TRADITION AND THE STREET:
CONTINUITIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF MAYA STREET WORKING
GIRLS AND BOYS IN CHIAPAS, MEXICO

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Abstract

Although there has been extensive research on the issue of street and street working children in developing countries over the last 20 years, few studies specifically investigated gender differences. Current literature, as well as international media, regularly reports that girls present the minority among street children and that those street and street working girls perform poorly on the streets, both economically and socially. A preliminary literature review revealed that until now, satisfying explanations and systematic research of this phenomenon are lacking. This is because many of the findings about street (working) girls were derived from single remarks and assumptions made in studies that mainly focused on street boys and therefore cannot be considered as solid sources of information. From these studies, it is widely believed that working on the street presents an interruption from a girl’s normal development and female socialization.

The current study systematically investigates the situation of street working children, in San Cristóbal de las Casas (SCLC), Southern Mexico, from a culture-sensitive perspective. Based on the idea that every child develops according to the ecocultural niche he or she is growing up in, a culturally sensitive and stepwise, mixed-methods approach was designed. Research on street working children of developing countries demands flexible methods of data collection adjusted to the uncertainty and highly unstable environment of the research field. Therefore, I applied a triangulation of methods and data sources: I started with an archival research and continued with ethnographic observations as well as a census before I conducted 51 semi-structured interviews street working children.
The study revealed that in contrast to other Mexican and international cities the center of SCLC exhibits an almost equal number of street working boys and girls (52% and 48%, respectively). Interestingly, more than 93% of the children identified themselves as indigenous. Even more interesting was that, contrary to what is reported in the literature, my results indicate that street child work in the center of SCLC is not an interruption but continuity in the regular development of the girls. Theirs as well as the boys' street work is heavily determined by Maya values about child socialization and development. By following the traditional role of Maya women (producing & selling Maya craftwork) in various aspects of their work, the girls operate in a protective niche, which not only allows them gender-consistent behavior, but also to perform successfully in the streets. Overall, cultural heritage seems to play a much more important role for girls than for boys in the organization and conduct of their street activities. Last but not least, the present research supports the importance of schooling for the present and future developmental perspectives of Maya street working children. However, also here important gender differences could be detected. While regular schooling seems to have great influence on the professional goals of street working boys, this was not correct for street working girls. Their strong adherence to their cultural heritage seems to prevent them seeking developing perspectives outside their current environment. This can affect adversely the girls' development in so far, that it may leave them unprepared for the future of rapid socio-economic change in their local environment caused by general trends of globalization.

This study revealed various implications for future intervention programs in SCLC and elsewhere. In order to be culture- as well as gender-sensitive, overall,
programs should perceive the children’s culture as a chance more than as a challenge. This includes that they acknowledge that boys and girls face different problems in their working settings. In addition, sustainable solutions can only be established by working on a community level and by creating opportunities that not only allow the children to receive schooling, but also assures their family a better economic status.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

In the last 20 years, the presence of children living on the street of developing countries has received increasing attention throughout the public media. It has also become a matter of concern for national and international child welfare organizations. The United Nations define a street youth as "[...] any boy or girl [...] for whom the street in the widest sense of the word [...] has become his or her habitual abode and/or source of livelihood, and who is inadequately protected, supervised, or directed by responsible adults" (UNESCO 1995, p. 286). Despite the inclusion of girls in this definition, the majority of the children and youth found on the street are male - more than 90% in many African countries, over 80% in Jamaica and other Caribbean countries and more than 75% worldwide (Aptekar, 2004, p. 379). This fact is frequently hidden in the academic and welfare literature as many former studies referred to the term "street children" while they actually reported about street boys only. Although "[...] gender has been identified as an important organizer of many aspects of human development" (Raffaelli et al., 2000, p. 1432) most of the studies did not specifically investigate gender differences among street children. Hence, information about girls remains fragmentary and is often more based on anecdotal reports and speculations than on actual research findings.

This study intends to gather information that helps to better understand the situation of the street working children of SCLC and in particular, to learn more about the specific situation of the street working girls. Based on and inspired by concepts of Cultural as well as Anthropological Psychology, children working in the streets¹ of San Cristóbal des las Casas (SCLC) in Southern-Mexico are investigated from a gender

¹ In the following, the term 'street working girls' or 'street working boys', respectively, will be used to describe children working on the streets.
sensitive perspective. By learning more about the conditions that determine the
differences in daily life between street working girls and boys, this study also identifies
variables that could serve as useful key terms to analyze and to improve the situation of
street (working) children, in particular girls elsewhere. The results of this study have
several implications for future street child intervention programs.

1.1 Who is a ‘Street Child’?

First, some clarification of the term ‘street child’ is needed. Following Aptekar,
there is “no clear definition of street children” (Aptekar, 1994, p. 195). The term street
child in its basic definition: “a homeless or neglected child who lives chiefly in the
streets” (Oxford Dictionary) has also been proven to be problematic because - contrary to
conventional wisdom - most so-called street children do not actually live on the street full
time (Panter-Brick, 2002). For example, only about 10% of the street children in Latin
America “are full time residents of the street environment” (Rizzini & Lusk, 1995, p.
392). Hence, a variety of different definitions of ‘street children’ exist that try to describe
the children’s status with different categories. Lusk, for example, developed four
psychologically characterized categories:

“First, there are poor working children returning to their families at night. They
are likely to attend school and not be delinquent. Second, there are independent street
workers. Their family ties are beginning to break down, their school attendance is
decreasing, and their delinquency is increasing. Third, there are children of street families
who live and work with their families in the street. [...] Finally, there are the children
who are orphans, refugees, and others, who have broken off contact with their parents or
other caregivers. This category of children are residing in the streets full time and are the

UNICEF (1993) classified street children in many countries with the terms ‘on’
the street, ‘of’ the street and ‘on and off’ the street. Children ‘on’ the street are engaged in
the street but have regular contacts with their family and return home for the night on a regular basis. Children 'of' the street live work and sleep in the street. However, this classification may be too rigid because it is not correspondent to the realities found in most cities around the world. Street children do not form homogeneous groups, nor do their life circumstances remain constant. For example, the children's involvement in street life and contact with their families changes as they become adolescents. Therefore, the same child may be represented in more than one of the stated categories. Accordingly, current studies are based on more multi-level approaches. They take into account that a child experiences childhood in different ways at various ages or with diverse characteristics and thus is influenced by and interacting with a variety of environments (Ennew & Swart-Kruger, 2003). Researchers like Beazley (2003) and Lucchini (1996) prefer to use constructs like street children's 'careers' or 'domains' to describe children's life in time and space, which in their variety and social meaning are culturally determined.

In the course of the literature review for this study it became clear that due to the scarcity of comprehensive information that exists about street girls, the application of a narrow definition of street children would unnecessarily exclude valuable sources of insight. Instead, the results of the presented literature review are based on a definition of street children that includes all children that live and/or work at the street and are 'at risk' for extreme poverty, growing up in a highly deprived environment without the basic necessities of life (Panter-Brick, 2001).
1.2 Literature Review: Street Working Girls of Developing Countries

It is true that girls are a minority in the streets of most developing countries compared with their male counterparts, but they are not absent. The percentage of street girls varies by ethnic group and from city to city. In Latin America, girls are reported to comprise 12% in Cochamba, Bolivia, 14% in Lima, Peru, and 35% in São Paulo, Brazil (Lucchini, 1994). In many African countries girls are reported to comprise only 10% of all street children while they represent less than 20% in Jamaica and other Caribbean countries, and about 25% worldwide (Aptekar 2004, 1994; Aptekar & Ciano, 1999).

These varying figures of street girls clearly indicate that different cultural, economic, social, and political settings influence the abundance of girls on the streets. In most cultures, gender is regarded as an important organizer that characterizes many aspects of human development by defining appropriate roles and behavior for men and women. Although cultures differ in their construction of gender-specific roles, “there are certain similarities that are relevant to the situation of homeless youngsters” (Raffaelli, 2000, p. 1432).

In the developed world, there are about as many girls on the street as boys. When looking at their background, a lot of them appear to come from middle class backgrounds with a family structure that is still considered as the ideal nuclear family - two parents and a couple of siblings. Common reasons to leave home are abuse, psychopathological parents, or the fear of coming out with their own homosexuality (Aptekar, 2004). These explanations cannot be simply transferred to the situation of street (working) children in developing countries because they live in environments with completely different
demographic characteristics. In developing countries, the state or the communities typically do not possess the resources to provide sufficient support and enough institutions to assist families and their children growing up in difficult economic conditions. Street children are a much more common phenomenon that is evident in many cities in Asia, Africa, or Latin America (Rizinni & Lusk, 1995). Although it is not possible to draw a uniform picture of the children who live ‘at risk’ in developing countries, nearly all of them face the same problem: extreme poverty.

Often, street children or children in circumstances of extreme poverty come from women-headed households. Aptekar (1990) examined the family structure of poor households in Colombia, the majority of which he found to be matrifocal. In those families boys are usually taught by their mothers to cope with the limited economic resources in the household by becoming independent at a very early age and earn their own money outside the home (Aptekar & Heinonen, 2003). Conversely, girls are socialized to remain at home even if they already have their own children. Girls therefore learn to look for their own identity inside their home without being dependent on intimate relationships with men. A similar development of families can be observed in many poor neighborhoods of other developing countries (Aptekar, 1989). This gender-oriented socialization strategy to survive has two different outcomes - for boys, the solution is independence from, whereas for girls it is dependence on their families. This gender-oriented socialization may be the most comprehensive explanation for the predominance of boys on the street. In addition, the different individual socialization histories can contribute to a variety of consequences that determine a child’s development ‘on’, ‘of’, or ‘off’ the street. His or her ability to survive can be strongly influenced by the experience
made either as a boy or as girl in the developmental niche (Harkness and Super, 1994).

The most obvious consequence of a gender-oriented socialization is the acceptance of different roles in the subsistence work cycle.

The vast majority of youth in developing countries are engaged in some economic activities of work to support themselves and/or contribute to the family income. Boys “typically engage in more visible activities” (Lalor, 1999, p. 761) in localities such as roadways or public areas, where they typically peddle cigarettes, newspapers and magazines, lottery tickets, candies and gums, etc. and wash and mind cars, shine shoes, or beg (Gustafsson-Wright & Pyne, 2002). The process of becoming a street child is gradual and predictable. Boys may first start to stay on the street in the daytime, then not return home for one or two nights and then spend increasingly more time outside the home. In contrast, girls are often part of the “household production strategy” by taking on more of the household chores and acting as sibling care providers while the mother is employed as a service worker away from home (Rizzini & Lusk, 1995, p. 394). Often girls are sent to relatives who need help with housework or care tasks (Rumbidzai & Bourdillon, 2003). They may also work as housemaids, laundresses, in back street hotels, in a household cottage industry such as sewing or work for a ‘maquiladora’ or equivalent employer (Lusk, 1989). Girls work for their mothers, who expect them to hand over their entire daily wage. The income from the daughters is mostly considered as “family income,” and may lead to conflicts between the mother and the daughter. Often, the situation is characterized by an extensive economical abuse of the girls by their mothers. Street boys, even though they support their family, usually have a more independent financial agreement with their parents. Due to their available job opportunities, those
earnings are less controllable by the mother, and they have some freedom to decide how they spend their money and which portion of their salary they are willing to give to their family (Aptekar & Ciano, 1999).

When talking about gender dimensions of street children’s work, there is another common explanation for the lower number of girls in the streets. It is a general belief that the majority of girls are taken off the streets to become prostitutes. This situation has been emphasized, “particularly by the media or international organizations, as inevitable and total” (Lucchini, 1994, p.6). However, the actual number of child prostitutes is likely to be far lower than reported (UNICEF, 1993). Nonetheless it is also probably true that many girls are not visible on the streets because they work in brothels. For these girls who work in the milieu of professional prostitution, there is no compromise between the two social spheres: “[...] a girl cannot simultaneously be a professional prostitute and a street girl. She is the one or the other, because the social rules and the rhythm of daily life are too different from one case to the other” (Lucchini, 1994, p. 18).

As a result, the most common programs for girls are private homes which are run “under the direction of nuns, applying the rubric of Christianity to change the girls from being wayward to less frivolous about their bodies” (Aptekar, 1989, p. 427). These programs contribute to the stigmatization of the girls and to their invisibility in the public. While programs for street boys are more vocational and seek public or media attention to compete for funds, places that serve girls operate more like monasteries. Because they rarely seek public attention or more commonly avoid it, they and their female inhabitants are difficult to find (Aptekar, 1989, p.428).
To understand the gender biased situation and the lower number of the girls on the streets, it is also important to assess the chances of a girl or a boy to survive persistently on the street. While it is common for boys for economic reasons to work and live on the street and at the same time to remain connected to their mothers, street girls have different motivations and often come from a different family background. Interviews from studies in Mexico and Brazil revealed that parents usually “make every effort to retain the girl in the home environment” (Rizzini & Lusk, 1995, p. 393). The majority of girls who ended up on the streets had to escape from their homes, because they did not experience such protection. Instead they often had to face different forms of verbal, physical and sexual abuse. More street girls than boys stated that they are on the street because they used to live in dysfunctional families, where they experienced maltreatment like physical or sexual abuse. Because girls normally did not experience the same socialization to independence as the boys, they cannot leave easily and usually suffer a much longer time under worse conditions of abuse than the boys, before they choose the life on the streets. A common reaction to this unsolvable situation is to fly to the street, a behavior that may account for the male children – but not for their sisters (Aptekar, 1988). That means if a girl leaves her home, she is often fleeing after a long history of physical or sexual abuse. Hence, a high percentage of street girls often have more difficult, distant or no relationships with their families of origin than boys (Aptekar & Ciano, 1999). They cannot rely any more on the family support, because a girl on the street normally represents a broken path of development.

Due to this situation the girls are usually lacking the experience of a gradual adjustment process to street life. When a girl arrives on the street, she is likely to suffer
from more developmental and psychological problems than her male counterparts (Aptekar & Ciano, 1999) and she normally does not have any prior working experiences on the street. The girl is therefore in high danger not to be able to cope with the new and sudden challenges of street life. Compared to girls of ‘at risk’, families who stayed at home, street girls were more likely to develop psychopathologies and serious health conditions. This seems to be the opposite situation for the boys. Several research studies (Aptekar, 1988, 1989, 1990) revealed that boys on the street often exhibit better mental and corporal conditions compared to their brothers and sisters who stayed at home. On the other hand girls, are extremely likely to fail on the street because of their insufficient preparedness and low status as a female. These risks explain why many girls are afraid of turning to the street, or do not spend long periods of time living on the streets. They are forced to seek ‘alternatives’, which often means that they have to return to their abusive home or become a prostitute. It is difficult to categorize these ‘alternatives’ as less harmful than the street. But there are authors who emphasize even more severe outcomes for street girls. One example is Knaul’s (1995) explanation for the reduced number of street girls in Bogotá. She claims that due to the accumulation of severe risk factors (similar to those presented here) a certain proportion of girls who reach the streets just do not survive for long periods of time. Brazilian street girls may face similar fates: “They disappear. They become arrested or they die. They die from venereal diseases, they are sent to mental institutions, they die from abortion, or in childbirth, or they kill themselves” (Panther-Brick, 2002, p. 164).
This gender-focused summary of the research on street (working) children intended to provide a brief overview of the manifold complexity and interplay of many different factors in the cultural context of a developing country. The answers for the limited number of girls on the street are often drastic and alarming. However, all cited studies offer only very general and often speculative explanations about the life of street (working) girls. They miss the opportunity to inform about street (working) girls by not giving a detailed description of the career and life of those girls. However, to learn more details about their lives seems essential to profoundly understand the specific situation of girls on the street. The ecocultural approach of this study aims to characterize the situation of street working girls based on their daily experiences and their activities within their community. Findings from this approach have to be interpreted within the framework of their distinct cultural setting. An ecocultural and gender-sensitive approach can serve as a useful tool to uncover relevant factors that can explain the malfunctioning (or sometimes) comparatively ‘good functioning of street (working) girls. It is expected that many critical elements in the life of street girls can be detected, that previously may have been overlooked.

1.3 Observing Street Work from the Perspective of Cultural Psychology

To understand the socially and politically controversial topic of street living and working children from the perspective of their local culture it is important to initially accept that in some cultures a child’s traditional development would be considered inappropriate and unethical if judged from a modern, Western perspective. There is not one ‘right’ way in which children develop (Gaskins & Göncü, 1992). Cultural
psychology offers the theoretical framework for a relatively unbiased approach to children's development applied in this study by conceptualizing culture as the set of beliefs, values, and practices of a particular group that are transmitted across generations. Culture is dynamic, constantly shaped, and produced by members of its group (Maynard & Kim, 2006, p. 6).

Following this notion, culture provides the context for child's development as one of its constituents rather than as a variable that exerts and influence on the child's development (Göncü, 1999). Hence, if researchers aim to increase understanding of child development they have to understand how the child gains those meanings. Vygotksy’s activity theory (1962, 1978) emphasizes that children internalize meanings through two different kinds of engagement. On the one hand, they learn by collaboration with other more competent members of the society to solve a particular problem or they learn it by play. Thereby, children recognize and learn what meanings are valuable and how one can engage in those. On the other hand, children's play gives them the opportunity to independently find out what meanings are valuable to them. If a child’s development is a process constructed from the activities he is engaged in or socialized to, research should take into account the availability and the kind of activities that are accessible for children in a community, how children usually participate in this activities, and what would be the learning outcome of their participation (Göncü, 1999).

