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Hardships of Scarcity: Microsociology on Poor People's Survival Strategies in Everyday Life

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Abstract

Basic human rights are not met in many parts of the world. Hunger, ill-health, and poor education are often part of the lives of the poor. The purpose of this study is to understand poor people's sources of strength, social relations, sources of income, and perspectives as strategies to cope with poverty in everyday life. Data gathering was done through field observations and semi-structured interviews with poor and non-poor people in the Philippine town, Hagonoy. All data was codified according to recurrent and salient issues and analyzed using chiefly symbolic interactionism as the theoretical framework. The results of this study reveal that poor people suffer from stigmas. Poor people carry out various survival strategies: some strategies are creative, spiritual, and norm-breaking; social relations are important to cope with poverty. There are differences in the way poverty affects men and women due to culturally defined gender roles. The poor people in this study were marginalized into less desirable areas; because of their lack of resources they live in shanties where they have little protection. Calamities affect both the non-poor and the poor people but the latter are in a less fortunate position.

Keywords

Poverty, Stigmas, Social Marginalization, Coping with Poverty, Income Opportunities, Floods, Field Observations, Semi-Structured Interviews, Microsociological Analysis

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Basic human rights are not met in many parts of the world. Hunger, ill-health, and poor education are often part of the lives of the poor. The purpose of this study is to understand poor people's sources of strength, social relations, sources of income, and perspectives as strategies to cope with poverty in everyday life. Data gathering was done through field observations and semi-structured interviews with poor and non-poor people in the Philippine town, Hagonoy. All data was codified according to recurrent and salient issues and analyzed using chiefly symbolic interactionism as the theoretical framework. The results of this study reveal that poor people suffer from stigmas. Poor people carry out various survival strategies: some strategies are creative, spiritual, and norm-breaking; social relations are important to cope with poverty. There are differences in the way poverty affects men and women due to culturally defined gender roles. The poor people in this study were marginalized into less desirable areas; because of their lack of resources they live in shanties where they have little protection. Calamities affect both the non-poor and the poor people but the latter are in a less fortunate position. Keywords: Poverty, Stigmas, Social Marginalization, Coping with Poverty, Income Opportunities, Floods, Field Observations, Semi-Structured Interviews, Microsociological Analysis

The United Nations' (2014) Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that:

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

The general media and previous research however, indicate that these basic human rights are absent in the everyday life of millions of people across the world. Consequently there are people who struggle from food shortage, improper housing conditions, illnesses, and lack of education. Moreover, widespread poverty is harmful to the economy of entire nations (Spicker, 2007, pp. 98-99) and affects the global market through unequal distribution of wealth and labor (Potter, Binns, Elliot, & Smith, 2004). It is thus evident that poverty as a social problem is an important sociological topic.

In this study my aim is to understand poor people's sources of strength, social relations, sources of income, and perspectives as strategies to cope with poverty in everyday life. I increased my comprehension by listening to their stories and observing their surroundings, behaviors, and appearances. By describing and analyzing their situations and definitions related to poverty, I gained more knowledge of how poor people cope with the social consequences of poverty, and convey this knowledge to the readers. If we understand more about survival strategies of the poor, we might also understand more about matters such as prejudices towards the poor and why some poor people intentionally or unintentionally break

social norms, and conflicts (underlying, potential, or emerging) among the poor and other social groups. This can lead to a better understanding of the role more privileged people play—or not—in the lives of the poor.

Poverty in the Philippines is defined as a pervasive social problem (Osias, 2011, p. 2) which makes the topic in question socially relevant. The town of Hagonoy in the province of Bulacan provided me with information and a location distanced from popular tourist areas. Please take note that this article does not focus on the many possible theoretical definitions of poverty as such.

The Philippines and Hagonoy

Some basic knowledge of the country will put forward some of the broader contexts that affect the people. The Philippines was under Spanish rule for 333 years and then under US guardianship for 48 years. Consequently, there are Western cultural influences that have integrated into the Filipinos' lives. For example, Roman Catholicism is the predominant religion and English is one of the official languages.

Political agitations have marked the history of the Philippines. Although high in resources and the potential to develop into a large industrial economy, the country is mainly an agricultural society where poverty contrasts with extreme wealth (Philippines, 2014). According to an article by BBC (Philippines Profile, 2014) the country is moving away from agriculture towards a promising industrialized economy. The industrial expansion that occurred during the end of the 20th century however had a negative impact on the environment (Philippines, 2014).

The Philippines has the highest birth rate in Asia; despite this, the government has been careful in taking measures to decrease the birth rate in order to avoid clashes with the Catholic Church (Philippines Profile, 2014). However in December 2012, a reproductive health law was passed making sex education and contraceptives more accessible to the poor (Sabapathy, 2014; "The Philippines passes reproductive health law," 2013).

The issues mentioned above are clearly reflected in the fishing town of Hagonoy (Maps included, see Provincial Government of Bulacan, 2007; Zamboanga.com, 2013 in Appendix A). Like the rest of the Philippines, Hagonoy gets its share of calamities such as floods which have a devastating impact on large parts of the inhabitants (Dizon, 2011). I noticed that, there are numerous squatters' areas and shanties in the town where poverty has accumulated. The main modes of transportation are tricycles and mini buses called *jeepneys*.¹ All of my interviewees described the town as a rural area.

Pre-understanding

Born in El Salvador and raised in Sweden since the age of 6, I can still recall distant memories such as beggars, street children, and shanties in my country of birth. Poverty as such, can be easily observed when it is widespread; many of my memories were reaffirmed when I returned to El Salvador in 2004 and 2005.

In 2010, when I traveled to the Philippines for the first time, I recognized several poverty related issues that I had previously seen. The similarities made an impact on me, yet I still felt that there were many questions for which I would like to seek answers. I believe these experiences have compelled me to understand more about poverty and its consequences.

¹ A short glossary list, preceding the references of this article, is available.

Previous Research and Literature

Local literature on poverty written for college students, teachers, and researchers, underlined a critical perspective of poverty and other social problems. The literature also gave insight to the Philippine culture and society (Panopio & Raymundo, 2004; Zulueta & Liwag, 2006).

Previous qualitative studies sought to understand the characteristics of poverty in the Philippines, the perspectives of poor people about poverty and the people who managed to escape it (Tuason, 2008; 2010). Tuason revealed that even though some of her interviewees had become financially stable, they still needed to continue to manage their emotions related to once having been poor. Tuason also discussed topics such as socioeconomic marginalization, violence, sub-human living conditions, and deficiencies in the socio-political structures as factors that maintain or worsen poverty. These social problems can further lead to mental and physical health concerns that worsen the situation of already poverty-stricken people. The empirical aspects and literary reviews in Tuason's research form an extensive study on poverty in the Philippines with an emphasis on how poor people cope with poverty.

Another qualitative missiological study by Stravers (1988) underlined how cultural worldviews can circumscribe poor people and affect their behaviors as the feeling of helplessness increases. Stravers pointed to reciprocity and faith in God as sources of strength in coping with poverty. Stravers based his study on his experiences of 10 years in Negros, Philippines, as a missionary. Although Tuason (2008, 2010) argued that poor people perceive God as a source of strength, Stravers (1988, pp. 341-342, 347) continued this argument by promoting a relationship between God and the people. Stravers did not offer a self-critical view or limitations of his study. The way he described the poor as satisfied with hand-to-mouth existence and the middle class Church members as people who make the most of opportunities (p. 332), differ from my own empirical studies for this article. The poor people I encountered were highly dissatisfied with their situation and the structural components of poverty and calamities have also affected the people who could identify themselves as members of the middle class.

There are studies on poverty outside the Philippines which I perceive to be relevant because of the perspectives they add. Cattell (2001) for instance, explored the links between poverty and social exclusion through in-depth interviews in two deprived areas in England. She identified three factors that affect social networks and social capital: (a) neighborhood qualities and perceptions, (b) poverty and social exclusion, and (c) social consciousness. Cattell pointed to the benefits of social networks and suggested that varied social networks lead to more varied accessible resources which in turn can benefit health.

Adding to the research on deprived areas, Kusenbach (2009) conducted ethnographic interviews with residents of mobile home communities in Florida. In her study, she focused on strategies that mobile home residents apply to salvage decency. She revealed that the stigmas and stereotypes that follow "trailer" living have led community members to develop strategies aimed to divert negative views of their social identity. Interestingly, Kusenbach argued that there are similarities on how mobile home residents and other marginalized groups salvage decency.

Poverty as a social construction and the stigmas it entails are recurring topics in further literature. Coser (1965) wrote in his essay, that the unequal power structures the poor become part of degrade them for being dependent on government relief. Prolonged dependency can cause passivity and retain people in poverty. The stigma of poverty can be understood according to how poverty is explained; Landmane and Renge (2010, p. 47) argued in their quantitative study, that structural explanations of poverty predict positive attitudes towards the poor while individualistic explanations rather lead to negative attitudes towards them. The

researchers also found that identification with the poor does not explain attitudes towards the poor which is why poor people themselves can have negative attitudes towards other poor as a way to disassociate themselves from a stigmatized group and maintain a positive social identity.

Poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon (Spicker, 2007). In his book, Spicker examined poverty from the materialistic, economic, moral, and social point of view. He explored possible definitions of poverty as well as the effects and causes of poverty from a micro and macro level.

While these studies have brought valuable information on poverty, they do not, for instance, focus on how calamities such as floods affect poor people in the Philippines where eight or nine tropical storms on average make landfall every year (Brown, 2013). The consequences of these storms are devastating and become part of the Filipinos' reality.

