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# CHILD LABOUR
## A multi-disciplinary review

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## Introduction

The aim of this article is twofold: firstly, I will examine the value of children's participation in working life in the South[1] and particularly in Nepal. My second objective is to assess the theoretical possibilities of the psychosocial health screening tool used to answer the questions raised in the recent literature on child labour. Child labour is a social problem arising out of family poverty and the fact that children form a cheap, usually obedient, labour force not recognized by trade-unions. I will examine the sociological, psychological, and institutional research contexts in relation to a study of children working in the carpet industry in Nepal, which was carried out by the author in collaboration with Professor Murari P. Regmi from Tribhuvan University. As child labour is a social and to some degree also cultural problem, the investigation will be conducted from a sociological and a social anthropological viewpoint. The "cultural problem" presumably arises from the different values assigned to children's participation in working life and from the conceptualizations of childhood prevalent in different cultures. There is thus a need to analyze the basic question of what kind of work is actually a hindrance to the development of the human potential of every child. This paper will not, however, discuss issues related to the elimination of poverty, as this is a topic more closely related to the field of political economy.

This paper is an attempt to describe the contextual and temporal dimension of an ongoing study on children who work in the Nepalese carpet industry. The contextual approach will be effectively used here mainly to study child development in adverse environmental conditions, such as poverty-driven child labour. The sociopolitical environments will be conceptualized along the *North – South* dimension throughout the text. Furthermore, the claimed *globalization of childhood* will be discussed later. Moreover, the present author tries to answer the call made in the *World Summit for Social Development, 1995*, to researchers to take responsibility for social development in the South (see for more Jahoda 1975, Kagitçibasi 1991, 1994b, 1996, Nsamenang 1992, Sinha 1983, Sinha & Kao 1988, Edwards 1996). In studying societal changes in the developing world, I agree to some extent with the views of Bame Nsamenang (ibid.) and Çigdem Kagitçibasi (ibid.) according to whom research should be policy-driven and promote the overall development of societies. Thus, basic research must be postponed because there are more urgent problems to deal with.

In this paper child development in context and the further issue of social disadvantage will be discussed. The regulation of children's participation in working life requires categorization which due to lack of scientific data has so far been based on political classifications of working life. Further, the main international conventions related to child work will be presented, and it will be pointed out which of these have been ratified by the Nepalese Government. The child labour literature will then be reviewed, especially, the question of how harmful or hazardous a child's work might be. After this the emergence of *Childhood* as a object of research and *Child labour studies* in the social sciences will be discussed. Finally, an overview will be given of the ongoing research into the Nepalese child laborers in carpet factories, also including a description of their working conditions.


## Development in context


The necessity of the children to go to work can be seen as a symptom of the larger phenomenon of *social disadvantage*. Social disadvantage (low education, low income, low employment levels or unemployment) is ad-

ditionally associated with lack of opportunity for developing effective social skills and parenting skills, which also serve as a negative mediator. In socioeconomic contexts where children's material contribution to the family is substantial, a *utilitarian* value is attributed to children and their work is seen as important. With changing lifestyles, especially with urbanization and increased parental education, child work loses importance. This change is seen both in the decreasing amount of actual work and also in the lower value attributed to it by parents. The most important dimensions of variation are those of rural-urban and socioeconomic status (SES) (see Kagitçibasi 1996, 19–34).

There are mediating variables (at the levels of the caretaker, family, and community) between the macrolevel adverse conditions, such as poverty, and the growing child. The very existence of mediating variables allows room for action in favor of the growing child. The context of development has a long history in social sciences. There are two theoretical developments which are of interest here. One of these is ecological theory and the other is life-span development theory. Especially with the impetus provided by Uli Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1986), conceptualizations of environmental systems, all nested within one another like Russian dolls, multilevel bases of human development and functioning are taken seriously. Similarly, in cross-cultural psychology, Berry's ecocultural model of cognitive style (1976, 1980) has found acceptance as a general model of person-environment relations (Berry et al. 1992). In addition, problem-oriented research has emphasized family interactions as a key context variable for planning of programs to improve children's welfare. In short, one should be aware of the different levels of analysis while planning actions based on policy driven research. The outcomes of activities are contextually and culturally dependent.

Catherine Boidin (1995, 23–70) asserts that low school attendance rates, fragmented repetitive work, relations between child workers and employers, the distance between the child and his/her family, and the isolation and separation of the child from his/her family are the main *risk-factors* affecting the development of children who work. Moreover, different forms of violence are typically perpetrated on the child worker: under-remuneration, poverty and debt, isolation, ill-treatment, being an object, and being without a future may severely diminish the child's possibilities for optimal development. Furthermore, Sameroff and Fiese (1992) point out that the number of risk factors work in an additive, not a multiplicative,

fashion. For example, when two or more stresses occur together, the chance of a damaging outcome goes up at least fourfold, and when four risks are present, the chances of later damage increase tenfold. In addition, Sameroff et al. (1997) on the basis of their longitudinal studies note that changes in the numbers of risk factors are not common, and stability rather than change appears to be the rule. In short, experience accumulated in the field has led to the finding that if four or more risk factors are present the more likely will children be to have problems in their later lives (Rutter 1979, Sameroff et al. 1997), see also pages 169–173 below.

### Regulation of children's participation in working life

International efforts to regulate and end children's participation in working have a long history. This work began with the ILO in 1919 in the context of the League of Nations and has continued since 1945 in the context of the United Nations, gaining impetus in the International Year of the Child 1979 and, especially, in the Convention of the Rights of the Child 1989 (CRC). National laws follow the Conventions and Recommendations adopted by the International Community.

In contrast, a fundamental critique of the *unproductive child* is currently being conducted by social scientists and lawyers. Already in the 1970s the provisions of some labour laws were said to represent an undue restraint on the rights of young people (Mnookin 1978). Although children below the age 15 are working throughout the world, their participation in trade unions is restricted. The CRC has set the age-limit for childhood at 18 years, which is usually the age of enfranchisement. Despite this, the age-limit of 15 years stated in the ILO Minimum Age Convention has most often been used in defining child work. However, from their psychological viewpoint the effects of work on 16–17-years-old teenagers might be different from its effects on children under 13 years old.

The main ILO Conventions on children include: Forced Labour Convention 1930 (N. 29), Abolition of Forced Labour Convention 1957 (N. 105), and Minimum Age Convention 1973 (N. 138), which until recently has been the most important and widely accepted convention. The core of the Minimum Age Convention is that children below the age 15 ought not to work. However, if the legislation of a country is different from this it needs to be followed. For example, in Nepal the minimum age for participation in working life is 14 years. In addition, to engage a child as a la-

bourer the Nepalese Children's Act (1992) requires permission from the Children's Welfare Officer and the child's parents or guardian. In order to facilitate the enforcement of the child labour laws, the Labour Act (1991) mentions the establishment of Labour courts in Nepal. Furthermore, according to the Prison Act (1963) a child in jail cannot be put to work (for more details see Mhatre 1995, 44, 94–96).

Next the conventions ratified by the Nepalese Government will be presented. According to the ILO-Office Nepal (1998) the Nepalese Government had up to May 1998 ratified seven Conventions, including the Weekly Rest (industry), ratified in 1986 (N. 14); Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining, ratified in 1996 (N. 98); Equal Remuneration, ratified in 1976 (N. 100); Discrimination (Employment and Occupation), ratified in 1974 (N. 111); Minimum Wage Fixing, ratified in 1974 (N. 131); Minimum Age Convention, ratified in 1997 (N. 138); and Tripartite Consultation, ratified in 1995 (N. 144). These Conventions have been notified in the Labour Act 1992, and Labour Act 1997 by His Majesty's Government (see ILO 1999), and form the basis for the possible interventions in Nepal.

