"Growing big in the streets"

Lusaka´s street youths´ voices of poverty in the streets

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Tiivistelmä□□ Referat – Abstract

Street children´s life situations have received a lot of attention both in the media and in research in the recent years. In the literature street children are often defined as being under the age of 18. In this thesis, the focus group is the street youth, meaning the adolescents and young adults who either live full-time in the streets or are otherwise strongly connected with the street life. The research interest was to study how poverty is present in the lives of the street youth, and how their experiences of poverty in the streets and their own agency change when they grow older. A further interest was to find out how street life enables transition into adult roles in the society.

The theoretical background of the thesis consists of introducing the discussion of structure and agency in social sciences as a way to understand the social life, then introducing the relevant concepts of poverty and social exclusion. Poverty in this thesis is understood in its widest sense, as Amartya Sen has defined it: deprivations of basic capacities that a person has to live the kind of life he or she has a reason to value. Also, the contemporary research on street children is introduced, where the agency perspective has gained space. The thesis also takes a look at some situational factors of the case study country Zambia, which affect the lives of the country's vulnerable children and youth.

This thesis is an ethnographic research consisting of two field work periods in Zambia's capital city Lusaka. These field work periods took place in July-August 2011 and 2012 in an organization working with street children and youth. The informants were a heterogeneous group of street youth, aged between 14 and 28 and connected to the street life from different positions. The data consists of field notes and 33 recorded interviews with the informants.

The results show that most of the street youth expressed reluctance towards their current life in the streets with little prospects for change. Income-wise their poverty seemed to vary, but the money was spent to meet one's instant needs. Poverty was further expressed in terms of experienced public disrespect and vulnerability to violence and abuse by other street youth as well as police authorities. It also meant remoteness and mistrust in one's social relationships. Poverty in the streets caused dependency of substances leading to decreased ability to take care of oneself as well as violent behaviour. Growing older in the streets seemed to bring increased feelings of wasted years and frustration in one's life situation, which was in contrast to adult roles in the society. Prolonged street life brought a risk of adopting illegal means and violent and harmful conduct. However, this was not necessarily so, and some of the youth had taken distance to the street life abandoned many of their earlier street behaviors. As chances for employment were small, they were, however, still stuck in the streets to earn living.

CONTENTS

1   POINTS OF DEPARTURE

1.1   Searching for an understanding between two worlds

Street youth´s life experiences have interested me for a long time. My first closer
contact with street children and youth was when I was volunteering in a juvenile jail in
Tanzania during the summer of 2009. Most of the youth in the jail had been living in the
streets, and I was surprised by the big contrast in working with unconstrained youth in
Finland and these youths in the jail. Regardless of their difficult experiences and the
poor conditions in the jail, the youth were polite to me and eager to learn and take part
in almost any activity. The adaptability and sense of humor with which they seemed to
be facing their daily lives impressed me. Furthermore, their manner of interacting with
each other and with the volunteers made me feel like I was working with mentally
stable youth.

Both in Tanzania and later in Zambia many local people have told me that it is good that
I am in Africa, so that I can see what real problems are. I have tried to explain, that the
problems in my home country are just as real to people facing them, they are just very
different by nature. However, I feel I have failed to explain this understandably. The
problems of absolute poverty, hunger, HIV and other illness, in the absence of well-
functioning social security and health care systems are so much more concrete issues.
Speaking about relative poverty, depressions or burn-outs does not seem like a pertinent
discussion. Yet in Finnish child protection contexts I have met children who are doing
mentally so badly that upon psychiatric evaluation it was found that their whole identity
building process has been disturbed up to the point that they have not been able to form
their own identity and understanding. These cultural contrasts and my potentially
misleading perceptions of mentally strong street children made me interested in
understanding how the street youth actually experience the street life.

My thesis is an ethnographic research which consists of two ethnographic field work
periods in Zambia´s capital city Lusaka. The first one took place in the summer of 2011,
when I was volunteering for six weeks in an organization working with street children
and street youth. My ethnographic data from that period consists of observations,

discussions and recorded interviews with youth who were either full-time living in the streets or otherwise connected to the street life. My initial interest was inclined towards street youths´ narrative identities, but I later chose street youth´s experiences of poverty as the primary research question. While these youths were telling me about their lives, they were also building up a picture of their experiences of living their life as the urban poor in the informal economy of Lusaka´s streets. I see poverty as the framework within which I perceive their agency. The second field work period was six weeks and took place in the summer of 2012 in the same organization. This period enabled me to deepen the understanding I had of their experiences and to get longitudinal data by making follow-up interviews with the same youth.

1.2   The purpose of the research and the research problem

Street children´s situations in different parts of the world seem to have attracted the attention of both media and research. According to the amount of academic and other studies made on street children within resent years, it seems that it is a very timely topic. One indicator of growing public interest in street children´s rights is the International Day for Street Children on 12th of April, which was celebrated for the first time in 2011. The main purpose for launching this day was to make street children´s situations and needs visible and to send a message to governments and other actors to stand for the rights of these children. (http://www.streetchildrenday.org; The Guardian 12.4.2011[1]) In the same year UN´s Human Right Council adopted a resolution focused specifically on the rights of street children. This resolution turned out to gain more co-sponsors than almost any other resolution in the past. These initiatives reflect that there is a growing global willingness to commit to street children´s protection, and that their rights are viewed as a matter of top importance. (OHCHR 2012, 7.)

This growing interest has helped to raise awareness of the situations of street children and adolescents. Most studies about street children follow the international standardization of childhood according to which it ends at the age of 18. This means that youth living in the streets aged 17 or younger are considered primarily as street children, whose childhood status and rights as children should not go unnoticed (e.g. UNICEF 2005, 1, 36; OHCHR, 7). Organizations advocating for children´s rights such

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[1] http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2012/apr/12/street-child-not-a-crime

as UNICEF have been particularly active in making publications concerning street children. The standpoint in these studies is to put street children in the child right agenda.

It appears that very little research is done about street youth beyond their adolescence in developing countries. It seems almost as if the existence of this group of older street youth would often go unnoticed, like turning 18 in the streets would mean that they are no longer there. However, some studies about street children do recognize that there are also older street youth who are living life very similar to their younger counterparts (e.g. Hecht 1998, 15; Kilbride et al. 2000, 2). These studies tend to include the older youth in their focus group of street children, as the following example shows: "*Street children range in age from newborn infants born on the streets up to about 16 to 18 years of age when most nations define the person as an adult. Nevertheless, as we shall see, Kenyan "street children" sometimes include boys in their mid-twenties although this is rare*" (Kilbride at al. 2000, 2).

I consider this kind of conceptualizing as problematic since it either leaves the existence of older street youth unnoticed or then includes them into research that is done within the framework of childhood. There are reasons to believe that the life situations and experiences of the older street youth differ from those of younger street children. In order to recognize street youth´s life situations accurately, more research should be done within the framework of youth research separate of childhood conceptualizations. The older youth in the streets need to have their voices heard too. The Consortium for Street Children made a literature review in 2011 concerning the existing street children research and it similarly suggests that there is a need for taking in and further defining young street adults (Thomas de Benítez 2011, 8).

As a response to this need, "the narrators" in this research are the street youth: adolescents and young adults, who are either living full-time in the streets of Lusaka or otherwise connected to the street life. My research interest was in their life experiences and more specifically their experiences of poverty. My expectations coming from the previous research about street youth is that street life is an alterable phase in the lives of these youth having a beginning and an end. My research questions are the followings:

1) How is poverty present in street youth´s lives?

2) How do their experiences of poverty and own agency change according to their age and "street careers"?

3) How does the street life enable detachment and transition into adult roles?

This thesis is constructed in the following way: This chapter has introduced my research interest and the research questions. Chapter two defines who are the street youth and reviews the existing literature. After this the concepts of structure and agency, as well as poverty and social exclusion will be presented and their relevance concerning street youth will be discussed. In chapter three the research will be attached to its Zambian contexts. Chapter four introduces the ethnographical field work and the informants, discusses about ethics and presents how the analysis was done. In chapter five the results are presented, which means answering to the three research questions. Chapter seven concludes the thesis by summarizing the key findings and reflecting the reliability of the results.

2   DEFINING THE FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH

2.1   Who are street youth?

The period between childhood and adulthood is called youth. This is usually seen as time when individuals prepare themselves for adult life. What this period covers is, however, very society-related, since it depends on the social roles and social change of the society in question. (Mufune 2000, 233–234.) In most Western countries a person is legally an adult when he or she turns 18. In African societies the age of legal adulthood varies typically from 18 to 21 (Chigunta 2002, 2). Whereas the legal adulthood is bound to a person´s biological age, adult identity seems to be more related to making long-term decisions and commitments. This transition to adulthood has been prolonging in virtually every post-industrial society. Simultaneously the period of childhood seems to have squeezed, as biological maturation and sexual experiments seem to be emerging at an earlier age. (Bynner 2007, 368.) Also in Africa a tendency to extend the category of

youth to include persons aged 30 and above has been observed. However, in an African context this extended transition to adulthood seems to be different by nature since it primarily reflects the prolonged period of youth´s dependency on their families to support them. This in turn reflects young people´s difficulties to find sustainable and independent livelihoods. In addition to this, in many African societies, especially in rural settings, the socially recognized adulthood status is connected to person´s capacity to sustain a legal marriage. This means that the unmarried people above the legal age are not considered as adults. (Chigunta 2002, 2–3.)

It is argued that adulthood becomes consolidated through the development of clear occupational career tracks, and more than anything through sustained partnerships and long-term commitments. Since the collective support for identity formation has decreased, the youth (or emerging adults) must first take the psychological task of individually forming a stable identity in order to be able to make and sustain these commitments in life. (Schwartz et al. 2005, 202.) This includes exploring different life options especially concerning love, work and world-view (Arnett 2000, 473). This kind conceptualizing of youth as a distinct transitional stage has weaknesses when applied to non-Western contexts. In the developing World the lack of resources and weak institutional framework provide youth with limited possibilities to self-made life choices. Successful transitions into stable employment or marriage are not easy to accomplish for youth living in poverty regardless of their psychological readiness. They may also be obliged to carry adult responsibilities, such as participating in gaining the family income at a very early age. (Schernthaner 2011; Ruddick 2003, 345.) These limitations have been recognized and defining youth as a transitional phase is specified being applicable only in cultures that allow young people a prolonged period of independent role (Arnett 2000, 469).

Regardless of its critique and limitations, I would consider youth as a distinct transitional stage applicable to street youth also in Africa. Whether it is a self-made choice or out of necessity that the youth is in the streets, he or she has left the dependency of childhood home but has not yet entered the long-term adult roles. In this way he/she is living in the transitional stage of youth even if it cannot be characterized by similar opportunities to explore a variety of directions in life as the youth in Western societies have. To some youth the street life itself can represent a transitional

opportunity in order to assume a more independent role and adult status in the community (Evans 2006, 126). For most street youth psychological transition into adulthood is not an easy task since there is nearly nothing sustainable in their lives, not to mention their difficulties to meet the societal expectations for adult roles, such as providing for a family. In many ways it is the chronic instability, be it in terms of housing, relationships, income or health, that most clearly characterizes the lives of street youth (O´Grady & Gaetz 2009, 6).

Since in most definitions street children include youth under 18, and independent categorization of street youth as a separate group is rare in non-western context, I am applying here the definitions most used for street children. The terms "street children" and "street youth" are also often used as synonyms to one another in different contexts (Thomas de Benítez 2011, 33; see also e.g. Mufune 2000; Ennew 2003). Street children or youth are a diverse group that can be defined in many ways. Most definitions, however, have three characteristics in common: spending remarkable amounts of time in the streets, streets becoming a way of living, and inadequate supervision and care from guardians (Mufune 2000, 234). UNICEF distinguishes in its various texts the definition of street children into two different sub-categories depending on what is their relationship to responsible adults and home. These categories are children on the streets and children of the streets. Children on the streets work in the streets during the day to contribute to their family´s economy. They have a home where to go during the nights. Children of the streets are the ones to whom the streets are the main reference point of existence. They do not have a sense of belonging to their home, and hold only occasional ties to their families. (Ennew 2003; Mufune 2000, 234.) It has, however, been argued that this kind of categorization does not work in an African context, and using these concepts can be seen as imposing assumptions on distinct environments (Ennew 2003; Mufune 2000, 235). It is also hard to distinguish between the two groups, youth of the street and youth on the street, from one another since most youth switch between the two (Aptekar & Abebe 1997, 479).

A growing number of researchers have also recognized the existence of street youth´s sub-cultures where they live their cultural and social lives. Some consider youth´s participation to a specific context-related sub-culture as a more suitable tool of definition of who is a street youth than trying to define youth´s relationship to the streets

(e.g. Davies 2008, 309–330; Naterer & Godina 2011, 24). Street youths´ needs, vulnerabilities and behavior change depending on the years spent in the streets and on their age. Life does not remain static in the streets but street youth develop so-called street careers, which correspond to their adaptation to street life. (Schernthaner 2011.) Kilbride (2000, 8) who has done research on Kenyan street children point out that being a street child is an event in the lives of these children, meaning that it has a beginning and, for most, an end which means a transition into some adult status.

2.2   Researchers´ look on street children and youth

As stated earlier, I have not been able to find much literature focused on street adolescents or young street adults, especially not when it comes to studies from developing countries. On the other hand, various street youth studies have been made in certain Western countries, such as Canada, where youth are the biggest group among homeless people (e.g. Hulchanski et al. 2009; Gaetz et al.1999). Also in developing country contexts, there is, however, a rising awareness that the group which in most contexts is defined as street children, is in fact, a mixture of children and youth. The predominant assumption that street youth are street children who have grown off age perhaps contributes to the fact that street youth have been categorized as street children (see Thomas de Benítez 2011, 33–34; Hecht 1998, 15). The shortage of research of street youth as a distinctive group has also practical implications. For instance Mufune´s (2000) article on street youth in Southern Africa, starts by defining youth as a separate phase from childhood and adulthood, typically falling somewhere between 15 to 24 years of age. Later, the writer however, most likely due to the lack of existing separate data, ends up using notions, discussions and reflections from previous studies concerning street children, also defining street youth as a special kind of youth normally aged between 5–20 years. Mufune states that older youth are not in the streets since they cannot make a living in a way that younger youth can, for instance by appearing miserable in order to gain sympathy (ibid. 2000, 235).

All in all, street children research is still at quite a young stage, and its main body has focused on describing the population (Dybicz 2005, 768). The body of literature has its roots in 1980s Latin America (Ennew 2003), and comparatively little conclusive research on street youth has been made in Africa (Davies 2008, 309). What was

characteristic to the street children literature in the first two decades was its homogeneity. Studies of street children concentrated on portraying a typical street child, the poor and problematic family background and street life characteristics, such as use of substances and street works. (Hecht 1998, 3–4; Thomas de Benítez 2011, 11). The early literature on the street children phenomenon also relied on estimates of an increasing problem on a huge scale (Thomas de Benítez 2011, 4–5).

Recent literature on street children and youth implies that there has been a shift in perspective. Studies in the 21st century have lifted up the agency of street children and youth, viewing them as competent social actors that are actively challenging the traditional norms of childhood and children´s roles (e.g. Evans 2006; Davies 2008, Beazley 2003; van Blerk 2006). This change in standpoint has shifted researchers´ perspective on street children and youth from problem-based contexts to viewing them as social actors in their own right interacting in different environments (Ennew & Swartz-Kruger 2003).

The paradigm change also reflects a development in the understanding of childhood, where questions of children´s agency and powerlessness have become central. Childhood studies acknowledge that the modern perception of childhood is based on the myth of children´s innocence. It imposes obligations to preserve children´s innocence and protect them from the harsh realities of life. The romanticized image of "the innocent child" has a dualistic nature: whereas it becomes an idealized expression of childhood, individual children breaking the norm become vilified. (Kehily 2005, 1–16.) Due to this idealized perception of childhood street children have been seen as children out of place, either helpless victims deprived from their childhood, causing a moral panic reclaiming for protection of their childhood, or dualistically, as children living immoral and chaotic lives calling for the protection of the public order. (e.g.Ennew & Swart-Kruger 2003, Beazley 2003, Aptekar 1988, xx – xxi, 48.) The fact that these stereotypes of victimhood and delinquency tend to be better indicators of the observer´s own assumptions than of street children´s realities is well understood in recent literature (Ennew & Swart-Kruger 2003).

The new millennium has produced a fair amount of studies from different parts of the World. Many of them seem to aim to knock down the old stereotypical assumptions on

street children and replace them with an image of capable street children facing life challenges with their creative and collective responses. This makes one wonder if the street children literature has really become more comprehensive and reliable or is it just the researchers´ way to look at the street children which has changed? However, it is not only the way in which street children are seen that has changed, but also how the research on them is done. Contrary to the previous adult-centered research, researchers have now become sensitive to using methods that aim to reach the ways in which children understand their experiences. The aim is to include street children in data collecting processes instead of being objects. (Ennew 2003, Ennew & Swartz-Kruger 2003.) This implies that the recent data does reach street children´s voices and realities better.

Street children literature has brought up various complexities of the lives of these children. One such is the role of street youth´s subculture, which seems to include both protective aspects, such as providing a feeling of belonging and social support network, and distractive aspects, such as peer pressure for use of intoxicants in order to be accepted. Street youth´s experiences of life in the street seem to be expressed in contradictory feelings of shared group solidarity, yet riddled with feelings of loneliness and continuous fighting with peers (Evans 2006, 123; Hecht 1998, 46). Also growing older in the streets brings contradictory roles, as will be discussed later.

2.1 **Structure and agency debate**

The core of the so called "structure-agency" debate in social sciences is centered on the question of whether a person is capable of choosing his own destiny or whether the social circumstances define his chances in life. The concepts of "structure" and "agency" are both very abstract by nature, and thus can be defined in various ways. In principle, however, "structure" refers to those social constraints embedded in society which influence individuals´ behavior, whereas agency refers to the human capacity to act according to one´s own will. Social theorists have approached this structure-agency debate from different positions, these being the structure- centric, agency-centric and approaches wanting to bridge these two. (Sherman 2012, 37–39; Bernardi et al. 2006, 167–168.)

The structure-centric approaches argue that the powerful structures in society have a dominant role in influencing individuals´ conduct. According to this logic, society´s mechanisms including its institutions, values and norms are regulated and hierarchal. They function to maintain the given power structure and social order in society. Since the social order has a self-reinforcing nature, a person´s ability to act is fundamentally defined by his position in the social structure and his acts subordinate logics of this structure. Seen from this perspective, individuals are passive recipients of externally given social determinants. (Bernardi et al. 2006, 165–168, Sherman 2012, 37–41.)

The agency- centric approach emphasizes the primacy of individual judgments, actions and decisions. The focus is not on societal structures but on the individual. Human agency is seen as a defining factor in organizing social life. It is people´s actions which create the social systems, not the other way round. This approach emphasizes individuals´ capabilities to plan, understand, organize and evaluate their actions. People are not passive recipients of external determinants but motivated actors in a society. (Sherman 2012, 37–38.)