1.3.1 Ecocultural Features as an Analysis Instrument

The theoretical framework of this work is the Ecocultural Niche Model (Weisner, 1984) and an activity setting approach developed by Gallimore and others (Gallimore, Goldenberg, Weisner, 1993). The term 'ecocultural niche' is based on Bronfenbrenner’s
(1979) idea of the ecology of a child’s development and describes the socio-cultural environment of a child and its family. Early work from anthropologists Whiting and Whiting (1975) and psychologist Bronfenbrenner (1979) established child-centered research designs by using multi-level approaches of qualitative as well as quantitative methods to learn more about a child development in its ecocultural niche. Tom Weisner (1984) followed this ecocultural research tradition and later presented a comprehensive list of features that either influence directly or indirectly the development of a child in a certain ecocultural niche.

“The niche includes the features of the environment, as conventionally defined, and also scripts, plans and intentions of actors. Thus, the ecocultural niche includes variables inside as well as outside the person. Its most important elements are the relationships between participants in organized behavior settings or activity units – actors with goals and intention in the context” (Weisner, 1984, p. 336).

The first step in transferring those ecocultural features to a research study that is aimed at investigating gender differences among street working children is to analyze the level of the economic and technological development of the country and/or the geographical region in which the child is growing up. Those factors determine the prevalent characteristics of the subsistence work cycle, e.g. the kind of wage or self-supply work of child’s family, degrees of migration for work, distances between home and work etc. Furthermore, demographic characteristics and health status (e.g. health risks, availability of health care) of the community play a significant role. This in turn influences further variables such as mortality, birth rates, and family sizes. The overall aspect of community safety (like the risk of traffic accidents, intra- and intercommunity violence and warfare) is another factor that highly affects a street (working) child’s development. Additionally, the division of labor by age and sex or other criteria like caste
or ethnicity, the importance for subsistence and the prestige of different labor tasks strongly influence developmental pathways of children and gain critical importance for a child living or working on the street. Essential questions are: What are children expected to do from early childhood to adolescence? What is the composition of children's play groups - are they segregated by age, gender or kinship categories such as siblings, cousins, relatives or non-relatives? In addition, the role of women in the community and women's independence and autonomy are important factors that determine the development and the support of male and female children. Also, available sources of cultural influence and the exposure to literacy are a determining factor in the child's development. By verbal stimulation, and by contact with toys, media, or other elements of the outside world, the child will be influenced in her development and in his or her ideas or plans for their future. Parental sources of information and beliefs concerning child rearing, health, nutrition, or new methods of subsistence activities also influence a child's well-being. For example, parents of different societies vary highly in their attitudes towards child's work and whether child work imperils or fosters positive developmental outcome. In general, measures of community heterogeneity and change create a social background, that heavily determines the child's life and what role he will have in the particular society. Those measures may be the presence of ethnic sub-groups, bilingualism, sub-castes, social-class differences and social solidarity, the role of minorities, group oppression, the degree of community commitment among the subgroups, migration processes or the usual number of generations living in one family household. For example, the chance of becoming a street (working) child is increased for a child that belongs to a certain discriminated minority of the community.
1.3.2 An Activity Setting Approach as an Analysis Instrument

Another promising way to learn more about a street working child’s ecocultural niche is to look at the variety of routines a child is engaged in. Following Gallimore et al., (1993) common social activities and habits like the child’s work, school attendance, the family’s sustenance activity, chores, meals etc. are used as basic units of analysis to gain a more thorough understanding of a child’s developmental niche. Their activity setting approach is mostly based on the first of the three components that determine Super and Harkness’ (1986) concept of the developmental niche. For Harkness and Super (1994) the developmental niche is characterized by

“(1) the physical and social setting of the child’s every day life; (2) culturally regulated costumes of child care and rearing; and (3) the psychology of the caretakers” (Harkness and Super, 1994, p. 217).

Another guiding theoretical framework chosen for this study’s research on street children in San Cristóbal de las Casas was Gallimore’s activity approach (1993) which focuses on immediate visible factors of settings the child is regularly part of. To gain a gender-sensitive understanding of the risks and protective factors that shape a child’s life, the study aimed to investigate the following aspects of the diverse social settings: The teaching and otherwise influential personnel and its presence and availability in the street setting; the motivations and feelings of the children for their street work, the cultural scripts that lead the children in their daily routine; the nature, frequency and distribution of the tasks and activities the children perform; the cultural goals, values and beliefs that accompany the children when they are engaged in a particular activity setting in the street.
From the perspective of developmental and cultural psychology all daily interactions present sources of information to learn more about the well-being and development of an individual child and how differences are related to age, gender, family structure etc. By analyzing such a "perceptible instantiation of the ecological and cultural system" (Gallimore et al., 1993, p.539) different working opportunities for boys and girls on the street were identified. The suggested, setting-oriented ecocultural approach offered a high potential to learn more about the genesis of gender differences, without ignoring biological, cognitive-developmental or socialization models. Therewith, I tried to follow the famous and successful research example of Whiting & Whiting (1975) who detected sex differences in their 'Six Culture Project' or in their research presented in 'Children of Different Worlds' of Whiting & Edwards (1988). The study is based on their idea that gender differences in children's development are observable and shaped by culture.

1.3.3 The Research Project: The Ecocultural Setting

The location that was chosen to conduct this research about gender differences among street children is San Cristóbal de las Casas (SCLC), Chiapas in the South of Mexico. The setting will be described with the help of the earlier presented list of ecocultural features. First, there will be general overview about the region of Chiapas, followed by an introduction into some demographic features that describe the periphery and the center of the town of SCLC. A special focus will be on the ecocultural context of the indigenous population in Chiapas, because one finds almost exclusively indigenous children working on the street. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the values and motivations that underlie the phenomenon of street working children in SCLC, this paper
will provide a brief summary about existing essential research results on Mayan concepts linked to the phenomenon of street working children. These are in particular Mayan parents' cultural belief systems about childhood and child development, including the prevalent concepts about learning, as well as Mayan cultural values about work and the division of labor by gender.

Ecocultural Setting: Chiapas, San Cristóbal des las Casas

The state of Chiapas is located in the very southeast of the Mexican Republic (Figure 1). The state is divided into a total of 111 municipios (the Mexican equivalent of counties), with its capital at Tuxtla Gutiérrez.

![Figure 1. The state of Chiapas in Mexico.](image)

Chiapas can be divided geographically into three regional bands running from northwest to southeast across the state: the Soconusco Coast along the Pacific Ocean, the Eastern Lowlands and the central Highlands (the focus area of this study).
Chiapas, like other states in southeastern Mexico, has a multiethnic and multicultural population. Around 26.1% of the 4.3 million people (INEGI, 2005) living in Chiapas are indigenous. However, unlike indigenous groups in other Mexican states, who were more or less assimilated and hence lost the connection to their cultural ancestry, the Maya descendants of Chiapas have kept their ancient culture alive. For example, their costumes and languages although altered can be traced back to ancient Maya times. The most common indigenous languages spoken in Chiapas are Tzeltal (37.9%), Tzotzil (33.1%), Chol (16.9%), Zoque (4.6%), Tojolabal (4.5%), Kanjobal (0.6%), Mame (0.6%) and Chuj (0.2%) (INEGI, 2005). Another example of the adjustment of their tradition to external influences is religion. Many indigenous people in the state of Chiapas practice a syncretic religion that mixes Catholic and pre-Hispanic Mayan religious beliefs. While official tables simply state numbers for being Catholic (63.8%), Evangelic (13.9%), and without religion (13.1%) (INEGI, 2000), religious practices vary strongly among the different communities. During the recent decades several religious conflicts in the communities were the reason for major expulsions of Protestants from predominantly Catholic communities. Many of the banished families immigrated into the shanty towns at the periphery of bigger towns like SCLC (Figure 2).

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2 Different internet sources indicate different but consistently higher numbers of indigenous people in and around the city of SCLC. They state that more than 35% or 48.6%, respectively, of the population in and around SCLC is indigenous (Buchsbaum, 2004; Comisión para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas, 2004).
While those religious conflicts can force people out of their home villages, there are also major economical reasons for indigenous families to leave their rural communities. Within all of Mexico, Chiapas has the highest rate of people living below the poverty line. Indigenous people clearly display the highest rate of poverty and its negative consequences. Around 42% of indigenous people live with an income that is below the minimum monthly wage, while another 42% of indigenous people have no income at all. Eighty-five percent of the indigenous but only 58.3% of the general Mexican population work in agriculture, which is still the dominant subsistence model for low-income families in the state (CIEPAC 2004). However, as a consequence of progressive movements of globalization and invasion of foreign companies to the local market during the last decade, many peasant farmers (campesinos) are not able to survive with their agricultural income only. In addition, the housing in Chiapas is generally of
poor quality: According to INEGI (2005), 36.2% of the homes of the indigenous population do not have running water, 35.2% do not have electricity, and 71% have dirt floors.

The region also has one of the worst health indicators. In areas with an indigenous population of 70% there is only one doctor for every 25,000 habitants. Almost 72% of the population of these areas suffers from malnutrition, which is in the long term one of the highest causes of illness and even death (CIEPAC 2001). Although infant mortality has declined through the last decade, the decline was smaller for rural communities of minorities. Official numbers vary from 34.8 stillborn children per 1000 births (CIEPAC 1996) up to 63 and more, depending on the source.

According to the 2005 INEGI census, Chiapas has also one of the highest illiteracy rates in the nation, only 90.3% of the total population of Chiapas is able to read and write at all. Slightly more men show proficiency to read and write compared to women. However, one can recognize significant improvements since the last census in 2000. Back then, only 87.3% of the population showed reading and writing abilities, and the gap between men and women was greater. Unfortunately, no census data is available about the literacy rate of indigenous people in Chiapas, though UNESCO (2005) states that adult illiteracy in some municipalities of Chiapas reaches 70%. Not surprisingly, those areas are almost exclusively populated by indigenous peoples, many of whom do not speak Spanish (24.9%) (INEGI, 2005). In 2005 the average Chiapanecan went to school for 3.9 years. Men have an average of 4.7 years of school, whereas women only spent 3.2 years in school (INEGI, 2005). According to UNESCO (2005), schools in the indigenous communities have the highest rates of dropout and failure, some 30% higher
than the national average.

Those social and economic disadvantages are adding to the already mentioned religious conflicts, major reasons why more and more indigenous families give up their homes in the rural areas and immigrate to shantytowns (colonias) around mayor cities in Chiapas and elsewhere.

The city of SCLC has approximately 130,000 habitants. Its major economic activities are agriculture, commerce, and tourism. In towns like SCLC with greater access to commerce and tourism, the families hope to find work that provides them with enough resources to survive. According to the local organization for street children, Melel Xojobal (2006), most street working children and their families live in colonias at the periphery of SCLC in areas that usually lack proper city planning and do not serve basic needs such as sewers, paved streets, potable water, and electricity. The families' homes in those colonias are often of poor quality. They are built with a mixture of wood, corrugated sheet, and sometimes even plastic and cardboard (Figure 3). Many of these dwellings only possess dirt floors.

Figure 3. Family home in the colonia Emiliano Zapata, SCLC.
In sharp contrast to these marginalized areas stands the location where many street working children work - the picturesque, colonial center of SCLC (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Center of San Cristóbal de las Casas.

Because of its well-maintained colonial architecture in the center of the town and its position near other popular turistical sites, tourism plays an important economic role for the city. Especially since the uprise of the political movement of the Zapatista party in 1994, many tourists have visited the town. The very clean and lively center of the city showcases an array of beautiful colonial churches and places (Figure 5). These historical places are surrounded by a great variety of gift and art shops, boutiques, restaurants, and coffee houses that offer their services to the many national and international visitors. In between the churches and shops the visitor will be approached by very persistent young sellers and service providers: the Maya street working boys and girls of SCLC.
1.3.4 Child Development, Learning, and Work in the Mayan Culture

Research in the Mayan Culture

In order to understand the situation of the street working children of SCLC, whose developmental pathway is so different from what a Western perspective would consider as ideal, it was important to learn more about the habits and values that commonly constitute the daily experiences of the street working children that predominantly belonged to the Maya culture. Fortunately, I was able to rely on many years of research in the Mayan Culture. In 1957, the Harvard Chiapas project was founded by Evon Z. Vogt (1969, 1970, 1994). Vogt studied various aspects of culture in Zinacantán, Chamula, Huistán and San Andrés Larrainzar (Mayan communities near SCLC), as well as the town of SCLC itself. Many scholars from various disciplines conducted intensive ethnographic and experimental research among the Mayan people. The works of Cancian (1992), J.F. Collier (1968, 1973), G. Collier (1975), Haviland (1978), Laughin (1975), Gossen (1974) and Wasserstrom (1978, 1983) provided useful information about
economy, public life, and social stratification of the Mayan people during the previous 50 years and earlier. In addition, Harvard Chiapas Project researchers such as Nash (1970) contributed a deeper understanding about beliefs and behavior in a Maya community. Furthermore, Greenfield (1973), and Childs & Greenfield (1980) were able to identify and to follow three important tasks (weaving, making tortillas, and collecting firewood) of Maya womanhood through the last 30 years. The recent works of scholars like Maynard (2002, 2004, 2007), Gaskins (1994, 1996, 2003), and Rogoff (1981, 1990, 2003) continue in this research tradition. In particular, the works of Maynard, Gaskins, and Rogoff that provide extensive insights in cultural teaching and learning habits, parents' belief systems, traditional (working) activities and the concept of childhood in the Mayan culture, serve as important information sources for this work.

The Concept of Child Development in the Mayan Culture

Suzanne Gaskins (1996, 2000, 2003) describes Mayan children's behavior in detail, thereby enabling us to understand what "[...] Mayan children and the other people around them do but also why they do it [...]" (Gaskins, 2003, p.28). She not only identifies the range and the distribution of the activities in which Mayan are involved in on a daily basis, but also analyses individual differences in those acts of engagement. Thereby she recognizes that all children's activities, such as maintenance activities, play, work and learning, were characterized by three cultural principles of engagement. These three principles are: primacy of adult activities, importance of parental belief and independence of child motivation. Gaskins characterizes life in a typical Mayan

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3 Though Gaskins and Rogoff work in Maya communities outside of Chiapas, their findings bear similarity to the research findings from Chiapas.
household as focused on adults' work and less structured around children's interests. The prevalent attitude is that the work has to be done and that children are supposed to not interrupt that work (Gaskins, 1996, 2000).

However, children are constantly accompanying and observing their parents in their work and are allowed to participate in those parts of the activity that they are already competent in. Rogoff, Angelillo, and Morelli (2003) describe and investigate a very similar behavior in a Mayan community in Guatemala. They assess that it might be less necessary for Mayan children to be engaged in child-focused activities like lessons, adult-child play, adult-child related conversations, etc. to prepare children for "[...] involvement in mature community practices, because they are already a regular part of them [...]" (Morelli, Rogoff & Angelillo, 2003, p. 275). Furthermore, Gaskins (1996, 2000) emphasizes that the cultural and parental understanding about "[...] the nature of the world and about the nature of children significantly shape children's experiences [...]" (Gaskins, 2003, p. 34). Like all parents around the world Mayan parents will try to ensure the child's well-being by protecting the child from health hazards like sickness, injuries due to fire, falling, or dangerous animals. However, every culture has very distinctive ideas of how the goal of a child's well-being should be realized. Generally, the Mayan belief about childhood and child development is very different from Western parents' concepts. Although developmental categorization can be identified in Mayan culture (Gaskins, 1996), Mayan parents see their children's development as a gradual and continuous process. No specific stimulation or education is necessary to prepare the child for a successful adulthood. The child's innate forces will just come out by themselves and are not controlled by the parents or the child herself. Therefore, Mayans are not
particularly concerned if, at a certain age, one of their children does not display abilities that other Mayan children usually accomplish in that age. For them development just happens and does not have to be monitored (Gaskins, 1996, 1999). The Mayans also pay great respect to the independent will of a child. For example, they try not to determine a child’s motivations and interests. Reciprocally, the child also has little expectations about her or his impact on the activities of others. Although the Mayan children stay close by their working parents and are most of the time at least partly involved in the adult activity, the children usually can decide by themselves how and at what pace to fulfill the task they are responsible for. This also includes - from a Western perspective - very essential decisions like whether to attend school, take medicine, when to eat or to sleep, etc. Generally, the Maya pay much less attention to the activities of a single child, and vice versa Mayan children expect much less attention and confirmation from their parents than Western children (Maynard, 2002).

The Concept of Learning and Socialization in the Mayan Culture

The described cultural principles of engagement are also critical for learning and socialization processes of Mayan children. Previous research on learning and teaching in the Mayan culture emphasized keen observation, scaffolding, and guided participation as the predominant models of learning in different settings in Mayan villages (Greenfield 1984; Maynard, 2004).