The most recent and most debated convention is the *Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention 1999 (N. 182)*. The four basic categorizations of the worst forms of child labour include all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery; the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances; the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities; work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to jeopardize the health, safety or morals of children. There is probably no disagreement about the three first categories. However, one could argue about the reasoning behind the vagueness of the fourth. It leaves open the question of what in fact is harmful for the social development of children and leaves it to the national level after consultations with employers' and workers' organizations. At present, guidelines concerning the definition of hazardous work are included in the *Recommendation* only, and therefore they are not subject to ratification. Thus, it is interesting to review the recent theoretical and practical suggestions for more accurate culture specific research on child labourers.

The child labour question also relates to the Human Rights issues. According to UNICEF (1999), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) has broken all records as the most widely ratified

human rights treaty in history. Its uniqueness stems from the fact that it is the first legally binding international instrument to incorporate the full range of human rights – children's civil and political rights as well as their economic, social and cultural rights – thus giving all the rights an equal emphasis. Eyleen Verhallen has reminded us that the "Right not to be exploited, not child labour" is the spirit of Article 32 in the Convention of the Rights of the Child. Article 32 provides for "the child to be protected from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's spiritual, moral or social development" (see UNICEF 1999).

## Literature review

### Definitions of child labour

Because different cultures value children's participation in working life differently it is difficult to evaluate how children's work is valued in different contexts. After that I will review some multidisciplinary scientific approaches to child labour: these include economic, anthropological, sociological, educational, and psychological studies. Recently, Judith Ennew (UNICEF 1999, 43–44) has pointed out that "there is no unified discourse on working children" , and "more space and time are spent on definition than any other topic in the field" . One such definition is the "worst forms of child labour" (Convention N. 182, 1999), presented above. Furthermore, there is also the question how one decides whether one kind of work is more detrimental to children than another. According to Bequele and Myers (1995, 26–7), experience shows that questions of this sort have no purely technical solutions, and they must be resolved by agreement rather than by formula, reflecting realities and cultural values, and therefore differing from place to place. What is important is that concrete, feasible decisions be made about which work problems require the most urgent attention, and that these decisions enjoy at least a modicum of social credibility and legitimacy. It is a question more successfully lived through in practice than intellectually agonized over beforehand. As a researcher of child labour, I fully support this formulation of the nature of policy driven research and implementation of the current understanding of the phenomenon of child labour.

## Economists on child labour

There are powerful economic arguments for measures to reduce child labor. Premature and extensive engagement in work prevents children from accumulating human capital and having higher earnings in later life, while economic growth is affected by lower rates of productivity growth (Fallon & Tzannatos 1998, 5). The viewpoints of economists are related to so called *push* and *pull* factors. For example, Moni Nag et al. (1978) has shown that the work input by children in Javanese and Nepalese villages is quite substantial and children probably have a net positive economic value to their parents in these villages.

Recently, Richard Anker and Helinä Melkas (1996) have reported on the experiences of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) in using economic incentives to eliminate children from hazardous work. According to them, child labourers do not have a chance to acquire sufficient human capital to become skilled adult workers. In addition, the widespread use of child labour also increases the economic value of children and therefore helps to maintain high fertility rates. On the other hand, the numerous demand factors that pull children to work are an important reason for the continuation of child labour. For example, children are often seen by employers as less costly, more trustworthy and less troublesome than adult workers. Furthermore, they conclude that many poor families feel that the formal school system is irrelevant for them at present because of poor quality of teaching and schools as well as an irrelevant curriculum (Anker & Melkas, 1996).

Elson (1982) has noted the general problem that most of the research on child labourers is not longitudinal or even long-term work with the same population. Thus research tends to provide unconnected "snap shot" descriptions of children's working activities. It is argued that many children are involved in more than one type of work on a regular basis. Moreover, the labour market is distinguished by divisions of age as well as gender, ethnicity and other, non-economic, social structures. However, it is to be said that there are factors which makes cross-sectional approaches justified. For example, the high mobility of children and their very participation in many types of work activities do seem to favor this approach (see p. 181).

One of the greatest merits of the arguments recently used by economists has been to show that the "nimble fingers" argument used by the

carpet industry to justify their use of children in their factories is not valid. For example, Levinson et al. (1996, chapter 12) have concluded that children are not irreplaceable workers in India's carpet industry: "children do not have skills which adults cannot match. This is not to say, however, that it would be costless to replace children with adult weavers" and "many of them would only accept such employment for a higher wage than that received by children, especially apprentices and bonded child workers".

## Anthropologists on child labour

The bulk of research on working children, mainly street children, has been conducted by anthropologists (see for example, Whiting & Whiting 1975, Munroe, Munroe & Shimmin 1984, Panter-Brick, Todd & Baker 1996, Burra 1995, Baker, Panter-Brick & Todd 1996, 1997, Nag, White & Peet 1978, Nieuwenhuys 1994, and Reynolds 1996). The findings by anthropologists lend support to the value of the real productivity for children in contrast to *token* chores. In a classic study, *Children of Six Cultures*, Beatrice and John Whiting (1975) found that child work in farming communities taught children responsibility and gave them a sense of worth and involvement in the needs of others. Similarly, in the North it has been found that affluent and suburban children are also likely to work (for more details see Morrow 1992, Landrigan et al. 1992, McKechnie et al. 1994).

Catherine Panter-Brick et al. (1996) found that in Nepal, the absence of family – a feature which distinguishes homeless children in developing countries from the homeless elsewhere – does not appear to affect adversely indicators of growth status. Contrary to the situation of homeless families in the West, homeless children in Nepal are not necessarily "at the bottom of the heap" in terms of socio-economic status and physical health. For some children the adoption of street-life may represent both a rational and successful response to their prior circumstances. Similar views have been expressed by others who have studied homeless children in Africa and in South America (see Veale 1992, Aptekar 1988, and Ennew 1994). This may imply that those children who do not survive in the streets move on to other jobs, for example to the carpet industry – although children in the carpet industry are more often recruited directly from the villages around Kathmandu than through direct contacts with the children. In addition, Nepalese children's street-life may still differ from the experiences of the Indian pavement children who live with their parents on the

street; hence, having no physical home hardly serves as a criterion for homelessness as such.

The societal valuations of children who are working in the carpet industries in Nepal can be assessed, at the moment, using Rachel Baker's (1998) study on street children in Nepal. She has found out that the identities of the street children, 'Khate', has adopted the middle-class definitions used to describe their life-styles via contacts with the media and NGO's (an example of a respected NGO in Nepal is Child Workers In Nepal Concerned Centre (CWIN)). Interestingly, she mentions children who work in the carpet industries, and quotes the boys saying: "Khate work is easier than carpet weaving and washing up in teashops, but about the same as working as a tempo conductor, as long as the driver keeps his word and pays you properly" (Baker 1998, 212).

## Sociologists on child labour

The sociological themes relevant to examining the value of children's participation in working life include *socialization, education* and *modernization* and possible cultural lags in societies' valuations, which might become hindrances to withdrawal of children from economic activities.

Since the ideology of *childhood* was first widely promulgated in the 1960s by the French historian Philippe Ariès (1960, 1962), there have been efforts to develop research in the area. Within psychology and educational science, children and their development had, however, been studied as early as in the beginning of the century. In the early classical sociological writings, such as those of Emil Durkheim (1911/1956) and Talcot Parsons (1966), children were seen either from the point of view of moral education or alternatively as members of their families, thus belonging to one sub-system of society. However, the discovery of children as a specific social group was only made by sociologists in the 1980s. In addition, parents have increasingly adopted a more abstract perception of childhood (Pollock 1983). In short, children and childhood connect to a range of other issues and social processes and are approachable from a number of sociological viewpoints (Alanen 1992).

