

Street Children: Getting to Know Them

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Abstract

Over a three-year period, the author conducted an action research study, which included interviews and participant observations, with five children living on the streets in Port-of-Spain, the capital of Trinidad and Tobago. Data reveals the complex but interesting characteristics, lifestyle, and language of street children. If more people were aware of some of the difficulties that these children experience daily, perhaps they would be motivated to become agents of change.

Introduction

This article tries to highlight the experiences and perspectives of five street children who actually live on the streets of Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago. The data were collated, triangulated, and presented in a narrative manner. Action research, including a case study, of five street children was conducted. Interviews and participant observations were used for data collection, and triangulation of the methods was very useful. Data reveals some of the characteristics and language of these children. Recommendations for more involvement in the lives of street children are made.

Definition of Street Children

O God boy dat woman looking real good! Ah feel ah could f--- she right now. Nutten like ah good woman tonite.

That is a very attractive woman. I feel I could have sex with her at this moment. There is nothing better than having a woman to make love to and have sex tonight.

Pie Man gimme a pie to eat, Ah hungry fuh so. Smoking cigarettes is real fun. It does make yuh feel real good. It does give yuh ah good high.

(The term "Pie Man" refers to a man selling pie.) Give me a pie to eat because I am very, very hungry. Smoking cigarettes is really fun. It makes you feel happy and takes away your problems.

Dis knife is fuh protection. Life on the streets real, real tough. If anybody only touch me—dey dead, yes real dead! Ah don't make joke at all.

I use this knife to protect myself. Life on the streets is very hard and tough. If individuals try to do me any harm, I will kill them. I am very serious about this.

These voices point to the stark reality of those who live on the streets. They speak about the violence, abuse, and hunger that some children endure on the streets. They also reveal that some street children resort to violence as a means of protecting themselves. These expressions are indicative of symptoms of a greater problem.

Groves and Johnson (2000) state that it is very difficult to coin a precise definition of *street children* because different countries define that term in a variety of ways. They also believe that: "street children are a rapidly growing unique urban population throughout the world." Huang et. al. (Huang, Barreda, Mendoza, Guzman & Gilbert, 2004) state that there is no clear way

of defining this term because individuals cannot assume that: "...all children on the streets are homeless."

In Trinidad and Tobago, Ali (1997), Charles (1998), and Roxburgh (2000) describe them as "street children." Olusanya (2005) defines *street children* as: "the generic term used to refer to children who use the street for their daily survival." Abdelgalil et. al. (Abdelgalil, Gurgel, Theobald & Cuevas, 2004) and Human Rights Watch (2003) believe that *street children* are poor children who lack guidance. Scheper-Hughes and Hoffman (1994), who conducted fieldwork among some street children in Brazil, posed the following question to the townspeople during one of their projects: "What is a *menino de rua* (street child)?" Despite the data gathered, it was difficult for them to arrive at a precise definition. They maintain that such children should be classified as victims of unfortunate circumstances.

Harris (2000) believes that sometimes youth are considered to be street children because they are underprivileged and happen to be in the wrong places. Harris, (2000) notes that street children are often considered dangerous and will be regarded as a threat to society if they are found loitering on the streets in the city. Scheper-Hughes and Hoffman (1994) hypothesized that street children are like our definition of dirt: "Soil in the ground is clean, a potential garden; soil under the fingernails is filth." Dirt is necessary for the growth of plants, but when it is out of place it becomes a nuisance, and is considered filthy and repulsive. A similar analogy could be used to derive a description of street children. Scheper-Hughes and Hoffman, (1994) are of the view that if individuals stop, reflect for a while, and evaluate their own perception of street children, they may arrive at a similar conclusion.

Drawing on information gathered from literature, coupled with interviews from those who look after street children, *street children* in Trinidad and Tobago describes

children, aged 10 to 16 who do not enjoy the comfort and security of a family and seek refuge on the streets as a means of survival. Some actually live on the street and sell, beg, and return to their families or Drop-in Centres. During research, when I asked the children their ages, they told me that they were between 10 to 16. Therefore, I decided to use this age range in a working definition of street children. In the Analysis section of this article, I present some of the characteristics of these children.

