

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

WHERE THE SIDEWALK ENDS: A THEORETICAL MODEL
TO REIMAGINING CARE IN THE LIVES OF CHILDREN
WORKING ON BEIRUT'S STREETS

by
DANA FADI HALWANI

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by
DANA FADI HALWANI

Approved by:

Dr. Sylvain PERDIGON
Assistant Professor, SOAM
[Dr. Full Name, rank]
[Department]


Advisor

Sani HANAFI
Prof.


Member of Committee

KIRSTEN BEHEID -


Member of Committee

Date of thesis/dissertation defense: April 27th, 2018

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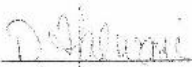
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To my daughter Summer, whose wild heart and imagination inspire all that I am and all that I ever hope to be. You will always be my miracle.

Lastly, although my name is on the title of this research it is by no means mine. I dedicate this research to all children who have made, and will continue to make, their way through life in times of war.

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Dana Fadi Halwani for Master of Arts
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Title: Where the Sidewalk Ends: A Theoretical Model to Reimagining Care in the Lives of Children Working on Beirut's Streets

The number of children working in the street in Lebanon is difficult to determine. In recent years the influx of families seeking asylum and refuge in Lebanon from the on-going Syrian crisis has made the visibility and plight of children on the street increasingly difficult to ignore. Despite the growing concern with the rising number of street children in Lebanon relatively little is known about the full context of their lives and much more research is needed to understand their social worlds to assess possible solutions or interventions. Street children continue to be a heated social and moral debate. The discourse surrounding street children in Lebanon over the last two decades participates in the discourse about street children found in other places around the world. It is a story filled with exaggerated numbers, descriptions of ill-cared for and abandoned children, juvenile delinquency, and future criminality. Humanitarian and NGOs reports focus on the urgency to deal with the issue of street children while little, or no attention is paid to the complexities of agency, the value, and meaning assigned to work, and the manner in which work can foster an opportunity to be cared for and to take care of others. Activists and the media use photography, rapid assessments, and short quotations to highlight the perceived careless and criminality of children and their parents to relieve social responsibility in caring for others. Designing better interventions in these children's lives and changing negative social perceptions about them hinges on a better understanding of their social world and of how they orient themselves within these worlds. It depends, in other terms, on learning to look at street-working children not just as victims but also as worthy society members who are creators of value, in the form of income, social networks, and existential meaning.

The following study was based on ten ethnographic interviews with children working attempts to add new variables into the current discourse surrounding street children by exploring the imaginative ways children get and keep access to care on the street under conditions of deprivation. This study seeks to ethnographically capture the positions that can be occupied by different actors in the space of care and their dynamic relationships. It focuses on how care emerges, and in which forms it does so, at the intersection of a variety of relationships framed by work in the lives of ten children selling small items in the Cola Intersection and surrounding neighborhoods in Beirut.

The study contributes to the urgent task of building a more robust profile of children working on the street in Lebanon. The ethnographic data produced in this

research provides an emphasis on the child's point of view. It is a child-centered approach in examining street work. The thesis helps paint a clearer picture of the needs, vulnerabilities, and opportunities encountered by children while trying to improve their well-being and that of their families. The study also works towards developing the concept of care as a survival strategy that may not be stable, but that is produced in the flow of real life. Care in this existential sense is used to connect social life, culture, politics, and economics in the local worlds of children overwhelmed with adult responsibilities. The realities of the childhoods of street working children revealed in the study have vital implications for the nature of services and protection programs that can be designed to support them.

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*To My
Daughter Summer*

CHAPTER I

A COUNTER NARRATIVE TO UNDERSTANDING STREET WORK

While the figure of the *bay'yah* or carriage owner/seller,¹ has a long and rich history in Middle Eastern cities, the presence of itinerant sellers on the streets of contemporary Beirut bears witness to transformations in practices of selling and buying that originated in part with the Lebanese Civil War. The fifteen-year conflict (1975-1990) drastically changed the way people lived and did business throughout the city. As people became increasingly confined to their homes for fear of their safety those in desperate need of a source of livelihood set out to work in the streets. The war created an environment in which informal practices of selling and buying goods could thrive such as: impromptu fruit and vegetable stands, vending trolleys loaded with various goods and necessities, mobile coffee shops, vans, and pull-and-levy straw basket systems to transport goods from the street to apartments without electricity. Many journalistic reports from the Lebanese Civil War bear witness to this diffuse transformation, like the *Spartanurg Herald Journal* noting in 1985 that "...[Beirut is] reduced to a basic economy of small merchants, industrialists and street vendors" (p. A11).² An episode from the movie *West Beirut* (Doueiri, 1998) similarly shows a

¹ There is no Arabic term for the word street worker. The closest translation is *bay'ah tajwel* or wandering seller. See "Bay'ah is the Arabic term for social contract... al-bay'ah is literally defined as a free will commercial transaction between two or more parties, where each becomes reciprocally obligated to the other." Alwazir, A. Ibrahim. (October/November 1999). "The Relationship between the Ruler and the Ruled: A Mutually Obligating Agreement." *Two Testimonies: A Charter for the Good Life* available from alhewar.com/Wazir.html.

² "Amid the Ruins and Rubble, Life Goes On." *Spartanurg Herald Journal* (June 30, 1985), A11.

vendor finding a quick form of entrepreneurship in selling glass after bombs have fallen and blown out windows, while another vendor begins roaming around selling cigarettes on a pushcart as the civil war emerges in the background, both calling attention to their ware through melodic tones to those increasingly confined indoors. Set out to make their own living, small street entrepreneurs also contributed to the ability of others to survive. Under the eloquent title “Beirut ravaged by war starvation”, another correspondent thus reports in this period that “nearly everything is in short supply- food, water, fuel, candles, batteries and flash lights [sold] as fast as street vendors can load them onto their push carts” (p.8).³ Another article published during the war, “Beirut sinks back into despair chaos” tries to convey the atmospheres of social interaction street vendors created: “in west Beirut, the rebel take over ended the government’s ability to enforce the 8p.m. curfew. In practice, the streets are deserted, and blacked out by frequent power cuts...Hamra the main shopping street of West Beirut, is lined with sidewalk vendors selling everything from nightgowns to Korans...What you can buy, you buy in quantity” (p.3).⁴ In his ethnography of *Reconstructing Beirut* (2011), Assel Sawalha similarly writes on the emergence of espresso vans two years into the civil war, insisting on their “social atmosphere” and presenting them as “sites of social equality” (p. 103). The informal economy diversified urban space, economic activities and integrated different city lifestyles.