The recent developments in the social sciences in the study of children are also related to the concept of *constructivism*. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966, 210) have argued that the human reality is an outcome of "socially constructed reality". The core of social constructivism

is the proposition that humans construct knowledge through social interaction. One could see *child labour* together with "childhood" as socially constructed or negotiated concepts. Whereas, *deconstruction* is a process whereby social realities and their underlying assumptions are laid bare and explicated from a certain interest viewpoint. It has been argued for example by Alan Prout and Allison James (1990) that the change in childhood research could form the basis of a new paradigm. Their book *Constructing and reconstructing childhood* (James & Prout 1990) have the quality of *re-presenting* childhood in a manner that takes into account the temporal dimension which is more in line with children's perceptions of the world, the focus of which lies in *presence*. They present three basic principles underlying childhood research: first, childhood is to be understood as a social construction. Second, childhood can never be entirely separated from other variables such as class, gender, or ethnicity. Third, childhood and children's social relationships and cultures are worthy of study in their own right, and not just in respect to their social construction by adults. Ethnography is recommended as a methodology. The emphasis is on the construction of pictures of children's social lives in the temporal form of presence, rather than in past or future, although they are intertwined with human perceptions of the world.

Jo Boyden (1990, 197) has noted the export of the concept of childhood to the South during the twentieth century. Apparently, there are more than one experience of *childhoods* and the *universalistic model* of childhood is misleading when it is used by international and national organizations. Importantly, Boyden also points out that these often are very different views by the welfare or rights practitioners and parents and children about the activities and experiences suitable for child life. What the former may consider as pathological behaviour patterns may be seen by the latter as integral to normal *socialisation* which usually refers to growing up/ older and becoming a part of the functioning system of society.

*Modernization* and its relationship to the situation of the children in the South is another sociological perspective through which child labour can be investigated. Although modernization theory has lost its significance among sociologists as a result of severe criticism (Benedix 1967, Gusfield 1967) its core argument is still considered valid by many scholars (see for example Kagitçibasi 1994a). The core of the modernization theory is the assumption of *unidirectional change* toward the model found in the North with social development (Kahl 1968, Dawson 1967, Doob

1967, Inkeles 1969). Thus countries in the South are often characterized as *transitional societies*. The Northern model usually implies a system of *independent* relationships, whereas the Southern model refers to a *collectivist* society. The second assumption, *the conversion hypothesis*, is that the family patterns found in the North have evolved toward nucleation and individualistic separation as a necessary outcome of industrialization. Therefore, it is claimed that industrialization will also engender the same changes in family patterns in the South.

Furthermore, in the South, where economic and social change as well as urbanization have been very rapid, and where it is most difficult to ensure that quality schooling is both available to all and that it yields tangible benefits for all, there are tensions between the traditional and modern conceptions of childhood (Oloko 1994). However, as the focus of my paper lies in the contextual valuations of the participation of children in working life in Southern contexts, it could be argued that from the children's point of view modernization with socioeconomic development leads to wider access to schooling and increased urbanization.

Sarane S. Boocock (1976) has suggested that, in the North, we can no longer afford to treat the young as an expensive consumer item, nor to keep children segregated from the productive life of community. Some psychologists support this view with evidence that economic dependency can be a psychological hazard to children (cf.; page 172 Jeremy Kagan). The sociologist Glen H. Elder (1974) found that during the Great Depression there was an adult-like experience among children, which increased children's independence, dependability and maturity in money management. His conclusion was that if the task is not excessive or exploitative, being needed gives rise to a sense of belonging and place, of being committed to something larger than the self.

In the North, the trend has swung in socio-economic attitudes towards the worker child from 'Useful' to 'Useless', and again towards 'Useful' since the beginning of the twentieth century (Zelizer 1985). The transition from the economically useful to the economically useless child was not a precisely timed event, but a gradual and uneven process. To this day, the economic value/cost of a child is still a concern, particularly in rural areas and sometimes among the urban lower class, and certainly so in the South. However, economically 'useful' children remain the exception in the North – despite the latest ILO estimate of 5 million child workers in Europe.

Jens Qvortrup (1985) has stressed the need to recalculate existing population censuses and occupational health databases in order to obtain further information about children. This recognition of a lack of data dates back to the 1980s when interest in children as a object of study in their own right was discovered in sociology.

Meyer (1983) has argued that, for many children, schooling acts neither as a channel of upward social mobility nor as an instrument of social change and personal development but as yet another medium of social control. Furthermore, it can further disadvantage the poor child by acting as a drain on income and undermining the direct transmission of culture. Recently, Jens Qvortrup et al. (1995, 334) have argued that "children's school activities, as they are organized systemically by adults and continuously adapted to new modern technology and economy, must in principle be understood as the continuation of child labour of previous modes of production". Theoretically, Qvortrup et al. are probably correct. However, one might consider the significance of education in other terms, too (see p. 169–170).

Sociologists have also worked hard to define child labour. The United Nations special agencies advocate, quote and research child *work* and child *labour*, where the latter refers to especially harmful or dangerous work (Boyden 1990). This distinction between harmful and suitable (if not desirable) work, as defined by legislation in the North has become the main frame of reference of most contemporary governmental and bureaucratic approaches to children's work. Many countries in the world have now either ratified or adopted modified versions of the child labour legislation prepared and propagated by the ILO in 1978, the Convention 138. However, it is to be noted that although the harmfulness of child work has been questioned there is no consensus about it. On the other hand, Olga Niuwenhuys (1994, 27) has remarked that "the notion of child labour conveys the idea of an abstract and sexually neutral child doing economically valued but undesirable work". She prefers the definition of work by E. Schildkrout (1981, 95) who argues that "any activity done by children which either contributes to production, gives adults free time, facilitates the work of others, or substitutes for the employment of others" is work. In short, the description of the worst forms of child labour (see above, p. 161) is the latest attempt to define the hazardous areas of children's participation in working life and continues to serve as guideline for future actions.

Ben White (1999, 139–140) argues for the *participation* of children in discussions about child labour, quoting child groups: "we are against exploitation in work, but we are in favor of work with dignity and appropriate hours, so that we have time for education and leisure" and "we are against the boycott of products made by children". Thus, although nowadays children's participation in discussions and decision-making is more and more encouraged, participation has not been defined or evaluated.

## Educationists on child labour

Special educationists Elizabeth Graue and Daniel Walsh (1998, 1) have criticized psychology for not trying to understand children but instead pursuing the lofty academic goals of the absolute universal law and the ultimate treatment. In their interpretive research orientation Graue and Walsh (1998, 9) define context as "a culturally and historically situated place and time, a specific here and now", and "the most important facet of any context is the other people who share a particular here and now" (1998, 11). The context of child labour research ought to be kept in mind by those who are conducting studies on children who work.

The problems of education and specifically, schooling in the South will be discussed in this chapter. Some of the problems of schooling in Southern contexts include inadequate public schooling; inadequate access to schools; the poor quality of instruction, often involving rote learning and recitations; lack of educational materials; at times the irrelevance of curriculum to local/national realities; and overcrowded classrooms (Myers 1991, Serpell 1993). Schools influence children's development in two ways. The learning of specific knowledge and skills is a direct effect of classroom teaching (Good & Brophy 1986). Sylva (1994) emphasises the indirect effects of schooling. She asserts that when schools change pupils' self-concepts, goals, beliefs about success and social responsibility they exert a powerful influence not only on subsequent education but also on employment and community participation in adulthood. In addition, the role of education on children's cognitive development is important.