Methodology

Action research involves a cyclical process of data collection, reflection, and analysis; this research format has been used in previous research with street children (Adams and McCullough, 2003). Over a three-year period, I got to know five street children very well, and through the use of interviews and participant observation, I got a clearer understanding of how they live. Interviews and observations were carefully chosen because I felt that they would allow the children to speak for themselves and thus address the primary research question: What are the perspectives of street children? Data collection was done through regular and consistent fieldwork. The days and the hours of contact were deliberately altered to get a holistic perspective of the children's lives.

Interviews

Conducting interviews with street children, about issues pertaining to their lives, was one method used to obtain their perspectives. Interviews with the children were conducted both individually and in groups. Some interviews were structured and others were unstructured. For unstructured interviews, I prepared questions centered around the research focus:

Describe your experiences of life on the streets.

Structured interviews yielded background information that could be readily summarized, although the data from these interviews were of limited value.

They did yield simple descriptive and basic information, but failed to explain why these children continued to live on the streets, despite their intimate familiarity with the dangers that surrounded them. In fact, structured interviews were a precursor to more open-ended discussions that are more appropriately categorized as unstructured interviews. A wealth of qualitative data was gained through interviews based on prepared questions. The children spoke quite openly. These findings generated deep insights into how street children understand their social world and allowed me to listen to their varied and rich perspectives.

As far as possible, I created a very relaxed atmosphere during interviews so that the interviewee did not feel intimidated. While the children shared their varying testimonies of life on the streets, on occasion, some children were somewhat reluctant to explain personal issues relating to their lives. When those moments arose, I gently persisted and tried to assist them as best I could. I rephrased questions, and spoke in the vernacular; when they still did not speak, I discontinued the interviews and respected their rights to silence. I was very careful not to become too intrusive. Sometimes, in an attempt to “boast” about whose life on the streets was the toughest, they became excited and spoke freely. However, there were times they would not speak about their own affairs but bragged extravagantly about the experiences of others. Sensitive areas dealing with abuse were heavily punctuated by prolonged periods of silence, or by flippant remarks and forced laughter. Words, phrases, and issues that appeared to be superficial and/or were mentioned often, were further explored during group interviews.

Group interviews

Group interviews create an ambiance where children who live on the streets can communicate freely with one another. They provide great opportunities for street children to vent their emotions. Group interviews, according to Charlton, (1996), help researchers to comprehend what children are communicating. By paying close attention to what children say, some researchers become better able to understand and help them. Charlton (1996) believes that during group interviews, some street children are better able to talk about a concern or fear. In such a setting, some of them experience bonding because of the trusting relationship created. They feel comfortable, and they freely express their personal feelings. Consequently, Charlton (1996), argues that group interviews can be therapeutic for some children, in that: they are able to vent their feelings and thus begin to resolve their conflicts.

Interviews demand an enormous amount of time for preparation, as well as for transcribing information, which is often contradictory. However, through the use of participant observation, I was able to confirm details, and in some cases clarify certain ambiguities.

Participant observation

One of the most noteworthy components of participant observation is its directness of observation, as opposed to questioning. Robson states: “You do not ask people about their views, feelings or attitudes; you watch what they do and listen to what they say.” (1998, p. 191). Observing the various moods of the children was phenomenal. I took note of motives and deep-rooted feelings. In response to the issue of abuse, most of the children remained silent. I noted a change in their physical disposition: eyelids dropped, lips were closed, and heads were bowed. At times, they would simply gaze into space or at the ground. With questions pertaining to sexuality, it was clear by their expressions that many of the street children were uncomfortable and were struggling

with this area. Rather than assume that they were not sexually abused or avoid the issue entirely, I asked them if they wanted to say anything or recall any encounters they may consider ill-meaning, unkind, malevolent, or mischievous during their early childhood days.