Concepts of structure and agency are often viewed as contrasts to one another and as such they become defined in dependency as each other´s opposites. These contraries include representing "structure" as static, patterned, constrained and collective by nature whereas "agency" is seen as active, random, freedom, and individual. This kind of theorizing, however, fails to capture the inter-linkages between structure and agency. (Hays 1994, 57.) The third school of thought in the "structure-agency" debate brings up the dialectical and reciprocal relationship between "structure" and "agency". Social life can only be understood by the interaction of human agency and social structure. (Sherman 2012, 38.) According to this approach, society´s social systems do influence on how people act, both in terms of choices available to them and in terms of their preferences influenced by living in a given socio-cultural context. However, people do make intentional choices under a set of given circumstances. These actions can lead to changes in the social structure. (Bernardi et al. 2006, 168–169.) Giddens states that individuals are simultaneously creating the social system they live in as they are created by it (Giddens 1991, 204).

In this thesis I apply the reasoning of this third school of thought. I am interested in how street youth position themselves in this debate, meaning up to which point they consider that they can influence their lives by making choices, and up to which point they see their life dependent on external factors. The will to understand the interlinked and bilateral nature of structure and agency in street youth´s life circumstances is a perspective which is carried throughout the work and analysis.

2.1 Street youth in the framework of poverty

Poverty plays an important role in the explanatory frameworks of the streets youth phenomenon. Especially the early literature relies heavily on assumptions that street children are the result of poverty and family breakdown. However, as the literature of street children and youth develops and delves deeper, so the causal analyses have become more comprehensive (Ennew & Swart-Kruger 2003). The contemporary dialogue focuses both on the factors which "pull" and those which "push" youth into street life. These analyses have broadened from the most obvious and immediate causes to include also the underlying and structural causes. Underlying causes are embedded in societal attitudes and expectations, and structural causes reflect macroeconomic factors such as policies and national economy. (ILO 2002, 46–47). Although some academics, such as Dybicz (2005, 765) claim that "all factors leading to street life are rooted in extreme poverty", this view is simplistic. Reasons leading youth to the streets are often many-fold and not necessarily bound to family income. For instance, Chitradub (1998) states that in Thailand also youths from middle-income families choose street life in search of a more accepting social environment (Chitradub 1998, 11–13). Nevertheless, material poverty is the predominant cause. In order to analyze the push and pull factors for children leaving home and school, poverty must, however, be seen in its various aspects and in interaction to other causes (ILO 2002, 46–47).

Poverty has conventionally been defined in terms of economic and material deprivations. Poverty analyses typically focus on measuring monetary incomes or consumption: the poor are those who lack sufficient purchasing power for their needs (World Bank 2000, 16; Haughton & Khandker 2009, 2). Probably the most known and widely used poverty indicator is the poverty line, meaning the minimum level of income needed for a person to meet the daily needs for survival in a given country. In

international comparisons this level is typically measured by using poverty level of 1,25 dollars per day.[2]This kind of measurement of what is called absolute poverty is however also arbitrary and relative, since meeting the basic needs undeniably requires different amounts of money in different environments. People´s needs are also bound to different personal and social circumstances. (Sen 1999, 70; Kangas & Ritakallio 2008, 3.) Focusing on monetary poverty likewise fails to address other dimensions of poverty and tells very little of how poverty is experienced.

Poverty is nowadays understood as a multidimensional phenomenon going far beyond the issue of income insufficiency. Rather than low income levels, poverty is seen as a "*pronounced deprivation in well-being*" (World Bank 2000, 15). Perhaps the most comprehensive notion of poverty is defined by Amartya Sen (1999). Sen argues that poverty should not be measured in terms of income, but rather in terms of deprivation of basic capabilities that a person has. These capabilities mean the real freedoms enabling a person to lead the kind of life he or she has a reason to value. Capability deprivations are those unfreedoms which prevent people from exercising their free agency in society. They are connected to income deprivations since low income often results in other deprivations such as hunger, ill-health and illiteracy. However, the value of wealth lies only in what it allows us to do and how it can help us to live a life meaningful to us. Income is an important instrument which generates capabilities, but it is not the only one, and often not sufficient in itself. Sen states that economic resources deserve a place as a beginning point in understanding of poverty, but it cannot be the ending point for poverty analysis. The experience of poverty is, in fact, formulated in relation to incomes and achievements, commodities and capabilities and economic wealth and our ability to live as we would like. (Sen 1999, xii–74.)

Sen´s ideas have been a considerable contribution to a contemporary understanding of multidimensional poverty (See e.g. Frediani 2007, 133–134; World Bank 2000, 15; Thorbecke 2005, 2). For instance, World Bank has expanded its understanding of poverty to include concerns of low-level of education and poor health, which are acknowledged to have importance as such, but even more so when combined with low-income. Lack of resources, hunger, illness and illiteracy tend to go hand in hand.

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2 http://web.worldbank.org

World Bank also includes aspects of powerlessness and voicelessness into its notion of poverty, and recognizes vulnerability and inequality as distinct but related phenomena (World Bank 2000, 19). Powerlessness and voicelessness refer to poor people´s inability to influence and get their voices heard in society. Lack of voice and power is not only experienced in political spheres but also in other arenas of life, such as credit markets and employment (Naryan et al. 2000, 32–33). Vulnerability means the risk to fall into poverty. It also means insecurity and being exposed to other risks such as violence, exploitation and crime (World Bank 2000, 19). The experience of poverty also effects person´s psychological well-being. Experienced poverty is manifested through feelings of shame and humiliation and a loss of self-worth. Poverty also can exclude people from fully participating in the community life. (Naryan et al. 2000, 31–32.) It is recognized that all these aspects of poverty form a self-enforcing vicious circle that can be difficult to break (World Bank 2000, 15).

In order to understand the poverty facing street youth, poverty needs to be seen in its various dimensions. Various studies have shown that street children and youth are not in any way outside the money economy, and often are well capable of fulfilling their physical needs for survival. In fact, they often are better nourished than their siblings who have stayed at home and rarely suffer from sever hunger (Kudrati et al. 2008, 441). This especially refers to children of the streets, who tend to have quite weak links to their families, and can be quite relaxed in their use of time and money, in comparison to the children on the streets, who come to work in the streets to work to contribute to the upkeep of their families. Resorting to the streets can also be a self-made choice in order to use the money for oneself instead of helping one´s family. Street children are also often very skilled in taking advantage of resources that a variety of organizations provide for them, such as food and clothes. (Hech 1998, 105–109, 174–178.) However, when considering their inadequate living conditions and their vulnerability to violence, lack of education, poor health and social stigma street children and youth are among the poorest of the poor.

In this paper I will be applying Amartya Sen´s definition of poverty as a capability deprivation. I consider it the best approach, since it enables giving a voice to youth to self-define those deprivations which they consider impoverishing to their lives. In order to understand the realities of street youth´s situations more accurately, I believe there is

a need to include another perspective of poverty to the discussion: that of social exclusion.

2.2 **Poverty and social exclusion**

There has been a tendency to see poverty as something that touches developing countries and social exclusion as something which concerns developed countries (Sen 2000, 23). The term "social exclusion" has become popular in identifying social problems in the Western World. However, there seems to be no consensus on how to properly distinguish between social exclusion and poverty, especially when poverty is considered a multidimensional phenomenon. Some studies regard social exclusion and poverty as virtually the same phenomenon, while others see poverty as one form of social exclusion or define social exclusion as result of poverty (Flotten 2006, 15). In this paper I consider social exclusion as a specific dimension of poverty. Conceptualizing social exclusion as a distinct phenomenon from poverty would hardly even be possible since, as noted, poverty is understood here in a wider sense as deprivation of capabilities, and therefore not necessarily bound to materialistic deprivations.

Social exclusion is associated with the notion of certain people being outside of society, the labor market or out of social networks (Flotten 2006, 62). The term "exclusion" implies that the phenomenon is actually a process where certain people become excluded from participating in society. The concept also includes an idea of its opposite, the notion of cohesion. Without social cohesion there is no relevance in talking about certain groups of people getting excluded from this assumed cohesion. (Helne 2003, 2–3.) Helne (2003) sees that the problem with social exclusion discourse is, however, that instead of talking about social exclusion as a relation between those who are "included" and those who are "excluded", it has concentrated on recognizing those who are the socially excluded. This means that the society which is pushing certain individuals to its margins becomes blind to its own actions. Therefore, the talk about the socially excluded becomes rather a way of creating symbolic borders between those who are excluded and the rest of the society, creating and strengthening sense of community, morality and normality among the non-excluded. (ibid 26–43.)

Whether the concept of social exclusion is useful in developing country contexts is still a subject for debate. For instance Saith (2001) argues that in the West social integration is institutionalized due to the existence of welfare systems and functioning formal employment markets. Social exclusion is thus defined in connection to unemployment status or exclusion from activities and standards that are considered as the societal "norm". Social exclusion is experienced by minorities. According to Saith, due to the structural heterogeneity of developing countries, defining the "norm" is not easy, and the concept of social exclusion is poorly suited to local contexts, where the majority of people are involved in economic activities outside formal employment. Lack of welfare arrangements also means that the majority of people do not enjoy social rights, such as adequate health care. This means that through the Western conceptualization lens of social exclusion, the majority of people would be "socially excluded". Saith sees that attempts to alter the concept of social exclusion to fit into developing country contexts has just turned into repeating and relabeling dimensions already recognized when talking about multidimensional poverty. (ibid. 4–6, 6–8 12–13.)

Other academics, such as Sen (2000) see that social exclusion can make a valuable contribution to the understanding of poverty in developing country contexts. He sees that the value of the social exclusion concept lies in its focus on the relational aspects of poverty. Sen however criticizes the way social exclusion is often used as an umbrella term to cover any kind of deprivation, regardless if it, (or the processes that have lead to it), can be traced to relational features or not. He argues that social exclusion can best be understood when it is embedded in the wider contexts of poverty as capability deprivation as a specific perspective focusing on relational features. (ibid.2–5.)

I believe that street youths´ experiences of poverty can be better understood when a special attention is put to observe the relational features in their deprivation. It is for instance noteworthy that when comparing street children and youth studies from Canada, Brazil and South-Africa to name a few, regardless of their different socio-cultural surroundings, street youth´s experiences around the world share certain similarities which are rooted in their marginalized position in any given society. Being a "street youth" carries a strong negative social stigma that significantly limits opportunities. When this phase becomes prolonged, it can pose a risk for the youth to loose one´s self-dignity (Gaetz et al. 1999, 13). Several studies from different

developing countries show, that street children and youth are found at the very lowest level of societal hierarchy. The fact that they occupy the public domain causes strong responses to maintain the public order, including police violence targeted on them. (e.g. Heinonen 2000, 71–72; Ennew & Swart-Kruger 2003; Hecht 1998, 98, 127–130.) In my opinion, this should to be recognized as social exclusion. Even if the "norms" of social life would be harder to define in developing countries as Saith (2001) suggests, street youth seem to be a group that clearly is breaking these norms.

2.3   Contemporary discourse of street youth´s agency

The growing number of studies focused on street children´s agency show that it is precisely in the context of negative and in many ways stigmatizing public attitudes coming from morally powerful ideals of family, home and childhood, that street children´s experiences and agency are formed (e.g. Davies 2008; Beazley 2003; Ennnew & Swart-Kruger 2003). Davies (2008, 311–314), who has researched street children in North-Western Kenya, argues that instead of being passive recipients of mainstream culture, street children in fact actively reinforce the public stereotypes of themselves and make them work to their benefits. Therefore, due to their willingness to reinforce these myths and their ability to work beyond the accepted childhood norms, they earn a certain degree of freedom of action. Through the practice of their sub-culture, street children actively create boundaries which separate them from the mainstream culture. These practices enable them, despite their marginalized position in the society, to gain some control over their lives and create a somewhat satisfying life-style. Beazley (2003) suggest similarly that Indonesian street boys actively reject the victim and deviant labels by reinforcing positive aspects in street life and creating a mentality according to which it is great being in the streets, where their lives are better than living the conventional childhood. He describes that street children take enormous pride in earning their own money and being totally independent. He argues that street children should not be seen as children who have lost their childhood, but rather as children experiencing it alternatively.

Many of the studies which emphasize the agency of street children consider that this agency is embedded in their formation of strong social groups. These social groups, which work as alternative communities, form "street children identities" which are

shaped through creating and maintaining specific street children sub-cultures. Sub-culture practices often include specific dress-codes, slang, use of substances, hierarchical organizations, rituals and norms. Street children help their in-group members by sharing resources and defending each other, and belonging to a group sometimes includes pacts of solidarity between the in-group members. (e.g. Hecht 1998, 187; Beazley 2003, Davies 2008.) Even though street children´s tendency to form subcultures and group identities seems to be a common feature in many parts of the world, these experiences vary greatly according to different cultural settings (Aptekar & Heinonen 2003)**.** Street children´s realities are always socially constructed and do not follow a universal pattern (van Blerk 2006, 68). Heinonen (2000) who studied street children in Ethiopia argues that street children in Addis Ababa cannot be said to have a subculture. She found that the street children were scattered around the city, and they had little connections with one another. They also adopted the cultural ideals and values of the mainstream culture instead of creating own norms. (ibid. 65.)

Earlier studies have shown that at least some street children have also positive emotions towards the street life and see it as exciting and "addictive". (e.g. Raffaelli et al. 2001, 400; Hecht 1998, 112; Beazley 2003). Evans (2006, 114–115) argues that street children´s age and the sense of temporality influence how street life is perceived. Life in the streets becomes harder as youth become older and stay longer in the streets. Young children tend to emphasize the positive aspects of street life compared to older youth and Evans interprets that young children´s negative experiences in the streets are balanced by the excitement of breaking the norms of children´s roles in the society. Furthermore, Hecht (1998, 184) sees that because of the stigma and hardships of living in the streets, children hold on to the belief that their street existence is only a temporary phase in their childhood. Due to this they often emphasize the difference between them and homeless adults who they disrespect, and when maturing physically, they want to maintain the links to their childhood in various ways.

These findings seem to imply that the positive sides in the street children´s lives are connected to the notion of an alternative childhood experience. It leaves only one question: what happens when they grow older? Street children´s agency seems to change dramatically when the children reach adolescence and become physically more mature. Aptekar (1988) argues that in Colombian society street children are treated as

children as long as they are physically small which leads usually to their small crimes being forgiven. Begging is economically profitable since people feel sympathy for them. When street children are physically more mature, people´s attitudes towards them change. They are no longer seen as children, but rather as street adults, which makes the public teat them with fear, disapproval and suspicion. These attitudes might decrease street youth´s agency and make them economically dependent on the younger street children. Street youth in their adolescents should fast adopt the adult identity and figure out what kind of a form it gets in street life. (ibid. 47–114, 89–114.) Also research made elsewhere show surprisingly similar outcomes. (e.g.Evans 2006**;** Mufane 2000, 236; Schernthaner 2011; Beazley 2003).

According to Beazley reaching adolescence is the phase in Indonesian street youth´s "street careers", when they start to feel resentful towards the societal structures which are restricting their opportunities. It is also a time when youth reflect on their lives and might make the choice of abandoning street life. Staying in the streets involves a constant search for new ways of making money, often involving criminal activities. The youth also adopt coping strategies as a response to negative public attitudes. Beazley suggests that to guarantee their continued belonging to their social group of street children the youth in their adolescence tend to reinforce their symbolic borders to the mainstream culture. This means emphasizing unconventional behavior such as using intoxicants and fighting. (Beazley 2003.)

Street youth´s agency and their survival methods have been popular themes in recent research. Agency in context of detaching oneself from street life is a theme less approached in research. Heinonen (2000) and Aptekar (1988) have pointed out that street youth´s disengagement form the streets and transition into adult roles in the society can be painful and difficult, since street youth often tend to lack the important social connections which enable getting a change in the employment markets. Aptekar (1988, 79–80) sees that the success of detachment is very much related to street youth´s ability to form useful social relationships. The success in transition into adult roles in the society is dependent on whether a youth perceive being in conflict with the mainstream society or not (Karabanow 2004, 59). This is connected to how the mainstream society accepts the youth. Street youth who are stuck into chronic poverty, acting aggressively and looking unclean are likely to be forced into delinquent life for

survival (Aptekar 1988, 111). Hecht (1998, 79–80) argues that Brazilian street youth expressed that leaving the street life takes a lot of willpower, referring to youth´s perception that change is needed primarily within oneself.

3   LOCATING RESEARCH IN THE ZAMBIAN CONTEXT

Experiences are always context related. Self-narratives are bound into time and place, and as such provide for the researcher an access not only to the individual experience but also to the culture and social world of the teller (Lieblich et al. 1998, 8–9). In order to get a better understanding of informants´ experiences and the socio-economic backgrounds, I will first give an introduction to Zambia and the challenges its children and youth is facing. Since poverty cannot be understood without taking into consideration its structural and underlying levels embedded in the society, this introduction aims to present the societal level factors present in street youth´s experiences.

3.1   **Zambia**

Zambia is a landlocked country in Southern Africa. It had an estimated population of 13.5 million in 2010 and its population growth rate was the highest in the World, Zambian women giving birth to an average of 6.3 children. (World Development Database [accessed 19.9.2012]).[3] Because the population growth has been high for a long period of time, the population is also very young and about 46 % is under the age of 15. Zambia is also one of the most urbanized countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and the proportion of urban population is growing at a fast rate. (Ministry of Finance and National Planning 2010, 6, 27).

Zambia has a colonial history of being under the British rule from the end of 19th century to 1964 when it gained its independence. After its independence Zambia was one of the wealthiest countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and its economy was and still is much dependent on the production of copper. However the 1970s oil crises which both increased the prices of imports and collapsed the price of copper caused a situation where Zambia´s economy was in turmoil. To get its economy back into balance it

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[3] http://data.worldbank.org

turned to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank for assistance. (Situmbeko & Zulu 2004, 7.) In order to get loans from these financial institutions a country has to implement structural adjustment programs (SAPs) which aim to redress structural imbalances in the economy. These policies include, among others, privatization of state owned enterprises, market liberalization and budget rationalization leading to cutting down of the social expenditure (Jere-Mwiindilila 1994). The purpose behind the SAPs has been to integrate developing countries into the global market, in order to create incomes to repay their international debts (Frediani 2007,135).

The introduction of the neo-liberal agenda can be seen as having had many negative results in Zambia, putting the country into an unbearable debt cycle and having high social costs for the vulnerable groups. The results of neoliberal policies and privatization have caused rising inequalities and poverty. The effects have hit hardest the poorest of the poor, majority of which are women and children. (Jere-Mwiindilila 1994.) Badly indebted Zambia got into IMF´s Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, and in 2005 its debt which has risen to level of 7 billion dollars was dropped to much more manageable level of 500 million.[4] After the debt relief Zambia´s economy has turned into rise, but on the other hand, is has meant that the country has had to adopt more structural adjustments and conditionalities by IMF and World Bank causing the deepening role of neoliberalism and rising inequality in the society (Situmbeko & Zulu 2004, 17−19).