In the study by Kathleen S. Gorman and Ernesto Pollitt (1996) in Guatemala it was found, in line with empirical findings from industrialised countries (Rutter 1979, Sameroff et al. 1987, Williams et al. 1990), that the performance of subjects declined as the number of risk factors to which a subject was exposed increased. More importantly, primary education

was observed to buffer the effects of early risks for a subset of subjects. Subjects at high risk who stayed in school performed significantly better than subjects with similar levels of risk who completed fewer than four years of primary school. In other words, schooling not only enhances cognitive development but also acts as a preventive measure against environmental risk factors.

Michael Vlassoff (1991) has pointed out the significance of education for the attitudes of parents. Where education has taken hold as it were, an important social change seems to take place. Parents begin to value their children's education more and more so that perhaps less work is demanded of them while more effort is made to give them the maximum education possible. As a consequence, children's costs become conscious facts and their economic benefits begin to pale in significance (for details see Vlassoff 1991). Keith Lewin and colleagues (1983) has also pointed out the impact of schooling on fertility. The evidence suggest that in *low income* countries, such as Nepal, a few years of schooling (up to four years) leads to an increase in fertility, whereas subsequent years of schooling lead to a decrease. Thus, by making the primary schooling accessible to all, particularly females, fertility levels could be reduced in *low income* countries.

In the North it is customary in many societies to employ children because they want to consume, and their parents allow them to work. On the other hand, Roger Hart (1992) has argued that children are economically dependent for an increasingly longer time. In the South, Patil (1986) has shown in Bangalore that economic compulsion is only one of the motives behind child work. Of 600 working children, 42 per cent indicated that they worked for reasons such as failure to advance at school, the desire of their parents for them to receive a training, or the desire to enter what in adulthood will amount to a lucrative employment.

## Psychologists on child labour

The main psychological assumption about child labour is related to the child's social environment or context: "How children perceive their work depends on their social environment and cultural context" (see for example Woodhead 1999b). In this chapter, first, the criticism towards psychology in the field of developmental psychology will be reviewed. Then the significance of cultural background in performance in psychological tests will be discussed. Moreover, the interesting view of the possible shift that

has happened in the South as a result of the modernization process will be presented. Then the issues related to social constructionism in the field of psychology will be examined, because the process of social construction constitutes the very basis of how we define what is relevant in any subject matter. Finally, educational psychology in relation to the South will be discussed. The further issue of the risk-factors associated with cognitive and behavioral outcomes in the Southern context will also be investigated.

Martin Woodhead (1999b) has argued that to explain the effects of work on the psychological aspects of development by means of the mechanistic model of cause and effect is less appropriate than seeking to explain more physical trauma and injuries. Whether young people are affected positively or negatively by their work experiences depends on their personal vulnerability, which is in turn mediated by the economic, social, and cultural context of their work, and especially by the value placed on their economic activity and the expectations for their development and social adjustment.

In the field of psychology the individual child has been seen as one centre of research. The social and cultural context have been seen as the environment in which a child develops. There have been critiques of psychological accounts of child development of childhood both in the United States (see Bronfenbrenner 1979, Kessen 1979, Kessel & Siegel 1983, Walkerdine 1990) as well as in United Kingdom (see for example Richards 1974, Richards & Light 1986, Burman 1994, Morss 1990, 1996), which have centered on the demand of taking more into consideration the cultural and social context. For example, Martin Woodhead (1990) has argued for a more explicit, culturally sensitive perspective on childhood. More recently, Erica Burman (1994) has criticized developmental psychological research. She reconstructed the developmental psychology and showed that it has a Northern, or Western value base and that it depends on normative data. Furthermore, she argues that it contributes to the maintenance of the social formation which gave rise to it.

However, the idea of social *constructionism* has a long history in psychology (see for example Zuriff 1998, Martin & Sugarman 1997). The way we construct our views, for example towards child labour, is done socially together with other actors in the field.

Cultural background, and particularly educational level, can affect the individual's performance in psychological and neuropsychological tests. John Berry (1971, 1979) has emphasized that ecological demands and

cultural practices are significantly related to the development of perceptual and cognitive skills. John Berry and colleagues (1995, 1) used the term *culture* to refer to the "shared way of life of a groups of people". Research into cross-cultural cognitive psychology has shown that cultural background has very critical implications in terms of language, perception, memory, and logical reasoning (Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition, 1983). In the Nepalese population under investigation it was found that cognitive skills were distributed, both in the school and carpet groups, in a Bell-curve manner (Alaraudanjoki et al., forthcoming). This supports the assumption of the universality of certain neurocognitive functions, in any given population, if the tests are culturally relevant.

Universality and the relativity of human development will be discussed next. The cultural-relativistic approach to child labour in its extreme form is *non-acceptable*. While it is true that the way children's immediate social and cultural environment values children's participation in working life affects how children perceive their work, it is not acceptable to let them work in a context which, for example, affects normal growth or is associated with pathological problems (Woodhead 1999b). Jerome Kagan (1977) noted that while the 'useful child' could confirm his or her sense of value by making a material, visible contribution to the family's well being, for the economically 'useless child', self-esteem depends primarily on psychological qualities. Such children may be unsure about their worth and overly depend on expressions of parental love for self-validation. This view has received partial support from the work of Mary Engel et al. (1967, 392–404) who found in the USA that part-time jobs not only had any negative effects among boys between ten and fourteen years of age, but they also gave them a feeling of competence and personality development.

Only a few psychological studies on working children have been published. They have, similarly to those by anthropologists, mainly investigated the more visible *street children* (Aptekar 1988a, Aptekar & Stoecklin 1997, Carraher 1987, De Oliveria et al. 1992, De Souza et al. 1995, Felsman 1981, Ghosh 1992, Grando 1988, Jansen et al. 1990, Monteiro et al. 1998, Noto et al. 1997, Saxe 1988, Tyler et al. 1992, Veale & Adefrisew 1993, Woodhead 1998, see also page 180 below).

In short, both of the basic underlying assumptions of the *modernization* theory (the unidirectional change hypothesis and the conversion hypothesis, see page 166 above) have been questioned, and Çigdem Kag-

itçibasi argues (1996, 105) that "the main shift in the world with socio-economic development is not toward the model of independence but toward the model of emotional interdependence", which is typical in the more developed/urban areas of the South with their cultures of relatedness, and their collectivist culture base. The core of Kagitçibasi's model of emotional interdependence is that while individuals and families adopt more independent attitudes in the economic domain of life, they continue to preserve emotional ties, or interdependence, and thus collectivist values prevail.

School learning is more conducive to generalization and transfer to new learning situations (Laboratory of comparative human cognition 1983, Scribner & Cole 1981, Segall et al. 1990), though some higher level everyday cognitive skills are also transferable (Carraher et al. 1987, Carraher et al. 1993). Moreover, schooling is often more instrumental than traditional skills for advancement in changing societies (Kagitçibasi 1996, 110). There is much evidence indicating that formal education has far-reaching long-term effects, such as later age at marriage, lower fertility, lower infant mortality, and better nutrition/health of future children (Caldwell 1979, 1980, Cochrane & Mehra 1983, LeVine 1983, see also page 169 above). In addition, there are the obvious benefits such as better literacy skills and higher levels of employment.