Through the use of interviews and participation observation, the children were provided with an opportunity to relate their life situations, to express their feelings, and to interpret their goals and aspirations. Furthermore, the combination of methods enabled a degree of triangulation, which, according to Denzin (1970) and Jick (1983), contributes to confirmation and completeness. The combination of methods was deliberate, because, as Arksey and Knight, note, "...it is important to try to blend and integrate the different methods, and not simply to design a study that comprises distinct, mutually exclusive approaches." (1999, p. 21).

Analysis

A serious challenge lay in the effort to analyze the perspectives of street children, because very often their stories were complicated accounts and could only really be understood within their context. Because the perspectives of the children were often couched in stories, in trying to analyze data I had to consider the form and context of these stories. This involved examining how the children conveyed their perspectives. I examined certain words, sentences, and linguistic features and focused attention on the way certain "slangs" were used. In addition, I paid close attention to when things were said, why they were said, and how they were said within the social context, in order to arrive at an understanding of the perspectives of children who live on the streets.

The analysis presented here takes a narrative form, which reflects its ever-developing nature as it describes the different components of the children's

perspectives and simultaneously explains the context of street life.

The five children

In Trinidad and Tobago, street children are sometimes easily identifiable, especially when they are in rags loitering outside food outlets and banks. Sometimes, they appear at traffic lights and busy street intersections, selling snacks or begging by tapping on the windows of vehicles. In Port of Spain, the capital of Trinidad and Tobago, the teenaged street children may even wait for a sexual rendezvous that will bring in money, lunch, or a place to sleep. However, there are also times when these children are not easily visible. When they are sleeping in abandoned buildings or living as concubines, it is difficult to notice them. Sometimes people see them, but they go unrecognized because they could be mistaken for other teenagers talking with their friends in malls, shopping plazas, and on street corners.

The five children were: David, Duncan, Damien, Danny, and Daniel. Throughout this article, pseudonyms are used for the children, adults, institutions, and geographic locations. Some of them were unable to read, write, spell, and/or speak properly. All five spoke in the vernacular. Because David and Duncan had attended classes for a length of time (albeit with varying periods of interruption), their language skills were more developed than those of Damien, Danny, and Daniel, who seemed to lack motivation for learning. The articulation of speech of the latter three was poor: David in particular, stammered and stuttered and mispronounced many words.

Damien, Danny, and Daniel had each attended school for a short period of time. At the time of the research, David was attending a vocational school and Duncan a school for children with special needs. Damien and Danny attended the same primary school, and although the two were at the same level, (Standard Two), they were in different classes. Daniel went to a

different school, but after one week he was expelled because he threatened to kill the teacher.

Daniel was raised by his grandmother. The rest of the children - David, Duncan, Damien, and Danny - grew up with their respective mothers and stepfathers. In the very first interview, Daniel said he grew up with his grandmother, but weeks later he never mentioned his grandmother; rather, he spoke about his father. Similarly, in the first interview four of the children told me they grew up with their mothers and stepfathers, but weeks later Duncan revealed that he was raised by his father. All five children were clear that they were not orphans. They were raised neither by a single parent nor by the "usual" two parents.

Abuse: Reason for leaving home

The reasons for these children leaving their homes and living on the streets were multiple and divergent. Generally, street children mainly comprise school dropouts, children who are addicted to video games, children who are excluded from family life, and children who are victims of AIDS. There are also those who are runaways from domestic violence and abuse. There are those who are brought by parents or guardians from rural areas to the main towns to solicit alms. Some children are sent by their families to eke out a meager living. Therefore, it is not uncommon to observe children stopping cars at traffic lights along the highways and in the city to ask for money. Danny and Duncan stated quite clearly that they left home because of abuse:

Ah lef home because meh fadder uses to beat me fuh nutten. Yes, fuh nutten boy. When he drink and get drunk he just like to beat meh bad. He does beat meh with a hose.

