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Jerry Hollingsworth. 2008. *Children of the Sun: An Ethnographic Study of the Street Children of Latin America*. New Castle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. 136 pp. Paperback.

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In *Children of the Sun*, Jerry Hollingsworth, Professor of Sociology at McMurry University, takes the reader inside the subculture of 'street children' in Cuernavaca, Mexico and Lima, Peru. Street children are children up to the age of eighteen, who are forced to live and work on the streets as a result of poverty, migration or familial conflict. They are burdened with a myriad of issues. Many lack access to formal education and adequate healthcare, face discrimination, and show a propensity towards drug use and victimisation. They are also excluded from what conventional society has defined as childhood (10). Hollingsworth's goal is to give an in-depth account of street children's lived experiences, and analyse their individual characteristics and day-to-day behaviours through a lens of subculture, pseudo-adulthood, and the importance of play.

Children of the Sun is a two-part book. Part one is titled 'The Children

of Mexico' and part two is titled 'The Children of Peru.' Each part begins by providing the historical, political, and economic background of each country. This background information provides the reader with an understanding of the structural factors, such as social stratification, unemployment and political corruption that according to Hollingsworth, contribute to the presence of street children on Mexican and Peruvian streets.

Hollingsworth uses the term 'street children' to refer to children in three different situations. Market children labour on the street in order to supplement their families' income and attend school sporadically. They comprise the majority of the street children population. Homeless Street children live on the streets full time and in most cases, have lost contact with their families after running away or being abandoned (11). Hollingsworth introduces a third category, street family children.

Like homeless street children, street family children live on the street full time, but do so with their families, and are mainly the children of indigenous migrants (11).

Chapters two (Mexico) and ten (Peru) expand on the field methods employed. Hollingsworth relies on ethnography in order to explore the subculture of street children. Hollingsworth undertakes two forms of ethnographic observation, participant and non-participant observation, as well as one-on-one interviews with the street children. Non-participant observation is undertaken in the case of Mexico. In contrast, Hollingsworth assumes the role of a volunteer with a non-governmental organisation for the first part of the fieldwork in Peru, to report on children who live in extreme poverty. He then returns to the role of an observer, for his analysis of market, family, and homeless street children.

Chapters three, four and five relay Hollingsworth's narratives and observations of Mexico's market, family, and homeless street children respectively. Hollingsworth presents the children's stories in the form of case studies; the case studies include four market children, four homeless street children, and three street families. Following each case, Hollingsworth's assessment consists of two things: (1) the importance of play in the children's lives, and (2) the pseudo-adulthood traits that the children exhibit, through the way they cope with street life in their

everyday routines. These chapters shed light on the unique characteristics of each group of street children. Hollingsworth observes that market children are able to form connections with adults and other children for protection and business. On the other hand, Hollingsworth finds that street family children are too young to experience the street on their own, so they beg for their survival under their mother's watch. Hollingsworth argues that there is possibly a stratification system between market and street family children, since street families are often indigenous migrants. Based on the colour of their skin and their appearance, they are looked down upon by the market children. Consequently they are unable to take advantage of the same economic opportunities (45). Finally, Hollingsworth notes that homeless street children live without any supervision but form connections with other children in similar situations for protection and camaraderie. Out of the three categories, Hollingsworth finds that homeless street children are more likely to engage in delinquency for their survival.

In chapter six, Hollingsworth explores two behaviours that are most common to homeless street children: the use of inhalants, and sexual promiscuity. Having attended a "huffing party," Hollingsworth identifies paint thinner and glue as the drugs of choice for homeless street children, due to their low cost and the lack of regulations associated

with their use. Hollingsworth finds that homeless street children rely on inhalants as a mechanism to cope with feelings of sadness, loneliness, and hunger (57). Hollingsworth further notes that during “huffing parties,” homeless street children practise unprotected sex with each other. Sometimes this happens willingly, and other times through force or coercion. Hollingsworth labels this a ‘social event’ that combines inhalant use and promiscuity, making homeless street children more vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases (58-59) and heightens their chances of sexual victimisation by other street children and adults.

