Eleno and Otoniel may have fuelled a refusal to be docile residents of third stage.

If their departures were somehow not surprising, Pedro's was. With no street experience to speak of, no apparent sources of problems with educators, and a keen appreciation of education, Pedro seemed like the perfect candidate to spend many years in the institution. He was calm, solitary rather than group orientated, sweet natured and affectionate. Indeed, he seemed to be doing well in the third stage, keeping regular company with Jairo, a quiet and easy-going boy from the coast. But one day, the football coach who had been brought in to get a team ready for a local tournament, said he had received a note and a returned uniform from Pedro the day before. The note had said that he was sorry to inconvenience the team, but that he was fed up and was leaving. The uniform was returned washed and folded, and the note said nothing about where he was going. What his motive for leaving had been, no-one was ever sure.

Orlando's case was also complicated, although he had clearly been uneasy in the third stage. From the first weeks here, he had started smoking marijuana again,

and was soon spending all day by the stream and wandering around the area at back of the institution. This went on until he had an unpleasant experience. I happened to be sitting in the social work office that afternoon, when Padre Luca came walking up to the door of the social work office, shaking his head of thin white hair from side to side with a look of weary disapproval on his face. 'Where's Gloria?' he asked the social work secretary, as Gloria popped her head round the door from her office. 'What is it?' 'Its Orlando again. He was sitting out by the stream when two guys from the *barrio* came up to him with a gun and demanded his trainers, and he's walked back here stoned and without shoes. Let him get his things and leave'. And so Orlando left, never to be heard from again. What exactly bored him I don't think anyone ever managed to find out, although perhaps the question would be more apt the other way round: - what could have motivated him to stay? In the last days of the Transition House, his mother had given birth to a baby, and Orlando had literally wept with joy. His mother had been living on the street for months, and Lydia took Orlando to see them in hospital after the birth. Perhaps pulls from his family life became more pressing, in the face of the arbitrariness of institutional life.

V. The Future and Experiences of Alumni

The institution did not propose that the boys would become wealthy members of society, but perhaps educated and employed. In the third stage, the future was a topic usually discussed in relation to which workshop boys might want to be in. However, those in Sylvia's class in the Transition House had participated in a class exercise one day where they talked about the future. Of the nine boys in the class, four wanted peace for Colombia, one with a win against Chile in that week's football match thrown in. Another wanted all 'street' children to have somewhere to live, and Otoniel's answer was 'the legalisation of marijuana and cocaine'²⁰. Two others wanted a better life and a better world, and another boy wanted to be healthy. What they wanted to be when they grew up was a more mixed bag of replies: two wanted to be soldiers, one a computer engineer, one an orthodontist,

²⁰ This suggests his awareness of different discourses and arguments surrounding the drugs trade, although it could also have been said to emphasise the centrality of drugs to his vision of what being young and rebellious was about.

one a doctor, two educators, one football goalie and one aspired to be Pablo Escobar.

What the graduates of CCS actually ended up doing was a complex question. As the head social worker said once, it was nigh on impossible to do social impact assessments of the project's successes and failures, given the characteristics of the population they worked with. People moved around, postal services weren't reliable, any address the institution might have had for them was probably of relatives or parents years ago, and so on.

However, as a self-aware institution, CCS had put Padre Carlos in charge of starting an alumni association. I was invited to attend meetings once I had expressed my interest, and collaborated by interviewing one young man for the first newsletter. The ten or so people who formed the executive committee started meeting on Sundays, and in subsequent months contact networks were sought out and activated so that nearly 100 men and some of their wives and children appeared one Sunday at the campus for the first of a planned series of regular reunions. Workshops and discussion groups were organised, and the hope was that those who needed support and help might find solidarity among their old friends. At this meeting I was allowed to introduce myself and my project, and during the course of the day had several men suggest they were willing to be interviewed, and I subsequently received a few responses to a small advertisement I placed in the alumni flier. Other contacts were made in more haphazard ways.

Roberto and Friends

Roberto was one of the first friends I made in Medellín in 1994, one day when the blue CCS bus stopped at a petrol station to refuel and we all had to get off (apparently in case it blew up). His family lived in a house the institution had sold at a nominal price to Roberto when he left at 18, after having been a model student. At the time, his two best friends from his days at CCS were both around, Sergio having recently returned from the army, while Freddy was working as the Patio's doorman. At the time Freddy had two little brothers in CCS, and seemed the self-declared

leader of the trio of friends, often wearing a leather jacket and carrying a knife. While Roberto was supposedly working as a door-to-door salesman at the time, his mother would often complain that he stayed out late, and didn't bring enough money home. Four years later, Roberto told me how he had been involved in a scam selling underwear on the coast, and that he had problems with the police, because of customs and tax evasions.

In December of 1998 Roberto was trying to get together the money to go back to the coast, where he said he had a contact who would give him work in a hotdog and hamburger stall. He also said that he was worried because Convivir were canvassing residents of the *barrio* to see whether they were willing to pay for a unit to come in and clean up the area. And part of the process of canvassing the area included drawing up a 'black list' of people who needed to be eliminated; according to most rumours, Roberto's name was on it.

The last time I saw Roberto was in January of 1999, when he turned up at the Patio one afternoon. He had still not managed to get to the coast, and said he was working although he didn't say in what. He told me some family news, and after talking a bit more, we said goodbye. One day in March, I came up to the campus at about 10 a.m. after running an errand. On a corner which overlooked the hillside and the road led down to the next part of the *barrio*, I noted that several young men, including Roberto's friend Camilo, were standing there wearing unusually elegant clothes. As the gates closed behind me, Camilo came up to the gate and gripped two bars with his hands, and said, 'They've killed Roberto'.

At the Transition House the sadness was palpable; Fernanda and Olga were particularly upset, as Roberto had passed through here some ten years before but as his family lived in the *barrio* he was quite a well-known figure.

Over at Roberto's uncle's house, the wake was underway, and young men flowed into the street. Inside his mother, aunts and sisters were crying, an elderly aunt swayed the rosary over his grey plastic coffin. His younger brother whispered to me to come to the kitchen, and we walked through the narrow corridor that

divided the small curtained-off bedrooms. Roberto had been shot while riding on the back of a motorbike down the Avenida Oriental, a main thoroughfare of six lanes which ran north to south on the eastern edge of the city centre. His body had been pierced by two bullets, and his brother showed me - whispering not to let his mother know that they still had the clothes because they would upset her more- the blood soaked shirt and the same once-white trousers I had last seen him wearing, now pink with blood. The bullet holes were visible in the shirt, one of the few items with which he had to remember his brother. Roberto's friend Camilo said that he had been taken to the emergency room of the main public hospital, but that because he was poor and had no medical insurance he wasn't attended quickly. 'He died because he was poor' said Camilo.

In the saddest of ways, his death was only a short-term shock, the exact time and details of his death being the element of surprise in his otherwise predictable and inevitable end. Roberto's friends had already met their fate, Freddy had been killed in 1996, and Sergio in 1997. On the day of Roberto's funeral, it poured with unrelenting rain as the casket was being pushed into the concrete hole in the cement wall thirty feet high. The oldest of the three friends from the Patio only lived to was the age of twenty-six.

Jorge

One of the alumni willing to tell his story was Jorge, who was then in his early forties. He recounted how a woman his mother worked for had recommended CCS as an option for her son, and Jorge spoke of his great appreciation for the institution, the priests and the ways in which he felt they had helped him. This was particularly around his self-confessed difficulties with anger (*ira, rabia*), and he described himself as *muy brusco, muy violento* (very brusque, very violent). Jorge reminisced about how, as a physically small child, he was sometimes sent by others to provoke their enemies, and how some had said he would grow up to become another 'Sangrenegra', one of the most legendary bandits of *la Violencia*²¹. He suggested his abilities in later life, to react in self-defence and when he felt others were being violated, particularly during his time as a policeman, had grown out of

²¹ Sánchez and Meertens 2001 discuss Sangrenegra and other figures of this period in depth.

these childhood experiences. Indeed his words reverberate with allusions to the manners in vengeance and violence have been linked in Colombian history, as discussed in Chapter Two.

Jorge recounted how he had seen and confronted instances of violence as well as corruption, and of killing people, both on and off police duty. Our conversation was peppered with sighs from Jorge of '*es que uno ha vivido unos ambientes*' (its that I have lived through some strange things)²². In the face of the arbitrariness of justice, and despite his self-professed short temper and proclivities towards violence, Jorge said that he had no reluctance about killing those who in his eyes deserved it²³, and suggested that he was also fearless because of his sense of right and wrong. This included confronting armed men in a *barrio* he and his wife had moved to, who had promptly told them they had two weeks to leave, and saying to the man who controlled the zone (*el que controlaba la zona*) that he was incapable of shooting him. According to Jorge, the man was dead two weeks later. "You have to be hard!" Jorge said. He emphasised that he would not kill for money, only for his sense of justice, and hoped that whatever divine judgement ever made of him would take his sense of right and wrong into account.

Camilo

Roberto's friend Camilo, whom I interviewed for the alumni newsletter, said he had often been wheeled out by the institution to give a success story. He had arrived at the Patio from the street at about the age of eight. He and Roberto were both then living in Niquitao, the birthplace of many Patio boys, and where Roberto's aunt still lived. In our formal interview, he recounted the story of how he came to CCS.

"Because of the conditions of poverty and abuse - especially from my stepfather- in my family, I decided to go to the street because maybe I thought that in the street I would have more liberty and ways of subsisting or at least that there I wouldn't have my stepfather abusing me. I spent four years in the middle of drugs and vices that you find on the street. A priest called Raymond invited me to go to the Patio. I

²² Amongst these was an apparent practice by other police of stopping people to do *requisas* (body frisks), including making them show the contents of their pockets. If they retrieved large wads of cash from their pockets, Andres recounted, the officers would put a large 'X' on their backs in white chalk - for a *bandido* waiting around the corner.

²³ He did not mention *gamines*, or whether they might be included, and due to the flow of the conversation I did not ask.

learned how to do some handicrafts and to study. That's why they took me to the Transition House, where I took the first step, of leaving drugs. I started a new life with lots of will, lots of work and lots of effort..."

Concluding, he said

"I found moral support and admiration through them [the Salesian priests]. CCS is the best thing that has happened in my life and that's why I am always grateful. I would like to contribute to the improvement of boys, who like I did, need a friendly hand to help them."

In 1999, Carlos was running a furniture-making and repair business with his girlfriend. Of the boys that had gone through CCS with him, he said that he knew of few that were still alive.

Armando

Armando's story also showed the potential of the institution and a lasting appreciation of it. Armando was then the president of the alumni group, and, having graduated from university, was teaching in the local technical college. He had arrived at CCS as a child needing to board, as his mother worked as a domestic servant on a residential basis. His father, he discovered as a young man, was a wealthy businessman who had had nothing to do with him as a child.

Armando was candid about life in the institution, explaining that when he arrived there he had known nothing about the streets, drugs or robbing. Over the years though he said he had learned a lot, if only to save face and not stand out as naïve. He had gone into CCS with no street experience, and come out with a sizeable body of knowledge. But inspired by education, and always maintaining close links with his mother until her death in the mid 1990s, he went through CCS with a desire to maximise any advantages to be gained via the institution.

VI. Conclusion

These CCS alumni stories cannot be conclusive, but they highlight some of the complex issues about social advancement, individual morality and the institution's teachings, in the face of unemployment, poverty and violence. In the third

stage, boys were clearly grappling with issues of agency and power relations, and these were framed in light of experiences outside and prior to entering the institution. On the one hand, the institution's staff wanted the boys to think of themselves as the *raison d'être* of the institution, and the owners of its installations, but on the other, the structure of the institution and the regulations which governed it reduced boys to passive and compliant positions. Threatened with punishment, the removal of weekly cash stimuli and the loss of points with which to buy essential goods, the only way for a boy to get ahead and indeed stay in the institution without encountering problems was to completely or at least largely internalise its norms and values. However, educators sometimes treated boys in ways which deliberately humiliated them, such as associating them with a lack of hygiene and hunger, perhaps to legitimise educators' power and status. Meanwhile, boys certainly didn't abandon their judgement or subjectivity and experience at the gates, and amongst their peers could verify their impressions, question educators' authority and judgement, and otherwise provide each other with peer support networks.