Since 2005 Zambia´s economy has been rising more than 6 % a year (World Fact Book, accessed 24.9.2012)[5]. This fast development is also clearly visible in the capital city Lusaka. When I came to Lusaka for the second time in 2012 I was surprised by the way the city had changed just within one year. New modern shopping malls, movie theatres and a huge football stadium had been built and were now part of the image of the city. The traffic was worse to the point where minibuses that used to drive all the way to the Kulima Tower bus terminal at the heart of the city were now dropping customers off at an earlier station because of the congestion in the center. The city´s streets were crowded with just newly imported cars, easy to spot since they were not yet registered

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[4] http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4571652.stm
[5] https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook

and driving without number plates. In 2011 the World Bank reclassified Zambia from a developing country to a lower middle income country. This kind of a shift in ranking is relatively rare especially in the continent of Africa and in a way it symbolizes that Zambia has become a development success story in the eyes of the big international financial institutions. For instance, this is how World Bank Group presents Zambia:

"Zambia is a peaceful, democratic country with enormous economic potential, now grounded in its rich endowment of natural resources. With good economic management and several years of strong economic growth, Zambia has turned around its image as a country performing below its potential."(The World Bank Group, 1.)

However the statistics of economic growth and new ranking status tell just part of the story. There is the other side of the coin. Zambia´s economic success is far from being equally distributed within the country. When Zambia´s development is measured by using Human Development Index (HDI) it shows less success stories. HDI assesses long-term progress in three dimensions of human life: health, knowledge and standard of living. In 2010 Zambia ranked only 150th out of 169 countries, 64% of its population suffering from multiple deprivations at a household level, and additional 18 % vulnerable to these deprivations. This means that the great majority of Zambians lack basic conditions such as safe drinking water or basic health care. (UNDP 2010.) On average one in seven adults are infected by HIV, Zambia being one of the worst affected countries in sub-Saharan Africa (USAID 2010). It seems that despite its economic performance, Zambia has maintained with its developing country problems and that its development is characterized by increasing inequality and stagnant poverty.

3.2   Weakening social security and street children

It has been argued that the deepening poverty has greatly contributed to the traditional value systems and social institutions and that traditional African social support systems are disintegrating especially in urban areas (Chigunta 2002, 6). In Sub-Saharan Africa the extended family has traditionally functioned as a social security system. Extended family members help each other economically, socially and emotionally. In cases of parental death children are fostered by relatives. Even when natal parents are alive, fostering by relatives has been a common arrangement due to economic or other reasons

and is considered to have reciprocal benefits for both families. According to studies it seems to be rare that relatives treat the fostered children in a significantly different manner than their own biological children. In most cases foster parents try by all means to give fostered children educational opportunities also. (Foster 2004.)

However, since Zambia has been hit heavily by HIV and AIDS, more than 20 % of children have lost one or both parents (UNHABITAT 2007, 10). HIV has heavily burdened the extended family system. Not only has the amount of orphans caused by HIV increased dramatically, but it has also reduced the amount of prime-age caregivers available, such as aunts and uncles. Besides the reduction in actual numbers of caregivers, there has also been a change in attitudes which means that the amount of relatives willing to foster children is reducing. In the past the social duty and responsibility towards other members of the extended family was considered almost unlimited. (Foster 2004.) However, in Zambia today there is an increasing trend whereby people offer to take care of children only when they are directly related to them and in the case of married couples, only when related to wife. Women in particular seem to be unwilling to take care of children that are not their own, or even their immediate sister´s or brother´s. Also when remarrying, there seems to be a reluctance to take care of children born in the previous marriage. Another trend that weakens the extended family support and exchange is that of rich relatives isolating themselves from their extended families. Instead of keeping close contact and providing assistance to their relatives, especially to those in rural areas, the self-chosen social networks of friends have come to play a more important role. (Mininstry of Sports, Youth and Child Development 2004, 13.)

I found two quite recent quantitative studies on street children in Zambia, both of which were researching the causes leading to children taking to the streets. The other one was made in Ndola (Strobbe et al. 2010), one of the country´s biggest cities, and the other one in Lusaka (Project Concern International Zambia 2002). In both of these studies street life was strongly linked to a family´s income poverty. The majority of the street children and youth came from poor compounds, and lack of money and food at home was reported as the main factor why children went to the streets (Project Concern International 2002, 1, 8; Strobbe et al. 2010, 11). One indicator of poverty is that families do not manage to keep their children in school, since they are not able to pay

for school fees and other requirements. Both studies indicated that dropping out of school is a risk factor for a child to end up going to the streets. Also family problems, mistreatment and abuse were significant reasons for not staying either with one´s family or relatives. (Project Concern International 2002, 19, 11; Strobbe et al. 2010, 10–11.)

However, the studies also had some differences in their findings. The study made in Lusaka states that, contrary to the common belief, it is not the orphanhood that pushes children to the streets, since only about 10% of street children reported not having parents or close relatives. Their study states that a more valid explanation factor was that children´s caretakers were unemployed which implies household poverty. More than 90% of street children reported that their guardians were unemployed. Also friend influence turned out to be a meaningful pull-factor to be fond from the streets, at least in comparison to being in a street children center. (Project Concern International 2002, 8, 10.)

To explore the causes that lead children to the streets, the study made by Strobbe et al. (2010) compared families whose children had gone to the streets and families which seemed to share similar observable characteristics, but had no street children. All the families were living in highly populated slums of Ndola. According to their study the factors that turned out to make the difference in street households and non-street households, both of which equally struggled with income poverty, lied in the health status of the head of the household and in the extended family networks. Families with a healthy head of the household and with grandparents and aunts present in the life turned out to be better able to keep children from going to the streets. The study also further showed that family´s own children were in a greater risk to be in the streets than fostered children, which implied that when a family agrees to take a child to foster they try by all means to take care of that child (Strobbe et al. 2010, 23).

3.3   **Youth unemployment and urban poverty**

In Zambia, as elsewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa youth unemployment is a big national challenge. The lack of employment opportunities means that the majority of youth are obliged to find alternative means for survival. This often means engaging in low-paid and insecure economic activities in the informal market and in some cases even resorting to criminal activities. Informal markets with survival-type piece works provide an easy entry for youth, who, due to the lack of required education, work experience and social networks, find their position at the end of job queue for formal employment. (ECA 2005, 167–169.) In Zambia informal sector covers around 70 % of the urban employment (UNESCO 2012, 260–261). Youth with low education are especially at high risk of unemployment (ECA 2005, 174).

Urban youth unemployment is further reinforced by the fast rural-urban migration. Zambia´s development has in many ways concentrated in urban areas, where poverty rate has declined in comparison to the rural areas where it remained as high as 80 % (Chapoto et al. 2011, 1). In urban areas the technological advances have provided new opportunities for youth, with Internet provides an access to information and communication networks, whereas in rural areas most youth lack access to these facilities (NYCA 2005, 6). The stagnant poverty and lack of opportunities in rural areas make many young people move to urban areas in search for opportunities. The reality however often turns out to be harsh, and the migrants often find themselves in a vulnerable position struggling to survive with limited social networks and often lower level of education than youth from urban areas. Being trapped into poverty, some youth turn to crime, sex-work and drug selling for survival. (ECA 2005, 168.)

Hansen Tranberg (2010) argues that the combination of applied neoliberal policies and the rapid growth of youth population in Lusaka have caused a situation where young people´s economic opportunities are severely limited. Hansen Tranberg sees that the past decades of structural adjustments and neoliberal reforms have affected the availability of urban space, specifically constraining young people. Opening markets to foreign investment and privatizing government enterprises in the 90s caused job losses which pushed many adults into the informal economy. Since adults occupy the more attractive informal sector jobs, youth opportunities are limited to low-level jobs that

offer few possibilities to move upwards in the labor-market. This means that today´s urban youth from poor background´s with little education have fewer employment possibilities than their parents did. (ibid. 14–17.)

Street vending is on of the most common economic opportunities in town. The Zambian government has not legalized street vending, which would mean that the marketers would be legally allowed to move from official market places to the streets. The governments´ official standpoint is that street vending needs to be controlled and street vendors removed from the streets. People have also been advised not to buy from the street vendors, and there has been attempts to clear the streets from vendors. (Lusaka Times 10.8. 2012; Lusaka Times 11.3.2012; Lusaka Times 6.3.2010, Lusaka Times 9.7. 2012.[6]) Hansen Tranberg (2010, 16–21, 23–24) sees that the attempts to remove street vendors from public space produce access hierarchies, where especially youth are in a vulnerable position. Many youth selling in the streets have subcontracted deals and make so little money, that it is just enough for basic up-keep and does not enable saving up for an independent business. Most of the sellers in the streets are young men who do not make sufficient money to get married and start a family.

Although rural and urban poverty share most of the same characteristics, and should rather be seen as an interrelated continuum, there are certain aspects that are more pronounced in urban poverty. These include reliance on cash economy, overcrowded living conditions and slums, crime, violence and lack of community for social security (Baker & Schuler 2004, 3–4). The rapid growth of the urban population is also putting pressure on urban infrastructure such as sanitation, energy and roads. The shortage in housing is likewise a big challenge for the country, where there already is a lack of about a million housing units. Given that the current population growth continues, Zambia would need to build 2,4 million new urban housing units by 2037 in order to maintain the current situation. To put this into perspective, it would mean building housing to cover nine times the current capital city Lusaka. (Ministry of Finance and National Planning 2010, 28.) Due to lack of cheap government housing arrangements, the majority of Lusaka´s population lives in informal housing with inadequate infrastructure (Hansen Tranberg 2010, 15).

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[6] http://www.lusakatimes.com

4 INTRODUCING THE METHLOGICAL CHOICES AND THE FIELD

Street youth researchers face certain challenges. Perhaps the biggest is connected to gaining the trust of the youth (Aptekar & Heinonen 2003). Getting reliable data is not easy, since youths´ self-reports are often untrustworthy. Manipulating people´s perceptions about themselves is an important surviving skill and also a form of entertainment for the street children and youth. Street work includes a certain amount of deceit. Street youth might alter their answers according to how they think the researcher might be able to benefit them. (Mufune 2000, 235; Heinonen 2000, 36–37; Aptekar 1988, 14–15.) Researchers have come to understand that it is advisable to combine several data collecting methods in order to compare the validity of information gotten by each method. Likewise, the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods has been considered beneficial (Aptekar & Heinonen 2003). Because of the challenges, ethnography has been a popular research method used on studying street youth, and I also found it the most suitable method for the purpose of my thesis.

4.1 Ethnography

Ethnography as methodology has been defined in many ways. Sometimes the word ethnography has been used to imply to "research using diverse methods". What makes a research an ethnographic one seems to have various interpretations (Lappalainen et al. 2007, 10). However, ethnographic research typically tries to find information about people´s everyday practices and lifeworlds. In order to do so the researcher finds strategies for taking part in this everyday practice and becoming familiar with it (Lüders 2004, 223). This normally includes a field work period, where researcher participates in people´s lives for a relatively long period of time, collecting whatever data is available and usable for his research purposes (Hammersley & Atkinson 2005, 1). Field work can include participant observation, interviews and other methods of data collection (Vuorinen 2005, 63). The researcher can have various possibilities to position himself in the field. These vary from openly observing researcher, to different forms of membership within the group and possibilities to change position in the middle of the process (Lüders 2004, 222–225). My research included two field work periods which

took place in a street children and youth day time activity center in Lusaka. Both of these periods lasted for a period of six weeks in July-August of 2011 and 2012. The following sections will characterize the fieldwork.

4.2 **The street youth Center**

The Center was open weekdays from morning until afternoon. It was targeted for street children, but had its doors open to all vulnerable children and youth. The Center provided its visitors with a free lunch daily, and there were activities such as teaching, preaching, games or dancing and playing football in the nearby field. The activities did not follow strictly planned time tables, but varied daily and some days had more activities than the others. When it comes to teaching, special attention was given to learning about God and the Bible, about HIV/AIDS and the negative effects on substance use. Besides the organized activities the days also included quite much free time when the youth could spend their time as they wanted. The Center also provided a possibility for the street youth to wash themselves and their clothes. In the Center there was a TV, a pool table and some games, such as a chess board, which the youth could use. In order to avoid a situation where the street children and youth would just come there to eat the lunch and then go back to the streets without participating in other activities, the gate was locked about an hour or so before the lunch and reopened only after the dishes were washed after the meal. This rule was not however strictly followed, and I observed that the youth knocking at the gate at lunch hours were let in. The lunch hour was by far the most crowded time of the day.

Twice a week peer educators made outreaches, which meant visiting those places in town, where the street children normally spend their time. Outreaches aimed to introduce new youth to the functions in the Center, and also to check up on familiar youth who had not shown up there for some time. The Center was just one part of the organization´s work with vulnerable children and youth. Besides having the daytime center, ii also sponsored children and youth from poor house-holds to school. Other initiatives also took place, such as a women´s business-skills training course. This course was aimed for children´s mothers, many of whom were unemployed. Another important function was that the Center assisted its visitor children and youth with health

care when needed. There was a nurse working in the Center, and the youth were taken to a nearby clinic to see a doctor and get medicine when there was a need for this.

Besides the nurse, the staff working in the Center included a smaller number of administrative personnel and about twenty peer educators. Since the peer educators were so many, they worked in weekly shifts. Peer educators did not get salaries as such, but allowances were given to cover transportation costs. In reality, these allowances were bigger than what the transportation cost, so they enabled the use of money for living as well, even if it was small. Nevertheless, many of the peer educators seemed devoted to the work they did. For instance when there was a new young adolescent girl who started coming to the Center and had no safe place to stay at nights, a peer educator took her to sleep in her house. From the Finnish perspective, there didn't seem to be a clear distinction between work and free time. The peer educators were for instance encouraged to make phone calls to the older street youth during the weekends to ask how they were doing to so that they would feel appreciated. There had also been an initiative where some of the street youth had been offered a possibility to stay in peer educators´ homes.

There are various organizations working with street children and youth in Lusaka. Unlike many of them, The Center did not have a night shelter. This made monitoring of the client youth difficult, as well as enabling a more permanent change in the lives of these youths. For instance, when street youth, who did not stay with their families were sponsored to go to school, they were also provided with a flat to share with friends. Given the freedom and independence of living together, the youth had problems leaving the street life even when the possibility for education was there. The lack of a night shelter also meant that the organization targeted a little bit different group of street youth than many other organizations. Many of the youth in the Center were the ones who had been in various shelters in Lusaka but did not adjust to the rules of these shelters, and kept on going back to the streets. In addition, many street children organizations also limited their target group to those youth under 18, whereas the Center was also visited by high amount of older youth. It appeared to me that the organization did not enjoy considerably high funding, for instance, it did not have a car at its disposal, and there was no reimbursement for transportation costs when visiting children´s and youth´s homes. However, at least during the time I was there, there was

never a shortage of food, which seems to be a problem with many organizations operating in Lusaka (Project Concern International Zambia 2002, 18-19).

During my first field work period in 2011, the Center was visited by average from 70 to 80 street children and youth daily. The majority of the visitors were boys, whereas perhaps maximum 10 % were girls. The low percentage of girls reflects the lower percentage of girls in the streets, but also that the girls often preferred organizations targeted specifically to girls. Regardless the fact that the Center was targeted for street kids below the age of 18, about half of its daily visitors were above the targeted age group. They were mostly youth that had lived their childhood in the streets and were still living the street life as young adults. During the second field work period in 2012 the Center was visited on average by 30 to 40 children and youth daily and it seemed to be functioning somehow less actively. Unlike the previous year, this time around most of the visitors were younger kids.

4.3   Access to the field and my relationship with the informants

At the time when I found the organization in 2011 I had been in Zambia as an exchange student for six months. I contacted the organization and asked for a possibility to volunteer work and collect data for my master´s thesis. At that time I did not yet have a fixed idea on what my thesis would actually be about, but my primary interest was in street children´s life stories and experiences. That the target group turned out to be the youth, not the children, was a result of a situational coincidence. The assistant social worker asked me to work with the older street youth, who were beyond the target age group of the organization. The organization was planning to organize a business training course, where the most motivated and potential older youth could participate. The course would include some starting capital which would make it possible for them to start some business on their own. An additional goal was to make these youth move from the Center in order to get more space for children. The aim for my work was to interview the older youth and to get their background information for the organization and also to help in finding out who would be the best candidates for the course.

On my second day at the Center the assistant social worker introduced me to a roomful of older youth. He told the youth that I was a social work student and that he has asked

me to start working with them, so that when they have things they want to talk about they can approach me, and that I will be interviewing them so that the organization will get their background information. In this occasion many street youth brought up their wishes on being sponsored to go to back to school, or being sponsored back to where they come from. The assistant social worker asked them to address these wishes to me. I introduced myself and told them I am also doing a research for my studies in the university about their experiences on living in the streets and I would be interested in getting to know them and hearing their stories.

I felt this introduction was important, because this was how I got the "legitimacy" in the eyes of the street youth to do the interviews. For the street youth my role as student was not important. To them my master´s thesis did not say much. University studies were far from their lifeworlds. What was important to them was that I was interviewing them for the organization which might later benefit them: maybe they would be sponsored to school, could take a part in the business course, get starting capital for their own business or get bus tickets to another province. In regard to what I mentioned earlier about my perception of the funds the organization had at its disposal, I felt that the task was given was sometimes a bit problematic. I tried not to give false promises to the youth. However, even by asking them about how they wished the organization could help them, and what they hoped from the future and mentioning about the course which is planned to be held gave them hope that they would be helped in their needs. In August 2012 the course had not yet started but the initiative seemed to reappear to the agenda at the end of my stay there. Some of the youth were sponsored to school and had flats to stay, whereas the year earlier they were still in the streets.

All in all I felt very warmly received to the organization both by its personnel and by the street youth. The street children and youth in the Center were very easy to get along with regardless the language barriers. They welcomed me into their lives by letting me interview them, wanting to escort me to the bus stop at the end of each work day and inviting me to visit their homes or places they stayed. Aside from participating in the Center´s daily activities and the outreaches, I also visited some of the street youth in their homes, and one young man where he stayed under the construction of a bridge. Some of the youngsters I got to know much better than the others. Often I also ran into my informants while walking in the city. I felt that being a white young woman I got

special attention and probably got to see the best side of them. Peer educators working in the Center often mentioned the insults they got to hear from the street youth, but this was kept from my ears since I did not understand local languages and they always addressed me in a friendly manner. Some of the street guys were also trying to make contact with me in a manner where the friendliness went a bit over line, for instance sometimes they called me on phone to tell me they loved me or joked that their ambition in life was to get "colored babies". However, I did not consider this kind of approaching as actual attempts to hit on me, but as a form of entertainment and responded to it with humor.