Although it may be obvious that observation is an important component in learning, ethnographic research indicates that for Mayan children observation plays a much more important role than for US children of European heritage (Rogoff, 2005).
Gaskins (1999) states that 2- to 3-year old Maya children spent a great deal of time silently observing ongoing activities of the extended household. Infants younger than 2 years can spend up to 40% of their time looking at other people and things and it is still up to 10-15% for ages 4 to 7. It is the nature of the common setting of a Mayan family that creates for the child a situation with extensive opportunities to watch. The setting is characterized by the principles of the adult’s work priority and the belief that a child naturally develops and realizes his own interests. By accompanying his family in their daily activities, the child is permanently exposed to a learning environment that is dominated by cooperatively working parents and older siblings. Eventually, the children will start to participate in certain parts of the family work while receiving scaffolding instructions and guided participation (Maynard, 2003; Rogoff 1990). Through their interaction with more experienced members of their community, the children can accomplish tasks they are not yet able to do completely by themselves. As described by Maynard and Greenfield (2003) scaffolding and guided participation is the most common teaching and learning strategy among Mayans females in the community of Zinacantan. Their learning setting is characterized by long phases of observation,

“[...] contextualized talk, bodily closeness between the teacher and the learner, highly scaffolded interactions, the expectation of obedience, and having more than one teacher for a given task [...]”(Maynard, 2004a).

Furthermore, Maynard & Greenfield found out that those procedural features are almost always present when Mayan girls learn to weave, to make tortillas, or to gather firewood - three essential activities in the traditional life of Mayan womanhood (Maynard & Greenfield, 2003).
Age and Gender Divided Labor in the Mayan Culture

Although Mayan parents give only minimal formal instructions and are not intentionally stimulating or testing their children's limits or abilities, they expect their children to eventually learn those tasks that are needed to become a good and productive citizen of the community. What task a child or a family member is expected to do depends highly on his or her mental and physical endowment. In their mid-teens, young Maya will take responsibility for the most physically or organizationally demanding jobs in the family or community and are then considered as true work partners by their parents (Gaskins, 1996). Around age 15 most young Mayan males and females spend most of their time working. Before this age the children contribute to their family work according to typical Mayan stages of development. Following Gaskins (1996), Maya distinguish between five different stages of development for babies and four stages in the rest of the childhood. The five stages of babyhood encompass “Very little babies”, “Lap babies”, “Scooter babies”, “Upright babies” (around 12 months) and “Talking babies” (at around 18-24 months) (Gaskins, 1996, pp. 350-352) in reference to the external visible development of the infant. Children of those stages spent their time by accompanying older family members in their work. Children between the ages 2-4 are called “Beginning-to-start-understanding children” (Gaskins, 1996, p.353). They are able to follow simple instructions to do a task. They begin to understand and learn to take care of themselves: feeding themselves, bathe themselves, go to sleep etc. Therefore, they are no longer called babies. Beginning around the age 4-6 children are considered as “In-the-Process-of-understanding-children” (Gaskins, 1996, p.353), who can now already significantly contribute by doing the chores that are assigned to them (Gaskins, 1993;
Kramer 2003). However, they are neither expected nor judged to have high skills of reasoning and still spend much of their time playing. It is also in this phase when the nature of the child's chores and the informal learning first starts to be determined by gender.

"Boys begin to go with their fathers to their corn fields, and girls begin to join in on the more complex household chores of food preparation and caretaking of younger siblings" (Gaskins, 1996, p. 354-55).

Some time between 9 to 12 years, the amount of time spent in gender-specific working again increases (Gaskins, 1996, 2000; Kramer 2003). "Having-reached-understanding-children" (Gaskins, 1996, p.354) take over full responsibility for their work and complete their chores completely independently from their parents. Limitations exist only in respect to physical strength and in parts from not having a full understanding about the relevance of a certain task in an overall scheme for producing a living (Gaskins, 1996). The last developmental stage in a typical Mayan childhood is the initially explained transition phase into adulthood, the stage of the "Becoming-adult children."

Other than the mentioned division of work by age, one can also observe a gender-based division of work. Traditionally, domestic work is dominantly seen as female work. Similar to Maynard & Greenfield (2003), the anthropologist K. Kramer (2003) states food production, food preparation, collecting water and firewood, running errands, tending herds, sewing, washing and cleaning as typical female work tasks among Mayans of the Yucatan Peninsula. From a very young age, beginning between two to four years, girls take care for their younger siblings. In cases where no age-adequate female sibling is available Mayan boys also engage in childcare. However typically the male developmental pathway as a work force in the family is different from the described
female one. In general, Mayan men do more field work and outside-the-compound work than females. Traditional male tasks are processing seeds for planting, transporting goods between the villages and fields, as well as hunting and trapping (Kramer, 2003). Accordingly to this tradition, boys spend more time in the field than girls. Kramer calculated in her ethnographic research that, boys allocated 13 percent of their time to field work, whereas girls only 7 percent. “Boys increase their time spent in the fields after the age of 8 to 11, which is when young girls devote much of their time to child care” (Kramer, 2003, p. 103). Gaskins (1996) also states that at age 12 boys usually spend less time working than girls. She assumes that this might be caused by the somewhat harder work in the fields the boys accomplished. Consequently, the boys might spend more time resting when they finished their work. Interestingly, Maynard (2004b) could show that despite highly salient gender segregation after infancy, both male and female caregivers are able to teach their younger siblings activities that are traditionally female-related. “In the context of sibling caregiving, boys ages 5-11 taught two-year-old girls to do things that girls would need to know how to do” (Maynard, 2004b). However, although both gender could observe during their early childhood a similar amount of female tasks, girls had more direct experimental practice in doing female tasks. At the same time small boys seem to receive more training in typical masculine activities, which was taught to them by their older brothers. By playing increasingly with older brothers when growing up, young boys make a smooth transition from the female activities they were exposed to in their first years to more male appropriate activities (Maynard, 2004b).

Important further questions of interest result from those previous findings: How does the development of Mayan children in traditional, rural settings change or translate
in the urban setting of SCLC? How do traditional Mayan behaviors and values influence the life of the street working children of SCLC?

1.4 Conclusions

It is the overall goal of this research to shed light on daily life settings and experiences of street working girls, and on differences between boys and girls who work on the street, topics that have been sparsely addressed in the literature. The presented ecocultural and the activity setting approach serve as useful instruments to examine the children's situation. By using theoretical concepts of cultural psychology as well as psychological and anthropological research methods, this study aimed at gathering information about the children while taking into account the children's cultural context. Because the study investigated street working children that grew up and live in Mayan communities it was considered crucial to include Mayan perspectives on childhood, child development & learning, and child work. In doing so, the study did not intend to justify child work, nor exploitative child work in general. However, it is the my opinion that if the goal is to limit work that endangers the healthy development of children, it is important to first understand child work from the perspective of the child's particular culture. Generalized stereotypes about street (working) children should be replaced by insights gained through profound, culturally adjusted research.
Chapter 2: Procedure

2.1 Research Design

To investigate street working children I intended to apply a culturally sensitive and stepwise, mixed-methods approach. A triangulation of methods and data sources was applied. Following Paterson (2001), a triangulation is defined as a mixing of several data and/or methods to improve the construct validity of the study. This methodological procedure to mix quantitative as well as qualitative data and/or methods in a single study is commonly chosen in pilot or initial studies that intend to investigate diverse perspectives upon one topic. By collecting data from different sources and perspectives, the likelihood of accuracy should be increased (Yegidis and Weinbach, 2006). Figure 6 depicts the stepwise design of the research project and also explains the order of the different research methods that were used.

Figure 6. Schematic overview of the research design.
2.2. Research Setting

The overall research setting of the study consisted of different locations in the center of SCLC. To select these locations I surveyed local citizens, social workers, as well as street working children and adults about inner-city areas displaying high density of street working boys and girls. Furthermore, I divided the inner-city area of SCLC with the help of the tourist map of the local municipal authority and a grid in six equally sized rectangles. Then I observed the number of present street working children at the most populated places and/or streets of each rectangle at different times a day during the period of a week. Figure 7 shows the places in the center of SCLC in which the ethnographic observations and talks, the census and the semi-structured interviews were finally conducted (indicated by green stars). Those places were selected according to their abundance of street working girls and boys.

Figure 7. The center of SCLC.
In addition, one third of the interviews were either conducted in the colonia of Emiliano Zapata, where a lot of street working children live, or at the food market José Tieleman, a usual working place for children that lies in close distance to the city’s center.

2.3 Participants

Because of the multi-method design, the participant sample consisted of three overlapping research groups.

Ethnographic Observations & Talks

For the ethnographic observations the sample was comprised of an indefinite number of street working children observed during different times of the day and night at diverse locations in the center of SCLC. The age range of those participants was from birth to approximately 16 years.

Census

The census (this method will be explained in detail on the following pages) was also based on the number of observed children during different times of day at different locations in the center of SCLC. It included children from birth to approximately 16 years.
Semi-structured Interview

Semi-structured ecocultural interviews were conducted with 51 children, including 27 boys (53%) and 24 girls (47%) ranging 7 to 16 years. The mean age was 10.5 years, and the mode was 10 years for both genders. The following Table 1 displays the gender and age distribution of all interviewed children. Girls ranged 7 to 13 years with an average age of 9.5 years. Boys ranged 9 to 16 years, with a mean age of 11.5 years.

Table 1. Age Distribution of all Interviewed Children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Boys (n=27)</th>
<th>Girls (n=24)</th>
<th>Total (n=51)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 years</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because of the principle to treat every child equally, every child that offered or agreed to be interviewed was included in the interview sample. Therefore, the research sample of 51 interviewees also contains six girls who stated that they did not have their own work, but either helped their families at the market, or stepped in for other family
members at home while those worked at the street or elsewhere away from home. In the analysis of the data about street working children this group of girls will be excluded. However, because those girls come from families with a similar Mayan cultural and social background (neighborhood, parents’ level of education, parents’ job etc.) compared with the street working girls, an additional analysis of the data from street working (n=18) and non-street working girls (n=6) will be conducted.

Of the 45 children who claimed to have work outside the home three boys worked within their family’s business, while the other 42 children declared that they worked mostly apart from their families. Data from these two groups will be compiled together (n=45) because children who worked in the family’s business saw themselves as full-fledged and responsible workers conducting the business (at least part of the day) by themselves. Those street-working boys and girls had an average age of 10.6 years. The age range for girls (n=18) was 7 to 13 years with an average age of 9.5 years. Boys (n=27) ranged in age from 9 to 16 years, with a mean age of 11.5 years (Table 2).
Table 2. Age Distribution of Street Working Children.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys (n=27)</td>
<td>Girls (n=18)</td>
<td>Total (n=45)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>8 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>9 years</td>
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<td>10 years</td>
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<td>11 years</td>
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<td>12 years</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>13 years</td>
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<td>14 years</td>
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<td>15 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
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In the beginning of this study I only children interviewed children she had been in daily contact for at least three weeks. Later snowball sampling was applied to recruit interviewees. These two procedures helped diminish the mistrust the street working children naturally express toward foreigners. From all 60 children that were asked by me or were suggested to her by other children, 10 individuals (16.7%) refused to be interviewed, either because they had no interest in it, or their parents or other adult relatives such as aunts or grandmothers expressed to me that they wished their children not to participate in the study. Among the group of children who refused to participate in the interviews no specific pattern concerning gender, age, or profession was detectable.
2.4 Establishing rapport

High-quality research on street children is based on a proper working relationship between the researcher and the children (Hutz & Koller, 1999). When I reviewed the literature on street children to prepare my own study, it became apparent that without a real rapport with the children, there would be only limited possibilities to learn about the children’s situation. However, except for a very few papers (Hutz & Koller, 1999), most studies do not provide a detailed description about this crucial step in research on street children. The few indications about how to establish relationships with children in the street setting were mainly concerned with not paying the participating children.

Although it is common for researchers in most psychological studies to compensate their participants, this is not appropriate in research with street working children - for both methodological and ethical reasons (Hutz & Koller, 1999). Because the participants are usually very poor, paid data collection implies the risk of buying information the participants are assuming the researcher wants to hear, which makes the information more likely to be inaccurate. The possibility to earn some money by just answering a few questions may be too tempting for those children who struggle everyday to earn their own (or even their families’) income. Hence, the principle to not buy information was central when I started in the field. Because of a lack of further and more detailed information, I decided during the preparation of my study that I would gain the necessary trust of the children by ‘hanging out’ on the street the whole day. Meanwhile I monitored the process of how I established rapport with the children very closely, so that I could give a detailed description of the process that could help to not only support the
dependability of my data but also could be an useful contribution in how to establish rapport in the literature on street children.

Therefore, I started to ‘hang out’ for days on the street at places where most street working children spend their days. I usually spent around 11-12 hours a day on the street. I identified a time window starting from 8:00 or 8:30 in the morning am until around 7:30 in the evening in which I was able to observe many street working activities. On few occasions, I also spotted single working children before and after this time window. The fact that I was present on the streets for long hours had two beneficial effects on my project: Hanging out on the street, I could observe and could be observed. Sitting day after day in front of the cathedral I was approached by a great number of young and adult street sellers, who offered me their products and services. After a few days people started to greet me, what I interpreted as a first sign of my goal to become known in the ‘street community’. In the beginning, I neglected to buy any products and services that were offered to me by street children – strictly following the principle to not pay my participants. However, after several days of observation I identified the exchange of services as the most common way of social exchange among street working adults and children. The children spoke regularly to those people who used their services or to those people whose services the children used, like other food and candy sellers on the street. For example, shoe shining boys or girls selling craftwork regularly bought cheap ice cream and candies from mobile sellers. Naturally, the street-working children also approached many tourists and offered their services to them. It became obvious that the offer and exchange of services was the most common way for the street working children to get into contact with other people. Therefore, I decided to also use their services only
in so far that I had a real need for them, which means that I eventually bought food, chewing gum, candies and souvenirs for a price that was less than they usually asked from tourists and (probably a little) more than the amount they received from local clients. By doing so, I got into contact and conversation with the children in a way that was most natural for them. At this point I would like to emphasize that although thereby a fiscal relationship was created, the money I gave to them was an exchange for their product and service and not for any information about the child him or herself. I also rejected demands of children to give them handouts or to buy them food. However, after a few weeks of research, several of the children I knew best started to offer me candies and fruits as gifts. It was then that I softened the mentioned principle to exchange food with the children, because the children would have perceived it as irritating if I had declined their signs of friendship. These culturally embedded gestures of friendship, expressed by giving away little gifts, as well as the above mentioned normality of a compensatory relationship made me revised the principle. When I later started with the interviews, I rewarded the children for their participation with a notebook and pen, a total value of about 50 cents. Because I received small gifts from the children as well, e.g. bracelets, self-made paper craftworks, or candies and fruits, and based on my interactions with them in the course of my research, I considered this reward as appropriate and not as a risk factor for buying information from the children. Additionally, the fact that some of the children, despite the reward, decided not participate in my research, displays that the monetary value of the gift did not provoke them to agree on the interview.

The second principle I followed during the course of my study is the to be and stay open toward anybody. To prevent and reduce mistrust, I informed everybody I was
in contact with about the nature and the goals of my research project. I informed not only the street working children and their parents, but also the social workers of Melel Xojobal,* local and international clients of the children, adult street sellers, street cleaners, restaurant owners, tourist information clerks, policemen, taxi-drivers, and market-sellers and everybody else I talked to about who I was and about my project in SCLC. After a while I noticed that the people I was in touch with had started to propagate this information to their social environment. It happened, for example, that while I was playing or talking with street working children that bystanders explained to curious newcomers that I was here to write about the life and work of the street working children. People sometimes described me as a journalist who wants to report about the children, which I considered appropriate to describe my work. Soon, by the many small talks and the friendly greetings I experienced on a daily basis I could assure my social acceptance among the street working community. During my entire 6-week stay I met only one person who expressed hostility and rejection towards my study and me. A 40-45 year old Mestizo male market-seller (very often drunk) not only attacked and insulted me verbally but also started to intentionally spread misinformation and sexually discriminating lies about me. After several debates with him in which I tried to encounter him with the same openness and explanatory position that I express toward everybody, I extended my strategy of openness insofar that I told other street-working members about the problematic behavior of this person. Immediately, people explained to me that he was known for his problematic behavior towards female foreigners and that his behavior was disregarded by the local market-community. I also learned that he was called ‘Mai Miguel’, (Engl. for ‘Bad Michael’) and was widely considered as an aggressive,
maladaptive personality. I was advised to just ignore him or to call the police. I did not want the police to be involved but continued with my strategy of absolute openness. Luckily, he finally stopped his behavior when my befriended local Mayan curer, a highly respected member among the Mayan market people, told him to let me work in peace. When he later tried in broken Tzotzil to speak to a 13-year old shoe shining boy I was just talking to, the adolescent sent him away in harsh Tzotzil words and translated for me in Spanish that he dismissed the behavior of ‘Mal Miguel’. After this young Mayan boy defended me, ‘Mal Miguel’ never approached me again.

After a while I learned that I, too, had some resources to offer to the children and other street sellers. Nearly every adult and young street working person I met was interested in learning foreign languages, mostly English, to improve their business with the foreign tourists. Hence, I spent many hours teaching different children the English words that were essential for their work on the street, e.g. the number system, the names of the products they were selling, salutations, and how to express agreement and disagreement. Sometimes I also took care of their craftwork products, candy boxes, or shoeshine boxes when they had to use the bathroom. It seemed that they often considered me as an interesting entertainment during the long hours of sometimes very boring street work. We had many talks about topics the children were interested in, e.g. living conditions in Germany and the USA, cost of living in these countries, about the children living there, etc. Furthermore the children often invited me to initiate or participate in street games with them. This was because they associated me with the social workers of the local street children organization Melel Xojobal I had befriended. Melel Xojobal provides and organizes street activities three times a week such as plays, drawing, ball
games, movies, and presentations for the children.