For those who went out at weekends, *barrio* life and the pace and excitement of life outside the institution might always remain a temptation, as did the street for others. Because, despite the best efforts of the institution, the boys were otherwise surrounded by and came from an extremely different (and vibrant) cultural and social environment, with which they retained many different kinds of links, including relations with family and other peers from their pasts. Roberto and his friends clearly maintained their links with the logics of other worlds outside the institution. We cannot determine if it was through their family and thus social ties with Niquitao, or the people they met by other means that involved them with the criminal underworld, that which led them all to early deaths. CCS could not apparently save them. Institutions can rarely sever its interned from their external worlds. The children who enter the institution from the street are told that they have engaged in immoral activities which lead them down the wrong path, and they must take responsibility for this. However, the outside world is full of contradictions. The world of moral uncertainties which Jorge had difficulty negotiating, and the street life with its hardships and freedoms, to which Otoniel was quickly tempted back, illustrate some of these. Social status and identity is

complex. On the one hand, the institution wants the boys to imagine themselves as having a new relationship to society, to take them from poverty and hardships and crises and offer them protection. On the other hand, at 18 the boys must then reinsert themselves into the world, trained with some skills, and understanding that rules can protect them, and show them how not to be feared or stand out for being 'disposable'. But the institution itself sometimes demonstrates that it has its doubts as to whether this is possible. External circumstances brought children to its doors in the first place, and they will regulate their futures.

Chapter Eight
PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE THIRD STAGE



8.1 Packing their belongings to go up to the third stage, with (some help with folding from educators (top left).

8.2 Being welcomed by third stage staff, halfway up the hill.

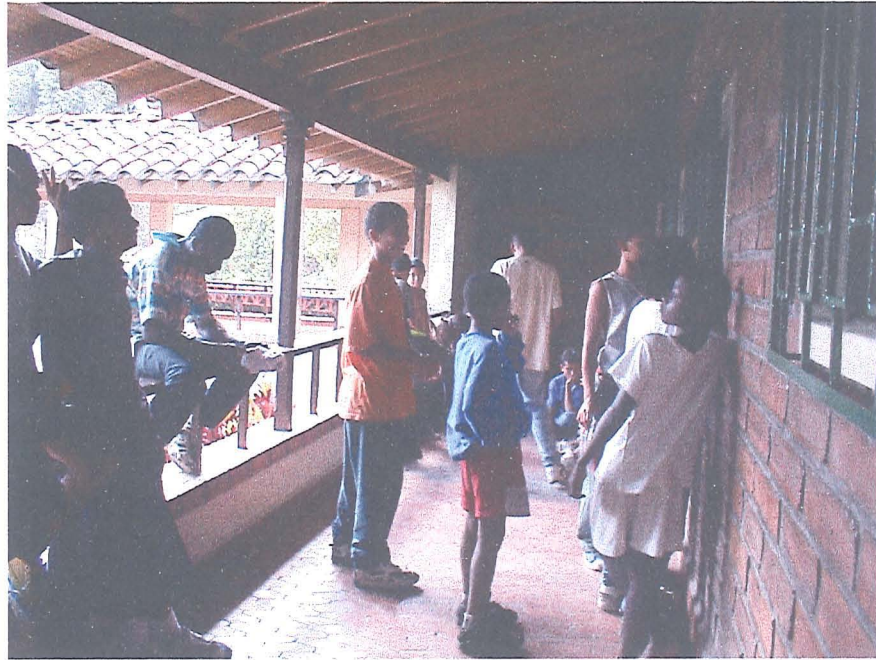




8.3 Boys play football at the City on an overcast day.

8. 4 A Friday afternoon for third stage boys at the City. On the balcony, boys hang on the railings, outside the audio-visual room. Underneath, boys line up to collect their *estimulo* (pocket money)





8.5 Around the corner from the audio visual room, boys wait outside the shop to buy clothes and other items with their points.

8.6 A group of boys from the fifth grade before class.





8.7 A group of boys chat outside the administrative centre during free time. Most are from the Transition House group; the others are from the previous promotion (#38).

8.8 A group of full time boarders (*reque-internos*) sit around on along weekend after doing some maintenance chores.





8.9 & 8.10 (inset above) Boys line up for lunch in their troops, while (inset) a boy who arrived late does a squat walk in punishment.

8.11 Boys in line to enter the dining room for lunch.



CONCLUSION

This thesis has examined the experiences of boys in their encounters with an institution dedicated to assisting so-called ‘street’ children. By exploring boys’ views and stories, the thesis demonstrates that most children do not come to be on the street by choice. Rather, as we have seen, many of the children who attend CCS’ projects for ‘street’ children have in fact been displaced by war and poverty, and many of those who take most advantage of the projects have little or no experience of the street. Following the boys through the stages of the institution, we saw how children’s varied experiences affected their reactions to the disciplinary and protective services it offered, and how tensions arose over the incongruity in the institution’s and boys’ perspectives of boys reasons for being there. Despite this, and boys’ reactions to certain relations of power within the institution, we saw how disciplinary processes and techniques aimed to get boys to re-define and re-create themselves according to the institution’s values. These processes are located in a context where violence displays complex manifestations in the children’s environments. As I showed, this demanded links to be made between extreme conditions of overt and structural violence, and how children’s agency may be expressed and contained.

I. ‘Street’ Children

The argument has shown the limitations of the concept of “street children”, and demonstrated that the category is a contested one. Children with long standing experience of the street engage in a selective and partial manner with the institution, and are usually amongst the first to leave if they do enter a residential phase. Difficulties occur in classifying what is in many senses a transient group on two levels: one, because children grow up, and two, because the street itself is a space of transience, rather than permanence. In fact the street in Medellín is also the scene of many of the city’s homicides and murders, including by vigilante paramilitary squads and it is usually difficult to survive here for very long.

This ethnographic encounter suggests that studies of 'street' children need to be grounded in analyses of structural and wider social factors that compel children towards the street. While researchers sometimes suggest that getting children to provide simple answers as to why they are on the street can be hard, this in itself is a valuable opportunity for reflection on the relationships of the researcher with the researched, as well as a product of the complexities of the forces that propel children away from homes and families. Thus researchers may also sometimes be asking the wrong questions. As the educator who talked about making up whatever the psychologist wanted to hear implied, children are perfectly able to manipulate the effects of what they say. It is to their credit as well as their loss that 'street' children are researched, as well as such iconographic examples of 'Third World' poverty and survival.

I have shown that when a variety of research methods are used and, more importantly, when children themselves are involved in creative ways, spaces and moments can be created where children feel comfortable and know that they are being listened to. This is a matter of time and trust. Letting children evaluate for themselves the worthiness and the wisdom of participating in research provides them with a grounded basis upon which to decide for themselves whether or not, and to what extent, to participate. As I argued in Chapter Three, the possibilities for, and limitations of, children's consent and understandings of the possible effects of research need to be recognised and managed as openly as possible. In situations where children are used to being treated as objects of discourse rather than engaged subjects, participation in research can have an appeal the children themselves are aware of. If placed in positions of authorship, children's consciousness of their conditions (cf Felsman 1989) and their eloquence about what they have experienced, as we have seen, makes for very fruitful research.

This underscores the importance of concentrating on children's views, which offer a dynamic perspective on the society of adults around them (cf Toren 2002), as well as again indicating the limits of their agency. While children's agency is often recognised in studies of the street, this thesis has examined the manner in which 'street' children understand and react to an institution, by highlighting boys'

perspectives of the opportunities provided by one institution. I have shown that their appreciations involve subtleties of negotiation, and that the children engage with the different perspectives and processes being offered to them in a manner that involves constant evaluation of what is on offer, as well as of their own well-being.

II. Boys' Views

In this thesis I showed how children came to the street or the institution for a variety of reasons, and that many of the children at CCS have in fact been displaced by violence. The assessments boys make of the institution have to be understood in light of the contexts of poverty, conflict and multiple types of risk they endure. As I argued in Chapter Two, violence in Colombia has many manifestations. Structural violence affects boys' lives and the possibilities for their futures, or as Cockburn puts it, it also constrains the "potential development of an individual or group", through "the uneven distribution of power and resources" (2001: 17). In fact, both violence and discipline constrain boys from multiple points – through war, poverty, '*maltrato*', and as security forces contain them on the streets- while the institution compels them to understand their plight in terms of their own deviance.

For those seeking to escape problems of conflict and poverty, the Patio offers an immediate and accessible refuge. Many on the street use this space strategically, and without any apparent interest in the institution's view of 'progress'. Some have already sampled and disliked the regime it offers, while others are merely passing through while settling tensions at home. Others are keen to be chosen to go up to the next stage of the institution and find more permanent shelter and education. Within their reasoning are appreciations of the conditions the institution provides, which shows how power can compel, with material benefits, safety and warmth. The spaces of the institution provide opportunities for boys to learn, sleep and play in a secure and pleasant environment, and to do many things they cannot do on the street. Boys respond to educators and the advice and guidance they can provide, and in numerous ways demonstrate their ability to differentiate between what they enjoy and dislike. And, despite Padre Carlos' perspectives about their utilitarian approach

to the system, CCS provides crucial support to many families, in the context of a dearth of welfare or other assistance from the state, as I explained in Chapter Four.

Once inside the institution it becomes starkly apparent that the institution shares with the general public a view of the boys that is based on moral deviance, while positioning itself as being there to help them return to the right tracks of childhood. The lessons of the street and the ways in which they survive here sometimes constitute knowledge with which to dispute certain meanings about the street given by the institution. While on the street boys experience hardships and threats of violence, there is also evidence, in boys' stories and in the film 'the Abused Child', that on the street there are significant opportunities for sharing and distancing experiences of violence and injustice. Here boys build their own meanings of their experiences, in a context where they learn that others have experienced suffering similar to theirs (cf Felsman 1989).

The boys' experiences also suggest the extent to which the streets of Colombian cities are homes for those who have no other, such as victims of displacement and violence. However here boys experience yet further violence, discrimination and harassment, as the street is shrouded in social mythologies of pollution, contamination and taboo. Indignantly, boys emphasise that they are not drug addicts or dirty by choice, but that they share mainstream moral and cultural concerns. They argue that views of them as deviant are simply wrong, and that they are being judged solely because of their poverty. These experiences position boys to take a highly critical stance towards some of the attitudes expressed within the institution, such as some staff's use of the label '*gamines*', which indicates lack of fit between the institution's view of the boys, and the boys' views of themselves.

As I have shown, the trajectory of the disciplinary power and the ways in which power acts on and around boys are multiple and comprehensive, suggesting the importance of Foucault's view of power (as discussed in Chapter Two). For example, power was ubiquitous in the process of transformation in the Transition House. Discipline was effected through visual surveillance, verbal rhetoric and individual coaching and support. We saw how power could be positive, how

material power can influence and effect, for example in some boys' views of life on the street. Changes in the ways boys think about the street, such as adopting particular vocabulary or expressions of concern about acts of theft, suggest how the boys absorb and internalise elements of the institution's view, which they might previously have rejected as misinformed. These processes also highlight the role of disciplining and the formation of a different habitus in re-evaluating their understandings of elements of their prior lives. However, the efficacy of this process, and even the value of the material comfort of the Transition House, is questioned by Ivan, the third stage educator, who suggested that surveillance and policing are more important than the transformed inner will of the child in accounting for the individual staying in the Transition House.

The disciplinary context highlights the relevance of the differences between 'formal' school-based learning and the unconscious inculcation of 'habitus' (cf Bourdieu and Passeron 1990), and suggests how one of the crucial elements of habitus necessary for 'formal' learning to take place was obedience of authority. The institution invokes boys' lack of respect for authority as an important issue in both the selection process and the initiation ceremony. This vital ingredient in the institution's method kept away children with stronger or more significant experience of the streets. However many boys, often with less experience of the street, reflect upon their new bodily conditions with a positive sense of change. From the body outwards, they become new men as their bodies become free of drugs, and are clothed in ways that position them in a new relationship to society. They come to see that their old ways of being – wearing dirty clothes, going barefoot - could be seen as evidence of their distance from certain social norms, which they were far from rejecting. Regardless of experience of the street, however, through the process, and as a result of it, many boys demonstrate awareness and consciousness of how discourse marks them as particular kinds of subjects.

