

PARADOXES IN SUSTAINABLE RAINFOREST PRODUCTION: CHILDHOOD AND
CHILD LABOR IN AÇAÍ EXTRACTION IN THE BRAZILIAN AMAZON

By

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To my son, Harmony, you are the reason

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“Açaí is a type of vice, even when you can’t afford it, you still want it, like an addiction” Nuno, a 52-year-old artisanal açaí processor, tells me. He is explaining the açaí commodity chain as he sits on a small stool surrounded by dozens of empty açaí baskets and mounds of açaí seeds. Less than 100 yards off the shore of the Amazon River, he and his family produce 130 liters of açaí every day, selling each liter for R\$8 in little plastic bags tied in a knot at the top. When I ask him about children’s role in the commodity chain, he emphatically says, “the production of açaí would absolutely stop without the work of children. The major part of those who pick açaí are children, usually starting around age nine.”

Over the last decade açaí (*Euterpe oleracea* Mart.), a palm fruit traditionally eaten as a staple food in the Brazilian Amazon for hundreds of years, has become a popular health food for global consumers. In the last two decades national and international demand has increased more than fivefold (Brondízio 2009), generating more than \$150 million dollars in annual revenue. Marketed as an exotic tropical berry rich in antioxidants, it is also hailed as an environmentally friendly, sustainable rainforest extract that brings much-needed income to the rural Amazonian poor while maintaining forest cover and biodiversity. Açaí seems to embody an ideal of ethical consumption, but upon closer inspection another narrative emerges. Children’s labor is a crucial element in the extraction process, which is not only extremely dangerous, but also interferes with school attendance.

Açaí palms are tall and thin, exceeding heights of 10-15 meters above ground. There is no mechanized technology to harvest the fruit, so it must be picked by hand. Most açaí palms cannot bear the weight of adults, requiring youths (typically age 8 to 15) to climb, machete in hand (or mouth) to cut the fruit cache located under the fragile crown. They use no safety equipment, only a cloth or palm leaf strap (called a *peconha*) wrapped around their bare feet for leverage. The dangers are innumerable, as they are exposed to a variety of health risks in the natural environment ranging from minor injuries to permanent disability and death.

As the açaí export boom intensifies, serious questions arise about the physical and educational risks of these children and the (increased) need for their labor. The concerns about child labor collide with local cultural and socioeconomic realities, in which children’s work has long been an accepted and integral component of rural household economies. This ethnographic study examines the lives of children in rural riverine Amazon communities and their contributions in household açaí production. It specifically focuses on children’s own perspectives and experiences in their daily lives, expanding knowledge about childhood and child labor in the rural Amazon region of Brazil. Using a child-centered approach, this study incorporated children into the production of ethnographic knowledge. This methodological approach represents an epistemological break with perspectives that have dominated much of the study of childhood, which assumes children’s incompetence and inarticulateness (James 2007; James and Prout 1995; La Fontaine 1986; Montgomery 2009). By developing research methods

that allowed me to engage collaboratively with children throughout the process of knowledge production, the perspectives that emerged from this project of reflexive ‘engaged anthropology’ provide an intimate, firsthand account of rural Amazonian childhoods. The children’s own narrative interpretations illuminate their understandings of their own material and social circumstances and their roles in and contributions to their families and community—a perspective that, historically, has received little attention in academics and policy circles. Brazilian açai extraction is an especially powerful focus for this inquiry because of the implicit contradictions and tensions between its marketing as an ethically responsible product and the role of children in household/family production and the dangers they are subjected to through these roles.

Children’s participation in açai extraction raises a host of ethical questions. It clearly violates human rights standards set forth by multilateral entities like the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the International Labour Organization – International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (ILO-IPEC) due to the danger and time allocation necessary in its production. However, ‘universalistic’ definitions of childhood and child labor prevention models, seen as fundamental to the development and dignity of children, inherently conflict with cultural and situated understandings of childhood in many societies. One-size-fits-all approaches to child labor fail to consider the reality of daily life and the extreme impact that poverty and inequality have on parent’s decision-making concerning their children. The normative definition of childhood that has spread worldwide among educated, cosmopolitan publics, professionals, and policy makers applies to only a small percentage of the world’s children but plays a large role in setting global standards, especially in defining a child’s proper place and treatment in society. This is most apparent in national and international intervention and child labor eradication strategies that use compulsory education as a remedy for the ‘child labor problem,’ even in places that lack quality education and options for advancement regardless of education level.