During the course of my census in second third of my study, several children soon also found out that I could offer them another service: They used me as a source of information when they searched for their family or friends. Although most of the children worked in the street as a part of loose network of family and peer members, they often walked around and worked independently at different places in the center of SCLC.

When the children learned that I registered every street working child I saw at a certain place and at a certain time, they started to ask me for help when they looked for someone. A question like “Have you seen my friend during the last hour at this or that place?” became quite common. After a while, I noticed that it was this relationship of mutual exchange of services with the children that maintained and nurtured the bond between them and me.

Certainly, one essential factor that also facilitated my rapid acceptance by the children was the fact that I am a young woman and was therefore likely to be perceived as less threatening compared to a male person. Because of their cultural background the girls in particular might not have talked as soon to a foreign male as they talked to me as a woman. However, being female did not exclusively contain advantages for my research work. For example, boys older than 13-14 years sometimes displayed bashfulness because I was a woman. In addition, while hanging out on the street, my research was frequently interrupted or disturbed by approaching men, who wanted to take pictures of me or tried to get into contact with me.

An important factor for my work in the street was my principle to maintain contacts steadily and continually. Independent of the child’s agreement or disagreement
to participate in an interview, I tried to foster the relationship with each child to be as equal as possible. This goal was not always easy to accomplish because the street working girls often did not like me talking to boys or with certain other street working girls with whom they had a competitive or hostile relationship. I also stayed in close contact with those children who refused to participate in the interview. These were approximately 10 children out of the 60 children I asked. I stayed in contact with at least half of those children from the moment we met until the end of my research stay. These children also told me about many details about their life at home and in the street but just decided not to do the interview\(^4\), although they knew they would receive a little gift after the interview in form of notebook and a pen.

Through this detailed description of the process of establishing my relationship with the children I intend to give an insight in an important process of research with street working children that is nonetheless usually not described in street children literature. I thereby based my research procedure primarily on the mentioned principles: to not directly buy information, to be and stay open toward anybody, to participate in a mutual exchange of services, and to maintain contacts steadily and continually.

2.5 Methods

2.5.1 Method 1: Ethnographic Observations & Talks

*Ethnographic Observations*

In a research setting unfamiliar to the principal researcher, initial ethnographic observations and talks provide better understanding of the local situation. I assumed that

\(^4\) I did not include their data in the analysis of the interviews.
through the process of collecting data my understanding of the setting would be extended, but also changed (Perecman & Curran, 2006). After initial observations and counts at various inner-city places and streets (please see selection procedure p. 40) and informal talks with locals, social workers, as well as street working children and adults, I chose a bench in front of the cathedral to conduct ethnographic observations. The open cathedral plaza offered enough space for me to observe the participants and also allowed them to follow their working activities without disturbance. At the same time, this location provided for the opportunity to become familiar with the children, which was very important in regard to ethnographic talks and the later semi-structured interviews. In addition, locals and foreigners often describe the chosen open square in front of the cathedral as the ‘heart’ of the town, where street working children and their families mingle with international and national tourists, residents, businessmen, and promenading families.

I used three different formats to organize the collected paper field notes. The first format was acquired through continuous but unstructured monitoring of the behavior of individual street working children as well as groups of street working children. I noted down the times the children showed up for work, their gender, estimated age, working activity, their appearances, their company, and behavioral patterns when working, playing, talking, or eating. Those categories emerged in a purely exploratory manner in the course of the research observations. The usage of pre-determined observation categories was deliberately avoided in order to identify only those variables meaningful to the setting. The second format I used was a separate record about the emerging methodological ideas and interpretations during my observations and their potential
implications for the further research activities. The third format I developed was based on
the above-mentioned activity setting approach. While monitoring single children of
different gender- and age groups I recorded all personnel that surrounded the target child
in the setting independent from each individual’s interaction with the child. While
monitoring a single child I recorded all adult and non-adult persons that were present, the
child’s appearance, the nature of the child’s activities and tasks, the cultural scripts that
were followed and what might be motivations, feelings and goals present in the child’s
setting (Gallimore et al., 1993; Super & Harkness, 1997). For this format a special
“activity setting table” that I had prepared in advance was used (see Appendix I). One
advantage of all three formats was that they were predominantly built upon non-verbal
information. Hence, I did not have to deal with potential language barriers.

Ethnographic Talks

During my work in the public setting the principal I naturally came into contact
with people that also spend (part of) their days in the center of SCLC. In ethnographic
talks with them about the content of my study, their working activities, and their
perspective on street working children, I transformed my initial “covert access”
(Silverman, 2001, p.57) into an open one, i.e. most people that were regularly present at
the research setting knew that I was conducting a study on street working children.

All talks were conducted in Spanish although this is not my native language, and
in many cases, was not the native language of the conversational partners, either.
However, by studying Spanish for several years in my university career and through
diverse study and working residences in Spanish-speaking countries, I consider myself
proficient enough to conduct the ethnographic talks. Most of my conversational partners, whose maternal language was often Tzotzil or Tzeltal, also spoke Spanish because this was the required language to work in the center of SCLC.

Those unstructured observations and interviews provided the important flexibility that is necessary in a study with street working children (Yegedis & Weinbach, 2006). Similar to what Russell (2006) described previously, they were also essential for finding my role in the field, establishing rapport, developing more specific research questions, and to detect and test a potential guide for my later semi-structured interviews. In addition, it created the basis for the following, more structured research work of the census and the interviews. In general, my study followed a process that Michael Agar describes with the following words:

“... you learn something (“collect some data”), then you try to make sense out of it (“analysis”) then you go back and see if the interpretation makes sense in light of new experiences (“collect more data”) then you refine your interpretation (“more analysis”) and so on. The process is dialectic not linear” (Agar, 1980, p.9).

2.5.2 Method 2: Archival Research

To learn more about the children’s socio-demographical environment I also used archival data. One valuable source was the Instituto Nacional de estadística geografía e informática (INEGI). INEGI is a unit of the Mexican government dedicated to the collection and organization of statistical, geographical and economic information on the different states of the country. INEGI provided manifold information about socio-demographic conditions in Chiapas. For the research project, I included only data that either seemed to be critical based on the knowledge of my ethnographic work or that was mentioned as a topic in Tom Weisner’s ecocultural feature list. This information
encompassed housing conditions, years of schooling, literacy rates, language groups, and minimum income.

Furthermore, I had access to the library of the local organization Melel Xojobal that has dedicated its work since 1997 to improve the legal and living situation of the indigenous population in Chiapas, in particular that of minors, through education and information. Although an official collaboration with Melel Xojobal was not possible due to political and bureaucratic reasons, the staff of the organization allowed me to use some of their published and unpublished material about street children in SCLC.


2.5.3 Method 3: Census

Based on the conducted ethnographic observations and talks as well as on the archival research, I designed and conducted a census that systematically captured the following information for each observed street working child in the center of SCLC in a given time period: gender, age, working activity, with or without company, daytime, and weather conditions. This systematized data collection provided an overview about the characteristics of the children’s typical working situation and revealed some gender-related differences in the following categories: Total numbers present in the streets; typical working activity; work times and hours worked; accompanied or individual work.

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In this thesis I follow an oral agreement I made with the staff members of Melel Xojobal to cite only data they had published previously.
The census was limited to five main places and one street in the center of SCLC that were highly frequented by street working boys and girls (for the selection procedure please see p. 40). Counting was done for 14 days (twice per day) every two hours at 8:15 am, 10:15 am, 12:15 pm, 2:15 pm, 4:15 pm, 6:15 pm, and eventually 8:15 pm at each location. The time window of the census was based on the ethnographic observations about common working times of the children in the center of SCLC.

To be able to conduct the census I had to train myself in several areas. First, it was essential to estimate the correct age of the child in a very short period of time. Therefore I invented a game that I daily played with the children. Whenever I met a child for the first time or later, and I did not know her or his age and name, the child and I had to guess each other's name and age. The children liked this game and after one to two weeks I became relatively competent in guessing any child's correct age as well as memorizing the names and appearances of those that I met more often. Becoming familiar with the children's faces was also important to prevent double counting during each census turn. Many children changed their work places during the census period and could therefore easily be counted twice.

2.5.4 Method 4: Semi-structured Interview

The Interview Process

Each interview lasted between 15-20 minutes and was mostly conducted in the working environment. In a few cases, the interviews were performed in the home environment of the children. Before the field phase of the research project began I decided not to use written consent forms because it would have generated an artificial and
uncomfortable ambience among the street working children and their parents. Asking for a signature in an environment with high rates of illiteracy did not seem appropriate.

Hence, before the start of the interview I asked each child or parent and in some cases other legal guardians (founder of the organization O.I.N.A.CH) for an oral assent (see Appendix 2) or oral consent, respectively (see Appendix 3). Thirty-one children claimed that none of their parents was nearby or that they had already asked them in advance (after a while the children knew that this was a required premise). In these cases I asked the children themselves for their oral assent (see Appendix 2). In doing so, I told them in simple words that I was a student from an American school who would like to learn more about the work and living situation of street working children in SCLC to write about it in a paper for my school or in a professional journal. I told them that I would not pay them but that I would give them a notebook as a gift to say ‘thank you’ for their time and effort. I also told them that there was no need to reveal their actual name for the interview. The children were also informed that they could stop the interview or leave questions unanswered whenever they wanted. The fact that all 51 participating children completed the interview can be taken as an indication that the children felt comfortable with the situation.

To conduct the interview we usually sat down nearby convenient places such as church stairs, park walls, benches, or on the ground in less busy corners of streets or small parks. As is common in the Mayan culture, we sat in close distance to each other, often with shoulders, arms, or legs touching. All interviews were conducted in Spanish. However, if a child occasionally had difficulties to understand or answer a question, different attending persons such as friends or older family members of the child repeated
the question in Tzotzil. This was possible because in almost all cases friends or family members such as siblings, mothers, aunts, or cousins surrounded the interviewee. It was common for girls and boys to seek support from their peers or family members while answering the interview questions. This behavior complies with the natural communication pattern of the Mayan culture. Different from Western, more individualistic cultures, it is very unusual to conduct a conversation with a single individual, least of all a child (Greenfield, 1997). As described before, Mayan children are not accustomed to be the focus of attention, and they perceive themselves from a more collectivistic perspective rather than as an individual self (Gaskins, 2003). Therefore, they regularly consulted their friends and family to answer the ‘unusual’ questions about their personal habits and experiences. However, if they did not agree with the suggested answer alternatives they either formulated their own answer or did not answer the question. There was a tendency for more independent answers for children of higher ages, and, interestingly, for children that displayed a higher number of years of school attendance.

An unexpected challenge for the interviews was that the children refused to be recorded by a voice recorder. Although they loved to play around with the device and to record laughing and squealing sounds, they persisted in their will not to be recorded during the interview. This was clearly expressed by one individual: “You take this pencil and this paper and write down what I will tell you. This is the way we will do it” (shoe shining boy, 10 years). I also gave up my idea to use a voice recorder after a preliminary interview with a 9-year old boy. With this child I had very early on an exceptional good relationship. We talked a lot and he told me many details about his life. Furthermore, he
introduced me to his older sister and taught me the prices of his candies, so that I could sell for him while he was using the bathroom (by the way, I didn’t sell anything). When I used the voice recorder I noticed that it provoked the child to tell me a ‘better story’. For example, he started to exaggerate how much he was working and earning, his formerly absent father ‘became’ a policemen and he all of a sudden had many pets like a little fish or a little dog. Due to the fact that I had collected much data about the boy before during ‘informal’ talks and because I also interviewed his older sister, I not only noticed pretty quickly that he displayed a kind of artificial behavior while recorded, but also that there was a high amount of inconsistence between what he was telling in the interview compared to what he had told me when I did not use the voice recorder. Finally, after asking the first eight children for permission to use my voice recorder without success, I decided to stop asking and started to take handwritten notes of every interview I conducted. It became routine for me to check the interview notes immediately after the interview. Thereby I could fill in missing words or correct unreadable writing. Additionally, I made notes about the process and the circumstances of the interview, e.g. emotional reactions from the child or by-standers, the child’s verbal abilities, the child’s attention span, distractions from outside, disturbing events, how much a child relied in his or her answers on others etc. Every night, I transcribed the hand-written data into the computer, and I also checked for potential gaps or contradictions in the interview. Sometimes, I had the opportunity to talk to particular children a second time about those ambiguities in the following days, which made it possible to correct some of them.
The Development of the Interview Guide

To assess the features of the child's ecocultural niche, the design of the Ecocultural Family Interview (EFI) (Weisner, 1997) was followed. The EFI is a qualitative ethno-graphic interview to assess children and families' needs in the context of their socio-cultural environment. The approach is to blend several research traditions into a guided conversational framework and questionnaire, using both open-ended and direct, structured questions. For example, as in the EFI, I encouraged the interviewee to talk about daily routines. In the current study the ecocultural interview comprised ten ecocultural domains, which were defined theoretically by Tom Weisner's ecocultural feature list and his approach to the study of activity settings (Gallimore et al., 1993; Weisner, 1984) and operationally by the insights I gained in the first steps of the research through the archival research as well as the ethnographic observations and talks. However, since the interview guide had to be adjusted to the local setting, I could not just transfer it to the local situation. Instead, to assure construct validity I identified essential ecocultural domains through ethnographic observations and talks, as well as through archival research. To assure test-retest reliability I repeated parts of the interview with approximately one third of the children. With one child I conducted the complete interview twice. I also controlled consistency of the interview results by crosschecking them with the results of the other measurements such as the census and ethnographic data.

A further challenge was that even though the children were interested in being asked questions, they did not give long answers. Although I decided in the first place to
use the format of a semi-structured interview that would allow the children to talk about a certain topic as much and as long they wanted; the children preferred to give short one-sentence answers. Therefore, I remodeled and split the original open-ended and narrative interview questions about general ecocultural topics such as work, school, family, housing conditions, food, health, and leisure based on the children's daily routines into a higher number of questions that concerned smaller units of these domains or their routines. For example, in the adjusted interview guide I not only asked the child to tell me generally about his daily meals, but included more detailed questions such as when, where, how often, and what the child usually, or preferably, ate. These more closed questions helped the children to answer them. Naturally, this kind of a more detail-oriented question catalog (see Appendix 4) also comprises the risk to steer the children into certain categories of answers or statements. However, because in Mayan culture children are not accustomed to hold long monologs with adults at all, and in general Maya children are more expected to listen to adults instead of talking themselves (Gaskins, 2003), the redesigned interview strategy was more successful in motivating the children to talk about their daily life. Nonetheless, I still used the interview guide (see Appendix 4) mainly as a springboard or a checklist to organize the interviews. When a child, while talking about a certain topic, mentioned information that belonged to another topic I encouraged him or her to continue on that topic and to come back to the initial interview question later. For example, children often mentioned the matter of going to school when they talked about their motives to work or their daily work schedule.
Language of the Semi-structured Interview

A native Spanish speaker who holds a university degree checked the question catalog for potential mistakes in translation and understandability. Then I pre-tested the adequacy of the interview guide and comprehensibility of the questions in informal talks with the children. However, the questions were not checked and translated back by a bilingual person in Spanish and Tzotzil as initially planned. Therefore, it is possible that "reasonable approximations in translations" (Agar, M., 1980, p. 103) were not always achieved and not all existing cultural differences regarding concepts behind certain expressions such as 'home' or 'older and young sibling' may have been detected in advance. However, in the course of the informal talks with the children and other community members I could clarify some of these hidden misunderstandings. During the interviews I paid special attention to the fact that certain terms in Spanish could have different cultural connotations in Tzotzil or Tzeltal by formulating each question as openly as possible. For example, because many Mayan families live together with relatives in one compound, I asked the child, who he or she is living with and not with whom he or she is living with in a house. It was also important to know that the languages Tzotzil and Tzeltal provide special expressions to describe family relationships. For example, different notions exist for siblings depending on the relative age and gender of the focal child and the gender of the particular sibling.
2.5 Data Reduction & Analysis

Analyses were conducted for the structured and unstructured observation notes (38 days), the informal talks, the census (14 days/6 times a day) and the semi-structured interviews (51 interviews). In addition, the results of each instrument were combined with each other and compared with the earlier stated archive research based data. The counting of the census data revealed the differences in total numbers as well as in percentages between boys and girls.

The structured and unstructured observation notes and the informal talks were coded using the presented categories of the ecocultural features list and the activity setting approach. Coding categories were: working activity, working conditions, company when working, school attendance, family structure, chores at home, housing conditions, leisure time activities, meals and food, health future perspective, and clothes. The data from the ethnographic observations and talks was analyzed with special respect for the typical differences between street working girls and boys, e.g. working activity, organization of work, clothing during work, working times etc.

For reduction and analysis of the interview data, the following categories referring to specific ecocultural domains were established: working activity, ethnicity and language, family, structure, housing and living, working conditions and times, working atmosphere, importance of and motivation to work, chores and sibling care taking, school attendance, leisure time, future perspectives and aspirations. Each interview question and its answers were assigned to one category accordingly. This procedure was possible, because of the relative shortness and simplicity of the answers providing direct,
unambiguous evidence in the questioned topic. The answers in each category were summarized and are presented either in total numbers or percentage. Again the data was specifically scanned for typical differences in these categories between girls and boys.

Once the data from all the different measures was coded or counted, respectively, I searched for those factors that seem to be essential to determine differences between street working boys and girls. I also checked for gender-typical patterns that became visible in the daily life of the street working children. Only factors and patterns that were supported by more than one measurement were followed.