Resistance

Boys' acceptance of the conditions for staying in the institution does not mean they accept everything inside it as just or legitimate. Multiple instances of resistance are apparent in the fabric of daily life. Boys reject subject definitions by rejecting the

categories and labels with which they are supposed to re-write the narratives of their lives and their pasts. Visibility and group surveillance responsibilities are subverted by hiding acts, in compliance with ethics of not telling: telling on each other might damage the fabric of solidarity on which they so often rely. They reject the use of force as way of communicating with them, as manifest in their many complaints about the younger educators. While they accept that hitting children might be 'reasonable' if the child has understood what they have done wrong, in practice this never applies to their own cases. And they demonstrate frustration with the lack of spaces in which to articulate and put forward their views. Boys' abilities to separate message from messenger, to critique discourse, to question motives and to second-guess were very apparent, as illustrated in numerous ways in the chapters of this thesis (see especially Chapter Seven).

Based on their appreciations of the forces of crisis impinging on their situations, while in the institution boys enter into contractual relationships with CCS to take advantage of the protection, welfare and education it offers. Boys take up CCS's offer of development roughly on its terms, but they demonstrate consciousness of how power functions, and its drawbacks, when for example they criticise figures in authoritative positions for abusing their power, and manipulating the conditions of the contract. They are thus aware of both the benefits and the constraints involved in staying in the institution, and as we saw, most who do not accept its conditions leave.

Resistance thus has to be understood as a subtle process, conditioned by wider factors. Structural conditions determine, in part, what kinds of resistance can be articulated or made, but so do balances and trade offs with what power has to offer. We saw in the cases of alumni whose lives had become entangled with violence, that outside the institution they were agents whose ability to act was constrained by the poverty and violence that again surrounded them. The brevity of Roberto's life could have been predicted by many, his death one of thousands every year in the city related to the small scale criminal activity engaged in by young men with no other hope for their lives. Jorge was perhaps the most overtly concerned with morality, as he expressed concern with how the higher powers would eventually

judge him for his engagement with violence. But he also manifested a sense of his own ability to act as an arbiter of right and wrong, and was thus authorised to murder those he saw as dangerous or immoral. His views suggest wider problems of crises of legitimacy in Colombia, and his actions, the ways in which individuals try to create their own sense of order and meaning in situations of crisis.

III. The Institution's View

The institution's objectives, of helping children in need and removing them from the dangers of the street, involve both protecting and reforming them. This reform is both spiritual and physical. For CCS, boys' exposure to and engagement in practices associated with the street is leading them down the wrong path. For the institution, the street is bad, '*malo*' in Padre Carlos's words, and the initiation ceremony we saw in Chapter Six explicitly seeks to destroy the contaminating association of boys with the street. Here, and in instances where educators vilify the boys for being nothing more than *gamines* or *desechables*, the institution reproduced the stigmatising categories which make the boys targets of violence on the street, and sends contradictory messages to them. This negative view suggests that the institution may doubt the extent to which boys can be reformed, and functions both in relation to boys' capacity to determine their own lives, and seeing them as more fully formed in particular ways. Boys' hostility to this view of themselves is not only in evidence when they react with frustration to being labelled *gamines*, but is also summed up in their reactions against being 'determined', judged and defined. The ability of those in positions of power to label, categorise and judge is one with which the boys demonstrate extreme frustration, and which highlights the limits of their agency. As we also saw, however, such categorisations and the understandings of the subject that they produce are also an issue amongst staff. This was apparent in the hand-over meeting for the third stage, where different ways of approaching the challenge of reforming boys became clear (in Chapter Eight, pages 274 – 276). Ivan suggested that the Transition House did nothing more than invigilate to compel, however the boys reacts positively to the homeliness of the environment and facilities, whereas in the third stage the emphasis is on punitive discipline which is harsher and more distant.

A gradual approach to discipline characterised the process by which boys moved from the Patio to the Transition House, and then to the city. These were all spaces with different meaning, orders and values. At the Patio the institution's goals were expressed in dynamic terms of 'moving ahead' or 'progressing', and throughout the boys are encouraged to think of themselves as subjects on course to a different future. There is a parallel with the way the terminology suggests their progression from a space outside a home, to the inside of one, to a civic space, a community with its rules which every member of the community must obey, of their own volition. This process evolved around the gradual development of boys' responsibility for their acts and for aligning their behaviour to institutional standards. As such, it represented a process of development in self-discipline.

The institution's symbolic evocation of boys' lives, and its construction of their moral deviance, bears little relationship to their own understandings of their situations or the ways in which they arrived at the institution. Lessons based in individual causality and responsibility, drilled through the process of self-evaluation in a public confessional setting, are at the heart of the system – a discipline of self-responsibility and an individualised relationship to norms. But for many children, this symbolic system and the disciplinary techniques around it are goals which compromise their otherwise heightened sense of well-being. The material and security benefits, the affection and friendship of educators, and the solidarity and friendship with other boys, provide significant reasons for staying. But these positive feelings mix with senses of boredom, confinement and restriction. Decisions about departure are evaluated in light of alternatives, and there are sometimes positive and compelling reasons to be outside. So while working on boys' moral selves, the institution's symbolic view contrasts with other levels of embodied experience. Within the heterogeneity of the population of boys, the space for resistance is articulated in the distance between the appropriation of symbolic codes and absorption of these categories, and boys' awareness of alternatives.

One of the most profound problems CCS faces is convincing children of the need for discipline, particularly towards the end of the process when it is assumed that the logic of the system has been internalised. Many boys manifested an awareness of

how the outside world was regulated by violence, requiring wits and survival skills to which the rules taught in CCS were not relevant. Other kinds of discipline, such as the evaluation of the self, showed how discourses which sought to make boys regulate their own behaviour were partially absorbed. But some boys did not seem to accept the balance between safety and discipline that the institution put forward. The corollary to this is that the institution must entice and provide alluring conditions in which boys are willing to forfeit liberties for the sake of objectives the institution rehearses on them. Its power to lure them into staying is apparent. But the power it has to provide for boys protection and safety is combined with the need to convince some of them that the outside world is dangerous, and that self-discipline has an important role to play in changing their relationship to society.

The ceremonial role of the few priests on the campus is evangelical, but priests also carried out other managerial and administrative duties. This meant that for the boys they were important but somewhat distant figures compared to the educators with whom they lived and interacted during their daily lives within the institution, or even the teachers who provided their formal education. We have seen that educators, their words and actions, had an enormous impact on the quality of boys' lives. Their work was focused on developing specific disciplinary mechanisms, such as training the boys in the practices and habits of routines, chores and obedience. The fact that educators and priests constituted the main role models for boys within the institution may have a detrimental effect on the boys' ability to imagine and define their lives beyond it. While in the Transition House some boys talked of wanting to emulate educators, but by the third stage and its different tensions, the appeal of this seemed to wear thin. Meanwhile, none ever mentioned wanting to become a priest.

The approaches of staff and priests are also necessarily different. While the evangelical and spiritual objectives of the priests inform the basic policies of the institution, many staff approach their work with a commitment to social care and the development of boys' opportunities. They work with a variety of personal, political and social objectives, and respond on a daily basis to both the requirements of the institution's mechanisms and routines, and the boys' needs for nurturance and support. These approaches are thus secular in orientation, and derive from

individual and shared understandings of the boys' situations as ones meriting particular types of attention and responses. This had both positive and negative corollaries, with some educators having a strong and friendly rapport with boys, while others seemed to abuse the power they had over the children. The goal and process of professionalizing the occupation reflected the institution's concern to standardise the educators' approaches. Whilst seeking to instil knowledge of particular discourses and approaches in all educators, this emphasis would also diminish and possibly marginalise individual views and methods.

Futures and Objectives

CCS' ability to fulfil its objectives is limited by a number of significant factors. In part, there seem to be limits imposed by the internal hierarchy, which affects what staff say, talk about and do. Another more obvious source of constraints is financial, ranging from funding limits set by the government for each child's maintenance to the difficulty of finding donors. These suggested how vulnerable the institution was to economic forces far beyond its control. To the fact that CCS operates within financial constraints imposed by global economic forces beyond it are added the effects of war and poverty. Nonetheless, CCS has survived and even managed to grow significantly despite conditions of economic hardship. To what extent this is due to the cultivation of particular networks by the higher echelons of management or by the Salesian community itself, in Antioquia and beyond, is difficult to say. As I suggested in the introduction, projects and priests who are seen to stray from the strict remit of evangelical catechisms, by engaging with liberation theology for example, are often marginalized or ejected from the community. The ability to steer a cautious line of action through difficult political circumstances is the most likely explanation for how CCS has kept going.

The institution also achieves functions that are not part of its stated objectives, addressing broader issues and a wider group of children. The Patio and other projects provide places of safety and respite from the street, while the Patio was also functioning as a reception centre for displaced children and children who were victims of war and violence. It also gave shelter to boys who had left home for short periods of time, while they negotiated the conflict in their domestic setting.

Once outside CCS, those who had been inside had mixed feelings about it. Some, like El Alemán, demonstrated a keen appreciation of what the institution did and how the staff there tried to help boys find another life, a better life, off the streets and away from drugs and violence. This often coexisted with a melancholic sense that they had somehow ‘failed’ there, and often still-sharp memories of what had happened there to make them leave. The burden for the youngsters was the message from the institution that the blame lay with the child for not wanting to take advantage of what they offered, for lacking *verraquera*, or guts, as Guillermo put it.

Within CCS, the strength of peer bonds often seemed to assist boys’ resilience, providing support to each other through friendship in ways which helped counteract the emphasis given to individual responsibility within the process. CCS also taught and encouraged boys to work together in groups and teams, but friendships could both be maintained outside such groups as well as form within them. The importance of social contact outside the institution seemed to have been taken into account in the policy of letting boys out at weekends to maintain contact with families and communities, but, for ‘*reque-internos*’, there were no fostering or other arrangements through which boys could pursue non-institutional relationships. In fact *reque-internos* in the third stage occasionally wistfully recalled relations with other families they had made while on the street (as described in Chapter Five), which they could manage and get needed emotional interaction and support from, but opportunities for which were lost once inside CCS.

As I have suggested, CCS is not a ‘total’ institution such as those studied by Foucault, where internment responds to different objectives. At CCS, boys have the possibility of leaving whenever they like. Those like Orlando, who are asked to leave, are exceptions, and the decision was based on the perception that he was physically hardly there, and in terms of will, even less so (see Chapter Eight, page 294). But as the particular incident that led to his departure – being robbed of his shoes at gunpoint - shows, the institution cannot isolate boys from the world outside. The world just beyond its gates and behind its buildings can be dangerous. In internal communications and culture, the outside world has a marked impact.

Educators tried to explicitly engage with the issues of danger and difficulty that the outside world represented, and this was certainly what boys illustrated in their drawings, shown following Chapter Four. For as we have seen, amongst the boys CCS attends to are victims of war, and children perceived as dangerous threats to the social order. The extent to which staff felt they must reckon with the effects of the violence was underscored by Ivan, when he discussed violence as a sickness which permeates Colombian society. However, as I argued at the outset, the institution has a view of children's agency which is at odds with the boys' own understandings of their situations, and the conditions in which they exist and survive.

Staff are thus acutely aware that what they do might have little long term effect, and that the course of childhood and the way it affects a child's future cannot be altogether altered by the institution. This material suggests that consciousness is socially reckoned, while souls and discipline are individually constructed. The links between conscience and consciousness that are meant to be apprehended by CCS provoke questions as to what extent consciousness can be moulded by ideas of conscience. This is why CCS simultaneously can and cannot work.

Thus to some extent, the institution fails to achieve its own aims. Both staff and management are aware of this in different ways. The Transition House staff's suggestions for altering the process, by introducing a new stage or prolonging the Transition House stay, indicated an awareness and concern over such issues. Further, boys who leave do so despite the education on offer, and indeed, Cesar was one of the few who articulated this as a major reason for staying. However, the third stage and the workshops also have important functions for other sectors of community. Some of the ambiguities in CCS' effectiveness are apparent in the trajectories of the boys within institution. When I visited in January 2001, of twenty boys of Promotion #39 whose whereabouts I discussed with Dario, then spending his Christmas holidays in the Transition House, nine were still in CCS, the other 11 having left. Juan David and Bernardo, two of the three who repeated Transition House had left during their second six-month period there. Bernardo was

apparently back at the Patio; neither Dario nor anyone I spoke to had any news of Juan David.

