On and Off the Street and Somewhere in Between:
Identity Performance Among Adolescents Living On (and Off) the Streets
of Lima, Peru

by

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A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Approved April 2011 by the
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May 2011
ABSTRACT

In this dissertation I present data gathered from an eleven-month qualitative research study with adolescents living and working on the streets of Lima, Peru. Through the pairing of photovoice with participant observations, this work incorporates distinctive methodological and theoretical viewpoints in order to complicate prevailing understandings of street life. In this dissertation, I examine the identities that children and adolescents on the street develop in context, and the ways in which photography can be a useful tool in understanding identity development among this population. Through a framework integrating theories of identity and identity performance with spatial theories, I outline how identity development among children and adolescents living on the street is directly connected to their relationships with the urban landscape and the outreach organizations that serve them. The organizations and institutions that surround children on the street shape who they are, how they are perceived by society, and how they view and understand themselves in context. It is through the interaction with aid organizations and the urban landscape that a street identity is learned and developed. Furthermore, as organizations, children and adolescents come together within the context of the city, a unique street space is created. I argue that identity and agency are directly tied to this space. I also present the street as a thirdspace of possibility, where children and adolescents are able to act out various aspects of the self that they would be unable to pursue otherwise. Weaved throughout this dissertation are non-traditional writing forms including narrative and critical personal narrative addressing my own experiences.
conducting this research, my impact on the research context, and how I understand the data gathered.
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my daughter, Olive Marissa. I love you more than you will ever know. I hope that through my example you can see that a woman can be both nurturing and scholarly, both a successful parent and a successful professional.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to express my deepest gratitude to the boys who participated in this study. Thank you for giving me your time, energy, and your selves. I would especially like to thank Manuel for trusting me, for allowing me to be a part of your life, and for your kindness and care.

I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Beth Blue Swadener, my chair and mentor, for your guidance and energetic support.

Thank you to Dr. Margolis for inspiring me to look back to my creative roots, and to Dr. Fischman for reminding me to trust my instincts.

Above all, I want to thank my husband, Jason, for your implementation of team confidence building meetings, for your undying love and support, and for encouraging me to press on when I most wanted to quit. I am certain that without your constant faith in me, I could not have completed this process.
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Chapter 1

EMBARKING ON THE JOURNEY

I had so many ideas about what this year in Lima would be like. I had spent my entire career in graduate school preparing for this; I read and re-read the literature on street children and I dove head first into theory. I found the required gap in the literature, developed a unique theoretical lens through which I would examine the reciprocal relationship between children living on the street and the urban landscape. I developed a way to combine distinct methods including participatory observations and photovoice to answer my research questions. I spent months communicating via email with some of the most well-known authorities on street children in Lima and made a trip in the summer in order to establish the necessary contacts so I could gain access to my population. Reading the work of others who had done research with children on the streets, I imagined myself to be in the mix, out on the streets everyday, or nearly everyday, slipping into the field, without anyone really questioning my presence, at least after the initial shock of it all. This is not to say that I had romanticized fieldwork. I knew there would be problems and difficulties, and I had proposed and attempted to reconcile each worst-case scenario in my mind, in my proposal, and with the institutional review board. Yet, somehow, being there, seeing and experiencing it, research was different. Things were not only different, but much more difficult than I had considered possible. I had not imagined that things would be easy, but I had imagined they would be easier than this.
Beginning research, establishing contact, adjusting to the chaos that is Lima, none of it went at all how I had planned. I spent more time inside than out. NGOs in Lima don’t really spend that much time in calle, only twice a week in the same area. Rather, they focus their attention on follow-up with children who have managed to get off the streets, who are in a casa-hogar, or with those children who are en route to making the street a more permanent home, in work that they call “prevention.” Chicos del Centro\(^1\), the NGO I began working with, had so many volunteers that I easily got lost among them. While each year they had two volunteers that committed a year of their time, they also had foreign volunteers come and go, spending as little as a week to or as much as three months. At the casa-taller I was not readily welcomed by the volunteers, all of them coming from the same European country. They seemed to walk through me and around me as if I were a phantom, a shadow of something that never was or perhaps something that was yet to be, only preferably after they had gone. In the midst of this organized disorganization, there was no room for me; I was an outsider among the outsiders. Furthermore, the kids were dismissive and often uninterested. I struggled, attempting to strike up conversations but they frequently preferred to talk to the people they knew, to those who had been there for longer. Chicos del Centro also had very specific and real ideas of how I needed to proceed and often questioned my knowledge on the population. The isolation of fieldwork had begun to sink in. The loneliness I felt was not only compounded by the physical distance from other graduate students and my committee members as I was on an entirely other continent, but also by the fact

\(^1\) Psuedonym
that I was an outsider to not only the kids I was working with, but with the outreach workers who mostly seemed very skeptical of me.

Then, after two months in the field, the NGO closed its doors. Can this really be happening? No more casa-taller, no more calle. I must have spent a week in my bathrobe, despondent, hopeless and probably feeling a little too sorry for myself. I needed to figure out how to proceed, how to hit the streets on my own. From my very arrival in Lima, outreach workers, citizens, volunteers, other researchers, frankly, everyone advised that I not go it alone. It wasn’t safe, especially for me, a gringa. I wanted to say, “who cares” and just do it, but the voices that surrounded me argued otherwise. After some time spent crying, agonizing and trying to wrestle with my own fears, I remember looking to Jason (my husband and research partner), and asserting, “I have to go. I cannot lose contact.” I could not lose the progress I had made. After the first round of photovoice, the kids were actually excited about the study and were willing to give me the time of day. I was getting somewhere, albeit slowly, it was still somewhere. Some were opening up and beginning to feel comfortable with me. I was starting to feel comfortable.

“Where will you go?” Jason asked. “To the boys cuarto, Alexis told me were to find it. I asked him to draw me a map, and he did.” It was an annotated map, but it led me in the right direction nonetheless. On the last day of the casa-taller, I had confirmed the location with Edwin and he pointed out the building on the bus ride home. Jason was hesitant, but insisted that he go with me. He was much more cautious than I had ever been, perhaps rightfully so. I remember once
asking Andre if he would take me to where he stays and he responded that it was not the kind of place for someone like me. It was filled with “mala gente”, it was dark and menacing and just no place for una mujer. But we went and I admit it, I was scared. Though, this fear did not stem from a fear of what might happen to me, I was not scared necessarily of the dangers the “street” had to offer. I was much more afraid of not being welcomed, of feeling out of place. In fact, this feeling of being out of place never actually went away during the eleven months I spent in Lima. It got better and some days I did not feel its presence as much as others, but access and belonging required constant renegotiation. As we exited the bus, I saw the building from across the street. I felt as if I was walking into forbidden territory. The street was filled with people, each walking to their destination, alone and in large groups. The area must have been near a university as there were groups of students going to and from the direction beyond the boys’ cuarto. They belonged, I did not.

The sounds of car horns filled the streets of Lima Centro and echoed in my ears. We walked up to the building, but hurried pass the front entrance and did not stop. I tried to glance inside without appearing as though I was prying, or spying for that matter. I felt the eyes on me and Jason, wondering what two gringos were doing there. Maybe they thought we were lost. We decided to sit across the street and wait; I was not comfortable with asking people sitting outside the building how to find them. (Inside my own head insecurities of being a novice researcher flooded my mind: Is there something wrong with me? Should I be more assertive? Is it really that dangerous? What am I so scared of?)
The building where they stayed was, as it turns out, an old hotel, which now rented out small one-room rooms by the day/night. They did not have a bath or a kitchen, though some set up temporary stoves and toilets in their rooms: A portable burner for cooking and a pot used for urine were sufficient to get one through the day. Both water and electricity only came on at certain intervals throughout the day: an hour in the morning, another hour at midday, and another in the evening. People came and went from the building’s dark entrance: Mothers with their young children in tow, transvestites, prostitutes, transvestite prostitutes, old men, and young men who worked calling cars just across from the building. Middle-aged men sat in the doorway, conversing, watching the people go by. Watching us. We sat and waited. “It’s too dangerous to go inside, Jamie,” Edwin’s warning ran through my head. “A woman, alone, no, I don’t think so. It’s not safe,” Frank cautioned. But here I was, eyes on us, sticking out like the sharp edges of broken glass.

We spent what had seemed like hours waiting for a sign of them, though in reality it was an hour and a half. Trying pointlessly to blend in, to be inconspicuous. And then, they descended. I saw Manuel and Andre with charango and zampoña in hand and my heart leapt and fell to my stomach all at once. Here we go, I thought, this is where the real work begins, and we ran across the street calling their names.

Mapping the Road Ahead

In this dissertation I employ various writing strategies, styles, and techniques to convey my experiences, observations, understandings gained, data
collected, and lessons learned over the eleven months I spent working with 
adolescents and children living on the streets of Lima, Peru. Using a multi-
layered and multifaceted form of writing speaks to the complexity of the research 
and to the varied and multiple perspectives adopted both in the field and during 
analysis. These diverse writing forms also address the various identities 
performed by both myself as researcher and by the participants as we embarked 
on this journey called “fieldwork.” For me, these identities encompass divergent 
aspects of the self, identities that are simultaneously academic and practical, 
novice and expert, identities that entail being a friend and teacher, a foreigner and 
outsider, a researcher and stand-in mother/caregiver. For the boys involved in this 
study, identities surfaced that have been a part of their existence for years, while 
other, new identities emerged in the process. These aspects of the self included 
identities that are simultaneously child and adult, son and father, deviant and 
rebel, hard working and idle, abused and abuser, expert and novice, teacher and 
student.

In the chapters that follow, I do not attempt to offer simple solutions to 
complex problems, nor do I claim to give voice to or even tell the un-told stories 
of research participants. Furthermore, I remain aware that by the time I finish 
writing and relating our experiences, the research context will have changed. The 
spaces within the streets of Lima and the lives of my participants will have altered 
and morphed as new children seek refuge in the streets of the city, while others 
leave her spaces for more a conventional means of existence, or are rounded up 
by police raids attempting to clean the city streets of poverty’s residue. A
multiple, varied and non-linear approach allows for flexibility in the ways we understand the complex lives of the participants involved in this study and an ever-changing population and rejects the simplistic problem-solving approaches so commonly found in traditional social science research.

**Using a Multi-Layered Approach**

“*Stories are not waiting to be told: rather, they are constructed by the writer, who attempts to impose order on some set of experiences or perceived events*” (Denzin, 2001, p. 8).

As a scholar schooled within the walls of academia, I rely on traditional academic prose to relate my analysis of field notes, informal conversations, and the photographs taken by my participants. As an artist and a complex individual situated within the research context, I use experimental writing forms to capture the “residue of fieldwork”, including the psychological stresses and emotional experiences (Lincoln, 2009). These experimental writing forms include non-fiction narrative, critical personal narrative, and song lyrics, but also include lengthy excerpts from field notes, which often serve as a form of narrative. The narratives woven throughout this text allow me to get at the experiences of my participants and the relationships that developed between us, while critical personal narratives serve to “question previous assumptions of empirical authority” (Swadener & Burdell, 1999, p. 21).

Within the context of research I was witness to the creation of unique spaces, spaces that came out of a particular intersection of both space and time, through a collision of distinct, separate individuals who would most likely never
have come together otherwise. Narrative allows for a rethinking of the discursive methods of relating time and space, as writing is not bound by time or space. It is in this alternative space, a space that is both “difficult and risky” and “filled with contradictions and ambiguities” in which we can find hope and new possibilities (Soja, 1996, p. 3).

Lather (2007) argues, “texts that do justice to the complexity of what we try to know and understand, include tales not told, the words not written or transcribed, the words thought but not uttered, the unconscious” (p. 13). Furthermore, Law (2004) reminds us that when social scientists try to describe phenomena that are complex with simple or clear descriptions, they end up making more of a mess it. Therefore, through the use of narrative I attempt to do justice to the complexity of trying to understand the lives of my participants by focusing on the tales not told, by rejecting simple answers and solutions to the problems faced by a complicated group of adolescents. Through the use of narrative I can share the story of our storied selves (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and also share new understandings of self that surfaced while conducting fieldwork. These understandings impact not only how I view the entire process, but also how I understand my participants.

A Road Map to Lima, Los Chicos, y Yo

Lima y Los Chicos

Lima is the capital city of Peru and is a large metropolitan city situated on the Pacific coast. While the city of Lima contains more than 40 districts, the area of focus in this study is the district of Cercado de Lima, also called Lima Centro.
Lima Centro, or downtown Lima is marked by heavy congestion in regard to both vehicles and foot traffic. The pollution in Lima Centro can be suffocating as emissions are not regulated, small vans and old buses that were decommissioned in other countries are imported and used as major sources of public transportation, and the large quantity of vehicles that maneuver through the city streets pump out thick black smoke from their exhausts that falls like a heavy veil over the city. The city is also marked by a large street vendor population with vendors selling items ranging from food, both pre-packaged and homemade; clothing; books; wallets; needles and thread; toothbrushes; pens; and anything else that will help them earn a living in a city without the infrastructure to support the large numbers of internal immigrants that flock to Lima in hopes of finding a better life for themselves and their families. Women and men alike sell phone calls at 50 centimos a minute, and their calls of “Llamada, llamada, llamada,” beckoning the majority of the population without cellular phone technology ring throughout the city. Inhabitants set up stations were you can get your most “accurate” weight for only 10 centimos, sharpen your knives, or buy freshly cooked choclo con queso, ceviche or empanadas. Kiosks selling magazines, galletas, gasesosa, candy, and chifles decorate nearly every street corner.

Children can be found in most areas of the city selling caramelos, performing acrobatics, shining shoes, playing music, or simply begging for limosna (or a propina as they prefer to call it). The occurrence of children trying to make their living on the street varies throughout day, season and year, with more children out and about during summer months, and at night and on
weekends. There are those children and adolescents who eventually make the streets more of a permanent home, though there is hardly anything permanent about street life.

While children and adolescents can be found in most areas of the city, including the wealthy tourist district of Miraflores and the bohemian late night discoteca area of Barranco, the boys and girls who navigate the streets of Lima Centro are the focus of this study. Boys and girls can be found in its streets, typically in small groups, though also alone and in larger processions. While there exist young girls who live and work on the streets in Lima Centro, the majority of the adolescents in the area are boys. Girls tend to frequent other districts, including areas where they make a living through prostitution or areas in the outskirts of Lima.

Those children and adolescents who make their lives on the streets of Lima do so in an environment of instability and frequent transitioning as they move or are moved between the street, home, casa-hogar (home for street children), and preventivo (juvenile detention centers). Most children and adolescents on the street have not completely cut ties with their immediate families but maintain infrequent or inconsistent contact. Due to the constant change in their environments, relationships between street children are often shallow, fluid and unstable. Furthermore, NGOs that serve this population rely heavily on volunteers to aid in street outreach, exposing the children and adolescents with whom they work to constant changes in outreach workers, at least every year if not more frequently, all of which lead to instability in their
inter-personal relationships. The majority of these children and adolescents are significantly marked by their abuse of drugs, specifically terokal.\(^2\) Finally, the boys in this study demonstrate genuine difficulty in looking forward, discussing future options or possibilities, and typically live in the moment, concerned mostly with their next meal or next high.

The children and adolescents that comprise the “street child” population within Lima also demonstrate the difficulties in defining and categorizing children who live on the street. The majority of the research on street children and youth in Latin America separates children into two categories: niños de la calle (children of the street) and niños en la calle (children on the street) (CESAL, 1998; Hecht, 1998; Menjivar & Ooijens, 1995; Mickelson, 2000; Moran & Castro, 1997; Moulin & Periera, 2000; Trussel, 1999; Villarroel, 1999). Niños de la calle are children whose main source of subsistence is the street, while niños en la calle are children who spend the majority of their time on the street but return home frequently. Verdera (1995) maintains that niños de la calle, in comparison to niños en la calle, are a minority population, and in the case of Lima, they are children in a state of abandonment or who have abandoned their families.

More recently, however, researchers have drawn considerable critique to the dualistic and limited categories of children on the street (ninos en la calle) versus children of the street (ninos de la calle) (ADM, 2001; Bar-on, 1997; De Moura, 2002; Hecht, 1998; Le Roux & Smith, 1998; Panter-Brick, 2002; Tierney, 1997). Associación por la Defensa de las Minorías (ADM) (2001) maintains that

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\(^2\) Terokal is a shoemakers glue inhaled by children and adolescents on the streets of Lima. The glue, which can be purchased in various shops throughout Lima in cans of varying sizes, is poured into a plastic bottle or bag and then inhaled to produce a high.
this understanding is limited as many street children lie somewhere between these two extremes. Furthermore, De Moura (2002) offers a critique of the notion of “street child,” maintaining that the term itself is problematic and implies a homogenous population, while in actuality “street child” encompasses a diverse population of children who are dislocated from family, school and the community by varying degrees (Le Roux & Smith, 1998). Life on the street is not a fixed nor a permanent state, but one that is often transitional. Children who make their ways on the streets may do so for short or long periods of time. While there are some who do make the street a permanent resting place, others may return to their families, find work in an attempt to transition out of street life, go to prison, die from communicable diseases like tuberculosis or AIDS, or disappear.

It is therefore important to explain my use of the term “street child.” I have spent a lot of time interrogating this term over the last several years and have drawn many conclusions regarding its use. I argue that the term has the effect of positioning the child as belonging to the street, as if they were created by it or are born out of it. This positioning allows for societies and citizens to dismiss these very children who make the street their primary dwelling place and assume no or little responsibility for their care. The term also, as Hecht (1998) indicated, positions the street child against the backdrop of home children and therefore treats them from a deficit perspective. This positioning normalizes the home child, creating an inherently abnormal street child lacking an authentic childhood. Furthermore, the term is limiting and subsumes an extremely diverse population of children and adolescents into a narrow and problematic category. It focuses on
one aspect of these children (Schibotto; 1990, as cited in Villarroel), that they seemingly make use of the street and the urban landscape more than other children, and sidelines all other complex parts of their lives and identities.

However, I also recognize that this is the term that dominates research, outreach, non-profit and state funded programs. While in most cases I replace the term with the more generous phrase “children who live and work on the street” there are times when its use is necessary and/or unavoidable. I therefore use the term with care and caution, and in combination with Panter-Brick’s (2002) notion of a street career, as this term recognizes the fluidity of their careers both on and off the street. She argues that this term serves as “a fruitful analytic device for moving the literature beyond its habitual snap shot descriptions of children” and demonstrates the ways in which the outcomes of street careers are context dependent (p. 164).

**On the use of pseudonyms.**

Many of the boys involved in this project expressed a desire to use their real names. When offered the opportunity to create their own pseudonyms, the boys were confused, and surprised. Why would they want to use a different name? In fact the whole point of being involved in the photography project was to realize themselves as individuals, not just another nameless, faceless street kid. As their friend and confidant, I strongly wish(ed) to honor the boys’ desires and a large part of me considers the use of their real names important in changing the way we perceive and understand children who make their way on the street. Yet,
there is still the trained researcher in me who not only agrees that it is my job to protect them, but understands this role as an honor and a privilege.

While I have in fact critiqued and questioned the extreme panic instilled by the institutional review board as they suggest that using the boys real names may compromise their anonymity and put them at risk by being recognized by authority figures in Peru, like Serenazgo or la policia (who are surely reading English language academic journals), I still see their use as important, in this instance. It is, in the end, me who is in charge of and responsible for how the boys are presented to the world. I have the last say and the last decision in how their and our stories are told and how I present the data. There is a chance that they may not entirely agree with my understandings of events or how I choose to present situations. Using pseudonyms, instead, serves as a way to protect both of our interests. Moreover, while I may be entirely convinced now that divulging their real names is an important step in humanizing a population that is so often dehumanized by society, research and the media, my convictions may change five, ten or twenty years from now and I do not want to be left looking back with regret. It is for these reasons that I have changed the names of the boys in this study as well as the organizations with which I worked.

**Jason, Los Chicos, y Yo**

After the NGO closed its doors just two months after my arrival in Lima, due to internal bureaucratic problems, I lost the network I had established to gain access to the boys in my study. This access involved interaction in a casa-taller and in calle. Many of the boys who frequented Jirón de la Unión or Lima Centro
went to this *casa-taller* just across the river in *Rímac* on a daily basis (some more frequently than others) where they would wash their clothes, bathe, participate in a workshop with themes ranging from personal hygiene to cooking, and eat a small meal. There was also a *fútbol taller* once a week, were we would walk to a nearby pitch and play a game of *fulbito*. The *casa-taller* provided me with a secure location to spend time with the boys involved, observe them interact with one another and with the volunteers and outreach workers that were a significant part of their lives. It also provided me the opportunity to talk to them informally about their lives and get to know them on a personal level and provided a drug-free environment where their faculties were not compromised by the consumption of drugs like *terokal* or *pasta básica*. (It is important to disclose that the boys who were apart of the study were chosen primarily out of convenience. They were the boys who most regularly came to the *casa-taller* and with whom I had frequent contact in the street. They were also the boys with whom I had developed a reciprocal relationship.)

My work with this NGO also offered me the opportunity to be in the street tagging along for their street outreach in the area of *Lima Centro* two nights a week. Their street outreach consisted of going out to *Jirón de la Unión, Barrio Chino*, and other surrounding areas and playing table games with the children they encountered. The number of children and adolescents would fluctuate on a daily and weekly basis, and the actual children we encountered varied, with some of the same children and adolescents there week after week, while others would appear and disappear for short or extended periods of time. The games we played
included checkers, jenga, memory, cards, and others. From the perspective of the NGO, this outreach allowed them to develop and maintain relationships with those children and adolescents who were not in a casa-hogar or preventivo and who were, at this juncture, on the street or on their way to making the transition from home to street. Games served as a vehicle through which to access the children and conduct interventions. Discussions, while initially got at the personal history of the child, almost always led to an attempt to convince them to enter a casa-hogar, or to return home. It was an automatic assumption that for each of these unique children and adolescents, their homes or a replacement home like a casa-hogar would be the best situation for them. (At first glance this seems like an appropriate response, yet after one begins to understand what each of these two places may look like and represent for some of the children, this assumption becomes problematic. I discuss this in greater detail in chapter 4).

My role within the NGO consisted of helping out where I could and where they needed me. In street outreach I too would play games with the boys and girls, and older youth in their late teens and early twenties and talk to them about their lives. I followed particular dress requirements and deferred to the NGO for their expertise in issues I may have encountered. During the game play, conversations would sway between me inquiring about their lives: their experiences on the street, their families, their age and history in calle, and their thoughts about their futures, to the boys interrogating me about my life in the US: my marital status, my age, my family, profession, familiarity with Peru, asking
about things they had heard about the US, including Hollywood, the climate and its geography.

While this NGO was not perfect, it did offer me a venue in which to access the population that was in many regards better than the alternative. They were one of the few, if not the only NGO who conducted regular outreach in the area of Jirón de la Unión. There were others who went out to the streets, but most did so infrequently or intermittently, or with a mission of feeding the hungry, or taking God’s message out to the street. Its closure, therefore, not only deprived me of the secure venue I had established a year prior to embarking on the research, but left me without, what I perceived at the time, a viable alternative. It was at this point in time, contrary to the desires and advice of many others, that I decided making and maintaining contact on my own was the only real option.

The NGO, in its concern for me and my project, did help me to establish contact with a La Tierra where I would conduct observations for the remainder of my time in Lima. This casa-hogar did not conduct outreach in Lima Centro as they had identified other areas of the city where they felt their efforts could be better put to use (those in Jirón were frequently and increasingly regarded as too far gone and therefore agencies concentrated their efforts on other children they viewed as salvageable. I discuss this at greater length in chapters 4 and 5). The casa-hogar did however concede and agree to accompany me to the streets at night once a week, which while extremely kind, was not nearly sufficient for the purposes of my research.
The decision was therefore not a difficult one. I knew that it was my only option, and I was thankful to have an extremely supportive partner who was willing to tag along despite his limited Spanish abilities. Jason in fact proved to be a viable and important tool in my research. With his body adorned with many large and colorful tattoos, each of which tells a story, the boys who were a part of my study became immediately enamored with Jason and his body art. During any initial contact or when they would introduce us to a friend for the first time, the boys would insist on Jason modeling his tattoos for them (this frequently required the removal and adjustment of clothing), explain to them their significance and the pain and cost endured in their acquisition. Jason always obliged and despite limited verbal communication was able to develop relationships with the boys, who all took quite a liking to him. Perhaps this was because they never received any judgment from Jason, and there was never any pressure to leave their situation or any profound inquisition into their personal lives. The boy who served as our most consistent companion, Manuel, called him papa, which originally stemmed from a joke about Jason being like *Papá Pitufo* (Papa Smurf), for his blue pants and beard.

Jason’s role during research was manifold. For me he was a sounding board, a confidence builder (through his implementation of team confidence building meetings), a research partner, a research assistant (typing up my hand written field notes), and a companion during times of waiting and searching (occasionally unsuccessfully) for our participants. For the boys in the study he was someone to play *fútbol* with, someone to joke with and make fun of, and a
male figure who could serve as a comrade, who enjoyed similar things like martial arts, sports, music and Chris Farley movies, and someone they could also teach as he learned Spanish from them.

The boys saw me as many things, some of which can also be said of Jason. For them I was a friend, a source of assistance as I would take them to the free health clinic, pay for meals, and bring them things like flea powder or needed medicine. I was also at times a stand-in mother who would, for example, stand by their side when they were afraid to confront outreach workers, accompany them to visit their sister in a *casa-hogar* in the outskirts of Lima, accompany them to a *casa-hogar* where they were previously interned to retrieve clothing, or counsel them on options in dealing with their illness, particularly tuberculosis. I was a researcher who provided cameras but asked a lot of questions, sometimes to the point of irritation, a foreign volunteer who came reliably and consistently to visit and “hang out.” After several months of being in the field Manuel would often use his limited funds to call me on my cell phone so as to be sure that I was in fact coming when I said that I would. Phone calls in Lima to cell phones are expensive, contextually speaking, and Manuel’s calls were always short and to the point: “¿Yamey?” “Hola Manuel,” “Vas a venir?” “Si, hoy día a la una,” “Bueno, te espero.” And the call would end.

The boys, for both Jason and myself, served to be much more than participants. They were friends, sources of laughter and entertainment, as they made fun of and joked with each of us. They were informants who taught us about street life and the history of Lima and her street population, guides who
took us through the city helping us to know and understand its complex landscape, teachers who bettered our Spanish and taught us many and various jergas, caretakers who advised us the best and least dangerous routes to take, the correct fair for combis and buses, and counseled us on how to care for ourselves and avoid rateros (pick-pockets). They educated us on the many NGOs that served the street population, on where to find certain boys we were searching for, on all of the ins and outs of Lima, street life, and how to continue to be a part of and accepted in it. The boys taught us, albeit inadvertently, about each other and ourselves. They helped us to develop patience as we spent a significant amount of time waiting for them or searching for them.

The Continual and Constant Re-Negotiation of Rapport

I walked up to Pedro, sitting on the front steps just outside the edificio. I said hi, and asked if he could go up and tell the boys we were there. If there were people I knew or recognized and knew to be friendly hanging out in front of the building, I would ask them to go up stairs and ask the boys to come down. Otherwise we would sit across the street and wait. Pedro responded, “you can go up if you want,” and leaned to the side to let me pass. I quickly indicated that I had no idea which room was theirs, thinking I did not actually want to go up, not yet. While my ethnographic curiosity was strong, we now knew that both Manuel and Jesus had tuberculosis and were advised by the doctor to not be in enclosed quarters with any of the boys diagnosed with TB. Aside from this, the reminders from anyone who had ever been in the building warning me not to go continued to swirl in my head. Jason was constantly
worrying for my safety, and I had to care for my marriage. I tried to persist and ask Pedro to go up for me, without letting on that I actually was not ready to go up. But he said, “no worries, I will show you,” and he stood up, turned around and walked into the building, expecting me to follow. There was no choice at this point, and I looked to Jason hoping my eyes conveyed this and walked in. Jason followed. Yet again in forbidden territory. We ascended the marble staircase, though now it was a mere shadow of its former beauty. The building was dark and I was anxious. Fearful? Yes. Afraid for my safety? Not entirely. It was a fear of the unknown, a fear for my health and a fear of intruding on the boys in their private space. What if I walked in on something neither of us was ready for? Yes, they knew me, and yes, they had invited me up before, but nonetheless I was entering on my terms, not theirs.

A couch stood on its end in the corner of the entryway. We began walking up the stairs, as there are no rooms on the bottom floor. As we arrived at the third floor, the flooring changed from the cracked marble of the staircase to hollow and splintered wood. Paint was chipping off the walls and the floor felt as though it might fall out from under us. A man and a woman stood just off the stairway, locked in an embrace and kissing passionately. Light from outside seeped in through open windows, contrasting heavily with the darkness of the stairwell. As we walked past various rooms we could hear music playing, people laughing, and a family visiting together. Sections of the hallway smelled strong of urine and there were swarms of flies hovering in certain spots. Two young kids played together in the hallway. We passed several rooms and I tried to both
glance inside and avert my eyes at the same time, so as to not seem nosy or judgmental. I peeked in one room to see a portable stove used as a place to cook, with the debris of living piled everywhere. Inside there was a family eating a meal they had just cooked. The father sat on the edge of a bed, his belly hanging heavy over the front of his boxer shorts, while the wife stood eating her food out of a bowl. As we continued down the hall, we came to a very dark area and I was hesitant to continue to walk, feeling the uneven wood floor beneath my feet, fearful of large holes or missing planks. We passed the bathrooms, the floors wet with urine and the smell of feces resonated into the hall, the tiniest bit of light entering in through an open window. I followed Pedro and glanced back occasionally to ensure that Jason was still with me. We turned a corner, and darkness once again.

As we continued down the hallway, the darkness grew thicker and at one point I could not see more than two feet in front of me. So this must be why they say the building is dangerous for me? Yet Pedro, our guide, continued on without any issue, as if his body had memorized the landscape, never faltering nor hesitating. I giggled nervously and commented on the darkness. We turned another corner, and the darkness lessened. Pedro stopped. We came to a halt behind him in front of a closed door. “This is their room” he said, and knocked, but he then proceeded to open the door without waiting for a response. When he opened the door I saw several of the boys inside and smiled nervously. They called out our names, both surprised and happy to see us, and invited us in. The boys all appeared drugged, particularly Alexis, though there was no sign of
Manuel, who we had come looking for. Jorge seemed very surprised to see me but was nice nonetheless. We asked where Manuel was and they said he had left to chambar. Ernesto immediately welcomed us in and insisted that we sit down. Ernesto was often unpredictable in his reception of us; some days he would beam with excitement at the sight of us while others he would completely ignore our presence. Today he beamed. The couch where we sat felt dirty and as I watched La Reina scratch her fleas I was certain we would bring some home to our own dogs. To be honest, I was inclined to reject Ernesto’s invitation to sit, mostly because of the fleas, but conceded for fear of wounding egos or appearing mistrustful. We had finally gained control over the flea infestation that wreaked havoc on our dogs and our apartment and I was afraid of recontamination.

La Reina had grown quite a bit. I remember her well from my first days in the street when she was just a puppy. Now she was large and sweet and not nearly as starved and scruffy as the other dogs adopted by Ernesto and the boys. Jorge was in the corner, lying on the bed watching television. Joaquin, who I had not gotten to know as well as the other boys, was particularly excited to see me, and smiled brightly, his eyes glazed over from the effects of terokal. Joaquin was always under the close watch of Ernesto and the other boys had explained to me that the two were maridos, a term they used in part to poke fun but also to underline the nature of their relationship. Joaquin was 15 years old, and usually high when I saw him. He did not, or at least did not appear to, work like the other boys. Ernesto was in his 40s and had taken up Joaquin as his confidant, paying his way, including food, room and terokal, in exchange for intimacy, both sexual
and emotional. Eventually Joaquin left the cuarto, his uncle finding him and taking him home. This was not the first time that Joaquin’s family had come searching for him, trying to convince him to leave street life, cuarto life and terokal. Each time he returned, excited to see his friends and get back to what he viewed as a more tranquil way of life. Maybe this time would be different. Maybe he would finally stay away for good. In a visit to Ancón, Jordan explained to me that each time Joaquin would leave, Ernesto would cry, saddened at the loss of his marido, his companion, and the consistency of sexual and emotional intimacy.

As we sat on the couch and conversed with the boys, I looked carefully around the room, trying to soak up everything I saw. I had seen the inside before, through the pictures that the boys had shown me, but somehow being there and experiencing it, things were different. The room was much like it appeared in the photos, only lighter. There was a couch and a bed, both of which had seen better days and a pile of garbage in the closet. There were tupperware containers on the windowsill, and as the room smelled of urine, I wondered if perhaps it was contained within them. There was a swarm of flies swimming through the air, the small television turned on in the corner. There was graffiti on the wall; a picture depicting two people having sex—one bent over the other and each of the boys’ names scribbled on the wall. There was an empty can of terokal under the bed. Jorge was flipping through the channels, and Joaquin asked about the pulseras I had been making with the other boys. We had found this was a great way to pass time together on the steps outside their building and talk casually about their
lives. Luckily I had the supplies with me, and handed them to Joaquin. He started to make pulseras with Pedro and asked me how I had been. He had apparently been sick for the last couple of days, with a fever, though he was feeling better now. I told Alexis one of the adivinanzas I had brought earlier that day to La Tierra and he laughed. The then made up his own adivinanza about Ernesto’s face, saying: What is short with a wrinkled face? Answer: Ernesto. This upset Ernesto who was frequently the butt of the boys’ jokes and taunts and he began to hit Alexis with a broomstick. He smacked his sneakered foot repeatedly and then actually hit him in the knee. Joaquin immediately scolded Ernesto and insisted that he behave himself in front of me. Ernesto then got up and began to go in and out of the room. From the corner of my eye I saw him hold a bag up to his mouth as he stood just outside the door, protesting by huffing terokal.

Alexis and Jorge played with a broken camera they had gotten from our project and pretended to take pictures of each other and of us. As they played with the camera, I wondered how much was actually pretend and how much of this display was related to their limited understanding of how cameras work. Alexis seemed excited that I was giving him the empty camera shell and he kept repeating that he was going to keep it. I tried explaining over and over again that it does not work now without the roll of film, but that they could at least keep the battery. Jorge asked when I would bring him a camera and I told him Tuesday. Alexis really wanted a camera to take pictures of his sister, so I said I would bring him one next week. He insisted that I bring it Saturday, and when I
responded that I would bring it Tuesday he again said he wanted it the next Saturday. I assumed he does not trust himself to not take pictures and save them for his sister.

After approximately half of an hour, we decided to leave and asked the boys to tell Manuel we had come by as I had pictures to give him. When we left we made our way through the maze of the hallway. My body was tense and hesitation set in once again. The darkness, however, was not as bad on the way out. Perhaps my eyes had adjusted some. As we left, Ernesto was in the bathroom and Jason poked his head in to say goodbye. He was facing the window and seemed startled that we were there. Jesus had previously explained to me that they smoke pasta in the bathroom, as it creates a large amount of smoke, which tends to bother their roommates, and I wondered if that was what he might be doing. Jason said he appeared to be doing something with the clothes.

As we walked down the dark hall we ran into the kids playing again. This time several adults sat on the stairs drinking, watching them play. I am not sure if they were related and keeping watch over the boys or if they were simply in the same place at the same time. As I was walked down the stairs, I saw another boy I had seen in calle though I could not recall his name. I recognized him and smiled, and he returned the favor. He is older I think and he said that he lives there with his vieja, which I took to mean his mother.

We walked outside into the daylight and began to make our way through the neighborhood to Valdo’s comedor, which specializes in serving people
diagnosed with tuberculosis. Valdo is an older gay man with bleached blonde hair and very few teeth. He once pulled me aside and advised that I should not spend too much time with the boys, particularly Manuel, as he had been diagnosed with TB. He counseled me and reminded that I needed to take care of myself and take precautions so as not to contract the illness, as the treatment was long and arduous. He explained that he had worked in a clinic where he treated TB patients for many years. At first I took Valdo’s remarks as a kind gesture and I appreciated his concern for my well-being. But the conversation turned from one of care to one of judgment and perhaps even disgust. He told me he was happy to feed TB patients but if they tried to talk to him, he would push them away, indicating had no desire to contract TB and would do whatever it took to avoid contamination. We asked if he had seen Manuel, but he said that he had not been there yet today.

Whether it is coming into their room, playing a game, sharing the food they recently acquired from local restaurant, using their comb, letting them try on your sunglasses or your hat, the children and adolescents with whom I worked continually tested my loyalty and perception of them. Something as simple as rejecting their offer of a french fry can be construed as mistrust and be detrimental to the relationship. People involved in street life talk to one another and word gets around as to the kind of person you are or are perceived to be. Negotiating relationships is often like walking a tightrope. Access and rapport are negotiated and renegotiated daily and saying the wrong thing or responding in a way that is perceived to be offensive can compromise a person’s acceptance on the street.
Entering the boys’ room after Pedro’s invitation was necessary and important for several reasons. Pedro, a key player in the lives of the boys living in this cuarto, would surely have communicated to the boys our lack of desire to enter their room. This hesitation and lack of interest could have been understood for exactly what it was: fear and judgment. Children and adolescents living on and off the streets of Lima are fully aware of the lifestyles from which people like Jason and me come, often their understandings are formed by what they see on television and in the movies. They are also aware of the poverty by which they are surrounded. Pretending that the strong smell of terokal or other aromas that the street offers do not surprise or bother you can be difficult but necessary. Entering the situation with judgments and pre-conceived ideas of what the lives of children living on the street are like suspended is important in developing and maintaining relationships. Turning down this invitation could have compromised our relationship with the boys and the crucial understandings and information to be garnered from this study.

**In the End, It’s All Data**

I knew from my experience with *Chicos del Centro* and the outreach workers as well as from the time I spent on the street observing, that the boys could change their mind about you as quickly as they made it, and without any warning. Frank had been conducting outreach on the streets of Lima for nearly ten years and had seen Andre grow from a young boy to a young man. They had developed a particular rapport and were quite friendly with one another. Frank had traveled to Andre’s home east of Lima, met his mother and siblings and knew
the intimate details of why Andre had left Huancayo and now lived on the streets of Lima. Yet, in an instant, Andre stopped talking to Frank. He refused to answer his questions, to engage him in conversation, to have anything to do with him. Frank, who was once a close confidant, someone who Andre trusted and confided in, was now someone to be despised, ignored and rejected. Only Frank could not understand why. He had no thoughts or ideas about what he could have done to upset Andre, and since Andre would not explain, was left to wonder.

My relationship with Andre also suffered. Andre had initially taken a liking to me, confided in me and often spoke to me while refusing to speak with others during the casa-taller or during outreach. He was involved in the photovoice project and seemed to enjoy taking pictures. But one day, after losing a camera, things were never really the same with Andre. I explained that I didn’t care about the camera and that I knew these things might happen. But for some reason, Andre was never the same with me. He became more and more unreachable. He spoke less, opted not to take any more pictures and would disappear for long periods of time. “El desaparacido”, we called him, as he disappeared almost as quickly as he appeared.