Other issues that I find relevant for further exploration are the consequences for children, young adults, and wives whose fathers and husbands deviate from the role they are expected to play as family men. If family men carry a traditional role of providing for their family financially, then their absence or their deviation from the role that they are expected to fulfill will have consequences for the rest of their family members. The circumstances in which poor people find themselves motivate them to find alternative income opportunities. This seems to become an important part in coping with poverty and therefore also significant in the studies of poverty.

Previous studies state that more research on poverty in developing countries is needed (Tuason, 2008, p. 158; 2010, p. 326). Landman and Rençe (2010, p. 37) also argued that there are few studies done on the attitudes towards the poor. According to Rose (2013, p. 71) an absence of poor people from public and political discourse (other than abstractions or generalizations) inhibits a better understanding of poor people's situation.

My intention is to contribute with more knowledge about poor people's perspectives and survival strategies from a microsociological point of view and to encourage more qualitative research on this social phenomenon. This study can be seen as a response to the arguments that more research is needed.

Qualitative Methods and Theoretical Framework

In my approach to the reality of the poor I made use of *naturalistic* and *ethnomethodological* interpretative idioms (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997). The emphasis of the naturalistic idiom lay on the researcher immersing him- or herself into the field and participating in the everyday life of the people being researched. The researcher seeks to tell the field participants' stories and interactions through rich descriptions, as they develop in their own environment. It is assumed that the field participants' reality exists naturally and by entering into their social reality the researcher can better understand their lives. "Being there" enables the researcher to consider all of his senses as they can be stimulated by the objects in the field (pp. 6-7, 22-37).

In the ethnomethodological idiom on the other hand, the researcher focuses on the way field participants construct their reality through language and conversations. In this way, the researcher not only sees but also hears how social reality is made. Social structure is not viewed as constraining the social actor; instead, it is regarded as a product of social actions. Ethnomethodological analyses are not bound by geographical locations since the field of analysis can be wherever reality is constructed and reproduced by interaction—speaking is regarded as a social action. In common with naturalism, ethnomethodology seeks to describe everyday knowledge by coming close to the social action, the idioms contrast in the way the subjects' stories are dealt with. Naturalists seek to tell the subjects' stories by immersing

themselves into their social world whereas ethnomethodologists do not merely use the subjects' stories to explain social phenomena but analyze language and conversations to understand their social world (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997, pp. 7-8, 38-52).

Large natural scientific universal laws and generalizations are regarded as unattainable and problematic in the qualitative tradition. Yet, there are certain types of generalizations more suitable for qualitative research that can be used. I took into account analytical (theoretical) and natural generalizations in order to bring into the analysis relevant and accumulated knowledge among the field participants (Lindgren, 2008, p. 130-131). Analytical (theoretical) generalization refers to a type of generalization made within a theoretical framework to summarize and clarify deep structures and social processes. Natural generalization is a knowledge based on experience about the social world. It is often related to expectations about how "things ought to be." The poor in my study for instance, have experiences through which they see and explain aspects of their social world. These qualitative approaches in combination with participatory and non-participatory observations and semi-structured interviews helped me to gain knowledge and understand the complexities of the social phenomena.

Because I had limited knowledge of poverty in Hagonoy, I also took inspiration from grounded theory which encourages the researcher to know little about the field (Glaser & Strauss, 1999). In the article, "Silencing Language of Anthropologists and Interpreters," Borchgrevink (2003, p. 108) states that "it is sometimes claimed that it is easier to do fieldwork in foreign places, as the very foreignness facilitates the questioning of what local people take for granted." I was thus able to reverse my limited knowledge into something beneficial. Yet, I am only producing knowledge and not developing a new theory.

My main theoretical framework is symbolic interactionism as outlined by Charon (2010). In the perspective of symbolic interactionism, human beings define their environment and do not only respond to it. Humans' definition of their immediate situation corresponds to their perspectives which are developed and modified in their social interactions. They interact both with others and with themselves (pp. 40-41). I complemented my analysis with Pierre Bourdieu's (1986, pp. 248-252; Broady 1990, p. 179) notion of *social capital* which he describes in "Forms of capital"; Merton's (2007, pp. 464-465) concept of *innovation* from his theory of social structure and anomie; Becker's (1997) understanding of deviant career patterns from his sociology of deviance; and from Goffman's (2007, p. 14) theory of social stigma, his definition of social stigmas which he divides into three categories: (a) stigmas associated to physical characters, (b) stigmas associated to personal qualities, and (c) stigmas associated to group affiliations—for instance poor people. These concepts clarify and emphasize some of the ideas of symbolic interactionism which maintain that societies are held together by communication and sharing. We understand who we are in relation to objects and people in our social reality. As human beings we come to expect how we should act towards others and how they should act towards us because of knowledge we gained from previous interactions. Yet we are also able to reject social norms and other's definition of ourselves. To make sense of our reality we use perspectives that we acquire from our reference groups or significant others, (Charon, 2010, pp. 2-3, 61, 80-83, 107). Not all perspectives are compatible however, which can create rejection and opposing behaviors.

A Qualitative Approach and Research Data

Gathering data through interviews and field observations enabled me to interact with poor people in their social field. The benefits of this approach is that the interviewee's stories and living conditions make the research data, which is always in some way related to the consequences of poverty and how people relate to it. My immersion in the field was beneficial in the generation of data since I was able to relate to how and what poor people expressed

during the interviews.

Qualitative methods include the possibility of unexpected events and interactions in the day-to-day life of the field. An approach of this kind has the potential to either contradict or confirm aspects of my pre-understanding about poverty. Semi-structured interviews gave some structure to my interviews without removing the possibility to form them as normal conversations. Participatory and non-participatory observations allowed me to engage in the field in more than one way and collect data anytime of the day. Field observations did not restrict me to observing poor people only but I also took into account the differences between poor and more affluent people. In this study I have used a microsociological approach which gave support to the adequacy of my chosen main theoretical framework and interpretative idioms. My data collection was enhanced by inspiration from grounded theory that motivated me to not eschew from what was unknown to me in the field.

Observations and fieldwork. My 2-month stay in the field (19 September - 18 November, 2012) involved me in various casual conversations and events where I observed poverty and cultural facets from a close and distanced point of view. As a result, I perceived it as natural to use both participatory and non-participatory observations.

Together with my guide and my interpreter I gathered information through long walks in areas where poverty has accumulated, mainly squatters' areas. This way of gathering material (field interviews and observations) is referred to as "going along" (Kusenbach, 2003). The physical conditions of the areas and the hot climate proved to be strenuous on some occasions. Feelings such as happiness, frustration, boredom, empathy, and sadness added to my comprehension of poverty.

In line with ethnographic arguments, the interviews became a part of my observations because I, as an interviewer, did not only hear but could also see and reflect about the interviewee and the surroundings (Persson, 2008, p. 43). Environment is significant in the sense that the interviewee has a personal history and social status within it; if knowledge is situated in such a way then it cannot be ignored (Tweed, 2002). In my fieldnotes I included descriptions of places as well as reconstructions of social events and interactions. Although I have only included one excerpt from my fieldnotes in this article, other fieldnotes are also part of this study as they contain data which I codified and analyzed according to the theoretical framework of this article. Some of my fieldnotes are embedded in the text where I, for example, described how poor people find income opportunities in an informal economy. The fieldnotes also reveal aspects of my and my interpreter's presence in the field; it is most clear in the excerpt I have included. Parallel to my observations, I took photos which became an intrinsic part of my fieldnotes as well as an additional source of information.

Interviews. Among the 16 interviewees in this study (see Appendix B for a list of interviewees),² 13 consider themselves poor; most of these people live in Mababang Lupa, a squatter's area in Hagonoy. An interviewee from this group also acted as my guide. Apart from the poor I interviewed, one considers himself neither rich nor poor; he has however, encountered poverty during his childhood and through experiences at work and other social interactions. Lastly, I included a priest and a police officer who, through their professions, have implications on the lives of the poor. These people from various social strata provided me with an inside and an outside perspective of poverty. As follows, I was able to observe potential consequences of the current social dynamics and how poverty is tackled between the social strata.

Seven of the interviews were conducted in English and the rest in Tagalog with the aid of an interpreter. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, translated (Tagalog interviews)

² I interviewed 23 individuals from various social strata; I explicitly refer to 16 of them in this article. It is nevertheless important to emphasise that all 23 interviewees affected the outcome of this article.

and codified in such a way that recurrent relevant themes and salient issues were emphasized. The lengths of the interviews were around 40- 60 minutes and on one occasion 2 hours. There were three occasions where I interviewed two individuals simultaneously.

I built my interview questions on six core questions: (a) Would you like to tell me more about yourself and your life here in Hagonoy? (b) Are your experiences common in this area? (c) Based on your experience, why does poverty exist? (d) How have the floods affected you and your family? (e) How do you confront hardships in your life? (f) Is there anything else you think I should have asked you in this interview? I also asked questions related to the place of interview, for instance, how deep was the flood water in their area during the worst times? How do their homes protect them against the elements? These questions led me and the interviewees to deeper conversations about specific issues of their lives and situations.

Interview participants. I recruited my interviewees through the snowball method and day-to-day interactions with various field participants. In most cases, the recruitment of interviewees was easier by their willing attitude to speak about their life experiences. There were two cases where I was unable to establish an interview; in the first case the person felt too shy and in the second, the person was a prisoner who was accused of car theft and whose answers were too short and vague. I got the impression that he felt he could not speak freely since there were police officers working nearby.