IV. Childhood and Welfare

I have shown that the possibilities for the period of childhood in Colombia are fundamentally affected by broader political and economic factors and structural violence, as described in Chapter Two. Middle class society in Colombia is regularly shocked and morally outraged by the ways children are interpolated into situations and acts of violence (cf Bustos Valencia 2000). Indeed, the myth that childhood is an isolated period of innocence is greatly challenged by the lived realities of these children, who must learn to survive in conditions of extreme hardship. This points to differences of vulnerability on a grand scale. While children in the north are usually monitored for the development of their awareness of violence, in Colombia it is something which many children have direct experience of.

Importantly, young male children on the street are often the most visible of children in urban poverty. The fact that the majority of street-based children are boys indicates the manner in which gender begins to be formed and articulated in the child's life from an early age. The conditions of girls who venture onto the streets are likely to be much more oppressive, is, as I have suggested, something about which even research is difficult. As we saw, services for girls are limited, and it is hard to find funding for them locally.

Many issues of child welfare are raised by this research. As I showed in Chapter Four, the current family and child welfare programmes of the ICBF are extremely limited (cf May 1996), and political commitment to meeting basic social needs has been severely wanting. These were the underlying causes of the harsh realities in which children and family tried to forge strategies for survival. There were no systems available to support families' efforts to stay together. Childcare, education and work were balanced in different ways as families struggled to survive, and often the ability of extended families to help each other diminished due to the difficult economic circumstances.

Rights are one way of addressing welfare issues, and there are great gaps to be closed between the rights to a family life promised in the preface to the UNCRC, and the realities experienced by most families in Colombia. There are also more specific welfare complexities to the question of rights. For example there is a tendency for institutional goals to override child-centred ones, when the reputation of the institution is considered more important than children's rights violations (Tolfree 1995: 77). This seemed to manifest itself within CCS on occasions. Within the institution, there were no explicit or dedicated mechanisms for children's views to be taken into account, nor any clear methods for boys to seek redress or even to contact a child advocate. Ultimately, the ICBF should be at the forefront of positive developments and changes to institutional practices and legal frameworks in Colombia, including revamping the Minor's Code which defines so much of ICBF's work. A priority should be to bring child protection processes, such as the placing of a child into care, into line with the UNCRC. Fostering democratic participation ought to be a major educational objective in Colombia, to counteract decades of neglect and exclusion. Indeed, the welfare of all should be a central government agenda, rather than the task of one institution attending to a few.

V. Contributions To Anthropological Debate

In this final section I consider some of the key areas of theorisation which the thesis has engaged with. The principle contribution of this thesis is ethnographic, and its approach is located within central concerns of anthropology and the broader social sciences. From within anthropology use is made of concepts of structural violence and analysis of violence at the symbolic level (Farmer 1996, Cassese 1991, Galtung 1988, Cockburn 2001, Abbink 2000, Merrtens 2001 a,b,c). I also explore issues surrounding power, taking particular inspiration from Foucault (1977, 1980) and linking questions of power to forms of discipline and the shaping of subjectivity (Rose 1999). My approach to these matters also highlighted the role of body and embodied processes (Csordas 1999, Shilling 1993, Bordo 1990). The ethnography focussed on questions of agency and consciousness. These are areas of growing emphasis within sociology, anthropology and the study of children, and they respond to the limitations of analysis which focuses exclusively on social structures.

This is crucial to the contexts analysed here, where subjects are marginal from a structural perspective.

Childhood, Power And Agency

By exploring issues of child agency (Giddens 1979, James and Prout 1997), this thesis contributes empirically to the growing body of literature on children and agency. As I discussed in Chapter Two, theories of child agency must be grounded in lived realities, and require in-depth analyses of the contexts in which children exist, for which an ethnographic approach is particularly useful. Such contextualised studies of agency can, as James and Prout (op cit) suggest, enrich the field of studies of childhood and at the same time expand the boundaries and potential of anthropology. As I suggested in Chapter Two, properly grounded and framed, studies of 'street' children do not have to exist at the margins of serious anthropological debates, but can contribute to mainstream areas of knowledge and expand our understanding of the social construction of childhood and children's experiences and sources of knowledge (Toren 2002).

The ethnographic chapters explored the ways in which children relate to and understand power. We saw for example the ways in which children both resisted and accepted different elements of the processes in the institution, and how they contrasted with their experiences on the street. What this research shows, by focusing on the children's views and giving them different opportunities to express themselves, is that they demonstrate varying but striking degrees of awareness of their place in marginal processes – in society, on the street and in the institution. They demonstrate complex and subtle grasps of where they stand with relation to other entities and forces. This contrasts in many ways with myths of childhood innocence, and demonstrates the extent to which innocence is in fact something which must be cultivated, in the separation of the child from the spaces of adult life. This, as Ariès (1962) suggested, began in Europe centuries ago, when pruning and shaping child morality was first articulated as a major public concern.

By considering the manner in which children are capable of apprehending power and its disguises, to borrow from Gledhill (2001), it is clear how power may operate

in subtle and complex ways, confirming Foucault's analysis of power as a diffuse and subtle force. This is particularly relevant when power is exerted through positivity and the manipulation of desire, when for example compelling subjects towards an ideal or towards particular rewards. For example, self-esteem was a concept presented to children as a desirable outcome, and the priest's invitation to the boys to recognise that they looked nice in their new clothes at the initiation ceremony was significantly effective.

As Toren (2002) has argued, childhood offers a particularly rich vein and moment through which to understand the process of becoming. In this ethnography emphasis has been given to the ways in which boys appreciate power, and understand their own agency. Context and the child's experiences inform such moments of recognition and the decisions effected by different children at different points in their lives. The analysis of such situations places the concept of agency at the centre of our concerns, and recognises the importance of complex webs of relationships and material circumstances (cf Boyden 1997).

If a key issue in agency is the dynamic interaction between the self and society, in childhood this is acute, largely because the child often has little power. S/he is a subject who receives messages but is rarely invited to participate in any dialogue as to whether those messages are appropriate. We see the boys complain about this imbalance in Chapter Seven, when they express a marked sense of justice and fairness (also explored in Chapter Five). But in multiple other ways the boys confront power as a constant challenge, something whose borders, magnitude, implications and occultations must constantly be evaluated, in the pursuit of one's own welfare. This ethnographic case underscores the extent to which children are conscious and active in confronting adversity, and in negotiating their own welfare. The threatening realities which the boys faced shows children's remarkable astuteness in reckoning with complex situations, and devising strategies even in the severely constraining contexts of social life in Medellín and Colombia.

Disciplinary Institutions: Applying A Foucauldian Approach

As an ethnography the thesis contributes an original analysis of the ways in which a disciplinary institution actually functions, by exploring the realities and challenges as experienced by children and staff in such an institution. The consideration of how these children reacted to the various disciplinary processes attempting to operate on them shows that Foucault's (1977) approach can be successful ethnographically. Indeed, Foucault's emphasis on examining the subtleties of power, including its ability to be positive, proves central to understanding how such an institution functions. This is because he encourages us to look at how power is effected in different relations, as well as to consider the politics of the body and the embodied nature of change and indeed discipline. As suggested in Chapter Three, the body has been the subject of growing attention in recent years (e.g. Cscordas 1999), and the concept of embodiment is particularly useful in understanding the nature of experience in a fuller and more grounded manner. We can see suffering made material, often written on the body, through scars, disease and the effects of drugs. As I suggested in Chapter Three, it is an approach which may in some instances dissolve some of the tensions which exist in ethnography between subjectivity and empiricism, by bringing the subject's empirical experiences to the fore of the constitution of their subjectivity. The thesis thus responds and contributes to some central concerns within anthropology about power and the nature of subjectivity.

This thesis also aims to make a contribution to understanding the impacts of political development and techniques of governmentality, as developed by Rose (1989, 1999). Particular attention was given to the techniques through which transformations of the self were seen or expected to be achieved, and the manner in which boys subsequently shifted their own understandings of their experiences and surroundings as expressed in their own discourses and views. The fact that staff were actively aware of the difficulties of enforcing the system and type of discipline that boys were required to achieve, explained in Chapter Eight, suggests the relevance of this issue of disjuncture. Staff reported that 'only a minimal level of assumption of the norms' had been achieved, and in three extreme cases within the group, kept the boys back to repeat the Transition House process.

This question of discipline forms one of the cornerstones of this ethnography, both as the objective of the institution and as a theoretical perspective of enormous relevance to childhood. If, as Nikolas Rose (1989) has observed, childhood in the 'West' is now the most heavily regulated sector of existence, it is because as Giddens (1991) argues, childhood is seen as the formative period of the person. As such it is critical to forming disciplined and orderly bodies that will constitute parts of a society which functions according to the grander designs of governance. In the fractured and conflictive state of Colombian society in the late 20th century, the goal of bringing errant, potentially subversive children back into the fold of the central institutions of socialisation has a clear value.

The case of 'street' children in Medellín thus helps to build empirical knowledge about children and what, if anything, constitutes 'childhood' in different societies. As suggested above, the theory of disciplinary institutions can be greatly enhanced by seeing what happens in practice. As I have shown, we cannot assume that technologies for disciplining bodies, souls and minds actually function as they are meant to, but are indeed challenged, questioned, inverted, resisted, and even appreciated, although often for reasons other than those of their original design. From a methodological perspective, fruitful ways of exploring these issues have included the use of photography, drawings and film, underscoring the extent to which visual anthropology and methods can convey aspects of experience and thus contribute important elements to the ethnographic remit.

Violence

While considering existing approaches to the subject of violence in anthropology, including those emphasising a symbolic approach or one based in social meanings (in Chapter Two), the analysis of the Colombian case presented here has suggested that a variety of levels need to be taken into account for a coherent approach to, and concept of, violence to emerge. Although it is clearly important for social meanings of violence to be taken into account, it is also vital to locate these within a context that can also be seen through the concept of structural violence. This thesis explores these relationships in a context where the absence of the state, and the impact of structural violence, are factors in the causes and nature of poverty and suffering.

These conditions also highlight the relevance of the concept of risk (Beck 1993, Caplan 2000), as an element of structural violence through which some people are made particularly vulnerable to multiple types of violence. The children experience violence in domestic settings, a function of their powerlessness to adult force; in communities where they are perceived as dangerous, and construed as defined agents; and as the indirect victims of the effects of conflicts on a national level which have nothing to do with them. These multiple types of violence confirm the importance of understanding and recognising structural violence. As a theoretical concept, I suggest that structural violence offers anthropology one of the most comprehensive means of addressing key questions of inequality which stratify the global context we study.

I discussed several approaches to violence within anthropology in Chapter Two, and suggested the limitations of approaches that reify the symbolic level, as this may distract attention from the material ends and effects of violence. By the same token, the constitutive effects of violence must not be dissociated from the power relations that enable acts of violence. This is true both in the case of individual acts of violence and the broader scale of events, such as wars that involve entities beyond the limited terrain of the nation-state. As is clear throughout the thesis, Colombia's conflicts are by no means bounded by or solely originate from within the Colombian state. The Colombian case demonstrates the need for further theorisation about the state (cf Held 1991) and contributes to the potential of anthropology and ethnography as extremely fruitful vehicles for such analysis (e.g. Bayart 1993, Coronil 1999).

I also discussed ways in which violence is linked to fear, and this is apparent in, for example, the ways that boys understand the risk represented by the police and paramilitaries on the streets. Fear manifests itself through the latent threat of violence, which, given an evaluation of risk, can have the effect of severely curtailing options and agency. However, risk and its confrontation through bravery highlight the cultural implications of the links between masculinity and violence. Indeed the gendered terrain of violence is extremely relevant here. In an original ethnographic

contribution, I showed how some of these connections function in Colombia, and argued that for marginalised males, associations with violence provide opportunities to demonstrate mastery and a kind of virility that is curtailed and forestalled by their weak structural positions. The continuities between the generation of those who were young men in the 1980s and described as a 'generation without a future', and those who were still children in the late 1990s, are all too stark.