My experiences and relationships with the other boys in the study also oscillated between highs and lows as their attitudes changed from one week to the next, from day to day or even morning to night. Working with the boys who participated in this study could be exhausting as adolescence can be a trying time for all those involved. Compound this with a relatively unpredictable existence living on the street and drug and alcohol abuse, and life can be even more
complicated. The boys were at times difficult to deal with. Their moods were unpredictable and they would often seem uninterested and aloof. There were many occasions where they would request that I come to their cuarto or meet them in a certain place either to take them to the clinic, or to receive their developed photographs but fail to show up for the appointment. When I would later question them as to what happened answers ranged from “I was sleeping,” to “I forgot” or even the occasional “I was there.” Research with this population obviously had its setbacks. There were times when an entire week would go by where we were unable to establish contact. Research, however, was also unpredictable, as we would be pleasantly surprised by unexpected visits with the boys. There were times when we had plans to meet up with one boy to review their photographs, but ended up spending time with a different participant altogether. What we learned in the midst of this unpredictable and often fickle environment was to go with the flow. We learned that the most important thing we could do was roll with it, let the research happen as it would. In the end, it was all data.

The Pressing Research Questions

I originally set out to examine urban public spaces as sites for the education of urban youth, while more specifically investigating the ways public space affects the lives of youth, living and working on the streets of Lima, Peru. With the assumption that children and adolescents interact with adults and citizens, police officers, shop owners, and other inhabitants of the city on a daily basis, my original research questions asked: How do these interactions shape how
children and adolescents on the street understand themselves within the spaces of
the city? How do children and youth who live and work on the street
conceptualize space and the urban landscape? How do interactions with the
various inhabitants shape the way street children affect and are affected by the
cityscape? And lastly, how do interactions among youth and other citizens within
the context of the city create opportunities for both teaching and learning?

During my observations with adolescents living and working on the streets
of Lima I found that the original questions and conceptual framework required
reworking. As I witnessed children and adolescents navigate between street,
home and the multitude of casa-hogares throughout Lima, I began to see the ways
in which issues related to identity and identity performance were a significant
aspect of their lived experiences. I therefore began to examine identity
performance with particular attention being given to the use of photography as a
means of self-expression and self-reflection. Through participatory observations,
informal interviews, and photovoice, I reformulated my research questions to ask
the following: What are the various identities adopted by children and adolescents
as they navigate life on the streets and their frequent transitioning between street,
casa-hogar, and home life? How are each of these identities constructed and
performed and what are the connections between identity and the spaces they
inhabit? Can the use of photography aid participants in self-examination and in
developing an understanding of the complex identities that they perform
throughout their adolescence? Lastly, I began to look at researcher subjectivity in
understanding how I affect the relationships with the research participants, and
ultimately the data gathered. So, a final question is, how does the researcher’s role in the field influence the research process and data collected?

In the pages that follow, I attempt to offer answers to these research questions. I begin by providing brief portraits of each of my participants, sharing what I know of their pasts and their presents. I describe my relationship with each participant as these relationships differed significantly from one boy to the next. I also describe at length the photovoice project, explaining what I had hoped it to be and what, in reality, it was. It was this project and the photographs that the boys took that sent me on a very different journey than the one I had set out to make. In the chapter on photovoice, I argue that the ways in which the boys appreciate the photographs that they took can be understood in the same way that families view and understand their family photographs; as documentation, as an indication of who people are or were, and as proof of having been present during the photographed event (Chalfen, 2002; Hirsch, 1997).

Through these photographs, I recognized that issues of identity and identity performance were salient themes among those making their ways in the streets, as they frequently and continually transitioned in and out and between the street and the casa-hogar. I began with a closer reading of Judith Butler, and found that her theory of gender performance could be used to explain much of what I witnessed as related to the performance of a street identity. I found that this street identity among the boys in this study and among adolescents and children on the street is shaped by the contexts within which they are situated, including the street and the casa-hogar. And while this identity is both fluid and context dependent (Holland,
Lachicotte, Skinner & Cain, 199), children and adolescents on the street search for consistency in their identities, and often grasp on to a street identity in order to combat frequently negative perceptions of them and develop a positive self-concept.

In the fourth chapter, I revisit the concepts of space and place that originally guided this research, and find Soja’s (1996) theory of *thirdspace* to be quite useful in examining the ways in which the street is navigated and understood by those boys and girls making their ways within it. This *thirdspace* is a space of possibility, a space that is both real and imagined, where children can be and act out identities they hope or envision themselves to be.

In the final chapter, I discuss the importance of researcher subjectivity and interrogate my own situatedness as the researcher and my impact on the research context. I understand that this research study conducted by any one else would have had very different outcomes, as who I am and how I engaged my research participants had a real impact on the data that I gathered. The aim of this dissertation, however, was not to conduct a replicable study, one that would offer simple answers to complex problems. Instead, I hope to offer some insight into the lives of children and adolescents living on the street, recommendations for effective outreach with this population, and contribute to identity theories, including the use of photography as a tool with which we can explore identity and identity performance. In the process, I also found that I was able to offer some insights into who I am as a researcher and the relationships I forged with the boys who participated in this study.
Some Final Notes on the Use of Spanish

Throughout this dissertation you will find that I frequently refer to various places, foods, or persons by their Spanish name. The selection of which things I speak about in Spanish as opposed to English does not have any particular rhyme or reason. I do not use Spanish for the sake of literary style or poetic prose. Instead, my use of Spanish is directly related to the fact that I am a native English speaker. Many of the words that I refer to by the Spanish name do not have a clear English translation, or if they do, the English translation does not capture the nuances of the word and its meaning. Other times I use the Spanish word because that is how I learned about the item or concept, and referring to it is English sounds odd and discordant. My fieldnotes reflect this same style, with Spanish words or phrases interspersed among predominantly English text. When documenting many things that the boys conveyed to me, I also varied between translating their speech into English and documenting their words in their original Spanish form. Therefore, the quotes that I present here follow this same pattern; sometimes quotes are presented in English, while at other times they are presented in Spanish. I, on most occasions, do not offer in text translation, which requires that my reader be willing to invest more effort in reading this dissertation. I believe, however, that this presentation provides for a closer representation of the research context, providing a better picture of my interactions with participants in this study. I have also included a glossary of Spanish terms that can be found in the appendix of this dissertation.
Chapter 2

PAINTING PICTURES: LOS CHICOS AND VARIOUS OTHER CHARACTERS ON THE STREET

In this chapter I provide portraits of the boys who participated in this study. These portraits attempt to describe each participant, providing details of their personalities and the identities they performed while I knew them. I also offer what I know of their backgrounds, including their home lives and their careers on the street before I arrived in Lima. None of the boys in this study exists in isolation, however. In fact, much of what I know about them and how I choose to present them here is dependent on our shared experiences and the ways in which I perceived our interactions. These portraits are presented from my perspective, not theirs. The manner in which I understand them is significantly affected by and complicated by my situatedness as the researcher, and theirs as subjects. As the researcher, I thought about the boys participating in my study everyday, dissecting their behavior in my mind and examining their actions, words and photographs. I doubt, however, that this obsession was reciprocal. While I developed strong relationships with several of the participants, the boys in this study had lives that existed before my arrival on the scene, and lives that would continue long after I left. Furthermore, as subjects, the boys presented particular versions of themselves in this research project, often performing identities that they hoped themselves to be or to become. Conducting observations in three different contexts (calle, casa-hogar and cuarto) helped to expand my point of view as I was often privy to several versions of the self.
performed by each participant depending on the context. I was also able to witness overlap and disjunct in these identities as they transitioned to, from, and in between the casa-hogar, the street, and their home. Regardless, each participant shared with me parts of himself that he was willing to share while keeping others to himself.

Alexis: El Viajero

No quisiera detener esta oleada que me lleva a donde, a donde no lo sé, solo me muve con ella.

Y nadie ahí me conocerá, y a nadie ahí reconoceré pero no tengo miedo.

No quisiera detener esta oleada que me lleva

Y todo lo que ya viví, lo sigo cargando
Lo llevo muy dentro de mí nunca lo he olvidado, lo siento tan cerca de aquí, lo llevo muy dentro de mí.

Voy en busca de un lugar, en este mundo abierto donde me pueda yo quedar, para empezar de nuevo.

Y nadie ahí me conocerá, y a nadie ahí reconoceré pero no tengo miedo.

Y todo lo que ya viví, lo sigo cargando
Lo llevo muy dentro de mí nunca lo he olvidado,
During the eleven months that I knew him, Alexis would often disappear for extended periods of time, sometimes for as long as a month. No one would know where he was, though some would speculate as to his whereabouts: “He’s in Puente Nuevo,” or “He must have gone home, to be with his family.” These, however, were simply speculations, as I knew that Alexis doesn’t have much family to speak of. He had been on and off the street since he was 12, and I knew him when he was 15. He told me that his parents separated when he was eight years old and he and his younger sister were left in the care of their padrastro (stepfather) who then abandoned the two of them. Alexis had not seen his parents since then and had no idea as to their whereabouts. After being abandoned by his padrastro, he and his sister were sent off to live with an uncle, who unable or unwilling to care for them, sent them to a casa-hogar. Alexis stayed in a hogar in Lima Centro, while his sister was sent to the girls’ counterpart on the outskirts of Lima. The hogar where Alexis stayed catered to a variety of families and children, including children on the streets. The majority of the children interned there, however, still maintained strong ties to their families, often going home on the weekends or for holidays. For many, financial reasons led their families to relinquish their care to the state.

Alexis eventually left the hogar, though he maintained his leaving was not entirely intentional. It happened one day when he was on an outing with the other boys from the casa and became separated from the group. Though he searched
and searched for them, he did not make it back in time to get the bus. Due to his inexperience with the city’s landscape, he was unable to locate the hogar where he was interned. He ended up staying on the streets that night, which marked the beginning of his career on and off the street.

I first met Alexis through Andre and Manuel; he tagged along for their first appointment with me to discuss the photos they had taken. He was introduced by his second name Walter, rather than his first, which made the coming weeks rather confusing as I referred to him with others unfamiliar with this name. I eventually came to know Alexis by his street name, which I found to be quite a fitting description of his personality, and an animal I happen to have a particular fondness for. He has one younger sister, who he occasionally visits in the hogar where she stays outside of Lima. He spoke of her often and took me once to visit her.

Alexis has been in several casa-hogares throughout Lima, including the one where I conducted observations for nearly eight of my eleven months in Lima. The casa-hogar mentioned above, where Alexis was first interned, was the same casa-hogar where I volunteered as a futból coach. Alexis, like many of the boys I came into contact with, argued that he had been on the streets so long he just could not get used to being in a home. He had tried, and tried again, but despite his efforts could not make the switch. He still, like many others, would express interest in entering a casa and completing a programa, but also insisted he had so much more to experience on the street.
Alexis’ insistence that he had too much to experience on the streets led me to be particularly surprised when I found him sitting on the doorsteps of La Tierra upon my departure one afternoon. Alexis had mentioned recently to Fabian one night during street outreach that he wanted to enter La Tierra, but as I had become so accustomed to children saying this though never actually entering, I dismissed it. Many of the boys and girls I had contact with on the street would express a desire to enter a casa-hogar, though typically never follow through with this request. I often wondered if this was simply done out of a lack of anything else to talk about or out of fear that outreach workers would eventually lose interest in them if they never expressed a desire to get off the street. I realize, however, that the reasons behind the continued expression of this desire to enter the casa-hogar are different for every child, but there are some overlapping reasons why, including a desire for approval, a real desire to leave street life complicated by addiction, boredom, and fear of abandonment.

December 15, 2008. When I left today to my surprise I saw Alexis waiting outside with Max—he made me promise not to tell the boys in his cuarto and begged me to bring the photos on Wednesday. He looked
drugged. I wanted to stay and visit with him but felt strange as if I was invading, so I did not but told him I would see him on Wednesday.

Alexis agreed he would see me later, as they were not quite ready to allow him to enter. There were protocols that had to be followed. He again asked that I promise not to tell anyone, particularly the other boys involved in the photovoice project, of his presence at La Tierra; something which he repeatedly reminded me not to do during his time there. I was happy to see Alexis sitting there with Max (an outreach worker from another casa-hogar), waiting to enter the casa. I was never terribly fond of his living situation, and was even less fond of Ernesto, the man with whom he lived. I was hopeful Alexis would stay at La Tierra, but knew that with life on the street and in the casa-hogar, nothing was constant or guaranteed. I left anxious to share the news with Jason.

Alexis was a relatively light hearted and laid back individual. He wandered to wherever he chose and had the demeanor of someone much older in years. He was also quite adept at surviving on his own. He stole frequently to get the things he needed or wanted and was not ashamed of this. He proudly offered stories of his thievery, usually cell phones, explaining how he would sell them for cash to purchase new clothes or food or terokal.

Alexis was clearly self-sufficient, able to fend for himself and obtain the things he needed and wanted without the assistance of others. An example of this independence is demonstrated in Alexis’ relationship with Ernesto, the man with whom the boys lived. Ernesto was a gay man in his forties who grew up on the streets and now provided several boys a place to stay dividing the night’s rent
amongst them (for some he provided free rent often in exchange for sex). Many of the boys looked up to Ernesto, arguing that he took care of them and was well respected on the street. Others believed Ernesto to be a pedophile and considered him to be abusive, though did not feel that there was anything they could do about it. During one of his disappearances, I found out that Ernesto had tried to have sex with Alexis while he was sleeping, and in order to stop his advances, Alexis punched him in the face causing several lacerations and what appeared to be a broken nose. This interaction between Ernesto and Alexis proved to be quite humorous to the other participants, and while it was not widely publicized as to what happened, Manuel shared with me the details. Alexis was unwilling to compromise himself in order to have a place to live. Confident that he could easily take care of himself, he “disappeared” for a month after this encounter and found other living arrangements.

Over the eleven months I spent working with Alexis, he disappeared on several occasions. Each time I would worry that I might not see him again, though he would always reappear. Alexis was kind, though I don’t think he would describe himself in this manner. He seemed to pride himself on his roguish behavior, but demonstrated care for both Jason and me when we were with him. He once warned me that if I did not know him, he would be the kind of person I would need to watch out for on the street, alluding to the fact that he would most likely try to steal from me. He also cautioned that if I ever saw him drunk, I should run the other way, because when he is intoxicated he turns into “Jean Claude Van Dam.” He then illustrated this by making karate gestures with his
hands. Though I took these warnings to heart, they contrasted drastically with the
caring, cheerful boy that I had come to know.

Alexis did not stay in *La Tierra* for very long, which was indicative of his
wandering lifestyle. He stayed there for just over a month, spending both
Christmas and the New Year and was content for much of this period of time,
until the day he decided that he wasn’t. When Alexis resolved to leave, there was
no convincing him otherwise, something I should have realized much earlier than
I did. The *hogar* attributed Alexis’ sudden desire to leave to what they called the
*síndrome de abstinencia*, or abstinence syndrome, which is the term they used to
describe the withdrawals that the boys would experience as they detoxified from
*terokal* and other drugs. They argued that this detoxification period, however,
could strike at any time in the early weeks, months or even years after abandoning
drugs. They frequently used this term as a blanket term to explain most of the
disagreeable or anti-social behavior that any of the boys would demonstrate.

“*Está con el síndrome,*” they would pronounce. While I agree that some of
Alexis’ desire was in part due to a desire to consume again, knowing Alexis, I
also realize that his desire to leave had a considerable amount to do with who he
was and in what space he felt most comfortable. This space was not the space of
the *casa-hogar*.

I am not sure why Alexis decided to enter *La Tierra* in the first place.
Many of the staff insisted that more children enter around the holidays, as they
don’t want to be alone on the street during a time that is traditionally spent with
family. I cannot say whether this was the reason Alexis entered. Some argued
that children may enter for short periods of time to take a brief “holiday” from street life. I am also unsure if this was true for Alexis. Regardless of his reasons for entering, his reasons for leaving were much more clear.

I have been fortunate to maintain contact with Alexis through MSN messenger, hearing of his newest adventures working for a bus company traveling from Lima to the selva several times a week, and now living in Lima Centro again in a cuarto by himself. He continues to present himself as an independent, self-sufficient young man. He has been unable to visit his sister in some time due to issues with his identity documents, which brings him much sadness. He often asks when I will return.

**Manuel: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man**

Manuel had been on (and off) the streets since he was eleven. He had just turned 16 when I left Lima. Manuel was a musician, and a pretty good one at that. In fact, Manuel placed a lot of emphasis and weight on his identity as a musician. He was also quite a comedian and in his relationship with me he was almost always joking. He did not particularly like being serious, and struggled when I would try to talk about serious things, like his home life or his relationship with his mother. Because of this, while Manuel and I were the closest out of all the boys whom I spent time with over the span of nearly a year, I cannot argue that I knew him entirely well. I do know that he was sweet, kind and always treated me with a great deal of respect. He never pushed the limits with me when it came to asking for things, he was extremely grateful for any help I offered and expressed that he really enjoyed spending time with both Jason and me.
December, 15, 2008. We first arrived at the cuarto and sat out front. I asked Jason if he thought Manuel would show and he said definitely. We sat and talked and I reminded Jason not to say anything about Alexis being in La Tierra (Alexis had asked me not to tell the other boys his whereabouts). By this time Manuel had come down, running across the street to meet us. I said hello and told him we would go off to the plaza or paseando to do the interview. We walked with Manuel and asked how he has been. He said the same, tranquilo. I asked what he did over the weekend and he said the same as other days: allí tranquilo. He worked a bit and hung out. He said he did play some games with his friends. We bought a coke and some galletas and sat down in the plaza. When I pulled out the newly developed photographs from my backpack, Manuel was excited to see the results. As we went through the pictures, we landed on a photo of Manuel sitting on a cajón, and playing both the zampoña and charango. When I asked Manuel to talk to me about this picture, he said that he had asked his friend Frederico to take that picture. They had just finished working and he thought it would be cool to show him with the zampoña and charango at the same time. He then went on to explain to me that for him music is an art form. And when I agreed, “Sí, la música es como el arte,” Manuel quickly corrected me and said no it is not like art, it is art, a cultural art. “If you were to give Jason a zampoña, for example, he would not know how to play. Only some people can do it and do it well and therefore it is an art form.” Later, Manuel showed me a picture
of him and his friend playing music on a *combi*. He said he loved this picture because it shows him paying music, which he loves.

![Manuel with his zampona and charango](image)

**Figure 2.** Manuel with his zampona and charango

Many of Manuel’s photographs show him with his instruments. While music and musical instruments are an important part of the lives of many boys making their ways on the streets, for Manuel, they were more than an essential tool to be used on earning a living. They were a means of self and artistic expression. The photographs he took showed him posing with his zampona, and charango, playing music on combis, sidewalks, in restaurants, and in his cuarto.

![Manuel’s charango, case, and zampona](image)

**Fig. 3.** Manuel’s charango, case, and zampona

Early on in our relationship, Manuel’s charango was broken during a taller on fútbol. The casa-taller where I originally began my participant observations held different workshops each day on topics ranging from health and illness,
cleanliness to cooking. Every Wednesday the topic was *fútbol*, which consisted of the volunteers and children playing *fútbol* on a nearby pitch in Rímac.

*July 9, 2008.* During play, Ronald kicked the ball hard, and it bounced off of someone’s body, though I am not sure whose. It bounced over to where we had piled our things; jackets, bags, etc. The ball bounced directly on Manuel’s *charango*, cracking it on the neck, just above the body. Everyone gathered around Manuel and the *charango*, and he held it in his arms, frantically trying to piece it back together. Manuel looked extremely upset and tears welled up in his eyes. Frank tried to reassure him and said that they could fix it, with a special glue, though Manuel did not seem terribly convinced. I have to remember to talk to Manuel about the *charango* and whether or not he was able to fix it.

Manuel used humor to deflect tension, confrontation and serious discussions. Through humor and comedy he was able to avoid discussions of almost anything. I would frequently try to get Manuel to open up about his home life and his mother and while I was able to discover small details like the fact that he has a younger sister as well as several other older siblings, that his mother cleaned houses for a living, and that he did not prefer to live at home, I always felt as though Manuel was holding back. He did confide that his parents were divorced, that he does not remember his father and his mother never remarried, though he chose not to disclose why he left home or other details about his family. He told me that he has been on (and off) the street since he was eleven years old, and began by selling *caramelos* and sleeping on the street in the areas near his
home. He then began renting rooms around his house, and eventually met another boy who lived in the building where he lives now and came to the center. Manuel harbored a lot of anxiety when it came to his family, which is part of the reason why he did not want to discuss them. This anxiety as well as his use of humor to deflect serious topics became very apparent the night we planned to see a play coordinated by a local casa-hogar and performed by many of the children who navigated the streets of Lima Centro:

October 21, 2008. As we walked inside with everyone, Manuel stayed behind, looked at me and waved as if to say goodbye. I looked at him, holding my hands up by my shoulders as if to ask why, and he shrugged. I walked back outside and he said he wanted to leave because “no me caen.” I assumed he was talking about the other boys from Jirón because he really does not see them much, but then I realized he was talking about the people from Chicos del Centro. He said he did not know they were going to be there. I asked why he did not like them and eventually he explained, after much prodding, that they pressure him too much. He confessed that they are always trying to get him to see his mother or to go into a home and he does not want to. He wants to see his mother, of course, but on his own voluntad. He then told me that he was afraid that maybe his mother was in there and he was afraid to go in. He said that she would make him go home with her and he worried who would pay for his cuarto if he was forced to go with her. I told him that Chicos did not know he was going to be there so it was unlikely that his mother was there and so we could go
in, and he said, “oh they know, they know.” I told him it was his decision and he could leave if he wanted. I explained that I wanted him to feel comfortable, and of course I wanted him to stay, but again, it was up to him. So we sat on the stairs and while we were there talking, Fabian came up to say hello. Jason gave Manuel the option to leave and go get a coffee and talk but eventually he decided to go in.

After the play, Manuel, Jason and I left to take Manuel back to his cuarto. Again I asked him questions about his family and his mother:

He said he plans to spend Christmas with her but he will spend the New Year with the boys from his cuarto. I asked him what was it that he liked so much about the cuarto and he smiled and got nervous and said this I cannot say: “eso no digo, eso no digo.” I tried coaxing it out of him and he said let’s go have a cafecito and I will tell you. So we walked and had a coffee and he still would not explain. I asked him why he left home and he joked to meet new friends and have new experiences. But it was clearly a joke. Jason and I realized that he jokes a lot. Humor seems to serve as a guard for Manuel, a wall that prevents him from having to share too much about his past. He would not answer my questions and told me when I saw him on Thursday he would tell me and we could talk. He said he wanted to go to the clinic again, actually he said when we go to the clinic. I was surprised that he was going again and said “You want to go again?” and he said well of course. So I agreed I would go with him.
Manuel never really did answer the question as to why he enjoyed the cuarto so much. Though I am not sure I needed him to spell it out for me. For Manuel, and many of the other boys, the space of the cuarto and the street serve as spaces where they can be and perform various identities that they are unable or uncomfortable being in the space of their home or the casa-hogar. For Manuel, these identities most likely relate to his sexuality and drug use, though the space of the cuarto may have also offered a freedom from an abusive or neglectful home environment.

Manuel also had a proclivity for becoming attached to the people in his company, though this did not mean just anyone. When I first met Manuel, he was best friends with Andre. They spent every waking moment together. They lived together, worked together, ate together, and came to the casa-taller together. One afternoon early on in my time in Lima, I sat in the casa-taller, watching the boys play music. As I watched them play the zampoña, strum the charango and beat the cajón, I caught Manuel gazing fondly at Andre as he played the zampoña, caressing his shoulder and I wondered if Manuel was perhaps enamored with Andre. After a time, however, Andre and Manuel had a falling out over music, and they went their separate ways. After that, Manuel became best friends with Ricardo, then José, then Ricardo again.

After several months of conducting participant observations and the photovoice project, Manuel demonstrated a strong attachment to me and to Jason. He would frequently call my cell phone asking, “Vas a venir?” (Are you going to come?), to ensure that I would be coming to the cuarto when I said I would.
Manuel, unlike many of the other boys involved in this study, was extremely dependable, always showing up for appointments when he said he would. Jason and I both developed a deep and genuine care for Manuel and we worried about his health and well-being. During the time that I knew Manuel, he contracted tuberculosis for the second time in his life and began to look rather ill, losing a significant amount of weight. While he wrestled with the idea of entering a *casa-hogar* when he learned about his illness, he decided to deal with it on his own. This led to him abandoning his treatment on several occasions, returning home to his mother’s house more than once, and later, long after I had left Lima, entering a *casa-hogar* where he eventually finished the six month course of antibiotics.

Manuel often expressed interest in returning to school, but could not bring himself to gather the required documentation together to do so. In order for him to start school again, he needed to obtain his records from his former school and this would require a visit in person. When I asked Manuel why he did not want to go, he suggested that the staff and students there would judge him for his current lifestyle and he was not willing to face that kind of judgment. As much as I offered to help Manuel, he was simply never able or willing to take the necessary steps to re-enroll in school. I often wonder if Manuel truly wanted to resume his studies, or if this was something he told me because he believed it would please me. Similar to the reasons why children and adolescents often express a desire to enter the *casa-hogar*: because they want to make outreach workers happy, and believe that by doing so, outreach workers will continue to express interest and concern for them and their lives.
Manuel still asks when I will return to Lima, as we occasionally speak via MSN messenger. He is now interned in a *casa-hogar* where he has been for several months and where he continues to practice his music. Through the use of an outreach workers video camera, Manuel has placed several short videos of him playing the *charango* and *zampoña* on Youtube.com.

**Jorge: Lo Más Difícil**

My relationship with Jorge was difficult, to say the least. He was much more aggressive than the other boys, and had a hard time taking no for an answer. The tone of our relationship also fluctuated, beginning and ending on positive notes, while our experience together in the middle was often strained. I met Jorge through the *casa-taller* where he would come, along with Andre, Manuel and Alexis, to bathe, wash his clothes, and eat a free meal. Jorge was 17 when we met, though turned 18 towards the end of my stay in Lima.

![Figure 4. A picture of Jesus taking a picture photographed by Jorge](image)

When Jorge and I first met, we got along quite well. Jorge was older than most of the other boys, and behaved accordingly. He was respectful, but also asserted a sense of wisdom and knowledge about Lima and street life. He expressed interest in becoming involved in the photovoice project as he believed he had something important to contribute. Our first meetings together outside of
the *casa-taller* in fact were rather productive as he took the assignment quite seriously and provided a great deal of information about the *cuarto* where he and several other participants stayed and his relationship with the street and to *terokal*. Things seemed to change however, when Jorge was expelled from the *casa-taller* for throwing an apple at one of the outreach workers.

*July 30, 2008.* Jorge was punished today and now can’t come to the *taller* for an entire month, which makes many problems for me. It seems that he threw an apple core in my direction. I was standing in the doorway, with my back to Jorge, and saw the apple fly past me. When I noticed it, I yelled “Hey,” then Edwin turned around and that is when things blew up. Edwin was the one who decided the punishment and at first he told me it would be one week, but then it was one month. I tried to stick up for Jorge but Edwin heard none of it saying that he was sure that he threw it at him because they were arguing earlier. Jorge was apologetic. Regardless, there was no changing Edwin’s mind. Jorge is expelled from the *casa-taller* for a month.

As time progressed, my relationship with Jorge became strained. He grew extremely agitated if I would decline his requests to purchase him a meal, and occasionally resorted to angry outbursts and storming off, including saying English vulgarities like “fuck you” and “fuck your mother.” It eventually got to the point where I would occasionally avoid Jorge in order to avoid the anticipated confrontation. Perhaps Jorge simply didn’t want to be bothered by my questions and inquiries, but knew me as a source of food and hunger drove him to behave
the way he did. Though I imagine that much of the change I witnessed in Jorge was due to his drug use, as from what I was told by the other participants, he had begun to use pasta more frequently.

September 15, 2008. So we waited outside and eventually Manuel and Jorge came down. Manuel is always happy to see us, though I think Jorge could care less. Manuel had sticky stuff all over his mouth making him look like a little kid who had just gotten into something he shouldn’t have. At first I did not think anything of it until he was showing Jason something on his hand. I think he must have shown Jason an injury because Jason showed them his scrape from playing ball. Next to the injury was a smear of stickiness and I realized it was glue. Then I told Manuel he had some on his face and he quickly became very embarrassed and asked Jorge if it was true, “¿Estoy manchado?” and Jorge verified that he was. Both Manuel and Jorge continued to ask for money for food, I reminded them that I just bought them lunch on Friday and that they need to work for their own food, but they kept asking and I kept saying no. I find this part to be a struggle, them always asking for money and me trying to say no. I try to explain that I cannot always buy them stuff. Some are easier than others and are respectful, but Jorge has lost all sense of decorum. While Manuel said, “Okay,” Jorge became really angry and as he walked away said “Fock you” in English, pronouncing the “u” as an “o.”
Interestingly, Jorge first represented himself as one who did not consume much terokal, indicating he believed it “makes people behave strangely.” Over time, however, I came to know Jorge as one of the heavier consumers of terokal and pasta básica, and I believe his heavy consumption led to his unpredictable behavior, with aggressive outbursts then kind and friendly gestures within the span of an hour.

During the months I spent visiting the boys at their cuarto, Jorge was forced to flee or face drastically violent consequences. He had offered terokal to the sister of Pedro, a well-respected resident of the building, most likely in his late twenties. It was apparently taboo within the confines of the building to offer drugs to a young girl who had not previously experimented. When Pedro, a consumer of terokal himself, was made aware of this, he threatened Jorge’s life, and in order to avoid confrontation, Jorge fled. Several months went by where we had no contact with Jorge, and when he did finally show up again, he was a very different person. Upon his return, he declared that he had been off of terokal and pasta for several months, and had spent much of these months living with his father. He was extremely proud of his accomplishment and often sought out praise for it. Having recently turned eighteen, he proudly displayed his newly acquired identification card. He was kind and respectful as he was when we first met, and frequently asked to connect with us so that we could play futból, as he was no longer willing to stay in the cuarto with Ernesto. Instead he rented his own room with a new friend who also stopped consuming after years of drug use and time on the street.
March 31, 2009. On the way to Barrio Chino I heard the sound of
charango, and cajón and thought to myself, wouldn’t it be funny to see
some of my kids. So I stuck my head in to the restaurant and saw Yuri
and Jorge and waved and smiled. We decided to wait outside to say hello
and both came out after playing the song. We said hi-Jorge is still hanging
with Yuri doing well, working. He said he wanted to play partido and
after trying to figure out how to go about it, we decided on meeting in
front of the boys building (today) at 3pm and that Jorge would try to
communicate with Manuel on line. I gave Jorge my number and email
and told them to call or email if there was an issue and then we parted
ways.

Jorge played music, like the other boys in the study, though did not know
how to play either the charango or zampoña. Instead he played the cajón, which
is a drum used in traditional Peruvian music. The cajón is shaped like a box and
is played by sitting on top of it and beating the front panel that sits between your
legs. It has a hole cut out in the center of the backside, which Jorge used to store
various items, including clothing, drugs, and other essentials. After he returned
from his two-month hiatus, we discovered that Jorge learned how to play the
zampoña, something he struggled with previously:

March 10, 2009. When I saw Jorge—still looking healthy, he sat on the
stairs and played the charango and Jason and I realized he must have
learned how to play recently, as he never knew how to play before. He
played the same chords of the same song—like a chorus, but nonetheless he now knew how to play.

I have not spoken to Jorge since I left Lima, and have not seen him on messenger.

I have been told, however, that he is living with Ernesto again and is using drugs heavily.

Andre: *El Desaparecido*

Me llaman el desaparecido
Cuando llega ya se ha ido
Volando vengo, volando voy
Deprisa deprisa a rumbo perdido

Cuando me buscan nunca estoy
Cuando me encuentran yo no soy
El que está enfrente porque ya
Me fui corriendo más allá

-Manu Chau, 2000

Andre had been on the street since he was very young. Frank, one of the outreach workers with whom I worked, had known Andre for at least six years. He was sixteen when we knew him. Or at least we thought him to be sixteen:

*March 10, 2009.* As we sat there and talked to Willis, Andre showed up. He said hello to everyone, I stood up and said hello with a big smile on my face, and he said hi, said my name (he did not say anyone else’s) and I asked him about his trip, saying I knew he went to Ica, and he replied “más o menos.” I tried to ask why, but in typical Andre fashion, he said he had to go as he was going to go eat. Andre looked different to me, older with a much more mature looking face. And I mentioned something to Edwin. He said, well he is 22. And I sat there in shock! What? Yeah
he said. “We ran into his mother a while ago and she indicated that in fact he is 22 years old.” What? For Edwin the entire reason he lied was to enter the casa-taller. Which I agree, must be part of it: to receive the benefits that only those under 18 get, that adults cannot receive. But I wonder why else. Is it just for the casa-taller? Is it for other resources that are available? Andre was never interested in entering a casa-hogar. Is it to avoid what comes with getting older? Responsibility? Later I asked Leonard and Ronaldo and neither of them realized that he was that old. They also indicated that he always kept his distance, so they never really knew him well even when he hung around them.

March 24, 2009. Calle with Chicos del Centro. On the way out I talked to Frank in the car about Andre and Manuel. Frank said he only met Manuel through Jorge in March of 2008; Jorge brought him to the casa-taller. He is under the impression that Manuel has very little time in calle. Andre he has known since he was little, he used to sell caramelos with little Ernesto. He said he assumed he and little Ernesto were the same age, which they are not as we have recently found out that Andre is 22 years old, according to his mother who also asked Chicos to please not tell Andre it was her that told them.

Given that Frank had known Andre for years, this was a lie that he had been maintaining for quite some time. The reasons why are not entirely clear. Did he really have the foresight to know that he would want access to services for years to come and so decided to let others believe he was younger than he was? Did he
not know his own age? Regardless, the discovery of Andre’s real age came as quite a shock to most of us, including Frank who had known him for so long.

When I first met Andre, he told me he was a loner and he preferred it that way. He did not trust people. He explained that he needed a lifestyle where he was not forced to associate with other people; that he just wanted to be by himself. He was very friendly with me, however, and seemed to open up to me right away. I found myself immediately attracted to Andre as an interview subject and very much wanted him to participate in the study. He was excited about the prospect of taking photographs and suggested several of his friends as potential participants, including Manuel. I would talk to Andre each night during outreach. He would talk about the town where he is from, Huancayo, in the highlands east of Lima. He described his hometown with nostalgic detail, describing the plaza, and the surrounding mountains. Andre loved playing partido, and preferred the talleres on fútbol, suggesting that they needed to have more of them. He was a skillful player. Unlike most Limanans, Andrés’s favorite team was Sport Boys. When the casa-taller closed, Andre urged us to hold our own talleres on fútbol, which we did for a while under his suggestion. He also played music, the zampoña mostly, and played quite well. He told me that he wanted to learn to play the charango, but did not have an instrument to practice on. He would talk to Jason about karate and expressed interest in learning a martial art.

Eventually, Andre drifted away from the other boys, the outreach workers, and the photovoice project. He no longer stayed in the cuarto with Ernesto, and
slept on the streets where he could be alone. I saw him more infrequently and he became much more reserved and withdrawn. We began to call Andre “el desaparacido” as he suddenly disappeared from the cuarto and our lives, making only an occasional appearance before disappearing again.

During the first few months of our relationship, Andre never consumed openly, unlike most of the other boys I encountered on the streets. In fact he maintained himself to be clean, a non-consumer:

August 25, 2008. We walked back to the room and stopped along the way, not sure why and were talking. Jordan was saying he needed new shoes because his were falling apart. I told them that they should use the terokal to glue them together and Andre explained that he glued his but as soon as they got wet they came apart again. I said what is terokal good for then, and Andre said inhaling, we laughed. Then he said not for me though, for me es otra cosa. I said what? He said work, eat and sleep. I said not even a drink, he said no.

Later on, after a long period of absence, we would run into Andre wandering the streets, intoxicated from heavy consumption of alcohol and terokal. He was different, withdrawn.

March 24, 2009. We went to calle last night, starting out at la escalera. There were no kids, so we went over to Barrio Chino and ran into Andre. Andre walked by and did not say hello to any one. Frank told me to call out to him as Andre does not really speak to Frank anymore, so I did and he came over. I asked how he was and he said fine, tranquilo. He said he
is sleeping in calle these days because he prefers it. I asked why and he said he likes walking all over, being free, getting on combis and working. I said you can still do all that and sleep in a room, and he said “¿y consumir?” I asked again how the trip was and he said it was good, he swam in the lagoon, went sand boarding. He asked about Jason and I told him we should get together to say goodbye as we were leaving soon. I asked if he had been playing partido and he said no he hangs out alone so it is not possible. I said yeah, but you have Petra with you, as she was hanging out with him, and he said yeah, she takes care of me.

I still see Andre on messenger every now and again, though we don’t talk like I do with the Jesus, Manuel and Alexis.

**Jordan: El Prisionero**

For the majority of the time that I knew Jordan, he was interned in a casa-hogar on the coast just north of Lima. Like the other boys involved in this study, we met at the casa-taller. He was new to the streets of Lima Centro, having recently escaped from the casa-hogar where he was staying. Jordan had met Ernesto in the casa-hogar, the older man with whom the boys stayed in a cuarto in Lima Centro. This particular casa-hogar, unlike most hogares, allowed boys and men of any age with a history of drug use to seek refuge there. Before this, Jordan navigated the streets of various other areas of Lima. It was just a few months after Jordan became involved with this study that he decided to return to the casa-hogar from which he had escaped, the same hogar where he had met Ernesto.
When I first knew Jordan he was a rather timid and calm boy. He was 15 years old, though acted much younger than the other boys. He appeared to have much less experience on the street than the other boys, as well. The more time he spent with the boys of the cuarto the more he began to consume terokal, and the less timid he became.

*September 1, 2008.* He told me about the first time he inhaled terokal and that Jorge taught him how. They weren’t really good friends and didn’t know each other that well then but that they were in Rimac and he wanted to try it and so he did. After that he started to do it more and more. It costs 3 soles and a can will last 2-3 hours maybe longer depending on how much you use.

Jordan was a devout Christian and placed a great deal of emphasis on his faith and his relationship with God. Torn between his desire to be free on the streets and his devotion to God and his Christian values, he cried frequently, lamenting that both God and his parents would be ashamed. He eventually returned to the casa-hogar, where he stayed for the remainder of my time in Lima. Jason and I would visit Jordan every other Sunday, taking the two-hour bus ride to the casa-hogar. Most times we were able to leave with Jordan, walk around the town, grab lunch or walk along the shore. Other times the pastora of this Evangelist Christian run hogar would ask that we stay at the hogar during our visit, though I was never very clear on her reasoning on these occasions for not allowing Jordan to leave.
I believe that much of Jordan’s anguish about God’s condemnation of him and his behavior came from his experience in this particular *casa-hogar*. He frequently told me stories of the exorcisms that they performed on him, arguing that he was possessed by the devil. Each day he was required to wake at five o’clock in order to climb a nearby mountain (hill) and conduct morning prayer, which lasted as long as two to three hours. The pastor and his wife would urge Jordan to repent for his sins and instilled a significant amount of shame for the life that he lead in the street. He was an extremely emotional young boy and he often expressed a significant amount of guilt for the things he had done. He anguished over the torture he subjected his parents to, feeling as though he had not only failed them but God as well. When I would visit Jordan and ask how he was, he frequently responded “*Acá, encerrado*” (Here, locked up). Jordan escaped from the *hogar* a total of four times before this, each time stealing something before he left.