I left home because my father used to beat me for nothing. He used to beat me for nothing.

When he drinks and gets drunk, at those times the beatings are very severe. He beats me with a garden hose.

Similarly, Duncan also mentioned that physical abuse at home led him to the streets:

Ah does get licks wit ah kinda hose yuh does use to water plants in the yard. Look, if you feel Ah lie. Look at meh knees. He chopp meh dey when Ah was six years. Is real tears home.

He beats me with almost anything: garden hose that is used to water plants. Look, at me if you think that I am not telling you the truth. Look at my knees. He chopped me on my knees when I was six years of age. Life at home is extremely miserable and unbearable.

Life on the streets: Children "on" and "of" the streets

Children "on" the streets work on the streets to support themselves and their families. Some of them retain some measure of contact with their families, and sometimes return home at nights. Their jobs may consist of: shining shoes, selling newspapers or snacks, washing cars or performing other menial tasks in mechanic shops, stores, or groceries. Some of them sometimes attend school whenever it is convenient, and may periodically return home or go to drop-in centres. Children "on" the streets may supplement their income by engaging in illegal activities, and are very often intercepted and interrogated by the police or the judicial system. Furthermore, most of those who work at such an early stage in their lives are exposed to the myriad risks and temptations of the street.

Children "of" the streets see the street as home because they actually live on the streets. They spend most of the time parading the

streets, imploring passerby and soliciting food, money, jewelry, or clothing to make their existence more comfortable. Some are involved in scavenging and robbery, while others are involved in prostitution and the drug business. They infrequently visit their families and may not even make mention of them. When they do speak of their home lives, it is usually in a flippant, reserved, or morose manner. Children “of” the streets are usually more aggressive and more violent than the children “on” the streets.

If people were to walk around Port of Spain, especially during the night, they would be sure to meet some street children. However, at times it is difficult to see these children, especially when they make their beds on the pavements. They not only sleep on the streets, but also beg for a living; some of the older street children are the ones who have resorted to robbery. If Trinidad does not try to solve the problem of street children, they will increase at alarming proportions. Data suggests that many these children can be considered to be “of” the streets.

Generally, whether street children are classified as “on” or “of” the streets, most of them are seen as failures. However, data from the five children clearly indicate that they are interested in trying to modify their lives.

Damien:

Look Ah does try to be good.
Look de teacher say Ah is a
good boy. An Ah believe she.

*I try my very best to be good.
Even the teacher said that I am
a good boy, and I believe her.*

Danny:

Ah know Ah does behave
bad and ting. But Ah go be
good tomorrow.

*I am aware that I behave badly,
but I am going to behave well
tomorrow.*

Daniel:

Yuh eh fine Ah behaving
good since morning. Yea Ah
go change.

*Don't you think that I have
been behaving well since this
morning? Yes, I am going to
change my behavior.*

Life on the streets: A means of survival

The term “street” does not hold quite the same meaning for street children as it does for the general public. It is their world. It is their environment. It is their dwelling place. It is on the streets that they make new friends. It is on the streets, that bonding and socializing occur, in the absence of family or even sibling support. In other words, the family unit, which provides warmth and a nurturing atmosphere, and brings stability to the lives of many children, is absent from the lives of street children. Children who live on the streets may substitute emotional security, gained through street association, for that unavailable in the home.

As a collective group, - both children “on” the streets, and children “of” the streets - usually begin their day as early as 6:00 A.M. Some children work during the night, so their day normally begins at around 10:00 A.M. Their schedule is not systematically planned. Some play outdoor games, but most of them are hooked on video games. While on the streets, they have to battle fiercely to keep alive. Some of them survive by selling whatever they can find. Some even sell themselves.