In addition, I conducted a sub-analysis for differences between street and non-street working girls.
Chapter 3 Results

The following results are presented in three different sections: census data, interview data, and activity setting data. All sections will be supported by ethnographic as well as archival data.

3.1 Findings from the Census Data

The census data intended to give a general overview about the distribution of street working boys and girls, and their characteristic work activities as well as work times across genders.

Working Activities by Gender

The census revealed that in SCLC almost half of the street working children were girls (boys= 52.2%; girls= 47.8%). These numbers roughly corresponded to the 2005 census data\(^6\) conducted by the street child organization Meel Xojobal (2005). They counted 57.3% street working boys and 40.7% of street working girls.

The observed boys and girls were mainly engaged in the following working activities overall: shoe shining, selling (and producing) Maya craftwork, selling candies, selling food (corn, chips, mangos), asking for school donations\(^7\), selling balloons, selling rain protection, selling watches, selling little cheap toys, as well as selling ice-cream and soft-drinks. Selling craftwork was the most common working activity among street

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\(^6\) Their census included the north, south and center districts of SCLC, whereas my census focused on the center.

\(^7\) This was a group of children, who fooled (mainly) tourists by asking in behalf of their school for signatures and donations, although they actually kept the donations for themselves or their families.
working girls (81.7%), whereas the most popular activities for street working boys were shoe shining (48.6%), followed by selling candies (28.9%). In contrast to their male counterparts street working girls were mainly limited to only one working activity (selling craftwork) while boys follow a wider range of working activities (Table 3).

Table 3. Distribution of Working Activity by Gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working Activity</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selling craftwork</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>81.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shining shoes</td>
<td>48.6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selling candies</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selling food</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking for school donations</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selling toys</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selling balloons</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selling watches</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selling ice-cream/soft-drinks</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selling rain protection</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fact that no girl could ever be observed to shine shoe suggests that this working activity is exclusively reserved for boys in the street community. Ethnographic talks with street workers from Melel Xojibal confirmed this finding. During their nine years of street work with street working children in and around SCLC, only one girl was reported to work as a shoe shiner in the periphery of SCLC for a short period of time. In contrast the census revealed that selling craftwork, an activity that is predominately conducted by girls was also performed by 7.4% of boys (usually young boys, see the
following paragraph for more detailed findings). Girls and boys were similarly (5.1% and 4.9%, respectively) involved in selling self-produced foods such as corn, popcorn, mangos, chips, or cookies. With the exception of one girl who regularly sold cheap toys all other working activities were exclusively conducted by boys. These activities such as selling balloons, selling rain protection, selling watches, as well as selling ice cream and soft drinks were conducted by around 7% of the street working boys. A sworn circle of street working boys and girls in the age range from seven to thirteen years followed the rather unusual working activity to ask tourists for school donations. After becoming more familiar with this group, that made up 3.3% of the boys and 1.8% of girls, respectively, some of the children confided to me that this was only a trick to earn money.\textsuperscript{8}

Overall, the results on the distribution of working activity and gender revealed a wider range of working activities for boys compared with girls.

\textit{Characteristics of Female and Male Working Activities}

An analysis of the census focusing on the children’s age and the three most prevalent working activities (selling craftwork, shoe shining, and selling candy) indicated that almost all boys selling craftwork were not older than nine years old and usually accompanied by adult craftwork-selling female family members (Table 4).

\textsuperscript{8} I classified this borderline legal activity also as a working activity because it resembles other usual street working activities in the following aspects: the children spent several hours a day approaching tourists at the street; the thereby earned money is an important source of income for them and their families; the children use tools (notebook, pencils) and apply a distinct strategy to earn money.
Table 4. Age Frequency of Children Accompanied by Adult Female Craftwork Sellers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15/16 years</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The age range of accompanied boys vending craftwork encompassed three to eleven years. The average age of those boys is 5.6 years with a mode 4.5 years of age. This finding suggests that selling craftwork is accepted for boys only until a certain age.

In contrast, the age of girls that were in adult company when selling craftwork ranged from three to sixteen years, with a majority of them ranging between six and twelve years of age. The average age for a girl selling Maya craftwork in the company of others was 7.9 years. The fact that a high number of craftwork-selling children were accompanied by adults indicated a gradual learning process, in which older siblings or
adults served as tutors and role models teaching the essentials of this working activity (please see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Craftwork selling group of Maya people.

This finding is very different from what was observed for the working activity that boys predominately follow, shoe shining. Shoe shining boys were in company of older family members for hardly any time. Instead, they either worked and switched between places independently, or met in loose groups with other same-aged shoe shiners (please see Figure 9). However, with only very few exceptions most of the shoe shiners were 10 years and older. Ethnographic observations about boys younger than 10 years disclosed that those young boys had more difficulties to recruit customers than the older boys, as well as in bargaining for an adequate price, and to socialize with peers. When asked where or how they learned their business, most shoe shiners reported that either a male relative such as their older brothers and cousins taught them, or they had to learn it by themselves.
The second most common working activity for both genders was selling candies. However, more boys (74.4%) than girls (25.6%) were engaged in this activity. In addition, there were clear gender differences in how boys and girls conducted this work. Boys (as well as men) sold the candies by walking around with a wooden vendor's tray strapped over their shoulders and hanging in front of their stomach. Alternatively, the mobile tray was setup on a designated tray holder (please see Figure 10).
Figure 10. Mobile candy selling tray set-up on a tray holder.

Girls (as well as women) usually sat down on the ground at a street corner, having the same wooden selling trays next to them. Female candy sellers were never spotted walking around selling and carrying the tray. When arriving at or leaving their working-place the girls and women commonly carried the selling trays by putting them into their shawls on their backs. The shawl then covered the tray including the sweets and the girls and women did not continue to vend. Ethnographic observations revealed that - different from boys and men - female candy sellers never approached customers by offering their services to them, but waited until customers approached them. Ethnographic talks with local citizens and street sellers indicated that female candy sellers were a rather new phenomenon in the streets of SCLC. Hence, it was still somewhat exceptional for females to vend candies on the street, which could explain why they did it in a manner that distinguishes them from male candy sellers. Many of the candy sellers were young adult single Maya mothers accompanied by their small children in the age range from birth to
three years old. Selling candy seems to allow those mothers to earn money and to take care of her young children at the same time, without having to rely on a broader net of family members.

In general, the census revealed that it was common for children to join their mothers or other older family members when working. About 50% of all observed children working on the street were accompanied by older family members. This result again corresponded to the 2005 Melel Xojbal census. Their census revealed a ratio of 53.2% accompanied to 46.8% unaccompanied children. In agreement with Melel Xojbal I consider these accompanied children passing through a phase of informal apprenticeship in order to become full-fledged street-worker when they become older. This assumption is confirmed by findings from ethnographic observations indicating that the child street selling activities resemble the activities of adult street sellers. It is peculiar however that those apprentice children are predominantly in the company of female family members. Men were rarely observed accompanying children during their work. On the few occasions male adults were observed with younger family members in the center of SCLC, those youths were usually adolescent boys in the age range from 11 to 16 years who assisted in works such as selling rain protection, balloons, as well as carrying merchandise to the market. 9

Additional Census Findings

A surprising result of the census was that more girls than boys worked after sunset. During the period of this research study (May to July 2006) sunset was between 6

9 These findings are only valid for the center of SCLC, occasional observations at market zones in the periphery of SCLC pointed at different patterns of adult-child-groups.
and 7 pm. As depicted in Table 5, a higher percentage of girls worked toward the end of the day, whereas slightly more boys than girls worked during the morning hours.

Table 5. Gender Distribution by Time of Day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time of day</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time point 1</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
<td>48.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7am, 8:15am, 8:30am)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time point 2</td>
<td>59.2%</td>
<td>40.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10:15am, 10:30am, 11:05 am)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time point 3</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(12:15pm, 12:30pm, 12:00pm)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time point 4</td>
<td>52.2%</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2:15pm, 2:30pm, 3 pm)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time point 5</td>
<td>41.5%</td>
<td>58.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4:15pm, 4:30pm, 5pm)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time point 6</td>
<td>42.7%</td>
<td>57.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6:15pm, 6:30pm, 7:15pm, 8pm*)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>52.2%</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*fiesta

Furthermore, census data indicated that weather conditions clearly influenced the number of street working boys and girls on the street. On rainy days fewer children could be observed in the streets.

The census also reveals that at 4 of the 5 counting locations, both genders were present in roughly even numbers. However, if the children did not work with their families, they always stayed in same-gender groups and did not intermingle with groups of the opposite sex.
3.2 Findings from the Semi-structured Interviews

In the following paragraph the findings from the semi-structured interview will be presented. First, the interview sample profile will be introduced. The subsequent results focus on the children's ethnicity and maternal language, family structure, housing and living conditions, working conditions and environment, motivation to work and parental influence, use and importance of income, chores at home, sibling care taking, leisure time and play partners, schooling, future perspectives & aspirations. Finally, there will be a subsection that depicts preliminary results of the differences of street working girls and non-street working girls that came the same neighborhood and shared a similar socio-economic background.

Profile of the Interview Sample

The findings were based on 51 interviews in total (coming from different 33 families). However, the main and first part of the analysis focused on 45 interviews with street working boys (n=27) and girls (n=18), only (Table 6). The 45 children came from 28 different, poor working families.
Table 6. Profile of the Interview Sample.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working activity</th>
<th>Boys Age range: 9-16 years Average age: 11.3 years Mode age: 10 years</th>
<th>Girls Age range: 7-13 years Average age: 9.8 years Mode age: 10 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>shining shoes</td>
<td>14 (51.9%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>selling gloves &amp; socks</td>
<td>3 (11.1%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>asking for school donations</td>
<td>2 (7.4%)</td>
<td>1 (5.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>selling craftwork</td>
<td>2 (7.4%)</td>
<td>17 (94.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>selling lemons</td>
<td>2 (7.4%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>selling candies</td>
<td>1 (3.7%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>selling oranges</td>
<td>1(3.7%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>selling pork chips</td>
<td>1(3.7%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>selling beans</td>
<td>1(3.7%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As stated previously the interview sample presents a non-probability sample. Hence, even though the quota for the main working activities for both genders, namely shoe shining for boys (census: 48.6% vs. interview: 51.9%) and craftwork selling for girls’ (census: 81.7 % vs. interview: 94.4 %) were roughly matched, the second popular working activity, namely candy selling for males and females (census: 28.9% and 10.9%) was highly underrepresented in the interviews (3.7% and 0%). Because some of the interviews were conducted in the children’s neighborhood (and not at their working place) some working activities presented in the interview sample could not be observed during the census in the inner-city area of SCLC.

In a subsequent subsection I will compare the six non-street working girls to the 18 girls that work on the street. However, because it is not the main intention of this
study to focus on differences between street and non-street-working girls, these results should be considered preliminary. The non-street-working girls received a modified interview guide that omitted those questions that were specially concerned about street work.

Ethnicity and Maternal Language

More than 93% of the street working children identified themselves as indigenous with Tzotzil as their maternal language. Only one boy and one girl reported that they are either Mexican or non-indigenous, respectively. Both children also stated that they predominantly speak Spanish at home, although the boy’s family also knows Tzotzil. When asked about her ethnicity, one girl answered with “I don’t know” even though her maternal language was Tzotzil and she always wore traditional Maya clothes while working on the streets. Interestingly, more boys than girls indicated that their families spoke Spanish at home (11 out of 27 boys, compared to only one out of 18 girls). Overall, Tzotzil was the maternal language for the majority of the street working children. Only three children spoke Tzeltal at home.

Family Structure

Two thirds of the interviewed children lived together with both of their parents and their siblings. Fewer children lived only with their mother and siblings, or other relatives. Surprisingly, only around 25% of the children shared their home in the city with other family members such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, or sisters in law. This is contrary to the traditional way of living of Maya families in rural areas who commonly
live together in extended family groups at one house or compound. However, informal
talks revealed that many city families cultivate close connections (e.g. exchange of food
supplies) with extended family members from villages outside SCLC. Most children had
four to five older and younger siblings with an average of 3.9 siblings. All of the fathers
and mothers, half of whom had visited school at one point of time, worked in informal
low wage sectors. Fathers were predominantly engaged as construction workers, drivers,
or in the agricultural sector. Their mothers often stayed at home to run the household.
Interestingly, more girls than boys mentioned that their mothers would follow a specific
work such as craftwork selling, working in the fields, or selling at the market. Overall,
there was a general tendency for the boys and girls to be better informed or recall more
easily the work of same gender family members. Younger male siblings worked-
depending on their age - as shoe shiners, car washers, candy sellers, food sellers, or they
helped at home. Adult male siblings often were engaged in small clothing and grocery
shops at or nearby the market. The majority of female siblings tended to sell craftwork or
help at home. Several interviewed children reported that their siblings were still too small
to work. However, the interviews indicated that it was very common for Maya children to
work in or outside the family home.

_Housing and Living Conditions_

All street-children lived in shantytowns (colonias) located at the periphery of
SCLC. Those were called Emiliano Zapata, Palestina, La Hormiga, La Florida, Las
Callas, Prudencio Moscoso, San Juan del Bosque, Primero de Enero, Retiro San Martin,
and San Antonio. The three children that asked tourists for ‘school donations’ shared a
rented room with six other children in one of the colonias when working in SCLC. Otherwise, on two to three days a week they lived with their families in the distant community 'Las Margaritas.'

The children lived in houses with poor structural quality. Corrugated metal served as roofing material, while the walls were usually built from wallboards (60%) and less often from concrete (31%). The majority of the dwellings had either dirt (40%) or cement (44%) floors. Most children had electricity and potable water in their home. Only three children reported not to have electricity and one boy did not have potable water in the family home. Despite their relatively poor housing conditions, surprisingly 71% of the children's families possess a TV in their home. In addition, 42% of the children's families had cell phones (21 families), 30% had landlines (15 families), and 12% had both (6 families).

Around 75% of the children's families grew vegetables (very often corn and beans) and fruits, for their own consumption and in rare cases to sell the additional harvest. It was also common for many families to keep small animal livestock such as chickens, rabbits, or ducks as additional meat supply. Foods that the children consumed on a daily basis were beans, vegetables, chicken, eggs, and rice. This list was similar to the one listing the children's favorite foods: beans, chicken, vegetables, eggs, and any kind of meat. However, several children mentioned that meat was not available regularly. Meals were usually taken at home or in some cases were brought from home. Ethnographic observations revealed that many street working children additionally liked to buy inexpensive snacks or candies in the street. However, for children who spent most of the day working on the street it is was very often only possible to eat very early in the
morning before their work, or in the late evening after work. Ethnographic talks detected some exceptional cases of children who sometimes did not eat for the whole entire day on the street, because there was no food available for them at home in the morning before they started their work.

Except for one boy, none of the children reported to ever have been severely sick. The most common minor diseases the children had suffered from were colds, headaches, fever, flu, respiratory diseases, bellyache, as well as skin diseases. Also, only few children stated ever having had severe injuries. Those who were severely hurt in the past most commonly cut themselves with a knife or machete, or burnt themselves with fire. When they were ill or wounded, some stopped working and/or going to school but stayed in bed instead. Others reported that they worked and/or went to school nevertheless. However, most children did not see a doctor when having these diseases or injuries. Unfortunately, no conclusions could be drawn from the interviews as to the cause of this behavior: Either lack of severity of the diseases or injuries, lack of primary health care, or lack of financial means for medical care. The one boy who classified himself as severely ill stated that he had a brain tumor. Symptoms of the tumor were strong headaches, fainting, or having red eyes, as well as a general bad physical wellbeing. I noticed that the 12-year-old suffered from a speech disorder, which could have been a further indicator of his tumor. The young boy also reported that for financial reasons he could not afford regular treatment, or the necessary brain surgery.

In summary, it appears that most children came from very low-income households that required them to work in order to assure the family livelihood. At the same time most families could provide enough resources to satisfy the children's basic needs.
Nonetheless, resources for additional costs such as improved housing and living conditions, higher nutritional intake, or healthcare were not always available.

Working Conditions and Times

The majority of the children reached work by foot. The walking distances ranged between 15 minutes to 1.5 hours of walking. Only on rare occasions could some children afford a bus trip. Several girls met each other, as well as with other female adult street sellers, in order to walk the distance from home to work in groups. This seemed especially important for them in the evenings after sunset. In informal talks some girls admitted that they were afraid of walking home in the darkness. Interestingly, seven of the boys but none of the girls reached their work via bike, which they often shared with one of their brothers. This suggests that it is acceptable for Maya boys, but not for girls to ride a bicycle (Maynard, 2004).

In the center the boys’ and girls’ usual working places encompassed busy shopping streets and places, nearby markets (Merced, José Tieleman), as well as parks. While craft selling girls also hawked in hotels and restaurants in the center, boys did not. Instead, many of the boys spent their day in the park Santo Domingo, a place that most girls seemed to avoid. In general, ethnographic observations revealed that girls and boys tended to work and hang out in same-gender groups only.\(^\text{10}\)

There were also several striking gender differences in the working times of the street working children. The interviews indicated that the children worked an average of

\(^{10}\text{Exceptions were very young boys (≤ 7 years) who accompanied their older sisters.}\)
about 8 hours per day. The first difference was that the boys tended to work around seven hours, while girls tended to work around nine hours per day. Second, 83% of the street working girls still worked when it was dark, compared with only 18.5% of the street working boys. Ethnographic observations can provide several potential explanations for this phenomenon. First of all, due to the nature of their work boys offered their services (shoe shining, selling inexpensive candies) mostly to local customers, whereas craft work vending girls more relied on international and national tourists as customers. In accordance with this, higher numbers of street working boys were present in the morning hours when local citizens were on their way to work. In contrast, more girls were present in the evening hours, when tourists frequently strolled around the city. A second explanation for the different working times of boys and girls is that girls usually worked in groups, whereas boys tended to work alone. Hence, girls might have felt more protected when continuing working in the darkness. Lastly, another plausible reason might be that it was very difficult for shoe shining boys to recruit customers in the darkness when one cannot see anymore if one’s shoes are dirty or not.