To assess the effects of Amazonia’s açai boom on rural child welfare and the cultural politics of childhood in poor families at the production end of the açai export-commodity chain, this study addresses two levels of inquiry: the regional and community levels. Research at the regional level documents the historical and overarching social-economic context, while research at the community level focuses on the cultural context of childhood, child labor, and rural household economics in the two small communities of Curralinho and Gurupá. Both municipalities are located in the state of Pará and are heavily involved in açai production. They have similar demographic profiles and present a set of similarities and contrasts in health, education, transportation, and economic profiles relevant to assessing the impact of the açai boom on children’s lives.

Throughout this study, the term ‘child’ refers to anyone under the age of 18, as defined by the ILO (the International Labor Organization of the United Nations). I use a mixed-methods approach that combines quantitative and qualitative data collection, including ethnographic participant-observation, semi-structured interviews, participatory photo interviews with children, questionnaires administered to both adults and children, and reports from government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Collectively, these data yield rich insights into local concepts, understandings, and perspectives on childhood, and family decision-making concerning children’s health, education, and work.

Between July 2011 and November 2013, I conducted a total of 19 months of field research in the northern state of Pará, Brazil. My project was funded by a National Science

Foundation (NSF) doctoral dissertation research grant, a Vanderbilt University dissertation enhancement grant, and I was locally affiliated with and guided by experts at the Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi (Museum of Natural History and Ethnography), the premier Amazonian research institution, in Belém, Brazil. Over the course of my field work, I lived with families in two remote rainforest communities, Curralinho and Gurupá, which have contrasting forms of local organization related to their production of açaí for the global export market and for regional consumption. In each community, I worked with children, their families, teachers, and others concerned with child welfare, participated in daily family and community life, volunteered at schools, and attended community meetings. In these communities and in the capital city, Belém, I interviewed, consulted, and collaborated with NGOs, socioenvironmental consultants, social workers, community leaders, and government officials, often travelling with them (and alone) by boat deep into the Amazonian interior to visit açaí-producing households, schools, and riverine hamlets. Through extensive interviewing, discussions, and participant-observation, I documented the socioeconomic realities and hardships that poor families confront daily, the multiple roles that children play in their homes and communities, and how adults view and treat children in public and private spaces.

As a key part of this research strategy, I designed and implemented an innovative child-centered participatory photo project to document the varied nature of children's understandings, their experiences, and their agency in daily life. The 15 young participants, aged 11-17, received digital cameras to photograph their daily lives for one to two weeks, which produced more than 2,000 images. These photographs served as a guide to interview the child photographers with in-depth, open-ended conversations directed by the children themselves. The children had a leading role in this research process, giving them the opportunity to 'speak' through self-reflexive photography and their subsequent narration of these visual artifacts.

The dramatic growth in the national and international demand for açaí has brought rapid economic changes to Curralinho and Gurupá, creating new wealth for some families while creating new hardships for others. On one hand, families that produce açaí now have substantially higher incomes during harvest months that allow them to eat better and purchase goods. However, children's labor contributions are crucial in rural household açaí production; out of all jobs in the açaí commodity chain, children perform the most dangerous and arduous task far away from medical intervention should something go wrong. This work prevents regular school attendance for months at a time during the harvest season and reports show increased drug and alcohol consumption, prostitution, sexual exploitation, and violence in these communities. The ethical and policy questions this study foregrounds in relation to children's health, safety, and human right highlight the complexities of developing and applying standards for human rights across cultures.

Organization of Chapters

In Chapters 2 and 3, I introduce the research communities of Curralinho and Gurupá, contextualizing the current socioeconomic reality, and discuss the methodological considerations and research design of this dissertation. Chapter 3 presents an overview of key concepts and approaches in the intellectual history and cultural construction of childhood in Euro-American thought. I discuss the literature on the 'ideal' or 'universalized' childhood, and trends in the social history of managing children and limiting them to specific categories and acceptable spaces. A key point and criticism is that the approaches that have dominated this literature tend to reflect elite and middle-class standards (Ambert 1994, Lancy 2008 & 2018, Montgomery

2009, Prout 2005, Cunningham 1998). They render children dependent and passive, emotionally “priceless” and economically “worthless” (Zelizer 1985), permitting little latitude for more nuanced interpretations of what is and is not acceptable for children (Neiuwenhuys 1996).