In Trinidad, it is not uncommon to observe street children scavenging through the garbage in the hope of finding something to eat. Sometimes it is spoiled food tossed out by supermarkets and restaurants, but is a ready meal for the hungry. Some street children even flock around the trucks and vehicles that make regular trips to the dumps, just to salvage something from the leftovers. The fact of their need is utterly deplorable, but sometimes, it is only

through this act of scavenging, that a street child is able to survive. Most of them have to be content with whatever they find.

Street children are in a constant struggle to survive. Because they usually live in deteriorating physical environments, such as market - places, bus stations, rum shops, busy streets, and traffic intersections, they are vulnerable to a number of risks and dangers. Apart from hunger, they are susceptible to a number of social hazards, not the least of which are health risks that include a variety of communicable diseases. Many of them have very limited educational opportunities, some are totally illiterate. The streets are their work place and their social abode. They earn a living on the streets. They eat on the streets. They sleep on the streets. They use illicit drugs and drink alcohol. Some of them are involved in prostitution, subjected to physical and verbal abuse, and become victims of violence. Nevertheless, the streets are their world - a world characterized by wretched deprivation.

Many children are forced to call this world, home. Further, some of these children, who very often are products of abuse and rejection, have virtually exchanged one type of lifestyle at home for a similar one on the streets. Danny explains:

Yuh see me here Ah looking quiet but nobody could take advantage of meh because Ah have meh knife to protect myself.

Although I am looking quiet, no one could take advantage of me, because I have my knife to protect me.

Although the literature sometimes uses derogatory names to describe street children, data reveals that street children in Trinidad and Tobago resent being referred to by nicknames. Calling street children by other names usually embarrassed them and sometimes made them

feel inferior. During a group interview, all the children revealed quite clearly that they did not like to be called *street children*. Furthermore, they did not even want to be associated with the characteristics of street children.

David:

Me, Ah is not a street boy again, Ah does go to school now. Ah is ah school chile.

I am not a street boy again. I go to school. I am a school boy.

Duncan:

Ah telling you, Sir, Ah is not a street chile, and Ah is not ah abandon chile. Ah is a school child because Ah does go to school.

I am telling you, Sir: "I am not a street child; neither am I an abandoned child. I am a school boy because I go to school.

Damien:

Not because Ah uses to live on the streets, da doh make me ah street boy.

Not because I used to live on the streets, that does not make me a street boy.

Danny:

Ah have meh modder, so I am not really a street boy.

I have my mother, so I am not a street boy.

Daniel:

Ah don't know, but Ah know Ah is not a street child.

I do not know, but I am not a street child.

David and Duncan tried to justify their contention that they were not street children by stating that they attend school and hence they are rightfully school children. Perhaps David admitted that he was once a street child when he stated that he was not a street boy "again." Duncan's response was even more emphatic, because he claims that he is neither a street child nor an abandoned child. Damien, like David, stated that he was a street child. Danny disregarded this label because he has his mother. Daniel did not know how he wanted to be called, but was certain that he is not a street child.

The lifestyles of children who live on the streets differ from one country to another, and members of the public react differently to the issue of street children. Some firmly believe that these children have several positive choices available, but simply and deliberately opt for this lifestyle. Yet, a sympathetic public may unwittingly contribute to the continuing presence of children on the streets, especially the youngest of the recipients of sympathy. Children of, about four years old, who beg on the streets or in the market place, look innocuous, pathetic, and heartbreaking. These street children may solicit and receive donations without much difficulty. Their parents are delighted and have few or no reservations about permitting even their very young children to continue begging, because they are likely to bring in a sizable income.

There is a great danger in allowing children to beg, especially when they are quite young, Scheper-Hughes and Hoffman (1994) suggest that as street children mature, they evoke less compassion and receive fewer handouts from people. When children develop physically and show signs of maturity, they are often chased away from public spaces in an aggressive manner both by members of the public and members of the police force. Some of the children respond violently in order to protect themselves. Others resort to stealing because, for them, it may be the only

solution to their problems. Thus, according to Scheper-Hughes and Hoffman (1994), there is a gradual progression from begging to stealing. As children grow older, they are often dehumanized and rejected and this makes successful begging even more difficult. Therefore, as a means of survival they begin to steal.