A third interesting gender difference emerged in the numbers of days per week the children usually worked. While 76% of the street working boys and girls worked six to seven days a week (29% everyday, 47% everyday except Sun- or Saturday), 20% of the boys only worked on the weekend, when they did not attend school. Many of these boys mentioned that they worked on the street in order to go school (e.g. to pay for school fees, inscriptions or supplies). None of the interviewed girls worked only on the weekend. This

11 In the interview I did not ask the children for their total work hours, but for the times they usually start and stop their work.
12 These results are also mirrored in the census data about the distribution of gender and daytime of work.
result points to a certain subgroup of street working boys that clearly favored school over work. Such a group did not exist among street working girls.

Working Atmosphere

The general result from this section is that most children felt very comfortable in their working environment. Two thirds of the children felt that they had good relationships with other street working children. Interestingly, when this group was asked about their relations with other street working children, girls exclusively referred to girls, and boys focused on their relations with boys only. However, for those girls and boys who stated that they had bad relations with other children (33%), the interviews and ethnographic talks revealed an interesting gender difference. Girls who tended to have bad relations with other girls complained about them saying ‘bad things’, gossiping, and stealing customers. The girls clearly distinguished between their girl friends and their ‘enemigas’ (Engl. enemies), with whom they avoided contact. For example, two groups of girls who had a hostile relationship with each other would refuse to participate in the same games that were initiated either by the street child organization Melel Xojobal, or by myself. The girls made a clear distinction between their in-group and out-groups based on relational aggressiveness. Boys, on the other hand, complained about getting beaten up and kicked by other boys. Interestingly, they experienced this physical aggressiveness not with unfamiliar boys, but with boys they commonly tend to play or hung out with and who they described on other occasions as friends.

Eighty-four percent of the children felt that their customers behaved well towards them. This result was supported by ethnographical observations and talks. During the
research period I never observed any kind of open hostility between the children and their customers. For the girls customers were mostly international and national tourists, whereas the boys’ customers were often local businessmen, policemen, municipal administrators, or other workers. However, ethnographic talks with several of these customers about the life of the street working children, brought up that many of the customers thought that the children were forced to work by their parents. In several customers’ view the parents of those children were described as alcoholics who would not work themselves, but use the children’s earnings to buy alcohol or other drugs. Defying those stereotypes, it was surprising to learn that 41 out of 45 children liked the work they were doing. Only two boys declared that they only liked their work ‘sometimes’ or ‘a little bit’. However, the majority of the children could not describe why they would like their work. Only a few children stated that they liked to earn money while others mentioned that they liked to learn English (during contact with tourists), walk around the streets and that they are doing ‘honest work’. Reasons to dislike the work were: Getting into fights (only boys), not having customers, not earning well, getting dirty, getting tired, unsubstantiated complaints from customers, and rainy weather. Again, half of the children could not tell any reasons that would make their work less likable. Only a few children had former negative working experiences. Three children reported that someone tried to steal their own or their sibling’s money and five boys complained that other boys hit them in the past. Also almost 80 % of the children were not afraid of anything in particular when they were working. Only three boys were afraid of getting beaten up again, getting hit by a car, or that someone would steal their
money. One girl stated to be afraid when walking home in the dark alone with her mother.

An exception to this mostly positive working attitude and feeling of the street working children, was presented by the group of children who tricked tourists by asking them for school donations. Those children not only had several bad experiences in the past such as having to run away, or someone taking their notebooks, they also did not feel accepted by the rest of the street community. All three of the interviewed children of this group admitted that they were also permanently afraid of being arrested or assaulted.

In summary, street working children perceived their work and their working environment as predominantly positive. However, the results also indicated that the working environment of the girls differed significantly from that of the boys. Another striking finding is that children that were engaged in borderline legal working activities perceived the working environment and atmosphere as much more negative compared with their legally engaged counterparts.

Importance of and Motivations to Work

The majority of children used the earned money to buy food and clothes, or they gave it to their families. Only two children regularly bought candies from their earnings. Two boys saved it for themselves and another three boys and one girl used their earnings exclusively to cover their school costs. Seven of the boys and two of the girls used the money for school costs among other costs such as food and clothes. These answers

13 In contradiction to this data, ethnographic observations revealed that it is quite common for minor (as well as adult street) sellers to consume inexpensive candies while working. However, due to the fact that the amount of money spent for candies is comparably low, those costs represent only a minor part of the income.
indicate that the children were important earners in their family and perceived themselves as responsible for their own and their family's livelihood.

Most children did not fear their parents' punishment after a day of unsuccessful work (in the interview described as 'bringing home no or only a little bit of money'). Seventy-six percent of the children stated that there would be no punishment from their parents or other negative consequences. Only two boys mentioned that their mother would hit them (4.4%), while two other boys reported regularly getting scolded (4.4%). A variety of children instead pointed to more practical consequences such as, that they would ask O.I.N.A.CH for the money, only eat vegetables that day, or that they would have to make more money the next day. When I asked the children what would happen to them if they stopped working 16 answered that this would not be a problem because their parents and siblings work as well, or that they can get money from relatives. Six children would immediately look for other work. Others spoke about more negative consequences: 'We would not have money' (4), 'we would have nothing to eat' (3), 'we could not go to school or buy school supplies' (3)\(^1\), 'I would feel sad' (2), 'my little 10-year old brother would have to work' (1), 'my mother would hit me' (1).

A great difference between the two genders emerged when I asked who decided about their work. Whereas for 74.1% of the boys it was their own decision, this was correct for only 16.7% of the street working girls. For 77.8% of the street working girls but only 25.9% of the street working boys their mother, father, parents, or female relatives (in two cases of parentless children) made this decision.

\(^{14}\) These were male street working children, only.
These results indicate the importance of the children's work in contributing to the family income. It suggests that the children understand the necessity of their work and are not forced into it by their parents. However, compared with girls, boys seem to have more individual influence on the decision to work on the streets.

**Chores at Home & Sibling Care Taking**

Only four children did not have to do chores at home. Surprisingly, no gender differences emerged for this category. Most commonly, boys and girls had to wash dishes at home. Other household chores done by boys were mopping or sweeping, carrying water, buying fruit as well as making beds. Girls' chores were mopping or sweeping, weaving, folding laundry, ironing, cooking, or cleaning the house in general.

More street working girls than boys were involved in sibling caretaking. More than 72% of the girls, but only 18.5% of the boys regularly cared for younger siblings. This result matched with former ethnographic observations indicating that boys tend to work more independently on the streets, whereas girls often stayed in groups of younger and older (female) family members. Thereby the girls were taking care of younger siblings while at the same time working on the street.

**Leisure Time**

I also asked the street working children if they had free time and what they would usually do during this free time. Seventy-three percent of the children had some free time for themselves. Many of the younger children (<12 years) spent their time playing and almost all of the children spent their leisure time in the company of some family
members. Children also regularly visited their extended families. Few children listened to the radio, watched TV, or studied. Several of the older children liked to go for a walk. Similar to other children around the world, the boys loved to play ball games (10) or play with toy cars (15), whereas girls preferred to play with dolls, barbies, or teddy bears (13). However, the children usually had to share these toys with other siblings. Seventeen children did not have any toys at all at home. In contrast to this scarcity of toys, three brothers of one family stated independently from each other to have a Microsoft Xbox video game console at home.  

In addition, ethnographic observations on the streets revealed that the children regularly played while working on the street. In less busy times the children often started to play with siblings and peers as well as with objects that were available, such as the products they were selling (bracelets, belts, little dolls etc.) or with things they could find in the streets (e.g. empty bottles, magazines, old CDs). Older boys regularly played soccer, cards, or tossing games with coins or little stones (similar to jacks). Some, but not all of the children also participated regularly in the games or painting activity offered by the street child organization Melel Xojobal at two afternoons a week (Figure 10).

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15 This family also possessed several TVs and mobile cell phones.
However, as social workers from Melel Xojobal reported and as I could observe myself on site, most of the nearby parents or other older family members did not encourage their children to play so palpably. Nonetheless, those parents hardly interrupted their children when they played in a more informal manner, calmly beside their work. Interestingly, I never observed any fights or other forms of aggressiveness among the street working children during these phases of play.

These results indicate that for Maya street working children play is a common activity limited through parental expectations. It seems that the parents neither prohibit play, nor do they reinforce it as is common in Western societies. The way the children play conformed with typical gender roles in play around the world. The low level of aggression in these play activities is noteworthy.

**Schooling**

From the interviewed street working children 63% of the boys and 50% of the girls reported going to school. However, ethnographic observations found at least two
boys and two girls working during times they reported to be in school. (Three of those four children were part of the group of children who tricked tourists to get donations.) All but three boys attended elementary school, which encompasses six grades. Around two-thirds of the children attended school in the morning (9 a.m.-2 p.m.), whereas the other third went to school in the afternoon (2 p.m.-7 p.m.). Some of the children explained that they went to afternoon school because these were ‘special’ schools that had lower inscription and school fees, provided donated school supplies, and did not require wearing a school uniform on a daily basis. All of the interviewed children liked to go to school. For 52% of those who attended school, going to school was more important than working or playing. Thirty-five percent declared that their work and school had equal importance for them. Thirteen percent of the school-going children perceived their work as more important than school. None of the street working children thought that playing was the most important in their everyday activities.

The most common reasons for children to go to school were: ‘I want to study’ (10), ‘I like to go there’ (7), ‘I want to know how to read and write’, (3). Individual children went to school to get a better job in the future, to learn Spanish and English, to become a teacher, to sell better, because they had a scholarship, or their mother wanted them to go. The parents seemed to support their children by buying the school supplies for them.

All children who went to school reported knowing how to read and write. However, when interacting with them I noticed a great diversity in their literacy skills. From those children who attended school earlier but stopped going for some reason, only those who went until the fourth grade, stated that they knew how to read and write. None
of the children, who had never attended school knew how to read and write. The reasons that these children never went to school were: ‘I don’t have the necessary documents’ (4), ‘I have to earn money’ (4), ‘I don’t have the money’ (3), ‘I don’t want to go’ (2). Most of those children’s siblings also never went to school for similar reasons. Very few exceptions were two children whose younger siblings went to kindergarten or to beginner grades of elementary school.

Sixty-three % of the street working boys attended school, 33.3% never went to school and 3.7% (one 16 year old) stopped going to school after elementary school. For the street working girls those numbers are almost reverse: 39% of the street working girls attended school, whereas 61% of the girls did not visit school because they either never went to school (27.8%), or they stopped going before finishing elementary school (33.3%). Those girls stopped going to school because their parents asked them to do so in order to work more hours a day. Several of these girls expressed their personal desire to continue school but none of them believed that this would happen.

When asking the children for the reason why they were working, it was striking that 35.3 % of the street working boys who went to school answered that they actually worked in order to earn the money to go to school. None of the girls reported this. Only when asked for what their income was used for, two (22.2%) of the girls in contrast to seven (41 %) of the boys reported that (at least parts of) the money was used to cover school costs. This difference between genders in schooling is also supported by the earlier stated fact that around 20% of the boys only worked on the weekends when they did not have school. At the same time during the whole period of my research I never met a girl that exclusively worked at the weekend but went to school during the week.
Beside the differences that are revealed by the content of the interview answers, the influence of schooling also became obvious in the behavior of the children during the interview. After each interview I added a description about the child's behavior and appearance at the time of the interview. These notes indicated that children that attended school for more than four years regularly were better able to express themselves verbally, to understand more complex interview questions, to stay focused throughout the course of the interview, and to answer questions with slightly more openness and creativity. However, I consider these notes about the children's interview behavior to be anecdotal because I did not capture or measure their behavior in a systematic manner. Further research will be required to draw further conclusions about this observation.

Finally, I also learned through informal talks with some street working girls that schooling had an influence on the children's play. While playing with several street vending girls a variety of sing and hand-clapping games, some of the girls explained to me that another girl that was not participating but observing our play during the whole time, could not participate because 'she did not how to play these games, because she never went to school'.

Future perspectives and Aspirations

Street working children who went to school for a longer period of time had an easier time answering questions about their professional future plans than their less schooled counterparts. Also the career aspirations differed for schooled and unschooled street working children. In particular, schooling seemed to generate higher career aspirations for the interviewed street working boys (Table 7).
Table 7. Career Aspirations Schooled Versus Unschooled Street Working Boys.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career aspiration</th>
<th>Schooled boys (n=17)</th>
<th>Unschooled boys (n=10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>doctor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>job in academia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>civil engineer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>soldier</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>taxi driver</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>construction worker</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work in a shop</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>selling ice-cream</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shoe shiner</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>selling chips in the street</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>selling chewing gums</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>any kind of work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among street working girls the difference in career aspirations between schooled and unschooled girls was less clear. A fairly similar amount of schooled and unschooled street working girls preferred to sell craftwork or to become a housewife as adults (Table 8). This result might indicate that schooling does not influence street working girls as much as boys in their future aspirations. The girls’ future professional plans resemble still very much the role of a traditional Maya woman (doing housework, producing and selling Maya craftwork). However, one factor that could have influenced this result is that the interviewed girls are on average 1.5 years younger than the boys. Hence, they might develop more advanced future plans with increasing age.
Table 8. Career Aspirations Schooled Versus Unschooled Street Working Girls.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career aspiration</th>
<th>Schooled girls (n=10)</th>
<th>Unschooled girls (n=8)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>doctor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nurse</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>waitress</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>selling craftwork</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>house wife</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>house wife and selling at the market</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, this result was different for the subgroup of girls who did not work on the street. Those girls, who all went to school, clearly displayed (similar to the street working boys) higher career aspirations than their street working schooled and unschooled female counterparts (please see Table 9, page 93).

Comparison of street working girls with non-street working girls

Those girls who did not work on the street but came from similar neighborhoods as the street working girls and also identified themselves as indigenous. The interviews revealed no significant differences in living and housing conditions between street and non-street working girls. Their parents had similar low wage jobs and a similar level of education as the parents’ of the street working girls. The non-street working girls had as many siblings as the street working girls (on average).

However, there were also some interesting differences between the two groups. As mentioned before only less than half of the street working, but all of the non-street
working girls went to school. In addition, compared to one in 18 street working girls, two of the six non-street working girls spoke Spanish as their first language at home. Another difference between the two groups was that most of the non-street working girls had older siblings who were employed in a household, in shops, or at the market. These jobs might have provided a slightly higher and more secure income compared to other jobs in the streets. In fact, three of the six non-street working girls had older brothers who migrated to work elsewhere (two of them were working the U.S.). None of the street working children ever mentioned having siblings who migrated for work reasons. The fact that the non-street working girls had disproportionally more often older siblings who migrated for work or who were engaged in relatively stable employment could be an explanation why none of the girls had to earn money on the street. The older siblings' financial support might have assured the families of the non-street working girls a higher source of income compared to the rest of the poor working Maya families. This extra money might have allowed younger siblings to attend school. Those two non-street working girls that did not have older siblings working in such employment both received scholarships in order to go to school. One girl possessed a school scholarship sponsored by the Mexican state, the second girl received full support for living and school costs through the street child organization O.I.N.A.CH. However, the girl who received the school scholarship reported that she alone was doing all household chores because her mother sold food at the street and her two brothers also worked outside the home (her father had left the family). The girl who was supported by O.I.N.A.CH reported that she did many chores at the orphanage of O.I.N.A.CH and that she also regularly assisted at the market stall of the O.I.N.A.CH director’s family.
Another difference between the two girl groups, already implied in the above section, was that the non-street working girls showed similarly high career as schooled street working boys and much higher career aspirations than their street working female counterparts (Table 9).


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Career aspiration</th>
<th>Street working girls (n=18)</th>
<th>Non-street working girls (n=6)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>doctor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accounting</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nurse</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work in a shop</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>waitress</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>selling craftwork</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>house wife</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>house wife and selling at the market</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't want to work</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't know</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3 Findings from Activity Setting Analyses

In the following the results of four selected activity setting analyses are reported. Those settings represent daily life situations of two typical street working girls (a four-year-old and 11-year-old) and of two typical street working boys (a four-year-old and a 11-year-old). Traditional activity setting analyses include: the present personnel; tasks and activities the child is involved in; the cultural script that is followed in this setting; tools that are applied in this setting; motives for doing a task; and involved cultural
values, goals and beliefs of the participants of the setting. However, the activity setting analysis of this study concentrated exclusively on observable data such as the personnel that surrounded the child, the child's appearance, tasks and activities of the setting, the cultural script that was followed, as well as tools that were used. In order to avoid cultural misunderstandings caused through my perspective as a cultural outsider, I waived those analysis criteria that required the observer's interpretation of the setting (such as motives, cultural values, goals or beliefs).