Jordan had nightmares frequently and he would often share with me their contents. He dreamt of killing his father or of his mother’s death or awful things happening to his little brother. He believed that God was communicating with him through his dreams and took these dreams to mean that he needed to repent for his sins.

The *casa-hogar* where Jordan was staying was more than two hours away from his home and while his mother tried to visit every other Saturday, she frequently had to cancel. Jordan’s father on the other hand did not visit. When I asked why his father did not come, he responded that he was busy. He had a
younger brother who lived at home with his parents, and a few older siblings who were already married.

While Jordan was extremely sensitive and emotional, he was also often playful, joking and telling stories of his life on the streets.

*September 1, 2008.* Jordan talked about the fight that is inside of him and how he really wants to enter a *casa-hogar* but he can’t. I asked what he liked about this life and he said nothing at first but I pushed and said there has to be something or you wouldn’t live this way and he said he likes to walk about and harass people and then started to laugh.

He told tales of thievery where he would steal and resell cell phones. He also told stories where he was fooled by other more seasoned criminals, for example, including one person who sold him a telephone that turned out to be a bar of soap. Jordan did not realize that it was a fake as he made the transaction quickly, but argued while they may have fooled him once, they would not fool him again. He also told stories of how he and a friend stole books from the library at the *hogar* where he was interned and was able to resell them for his own profit. This story brought him both pride and shame, as he was proud of his stealthy abilities but shameful for having betrayed the pastor and *pastora* who cared for him.

Jordan seemed isolated in the *casa-hogar* and he asked about the other boys each time we came to visit. He always wanted to know if the others asked about him or missed him, and while his name rarely came up in conversations with the boys from the *cuarto*, I did not share this with him. Unfortunately, I have not been able to maintain contact with Jordan as I have with the other boys.
The last that I heard, however, he had escaped again from the hogar and was back on the streets of Lima Centro.

**Jesus: El Rapero**

Jesus loved rap. He envisioned himself a rap singer, rapping about his life on the street and the hard world of drugs. He was in constant search of a video camera so that he could record himself rapping. When we first met and over the next few months, Jesus would often rap for Jason and me, and frequently spoke about his dreams of making it big, recording an album and a rap video.

Jesus was sixteen when we met and turned seventeen during my time in Lima. He became a part of the project by default as he lived with the other boys in the same cuarto, occasionally came with them to the casa-taller, and began to express interest in taking photographs. Jesus was not a musician like Manuel, Alexis, Jordan, Jorge and Andre. In fact he did not know how to play any of the traditional Peruvian instruments. Instead he made his living calling cars just outside the front entrance of the building where he stayed. In Lima, people heading in the same direction or to the same location in the city will frequently share taxis. Jesus, like many others, assists the taxi driver by calling out to passersby the destination of the cab so that too they may take part in this less crowded and expedient form of transportation. The cab drivers, grateful for the help in filling his car, will tip the callers. Jesus worked just an hour or two each day, making sufficient money to pay for his cuarto, one to two meals, and to purchase terokal, alcohol or pasta.
September 15, 2008. On the way home two young kids entered the bus and got off immediately—Jesus told me that they got on to rob but didn’t see any opportunity so got off. I asked how he knew that and he said he used to hang out with them and rob. He said that everyone used to rob but now they are trying to play music more instead.

Like most adolescents on the street, Jesus used terokal, though also often used pasta básica, which is a bi-product in the production of cocaine (the formal name is pasta básica de cocaína). Unlike several of the other boys, who often denied their use of terokal, Jesus had no qualms about his drug use and would openly discuss drugs and their affect on him. He was well aware of the negative aspects of using but explained he was just simply too attached.

September 15, 2008. Jesus talked to me about how he wants to do a rap video and sing some songs and that he would like me to get a camera so they can make a video. He told me that he thinks drugs are bad and I asked why he does them then, and he said he has nothing else to do. He said that when he gets some other kind of job, doing rap or what ever, he will stop using drugs then.

Jesus was a bit of a Casanova, and presented himself as a ladies man. He often made fun of the other boys, claiming that they were all homosexuals, calling
them “maricones.” He made it a point to prove to me their homosexual tendencies through his photographs, by capturing this behavior on film. The camera with which he “documented” these acts, however, was lost (read: stolen), and the photographs along with it. Regardless, Jesus was firm in his conviction, and by denouncing the other boys homosexual behavior felt he strengthened his own machismo.

Like Jorge, Jesus’ behavior was often unpredictable. Most times he was tame, respectful, and kind, while others he would act hostile, particularly when I would not agree to purchase him lunch or other food items. Like Alexis, Jesus also entered La Tierra while I was conducting observations there, but argued he only planned to stay a few days as a form of respite from street life. He did just this, leaving as quickly as he entered.

Jesus enjoyed making pulseras, or bracelets, which is a popular past time among children and adolescents on the street. These pulseras are made by tying a series of knots in nylon strings of various colors in order to form patterns.

November 10, 2008. During lunch they talked about Max, and how he comes to make bracelets with them. Manuel and Jesus showed me the bracelets they made: Manuel’s with his name on it in little blocks and Jesus’ bore the name of his ex-girlfriend. I told them I wanted to learn to make bracelets and they all became animated in teaching me, explaining what we needed and where we could get it. I decided that it wasn’t a bad idea, so we left and went to buy nails, cola de rata and pita for the bracelets. We found out that we needed to go to Caqueta to get the little
tiles for the names. (By the way—Jordan said that he used to go to Caqueta with Andre and Jesus and beg for fruit).

Jason, the boys and I would often sit outside their building making *pulseras*. Jesus, like the other boys, enjoyed the creative outlet, and it provided a great tool for participating in casual conversations where I could ask the boys about their lives, their personal histories, and do some form of member checking. Jesus would proudly display as many as ten *pulseras* on one wrist, and knowing that he made them gave him great pride.

I have also spoken to Jesus several times on MSN messenger since leaving Lima, though not as frequently as I speak to Manuel or Alexis. From what I know he is still living in the *cuarto*.

**Petra: Consistency Amid Chaos**

*Petra* was a constant figure on the streets during the time that we conducted observations in Lima. She was a black, medium-sized dog of no particular breed, and had a docile and playful demeanor. While there were other dogs, like Penny, Old Yeller and *La Reina*, who made their ways on the streets along with many children and adolescents, they seemed to come and go. *Petra* on the other hand, would change her living situation, but remained present for the year we spent in Lima. During the first six months of data collection, she lived in the *cuarto* with Ernesto and the boys. Later, she began to wander the streets on her own and we would occasionally see her lounging on a street corner or walking the sidewalks by herself. She then became pregnant and bore puppies, though several did not survive the harsh conditions that street life offers.
February 10, 2009. I forgot to mention that Manuel told me that Petra had puppies—she gave birth in the casona to 5 pups. Two died and now she has 3. He said they went to the casona and took her and her pups home to care for them—they are like 3 weeks old. I asked if they were looking for homes for them and he said no, they wanted to keep them because what is great about Petra is that she takes care of them. If someone is trying to mess with them, she will bark and attack.

March 15, 2009. Jason and I went to Lima Centro to buy souvenirs and I saw Petra—her breasts hanging low still from having given birth several months ago. As I walked down Jirón, I pointed out to Jason that Petra was there and he mumbled under his breath that so was Ernesto.

Towards the end of our time in Lima, Petra began to wander the streets by Andre’s side, going everywhere that he went:

March 24, 2009. After Andre said he was leaving I turned around to find a woman crying to the rest of the Chicos del Centro gang. She was crying, sobbing and sobbing more because apparently the father of her baby has come and taken him without her permission. She continued to sob that she has gone to the police and made her denuncio but they have
not done anything. This conversation lasted at least media hora, and while Andre said he was leaving he came right back to listen in. He came and went, stopping to play with Petra in the street, spinning in circles with her as she tried to wrestle him. He would then walk away but show up in the picture again, listening in on the conversation.

March 26, 2009. While we sat there, Andre and Petra came rolling up, and when I told Jason that that was him, he did not believe it. He said he looks older than he remembered and barely recognized him. Andre said hello to me and to Jason as well. He came walking up holding a small plate of food (causa) and was eating a bit of it. Camila expressed interest in the food and he gave the majority of it to her. She then told Jason he needed to eat it because Peruvian food is good. This came just after a conversation about his vegetarianism, to which Camila was very upset because he could not enjoy Peruvian fare. Petra looks older and has gone very gray.

**Ernesto: Contradictions**

Ernesto was a short man in his early forties. He had longer hair that he wore in a bob. Ernesto apparently grew up on the streets and was a constant figure on the streets with his little dog *La Reina* always in tow. *La Reina* was a young puppy when we first arrived on the scene in Lima and grew to be a medium sized dog. As a young pup her stomach was often distended, most likely from parasites or worms and as she grew she lost a significant amount of her hair, most likely from mange. Regardless of both, she was quite the resilient dog. Ernesto
was well known among the street population including the boys and girls, outreach workers, Good Samaritan Organizations, and adults living on the street. Outreach workers working for Chicos del Centro, when describing Ernesto early on in my stay in Lima, indicated that he was gay and most likely had relationships with the young boys who lived with him. They viewed him as a pedophile, though when I asked why nothing was done about this, relayed that they had no proof. The boys would have to go to the police and turn him in themselves, and the likelihood of that happening was slim. For the majority of the time I spent in Lima, Ernesto was with a young boy named Joaquin and the boys in my study referred to him as Ernesto’s wife. Joaquin was drugged most times that I saw him. He expressed excitement when he saw me and embraced me when we met. Joaquin never expressed an interest in participating in the study, however, unlike many other boys and girls that I came into contact with. He mostly kept to himself, hold up in the cuarto with Ernesto, though occasionally coming out to the streets at night either alone or with Ernesto.

September 28, 2008. Jordan talked about how when the boys would tell Ernesto that they were going to leave and check themselves in to a casa-hogar he would cry and talk about how he would miss them so—and that he would be all alone.

When Joaquin’s older brother came for him and took him home, away from the cuarto, Ernesto was crushed. The boys would tell me how he would cry and hope for his return. Ernesto, like all those that turn to the street, had a difficult personal history. And despite his being a pedophile, I felt sorry for him.
January 13, 2009. As I was sitting with Desaul I saw a dog come running up just in front of me and soon realized that I knew that dog—it was Ernesto’s. I looked to my left and there was Ernesto arriving. He of course greeted and began to talk to me about Manuel. He said he is really bad (Frank had said to me earlier in the evening that Ernesto told him Manuel was in really bad shape and that he had stopped his treatment, saying that we needed to take him home or something). He did the same with me, and I said I would talk to him. I began to wonder why Ernesto is suddenly so interested in Manuel’s treatment and health. At this point Javier came up to Ernesto begging him to let him stay in his room that night and began to play with a necklace around his neck. He fondled the necklace and continued to beg and put his arms around Ernesto’s neck. At one point I swear he was going to try to kiss Ernesto and Ernesto said not here. I removed myself from the situation feeling rather uncomfortable and to not look like I was staring.

Ernesto was usually kind when we saw each other, though occasionally would ignore us. I kept my distance from Ernesto, and while I was friendly when I saw him, I did not usually attempt to engage him in conversation. I did not trust Ernesto, and believe that he too was skeptical of me. I speculated that he would often indicate that the boys were not in their cuarto when he knew them to in fact be there.
Pedro: Big Brother

Pedro was a young married man, and the father of two children. He appeared to be in his mid to late twenties and frequently spent time with the boys. He too used terokal, and perhaps other drugs. The boys seemed to respect him and began to spend a lot of time with him, both at night, and during the day as they would go to the beach or swimming pool during the summer months. They spoke highly of him. He played fútbol with us once or twice, though never really spoke with me. He smiled and was friendly in his demeanor, but our conversations were extremely limited. While sociable with the boys, he also appeared to keep order in the building and was close with the building’s owner.

Some Final Reflections

The boys from the cuarto never consumed drugs openly in my presence. This was a marked difference from those I would observe on the streets at night. I attribute this mostly to the fact that my time with the boys was during the day, and the consumption of drugs, for many, was a nighttime ritual, as they reserved days for work and making money. This does not mean that some were not intoxicated when we saw each other, as I am sure that they were, particularly Jesus, Jorge and Jordan. Many of the boys struggled to admit to their drug use and, like Andre, Manuel and Jorge, often maintained that they did not partake in such activities. I can only speculate as to why they denied their use of terokal and other drugs, but believe that much of it was due to their desire to maintain a particular image with me. Manuel, for example, I believe wanted me to view him as innocent and good. He attached himself to me much in the same way that a child does his mother, and
perhaps was truly afraid of disappointing me. Despite what I said to reassure him otherwise, Manuel hid much of his past and his drug use from me. Perhaps the boys were so accustomed to judgment and adults consistently urging them to stop using drugs that they wanted to avoid the topic with me altogether. What is most striking is that despite what the boys admitted to or denied, the photographs they took told a very different story. Eventually, after more time spent, they began to be more honest about the role that drugs played in their lives.

As I write the portraits of the boys and re-familiarize myself with their relationship with Ernesto, I find myself feeling both disgusted and guilty. I question whether keeping my distance from Ernesto was the best approach, or if I should have done more to stop him. I strongly believe(d) him to be abusive and manipulative and often cringed at the sight of him. After a lot of reflection, I realized, however, that I could not change what had been in place for years, and feared that if I were to attempt to do something about Ernesto, I might compromise the living situation for the boys. Most of the boys held him in high esteem, and believed him to be offering a service to those needing a room in which to sleep. They maintained that he often paid their share of the cuarto when they did not have money, or would purchase them food when they came up short. Manuel argued that for those that did engage in a sexual relationship with Ernesto, they were fully aware of what they were doing. For those that believed him to be an abusive individual, when I asked them why they did not file a report with the police, they argued that he was too well respected among the street population and
among the people in their building, and to do so would surely create problems for them.

I also question my decisions to regulate the amount of food or meals that I would purchase for the boys. This was a topic that brought me a significant amount of stress and anxiety throughout this study. Should I have just given in and purchased food whenever they needed or wanted it? Did I really need to regulate it? I am still uncertain what the best and most appropriate decision would have been, though I do cover this topic in greater detail in chapter seven.

Writing portraits of the boys proved to be more difficult than I would have imagined. I have tried to be as honest in my portrayal of them as I could, careful not to romanticize my relationships with them, while demonstrating both care and understanding as I provide less noteworthy details of our interactions together. I am grateful to each of my participants for the time they shared with me and hope that by providing honest accounts regarding the more difficult aspects of our relationships, I can help other researchers embarking on similar endeavors.
Chapter 3

VISUALIZING THE INVISIBLE

Upon my initial arrival in Lima, I began conducting participant observations both in calle and at the casa-taller, each facilitated by the organization Chicos del Centro. It was not until I had been in Lima for a month and a half that I first introduced cameras and the photovoice method. Struggling to develop strong relationships with any of the boys that I observed, the camera provided me entrée into their lives and marked a true beginning to the researcher-participant relationship. Through the use of disposable cameras, I would begin my exploration of the lives of the boys of the cuarto and of children and adolescents on the streets of downtown Lima.

I privileged this child-centered visual method for several reasons. As I had initially set out to explore the socio-spatial environment of children on the street, and the reciprocal relationship between the urban landscape and the adolescents navigating within it, handing participants cameras seemed like a logical choice. Furthermore, this method allowed for this research to be research with my participants, rather than research about them (Young & Barret, 2001a). It also provided for an easier introduction to my intentions as a researcher, as I found that simply telling the boys that I was there to investigate their lives didn’t seem to make a lot of sense to them. The cameras helped to set me apart from the other gringos who conducted outreach in their sole capacity as volunteers. Finally, photographs would provide me with a window into their lives and entrance into arenas that I was not physically able to access.
In this chapter I examine the ways in which photographs provided participants with a means by which to express themselves and in several respects, served to humanize the adolescent participants who exist at the most extreme margins of society. I discuss how the self is created and viewed within the photographic image, how photography leads to membership in traditionally restricted arenas and to de-marginalization, and how the creation of mementos provides for critical engagement in the creation of history. This method also provided the youth participants the opportunity to decide what they deemed important and provided them access to technology that they would otherwise likely never have had access to.

Understanding the Roots of Photovoice and Its Uses

Photovoice, also referred to as photo novella, is a term used to describe a particular participatory research method where participants are provided cameras with which to photograph and explore their socio-spatial environments. Participants and researcher then discuss the contents of the photographs, the meanings behind them and their importance in open-ended interviews (Nowell, Berkowitz, Deacon, & Foster-Fishman, 2006; Wang & Burris, 1997). Since its inception, photovoice has been considered an important tool in helping participants to “catalyze change in their communities,” which is held in direct opposition to the passivity attributed to subjects in traditional documentary photography (Wang & Burris, 1997, p. 370).

3 This chapter focuses on the act of taking photographs rather than the content of the photographs themselves. With more than 500 photographs taken by the participants in this study, I am unable to fully examine the contents within the space of this dissertation.
For many researchers, this method has proven useful in balancing power between the researcher and researched, creating a sense of ownership among participants, building rapport and fostering trust, generating and analyzing data, and understanding the experiences and perspectives of participants (Bolton, Pole & Mizen, 2001; Castleden, Garvin, & First Nation, 2008; Gold, 2004; Harper, 2002; Harper, 1998; Karlsson, 2001; Matthews & Limb, 1999; Nowell, Berkowitz, Deacon, & Foster-Fischman, 2006; Ross, 2004; Young & Barret, 2001a). Researchers have also argued the significant benefits for participants and their communities provided through the use of photovoice, including creating awareness and social change (Rhodes & Hergenrather, 2007), fostering deep reflection, enabling participants to become experts on their own lives and communities (Foster-Fishman, et al, 2005), and for providing opportunities for developing personal and social identities and building social competency (Stack, Magill, & McDonagh, 2004). For marginalized populations like street children, photovoice has proven to be essential in challenging stereotypical representations (Ataöv & Haider, 2006; Campos Montiero & Dollinger, 1998).

With a growing trend in conducting research with children, researchers have recognized the importance of privileging the perspectives of young research participants (Vanderbeck & Dunkley, 2005), and participatory methods like photovoice have proven useful in understanding children’s perspectives (Young & Barret, 2001a; Ross, 2004). Matthews and Limb (1999) insist that participatory methods are essential in understanding how children conceptualize and interpret their socio-spatial environment in ways that are not adult centered. Young and
Barrett (2001a) also found that the researcher’s position, in their case as a white, adult, female, prevented her from truly becoming a full participant observer, as was the case in this study, and “therefore photo diaries were used to re-create street children’s daily life processes and spatial patterns” (p. 147). This method proved advantageous for Young and Barrett (2001a) as the images “gave excellent coverage of the children’s daily lives and good representation was produced” (p. 147). The pictures, much like Collier and Collier (1986) maintained, also provided starting points for interesting and informative conversations, allowing for discussions that were frequently more informative than the photos themselves. Furthermore, visual methods like photovoice can provide the researcher access to spaces typically inaccessible or where the researcher’s presence would significantly alter the situation (Karlsson, 2001; Young & Barrett, 2001a).

Wang, Cash and Powers (2000) along with Young and Barrett (2001a) maintain that the children in their studies benefited from this method as it boosted self-esteem and confidence in the children and made them feel worthwhile in taking part in a creative activity, and as they were entrusted with the cameras, it gave them access to technology that they would otherwise never had access to, and the children were able to keep their photographs. Stack, Magill, and McDonagh (2004) found that “a process such as photovoice provides youth the opportunity to develop their personal and social identities and can be instrumental in building social competency” (p. 49). Ross (2004) found that the use of photographs revealed children’s engagement with their environment and provided
them a medium by which to express how they felt about and perceived their environment.

While the results from this study confirm many of the findings of other researchers outlined here, photography and the photographic image proved to be much less complicated for the boys involved. While the ways in which we understand what photography meant for them are theoretically complex, for the boys, the answer was simple: photographs allowed for the documentation of their histories and the creation of memories.

**Photovoice, fotovoz**

*It was early December, and after having given the boys cameras on four separate occasions, I was frustrated. The boys’ lack of enthusiasm for the guidelines I had given confused and upset me. In fact each time I gave any kind of instruction, they completely disregarded them. I was hoping to have them use the cameras in what I viewed as a purposeful way where they would take pictures, for example, of the spaces throughout the city that were important to them or document a 24-hour period in their lives. Instead they took pictures of what they wanted: their friends, themselves, and hanging out; things I initially viewed as irrelevant. I had imagined, after all of my reading on the use of photovoice, that the boys would be inspired to address issues important in their lives. I imagined they might voice concerns about police abuse, drug use, a lack of viable resources, sleeping on the streets and embrace photographs and photography as a means by which to express these concerns. As I realized that the boys, regardless of my instructions, were going to do as they saw fit, I felt duped,*
fooled, and even taken advantage of. I hadn’t considered that having the ability

to record and re-member their own histories was an important issue, one that had
not been addressed sufficiently in the literature up to this point in time.

“I told you already, Jamie, I just take pictures to have memories, nothing
more.” And it was true, this was not the first time he told me this. It was that
simple, and looking back on it now, it seems naïve and perhaps even unrealistic to
expect otherwise. Of course they desired to use cameras in the way that so many
other people do: to prove events having taken place, to document their histories,
and to tell the stories of their lives. At that point in time, however, I immediately
took Manuel’s response to be an indication of the failure of this project. I
imagined that it must have been something wrong with me, something I was or
was not doing that prevented me from getting at the real data, that prevented this
project from being the emancipatory project I had hoped for.

I asked Manuel to elaborate on his answer, searching for more. “I know,
I know,” I responded. “You have said this before. But what is so important
about having these as recuerdos?” Manuel then explained that these pictures
offer him a way to remember this very time in his life: “In a couple of years I will
have my enamorada and we will have our own room. Music will not pay for this,
so I will have to get a different job.” “What kind of job?” I asked. “Any job. It
doesn’t really matter.” Manuel replied. “But with the pictures I will be able to
remember how things were now, how things were when I was young.”

This notion that photographs house our memories is not unique to Manuel
or the other boys in this project. For many people, photographs serve as
important documentation or as proof of life having happened. Families, for example, are devastated when all of their memories (read photographs) are destroyed in a house fire; without them, they fear they would be left with no memories at all. Travelers are destroyed to find out rolls of film were not loaded or exposed properly and the pictures they took documenting their trip failed to turn out. This is less problematic now as we are well entrenched in a digital age, but regardless, when photographs are lost, whether they be cellulose or digital, memories are lost along with them. In this chapter, I explore how the boys viewed the photographs they took and directly link this to the ways in which families view and understand their photographs: as record, documentation, and memory.

**Photographic Images as Visual Method**

Visual sociologists, educational researchers and anthropologists have long been scrutinizing the complexities of the visual image, particularly photographs, and their use in visual research. Many researchers have argued against the evidentiary claims of photographs (Banks, 1998; Burgin, 1986; Prosser, 2000; Rosler, 1993; Solomon-Godeau, 1991; Warren, 2005), asserting that photographs are subjective in nature, and therefore in direct contradiction to the required objectivity of research. In contesting the photograph’s ability to document events Solomon-Godeau (1991) asserts, “phenomenologically, the photograph registers as pure image, and it is by virtue of this effect that we commonly ascribe to photography the mythic value of transparency” (p. 180). She disputes this transparency, citing “everything from outright trumperies to the poreless faces of
Vogue models” as evidence (p. 169). Solomon-Godeau (1991) further reminds us that visual images, like photographs, are mediated through not only the lens of the camera, but also subject to the photographer’s aesthetic interests and cultural concerns. Warren (2002, 2005), in her discussion of the use of native image-making, also termed photovoice, argues that the process of making photographs actually tells very little about the subjects chosen for pictures. She stated, “so strong is the presumed relationship between the photograph and reality, that what results is an over-emphasis on the visible, observable features of photographs rather than their capacity to help visualize the invisible” (2002, p. 233). Rosler (1993) also attacks documentary photography for the ways in which it can further exploit already exploited groups. Others assert that images cannot and should not stand on their own, but must be accompanied by photographer explanations and conversations (Warren, 2005).

In using photography as a research method, it is important to remember that images and visions of street children in context are mediated through the lens and the photographic image. The photographic image often presents the information within its frame in several distinct ways: as truth, as a scene in which the actors within the image are (seemingly) unaware of the cameras presence, and as elevated in importance. Banks (1998), maintains, that the fallacy remains in not only assuming that the subjects depicted in the photographic frame are unaware of the cameras presence, but also that the photograph can overcome the social and historical viewpoints within which the image is situated. He continues, “cameras are socially located and see from a socially constructed viewpoint” and
“Its very presence confers importance and significance on the scene it reveals, to the viewer if not to the participants” (Banks, 1998, p. 18).

Despite this criticism, researchers have maintained that photographs can be a valuable part of sociological research (Margolis, 1990; Wagner; 2002). Wagner (2002) contended this “rejection of images as evidentiary and representational resources” when he stated:

> It is important to acknowledge that images are no more fixed and tidy than products of the other recording tools used by social researchers. To use them reliably, people need to learn how to work with them – how to use them appropriately and effectively in collecting and analyzing data and in teaching others what they have learned through this kind of work. This is not a simple task, but neither is it a simple task to write field notes, construct a set of interview questions, “clean up” census track data, or explicate key concepts in a social theory text. (p. 170)

Furthermore, Chaplin (1994) asserted “any account whether it involves photographs or not is constructed” (as cited in Packard, 2008, p. 64, emphasis in original). Therefore any form of qualitative research can be construed as subjective, not only photographic methods.

Regardless of what academics and theorists surmise concerning the truthfulness of photographs, in his research on family home media, Chalfen (2002) reminded us of the importance attributed to photographs by family photographers and their subjects. While he conceded that the photographer’s cultural context does influence image-making, he demonstrated that regardless of
this, for families, photographs provide “evidence” of who and how people are (or are assumed to be). What is important is that we understand the ways in which ordinary people view and think about photographs and photographic “representations.” Rather than wholly rejecting photography as a viable research tool, we must heed the advice of Solomon-Godeau (1991) when she reminded us that a variety of factors, including those related to both the act of viewing and the viewer, affect the ways in which photographs are perceived. Subsequently, she urged us to view the image as event where the circumstances surrounding which the image was made and viewed contribute to its intelligibility.

**The Family Photograph**

In her text, *Family Photographs*, Hirsch (1997) recounts the invention of Kodak, and the camera’s entrance into the “domain of the ordinary and the domestic.” She argues that with the advent of Kodak, photography became the family’s primary instrument of self-knowledge and representation— the means by which family memory would be continued and perpetuated, by which the family’s story would henceforth be told. Now, more that one hundred years later, photography’s social functions are integrally tied to the ideology of the modern family. (p. 6-7)

We look to our family photographs to tell us about who our relatives are or were, to offer truths about their lives and their histories. We believe photographs to be markers in our own personal histories, recording who and how we were at the various ages and junctures in our lives. We do not question their truthfulness or their validity. While the boys in this study may not comprise a traditional familial
unit, they, in many ways, function much like a family. Older adolescents frequently adopt the role of disciplinarian, and are looked to for the guidance and wisdom they can offer on street life. The younger, newer members are teased, reprimanded, counseled and consoled.

February 3, 2009. When we arrived at la escalera there were only three kids there, but as we sat, more people slowly trickled in, gathering for la leche. It seems that all the familiar faces were there: Frederico, Pamela, Teresita, Camila, Desaul, Daniel, El Vampiro, Rico (the chibolo that had hung out in the boys cuarto at one point), the one girl with the baby I have seen at the clinic several times, and many others. I looked around and watched the kids mingle in the various corners of the la escalera: huffing, chatting, arguing, and I realized it was like a family reunion . . . It was like one big party and the only thing that was missing was the food and cake. Rico did pass out some corn chips, but later announced that any one who had eaten one would die that night because he found them in the garbage. At one point a fight broke out between two older boys I have seen a few times before. They spilled the food they were eating and started pushing one another, like siblings in a family where tensions run high and grievances deep. The rest of the boys and girls and the NGO staff yelled at them to stop. Ronaldo was shouting to have respect, knowing that if it continued, we would have to leave.

January 27, 2009. Leonard came over and we talked a bit—not about anything in particular. The other kids started fighting, one trying to steal
the bag of clothes from the other. Many of them started to get involved, yet Leonard reprimanded them, telling them that only one of them should try to resolve it. The older kids on the streets do often behave as parents might, reprimanding, chastising, and consoling the younger kids.

Scenes like those described in the excerpts above were not uncommon on the street. Having abandoned their given, traditional family units, the boys and girls on the street often sought out an alternative. Those who had been on the street longer operated in much the same way that parents might, setting ground rules, enforcing those rules, and offering care to younger children learning to make their way on the street. While their roles might easily change from parent to sibling to child within the span of an hour or a day, family dynamics were frequently at play within the space of street life. Given this dynamic, it is not hard to understand why the boys in this study would be drawn to photographs and their desire for them to operate much in the same way that they do for families: as documentation and as record of past events. Though family photographs are no less subjective than any other mediated image, for families, as well as for the boys in this study, they became an instrument of self-knowledge, and a “means by which family memory would be continued and perpetuated,” regardless of the truths they do or do not tell (Hirsch, 1997, p. 6).

**The Humanizing Effects of Photographs**

Much of the ways in which I theorize and conceptualize the boys use of photography in this study can be understood similarly to the ways in which Chalfen and Hirsch discuss family photographs and the meanings attributed to
these photographs by families. Hirsch (1997) argues that family photographs provide continuity, or at least the illusion of continuity over time and space, and tell stories. Having access to a camera, to the means of memory production, provided the boys and opportunity to see themselves, to try on new identities, and to begin to develop a sense of continuity over their adolescence. While the photographs taken in this project served several purposes as they provided me as the researcher a window into the lives and experiences of the boys in this study in particular, and of children and adolescents on the streets of Lima in general, and the boys access to an act that they would otherwise have difficulty in accessing, the more meaningful purpose proved to be the creation of “recuerdos” (mementos) of their youth.

Like Karlsson (2001) and Young and Barret (2001a) experienced, supplying the boys with cameras did allow entry into moments in time and spaces that I would otherwise have been unable to access in observations. The conversations that accompanied the photographs offered me a better understanding of the nuanced and intertwined lives of the boys and other individuals in the urban landscape. Photographs for the boys in this study, however, served as a means of memory-making and meaning-making surrounding a period in their lives where they find themselves in frequently unstable and transitional spaces. For them, photographs served as a documentation of moments in space and time, but also served as a medium through which to express and develop their identities, create understandings of events and the meanings attributed to the people and places within the photographic image. Finally,
photographs and the act of image-making provided membership to social arenas the boys would otherwise be prevented from entering.

**Membership to New Social Arenas**

“I take photographs so that I can have mementos of this time in my life, of my youth, and remember what life was like now” (Manuel, field notes, December, 2008).

After conducting the first round of the photovoice project, I found there to be a real desire on the part of the boys to see themselves within the photographic image. I attributed this in part to the excitement and novelty of having a camera to use at their discretion. After several attempts at providing guidance, asking boys to take pictures documenting a 24-hour period or to take pictures of places important to them throughout the city, I realized the abundance of photographs taken of themselves and of their friends that I continued to receive back could not be attributed to novelty alone. When I discussed this phenomenon with them, they expressed that they wanted to take pictures of their lives and their friends so as to have “recuerdos” (mementos) of their youth. Each of the boys expressed that they had either never had access to a camera or to photographs in the past, or if they did, they had no photos of themselves or their families. It was important for the boys to have these recuerdos and to participate in their own history making.

This is not to say that the boys do not have access to visual images and to various forms of technology. Internet is readily available throughout Lima in public internet cafes and is relatively inexpensive. Many children and adolescents
on the street spend time on the internet chatting with friends on MSN messenger, playing video games, or surfing Youtube.com. Some computer monitors even come equipped with cameras and children and adolescents will snap pictures of themselves to upload to their profiles on messenger or Hi5.com (a social networking site similar to myspace.com or facebook.com). Although Chalfen (2002) noted “anthropologists and others are acknowledging the fact that while half the world’s population has yet to make a telephone call, peoples from virtually all parts of the world are either making or collecting personal photographic records of themselves” (p. 143), for street children in Lima access to home-media like photography remains extremely limited. Their access to internet and digital imagery, however, is abundant. Similarly, those adolescents making their ways on the streets of downtown Lima are marked by significant contact with foreign volunteers. These volunteers bring with them cameras, frequently using their cameras to document their adventures as volunteers, the relationships that they forge with the children, and their travels while in the host country. Those children on the streets of downtown Lima become quite excited about the prospect of seeing themselves on film, and with the advent of digital cameras, this desire is quite easily and readily appeased by the volunteers.

What is confirmed and exacerbated by this and the access that they do have to technology, particularly to social networking sites like Hi5.com, is the realization that for many other people around the world, photographs are an important part of their lives and growing up. This knowledge serves as a constant reminder of their marginalization. Furthermore, as Chalfen (2002) contended,
“missing personal pictures can contribute to a sense of guilt and alienation; everyone else has childhood photographs – what’s the matter with me? Questions of belonging and even authenticity may develop from a longing for evidence of the past – once again confirming the need for symbolic support systems of various dimensions.” (p. 146)

The physical possession of a camera also provided participants with the opportunity to feel important and several of the boys took pictures of people who doubted that their ability to obtain a camera. For example, as we looked at a picture Alexis took of a man sharpening a knife in front of a restaurant (some people garner their living by offering traveling services such as knife-sharpening to local restaurants and private residences), he explained, “I told him to smile for the picture but he laughed and did not believe I could take a picture or that I had a camera, so I pulled it out of my pocket and snapped a picture of him to prove it!” (Alexis, age 15, fieldnotes, September 15, 2008).

Cameras, Banks (1998) claimed, are “socially located and see from a socially constructed viewpoint” (p. 18), so rather than “documenting” they serve to “create” memories and our understandings of events. Freire (1970) indicated that when persons are denied their right to take part in the creation of history, “to participate in history as Subjects” they become both alienated and dominated, relegating the oppressed to the role of object (p. 111). As the boys snap pictures of themselves and their friends, they play an active role in the creation of their own histories. Furthermore, in contexts like Lima, where home photography is reserved for the middle and upper classes, those who can afford to purchase
cameras and develop/print pictures, the youth in this study gain access to an act that is reserved for the elite, gaining entry into an arena they are typically prohibited from entering, bringing them in, however slight, from the margins.

*Yo Existo (I exist)*

Chalfen (2002) argued that there is a “human desire and need for pictorial evidence” and maintains that people often take and use pictures in order to “reaffirm a sense of ‘being there’” and as proof that events took place (p. 147). If people use pictures to provide evidence of having *been* there, can pictures be used in the same way to provide evidence of *being*? While the notion of pictures as documentation, truth or objective reflections of reality has been accurately problematized (Banks, 1998; Solomon-Godeau, 1991; Warren, 2002, 2005), it does not change the fact that lay people continue to view them in this way (Chalfen, 2002). Therefore, for the participants in this study, in part, being *in the picture* can prove to themselves and to the world that they exist, at least for “the time it took to make the exposure” (Becker, 1974, p.5). As they express excitement at the opportunity to “record”, “document” and create *recuerdos* of what life was like at this point in their lives, the boys understand the images they shoot as reflections of reality. Furthermore, “photographing is an act which renders some things visible, and therefore important, and other things invisible and less important” (Packard, 2008). By *being* the in picture, the boys feel important, worthy and deserving of being documented. They can author their own histories, and be present within them.
Expressing and Developing the “Self”

Part of the desire to “see themselves in pictures” can be attributed to the need to realize and recognize themselves as persons with individual identities. Labeled as “niños de la calle” (children of the street), “niños en situación de calle” (children living on the street), “niños callejeros” (street children), and more negatively “pirañas” (piranhas) or “pirañitas” (little piranhas), children and adolescents living on the street are frequently categorized by these limiting descriptors by the outside world and become locked within an outsider-imposed identity. With photographs the boys begin to create and develop their own identities and begin to construct how they view themselves and others within the frame. Manuel, for example, one of the two boys who completed the annotated album, was able to begin to assert his individual identity and educate himself and others about who he is. More so than any other participant, Manuel would turn in cameras where nearly entire rolls of film revealed photographs in which he turned the camera on himself and snapped pictures or posed in front of the camera while a friend took pictures of him.

Berger (1972) argues, “the photographer’s way of seeing is reflected in his choice of subject”; the people, spaces and places shot by the boys in this study can tell us a lot about how they view the world and themselves within it. Warren (2002) asserts

the photograph probably reveals more about the life-world of the photographer than those of the subjects he or she photographs. Of course this is an advantage when asking respondents to make their own
photographs since the photographs may quite literally act as a lens through which to explore these life-worlds. (p. 237)

Photography, particularly when paired with conversations surrounding images has the power to illustrate the photographer’s experiences, so when a photographer takes a picture of an object, the photograph does not necessarily say anything about the reality or truthfulness of that object, but speaks to the “intangible and ineffable experiences of the photographer” (Warren, 200, p. 233). In this sense, when the boys take pictures of themselves, the photograph speaks less about the way they appear in the photograph and their physical features, than it speaks to their motivation for taking pictures of themselves.

Elkind (1967) in his study of developmental phases asserts that within adolescence the child is frequently self-admiring. The boys in this study, however, are not afforded the same leeway in playing with dress and style and exploring their own identities as the adolescents studied by Elkind were able. Therefore, provided the opportunity to take pictures their immediate reaction is one of egocentrism and self-absorption, and this self-absorption, very much present in the boys’ photographs, can perhaps better be explained as a consequence or bi-product of their marginalization. Of the 46 pictures placed in the book created by Manuel, 32 of the pictures were of him, 24 of him alone and the remaining of him with various friends. Of the 48 pictures chosen by Jordan for his album, 27 were of him, 17 of those of him alone and the remaining of him with friends. The presence of so many photographs of themselves indicates several things: there was a fascination with seeing themselves in photographs, a
fascination with the self, and a need to realize and express themselves as persons who are individuals with individual needs, desires, likes and dislikes.

Beneath the photos he chose for his album, Manuel wrote “Hola mi nombre es Manuel” (hello, my name is Manuel) in a total of 8 out of 17 captions in a 24 page book. He said, “I like who I am” three times and talked about what he likes including his love of music and fútbol on four occasions. In the album, it was Manuel who was in charge of presenting himself to the world and repeatedly introducing himself may indicate several different things. It may be that he was at a loss for things to say, but more likely, concerned mostly with day-to-day survival, Manuel has not had the opportunity for much introspection and therefore has not spent a lot of time thinking about “who” he is and what he likes. Manuel is, however, asserting and owning his identity by saying this is who I am and I like who I am.