³ “Beirut ravaged by war, starvation.” *Beaver County Times* (October 8, 1978), 8.

⁴ Jack Redden. (1948). “Beirut sinks back into despair, chaos.” *The Milwaukee Journal* (February 19), 3.

The war formally ended in 1990 with the *Taif Agreement*,⁵ leading to the gradual re-opening of streets, businesses and educational institutions. However, the focus on transnational business communities during the reconstruction period failed to address the needs of the lower working class (Stewart, 1996) and accentuated, rather than decreased, social and economic disparities. There was no room for street work and itinerant sellers in the visions of investors and developers tasked with rebuilding the city, or only in strictly policed and polished fashions or temporary events such as the various upscale *souks* (outdoor marketplace) like Beirut Souks, Earth Markets, Souk al Tayab, and Souk al Akel designed or organized for affluent consumers. In a city of rapidly shifting values and culture, an increasing obsession with concealing the countries' past impurities resulted in social backlash and outrage towards those who were unable or refused to give up some of the social practices associated with the civil war.

Traditional forms of small scale self-employment such as *khudarji* (vegetable seller), *buoyage* (shoe shiner), *ahwaji* (coffee seller), *a'tahji* (antiques seller), *bay'ah il naseeb* (seller of luck or lotto tickets) *bay'ah ka'ak* (bread ring seller) *bay'ah swageer* (cigarette seller), *bay'ah ward* (flower seller), *zibbal* (garbage collector) quickly came to be seen by the elite in control of the reconstruction as a mark of underdevelopment and an inopportune reminder of the country's recent troubled past, in brief, an intolerable stain on the project of an ultramodern metropole. In addition, municipalities

⁵ “The Taif Agreement (The National Reconciliation Accord or Document of National Accord) was negotiated in Ta'if, Saudi Arabia, in September 1989 and approved by the Lebanese parliament on 4 November 1989. It was an agreement reached to provide the basis for the ending of the civil war and the return to political normalcy in Lebanon”. Hassan Krayem. (1997). “The Lebanese civil war and the Taif Agreement.” In: *Conflict Resolution in the Arab World*. Beirut: American University of Beirut Publications; available from: ddc.aub.edu.lb/projects/pspa/conflict-resolution.html.

licensing decrees were put into effect to eject vendors off the streets as shop owners demanded legal action against street workers denounced as unfair competitors. As a result, measures like crackdowns on vending carriages and stands, imprisonment and monetary penalties were set in force in order to uphold new standards of public order and control. An article published in *The Times* under the title “Lebanon gets shock as life and lights are turned on”, describes the terrifying experience of a vendor in the Hamra district during the cleanup campaign. It reads:

Shots rang, people froze and for a moment it seemed the outbreak of another full-scale street battle. Policemen ran firing rifles in the air backed by a huge, red-bereted officer cradling a machinegun with the aplomb of a Rambo... Abu Hassan, an old fruit vendor from the south was evidently too frightened to plead for mercy as the men of the Squad 16 anti-riot unit ransacked his illegal kiosk. The tin roof collapsed, smashing a heap of ripe watermelons. Fresh bursts of automatic gunfire sent his competitors fleeing. “We are cleaning up Beirut”, the Rambo proclaimed. “Beirut will be beautiful”.⁶

Such imaginaries and social strategies failed to be accompanied by efforts to provide vendors with viable alternatives to make a living, thus forcing them into situations of increased social and economic insecurity.⁷ The reconstruction had critical implications on the manner in which familial and community forms of care came to operate in absence of state run institutions. For many adults who were denied access to employment, the work of young family members came to be understood pragmatically,

⁶ C. Juan. Gumucio. (1990). “Lebanon gets shock as life and lights are turned on.” *The Times* (July 9).

⁷ For example, a post-war UNICEF report from the mid-1990s states: “the deterioration of economic conditions, the death, the disability or migrations of the family heads, forced children at early age to drop out from school and seek employment to support themselves and their families. A large number of children are seen roaming the streets begging or selling services and goods.” United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund. *The Status of Women and Children in Lebanon (1995)*, executive summary. See also “the phenomenon of working children was a direct result of the post-war economic situation, as it did not exist prior to 1975”. The Rene Moawad Organization. Education. (n.d.) Education- Working Children; available from rmf.org.lb/education/working_child/intro_workchild.html.

either as their only option for survival or as novel routes towards responsibility and learning a skill set in an environment marked by the scarcity of other resources. Deficits of care in state services and the inability of parents to economically care for the family were filled by children. By challenging the means of social order, control of public spaces, and access to goods and services, youth participating in petty capitalism in the public sphere became known and discussed as street children.

Street children are often understood ideologically and articulated in terms of (1) their presence in a shared public space (i.e. the street) and (2) age, used to define societal roles, expectations and responsibilities. Plugged together the two words foreground the negative impact of the environment. Connotations associated with the term street in the English language in such phrases as: street crime, streetwalker, street smart, street crime, street gang, street Arab and back street are used to describe actions and behaviors outside of societal norms.

In Arabic, an early printed occurrence of the term *awalad al shawari'* or children of the street appears in the context of the 1919 revolution in Egypt, in order to draw a distinction between the educated class and members of the popular quarters who actually took part in demonstrations.⁸ In Lebanon, the term was used by Fu'ad Sulayman, a journalist, poet, as well as, political and social critic whose work expressed the reality of life in Lebanon. In an editorial piece under his pseudonym Tammuz, he uses the term *awalad al shawari'* as a metaphor for the working class exploited by the political and ruling elite. It reads:

This poor street, or rather the poor sons of the street, or rather poor me and you, sons of the street!! ... The government pulls us to and fro ... and the opposition also pulls this way and that. All of them make grand claims on our

⁸ "A Diwan of Contemporary Life (208)", *Al Ahram Weekly* (424) (April 8-14, 1999); available from weekly.ahram.org.eg/1999/426/letters.htm.

behalf, on behalf of the street, on behalf of the children of the street.⁹

In such cases the phrase was not used to describe the precariousness of the street environment, social collapse or lack of concern to care for children. Rather, the street is representative of the public and by extension of the real nation. Thus it seems that in its original uses the term *awalad al shawari* was employed to mobilize deinstitutionalized members of society and express their collective sensibilities and grievances in the public. By the late 90's, however, a radical shift had occurred marked by new attitudes and policies towards concern for public space, which also made the publicly visible poverty of children an object of governmental concern.