Activity Setting 1: Maria

Four-year-old Maria was part of a group of mostly female family members that sold Maya craftwork at different places and streets in the center of SCLC.

Personnel: Maria was always in the company of at least one adult female (supposedly her mother or aunt), three to four female siblings, young relatives, or friends in the age range from six to sixteen years old and a five-year old brother.

Appearance: Maria was wearing the typical clothing of Maya females. This encompassed a very thick, dark, woolen skirt cinched by a self-woven, colorful wide belt as well as a shining blue polyester blouse with the pattern and colors of the Chamula community (similar to the blouse depicted in Figure 12.) Together with this clothing Maria often wore old grey-black plastic sandals, but sometimes she also walked around barefoot. All her clothing displayed slight signs of dirt. She usually had her long black hair in a braid (often unkempt). Overall, she appeared to be in healthy condition.

\(^{16}\) All used names are code names.
Figure 12. Blue Chamula blouse.

Tasks/Activity: While following her older siblings Maria always carried a bunch of self-crafted bracelets (in her hand). The following picture displays a young crafts seller of Maria’s age holding a bunch of bracelets in her hands (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Young Maya girl holding a bunch of bracelets.
During the entire time on the street she observed her older siblings closely and stayed in near distance to them. Her older sisters approached international and national tourists by walking up to or next to them while holding the offered ware (commonly scarves, belts, bracelets) in front of their faces. Thereby they repeated the Spanish phrase 'Comprale!' (Buy it!), and sought close body contact with the potential buyers by touching their arms. They usually kept up with the tourist between a few seconds and up to several minutes depending on how high they estimated their chances to sell. Once the potential seller stopped, she or he was surrounded by the Maya group of sellers who offered the ware all at the same time by naming different prices. One selling strategy they used was that they started with a somewhat high price and then lowered it in a very quick pace. Another strategy was to offer several items at once (e.g. 5 bracelets for 20 pesos). In this course of action the sellers showed a great persistence. Maria, while watching this procedure closely, imitated exactly the behavior of the older girls. She held up her bunch of bracelets to the tourist, and repeated the Spanish words 'Comprale!' She also repeated the numbers and priced mentioned by the older girls. However, the way Maria used the Spanish words made it obvious that she did not grasp their full meaning (e.g. '5 for 20 pesos'). Once a buyer was willing to buy one of Maria's items the older girls assisted Maria selling. The girls monitored whether if she received the correct amount of money and also whether she handed back the correct change.

In between selling to tourists the family members reorganized their products. An older sister showed Maria how to arrange her bunch of bracelets. When the older sister saw a new customer she either approached him herself or occasionally told Maria to do so. Sending ahead young, 'cute' looking children was also a widely applied selling
strategy among Maya craft sellers. In case no potential customers were around, Maria played rather silently but with a lot of body contact with her older and younger siblings. In general, Maria interacted more often with her siblings than with her mother (or aunt). The older woman intervened only occasionally if she found (for any reason) Maria’s behavior too disturbing. Different from her older sisters, Maria did not yet produce bracelets, or belts herself. At age four she was still considered too small to conduct this kind of work.

**Script:** The general script for selling craftwork on the street was that sellers work in groups in which older family members supervised and instructed younger ones. Young sellers were expected to observe, imitate, and obey orders. As mentioned earlier Maria imitated her older sisters as well as possible when offering Maya craftwork. Thereby it seemed unnecessary for the child to already understand every step of the selling process. This was because more experienced family members were permanently present to support the child. Older siblings commonly taught the target child how to work successfully. The older ones served as role models and provided non-verbally and verbal instructions, such as how to approach tourists, arrange the items, give change, etc.

**Tools:** The traditional Maya clothing could be seen as a tool or as a strategy that marked them as Maya craft sellers and thus helped them to sell successfully to tourists. By wearing their costumes they clearly accentuated their heritage and the uniqueness of their products. The fact that they spoke Spanish to their customers could also be considered as a tool that allowed them to sell to foreigners. Another tool they used extensively was the shawl Maya women usually wear on their shoulders. In this shawl the girls and women transported everything they needed to have around with them throughout the day (e.g.}
children, food, clothes, belts etc.). Using their shawls allowed them to have their hands free when selling.

Activity Setting 2: Ana

Eleven-year old Ana sold and produced Maya craftwork in the center of SCLC.

Personnel: Ana usually walked around in company of her eight-year-old sister, her seven-year-old female cousin, and a ten-year-old female neighbor.

Appearance: Ana was always dressed in the traditional costume for Maya females. Composed of a thick black woven skirt, held by a colorful self-made wide belt, as well as a Zinacantec blouse. This was a white cotton blouse embroidered with big colorful flowers as well as a dark woven cape also embroidered with flowers (similar to the one depicted in Figure 14). She also wore dark plastic sandals. Her hair was always well combed in a long braid. Ana always tried to keep her clothes in clean condition. Overall, she seemed to be a healthy, mature 11-year old Maya girl.

Figure 14. Zinacantec woman’s shawl.

Tasks/Activity:

Ana and her group usually arrived at the center between 8:30 and 9am. Being the oldest, Ana had the responsibility for the group and hence decided when and where to sell. As
soon as Ana spotted potential customers she immediately approached them by showing them her products such as shawls, belts, bracelets, pottery figures (Figure 15 depicts a similar situation of young Maya females approaching customers).

![Figure 15. Maya girls offering their products to tourists.](image)

Thereby she invited them to buy using the Spanish phrase ‘Cómprale!’ (Buy it!). She also named different price quotes in rapid sequences. Her sister and friends followed her example. The group kept up with the tourists as long as they believed they had any chance to sell. When Ana saw that a tourist was talking to another craft selling Maya woman or girl, she and her group also surrounded the tourists in order to compete with the other sellers. She then indicated the better quality and the beauty of the colors of her products in the hope that the customer preferred her items to the ones of other sellers.

When Ana and the other girls were not selling Ana frequently led the group to quieter places where the girls could sit down and rest. Occasionally, the group visited a nearby playground, also in the center of SCLC. However, in these resting times Ana did
not play as often as her younger attendants. While sitting next to them she instead knotted new belts or bracelets. She did this craftwork by securely attaching different colored threads to her belt. She then interlaced the different threads through different agile and secure hand movements.

At the end of her day (around 7 p.m.) Ana and her friends often met with other Maya girls and women to walk home together in the darkness.

Script: Ana sold her craftwork by applying strategies that were typical for Maya street sellers (keeping up with a customer, offering her products in a persistent manner, lowering prices quickly). Thereby she served as a role model for her younger relatives and siblings. As the oldest group member Ana had the responsibility for the little group and the other girls usually complied her decisions.

Tools: Ana used Spanish and sometimes even some English words to sell her ware. She always wore the traditional costume for Maya women that marked her easily as an indigenous craftwork seller. She used her shawl and a basket to carry extra selling items and the material she needed to produce new craft work.

Activity setting 3: Juan

Four-year old Juan was usually sitting together with his family at the stairs in front of the cathedral in the center of SCLC.

Personnel: He was always accompanied by his mother, his six-year old sister, as well his one-year old sister. His nine-year old brother worked most of the day independently from the family as a shoe shiner at different places in streets in the center of SCLC. However,
his older brother usually arrived together with the rest of the family and also met with them in the evening in order to return home together.

**Appearance:** Juan wore old cut brown trousers that were in fact a little bit oversized for him, as well as a red-blue fleece sweater over an old grey thin T-Shirt. At his feet he wore old brown plastic sandals that he often took off. His black hair was cropped short.

**Task/Activity:** Juan stayed most of the day near distance his mother who knotted belts and bracelets. Occasionally, he accompanied his six-year old sister, who was sent by her mother to offer the self-made craftwork to tourists. Standing next to this sister Juan offered a bunch of bracelets, small clay figures, or masked Chamula dolls\(^\text{17}\) to the potential customer. However, Juan and his six-year-old sister rarely succeeded selling to customers because they hardly spoke any Spanish words and they were less apt and persistent as other older and more experienced sellers. Nonetheless, their mother for some reason never helped out when the children tried to sell to tourists.

When Juan was sitting next to his mother, he played calmly, slept, or observed his nearby environment. This calm behavior immediately changed when his shoe shining brother returned with the shoe shining box toward the end of the day. As soon as his brother put down the shoe shine box Juan eagerly started to play with it. He took out the brushes and started to imitate the typical movements of experienced shoe shiner. He often 'cleaned’ his sister’s sandals. Thereby he never used any colors, grease, or other costly consumer goods. Sometimes the mother sent her oldest son and daughter to sell craftwork for a short period of time. At these times Juan continued to play enthusiastically with the shoe shine box (Figure 16). At the end of the day when the family finally was leaving, the dolls represented famous spokespersons of the Zapatista rebellion such as the subcomandante Marco and Ramona.
Juan often carried the shoe shine box. It was always he or his older brother who carried the box, but never a female member of the family.

Figure 16. Young May boy playing with shoe shining box.

Script: Similar to other Maya children of his age, who cannot yet perform a street work themselves, Juan usually stayed next to his mother without disturbing her much in her work. Because Juan was still considered a small child he occasionally also sold Maya craftwork, an activity that is usually considered female work. When selling craftwork Juan was never alone but always accompanied his older sister. The eager play with the shoe shine box of his older brother was never interrupted by his mother and hence seemed to be considered useful practice in order to prepared Juan to become a shoe shiner himself later on.

Tools: Juan used his brother’s shoe shine box and the brushes to practice shoe shining. Otherwise he played with whatever things were available to him such as bracelets or things he found on the street.
Activity setting 4: Rigoberto

Eleven-year old Rigoberto worked as a shoe shiner in the center of SCLC.

Personnel: Rigoberto usually worked or walked around alone. However, he regularly hung out or waited for customers in a loosely bonded group of three to five about same age male peers (Figure 17).

Figure 17. Group of young shoe shiners.

Appearance: He wore old blue jeans covered with color spots, as well as an old red T-Shirt. On colder days he also wore an old dark anorak. His black leather shoes were well worn. His hair was kept in a short cut hairstyle.

Tasks/Activity: To recruit customers Rigoberto took his shoeshine box out of his backpack and walked around in the streets or sat down at a small bench or wall. The place at the bench or wall was also needed as a seating accommodation for customers. Rigoberto searched for clients among the passersby. Thereby he shouted in competition with other shoe shiners “Boleamos!” (Let’s shine them!), and pointed at the ‘dirty’ shoes
of the pedestrians. To gain a customer he had to bargain the price. His prices depended on the kind of shoe the customer wore (loafers or boots) as well the kind of customer (local citizen or tourist). The shoeshine price started at around four pesos for locals who wore loafers and went up to 25 pesos for tourists. Rigoberto cleaned the customer’s shoes by kneeling in front of him on a little wooden stool. He then put the customer’s foot on the shoe shine box. Before he started to shine, he took the tools out of his box. He began by cleaning the dirty shoes with a brush and soap suds made from pumpkins. After that he put color (or sometimes grease) on the shoes. In the end he polished the shoes with another brush and a piece of cloth. The movements he used were always in the same order, very quick and efficient. (One could observe that all experienced shoe shiners worked in the same manner as he did.) It usually took Rigoberto between three to seven minutes to clean a pair of shoes. When Rigoberto did not serve a customer, he liked to chat and rest with other shoe shiners. They then often played cards, tossing games with little coins, or soccer. However, as soon as one of the boys could gain a customer the boys interrupted their playing, waited for the occupied guy and picked up their game later on.

Script: Shoe shiners were predominantly boys who were 10 years and older. They attracted customer by shouting and pointing at their shoes in competition with each other. They acquired the customer by adjusting prices to the type of shoe and person. All successful shoe shiners worked very quickly and efficiently. Movements seemed almost ritualized. The boys did not mind hanging out together but ran their services independently and in competition to each other.
Tools: To carry his box to and away from work Rigoberto used a backpack. His wooden shoe shine box, which also served as a foot rest for the customers also encompassed a little wooden stool Rigoberto could sit or kneel on while shoe shining. In the box he stored a plastic bottle with soapsuds, two brushes to clean and polish, two pieces of cloth, a cup with shoe grease, a cup with black shoe color, a cup with brown shoe color and a cup with red shoe color (Figure 18). The term “Boleamos!” served as a signal for the customer to get their shoes cleaned.

Figure 18. Tools of a shoe shining boy.
Chapter 4  Discussion

This exploratory study investigates daily life experiences of street vending girls and boys in SCLC from a gender- as well as culture-sensitive perspective. At first glance the research indicates three major findings. First, in contrast to what is predominantly reported in the literature, and different from the situation in many other cities in developing countries around the world, the center of SCLC exhibits an almost equal number of street working boys and girls (52% and 48%, respectively). The second finding is that almost all of the street children are indigenous, despite the fact that the indigenous population in Chiapas, the descendents of the Mayas, represents only 26% of the total population. Third, in contrast to the majority of literature about child street work, my results suggest that street child work in the center of SCLC is not an interruption but continuity in the regular development of the children. Additional results of the present research can help explain these major findings.

The results presented above demonstrate that street child work in SCLC is characterized, particularly for girls, by Maya values about child work as described by Gaskins (1999) and Kramer (2003). It is especially striking that whereas elsewhere girls often experience street work as a dangerous and unfortunate interruption in their normal development as a female, street work in SCLC presents continuity in developmental stages for Maya girls. The traditional role of Maya women (producing & selling Maya craftwork) establishes an economically fragile but nonetheless protective niche that allows Maya girls gender -consistent behavior, as well as the ability to perform successfully in the streets of SCLC. The extent to which the two genders rely on their
cultural identity and habits in order to succeed on the streets constitutes one of the main differences in the daily life of Maya street working girls compared to their male counterparts. Cultural heritage seems to play a much more important role for girls than for boys in the organization and conduct of their street activities. Last but not least, the present research supports the importance of schooling for the present and future developmental perspectives of Maya street working children.

Continuity in Maya Child Development

This study reveals that the daily life of a street working child in the center of SCLC resembles in many aspects that of a child in a typical Maya village in Chiapas. As described by Gaskins (1996, 2000, 2003) and Maynard & Greenfield (2005) for more rural villages, typical Maya principles of child socialization and development characterize the children's daily life settings in the streets of SCLC. Infants and children regularly accompany and observe their mothers or other older female family members during their work on the street. Through this permanent exposure and access to adult work (Morelli, Rogoff and Angelillo, 2003) the children become gradually involved with the adult working activity. This kind of child engagement, mainly characterized by guided participation and scaffolding and less through formal teaching, is in line with the most common teaching and learning strategies of Maya females as reported by Maynard & Greenfield (2005). Similar to what is described by Gaskins (2003) as the 'independence of child motivation', accompanying children participate in the street work according to pace of their own abilities and interests. No specific, child-focused adult effort is put into preparing, motivating, or controlling the child to be a successful street seller before it
reaches a certain age. Nonetheless, one can detect that the working activities occur in specific age and developmental stages that are consistent with those observed in traditional Maya child work within the families in the village (Gaskins, 1999, Kramer 2003). Whereas two- to four-year olds who accompany their family on the street mostly imitate older role models in a playful way or follow their simple instructions, five-to-six-year-olds contribute significantly to the family street work. Street working children between the age of nine and 12 are often already quite competent in their selling activity and often take over full responsibility for their work. This follows the developmental pattern found by Maynard (2002) for sibling caretaking.

Overall, child street work in SCLC does not automatically interrupt the regular development of a Maya child but rather presents an apprenticeship that prepares the child for life through early experiences.

*Continuity in the Development as a Maya Woman*

Different from other cities in developing countries around the world, girls are regularly engaged in street work in SCLC. However, in order to understand why and how Maya girls are relatively successful in street work, it is necessary to pin down their daily work setting to its determining factors. Despite the social changes that brought the girls and women from their villages into town, the script of their work is closely bonded to the traditional female role in the Maya culture. In SCLC 84% of all girls involved in street work are selling as well as producing Maya craftwork. These activities are derived from the traditional weaving of textiles that done by Maya women, and adjusted to the economical reality in the center of SCLC characterized by tourism. Furthermore, the girls
rarely work alone on the streets but stay in groups or family alliances as they would similarly do in the family compound in the village, while their fathers and brothers leave the family to pursue fieldwork or jobs in commerce. Although the girls now work away from their family home and are involved in the cash economy they remain highly involved in sibling care as part of their traditional role as Maya females. Seventy-two percent of the girls (but only 18.5% of the boys) regularly take care of younger siblings, very often by taking along younger siblings when working in the streets. As part of such a street vending family/group younger girls (and boys) commonly receive scaffolding from older, more experienced family members.

It is also visually recognizable that the work of the girls is closely tied to their cultural heritage. Different from the street working boys in SCLC, girls usually wear the traditional Maya costume during their work. This uniform clothing of Maya women and girls is signaling group identity, as well as strongly expressing their cultural identity. This appearance seems to naturally evoke feelings of distance and respect in outsiders and can ultimately help to prevent sexual harassments or assaults, which are common risks of street working girls in other cities. The strong adherence to their cultural identity and habits creates for the girls a gradual and gender adequate introduction to the street life.

In general, working in the streets of SCLC does not necessarily result in interruption in a girl’s normal development. To the contrary, the environment supports a girl in becoming a woman within the Maya culture and at the same time growing into a reality that is heavily characterized by trends of globalization such as increasing migrations from rural to urban areas, incremental transitions from subsistence to cash economies, and the increasing importance of tourism. In this world of traditional and
novel influences, the girls' close bonds to their family and their Maya culture create a path of continuity that connects their home with the street.