The color of my skin, "being white", built an interesting difference between me and my informants. In Zambia, as elsewhere in Africa I have many times felt as if the history of global inequality and my place in it was written in my skin inescapably defining who I am. White skin carries an assumption of a certain social class and economic wealth ever present in encounters with people. The fact that street youth would treat me differently because I was white was not anything surprising. What surprised me instead was that because I was white, street youth always received me with friendliness, even at occasions where I was not expecting my presence to be taken as a positive thing. One of these events was when I took part in a night-time outreach with one of Lusaka´s street youth organizations. The street youth in the place where we visited were not familiar to me, so I expected that they might perhaps be a bit hostile towards me after all, what right does a stranger like me have to tourist into their lives? The experience however turned out to be the exact opposite of my expectations and the street youth we met showed particular positive attention to me.

"A skinny girl with shimmering hair, she looks happy, dancing close to a man way older than her. (...) Seeing us the girl rushes to hug me "I love this song! Do you like this music?"(...) "Boys sitting in the dark at the market entrance. We exchange some sentences. When we leave one of them turns to me and says "Thank you for coming to see us" I feel uneasy. Who am I to come to view their lives for a moment, when the night has fallen and its getting colder, just so I can go back home to my comfortable room. For what reason in the world should they be happy to see me?" (Field notes 2011, night outreach)

4.4 Data collection methods and positioning in the field

Many guides about ethnographic research seem to consider taking field notes as the main data collection method. For instance Hammersley & Atkinson (2005) describe the importance of field notes in the following way: " *(...) it does constitute a central research activity, and it should be carried out with as much care and self-conscious awareness as possible. A research project can be as well organized and as theoretically sophisticated as you like, but with inadequate note-taking the exercise will be like using an expensive camera with poor quality film. In both cases, the resolution will prove unsatisfactory, and the results will be poor* "(Ibid.173).

As it is advised in the research guides, I also kept a research diary during my field periods. In my work, however, the field notes are not the primary source of data, but rather as a secondary or additional source, whereas the main focus is given to the informants´ interviews. I kept the research diary more as a background tool, where I reflected my own thoughts, constantly defined and redefined what is relevant and what is interesting. Since I carried the book always with me, it is also filled with Nyanja lessons (the dominant local language in Lusaka) that the kids taught me and drawings they did. However, I very rarely actually took time to sit, look around me, and write down what I observed happening in the Center. Instead I took a habit of each evening writing down interesting events that had gotten my attention or what somebody had told me. This strategy might have gotten quite a disapproving feedback from Hammersley and Atkinson, since clearly things you remember when back home after several hours, is quite another thing than moving around with a notebook constantly in standby. I was aware that inevitably something gets lost between those fine hours, but I had certain reasons for this choice.

In fact, in the beginning I had the idea of focusing my observations on something and keeping a closer look on that. Since I was interested in the relationship between the younger and older youth in the Center, I decided to observe the pool table. Playing pool was probably the most popular activity, and almost all the time there were some people playing and most often these were the same people. At times there was fighting over whose turn it is next. So I started observing who uses the pool table, how the turns are distributed and negotiated, who gets to play the most and so on. This interest continued

for some days. Then I realized that this method is very inconsistent with my research interest. After all, how can I claim that I am interested in hearing my informants´ voices, if what I actually do is observe and write down what I see, so I can draw my own conclusion on what I think it means? After this understanding hit me, there were no more notes about the pool table, and I concentrated on talking with the youth and listening what they have to say.

Another reason for giving limited importance to the field notes had to do with my positioning in the field. I identified myself as "part of the staff", or volunteer worker in the organization. This means that I concentrated on participating rather than on observing. This selected positioning surely also affected also on what they wanted to tell me about their lives, to what kind of information I had access, since it affected also the way in which I interacted with the youth. For instance, as the rest of the staff, I intervened into their use of intoxicants when I saw them doing that inside the organizations area. Likewise, during the interviews and other discussions with the youth, I did not always simply take a simply neutral stance towards what they told about the antisocial aspects of their street existence, but at times I tried to advise them to make what I considered as better choices, such as reducing the use of intoxicants, coming to the Center to stay out of trouble in the streets or focusing on school work. I wanted by no means to judge them by the decision they made in their lives, but to encourage them in thinking that it was possible for them to change their lives. I felt that this kind of approach was also justified since most of the interviewed youth told that they wanted to change. Some of the youth also mentioned that they value the advices and encouragement they got from people in this respect.

4.5   **Informants´ voices**

In 2011 I made structured interviews based on the organization´s background information forms which I filled at the same time. These forms included information about their home and education background, reasons that had led them to the streets, their connections to home and relatives, and questions about their health status. I also asked each of them about their future wishes which was outside the organization´s questionnaire and did not limit the interviews only to the required questions but took the liberty to ask interlinked questions whenever the informants seemed motivated to talk

about their lives. With the permission of the interviewees, I recorded the interviews. Only one interviewed street youth refused for his interview to be used for my thesis. However, one youth who gave his permission for the interview but asked to see my interviews notes the second day. When I gave it to him, he ripped it. He had become suspicious where his information would be used. We later talked with him and I then left his interview out of the research material. This however made me think that he hadn´t at all understood why I interviewed him even if at the time of the interview I had explained what it was for and he had agreed without wanting to ask any further question.

Besides these interviews, with six informants we did an additional interview which included more specific questions about life in the streets and a "life line exercise". This meant that the youth were given a piece paper where they were asked to draw a line, which would symbolize their life experiences, so that it would start from the moment they were born to this moment. They were asked to write, draw or name people, events and places that had been important in their lives, and draw ups and downs to symbolize positive and negative events in their lives. Perhaps the most interesting outcome in the exercise was that it never worked very well. Most of the youth asked either me or a peer educator that was interpreting to draw it for them, while they could talk, or as one informant did, he draw a zigzag line, and told it symbolizes the way he sees life: it has both ups and downs. It is hard to tell if the exercise did not work since it was difficult for them to conceive time and their life as a line or to distinguish different phases in their lives in the streets based on living day by day, or if they just maybe found the exercise boring.

In July-August of 2012 I re-interviewed some of the same youths that I had interviewed the year earlier and interviewed also a couple of others. These interviews were less structured and included more of updates of their life situations and some questions concerning poverty. Interviewing the same informants again after one year provided an opportunity for longitude data. These interviews also highlighted the importance of the research questions concerning change and detachment, since their life situations had not remained the same that a year back.

In both years, the interviews were always held either in the Center or sometimes near it at the football pitch. Most interviews were carried out with interpretation help by one of the peer educators. Peer educators took different kinds of roles in the interviews. Sometimes they were purely interpreting and sometimes they were also taking part in the interviewing itself by asking further questions from the informants. The interviews were mostly made by my initiative: after getting to know certain youths a bit more I asked them if I could ask them background information for the organizations and interview them for my thesis. Sometimes some youth also came to ask me why I hadn't interviewed them when I had interviewed their friends and wanted to have their own interview too. The interviews lasted on average from fifteen minutes to forty minutes, although sometimes for over an hour.

In general the street youth seemed also to be interested about the interview moments, which made it a bit hard to make them somehow private, since other street youth used to come around to see what´s happening. Since most of the interviews were held in the Center we used to take chairs to the back of the house and sit there close to the wall, a bit separated from other activities that were held. On average about three times during an interview somebody came either to participate in the discussion or to tell something to some of us. Many times some of the other street youth came to listen what we were discussing about. At times the informants needed suddenly to go somewhere so we stopped the interviews. In a way I think it was good they were kind of spontaneous, especially since I could not guarantee that the informants had the full-consciousness on what their interviews will be used for, maybe it was good that the discussions were less formal and less private, so that they were telling things they felt comfortable sharing with people around anyway. I think the interview moments had quite a relaxed atmosphere and at times they were quite funny discussions.

I had to leave two transcribed interviews, both girls´ interviews outside my research since neither of the girls really fitted the category of street youth. As mentioned before the Center was a place open to anybody and especially during the school holidays there were also "home" children and youth from nearby compounds that came for the free lunch and some activities. I also left six recorded interviews untranscribed, and did not include them in the research material. I made this choice since I already had enough, if not too much data, and transcribing took much time. I should probably have limited the

number of interviews already in the first place, but because I had interacted with most of my interviewed informants and was familiar with at least most of their characters, I felt that each of them had something important to say and I felt uncomfortable leaving their interviews out of the research. These outlisted interviews were not specifically chosen nor did I listen to them before deciding to leave them out, they were just the last ones in line.

4.6 The informants

The children and youth who came to the Center were a heterogenous group. While some were homeless, in their twenties, and had been living in the streets for years, most of the younger children were living with their families and were in the streets because their families lacked resources to pay school fees. Whereas I also interacted with the children in the Center and got to know many of them, they are not the informants in my research where the youth is the target group.

The youth who came regularly to Center present a particular group of street youth that had chosen the Center as their organizational help context and meeting point. They knew each other and many of them were friends with each other. Not all street youth in Lusaka were reachable by the organization in question. For instance, twice a week we did outreaches to some specific places in the city where some of the familiar street youth were often found. We did not, for instance, do outreaches in Soweto, an outdoor market place where many street youth spend their time. I was told that we did not go there since the youth found there are not familiar to the Center´s staff and they would refuse to talk with the peer educators and would just start insulting them.

Interestingly, some of the peer educators were also living the street life. They were the ones who had been coming to the Center for a long period of time and whom the organization´s staff considered as trustworthy and important links between the staff and street youth. However, their working role as peer educators did not become very clear to me. For instance, they did not attend staff meetings or organize activities, and some of them were often clearly intoxicated.

The interviewed informants included altogether 23 adolescents and young adults. Only six of the interviewees were girls and I had to leave two of these interviews out of the research. This represents the unequal numbers between boys and girls coming to the Center, this division being particularly visible in the older age group, but from the research point of view it is of course problematic. All of the informants were economically independent from their families. The majority of the informants were above 18.

Informants age distribution (n23)
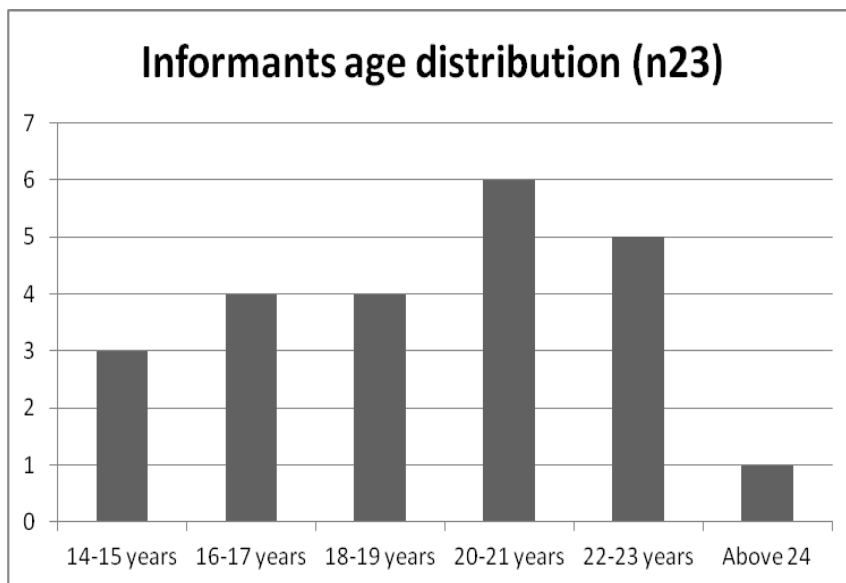
The above histogram shows informants´ age distribution. (The ones who I interviewed both in 2011 and 2012 have been counted according to the 2011 situation). The youngest interviewed informant was 14 and the oldest was 28.

There was a big variation among informants´ situational factors. They were in different phases in their "street careers". Some of them had spent only a few months in the streets while most of the informants had been in the streets for several years; one informant even said he had been 15 years in the streets.

Years spent in the streets (n22)
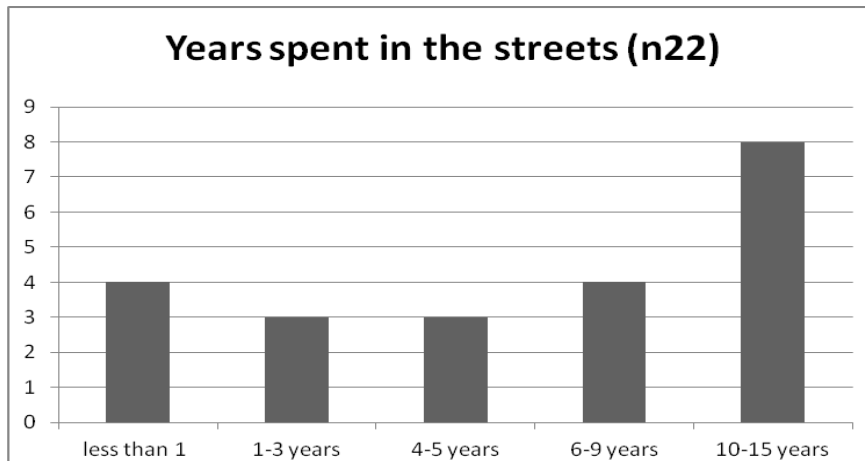
(The whole sample n 23, missing data from one respondent)

The above histogram shows the number of the years the youth had spent living the street life. Not surprisingly, the growing amount of years spent in the streets reflected the informants´ age. All of the informants had been children or adolescents when first introduced to street life. The ones who had spent less than a year in the streets were among the young age groups.

Not all of the youth lived full-time in the streets at the moment of the interview. Out of the 23 respondents, 10 reported sleeping indoors, while 13 slept their nights in the streets. However, similarly to other studies concerning street youth, many of the informants were switching between sleeping outside and some other arrangements, so that having or not having a place where to stay did not necessarily always reflect a permanent difference in their life situations. Out of the ten who had a place where to stay, two were staying with relatives, and eight rented a flat either alone, or, as in most cases, together with friends. Of the four youth whom I re-interviewed in 2012, the two who had a flat in 2011, were now married and lived with their spouse and children. Two others who were in the streets in 2011 now had flats. In this sense, they all had gradually moved forward in their street careers, and three of them expressed that they actively tried to distance themselves from street life.

4.7 Ethical concerns

Ethical concerns are especially relevant when it comes to research on marginalized groups. Central question of ethnographic research is what kind of comprehension it gives about informants and their lived reality. There is the risk that the choices made reflect more the researcher himself and his world values than the informants´ reality (Granfelt 1998, 19). In ethnography it is both the researcher´s task and responsibility to make choices of what is relevant to see and what is not (Vuorinen 2005, 65). The view includes aspects of power and control: who has the power to see, to name and categorize people and phenomena? (Löytty & Rastas 2011, 10).

In my research the power aspect is two-fold: it is not just a research about a marginalized group, street youth, but it is also research made by a Westerner in Africa. During its history Western research has done a lot of harm to Africa. The knowledge of Africa has been the center´s knowledge of periphery. In this power relationship Africa has been defined within the frame of "otherness". It has been portrayed either as primitive or exotic when presented in contrasts to the West. (Löytty & Rastas 2011,13–14.) As Nigerian writer Binyavanga Wainaina has put it, in texts about Africa *"Africa is to be pitied, worshipped or dominated"* (Wainaina 2005). Western science further controls the theory of science. This leads to situations where theories that are invented in the West reflecting the reality of the western world are applied in the developing countries no matter how irrelevant they might be. (Connel 2007, 106.) This can cause misleading analyses no matter how devoted the intention to be respectful to the representations of local reality is. As discussed earlier, I consider social exclusion as a relevant concept and framework in this research, even though its relevance in developing countries has not always been agreed on.

I find it very important to try to understand the ways in which the street youth themselves view their lives. Coming from outside, this is not an easy task. How can I ever understand enough of everything that is relevant? How do I know whether I have reached their voices? An example of a rather failed attempt is Kony 2012 project. Kony 2012 was a video campaign where an NGO called Invisible Children launched a Youtube video concerning the long term conflict in Northern Uganda. The video used a format where an American filmmaker explains Uganda´s problem to his son: Joseph

Kony, the leader of North Uganda´s Lord´s Resistance Army, is a "bad guy", whom the World needs to stop.[7] This video made many people in the Western world feel that they can participate in the fight for humanity and justice just by sharing the video in social media networks such as Facebook. However noble the cause of this project might have been, when the famous video was finally shown to Ugandan audience, after 80 million viewers in Youtube had seen it, the reaction was anger and disappointment. To them it was a video about a white man and his son telling an oversimplified version of the reality of some events that happened years ago and have nothing to do with their realities, yet the video insisted on telling their story. (Murray, Daily News 14.3.2012.) This can happen if we only pay attention to things we want to hear.

Analyzing data, however, inevitably includes interpreting it from one´s own understanding. My life experiences are very distinct from that of Lusaka´s street youth, which implies some risks of misinterpretation. Since my aim has been in giving space for street youth´s own voices and in trying to understand the ways in which they construct meanings to their life experiences, I have used quite many citations in this work. I also felt that in this way I can invite the reader to assess whether he or she understands what is said in the same way as I did.

A further bias which affected my possibilities to reach the voices of my informants was that the information I got was always either interpreted or incomplete because of deficiencies in our mutual language English.

> Elina: And when do you use it? [after Jimmy has told he uses substances sometimes]
> Peer educator: Like what was the question?
> Elina: Yeah, like on what occasions?
> Peer educator interprets
> Jimmy: Mmmmh..
> Peer educator: Because maybe if they want to sleep they use it so that it becomes more like a blanket
> Elina: Yeah, but he is staying at home isn´t he?
> Peer educator: Yeah, yeah, I was just trying to put my example…
> Peer educator says something and Jimmy replies
> Peer educator: He is saying that mostly when he is coming here, I don´t know what is the distance he is taking, probably have to walk….

This short piece of interview is an example of how at times the peer educators had their own interpretations about the state of things which hindered the possibility to reach the informant´s voices. In the example above I felt that the peer educator is giving an interpretation which goes well in line with the general discourse of street children´s use of intoxicants: a generally acknowledged reason for the use of intoxicants is drugging oneself in order to cope with the hardships of street life (e.g. Kilbride et al. 2000, 121–122, Aptekar 1988, 51). In Jimmy´s case he did not use the drug to help him cope with spending night in the streets as the peer educator suggested since he slept the nights at home. On the other hand, peer educators interpretations were often very useful, since they also helped me to understand things that were culturally unfamiliar to me.

Ethnography is often seen as a research methodology which includes such strengths as empathy and human concern, allowing for an egalitarian, reciprocal relationship between researcher and informants. However, Stacey (1998) argues, that ethnographic methods can also put the research subjects at a risk of exploitation, betrayal and abandonment by the researcher. This is so, because fieldwork and the textual products make an intervention into the system of relationships where the researcher is much freer to leave than the informants. My leading principle in this research was to cause no harm to the informants. This obviously includes protecting their anonymity. For this reason I have not named the organization where they were found, and informants´ names have been changed in the texts. Likewise also peer educators are not named in the text. I have also altered some details, such as information of where they live so that the informants are less recognizable, and I have paid attention to presenting my results in a way that no particular respondent could be recognized even when possible readers are people working closely with the informants, as I intend to send the thesis also to the organization. Since ethnographic research enables getting to know much more than what the informants would tell in an interview, ethical considerations also included making choices on what I can write about. Since I was present when the youth wanted to find a solution for their problems, I got to know several things which might have been private. I decided that not all that I know can be used as my data, but have tried to use sensitive consideration on what all I write about and how I do it.