Elkind (1967) suggested that adolescents while self-absorbed are also very critical of the self due to the physical changes they are experiencing and he maintained that they assume others are this critical of them as well. Therefore, when looking at Manuel’s statement that he “likes who I am” we can understand this assertion to be in part an anticipation of or reaction to criticism, real or imaginary. Elkind (1967) asserts

One consequence of adolescent egocentrism is that, in actual or impending social situations, the young person anticipates the reactions of other people to himself. These anticipations, however, are based on the premise that others are as admiring or as critical of him as he is of himself. In a sense,
then, the adolescent is continually constructing, or reacting to, an imaginary audience. It is an audience because the adolescent believes that he will be the focus of attention; and it is imaginary because, in actual social situations, this is not usually the case (unless he contrives to make it so). (p. 1030)

Elkind’s theory of the Imaginary Audience (IA) asserts that adolescents are egocentric because they believe themselves to be at the center, though this belief has no real basis. But what happens when adolescents do in fact experience high levels of criticism and are aware of their own marginalization? Bell and Bromnick (2003) argue that children “worry what other people think” and “assume that other people are as obsessed with them as they are with themselves” because there are genuine consequences at stake (p. 205-206). They thus problematize Elkind’s assertion of the Imaginary Audience as a “mental construction and not a social reality” (p. 207). It is important to understand that children and adolescents on the streets of Lima receive high levels of criticism on a daily basis. This criticism may come from outreach organizations, from police officers or city security, or from other people living within the confines of the city. They are critiqued for their lifestyle and reminded daily that there are better and healthier options (at least from an adult perspective). Outsiders cannot understand why anyone would “want” to be in the street and view their lives as wholly negative, hopeless and not respectable. Children are reminded of this perception by parents, psychologists employed at casa-hogares, and clergy who
may run homes for street youth and this perception was frequently conveyed to me.

Children and adolescents on the streets are also chastised for their use of drugs, for their appearance, and are commonly viewed as undesirable creatures that leech off of society and soil the urban landscape known as *pirañás*. This term is used as a descriptor of the street child population, and despite intentions, carries with it negative and derogatory connotations. In describing for people the boys with whom I was working, many would clarify by asking if I was referring to *los pirañas*. Outreach workers would say “no seas piraña (don’t be a piraña)” when chastising children for negative and undesirable behaviors, or within the context of the *casa-hogar* reminding children that they are no longer *pirañas* while interned within it. This was done both in congratulating them for leaving their street lifestyle behind but also as a way of reminding them what behaviors are appropriate for someone who is not on the street.

In participant observations as I attempted to board buses with participants, musical instruments in hand, they were frequently refused entry. Some context to Lima is important to understand this experience. Within the city, public transportation on *combis* (mini vans or small buses) or buses is an important part of its structure, and is one of the primary ways of moving from one place to the next. The entrepreneurial spirit that drives some of Lima’s inhabitants can be viewed most easily as one travels aboard its buses. Various individuals board the buses in a constant stream throughout the day and attempt to make a living in a range of ways: selling candies, cookies, or other snacks, selling
pens, toothbrushes, needles and thread, wallets, key chains, playing music, selling ice-cream in the summer, recounting stories of sick family members as they show doctors reports and x-rays as proof of their condition, and a few even do magic tricks. The majority of the boys with whom I worked played music using traditional Peruvian instruments including the charango (a small stringed guitar-like instrument), zampoña (a reed flute-like instrument), wiro (a percussion instrument in the form of a ridged tube played with a hair pick), and cajón (a wooden drum shaped like a box). While many of the boys with whom I had contact did admit to participating in illegal behavior like stealing and drug use, each of the boys in this study worked to produce the majority of his daily earnings. Among the plentitude of adults who work in this manner to bring food home to their families, in my observations it seemed that few were ever turned away by those operating the buses and combis. The refusal to let the boys board the bus happens, in part, because of the pre-conceived ideas of who and how they are.

Therefore, many of the ways in which the boys in this study understand themselves are based upon how they are viewed by the outside world. In my time spent in the field, it became very evident that they understood the ways in which society viewed them and critiqued their lifestyle. On several occasions they expressed discomfort because of the way they looked and the dirtiness and disrepair of their clothing. This discomfort and awareness became particularly evident when the boys expressed interest in looking at schools where they might study but preferred to wait until they had an opportunity to wash themselves and
their clothing, or when we took Manuel for an ice-cream cone after an informal interview discussing the photographs he took, and he preferred not to enter out of embarrassment for the way he looked. When I asked why the boys chose to work only in certain areas of Lima Centro and not wealthier tourist areas where moneymaking opportunities would be greater, they responded that their appearance would cause problems for them in, say, the tourist area of Miraflores.

Faced with so much external criticism, it becomes imperative that they attempt to develop positive self-concepts, and Manuel’ assertion “I like who I am” can be seen as almost a defensive response to the outside assumption of the impossibility that he might like anything about himself or his lifestyle. This need and desire for positive self-concept can be seen also in the rejection of adult prescriptions of what they need and should do. Children may embrace street life so as to reject adultist conceptions of what is best for them. Beazley (2003) indicates that “socialization to a subculture . . . helps a young person redefine negative self-concepts by offering a collective identity and a reference group from which to develop a new individual identity” (para. 11). In order to combat these negative perceptions, children and adolescents on the street embrace street life, arguing that they are better off within it.

**Creating Understandings of Events, People and Places**

Photographs can serve to create understandings of events and the meanings attributed to the people and places within the photographic image. When the boys in this study take photographs of themselves and their social networks, they are creating and performing identities for the camera’s lens, often
portraying personas they wish they could be. Sometimes these personas are purposeful and contrived, and sometimes they are not. In her exploration of family photographs, Hirsch (1997) argued, “photographs can more easily show us what we wish our family to be, and therefore what, most frequently, it is not” (p. 8). The boys in this study turned in photographs that depicted themselves and their friends in various postures and poses. Sometimes the boys posed with sunglasses and baseball caps, trying to mimic the gestures of pop icons like Daddy Yankee.

Many of the photographs demonstrate the boys grouped together, posing for the cameras’s lens. Huddled together, looking tough, laughing, but rarely smiling, the pictures reflect a familial unit: A group of friends enjoying their youth and experiencing happy times together. And while the boys in this study did have fun and friendships were forged, these friendships were typically fleeting and shallow. The cuarto in which the participants stayed served as a landing place for many children and adolescents on the street, who would come and stay enticed by the comfort and freedom that four walls offered. My observations, however, reveal the transient nature of this room and of their lives as boys would come and then go, pulled away by family, friends, or themselves for a desire to get off the street and off drugs. Sometimes they were pushed away by inhabitants of either the cuarto or the building. Alexis, for example, fled from the room for a period of a month or more because he punched Ernesto, the room’s principal renter. Jorge, on the other hand, fled in fear of being assaulted because he offered terokal to the younger sister of a prominent figure within the building. The
pictures, however, do not depict the precariousness of their relationships and the fragile space they occupied, but create memories that often contradict the reality of the situation. Viewed on their own, the photographs taken by the boys in this study can easily present a nostalgic and two-dimensional view of street life, one that is in direct contrast to the lived experiences of the participants.

The boys in this study also demonstrate the ways in which photographs serve to construct meanings and understanding of events and the people and places within them. In an interview surrounding the photographs he took, one participant remarked that “cans of terokal and bags in pictures make us look bad—they give a bad impression” (Alexis, age 15, fieldnotes). Drugs, specifically terokal play a significant role in the lives of children and adolescents living and working on the streets of Lima. The boys in this study repeatedly demonstrated an awareness as to how the outside world viewed their use of drugs, and for many of them the denial of drug abuse was an important way of maintaining rapport with agencies and volunteers and maintaining a more deserving image: that of a child deserving of services, deserving of admittance into a casa-hogar or deserving of limosna (alms). Therefore obtaining real honesty about the presence of drugs in their lives at times proved difficult. Pictures may reveal one thing, but participants would indicate another. Throughout participant observations and discussions surrounding the photographs taken, I found that while it was often easier for them to critique the behaviors of their peers, including drug use, they were also better able to critique themselves through the mediated image.
Of the 495 photographs with discernable images taken by the boys in this study, 131 of the photographs showed images of them either obviously drugged or show the presence of drugs in the picture. While in many of Alexis’s photographs there is evidence of both drug use and paraphernalia, photographs also at times demonstrate participants purposefully holding cans and bags just outside of the cameras sight, so as to portray a scene that is drug-free and healthy. This purposeful omission of drugs from the camera’s field of vision demonstrates the awareness of the ways in which their presence “give a bad impression.”

The Evidentiary Claims of Photographs

In his research of family home media and of family photographs in particular, Chalfen (2002) reported, “instances of pointed objects having been used to scratch out people’s eyes and faces or scissors having been used to cut people out photographs all together, seemingly in an attempt to eliminate people’s identity, existence or association” (p. 146). The participants in this study similarly would destroy, return, or reject photographs that were not pleasing to them. For example, Andre upon viewing pictures of him using terokal became agitated and upset and returned those particular pictures to me. He indicated, “I don’t want them, you can have them” and when I asked why, he replied that they “brought back bad memories” (field notes, July 20, 2008). By relinquishing the photographs over to me, they no longer existed and Andre did not have to be “reminded” of moments in time that were unpleasing to him, almost as if these events never actually occurred. Similarly, Alexis, after entering a casa-hogar, returned several photographs to me that depicted him and his friends on the street,
in the cuarto inhaling glue, or just hanging out. When I asked Alexis why he did not want the photographs, he responded, “me empilan” (they provoke me) (Field notes, December 19, 2008). Not seeing the images would enable Alexis to “forget” his time on the street, and therefore remain in the casa-hogar. For Alexis, as well as for Andre, they viewed the photograph as “evidence” and if it was out of sight, if the photographs didn’t exist, the events never happened.

Related to the evidentiary claims of photographs, the boys in this study also tried to prove to me the existence of certain behaviors or events that may or may not have happened. One participant purposefully put a rolled up piece of paper that looked liked a marijuana cigarette in the mouth of another participant while he was sleeping. In an interview with both the photographer and the other boys living in the cuarto at the time, it became evident that the photographer took this picture for my benefit. In another instance, Manuel and his friend had accused Jesus of being homosexual and participating in homosexual behavior with Ernesto. This situation is particularly interesting as the issue of homosexuality is precarious within the context of Lima. Homosexuality also plays a role in street life, though adolescents on the street make a distinction between acts of giving versus acts of receiving. For them, it is participating in receiving acts that makes someone homosexual.

As a way of responding to the allegations regarding his sexuality, Jesus advised me that he had taken pictures of Manuel and his friend who was staying in the cuarto at the time, engaged in homosexual behavior. These pictures would serve as proof that Manuel and his friend were in fact gay. Unfortunately his
camera was destroyed and we will never know what *truths* the pictures told. In an effort to combat Jesus’ allegations and the claims produced by his photographs, Manuel captured more pictures showing his friend purposefully leaning over Jesus’ face while he lay on a couch and seemingly kissing him. While it became clear through conversations surrounding the images that they were in fact staged, for Manuel and his friend these images could discredit Jesus’ claims and also prove that the true homosexual was Jesus. They made no mention as to what these pictures proved about Manuel’s friend, however.

There is a “presumed sense of naïveté and untampered truth accorded home media” as we view it “in some very real sense, the heart of good evidence” (Chalfen, p. 147). Although the pictures taken by the boys in this study remain within the confines of a research method, I argue that their photographs can be viewed in a similar light as the home media to which Chalfen refers. For these boys, their photographs are “the heart of good evidence” (p. 147). Within them “we can also find occasional breaks in this evidential veneer” when we hear examples of “image management” (p. 144). Image management occurred occasionally among participants. Manuel, for example, would often return photographs of himself where he did not like the way he looked, usually citing his hair looking odd or funny.

Photographs can also show us things that we do not want to see, things we are unwilling or unable to recognize, remember or acknowledge. Hirsch (1997), in discussing the creation of her own family albums and the censorship that occurred in their making, as she selected which pictures were album worthy,
recounts her feelings about a picture of herself and her son that did not make it into the album. “This picture,” she relates, “forces me to confront my own image not as I saw it, or wanted to see it, but as others did” (p.186). When Manuel or Andre chose to return pictures to me, because they did not like the way they looked, or because they “brought back bad memories,” it is because there is something about what the picture communicates that they do not like. Confronting these pictures forces the boys to modify the ways in which they view and understand themselves. These personal narratives might be as simple as believing oneself to look a certain way, and not wanting to confront pictures that remind us of our flaws, or as complicated as not wanting to recognize an addiction, a lie about one’s age, or a relationship that is no longer.

Conversely, as Chalfen (2002) argued that photographs provide “evidence” of who and how people are, or are assumed to be, he also emphasizes the ways in which photographs can reinforce assumptions. As the photographs taken by participants depict children inhaling glue, living in squalor, or sleeping on the street, they can reinforce societal perceptions of who and how street children are, perceptions that tend to be limiting and restrictive. As Steichen maintains, “photography can be a moving force in the world . . . it can lift individuals as subjects from the humdrum and turn them into symbols of universal humanity” (as cited in Hirsch, 1997, p. 49). This universality can, however, be dangerous as we begin to assume that the people in the picture look just like these people in similar positions thousands of miles away (Hirsch, 1997). Similarly we might begin to assume that the pictures taken by the boys in this study are
representative of all boys living on the streets of Lima. It is important to remember, that the photographs taken in this study are unique to boys who took them. They show one fraction of one moment in time, and cannot tell a complete story. And while we must be careful about how we perceive the truthfulness or representativeness of photographs (Solomon Godeau, 1991), we cannot disregard the documentary relevance photographs have for families and similarly for the participants in this project.

**Being the Center**

Another positive aspect of using photographic projects like photovoice with children and adolescents who live on the street has nothing to do with the photographic image. Their involvement in this project allowed them not only to participate in an act that is typically reserved for the middle to upper middle classes, but allowed them to feel unique, special, and important. For the majority of my time in Lima, the boys involved in the project rented a one-room space each day from an adult male who was a permanent fixture in street life. Their relationship to the street was very transient and each would experience periods where their presence on the street, aside from the time they spent working, was limited. Coming to the street at night to take advantage of outreach organizations that provided food late on weekday nights was not always a priority. I originally met these boys in the *casa-taller* (workshop), which was open to children and adolescents from the city center that lived and worked on the street. Though the boys did not usually (I stress the word usually) physically sleep on the street, they are still considered a part of the population because they garner their income from
the street (playing music), run in the same circles (eating at the same *comedores* (public soup kitchens) as boys who are sleeping in the street) take advantage of many of the same resources (free clinics, *casa-hogares*), and have limited contact with their families, but also experience periods where they come to the streets to socialize, sleep, or receive free meals and use *terokal*.

While conducting fieldwork and the project with the boys, the *casa-taller* closed due to internal bureaucratic issues and therefore one of the major lines of outreach the NGO had was shut down. Street outreach remained one of their only means of accessing the population (though this too was closed for a time). The organization, one of two that contacted this particular group of boys, while at first tried to maintain some contact with the boys during their internal difficulties, significantly limited their contact and eventually ended all visits to the boys’ room. Several of the boy in the project expressed frustration in “being forgotten” by the organization. Having frequent visits each week from me was something they not only looked forward to but also appreciated. In our communication after I had left Lima, Alexis expressed that he was grateful to me “for all the time [I] spent with [them]” (personal communication via msn messenger, April, 2009). Being part of a worthwhile activity gave the boys something to look forward to (Young & Barret, 2001a), but also having a consistent figure visit, spend time, and listen to their stories and their lives was important not only for the project and developing rapport, but in also humanizing participants and seeing and allowing them to be seen in more than the limited and restrictive ways they are viewed by society. An important aspect of this was that the main purpose of my visits was
not to chastise them for their lifestyle, nor convince them to enter a *casa-hogar* or return home to their families. In other words, do what *I* believed best.  

**Understanding Photographs: The Researcher Perspective**

As Hirsch discusses the way families view photographs, she argues that family photographs can allow the outsider in, but only as a guest. For me, regardless of my close relationship with the authors of these photographs, and regardless of their explanations of the events taking place, I will always be the outsider looking in. I will also always, despite the explanations that come along with them, see the pictures differently than the boys see them. While for them, the photographs depicted a group of friends together having a good time, I still see a group of boys lost, living in poverty, marked by drug abuse, and sitting on the fringes. They saw images of them together with Ernesto having fun and playing; I cannot not see past the abuser.

While I am fully aware of the subjective nature of photographs and the problems associated with photographs as documentation, it is still difficult for me to escape the nostalgic quality that these images hold. The photographs that the boys took bring me back to a time in my life that I remember quite fondly, often forgetting the very difficult nature of the work. I am left to wrestle with the narratives the boys attributed to each photograph, and my own narrative surrounding this project and the year I spent in Lima. For the boys, the photographs are records of their history, their adolescence. For me, the

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4 It is important to disclose that this does not mean I did not have conversations with participants about their lives and healthy options. When Manuel contracted tuberculosis for example, and then later prematurely abandoned his treatment I did attempt to advise him on the dangers of leaving TB untreated and urged him to continue his treatment.
photographs remain persistently in the present. While the boys’ will continue to change and grow, they are thousands of miles away. For me, in many ways, the way they are in the photographs is how they will remain.

**Afterthoughts**

For the boys in this study, the most valuable outcome offered by their participation was the ability to have “recuerdos” of their adolescence and childhood. These recuerdos provided not only snapshots, frozen moments in time, of the reality of their lives, but allowed them an active role in the creation of their personal histories. In recording their youth they are able to author their own histories, identities and create memories for themselves.

Steichen (1969) argued, “the mission of photography is to explain man to man and each to himself,” (as cited in Weinstein, 1977). Seeing and reflecting on themselves within the photographic image can provide participants with the opportunity to realize themselves as persons with individual identities and can serve as a means of self-representation and a catalyst for identity development, in which children can explore who they are, relate their own histories, express their values, all in attempts to distance themselves from this period of development where they have been marginalized from school, home, and family. Moreover, through photography they become active participants in the creation of history, constructing meanings and making memories shifting their roles from object to subject.

Nearing the end of my time in Lima, I wanted to know what the boys thought about the photovoice project:
March 24, 2009. Manuel told me to bring a notebook the next time I saw him and he would write down what he thought. So I did, though he did not want to write his thoughts and felt it better that he dictate and I write it, so that is what we did. He said (verbatim): “Hola mi nombre es Manuel. El proyecto de fotovoz es muy fashion (this is Manuel being funny). Lo que me ha gustado más es tomarme las fotos de yo mismo para darle a mis amigos que me estiman. Para tenerme las fotos de yo mismo, para tenerme de recuerdos.” (Hello, my name is Manuel. The photovoice project is very fashionable. What I liked most is taking pictures of myself to give to my friends who respect me. To have photos of myself, to have memories.)

When I asked him if he were to do the project again what he would do, he said he would take pictures of Lima, Ica and other lugares distintos. He also said, “me gustó el proyecto.”
Chapter 4
SHAPE-CHANGERS: ENACTING, DEVELOPING AND DISCOVERING IDENTITIES IN THE CHANGING LANDSCAPES OF STREET CHILDREN IN LIMA, PERU

Just as issues of identity surfaced while I carried out the photovoice method, they also became particularly evident during participant observations, and proved to be salient themes among those adolescents I observed on the streets of downtown Lima. As I moved away from a theoretical framework that relied heavily on the theories of space and place, I moved towards theories of identity performance. In this chapter I present a theoretical perspective that outlines how identity development among children and adolescents living on the street is directly connected to their relationships with the urban landscape and the outreach organizations that serve them. This framework provides a means for understanding the life trajectories of children on the street, and illuminates how the organizations and institutions that surround them shape who they are, how they are perceived by society, and how they view and understand themselves in context.

Understanding Identity

In exploring the identities of the adolescents involved in this study I present different ways of understanding their performed identities. These are not fixed or singular ways of knowing and understanding identity but are presented as one version of a story and one of several perspectives. In this regard I build on the theoretical work of Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain (1998), Butler
(1999), and Gee (2000), in order to understand the life trajectories of children on the street and how the organizations and institutions that surround them shape who they are and how they are perceived by greater society. Throughout this chapter and this dissertation I use the term identity to mean the way a person views and understands him or herself as well as how they are viewed by others (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, Cain, 1998). Identities are not something we are born into, but are created and shaped over time (Butler, 1999; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). As Butler (1999) maintains, identity is “tenuously constituted in time . . . through a stylized repetition of acts” (p. 154), it is instituted through behaviors and gestures that are performed repeatedly.

Identities are fluid and fungible and are relative to particular social worlds and affect how a person acts within that world (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998). A “figured world”, or social world, “is a socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation” wherein certain actors are recognized and meanings are attached to particular acts (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998, p. 52). Within the cultural world of the *casa-hogar*, for example, which is built in response to the cultural world of the street, meanings are attributed to certain actions. These meanings may differ from those attributed to the same actions within the cultural world of the street and are therefore context dependent. Figured worlds “provide contexts of meaning and action in which social positions and social relationships are named and constructed. They also provide the loci in which people fashion senses of self— that is develop identities” (p. 60). As young boys and girls enter into the figured world of the street, for example, which
is in part created by and dependent on the figured worlds of the *casa-hogar*, they develop identities in situ.

Gee (2000) argued that all people act out multiple identities connected to their performance in society. He proposed four different ways to conceptualize identity, indicating that identities come from four different over-arching categories that fold together and overlap. These categories, briefly explained, consist of the N-identity, I-identity, D-identify, and A-identity. The N-identity is that which we understand as being a *natural condition*, or naturally occurring and Gee offers us the example of a person’s identity as an identical twin. Conversely, an I-identity is *assigned* to an individual by an institution. As societies, outreach organizations and other institutions (including research) label children living on the street as *street children*, for example, they create, contribute to and help to maintain a street child identity. These children, marked by an inability to “fit in” or to survive within a home in ways that other children can, are identified as *street children* and the work that *casa-hogares* and outreach organizations do serve to reinforce this identity. Interestingly, Gee also maintains that I-identities can be understood as both an imposition and a calling.

The D-identity or discursive identity refers to an identity that is created and reinforced by how we talk about, treat and interact with persons understood to possess a particular identity. For example, it is because we call children on the street *street children* that they we understand them as such. The discourses surrounding children living on the street and the ways in which outreach organizations view and triage them while they attempt to extract them from the
urban landscape further construct and reinforce this identity. Conversely, we might simply view these children as children with shared or similar experiences, including anxieties, trouble fitting in, home problems, mental illness or other issues that prevent them from fully connecting to home-life and mainstream society and who have chosen the street as a viable alternative. The street, alternatively, while a space within which they exist, would not define them, though would inevitably have an impact on how they behave, how they are viewed, and how they choose or are thought to be. Similar to I-identities, D-Identities can be viewed as either being ascribed or achieved, depending on how we look at them. D-Identities and I-Identities work together, however, and Gee (2000) explains that, for example, professors are professors because the institution makes them so, but they require that people talk about them and treat them as professors (D-Identity) in order to sustain them as professors (I-Identity). Not all D-Identities, however, are institutionally sanctioned.

One last way that Gee (2000) categorizes identity is with what he calls the A-Identity or Affinity perspective. Within the affinity perspective there exists a set of distinctive practices that make up this identity and he argues, what people in the group share, and must share to constitute an affinity group, is allegiance to, access to, and participation in specific practices that provide each of the group's members the requisite experiences. The process through which this power works, then, is participation or sharing.” (p. 105) Affinity groups are not necessarily chosen, though they might appear to be. They can in fact be socially engineered, much like companies and businesses attempt to
create affinity groups among their clients, ensuring that they share similar experiences with the company. The affinity group of street children is, in some respects, engineered by outreach groups, researchers, and casa-hogares, though appears to be chosen entirely by the children that make up this group.

The Creation of Figured Worlds

It’s Tuesday, which is pan con tamal, so we will most likely be heading to el muro en Barrio Chino. Needless to say, the area is crowded with Chifa restaurants, but is also home to many shops selling a variety of bargain goods from kitchenware to children’s games and toys to dog supplies. Some shops change their theme with the season and its corresponding holiday. During the months of November and December, for example, shops selling Christmas goods from candies to decorations and presents take over, staying open late as people crowd Lima Centro seeking presents for their families and friends. Before hitting the streets, volunteers and outreach workers meet at the office, which is actually an apartment. There we don our chalecos, head down to the street below, and hail a taxi where as many as six people pile into one car before we make our way to downtown Lima. After each car arrives at the Plaza we walk our typical route, starting in Barrio Chino on Tuesdays while we head straight to Santa Teresita on Fridays. We make our way through the streets of Lima Centro, entering areas of heavy foot traffic even at the 9 or 10 o’clock hour in Barrio Chino. When we arrive, we generally find a group of boys and a couple of the regular girls congregating, socializing, and typically huffing terokal.
While it is evident that children who make their ways on the streets of Lima develop particular and somewhat predictable navigational patterns, these patterns are subject to change throughout any given period of time, and may vary due to changes in the seasons, changes in resources or the changes in the population and their personal desires and preferences. After the NGO with which I conducted outreach closed for a time, for example, we discovered that the choice location for Friday nights among street children in Lima Centro had changed and after some investigation realized that we were most likely to find our population waiting at la escalera. Part of this change can be attributed to the fact that street life in Lima is connected to and dependent on various church-run and lay organizations that make it their mission to feed the hungry; many of whom are boys and girls who make their ways on the street. The boys and girls living on the street at any given time immediately learn the routes and drop-off points of these institutions and often organize their lives around them. Depending on which organization is feeding them that night, they change their locale and even the time spent on the street. In fact, children on the streets of Lima are certainly not as visible in the streets during other times of the day as they are when they are waiting for organizations with food to arrive. They may wait in the area where they are expecting their suitors or may wander through various parts of the city haciendo la hora until it is time for the drop-off. After the institutions arrive and deliver the food, the boys and girls will typically retreat to their respective sleeping places, whether it be a night shelter, their cuarto or a casona, where they can socialize and partake in recreational activities in private.
I use the term drop-off to emphasize the nature of the interaction between those living on the street and the Good Samaritan organizations that come to feed them. These organizations that come to the streets to feed the poor and indigent may do so with very little interaction with those they are there to serve. They bring them food, pray with them, and play music but rarely converse at length with them or engage them in any other way. What the organizations do, albeit inadvertently, is create a social arena and space for the formulation of strong relationships between and among a street child population and between street children and a street adult population. It is because of this creation of a figured world that relationships like that between Ernesto and Joaquin are formed, or like those between Ernesto and the many boys that seek refuge in the solace of his cuarto. Without these organizations beckoning children and adolescents and adults into the same spaces of the streets, encounters between child and adult would be less likely to occur, and if they did it would be in a very different context.

The use of drugs like *pasta* and *terokal* occur most frequently under the cover of night or within the more secure confines of a *casona* or *cuarto*. As the organizations come at predictable times and days, people, both housed and unhoused dependent on their kindness, come to the streets and intermingle creating a new social world deeply connected to the existence of this kind of outreach. Within this space users intermingle with non-users exposing them to various kinds of drugs, pedophiles are able to maintain close and unmonitored contact with children and teens, and mothers and fathers searching out food for
their families expose their young infants and toddlers to drugs at a very early age, whether using themselves or in the company of those who are using. The organizations themselves provide a space and a context for these relationships to develop, and are, in the end, responsible for much of what street life in Lima looks like.

The Good Samaritan organizations, and the outreach organizations like the one with which I worked, serve as key players in fostering A-identities and therefore the development of affinity groups between and amongst those making their way on the street. Children who are on the street may then, by default, join an affinity group of street children. This affinity group, created by the urban landscape and the actors within it, consists of children who may otherwise never connect. For example, outreach organizations bringing leche and pan con tamal to the streets, and groups of children, living on and off the streets, coming from various places in the city, unite as they seek out these resources. These children then connect and begin to form groups based on their similar experiences. This same pattern can be seen within the case of Preventivo (a juvenile detention center) and the casa-hogar as children are collected from various places in the city and brought together within this new context. They now share experiences within the particular space of the Preventivo or casa-hogar and create affinity groups based on these new shared experiences. As children and adolescents leave, escape, or are withdrawn from the casa-hogar, they can now seek out the groups they have come know while inside, often in spaces of the city they may not have necessarily navigated before (a prime example of this is the relationship
forged between Jordan and Ernesto, who met in the casa-hogar. I discuss their relationship in greater detail in “The case of Jordan” later on in this chapter).

Street Identity

“Tu sabes que somos de calle. Hay cría y corazón.” (Raymond Ayala, performed by Daddy Yankee, 2007)

When we discovered that Manuel had contracted TB for his second time, I was desperately concerned for his well-being. Angeles had confided in me that his test had in fact come back positive and that his only options, from her perspective, were to return home or to enter a casa-hogar. I knew Manuel would not return home, at least not now, so it was time to try to talk to him about an hogar. We went to pick him up from his cuarto and take him to the clinic to get his test results. On our way to the clinic, sitting in the back of the bus, Manuel asked me if I knew the results, and while I had reservations about telling him, I confessed that I did and that they were not good. I think Manuel must have known the answer seeing that this was not the first time he had tuberculosis. He knew the symptoms: the backache, the cough, the night sweats, and the fever. Despite his suspicions, when I broke the news to him, Manuel looked defeated. I told him that Angeles suggested he had very few options at this point in time: either return to his home with his mother, or enter a casa-hogar. He immediately rejected the idea of going home, no way, not now, not today. To my surprise he agreed that he would enter a casa-hogar without any hesitation and when I asked which one he immediately responded La Tierra. I had been conducting observations in La Tierra for several months now, three times a week and agreed
that it would be a good place for him, at least this way I could stay in contact and
make note of his progress. The only problem was Manuel’s age. He was sixteen
and La Tierra had a policy of not accepting any boy over the age of 15. In fact,
Manuel had recently tried to enter La Tierra but was rejected because of his age.
I knew the director and hoped I could persuade him to make an exception as
Manuel’s case was urgent. TB treatment is a daily thing and in Lima patients
must to report to a posta each day where they take the handful of pills in the
presence of a health care worker. The treatment is any where from six months to
a year depending on severity of the disease and the history of occurrences.

When we arrived at the clinic I spoke at length with Angeles and she spoke
to Manuel who agreed he would enter La Tierra. We spent the next two hours
trying to contact the director of the casa, convince him to let Manuel enter and
then waiting for a response. We were racing against time as we knew that the
longer it took the more time Manuel would have to reconsider his decision. I had
become particularly attached to Manuel and was anxious for him to leave the life
of the street and his cuarto behind. I also knew that without proper treatment
Manuel’s illness would grow worse and he would grow thinner and weaker than
he already was. Left untreated, he would most likely die from the disease.

When we finally got word that La Tierra had agreed to let Manuel enter,
we (Manuel, Angeles, Jason and I) decided that Jason and I would take him there.
Manuel expressed concerns about entering the casa-hogar today, at this very
moment. He argued that he did not have his charango with him and needed to
return to the cuarto to retrieve it along with some other things. We agreed we
would stop by the cuarto and then take him to La Tierra. I was nervous and excited as was Jason and we both sensed Manuel’s apprehension and anxiety. He did not expect to have to make a decision so quickly and to have to leave his friends and the cuarto behind today. This was not Manuel’s first time being interned in a casa-hogar, however. He recently spent two weeks in one but left arguing that he just couldn’t handle the change; he was too accustomed to street life. He had been in and out of several casa-hogares in Lima over the last few years. As we rode the bus back to Lima Centro towards his cuarto, Manuel was quiet. I tried to get him excited about the change, explaining that we would see each other regularly and that I could bring him various things as reward for progressing in his program. Though when we got off the bus, everything changed. Manuel looked to me and said, “No puedo, Jamie. No puedo sobrevivir en una casa. Estoy demasiado acostumbrado de calle, de estar allí. ¿Y quien va a pagar mi cuarto?” (I can’t Jamie. I can’t survive in a home. I am too used to street life, to being here. And who will pay for my room?) I tried to convince Manuel that the other boys and Ernesto would find another roommate, and that this was not something he needed to worry about, but it was no use. He had made his decision and nothing I could say would change his mind. Manuel explained he would do the treatment on his own, he knew the routine; he had done it before. I had no choice but to accept. I did not want to overstep my bounds as I was not an outreach worker and this was not my job. I was Manuel’s friend, however, and the adult in the relationship. I knew that left to his own devices Manuel would continue to use terokal and be in a particularly unhealthy environment
where most likely his condition would worsen, or if he did complete his treatment, where he would contract TB again. Regardless, it was not my decision to make. I gave him a hug, watched him cross the street and enter his building. As he walked away, I swallowed the lump that was building in my throat and did my best to hide the tears that were welling in my eyes.

The above story demonstrates several things. It demonstrates the ways in which the term “de calle” plays an important role in how children living on the street conceptualize themselves and how they are understood by greater society. It also speaks to the particular problems in the provision of limited alternatives to children and youth in Lima who are on the street, particularly when they are forced to choose between two relatively undesirable situations. Finally, it speaks to the very difficulty in the researcher participant relationship and to the impossibility of maintaining distance or neutrality with research subjects we grow to care so much about.

For children and adolescents who are connected so closely to street life, being “of the street” or “from the street” becomes not only an important part of how they understand themselves but also how they conceptualize life inside of a casa-hogar. The adoption of a street identity becomes a significant part of who they are and as identities “happen in social practice” (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, Cain, 1998), the more time spent on the street, the more ingrained it becomes, or the more attached to this identity they can become. Many of the youth with whom I had contact maintained they are “de calle” (of the street), much like the term “niño de la calle” suggests (the term used among researchers
to describe children living on the street). They have also adopted the understanding that they belong to the street, as if they were somehow created within it. When asked why they have left or choose not to re-enter a casa-hogar (most children and adolescents one encounters on the street have been in a casa-hogar at least at one point in time if not more during their street careers), they maintain they are simply too accustomed to street life. This street identity, which is reinforced by engaging in and performing particular behaviors and postures, including the use of terokal, is a large part of who they are. This identity, attributed to the children by larger society and institutions (I-identity) based on their inability to exist within the space of the home, has become understood by the children themselves as an inherent part of who they are, or naturally occurring (N-identity).

Children and adolescents leave home for a variety of unique and complex reasons. Interestingly, the reasons that they provide for having taken to the streets are not necessarily reasons that would lead every child under the same or similar circumstances to leave home. Each situation is complex, and each child is different in the ways that they react to situations and how they understand their options. Aside from the significant differences, however, there are some overlapping consistencies and similarities found among those who make their ways on the streets, for short or long periods of time.

Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain (1998) argue that people develop different relational identities in different figured worlds because they are afforded different positions in those worlds. I argue that children come to the street
because within the context of the urban landscape and within street life, they can attain a different relational identity, one of more power and privilege than they are afforded in their home situation. Being on the street means different things to different children, but consistently among the boys in this study it meant a certain amount of freedom and, while it requires a great deal of self-sufficiency, a life that is perceived to be much more calm in contrast to life at home or in the casa-hogar. While, from an outsider’s perspective, street life may appear stressful, dangerous, and often hostile, like any situation, the boys and girls grow accustomed to these elements, and in the face of very limited options, often choose this alternative lifestyle over a life of internment.

On the street, children and adolescents begin to form and perform an identity that is unique to this particular context. This identity is established and maintained by other children on the street, by outreach organizations, by citizens using the urban landscape in various ways, and by the children themselves. Part of the adoption of this identity is survival: to fit in and be a part of street life, one must act the part. Part of this is also related to their identification with an affinity group (Gee, 2000), and developing and performing a collective identity that respects and cherishes particular aspects of the self that are not respected in other contexts, like their home or the casa-hogar, for example. Furthermore, children begin to form an affinity for other children like them—those assigned to the remedial reading group, those assigned to the advanced readers, or those categorized as throw-aways, unworthy of time and attention, as street children.
In their discussion of members of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain (1998) assert that new members learn to “fit the events and experiences of their own lives into the AA story structure so to identify themselves in the figured world of AA” (p. 83). Similarly, children who take to the streets learn to fit the stories of their own lives into the story structure of the “street child,” so as to fit into and be a part of this figured world. This re-identification or re-storying of their lives to fit this model allows for the development of a sense of self and the identification with an affinity group. Each of the actors on the scene of street life takes part in the co-construction of a street child identity. In understanding street identity, we can again look to Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain (1998) as they argue that behavior is a “sign of the self in practice” rather than a “sign of the self in essence” (p. 31). As children perform the behaviors that coincide with street identity, they are creating a self through practice. There is nothing inherent in any child that makes them a street child. They learn and practice this identity on a daily basis. The ways in which others treat them reaffirms this identity and buttresses their practice. Being shooed off the bus, out of a restaurant, being called a piraña or a pest, being given leftovers or food as a form of charity, being searched out in the urban landscape as a child in need of rescue (or as a potential research participant), all of these experiences help to establish and confirm their identity as street child. Just as being an alcoholic is not natural or obvious, neither is being a street child, instead children must learn to tell about themselves and view their lives in this way (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner & Cain, 1998).
Identity in the *Casa-Hogar*

Here, I present the case of one *casa-hogar, La Tierra*, where I conducted observations for eight months and some insights from another *casa-hogar* where one of my participants was interned and where I frequently visited. These *casa-hogares* are not necessarily exemplary of all *casa-hogares* in Lima, though they demonstrates similarities in their objectives and in how they are viewed among children on the streets. These cases provide a window into the difficulty of “mainstreaming” or “rehabilitating” children and adolescents who live on the street, and some of the problematics of this rehabilitative approach. Part of this difficulty stems from the dichotomy between street and *casa*, as children, outreach workers, and researchers, in essence, develop an understanding of these two in opposition to one another, at two entirely different ends of the spectrum.

For children to embrace the world of the *casa-hogar*, they must reject the street, street life and their “street child” identity. They must go through a form of identity devaluation in order to develop a new identity as a “survivor” or as a recovered street child and now a home child. The pitting of one against the other does not allow for consistency in identity development and performance, for the embracement and development of a core identity and leads to one inevitable result: the majority of children who have spent significant time on the street will not likely fully reject their street identity and embrace the identity of home child and the programs set up to help them will continually fail.
La Tierra.

I spent a total of eight months observing in La Tierra. Over the span of these eight months, I saw boys come and go, and come and go again, as the faces of the boys housed within its walls changed as dependably as the seasons, though with the frequency of the passing days. La Tierra is considered a therapeutic community and was created for boys who want to get off the streets and who have a history of drug abuse. The home typically allows boys to enter who are between the ages of 8 and 15, though exceptions are made for what they deem as extreme cases, and houses anywhere from 30-45 boys at a time. The staff included teachers, psychologists (including interns), a nurse, volunteers, and administrative staff. The program at La Tierra is an 18-24 month program and consists of three different phases: Acogida, Pre-comunidad, and Comunidad. After a child successfully completes each of these phases they are promoted to the phase of Reinserción, where they spend a few months preparing themselves to be reinserted into their families, their community and into society in general. For the most part, the boys who entered during the time I spent conducting observations made it as far as Pre-comunidad or Comunidad or left the casa while still in Acogida. Each boy’s trajectory is unique, and some enter and leave the casa-hogar as many as four or five times. When a new group of boys enter, the casa tends toward chaos as they bring with them fresh stories of the street, tales of mutual friends, and sentiments of the beauty and glory of “the good old days.”