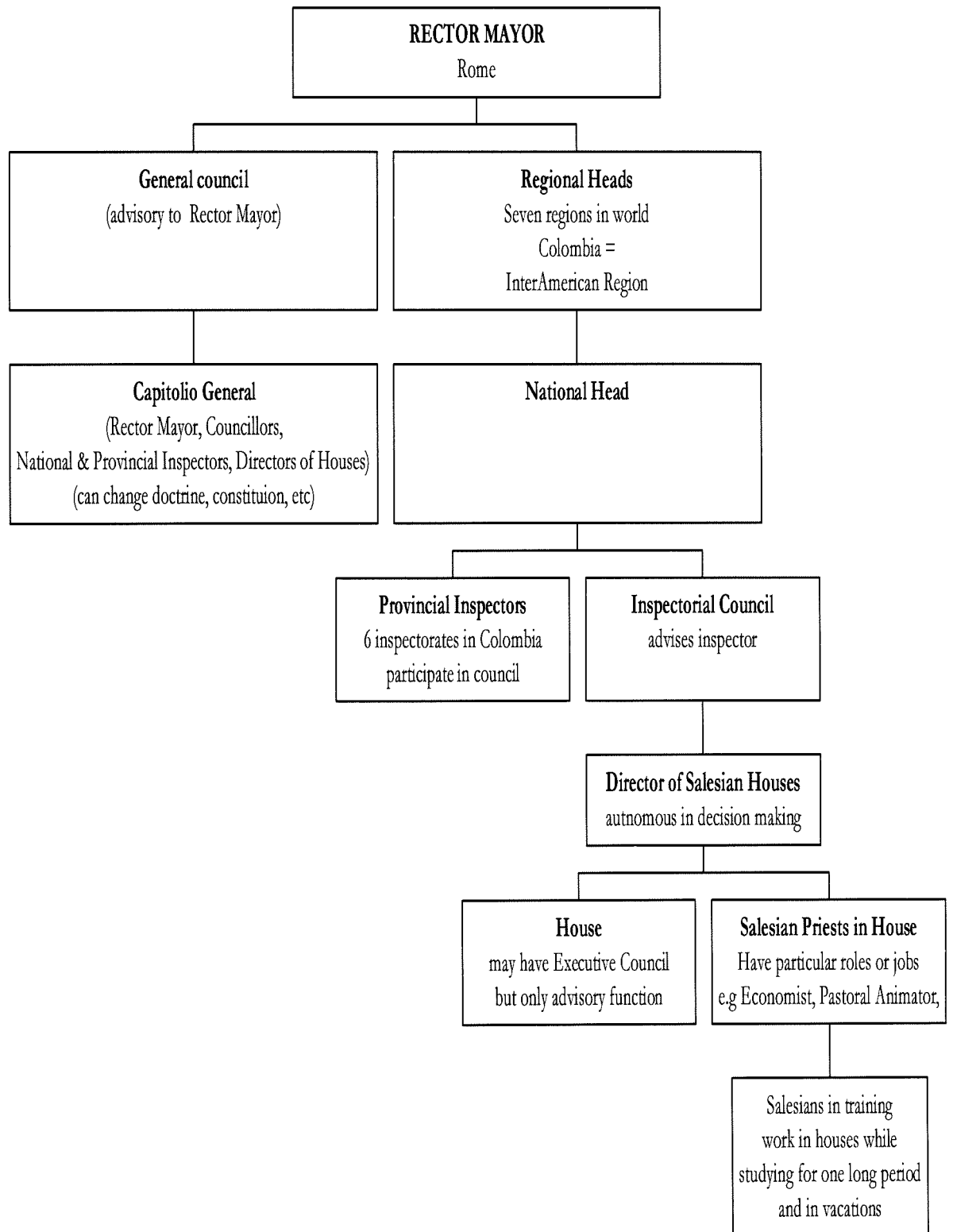
The issue of violence finally brings us back to the institution, and some of the ways in which its task and challenges can be understood. A fundamental point is the offer of safety it presents to the boys. Throughout the enactments of the disciplinary system at CCS, there are references to acceptable and unacceptable types of behaviour. In the Transition House, overt aggression and violence, against either fellow boys or staff, is regularly declared unacceptable. Violence is notably controlled within the institution, even if it is present just inches beyond the high metal gates that guard the campus from the *barrio*. This highlights the fact that violence must not be reified in the Colombian context. Rather, violence must be understood in its specificities, and I have shown that we cannot limit ourselves to questions of accountability, or moral reasoning in violence, but it is often useful to consider the side of the aggressor (cf Abbink 2000), as well as that of the victim. The Colombian case, where violence is entangled with so many social processes, suggests that violence has multiple effects, and must be traced to multiple points of origin. Critically engaged anthropology is in a good position to offer grounded analyses of what Galtung (1988, in Cassese 1991) called the absence of positive peace. The word 'peace', when it refers to the conditions of life of the few not the many, is wrongly applied – and all too often. While war indicates an overt absence of peace, there is also this negative peace, where many pay the prices for the peace of a few; and there is positive peace. We can only hope that Colombia one day finds this positive peace, for all.

This thesis has shown that a context of multiple forms of violence, other forms of subtler forms of power are also at work. Boys are formed by lived experiences in their communities and in the institution, which attempts through disciplinary techniques to mould them into particular kinds of subjects. By examining the case

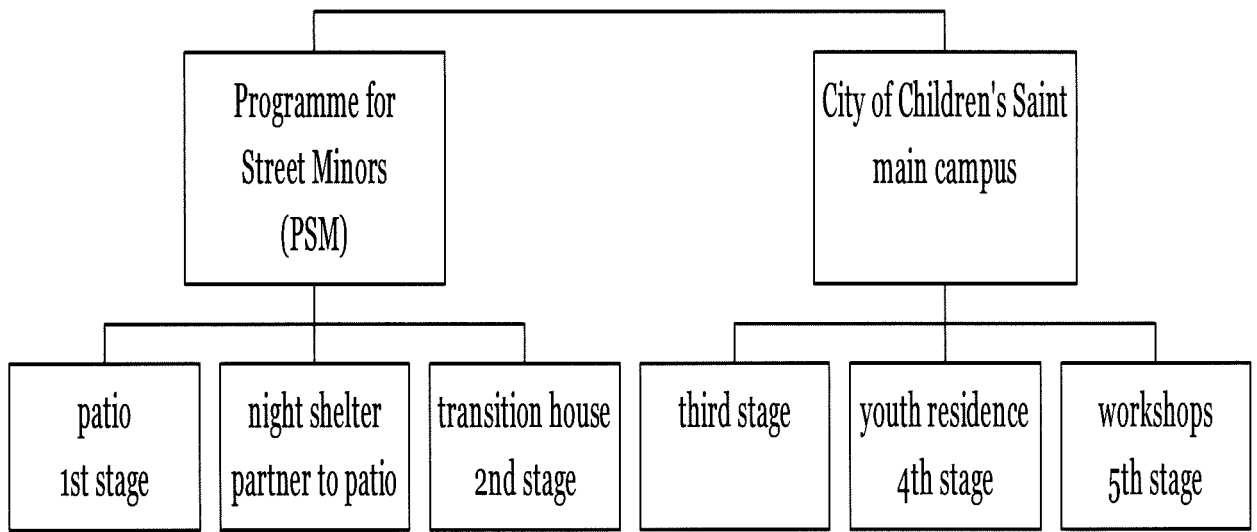
of children caught up on an environment where violence and power manifest themselves in these complex ways, the thesis showcases children's awareness of power, as well as their susceptibility to it.

The complexity of the case, and of the circumstances in which the children find themselves, underscore the relevance of ethnography today. A deeper understanding of the conflicting forces in Colombian society can only be achieved through a comprehension of the interrelationships between different aspects of society, including those in overt conflict. Anthropology has a unique method through which to approach such contexts, and this thesis, through careful descriptions and analysis, makes a contribution to the further development of anthropological knowledge.

Appendix 1. Structure of International Salesian Community



Appendix 2. Institutional Overview and Project Structure within CCS



Appendix 2a:

San Juan Bosco and the Art of Re-Education

At the City of the Children's Saint, the goal of transformations of miscreant youth into good Christians and honest citizens is to be achieved by a system of constant surveillance, militaristic group formations, educational regimes, and the confessional. Don Giovanni Bosco (known in Colombia as San Juan Bosco), founder of the Salesian system of 'Preventative' care for youths, initiated his work with vagabond children in Turin in the 1840s. Concerned by the lack of moral guidance these youngsters were receiving, he opened an oratorio in which they could be offered guidance and support, and later, training as apprentices.

Contemporary to Mettray, the reformatory in France that Foucault writes of, and indeed to the Ragged Schools of Britain, the success Don Bosco achieved produced a significant following amongst European leaders, social reformers and policy makers of the day. Of Mettray, Driver (1994: 123) writes that:

“Philanthropists and politicians flocked to its gates, eager to learn the secrets of its success; indeed, a visit to Mettray was likened to a pilgrimage to Mecca”, for the social reformer.

While we do not know if Don Bosco knew about Mettray (cf Braido 1994¹), Don Bosco's oratory received visits from Lord Palmerston², and envoys of kings, anxious to see if lessons could be learnt that would make the task of running juvenile penitentiaries easier. He also wrote some twenty volumes on the lives of saints, was credited with prophetic powers³, and was a charismatic figure, in a contemporary's admiring view:

“No priest receives more caresses from his sons, they all gather round him, they all want to talk to him, to kiss his hand; if they see him in the city, they go out immediately from the shops to offer him gifts. His word has a prodigious good effect over the hearts of these still soft souls, to instruct them, correct, to steer them towards good, educate them in virtue, enamour them of perfection. His admirable office is an asylum always open at any hour to any youth that

¹ Don Bosco did however visit France, twice in the 1870s and 1880s, and correspond with French thinkers on reform (Braido 1994).

² Braido 1994: 169, footnote 91. Braido notes that this is of course only the alleged conversation, and that it may well not have been Lord Palmerston himself to visit, in 1880, but an emissary.

³ Such as predicting to geographical coordinates of Brasilia, the Brazilian capital built nearly a century later.

goes to him to distance himself from the dangers of the corrupt world, to liberate themselves of the claws of guilt, receive advice, obtain help in any honourable proposition”⁴.

What he said to the boys in their moments of idle distraction or mindless equivocation we do not know, but this same commentator also observes that at the project, other priests

“...invigilate the mob composed of so many different elements, moved by such uneven inclinations, adapting themselves to all the person so as to orient their thinking, their affects, their acts towards religion” (ibid).

For Lord Palmertson, however, the news wasn't good. “The means we use cannot be used by yourselves”, commented Don Bosco. ‘Why?’ asked Lord Palmerston. ‘Because these are precepts only revealed to Catholics.’ ‘Which ones?’ ‘The frequent confession and communion and a properly listened-to daily mass...’⁵.

The secret of the system, Don Bosco revealed, was in elements of religious practice which would include pastoral care for the soul. The practice of confession highlights the transcendence of religious forms of regulation, and historical continuity of Catholic measures for subjecting the populations to ideas of morality.

Thus for Don Bosco it would not be enough to threaten the boys with punishment: they had to be compelled towards the norm by a broad spectrum of different mechanisms. At the heart of the systems devised by Don Bosco and at work in CCS was a positivistic model of behaviour. The words of Don Bosco explain this well:

“Two are the systems that have always been used in the education of youth: Preventative and Repressive. The repressive system consists of making the subjects know the law and try afterwards to know the transgressors and apply the deserved punishment. Distinct and I would say opposite is the Preventative system. It consists of making the prescriptions and rules of a Centre known and invigilate afterwards in such a way that the students always have over them the eyes of the Director or the assistants, who speak to them like loving fathers, serve as guides in all circumstances, give advice and correct amiably, which is the same as saying: *Make it impossible that the students commit errors...*”⁶

⁴ Commentary by Lorenzo Gastaldi, later to be appointed Archbishop of Turin, published in ‘*Il Conciliatore Torinese. Gioernale religioso, politico, letterario* 2(1849) 42; in Braido ibid.

⁵ Ibid

⁶ From *Storia dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales*, 1880: 7; in op cit.