I mainly interviewed poor people; however, I included non-poor people to investigate contrasting perspectives. The standard of living, occupations, and appearances guided me in identifying those who are considered to suffer from extreme poverty from those who have a stronger economy. The poor people whom I interviewed described themselves as poor as they spoke about their hardships related to poverty. There was a consensus between those who were poor and those who were more affluent about who is regarded to live under severe poverty. The type of poor people whom I interviewed have several things in common: (a) they live in shanties, (b) they have low education, (c) they take part in an informal economy, and (d) their income is too low to satisfy essential needs such as proper food, medicine, and in some cases enough clothing. In the group of poor people there is one person who is an exception because she has a college degree and works as a teacher but lives in a humble house in a shanty area and describes herself as poor. I understood that those who took part in an informal economy were those who had no employment and would seek income opportunities in various ways in other people's homes, on the streets, and at the local trash dumps. Some of the interviewees work as tricycle drivers who were either self-taught or taught by someone on how to drive tricycles. None of the interviewees owned a tricycle but would either borrow or rent one. According to the police officer I interviewed, tricycle drivers often do not have the proper documents to perform their job.

Ethical Guidelines

I followed the ethical guidelines of the "Framework for research ethics" defined by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC, 2012).³ All interviewees were informed

³ Ethical Guidelines:

1. Research should be designed, reviewed and undertaken to ensure integrity, quality, and transparency.
2. Research staff and participants must normally be informed fully about the purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the research, what their participation in the research entails and what risks, if any, are involved.
3. The confidentiality of information supplied by research participants and the anonymity of respondents must be respected.
4. Research participants must take part voluntarily, free from any coercion.
5. Harm to research participants and researchers must be avoided in all instances.
6. The independence of research must be clear, and any conflicts of interest or partiality must be explicit (ESRC,

verbally (and when possible also in written form) about the purpose of my research. With their consent, I recorded all interviews and told them that they could ask questions, interrupt, or refuse to answer specific questions at any time. Several of the interviewees expressed support for my intentions to publish as well as to send the article to different NGOs.

Throughout this article I used pseudonyms to ensure the interviewees' anonymity. Close range observations that I conducted in the field, such as entering and photographing someone's home, was done with the consent of the occupants. Together with my interpreter, I also visited the local government office that consented to my purpose in the field. Other than this, I was not required to seek any other permission to do research in Hagonoy.

Interpreter and Language Issues

Despite the fact that English is one of the official languages in the Philippines, there are people who still have limited knowledge of the English language and who speak only the local dialect (e.g., Tagalog). Based on my observations, English proficiency is affected by educational background and white collar job experiences, something the poor in Hagonoy often find themselves deprived from.

There seems to be a quietness regarding the use of interpreters in cross-cultural research. Borchgrevink (2003, p. 102) writes, "Anthropologists seldom explicitly admit their degree of dependence on interpreters, these shadowy figures frequently crop up in fieldwork anecdotes, sometimes under the name of *field assistants*."

Learning a local language well enough to be able to follow a normal conversation takes a long time; most people will need more than a year for this. I was able to benefit from the fact that Tagalog incorporates many Spanish and English words in its vocabulary, which are two languages I know well. Having no knowledge of the language in a short-time fieldwork makes necessary the use of interpreters in increasing the efficiency of collecting information (Borchgrevink, 2003, pp. 97, 100, 104). I tried to lessen any complications related to language by following Borchgrevink (2003, pp. 112-113): instructing my interpreter, considering second opinions, and learning some of the local language.

Although one could point out the difficulties when using an interpreter, I found that the benefits outweighed the disadvantages. The benefits of having my partner as my interpreter are that I could work with someone who is Filipino, aware of my purpose of study, familiar with sociology, skilled in English and Tagalog⁴, and knowledgeable of the local culture. The fact that my partner is also a pharmacist meant that I could consult her in regards to common medical issues encountered in the field.

The selection of an interpreter can affect the research in various ways. From a gender perspective, female interviewees might feel more comfortable having another female present. This is especially important if the interviewee feels closer to the interpreter (Borchgrevink, 2003, p. 109; Jentsch, 1998, p. 284). Since the interpreter and the researcher may be perceived as a team, it is possible that the interpreter can serve as a gate-opener. If the interpreter is familiar with the field of study then the interpreter can also become a cultural consultant and a key informant (Borchgrevink, 2003; Jentsch, 1998, p. 280).

I would like to remind the reader that translations necessarily need to take into account the culture of language and culture overall because they are linked to each other. Translations are not mechanical with one word corresponding to another in a second language. There are no accurate translations, these depend on the objective. In factual content where conveying

2012).

⁴ Her competence in language includes a certificate from IELTS (International English Language Testing System), native speaker in Tagalog, and degrees from previous studies in both languages. Observe that Tagalog is a dialect and that the two official languages in the Philippines are Filipino and English.

expressive aspects are not prioritized, a more literal translation may be preferred (Borchgrevink, 2003, p. 106). In conclusion, as Jentsch (1998) stresses, “[t]he contributions of these so called social assistants [the interpreters] are therefore not enough appreciated” (p. 276).

Emotions

Encountering poverty sets off emotions that can be hard to manage. It was difficult wanting to help someone and not being able to. I will exemplify with the following fieldnote of an interview in which the interviewee, brought along his toddler brother who at the time was sick.

I felt touched by Julius' humbleness as he held his 1-year-old brother in his arms and fed him with small pieces of bread from the food we had served them. He was looking after his little brother while his parents were [busy] working. I was surprised when he mentioned that he found the interview enjoyable. I tried to keep the interview short and casual. I also let Julius raise any topics that he wanted to talk about. I noticed that the toddler was uneasy. I was therefore keen to know if they both were as comfortable as possible. Yet, I felt sad when Julius told me his brother was sick with diarrhea and was vomiting. After 15 minutes in the interview the toddler vomited in front of us. I wondered if it was because of the food we had served them. At this point I needed to stop the interview while keeping my calm. I needed to discuss with my interpreter /.../ regarding any possible help we could provide. I wondered if we could help Julius' brother with medicine, but she said that not having any knowledge of the case, buying salts to rehydrate the toddler without consulting a doctor could be dangerous if he is not dehydrated [we offered him water and wipes instead]. I felt frustrated, I wanted to do something but I did not understand the situation from a professional medical point of view and in my frustration I felt helpless in my desire to help the little child. (111012)

Analysis and Rigor

In this section I introduce the research data which I chiefly analyzed using symbolic interactionism to generate a sociological understanding of the phenomenon. The research data underlines the field participants' perspectives related to poverty and their relation to it; together with relevant literature their arguments can be further understood or confirmed. An example is as follows.

I held my first interview with my guide who had strong opinions about why people in Mababang Lupa suffered from poverty and floods:

A.R: *You were saying that the government neglects people here [Mababang Lupa]. Can you tell me more?*

My guide: *I don't know why they let this happen to us /.../ because we are poor. The people are scared to complain.*

A.R: *Why are you afraid of the government?*

My guide: *Because we are poor and we cannot fight them.*

A.R: *If you could say anything to a high governmental official regarding people's situation here, is there anything you would like to say to them?*

My guide: *I will tell them; why aren't you doing anything for our area, why are you forsaking us especially the poor? The water doesn't stop rising [floods]. People won't be this poor if the government helps [poor people]. (240912)*

People's social realities are dependent on their definitions of situations (Charon, 2010, p. 125). The poor people in my research expressed a sense of being forgotten by the majority of their society as they often argued that the government is corrupt and does not provide enough help for the poor. By understanding how my guide defines his situation in the quote above, it is possible to understand the social marginalization that some poor people experience. From a symbolic interactionist perspective (see Charon, 2010, p. 126), aspects in the process of my guide's definition of his situation could be discerned in the following way: My guide's community became a reference group whose perspective he applied as he stated, "we are poor." He pointed out relevant issues about the situation of poor people, such as poverty itself, the government's neglect, the floods, and the poor people's fear of the government. Drawing on past memories and present observations he stated that the government is not doing anything for his community and concluded that the government does not care enough about poor people; he thus imagined the government's view of his community as a low priority issue. Thus the difficulties of poverty are enhanced by the people's fear to raise their voices and a government that is not fulfilling its responsibility in alleviating poverty.

My guide's definition of his and his community's situation is a definition that underlines social marginalization and unequal power structures. I realized that poverty had become a part of the everyday life of many in Hagonoy and according to media there are cases of corruption in the country (Moss, 2014; "Philippine senator arrested over huge corruption scam," 2014; "The government is accused of bias in fighting corruption," 2014) which could help explain why there is little trust in the government among my interviewees. Symbolic interactionism however, is one scientific perspective among others (Charon, 2010, p. 26); the interview quote above could therefore reveal other aspects related to poverty through different frames of reference.

Poor people are forced to face many difficulties in order to survive scarcity, this was apparent in the data. I initiated the coding process with open coding, that is, I categorized with an open mind phenomena in sentences and larger passages of texts to identify units of meaning and discover those that were unexpected. I categorized larger passages of text rather than just sentences when possible to avoid decontextualizing the data. The data source includes, interview transcripts, field notes, and photos. The photos I categorized according to what they portrayed. Throughout the process of coding I kept memos in which I randomly wrote down half-formed ideas and concepts that could help me make sense of the data and develop my research. I sorted the data by copying and pasting the data from one word document to an empty one specific for that category. Moving around the data this way helped me make sense of the relationships between the categories. The categories I identified formed subcategories to categories such as (a) family issues, (b) social relations, (c) sources of income, (d) housing and calamities; throughout these issues social marginalization, stigmas, and coping with poverty are intrinsic topics of the discussions. The core category of *coping with poverty* presented a central problem for the field participants (Biddix, n.d.; Gallicano, 2013). The categories that I have mentioned are recurrent and salient in the interviews and in my observations; they are part of the following headlines.