*Differences in the Street Work Engagement of Boys and Girls*

As previously mentioned, many essential differences exist in the daily life settings of male and female street working children in SCLC. Creating awareness about these differences is not only essential for future intervention programs, but may also provide clues about what distinguishes the street working girls of SCLC from their less successfully performing (and surviving, after all) counterparts in other cities of developing countries. In other words: Which factors help the Maya girls to be less endangered and vulnerable when working on the street?

At first glance the most striking difference seems to be that while boys tend to work alone and independently from a specific group, girls usually work either as part of a street vending family or in stable girl groups that encompass sisters, friends, cousins, or neighbors. However, this phenomenon alone may not explain the better performance and survival of girls in SCLC compared to girls in other cities. Certainly, there exist groups of street working girls in other cities as well. Again, the close adherence to the role of traditional Maya women is what makes the difference for the street working girls in SCLC. Over 84% of the girls exclusively sell Maya craftwork, while boys follow a greater variety of street work activities that resemble more those street work activities of other cities, e.g. shoe shining, selling candies. The streets of SCLC provide a working niche for the girls that may not be available in other cities, e.g. tourists buy Mayan craftwork. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the way the girls' work is organized
displays great similarity to Maya child work within the families in the villages. The girls thereby receive a lot of scaffolding from older female family members, stay close to each other, vested in the traditional costumes, and in general show less independence from the family network than their male counterparts. In contrast, Maya boys do not seem to rely so much on their cultural heritage and family system to perform successfully on the streets. They work more independently, follow a broader variety of street working activities, often wear Western clothes during work, and overall show more interdependence from their families.

Interestingly, gender differences in the kind of working activity and the way this activity is organized also seems to influence the children's working hours. The results revealed that, surprisingly, more girls than boys worked during and after sunset.

Differences in Schooling of Street Working Boys and Girls

The greater independence of boys may also be an explanation for the detected differences between boys and girls in schooling. A subgroup of street working boys specifically use their street work to finance their own academic studies. They display a clear priority to dedicate their individual financial and time resources to school and only in second place to support the family. In return, no girls are found who combine school and work in a similar way. Girls attending school predominately perceive their income as part of the family income rather than their own source of income which they could use to pay their own school costs. This behavior is also consistent with the finding that many girls formerly attending school had to quit school because their parents demanded them to
work more in order to support the family. Hence, it could be interpreted that for boys working and attending school at the same time are less mutually exclusive than for girls.

This greater relatedness of the girls towards family life at the expense of schooling seems to be represented also in the relation of schooling and later occupational aspirations. While boys exhibit tendencies towards higher future aspirations the longer they go to school, this does apply to girls. Although the schooled street working girls also mentioned slightly higher future perspectives than their unschooled street working counterparts, still many of the future ideas circled around being a housewife, mother, or craftwork seller. These ideas are very similar to the momentary life and work of their mothers. Interestingly, the sub-sample of non-street working girls, who come from families from the same neighborhood, but attend school regularly, displayed similar tendencies to the boys. For these two groups regular schooling changes their future expectations in so far that they perceive their momentary work and poorness only as a transient state in their life, and have advanced goals for their future.

Street-working Maya girls, independent from their years of schooling, stick very closely to traditional and current roles of Maya female. They hardly strive for higher professional jobs that would assure them better societal status and more stable incomes. One could interpret this behavior as the downside, or the price the girls have to pay for their close cultural and family bonds. On one hand their strong internalization of Maya habits and values protects them momentarily in the streets and also prepares them well for a future within this spectrum. On the other hand, it seems to prevent the girls seeking opportunities and developing perspectives outside their current environment. This narrow worldview is insofar counterproductive or even dangerous in that it may leave the girls
unprepared for a future of rapid socio-economic change in their local environment caused by general trends of globalization. A lack of school education might impede that those girls' initiative to carve out an economically more stable niche in a modern world of global competition. For example, many of the street girls do not seem to be fully aware of the far-reaching consequences of illiteracy.

Nonetheless, it became clear in the course of the present study that almost all children working in the street of SCLC consider some schooling to be important in their lives. Those who attended school proudly pointed out their literacy skills and all of those children who were not going to school expressed their wish to go to school, or at least to know how to read and write. Almost all of them expressed the idea that one can have a better life with some literacy.

This finding suggests that if future intervention programs are able to find a way that allows the children to earn enough money for living besides going to school, they will come across a great willingness of the street working children to use this opportunity. To keep children in school, successful intervention programs should focus on reassuring children of the reasons why school is so important for them. Enough knowledge about the mechanisms of our modern and globalized world needs to be adequately conveyed to them in words they can understand. Although this process may incorporate the risk of disconnecting the children from their original culture and therefore has to be conducted in culturally sensitive ways, it ultimately enables the children to make their own decisions on how to create their futures.
Recommendations for Interventional Programs

This study could shape future intervention programs in SCLC and its general ideas could apply to programs in other cities around the world. First of all, the research shows that in order to reach the children we need to create programs that do not deny their cultural background. It is crucial for those programs to perceive the children’s culture as a chance more than a challenge. This also means the programs that exclusively focus either on street children or street working children should broaden their perspective by working in a more systemic manner on a community level.

Including the community and the family in the program also helps in finding sustainable instead of short-term solutions. Sustainable solutions are those that allow the children to receive schooling, but also permit better economic status for their family. One mid-term pragmatic solution to this is to find ways that allow the children to be engaged in work and to go to school at the same time. Economic circumstances, above all global competition, force many families into poverty and promote child work outside the family system but within the economic market. The importance of literacy, to be able to represent one’s own rights and needs when dealing with public and private institutions such as schools, health departments, or companies, is increased in developing countries that compete in the global market.

Culture-sensitive programs have to be aware about the different needs of street (working) boys and girls. Girls and boys face different problems and also apply different strategies in their daily work settings on the street. Even more, these gender-based strategies change from city to city. The present study in SCLC is an example for great
connectedness to an old culture protecting girls working on the street. Other cities may lack this possibility at first glance, but could learn from this example by offering modified or alternative starting points. Hence, pragmatic intervention programs for street working children need to find out what kind of gender-adjusted work or working strategy would help girls and boys to perform more successfully within their community. How can these girls and boys be protected but still earn the money that is necessary for their own and family survival?

Limitations of the Present Research

While these findings about the street children of SCLC rest squarely on data collected and analyzed, some limitations should be considered.

First of all, the used sample techniques for the interview such as recruiting familiar street children and relying on snowball sampling might have created a biased sample. Even though I made great effort to establish rapport with all different kinds of children on the streets, a variety of potential biases probably persisted. Children who felt confident enough to be speak in Spanish (or were supported by a translator), who were not afraid to talk about their legal or illegal working activity, and who felt no guilt or shame talking about their working and family life were more likely to participate in the interviews.

Another problem related to the biased sample composition was, that because of a difference in the mean age between interviewed boys and girls (which were on average 1.5 years younger), it could not be excluded that some of the detected genders differences were caused by different developmental stages. To overcome this
interpretational limitation, interviews with younger boys less than ten years old and girls older than ten years had to be conducted.

A reduction of the data credibility (as a qualitative researcher would say) or reliability (a term more applied by quantitatively oriented researchers) can not be excluded for the following reasons: Despite the made efforts to establish rapport, the self-report as used in interviews and ethnographic talks may have resulted in participants disclosing more positive than negative, or otherwise incorrect reports. Also every child, except one, was interviewed only one time completely. Furthermore, the great distance of the research location did not allow a confirming check on the findings from the informants.

The research period of six weeks would be considered as comparably short in the field of anthropological research and was conducted by me alone as the only researcher. However, data triangulation such as the comparison of interview findings with ethnographic data (observations, talks) could assure a certain amount of data credibility, (or differently expressed, reliability).

One might also discover impaired study validity (or accuracy) for the following shortcomings. Due to the nature of my study, the complete design and in specific the interview were designed in reference to the actual field situation and hence common validity test procedures could be fulfilled only to a limited extent. Furthermore, accuracy of the interview answers could be impaired because the conversations had to be noted down instead of voice recording them, as initially planed. Cultural biases from me as the main researcher and as an outsider of the Maya culture cannot be excluded. A necessary back-translation of the interview guide from Spanish into Tzotzil and into Spanish again was missing.
And last but not least, general factors and concepts that are detected in this study as essential to understand the daily life of street working girls could serve as promising ideas to understand and to investigate the situation of street (working) girls and gender differences among street (working) children elsewhere. However, in reference to its specific findings, this study should be considered more as a snapshot that resembles the situation of the street working girls and boys of the center of SCLC at a particular point in time. Hence, even though general concepts and theories of my work can contribute to the literature and serve as a source of ideas for further intervention and research projects, it is not possible to just transfer my data to explain the situation of street working boys and girls elsewhere. This means that the generalizability or external validity of the study findings may be limited.

Perception of Child Work

Having written a paper from a culture-sensitive perspective, and finding myself describing protective mechanisms of child work in a specific culture, some words are necessary to prevent misunderstandings in such a sensitive issue. Hence, I will try to put the situation of the researched street working boys and girls of SCLC in the perspective of a general concept of child work and labor.

Whereas in the Western world child work in the past has been abolished (Shaffer, 2007) and is considered non-ethical, in the Asian Pacific, Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean regions different forms of child work are still widespread phenomena with different societal significances. UNICEF (2007) distinguishes between child work, child labor, and worst forms of child labor in order to differentiate between that kind of child work that is still considered as (limited) acceptable in the context of its
societal meaning (=child work), and work that is considered harmful for the children and needs to be abolished instantly (=child labor). Child work is described as children’s participation in economic activities - in a way not negatively affecting their health and development or interfering with education, and is permitted from the age of 12 years under the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 138. Child labor refers to children working in contravention of the above standards. This means all children below 12 years of age working in any economic activities and those aged 12 to 14 years are considered engaged in harmful work (ILO Convention 138).

Classifying the child work observed in SCLC turns out to be difficult because on one hand the study demonstrates that the children do not consider their work as affecting their health and generally perceive it as rather positive. On the other hand their work does (for many of them) interfere with their education and the majority of children are younger than 12 years. In addition, organizations such as UNICEF make a clear distinction of child work outside and inside the family. Whereas the first one is considered child labor, the second is not. In SCLC the line between working inside and outside the family is often blurred. Despite the observed comparably positive effects of the traditional child work in SCLC, from a personal perspective, it is difficult for me to take a definite stand for the acceptance of child street work as observed in SCLC. I agree with Marguerite Bey (2003), who concludes in her study about seasonal agricultural migrant families from the South of Mexico that working with their family contributes significantly to the children’s socialization. And even though the described conditions violate the ILO Convention about child work, Bey states that an immediate total abolition of work for children is at risk of producing a situation of severe economical insecurity for the families. Similar
statements can be made about the situation of the street working children in SCLC. However, it became very clear through my research (and this is different from Bey’s further conclusions) that it is crucial to provide school education for every child (for a community’s development toward economical independence). Thus, it appears clear to me that the ultimate goal should be to bring every child into school, which from my understanding can only be achieved if we take the cultural context of the child into account.

It is my opinion that research studies such as the one presented here, support the ultimate goal of providing the better well-being of street working children because they aim to broaden the understanding of the children’s life without just stigmatizing them as victims of their economic situation. By complementing the literature on street children with cultural-psychological analyses of settings in which girls actually work on the street, it is my hope to contribute new insights into the diversity of child street work in order to enable the development of sustainable as well as multi-systemic solutions to the problem.
Appendix

Appendix 1: Activity setting table
Appendix 2: Assent form for Children,
Appendix 3: Consent form for Parents
Appendix 4: Interview guide for children
Appendix 1: Activity setting table

Activity Setting: ____________________________ date: ____________________

Time: Start __________ End __________ = Total __________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personnel</th>
<th>Script</th>
<th>Tasks/Activities</th>
<th>Tools</th>
<th>Motivations</th>
<th>Values/Beliefs</th>
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Appendix 2: Assent Form for Children

**Assent Form for Children:** N.B. Children will be given a copy of the assent speech.

Based on demographic data about the Chiapas area, my studies of academic and welfare literature about street children and my former work with street children, I assume that a great majority of the street and street working children of San Cristobal I will talk to will not be able to read and write Spanish properly. They usually spent only very short periods of time in school and this often on an irregular basis. Reading and signing a consent form would be very uncommon and even confusing for these children. To ensure that they understand what I want to study and that their participation in the study is voluntary, I will read to them a Spanish version of the following:

**For conversations/interviews with children on the street**

"I want to learn more about children that work and live on the streets of San Cristobal. I want to tell the adults and children of my home country what the children and their family here usually do. Therefore I will ask what you and your family usually do at a typical day. I will ask you things like: What do you do after getting up? Is that okay for you?"

"Because I do not want to forget anything you told me, I would like to record it on this voice recorder [I will show the child the voice recorder]. Do you agree?"

"If you want you can hear the records of our talk after the talk."

"I also would like to make a picture of you. So I can remember you and what you said. If you want I can give you a copy of the picture when we meet next time. Do you want that?"

"I will not give you any money or food for our talk. Because I think then you will talk to me only because of the money or the food and not because you really want to tell me something about you and your family. We can immediately stop our talk whenever you want. Okay?"

"Can I show your picture and what you said to the people of my country?"

"Are you ready?"

"Thank you."

---

18 Because I decided in the field to not picture the interviewee, nor tape record the interview, but to give a small gift as reward, my actual words slightly differed from this assent form presented to the IRB.
Appendix 3: Consent form for Parents

Oral Consent form Parents: Parents will be given a copy of the consent speech.

“I want to learn more about children that work and live on the streets of San Cristobal. I want to tell the adults and children of my home country what the children and their family here usually do. Therefore I would like to ask your daughter/son what she/he and your family usually do at a typical day. I will ask him/her things like: What do you do after getting up? Is that okay for you?”

“Because I do not want to forget anything he/she told me, I would like to record it on this voice recorder. Do you agree?”

“You and your child can hear the records of the interview talk afterwards.”

“I also would like to make a picture of your daughter/son. So I can remember your child and what she/he said. If you want I can give her/him a copy of the picture when we meet next time. Do you want that?”

“I will not give you or your daughter/son any money or food for the talk. Because I think then she/he will talk to me only because of the money or the food and not because you she/he really wants to tell me something about her/himself and your family. We can immediately stop our talk whenever the or she wants to stop.”

“Okay?”

“Can I show the picture and what your daughter/son said to the people of my country?”

“Do you have any questions?”

“Thank you.”

---

Because I decided in the field to not picture the interviewee, nor tape record the interview, but to give a small gift as reward, my actual words slightly differed from this parental consent form.
Appendix 4: Interview guide for children

Interview guide
date: ______ time: ______ location: ______

Personal dates
• What is your name?
• How old are you?
• Where are you living?
• What kind of religion do you have?
• Are you indigenous?

Work
• What is your working activity?
• Where are you working?
• How do you get there?
• With how many years did you start to work?
• What have you done before?
• From when until when are you working (time)?
• How many days a week and what days are you working?
• Do you work when it is already dark? Until when?
• Who decided that you work?
• Do you like your work?
• Why are you working?
• How much do you earn at a really bad day? And how much at a really good day?
• What are you doing with the money you earn?

Risks & Conditions
• Is your work dangerous?
• What are you doing to protect yourself?
• Are you afraid of something when you are working?
• Did anything bad happen to you in the past when working?
• How are your clients behaving towards you?
• How are the other children behaving towards you?

• What do you like about your work?
• What do you not like about your work?
• What happens if you come home and after you have earned only little or no money at all?
• What would happen if you stopped working?
Chores
• Do you also have to help with chores at home?
• What chores are you doing?
• Do you have to take care for your younger siblings?

Family life
• With whom are you living?
• How many brothers and sister do you have?
• How old are your brothers and sisters?
• Is anybody else living with you?
• What is the work of your parents?
• What is the work of your brothers and sisters?
• In what language are you talking at home to each other?

School
• Are you going to school? *(depending on answer different follow-up questions)*
  • Do you go to school in the morning or in the afternoon?
  • In what grade are you going?
  • Do you know how to write, read and calculate?
  • Do you like school?
  • Do you have a school uniform?
  • Who buys your school supply?
  • Why are not going to school?
  • Did you ever go to school?
  • How many years did you go to school?
  • Did your siblings go to school?
  • What is the most important for you: school, work, or play?
  • Why are you going to school?
  • What do you like about going to school?
  • What do you not like about going to school?
  • Did your parents go to school?

Housing?
• How many rooms do you have at home?
• Do you have power and potable water?
• Do you have a TV?
• Do you have telephone or a cell phone?
• From what material are the walls, the roof, and the floor of your house?
• Where do you sleep?
• Does your family have land to grow fruits and vegetables?
• Does your family have animals?
• What animals do they have?

Leisure time
• Do you have leisure time?
• Do you have toys?
• What leisure time activities do you do or like?
• With whom are you playing?

Food
• What is your favorite food?
• What do you eat at a regular day?
• Where and when are you eating?

Health
• Have you ever been severely ill?
• What did you have?
• What happened? Did you see a doctor? Did you work?
• Have you ever been severely injured?
• What happened? Did you see a doctor? Did you work?

Future perspectives
• What work would you like to do as an adult?
• What other work would you like to do if you cannot do this work?
• If you had three free wishes? What would you wish?
• What would you like to learn right now?

Comments/Interview Process
References