Inability to guarantee informants´ full consciousness was already discussed earlier, but a further ethical concern connected to that was that most of the informants were

intoxicated when interviewed. Majority of the informants inhaled daily "bostick" a mixture made out of bensin. This might have affected their ability to understand the meaning of my research and their consideration of whether they wanted to take part in it might have been confused. On the other hand, using the intoxicants and constantly being a bit "high" was part of their lived reality, so I asked myself if they were to make all their life decisions under the influence of intoxicants why would this need to be an exception? The youth also typically told that they were not under the influence of intoxicants at the moment of the interviews even when this was not true. It seemed to be more like a rule than an exception that the youth would tell that they had either stopped or reduced the use of intoxicants and were sober at the moment when interviewed.

4.8 Describing the research materials and the process of analysis

My textual research materials consist of the research diary and of transcribed interviews. The research diary which I held both in a hand written form in two notebooks (one held in 2011 and one held in 2012) and in a word file in my laptop. These notes made together 40 pages of handwritten text and 32 pages of text in a word document. Besides the research diary, I had 33 transcribed interviews, 26 made in 2011 and 7 made in 2012. All together they made up 145 pages of text with font size 9 and line space one. I did not transcribe the interviews precisely word to word, or write down every sigh or cough which were in the tapes. I didn't see it relevant, because an analysis of language use would be irrelevant anyway, since the information was translated. Seven informants spoke good enough English for the interviews to be carried without interpreter and these interviews I transcribed in a more precise manner.

In ethnography the analysis of data cannot be a separated stage but it is included in the whole process. Data collecting and the analysis should have an interactive relationship that is carried out with reflexivity. During the field-work period the analytical ideas develop and change, and it is often only in the middle of the research process that the researcher comes to understand that the research actually is about something else than his initial research problems. (Hammarsley & Atkinson 2005, 180, 205.) I also experienced this and felt that my research questions were constantly shaping and looking for their final form. My initial research interest in 2011 was in street youth´s narrative identity but during my course of study ended up realizing that my research in

fact was about their experiences of poverty. In 2012 when I had the chance to go back to Zambia, I was confident that now the core of the research was now fixed in questions of poverty. The second field work period however brought up additional questions of detachment and change, which were interlinked to poverty but still separate. I felt that ethnographic research, at least when made in another culture, indeed was a very holistic project, and many elements in my life in Lusaka also came into interpretation of the "data". How I experienced Zambian culture was always present in how I interacted with the street children, how I collected the data and how I interpreted the meanings of what my informants told. In this way my own experience of Zambia is also present in the whole process and in the results.

As already mentioned the recorded interviews were used as the primary source of data, whereas the research journals served as a secondary source. This means that only the interviews have been analyzed systematically, while the field notes I reviewed to enrich and illuminate the points gained from the interviews. It also served as a tool to evaluate the validity of what the informants had told, since at times there was a contradiction between what the informants told and what I saw them doing or what was told by somebody else.

I analyzed the interviews using content analysis. It is often emphasized in guides concerning research making that the data itself never lifts up anything, but it's the researcher´s way of reading, his interpretation and choices which form the structures for the data. However, getting to know the data, it can hint to us what we should ask from it (Ruusuvuori et al. 2010, 15-16). Since I had already processed my research focus a lot during the field work period and later when transcribing and reading through the interviews, the research material was very familiar to me, so I had a good idea of what I should ask from it before starting the analysis. These assumptions formed my research questions.

The analysis process meant going through my data interview by interview looking for answers to each of my research question. My first research question was how poverty is present in my informants´ lives, so I went through each interview asking "what is told about poverty". My second research question was how my informant´s poverty experiences and one´s own agency change within the growing years spent in the streets,

so I went through each interview asking "what is told about change, about becoming older, and about one´s own agency." The third research question concerned the transition into adult roles in society, so I went through each interview asking "what is told about leaving street life, what is told about adulthood". When I had gone through each interview I wrote down a short conclusion about them. After having made the conclusions I started searching for similarities and differences in the meanings the informants gave to these questions. The third question concerning adulthood and leaving the street life came up only in some of the interviews, so I deepened the theme by using a case study approach, analyzing the differences in what two of the informants told about their life situations in their interviews.

During the process of analysis I picked up three abstract terms poverty, change and detachment. These concepts became so called "nodes" or "cores" in my research, around which I started building up meanings (See Huttunen 2012, 48–49). All these themes were interlinked with one another in various ways. In the following chapter I present the results of the research, which means answering the research questions. I am using the above mentioned concepts of poverty, change and detachment as themes under which the results are presented.

5   RESULTS

5.1   Poverty

"Okay, so a person who is poor is someone who doesn't manage, who doesn't have even anyone to push you, you want to do something, but it´s very difficult to find it. And then the people to stand for you, they are never there and at the end you have nothing to cherish and to live for." (Jeff 23, translated)

"Poverty is in levels, I understand about poverty and yes, I am also poor and so, when you sleep outside, and you don't have where to sleep and everything, a good shelter, that is poverty. You find yourself all the time in cells, jails. That's suffering and poverty as well." (Musonda 21, translated)

These are two of the definitions which my informants gave to poverty, when I asked what they consider it means. I think these answers reveal something really important about how poverty is present in street youth´s lives. Poverty cannot be expressed solely in terms of how much money the youth had in their hands, what resources they lacked,

or how often they suffered from hunger, since their poverty became expressed in much more comprehensive meanings. As Jeff mentions, while poverty is related to incomes and managing economically, it also has a social dimension. One is poor when he does not have those people in his life, who would enable lifting oneself up from the poverty and who would be there for support at times of trouble. He considers that such an experience of poverty can be so overwhelming in itself that life loses its meaning. Musonda, on the other hand, brings up the way poverty is related to the experience of homelessness. Without a secure, fixed shelter one is constantly at odds with public authorities. Musonda uses the expression that a person living in the streets "finds oneself all the time in the jails", not specifying whether he means that homelessness pushes that person to do crimes, or that one becomes arrested merely by being homeless. Nevertheless it causes agony.

Previous research on street youth has shown that individual street children and adolescents adapt to the street life in a very different manner. As discussed earlier, part of the street youth seems to see positive aspects in their street life and also enjoy it regardless hardships. From all of my 23 interviewed street youth, only two mentioned positive emotions towards the street life, and presented life in the streets as a self-made choice. They were among the youngest of my interviewees, aged 14 and 15 and had moved to the streets only recently. All the other interviewed street youth seemed to be in unanimous agreement that the life in the streets was what they called a "bad life" and they wished to stop living that life. Most of them also seemed to be unable to name anything positive in their life in the streets. In this way they very clearly brought up that they were not living the kind of life they had a reason to value, and that there indeed were very few reasons, if any, to value the street life. Keeping Amartya Sen´s definition of poverty as capability deprivations in mind I interpreted these as voices about poverty. As mentioned earlier the informants were in different stages of their street careers: some of them had been in the streets only for a short period of time, others had slept in the streets for years, and some others had slept before in the streets but were now renting a place to stay. This means that also poverty which they were currently experiencing had different depth, or as Musonda put it "*was found in different levels*"

5.1.1   Running to the streets

Informants reasons for moving to the streets were various, and often related to inadequate means at home, even if this was rarely the only or most important immediate reason for leaving. One indicator of poverty at home was that, apart from a few exceptions, the youth had dropped out of school already way before choosing to go to the streets. That confirms what previous studies have shown: dropping out of school is a risk factor for the youth to go to the streets.
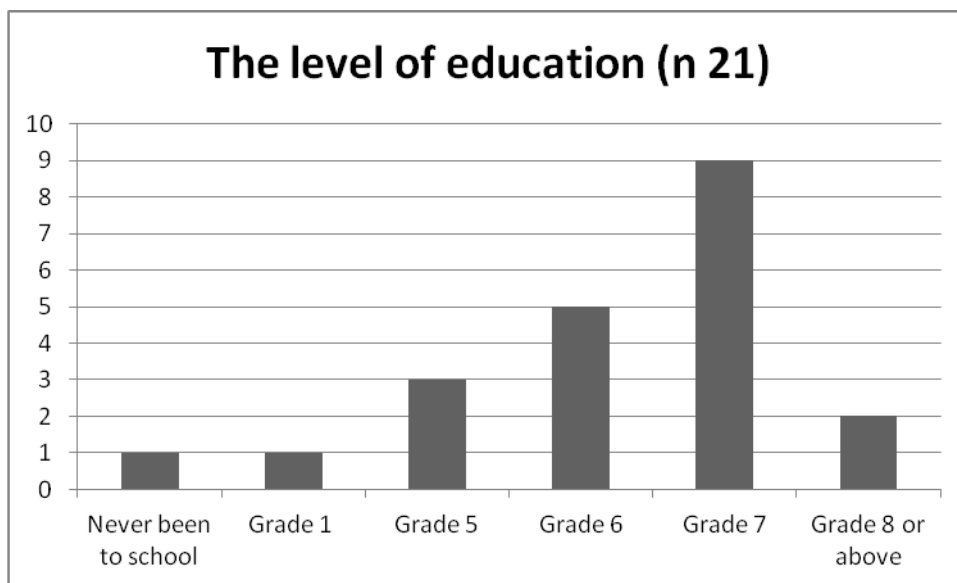
The whole sample was n23, information of education level lacking from two respondents.

The above histogram shows the distribution in informants´ education level. It also shows that the majority of the informants had at least some years of education: only one informant had never been to school, and one had finished after grade one. The majority had stopped going to school either after or during grade seven. The reason for this is probably very practical, since only the primary education is free in Zambia, meaning grades from one to seven. However, even if there are no school fees as such, sending a child to school has many hidden costs, such as uniforms and equipments, which restrict access to education for children from poor households (Petrauskis & Nkunika 2006, 2). Whereas most of the youth had dropped out of school in seventh grade, it did not necessarily mean that they had stayed at home until that time. Many of the informants had attended school from street children centers.

The histogram below shows the reasons the youth gave for leaving home and going to the streets. However, this kind of categorization does not really make justice to the complexity of their situations. These answers are more likely to reflect the most immediate reason for the decision instead of illustrating the overall situation.

Most immediate reason for leaving home
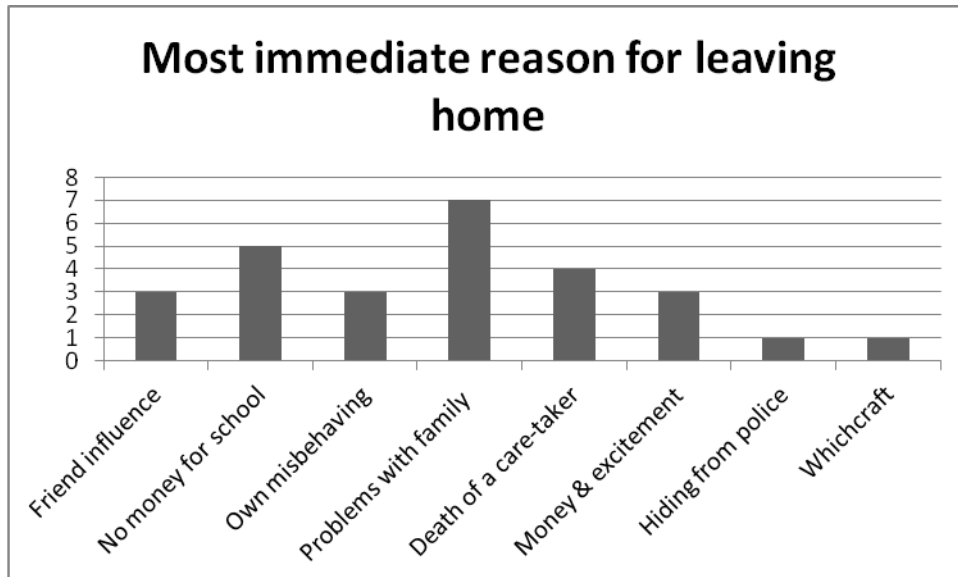
Total sample N23, answers missing from two respondents. When several reasons mentioned all of them were coded.

Whereas dropping off from school caused a risk factor which increased the possibility to leave to the streets, some of the informants also indicated that it was the most crucial reason they had left home. For them it was the sense of wasted future opportunities due to lack of education which had led them to go to the streets to find sponsorship for school, work, money or simply to look for a better life. The youth did not, however, necessarily refer to inadequate means to pay for their school as the only reason they were denied opportunity to education. Some of the youth told they felt treated unfairly at home in comparison with other siblings or step-siblings, that were given a chance to go to school. This perceived discrimination had often to do with the care-taking parent remarrying, putting them into unfavorable position in the changed family dynamics. Besides lacking access to school, the youth brought up having to do most of the house-hold chores or getting less clothes or food than others in the family. Youth often mentioned that the main reason they had left home was that they did not get along with either their own parents or step-parents. However, only few youth referred to direct abuse or neglect at home. Death of the care-taking family member had also led some of

the informants to street life. Some of the youth brought up that it had been their own behavior, such as drinking beer and misbehaving that had caused the tensions at home.

Three out of four girls reported friend influence as the final reason for deciding to leaving to the streets, but none of the boys mentioned this. Furthermore, boredom and having nothing to do at home doing nothing, seemed to be a forceful push factor to the streets, which provided excitements, money and freedom, as one girl described of how her friend influenced her to move to the streets.

Peer educator "So she is saying that after she talked to the friend, the friend comforted her, and was telling that do you know that we don't have that freedom here, because maybe every day, we eat kapenta, maybe on Thursday we eat kapenta, Wednesday we eat beans… And besides, when you put on clothes they will tell you to put on long clothes, put when you are in the streets, you can put on any clothes you want. And also the money, you can have the money that you want, and eat anything you want, and also… because at that center she is saying that they used to give her five thousand every Monday. But for her, she was saying that when we are in town we will be having a lot of money, such as maybe 100 thousand. And by then it was a lot of money, she never even knew about it. So you can eat whatever you want to eat with that money. It was more like she was influencing her, so they left together". (Interviewed Angel 14, translated)"

Angel´s story brings up that also the decision to go to the streets was often made several times, since for the most of the street youth, the street lives included spending phases back home or in centers. Street children centers typically provided the possibility to go to school, but had rules and restrictions unlike the streets, as Angels story shows. Angel brought also up the aspect of consumerism, which she was introduced to in the streets. As she said, having such money to spend as in the streets was life she wasn´t familiar with before. She also later told how in the streets she started admiring things, and she was excited of being able to get those things for herself. She told that it was money that kept her in the streets, even though the life was insecure.

It makes sense that income poverty was not in most of the cases mentioned as a primary push factor to the streets in comparison to family problems or peer influence, since almost all of the informants had mostly grown up as "children of the street". Instead of working in the streets in order to contribute to family´s incomes and returning home in the evenings, they had decided to leave the home life and provide for themselves.

However, poverty caused both a push and pull factor for the youth to choose the streets, as it presented an opportunity for life with cash and freedom that was lacking from life at home or in centers.

5.1.2 *Living the "bad life"- poverty and the streets*

The experience of monetary deprivation in the streets seemed to be quite individual. Some of the youth told that they were making quite good money in the streets, while others told that getting money to eat something for supper was a challenge. These differences were also visible, since some of the youth were wearing the same dirty clothes all the time, whereas others seemed to have a variety of clothes and kept them clean. Regardless of the differences in the amounts of the money the youth had in their use, what they had in common was that their incomes were irregular and unpredictable. In addition to this, the money they made went to fulfilling their immediate and basic needs and they were not able to save money to invest on starting their own business which would enable them to stop looking for money from piece-works in town. Money was an important factor also in what the youth told about their lives in the streets. When they referred to the good periods in the streets, they were often connected to the experience of having money. Even when some of them mentioned they were able to make sufficient cash for basic needs, the constant lack and need for money was connected to other deprivations in the street life in various ways.

Perhaps the most obvious deprivation in street life is the lack of shelter and security. As mentioned, not all of the informants were sleeping in the streets. The sleeping arrangements often reflected the level of monetary poverty that the youth were in. The ones who were in the streets each night, without a fixed place where to sleep, were in many ways the most deprived and had the least security. Some of the youth told that the issue of where to sleep was among the hardest in the streets. Sleeping in the streets puts the youth into a vulnerable position of being a target of violence and exploitation.

Some of the youth stayed in the Intercity- bus terminal in the heart of the city, which offered a possibility for some physical security, since there were security guards during the night to keep an order. To sleep there had a nightly cost, so it required being able to pay of one´s security. The amount of the money the youth paid each night for sleeping

in the Intercity for a period of a month was approximately equivalent to rental costs of the cheap flats some other informants rented. However, being able to rent a flat meant that the youth were able to both make enough money and to save that money. The ones who didn't have a place to stay had it hard to save anything or even to own anything, since things tended to get stolen from them. For instance, at times some of the youth came to the Center with a new phone they had just gotten, but after a couple of weeks the phone was already stolen.

"When I was sleeping in the streets I was washing cars, I had money. Now, I had nowhere to take it to, so now, when my friend Chansa came, he was staying with his sister. Then they told that they have a place there where they want someone to rent from there in Ng´ombe [compound]. So that's when I started going there." (Daniel 17)

As Daniel suggested, succeeding economically in the streets also brought the need for renting an apartment. Being able to rent a flat was an indicator that youth has gained a position in the streets where one is making enough money in order to have what to save. It also meant having such social connections that enabled finding a place to rent. However, due to the irregularity of the means, renting an apartment was not necessarily a guarantee of being able to quit sleeping in the streets. One informant told that he went home during the nights, when he had money for the transport, and in case there was not enough money, he slept in town.

The insecurity of street life was twofold: the youth expressed that it was both the fellow street youth and the other people who they met in the streets who caused their mistrust and experienced violence. These other people were most often identified as police or other public authorities such as security officers. The way the informants talked about police violence and suspects targeted on them implied that it was not their illegal acts that put them into trouble with officers of law but also the pure fact that they were street youth that caused they were treated as criminals.

"They are even suspecting us, "No you, you have stolen this!" But it is not you. You are just found in the streets, and you are jailed. Some of my friends, so many of my friends are getting jailed here. And some of them, they are getting even mad with the alcohol and the bostick." (Mutale, 22)

Here Mutale seems to refer to his friends´ unjustified arrests as causes for their use of intoxicants with severe consequences on their mental health. Constant police suspicion and direct police violence came up in many interviews among the most notable deprivations in street life, which brought much stress and limited informants´ life possibilities and feeling of security. Street life seemed to be characterized by mistrust.