To conduct trustworthy research I implemented the qualitative concept of *internal reliability* (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982, p. 32) which refers to several observers supporting each other on what they saw. I discussed my observations foremost with my interpreter and guide but also with other field participants; this was beneficial in clarifying field participant's behaviors within specific social contexts. Discussing my observations and understandings of

poor people with the interviewees also served as *respondent validation* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) in which they, as the observed, could comment on my findings and lead to more in-depth information about their perspectives on poverty and their situation. Moreover, *methodological triangulation* (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2011) of semi-structured interviews and participatory and non-participatory observations increased my understanding of poverty and added substance to my research, rather than relying on one method alone.

Results

The Absence of a Father

The experience of poverty is marked by matters such as age, gender, disabilities, and background. Despite individual differences, there are several issues of this social phenomenon with which all of the people in my research are familiar in some way. In regards to family issues, the absence of a father was, for some of my interviewees, a salient topic which I will now discuss. I will exemplify with two of my interviewees, Juan and Pedro, who explained what experiences they had from their point of view. In the quote below Juan clarified the feeling of his father's absence:

I was never close to my father because he never showed up to me and because of what he did to my family. He left my mother when she was pregnant with me. He did not give money or milk for me and now he will call me son? I will accept him as a father but if he will look for love from a son, he will not get it from me because he left us. Now, I don't think about him that much because I can stand on my own. It's just hard because I didn't get to study. I can't get a comfortable job because I have no education. I need to work hard. That's the hardest thing that happened to me, the time that I needed a father, he wasn't there. (250912)

Poverty is usually followed by more than one problem (Spicker, 2007, p. 36) and never perceived as a single problem among my interviewees. Juan clearly attributed some of his hardships to his father whose absence led to a weaker economy as well as a lack of fatherly support and love.

From an economic point of view, the poor women in my research usually stay at home and take care of the children while the husbands work. Consequently, the women's work abilities and possibilities for education are reduced by pregnancy and rearing of children. Previous articles on the subject of women's experience of poverty raise the same issues (Gupta, 2012; Van der Hor, 2014) and add that women become financially dependent on their husbands and more vulnerable to poverty (Gupta, 2012). In this kind of gendered distribution of labor, men's responsibility to bring home money is emphasized by a Philippine tradition in which men are expected to give all their income to their wives who will manage the economy and the needs of the household (Nava, n.d.). It is thus clearer why Juan feels frustrated, as he explained that his mother did not receive any help from his father during her pregnancy. Juan and Pedro offer some reasons to why fathers abandon wives and children:

Juan: *There are a people who because of lack of money, think only of themselves, just like our fathers. They didn't even think that family life is like this [difficult], while I, at this age, have already realized them [the difficulties], when I see my brother [who has a family] and other people. They [the fathers] cannot take up the responsibilities of their actions. They cannot be called men. If you started something, finish it and stand by it!*

Pedro: *It happens frequently, there are many broken families.* (250912)

People are able to acquire various perspectives through different reference groups. It is expected within the society that people accede to certain norms attached to social institutions (Charon, 2010, p. 36) such as family. Juan and Pedro are thus able to have an idea of what is wrong with their fathers' behaviors. Fathers who fail to meet the obligations attributed to them as head of the family incite negative emotions among wives and children. That is why Juan questions whether people like his father are "real men" for not taking responsibility.

Charon (2010, pp. 105-106) formulated *taking the role of others* as imagining the world from the perspective of other people, which in turn affects the actions of the one who imagines. Juan and Pedro's perception of their fathers increase the possibilities of a *role taking* marked by negative emotions that can provoke further conflicts. This in turn impedes a cooperation to solve existing problems between father and son. Charon explained that *taking the role of the other* is necessary to be able to love, cooperate, compromise, learn, make friends, be a good parent, make peace, and avoid harmful people. Juan however, argued that his father did not understand the difficulties or responsibilities of family life prior to having children; it is the notion of *failed role taking*. Juan also mentioned that people sometimes tend to think only of themselves when there is a lack of money. It is not possible to rule out that Juan's father at some point had gained more understanding of the role of a father and concluded that he did not want it or could not fulfil his obligations and therefore distanced himself from his wife and son. This could give a clue to why Juan claimed that, people like his father cannot be called men and that, *if you started something, [you should] finish it and stand by it*. Spicker (2007, p. 107) claimed that there are links between marital break ups and unemployment; relationships between men and women are more unstable with poverty. Juan determines that he suffered because of what other people did to him when they realized that he had no father:

Juan: *Our life is very sad, very lonely. Problems will come, like from school activities that required fathers to a meeting and I didn't have a father who could attend. I would just say to the teacher that my father has gone somewhere. Of course you will try to laugh it off. There were times I experienced lack of money. My mother can't buy the things she needs. Since we don't have a father, my mother would sacrifice whatever is hers for us, that is poverty /.../. My mother worked a lot for us, and that hurt me so. There were times I got into fights and they [other people] said, "go ahead and beat him up, he has no father anyway." I felt helpless because I had no father to protect me. It hurts when you need the love and care of a father, but there is no father there for you. That is poverty [not having a father]; money is something you can earn as long as you work hard.*

Pedro: *I have the same experiences.* (250912)

A way for Juan to deal with challenging situations arising from not having a father's support is to try to laugh it off. Kusenbach (2009, p. 419) argued that humor is a common strategy to ease the pressure of difficult situations although it might not have the full effect as desired. The symbolic value of a father as a protector was emphasized when Juan put forward the feeling of being helpless and that he got beaten up. Juan describes poverty as, his mother sacrificing herself for him and his siblings, and the absence of his father. Money, he says, can be earned through perseverance and hard work. In this sense money cannot replace the love and care of a parent.

In the Philippines karaoke singing is very popular and for many of the interviewees it is an important social activity in which they can express themselves and find relief from

hardships of the everyday life. In a hip hop song that Juan composed (see Table A), he reaffirms his and possibly some of Pedro's experiences. The entire song is like a symbol for the misery of poverty and points to how his social relations were affected. He may have committed errors as he was lost and "developed horns" but what he wishes for is a life in the "promised paradise." His reality is however in Mababang Lupa where loneliness follows scarcity. It is the "one life" he was born into from which it is hard to escape.

A fatherless life forced Pedro and Juan to act as providers for their families they argued in the next quote. The two friends clarified that they resented their fathers' absence and that they will be better fathers in the future. They then established their differences from their fathers. It is a strategy that Kusenbach (2009, p. 413) called *fencing*, a way of diverting from themselves stigmas associated with people they do not think highly of:

Hip Hop Song

*I lived in a world where I didn't
meet a father, and everything is
relied on to my mother.
I want to hug and thank her, but I
met her cane instead.
I got lost and developed long horns.
Every time we eat she says my eyes
are filled with sorrow. The path I
chose is not for normal kids, it
seems hellish, or probably worse.
The peaceful, promised paradise is
impossible to reach if you only have
a peso.
Forget everything and anything you
desire, if you don't have money you
don't have a loyal friend.
I got a bitter end, is it like yours?
My story and yours could be similar.
Maybe we share the same
experiences.
Tears keep falling no matter how
many times you wipe.
One life... One life...
You have one life... One life
Juan (2012)*

Juan: *We became like this because they [the fathers] became scared of the relationship, if they couldn't handle it why did they do it? We became the products of their denial. We realized that it is hard to have no father because we acted as the providers of the family. We have developed determination. So for me, it will not be hard if I become a father.*

Pedro: *For me, if I will have a child, I will not let the same things happen.*
(250912)

According to Juan, their poverty has been perpetuated through their fathers' decisions or shortcomings. Symbolic interactionism (Charon, 2010, pp. 6, 19, 65, 152) supports the claim that the past affects individuals to a degree, since we are born into a society with certain cultures, perspectives, and social institutions which affect our social conditions. Still, the individual defines the past and can reinterpret it throughout the course of his or her life. In this sense, humans are not completely controlled by their past. Juan and Pedro are thus able to take

distance from parts of their past, in the sense that the past is redefined into a source of determination. The fathers' absence gives them courage to take on responsibilities towards their mothers and siblings.

Juan and Pedro's negative perspectives of their fathers could be reinforced as they interact with one another. Panopio and Raymundo (2004, p. 117) maintained that peer groups become more influential if there is not enough parental guidance, affection, and attention. I will now turn my attention to the importance of family and social networks in order to cope with poverty.

Family and Pakikipagkapwa

Poverty puts families under pressure and it is common that children start working from an early age to help their parents financially. Education is not guaranteed to all children; some children work so that their siblings can go to school (Tuason, 2010, p. 305). Strong ties within a family give the members a sense of social security knowing that they can rely on each other as a means to cope with poverty. To rely on family, friends, and relatives for receiving help and gain social security is known among Filipinos as *pakikipagkapwa* (Tuason, 2010, p. 313). The term has some resemblance to Pierre Bourdieu's conception of social capital (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 248-252; Broady, 1990, p. 179) which refers to the value of social networks and the support they can bring. Spicker (2007, p. 46) agreed that income and wealth are not the only kinds of resources, people also benefit from the resources of family, friends, and communities. Most people are thus greatly affected by their family's social position; resources in this sense are also social.