I focused my observations in two distinct areas: the group therapy sessions and the arts workshops or talleres. The therapy sessions, as they called them,
were more like a workshop or class focusing on the values and behaviors deemed important to life inside the *casa-hogar*. These small classes might cover issues of drug abuse, sexuality, appropriate behaviors, personal hygiene, and what they termed the *síndrome de abstinencia*, or the syndrome of abstinence, which for *La Tierra*, accounted for most of the problematic behaviors or difficulties experienced by the boys interned there.

Several of the boys I knew from my time on the streets and two of the boys who participated in the photovoice project entered *La Tierra* for short periods time during the eleven months I spent in Lima. Most of the young boys I spoke with on the street, however, had been interned in this *casa-hogar* at some point in time in their street careers. In fact, *La Tierra* is well known among street children in Lima and among other *casa-hogares*. As boys enter the *hogar*, newly interned boys mingle with those who have been inside from anywhere from a few days to several months and rarely, but possibly up to a year. Once inside the *casa-hogar*, the boys exchange stories, like veterans returning from war. They tell stories of being collected by the *batida*, being taken to the *comisaría*, to *preventivo*, stories of stealing, escaping danger by the skin of their teeth, and stories of where they spent time on the streets, the characters they knew, and who they hung out with.

*November 17, 2008.* Today I observed in the group therapy session and for *Acogida 1*, which consists of about thirteen kids who are new to the *casa*, or have recently returned after escaping or withdrawing. The boys in *Acogida 1* (which translates to “taking in”) may have anywhere from
one day to three weeks inside La Tierra, some longer if they have failed to progress according to the casa’s parameters, like Antonio, for example. 

This particular morning was off to a slow start. In the daily morning reunion the lead psychologist talked at length with all of the boys about an incident that occurred over the weekend. Apparently a young boy, about 15 years old, stole an item that belonged to another boy and is now very close to being asked to leave La Tierra. When the Acogida session finally began, the counselor started with a sort of Simon Says exercise where the kids began by dancing around in a circle then following her instructions to put a hand here or a hand there while she started an elimination process. Some of the boys seemed engaged in the activity, though others refused to participate. After some of the boys were eliminated, they talked among themselves and became rather disengaged in the entire process.

Not unlike most other days on the streets or inside the casa-hogar, the boys asked me various questions throughout the morning, curious about where I am from, where I live, who with, what my dogs’ names are, what language I speak, etc. During and before Simon Says many of the boys acted very unruly: trying to escape the room, fighting, throwing punches at each other, while others sat on the periphery, reserved and withdrawn. Antonio, for example, was trying to fight continually with Diego throwing punches at him, while the two new boys I met, Fernando, who used to spend time on Abancay and swears he knows me, and Rolando, who has been there now for three weeks, were quiet and calm.
While Fernando talked out of order at times, he still did not scream, try to escape, or fight. There were also the two young boys in blue, probably about 10 years old, who looked like little men. Carrying themselves with strong, tough postures, they looked like very small 18-year-old boys trying to show their maturity. They tried to get out through the window, they tried to get out through the door; looking for a means of escape at every chance they got. The two boys would tell the instructors that they wanted to leave and go back to the street, but the whole time they had this odd and mischievous smile as if they really had no intention of escaping.

The dynamic between teacher and student, psychologist and client, adult and child is one that was particularly different for me. The boys would scream at the teachers and the teachers would scream back. I found the ways in which they engaged each other to be unsettling and wondered if they felt this engagement to be useful. As an outsider, I viewed the entire scene as loud and unfriendly and filled with conflict. The teachers would remind me that this is not normal and sometimes the boys behave quite well, but it is just more difficult in a group that large. Yet over the course of eight months, I came to realize just how “normal” all of this was. Perhaps this type of chaos did not occur every day, but it did occur regularly.

*November 18, 2008.* I decided to watch the boys play foosball for a bit, then marbles and then I went and sat down on the benches just outside the *comedor.* The environment in *La Tierra* is chaotic and the boys are frequently out of control and all over the place. The boys do behave in
ways that are very caring towards one another though, in a brotherly sort of manner: caring for the younger boys, picking them up, putting their arms around them, hugging them, taking them under their wing (meant literally and figuratively). They also chastise each other, reminding each other of their place and fight frequently. Sometimes, though, it is often hard to tell of they are really fighting or just messing around.

Anyway, I decided to use this time at La Tierra to try and get to know more of the boys. I was sitting on the bench, hanging out and Armando came and sat down by me. I said hello and asked him how he was and he immediately responded, “You remember me?” I said, “Of course.” He asked, “What’s my name?” I said “Armando.” And he said yes. I told him that I even remembered when I first met him: he was over there, on the steps, drawing. I asked if he was still drawing and he said yes. He told me that he had just completed two months today. This is his first hogar and he has now completed 2 months. He gleamed with pride. He thinks he'll stay. When I asked him why he decided to leave the street he said, “Not to say I was bored, its not that, but I guess it hurt my parents a lot and they were always looking for me (siempre me buscaban)” and “me daba mucha pena saber que estaban triste” (it hurt me very much to know that they were sad). He had planned to come to La Tierra with a friend but his friend ended up getting arrested and is now in Maranga, the boys prison. So he was going to come but did not know the way, and luckily Max (an outreach worker from another casa) brought him.
At this point the kids were to go to their talleres and some of the boys asked me if I was going to velas, like I had the previous week. Two of the young boys grabbed on to me and walked with me to velas, asking me various things about me. One of the younger ones’ name is Enrique and he is ten, though he looks no older than seven. He is always rambunctious and seems to be particularly mischievous and naughty, but always with a playful smirk on his face.

After taking a break from velas, I went outside and ended up talking to Fernando. He confessed that this was his third time in La Tierra, having escaped twice before. He told me that he came back because he was bored on the street and he wanted to change, he felt it was time to change. While we spoke his friend made fun of him for being a fumón, saying he did a lot of drugs. I reminded the boy that all of the kids here had done drugs, as it was a requisite for entering. I spoke to Fernando about his drug use and he spoke of his time on Abancay and Grau and in la Victoria as evidence. I agreed that around Abancay and Grau there is a lot of terokal. He continued to tell me about the times he hung out in Jirón when he was a chibolo (younger), and that recently he only sometimes ventured over there, but not often. He went on to ask me if I knew several different boys that used to be in La Tierra, including Ronaldo, one of the boys who now worked there. As our conversation ended, I asked if he thought he would stay here and he said yes, he thought so. It is time to change.
November 24, 2008. Today started, as usual, with a meeting for all of the boys in the sala TV, and from there went outside to line up on the steps (formarse). When asked to get in line, some of the boys do so with no questions asked, others refuse, and still others scream and yell whilst doing it. One of the younger boys pointed out to the instructor how well he was formed in line, as he had apparently recently been in trouble for not getting into line when he was supposed to. Today the boys were strangely excited for group therapy to start and all took off running when their group was called. They were broken up into the usual six groups: Acogida 1, Acogida 2, Precomunidad 1 and 2, Comunidad and Reinserción. Technically the program at La Tierra consists of three phases: Acogida, Pre-comunidad, and Comunidad, then kids are ready for reinsertion, but they broke up Acogida and Precomunidad into two more groups because there were so many kids: Larger numbers of children equals larger contributions from private donors.

Life inside the casa-hogar often sits in extreme contrast to life on the street. Daily schedules change drastically, behaviors are modified or done away with and even the way that children view and understand their world must be altered. What the children are offered, in exchange for this significant alteration of their lives and identities is what casa-hogares view as security, safety, cleanliness, order and consistent companionship. Within the casa-hogar breaking behaviors that are thought to be “de calle” is an important aspect of “rehabilitation.” Again, we can look to the members of Alcoholics Anonymous
studied by Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain (1998). The change the boys undergo as they transition from street to hogar, much like the change as they transition from their homes to the street, is more than a change in behavior. “It is a transformation of their identities” affecting “how they view and act in the world.” It requires a new understanding of the world and themselves within it as well as “a reinterpretation of their own pasts” (p. 66). Children in the casa-hogar are taught to reject their street identity and reinterpret their time on the street in a negative way. Walking arm in arm, hugging, lying on or having too much bodily contact with peers, sitting on the floor, and using nicknames, among others are not permitted in the casa-hogar as these postures and behaviors are associated with calle and are viewed as inherently negative. Children in the casa-hogar are taught to reject their street identity, and this rejection is very much a part of their rehabilitation. They must begin to view their street identity as particularly negative and reinterpret their time on the street in a negative way.

In order to combat frequently negative perceptions of them, however, children on the street develop positive ways of viewing themselves. Being forced to redefine a newly attributed positive self-concept (street identity) as negative inside the casa-hogar can serve as a point of confusion. Leaving or refusing to enter the casa-hogar can be seen in part an assertion of control and authority in their own lives, allowing them to take ownership of their identities.

This insistence towards the rejection of a street identity on the part of the casa-hogar is one-dimensional and does not embrace its complexities including the adventurous spirit that is an important part of who these children are.
Burbules (1994) indicates the process of identity construction is not entirely flexible, maintaining that while “identities are undoubtedly more fungible than people generally acknowledge” there remains “a human need for stability and sustainability in identity” (para. 18). While numerous children enter casa-hogares throughout Lima, very few complete rehabilitation programs. As children argue that they are “too accustomed to street life,” fully rejecting much of what they know or have come to know living on the street is a daunting, scary and often understood as an impossible task set before them. While many of the boys I came to know and care about frequently expressed a desire to enter a casa-hogar, in the end they were unable or unwilling to make the switch. The ultimate negation of an identity that has been a large part of their everyday performance proved to be too extreme.

Furthermore, the change required by the casa-hogar is drastic and yet not entirely positive. La Tierra, for example, while genuine in its intentions tended to be a relatively difficult place to be and very few of the boys that entered actually stayed to complete their rehabilitation programs. Each of the boys cited in the excerpts from field notes above, for example, including Fernando and Armando who both maintained “it was time to change” eventually left La Tierra and returned to the street, long before they graduated to the reinsertion phase of their program. These boys, along with the other children interned there were constrained within its walls and were only given permission to leave on the weekends when family members could take them out for a few hours or a day depending on their behavior the previous week. For those who did not have
family, they were able to leave on field trips with volunteers to various locations like the swimming pool, the park or the movies. Interestingly, one of the main forms of punishment for inappropriate behavior was the suspension of these privileges. Additionally, much of the daily routines of this *casa-hogar* and many others are based on a military-like regimen which included waking at 5 a.m. to complete chores, clean themselves and prepare for morning sessions. Part of the refusal to enter a *casa-hogar* is based not only on the resistance to change but on their experience and knowledge of what life is like inside one.

**The case of Jordan.**

“¿Cómo estás Jordan?” “Aca, encerrado.” (fieldnotes, December 14, 2008)

Jordan’s experience on and off the street and in the *casa-hogar* is a good example of the struggles that children and adolescents confront when trying to make a particularly difficult transition from street life to home/house life. I first met Jordan during a night of street outreach with *Chicos del Centro*. I had been conducting observations in *calle* for a few weeks when I met Jordan. According to the outreach workers, Jordan was new to the street and no one from the organization had met him before. When we met, he was kind, interested, and engaged me in conversation. Over the following weeks, Jordan continually demonstrated himself to be interested and engaged and did not consume heavily, at least in my presence, on a regular basis. As I had more contact with Jordan, there were several occasions where I witnessed him heavily drugged. His behavior on drugs was in direct contrast to his behavior off drugs and affected the how he related to me. Jordan’s behavior while on *terokal* was often sexually
forward and mildly aggressive. His behavior off terokal was playful yet calm and typically talkative.

Contrary to the organization’s assumption, this was not Jordan’s first time on the street. In fact he had spent time on and off the street for several years before he became involved with Chicos del Centro. At this point in his life he had come back to the street after escaping from a casa-hogar outside of Lima where he had spent the last two years. Previously, his time spent on the street was in a different area of the city.

November 23, 2008. We went to Ancón to visit Jordan. He said he had been sick so was pretty quiet for the first while. He admitted that he has been bored there and that he thinks about leaving. The only remedy he has to stop thinking about leaving is to go to sleep. I asked him if he wanted some things to keep him busy like pulsera stuff or books or coloring or whatever and he said he does not like to read. The rest of our conversation was normal—how are his parents, school, everything like that. He told me he remembers the first time he came to the casa; he was 11. They had brought him there, the pastora and pastor who found him on the street. They brought him to his parents who were already thinking about putting him in a casa-hogar. I asked why he left home, he said he was bored at home and liked life on the street. After some prodding he explained that his father would sometimes come home mareado and begin to beat his mother and then turn to Jordan and beat him. He confided that his father would get very aggressive with his mother but then he
eventually came to just beating Jordan. He said at that point in time he started to work on the streets just so he would not be at home. He said, unlike other parents who make their children work, his parents never made him nor ever asked him to give them money. He did it because he wanted to and did not want to be at home. It was a way for him to be away from home until 11 or 12 at night. Well from there, he said, he ended up staying on the streets.

Jordan came to the city’s center after talking about it with Ernesto, who he met in the casa-hogar where he was interned during my time in Lima, the same Ernesto with whom the boys in this study lived. After escaping from the casa-hogar, Jordan came to Lima Centro and reconnected with Ernesto, meeting the boys who stayed with him and the organizations that conducted outreach with this population.

Like for many of those who take to the streets, there was both something about the street that pulled Jordan, and something about the casa-hogar that pushed him away. There was of course the reciprocal to this effect, which was that aspects of street life pushed him toward the allure of the casa-hogar. In my conversations with Jordan he would assert that he enjoyed many aspects of street life including the time he spent with friends, joking around and what he called “molestando la gente” or “harassing people.” By harassing people, he meant playing tricks on them, both harmless pranks and less innocuous ones like stealing.
December 14, 2008. We went to Ancón today. I asked Jordan how he was and he said más o menos. Jordan talked about wanting to leave and wanting to see his friends. He says he is bored in the casa and asked me to bring him a zampoña to make it less boring. We talked about what he misses about the street and he said hanging with his friends, going out at night and molestando the gente. I asked which he liked better being in the casa-hogar or being in the street and he responded both. He does not miss sleeping on the floor or in the street nor does he miss the bed bugs or the filthiness, but he seems to look at this part of his life with fondness and always asks about the boys in the room. He asked about Joaquin and Ernesto and giggled.

Jordan also enjoyed many aspects of the casa-hogar that he was in and was particularly drawn to it by their adherence to a strong faith and belief in God. He frequently talked about his relationship with God and the importance that faith played in his life. For Jordan street life and his faith were in direct contrast to one another and he expressed shame when he talked about some of the things he had done while living on the streets. However, there was also a part of Jordan that loved the time he had on the street and reveled in his mischievous spirit. In our visits together, while he was interned in the casa-hogar, he often spoke of this time with fondness.

Both in his time on the street and in the casa-hogar, Jordan struggled with various aspects of his identity. On the street he would frequently talk about his desire to “change” which involved re-entering the casa-hogar and he expressed
anxiety and embarrassment over the way that he had been living, namely his drug use and stealing. But while in the *casa-hogar*, Jordan was also confronted with conflicting emotions. He expressly missed his friends, the freedom and adventurousness of street life, and often suffered from boredom as he was forced to stay inside the small house most days. He looked back fondly at this time on the street, and while he arguably did not miss the bed bugs or sleeping on the street or on the floor of the *cuarto*, he missed playing music and wandering through the city, free to do as he pleased. The change he had to make, to transition from street to *casa*, was drastic and understandably difficult. While in the *casa-hogar* Jordan would frequently tell me stores of his adventures on the street, and always did so with a certain nostalgic fondness.

*January 11, 2009.* Jordan said he has been really bored and that the last week was really hard. He is not playing football and really does not have much to occupy his time. The pastors never really want to play football and they never let him go to internet, mostly I think because they don’t feel like going. He said an average day is waking up at 5, praying, then cleaning up, resting, eating breakfast, bible study, lunch and then hanging out. He watches a lot of tv.

Jordan was quiet today and I did a lot of the talking. He said he is just a bit tired.

**Reconciling Street, Home, and In-Between Identities**

Part of the difficulty that outreach organizations and *casa-hogares* encounter in rehabilitating children on the street, lies in how they approach this
population. Coming at the children with the motive to change them, to change them into something more acceptable, fails to embrace or encourage the traits that enable to them to survive on the streets and care for themselves. There exist plenty of children who remain in abusive environments for fear of not being able to care of themselves, yet these children are not necessarily criticized (though I would not argue that they should be). What is interesting, is that instead, outreach organizations, research, and society pit street child against home child, good child against bad child, criticizing the lifestyle and life choices of the street child, rather than celebrating their self-awareness and their refusal to be treated negatively.

As I have argued in chapter three, the boys in this study as well as those children living and working on the streets of Lima, face criticism regarding their lifestyles on a daily basis. Due to their often difficult histories and the criticism they face on a daily basis, for many of the boys, there is a desire to be viewed as a both good and deserving. This desire can be seen particularly well in the boys’ encounters with me. When first conducting the photovoice project, Andre and Manuel encountered photographs of themselves using terokal. Early on in our relationship, these boys tended to be very guarded about their drug use and frequently denied or minimized the severity of their relationship with terokal. When the boys received the film back from the pictures they had taken, both were surprised and angry to see evidence of them inhaling terokal. They then proceeded to deny the data before them. The reactions of the boys speak to issues of identity and the complex relationship between researcher and participant, particularly in research with children in vulnerable positions. This identity of
innocence is not only different from identities they perform among peers, within the *casa-hogar*, or among street outreach workers, but is in direct opposition to how they are viewed by many of the adult figures in their lives. During my observations with *Chicos del Centro*, I found the conversations to be relatively consistent between staff and volunteer and the children and youth with whom they were attempting to intervene. These conversations frequently involved a critique of their drug use and an attempt to convince them to leave the street: “Don’t you want to enter a home? Why not? You’ll be taken care of there. It is cleaner and safer than the street, you can go to school.” This does not mean that many of the outreach workers did not try to get to know the children on a more intimate level, as many of them had been in the field for years. Yet their primary mission was always rehabilitation, and the children and adolescents knew this.

Children and adolescents are aware of the judgment that exists about their lifestyle and therefore, there remains the desire to be viewed in ways contrary to how they are viewed by society and even perhaps contrary to how they view themselves. This includes a demonstration of themselves as innocent and this demonstration is directly related to their need to be viewed as both deserving and good. Therefore, while after more time spent in participant observations the boys became more honest with regard to their lifestyles, there still existed times when they would negate or deny information garnered from photographs or other sources. This negation exemplifies a desire not to tarnish my view of them and speaks to the positionality of me as the researcher/outsider.
One prime of example of this was Manuel’s inability to admit to me that he had abandoned his TB treatment. Having been involved with Manuel for some time, he had requested that I take him to a free clinic where he could obtain a TB test. While there were other free clinics where Manuel could go to obtain the test, this one catered to children and adolescents on the street. Tuberculosis is a very real and looming threat in Peru, in Lima, particularly among the street population, and for many there is a constant fear of contraction. Of the six boys involved in the photovoice project, three were tested and two were confirmed positive for TB. One week after leaving his sputum sample, Manuel tested positive and the clinic asked that I bring him back in. Manuel and I had become particularly close over the passed few months, and the NGO recognized that he trusted me more than any of their outreach workers. As indicated above, Manuel decided against entering a casa-hogar where his treatment would be monitored, and decided to take charge of his treatment on his own. He was in fact successful in going to the posta every day and taking the handful of pills for a time, and he even stopped using terokal for a period of time as well.⁵ After a month or so however, there was talk among the other boys that Manuel had abandoned his treatment and started using again. When I would confront him with the information the other participants were providing me, Manuel would immediately deny the allegations, insisting that he was still maintaining his treatment regimen and not using terokal. As much as I insisted that he could tell me the truth and that I would not judge him, during the time I was in Lima, he never admitted to having abandoned treatment or to using

⁵ In communications over msn messenger with Manuel, he indicated that he returned home for a period of time where he took up his treatment again, and eventually re-entered a casa-hogar where he finished the treatment.
As the months wore one, he did, however, eventually stop denying the allegations. I argue that for Manuel, withholding this information allowed him to be seen as “good” in my eyes and assured that I would continue to come around and see him.

“Estoy demasiado acostumbrado de estar en calle. Ya es muy tarde.”

Within the context of Lima Centro, there exists a population of children and adolescents that are considered by many as “too far gone.” Outreach organizations argue that these children cannot make the required adjustments involved in living in a casa-hogar and rejecting street life, suggesting that they are simply “too accustomed to street life” or just “too far gone.” Through a deeper exploration of identity performance and development, we can begin to understand the reasons why organizations view children in this way, and why the children themselves also frequently adopt this perspective. The organization, Chicos del Centro, with which I originally began my fieldwork adopted its namesake from children and adolescents who live on the streets of Lima Centro. Their mission was to intervene and provide these children with alternatives to street life, drug use and separation from mainstream society. Through the use of table games, workshops, and kind and friendly conversation, the organization aimed to provide a bridge between casa-hogares and the street child population in Lima, and help to re-incorporate these boys and girls into society. After working for a number of years, the organization, like so many others, decided that their efforts to convince the children and adolescents of Lima Centro to leave street life behind were fruitless. They then decided to stop outreach with this population,
the very population for which they were created to help, and instead focus their
efforts on children in other areas of the city, children who were not yet “too far
gone” like those of Lima Centro.

This perception of and conceptualization of children on the street in this
capacity demonstrates the recognition, at least in part, of the monumental task
required of essentially abandoning an often highly developed sense of self and
identity in order to incorporate themselves into society. It, at the same time,
however, places the child at blame, for not being able to accomplish this
evermous task. Rather than adjust their strategies and methodology, they
abandoned the children entirely to move on to a population who, as they are
newer to street life, does not carry with them as well defined street identity.

This sentiment of being too far gone was not only expressed by outreach
workers and private citizens, but was also expressed by many of the boys with
whom I worked. When asked why they had not entered a casa-hogar or why they
left one, the response was typically, “Estoy demasiado acostumbrado de estar en
calle. Ya es muy tarde.” This expression says a lot about the ways in which
children on the streets shape their identities and how they view themselves. One
could easily argue that this sentiment means nothing more than a lack of
motivation to “change.” One could also argue that this sentiment means just that,
life inside the casa-hogar is so drastically different from life on the street that the
change they would have to undergo is too difficult and perhaps impossible. It is
also possible that the boys and girls who say this or express this sentiment are
repeating what they hear or have heard many times over from outreach
organizations that are frustrated that their methodologies for intervention are not working. I would argue, however, that while each of these explanations is a possibility, there exists another more plausible explanation that has everything to do with the ways in which we develop and perform our identities. Children who enter street life at any age begin to adopt the postures, behaviors and perspectives that coincide with a street identity. Lived long enough, experienced long enough, this identity becomes more engrained. There also comes a point where a child or adolescent argues, “this is who I am!” as they desire to embrace their identity, and to be proud of who they are (Beazely, 2003). Constantly being faced with opposition to this identity is difficult and complicated and can drive a child to further embrace street life, where people like him, or at least accept him, for who he is.

In their synthesis of Bourdieu, Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain (1998) maintain “those who learn activities in childhood perform them in a more natural, less self-conscious style . . .” (p. 136). Those who learn later do so with an awkwardness that they may never overcome, which inevitably leads to feelings of inferiority. Children who begin their street careers at a very early age, or even at transitional ages like puberty, after a significant amount of time in the street, may find the transition from street life to casa-hogar to be more difficult and awkward. However, it is essential and important to recognize that “there is a continual process of heuristic development: individuals and groups are always (re)forming themselves as persons and collectives through cultural materials created in the immediate and more distant past” (p. 18). Furthermore,
the possibilities of heuristic development do not mean that humans are free to develop whatever subjectivity they wish and do whatever strikes them at the moment. Far from it. One’s history-in-person is the sediment from past experiences upon which one improvises, using the cultural resources available, in response to the subject positions afforded one in the present. The constraints are overpowering, yet not hermetically sealed (p.18).

What this means for those adolescents, who make their ways on the street, is that while change may be difficult, it is not impossible. Outreach and research must recognize that children are products of their pasts and past experiences and these experiences have shaped who they are and how they interact with the world. As *casa-hogares* force children to fully reject these past experiences that have played such a significant part in shaping them, they set themselves up for failure.

*November 17, 2009.* I tried to use this time to talk to Jesus and I asked him if he ever thought about going back home. He responded that he was much too accustomed to street life. That’s what they all say, I said. I asked how his parents treated him when he was at home, and he replied, “*más o menos.*” I probed further and asked why he left in the first place and he said, “that is a difficult question, Jamie. One that I cannot answer.” I asked if he could ever tell me and he said never. “This is the person I am now, and I won’t go back.”
Understanding Identities and the Spaces in Between

Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner and Cain (1998) argue that we are always forming our identities and that identities develop over a lifetime and are psychohistorical formations. As can be seen in both street identity and identity inside the *casa-hogar*, identities are “lived in and through activity and develop in social practice” (p. 5). Identities, however, are also improvised as persons are caught in “tensions between past histories and present discourses and images that attract them or somehow impinge upon them” (p. 4). Children living on and off the street, similarly, are caught between their past histories (their storied selves) and present discourses, which are often contradictory. A child who finds himself making his way in the streets of Lima will at some point in his life have an interaction with a *casa-hogar*. This may include actually being interned in a *casa-hogar* or simply having contact with their workers during street outreach.

As boys move in and out of street life, to and from *casa-hogar*, and in and between home, they are neither fully invested in street life, nor fully committed to leaving it. With all of this shifting back and forth and to and from, they begin to develop a sense of self that is often deeply connected to this instability and change.

Self-consciousness and self-reflection develop in a child as a product of their social history. A child “learns to objectify herself by the qualities of her performance in and commitment to various social positions. Those objectifications to which one is emotionally attached become the core of their identity” (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner & Cain, 1998). Manuel, for example, is
attached to himself as comedian, as a reliable friend and confidant. Manuel always worried about who would pay for his part of the room if he left. He wanted to believe that his friends and roommates depended on him, that he was a vital part of the functioning of the cuarto. Manuel was not willing or able to admit (at times) that the room would carry on without him. This can be attributed to, in part, his desire to believe that he was an indispensible part of the figured world of the cuarto.

November 10, 2008. It’s Monday and our first day to visit the boys since we had taken two weeks off going to Ecuador and then me being sick. We went to the boys’ cuarto and sat out front for just a minute when Jason saw Jorge and, although I hesitated a bit, we decided to try and catch him. At first I was tempted to let him go because I struggle with Jorge — all he seems to want is food or money and it is really difficult to have a real relationship with him. So we followed and try to catch up until eventually he turned around slightly and saw us. I waved and Jason waved. And he started walking back. He shook Jason’s hand, we did the kiss on the cheek and I asked how they had been. He said fine, normal. He then said the one who is in a bad way is Manuel. He told us that his lungs are having major problems and he has lost a lot of weight. He said he is really skinny. I said if he could get Manuel to come down I would take them to lunch, but his immediate response was Manuel was not moving as he said he was just too tired and that he does not have ganas de hacer nada, he just sleeps and that he is working but very little, just sleeping most of the
day. I pretended to call up to him, knowing that he could not hear me as their room is at the back of the building and they do not have a window facing the street, but some how minutes later Manuel appeared. The sight of him was difficult, Jorge said he was skinny but he actually looked like he was wasting away. He wore baggy jeans belted tight so they would not fall off and a black track suit jacket, also very baggy that was zipped all the way up to his chin. It was actually a warmer day and at one point I took off my hoody and I wondered why Manuel stayed so bundled up. Was it to hide the way he looks underneath all the clothes? My guess is that Manuel is probably 5’5” and weighs 85-90 pounds. When I grabbed his shoulder there was nothing to it. When I said wow you are so skinny he said, me, no I’m not skinny. I said right, you are huge, very muscular and he joked and pretended to flex his biceps and chest.

Manuel’s inability to recognize the severity of his illness, while complicated, has a lot to do with his attachment to his street life and street identity. The physicality of his illness was a glaring and undeniable reminder of the less desirable and unhealthy aspects of his lifestyle. Yet recognizing that he was ill and that the way in which he was going about dealing with this illness was not working, would require Manuel to leave street life and therefore, much of his street identity behind. His attachment to himself as a musician was also tied to his street identity. What other venues would Manuel have for expressing himself through music if he were to leave street life behind? On the street, he was able to perform this identity as a musician on a daily basis, in combis, on buses, in restaurants, and
for outreach workers and volunteers. His commitment to his street identity can be seen in his reluctance to abandon it, which entering a *casa-hogar* would require of him.

**Some Concluding Remarks**

While identities are constructed over time, constituted through behaviors, and enacted on a daily basis, children and adolescents on the street, who exist in particularly vulnerable positions within society, develop attachment and search for consistencies in the identities they perform. For Manuel and the other boys on (and off) the streets, a street identity becomes an important part of how they view and understand themselves. Their attachment to this identity can be attributed to their need to realize and recognize themselves as desirable individuals. This street identity is constructed and reinforced by the boys themselves and the other characters found in the street space, including outreach workers, *casa-hogares*, and Good Samaritan organizations. Reconciling this identity with the requirements of the *casa-hogar* proves to be quite difficult for most of the boys who attempt to transition from street life to home life. This difficulty can be seen in the large numbers of boys who enter *casa-hogares* but leave long before completing their rehabilitation programs.

What I have demonstrated in this chapter, in part alludes to the unique street space that is created as organizations and children and adolescents come together within the context of the city. I argue that identity and agency are directly tied to this space. In the following chapter, I further explore the connection between space and street identity as I revisit theories of space and
place, in particular Edward Soja’s theory of thirdspace, where the street becomes a thirdspace of possibility.
Chapter 5

SPACES AND PLACES: REEXAMINING THE RECIPROCAL

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHILDREN LIVING ON THE STREET AND

THE URBAN LANDSCAPE

As I set out to conduct my dissertation fieldwork, I wanted to understand and investigate the reciprocal relationship between children living on the street and the urban landscape. Through the lens of cultural and human geography, I argued that the street informs the lives of those who live within it, while those making their way through the urban landscape alter and impact the spaces of the street. I posited that childhood that takes place on the street is inherently informed by the street and the meaning of the street is conversely altered by the presence of children who live, work, socialize, and take part in illicit activities. I maintained that the existence of children living and working on the streets produced “a particular ‘street childhood’ with associated ‘street child spaces,’ many of which are hidden and separate from the adult city” (Young and Barret, 2001a, p. 141). In turn, I expected to find that the masculine jungle that is Lima (Invernizzi, 2003) morphed as children made this jungle their home.

Once in the field, I was compelled to abandon this theoretical framework, and began to look towards theories examining identity and performance, as these proved to be salient themes among the children and adolescents I observed. However, the concepts of space and place resurfaced as I commenced analysis and continued to examine fieldnotes and reflect on my experiences in Lima. These concepts that were once at the forefront and then pushed to the margins,
have re-emerged to reveal their importance and relevance once again. The ways in which I use theories of space and place have changed and developed with the research, but the concepts are there nonetheless. There are portions to my original thesis that I still agree with, while there are others that are particularly contradictory to what I witnessed in the field. For example, although there are in fact spaces occupied by the children and adolescents living on the streets of Lima that are very much separate from the adult spaces of the city, most are not. They are not hidden from adult eyes and ears and the dichotomy between adult and child spaces does not usually apply. Rather, a separation exists between centered and marginal spaces (Snow & Mulcahy, 2001), though a space that is centered at one point in the day may be marginal at another. Within these marginalized spaces, children co-exist with other peripheralized or marginalized children and adults, both housed and unhoused. Children on the street, homeless adults, families searching for food in the outreached hands of a stranger, all share the street, co-creating the cityscape of Lima Centro.

The boys involved in the photography project, the boys of the cuarto, for example, shared space at the periphery with other marginalized adults. The room they rented is in an old hotel inhabited by a variety of people, who all share one common trait: they are extremely poor. The boys shared the room with Ernesto and at various times, bunked with another figure, Pedro, also an adult male, married with children, whose family lived in the building. The space of the cuarto and the larger space of the hotel are far from being separate child spaces within an adult city. Rather, these peripheral spaces where marginalized adults
and children comingle are separate and distinct from the centered spaces of the city.

These centered and marginal spaces in Lima, however, are not completely disconnected from one another. In fact, many of the spaces utilized by the boys in this study and other marginalized adults are embedded within and between the centered spaces of *Lima Centro*. The hotel, for example, is just off a main thoroughfare in Lima, and is located on a bustling street where young college students pass daily as they make their way to the nearby university. Once inside the building, however, its marginal position becomes evident. The spaces of *la escalera* and *Jirón* are no different. *Jirón de la Union* is a major shopping area in *Lima Centro* that is bustling with tourists and Limaneans alike at most hours of the day and night. Yet nestled just off the main path, children, adolescents, and a smaller number of adults living on the street are present, depending on the time of day, appropriating nearly vacant sections of sidewalk for their own use. There is a separation that exists between these spaces, the spaces that are used by those of the center and the spaces that are used by those of the margins, that is often palpable though not separated by meters or miles.

**Space**

In theories of human and cultural geography, the term “the street” is often used interchangeably with public space (Lees, 1998; Crouch, 1998), and can be understood as an inherent part of the urban landscape. The income-generating activities in which “street children” in Lima participate, take place near thoroughfares, on *combis*, and in restaurants. While we imagine the “street” as
the concrete surface by which vehicles maneuver, in the discussion of street children, the “street” refers not only to this surface, but also to the public arenas in and around the physical street, including sidewalks, plazas, alleyways, storefronts, commercial centers and outdoor markets.

The spaces that children and adolescents utilize and navigate are produced, not as one might produce a “kilogram of sugar” or a “yard of cloth,” but rather through social relationships between the human inhabitants of a particular setting (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 85). As children and adolescents interact within the spaces of the city, their interactions draw on existing political and ideological understandings of social settings and in the process reinforce and recreate the meanings and understandings of these spaces (Lefebvre, 1996; Soja, 1989). The features of the urban landscape shape how people act within it while the social meanings attached to a place have a history that forms contemporary understandings of that place. In this sense, “boundaries matter. They construct our sense of identity in the places we inhabit and they organize our social space through geographies of power” (Malone, 2002, p. 158). Furthermore, persons “do not experience the city blankly;” we absorb everything around us, which influences who and how we are in daily life (Harvey, 2006, p. 17). In this way we can understand why children feel more free to interact with certain spaces of the city, like la escalera for example, over others, like the near by Plaza de Armas. Their use of these spaces is directly tied to the histories associated with these places, including the ways in which children living on the streets prior to those
that I observed in Lima interacted with these spaces and were treated during this interaction.

**Thirdspace**

As I examine children’s and adolescents’ use of the street spaces of Lima Centro, and the connection between these spaces and identity development and performance, I look to Edward Soja’s exploration of thirdspace. A thirdspace, he posits, is a space “of political choice that is also a meeting place for all peripheralized or marginalized “subjects” wherever they may be located” (Soja, p. 35). Soja further defines thirdspace as,

> a knowable and unknowable, real and imagined lifeworld of experiences, emotions, events, and political choices that is existentially shaped by the generative and problematic interplay between centers and peripheries, the abstract and concrete, the impassioned spaces of the conceptual and the lived, marked out materially and metaphorically in spatial praxis, the transformation of (spatial) knowledge into (spatial) action in a field of unevenly developed (spatial) power. (p. 31)

As children leave their homes and enter the street spaces of Lima Centro, they mingle with the many and varied characters that comprise the urban landscape in a space that is both real and imagined. These real spaces, spaces of concrete and asphalt, spaces constructed as thoroughfares, as pedestrian walkways, become something more to those who appropriate them.

Soja explains thirdspace to be both real and imagined for several reasons. The spaces are real because they are solid structures created by human and
machine strength. These spaces are constructed with particular purposes in mind (e.g. transit, shopping, and various business needs) and are used in these intended ways. They are imagined because they become what the user hopes them to be.

For both boys and girls who make their ways on the streets of Lima and the outreach organizations that serve them, the spaces within the urban landscape become and have the potential to become much more than they were created to be. They are spaces where the boys and girls can become a member of a group, spaces where they can enact the part of a leader, a lover, loved, where they can be looked up to, become an object of desire, where they can desire, where they can exercise certain “freedoms,” a place where choices exist, a place where they can choose. These are spaces where they feel themselves to be both free and boundless.

Soja (1996) maintains that a necessary part of thirdspace “is the transformation of (spatial) knowledge into (spatial) action in a field of unevenly developed (spatial) power” (p. 31). Children and adolescents living on the street use their spatial knowledge, which includes knowing what areas of the city are open and available to them, and which are not, to carve out spaces for themselves, both materially and metaphorically, where they are free to act out and participate in this imagined lifeworld of experiences (spatial action). All of this takes place in the unevenly developed field of spatial power that is Lima, as centered spaces dominate, and peripheral spaces can become centered spaces as quickly as a Serenazgo officer can enter the scene.
The play between center and periphery is an important element in Soja’s presentation of thirdspace. Not all spaces are equal, and the ways spaces are conceptualized has a direct effect on the inhabitants of those spaces. Duncan (1983) suggests that the social value of an individual is roughly related to and equal to the places he frequents. For example, in Ecuador, Quito is viewed as conservative and boring where as Guayaquil is understood to be both dirty and dangerous, and accordingly the inhabitants of these cities are conceptualized in the same manner (Radcliffe & Westwood, 1996). Similarly, the boys and girls making their ways on the streets of Lima are frequently associated with the residue connected to the places in which they dwell. It is these marginal spaces where boys and girls on the peripheries dwell that become spaces of possibility.

**The Role of Outreach in the Creation of a Thirdspace**

For the agencies that serve children and adolescents living on the street, this thirdspace serves as places where they work towards getting children off the street in attempts to rehabilitate them and move them towards a more mainstream lifestyle. This is a space where they imagine themselves to be helping those in need, resolving a social problem, and sometimes, to be doing God’s work. These organizations come to the street creating a space where the boys and girls are important and sought after. The agencies together with the children and adolescents co-create this real and imagined space, a peripheral, separate space where marginalized adults and children come mingle.

*July 8, 2008.* I found out last night that the boys/girls in Lima Centro hang out in the places where we meet them because they know that we
will be there. They also know that we come at a particular time and are accustomed to our schedule, and therefore make sure they are around when we are scheduled to be there. On Wednesdays they hang out in *Barrio Chino*, for example because *la leche* comes there. *Barrio Chino* is the place we go on Tuesdays. It seems quite intelligent of them and also some how contrary to what *Chicos del Centro* wants, at least in regard to their approach. They don’t want to provide assistance but do make the street a fun and interesting place for them to stay. The kids have made friends in the volunteers and people like Frank (an outreach worker) are permanent fixtures in their lives. Nathaniel, one of the volunteers, indicated that they told him that they do not do a lot of follow-up/seguido with the boys from *Lima Centro* because the kids end up missing the street when they see them as they associate *Chicos del Centro* with the street.