The discourse surrounding street children in Lebanon over the last two decades participates of the discourse about street children found in other places around the world. It is a story filled with exaggerated numbers, descriptions of ill-cared for and abandoned children, juvenile delinquency and future criminality. This discourse fails to acknowledge the political, socioeconomic and cultural choices specific to Lebanon that go beyond the control and desires of individual parents and children. In 1995, shortly after Solidere, the Lebanese company responsible for the reconstruction of Beirut's central district was established in 1994, the Lebanese Union for Child Welfare published a description of street children in a narrative report presented to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Geneva. It states:

Street children belong to the following groups: 49.3% gypsies, 32.9% Syrians, 17.8% Lebanese. They live in destroyed buildings and the majority live in the suburbs. They are organized groups that share profits and responsibilities. Street children are beggars, bubble gum sellers or car glass cleaners. An adult supervises their work and delegates their responsibilities. Begging is a profession that the whole tribe follows.¹⁰

⁹ Tammuz. *An-Nahar* (January 11, 1950), front-page editorial.

¹⁰ United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. *State Party Report: Lebanon* (February 3, 1995), 4.

Three years later Law no. 686/1998 mandated compulsory education for Lebanese children only until twelve years of age. The same year, in a Children's Day Seminar held at the American University of Beirut (AUB), Albert Zoghby, of the Lebanese Union for Child Welfare, called for "existing laws against vagrancy and begging to be applied to street children and for those from abroad to be deported." He also interpellated his AUB audience with statements such as: "Did you know that only 22 per cent of the beggars surveyed are Lebanese?" adding, "since it is against the law, the foreigners should be deported."¹¹

More recent articles published in Lebanon's press under such titles as: "NGO Urges Citizens Not to Encourage Child Beggars",¹² "Child beggar networks persist despite crack down",¹³ "Children Labor at Beirut Graveyards",¹⁴ "Over 1,500 Children Working in the Streets across Country",¹⁵ illustrate the growing social and moral panic in regards to the presence of children on the street.

The work of children on the street is strenuous, intensive and difficult. Their

¹¹ Aside from discouraging the poor and the futures of improvised children as members of society his comments refute several of Lebanon's international commitments such as the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racism (1971), The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) and draws attention to the problematic 1925 Lebanese nationality law.

¹² *The Daily Star*. (July 14, 2010); available from dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2010/Jul-14/58218-ngo-urges-citizens-not-to-encourage-child-beggars.ashx.

¹³ Meguerditchian, Van. *The Daily Star*, February 8, 2012; available from dailystar.com.lb/News/Local-News/2012/Feb-08/162564-child-beggar-networks-persist-despite-crackdown.ashx.

¹⁴ Fatima Shoukeir. (February 7, 2013). *Al Akhbar*; available from english.al-akhbar.com/author/fatima-shoukeir.

¹⁵ Mazin Sidahmed. (February 17, 2015). *The Daily Star*; available from dailystar.com.lb/News/Lebanon-News/2015/Feb-17/287669-over-1500-children-working-in-streets-across-country.ashx.

trades range from shoe shinning to the sale of coffee, fruits and vegetables and on the lower end of the spectrum, gum and tissues. The risks of street work are also real and significant. They are directly exposed to the physical and environmental hazards of Beirut's dangerous traffic and abuse at the hands of other children and adults. Their gear and stocks can be confiscated by the police or stolen by competitors on the streets. The regularity of their income is threatened by inclement weather, the street repercussions of sudden changes in the political and security situation, or new zoning decisions. They can also be arrested themselves and their arrest can always legally lead to that of their parents.

The United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), Rapid Assessment of Street and Working Children in Cairo and Alexandria, defines street children as children who are not adequately protected and supervised by a responsible adult.¹⁶ And indeed it is widely assumed that the presence of a child working on the street can only indicate that there is a lack of care in the child's life. Yet even a quick examination reveals that street-working children hardly live "care-less" lives. In the first place, most of them actually operate as caretakers for primary others (siblings and/or parents) through their work on the street.¹⁷ Street children are also rarely working in empty or abandoned streets; rather, they commonly work in plain sight of shop tenants, traffic officers, parking attendants, garbage collectors, bus drivers,

¹⁶ Office of Drug Control and Crime Prevention (ODCCP), the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP): *Rapid Assessment of Street and Working children in Cairo & Alexandria*, (2001), 13.

¹⁷ See "the vast majority of street working children gave all their money to family members (95 percent)". International Labor Organization (ILO), *Profile and Magnitude Report on the Children Living and Working on the Streets in Lebanon* (February 2015), 52. Retrieved from: lebanon.savethechildren.net/news/ministry-labour-save-children-ilo-unicef-launch-study-plight-working-children-streets-lebanon.

gas attendants, and other vending adults, with whom they develop of a variety of relationships ranging from customership to informal protection. Finally, street children also collaborate with each other in their work to provide and exchange protection, support and knowledge. In addition, daily work on the streets is not a carefree existence: it takes a lot of self-directed discipline, from maintaining one's tools and supplies to abiding by a self-imposed working schedule to managing one's forces and energy. Thus care also manifests itself in the words a child will choose to use in various contexts, the ways in which he or she dresses, manages finances on a day-to-day basis, and navigates the street unsupervised. Overall, care emerges in street work at the intersection of a variety of social relationships and of the individual construction of the self in a manner that can affect greatly a child's ability to generate an income and the quality of the life he or she will encounter on the streets.

The concept of care for the purpose of this research is not simply conceived as a binding relation that involves a giver and receiver. Rather, I define care as a loose mode of affiliation between youth and a variety of adults, and between youths themselves, that is sometimes at odds with normative ideas concerning the proper relationship between state, society and families. The motif of *care* is peculiarly operative for the study of street working children because it provides an entry into the various social contexts that these children navigate on a day-to-day basis and the modes of sociality that characterize them. Such an investigation of the place and forms of care in the life worlds of street children is important, I believe, in order to better understand these life worlds.