In the symbolic interactionist sense, society constitutes and maintains itself through interdependence, cooperation⁵, and a shared culture. Most often, the interests and goals of the individuals are complementary, compatible, and occasionally the same (Charon, 2010, pp. 153-154, 158-159). The consequences of weak family ties in combination with poverty can be dreadful. Pedro, who together with his brother did not grow up with both of his parents, reminisced about some of his experiences as Juan who was present, struggled to keep his tears away:

My twin brother and I grew up with our aunt and grandmother. For me it is ok if my parents would visit us, of course we would be indifferent towards them, because other people raised us. My father would visit me but I don't feel close to him because when I was younger and needed him, he wasn't there. When we were younger my twin and I were sickly and often infect each other. My twin died because we didn't have money to buy medicine. (250912)

Juan recognized aspects of weak family ties from his own life in Pedro's story that made him sad. What stands out in the quote above however, is the possibility of death as a result of poverty. Monica, a teacher in a pre-school for poor children in Mababang Lupa, expanded on the problem: food shortage among some families led to one of her students dying of malnourishment, the lack of money prevented the mother to help her child. Monica added that sometimes the students share their food with those who are not able to bring any. This goes

⁵ According to Charon (2010, p.154), enemies who are hostile to each other do not constitute a society because they are not involved in a cooperative effort to deal with a situation. They may understand and take each other into account but a society is characterized by actors working together regardless of their individual goals and interests. The level of cooperation affects the stability of the specific society. Hence, a family which is regarded as a small society (Charon, 2010, p.152), malfunctions with little cooperation. An argument could be however, that oppositions within a society can in some cases also lead to developments and reforms.

back to the idea of relying on each other or *pakikipagkapwa* to cooperatively solve a problem. During my visits to the school, I noticed a trash can in which empty bags of chips and cups of instant noodles suggested that some of the children's food had little nutrition.

Sometimes the efforts and good intentions of the parents are not enough to help their children and they are forced to have unpleasant experiences, like the mother whose child died because of malnutrition. In regards to domestic violence as an aspect of weak or malfunctioning family ties, Grace, the mother of Julius had to deal with her husband beating her son and threatening her in various ways. The online article, "Philippines: Law fails to stem domestic violence" (2008), argued that though cases of domestic violence towards women have been registered, few reach court. There are women who because of fear of stigma do not want to see their children's father jailed or they do not have the means to manage without the family's breadwinner. Grace makes an example as she, as a housewife and mother, is financially dependent on her husband:

My husband and I have been living together for a long time. Even though I have lived there [in Mababang Lupa] for a long time, sometimes we have been forced out from the house [by the husband]. He [the husband] said, "Get out of here, you are useless." If we won't leave, he said, he would kill us. If he gets drunk he throws us out, beats us, points knife at me. I have nowhere to go. I don't have parents anymore. I was orphaned, I have no siblings. I have nowhere to go. (121012)

Grace wants to leave her husband but does not know how. As she was orphaned and lacked parental support she finds herself in a vulnerable situation. Apart from being unemployed, the prohibition of divorce by law in the Philippines (McGeown, 2011) makes it harder for her to escape her abusive husband. Annulment which could be an option is also too expensive. This is how a BBC article writes about the matter:

Annulments are currently too expensive for anyone but the rich to contemplate—so that while poor people can be trapped for years in abusive marriages, it is not uncommon for the rich to have more than one marriage annulled (McGeown, 2011).

The prohibition of divorce is strongly supported by the Catholic Church and after hearing Grace's story I was prompted to bring the issue of domestic violence against women with Erwin, a local priest. Concerned with the various problems entailing poverty in his community, Erwin pointed out NGOs as helpful organizations that spread more awareness about abused women in relationships. He claimed however, as I asked him if he would ever support divorce: *as a Church leader I would never support divorce* (181012). Religion has great influence in the Philippines; people like Erwin and those who support Catholic views constitute a social group with a strong social capital that can act for and against the well-being of abused women, like Grace, by denying her to legally escape her abusive relationship. Poor people may use their social networks to cope with poverty, but their options are limited in cases when other larger and more influential groups institutionalize norms and perspectives that have negative impacts on the lives of those who do not agree and are weaker.

I encountered arguments that underlined further aspects of domestic violence. In this sense I refer to domestic violence as abuse—physical and psychological—against all members of a household since these are often composed of more than a woman and a man. Juan expressed in his hip hop composition that he as a child wanted to hug his mother and thank her but was caned instead; Grace mentioned that her son was beaten up by the father; and Roy, a

police officer, whom I asked if he feels there is equality between men and women in the Philippines maintained that, in the efforts to work for equality between men and women, nowadays there are established laws that have enabled women to harass men and added in the interview that sometimes the violence is mutual:

Roy: In my opinion which I experience in my job hmm, the men sometimes will be harassed by women hehehehe, yes, because of certain law that provides that. (271012)

A.R: What kind of poverty do you encounter in relation to your job?

Roy: Many husband and wife /.../ are going to [the police] station because they are fighting /.../ because the husband is not giving money to the wife for their family /.../ and ah, sometimes they nearly kill each other because of that fight, which is the outcome of /.../ having no financial, for the family. (271012)

There are statements that the Philippine law does not entirely protect women and men from domestic violence (see for instance Delfin, 2008; Philippines: Law fails to stem domestic violence, 2008). Delfin (2008) underlined that men may not openly admit about abuses they experience because of fear of being ridiculed, which could help explain why Roy laughed as he mentioned men being harassed by their women.

Despite the adversities of the poor people, most of them seek ways to find solutions to their problems. Grace who does not always have enough money to buy food stated that she relies on others by borrowing money or asks for food to pay later in order to eat. The problem is that she and her children have to wait for her husband to return home every day with money so that they can buy food. Unfortunately, there were times the husband spent the money that he earned during the day on alcohol together with friends:

My problem is just my husband, and that we eat only once a day. He usually gives us money that lasts only until lunch. We hope that he would come home early so that we could eat [dinner]. Sometimes I borrow [money or food] like from the maglalako [someone who sells food by foot] in our place. (121012)

The recurring floods in Hagonoy add more problems when personal items are lost. Grace's two small children whom she brought along with her to the interview were naked, except for the one t-shirt that one of the children was wearing. The children lost their clothes in the floods which forced Grace to a wash-and-wear use of their clothes or borrow clothes from friends thus making use of *pakikipagkapwa*:

A.R: *Why are the children not wearing underwear? [I pointed to the toddler in her arms]* **Grace:** *Because he has few. He doesn't have many clothes. I just wash-wear-wash. All of them have few clothes ever since the flood. I just ask for clothes from others sometimes. (121012)*

During my stay in Hagonoy I often saw young couples with several children, for instance, my guide who is 22 years old and has three children. There are numbers of reasons why families have many children. Two most notable reasons are that the Church opposes contraception and there are still people who have too little knowledge about birth control (Harden, 2008). Another reason could be the way some people define children as economic assets because they could contribute to the livelihood of the family (Zulueta & Liwag, 2006, p. 46) and care for the parents when they grow old. A critical argument is, that because of limitations related to poverty, having many children will add to an already crowded lower

social class (Zulueta & Liwag, 2006). The high population growth has been defined as negative for the national economy, millions of children are malnourished and there are environmental issues to be considered (Easton, 1999; Goffman, 2013).

Pakikipagkapwa includes reciprocity; people will give to those who ask for help even if they themselves have limited resources. The idea is that those who helped will be able to rely on those whom they have helped in the future. This is connected to *utang na loob* or debt of gratitude and means that those who have been helped remain “indebted” because they are expected to return the favor that they once received (Tuason, 2010, p. 311). The adversities of *pakikipagkapwa* could therefore be the reciprocity it includes, which according to Stravers can discourage savings or reinvesting profits to gain financial security. Acquired wealth is expected to be shared and not doing so means to deprive others of their share (Stravers, 1988, p. 337). People rely on *pakikipagkapwa* because it helps them but the reciprocity or *utang na loob* it entails can bring other difficulties for the people who have little and become indebted. Despite the notion of *pakikipagkapwa*, there is still no guarantee receiving enough help. It is hence substantial for the poor to find various income opportunities.

Income Opportunities

Poverty affects poor people’s patterns of life and creates an inability to fully participate in society (Spicker, 2007, p. 114), as opposed to other people who have greater opportunities to study and find stable employment. Yet having an education and being part of a formal economy does not guarantee an exit from financial hardships. Monica, the school teacher, who has a college degree and a regular employment stated that there had been times she had to borrow money to buy medicine when she was sick. Repairing her damaged house after the recurring floods also increased her expenses. She admits that her salary is not enough to support her family. The surrounding poverty affects her and brings difficulties into her life. But she can at least have a level of protection in her work that other people without formal employment do not have.

Some aspects of some poor people’s behavior are more of an adaptive response to their situation (Spicker, 2007), for example, begging which is highly stigmatized. Coser (1965, p. 147) argued that those who cannot give but only receive are assigned to the lowest stratum of society. Begging is nevertheless a way of relying on the good will of people who are better off financially. Appearance can determine whether a beggar will receive money or not. I was told during a casual conversation that some beggars may act weak or sick to win the sympathy of people when they beg. Totoy gave his perspective on the issue:

I know there is a syndicate here that attracts a lot of beggars with drugs and they [the beggars] will ask every store for money. You can easily recognize them because they are very strong and why would you help those guys that are very strong /.../ I have a regular beggar in my store and you can see that the old man is really sick and that he has wounds. Every time he comes to my place and asks for help, I give him 5 or 10 pesos. (051112)

I found out that laziness is a recurring explanation for why poor people are poor. It is a way of blaming the poor for their own poverty. There are those who see poverty as useful because it is presumed to create “incentive to work” (Spicker, 2007, p. 99). This perspective points to poverty as a cause to lack of effort. Spicker (2007, p. 49) however, put forward that people tend to be poorer in more unequal countries (where the gap between the rich and poor is eminent), and countries which are poorer tend to have more inequality. The broader social context can thus not be ignored to understand the existence of wide spread poverty, nor be

blamed solely on the poor. There is congruence between my observations and Panopio and Raymundo (2004, p. 347) who underlined that poor people often engage themselves in occupational multiplicity to get by day to day. It is common among poor people to have up to three jobs. Family members take on any possible jobs such as vendors; number runners in *Jueteng*⁶; construction workers; and combing water courses for crabs, fish, and snails in the local water ponds. A poor person who is forced to work first to be able to eat is referred in Tagalog as *isang kahig, isang tuka* and means “one scratch, one peck” or hand-to-mouth existence. In order to have an income poor people often have to endure difficult working conditions as Ronaldo a tricycle driver comments:

A.R: *You work as a driver full-time? How long have you been working as a driver?*

Ronaldo: *When I was 11 years old I started to drive tricycle. I work from 5 a.m. to 9 p.m.*

A.R: *How do you feel about driving?*

Ronaldo: *It's difficult, especially when the road is bumpy it hurts on the body.*

A.R: *What can the people themselves do to get rid of poverty?*

Ronaldo: *They have to work hard. They must do all the jobs they know. I know a lot of jobs. But driving a tricycle is something I had to learn because I only finished grade 6. I learned driving this [tricycle] myself. (250912)*

Figure 1. Tricycle driver working despite the flooded roads

Tricycle drivers, as well as other workers, have to endure the scorching sun, exhaust fumes from other vehicles, rains, and floods (see Figure 1). In Hagonoy, tricycles are very common and several of my interviewees work as tricycle drivers. Those who do not have their own tricycle borrow from friends or rent elsewhere. *Pakikipagkapwa* is thus an important aspect in the process of performing the job. The salary however is not enough. Erwin, the priest, offers an explanation for why drivers have low incomes:

Here in Hagonoy there are a lot of tricycle drivers, because it is an easy way to earn money, but you also have to see the consequence. If there are many tricycle drivers, your income will be less and it will not suffice your family and the costs for the motor cycle. Do you see my point? If there are many tricycles the income will not suffice to feed your family and to answer the terms of installment [housing], to pay the rent every month. (181012)

Several of my interviewees argued that they had learned tricycle driving through friends and

⁶ Jueteng refers to an illegal Philippine lottery game.

by observing. Experienced tricycle drivers therefore constitute a reference group to a possible income opportunity. Panopio and Raymundo (2004, p. 92) referred to *gaya-gaya* which is a form of imitative behavior. For instance, if someone successfully runs a small store, there is a possibility that surrounding people might try to replicate that success by opening a store of their own.

The poor people in my observations who have no formal employments took initiatives and sought additional income opportunities. By creating and doing alternative jobs, the poor occupy themselves with an informal economy. I encountered aspects of an informal economy already on the day I stepped out of the airport in Manila. A group of young men, around the age of 20, offered to carry our luggage in exchange for some money. The cleverness in this kind of informal economy lies in the various ways poor people are able to see and create income opportunities in their surroundings.

On another occasion (in Hagonoy) a group of young men were assisting vehicles to drive in opposite directions on a narrow road which was under construction. With the help of the young men's hand signals, each driver knew when it was free to move ahead. As each vehicle passed on, one of the young men waited for the drivers on the other end of the road to receive a few coins for their service. Moreover, religious events such as All Saints' Day (November 1) offers further income opportunities. People who visit their dead relatives in the cemetery during this day, light candles on the tombs. The wax from the melted candles can be sold for recycling; it is therefore, common to see children scraping the melted wax from the tombs with spoons.

Melted wax is not the only thing that can be recycled. Some people buy and sell scraps such as plastics and metal, while others scavenge for scraps in the local trash dump. Many of these informal jobs entail risks apart from the hardships. Scavengers endure flies, dirtiness, and skin lesions which increase the risks of sicknesses as well as the stigma that follows this kind of occupation (see Figure 2). The cooperation between people and those who work in the informal economy suggest that it is a known practice for receiving certain services and earning money. In fact, some poor people actively seek small tasks to perform for those who can and are willing to pay for their labor. Over time a relationship is established between the "informal worker" and employer. Through reference groups and social networks, individuals observe and learn where and how to find job opportunities. The money that informal workers earn however, do not measure up to the hardships they have to bear while performing their tasks. Some ways of earning money are marked by despair such as Grace who was forced to sell her personal belongings to feed herself and her children.

Figure 2. Boy scavenging at a large trash dump in Hagonoy

Not all occupations are legal or follow the accepted norms. During my stay in Hagonoy, I often saw people hiding behind bushes fishing illegally on private fish ponds, supposedly to

eat or sell the catch. Since metal and copper wires can be sold for recycling, stealing them can be perceived as profitable. Yet, it is not always about acquiring money; sometimes, it is rather about escaping specific expenses. Alma and Noel, an older couple, claimed that it is common for some people to attach wires to electric posts to illegally acquire free electricity; some will tamper and turn off the electric meter to reduce the electric bill. The electric companies are aware about this and do routine checks. According to Roy, the police officer, crime is partly the result of poverty:

Roy: *Some criminals, kidnappers, snatchers, robbers, and people who indulge themselves in illegal gambling engage themselves with bad actions, because they are having financial difficulties in their lives.*

A.R: *So you mean that poverty can lead to crime?*

Roy: *Yeah it is very relevant to each other. (271012)*

Merton (2007, p. 464) pointed out that people on the lower social strata, experience the highest pressure to divert from the norms of the larger society. He referred to a mode of adaptive behavior that he calls *innovation*, in which the cultural definitions of success have been internalized, yet with limited access to conventional means for reaching the desired goals, other norm-breaking means are put into practice instead. This can be connected to the way symbolic interactionism (Charon, 2010, pp. 28-29) explains human behavior as active towards their environment. Humans are not merely conditioned, controlled, responding, and imprisoned by the norms of their society. Depending on their social interactions, perspectives, and definition of their situation they can act against accepted norms for a cause they consider as justifiable. The capacity to act against social norms however, does not suggest that humans are completely free in their will. Reference groups and perspectives still play a role in human behavior. According to Becker (1997), deviant behaviors may reflect a loyalty to certain norms which are prioritized over others. Norm-breaking can thus also be related to people being socialized into groups with certain perspectives towards behaviors that are normally rejected by the larger part of society. Labeling someone as deviant can push him or her into a self-fulfilling prophecy. The career of deviance is thus affected by the person's reference groups and by those who become the outsiders to him or her (pp. 25-39). It is some of the reasons criminality moves throughout all social classes and cannot be said to be unique among poor people.

I noticed certain resentment and a "we and them" perspective as Totoy and other more affluent people described the poor as southern immigrants who moved to Hagonoy, built their shanties and made the town ugly. The stigmas towards the poor have consequences; Goffman (2007, p. 16) put forward that stigmas, as perceived by the wider society, can be internalized by the stigmatized themselves. In this sense Cattell (2001, p. 1504) added, that stigmas towards poor people do not only come from non-poor but are also reproduced internally among the poor themselves. This in turn affects their self-perception as well as emotions because we, as human beings, see ourselves through other people when we interact with them (Charon, 2010, pp. 80-81). My guide for example, stated that there are drug abusers in Hagonoy and made the following comment regarding his safety: *I'm scared that I might get confused with someone who uses drugs and get killed. My family will suffer. I don't use [drugs]* (240912). The self-perception of being inferior aggravates the persistent sense of insecurity which leads to anxiety (Goffman, 2007, p. 22). My guide, who is aware of his social position being associated with certain prejudices, feels a strong anxiety but is able to reject their truthfulness if ever applied to him; it is however, harder to escape the bad physical conditions that entail living in shanty areas.

Shanty Areas

The Philippines is one of Asia's fastest growing economies ("Philippines: Economic growth and challenges," 2013). Yet, many are left behind in extreme poverty, living in shanty areas where poverty accumulates. The homes of people are more than protective shelters; they are according to Kusenbach (2009, p. 401), "strong symbols of individual and collective identities and relationships." The symbolic value of a home is related to social status. Belittling a person's home can thus be perceived as an assault to his or her identity and community.

The lack of resources however, limits the poor's abilities to acquire a good home for themselves. They become marginalized from the more affluent parts of society and brought together into less desirable areas. In poor areas like Mababang Lupa, poverty can worsen the already existing problems because people who are poor are likely to have other problems such as unemployment, diseases, low education, and difficulties with single parenthood. An accumulation of poor people in a specific area is followed by a concentration of these problems and the place itself develops a negative reputation (Spicker, 2007, pp. 38-41).

Apart from the broader socioeconomic structures that influence community life in shanty areas, there are inter-related deprivations that must be understood at an area level. Poor areas are characterized by poor housing, low status, lack of security and a rundown environment; this means that even non-poor people are negatively affected in these areas (Spicker, 2007). Further notable problems are:

- Overcrowding—the settlement has a high population density.
- Fires—fires can spread quickly.
- Overpopulation—the area does not have enough resources to support the growing population.
- Competition for jobs—jobs are in short supply.
- Disease—poor sanitation and limited health care can lead to the spread of disease.
- Lack of space—the newest and poorest arrivals may be forced to live on the worst quality land.
- Infrastructure—services are poor...and connections to the electricity supply can be limited and sometimes dangerous (Causes of urban growth, 2014).

Evelyn, a housewife and a part-time *labandera*, in Mababang Lupa claimed that her community is often described in negative terms because people believe many of its residents are robbers, thieves, and rapists. She agrees that the people of Mababang Lupa are being prejudiced but does not reject the claims that people in her community are engaged in criminal activities.⁷ Rodel who lives in the area underlines the problems:

A.R: *How would you describe Mababang Lupa to someone who doesn't know the area?*

Rodel: *Flooded, dirty, crowded and a lot of quarrels among drunken people.*

A.R: *Why do you think there are fights?*

Rodel: *Because the youth got hooked on bad habits and vices. (091012)*

In some cases, people who might have never been to Mababang Lupa could have strong opinions about the place, like Totoy, a self-employed man, who defines Mababang Lupa as a

⁷ In the beginning of my fieldwork, I was offered to have a guard following me during my observations. I kindly turned down the offer since I felt this would compromise the trust I was seeking from the field participants.

dangerous place and should be avoided.