As the outreach organizations and Good Samaritan groups come to the streets seeking children and adolescents they can attempt to mainstream, the boys observed in this study developed a sense of being sought after and desired. This sense of being both desired and important reinforces how children on the street understand the spaces they navigate. They see themselves as popular, important, and cared for. They develop relationships with volunteers and staff from outreach organizations, who grow to care for them, who ask about them in the various street networks, and who show concern for their safety and well-being. This interaction within the marginal street spaces of Lima reifies their identities as
street children and the interactions they share with outreach workers, other
children on the street, and with foreign volunteers all serve to strengthen their
attachment to these street spaces, and to a thirdspace of possibility.

Approximately six months into my fieldwork in Lima, I had a
conversation with Angeles, the director of Chicos del Centro, about the
population of children and adolescents in Lima Centro. She said, that after ten or
more years of working in this area and with some of the same boys and girls as
when they first opened their doors, the organization was seriously contemplating
terminating outreach with this particular population. She began to explain that
those who they have contact with on a regular basis at la escalera or in Jirón
enjoy the twice-weekly contact. They look forward to it. For them, she argued, it
is a time to mingle with friends, to socialize. She explained that these boys have
no real intention of leaving the streets, rather they enjoy being in that space,
feeling sought after and conversing with the various volunteers they have
befriended. The organization began to view these boys and girls as being too far
gone, too entrenched in street life to either choose to leave or to withstand the
significant adjustment entering a casa-hogar required. When I first had this
conversation with Angeles, I had very conflicting emotions. In part, I agreed with
her. It was evident that the boys and girls anticipated and welcomed our arrival
every Tuesday and Friday. It was also evident that certain members of this group
would most likely not leave the streets, at least not soon. In fact, several of those
who we saw week after week were over the age of 18, and therefore outside of the
agency’s target population. I also thought how odd it seemed, however, for the
organization, whose name stemmed from their work with these very boys and girls, to abandon them entirely. There were still children and young adolescents who navigated the spaces of Lima Centro, who bounced from casa-hogar to casa-hogar, and who could benefit from the consistent contact Chicos del Centro could offer. While this decision beckoned me to question this “too far gone” theory that many outreach workers espoused (I interrogate this theory in chapter 4 of this dissertation), it caused me to search for an appropriate theoretical lens through which to understand their relationship with the outreach organizations and with the urban landscape.

The concerns expressed by the NGO’s director reinforce the imagined and perhaps even fantastic nature of the appropriated spaces of Lima Centro, the thirdspace created by the interaction between organizations and street children. Outreach organizations view this interaction as a step in the process towards getting children off the street, in rehabilitating them and moving them towards a more mainstream lifestyle. The children, while perfectly aware of the intentions of these outreach groups, view this interaction in a different way. For them, it is a time to socialize, a place to be fed, a space within which they can confide in a friend, seek assistance with a medical problem, play games, or feel important, cared for and sought after. The constant talk of entering a casa-hogar can perhaps be seen as simply a tolerated side effect.

Day vs. Night

I had been coaching the boys for the fútbol league for a few weeks now, though it was still early on in my dissertation fieldwork. Coaching, while may not
have contributed to data collection, was a nice respite from fieldwork. The boys were awesome—friendly, excited, and some of them were amazing players. As we headed back from practice, Paul led us on a different route. We passed the bridge we normally crossed as we came to and from Rimac and instead headed over a separate pedestrian footbridge just a few hundred yards away. As we crossed the bridge, several of the boys and I chatted about the usual stuff: fútbol, school, the U.S., my home, my family, when I would return, what I did for work, their families, their homes, and of course the upcoming championship. At the end of the footbridge, we laughed as Jason mimicked the calls of “Llamada, llamada, llamada”, as people shook cellular phones trying to sell phone calls using any one of the various service providers in Lima. Just past the bridge, we turned to the right, walked straight ahead towards a veterinarian’s office and headed back to the boys’ school. When I saw the office, a rather ramshackle sort of place, I began to wonder if many people took their pets there, and I wondered if I ever would if necessary. It wasn’t until we were headed away from the veterinarian’s office that I realized where we were. I had been there several times before. I looked around, staring at the grassy area behind the crisscross wood fence, at the gray cement stairs and it dawned on me that I had come there with Chicos del Centro and the boys I had been conducting fieldwork with, only I was there late at night, typically past the 10 o’clock hour. I was shocked at how different it looked and felt.

The thirdspace for those young people making their ways on the streets of Lima Centro seems to be synonymous with the darkness and cover of night.
These spaces where children feel themselves to be free, where they can live as they imagine themselves to be, often contrast significantly from the reality of life in the daylight. Without the cover of darkness and the veil of *terokal*, the youth remain peripheral and marginalized. In the daylight, they are caught within the firstspace of Lima, the constructed real space of the center. In this day space, the boys and girls must navigate according to the rules set forth by those of the center: they cannot inhale *terokal* freely and must act and behave as society expects young men (and women) to. The boys encounter difficulty as they board buses, play music in restaurants, or attempt to beg for food from passersby. Within these spaces they are not free to move as they choose, and they cannot live as they imagine themselves to be.

On a given day, the boys involved in this study would typically sleep until one in the afternoon, sometimes waking earlier while other times later. This means that they experienced daylight only for a few hours each day, retiring to their beds or to a chosen place hidden in the city usually no earlier than three in the morning. Perhaps part of this night owl routine can be attributed to a lifestyle heavily entrenched in drug use, or perhaps it can be attributed to the type of work many of these boys participated in, as they often argued that playing music in restaurants can yield more income at night than during the day. Regardless, the contrast from day to night is remarkable. Furthermore, Good Samaritan groups bring food to the needy at night, therefore calling the boys to the streets in the nighttime hours. It is hard to say, however, which came first, the Good Samaritan groups beckoning the less fortunate into the streets, or the less fortunate coming to
the streets beckoning the Good Samaritan groups to serve them. Regardless of these factors, Soja’s theory of thridspace serves as a viable explanation for the contrast between the boys’ use of space in daylight and their use of space at night and is a valuable tool in understanding, at least in part, some of the reasons why the boys flock to the streets, particularly under the cover of darkness.

During the day the citizens of Lima use the urban landscape in much of the ways it was initially intended. They conduct business, shop, navigate the streets and sidewalks as the concrete surfaces lead them from one place to the next. As the streets of Lima Centro are filled with those citizens who comprise the center, there is less room for the movement of those who exist on the periphery. In an attempt to keep the areas of Lima Centro more tourist friendly, places like the Plaza San Martin, for example, and the Plaza de Armas, are more heavily policed during the day and in the evening than they are late at night. The boys are therefore not able to move as freely as they do late at night and must behave in ways that coincide with the ways intended by the city’s designers.

In a city as large and metropolitan as Lima, people can be found out and about at almost all hours of the day and night. At night, however, there exists much less surveillance and the boys can experience a certain sense of freedom. While police officers, civilians, shop-attendants and various other city-goers do not disappear once night falls, in the later hours, activity dwindles as there are simply less people out and about. This means there are fewer people around to impose guidelines, order, or the various rules and regulations stemming from the

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6 Not all people navigating the city belong to the center. In fact, Lima is home to people who exist on the margins by varying degrees. The boys, however, exist on the extreme margins.
center. Police officers and *Serenazgo* do patrol the streets at night, and the boys are not immune to encounters with them. In fact, most of those living on the street have several stories about their encounters with police, whether these be individual encounters or through large scale police street sweeping missions known as the *batida*. Yet their chances of these encounters significantly decrease as people retire to their beds. It seems that much of the motivation to keep children in line is for appearances sake. A cleaner city, one free of the residues that the marginalized leave behind, is apparently a more welcoming city (Sibley, 1995).

**The Transformation and Appropriation of Space**

The spaces that the boys and girls of *Lima Centro* appropriate for their own use throughout the city are peripheral spaces by one definition or another. The *casona* and *cuarto* are hidden away tucked inside buildings that are either abandoned or occupied by others existing at the periphery. The spaces of *Barrio Chino*, *Jirón* and *la escalera*, while situated in the center, are used primarily by the children and adolescents at night, when foot and vehicle traffic decline and there is less of a police presence.

*The cuarto.*

The boy’s *cuarto*, as indicated previously, is a room in a building that was originally a hotel. The rooms are now rented out by the day and week. Flanked by small *bodegas* typical of Lima, the gray concrete structure, while still sound, is old and not well maintained. The paint on the façade is faded and chipping and the wooden structures of the interior are decaying and broken. Several windows
of the four story building can be seen from the street, many of which typically have clothes hanging from lines, while others are boarded up where glass was broken but never replaced. The room that the boys share with Ernesto is small, approximately the size of a small bedroom, but is equipped with a bed and a couch. While as many as 8 boys may share this small room, they alternate sleeping arrangements most nights, to ensure that each person has his turn in the bed, the floor and the couch alike.

Figures 7 and 8. Our view of the cuarto from across the street.

The space of the cuarto serves as a place of respite, a home away from the centered spaces of the city where, during the day, the boys must conform to the rules and regulations set forth by those of the center. Unless they have other engagements or a pressing need to earn money, the boys spend much of the daylight hours inside the cuarto. Typically emerging anywhere from 12 o’clock to 3 o’clock in the afternoon for lunch, the boys usually return to the cuarto immediately after until they head out to the streets to work for a few hours at around 6 o’clock in the evening. This space of the cuarto serves as an alternative thirrdspace for the boys as it is a space where their performance of particular identities is not hindered by the structures of the center. Within the space of the
cuarto, the boys are also able to use drugs freely without fear of the legal ramifications. This ability and freedom provides another incentive for staying in the room for much of the day. Within the space of the cuarto, the boys are not confronted with visions of themselves as drug addicts, street children, pirañas, or the unwanted residue of poverty. They are not homeless, abandoned, or alone. Instead they can be just boys, passing time with their friends, enjoying the freedom they believe themselves to have, socializing, sleeping, all in a relaxed and (mostly) unregulated space.

As the photographs taken by the boys for the photovoice project suggest, the boys spent time in their cuarto playing games, acting out skits they had seen on popular television programs, and making and recording rap music on their cellular phones. Within the confines of the cuarto they found refuge from the spaces of conflict that they encountered in the centered spaces of the city, where they were continually faced with adult prescriptions of what is best and most appropriate for them. In the space of the cuarto they were able to both reject and resist the lifestyle outreach organizations and society deemed suitable for them, and embraced their own beliefs and ideas about what was best for them, exercising agency in their own lives.

La casona.

A casona is an abandoned building where only the external façade remains; it’s interior gutted, typically down to the dirt floor. This casona may be an old colonial home (hence the term “great big house”), but can be any gutted and abandoned building, typically situated within the city center (see figure 8).
During my fieldwork, the location of la casona changed frequently. *La casona* serves as the ultimate therspace, at least for the time it goes undetected by its owners or the authorities. Separate from the center, *la casona* also serves as a child/adolescent only space. In fact the *casona* is one of the few spaces where children and adults do not mingle.

*October 9, 2008.* When we asked Paz if she thought that the other kids were at Santa Rosa, the other *comedor* that Ronaldo told me about, she said no that they were all in the *casona*. She said they had sealed up the door with cement and bricks and they all got locked in—she had gone by the day before and found out. We asked if they could climb out and she said it [the wall] was really high. Eventually Ronaldo came and told us that the owners of the *casona* had come yesterday and threatened to call the police and then sealed up the door with bricks. But the boys and girls had made a hole where they could come and go from.

![Figure 9. One of the casonas](image)

The creation of *la casona* among children and adolescents living on the street can be seen as a response to their marginalization. This marginality is complicated and made worse as they are forced to fit into adult centered urban environments (Matthews & Limb, 1999; Young and Barret, 2001). Having a free
space where they can escape the scrutiny associated with the public spaces of the urban landscape enables children to behave as they deem appropriate. While similar to the space of the cuarto, the casona is a space that is free from any adult or regulatory presence. Moreover, the casona does not require the provision of any form of payment, whether it be monetary or of a sexual kind, that is required by the cuarto. Once detected by police or the home’s owners, a new casona is found, and life goes on much as it did before.

**La escalera.**

La escalera is just on the outskirts of the high foot traffic area of the Plaza de Armas, where thousands of people come to loiter in the plaza, photograph the surrounding colonial buildings and the governmental palace, attend church services, shop, or dine in any one of the nearby restaurants. The area of la escalera itself, while not subject to nearly as much foot traffic as the Plaza de Armas, still receives some pedestrian and vehicle traffic, and is in a somewhat abstracted view of various passersby and patrolling police. La escalera serves as a meeting point for children and adolescents living on the street and is a space where they can socialize, make plans for the night, use terokal and receive free meals from Good Samaritan groups. La escalera also serves as a meeting point for homeless adults and housed families as they wait for the food provided by the Good Samaritan organizations and church groups. At night, children, adolescents and adults gather, sitting on the steps and on the sidewalk just across from them, mingling in the street now free of any passing cars. They sit alone and in small
groups, conversing, laughing, fighting, nursing hungry babies, inhaling terokal from plastic bags, and waiting for la leche to arrive.

October 9, 2008. Salida with La Tierra. As we arrived at la escalera, I saw a lot of kids. Some faces I knew, others I did not. Desaul, Elvis and Mateas were there; we had actually seen them walking as we were driving to our parking lot. Liz was there sitting up at the top of the stairs hiding under her jacket. I assumed that she was hiding from me because of the camera and when I asked her she said she was hiding “because of him” and pointed to a boy in the distance. Everyone was full of energy tonight. Liz was sitting with her nephew and her grandmother sat just below her on the steps with her other nephew; they are twins. The grandmother would occasionally throughout the night scold the boys for huffing terokal within a close distance of her grandkids, which seemed strange since that was one of the major activities here.

I sat with Liz but we did not talk much. I watched the kids huff and talk to each other and then begin to play music. There is quite the ebb and flow to street life, sometimes you find lots of kids and others not so many. I wonder where everyone else is when they are not where we
usually find them—like Paz, little Ernesto and others. Pamela eventually came out with Elisa but did not hang out with the others.

I also saw Alexis, he was wrapped in a blanket, seemingly drugged. He seemed to come down to the *escalera* after Andre. He eventually sat down by me after doing the rounds with his friends. He told Fabian that he wanted to go to *La Tierra* but I looked at him and asked if he was serious. Alexis had never expressed interest in entering a *casa-hogar*, and when asked usually scoffed at the idea. He said that yes he really wanted to enter and Fabian asked that I bring him, since we knew each other well. I tried to arrange a meeting for Monday, and we arranged to meet somewhere so I could take him.

While we were sitting there, two *Serenazgo* officers came up and began yelling at the boys and girls about consuming. They made rounds through the crowd with their machine guns slung over their shoulders and their batons in hand. I felt very frightened actually, thinking at any moment they might decide to swing at someone. They kept saying “what are you waiting for, *la leche*?” And then chastised the children for consuming. The children and adults alike were silent, including Fabian, and my eyes followed each of them afraid to lose contact. Their batons were long and curved, not like ones I have seen before. At one point they swung at one of the kids behind the large garbage truck that is usually parked at the top of the stairs each night and Liz screamed at them not to hit him. I am unclear as to which boy it was. The police eventually left.
and as soon as they walked away the kids immediately started consuming again and talking. It was as if we were watching a film or in one for that matter and the director yelled action, or someone had simply pushed pause on the DVD player. As the kids began to consume again Fabian immediately chastised them asking if they could wait just a bit longer.

During the times when groups come to feed children and adolescents living on the street, the homeless, and adults and families living in poverty, *la escalera* is bustling, crowded, and filled with the sounds of talk, laughter, yelling, and sometimes singing. By the end of the night the area is littered with paper cups, plates, and plastic bags filled with the sticky remains of *terokal*. Yet during the day, *la escalera* is a clean and empty space, free of the residue from previous nights’ festivities. The city and those of the center work hard to maintain a clean appearance.

The presence of the *Serenazgo* officers in the scene described above demonstrates the precariousness of the children and adolescents within the urban landscape, and exemplifies their marginalization. The space of *la escalera*, when free from the vigilance of police officers or other forms of surveillance, however, provides the children with an alternative space nestled within the urban landscape and in close proximity to necessary services where they can come together, act out identities, and resist at the margins.

*Santa Teresita.*

*October 9, 2008.* We went to *Santa Teresita* today and saw Paz there with her son. Paz is 19 and has been on the street 10 years. She was the only
one there but said the others would come. There were a lot of young kids at the *comedor* today, and it is interesting to watch all sorts of people come and go. There were construction workers all wearing their uniforms from the municipality. There were indigenous women wearing their indigenous garb, old men, people with children, families. One boy came up to us and asked us if we had entered yet, taking us as the same as everyone else. Everyone there is genuinely nice and really don’t pay us any mind.

*Santa Teresita* is also a space that changes significantly from day to night. During the day, numerous inhabitants of the city come to this space to take advantage of the inexpensive meal offered by the church-run *comedor*. Children and adolescents living on the street comingle with other housed children and adolescents, with adults working in the city, with nuns, priests and other members of the clergy, and with many of the city’s poor. They reunite with other children and adolescents and make plans for the remainder of the day. At night, the space of this *comedor* changes into a thirdspace of possibility, a space that is in many ways like the space of *la escalera*. Outside of the main areas of vehicle and foot
traffic, *Santa Teresita* appears hidden and separate from the city, much like the spaces of the *cuarto* and *casona* are.

**Barrio Chino.**

Like *la escalera*, Barrio Chino (Chinatown) is a space within the urban landscape where children and adolescents gather to converse, play, partake in drug use and receive food and drink from Good Samaritan organizations. Unlike the other spaces utilized by those children and adolescents on the streets, *Barrio Chino* is not hidden in any way. It is a space that experiences significant foot traffic during the day and often at night. During the day, *Barrio Chino* is a bustling shopping area and home to many *Chifa* restaurants. At night, as shops and restaurants close, children and adolescents are able to make use of the area more freely.

![Figure 14. El muro in Barrio Chino.](image)

12.9.08. *Calle* with Chicos del Centro in Jirón. We went to *Santa Teresita* but there were no kids there. We then walked to *Barrio Chino* and saw Javier, Desaul and Hector. Javier jumped rope with the girls; I just watched as my stomach is a wreck. After they jumped and Javier grew tired he walked down the ramp to the garage to do something, most likely prepare his bag of *terokal*. *Barrio Chino* was still alive tonight until
late as most of the stores stay open later for Christmas. Javier was down in the garage for some time and I continued to look down and saw him with his back to me and what looked like him preparing his drug: pouring it from can to bag or from can to bottle.

The Right to Be Different

In *Thirdspace*, Soja draws explicitly on the work of Henry Lefebvre and his theories on space and spatiality. In fact Soja maintains that his theory of thirdspace is directly tied to Lefebvre’s discussion of space in similar yet less explicit terms. Lefebvre was the first to theorize difference and otherness spatially. He argued “for a need to struggle on a wider terrain . . . the right to difference, to be different, against the increasing forces of homogenization, fragmentation, and hierarchically organized power . . .” (Soja, p.35). Lefebvre wrote of a “collective space of resistance” which Soja translates into a thirdspace of political choice, a meeting place for peripheral and marginalized subjects. It is apparent that the boys involved in this study and children and adolescents on the streets in general reject a traditional life trajectory. This rejection, while occurs for complex and varied reasons, allows them to come together with other boys (and girls) existing on the margins.

It is necessary, however, to first interrogate the use of the phrase “political choice.” First, I do not wish to argue that coming to the street is a choice for those children and adolescents living within it, at least not in the way in which middle class people from industrialized nations understand choice. I do not believe that anyone would choose a life of poverty, of homelessness, or a life
filled with the daily stresses that these boys and girls encounter with regards to the acquisition of their next meal, a place to rest their head, or the difficult position of allowing someone to take advantage of them in order to secure both of these necessities. The term choice implies that there exist at least two viable options, and one chooses one option over the other. Rather than use the term choice, I would argue that a decision is made, and it is often a decision to leave a negative situation for one that is deemed less negative, for whatever reason. The decision to leave one’s home environment to live on the street is not a decision that simply happens without thought and consideration. There are many factors at play that push and pull children into the street: negative or abusive home environments, the prospect of making money, the allure of freedom, of drugs, of a space uncontrolled by adults, and poverty, to name a few. Each of these things serves to draw or push children into the street and away from their home environments. This is a gradual process, however, that happens over time and may not be viewed by the children and adolescents as a conscious decision or choice, rather as something that simply occurred. Once in the street, children and adolescents must make the choice to stay on the street, to not return home and not to enter a casa-hogar. But the term choice here is also problematic, particularly when we examine the alternatives.

What I understand Soja to mean, when he speaks of political choice, speaks more to the choice to reject the expected life path prescribed by those of center. Children are expected to (or at least to want to) grow up in the family into which they were born, to reject street life and either return home or enter a casa-
When faced with these options and they choose to remain in the streets, they are making a political choice to reject mainstream expectations of who and how they should be, of what they should want, and how they should proceed with their lives. Though the options are limited, they choose the “right to be different.”

Understanding thirdspace in this way requires a review of the ways in which I examined identity development among children on the street. As I argued in chapter 3, many boys and girls on the street develop an attachment to a street identity in opposition to the constant and continual suggestion by adults that they reject this way of life. Faced with constant criticism of their lifestyle, the boys and girls respond with a stronger attachment to the street child identity. The spaces of the *casona*, *cuarto*, *la escalera* and *Santa Teresita* offer them a place where they are able to fully embrace their identities as street children while exploring new and different identities in the process.

Lefebvre argued that space can be understood in a trialectic: three unique conceptualizations about what space is and does. The first is referred to as “perceived space” or “spatial practice.” “Spatial practice, as the process of producing the material form of social spatiality, is thus presented as both a medium and an outcome of human activity, behavior, and experience” (Soja, p.66). This space is the space of everyday. It is materialized, socially produced and empirical space. Soja refers to this type of space as Firstspace. Firstspace is the space of the concrete. It is “directly sensible and open, within limits, to accurate measurement and description” (p.66).
Secondspace, or what Lefebvre refers to as representations of space, is a “conceptualized space.” This “conceived space,” or mental space, is the “representation of ideology and power, of control and surveillance” (p. 67). This dominant space tends towards a system of signs. This space is subjective and imagined (Creswell, 2004). Secondspace, as Creswell (2004) explains, relates to the ways in which many people understand place, or a “felt and cared for center of meaning” (p. 38).

Thirdspace, or the space of representation, on the other hand, is linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life. Thirdspace is understood as the counterspaces of resistance; it is perceived, conceived and lived. Thirdspace, a space that occurs on the margins, is a space of struggle and a space of resistance. For the boys and girls of Lima Centro, this thirdspace is a perceived, concrete space of Lima Centro, the conceived space of utopia, and a space where they can live out the possibilities, where they can reject and resist adultist conceptions of who and how they are supposed to be.

**Thirdspace as a Space of Adolescence**

For the majority of those boys and girls who come to the street to exist within this thirdspace of possibility, their time there is finite, however, as this thirdspace seems to be synonymous with youth. For the large numbers of children and young adolescents who come to the streets of Lima each day, month, and year, very few make it a permanent home. For many it is a place of both childhood and adolescence. While some are engulfed by the street and street life, remaining on the streets long after their adolescence has ended, most eventually
leave the street in search of a more mainstream lifestyle. They come to the street less frequently and begin to establish for themselves a life outside of street life. Whether because they return home, find more regular work or rent a room in another part of the city, the street becomes less of a factor in who they are and their daily existence. Street life is no longer about who they can be or hope to become. It is no longer seen an alternative to a negative home environment, and ceases to be a place of possibility. The children and adolescents grow up, they become adults and things are somehow different.

Furthermore, as children get older and become more deeply involved in drugs, they are less able to engage with thirdspace in a way that is productive, imaginative, or purposeful.

March 17, 2009. Camila is progressively becoming worse—she does not say hello and actually kept her distance except when she came over to signal to Wallace that it was time to go. She looks crazed and very drugged. Wallace was also very drugged and could not form sentences. He tried to talk but words could not come out and he stood leaning significantly to one side. I tried to ask him where the other kids were and he tried to speak but could not. When Camila approached, Bernice put her hand on her shoulder and Camila winced. Wallace stood there with a belt in his hand and Layla speculated that he was threatening Camila, but I have to say it seems more that she is the one who controls that relationship. We said our goodbyes and left.
Camila and Wallace have been on the street for many years. Each of them is over eighteen and spent much of their childhood and adolescence on the street. Each has progressively become more entrenched in drugs and the changes I witnessed in Camila over the year that I knew her were remarkable. While Camilla was never particularly friendly, outgoing, or talkative, she became even more withdrawn, paranoid, and less in touch with reality.

Soja argues,

those who are territorially subjugated by the workings of hegemonic power have two inherent choices: either accept their imposed differentiation and division, making the best of it; or mobilize to resist, drawing upon their putitive positioning, their assigned “otherness,” to struggle against this power-filled imposition. (p.87)

Children and adolescents who once resisted and struggled against the mainstream, may eventually resign themselves to a place in the margins.

**Some Final Thoughts**

As Matthews and Limb (1999) have acknowledged, children throughout the world “come in all shapes and sizes and may be distinguished along various axes of gender, race, ethnicity, ability, health and age” (p. 65). Furthermore, children encounter significant variations in their early experiences. These differences “will have an important bearing on their geographies and should not be overlooked in any discourse” (Matthews & Limb, 1999, p. 65). Stephens (1995) explained socio-spatial marginalization as a clear part of growing up for children, “though some children may experience it more than others” (as cited in
Matthews & Limb, 1999, p.65). Children and adolescents making their ways in the urban landscape of Lima Centro experience marginalization in many and most aspects of their lives: familially, socially, and spatially.

Within the spaces of Barrio Chino, Jirón de la Unión, la escalera, and for the boys in the photovoice project, the cuarto, however, children and adolescents on the street find and create spaces of possibility. These are spaces where they are not constrained by dominant discourses about what a child is and should be, discourses that argue that children must be looked after and cared for by both families and the state (Canella, 1997; Prout, 2002; Ruiz, 1999), or that perceive of children as socially passive (Ruiz, 1999). The creation and use of these various spaces demonstrates the ways in which children and adolescents begin to express agency in their lives, rejecting adultist prescriptions of who and how they should be.

Casa-hogares and outreach organizations that come into the spaces of Lima Centro can capitalize on the remarkable traits that these young people possess as they exercise agency over futures and reject mainstream trajectories expected for children. Celebration of this resistance may yield better results than forcing children to reject the identity and space where they find themselves to be most comfortable. The window of opportunity is short, as drug use continues or worsens and adolescence draws to an end, but is there nonetheless.
Chapter 6

RE-SITUATING RESEARCH: RESEARCHER SUBJECTIVITY AND THE IMPORTANCE OF CRITICAL PERSONAL NARRATIVE

Throughout this dissertation, I have weaved narrative, excerpts from field notes, and even song lyrics to illustrate the context within which I conducted research, and to explain behaviors observed and conclusions drawn. I have examined how Good Samaritan groups and outreach organizations co-create the space of street life with the children and adolescents who navigate it. In this chapter, I explore my presence on the streets of Lima, and my own influence on the research context. I believe that an exploration of this nature is essential in a research context that is as complex as the one in this study and with a population that is vulnerable, marginalized and as complicated as the boys who participated.

Traditionally, academics have approached research as a means to an end. Research is seen as a viable tool in understanding social phenomena, a means for solving societal ills, and investigating the lives of those habitually and historically ignored, forgotten or pushed into the margins. As researchers in the social sciences, we often approach research with both the hope and expectation that we will discover answers to problems, and obtain concrete practical applications of our findings. We research to evaluate the effectiveness of programs and interventions, to better teaching practices, and to create more inclusive classroom environments (Artiles, Kozleski, Dorn & Christensen, 2006; Artiles & McClafferty, 1998; Stake, 2000). As qualitative researchers, we frequently seek to understand social phenomena, to shed light on poorly
understood or misunderstood situations. We research to produce knowledge and intrinsic to our research is the expectation that new understandings will lead to social and societal change (St. Pierre & Roulston, 2006). Our view of research therefore carries with it the assumption that the problems and phenomena researched have real, although often complex, solutions.

What's more, the social sciences, particularly the genre of educational research, have adopted a science-based approach to research, and inherent in this model is the expectation of researcher objectivity (St. Pierre & Roulston, 2006). In fact, “there has long been a tendency to view the self of the social science observer as a potential contaminant, something to be separated out, neutralized, minimized, standardized, and controlled” (Fine, Weis, Weseen & Wong, 2000, p.108). As we adopt a problem-solving perspective, however, our own subjectivities immediately influence the way we approach research (Richardson, 1992), as it is our value-systems that determine what we view as a problem in the first place.

**Critical Personal Narrative**

According to Swadener and Burdell (1999), critical personal narrative “moves away from claims of objective reality” and away from the truth-finding mission of more positivistic research. These narratives play an important role in decolonizing research as they serve to disrupt and disturb traditional research, drawing attention to the complexities and contradictions in doing research, particularly with marginalized populations (Mutua & Swadener, 2004). Chapman (2004) argues critical personal narrative is critical (and particularly useful)
because it “works with issues of power and knowledge” and personal because it “is about the author,” and “it seeks to make the personal experience usefully political” (p. 98). As I answer Lincoln’s (1997) call to “break the science habit,” experimental forms of writing, like critical personal narrative, that focus on researcher subjectivity become instrumental. Breuer, Mruck, & Roth (2002) argued that “research—the process and its products—depends on the characteristics of the persons involved, on their biological, mental, social, cultural, and historical etc. make up and/or condition” (para. 5), and that we must therefore, be aware and make explicit these personal characteristics so as to understand their effect on research outcomes. Furthermore, Lincoln (1997) asserted that researcher objectivity is obsolete and that we as researchers must begin to include ourselves in research texts. As the ‘self’ is not a single unit, but multiple and nuanced, how do we choose “which self we want to expose, which persona we will risk to audience gaze?” (Lincoln, 1997, p. 41). She reminds us that “readers and theoreticians alike ask that texts "come clean" with the author's partial, situated, but authentic self, preferably the "self" that showed up to begin the fieldwork, the self that accomplished the fieldwork, and the self who left changed” (Lincoln, 1997, p. 47-48).

While “good research” is supposed to be value and culture free, in writing this dissertation, I recognize the impossibility of this assumption (Harding & Norberg, 2005). Feminist scholars have long argued for the need to recognize researcher positionality and to make transparent our situatedness within the research context and within the world (Harding, 1987; Maynes & Pierce, 2005).
Harding (1987), in her discussion of feminist methodologies in the social sciences, argued “we need to avoid the "objectivist" stance that attempts to make the researcher's cultural beliefs and practices invisible while simultaneously skewering the research object’s beliefs and practices to the display board” (p. 9). She continued, “the beliefs and behaviors of the researcher are part of the empirical evidence for (or against) the claims advanced in the results of research. This evidence too must be open to critical scrutiny no less than what is traditionally defined as relevant evidence” (p. 9). Researchers and participants together create the research context and therefore both must be analyzed as viable sources of data.

My purpose in weaving critical personal narrative into this dissertation is to not only problematize the notion of the neutral and objective researcher, but also to scrutinize, question and intensely examine my own vulnerabilities, experiences, and subjectivities. Law (2004) maintains that methods do not depict or discover realities, but rather they take part in the performance of those realities. So as researchers use seemingly objective methods like interviews or participant observations, it is through these interactions that realities are enacted, selves are played out, and new spaces are created. What this means specifically in the case of the participants in this study, is a move away from the intention of solving a problem, or of finding the solution to the complex “street child” phenomenon, and towards a multi-vocal, multi-layered and more nuanced understanding of children within the cultural context of Lima, generally, and their relationship with street-life specifically.
Richardson (2001) argues, “people who write are always writing about their lives, even when they disguise this through the omniscient voice of science or scholarship” (p. 34). She maintains that try as we might, writers cannot suppress their humanity. It comes up in their “choice of metaphors, topics and discourses” (p.34). Rather than try to suppress myself and my experiences in the field, I choose to make explicit my presence and the ways in which this research affected me. While the use of narrative helps me to humanize the research participants in my writing, critical personal narrative allows me to acknowledge that I was there; it puts me on the scene while permitting me to admit that the research process affected me and that it also affected other people (Lincoln, 1997).

As an artist I understand the difficulty in putting yourself out there, and the vulnerability required in a thoughtful critical personal narrative. It requires opening yourself up, exposing your intimate self to be judged, critiqued, and picked apart by the outside world. I also know that any real art, art that touches, affects and that exposes comes from a place deep within the artist. It takes courage, perseverance, and a certain carelessness to display oneself so honestly. Writing a personal narrative in a critical way requires this same courage. It is much like the art I once created, which now seems like a lifetime ago. The use of critical personal narrative in this dissertation comes from the most honest part of me. It comes from a profound care and love for the boys who shared their lives with me, who opened up themselves to me, who allowed themselves to be vulnerable. As Fine, Weis, Weseen and Wong (2000) remind us, our informants
have long been “carrying the burden of representation as we hide behind the cloak of alleged neutrality” (p. 109); perhaps it is time that we allow ourselves to be vulnerable.

In this critical narrative I consider my mental, social, and privileged conditions/positions and examine my own desires and expectations situated within this research study. I question and reflect on my hopes for the participants involved and disappointments when these hopes were not fulfilled. I also examine my fears about doing research right that created anxiety and tension during fieldwork. In this narrative, I draw from field notes, memos, and personal research journal entries, but also, I draw on my daily reflections and recollections as I analyzed data having left the field some time ago. These daily reflections further convey what the research experience was and what it meant for me, how I perceived my outsider status, and the significance of the relationships forged.

Taking a Step Back

I found that in the midst of doing research, I struggled to come to terms with some of the things I witnessed, with my own hero complex, and understanding the real benefit to doing this research. On several occasions I was forced to take a step back to try and assess all of these fears and concerns that at times overwhelmed me. And while I did not necessarily suddenly come up with the answers during these breaks from research, I was usually able to develop a renewed sense of faith that if I observed closely and diligently wrote my field notes, the answers would eventually come. I often feared that this faith was both
blind and ignorant, but rather than abandoning the entire endeavor, decided it was the better option.

Over the eleven months I spent in Lima, I suffered bouts of illness ranging from the expected stomach virus to the less treatable kinds of homesickness and exhaustion. As a novice researcher, I often questioned my abilities and at times, the point of this undertaking. In fact, I questioned if the research would have any value or add anything new to the already extensive research about children on the street. I knew I was never going to be able to rescue the boys I worked with or even change their particular circumstances, though I often had romantic ideations of whisking one or two away with me on my return to the States, fantasies about them abandoning street life, and maybe even attending college one day. These fantasies while fleeting, at times got the best of me.

**Becoming Too Close**

Lima, while a modern and amazing city, could be exhausting and oppressive. Being confronted with the extreme gap between the rich and the poor on a daily basis coupled with the darkness of constant cloud cover and heavy pollution wore on our already heavy hearts. I must be honest, seeing children the age of my own young nephews making their ways on the streets alone, huffing glue and suffering from serious illness like tuberculosis was hard and contrary to my middle class sensibilities. I tried to adopt a neutral perspective and remind myself that this was not my culture. I reminded myself that as objective researcher it was not my place to judge or arbitrarily place my values onto my participants and the people of Lima. This was not an easy endeavor, and I realize
now, an unrealistic one. I came to the field a grown person, with certain beliefs that would not change, regardless of how hard I tried. I do not believe that the street is an ideal place for a child to grow up and I do not believe that children, any child, housed or unhoused, can truly know what is best for them. I, however, do not believe that one’s status as an adult automatically makes them an authority on the best situation for a child. I do believe that the boys in this study, those I spent time with and got to know on various levels, need to be able to exercise agency in decisions about their futures and what is best for them. When faced with limited options, I can say that I now understand why the street often seems like the best alternative.

During my time in Lima, I developed a certain level of closeness with several of the boys in this study and grew to love and care for them very much. I wondered if this fondness was dangerous or somehow contrary to the objectivity required of research, and of course worried that I was headed down a dangerous path. When Manuel would spend his very limited funds to call me, I felt delighted and even validated. When the boys now, over Messenger, thank me for the time I spent with them, or ask me repeatedly when I will return, I become particularly emotional. Or when Alexis left La Tierra after being interned there for over a month, I was crushed, and when Manuel, after finding out he had contracted TB, decided against entering a casa-hogar and to deal with treatment on his own, I was devastated.

Just before Christmas, Alexis, one of the participants in the photography project, entered La Tierra, the casa-hogar where I was conducting observations.
At first he kept to himself, busy making *pulseras* and adorning his wrists with multiple bracelets of various colors and styles. He gifted some of them, but most he kept for himself as evidence of the work he had accomplished. He seemed serious about staying in *La Tierra* and spoke about the things he might want to do when he completed his program. He slowly began to open up, and seemed more comfortable there. He was calmer, less mischievous, but still had his sense of humor. When Alexis left, I felt not only disappointed and defeated, but as if I had failed as well:

*January 19, 2009.* Today was hard. In psychology Alexis refused to cooperate. He said he was tired and he did not want to participate and for the most part he did not. I would try to rouse him, to get him involved, but he showed no interest. There was one project where they had to color in a flower and then list their best qualities in each of the petals. Alexis wrote “*ninguna*” in each petal. After he was done he put his hood on so it covered his face and leaned his head back on the bench. He was behaving in a way that demonstrated not only that he was absolutely not interested in what they were doing, but also that he had no interest in being there.

Later, I saw his psychologist trying to talk to him, but he gave her the cold shoulder and refused to talk. When she came outside, I asked her what happened and she indicated that he would not talk to her, so I went in. I told Alexis I was leaving and he said ok and shook my hand. I then said, “but before I go I want to talk to you.” So we sat down on the table and I asked him what was going on this morning. He said “*ya me aburrí*”;
he was tired of this place and wanted to leave. I asked what had changed from the day before and he eventually explained that the other kids had animated him about life on the street. He told me that he had been thinking a lot about calle and wanted to get out; he was tired of being locked up. I suggested that maybe tomorrow he would not feel the same and that perhaps he should give it another day or so. I tried to make a deal with him, proposing that he stay another two weeks and if he still felt the same he could leave then. He said, “I am not going to stay two weeks, a week or even a day. I want to leave.” The psychologists all asked that I talk to him, to try and convince him to stay. I felt conflicted. On the one hand I didn’t want to try to convince Alexis to do something he didn’t want to do. I also didn’t want to confuse my role with that of an outreach worker. But I was already trying to convince him. In fact, I had just tried to make a deal with him. I wanted Alexis to stay, to not return to that room with Ernesto and the other boys. So I went in to talk to him. La Señora was trying to convince him to take a pastilla that would help with anxiety and help him relax. I asked him where he would go and he said he did not want to go back to the room; that he would probably go to Grau (another area in Lima Centro). I had honestly never seen Alexis like this, he wanted to leave so badly and did not want to talk to anyone. After a long time trying to convince him, Alexis eventually just said no and that he would like to leave and that if they did not let him he would escape. He signed his release paper, putting his name, age and the date. They took
him to get his things: his zampoña and wiro, and while he was gone I
broke down. The tears started flowing from my eyes and I could not stop
them. I tried and tried but to no avail. Eventually Alexis came back and
Fabian and I walked him to the door.