"In the town, you can never be free, because you are always at the look-out, you are all the time conscious of who is following you. Even when you are not the one who has done it, you just being found on that place, you are always a victim of those troubles." *(Jeff, 23 translated)*

The lack of trust was not just limited to police and general public, but also the social relationships and street friendships were described with feelings of mistrust and remoteness.

Elina: So when you are in the streets, do you feel you can trust your friends?
Haggai : Aaaah, never trust a friend…[starts speaking Nyanja]
Peer educator (translates): He is saying that never trust your friend, because you know your friend and his behavior and he knows your behavior, so there already you cannot trust. Because I don't know how to say in English, but those friends in the streets, they are like confused, or like disturbed somehow. You trust them today, and tomorrow they disappoint you. He is saying that you can only have a friend but you cannot over trust your friend.
Elina: So did you also in the streets disappoint your friends?
Peed educator: He is saying what he remembers is him being disappointed, not him disappointing his friends.
(Interviewed: Haggai, 23, translated)

Even when many of the youth confirmed spending much time with their friends in the streets these friendships tended to offer very little emotional closeness or support. The feeling of mistrust and readiness to exploit one´s friends also seemed to be mutual, as Haggai suggested by saying that since both parts know each other´s behavior building up trust is impossible.

Peer educator (translates) "So his fellow guys they do like, if they discover someone has got money, they discover you have a group there, they come, they get you. Someone searches you and they leave you […] He is saying that it is hard to make a friend in the streets, because the best friend you trust, at some point they sell you to other friends "This one, he has got money!" And he again, he does the same, he gets money from others as well" (Interviewed: Duncan 28, translated)

The willingness to take advantage of others seemed to be connected to the experienced poverty and constant need for money, where all means to provide fast cash in hand were acceptable. The problematic nature of street friendships was not only expressed in terms of willingness to directly benefit from the others. The informants also pointed out a lack of respect towards each other, which came out in terms of mutual insulting and fighting. Fighting was often mentioned as a feature of the street life, and as an issue which made the life bad. At times the conflicts between the street youth seemed to take very extreme forms, as some of the youth mentioned there were even killings in the streets.

However, not everyone lacked close friendships. Some of the informants told that they also had friends they could trust and count on when in trouble. These were often the youth who did not live full-time in the streets, which could reflect the importance of social relationships in getting forward in one´s street career, or then maybe also the fact that one is more able to choose the people he mingles with when not living full-time in the streets. Likewise, girls seemed to form more stable friendships with a reciprocal nature. This perhaps also had to do with the fact that they were in higher risk of physical and also sexual abuse. Moving together and in bigger groups was a form security, as one female informant suggested by telling that when they were just two girls, they had problems, but when they were more, they were left in peace. The girls also said that shared the money they got with each other. Contrary to the girls, some of the male informants told that they isolated themselves from others in order to avoid being beaten or stolen from. Since street life offered disappointments in friendships, for some of the youth a relationship seemed to offer a possibility for a closer and more attached social relationship, as one informant suggested.

"So he is saying that from the time he came to the streets, he never used to gain friends, so the happiest moment of his life is him having a girlfriend."(Interviewed: Simon 20, translated)

The street relationships weren't however automatically based on affection and especially girls referred to having a boyfriend as a form of security in the streets as Angel here suggests.

" When you accept [someone to be your boyfriend] these other guys, they won´t come close to you. So because that guy will be sending guys to be monitoring all your movements to see if you are going out with other guys." Angel 14 translated

Also Kudrati et al. (2008) argue that in their study on street children in Sudan it was difficult to explore up to which point there was mutual affection since both parts in street relationships typically described their relationship in terms of what they concretely benefitted from it (ibid 443). Even if there was not necessarily much room for romantic love, the relationships could include care, trust and affection, and perhaps a more stable social relationship that seemed to be hard to form otherwise in the street environment especially for male youth.

Elina: So do you love him? Are you in love?
Diana: Aaah…. Awe [As in "no". Talks a lot.]
Peer educator (translates): No, not much. The only thing I thank him is that… Okay, I appreciate the fact that he has been there for me. When I got sick, he was the one who took care of me, and he could even sleep there at the side bed when I was sick and in a hospital and he brought the necessary things for me. (Interviewed: Diana 17).

Street life also included other negative aspects and deprivations. Perhaps the main factor which affected the youth´s possibilities to succeed was the use of intoxicants. By far the most common intoxicant was bostick, even though some of the youth confirmed also using other substances, such as marijuana and alcohol. All of the interviewed youth said they wanted to stop using bostick, but that the street-life did not enable succeeding in such decisions since they just ended up using it anyway. Youths typically started using bostick gradually, where as in the beginning when entering the street life they avoided it. Some of the youths referred to peer pressure and how it had been hard to avoid using bostick and being accepted in the streets, as initial reasons to start the use. They told that later they had started to like it and at least some had become addicted. The use of substances was also employed as a response to the sense of meaninglessness and painfulness of the street life, as Mutale explained.

"Like I have got nothing… Am thinking like with a high pressure […] Now I start crying with myself, because like, to finish all my pains, that's like when I get [drunk]… to forget a bit. My all life background. That's when I get. But I would like to stop it all. It´s only that am found in the streets. I really want to stop all bad. And it´s not just alcohol that I get, I do even that bostick a bit" (Mutale, 22)

Some of the youth were heavily addicted and told that they inhaled bostick all the time, and even when they were sleeping they would use it. The level of addiction was quite visible also in the appearance and affected greatly ther level of functioning.

"I found a very big difference [between inhaling bostick and not inhaling], because when I am smoking bostick, I am not bathing, and… I don't have power to.. work anything or..the same with play the ball, I am not playing football because of bostick. I get tired fast. (Michael, 15)

As Michael tells, using bostick affected the possibility of earning money and taking care of himself. Being under the use of substances puts the youth into danger, since they were less able to defend themselves. This was especially dangerous for girls. When the youth were under the influence of bostick, they also tended to get into trouble. They also told that the insulting and fighting was mainly caused by the intoxicated state when they lost control. It further contributed to the fact that they didn't care to wash themselves or their clothes. Looking dirty on the other hand affected negatively street youth´s opportunities, since it made their deprived state visible and put them as targets of social disrespect in town. It also affected their possibilities to participate in social life such as going to church, where it would have been inappropriate to show up in dirty clothes. The dirty street appearance might also affect street youth´s possibilities to get service in certain places. For example, we took one youth to the nearby clinic one day, and the lady giving the lineup numbers first refused to give the youth an appointment with a doctor because of his dirty appearance. He was advised first to go and wash himself and then come back. He was eventually given the appointment, but being accompanied by two white people (I and another trainee) might have also made the difference.

The use of substances had both direct and indirect effects on youth´s health. Among the direct effects, most commonly reported were lung and heart problems, for instance one youth told the pain he had in his chest occasionally got so bad that he just slept the whole day. Another informant told that he tried to reduce the negative effects of bostick use by drinking milk afterwards, "*to clean his chest*". The indirect effects included the situations they got into while intoxicated, such as having unprotected sex or becoming sexually violated, which caused a risk for sexually transmitted diseases, most notably

HIV. All the informants did not however report health problems, more than half of the informants told they did not have any concerns about their health.

I think there is a good reason to view youth´s poverty experiences in the light of social exclusion. The notion of social exclusion is useful because of two reasons. Firstly, since it highlights the relational nature of poverty and secondly, since it emphasizes the process nature where certain groups become socially excluded in the society. The kind of poverty that street youth experienced was indeed very relational by nature. It was to high extend through their social relationships or the lack of them, that their experiences become meaningful. The social stigma of being a street youth made them targets of public disapproval, mistrust and suspicion. Social stigma also seemed to work as justification to the police violence and suspect in the name of public order. This means that they were actively excluded from their social rights, and this exclusion was further reinforced by public authorities namely the police officers.

In various ways all the deprivations in street life were interconnected and reinforced one another. The ones who slept in the streets also used the most intoxicants, had the dirtiest clothes, and reported the least trust in their friendships. They were also often moneywise the poorest, and had the worst health and the least security. They enjoyed the least social respect which in turns affected their sense of self-dignity.

5.2 **Change**

5.2.1 Passing years in the streets: growing adaptation but negative emotions

Growing older in the streets was a theme that came up often in the interviews. Most of the older youth referred to antisocial activities such as sniffing bostick, fighting and stealing as something which they did when they were still growing up and which they now had stopped. This was so even when it was evident they were still involved in these activities (for example I saw them using bostic in the Center). They seemed to be more comfortable talking about the negative aspects of the street behaviour either in a very general level, or as a personal experience that took place in the past. Some of the older informants brought up that they had started feeling ashamed of living the street life because of their growing age and societal expectations connected to adult roles.

As discussed in section 2.3, age along with the sensation of temporality affect how street youth experience the streets. Since the great majority of the informants had spent many years living in the streets it was evident that street life did not reflect a temporal short-term phase in their lives. If the streets had, at least to some, initially presented a more exciting option to that of being home doing nothing, it seemed that for the youth who had lived there for years, the street life itself had turned into "doing nothing." Also the perception of freedom in the streets seemed to have changed. Many of the informants told that there was no real freedom, because of police violence and harassment. In accordance to previous studies, some of the informants implied that one needs to work harder to get money in the streets, since you cannot just rely on people´s pity and sympathy.

"[I have learned] Just to work hard, because the way we are growing, you cannot be just begging, begging. So you need to work hard. […] Yeah, then the way I am, at this age they can tell me to go and work" (Daniel, 17)

The fact that begging lost its profitability was especially hard on girls, since they resorted to sex-work as the only other option available for getting money.

"Okay, the biggest difference is that if a boy is in the streets, he is able to do one or two things. He is able to carry some things for other people to raise the money and even to push some wheelbarrows. But for a girl or a woman in the streets, it is very painful, because the only option for you is to sleep around with men in order to get some money" (Diana, 17, translated)

The girls said they continued begging on a regular basis as a means of getting money, while only one male informant told he begged to get money. Begging perhaps was also more profitable for young women than it was for young men, since, as Diana told, the piecework that was there in the streets were considered suitable to boys and men, not to girls and women. As Daniel suggested, older boys´ begging got the public response that they should go and work instead. If there are no work opportunities outside sex-labour available for girls, their begging probably gets a more sympathetic response.

Some of the youth told that age and gained experience from the streets had taught them useful skills, such as budgeting money instead of wasting it right away. Being "bigger" also seemed to bring growing feeling of security in the streets, and the youth told they

were able to defend themselves. For instance, this is how one informant told about spending his nights in an unfinished building in town.

"Spending the time at street at night at the building is very good, very comfortable, no… no feeling cold…" (Jeffrey, 22)

His description expresses a sense of security rather than insecurity, in a place which he had just described as a scene where the older youth mostly are found and where a lot of stealing and sexual assaults took place.

Interestingly however, when I asked the informants how their experience of life in the streets had changed during the years, most of the older youth replied that there was nothing that had changed: life had remained just the same year in year out. By saying this they perhaps implied to the fact that there had not been such real improvements in their lives, which would have detached them from the street life, rather than meaning that their lives would had actually remained unchangeable. Life in the streets was considered hard at all ages, but its challenges did change.

"The difference? There is no any difference. Because, it´s still hard when growing there. Some other big people, if you wash cars there, they see that you are young, so they disturb you, so you don't get that money that you have worked for". (Daniel, 17)

Age and maturity brings a position of power in terms of physical strength over the younger street children. The abuse and utilization of younger street children was not a theme which came up often in youth´s self-narratives as something they would currently be involved in, but rather as memories from the past. In these memories one was either the child victim, as in Daniel´s case, or the young performer still learning about life. Some of the informants, all male, did tell they exercised such power over the younger ones. When the youth talked about beating younger children, it was, similarly to stealing, expressed as something that they could not be proud of, but saw it as necessary part of the survival strategies in the streets.

"I feel bad, but those are the means to find something for us to eat, but I know deep down in my heart that it is bad to do that and I even advice those older guys who are into what I was doing before, they who are coming and beating those younger ones, I tell them what if you kill someone, and they take you to jail and you never come out of the jail." (Musonda 21, translated)

What Musonda said shows that the abuse of younger children can be very violent by nature, as he tells how he tries to convince others to stop such behaviour by showing that someone can die because of their actions.

I am aware that there are risks of false interpretation when addressing meanings to the use of language, especially when it is translated, but it seemed to me that another way to distance one´s own agency from the actions generally considered as immoral, was to address them as things that "are in the streets", as a necessary part of it.

"..me living in the streets, there is nothing good in the streets, there are only bad vices, such as sniffing, stealing, smoking itself, fighting, and maybe even harassing people, even forcing them to have sex with you." (Musonda, 21, translated)

As Musonda said, there are bad vices that occur in the streets, but in his way of expressing he does not address himself as a subject for those acts. In a way he is locating the ownership of the acts to the streets, like the streets would make these things happen, instead of individuals.

Even though such activities that were considered as immoral or bad, such as stealing, fighting, or beating younger children, were often referred to as something that one did while growing up, other informants brought up that they were in fact rather connected to unwished situation where one has grown up and still in the streets.

"I do not want to be found in the streets, while, because me am now growing, I will start living the bad life, because I will even start stealing. Now this, it is not what I want. [....] Think about the bigger boys, as they are getting old, as you can see, the way am going, I have started taking beers, I cannot continue like for 3-4 years, just eating nshima and then going back. [...] now because they are looking at the children first, so the bigger boys are going destructive. Some of the bigger boys and bigger girls, they will start doing damage." (Mutale,, 22)

Mutale tells that when one starts getting older and is still found in the streets, there is a growing sensation of frustration. Coming daily to the Center to have a lunch is no longer satisfactory. He tells that he has started drinking, and is concerned that, if time collapses and he still continues to be in the streets, he will start going on to the wrong tracks in life. He also sees that since street children are in the focus of provided

organizational help, leaving the older youth with little support, they will respond to the perceived neglect by turning to violent behaviour. "Big guys" or "big people" were terms often used when informants were allocating performers of violent acts or bad influences in the streets.

As mentioned some of the older youth took their frustration out on the younger children in the streets which they justified from the standpoint of its economical profitability. There was also gendered and sexual violence, which targeted particularly the girls and young women in the streets. In their case, the violence was less connected to monetary benefits and had more directly to do with exercising power. From the male informants only two mentioned that sexual abuse took place in the streets, where as all the girls expressed fear of being raped. To girls the aspect of sexual violence was a crucial determinant in how they experience the streets, also affecting the choices they made, such as where and with whom they moved. One male informant told also that some of the older street guys force the younger boys to have sex with the older girls. This in turns reveals that sexual assaults are related to use of power accessed due to gender and age. In addition to direct sexual violence, the dynamics of the sex-work itself were such that because of the fear of being abused, the girls had a very weak position to set requirements, such as the use of condoms or at times even to refuse sex, as Angel tells.

"What is happening there, is that if a guy proposes to you and you refuse, then they would beat you and maybe at night they will catch you. And then if there is four of you, all of them, they will take turns on you." (Angel 14, translated)

Even if the youth expressed "bad" conduct in the streets in a way that tried to convince the audience to shift the responsibility of the acts to the situational factors, such as necessity, or being young and growing up, they were aware that it was also question of self-made choices and one´s own agency.

"Yes, I know it is not good, but you know sometimes when I sit, I ask myself, why am I doing this. This, what I am doing is wrong and can´t help my life, I should stop." (Davy, 20)

"Yes, the freedom is there but it depends on you yourself what you are thinking, like in terms of choices, yes, I have been living in the streets for quite a long time, so I know

what it takes, so choices, there are bad choices and good choices, but mostly I focus on good choices."(Musonda 21, translated)

Several studies suggest that there is a reciprocal linkage between victimization to violence and performing violent acts (e.g.Baron & Hartnagel 1998, 182–183**;** Shaffer & Ruback 2002). Growing up victimized and abused in the streets, and at times also at home, provides social experiences and behaviour models that youth can adopt in the streets (Baron & Hartnagel 1998, 182–183). Nevertheless, it is not only their victimized childhood background which causes risk factors of adopting violent behaviour. The youth staying in the streets told they were victimized to the point of beating on a daily basis, and not only by other people in the streets, but also by police authorities. Street youth´s agency and violent offences should be viewed in relationship to their experiences of victimization.

What was inevitably present in the responses of the youth was the norms of what is a good life supposed to be like. Since Zambia is a predominantly Christian nation, Christian ideals contributed to the notion of what is the right way to live life. At times youth´s answers perhaps reflected more the kind of answer that they thought ought to be given than the reality. This became visible especially when they told things that were conflicting with something that they had said before. For instance a youth told that he has now changed his behavior, and is going to church every Sunday. Then later in another conversation he said that he is living the street life since he lacks the access to church, so he cannot learn the word of God needed in order to know how to make right choices in life. It was perhaps also similar when they referred to the "bad behavior" as things they did while growing up, even in cases when they were still involved in these activities: adult age is related to ability to consider one´s actions in a mature way and take responsibilities. It seemed that street youth´s self-perceptions became formed in the contrast with the notion of good life and the kind of life they lived in the streets, which they self-defined as a "bad life".

5.2.2   Meeting the wanted change: change in oneself and change in circumstances

"I just want to have that life, a good life, like other people in the community I see, their life is good." (Haggai, 23, translated)

None of the informants told that their life in the streets was where they wished to be in life. They had other kind of plans and dreams, most popular of these were running one´s own small-scale business or going back to school. Some of them wished to go back to their families in other parts of the country and start living there. The ones who were also sleeping in the streets wished to start renting an apartment. Some of the informants mentioned wishing to marry and start providing for a family. The most common was however to get something else to do, which would enable them to stop the street life. What came up in almost all of the interviews was that the youth felt that as long as they continued living the street life, their lives would not get better.

Elina: What do you think about like your everyday life, what kind of a change would you want… like these are the aims you have for the future, you want to become a missionary
Charles: Yeah
Elina:.. and you want to sing gospel, but what about today, what kind of a change do you think you need in your life now?
Charles: Eeh, something like, ehm, ehm, still.. born again
Elina: Huh?
Chares: to born again… to change.
Elina: Yeah, to change
Charles: Yes
Elina: So you want to change, but how? What do you mean?
Charles: To change, yah, yah, yah…actually, eh.. as I tell you that… because I can´t change, when am getting in the streets, so I need, like support, who can support me, like….[silence]. [In a sure tone] I need a shelter actually. A shelter that I can stay, without leaves and then I go to school… and and... [silence] (Charles, 19)

Charles expresses that meeting the change wanted in his life feels so unrealistic, that it would mean being born again. He suggests that what he needs in order to get a different kind of life is a place where he can stay permanently, without going back to the streets and from where he could go to school. His response is interesting, since he is describing a typical centre for street children. Most of the youth had at least at some point been in one or more centres, but had decided to go back to the streets for one reason or another. This is why Charles´ answer is not very typical. The youth more commonly saw that

meeting the change they wanted would require a much more independent solution. They typically wished they could get investment capital, so that they could start their own business. Starting a business represented a chance to rise from the poverty and quit the street life. The wish for independence is understandable considering their growing age. However, Charles´ answer does reveal something which for many of the youth was true; as long as he kept on living the street life, there did not seem to be a real difference. The lifestyles between those who had a flat to rent and those who slept outside did not necessarily distinguish much from one another. As long as the youth kept on spending their time in the streets living the street life, a flat where to sleep the night just offered more security during the night, not real improvements in terms of detaching oneself from the streets. It was other things that made the change possible.