Social capital may be important to survive poverty, yet people who are concerned with personal decency create and maintain physical and symbolic boundaries between themselves and those they perceive as indecent (Kusenbach, 2009, p. 402). Totoy's boundaries are not unique to him; people within Mababang Lupa also create symbolic boundaries towards others in the area when they speak of "those others" who prostitute, steal, drink, and fight.

In accordance with a symbolic interactionist argument, it is not possible to find all perspectives on a social object such as a shanty area and its inhabitants. People are able to use several perspectives to understand the same social object (Charon, 2010, pp. 5-6). Juan for instance, rejected prejudicial arguments against the poor as being lazy in Mababang Lupa in the following quote:

I start work every day in the morning to earn money, because we need money immediately in the morning. It is not proper that you will be called a low-grade. One should be proud for being responsible. (250912)

Mababang Lupa cannot be defined only by the negativities mentioned above. The reasons are that it is a place where people live and have their homes, their livelihoods, their friends, and families. Despite the accumulated problems in the area, it is possible to see children happily playing outside their humble homes and people busy with their everyday lives. The emotional attachments to the place can be exemplified by Julius whom I asked what he liked about Mababang Lupa. He answered: *I was born there* (111012).

Due to prejudices and poverty, social exclusion of the poor is prevalent. But, there is also a social inclusion among the poor, it is in this social inclusion where it is possible to find perspectives that emphasize other issues beyond the social problems which the outsiders often hear about and which often denigrate the people.

Shanties and the Floods

At a yearly basis, Hagonoy like other parts of the country suffers from floods usually caused by the monsoon rains. High tides are also a recurring element which are not as deep as the floods, but can still cause serious damages and injuries. During my field observations I was able to observe and experience the high tides which could reach up to a man's knees.

Both rich and poor people are affected by the floods and tides; the waters are often deep enough to reach the interior of people's homes. In the case of Mababang Lupa and other shanty areas in Hagonoy, even though the waters that caused by typhoons may have subsided from the rest of the town, the shanty areas are still flooded because of the high tides. Moreover, the poor are less protected in their shanties (see Figure 3) against calamities and other external threats. To avoid burglaries, families entrust their homes to their neighbors. In this way, houses can be guarded even if the owners are not at home.

The calamities were sometimes, to my surprise, associated with people being happy. Some of my interviewees saw the benefits of having floods because they received relief goods in the form of donations from NGOs and government.

Totoy underscored how the local fish ponds overflow and fish are spread throughout the flooded areas:

Well actually, especially in Hagonoy, during flood season, most people are happy, you know why? Because of the flood the fish ponds are all overflowed. A lot of fish are caught even on the roads /.../ that is why they catch the fish and they sell it and most of us eat it /.../ the food is very abundant. (051112)

For the owners of the fish ponds however, the floods create great financial losses. The views of the floods vary. Ricardo and Rodel explain how their perspectives changed over time as they better understood the consequences:

Figure 3. A Shanty house in Mababang Lupa destroyed by a typhoon. Several of my interviewees had experienced their homes being destroyed by calamities

A.R: *Do you agree that some people are happy during the floods?*

Rodel: *Yes, when we were kids, we were happy because we had no classes and received free food. But now it is different. When there are floods it is not fun anymore. But the kids they still like to swim.*

Ricardo: *People lose their jobs especially in the fields and fishponds. A lot is aggravated.*

A.R: *You received food, you say?*

Rodel: *Relief goods—canned goods, rice, noodles, coffee, milk.*

A.R: *Did you receive more than once?*

Rodel: *Twice only, it was often my mom who received.*

A.R: *Was that enough?*

Rodel: *No. (091012)*

Totoy had underlined the benefits that he experienced in the floods, but like Rodel and Ricardo, he also pointed to the negative outcomes of the calamities. Several of my interviewees commonly suffered from athlete's foot, locally known as *alipunga*. Totoy expanded on the problems in the following way:

A.R: *Did you experience any sickness during the floods?*

Totoy: *Yeah, there are diarrhea, cold, and fever. Most kids have fever. Are you familiar with dengue? [I nod yes as he continues]. When the floods subside, the next is dengue because of the mosquitoes. They affect, especially when there are no screens on the windows of the house /.../. (051112)*

Even when the floods and high tides subside there are still risks of mosquitoes and dengue. The waters leave mud and dirt inside people's homes. The way in which the poor are affected becomes clearer if one considers how shanties are built.

People often use metal sheets, cardboard, sacks, plastics, wooden boards, and other materials available to build their homes. Shanties are often incomplete since the walls are too thin and have small openings in random places, which allow rats and cockroaches to pass

through. The metal sheets that are often used as roofs and walls are easily over heated by the sun and make loud noise when it rains. If a cat or a bird happens to walk on a metal roof, they are clearly heard from within. Most of the shanties I observed did not have toilets, running water and proper electricity installations (see Figure 4). On one occasion I was warned from coming too close to an abandoned shanty whose fragile construction had been ruined by the floods. I did not notice the electricity cables that hang from the debris almost reaching the water on which we were standing. Julius and Janice shared their experiences of living in shanties during floods:

A.R: *How do you feel when you are inside the house during the floods?*

Julius: *We slept while sitting down since our roof had a big hole [not enough space to lie down]. Our roof leaked when it rains. Now we have covered the house with another roof.*

A.R: *Do you get enough sleep when there are floods?*

Julius: *When it is too hot or when our backs get wet then we cannot sleep.*

A.R: *Do you also get cold?*

Julius: *Yes. (111012)*

A.R: *How does your house protect against wind and rain?*

Janice: *When it rains it leaks, we stay here [she points to a place inside the house].*

A.R: *Did you have many things destroyed during the floods?*

Janice: *Our roof, we don't have many things anyway. Everything was submerged.*

A.R: *Did your family build this house with their own hands?*

Figure 4. Inside Janice's home, the floor is submerged in water and the sun is shining through the holes in one of the wooden walls. A part of the roof, which is not visible in this picture, consists of a brown blanket

Janice: *Yes, my husband. (240912)*

Janice and Julius revealed the little protection they get inside their homes. These experiences create other problems and add to other poverty related hardships that they are forced to face. Tuason (2010, pp. 312-313) wrote about two culturally defined perspectives that could be used as strategies to deal with hardships: *pagpupunyagi* (perseverance and fortitude) and *bahala na* (letting go). The first perspective refers to perseverance and hard work in order to make a difference for the better. The second perspective means to let things take their own course and accept a lack of control of things. Due to successes and survival in the past, *bahala na* becomes a "blind faith in good things." Panopio and Raymundo (2004, pp. 90-91) added that *bahala na* may lead to a strong dependence on the supernatural or spirits to take care of things, which

leads to a lack of initiative and self-reliance. Yet, *bahala na* can also underlie patience and a readiness to bear the difficulties in life with the faith that the supernatural spirits will reward hard work and perseverance in facing difficulties.

God was commonly perceived as a source of strength among my interviewees. Through faith, some of my interviewees felt they could find strength to move forward in their lives despite the hardships of poverty. God is thus a significant other to whom they can ask for help and whose perspectives can be used as guidance. Moreover, important sources of strength mentioned by my interviewees were being connected to family, socializing with friends, and expressing emotions through karaoke singing.

Discussion

My aim in this study was to understand poor people's sources of strength, social relations, sources of income, and perspectives as strategies to cope with poverty in everyday life. With a greater knowledge about the poor people's situation I also wanted to understand more about prejudices towards the poor, breaking norms, conflicts, and coping with the elements. This knowledge can lead to a better understanding of the role more privileged people play—or do not play—in the lives of the poor.

Stigmas associated with the poor have negative emotional impacts on their self-perception and definition of situation. The poor suffer from stigmas due to characteristics associated with poverty such as dirtiness, violence, crimes, and laziness. These stigmas can be internalized and reproduced among the poor. My interviewees lamented about the way they themselves are seen by the rest of society but would also themselves point to laziness as one of the reasons why some people are poor. Social norms and interactions affect people's behaviors and perceptions. It is the reason why more affluent people create symbolic and physical boundaries between themselves and other people they consider as indecent. The negative associations with poverty and poor areas could give some explanation as to why people like Totoy have strong opinions about an area like Mababang Lupa although he has never been there. Norm-breaking can be perceived as a necessity in order to survive and could, in some cases, lead to criminal activity. I often observed people fishing illegally in private fishponds, presumably to either sell or eat the fish. Consequently, poor people breaking social norms are further stigmatized. What is socially defined as norm-breaking or crime however, moves through all social classes and is not unique to poor people. The situation of the poor is worsened by their poorly-built shanties that do not provide enough protection from the elements and possible burglaries. Poor health and malnourishment among the poor children is a consequence of the unstable and volatile family economy which disables parents from providing proper nourishment to the children.

The poor people find income opportunities by engaging in an informal economy, it is an aspect of their marginalization. Participating in a formal economy could very much improve their economy and give them better protection from hazardous working environments such as the trash dumps where several of my interviewees scavenged for plastics and metals to sell; however, participating in a formal economy or employment is difficult since poor people are often marginalized from attaining higher education. All of my interviewees (except one) who consider themselves poor were not able to finish high school. Yet in an area where poverty is widespread, Monica the primary school teacher's situation shows that a college degree does not guarantee an exit from poverty. The complexity of poverty indicates that even after earning a college degree there are more factors to be considered like a place of living, social capital, and resources available. Despite Monica's financial struggle and difficulties at work, she has a level of protection that those who scavenge in the trash dumps do not have.