While there were certain things that I grew accustomed to over the months I
spent in Lima, there were a few things that I could not reconcile. The affection I
developed for my research participants was one of these. Alexis’ leaving was
particularly difficult for me. I felt so invested in his future, in his program at La
Tierra and in his well-being. I felt defeated. I remember crying in front of staff,
and being angry and embarrassed that I could not control my emotions. I had not
expected that I would feel this invested. This was not the first time I broke down
about research participants, and unfortunately, would not be the last.

At the time, I wondered if being this invested would cloud my objectivity
and negatively affect the research. I worried that I had become caught up in the
agenda of the casa-hogar and of the outreach organizations, wanting to save the
boys from the streets and from themselves. I worried that I had become too
emotionally attached. I can honestly admit that developing such a deep care and
affection for Alexis and the other boys in this study certainly affected the
research, but it is no longer something I feel I need to hide or diminish. Who I
am, what I am, how I view the world all affected not only how I understood what
was happening around me but how people behaved and interacted with me.
Because of the investment I felt (and continue to feel) in my participants’ lives,
because of what I wanted for the boys, because I could not let go of these desires,
the boys showed a particular version of themselves to me, one that was perhaps different than what they displayed to others. It is the relationships that developed between us that shape how I understand street life and its interconnectedness with various outreach organizations, and in the end the conclusions I draw from this research and share with members of the academic community.

Reflecting on the day’s events, I began to replay the fieldtrip I had taken Alexis on just the day before he left La Tierra:

There is something I wonder about yesterday. When we were at the plaza in San Miguel, Alexis said that instead of lunch I should buy him a polo and I laughed and said he had to eat. He then later suggested we eat somewhere near the hogar and so we went that way. When we got close he changed his mind and said let’s just go to the hogar and eat. I couldn’t tell if this was difficult for him because we could not make a decision as to where to eat or if being outside made him feel worse for the way he looked and not being able to have the freedom that he was used to having. Either way I feel somehow responsible.

I went on to see Alexis frequently after he left, though he would disappear, just as he had before, for weeks at a time. In conversations with him over MSN messenger after returning to the U.S., I came to realize that Alexis would most likely be okay, which is not something I can say for all of the boys I worked with. He was a wanderer, a free spirit of sorts, and ended up securing a job—at least for a time—with a long distance bus company, making frequent trips between the selva and Lima.
At the time, however, I wondered if I was somehow responsible for Alexis leaving the casa, having taken him out for a field trip just the day before. Being out in the real world, no longer protected within the confines of the casa-hogar, can be shocking and depressing. As I have indicated before, many of the boys I encountered on the street associated street life with a sense of freedom, this freedom being tied to the ways in which they were able to conduct their lives including obtaining things through less than legal means. Alexis had prided himself on the way he looked. He frequently purchased nice new clothing and typically showed off on these days. He was adept at stealing and told me stories of how he could steal cell phones and money from people without them even knowing. I wondered if being out near a shopping area made him miss being able to fend for himself and buy himself the nice things he longed for.

Looking back, I believe that our outing had something to do with Alexis’ decision to leave the casa-hogar. I also believe that if it weren’t me who took him on a fieldtrip then it would have been someone else and Alexis would have eventually left La Tierra regardless. The casa is not set up in such a way that encourages children to stay. Furthermore as new children and adolescents enter, fresh from the streets, they bring with them the excitement and appeal of street life: a reminder of what they have left behind.

Doing Research Right

The concerns I had for becoming too close to my research participants and for my inability to be objective translated into a fear that I was not doing research right. This fear was exacerbated by the fact that I also really enjoyed what I was
doing. In fact, while Lima and street work were at times exhausting, both had many rewards. My days were spent conversing, sometimes about street life, but sometimes about non-research related things like life in the U.S. or movies. I got to play games, make bracelets, walk around the city, play fútbol, and “just hang out” on a daily basis. It was this hanging out, however, and the accompanying enjoyment that I garnered from these everyday experiences that led me to question if I was doing research right. Frankly, I had never had a job that I enjoyed like this, so my immediate instinct was to assume that I was somehow on the wrong path, and missing the “real” research in all of this.

As a novice researcher, I approached the outreach workers with a great deal of respect as many of them had been conducting outreach for years. I would often, as we walked through the streets of downtown Lima in search of children, attempt to gather as much information from them about the street, street life, and our population as I could. Several of these workers had been conducting outreach for over a decade and have witnessed children grow into adolescents and then into young adults and have their own children all on the streets of Lima. They knew a deeper and more intimate history of many of the boys we encountered on the streets, one that often colored their view of them. I found it hard not to allow the information they shared with me of each boys’ past alter the way I came to know and care about them. Instead, I hoped to know them as they chose to share themselves with me, as persons with complex identities. I also found it difficult not to allow their expert opinions and knowledge overwhelm the development of my own expert knowledge. It was not my aim to regurgitate their ideas about
how and why boys came to the streets and often stayed there, but instead allow myself to process their ideas, to allow them to ruminate in my mind as I gathered my own data through conversations and observations.

Learning to trust my own investigative instincts took time, though I am not sure this ever fully occurred in the field. I tried to develop a sense of confidence in what I witnessed and the information I gathered from the boys through our informal conversations. This confidence did not always come easy and my outsider status to Peru, Lima, and to the streets was often mistaken as naïveté. There was a genuine struggle in trusting what I perceived and how I understood it, and in maintaining faith in this. This struggle translated to a continual and persistent questioning of my capabilities, the research and myself. This questioning carried over into my own behaviors on the street: Was I doing it right? Was it okay to do this, or that? And what if I wasn’t doing it right? What then? One very concrete example of this constant questioning came as I struggled with the idea of purchasing the boys food. I had originally proposed that an incentive for the boys involved in this study would be offering lunch in exchange for an interview about the photographs they had taken. This incentive was written in my dissertation proposal, and approved and agreed upon by my committee. When I shared this proposed idea with the NGO I was working with, they were vehemently opposed. They argued that not only did this provide the boys with some kind of subsistence enabling them to stay on the streets, something that they had long campaigned against, but in the end would create problems for me as they would come to equate me with food and expect this on a continual basis. I found
it difficult to wrestle with the idea of not offering the boys anything in return for their time. What was their incentive for doing this then? I also wondered how the NGO differentiated this from their own provision of food, clothing, showers and the like during their daily taller. For me this seemed to be subsidizing their subsistence far more than an occasional lunch.

After the NGO closed their doors, I felt less constrained by their philosophies and decided to trust my instincts. When I went to the boys’ cuarto both in an attempt to maintain contact and to advise that there would be no more casa-taller, we went for lunch. It seemed like the appropriate thing to do. Lunch in Lima Centro is far from expensive. In fact a lunch at any local comedor costs hardly more than a dollar, and there are other places where you can find it for cheaper. This first lunch, I came to realize, led to, as the NGO argued, if not an expectation that lunch would often be provided, certainly a hope that it would, and combined with my whiteness and extranjera status, a perception that I had money to spare. While Jason and I were funding our own way in Lima, aside from a few small grants provided by my university, and money was finite, we did in fact have more money than they boys would ever have, and a few dollars on lunch was certainly not going to send us home. The issue was based on principle and perceptions, and it was important to me that with the provision of lunch came an exchange for honest and candid information. This balance was a constant struggle, though proved to be more difficult with some of the boys than with others. Some were happy to receive food when I offered, while others took to continual begging, which was difficult to deal with and compromised my ability
to conduct research with them. I began to question again if I had done the right thing, but could I really stop what had already been started? I made it a rule that we did not do lunch more than once a week, and this would often give the boys something to look forward too. If they became too aggressive in their begging, I would leave. While it was not my job to mother them, or teach them responsibility, I needed to protect myself from feeling used, which happened on occasion. This led to disappointment for me as leaving the field based on principle meant one day less to collect data. Sometimes the boys would eat and then suddenly have to run, which caused me to further question my decision to provide food.

The boys that ended up being involved in the photography project did not regularly sleep on the streets. In fact, they had their own cuarto where they spent much of their time. They were connected to the other boys who slept on the streets or in the casona, and occasionally found themselves doing the same, but for the most part they worked on the combis and in various restaurants around the city playing music, and then retired to their room where they would socialize and use terokal late into the night. Therefore, conversations were not as easily had as they were with those actually living on the streets. With those boys who slept on the street or in the casona, who used the street as more of a living space, rather than a space for mostly work, we could sit together on the sidewalk and have relatively informal and spontaneous conversations. With the boys of the cuarto, however, events had to be orchestrated for us to have a reason to spend time together. There were times where I was able to follow them as they played music
in the *combis* or in restaurants, but this was not always a feasible option as some of the boys found it odd and intrusive. Instead, after the *taller* closed, we played fútbol together, made *pulseras*, or ate lunch. There were times when I struggled with the boys and tired of battles over food. Jesus and Jorge’s requests, for example, could be relentless, and these times typically coincided with their heavy use of drugs. I worried that my unwillingness to give into their requests would compromise our relationships.

I also viewed how the boys handled the offering of food as determinate of their tenure in the study. Jesus and Jorge eventually (more than six months into the study) became extremely aggressive after my repeated refusal to buy them food and became less available. Alexis and Manuel, on the other hand, gladly accepted food when it was offered, and also had little to no issue if it wasn’t. This is not to say that they didn’t ask, they did, but if I responded that I had just bought them food the day before or a few days earlier, they took this reminder in stride and did not proceed with their requests. I found that, because of this, my relationships with Alexis and Manuel, in particular, were easier, and that both of us got something more out of it.

The provision of food served as a constant point of contention for me as I struggled to *do the right thing* or to *do research right*. Should I have never offered food in the first place? Did the boys see me as a source of money and nothing else? If I had never offered food, would things have been different? These questions were ones that I asked myself continuously, and are ones that I
was never fully able to reconcile. I did, however, also pose this dilemma to the boys that I was involved with and this is how they responded:

As we sat at Valdo’s comedor, I decided to mention to the boys the nagging concern about the provision of food. “Some people say that I shouldn’t buy you food. That you will come to always expect it,” I said. The boys responded that they thought that was silly. Manuel in particular said that was crazy, indicating that other people, like the outreach workers come and expect to hang out with them, but they refuse to offer food.

“What are we going to hang out with them for?” He argued.

For many of the boys, there was no point in a visit, where I came to ask them about their lives, and inquire about the goings on of the cuarto and the street without the prospect of getting something in return. Though I did not always give in to the boys’ requests, they knew that there existed the possibility that something may come of it. This something, however, wasn’t always in the form of food. For a period of time the boys, Jason and I sat together on the steps outside of their room and made pulseras, which is a popular pastime among many children and adolescents on the street and in the casa-hogar. I offered the supplies; the boys offered their knowledge and taught me how to make the bracelets. With this act we were able to spend time together and I could inquire more casually about their lives. I found that too many questions all at once tended to put the boys on the defensive, as many were hesitant to reveal much of their histories. Having activities we could share together, whether they be the photographs, creating the albums, making pulseras, playing fútbol, or eating
lunch offered us a reason to be together, one that was less awkward than simply, “I want to learn and write about you.” The boys knew my intentions as a researcher, but this meant very little to them.

While I am aware now that these activities proved to be necessary and important research tools, the provision of food is just one example where self-criticism got the best of me. Looking back, I understand that it wasn’t my inability to do research right that caused problems, but the fact that I was conducting research with relatively unstable adolescents whose existence on the periphery coupled with their use of drugs made our relationship complicated at times. My whiteness and the insecurities I struggled with as a novice researcher further exacerbated these problems and contributed to the difficulties encountered in carrying out this project. This understanding garnered now offered little consolation in the field, however.

**Health and Well-Being**

On top of these often-difficult emotions and insecurities, I also wrestled with fears surrounding issues of my own safety and well-being. Tuberculosis was a real and constant threat, and while I was mostly able to ignore this threat, it continually lingered in the back of my mind. There came a period, however, where I was ill for more than a month, and this threat that I had been trying to ignore came rearing to the forefront. I found myself wanting and needing to be tested, if not to determine the ongoing cause for my illness, then to put my mind at ease. Luckily, having spent so much time with the boys who on several
occasions had to go to the *posta* to drop off a sputum sample, I knew exactly how to go about it:

January 20, 2009. We then went directly to the *Centro de Salud* on *Ejército*. In my discussion with the doctor, she explained that Peru, much more than most, is the “*país de TBC*” and that many patients begin their treatments but do not finish them and therefore develop a resistance to the drugs. She also said that as a TB country, the symptoms take many different forms, so it is always wise to test for it. She cautioned that we should wear masks and be very careful in our closeness to TB patients. Apparently the disease can last in the air for two hours and can reach distances up to five meters away when a person coughs. Contrary to Dr. Mund’s opinion, she believes TB to be extremely contagious. After examining me, however, she does not think I have TB.

I do want to write about my struggle with illness and the ways in which sickness has not only made my work difficult, but also complicated. The fear of tuberculosis has become quite great and it makes continuing to develop relationships with the boys difficult. It is good to know that if Manuel continues his treatment, he is no longer contagious—at least this is what the doctor said—that once a person begins treatment after a bit, they are no longer contagious. She also explained that the treatment is a mountain of pills every day for two months and then it is twice a week for the next four months. I have been really working myself up with the fear
of TB and while I am scared to take the test, I know it will be better to know than to wonder.

This fear that I had developed over tuberculosis, in part rational and perhaps in part irrational, made Lima and this research study a difficult context in which to live. While I could take some precautions, like hold my breath when one of the boys coughed, there were others I was unwilling to take. Wearing a mask around the boys and in street outreach would only serve as yet another barrier between us and prevent me from ever developing close or genuine relationships with them. I found that I just had to live with the fear, and hope that if I did contract it, it was treatable.

**Conclusion**

My intention with this chapter is to do more than problematize the notion of researcher objectivity. It is my aim to highlight the importance of subjectivity and the necessity of a multi-layered, multifaceted understanding of social interactions, social situations, and social phenomena. In order to understand complex issues, we as researchers must begin to investigate, examine, and interrogate our own positionalities within the research context. Not only must we make our situatedness transparent, but we must also begin to specifically investigate our positionalities in order to create spaces of possibility. For me, this chapter does not replace a presentation of data collected in the field, as these narratives are not an exercise in vanity. I cannot ignore the purpose of the research, which is to get at the complexities of the relationships between children,
the street, and the abundance of state run and non-profit organizations that aim to help them.

As Lather (2007) warned, it is important that we not become “enamored with reflexivity” (p. 30). She argues instead for a post-humanist reflexivity, which is not about individualized angst or a self absorbed account of the researchers experience. It is, however, about an appreciation and use of our stories “for what they can add to the depth of our analysis” (p. 30). As Richardson (1992) argues, “when we write social science, we use our authority and privileges to talk about the people we study. No matter how we stage the text—the authors—are doing the staging” (p. 131). Highlighting my own fears and insecurities, while painful, provides for a merging of stories, admitting that I, too, was a key figure on the scene. As we move towards a more personal, self-conscious form of writing, privileging story over analysis and encouraging multiple and varied readings of the stories we write, our accounts of ourselves may be “unflattering and imperfect”, but are both “human and believable” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 748). Having been raised with a “fake it until you make it” mentality, it is not easy for me to admit to being a novice in a published text, let alone admitting to my own insecurities and feelings of not belonging. But by reflecting on the ways in which the research affected me I am able to add another level in the understanding of the research context. I understand, and am now willing to admit, that who I am, what I am, and how I view the world all affected not only how I understood what was happening around me but how my participants interacted with me and the findings that I draw from this research.
The fears that I have outlined here contributed significantly to decisions I made in the field, including decisions about purchasing food, my decision to not spend time and conduct observations within the space of the cuarto, and my decisions about where and when to conduct observations in the street. It is highly plausible that because I developed such a strong connection to and care for several of the boys in my study that I perceived and understood our interactions in ways that a more “objective” researcher might not. I am certain that Manuel interacted with me in ways that he did not engage others, and that much of this can be attributed to his perception of me as a mother figure. Manuel never wanted to disappoint me, and for this reason was often unable to be truly honest about his life, his history and his decisions. On the other hand, it is because he trusted me so thoroughly that he was able to be so candidly honest about some of the goings on in the cuarto and the tenuous relationship the boys maintained with Ernesto.
Chapter 7

SO WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?: CLOSING REFLECTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In this dissertation I have explored the use of photographic methods in research with adolescents living on the street in Lima, Peru and the role that photographs played in their lives. I have examined the adoption of and attachment to a street identity, and further explored how casa-hogares and outreach organizations facilitate the creation of and attachment to this identity. I have presented an understanding of the street and street life that speaks to the complexity of the lives of those children and adolescents making their ways on the street and the interconnectedness between them and the urban landscape. In this final chapter, I synthesize these understandings and provide recommendations to the various stakeholders in the lives of children on the street, including outreach organizations and researchers.

Remembering the Beginning

In my dissertation proposal I shared the story of a boy I met while traveling in Peru several years ago. In order to understand both the motives for conducting this study, the motives for continuing to pursue this line of investigative work, and my hopes for the outcomes of this research, I am reiterating this story here.

Ten years ago, I set out to travel South America with Ecuador and then Peru as my starting point. Perhaps five months into my travels, in the Peruvian city of Tarapoto, I met a young boy, about eight years old, who
sold cigarettes from the small box he carried tied around his neck. He often kept late working hours, selling to the various city goers. Each day my traveling companion and I conversed with him and gave him the leftovers from restaurant meals we had purchased. We continued to see the boy for the six days we remained in this small city, until one morning, walking home from the market, we discovered him lying face down on the sidewalk. Passersby stepped over and around him, unencumbered by his existence. I looked to my companion and confirmed that this was our friend, but confused and bewildered, we continued on. Seeing this reality was difficult for me, but what is and was more troublesome was my own inability to react immediately to help him. I was an outsider to this culture and was not sure what my role should be; by the time I realized how necessary it was that I act, the boy was gone.

While this boy was not the first “street child” I had encountered in my travels in Latin America, this brief interaction made its mark on me. The image of the boy lying on the sidewalk as people casually passed by him is forever engrained in my memory. It was because of this boy, and my interaction with and reaction to him, that I decided to return to school to pursue an advanced degree. I became determined to make a difference in the lives of children living and working on the street, hoping to generate change. Armed with these boys and girls as my cause, my goals were both lofty and romantic. I dreamt of opening a school where children on the street could come, participate in creative endeavors, build a community, and invest in their future education.
Now, many years later, my hopes have taken a less romantic turn. While I may not open a school for boys and girls living on the street, I am still concerned with making a difference in the lives of those young boys who navigate the streets of Lima and other cities around the globe. It is my hope that this dissertation, particularly any articles that stem from it, will alter the ways in which we not only conceptualize street children, but the methods we choose to employ when initiating interventions to assist them. Conducting the fieldwork for the dissertation also made a significant impact on how I understand the boy I met so many years ago, particularly his motivations for selling on the streets. That encounter also affected how I engaged the boys involved in my study, and in many ways led to the care I exercised in conducting this study.

In the sections below, I review the arguments made in the pages of this text, and discuss the implications of these assertions. I also address some of the limitations of this research study, and suggest areas where future research may address any unanswered questions. As in any interpretive analysis, the aim of this study is not proof. In fact, conclusive proof is often not possible in interpretive research, especially when data is primarily derived from field notes, much like the data in this study (Erickson, 1986). Regardless, it was never my aim or intention to prove anything about those children and adolescents living on the streets of Lima, nor anything about the organizations that work with them. Instead, I hope to have established plausibility how I have analyzed my data and examined the interactions between child, outreach organization and the urban landscape (Erickson, 1986).
As I offer a discussion of the findings from this research study, it seems suitable and necessary to revisit the research questions. As stated in the introductory chapter, I set out to deepen my understanding of the following: What are the various identities adopted by children and adolescents as they navigate life on the streets and their frequent transitioning between street, *casa-hogar*, and home life? How are each of these identities constructed and performed and what are the connections between identity and the spaces they inhabit? Can the use of photography aid participants in self-examination and in developing an understanding of the complex identities that they perform throughout their adolescence? Lastly, how does the researcher’s role in the field influence the research process and data collected?

A common thread that connects each of the three ways in which I have analyzed the data gathered in this study is identity. Whether it be identity as connected to the figured world of the street and the *casa-hogar*, identity as expressed and understood through photographs, or identity as tied to the street as a thirrdspace of possibility, identity is a key element at play in the lives of the adolescents who participated in this project, and similarly those adolescents living and working in the streets of Lima. The adoption of and attachment to a street identity is also an essential part of this period of adolescence.

**Street Identity**

In my examination of identity among children and adolescents on the streets of Lima, observing children as they navigate between the *casa-hogar* and the street, I have presented the creation of and attachment to a street child identity.
as one of the primary identities that children living on the street perform. I argued that this identity remains consistent across contexts for many if not most of the children and adolescents navigating the streets of Lima Centro, and the attachment to this identity can, in part, explain why many so boys that enter the casa-hogar eventually reject it. Their attachment to this identity comes as both a reaction to the frequent criticism they face regarding their lifestyle and life choices, as a means of resistance. It also arises, in part, from the desire for a space of possibility, of unimagined alternatives within the urban landscape.

While inside the casa-hogar children are forced to reject their street identity and develop a new perception of this identity as negative, many if not most children find themselves unable to make the switch. Though street identity is directly tied to the street and the urban landscape, it is also tied to the casa-hogar and how they conceptualize children who make their ways on the streets. Because the hogar positions children as street children in need of rescuing, they reaffirm this street identity. Just as professors, in order to maintain their identities as professors, need people treat them as such (Gee, 2000); street children become street children much because of the ways in which others treat them.

This street identity is not the only identity performed among those adolescents making their ways on the streets. In fact they perform a variety of identities on a daily basis. These include their identities as child, adult, musician, comedian, Casanova, rapper, rogue, wanderer, research subject, photographer, and so on, yet it is this street identity that is one of the more salient identities that children on the street attach themselves to in a time of frequent if not constant
transitioning. The consistency in this identity offers the boys stability as they face turmoil, criticism, and instability, and offers them a space for exploring unimagined possibilities.

In answering the question, *How are each of these identities constructed and performed and what are the connections between identity and the spaces they inhabit?*, I have found that while children adopt various identities dependent upon the places within which they are situated, street identity serves as a constant for many of those in this study. While this research question seeks to understand the multiple identities that children and adolescents perform on the streets, and how these identities are shaped by the contexts in which they are performed, in my analysis of the data gathered in this study, I present street identity as one identity in particular that resonates for most children navigating the streets of Lima. This street identity is co-constructed by all of the actors within the urban landscape, including outreach workers, the children themselves, and those who regulate them. The spaces of the *casona, cuarto, la escalera* and *Santa Teresita* offer children and adolescents a place where they are able to fully embrace their identities as street children, an identity to which they have attributed a positive self-concept, while exploring new and different identities in the process.

**Photography and Identity**

My original motive for incorporating photovoice as a research method in this study was to provide the participants a means for exploring their socio-spatial environments. It was my hope that through photovoice I would be able to understand the reciprocal relationship between child and the urban landscape.
Instead, I found that the adolescents in this study valued photographs for what they provided them: a means for exploring the self, memory making, and a way to record their personal histories. I found that through photography, participants began to realize themselves as individuals and were able to tell the story of their lives, particularly their adolescence. Photography served as a means for humanizing the participants in this study, participants who are often dehumanized by society, research, and the media. Through the documentation of their histories and their lives, the boys took part in an act that in contexts like Lima, is typically reserved for the elite. While photography may not have produced the self-examination or awareness of the complex identities they perform throughout their adolescence, it did prove to offer an opportunity to the boys to realize themselves as individuals and take part in the telling of their own histories.

**Researcher’s Role**

I am very present in this dissertation. After all, I am the one who recruited participants, conducted the research, analyzed the data, and wrote up the findings. Should we expect any different? As demonstrated in chapter 6, I certainly had an affect on the research context. So as I aim to answer the question, *How does the researcher’s role in the field influence the research process and data collected?*, it is pertinent that I first explain what my role was. My capacity as researcher meant very little to the boys involved in this study. In fact while they were aware of my position as researcher, they viewed me much the same way as the other volunteers they had met and interacted with over the course of their lives on the streets. I was unlike the other volunteers, however, in several ways. I spent time
with the boys on my own, along with Jason, outside of my work with *Chicos del Centro*. I handed out cameras, provided food, and offered assistance going to the free clinic. I was someone that some of the boys did not want to disappoint, while for others, was someone they regarded as a possible and hopeful source of subsistence.

The fears and insecurities I faced while conducting this research impacted the study in significant ways. They determined where and when I was willing to conduct observations, what questions I was and was not willing to ask, and how I was and was not willing to be regarded for the sake of the data. While these fears had an impact on the data gathered, so did my demeanor as a kind and nurturing individual. I believe it is because of the care that I demonstrated to Manuel that he was so honest with me about the goings on in the cuarto. I was able to obtain insider information that those from *Chicos del Centro*, who had been working with the population for over a decade, were only able to speculate. So while I can reason that a different researcher, one with fewer insecurities, a fearless nature, and perhaps even one with greater fluency in the Spanish language might have gathered different data, I can similarly reason that it was because of my care for the participants involved, and my stubborn and persistent nature that I was able to develop a thoughtful and complex understanding of street life and its allure for the boys involved in this study.

**Limitations and Parameters of this Study**

As with any qualitative study, this study is not without its limitations. The boys involved, for example, are complex individuals, dealing with a variety of
issues in their lives and in their personal histories. One of the greatest limitations to this study can be attributed to the fact that I was unable to get in depth information from several of the participants about their personal histories and about their own reasoning for taking to the streets. For many, they expressed that they experienced a certain sense of freedom that the street could offer, and preferred not living in their home environments. They maintained that they were too accustomed to street life; that they were easily bored at home.

Yet, for many of these boys, there seemed to be other reasons why home life was not a tolerable or preferable place, reasons I will most likely never know for certain. Armed with this knowledge, the assertions that I have made here might be different, as this information could foreseeably change how I understand their motivations for taking to the streets. While I can speculate that abuse and neglect, sexual orientation, and poverty were part of the impetus for leaving their homes, I cannot say this with absolute certainty. I do know, however, that for many of the boys, their motives for coming to the street are not entirely clear to them either. It is a transition that happens slowly, over time. Some of the boys I met traveled to Lima from places like Huancayo in order to search out the possibilities only a big city like Lima could offer. Many begin by selling candy or playing music to bring in extra money for their family. While on the streets they meet other boys doing the same, and establish kinships. Javier, a twelve-year-old boy I came to know on the streets, related his story to me one evening during outreach:
December 9, 2008. I went over and sat down with Javier as he was perched up on the wall that separates the sidewalk from the garage ramp. I asked him how long he had been in the street, he said since he was 8; he is 12 now. He first went out to the streets selling with his mom and then alone. He eventually met some boys in the street who taught him how to huff terokal; he remembers the first time well. A boy he had met told him they were going to huff, and he asked him what exactly terokal was. The boy explained that it was glue. They went to purchase it together and the boy showed him the yellow can. Javier told me that he did not know how to read at this point in time, and so the boy had to explain to him what it was and what it said and how to use it. When he huffed for the first time he became very buzzed; duro he said. He used the word mareado to explain the sensation. He said he went off with these boys, but when he went home and his mother asked for the money from the caramelos he was to have sold, he did not have it. He told me that he fooled her, “la engañe” he said, because he did not want to get beaten, and so did not admit to using terokal or to using the money to buy it.

There were other times, however, where his mother accused him of using and smelled his breath and could, of course, smell the terokal on him. He said the first time this happened his father beat him, “me pegó muy duro” he said. His mother told his father to do it as well because he was doing drugs. When I asked Javier what he thought of them beating him he said that he deserved it because he was in fact doing drugs. He
insisted that before this his father always showed him mucho cariño. I asked him if he really thought he deserved it and he said yes because he was fumando terokal, but before that his father was always kind to him. Javier’s father is now dead; he was murdered a few years ago. He said his mother cried a lot for his father and so did he; he still misses his father.

Javier ended up on the streets because he did not want to get beaten at home. Some of the old gang around Barrio Chino taught him how to survive in calle. He said the old gang meaning those kids who are not on the street now or who are older now like Ronaldo and Frederico. He also said he spent time in Preventivo, which he described as a hogar where you normally stay a month and then they take you to the comisaria and from there you either go home to your family or to a casa-hogar. He stayed a month and then was taken to the comisaria. He said his mother came and got him and he went to lunch with his whole family and stayed in the house for week. He recalled in detail the day his mother came to get him, telling me that they went to the market to eat ceviche and his whole family was there: his sisters and his father and mother. They took him to buy new clothes for the navidad. He said then Felix came to visit him at his house and convinced him to leave and to use and so he left with Felix. Both of them live in Rímac. Javier ended the conversation when Desaul came up and told him they had to go. He said, “Pues señorita, eso es mi historia. Te cuento mas el viernes.”
For Javier, the reasons behind his transition to the street are not entirely cut and
dry. While abuse was certainly a factor, I would speculate that his father’s death,
and poverty played a part in his taking to and remaining in the streets and in his
desire for escape through the use of terokal. The transition, however, was slow,
and happened over time in an informal way. He began by selling candies with his
mother, then alone, and then connected with other boys who had transitioned to
street life. In the midst of all of this, his father passed. The rest is his (story).

Like Javier, the boys in this study are marked by their use of drugs. These
drugs range from inhalants like terokal, to harder drugs like pasta básica. My
limited discussion of and examination of addiction, drug abuse, or exploration of
addiction science in the analysis presented here can be viewed as another
limitation to this study. While the presence of terokal and its connection to street
life is not entirely absent from this dissertation, I did not choose to fully examine
it as a prominent figure in the lives of the boys who were a part of this study or
explore the role of addiction in their lives. As terokal and drugs seem to occupy
much of the boys’ time and money, it is certainly a contributing factor in their
perception of street life and their decisions to remain within it. Yet I would not
argue that it is the only reason why so many boys and girls come to the streets. In
fact, terokal may not be a part of the allure of street life at all, but rather a side
effect of entering into and becoming a part of this figured world.

Furthermore, as I conducted observations in only one of the many casa-
hogares in Lima, this might be viewed as another possible limitation to this study.
While I would argue that, from the knowledge I gained in conversations with
many of the boys and girls living and working on the streets of Lima and with various individuals who work with these adolescents, most casa-hogares work in the same way, using similar methodology, I do not personally observe this. I am also very aware that while similar, none of these hogares is exactly alike. Equipped with different staff, different philosophies, and different children interned within them, each casa-hogar is unique unto itself. The conclusions that I have drawn here, based on my observations in La Tierra, therefore may not be applicable to all casa-hogares. However, with this said, the data gathered and the assertions made here are not simply about interrogating the effectiveness of the casa-hogar. Rather, these assertions are about the play between hogar and street, between hogar and child, and are applicable to any outreach organization attempting to rehabilitate children living on the street, whether they be attached to a hogar or not. As outreach organizations and Good Samaritan groups enter the urban landscape in search of children to rescue, they contribute to the formation of a street child identity and a street child affinity group.

Another limitation lies in the fact that this dissertation is not an exhaustive analysis of all of the data I gathered during fieldwork. With more than 400 photographs taken by the participants in this study, I chose to concentrate more on what the act of photographing did for the participants involved than their contents. Furthermore, my observations in La Tierra could comprise another dissertation entirely. I am, in reality, only able to write one dissertation and chose to focus this dissertation on the development and attachment to a street identity, what it meant for the boys involved in my study, and how the hogar contributed to the
formation of this identity. What I have presented is just one piece of the puzzle, one layer in our understanding of the lives of children and adolescents who live and work on the streets of Lima. It is my hope that this layer will add to the complexity of our understanding of the street and street life and contribute to current and future interventions with children and adolescents living on the street.

Questions Left Unanswered

In both my observations with La Tierra and from my conversations with the director of Chicos del Centro, it became very apparent that most children who enter a casa-hogar do not complete their program. This was a concern frequently expressed by those working for Chicos del Centro. Conversely, most children on the street do not, however, make the street their permanent home. The street, instead, can be seen and understood as a transitional space, a place of adolescence. While many of the boys and girls encountered within the urban landscape eventually return home, many do not. Where do these boys and girls end up? What exactly happens to the boys and girls who spend a significant portion of their adolescents on the street? How has the time spent there affected them? Does street identity still play a significant role off the street and into their young adulthood? These questions could not be answered within the scope of this study, but can certainly be addressed in future research with the same or similar populations.
Recommendations

In this final section, I provide some recommendations to those people in Lima and abroad who have a stake in the lives of children and adolescents who take to the streets for long or short periods of time.

Some Recommendations for the Casa-Hogar . . .

In my experience with casa-hogares in Lima, I found that each one seems to subscribe to the same militaristic method of breaking children into rehabilitation. They require that those interned within their facilities rise at or before dawn, entrench themselves in prayer or work and follow the same routine each day, rarely leaving the confines of the home. The belief is that these children lack discipline, and with structure, regimen, and of course, time, each child will eventually learn to reject street life and embrace life of the mainstream. The children tend to be treated as if they are the same persons with the same needs, histories, desires, and dreams.

Yet nearly every child I met on the street had been interned in a casa-hogar, and most had been in several if not many of the casa-hogares found in Lima and her outskirts. Each of these children eventually left the hogar and returned to the streets, for long or short periods of time. Throughout this dissertation I have offered some insight as to why children might continually reject the casa-hogar. While many children would maintain that they do not enjoy all that comes with living on the street, the ultimate negation of an identity that has been a large part of their everyday performance proves to be too extreme. Outreach organizations must begin to broaden their understanding of identity and
identity performance. They must facilitate the ownership and acceptance of positive aspects of the identities they perform, which are typically and narrowly viewed as negative. Lauding children for the constructive decisions they have made in their lives, decisions to leave negative and abusive environments is one step in the process. Furthermore, organizations continue to operate under the assumption that their homes of origin are the best place for the boys and girls they encounter on the streets, and certainly a better alternative to street life. Yet not all home spaces are positive spaces.

**Some Final Thoughts for Outreach**

Given that the street is both a transitional space and a space of adolescence for many of the boys and girls who live and work within it, we can surmise that, regardless of the efforts of hogares and outreach, the majority of children and adolescents who take to the streets will eventually leave street life behind. What remains a concern is what happens or may potentially happen during this time spent on the street, in this space where pedophiles maintain unmonitored contact with children and adolescents, where addicts freely engage with vulnerable boys and girls, where communicable and life-threatening diseases remain a threat. The boys and girls navigating Lima Centro, and surely other areas of the city, may find themselves victims of abuse, permanently and irreparably affected by drug use, incarcerated for long or short periods of time, or brutalized by any of the various actors in street life, whether they be police or other informal regulatory persons.
While attempting to conduct interventions, the organizations themselves provide a space and a context for these relationships to develop, and are, in the end, responsible for much of what street life in Lima looks like. While this argument places a lot of responsibility on these organizations, it is evident that many of these organizations enable children to mingle with adults in various capacities, creating a dangerous and volatile mix between vulnerable child and often damaged adult.

In addition, in order to bring children into their programs, some hogares conduct their own outreach, though many collaborate with non-profits whose sole purpose is to perform street outreach and connect children with one of the many casa-hogares in Lima. Children and adolescents living and working on the streets of Lima have grown accustomed to the presence of these adult outreach workers on the street, and often enjoy the attention they are able to provide, even if momentary. As demonstrated in chapters 3 and 4, children and adolescents on the street often embrace street life in reaction to adult prescriptions of what is best for them, which almost always involves abandoning street life. As adults fail to recognize the reasons why children flock to the street and the agency they attempt to exercise in their lives, children can be further driven to embrace street life.

*October 21, 2008.* Linda cornered Manuel. She has apparently been doing follow-up with his family and said that his mother has been working outside the home and is gone for most of the day. She seemed to be pressuring him to go see her and Manuel looked horribly uncomfortable. He looked as though he was writhing in his skin, wishing he could run but
was stuck there. Linda kept talking and I found it odd that although Manuel was not saying anything, not responding, she kept pushing and kept talking in a very one-sided conversation. I felt horrible for Manuel and wanted to get him out of there, but at the same time sympathized with Linda. She cared for him desperately and wanted something better for him. I did not join in on the conversation, just listened a bit and looked away at times. Eventually Linda let up, though she did talk to him about a job with the municipality that goes from 7-11. Manuel said it was too early and that he does not wake up until after 11.

As Linda engaged Manuel, she did so with his best interest in mind, but she also did so without enlisting Manuel’s thoughts about seeing his mother or about work. Approaching Manuel and the other boys and girls who navigate the urban landscape with adult-centered understandings of what is best for them, as problems in need of resolution, and though they have no real understanding of their own needs, often serves to drive the children away from the efforts of outreach. While I might not argue that the street is an optimal space to grow up in, it certainly offers something to the boys and girls of Lima Centro that a home cannot.

As I have demonstrated, the street, outreach organizations and children living and working on the street connect in ways such that they co-construct the street child identity and the streetscape of Lima. The major take-away for all those concerned remains in the persistent nature of the relationship between children on the street and the outreach organizations that serve them. These two
entities are so intertwined that it is nearly impossible to understand street life without a thorough examination of the two in conjunction with one another. Simply ceasing outreach and removing these actors from the urban landscape will not, however, solve the street child phenomenon. The history is too far reaching and the relationship too involved. Though I do not claim to have any simple answers, I believe there is something to be said about the approach used by these organizations. As they pit street against home as if a battle between right and wrong or good and evil, organizations fail to recognize or celebrate the strengths of those children they aim to assist.

Some Final Thoughts About Being Too Far Gone . . .

As I prepared to carry out this study, I contacted a prominent researcher in Lima who had conducted a significant amount of research on street children. We communicated over email, and then in a preliminary trip to Lima, met in person. We talked for a brief period in his home in Jesus Maria, and he explained that he no longer conducts research on children who live on the street. This was a topic that was very much in the past for him. He confessed that he still did not quite understand what brought children to the street in the first place, and that it remained an unanswered question. While other researchers would argue that poverty was a major driving factor (Bar-on, 1997; Dewees & Klees, 1995; Karabanow, 2003; Mickelson, 2000), he did not agree that poverty alone served as the impetus for children and adolescents to abandon their home environments for the street. For if it were poverty, he maintained, then there would be far more children taking to the streets given Peru’s population living at or below the
poverty line. He eventually became disenchanted with the topic entirely, believing that he could do more, be more effective and make more of a difference with children who had not yet taken to the streets. Much like the staff of *Chicos del Centro*, he had given up on the boys and girls living on the streets of Lima. For him, they were simply too unreachable to benefit from research, intervention, and rehabilitation.

Similarly, as expressed earlier in this dissertation, the outreach organization with which I worked began to view the boys and girls of *Lima Centro* as being “too far gone” to benefit from their rehabilitation efforts. The theoretical perspective that I present in the pages of this dissertation offers a unique understanding of the figured world of the street, of the fantastic nature of street life and provides some insight as to why so many boys and girls find solace in the spaces of the urban landscape. As a space of possibility and a space of resistance, the street offers the boys and girls on the streets of Lima a space to live out the unimagined possibilities, a space where they are sought after, desired, and desirable. Understanding the exact reasons why children leave their homes may not be the most fruitful use of research efforts. Instead, developing a clearer understanding of what the street offers children and why they frequently return to it seems to be a more productive endeavor. The question isn’t about why children leave home, but why they turn to the street as an alternative to their home environments. Furthering an understanding of the street as a space of possibility provides outreach, *casa-hogares* and researchers the opportunity and ability to
create alternatives spaces to the street, spaces of possibility that are not spaces simultaneously connected to adult spaces, drug spaces, and spaces of abuse.
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Participant observations, informal interviews and photographic methods were used to carry out this eleven-month qualitative study investigating the lives of children and adolescents living on the streets of Lima, Peru. In this methodological appendix, I outline the population, sample, consent process, and methods employed. The appendix also includes a discussion of some of the issues and concerns that arose through the use of these particular methods. In order to learn about the relationship between children and the spaces they inhabit, it proved essential to study children living and working on the streets within the context in which they operate.