In the period of my fieldwork, CCS continued to share Don Bosco's goals, and used his 'Preventative' system. Through constant accompaniment, the effective diffusion of the rules, and the 'amiability'⁷ of the Salesian assistants and priests, boys at CCS were meant to be prevented from committing errors, and through this avoid punishment and find the 'right path' in life. Boys were to understand the errors of their ways from the moment they arrived at the Transition House, where a ritual of purification involved them denouncing their collective and individual behaviour that the institution associated with the 'sins' of the street. The regular updating of points won for decent personal presentation, love for the institution, and good treatment of others served as public reminders of who was and wasn't 'with' the programme at heart.

⁷ *Amarevolezza* in the Italian, *amabilidad* in Spanish, translations as discussed with the Director of CCS in interview on the 'Preventative System'.

Appendix 3: Mission, Values and Goals of CCS⁸

INSTITUTIONAL MISSION:

“To shelter and integrally promote boys, girls and youth of both sexes, poor, abandoned, in physical or moral danger, in collaboration with the State and other entities, via a continual process of Education and Promotion, Protection and Assistance, Formation for work, Interdisciplinary Attention and Intervention with families, based on the Salesian Pastoral- Educational Dimensions*, fomenting its projection to the social and familial mediums as committed Christians and honest citizens.

VISION:

CCS, leader in the promotion of children and youth of both sexes, poor and abandoned, in physical and moral danger, with ample coverage in Antioquia, with credibility and self-sustaining.

CORPORATE VALUES:

- Educate in the preventative and the positive
- Environment of joyfulness, familiarity, shelter and amiability.
- Participation
- Salesian spirituality

FUNCTIONAL VALUES:

- Peace
- Tolerance
- Faith
- Responsibility
- Amiability
- Discipline
- Sense of belonging

⁸ Taken from public policy documentation

* Educative Cultural Dimension, Evangelising Catechism, Vocational and of Associative Experience

- Respect

PROGRAMMES

Street Minor

Receives boys, girls and youth on and of the street, with the goal of offering them alternative for protection and integral promotion.

The first contact with the boy/youth is made in the streets of the city, through Operation friendship; then initiation is given to the diverse stages through which the child achieves their socialisation in such a manner that the child enters the Third Stage within the Academic and technical Programme of CCS.

INTERVENTION WITH FAMILIES

Objective:

Involve families in the process of protecting the boy, girl or youth trying to favour the reintegration to his/her family group in those cases where this is indicated, through interdisciplinary intervention.

Activities:

- Reception and approximation to families
- Realisation of integral socio-familial diagnostics
- Orientation and assessment of family
- Carrying out of group and reflexive works, educational and with therapeutic supports
- Engendering of resources for the establishment of support to the families

Policies:

- Respect and non-discrimination in attention to internal family dynamics
- Recognition of different types of familial organisation.
- Extension of the concept of family beyond the blood group.

FORMATION FOR WORK

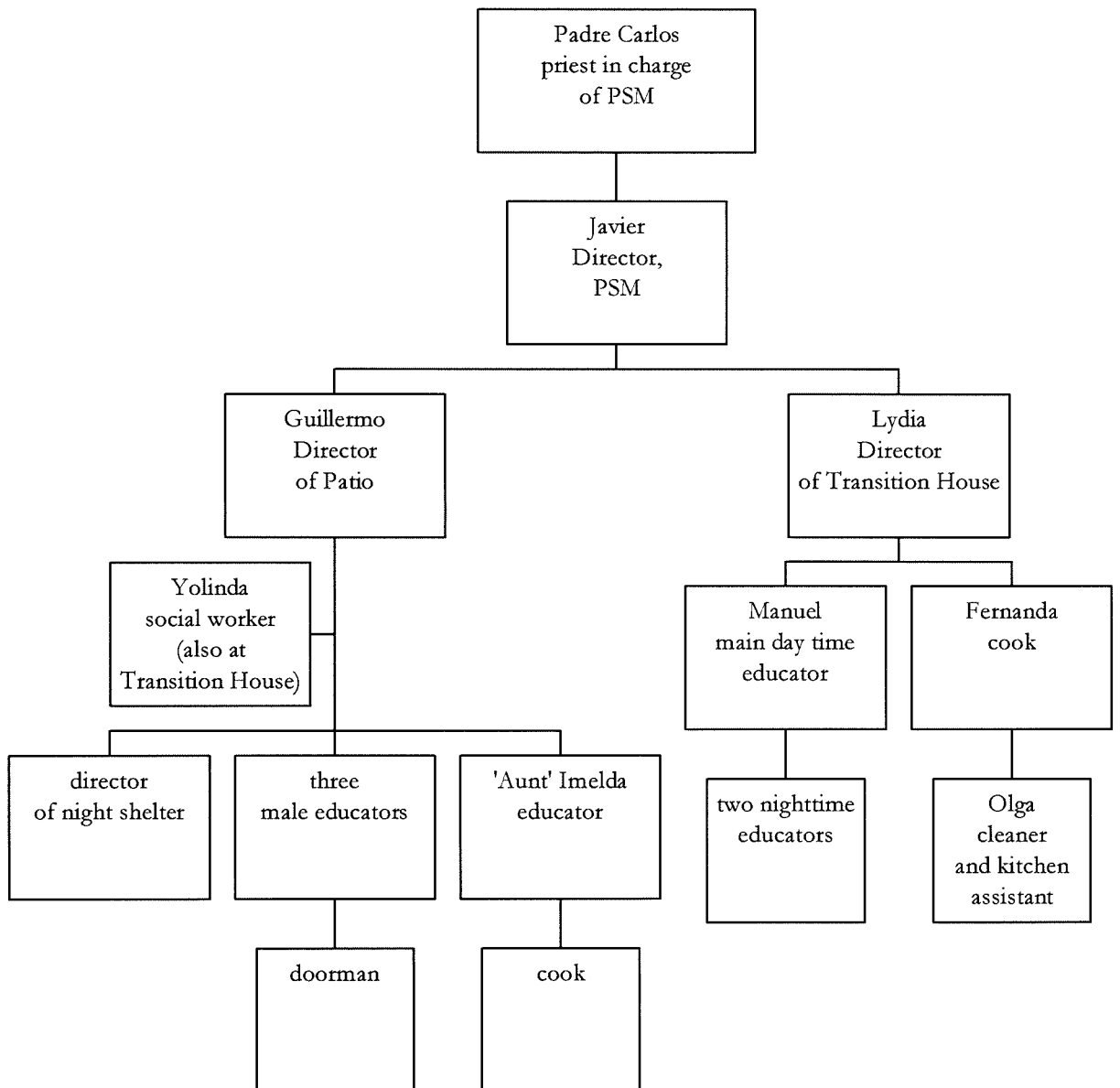
Objective:

Make possible for youth of both sexes and in difficulty, the development of abilities, skills, attitudes and behaviours through the exercise of daily work, of theoretical - practical learning of a trade and assimilation of human values which will permit their efficient integration into the social and labouring world.

Activities:

- Learning through levels
- Assessment and companionship
- Development of transversal themes (sexual education, democracy, use of free time, preparation for exit)
- Ludic, recreational, social and cultural activities
- Youth clubs
- Motivation through economic stimulation and recognition
- Carrying out of work in various labours, maintenance, and tolerable trades
- Business formation

Appendix 4: Staffing Structure of Programme for Street Minors



Appendix 5: Informants and Methods

Boys

- i. At Patio talked to about 100 boys over six months, some tiny snippets of conversation, others lengthy, some recorded, others noted; very much dependent on context of interaction with boy and his willingness.
- ii. From street *parche*, interviewed three.
- iii. During months at transition house and third stage interviewed thirty with tape recorder and/or notebook, about how had come to be at CCS.
- iv. Carried out two surveys with 15 boys in each (one at Transition House, another at third stage; see appendixes 6 & 7).
- v. Maintained contact with some thirty boys on regular basis- ranging from twice-daily conversations to weekly
- vi. For my purposes, the photography project largely provided confirmation of verbal discussions and other information about family and friends. Did not provide uniform information so not used in a substantive way.

Staff

Interviewed in their formal capacities, with tape recorder and pre-prepared questions;

1. Overall director
 2. Director of street minors programme, Javier
 3. Head social worker
 4. Head psychologist
- vii. Talked to less formally but regularly in ongoing interactions; about both role in formal capacity and informal opinions:
1. Transition house director, Lydia
 2. PMS social worker, Yolinda
 3. PMS psychologist, Miguel

4. Padre Carlos

Other data collection:

1. Collation and analysis of 100 entry records of boys attending the patio over 6 months (discussed in Chapter Five)
2. Analysis of 50/300 case files in social work department; project in conjunction with social work. (discussed in Chapter Eight)
3. Formal interviews with four alumni of CCS.
4. Informal interviews with members of public about parenting
5. Informal conversations with approximately 15 boys not connected to CCS about work and/or the Patio
6. Interview with public relations spokeswoman for ICBF

Appendix 6: Questionnaire Used in Transition House

Name: _____
Date: ____/____ 99 Time: _____
Place: _____
Conditions: _____
Other: _____

1. Who am I? Do you know what I do? [*¿Quién soy yo? Sabes que hago?*]
2. For you, what is a big person or an adult? [*Para ti ¿qué es una persona grande o un adulto?*]
3. What things have changed for you since you have been in the transition house? [*¿Qué cosas han cambiado para ti desde que estás en el Hogar?*]
4. How have you noticed these changes? [*¿Como te has dado cuenta de estos cambios?*]
5. How have you felt, in general, in the transition house? [*¿Cómo te has sentido en el Hogar (en general)?*]
6. Have you had any problems in the transition house? [*¿Has tenido algunas dificultades en el Hogar?*]
7. What for you was the ceremony of new man, old man? [*¿Qué era para ti la ceremonia 'hombre nuevo, hombre viejo'?*]
8. What's good and bad about the transition house [*¿Que tiene de bueno y malo el Hogar?*]
9. What things have you learnt here [*¿Qué cosas has aprendido aquí?*]
10. Do you see the street differently now? [*¿Ves a la calle diferente ahora?*]
11. When you got out to the street, how do you see the children that are there? [*Cuando sales a la calle, ¿cómo ves a los niños que están allí?*]
12. What other things do you see differently since being here? [*¿Qué otras cosas ves distinto desde estar aquí?*]
13. What do you want to be when you grow up? [*¿Qué quieres ser cuando seas grande?*]

Appendix 7: Questionnaire Used in Third Stage

Carried out in August and September of 1999.