In approaching the lives of street working children through the lens of care, my goal is not to minimize the hardship of children's lives on the streets, nor to deny that such relations can be and often are abusive and exploitative. Simply, I take it for granted

that children's work is likely to remain an enduring reality in the streets of Beirut pending a massive transformation of Lebanon's economic and social situation and of the political situation of its regional context. In this context, I believe that the possibility to design positive interventions (on the part of the state or of civil society actors) to improve these children's lives hinges on a better understanding of their social worlds and of how they orient themselves within these worlds. It depends, in other terms, on learning to look at street-working children not just as victims but also as worthy society members who are creators of value, in the form of income, social networks and existential meaning.

CHAPTER II

RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES AND METHODS

A. Research Questions

The theoretical model of research outlined in this thesis is structured around a collection of ethnographic data. The model will allow a researcher to investigate how care emerges, and in which forms it does so, at the intersection of a variety of relationships framed by work in the lives of children selling small items in the streets in Beirut. The methodological framework would allow the researcher to explore the networks in which street working children occupy the position of care givers or care receivers for: primary others, or the family; peer networks, or children's bands or association; and finally, short- or long-term relationships with adult strangers encountered in the streets. The model also includes an inquiry into the forms of care of the self that are necessary to sustain a successful career on the streets.

1. Care of Primary Others

In this component of the project, the goal is to document how children interpret their work in the streets in relation to their understanding of the care that family members owe to one another. Do they construe their work in the street as a form of care? Or do they consider that the fact that they are in the streets evinces a lack of care on the part of their parents? How do they understand their place and role in the decision process that led to their work in the streets? What part of the household budget do their earnings represent, and what is their say about the manner in which these earnings are spent?

2. Eliciting Care from Other Adults

A sustainable career on the streets often depends on a child's ability to elicit care from adults encountered in the streets in the form of informal protection, exchange of information, small favors, or mutual discounts for the purchase of various goods. Who are the adults engaged in such relations with children and what is their profile? How do children develop working relationships with such various figures as shop owners, traffic police officers, gas station attendants, or bus drivers? What are the actual, concrete benefits of such relationships and what price do children have to pay to sustain them from one day to the next?

3. Taking Care of Each Other

Street work, most often, is collaborative work: even a cursory observation of children working in the streets reveals that they go in small groups of two or more or that they regularly link up with each other. The goal in this component of the project is to document the various ways in which street children care for each other and how they reflect on this mutual care. On what basis (e.g. sibling-ship, friendship or street encounters) are such associations formed? What is the place of apprenticeship and mentoring in such associations, i.e., along which channels is the practical knowledge necessary to a successful career in the streets transmitted from one child to the next? How is trust built and maintained amongst potential competitors and how are decisions made collectively for the distribution or sharing of a specific vending territory? What kind of support is offered, and by whom, in moments of financial hardship or emotional breakdown? Finally, how do conflicts arise, and how, and by whom are these conflicts negotiated?

4. Taking Care of One's Self

In this last component of the project, the goal is to document the forms of care of the self that contribute to a street working child's capacity to maintain and secure a sense of existential security, self-worth and dignity in the adverse circumstances he or she faces on a day-to-day basis. How do they find the stamina necessary to meet their daily goals? How do they identify a place for work, where working will not only be safe, but also a place where they feel good? What material resources and care do they put in such self-fashioning activities as being clean, dressing one-self and even speaking in one register of speech rather than another? Finally, what discursive and symbolical resources do they rely on to hold at bay the stigma associated in society at large with their livelihood and situation?

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Methodologically this study relies on (1) *participant observation* (2) *ethnographic interviews* and (3) *child centered research activities*. My methods are modeled around the question of how care is enacted in the various relationships and practices of street children. Apart from observing and moderately participating in the daytime activities of children working on the street a researcher could, with the child's permission, conduct one-hour interview sessions held bi-weekly. Specifics such as where and when the children and the researcher should meet should be left up to the children to decide but the researcher could suggest age appropriate venues such as: a local public park, beach, or street stands selling café and soft drinks. During the session the researcher should ask the children questions and supplement these questions with a variety of research activities such as: worksheets, and conversation starter cards that were framed around care in different social relationships and environments. The use of such materials could allow for a freer and more open flow of reflection and responses by inviting children to actively participate in the research process. It can also be used to avoid boredom and loss of interest on the part of the young interlocutors.

A. Participant Observation

Using the method of participant observation the researcher should record systematic observations of how children shoulder care and responsibility. In order to avoid disturbing a child's work and drawing unwanted attention to the child's presence on the street the researcher's participation should be limited to talking with the

children when they are available and walking with them from various distances. The researcher should also ask the children where to locate themselves so that their presence is the least disruptive to the children's work and interactions with customers.

- While observing a researcher should carefully take scratch notes and use techniques to systematically collect simple quantitative data on the number of hours worked, distance traveled by foot, taxis or vans, number and duration of breaks, income earned, working expenses such as transportation, cost of food, buying stock and police fines.

- As a researcher shadows the young participants the researcher could also take mental notes of where they went and later transcribe notes into maps.

- Specific attention should be paid to the use of private spaces such as: shops, parking lots and apartment buildings entrances and public spaces such as: open green spaces, bus stops, street corners and sidewalks, as well as the social interactions that took place there.

- A researcher should observe the etiquette used to attract attention to one self such as: the adoption of particular facial expressions, eye contact, hand gestures, dress, language usages, manners displayed in travel (for example, thanking cars for stopping, holding doors for others, sharing the sidewalk, politely turning down requests for help by beggars and sales by other street vendors) and other concrete particulars especially in relation to type of interlocutor.

- A researcher should also trace the flow of information circulated in everyday chatter, eaves-dropping, advice and gossip used to forward self-interest or mutual benefit, reinforce the values and demands of a group and strengthen bonds.

- A researcher should also pay attention to how children collaborated together to inspire and provoke each other's work in arrangements such as: travel, the exchange

of goods, services, lending of money and how collaboration is used as: a way out of trouble, support system and form of protection.

B. Ethnographic Interviews

A researcher could use immersive conversations and directed one to one interviews to learn as much as possible about the context in which the child lives and works. In these conversations, the researcher should explore with the children the meaning and value attached to caring for and caring about their livelihood, family, relationships and wellbeing. A technique that could be used to make questions less threatening to children and to allow them some leeway in how they answer is to phrase some of the questions as questions about children in general in their context. This could make it clear the researcher is not trying to delve in the child's privacy and also communicates that the child is the expert (i.e., teacher) on the subject.

