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MAKING BODIES WORK

**YOUNG PEOPLE'S EVERYDAY
BODY MANAGEMENT IN URBAN MINDANAO**

The 2014 UP Anthropology Field School Papers
Cagayan de Oro

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INTRODUCTION

The UP Diliman Anthropology Field School is an annual activity that allows our anthropology undergraduates to integrate the skills, and knowledge, that they've acquired, to describe and analyze different aspects of Philippine society.

In 2014, we were fortunate that the University of Amsterdam's Prof. Anita Hardon came in with a multinational project to look at the various chemicals (eg skin whiteners, cosmetics, etc.) being used by young people. The project allowed our students to do an in-depth study not just of "chemical youth" but of urban youth culture in general, in a city, Cagayan de Oro, that is at once a frontier area but also one that is rapidly reproducing aspects of Manila and older primate cities such as Cebu, even while it retains a character of its own.

This compilation of the AFS reports present several snapshots of the rapidly changing urban youth culture, or cultures, from the perspective of UP Diliman anthropology students. In the tradition of UP's anthropology department, we allow students to adopt different research paradigms to tease out contemporary issues. We see both insider perspectives since the students were all young adults themselves, as well as an outsider perspective, in the sense that many of the students were not from Mindanao, nor were they Cebuano native speakers. And while the anthropology students came mainly from the upper and middle classes, their respondents came from a wider cross-section of Cagayan de Oro, including students, radio DJs and call center workers, drivers, river guides, market vendors, tricycle drivers, gay men and transgenders. As individuals, and as a class, the students had excellent opportunities to internalize the intricacies of ethnography and cultural studies.

The research in Cagayan de Oro was crucial for the larger project, a Philippine project with several research sites (Batanes, Manila, Puerto Princesa and Cagayan de Oro) as well as an international project, with close links to our Indonesian counterparts, which also tapped university students. The global research had just started and involved "grand tour" ethnographies, asking general questions about chemicals used "head to toe", and which became the basis for more detailed interviews in the research phases that followed.

The focus on "chemicals" was important, allowing students and faculty to do anthropology in the 4-field tradition: cultural anthropology, biological anthropology, linguistics, and archaeology. Note that the students learned to move out of the box or boxes of the 4-field perspective, biological anthropology for example no longer limited to bones and genes but the very real world of chemicals applied to and transforming bodies. Likewise, archaeology went beyond the tradition of studying the ancient past and instead emphasized an archaeology of things in the present.

I still remember the initial meeting we had with the students to plan the field school. There was excitement, but there was also anxiety and uncertainty, the students not sure what they were getting into.

When they returned from the field, I could see they had matured as anthropologists, and as young adults, seeing, in chemicalized youth, themselves, and their milieu.

May this field school be a model for the training of future batches of anthropology students!