Beazley (2000) argues that some street children are also vulnerable to pressures from drug dealers, pimps, other criminals, and pornographers. These people manipulate and exploit children promising them money, food, clothing, and a place to stay. The idea of obtaining "easy" money is very appealing and enticing, so some street children may gradually succumb to illegal attachments. In return for favors received, they are obligated to follow the dictates of their "new owners"; consequently, they become involved in all sorts of illegal practices, like burglary, prostitution, drugs peddling, and child pornography.

The Children Act (1980) of Trinidad and Tobago discourages children from begging on the streets and any public premises. According to the Children Act, persons who involve children in such acts are guilty of an offense:

If any person causes or procures any child or young person, or, having the custody, charge, or care of a child or young person, allows that child or young person to be in any street, premises, or place for the purpose of begging or receiving alms, or of including the giving of alms, whether or not there is any pretence of singing for sale, or otherwise, that person is liable. (1980, p. 11).

Many people are probably unaware that the Children Act exists in Trinidad and Tobago, because it is not often enforced. Thus, street children continue to beg and receive donations from the public.

The rugged life that children face on the streets, regardless of the meager rewards, could have an adverse effect on their long-term development. The illicit and non-productive activities that street children engage in during their daily lives are harmful and have the potential to influence them negatively. Old habits usually become entrenched in people's systems and are difficult to address. In the case of street children, there is no difference. Some of them have become so accustomed to the rugged life on the streets that possible alternatives to that life seem difficult to accept. When such behavior continues without mediation among street children, the gap between them and mainstream society gets wider. It can be argued that the longer children are on the streets, the more they are distanced from possible rehabilitation and resources; thus, they become absorbed into and a permanent part of the street life culture.

As mentioned earlier, some street children beg to survive. Others work to maintain themselves and their families. Still others, engage in illegal activities. However, there are those who turn to other "substances" as a means of dealing with the hunger and frustration that they encounter on the streets.

Life on the streets: Language of street children

Interacting with street children is not easy. Some street children, when relating incidents, give information that contains inconsistencies. Aptekar (1994) believes that this manipulation of information has a psychological function, in that it allows children to get back at a society that devastates and deserts them. Others, in an attempt to conceal certain data, may fabricate or exaggerate their situations. Aptekar suggests that some street children

cultivate an: "...extraordinary capacity to tell stories." (1994, p. 199). Initially, Daniel said that he is 10 years old. In a subsequent interview, he said that he is six:

Sir, Ah is six years. Yes Ah telling yuh, since Ah is six years. Ah went to primary school and Ah didn't even finish.

Sir, I am six years old. Yes, I am telling you that I am six years old. I went to primary school, but I did not finish my primary school education.

Permitting the children to express themselves is more important than trying to ascertain the "truth," because some street children genuinely have little concept of the specific time or precise date about particular occurrences. Hence, they may be unable to state precisely when they left home. Similarly, they may be unable to ascertain how long they have been on the streets. Usually, though, even when they lack the ability to account accurately for dates and times, they can nonetheless give a proper estimation.

This perspective, gives further insights into the lives of street children. Language is important because it is used to communicate a large variety of messages; through language, people convey thoughts and feelings and street children are no different.

Geoghegan et. al. (Geoghegan, Pollard & Kelly, 1963) hold the perspective that as children approach adolescence, they begin to grasp concepts of natural phenomena: the environment, plants and animals, and particularly humans. This intellectual inquiry is critical in their development. Their experiences widen and they associate new meanings with old concepts, adding to their repertoire of learning by listening, observing, and reading. Their vocabulary is also expanded.

