INTRODUCTION
I spent two weeks in Santiago, Chile working with professors at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile to study how the Chilean government provides services for youth at-risk of living on the streets in Chile.

The governmental body overseeing the programs for street youth throughout Chile is the Metropolitan Observatory for Street Youth.

The programs run by the Metropolitan Observatory focus on:
- Prevention: keeping children from leaving for the streets
- Reparation: helping the children return home after life on the streets

STREET YOUTH
"Any girl or boy who has not reached adulthood, for whom the street (in the broadest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc.) has become her or his habitual abode and/or sources of livelihood, and who is inadequately protected, supervised or directed by responsible adults" (UNICEF, 1983).

STREET YOUTH STATISTICS
Latin America: 40 million street youth
Chile: approximately 800 street youth
Santiago, Chile: 310 street youth

PREVENTION PROGRAM
SERPAJ
Prevention Programs: work with high-risk children and youth to help strengthen family relationships, to keep the children enrolled in school, and to prevent the youth from leaving their family homes for life in the streets

What does the organization do?
- Advocate in the schools for youth having difficulties
- Visit the students' homes to provide support for the child in the home
- Teach parenting skills to high-risk families
- Provide meals to youth at the organization
- Night outreach with youth on the streets
- Organize educational activities for the children at the center
- Provide therapy to children and youth with mental health needs

Moises, a youth at the center, and I during a workshop on self-care and hygiene

COUNTRY OF CHILE
Population: 17 million people, 6 million in Santiago
Rate of poverty: 15% of the population lives in poverty
Childhood poverty rate: 25% of Chilean children live below the poverty line
Childhood violence: 25% of Chilean children experience physical aggression in the home
Child labor: 240,000 children engage in labor activities – 13,000 work in the streets

WHERE THE YOUTH LIVE
The youth face daily hardships such as finding a place to sleep. Some children and families live in homes made of scavenged materials and borrowed electricity. Some lived in unsuitable homes with multiple families. Others lived on the streets under dilapidated bridges.

A Child’s Life on the Streets
Hillary Jones
University of Michigan School of Social Work

REPARATION PROGRAM
Asociación Chilena Pro Naciones Unidas (ACHNU)
Reparation Programs: work with youth who have left home for life on the streets due to issues such as neglect, physical or emotional abuse, substance abuse, or family distress in order to help them return home and break harmful generational patterns

What does the organization do?
- Provide food, housing, and education to children on the streets
- Help parents find jobs, housing, and stability
- Advocate for youth in the schools
- Night outreach to high-risk youth to connect them to needed services
- Offer substance abuse resources to youth and their family members
- Engage community members in discussion and community-building activities

A mural at the youth activity center

A mural at the youth activity center