- In order to collect household information the researcher should ask: How many people live at home with you and how are you related? What kinds of work do they do inside and outside of the home? What types of things is money regularly spent on (for example, food, water, clothing, cleaning supplies, gas, rent, debt, transportation fees, school tuition or supplies)? Can you tell me about any irregular expenses the family has paid for (for example, legal fees for visa renewals, work permits, passports, divorce, bail and penalties, migration/immigration of family members, medical expenses or hospitalizations of handicapped, sick, elderly or pregnant family members and extended kin, appliances or electronic devices. Can you tell me about the different things you have helped pay for?

- What do members of the family share (for example, a car, bedroom, food, clothing, medicine, money)? How are sick members taken care of? How often do you

visit or talk to other people related to you?

- Are there exceptional occasions that bring the family together (for example, birth announcements, birthdays, anniversaries, weddings, funerals and religious holidays)?

- How much is needed to invest in work and the work of other family members (for example, paying for baskets, trolleys, shoe shine kits, stock, uniforms, gear, supplies and transportation)?

- From your experience, what did most children do before they started working? How long do you think they went to school for? What are some popular after school activities for people your age?

- What employment or educational opportunities exist for children outside their current work? What do children working on the street do when they get older (for example, school, formal employment, migration, marriage)? How are future events and opportunities envisioned and prepared for?

C. Child Centered Research Activities

The researcher could also experiment with research activities that could allow the researcher to investigate how children envision attitudes of care. The details of these research activities could be worked out after a few weeks of fieldwork, when the researcher has a better sense of the children's intellectual maturity and of the kinds of research activities that they might find engaging. But for example:

- A worksheet of blank TVs, plates, music tapes, and books they would fill in with their favorite items for each category. Although this isn't necessarily part of the research question I believed collecting this type of information will allow me to better bond with the children.

- A collaboratively constructed household chore chart that would list responsibilities that could be checked off such as: cooking, cleaning, babysitting, shopping for household items and groceries, taking care of elders, helping parents entertaining house guests, and delivering/returning/asking for favors on behalf of their parents.

- The use of conversation starter cards pre-filled with topic questions. I would ask children to pick a card out of pile and answer the open-ended question printed on the card. If they felt uncomfortable answering the question they could put the card back into the pile and choose another. For example, the cards would ask question such as: describe your usual routine before leaving to work/after arriving back home, describe your weekend, describe three places you like/dislike to work in, describe the most interesting/boring people you have met while working. Describe the most beautiful/ugliest part of the city? Describe the safest/most dangerous place to work. Which parts of work do you find easy/difficult? Who are the people you look forward to/dread of seeing at work? Tell the story of a difficult situation at work and how others helped you/ how you have you helped others out of similar situations? Tell a story of a difficult situation at work when you received no help what kind of help, support or care would help avoid similar situations in the future?

- The researcher could role-play with children by asking them to coach me as if I was starting my very first day of work the next day. The researcher could ask them to teach the researcher how to: prepare for work (for example, what should the researcher wear? what time should the researcher wake up in the morning?), how to work (for example, what is the easiest and fastest item to sell, where should the researcher work and for how long should the researcher stay there for? how will the researcher know it is time to change where the researcher is working? how does the

researcher make friends, steer clear of trouble and avoid getting lost, or arrested?

- The researcher should also be open to also sharing some of their own stories as well as being open to answering questions the children have about the researcher's own life.

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

The methodological model provides a lens through which research with or on children should be organized. Regarding methodological challenges, this section suggests that children have different, not inferior, knowledge, abilities, and areas of strength that research methods must address. Research on children conceptualizes the child into distinct ways, each influencing how research is conducted with them. In order for the research model to reflect the autonomy of the cultural world of children the model must reflect children's different social status from adults. The research must recognize that children develop their own hierarchies, use of language, humor, rituals, all of which contribute to the creation of their independent, separate cultures. The organization of time, the allocation of resources, the rule of law and the geographical structures of the field site should all be considered aspects of adult culture that directly affect the lives of children. Exploring the child through an ethnographic approach entails approaching children's lives as embedded within shifting social structures. They are constructed through history, material conditions and dominant discourses. It should not be presumed that children share a collective identity that can be theorized and described. The study should be designed in such ways as to maximize a child's ability to articulate their own conceptions of identity.

The research design will have to allow children to place themselves on the continuum between adulthood and childhood, rather than presuming, on the basis of their presence working on street, that they fall into a fixed category. A researcher will need to pay attention to how individual children define themselves, and, in turn,

examine how their definitions of engagement relate to perceptions of their own development as both workers and children. Similarly, when analyzing data, a researcher should be more attentive to the ways in which definitions and experiences of youth are dependent on society's definitions and experiences of childhood in a particular historical moment.

A. Fieldwork

Fieldwork with and among children will present particular challenges to an ethnographer. As many other researchers who have conducted research in a street setting have testified (Bourgois 1996; Hecht 1998; and Marquez 1999), the nature of the street presents many dilemmas to the participant observer. Reflexivity needs to be built into various stages of the research process, it is crucial to avoid pitfalls in areas concerning: power, memory, public observation, and semi-participation. Thoughtful considerations and journaling are essential in order to work past a researcher's own assumptions and beliefs. It is crucial to consider the ways the relationship between the children and the researcher is not a simple binary but intersects with other aspects of the researcher's and children's social identities and locations. These considerations will also work to ensure children are not further disempowered by the research process and product or made conscious of their vulnerability through the research encounter.

B. Entering the Social World of Children

A researcher will experience significant obstacles in entering the social worlds of children. The safety of a child could be compromised if they are lead into a discussion about aspects of their lives which are peculiarly distressing. The research activities were designed so that children themselves could shape and change them in

order to express themselves in a manner that never forced them to directly address a topic which could cause them discomfort. The role of children in research is instrumentally important in allowing the ethnographer gain access to the various social worlds of children. In this sense, children are not only objects and subjects under study but also act as active collaborators. These roles illuminate key ethical issues in conducting research such as: the instrumental use of children to gain access to their social worlds, knowledge and relationships ,the active role of children in framing the research questions and collecting data, and when the children under study and are seen as individuals who are fully capable and competent enough to answer questions. In a recent paper written on methodological observations involved with interviewing children Virginia Morrow and Martin Richards have argued that,

... the ways of 'seeing children' that researchers hold have a profound impact upon the way in which we study children... The methods that we use, the research populations and subjects that we study, and crucially the interpretation of the data collected, are all influenced by the view of children that we take... (Morrow and Richards, 1996, 98).