## Psycho-social risk-factors in the South

Research in developing countries has contributed to expanding the definition of *risk factors* associated with cognitive and behavioral outcomes to include *nutritional intakes* (Grantham-McGregor et al. 1991, Husaini et al. 1991, Pollitt & Gorman 1994, Pollitt et al. 1993, Waber 1981, Wachs 1993), *anthropometric status*, e.g., height, weight, (Sigman et al. 1989), and *health*, for example, infection (Neumann et al. 1991). Moreover, the other risk factors cited in Sameroff, Seifer and Bartko (1997) include a history of maternal mental health, high maternal anxiety, parental perspectives that reflect rigidity in the attitudes, beliefs, and values that mothers have in regard to their child's development, few positive maternal interactions with the child observed during infancy, minimal maternal education, head of household in unskilled occupation, disadvantaged minority status, single parenthood, stressful life events and large family size. Against this background, it is likely that the children of this study working in the

carpet industry are in a special risk group with four or more risk factors affecting their development.

## Malnutrition

The development of normal potential is by and large affected by the so called *Poverty pentad:* malnutrition, disease, toxic agents, perinatal injury, and lack of intellectual/social stimulation (Brown & Pollitt 1996). These largely represent environmental influences and refer to preventable or modifiable occurrences. The list does not include influences that are clearly genetic. Moreover, Cravioto et al. (1966) have pointed out that their effects are perpetuated in the next generation. Many of the factors in this list have most likely been present in the development of the children in this study.

Poverty-related malnutrition and lack of medical or education services particularly in relation to the intellectual development of the children in developing countries are of interest. Poverty-related malnutrition and lack of schooling opportunities are the main causes of the delayed intellectual development of children living in the Southern countries. Malnutrition is the most important single factor causing health problems in children. Traditionally, malnutrition has been attached to extremely low weight, weight loss, stunted growth, weakened resistance to infection, and in the worst cases early death. The levels of malnutrition are severe, moderate and slight undernutrition, which are determined from the weight/height*height -index. The lack of certain micro-nutrients in food have different outcomes for health. The lasting effect of food deprivation in early life limits long-term intellectual development, and thus can disrupt a child's cognitive development. Today, the effects of malnutrition on delayed intellectual development are seen as a complex and multifaceted phenomenon (for details see Pollitt 1995). Recent studies have yielded new information on these processes, and these will be discussed below.
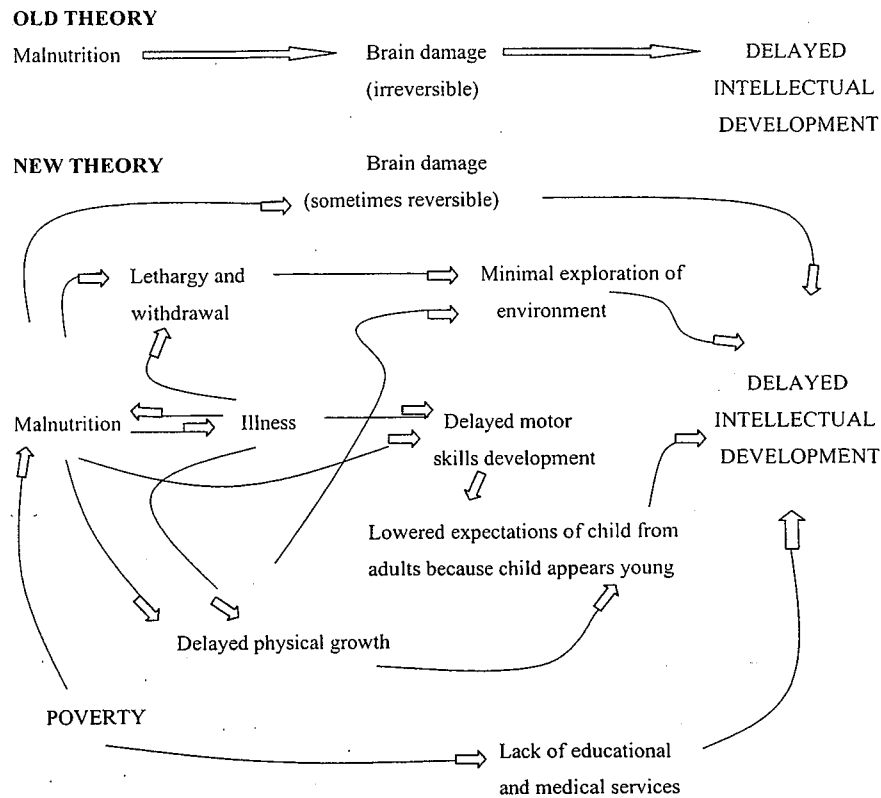
**OLD THEORY**

Malnutrition ⟹ Brain damage ⟹ DELAYED
(irreversible) INTELLECTUAL
DEVELOPMENT

**NEW THEORY** Brain damage
⟹ (sometimes reversible)

⟹ Lethargy and ⟹ Minimal exploration of
withdrawal ⟹ environment

DELAYED
Malnutrition ⟺⟹ Illness ⟹ Delayed motor INTELLECTUAL
⟹ skills development DEVELOPMENT

Lowered expectations of child from
adults because child appears young

Delayed physical growth

**POVERTY**

⟹ Lack of educational
and medical services

Figure 1. Relationships of poverty and delayed intellectual development (Brown & Pollit, 1996).

In their review of this field Larry J. Brown and Ernesto Pollitt (1996) came to the following conclusions. First, the findings implied that cognitive disability in undernourished children might stem in part from reduced interaction with other people and with their surroundings. Second, there is the possibility that malnutrition leads to brain damage (which can sometimes be reversible). Third, poor nutrition in early childhood can continue to hinder intellectual performance into adulthood. Fourth, learning capabilities are affected by how recently one has eaten. Thus, breakfast every day before school is important –particularly among children at risk for undernutrition. Fifth, studies suggest that there is a close association between iron-deficiency and motor skills in children. Finally, children with iron-deficiency are more susceptible to lead poisoning, which in turn produces its own set of neurological disorders that interfere with cognitive development.

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Factors such as income, education and other aspects of the environment can apparently protect children against the harmful effects of a poor diet or can exacerbate the effects of malnutrition (Brown & Pollitt 1996). Elsewhere it has been found that the strongest effects of high-protein supplement were observed among those at the low end of the social and economic ladder. However, adequate nutrition could not by itself fully compensate for the negative effects of poverty on intellectual growth (Pollitt et al. 1995). Although one should be careful in making cross-cultural comparisons, Cruz et al. (1993) found in the San Pablo Ecuador Project that the greater the degree of malnutrition, the poorer was the vocabulary score as measured by the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test. There did not appear to be any gender differences. However, this result should only be seen as a one illustrative outcome of the more general effect of malnutrition.

Recently, Barry Bogin (1998) has discussed the evolution of human growth and development. He emphasized that the growth spurts at mid-childhood and adolescence occur earlier, on average, for girls than for boys.

Typically in Southern country populations, growth starts to falter at the age of three months and it is significant by eighteen months (Unicef 1993, Martorell et al. 1995). A longitudinal study on Indian boys from Hyderabad, India, conducted by Satyanarayana et al. (1986) suggests that the role of early nutrition is significant for later adult size. Poor nutritional status in early life results in stunted growth. Children became stockier, i.e. shorter but not lighter. In addition, there seemed to be a cumulative effect depending on whether or not a child worked outside the family; if s/he did the result was significant growth deficits. Similarly, Catherine Panter-Brick et al. (1996) found out that 1) the Nepali 'children of the street' who are without stable shelter or adult care-givers showed fewer signs of impaired growth than either the squatter or village boys, both of whom lived at home with their families; 2) the duration of street-life in Kathmandu had no effect on either the levels of stunting or wasting; 3) and the homeless boys who had been living on the streets for less than one year were taller for their age than the village controls.