Date: _____

Nickname: _____

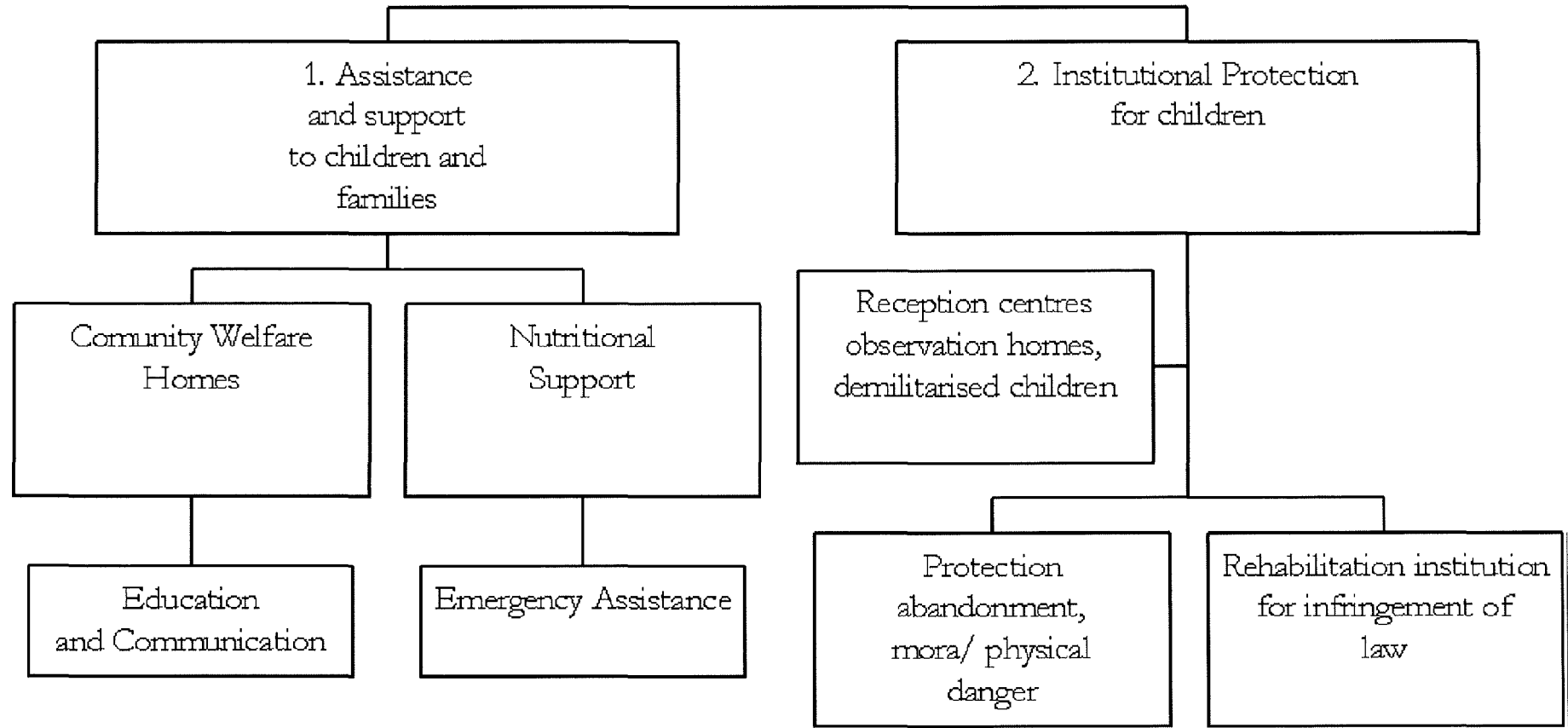
Age: _____

Do you know what I do here/ explanation [*Sabes que hago yo aquí- explicación*].

1. How long have you been in CCS? [*¿Cuanto tiempo llevas aquí en CCS?*]
2. What year of study are you in? [*¿En que año de estudio vas?*]
3. Did you enter through the transition house and patio? [*¿Entraste por Hogar y Patio*]
If yes, How long were you on the street for? Why? [*¿Cuanto tiempo estuviste en la calle? ¿Por qué?*]
4. Do you have family here in Medellín? [*¿Tienes familia aquí en Medellín?*]
5. are you a: day student/ weekly boarder/permanent boarder? [*¿Eres estudiante de: día/ interno / 'requieinterno'*]
6. a. Where do you go at weekends [*¿Dónde sales los fines de semana?*]
or: b. What do you do here on weekends? [*¿Qué haces aquí los fines de semana?*]
7. In general, do you like it here in 'the city'? [*En general, ¿te amañas en la Ciudad?*]
8. Have you had any type of problems here? What? [*Has tenido problemas de algún tipo aquí? ¿Qué?*]
9. Have you ever thought of leaving? Why? [*¿Alguna ves has pensado en irte? ¿Porqué?*]
10. What do you most like about 'the city'? [*¿Qué es lo que más te gusta de la Ciudad?*]
11. And what you like least: [*y lo que menos te gusta*]
12. Have you been bullied here? Is it a problem here? [*Has sido monopolizado alguna ves? ¿Crees que es un problema aquí?*]
13. What are the norms you have to comply with here? [*¿Cuáles son las normas que hay que cumplir aquí?*]
14. Why do these norms exist? [*¿Porqué existen estas normas?*]
15. Are the punishments just or unjust? Why? [*¿Los castigos son justos o injustos? ¿Porque?*]

16. Have you ever been punished? What or how was it? [*¿Te han castigado alguna vez? ¿Qué o cómo fue el castigo?*]
 17. When you've been punished, what have you thought? [*Cuando te han castigado, ¿qué has pensado?*]
 18. Have you ever been physically punished? How/what was it? [*¿Te han castigado físicamente? ¿Cómo fue?*]
 19. Have you repeated the acts for which you were punished or told off? [*Has vuelto a cometer los mismos actos por cual fuiste castigado o regañado?*]
 20. Have you had friends leave? [*Has tenido amigos que se han ido?*]
 21. Why did they go – or – why do some go? [*¿Porqué se fueron –o- porqué se van algunos?*]
 22. What are your relations like with the educators? [*¿Cómo son tus relaciones con los educadores?*]
 23. What's your troop like? [*¿Cómo es tu tropa?*]
 24. Have you had problems in the troop? [*¿Has tenido problemas en la tropa?*]
 25. Can troop leaders get you in trouble or give you problems? [*Los jefes de tropa pueden meterle a uno o ponerle problemas?*]
 26. The points system – what's that like? [*El sistema de puntos- ¿como es?*]
 27. Does it take a long time to collect the points you need, or do educators help you out with things or what? [*Se demora uno mucho tiempo en recoger los puntos necesarios, o también le colaboran los educadores con cosas o qué?*]
 28. Do you think you'll make it to the workshops? Which one would you like to be in? [*¿Piensas llegar a los talleres? ¿En cuál te gustaría estar?*]
-

Appendix 8: *Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar (ICBF, Colombian Family Welfare Institute) Summary of Programmes*



Appendix 8a: Extracts From The *Código Del Menor* (1989)

Outline of contents:

1st part = ‘minors in irregular situations’

2nd part = ‘about the abandoned minor or minor in situation of moral or physical danger’

3rd part = ‘of the minor who lacks sufficient attention to meet his basic needs’

SECTION 1, Chapter 4 [execution of measures], Section 4

Re the attention of the minor in a centre of special protection [*Centro de Protección Especial*]

ARTICLE 82.

The integral protection of the minor in a Centre of Special Protection is the measure by which the Defender of the Family [*defensor de familia*] places a minor, in a situation of danger or abandonment, in a specialised centre, which is licensed to function as such by the ICBF, when it has not been possible to apply one of the measures indicated in the previous articles.

‘Paragraph.’ “This integral attention to the minor can be administered directly by ICBF or by a contract with specialised institutions. Whilst a minor resides in a centre of protection, the ICBF shall subrogate itself to the Rights of the Minor in conformity with that established in article 81.

Article 83. Integral attention should be understood as the conjunction of actions that are realised in favour of children in irregular situations, to satisfy their basic needs and propitiate their physical and psycho-social development, by means of an adequate educational environment and by participation of the family and the community.

The integral attention shall basically be given via the substitute activities of family care, schooling, pre-laboreal and laboreal formation, special education when concerning minors with physical, sensorial or psychological limitations, and health care.

Paragraph 1st. So that the centre of special protection fulfils its objectives, it should be open to the life in the community, permitting the minor to participate in the community, as possible, and activities realised with regard to health, education formation and recreation, amongst others.

Paragraph 2nd. Notwithstanding and in special cases, when it regards a breaker of the penal code under 12 years of age, the placement of the child shall be in a centre of protection that offers specialised attention in accord with their situation.

Article 84.

The Defender of the Family should make monthly visits to the institutions and homes where minors are placed, with the goal of assuring the situation of the child, and recording this in their files.

Article 85.

The ICBF will create or authorise the creation of Emergency Centres to receive minors who are astray, exploited, abandoned or abused. To the centres will be assigned the necessary defenders of the Family so that they can begin the appropriate processes and adopt the measures of protection required by this Code.

These centres will operate independently of the centres of observation and reception for minors who are violators of penal law.

Article 86

For the completion of the actions consecrated in this anterior article, the National Police will lend the required help. In effect, they will permanently designate and put at the disposition of the ICBF the specialised personnel of Agents of Minors Police.⁹

Article 87.

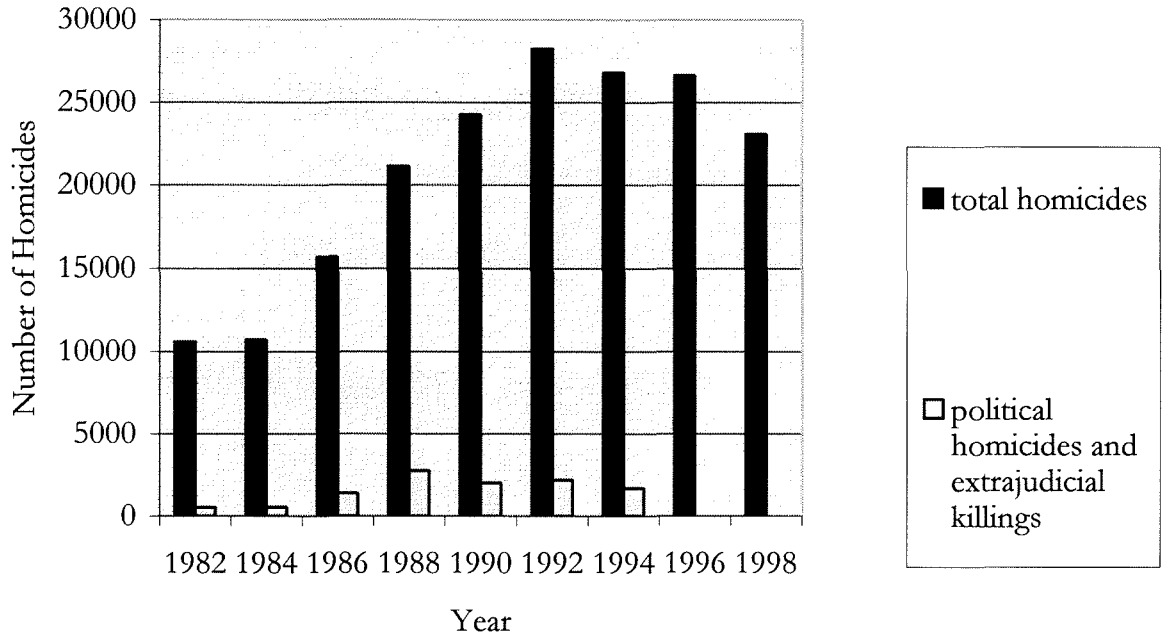
The centres of special protection, both public and private, should inform the ICBF of about any children in their care within eight days following their entrance or arrival, with the goal of beginning the procedures for their protection.

⁹ Whose actions concerning the Patio are described at various points in the thesis.

Failure to comply with this order will be sanctioned by the ICBF by temporary or definite closure without endangering any other sanctions which the acts related to this omission might generate.

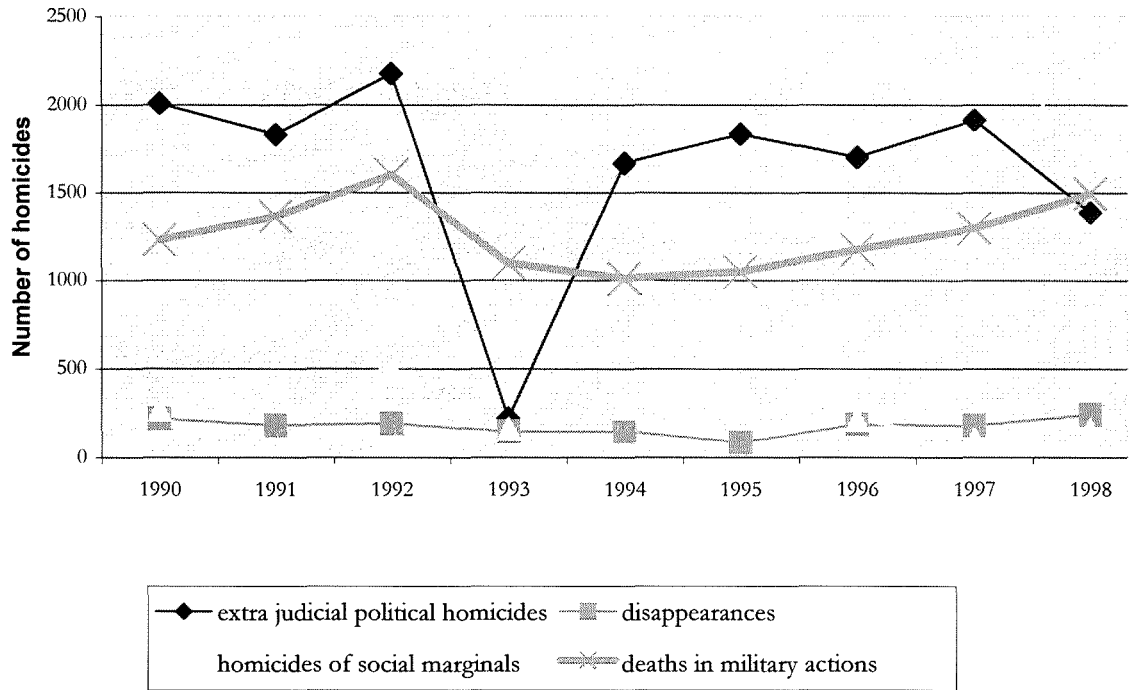
Appendix 9: Homicide Statistics, Colombia and Medellín