Therefore, Geoghegan et. al. (1963) believe that children must have an enriched experiential background. However, as they ascend the academic ladder, considerable variation of technical mathematical terms such as decimals, fractions, products, and factors may present some difficulty. Therefore, children need assistance to form the numerous and correct concepts that are the tools with which they judge and reason. These concepts are not formed in isolation. The social and emotional contexts in which children find themselves exert an influence on their intellectual processes. The personality traits of children, their curiosity, their need for achievement, and their drive to know more all contribute to their concept formation. However, language acts as a catalyst in the pursuit and achievement of concept development.

Most street children have not acquired these rudimentary skills. Therefore, they are slow at learning how to think critically, as well as how to comprehend and learn the subject matter that some of more fortunate peers are in the process of mastering. It cannot be repeated too frequently, nor be emphasized too much, that it is the whole child who grows intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically. Hence, development in these areas takes place concomitantly. Geoghegan et. al. (1963) claim that children at this stage, bring to their environment an accumulated experiential knowledge that can be measured imperfectly and estimated roughly. Although some street children may have reached this academic stage in their lives, they all have various, negative experiences. Some are experts on street life. Some are victims of verbal and physical abuse. Some have witnessed fights and contentious arguments both at home and on the streets. These varied negative experiences influence and determine their perceptions and insights, which are exhibited as they move from one stage of development to another.

Geoghegan et. al. (1963) believe that several factors cause street children to have difficulty with language. Some children may lack the proper foundation necessary to build language skills. Some do not understand the meaning of certain words, especially words have more than one meaning. Some have difficulty in articulating speech. Problems with speech articulation may be the product of many different factors. It must be borne in mind that some street children, from infancy, have heard faulty speech, and have seldom been corrected when they pronounce words incorrectly and speak in poorly formed sentences. Some of them even show signs of infantile pronunciations (baby talk), frequently evidenced in mispronunciation of initial consonants and syllables. Some speak in a singsong manner. As noted previously, although some of them attend school intermittently, some street children have completely dropped out of the school system. This inability to master language, coupled with all the negative factors of street life, make street life utterly unbearable and meaningless but not impossible to overcome.

Although life on the streets is extremely difficult - seemingly impossible at times - it is interesting to note that during interviews, all the children expressed various opinions pertaining to goals and careers they would like to pursue. For example, they collectively stated that they were interested in earning money. However, David and Duncan had a keen interest in furthering their education. David wanted to learn a trade, whereas Duncan wanted to work as a laborer. Damien, Danny, and Daniel immediately expressed a desire to work at fast food outlets. For these three furthering their education was not a priority. David:

Ah wan to be a mechanic when I get big. Ah go ha meh own business, so nobody could tell meh nutten.

I would like to be a mechanic. I will open my own business, so that I could be autonomous.

Duncan:

Ah wan to fix people house.
Dat is a easy job.

I would like to be a carpenter.

Damien:

Ah wan to sell in Kentucky Fried Chicken (K.F.C.). Dey does take anybody to work for dem.

I would like to sell Kentucky Fried Chicken (K.F.C.), because they will hire just about anyone.

Danny:

I wan to work in Pizza Hut you does make good money dey, ent, Sir.

I would like to work in Pizza Hut because they pay good wages, isn't that, true, Sir?

Daniel:

Ah go work anyway, like in Mario's Pizza or a bakery. Ah go get bread and ting to eat.

I would like to work anywhere, for example, Mario's Pizza, or a bakery, because I will get bread to eat.

Conclusion

This research provided an avenue for these five children to express themselves without reservation. The interview environment was non-threatening, and thus, the children were able to speak about deep and personal issues in their lives. Action research gave them the opportunity to interact in their natural environment. Interviews and participant observation were

carefully selected with the chief objective of answering the research question: "What are the perspectives of street children?"

This fieldwork among street children has unequivocally provoked my conscience. Moreover, the plight of these children has brought numerous questions to the forefront. What is the extent of this problem? What are the real causes? Are there any tangible solutions? The answers are extremely complex, and although I am committed to the cause I am aware that this is not sufficient. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that individuals, governments, and non-governmental organizations, try their best to try to minimize this social ill as much as possible.

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