One might ask how specifically these health hazards affect child workers in comparison to adult workers? There is no easy answer, but they may interrupt, for example, the growth process of the children and lower children's general resistance to illnesses. In addition, children are obliged to

use tools which are designed for adult use, and this might cause injuries and restrain their physical development.

The working setting in the carpet industries in Nepal is mainly factories, whereas in India carpet production is scattered in private homes. Hence, the occupational hazards found in the Indian carpet industries might be more spread among the workers. (See for more Das et al. 1992.) The hazards identified in their study included a persistent cough with expectoration, backache, and the common cold and joint pains occurred more often in the weaver population than in the comparison group.

## Methodological considerations in studying working children

Judith Ennew (UNICEF 1999) has noted the topics which need more conceptual and methodological work. These include children's participation, the health hazards of child work, and the macroeconomic environment of child labour. She emphasizes the importance of studying the length of exposure to hazards at particular ages and stages of development. Compared to street children, it is more difficult to study children working in more hazardous industries because of resistance from employers, parents and the children themselves. The more unacceptable the situation, the greater is the resistance. In addition, the time taken by tests for research is likely to be regarded as lost income by both children and employers (for details see Burra 1995).

Bearing in mind that the existing international conventions solemnly rely on the outcomes of political processes rather than on actual facts from scientific research, there are a number of non-scientific research attempts either for *advocacy* purposes or *programming and welfare* purposes (for more see Ennew & Milne 1997). Recently, Judith Ennew (UNICEF 1999) has argued that "the most useful framework in the field of child work and child labour is the typology of child activity patterns proposed by Gerry Rogers and Guy Standing in 1981, which sidesteps the problem of distinguishing between child work and child labour by looking at different economic activities of children within the total range of activities of childhood". This has the advantage of avoiding normative, or culturally relative, definitions of harmful, hazardous or intolerable child labour.

Michael Vlassoff (1991) has recommended the use of the educational system extant in the survey area. In his view, it should be used in deciding the age groups of the children: once the children have completed the number of years of schooling normally available to the average household, the fact that they have little to do except work after this point may mean that further educational opportunities are simply not available rather than their labour contributions are indispensable.

Ben White (1996) has presented an alternative approach which places types of work on a *continuum*, with the most harmful and extreme at one end, and the least harmful (and possible even beneficial) at the other. The most recent attempt to tackle the definitional problem at hand has been suggested by Jim McKechnie and Sandy Hobbs (1998) in their *balance model* which takes into account the cost/benefit variables and acknowledges the context where the work is being done. The basic benefit of the balance model is that by employing the model it is possible to get a clearer operational definition of what constitutes the cost or benefit of employment. They argue that a number of specific variables will need to be studied, such as the number of hours worked, the type of work being done, the working hours, gender, and age. The proposed advantage of this model is that all of the variables, those within the balance and the variables that may influence the balance, can be investigated, operationalised, and clearly defined. This model also has a degree of flexibility in that it can acknowledge that the context will play a role in defining the balance itself; that balance does not exist in a vacuum. By context this model refers to social, developmental and cultural factors (McKechnie & Hobbs 1998). Ultimately, it is the cultural context which defines the variables to be included in the balance equation. Even if there are no universal criteria to conceptualize the issue of children's economic participation, McKechnie and Hobbs agree with Woodhead's (1999) argument that "attending to the context does not preclude the application of external criteria to identify what is beyond acceptability. Any experience which, for example, affects normal growth or is associated with pathological problems must be taken into consideration".

Although Prout and James (1990) emphasize that research on children's perceptions of the world lies in the present, it might be valuable to look how these show *future-orientation* in different cultural contexts. Jari-Erik Nurmi (1991) suggests that the three processes thought to be important in adolescents' orientation to the future (goal-setting, planning, and evalua-

tion) may already exist in interaction during which parents tutor their children to solve problems and carry out tasks. However, the development of future-oriented motivation, planning, and evaluation is a complex, multilevel, and long-lasting process. Nurmi points out three aspects which, I think, are relevant also in the context of the Nepalese working children. Firstly, future orientation develops in cultural and institutional contexts: normative expectations and knowledge concerning the future provide a basis for future-oriented interests and plans, and related causal attributions and affects (Nurmi 1989). Secondly, interests, plans, and beliefs concerning the future are learned in social interaction with other people. Parents, in particular, but also peers influence how adolescents think about and plan for the future (Kandel & Lesser 1969). Thirdly, future orientation may well be influenced by other psychological factors, such as cognitive and social development. The present study seeks possible interactions on the last point.

How do patterns of future orientation vary cross-culturally? Despite the differences in future orientation of adolescents they all seem to think about their future work and education. Nurmi (1991) found in a review of the literature some consistent cross-cultural differences: adolescents from Anglo-American cultures are relatively more interested in leisure activities and personal happiness, adolescents from countries with a high rate of urbanization seem to be relatively more interested in their future education and career, whereas adolescents from traditional cultures are most concerned about topics related to their parents' family. He also noted that in traditional societies such as India and Mexico the parents and the family participate in the planning of adolescents' future to a greater extent than in Anglo-American cultures.

The present study on Nepalese children working in the carpet factories, which will be discussed below in more detail, suggests three psychological domains where the development of participating children are set against, cognitive and socio-emotional development together with a more social psychological dimension. (See Table 1 below.) Hence, it is possible to cover a wide area of psychological functioning in a short time. The methodology will be evaluated in the near future and the results published. Because of the lack of the studies on children working in the occupations classified as worst forms of work for children, the results from the street children studies will be summarised next.

## Main findings in street children studies

I shall now outline the main findings from the research on *street children*. Often it has been assumed that starting work at an early age has detrimental effects on children's development (e.g. Bequele & Boyden 1988, Fyfe 1989, Marcus & Harper 1996, Myers 1991, UNICEF 1997). Recently Catherine Boidin (1995, 23–70) had also identified the risk factors affecting the psychosocial and social development of child workers. However, there is an increasing number of findings which suggest that work at an early age may also have positive effects on children's development (see, for example, Aptekar 1989, Engel 1967, Kagan 1977, Morrow 1992, Panter-Brick et al. 1996, Whiting & Whiting 1975, and Woodhead 1998). It has also been shown that such children see their work as an inevitable and necessary part of growing up, as contributing to their family and their future prospects. Furthermore, street children seem to develop arithmetic skills that approach school level, show better nutritional status and are taller than slum dwelling and rural non-working children. In addition, they have better mental health than their poorer counterparts, a positive self-esteem and a strong internal locus of control, and also demonstrated the Eriksonian developmental characteristics of initiative, industry and positive identity.

## Need for scientific knowledge

There is a lot of research on child labour in relation to street children. Much of this research is not scientifically on a solid basis and it suffers from a lack of rigor in planning. Furthermore, there is also a lot of repetition, especially among the Non Governmental Organisations who often use the same databases. Therefore, more research is needed in this field.

For future research in the field of child labour Judith Ennew (UNICEF 1999) lists the following areas as of interest: child domestic workers, soldiers, commercial agriculture, the work performed by child nomads, child sex workers, and children involved in trafficking human beings and drugs. She urges researchers to look at the multitude of economical activities in childhood, not just in specific and sometimes relatively rare occupations. In addition, the framework by Gerry Rogers and Guy Standing (1981) could serve as a basis for this research. The recent more focused models of children's participation in working life could further guide this work (see page 178 above).