1. Homicides in Colombia, 1982-1998

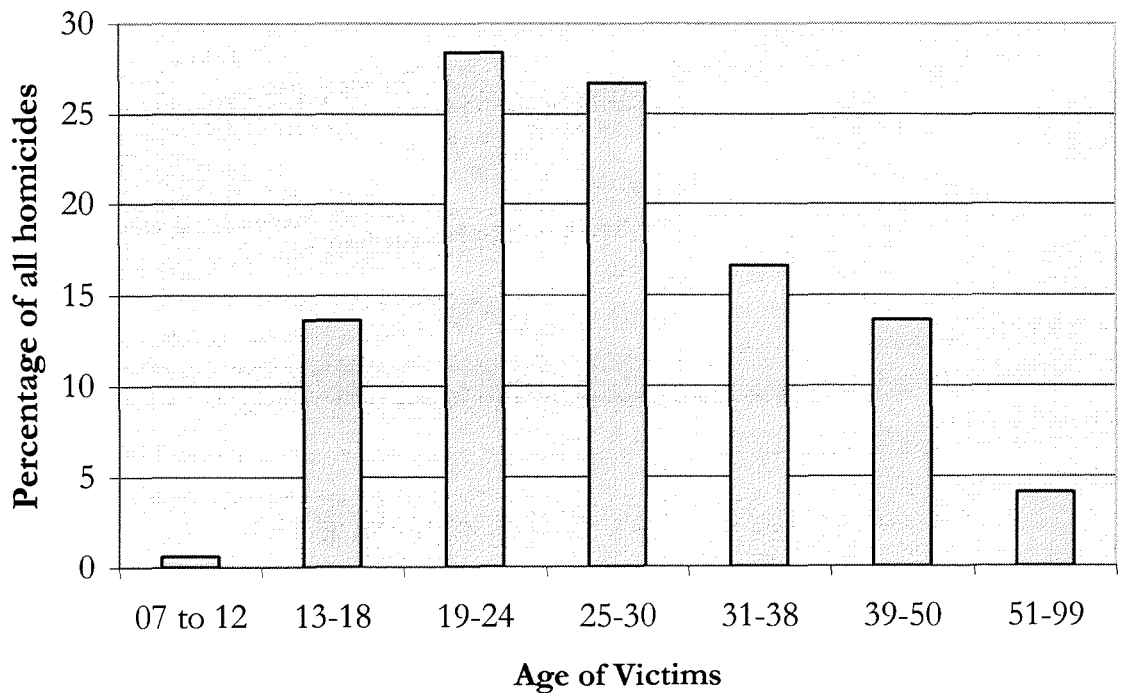


Data adapted from Sanchez 2001: 11. Figures for political homicides and extrajudicial killings not available for 1996 or 1998. As Sanchez notes, those most affected and implicated in these figures were young men between the ages of 15 and 24 (op cit).

2. Socio-Political Homicides, 1990-1999¹⁰

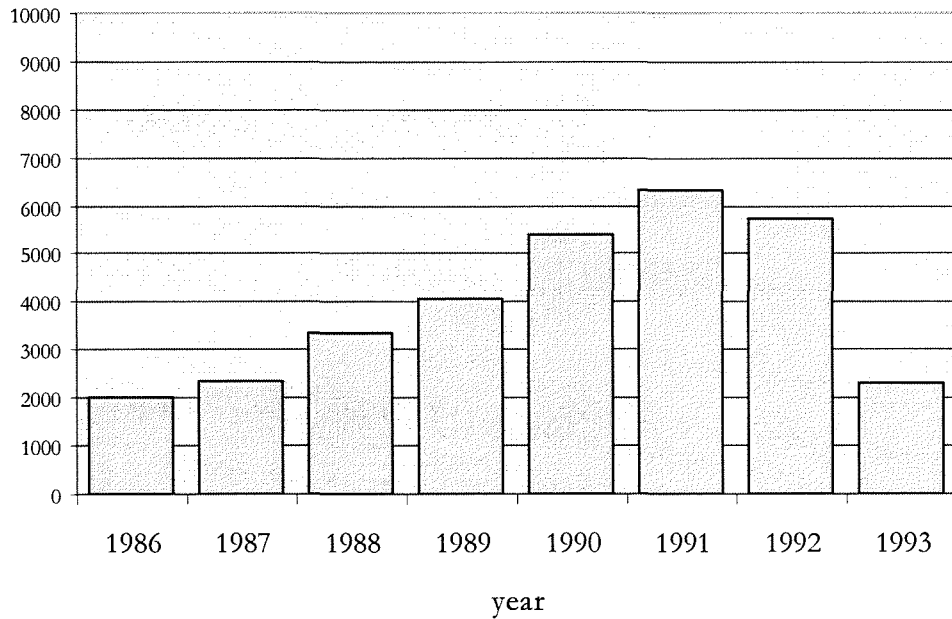


3. Ages of homicide victims as percentage of totals for metropolitan Medellín, 1986 - 1993



¹⁰ Data from Córdoba Ruiz n.d.

4. Number of homicides in metropolitan Medellín 1986 - 1992 & to May 1993



Data adapted from tables in Perez Guzman and Mejía 1996: 160-161.

Unfortunately the table data are not disaggregated in a way which would relate the age of the victims to changing levels of violence; thus we cannot say for example whether more youths in the 13-18 age group were murdered in 1993 than 1986. What they do show however is that the ages at which people are likely to be murdered are weighted to the lower age groups. To what extent the activities of 18 year olds are responsible for the 13-18 category we do not know. But that they are under the legal age of majority is significant.

Appendix 10: Statistics on Children from report on National Household Survey, 1996 (ICBF)

In Medellín in 1996, there were 840,000 minors in a population of about 2.6 million.

Section 4.3 asked respondents about what forms of correction they use with minors in their households. The report identifies Medellín as standing out in the number of respondents who responded positively to the question of ‘removing or prohibiting things they like’ as a form of correction (54.9%), compared to 33.3% in Bogotá.

A. Most frequent forms of correction, % of positive responses for Medellín.

1. With a call to attention, dialogue	83.7%
2. Taking away or prohibiting what they like	54.9%
3. With a telling off/ verbal punishment <i>(regaño, cantaleta)</i>	47.6%
4. With belt[ing] <i>(correas)</i>	22.4%
5. Slaps, pinches	22.1%

B. Children’s sexual activity, according to adult opinion. For boys, acceptable before marriage for 60.3% of parents, and unacceptable for girls for 67% of parents.

C. WORK.

Figures according to criteria of working at least one hour a week for some remuneration

No figures given for what proportion of all children work.

1. National average of 71.3% of children help with household tasks.
2. For 8 major cities, of 100% of working children, distribution according to age and gender:
 - a. 7 – 11 age range

boys	8.2
girls	3.6
<u>total</u>	<u>11.8%</u>
 - b. 12-13

boys	9.9
girls	3.4

	<u>total</u>	13.3%
c. 14-17	boys	51.8
	girls	23.2
	<u>total</u>	75%

NB/ many questions could be asked about who gets counted how as work.

Medellín has one of lowest rates of child self-employment, at 15%, compared to national average of 22.5%. Other 80% work almost evenly inside and outside the home. Work is split 33% in commerce or sales, 45% in services.

3. In Medellín, 47.6% of children who work do so for less than 24 hours a week; 10.6% for 24-32 hours a week, 27.5% for 33-48 hours a week, and 14% work more than 49 hour weeks (roughly on par with national averages).
4. In Medellín, nearly 30% of children receive no salary or wages for their work. Of these, 78.2% work in home-based industries or businesses (could be a shop run from front room through grilled window).
5. Why they children work in Medellín:
 - a. 36.8% because of the ‘difficult family economic situation’
 - b. 22.8% because ‘work forms them and makes them honourable’ (the verb *formar* is perhaps best understood in this context as an aspect of socialisation, the *lo hace honrado* illustrates a conception of work as forming an honest person).
 - c. 16.2% because they ‘should help with the household expenditures’;
 - d. 9.3% because it ‘keeps them away from vices’ (*lo aleja de los vicios*)
 - e. 4% said they worked to help pay school expenses.
 - f. 11% - other reasons.

D. SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

1. Non attendance for children between 7 – 17 = 10.6% in Medellín (national urban average = 9.4)
2. reasons for not attending school (%)

	<u>Medellín</u>	<u>urban average</u>
don't like it	31	25.4
parents can't afford it	18.8	24.9
no place available	12.4	7.1
must work	10.5	17
other reason	27.3	25.6

Appendix 11. Third Stage Family and Referral Data

Information obtained in research through files of social work office for third stage. Data about families, mode of remission and referral, motive for referral, types of families, employment and place of family origin.

1. Mode of referral (institution or entity through which made contact with CCS):

52%	ICBF (social work centres)
29%	Programme for Street Minors (entered through patio and transition house, as boys described in thesis)
19%	Other NGOs and other referral

2. Motive for Entry or referral:

24%	' <i>vinculación a la calle</i> '; relation to street ¹¹
22%	partial or total abandonment (could includes 12% orphaned)
12%	poverty of family (unable to house or feed them, a explained to me by social worker, who described families coming with children to the door)
6%	family problems (unspecific; could include abuse)
6%	moral or physical danger
6%	threatened (<i>amenazados</i> ; often in their home <i>barrios</i>)
12%	N/A

¹¹ This it may be noted is 5% less than the PSM mode of entry figures give. This could be due to the street not being identified as primary reason for entry when came through PSM, for example in case where child was known to have been orphaned.

3. Place of origin (birth or last home)

72%	Medellín, of which: (see map 4) - 32% NorOriental (northeast) - 26% NorOccidental (northwest) - 8% other areas - 6% Centre
14%	rural areas of Antioquia (see maps 2 & 3)
12%	without family and/or data
2%	other are of country (n= 1; the boy was from the Choco (see map 1).

4. Families:

34%	Mother –headed
16%	Recomposed/simultaneous (with new partner, and any of his/her children)
14%	Extended (i.e. not nuclear; aunts and uncles; grandparents)
12%	No living family
8%	Nuclear
2%	father-headed
4%	N/A

5. Fathers

64%	absent
20%	present
16%	dead; of these 4% known to have been assassinated

5. Income:

Employed in the informal sector = 98% (one mother worked in a factory)

Who in household worked:

- 32% Mother; in domestic service or cleaning jobs, with exception above
- 32% no-one; N/A
- 16% Father¹²
- 12% aunt(s) and uncle(s)
- 6% Step-father
- 2% Grandfather

¹² Contrast this with data showing that 20% had fathers present in their lives; suggests that majority of these did contribute income.

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Maps Consulted

Source:

Red de Solidaridad Social. Sistema de Estimación del Desplazamiento Forzado por Fuente Contrastadas –SEFC-. Programe de Atención Integral a Municipios Afectados por la Violencia. Informe 2000/ February 20001.

Maps:

- 292 Municipios donde se presentaron tomas y masacres
- 128 Municipios donde se presentaron desplazamientos masivos
- 322 Municipios de llegada de Desplazados
- 322 Municipios de Expulsión de Desplazados.

Source:

www.col.ops-oms.org/desplazados/geografia.index.htm

Maps:

- Municipios con alta acción guerrillera y presencia paramilitar, 1985-1990.
- Municipios con alta acción guerrillera y presencia paramilitar, 1991-1997

Expansión de Presencia paramilitar, 1985 – 1997

Source:

<http://pagina.de/deplazados>

Mapa de Municipios prioridad 1 y 2 en atención a desplazados según Naciones Unidas –2000.