Elina: Okay, so you felt your life started going better now that you had the apartment?
David: Because I went back to school, I started going back to school (David 17)

In the above conversation with David, I assumed that getting an apartment was an improvement to that of living in the streets. David however clarifies that the improvement he meant was the fact that he had started studying. In youth´s narratives getting an apartment did not seem to have made very big difference, as they described continuing to struggle with the same problems. They also continued being just as poor as ever, since now the money went to the rentals.

The street youth were aware of the fact that their own choices, especially using intoxicants made it harder for them to reach the good life which they wanted. They referred to the wanted change in their own lifestyle by using strong and comprehensive expressions, such as saying that they just need to "change totally", or to "transform", or "stop all that bad". Most of the youth referred to the combination of doing business and using bostick as impossible. However, they considered that changing one´s own behavior was conditional to, and made sense only in the context where they were helped first. The majority of the informants told they would stop all the street behaviour, if they only were given a job, a study place or investment capital to start one´s own business.

"He is saying that to stop [using bostick] is difficult, that's why he is asking for help, when they help him, the job will make him to be busy, like when he goes early in the

morning and he will come around 19, he goes an baths and sleeps, so the time like to go around and use bensin, sticker, that time will not be there" Duncan 28, translated

Duncan´s reply reflects quite well the logic that most youth had in terms of stopping use of bostick. Perhaps they held on to the belief that once a chance for change would appear it would be easy for them to stop.

When it comes to getting help, the older youth were a bit of a drop-out group in the organizational contexts. Many of the street youth organizations in Lusaka were mainly targeting their assistance to youth who were under 18. The Center was open to everybody, but its focus was on work with street children, and the older youth were mainly integrated into the organization´s activities by being paid as peer educators for helping out. Most of the youth referred to the organization as their primary and at times the sole connection which could provide them with a possibility for the wanted change. Nevertheless, the youth expressed contradictory feelings towards the organization. On the one hand they told that they were grateful for the help they got from there, especially when they got money as peer educators to pay for their rentals. This enabled that they did not need the streets for money.

"So me am appreciating very much here in the organization, because even at this time, I would be just maybe getting that bostick, it's a drug, and looking after cars, whatever, and so I just thank the organization. As we who are coming here, it´s good that we are having a time of chilling of all the bad for the moment we are waiting to stop. The time that we spend here, it is fine. Because in the streets, there are so many things that are happening." (Mutale, 22)

On the other hand they brought up feelings of frustration, since they felt that their life situations were the same, with the exception of a little bit more incomes and a place to come to relax for some time. As Mutale referred in the quote above, coming daily to the center was a period of *waiting to stop* the unsatisfactory way of living.

"I feel disappointed. Because for now, I am still just waiting. I wait and I wait and I see nothing that is happening." (Mutale 22)

It seemed that many of the older youth did not consider that being paid as a peer educator was a real job, but rather an additional income to their street incomes. They,

for instance, told that keeping an actual job would mean that they could not continue drinking or using substances when at work, yet they came to the Center when not sober. Many of the older youth had also other kind of wishes for the organization. They hoped that it would help them in starting own business or getting a driver´s license, which they saw as an actual possibility to start a better life. This hope also perhaps made them to stay in their roles as peer educators, even if they saw that the economic assistance for rentals was not sufficient for the change they wished to obtain in their lives and seemed also to enable continuing the street life.

"*Because, like this time, the way I am seen, it´s just like the same. Am just like the same [as] in the streets here. I have just turned like [into having] a shelter, not all behaviour*". (Mutale 22)

This was kind of a difficult circle where organization´s and youths´ expectations did not easily meet. Whereas the youth saw that changing one´s behavior was not possible as long as they kept on living the similar life, the organization wanted to see the change in their behavior first, so that they could help the potential youth and avoid wasting resources on those who would be keen on continuing the street life. This circle seemed to put the youth into the continuous stage of "waiting to stop the bad life".

5.3   **Detachment**

5.3.1   *Working careers in the streets*

Based on his study on street youth in Durban, Schernthaner (2011) emphasizes that, contrary to the general perception that when street youth become older they become involved in criminal activities, there was no clear indicator that this would necessarily be true. In his study he found also opposite tendencies; some street youth who had in earlier phases of their street careers been involved in criminal activities had later stopped those activities since they noticed that they were not providing a future. Also among my informants there were some youth whose lives seemed to have gone forward quite much within one year. Typically this included having stopped using bostick, spending less time in the streets, getting an apartment, and taking distance from criminal activities, such as stealing. This included making deliberate choices to distance oneself from the earlier strategies used in the streets.

"Okay for him, he is saying that the good thing is that he would not steal from anyone, but out of whatever he finds he survives on it, other than going there to steal because of the poverty."(Jeff 24, translated)

Some of the youth lived in apartments with their own families, being able to pay for the rentals and buy food home. Starting to live a more stable family life and the will to be socially respected had made them to take distance to the street behavior, as Jeff tells:

"So what made me to stop [using bostick] was that people were passing comments on me, like when I went to the bus, people would be saying that: "Oh, this one is smelling bostick, this one is that and that." Jeff, 24, translated

Stopping the use of bostick and staying out of trouble while doing piece-works in town, did seem to put the youth into a different position in people´s eyes. In contrast to many other street youth, who told that they were faced with continuous disrespect, Daniel told that due to his good behaviour, people would stand up for him.

Elina: And what do you think about peoples attitudes in general, when you are staying in the streets, do you feel that people are not respecting you or how do you feel that people face you?
Daniel: They just like me, because I have good behaviour, so they respect me. "This boy is not a trouble maker." That's what they do. Even if someone wants to beat me, they even come to help me "No this boy is no any trouble"

What seemed to be somewhat a problem in the transition to a more stable adult life was that finding work outside their street careers was not easy. As stated in section 3.3 the youth unemployment is a big challenge in Lusaka. Finding secure employment is not easy, especially to street youth who have limited social networks outside the streets. Most of the youth who had spent several years in the streets had, however, moved forwards in their street careers, and seemed to be making sufficient money for basic needs. Nevertheless, the streets provided limited range of economic opportunities when one does not have even namely investment capital. Most commonly the older street youth mentioned being involved in selling bostick, which they mentioned as the best income generating activity. This business seemed to be somehow organized, since the youth had certain days each of them were selling, and also delegated some younger youth to sell and bring the profits to them. The older youth who controlled the bostick

markets clearly had some power position in the streets. For instance there was an occasion where a younger boy had misused his bostick incomes. He was seemingly concerned of what will happen to him when he will run into the older youth who gave him the bostic to sell and avoided coming to the Center and going to town out of fear of meeting this person.

Due to its profitable nature some of the older youth who were involved in the bostick business had been able to shift from the streets to a life including renting a house and keeping up a family. Selling bostick however kept them connected to the street life which they wanted to stop in order to move into socially respectable adult roles in society. Those youth who seriously attempted to distance themselves from street behavior said that they were selling bostick only reluctantly because of the economic necessity. Selling bostick included a feeling of shame.

"*And the way we are growing up, selling bostick it is not a good business, we are always in problems, so the way we can get a stable business, like the way I am saying, it would be very helpful for me, because I would be respected by even the people back in the community. Because the job I do, we are never respected, and people are always pointing fingers on us and it is not something we do with passion.*" Jeff, 24

Apart from being socially organized by some of the older youth, there was also another dimension that restricted that not everybody could access successfully selling in the bostick markets, but only those who were in certain position. This had to do with police control.

Samuel: When am at town I have some piece-work and some selling bostick, its not good, but it´s just to help me,….
Elina: Yeah…. Who are the ones who are buying?
Samuel: Some street kids…
Elina: Okay, so they are the kids? (….)
Samuel: Yeah. And for us, when we started selling, do you know like corruption?
Elina: Yeah
Samuel: So we give the police officer like 10.000 and they just go…
Elina: Okay, and do the police often find you selling, do they know that you are selling?
Samuel: Others they know us, but others they don't
Elina: And in the streets like now, do people ever harass you or no? In the streets they know you, so do they respect you or?
Samuel: They respect me.

Elina: Okay. Also the police?
Samuel: Yeah
Elina: So you never end up being in the fights or anything like that anymore?
Samuel: Ahh…. no.

The above discussion with Samuel brought up that being able to sell bostick one must have at least some loose cash in hand, since you need to have what to bribe the police with. It further illustrates that he is less connected to the street life activities such as fighting, and feels socially respected in the streets. I interviewed Samuel also a year earlier, when he was already selling bostick and spend much time in the streets. At that time he had not yet reached an economically stable position, but told he was struggling to find money for his rentals every month. He mentioned that selling bostick was risky and included being a continuous target for police violence and arrest, since he did not have adequate means to pay for the police feigning ignorance.

"I want to stop selling bostick. Yeah, because it is not a god job, it is risking job. Other time you can be beaten by the policemen, other time they can catch you and take you to their cells. So it´s not good, I want to stop selling bostick […] When they catch you they want you… wish you want to leave out they need like 50 thousand to leave you out. So it is very difficult to pay that money when you are hungry and there is no money in the house. It is very difficult." (Samuel 22, 2011)

Corruption in bostick business puts Zambian police in a rather awkward light, especially since bostick symbolizes the "bad" in the streets and was sold by older youth to younger children. Keeping in mind that older youth mentioned police abuse as one of the worst sides of street life- and this abuse not bound by what they actually had done, but rather to the pure fact that they were found in the street, making them always targets of suspect, one would think that being caught selling bostick would cause strong police reactions.

Even if street youth´s lives included doing almost any quasi- legal or illegal activity that would give fast cash in hand, including stealing, this does not mean that they would have similar weight. As Haggai here suggests, the money that one has actually worked for, "sweated for" is considered having more value than money that comes from stealing.

"He is saying that there were other people that he was meeting that were driving, and they were telling him, I used to smoke, more than you but now I am driving. Even the money that am getting today, I know that I have sweated for that money. So when you are given the money they know that this person worked for that money, so he thinks he needs to be doing the same." Interviewed Haggai 23, translated

Since I had such a small sample of young women in my research, two of whom had stayed relatively short time in the streets, it was impossible to find patterns in their street careers. However, one young woman explained that her street career had changed so, that she didn´t have to do sex-work anymore, since she had found a boyfriend who was able to provide her.

5.3.2   The role of social relationships in ending the street life

As indicated in previous chapter, for some of the youth, getting own children and starting a family seemed to be a strong motivation to distance oneself from street life and make efforts to step into other kind of roles in the society. This was however not necessarily so. Considering the sexually active way of life in the streets, street girls tend to get pregnant whether they wanted or not. Three out of four of the girls told they had become pregnant, but had had a miscarriage. One girl told she had purposely self-caused the miscarriage by drinking something her friends gave her for that purpose. One informant was pregnant when I met her in 2012. When asked whether she knew who the father of the baby is, she told she doesn´t have a boyfriend and said simply "Soweto" referring to the out-door market place where a lot of street youth are found, probably meaning that it can be anybody. The men did not often tell they had children, except when they had children with their wives (referring to a more committed relationship). It is hard to tell if they actually did not have children, or just did not tell about them, or perhaps were not aware that they had impregnated someone in the streets.

In addition to starting a family and stepping into roles of parents, husbands and wives, there were also other important social relationships which played a role in attempts to detach oneself from street life. An important one was relatives. It appeared that whereas street youth often seemed to have their family relationships on a break when they were living in the streets, family members often played an important part in their stories when they had already taken some distance from the street life. Family members were often

the ones who helped the youth to get a place to stay and pushed them into doing something else than being in the streets or home. They could also be useful connections to find employment.

"He doesn't know exactly the years, except that he started in 2001 in the streets, and up to 2004-5-6, somewhere there. Then the cousin like told him to say, you cannot be sleeping in town, I help to get your own house, and if not, I will be staying with you."
(Duncan, 28, translated)

Elina: And how did you get the work place?
Haggai: Working place? My brother told me you can´t stay at home, so let´s go to town and start working. So this time am working to him. (Haggai 23)

However, to stay with one´s family seemed to require that one actually stops living the street life, which was not always easy. The combination of family life and street life caused conflicts at home. Often when visiting the youth at their homes, it appeared that their family had a very different perception of the problems at home than the youth him/herself had. Typically the youth told that they felt unaccepted and mistreated at home, where as the family members mentioned that the youth wasn't adjusting to the family rules, or had problems with neighbors or other things more related to the youth´s own behavior. Successful integration back home is no easy, if there is not unanimous view on where the core of the problem lies.

In 2012 I met one of my informants who lived in the streets in 2011. He came one day to the Center wearing clean clothes and looking smart. He told he had gone to live in his brother place and that his brother had also helped to find him a work. I was surprised by the fact that he had a brother living in Lusaka, since in 2011 he told he had no relatives there with whom he could stay.

Elina: "Okay, but what kept you in the streets so many years if you all the time had your brother staying in the Kalingalinga [compound], why didn't you run to him before?"
Peer educator interprets
Peer educator: "He is saying that he was not decent in person"
Elina: "He was not what?"
Peer educator: "Decent in person, meaning that he had bad behavior, bad character."
Elina: "Okay, so now your behavior has changed?"
Haggai: "Yes, I am changed"

Haggai tells that it was his street conduct, which had prevented him from seeking help from his brother, and only after he had changed (later referring especially to stopping the use of bostick) he felt comfortable going there. It made me also think that perhaps one reason why many of the youth did not keep contact with their families was related to the fact they might feel ashamed of their street appearance in front of their families, as one informant suggests:

Peer educator (translating)"The thing he is asking from the organization, that the day he is going back [to his family], he has to like, buy some new clothes, so when he goes there, he looks like a son, not like a street guy." Interviewed: Chanda, 18, translated

Haggai reflected that since the detachment from the streets starts within oneself and changing one´s own behavior, everyone in the streets can have a chance to change.

Peer educator (translating) "What he is saying is that no person in life has got no relatives. Each and everyone has got family or relatives. That is what he says. Whether your mother or father is dead there must be one of your relatives. So him, he is saying that everyone has got a relative, so even for them it is very possible to change." (Interviewed: Haggai 23, translated)

Haggai sees that the extended family network can provide a solution to get out of the street life, if one only is motivated enough to leave the street life behind. Many of the youth expressed the wish to get back to their families, which stayed in other parts of the country. Some of the youth expressed missing their family members whom they hadn't seen for some years. Family members had however also other kinds of roles in youth narratives.

"It is important, because of what I say, it works, it can be fine. In my life I can even be… all those who are chasing me, they can now start coming, and even my mum… I do not condemn my mum, because my mum is not a problem, like my father, so my mum is fine. But by this time, they know I am renting a house, so they have known where I stay, so they are even sending some brothers and sisters to come, they even get to sleep and eat there, we do everything. Or I go to my mothers place, I left something. And now they start saying, they start seeing me as important. Now I want them to be seeing me more, so that they start coming, sisters, even my brother.. some sister who still found me in the street." (Mutale 22)

The interviewed was a 22- year old man, who was renting a house with some friends in a compound in Lusaka. In this piece of interview he is talking in present tense, but I understood it as a talk about the hopeful future scenario where he would have stable employment and fixed incomes. Currently, he was expressing the unhappiness of the situation where he just had enough money to cover the costs of the rent. We were discussing about his wish to get employment, which he considers very important, so that he can start helping his mother economically (leaving something to her when he visits) and inviting siblings to his house where he can provide a meal and place to sleep. I understood what Mutale said as a desire to shift to another kind of social role in his family. He sees that being able to fulfil this role would make his family see him as important, and their relationship would get closer. Some of the street youth did tell that in their current situation they were economically helped by their relatives or the other way round. This was rare though.

The third group of social relationships mentioned in connection to detachment from street life was friends. As long as one´s main social relationships were street friends, the shift into doing something else was very difficult. However, other street youth could also work as useful connections, especially when they started living more stable lives and could help one another. Many of the street youth for instance started renting flats together, or were helped by their peers to get an apartment to rent. The youth often also introduced their friends to the Center and other organizations that could provide help. It seemed that those youth who had friends whom they mentioned being able to trust, and ask for help when in need, were also doing economically better. In this way moving forward in one´s street career was also connected to being able to form more stable and reciprocal friendships. Detachment also meant distancing from to those friends who were involved in the street lifestyle.

Elina: And so do you still spend time with the same friends you had in the streets, or has your life changed so you don't?
Peer educator translates
Peer educator: He is saying that what he does is, he is found with the same people, but he does not spend many hours with them. The reason of him going to them is for him to advice so that they also realize or decide what to do. So he just goes there to say guys you have to do this, me I do this. Just to encourage them. Interviewed Haggai 23

Haggai told that instead of spending time with his friends from the street, he met them to stand for an example of that one could change his life. Also some other youth referred to the desire to show people around that they have changed, which also could work as a motivation to quit the street life. The youth were also aware that some youth had successfully stopped the street life, and at times mentioned that they should join those friends who have stopped. Stopping the street life could also give a new kind of position of social respect.

Peer educator: He is saying that yes, it is a very good work [to encourage also one´s friends to stop the street life] because he is saying that, we people are different, even in the way we think. And there are others, who are thinking that I need to change but they just do according to what they are thinking. But he is saying, that the street people, they need people like us- including him, more especially him since he has been in that situation [….] Interviewed: Haggai 23

I am not sure whether it is the peer educator translating who is referring to Haggai, who had quit street life, as "us", meaning people who are different from street youth, or whether it is Haggai himself who makes this distinction. It does, however, reflect something very important about the social status of the street youth. Street youth are considered different than the rest of people, they become seen as people who are not even able to make wise independent decisions about their lives.

5.3.3   *From street guys back to school boys: Case Study of Gilbert and Fred*

Regardless street youth´s commonly expressed willingness to leave the street life any given moment they had a chance to do something else to keep them occupied during the days, some of them were more successful in distancing themselves from it than others, when an opportunity actually was there. In this section we will have a look at a case study of two young men, here called Gilbert and Fred, who were sponsored to go to school to continue with their education they had dropped of years back. Their situations shared some similarities but they seemed to take different stances towards the life in the streets which seemed to represent different things to them. Since this section relies heavily on youth´s own narratives, I am using quotes embedded in the text, to make it less disconnected. Gilberts´ interview was translated by a peer educator and Fred´s interview was carried in English.

Both Gilbert and Fred had come to Lusaka from other parts of the country where their relatives stayed. They both told that they had initially come to Lusaka and started staying in the streets, since there was no relative to support their school attendance. Neither of them kept contact with their families that stayed far. They had both been sponsored into schools by the organization and both of them were provided a flat which they shared with other friends. They both stayed small and modest flats, with no electricity, no windows and no lock on the door, and their belongingness consisted of few practical things such as matressess, clothes and cooking pots.