C. Power and Representation

Thinking about children and ethnography also raises issues around childhood, as it is a unique time in a child's life that renders them powerless in relation to adults. Since both the social reality and research methods are socially constructed the researcher must call into question their role as a researcher and the method itself, especially with respect to issues of power and representation. With street working children, power relations may become more complicated because they are in a social position that shifts frequently between areas of dependence and independence. Doing research with children necessitates recognizing the network of power relationships to which the child is already subject to. Although children are the keepers of the

knowledge that a researcher has access to, they are surrounded by adults who control the researcher's access and children's opportunities to participate in research. These adults cannot be disregarded once a researcher has gained access because they exercise influence over all stages of the research process. Hence, consent should be seen as a continual aspect of the research process. These adults enable researchers to access other adults. The access process provides important insight into the nature of social relations within the research setting. The researcher should constantly work with these adults to define and redefine how deeply the researcher will be included into the children's peer and work culture. It should be clearly understood the researcher will not take on a supervisory role.

An insider status with children and the adults in their lives may not be enough to facilitate understanding or ensure complete and accurate data collection between researchers and subjects. A researcher should also be careful not to represent their own personal memories of childhood as a form of bias because it can easily ignore the complexities and use of identity makers that children bring to the research. As Barue Thorne, stated on her own fieldwork with children, argue: "To learn from children, adults have to challenge the deep assumption that they already know what children are 'like', both because, as former children, adults have been there, and because, as adults they regard children as less complete versions of themselves" (1993,12). A researcher must also be aware that their own identity will be actively negotiated between child participants.

The least adult role will allow a researcher to keep rapport. For example, selectively sharing information about one's self and emphasizing certain attributes that will purposefully distinguish the researcher from other adults in their lives. A researcher will have to distance themselves from adult behavior by refraining from expressing

disapproval, expressing defense or making any suggestions. The researcher must place themselves in the role of a student and allow the children to take the lead in teaching the researcher about their lives. Methodologically, it is only through such long lasting relationships that a researcher can begin to ask personal questions, and expect to engage in substantive conversations with socially marginalized and vulnerable populations. In addition to exercising great care and ensuring methodologically the study is formulated to be age appropriate, designed to always prioritize the physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing of children, the research must also be conducted in a manner consistent with the ethical principles enforced by the Institutional Review Board.

CHAPTER V

THE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AND ETHICAL CONCERNS

Methodologically, the study of street working children is complicated because of significant sampling, data gathering, and measurement obstacles. Ethical concerns regarding the study of children are enhanced because of their young age and high risk working conditions. The Institutional Review Board is a board established in accord with and for the purposes expressed in this (45CFR46) policy.¹⁸ The Institutional Review Board sets strong systems of protection for child participants in research, which will provide support and guidance to ethical responsibilities that call for special attention.

The most pressing issue in conducting collaborative research with children are confidentiality, safety, the consent process and the usefulness of the research to the participants. There is also the issue regarding the researcher's obligation to report abuse and how to respond to such instances in the field site. Ethical behavior in the research process is also critical for collaborative work because it encourages an environment of trust, accountability, and mutual respect among the researcher and the study's participants. The Institutional Review Board permits research with children under three circumstances: (1) Research presents no more than minimal risk to the child. (2) Research presents more than minimal risk but offers direct benefit to child participant. (3) Research presents no direct benefits to the child participants but consists only of a minor increase over minimal risk. This section will highlight ethical guidelines that are

¹⁸ Code of Federal Regulations. (2009). *U.S. Department of Health & Human Services* (14 July); available from <http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/guidance/45cfr46.html>; Internet; accessed December 17, 2017.

put into action by the Institutional Review Board in order to preserve the safety and welfare of the human subjects in research.

A. Confidentiality

The proposed research does not involve deception or withholding information normally provided to research participants. The identity of the researcher conducting fieldwork should be disclosed to all the children and adults the researcher comes into contact with throughout the course of fieldwork. Maintaining the confidentiality of the information collected ensures that only the investigator of the research can identify the responses of participants. The researcher must also provide anonymity to information that is collected so that responses cannot be linked to individuals. Data collection must not contain details that could easily identify participants. In order to protect the identity of all the children in the study a researcher will have to change their names and alter the exact location of where the children work in order to prevent easy identification. Actual names or identifiable data should never be recorded, pseudonyms should be used in all writings related to the study, including field notes. Phone numbers stored to contact children, in rare cases, should be securely stored in a separate password protected data file. A researcher should also permanently delete all field notes in the form of electronic files and recycle all physical notes written on paper once they are no longer needed.

B. Safety

A researcher should approach children after a few weeks of non-invasive overt observations, in areas they are familiar with, in order to assess which participants were fit for the study in the best possible conditions. The framework of this study only revolves around a small sample of ten children in order to maintain an intense

relationship with each participant, which will allow for meaningful data to be collected. Although snowball sampling is not a statistically representative sample, due to the nature of the research on the street, inter-knowledge between the participants would provide an additional layer of protection for the children that chose to participate in the study.

C. Recruitment

The suggested criteria for inclusion in such a study is: male, between the age of 10 and 14, working as street vendors. Children under the age of 10 should be excluded due to the fact they would be less likely to exhibit a competent interpretation of the research goals, objectives, methodology, as well as of the risks and benefits of participating in the study. This age range has also been specifically chosen based on the previously mentioned 2015 International Labor Organization (ILO) profile report that found that “more than half of street based children in Lebanon are aged between 10 and 14 years old”. Female’s street children should also excluded because female street children are exposed to specific vulnerabilities and their trajectories deserve to be studied in depth and separately. In order to gather a pool of informants that meet the requirements a researcher should devote at least two weeks to making rounds in the neighborhood chosen as the field site. Observations should not involve any interventions in the activities of the children in order to avoid disrupting their work.