Pregnancy and the responsibility of rearing children which often fall on the poor

women in my research limit their opportunities to work and study. Poverty also limits the children's and the younger adults' accesses to education as they often work to help with the household economy and costs of education for their younger siblings. A Philippine tradition in which the husbands are expected to give all their income to their wives, who do the budgeting, could empower the poor women in my research. This kind of empowerment however, may be limited as the men themselves are poor and may not earn enough to cover the household expenses. The poor women's strong financial dependency on their men and vulnerability to poverty is evident when the husbands do not give them any money for budgeting and deviate from their role as main breadwinners. When the older children are able to help taking care of their younger siblings, like in the case of Julius, the women may gain more time to work and help with the household economy, but this points to other difficulties related to the children's quality of life and the limited opportunities to find a steady income in an informal economy. Poor women in abusive relationships have difficulties leaving the relationships since divorce is prohibited in the Philippines and annulment of marriage is too costly.

To cope with the daily hardships, the poor people in my study derive strength from family, faith in God, and social activities such as karaoke singing. The poor also rely on each other through *pakikipagkapwa* and *utang na loob*. Families with many children were common in the field of observation which probably resulted to the lack of knowledge about reproductive health, the unsupportive stand of the Catholic Church on the use of contraception and the definition of children as possible contributors to the family income and caretakers of the parents in old age. Moreover, high population growth in the country is a concern as it obstructs the reduction of poverty.

Differences in social capital, backgrounds, and perspectives increase misunderstandings and conflicts between the poor who see themselves as marginalized, forgotten, honest, and those who mainly associate the poor with crime, dirtiness, and laziness. In random everyday conversations, I overheard Totoy and other more affluent people describing the poor as southern immigrants who settled in Hagonoy, built shanties, and made the town ugly. This description of the poor emphasizes a "we and them" perspective. Moreover, the consequences of poverty that I encountered in the field point to issues that need to be dealt with in order to change the situations of the poor and reduce poverty:

- A greater interaction between more privileged people and the poor could be beneficial for the poor as they would have greater social capital and the more affluent people could become more involved in the reduction of poverty. This may however not necessarily reduce conflicts and could create other types of difficulties.
- Environmental issues must be confronted in an efficient manner in order to protect the people, the infrastructure, and the local aqua- and agriculture as these are related to food security and generation of wealth.
- The poor people in my research demonstrated entrepreneurial abilities; they could thus be seen as resources and be integrated in the formal economy through training in skills needed in small businesses, manufacturing and maintenance of local structure. By increasing their abilities to benefit from employment opportunities they are not passively locked in a unilateral relationship with governmental representatives such as social workers and other more affluent people. Integration into the formal economy may lead to integration to an overall economic growth experienced collectively by the inhabitants of Hagonoy and the Philippines.
- Access to contraceptives and better knowledge of birth control among the household are necessary to reduce poverty and potential sexually

transmitted diseases. The costs of having children should be more visible so that they will not be defined merely as assets and future caretakers of the parents. This seems related to the people's perception of the government not taking responsibility for the people which impels them to search for help among each other instead. Reduction of poverty could be enhanced if the population growth is in balance with the generation of employment and economic growth.

- Combating children's malnutrition is imperative in order to keep them in school; better education for the poor may in the long run contribute to better financial understanding to manage the household economy and better employment opportunities. The labor market is related to overall macrostructures unreachable for the poor but education is still preferable than none as the poor themselves can take part in the efforts to reduce poverty.
- As a step to promote better health among the inhabitants of Hagonoy, better systems of trash and waste disposal should be implemented; there needs to be an understanding why people throw trash on the streets. An additional part of the problem is that not all poor people have access to proper toilets which clarifies why they dispose waste in nearby rivers.
- Domestic violence should be approached from all directions. In addition to the knowledge of battered women, more knowledge regarding husbands who mistreat their spouses could help develop strategies to help the victims. With more knowledge regarding the abusers, better methods to distance them from such destructive behaviors could be achieved. Moreover, it should be underlined that violence can be directed in various ways among all members of the household in order to make visible all victims of domestic violence and abuser(s).
- The government needs to be transparent in their work and clearly confront cases of corruption to establish a trustful relationship with the people in which they can act as allies to the government in the efforts to reduce poverty.

Although there are NGOs and governmental programs, related to the suggestions above, the prevalence of poverty indicates that there is still work to be done. The suggestions above are not all encompassing and should be further developed. Some suggestions could entail conflicts such as in the matter of contraceptives.

There is a consensus between my findings and several issues underlined by previous research on poverty in the Philippines and elsewhere; these relate to poor people being stigmatized, strategies to save decency (see Kusenbach, 2009), and the importance of social capital and religion to cope with poverty. In this sense, my study confirms the results from previous studies but it also adds a focus on the implications of calamities on poor people as well as the informal economy in which they engage mainly due to social marginalization. This study also underlines the consequences for family members whose fathers or husbands are absent or abusive. There are discrepancies between my study and Stravers's study in regards to the way he describes his study participants as contented with a hand-to-mouth existence and that poor people do not plan ahead. In contrast to poor people, Stravers referred to middle class Church members as people who maximize opportunities. Despite being unsatisfied with their situation in terms of health, standard of living, social status, and resources available, many of my study participants have hopes for the future, if not for themselves, for their children. In my field observations structural poverty and calamities affect negatively both poor people and non-

poor in various ways, although the poor is always in a worse situation. Moreover, in consensus with previous studies (i.e., Tuason, 2008, 2010), poor people made an effort to improve their situation despite the limitations they suffered from being poor.

A limitation in this study is the absent voices of those men who were accused of abandoning or mistreating their families. To what degree or how are these men's behaviors related to or reinforced by the consequences of their own poverty, gender roles, social relations, and often young age? How would their stories affect the results of this study? There are other absent voices relevant to this study that I was not able to include. I tried for instance to interview a prisoner accused of car theft who was too vague and short in his answers. I had the impression he could not speak freely because there were police officers working nearby.

This article is not all encompassing but could be improved with more insight on the needs of the poor, the reproduction of poverty, and the impact of religion in relation to poverty. A longer duration of stay in the field would also be beneficial in the end result of this study. There are however methodological limitations on how close I can come to the poor people's experiences through my field observations. Due to the high risks of illnesses I did not for instance walk barefooted in the high tides (I used boots) nor did I suffer stigmatizations as most poor people did. The vast information in the field also made it hard to write down every interesting detail in day-to-day conversations around me. All the interviewees expressed a willingness to share their stories with me as they felt there was someone who was interested to hear what they have to say in regards to poverty, social marginalization, calamities, and the abuse they experience. Some interviewees argued that through my research, they could share what they had to say with non-poor people as well as with those who have more power—it is an opportunity they feel they usually do not have. Consequently the interviewees were positive to the idea of me sending this research to various NGOs as a way of raising an awareness of their poverty in Mababang Lupa.

There are key topics in my research that I argue could be compared or generalized to poverty of the same level in other parts of the world. These are the social stigmatization and marginalization of poor people, norm-breaking and their engagement in an informal economy. The generalizability of some aspects of this study is possible due to the consensus between my results and previous studies. In my own experience I perceived many similarities between the poverty I saw in El Salvador and the Philippines such as shanty areas. Inevitably there are limits to how much this study can be generalized. There are obvious differences between Hagonoy and other parts of the world that affect poverty as well cultural differences. The results from this study should therefore still be considered in relation to the social context from which they were extracted and then make a thoughtful comparison to poverty found elsewhere to understand where the similarities and discrepancies are to be found.

Several topics of my field observations could be the main focus of future research such as poor women, informal economy, living in shanty houses, surviving floods, poverty and crime, and trash dumps scavenging. Furthermore, there are examples of topics related to poverty that I did not write about such as street children, child labor, older people's experiences of poverty, migration and poverty, disabilities and poverty, the role of the state in relation to poor people, and men in poverty as main providers for their families. Something to consider in future research is related to an experience I had in the course of my research where I easily found literature on how to prepare for doing fieldwork but little about the emotional implications that follow experiences in a field where people suffer in various ways. In studies of this kind the researcher may still have to find ways of coping with emotions related to poverty in the field after exiting the field.

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Appendix A

Figure 5. Map location of Bulacan province (Zamboanga.com, 2013)

Figure 6. Hagonoy in the province of Bulacan (Provincial Government of Bulacan, 2007). The arrow and border enhancement are mine

Appendix B

The appendix shows a list of the interviewees referred to in this article.

NAME	DESCRIPTION
THE POOR	
My guide	Works as a part-time tricycle driver, scrap collector and fishpond worker
Janice	Full-time housewife
Monica	Works as a teacher, identified herself as Poor
Ronaldo	Works as a tricycle driver
Juan	Works as a scrap collector
Pedro	Works as a scrap collector

Noel	Is sick and stays at home, unemployed
Alma	Works as a money collector in Jueteng
Rodel	Works as a scrap collector
Ricardo	Works as a scrap collector
Julius	Sells jasmine flower and a begs
Grace	Full-time housewife
Evelyn	Works as a “labandera”
Neither rich nor poor	
Totoy	Self-employed
THE INFLUENTIAL PROFESSIONALS	
Erwin	Priest
Roy	police officer

Author Note

Antonio Rosales studied in Lund University Sweden, where he gained his Bachelor of Science and Master in Sociology. He takes an interest in microsociology and qualitative methods as a way to approach issues such as social deviance, marginalization, coercion, conflicts, power and stigma. In addition to sociology, he has a previous background as a musician--specifically in classical piano. Antonio Rosales was born in San Salvador, El Salvador and grew up in Malmo, Sweden. Correspondence regarding this article can be addressed directly to: Antonio Rosales at, anto9_malmo@hotmail.com.

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