When interviewed in 2012 Gilbert was 20 years old and had been staying in the streets for about four years before he got the apartment a few months earlier. I had met and interviewed him already in 2011, when he was staying in the streets and hoped to go back to school, start renting an apartment, and stop sniffing bostick. When meeting him again in 2012 he asked me whether I remembered our interview year earlier and told me that now he was going to school and seemed to be very pleased about this change in his life adding: *"so God is good".* Gilbert first told he had stopped the use of all intoxicants. In another conversation he admitted he was still using it, but that he *"could stop".* Gilbert was still found on the streets, and he told he went there because *"we don´t have food to eat".* He was getting his incomes from selling bostick and said that he had peer pressure also to sniff it while selling. Gilbert told that the bostick business was nevertheless a necessity, since this was the only piece-work that gave enough money. The money he claimed he was getting was quite much, and especially since organization paid for the rentals and he had a free lunch daily at the Center, the money would surely be sufficient for food. Gilbert also told that he was selling bostick only on Saturdays, so that did not quite explain why he could still be found in the streets during the week-days. He told that in case the organization would also sponsor food for him, he could stop going to the streets.

The other young man, Fred was 18-years old when interviewed him in 2011. In 2012 I did not have chance to meet him again, since he had shifted to another province where his family stayed. When I met him, he had been staying less than a year in the streets of Lusaka before moving to the flat. Fred told that in the streets he had learned to use bostick, but at this time he had stopped that. He told that he was not doing any piece-works at the moment, since he wanted to concentrate on school. He said that after

school he came to the Center, ate lunch there, then went home to wash clothes and go through notes. He told that his roommates were the ones bringing food home, and he also knew somebody working in town who sometimes gave him some money. Fred told that he did not want to stress himself about money at this point of his life, since the *"right time to have money, it will come",* and now it was time for him to concentrate on school. Also Fred expressed the wish that the organization would provide him and his roommates with groceries.

The fact that Fred and Gilbert had a different attitude towards street life was also visible in their appearance. Whereas Fred was always wearing clean clothes and seemed always to be sober, Gilbert often appeared to be under the influence of bostick and his clothes were often untidy. They both referred to street life as something which was a bad way of living. In their interviews they brought up certain points, which implied that their perception towards street life was different and which might at least to some extend explain why distancing oneself from to street life was easier for Fred than for Gilbert.

I asked Gilbert and Fred about how they viewed poverty and whether they considered themselves as poor. Fred brought up that he considered somebody being poor when the person does not have enough money to buy food, and he told that the way he is living made him poor. *"I go there at home, if Chansa and Kevin [roommates], they come home without anything, that means that we are going to sleep without anything until tomorrow. Because we don't have anybody to buy food for us."* In this way Fred brought up the feeling of dependency on others. When thinking back to the time he was in the streets he brought up that money-wise he was doing better *"yeah, yeah… I used to have money when I was in the streets. There were many piece-works there. Even this time, piece-works are there, but just because…"* *"[…] I won´t have time. So to avoid that, I just stay home. Because me, I want to surprise some people by my exams, I want to have a very good performance."* Fred was emphasizing the need to make a choice between the street life and student life and that he had chosen to concentrate on studies. When telling about his life in the streets he emphasized that all had been negative: *"[What] I have learned in the streets, that there is no, no… no good thing there. I haven´t even learned something. I was just passing through difficulties, like every day beating. Not even eating. No bathing. Yeah. Looking dirty. Everything was bad for me."*

Unlike Fred, Gilbert told that he did not really consider himself as poor. *"(Peer educator translating) "Okay, he is saying that the poverty for him, he does not take it as something which is in him, because he manages almost every day to buy himself a meal. And staying in the streets, for him, he does not feel it is like a very big burden. Because there are some, who don't even eat, but are found on the streets, but it's not like that for him"* Gilbert brought up that not everybody can handle the life in the streets, but that he belonged to those who can manage to succeed in it. He however recognized that the kind of freedom of choice that the street life has, includes making morally questionable choices. *"Okay, so he is saying that, it's not like he is really poor, but there are some challenges he is facing. Like he does not have somebody to control him and to tell what is wrong and right, so he has got that freedom, so that you do everything you feel like doing."* Gilbert also told that succeeding in street life included accepting from oneself these morally doubtful choices and adopting the "bad" street behavior. *"But for you, you have to misbehave for you to keep that environment. So they are misbehaving, but it's just coming from you whether you want it or not, because you need to suit the environment. No one can take care of you if you cannot take care of yourself."*

Fred also mentioned that the street life includes "each one for himself"- type of mentality although he considered this as strongly negative. *"The hardest thing in the streets was like, we had no one to care about us. Even if I get sick there in the streets, there is no one to take me to the hospital. But if I am coming here at the Center and they know that am sick, they can even take me to the clinic, they can take care of me."* Fred also brought up that he was not comfortable with the behavior models he had adopted in the streets. *"And the thing that was bad for me in the streets, was that I... I learned some things that I don't even like by this time, because, in the streets I learned how to sniff bostic, smoking.. like smoking cigarettes."* Fred also mentioned that it had been meaningful to him that people saw him as someone who is not a typical street youth, but a person who can have a better life. *"I am proud of myself, because by the time I was staying in the streets, people from different places, whom I was meeting in the streets, were telling me that: "You, you are different from your friends. And you can change your life. And you don't even look suitable for the things that you do here. If you go home, you can change, you can be somebody else in life."*

In Gilbert´s case the experience of being socially respected was different and it seemed to be connected to "being someone in the streets." *(Peer educator translating)"He is saying that there are those people who give you respect. And those are the people, you are maybe bigger than them, so when you just tell them to do what, they just do. And those are the people that can just give you respect, but only those who are already on the streets. (…)"He is saying that those others [who are not street youth], they do not mind him, because even when they see him, they don't talk to him, or there is no any relationship to them."* Gilbert brought up that he had gained a position in the streets where he was enjoying social respect from the smaller street children and had power over them. Unlike in Fred´s case, encounters with other people, those who were not staying in the streets, had no importance to Gilbert.

Both Gilbert and Fred told they enjoyed school. Yet, there seemed to be contradiction between what both of these youth were telling about their motivation towards going to school and the fact that they were not attending school regularly. Both of them identified root of the problem why they were skipping school days in that they weren´t sponsored uniforms and books. From the schools´ point of view, the uniforms were not compulsory but they were recommended. Fred´s teacher mentioned that he particularly had a good school performance but the problem was he was skipping classes. If in Gilbert´s case the "pull" for the streets might have explained why he was skipping school days, it left me asking why Fred not going to school regularly neither even when he was specifically emphasizing he wanted to be serious about his school. Furthermore, Fred´s flatmate confirmed that Fred indeed was not going to the streets to gain money. Fred brought up his disappointment that he had received a school sponsorship, but had to start studying without been given the adequate outfit and tools for it. "*Now, how they can take someone to school without giving uniforms and books? (…) "…what they are doing to us, it´s not good. Because today, they can tell us that "Okay, on Monday we are going to buy you the uniform." Now, the Monday we reach, the uniform, they don´t buy me."*Perhaps wearing the uniform had social importance, since having to attend to school without a uniform seemed to be a big issue even though from school´s point of view it was acceptable. *"Yeah, because me, I don't like being absent at school, and I feel bad about myself, because I have lost many opportunities in my life, (…) So what am up to, so when they are going to buy the uniform for me, it´s when they can start observing me. It´s when they can start observing me if I don't like school."*

These differences in Fred´s and Gilbert´s stories seem to imply that the experience of social recognition has an important role in how successful is one´s attempt to leave the street life. Fred brought up the positive experiences of being socially recognized by different people as someone who can become something else than a street youth. He also had gotten positive feedback from his good performance at school. The street life seemed to present only failures and hardships to him and he was emphasizing his willingness to cut connections to that life. Also when asked about his friendships he referred to his friends from school, which can imply that they were the main social reference group for him. This could explain why wearing a school uniform like rest of the class had a particular importance. Gilbert on the other hand, regardless that he told he wanted to finish the street life and end the street friendships, brought up that he was managing well in the street life and was respected by street youngsters, who seemed to be his main group of identification. Unlike Fred, he told that his friends were from the streets and in the school he *"doesn´t have anybody"*. Further explanatory factor for differences in their experiences is surely the fact that Fred had stayed in the streets for less than a year, whereas Gilbert had been already several years in the streets. The time spend in the streets also reflects how well the youth has learned to adapt to the street life (Schernthaner 2011).

6   CONCLUSION

This thesis has concentrated on Lusaka´s street youth´s experiences of poverty when growing older in the streets. Poverty is here considered in its widest sense, as Amartya Sen (1999) defines it, as deprivation of the basic capabilities that a person has to live the kind of life he or she has a reason to value. The street youth brought up, that the street life was not the kind of life they had a reason to value. Their poverty was rooted in the constant lack of money which kept them in the streets in order to do any income generating activities that were available. For some of the youth this meant adopting illegal activities such as stealing and selling intoxicants to younger street children. Informants´ incomes varied both daily and individually, but their earnings were volatile by nature and were used for fulfilling the immediate and basic needs, while providing little possibilities for savings. For girls and women the access to variety of economic

opportunities was blocked and begging and sex-work were mentioned as sole means of earning income.

Besides its economic aspect, street youth´s poverty was also expressed in terms of vulnerability and victimization to the point of exploitation, crime and violence. This was the most pronounced for the youth who stayed in the streets during the nights as well and for women more so than for men. Poverty was also experienced through public expressions of disrespect and feelings of shame. Poverty also entailed poor health, denied access to services and dependency on substances which lead to losing control of oneself and one´s life. This was connected to adopting violent behavior, fighting and mistrust and made the youth less able to take care of themselves or their appearance. Appearing in public intoxicated and with dirty clothes made their deprived state clearly visible, thus widening the gap between them and the general public. Poverty was also feeling of prolonged period of wasted years. Perhaps most comprehensively expressed, poverty was expressed in feelings of being stuck in an unsatisfactory way of living with marginal prospects of change. It meant the awareness of the immorality of one´s own actions and the contradiction between the notion of good life and the life one lived. Street youth´s poverty was also social exclusion. The social stigma of being street youth caused that their interactions with the officers of law became realized outside the legal justice system. This meant police abuse and arrests without proof.

These findings of street youth´s marginalized position in a society are well in line with previous studies of street children from different parts of the World. However, the research interest seems to have been limited to street children and adolescents. The assumption, that street children´s poverty and exclusion are the same as street youths´ is problematic. Helne (2003) writes, that because the way we see the world is selective, something is always left unseen and unspoken off. When something is left outside the discussion, it makes the discussion however awkward, as though what is left unsaid would all the time try to come out and locate itself. (Ibid 75–76.) This is exactly how I felt when I found multiple street children studies positioning street children regardless their age, in a childhood context, but only one non-Western study shat viewed street youth as youth. Recognizing street youth correctly is important, otherwise their needs risk to go unseen when policies are planned and implemented. What was visible in the street youth´s interviews was the lack of government sector support in their life

situations. Furthermore, most organizations provided assistance in forms that had been planned specifically for children, such as sponsoring children to go to school and providing centers to live in. Street youth wished for more independent solutions for their problems, such as living independently and starting own small-scale business.

My study pointed out several aspects which I see as connected to their growing age and growing number of years spent in the streets. The street youths' lives were not in contrast only, to what a good life is supposed to be like, but also to what an adult life is supposed to be like. Whereas at least some street children have been studied to take joy and pride in surviving independently in the streets, which is in contrast to what is expected from a child, the interviewed street youth did not take pride in living the street life, which was in contrast to society's expectations of adult roles and maturity. The older street youth expressed living the street life only with reluctance, even though the growing age and maturity brought more physical security and position of power towards the younger street children. Many of the contemporary street children studies emphasize street children´s agency. This agency has a collective nature and street children form groups and sub-cultures offering a sense of belonging and social support when the larger society is denying chances to participation. In contrast to this, many of my informants described their relationship with their peers from the streets with feelings of remoteness, mistrust and fear of deceit. This means that they lacked those protective factors formed by the close group membership, which are according to many previous studies, characteristic to street children. The girls however, talked about their friendships with each others in more reciprocal terms. Without the feeling of positive collective identity and group membership and support, the possible threat to ones security was considered coming from both directions, from within one´s own group (other street youth) and from the outside (other people in the streets, including police, as representative of the state authorities). Some of the youth responded to these security threats by isolating themselves from other street youth.

Street youths´ social isolation was further reinforced by the weak social networks outside the streets. Most of the youth did not have contact with their families, and seemed to be lacking social networks outside the organization that could enable getting a share in the employment markets. These experiences of social exclusion and blocked social structure are also important when viewing youth´s agency. According to a

Canadian study, street youth´s likelihood to adapt violent behavior rises as youth spend longer time in the streets. The experienced stress and frustration related to their continual poverty can work as motives for violent assaults, which can relieve stress and provide amusement. Particularly youth who experience that they do not get fair change in legitimate labour markets can adopt violent means to get wanted resources as response to felt discrimination. If the street youth feel that social structure is against them, they are bound to respond with violent means to obtain money. (Baron & Hartnagel 1998, 181–184.)

The informants in my research likewise brought up the felt frustration of their life situations that seemed to remain similar from year to year, not enabling them to move away from the streets and shift to respectable adult roles in the society. Even though many of the street youth referred to illegal activities as something they themselves were adopting when growing up, they also brought up the general view that getting older in the streets included the risk of turning into destructive behavior. Illegal activities and abusing of younger street children were mentioned as means to survive in the streets. Many of the older youth were often making more money than the younger ones and many of them told that they sold intoxicants to younger street children, since this was the best income generating activity in the streets. The youth did not turn to these activities since they preferred them to employment, but because they provided fast cash in hand in a situation where they were unable to find employment or start own business. The youth recognized that the change they needed in their lives included both the change within oneself, meaning abandoning street lifestyle, and the change in their life circumstances, meaning outside assistance. They however often considered that the change in own behavior was possible only after a chance was given to them to quit the street life, since the street life was expressed to require certain behavior models. This put them into prolonged state of waiting to stop the street life which they described as the "bad life".

Even though the prolonged street life formed a risk for youth to turn against the social structure and to adapt illegal and violent behavior models, this was by no means necessarily so. Passing years of street life and growing reluctance towards it could also bring growing motivation and will to move forward in one´s life. Even if detaching oneself from the streets was not easy, some of the street youth had successfully taken

distance to the street life, started up families or reconnected to their relatives, stopped using substances and spent less time with their friends from the streets. However, due to their poverty and the limited access to the informal markets especially without investment capital, they were still stuck to the street life in various ways, such as providing oneself by selling substances to street children. As the lack of social respect characterized the experienced poverty in the streets, the longing for social recognition might play an important role in the detachment, as leaving the street lifestyle seemed to shift the youth into another kind of position in the social hierarchy, which the youth took pride in. Also ability to form useful social relations played a crucial role in detaching oneself from the street life, which is in line with findings from previous street children literature.

My research has highlighted the negative aspect of street life and I have here interpreted it being connected to street youth´s growing age and years spend in the streets. There are certain things that need to be taken into consideration while evaluating how reliable and generalizable these findings are. Firstly I had quite a small number of informants in my research, and claiming that they would present the voices of all of Lusaka´s (or Zambian) street youth would be absurd. Secondly, the youth I interviewed were not necessarily representing the majority of street youth in Lusaka. Not having a night shelter, the Center was a place visited by many of the youths whom had not for one reason or another been motivated enough to leave the street life, but used the organization as integral part of it. This can mean that many of them were at least to some extend more marginalized than youth staying in shelters with more regulated environments. One indicator of this marginalization was, that when I asked who are the people that can help them in their lives, most of my informants referred to the organization. A research made in Brazilian context argues that those street youngsters who rely mostly on institutions´ help have more negative emotions towards the streets than those who reported relying primarily on help from friends or other people in the streets (Raffaelli et al. 2001; 408). Street children´s and youth´s experiences are also always bound to their cultural context: I have not been able to find such a study on Zambian street children or youth, which would have concentrated on their experiences.

The reliability also inevitably includes how well I have managed in the role of interpreter between the data and the results. This role includes what data I had access to,

what I considered as relevant in the analysis and how I interpreted the meanings from my understanding. Someone else might have seen something else that what I saw. One limitation in my research was that the gender perspective is not highlighted as much as it would have deserved. This had to do with the small amount of girls in the sample: searching for patterns and generalization from four girls´ interviews puts the analysis in quite a weak basis. The experience of living in the streets was however clearly gendered.

A further factor which affects the reliability of the result is that, as discussed earlier, succeeding in the street life includes deceit and manipulation of the audience, which causes that street youth have a tendency of lying. This most likely means that not all that the information they gave me was truthful, but perhaps reflected how they thought I might be useful to them. This might have led them either giving an image of being desperately in need of help, such as money for food, or a reverse image of being ready to leave the elements of street life any given moment. For instance, when an informant told a story of his mother, who first severly beat him each time he mentioned wanting to go back to school and then went to burn his son´s school books in order to deliberately block all his education opportunities, it was hard to imagine that at least some amount of exaggeration would not have taken place. The participant observation also revealed inconsistencies between what was told and what was done. Nevertheless, I do think that the ways in which the youth reflected their lives, and their place and chances in the society included something honest, which goes beyond whether they actually sold plastic bags or stole phones to earn their living. It is hard to believe that their expressed feelings of lack of social recognition, mistrust and dissatisfaction in their lives would be nothing but sincere.

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Appendix

1) Questions in background information forms

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Address:

School grade attended:

Are parents alive:

If yes, parents work occupation:

How many siblings:

Health status:

What time found in the streets and where:

Reasons why found in the streets:

2) Further themes/ additional questions asked:

POVERTY AND DEPRIVATIONS IN THE STREETS

What is hardest in the street life? How do you see poverty, what it means to you? Do you consider yourself as poor?

OCCUPATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND INCOMES

What do you do to get money in the streets? How much money can you get out of that? Do you think you make enough money for your basic needs? If you make more money one day what do you do with that money?

RESOURCES IN THE STREET LIFE

Is there something good in the street life? Do you feel that street life includes freedom? What has the life in the streets taught you?

PASSING YEARS IN THE STREETS

Was life different in the streets when you were younger and now? How?

SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Family´s and relatives role, street friendships, relationship. With whom do you spend most of your time with? Do you have good friends you can trust? To whom can you run to when you are in problems?

HEALTH & USE OF INTOXICANTS

Health concerns. What intoxicants are used and how often. Own feelings towards the use, and how it affects one´s life.

FUTURE HOPES AND WISHES:

What kind of change is wished in life? How that change is possible?

3) Life-line exercise

Draw a line that presents your life, starting from the point you were born and ending today. Draw the line to go up, when it is presenting the good periods in your life and down when you had bad periods in life. You can write or draw the people, places and events that have been important in your life.