**Gaining Access**

Gaining access was one of the foremost concerns of this study, though it was not just a matter of gaining access to youth for the study, but also maintaining relationships with the research participants over an extended period of time. During the summer prior to my departure, I spent two weeks in Lima, in part to determine potential cites for this research and conduct preliminary observations and determine areas of the city that would serve as the main focus of the study. This time also enabled me to develop connections with organizations working with children on the streets of Lima.

These connections with persons and agencies already working in the field proved to be essential in gaining access to the population. Two organizations working with children and adolescents on the streets of Lima agreed to support me in my dissertation research and facilitate access to this focal population of children in Lima. In the end, I worked with only one of these agencies, *Chicos de*
Centro, while I volunteered for the other as a fútbol coach for an annual championship they held for the various casa-hogares throughout Lima. I worked with Chicos del Centro as a volunteer, working in their casa-taller, in the street during outreach, and occasionally accompanying staff on follow-up with the families of children on the streets. It was through my work with this organization that I met and recruited participants into this study.

**Population and Sampling**

As I recruited participants through Chicos del Centro, an agency already working with street children, I must be clear that I relied on a convenience sample for this study. While I observed many boys and girls on the streets of Lima Centro, only a handful were invited to participate fully in this study and in the photography project. I was able to use my observations in calle with Chicos del Centro and La Tierra of the general street child population to develop a deeper and richer understanding of street life, and contribute significantly to the information provided by formal participants. It was clear that not every child could participate in the study, though many often expressed interest in taking photographs. I chose those boys with whom I had consistent contact, and with whom I perceived a potential for maintaining a long-term relationship. It was by default that the boys in the cuarto ended up being the participants in the photography project and in this study. I had in fact tried on several occasions to invite other participants who did not sleep in the cuarto, but slept mostly in the casona or on the street. One of these participants withdrew from the study after losing a camera and deciding that he was no longer interested in participating.
The other, a girl who repeatedly expressed interest in participating, failed to show up for appointments in which she was to return her camera. When I would see her during observations on the street, she would maintain that she forgot and then set up another appointment, to which she would again fail to show. She eventually admitted to having lost the camera.

**Consent**

As I worked with a particularly vulnerable population, it was essential that the information provided by participants be kept confidential and that their identities be protected. As suggested by my university’s institutional review board, in place of having participants sign consent forms, I provided a cover letter outlining their rights as a research subject. This cover letter did not require a signature and the true names of participants was not recorded. Instead, participants were assigned a pseudonym on first contact and were referred to by this pseudonym in all written documents, including transcripts, field notes, and memos. While the cover letter was given to each participant, participants understood their role in the research project, their rights as subjects, and what their participation entailed mostly from my verbal explanation. Many of the participants preferred that I read and explain the cover letter to them, rather than reading it themselves. I always offered them a copy, and some accepted this offer, while others had no interest in keeping the cover letter.

**Participant Observations**

Participant observations were one of the primary methods employed in this research study. Observing human behavior in context is essential to
understanding how and why people act in certain ways. Individuals have “meaning structures that determine much of their behavior” and ethnographic research attempts to determine what these meaning structures are, how they develop, and of course, how they influence behavior (Wilson, 1977, p. 254). Participant observations also provide for an appreciation of how the participants view and interpret their own actions. Within participant observations, Wilson (1977) outlines the following as relevant forms of data: “1) form and content of verbal interaction between participants, 2) Form and content of verbal interaction with the researcher, 3) Nonverbal behavior, 4) Patterns of action and non-action, 5) Traces, archival records, artifacts and documents” (p. 255). Participant observations are particularly advantageous due to confidential information that can be obtained that the researcher would otherwise not be privy to due to lack of rapport (Wilson, 1977).

Within this study, participant observations enabled me to engage in informal conversations with the youth in this study, observe them in the spaces they frequented and witness interactions within each of the communities they participated, including interactions with other adolescents and adults living on the street and in the casa-hogar, and with outreach workers. These observations also provided me the opportunity to observe participant interactions with inhabitants of the Limanean landscape including police officers, shopkeepers, combi drivers, passersby, tourists and the various residents of Lima. Participatory observations were conducted in several key areas: calle (the street) in Cercado de Lima or
Lima Centro (downtown Lima), the casa-taller (until the NGO’s unforeseen closure), among the boys of the cuarto, and in La Tierra, a casa-hogar.

Observations in the casa-taller

For the first several months of this study, observations in the casa-taller served as one of the primary means of gathering data. The casa-taller was open each weekday from approximately 11am to 5 pm and served as a place boys and girls on the streets of Lima Centro could go to bathe, do laundry, participate in a workshop, visit with volunteers, and eat a small meal. The boys and girls could also borrow clothing from the taller while they waited for their newly laundered clothes to dry, which could often take several days given Lima’s humid climate.

The taller would welcome anywhere from zero to ten children and adolescents on a given day. Often, the same children would come to the taller on a regular basis, if not every day then several times a week. Occasionally, a child would come once and not return for several weeks or a month. The casa-taller was run mostly by volunteers, and it was the volunteers responsibility to assist the boys and girls with their laundry and mending, lead the taller, cook the meal and ensure that the boys and girls followed the appropriate rules of the house. The casa-taller served as an ideal place to observe children living on the street as they engaged with one another and with volunteers, participated in informal conversations at a time when they were not under the influence of drugs or alcohol. The casa-taller was also the place where I first introduced the photovoice project.
When the boys and girls first arrived at the *casa-taller*, they were required to wait outside its’ locked entrance for one of the staff or volunteers to let them in. Once inside they were patted down to ensure that they did not have any drugs or drug paraphernalia on person. They handed over their possessions, including money, musical instruments, and other personal items to the *taller* for safekeeping. A staff member or volunteer would sign them in, documenting their name, date of birth, and the date and time. After this initial intake process, the boys and girls could then wash their clothing if needed, or color or play a game while they waited for the *taller* to begin. Most of the boys and girls who came to the *casa-taller* were between the ages of 13 and 17, though there were occasionally some younger children who attended the *taller*. Of each of those that I observed, most seemed to really enjoy coloring or drawing as a means of passing time until the *taller* began.

The daily *taller* or workshop varied. Some days there was no real *taller* planned and the volunteers would create an impromptu craft project or lesson about the dangers and negative aspects of street life. Other days the *taller* was orchestrated by a nurse or doctor from the clinic open to children living on the street and would provide the children with methods for preventing communicable diseases and sexually transmitted infections. Each Wednesday, the *taller* was a workshop on *fulbito*, though no teaching took place. It was essentially an excuse for the boys and girls to play the game.

While it was open, I conducted observations in the *casa-taller* approximately three days a week, with some weeks as many as five days a week.
During observations I engaged the boys in many of the ways the other volunteers would, by helping them wash their clothes, playing board games, coloring in coloring books, drawing, or simply engaging them in informal conversations. My observations in the casa-taller provided me with the opportunity to develop rapport with several boys living on the street, boys who would later become involved in the photovoice project. Developing rapport was a lengthy process, and having frequent interactions with participants proved helpful.

**Observations in Calle**

I conducted observations in the street in three different capacities: as facilitated by the NGO Chicos del Centro, as facilitated by the casa-hogar La Tierra, and on my own accompanied by Jason, my husband and research assistant. The observations in calle that I conducted with La Tierra and Chicos del Centro both occurred at night. On most occasions we arrived downtown around 9pm and returned home around 1am, sometimes later. The length of our observations, however varied with some days’ observations being longer or shorter, depending on the circumstances that day brought.

In my observations with Chicos del Centro, I followed the organizations protocol. Their main strategy in conducting outreach was to use table games as a medium through which they would connect with the boys and girls living on the street. The organization campaigned against the assistance driven strategies that other organizations used and the provision of food to those living on the street. They believed that this kind of outreach enabled those making their ways on the streets to maintain their street lifestyle, and provided no incentive for leaving the
street behind. Instead, the organization used board games as a means of connecting with the children on the streets, and through play, sought ways to convince them to reject their street lifestyle either by entering a casa-hogar or returning home. During this outreach, I participated in the game play and used this time to engage in informal conversations about the street, street life, and the personal histories of the boys I encountered. These conversations proved to be a give and take, where I would also answer many questions about my personal life, my home country and my knowledge of both Lima and Peru. My willingness to participate in what was often a barrage of questions helped me to develop rapport with the population and gain respect among them.

Outreach with Chicos del Centro involved as few as four individuals and as many as nine or ten, as the organization sponsored several volunteers from Europe each year and also benefited from the assistance of several Peruvian volunteers. During outreach with Chicos del Centro, we would typically begin near the Plaza San Martin and continue on foot to various areas of downtown known to be popular hang outs among children on the street. The places where we would encounter them varied among several choice spots and were often dependent on the locations where Good Samaritan groups handed out food and drink. We would work our way through the city, visiting children in the various pockets of downtown, sometimes encountering different children in multiple areas, while other times encountering a large population of children in one area. Outreach with this organization occurred twice a week in Lima Centro, though the NGO conducted outreach in various other parts of the city each night of the week.
I was able to conduct observations with Chicos del Centro from my arrival in Peru in May 2008, until late August, and then again when the organization informally re-opened in December of 2008.

Conducting observations with Chicos del Centro, proved at times, to be difficult. Part of our agreement required that I operate under the organization’s protocol. This meant that I was also forced to adhere to their guidelines and timetable, not my own. There were times when I was engaged in conversation with a participant and had to cut this conversation short because the organization was ready to leave. There were other occasions where volunteers/outreach workers outnumbered the boys and girls we would encounter on the street, and an aggressive environment was created, where volunteers seemed to compete for the attention of the child. This competition compromised my ability to engage in conversation with my population. The organization also had rules pertaining to drug use among the children and adolescents they encountered on the street. If the boys and girls used terokal or other drugs in their presence, the organization would leave. Drug use, however, still occurred as children would inhale the glue from a plastic bag hidden in the sleeve or under the collar of their shirt, or simply walk further down the way outside of the vigilant eye of outreach workers. However, if their drug use became obvious or blatant, the NGO would leave for the night. As children curbed their usual behavior and engaged in game play with the outreach workers, the context was altered and a new dynamic was introduced into the observable situation, making it so that I was frequently observing the
interaction between outreach workers and children which inherently altered their interaction with the street.

Observations in calle with La Tierra were not much different than the observations that I conducted with Chicos del Centro, though they did not include the use of table games. Typically, La Tierra conducted outreach with the sole purpose of identifying children who were interested in leaving the street and entering their casa-hogar. This meant they spent much less time in calle conversing than Chicos del Centro, as their sole focus was to recruit children to their hogar. As indicated previously, La Tierra had not conducted outreach in Lima Centro for some time, but as the organization was interested in helping me to maintain the research study after Chicos del Centro closed its doors in late August, they agreed to conduct outreach in the city’s center for my benefit. La Tierra brought along a nurse, the organization’s director, and occasionally another researcher from Denmark. This smaller number proved to be advantageous in enabling me to connect with participants and this population. Furthermore, as they had agreed to conduct outreach in order to assist me with the study, they were also willing to spend more time in the street than they typically would. Outreach with La Tierra only happened one time per week, however, which was the one major set back in conducting outreach with this organization. La Tierra, on the other hand, did not have any explicit rules about drug use in their presence, though would advise the children on the negative effects of drugs.

The observations that I conducted with Jason occurred both during the day and at night. During the night, our observations were much like those with La
Tierra and Chicos del Centro, though with Jason I was able to set my own schedule and stay in the street for as long as I felt was necessary. Together, we would walk the streets of the city center, paying particular attention to those areas known to be frequented by our population and once we settled on a particular place, would observe children interact with one another, with outreach workers, Good Samaritan groups, citizens, and police officers. During this time we also engaged participants in informal conversations about their lives. Time spent on the street also provided me with the opportunity to do some member-checking, as I verified information garnered from conversations with participants or outreach workers. While we began conducting observations during the day on our own after Chicos del Centro closed, we did not conduct observations alone at night until January of 2009, seven months after having been in Peru. Many of the outreach workers cautioned us that the streets could be particularly dangerous, dealing with an unpredictable population marked by their use of terokal and other drugs. By January, however, we were well known on the streets and felt more comfortable conducting observations on our own.

Observations during the day typically occurred at Santa Teresita, a church that also had a comedor publico (public cafeteria) where children and adolescents, along with many of the city’s poor, went to eat an economical meal. Occasionally, I would conduct observations at Caqueta, an open-air market with a large grassy area where the children and adolescents would frequently spend their days during the summer months. The observations I conducted during the day were different than those I conducted at night, not with regard to methodology,
but regarding the behavior of the children and adolescents. Children and adolescents usually arrived at the comedor for lunch just after they had woken up, and were often not under the influence of any drug at this point in the day. The comedor served many different people, not just those living on the street. Therefore, I was able to witness the children’s behavior among clergy members, construction workers, and other working class residents of Lima Centro.

Observations with Boys From the Cuarto

I began conducting observations with the boys from the cuarto after the casa-taller closed. I had invested a significant amount of time in gaining access to my population and was concerned about losing contact. Observations with the boys from the cuarto took several forms throughout the length of this study. In the beginning, they consisted of Jason, and one or more of the boys and me, eating lunch together and conversing informally about their lives and their current situation. In addition to eating lunch, we began playing fulbito together. Our participation in this pastime provided me with the opportunity to observe the boys in several capacities. As we had to travel by bus to arrive at the pitch, I was able to witness the boys play music on the bus, which served both as their form of payment and as a means of making money. During this time I was also able to converse informally with participants when we walked to and from the field and during breaks. Later, our observations changed again and we began to sit outside the building where they slept and make bracelets together, or simply sit and converse. Occasionally the boys would ask us to accompany them on errands.
they needed to run, whether it be to fix a broken instrument, visit a sibling, fetch clothing left at a *casa-hogar* or go to the free clinic.

Observing children on the street participate in income generating activities was one of the privileges of conducting observations with the boys from the *cuarto*. As indicated previously, for the boys of the *cuarto*, music was their main form of work. Together, or alone, they would perform traditional Peruvian songs on buses and in restaurants and after each session, one of the boys would stand up and recite a speech in which they would request money from the audience. The speech advised observers that they were children experiencing tough times, trying to make an honest living playing music, and that any expression of generosity would be appreciated. In each of the many occasions that I had the privilege of witnessing the boys work in this capacity, they never garnered much income, typically no more than one to two *soles*, which they then divided among them.

In observations with the boys from the *cuarto*, I was unable to fully observe them in their usual daily activities, which usually involved of spending time in their room and using *terokal* or other drugs. Though I had entered the boys’ *cuarto* on one occasion, and was invited up on several others, spending a significant amount of time in the room was something that, after much deliberation, I chose not to participate in. At least two of my participants were confirmed to have tuberculosis, and several others were more than likely infected. Spending time with them in an enclosed in area that was poorly ventilated put Jason and me at greater risk for catching the disease. This increased risk was one of the major factors that lead us to decide to not conduct participant observations.
inside the boys cuarto and instead create opportunities for us to spend time together outside. This required the introduction of various activities like playing fulbito and making pulseras. These activities provided a “reason” for us to spend time together, as witnessing their daily lives would have required a significant amount of time in their room.

**Observations in La Tierra**

The casa-hogar was not one of my originally proposed sites for participant observations, though was added for several reasons. After the original NGO with which I was working closed its doors, they were able to put me in contact with La Tierra, a well-known casa-hogar among the boys with whom I was already working. La Tierra was willing to allow me to conduct observations in their center, and while they no longer conducted outreach in Lima Centro, was also willing to reestablish contact with this population and accompany me to the street for observations. Their outreach to this area was still limited, however, which led me to conduct observations on my own along with Jason. Over the course of the eight months that I conducted observations inside La Tierra, several of this study’s participants were interned there for various lengths of time.

My observations in La Tierra changed over the period of eight months that I volunteered there. I began by casually observing the various talleres that took place during the afternoon. These workshops included ceramics, candle making, art, music and computer, though the majority of my observations took place in candle making. During the workshops, boys would work on the activities appropriate to that workshop, making ceramic ashtrays, candleholders, candles
and various wooden Christmas decorations. Often, however, the boys would use this time to converse amongst themselves and exchange stories from their time on the streets.

Later, I began to assist in psycologia, which was touted as a group therapy session where the boys were divided into groups depending mostly on the amount of time that had currently invested in La Tierra. The sessions were, in reality, short classes on appropriate behavior, health and wellness, and self-esteem. My role was to help facilitate the lesson plans and keep order. After the session I would often sit with the boys and help with homework, watch them play foosball, or make bracelets. Much like my observations on the street, I was able to participate in informal conversations about the boys’ lives, personal histories and experiences on the street. I also was often bombarded with questions about me, my personal history, my home country, and my familiarity with Lima and Peru.

In both my observations during the talleres and during psycologia, I was able to observe boys of various ages as they transitioned from the street to casa-hogar. Conducting observations inside La Tierra enabled me to witness first hand this transition, the struggle that many boys encountered as they withdrew from street life and from drugs, and the changes or consistencies in their behavior and demeanor as they moved between the street and the casa-hogar.

My main goal in these participatory observations was to understand how the casa-hogar worked, to observe children and adolescents as they transitioned from street to hogar, and to attempt to develop some understanding of the relationship between casa-hogar and street and the reasons why there seemed to
be a constant flow between the two. While observations in the *casa-hogar* resulted out of desperation to some degree, the addition of these observations proved essential. Given that the *casa-hogar* and street life are so intricately connected, and that in most instances a child or adolescent who has spent any time on the street has also spent time in a *casa-hogar*, and that most children on the street in *Lima Centro* have spent some time in *La Tierra*, observing children within the confines of this *hogar* added significantly to the ways in which I understand the street and street life, and children’s motivations for both entering it and leaving it.

**Writing Field Notes**

Field notes are “the most important way we have of recording the ongoing bits of nothingnesses that fill our days” (Clandinin & Conelly, 2000, p. 104). They are full of details and are the main texts from which we can tell the stories of our experiences (Clandinin & Conelly, 2000). Field notes were the main source of data for this study and were thus written immediately after I conducted observations. Frequently this occurred on the bus ride home from the *taller* or *casa-hogar*, from the boys *cuarto*, or observations in *calle* during the day. I handwrote field notes in notebooks and benefited greatly from the availability of a research assistant (read: husband) who would then type up these field notes on a daily/weekly basis. Field notes from observations at night were often written in shorthand upon my return to our apartment and explained in greater detail the next morning as I would often return home from observations as late as two o’clock in the morning.
Photographic Methods

Photovoice, where participants are given cameras to photograph their lives and then discuss the contents and the reasoning behind the images in open-ended interviews (Wang & Burris, 1997), constituted a secondary method employed in this research. Given that I was conducting research with a particularly guarded population, I understood that the use of photographs would allow interviews with my participants to remain insightful and intense and “bring the ‘subject’ into the research process as an interpreter or even an active collaborator” (Stanczek, 2004, p. 1473). In their study with street children in Kampala, Uganda, Young and Barret (2001a) found that “visual methods proved to be particularly important for developing gainful insight into the street child’s urban environment” from the perspective of the child (p. 142). For these researchers and participants, visual methods created a relaxed and fun environment and enabled the children to control the process without imposing adult influence. They further explain “child-centered visual methods avoid the adultist assumptions of the cognitive school and facilitate research ‘with children’ rather than ‘about children.’” (p. 144). Furthermore, Matthews and Limb (1999) insist that new methods are essential in understanding how children conceptualize and interpret their socio-spatial environment in ways that are not adult centered, and argue, “there is a need to investigate the environment as children ‘see it’” (p. 66).

I conducted the photovoice project with 8 boys ages 12-17 that lived and worked on the streets of Lima, Peru, though two of the original participants withdrew from the study. One of these boys returned to his family’s home in the
mountains east of Lima before turning in his first camera. The other withdrew after losing his camera in the second round of photographs. I first met the boys that participated in the photography project (Jesus, Manuel, Alexis, Andre, Jorge, and Jordan) at the casa-taller and provide detailed portraits of each of these participants in chapter two of this dissertation. This method served not only as a means of gathering data about the experiences and perspectives of my participants but offered the youth in this study a tool by which to reflect on themselves and their current situation, and in the future a way to look back on their adolescence.

Disposable cameras were handed out to each of the boys on six separate occasions, with some participants receiving fewer cameras due to inconsistent contact. On each occasion, I provided the boys with a new set of instructions according to which they were to concentrate their image making efforts. In the first session, I advised the boys to take pictures that would illustrate for me how they viewed and understood both terokal and the street. I asked that they concentrate on these two words, and capture images they felt would convey how they viewed and understood these words, and their impact on their lives. I also added that they should feel free to take pictures of any other thing that they deemed important. In the second session, I asked my participants to document the spaces and places that were essential in their lives and to their existence. In the third session, I gave the boys instructions to document a 24-36 hour period of their lives, taking one photograph every hour, except during the hours in which they were sleeping. Each of these sets of instructions was created in response to their behavior with the camera as I continually found that the boys returned
cameras filled with pictures of themselves and their friends, regardless of the instructions I provided. It was my hope that with some direction I could persuade the boys to concentrate on their socio-spatial environment, yet the instructions went unheeded. Taking their lead, in the fourth session, I asked the boys to create self-portraits and gave some examples of how they might go about this in creative and non-traditional ways. Realizing that there might be some data of interest in the fact that the boys continually chose to photograph themselves, I advised the boys to take pictures of whatever they deemed appropriate in the last two sessions.

After each session, the boys participated in an informal individual interview in which we discussed the photographs that they took. We went through each photograph, one by one, and detailed the contents of the photographs, the reasons behind taking that particular photograph, and the meaning the boys extracted from each image. These conversations provided context for me regarding the scenes captured in the photographic image, offered explanations to behaviors witnessed in the two-dimensional frame, and provided insight into the activities the boys engaged in while I was not around, particularly at night.

During observations with the boys in this study, I asked what was important to them to explore within this project. Each expressed excitement at the opportunity to be able to record their youth, to create memories and document what their lives were like at this point in time and all indicated a real desire to create albums. These annotated albums, designed using an internet-based
program, were completed in the end by only two participants (other participants disappeared for extended periods of time, started moving in different social circles or became heavily entrenched in drug use, which lead to infrequent contact). It is my hope that these albums, which the boys possess in hard copy as well as have access to in a secured website, will provide them the opportunity to later reflect on their histories and the ways in which they viewed their adolescence. The addition of the albums as requested by participants provided for a collaborative process in which participants helped to create the methodology, highlighting what was useful and important in their lives.

**Issues That Arose with Photographic Methods**

As Holt (2005) indicated, any “research with children raises particular ethical issues, given children’s socio-spatial marginalization in society” (p. 14). Conducting research with children who are additionally marginalized because of their “street child” status serves to further complicate the researcher-participant relationship (Young & Barret, 2001b). While it is certain that methods like photovoice provide for rich data and positive benefits for participants (Foster-Fishman, et al, 2005; Rhodes & Hergenrather, 2007; Stack, Magill, & McDonagh, 2004), and is indispensable in gathering data, garnering the participants’ perspectives, providing an arena for self-expression, and is particularly helpful in building rapport and deepening relationships between researcher and participants (Castleden, Garvin, & First Nation, 2008; Wang & Burris, 1997), it is, however, not without its shortcomings.
The introduction of visual methods can complicate research with adolescents living and working on the street, particularly those marked by heavy consumption of drugs like terokal. Young and Barret (2001), for example, encountered several problems when using photovoice with children living and working on the street. Three of the cameras they gave to the study’s participants were not returned, issues of jealousy also arose among the children and their peers, and children feared that police or other authority figures would not believe the cameras were theirs. While some researchers have argued that using participatory methods can help the researcher to wrestle with many of the ethical concerns that arise when conducting research with vulnerable populations like children who are wards of the state (Thomas & O’Kane, 1998) or children who live on the street (Young & Barret, 2001a), other researchers have also encountered ethical issues when employing photographic methods in research with children. These ethical issues include issues of consent, confidentiality, power and dissemination of findings (Ensign, 2003; Thomas & O’Kane, 1998; Valentine, 1999). At times, these methods generate ethical issues that would not have been raised otherwise, including the introduction of costly and unattainable projects that the children would most likely not be able to experience again on their own in turn creating a sense of want among participants (Punch, 2002). Karlsson (2007) warned that there are “heightened ethical concerns” when using photovoice, and cautioned its use with vulnerable underage populations.

Many of the photographs taken by the participants in this study were captured during nighttime hours, when participants were also under the influence
of terokal and other drugs. On a few occasions, images were captured that depicted the participants engaging in activities they were less inclined to share with me or other outsiders to street life. For example, after the first session, Manuel and Andre encountered photographs of themselves using terokal. When they first saw these images they became extremely agitated and asked, both themselves and me who took these pictures. Up to this point in time that I had known each of these boys, neither of them had demonstrated themselves to be heavy consumers of terokal, never having been noticeably under the influence nor having had consumed in my presence. These particular images foreground the ethical concerns that arise with projects such as photovoice. While the photographs were taken with the subjects’ apparent knowledge and permission, as they are obviously posing for the picture, the moments captured are in the private spaces of their lives and represent aspects of the self that they were not necessarily interested in presenting to the world, or at least to parts of the world at that point in time. And while we are not sure who actually took the photograph, we do know that if sober, these are most likely not images that Andre or Manuel would want to present of themselves, at least at this juncture in our relationship: the anger and upset with which they reacted to the photographs demonstrates this. While these images provide for me a window into the spaces, places and moments in time that, due to my outsider status, I might never be able to share first hand with my participants, they also permit intruders to enter into these spaces uninvited, myself included. After more time in the field, my relationships with the participants in this project developed and participants like Manuel became
more open and honest with me regarding their use of drugs. The ways in which our relationships developed over time does not change the fact that the photographs revealed information about the boys that they were not necessarily ready to reveal at the time.

Punch (2002) argued that it may be unethical to introduce children or participants to kinds of technology that they would not be able to access on their own after their participation in the study is done. She maintains that in the end this may plant unrealistic dreams of, for example, becoming a great photographer one day. The ethical questions and concerns that arise through the introduction of new technologies go beyond this, as potential participants may be willing to participate in research to which they might not normally agree. Karlsson (2007) similarly addressed this concern as she begged the question:

Does the group of children playing in the schoolyard and excitedly clamouring to be captured in my lens, understand my intention, the malleability and longevity of an image and how I might use it—perhaps commodify it by selling prints of it or the rights to publish it over the Internet or in a publication – in the future? (p. 185-86)

Do the young participants in this study like Manuel and Andre, who have extremely limited experience with cameras and photographs, truly understand the permanence of the photographic image? Intrigued by the notion of seeing themselves in pictures, participants may be willing to mortgage a part of themselves for the opportunity to take part in a process normally reserved for the privileged few, particularly within the context of developing nations like Peru.
Not strangers to the presence of researchers and foreign volunteers, the boys in this study demonstrated an understanding of the ways in which the outside world views them, and often exploits them. Several of the initial photographs shot by the participants depict themselves or friends purposefully posturing with bags and cans of terokal, holding them up for the camera like advertisements for soda or dish detergent. While the adolescents in this study chose what to capture on film, the act of photographing their own lives or the pictures alone may not prevent these images from objectifying or victimizing their subjects, as they may look no different that images captured in sensationalized news feed or documentary film and may be perceived in very much the same way.  

When examining images of street children, we are frequently faced with stereotypic images of children suffering in poverty, i.e. children sleeping on the sidewalks of the city, or exploitative images including images depicting children inhaling glue or other solvents. As we observe these photographs it is important to understand that they are not context-free and that these images provide limited understandings of the lives of children and adolescents who make their ways on the streets. Like the exoticized other presented as artifact on the pages of National Geographic, we must take into consideration “its [the photograph’s] makers’ institutional context, constraints, intentions, and unconscious motives on the one hand, or, on the other, its readers’ construction of meaning” (Lutz & Collins, 1993, p. 88). In his examination of the role of photographs in research, Prosser (2000) reminded us that part of the difficulty in using the visual image is the unquestioned assumption that cameras and photographs offer us truthfulness
and objectivity in the scenes they relate, themes I interrogate more fully in chapter 3 of this dissertation.

I believe that the use of photographic participatory methods like photovoice can provide real benefits to participants, and stand by the conclusions that I have drawn from their use in this study. However, as researchers we must remain constantly alert to the lasting effects participation in research studies such as this one may have. Furthermore, serious consideration must be given to the possible drawbacks that these methods pose for participants and the ways in which they may compromise their ability to act in their own best interests. Methods like photovoice must be used with time and care, and multiple rounds are essential in broadening participants’ understandings of themselves, their situation and their relationship with the researcher. Moreover, providing participants with cameras on multiple occasions and coupling this method with participant observations can help us to move beyond the stereotypical, exploitative images of street children that saturate our society, and towards a more complex, nuanced vision of street life and those who are a part of it, for long or short periods of time.

Analysis

In analyzing the data gathered from this study, I looked to Erickson’s model of data analysis as a guide, though also employed many of Miles and Huberman’s techniques, particularly with regard to data management. For example, in the very early phase of collection I took a step back to reevaluate and reflect on main themes, concepts and issues that had already begun to surface
It was this reflection that brought me to abandon my original theoretical framework, which relied heavily on theories of space and place, and look towards theories of identity and identity performance. This reflection continued throughout the eleven-month duration of the study. Miles and Huberman (1994) maintain that beginning analysis early, while still conducting research is essential to conducting qualitative research as it enables the researcher to “fill in the gaps or to test new hypotheses that emerge during analysis” (p. 50). This early analysis also enabled me to redevelop better systems of data collection as qualitative studies call for “different modes of inquiry at different moments” (Miles & Huberman, 1994), and changes in observation and interview protocols “usually reflect a better understanding of the setting, thereby heightening the internal validity of the study” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 431). For example, it was my original intention to conduct formal interviews with several of my participants, but after spending time in the field, I found that information was most successfully gathered in casual conversations, which were often facilitated by engaging in activities together like eating lunch or making pulseras.

Personal memos were also employed both as a means of analysis and as a means of data management (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Memos allowed me to better understand what I was seeing in the field, compile preliminary assertions and served as a means of archiving my ideas and the ways in which these ideas changed throughout the life of the research project. In addition to these strategies outlined by Miles and Huberman, I looked to Erickson’s interpretive model as a
guide for my analysis. Erickson’s approach to data analysis involves a holistic approach, in which the researcher deals with the data set in its entirety. I incorporated the use of narrative vignettes to offer a picture of what life within Lima is like for children living and working on the streets and how the outreach organizations impact their existence.
APPENDIX B

GLOSSARY OF SPANISH TERMS
Abancay: a major thoroughfare in Lima

abstinencia: abstinence

acá: here

Acogida: translates directly to “taking in.” Acogida was the first phase of the rehabilitation program in La Tierra.

adivinananza: riddle

allí: there

arte: art

Batida: search. The batida referred to in this text is a street sweeping mission conducted by Serenazgo officers in Lima as they attempt to round up children and adolescents living on the streets.

Barrio Chino: China Town

cafecito: coffee, a little cup of coffee.

casa-taller: translates directly to house-workshop. The casa-taller is a place where boys and girls living on the street can go to take part in workshops, eat, bathe, do laundry. The casa-taller is open only during the day and, unlike the casa-hogar, does not have overnight facilities and does not have the capacity to house children for long stays.

cajón: drum

calle: street

caramelos: candies

cariño: care, affection

casa: house

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casa-hogar: translates directly to house-home. A casa-hogar is a group home for boys and/or girls who are attempting to transition off the street. Each casa-hogar has its own program, but typically lasts anywhere from one to two years, with the end result being reintegration into society.

casona: translates directly to “great big house”. A casona in this text refers to an abandoned building where the boys and girls set up residence within the city.

Caqueta: A street in Lima, and the name of a large outdoor market.

centimos: cents

Cercado de Lima: downtown Lima

ceviche: Peruvian seafood dish made with raw fish, lime, and other spices.

chalecos: vests

chambear: to work

charango: small five-stringed guitar

chibolo: kid; younger

chicos: boys

Chicos del Centro: boys of the center. Pseudonym for the NGO I worked as a volunteer for.

Chifa: Chinese food

Chifles: banana chips

choclo con queso: corn with cheese

cola de rata: translates directly to “rat tail.” Cola de rata is a thick string used in making bracelets.
combi: a mini van or small bus used as vehicle for public transportation.

comedor: a dining room or cafeteria. The comedores referred to here are typically low cost cafeterias.

comisaría: police station

como: like, as

Comunidad: Community. The third phase in the program at La Tierra.

consumir: consume. Used in reference to drugs.

cuarto: room

de calle: of the street

denuncio: report

día: day

duro: hard

edificio: building

El desaparacido: the disappeared

el muro: the wall (in Barrio Chino)

El rapero: the rapper

el síndrome: the syndrome

El viajero: The traveler

empanada: pasty or pie (usually savory)

enamorada: lover, girlfriend

encerrrado: locked up

escalera: stairs
“Eso no digo”:
this I cannot say

“Está con el sindrome”:
He is has the syndrome

Estoy demasiado acostumbrado de estar en calle:
I am too used to being in the street

“¿Estoy manchado? ”:
Am I stained?

extranjera:
foreigner

formarse:
to line up

fotovoz:
photovoice

fulbito:
street soccer. Peruvian version of soccer played on a small field of either artificial turf or concrete with smaller goals. Fulbito is a faster paced game than traditional soccer.

fumando:
smoking; huffing (when used in reference to terokal)

fumón:
stoner

fútbol:
soccer

galletas:
cookies

ganas de hacer nada:
from “tener ganas.” Meaning to not have the desire to do anything.

gasesosa:
soda

Grau:
Major thoroughfare in Lima

gringa:
White woman

haciendo la hora:
killing time

Hay cría y corazón:
There is breed and heart

hogar:
home

hoy:
today
jerga: slang

Jirón de la Unión: A street in downtown Lima

“la engañe”: “I fooled her.”

La escalera: The stairs. A space in downtown Lima frequented by youth on the street.

la leche: Milk. The term applied to the food provided to children, adolescents and adults on the streets of downtown Lima.

la una: one o’clock

la policía: the police

La Tierra: translates to “the earth.” The pseudonym given to the casa-hogar where I conducted observations.

La Victoria: a district of Lima

limosna: alms

llamada: call

Lo más difícil: the most difficult

lugares distintos: distinct places

mala gente: bad people

Maranga: boys prison

mareado: dizzy, lightheaded. Can also be used to indicate buzzed, but not drunk.

maricón: queer, fag

maridos: husband and wife

más o menos: more or less, so so

media hora: half hour
me empilan: they provoke me
molestando la gente: harassing people
mujer: woman
música: music
Navidad: Christmas
ninguna: no one, none, not even one
niños callejeros: street children
niños de calle: children of the street
niños en la calle: children on the street
no me caen: I don’t like them
no seas piraña: don’t be a pirahna
padrastro: stepfather
país: country
pan con tamal: bread served with a dish made from a corn mass and typically stuffed with meat.
partido: game, match
paseando: (ir paseando) to go for a walk
pasta: see pasta básica
pasta básica: a byproduct in the production of cocaine. Pasta básica is a white powder that is typically either smoked in a pipe or by adding it to a cigarette.
pastilla: pill. La Tierra often gave the boys interned there sedatives to help them pass the “syndrome.”
pastora: female pastor

piraña: piranha. A derogatory term applied to children on the street.

pita: string

Plaza de Armas: The main plaza in downtown Lima.

Plaza San Martín: a plaza in downtown Lima

posta: medical center

Pre-comunidad: pre-community. The second phase in the program at La Tierra.

preventivo: a juvenile detention center. There are several preventivos in Lima that serve as centers for boys and girls under the age of 18 who have committed a crime, are abandoned, or left their home. Preventivo frequently serves as a half-way house between the street and the casa-hogar.

programa: program

propina: tip

“Pues Senorita, eso es mi historia.” Well miss, this is my story.

Puente Nuevo: New bridge. An area in San Juan de Lurigancho, a district of Lima.

pulsera: bracelet

ratero: pick-pocket

recuerdo: memory, memento, keepsake

Reinsertión: Reinsertion. The final phase in the program at La Tierra.

sala TV: TV room

salida: outing
**seguimiento:** follow-up

**Santa Teresita:** a church and *comedor* in Lima

**selva:** the jungle

**Serenazgo:** city security in Lima

**taller:** workshop

**“Te cuento más el viernes.”:** I’ll tell you more on Friday.

**“te espero”:** I’ll wait for you

**terokal:** *Terokal* is a type of shoemaker’s glue sold in a can. It is abused by many boys and girls on the streets as an inhalant.

**tranquilo:** calm, peaceful

**“Tu sabes que somos de calle”:** You know that we are from the street

**wiro:** (Guiro). A traditional Peruvian percussion instrument.

**“¿Vas a venir?”:** “Are you going to come?”

**velas:** candles

**viejia:** old; mother

**voluntad:** will

**“Ya es muy tarde”:** “It’s already too late.”

**“Ya me aburrió”:** “I’m bored already.”

**Yamey:** Jamie, pronounced by the boys as “yamey”

**yo:** I

**Yo existo:** I exist

**zampoña:** panpipes. The *zampoña* is a flutelike instrument played in traditional Peruvian music.
To: Elizabeth Swadener  
EDUCATION

From: Mark Roosa, Chair  
Soc Beh Full Board

Date: 05/05/2008

Committee Action: Approval

IRB Action Date 05/05/2008

Approval Date 03/21/2008

IRB Protocol # 0802002661

Study Title Street Youth in Lima, Peru

Expiration Date 03/20/2009

The above-referenced protocol has been APPROVED following Full Board Review by the Institutional Review Board.

This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals that may be required. It is the Principal Investigator’s responsibility to obtain review and continued approval before the expiration date noted above. Please allow sufficient time for continued approval. Research activity of any sort may not continue beyond the expiration date without committee approval. Failure to receive approval for continuation before the expiration date will result in the automatic suspension of the approval of this protocol on the expiration date.

Information collected following suspension is unapproved research and cannot be reported or published as research data. If you do not wish continued approval, please notify the Committee of the study termination.

Adverse Reactions: If any untoward incidents or severe reactions should develop as a result of this study, you are required to notify the Soc Beh Full Board immediately. If necessary a member of the Committee will be assigned to look into the matter. If the problem is serious, approval may be withdrawn pending IRB review.

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of this study, such as the procedures, the consent forms, or the investigators, please communicate your requested changes to the Soc Beh Full Board. The new procedure is not to be initiated until the IRB approval has been given.