Several questions arose from my review of the literature in this field:

1. What kind of knowledge is needed when aiming at the overall development of Southern societies?

2. To what extent can the *risk-factors* identified in the North be used to evaluate the risk-factors present in the development of normal potential in the South?

3. What criteria should be used in selecting an appropriate *level of analysis*, for evaluating the impact of selected actions during policy implementation? This requires good judgement and knowledge about the social and cultural context in question.

4. How is it possible to improve both the adults' and children's *education* in order to reduce child labour?

5. What work is harmful for children's development?

6. Owing to a lack of studies and knowledge about working conditions in different fields, the question remains as to what might be the *occupational health hazards related specifically to child labourers*? It is necessary therefore to establish and develop data collection practices which aim at gathering child-centered information. Furthermore, there is a need for the better utilization of existing databases and their recalculation from a child-centered viewpoint.

7. What are the *effects of malnutrition* on the development of human potential, especially on cognitive skills?

8. How well does the ILO's Psychosocial Health Assessment Screening procedure cover the issues raised in this review?

Answers to some of these questions will be proposed in the conclusion below. I will now (briefly) report on my ongoing research on children working in the carpet industry.

## Field study on Nepalese carpet children

The aim of my ongoing study is to investigate whether the children working in the carpet factories in the city of Kathmandu differ from children

who live in the countryside, help their parents in their livelihood before or after the school day and go to school. Originally, the interest of the study was to study the *effects* of work on the working children's development, but high mobility of the subjects due to piece-rate production led to the adaptation of a cross-sectional approach, which can only provide a sophisticated hypothesis on this issue, and not a definitive measure of outcome. The study focuses on the social-emotional and cognitive development of these children, investigating the impact of several factors on socio-emotional and cognitive development, such as working conditions and lack of education. A particular concern is the children's cognitive skills, locus of control, self-image, anxiety, fears and future orientation. Assessment of their psycho-social health was done by the use of the ILO *Psychosocial Health Assessment screening procedure*, the methodology of which has been compiled by Judith Ennew (1994) (Table 1). The data, 275 children ranging in age from ten to fourteen years old, were collected in 1996–97.

The basic assumption underlying the procedure is that there is little point at the moment to compare child laborers cross-culturally because there are no international standards as to what is good emotional and intellectual functioning. Moreover, in the absence of suitable national norms for child workers, there is a need for a control group of non-workers of the same socio-economic and ethnic status. The closest we can come is to compare working children with non-working children *within* a particular society, or to compare children who are working in especially hazardous industries with those who are not (Ennew 1994).

The procedure used in my ongoing study was one in which the data collection was accomplished in the Nepalese language by Professor Murari P. Regmi and four Nepalese final year MA students (see endnotes), one woman and three men, from Tribhuvan University. The data on the girls were mainly collected by the female student. The data collection site for the children attending school was decided after it became evident in the pilot phase that the majority of the working children came from Nuwakot District. In the same way as the data collection, the related analysis and reporting of the results is being done in collaboration with the Central Department of Psychology, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Table 1. ILO Psycho-social Health Assessment Screening procedure, compiled by Ennew (1994).

| Tests and interviews | Testing | Time minutes |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Bender Visual Motor Gestalt test | Visual-constructive skills | 5 |
| 2. WISC-R: Arithmetic and Digit Span Verbal fluency | Attention and short term memory | 15 |
| 3. Koppitz Draw-A-Person test | Linguistic fluency | 15 |
| 4. Locus of Control | Overall intellectual and cognitive skills | 10 |
| 5. Sentence Completion test | Sense of powerlessness, self-responsibility | 20 |
| 6. Richmond Anxiety test | Anxiety and stress | 10 |
| 7. Three Wishes test | Anxiety | 40 |
| 8. Vocational choice | Self-esteem, life satisfaction, future orientation | 5 |
| 9. Semi-structured interview | Most preferred, least and undecided | 10 |
| 10. | Loneliness, coping, health, sex abuse, Observationwork place ecology, powerful person | 15 |
| 11. | Appearance and manner | 3 |
| | Total time: | 2 ½ hours (Approx.) |

Access to the working children was obtained through one of the ILO Action Programmes. The children were met by the interviewer at least once before the first of two sessions took place. An informed consent was negotiated. The children working in carpet factories were interviewed and tested during the time reserved for participation in non-formal education (NFE) classes either at their work places or at the Children's Rehabilitation Center run by the NGO and funded by the ILO. The children attend-

ing school were studied on their school premises. The average duration of the assessment was two and half hours.

The assessments of the working children took place either in the ILO's Rehabilitation Centre in Kathmandu, where children stayed on average forty five days before being guided further, at the carpet factories during the NFE classes. The carpet children did not have to justify their participation in the assessment-sessions to their employers since they were already enrolled in the NFE classes, where they had been on average two months. In addition, the interviewers met the children at least once before they were assessed, and the assessment often occurred in open spaces where the child could maintain eye-contact with their peers from a distance. Pareek and Rao (1980) has found the latter procedure efficient in collectivist India to reduce test anxiety, especially among rural populations.

### Work and living conditions of the Nepalese children

Perhaps owing to the high rate of infant mortality and difficult living conditions, Nepalese families are culturally more inclined to adopt a paediatric, versus pedagogical, model of parenthood (see LeVine et al. 1994). The paediatric model's primary concern is with the survival, health, and physical growth of the infant. Children also have a strong sense of duty towards their parents in collective societies, and they want to help them. There are also migrating families who are adapting to a new environment and struggling for existence. In Nepal some children have been either sold or given to a contractor as security for loans taken by their parents. The latter is known as bonded labour according to the United Nations (ILO 1998). Furthermore, in Nepal there are also children who have run away from their families with or without the consent of their parents. Consequently, it is part of the normal growth process in Nepal for children to work at home with their parents, even if they are attending school.

The children working in the carpet factories have from a very young age most likely suffered both from malnutrition and lack of schooling. In addition, working conditions in the factories further increase the number of risk factors present during their early development. The health hazards of the carpet factories include bad ventilation of working areas in which wool fluff is highly present, insufficient lighting, inadequate toilet facilities, and ergonomic risks due to repetitive work tasks and static working positions. Therefore, working conditions in the carpet industry may cause

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child workers emotional blunting, boredom and dullness, leading to delayed social and intellectual development. The results of this study are expected to be published in the near future.

Despite the fact that the caste system was abolished in India in the 1960s, it continues to function in practice. The practical implications of the abolition of the caste system enabled access to schooling for the so called untouchable castes. At the same time the caste system still rules societal life in South Asia. Conditions in Nepal resemble those of India with respect to the caste system. Moreover, economic development in Nepal has not been such that it would have enabled the provision of education to all. Basically, the 'two-stage' society of India can be used to describe the Nepalese society as well. However, the Buddhist Tibeto-Mongolian population forms a large minority, which is not part of the Hindu caste system as such. Government efforts, both in India and Nepal at policy level, have brought in some changes in the forms of grants and quotas for the underprivileged. Thus these societies are slowly changing.