In chapter seven, Hollingsworth briefly acknowledges the role of non-governmental organisations, which for years has been to provide street children with education, legal assistance, and rehabilitation, in an effort to draw them away from street life. Hollingsworth further addresses the failed attempts of the Mexican government to deal with street children, which have led to controversy over corruption and human rights violations. In Chapter eight Hollingsworth outlines some of the strategies that market and street family children employ in order to sell their products or beg for money. Hollingsworth characterizes market children as ‘clingy’, due to the persistence and drive they demonstrate in order to sell their products to people passing by. On the other hand, Hollingsworth notes that street family

children follow people around with their hand extended, without saying anything, simply looking to make eye contact. Eye contact, according to Hollingsworth, is meant to cause pity in those passing by, which may lead them to give money to the children.

In Chapters eleven, twelve and thirteen, Hollingsworth turns to the children of Lima, Peru, but unlike the Mexican analysis, his assessment of Peru takes a different focus. In chapters eleven and twelve, Hollingsworth’s analysis is about children who live in extreme poverty in two different shanty-towns of Lima. Hollingsworth notes that the four children in this analysis have experienced sporadic episodes of street life, as they were members of rural migrant families before settling in the shanty-towns. Hollingsworth’s analysis of Peru is similar to his analysis of Mexico, focusing on the children’s instances of play, pseudo-adulthood traits, and delinquent behaviours. In Chapter thirteen, Hollingsworth returns to the original analysis of market, family and homeless street children in Cusco, Peru. This analysis is short as Hollingsworth only presents the analysis of one market child, one homeless street child, and one street family. Hollingsworth’s conclusions are similar to the Mexican cases, but one difference emerges with respect to the market children of Peru. According to Hollingsworth, Peruvian market children speak English in order to communicate

with foreigners and better market their products to tourists. In Chapter fourteen, Hollingsworth provides a historical description of 'basuco', a plant used by Peruvians working in the fields, which has similar effects to the inhalants used by homeless street children in Mexico. According to Hollingsworth, Peruvian homeless street children use basuco for similar reasons, and in a similar context as the homeless street children of Mexico. Basuco helps the street children cope with their current situation, suppress hunger and loneliness, and is often used during sexual activity with other street children or with adults.

Jerry Hollingsworth's *Children of the Sun* is a well written and thought provoking account, as it takes the reader inside a subculture that has become part of the daily landscape of Latin American streets. As qualitative research endeavours to do, Hollingsworth gives a 'voice to the voiceless.' *Children of the Sun* can be used as a 'jumping off' point for researchers interested in street populations and ethnographic methods. Furthermore, it is written in an accessible way to be understood by a non-academic audience. Books that are geared towards general and academic audiences are rare.

Children of the Sun, however, is not without a few shortcomings. In only 136 pages, Hollingsworth analyses the subculture of street children in two different countries, and contrasts them with each other. The

book could have been longer and provided more in-depth information about the street children with direct quotes from their narratives. Furthermore, from a methodological standpoint, Hollingsworth would have benefited from a sample drawn from different areas of Mexico, like he did in Peru, since the street children of one area are different from those from another area. Finally, this book brings back an age-old debate between 'spoiling the field' and 'fair compensation' when paying respondents. This occurs when Hollingsworth obtains participation from the mothers of street family children 'by paying one to 50 pesos at the time' (42).

With *Children of the Sun*, Jerry Hollingsworth makes a contribution to the literature on street children. Through Hollingsworth's analysis, it becomes evident that market children have the opportunity to develop networks, skills, and habits that may help them come off the streets. On the other hand, homeless and street family children are far more vulnerable. Finally, as long as structural poverty continues in Latin America, lack of education and children relying on the streets for their survival will continue to be a common sight. This perhaps suggests where research and reforms are needed. *Children of the Sun* belongs on the desks of researchers and in university classrooms; it should be read by anyone interested in the results of structural inequality.