D. Consent

Obtaining both parental consent and a child’s assent to participate in the study serves as an ethical obligation to respect and protect the children in the study. Informed Parental consent is voluntary permission granted by a parent or legal guardian granting

permission for their child to participate in a research study. It is the procedure by which researchers ensure that research participants are fully informed about and aware of the foreseeable potential risks and costs involved in participating in a research study. The Institutional Review Board Member Handbook states the following elements should be included in the informed consent document¹⁹:

- Research purpose procedures
- Risks and discomforts
- Potential benefits
- Alternative procedures or treatments
- Provisions for confidentiality
- Management of research-related injury
- Contacts for additional information
- Voluntary participation and the right to discontinue participation without penalty
- Unforeseeable risks
- Termination of participation by the investigator
- Additional costs
- Consequences of discontinuing research participation
- Notification of significant new findings
- Approximate number of subjects

The Code of Federal Regulations, 45 CFR 46.402 (b) defines “child assent” as “a child’s affirmative agreement to participate in research.”²⁰ This must be an active assent and not simply a failure to object to participation in the research.

It should be anticipated that collecting written consent from the children and their parent(s) and or guardian(s) is probably not the best option to guarantee the safety of children in the specific case of children on the street. The study is not an intended study on illegal activity but the collection of written consent would inadvertently provide written evidence of the illegal activities of the children’s parents since having one’s child working in the street is a crime under various articles of Lebanese law.

¹⁹ R. Amdur and E.A. Bankert. (2006). *Institutional Review Board: Member Handbook* (2nd Ed.). Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett Publishers.

²⁰ Code of Federal Regulations, 2009.

(Parents of children found on the street working or begging are subject to punishment and penalties under Law no. 164/2011: Punishment for the Crime of Trafficking Persons under article no. 586.²¹ They can also fall under the purview of other articles such as: articles no. 617 and. 618 of the 1943 penal code of the population). Therefore it is suggested to avoid collecting in writing information that is not directly necessary for the research project such as signatures of the research participants or their parents. A good solution would be to collect the parents' consent orally and provide the IRB with a list of phone numbers where.

It is suggested that there be a one week waiting period between approaching possible participants and collecting their oral assent in order to ensure children are allowed sufficient time to discuss their participation together with their families.

Consent scripts must contain the following elements:

- A statement that the study involves research.
- An explanation of the purposes of the research.
- The expected duration of the subject's participation – both for the overall study and the anticipated time needed to engage in the research activities. This includes listing all procedures (including follow-up interviews) you are requesting the subject to participate in.

- Description of the procedures to be followed and identification of any

²¹ Article no. 586/2011 section (3) defines the act of begging as a form of human trafficking, punishable by imprisonment of ten years and a fine of two hundred to four hundred times that of the official minimum wage if said perpetrator, partner, accomplice, or instigator to the crime is: One of the victim's legal or non-legal forefathers, one of the members of his family, or any person who exercises legal authority or actual direct or indirect authority over the victim. It also states: consideration shall not be given to the consent that is given by the victim to exploitation that is to be committed and is indicated in this paragraph; nor shall consideration be given to the consent to such exploitation that is given by one of the victim's forefathers, legal guardian, or any other person who exercises legal or actual authority over the victim.

procedures which are experimental (such as tests or games).

- Description of the types of questions that will be asked (with more specifics for questions that are likely to be sensitive, such as health history).

- A description of any reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts to the subject.

- Despite receiving parental consent the researcher must still judge the ethical standards for the child's participation. A researcher must ethically consider if a child's parents have considered the child's wellbeing.

A researcher needs to pay attention throughout the research process to the children's choice to participate. Active steps should be taken by the researcher not only to secure this right but also provide a safe space for children to make the decision not to cooperate without feeling obligated. The concept of voluntary withdrawal should be emphasized with children, as they often have a fear of disappointing elders. For example, repeat to the child that questioning or leaving the study does not mean they have failed or are in trouble. Consistent follow-ups during the study should remind children that they can leave the study without consequence if they no longer want to participate. The researcher should also constantly keep an eye open for indications that children want to withdraw from the study, even if they do not express it verbally.

Interpreting children's consent is a complex matter, since their response in terms of 'yes' or 'no' could come from a sense on their part that adults expect particular answers.

The researcher must be very attentive to the children's positive and negative actions and reactions over time and to cues that manifest a desire not to continue participating in the research project. For example, a child who: continually avoids the researcher in the street, is silent or answers questions minimally, displays uncomfortable body language, and has repeated absences from scheduled interviews should no longer

be approached to participate in the study. In such instances all field notes and data on the child should be destroyed and excluded from the study. The researcher should also refrain from contacting the child in person or through other means and avoided the child's workspace to the best of their ability (i.e. specific street, street corner, intersection, or traffic light). The researcher should also refrain from approaching other children for information on the child and from attempting to contact or interact with the child in any way. In the event the researcher finds themselves in the presence of the child while working with other children the researcher should excuse themselves and leave the site until the child is no longer present.

Although an investigator must obtain informed consent from subjects before enrollment in the study or participation in any research activities the process does not end here, however, as participants can withdraw from the study or opt out of a procedure at any time. The informed consent process is an ongoing exchange of information which could take multiple forms, including individual check-ins, family meeting, question and answer sessions. Child participants must have an outlet to express their questions and concerns and withdraw their consent if needed. Cultural sensitivities should also be taken into account during the consent process. Participants may feel more comfortable interacting with a local investigator or someone that shares their cultural background. If this is not possible, it is important that those seeking consent are provided training on the context and culture within which they are working. These procedures extend the consent process throughout the full period of participation.

E. Compensation

The topic of compensation is peculiarly delicate with research subjects who are both minor and poor. In this context, any form of compensation can easily turn into an

undue form of coercion into participating in the research project. The researcher must take steps to minimize any possible real or perceived coercion or undue influence. One way in which a perceived appearance of undue influence could be produced in the process of collecting assent (from the children) would be if the children and their parents come to perceive the researcher as a source of income (e.g., as a customer). For this reason, the researcher must be careful not to create this impression while recruiting potential participants. Concretely, it means that the researcher is careful not to create any kind of ambiguity in this regard by staying away from any kind of purchase from the children when approaching them for the first time, and by stating it clearly to them that there will not be any kind of financial compensation for their participation in the study.