In order to give a rough picture of the living conditions in Nepal, some descriptive statistics are in order. According to UNICEF (1998), the basic human needs of most children in Nepal are not being met. Infant mortality rates are high (82/1,000). On average, slightly more than 71% of the population has access to safe water (urban 93%, rural 68%). Around 40% of young children growing up in Nepal have not been fully vaccinated against polio, tuberculosis, DPT, or measles. With more than half of the adult population unable to read (41 % literacy for males, 14 % for females) and only 52 % of children reaching grade five, illiteracy rates are high. The Gross National Product (GNP) in Nepal is 200 USD per capita, in comparison to 390 USD in South Asia and 350 USD in the Low Income countries of the world. Document *Human Development in Nepal 1998* published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1998) gives Nepal's Human Development Index (HDI, based on 1997 data) as 0.351, which indicates that Nepal belongs to the "Low Human Development" group with a overall ranking of 152 out of 174 countries. In addition, life-expectancy at birth is 56 years and the Education index is 0.37. Hence, within the Low Income countries Nepal belongs to the middle group, with most of the countries below that figure situated in Sub-Saharan Africa.

*Problems and limitations of the ongoing*
*study on Nepalese child labourers*

Some of the problems of studies of this type include the inaccessibility and "invisibility" of working children, cultural aspects in relation to the methods used, and limitations of both time and resources. It seems that without institutional support, as in our case the ILO, studies are virtually impossible. An additional limitation in relation to methods involves the question of time. The total duration of data collection per child two and a half hours, which made it possible to collect data relatively quickly. It would not have been possible to have used a larger methodological package. The *Psycho-social Health Assessment Screening procedure* used made it possible to cover a wide area of psychological functions in a short time. This was preferred over an extensive survey of working conditions and the work environment. The results can be generalized to Buddhist Tibeto-Mongolian Nepalese children who are either working or attending school.

## Conclusion

The aim of this paper was twofold. First, the value of children's participation in working life in the Southern contexts and particularly in Nepal was discussed. The second point of interest was to assess the theoretical possibilities of the psychosocial health assessment screening tool used in answering the questions raised in the recent literature on child labour. Hence, a multi-disciplinary review of the literature was carried out. The value given to children's participation in working life in Southern contexts depends on the degree of socioeconomic development of the particular country in question.

Culture as a context refers to the shared meanings among a particular group of people who have a common way of life. Moreover, people in the same culture can be active members of a number of different contexts. The conclusions below include a discussion of the effects of modernization, regulation of working life, the nature of the data available on child labour, and evaluation of the methods used in the light of the literature review.

In poor countries where children work from a young age *utilitarianism* prevails as a major attitude towards children. One basic 'truism' of mod-

ernization seems to be the transformation of collectivist values towards individualistic Western values. Recently, Çigdem Kagitçibasi (1996) has criticized this view arguing that the main shift in the world with socioeconomic development is not toward the model of independence but toward the model of emotional interdependence, which is typical in the more developed/urban areas of the South with their cultures of relatedness (collectivistic culture base). The core of her model of emotional interdependence is that while individuals and families adopt more independent attitudes in the economic domain of life during the modernization process, they preserve emotional ties, or emotional interdependence. Thus collectivistic values tend to prevail despite socioeconomic development. From the children's point of view modernization with socioeconomic development leads to wider access to schooling and increased urbanization. In addition, as long as socioeconomic development has not reached a sufficient level the necessity of children to participate in working life remains inevitable. Hence, as modernization proceeds with claimed socioeconomic development the question of child labour is affected by the availability of both education and health services. These services have indirect effects in changing attitudes, mainly those of parents, towards children's participation in working life.

The regulation of children's participation in working life involves the classification of what constitutes harmful work in children's development. International efforts to identify possible hazardous fields of work have generally relied on political decisions based on accumulated experiences in the various activities. The major problem in this task has been the lack of scientific research on the effects of work on working children. The bulk of the research has been cross-sectional, and often, if they were not case studies, they used the same sources of data. The result has often been repetitive studies without any attempt at a more rigorous analysis.

My ongoing study on carpet children has connections with a variety of social institutions. Its scientific significance lies in examining for the first time the effects of work on working children by using a systematic procedure. Briefly, the present study is, of necessity, cross-sectional owing to a particular characteristics of the subjects – their high mobility. Piece-rate production in the carpet industry in Nepal is an obstacle to children's schooling because it demands continuous work to meet the deadlines set for production. Migration due to poverty and increased modernization in Nepal has had the effect that gradually people from rural areas end up in

the Kathmandu valley. However, many of the children who work in the Nepalese carpet industry have been recruited directly from the country-side through middle-men, or they have migrated with their parents.

. My study is, however, among the first attempts to analyze the psychosocial development of children who work in a field classified as among the worst forms of labour. A cross-sectional study does not provide causal explanations but can help us to understand the development of working children, and generates hypotheses for future research. Moreover, the study is an example of an action taken within the human rights movement. More specifically, the results of the study can be applied in the planning of action programmes by the various organizations promoting the rights of the children on both the national and international level, the ultimate aim being the abolition of the worst forms of child labour.

Research in the field of cross-cultural psychology has been criticized for exporting methodologies developed in the North to the South. In this paper the author has tried to contextualise the methodological pattern used. It has been developed for global use so that trained psychologists are not needed to administer the tests, although some knowledge of social science methodology is highly recommended. For example, research and interview techniques in the social sciences ought to be understood when conducting research of this type. While analyzing the results trained psychologists should be consulted. In comparison to the research discussed in the literature review the methodology we used seems to be appropriate in the context of studying working children. In addition, the three themes of the screening procedure will be investigated in more detail in future. The paradigm used follows the recommendations according to which research in the South should be policy driven, with the aim at improving the societies involved. Funds for basic research in the developing countries ought to be targeted only after systems have been developed to support indigenous socioeconomic development.

There are a number of groups of child workers and related topics that have been under-researched. These include a number of children who work as domestic workers, as soldiers, in commercial agriculture, in the sex industry or who are involved in trafficking human beings or drugs. The proportions of these children may be higher than those more researched children who obtain their livelihood from the streets. Hence, resources ought to be targeted to study and improve the lives of these children who are working in potentially the worse kinds of work.

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In this paper I have tried to present some of the contextual issues which are relevant in the present study. The institutional arrangements needed when conducting research on child workers, and applying the results were considered. The methodological considerations, including the evaluation of the instruments used in this kind of study were taken up. I focused on the research practices and findings in studies of child labour in various fields. From the policy viewpoint, it is perhaps more important to reduce the number of possible risk factors present in the working children's environment, rather than try to map the resilience factors enabling individuals to endure arbitrary living conditions.

It is the responsibility of researchers to take an ethical standpoint and explicate the procedures used when studying working children. A lot of rhetoric has been produced in discussions about the harmfulness of child work, but very few facts. Perhaps the greatest merit of this kind of research is that it produces information about the possible health hazards of working at young ages. However, work may have positive outcomes for youngsters as well, and it is our duty also make clear the possible benefits.

The participation in this study may have increased the self-esteem of the children, and being interviewed by an adult may more likely have been important life event for the interviewed child, hence increasing the number of the protective factors by one. The importance of the right of children to go to school and to grow up in a secure and stimulating environment has become evident during this study. However, the combination of work and schooling can perhaps secure both life skills and basic education for working children. A longitudinal setting would have helped in establishing causal explanations between work, work environment and psycho-social development, but this was not possible due to the high mobility of most of the children in the carpet industry who work in piece rate production. In sum, I hope that this study will help to generate new research on children's participation in working life. The methods used have been chosen with respect to their global application, and they are aimed to be as culture-free as possible. The research findings can be used to influence governments towards changing existing laws regarding the status and rights of children. This study is among the first attempts in the field of psychology to investigate the effects of work on young children.

# NOTES

1. The North – South dimension is used throughout the text, instead of "Majority – Minority World", or "Developed – Developing" (or First – Third World Countries), since developing countries are not getting any closer to the developed countries, and with the collapse of the "Second World", the concept of "Third" does not make much sense.

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