CHAPTER VI

LITERATURE REVIEW

This project by focusing on the lived social relationships and social interactions of children working on the street will contribute a thick ethnography of childhood to the anthropology of the contemporary Middle East. Anthropological research has called for a greater appreciation of child labor, inviting a focus on children's work as a chance to improve and take control of their lives (Nieuwenhuys, 1996). A growing body of literature on children working on the street has specifically approached children as social agents and economic actors, often vital to the survival of their families (Bar-On, 1997) and better off than their equally poor counterparts who stay at home (Aptekar, 1994). Several studies have shown how working children learn entrepreneurial skills by selling small items, sometimes under the supervision of adults (Invernizzi, 2003; Sharp, 1996). One well-known study found mathematical skills that Brazilian child street vendors acquired through their work to be better developed and more useful than those that children were learning in school (Nunes, 1993). Similarly, Jurdak and Shahin (1999) found that child vendors in Lebanon used logical mathematical skills in solving problems with transactions. A recent study in Peru showed trading children acquiring language skills that could serve for upward mobility more effectively than classroom skills (Aufseeser, 2012; see also Huberman, 2012). I am interested in building on such studies to render visible the capacities and skills of children working on the street as not only governed by money but also by care, trust, responsibility and a sensitive understanding of needs.

Moreover, research has also looked at the involvement of children on the street

together as a way to access important networks and resources, and how children use their social skills and appropriate subcultural norms and values in order to build careers (Stephenson, 2001). Children's work has been shown to involve social skills learned from a variety of sources including peers, unrelated adults and parents (Invernizzi, 2003). Recent discussions have focused on the behavior of children in attempts to change their lives (Jones, 1997) and how children develop a social identity and confront their stigma through strategic use of urban space (Ruddick, 1998). However, I seek to complicate such accounts by addressing how social relationships are also transformed when individuals and families are left solely responsible for their own well-being.

The growing body of anthropological literature on children in street situations invites attention to the integral social relationships their livelihoods depend on. In addition, how children perceive care in a variety of different spheres (individual, private, and public) are topics that deserve to be studied consistently. Conradson (2011) defines care as a sense of connection to and engagement with familiar others that has a significant bearing upon the quality of social life. Other studies have presented care as both labor and love (Finch and Grooves, 1983) and caregiving as an activity encompassing both instrumental and affective relations (Abel and Nelson, 1990). Fisher and Tronto (1990) identified four phases of care: caring about, caring for, care giving and receiving. This research could build on such studies by re-evaluating care in the everyday lived and exchange practices of children working on the street (Lucchini, 1993).

This project hopes to contribute to the urgent task of building a more robust

profile of children working on the street in Lebanon.²² The realities of their childhoods have vital implications for the nature of services and protection programs that can be designed to support them. Humanitarian and NGOs reports focus on the urgency to deal with the issue of street children while little or no attention is paid to the complexities of agency, the value and meaning assigned to work, and the manner in which work can foster an opportunity to be cared for and to take care of others. By contrast, this research could produce a thick account of some children's lives using qualitative ethnographic data. Reynolds rightly asserts, "The manifest advantage of the anthropological perspective is that it specifically looks at practices, how they come about and how they relate to moral categories and ideas of a good life on the ground, where everyday life is enacted" (Reynolds, 2006). Reynolds also pioneered anthropological studies on children and childhood by recording the social, economic and moral experiences of children within the context of the societies they lived in, to discover what conceptions of childhood adults hold and how they shape the way children are regarded and treated.

The study also builds on Reynolds's work by revealing the sets of behaviors and relationships children actively seek out, create and use to challenge the common assumptions and ideas society has of them. The study also aims at introducing a new set of variables into the current street children literature in Lebanon and could provide recommendations needed to ensure the safety of children while they are working. In order to ensure that future interventions support children rather than further damages

²² Considering perceived lack of future prospects lured many children into the hands of militias during the Lebanese civil war (see S. Joseph (2004). "Conceiving Family Relationships in Post-War Lebanon". *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 35(2), 271-293) and the same phenomenon has also reemerged and been documented in neighboring Syria by many Syrian rebel factions, including the Nusra Front, the Islamic Front and Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) (see also Human Rights Watch Report. (2014). *Maybe be Live and Maybe We Die: Recruitment and Use of Children by Armed Groups in Syria* (23 June); available from hrw.org/reports/2014/06/22/maybe-we-live-and-maybe-we-die; Internet; accessed March 2017).

their limited opportunities and livelihoods, a clearer understanding of the social relationships, attitudes and behaviors of children working on the street is urgently needed.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Street children are largely considered outside the normal socializing control of adult society regulated through the sphere of family and school. The confusion regarding street working children has led to a general misunderstanding of street work and the exploitation of street working children comes easily when society does not understand them. The inability of society to think of street working children as competent thinking, aware beings is key to understanding the problems researchers face in creating an anthropology that takes street working children seriously.

The researcher's ethical consideration throughout the research is to honestly represent the lives of the children in the study. To listen to what the children have to say and observe how they really work and interact with those around them. This process requires bringing to consciousness, even the verbalization, of much that is taken for granted or unexamined about street working children. It is the process of abstraction and bringing together the knowledge children can and do produce. This kind of knowledge is worth paying attention to because it is not the sort of knowledge we, as adults, tend to produce ourselves.

The findings of the study will question the cultural ideal that is advocated by virtually every Lebanese national that children belong with family and in schools and not working full time on the street. That it is incumbent upon a child's parents to guarantee his or her safety and healthy development, and if they are unfit to do so the state ensure parents and children receive the assistance needed to do so by depicting how such ideal conditions are not allocated in sufficient measures in Beirut to make

them possible. The study will provide a child's account of the dire poverty that forces them to work.

Qualitative studies provide researchers with the opportunity to enter into the otherwise unknown world of street working children. By accumulating explanatory information about what kinds of children become street workers and for what reasons, it may be possible to develop predictive models about which children are at risk of becoming street working children. By examining the roles that children play in the economies of their household, the variety of domestic arrangements we can better understand how the work of children is an integral contribution to the household and to the adult's in their lives. The study will also provide a vital understanding of the extremely social nature of street work as well as the physical demands placed on street working children. The study hopes to depict that children are both able to be dutiful members of their household and individual agents pursuing their own present and future interests. The study also hopes to describe where the street work of children fits into our current knowledge about child labor. Street working children, being profoundly disempowered and marginalized in research and in a host of other arenas, can hardly be understood to be underserving of the transformative attention and work that research efforts imply wherever they are implemented.

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