In Chapter 4, I trace the creation and evolution of the concept of ‘childhood. Until the 17th century, the notion of childhood as a separate category in human life was almost nonexistent (Ariès 1962). I show how this concept gradually became institutionalized, medicalized, and psychologized. More recently, entities like the UNCRC created and defined a ‘universal’ childhood and set of rights as applicable to any person under the age of 18; the UN General Assembly adopted such a definition in 1989, and it has been ratified by all countries, except for the United States and Somalia. However, the implementation of a single definition of a child is problematic as this ignores the complex nature and multiple interpretations of childhood itself, which are based in population-specific knowledge of the sociocultural contexts that give them meaning (Ambert 1994; Lancy 2008, Levine 2007; Montgomery 2009; Neiuwenhuys 1996).

Building on the previous discussion of the cultural construction of childhood with an overview of the international child labor literature, I analyze the difficulties and contradictions of applying a ‘universal’ concept of childhood cross-culturally. The UNCRC’s framework, clearly intended to protect children’s welfare and human rights, ignores the situated realities of the majority of poor families across the globe. It effectively stigmatizes those families who rely on their children’s work contributions for basic survival and overlooks their lack of alternatives.

While human rights advocates vehemently criticize child labor, often citing images of children toiling in sweatshops, factories and other industries, children who participate in family-based work, like açai extraction, tend to go unnoticed. Child labor is a surprisingly opaque issue in the scholarship on rural household economies. Child advocates tend to assume that youth working under their family’s supervision do not experience harsh treatment or the worst forms of exploitation (i.e., work that jeopardizes the child’s moral, mental, or physical well-being). The literatures on childhood, child labor, and commodity export use blanket terms such as ‘family labor,’ ‘family production,’ ‘household labor,’ or ‘household production’ to describe activities that require work from every able-bodied family member, which inevitably includes children’s remunerated or non-remunerated work (cf. Brandt 2008 [tomatoes], Brondízio 2009 [açai], Jaffee 2007 [coffee]). There is also an implicit assumption that children’s work in ‘family production’ has fewer negative effects on their health and education, as exemplified by child labor legislation that excludes the unpaid work contributions of family members from regulation. However, a 2007 report (Understanding Children’s Work [UCW] 2007:19) observes that while some family work does pose fewer obstacles to school attendance than factory-type child labor, “there was no evidence that work within the family was less hazardous than work outside it. Indeed, if anything, the evidence pointed in the opposite direction.”

While family-based work tends to be excluded from the domain of state concern, economists have recognized that limiting studies of child labor to work outside the household leaves gaps in understandings of why and how children work (Edmonds 2002). Economic theories about child labor tend to focus on causes and correlations related to variables of familial organization, household economics, and globalization (Bachman 2000, Bassu & Ray 2001, Basu & Tzannatos 2003, Becker 1991, Becker & Tomes 1986, Brown 2001, Chayanov 1986, Edmonds 2002, Emerson 2002, Emerson & Souza 2004). Implicit in these analyses is the assumption that children will work only when it is economically necessary. However, such models fail to consider situations in which children working is the norm and not the exception, as I found in the majority of riverine households producing açai. Research on what children

actually do, and how children and adults alike define childhood and its rights and duties, is essential to fully understand child labor's occurrence and to accurately form and implement effective policy and prevention mechanisms. My study addresses this gap through critical examination of child labor in rural household extractive economies like açai. In short, chapter 3 provides the historical and theoretical foundation for my study of the production of childhood in relation to child labor, and my methodological emphasis on engaging diverse, locally informed perspectives, including the perspectives of children themselves.

Chapter 5 discusses the moral economy of açai and juxtaposes the cultural importance of açai in both rural and urban Amazonia against the shifting economic gains and losses for rural açai producers, consumers, and communities. My research indicates that some rural families benefit financially from the growing export demand of açai, while it negatively affects others due to a reduction in the availability and affordability of this traditional staple food. Since 2008, both Gurupá and Curralinho's production of açai for export has grown rapidly, while simultaneously reducing local availability and increasing prices by more than 80%. Rural river dwellers, known as *ribeirinhos*, consume açai daily and consider no meal complete without it. Many families explained that when açai is unavailable or too expensive, the family table is "*triste*" (sad) and children often refuse to eat when it is not part of the meal. Five years ago, an average family's monthly açai expenditure was \$32.50. Today, that same amount costs \$210! With Brazil's monthly minimum wage of \$339, açai is now a luxury export food out of reach for its traditional consumers. As a result, the traditional ribeirinho diet has changed dramatically in a short amount of time.

Increased demand for açai should positively benefit local Amazonian economies and boost household income. However, my research suggests that this is not necessarily the case. Activities that once produced the most profits in the açai commodity chain (the growing and producing sectors) have shifted to the processing and export sectors located in urban centers (Brondízio 2009). These urban operations contribute little tax income to the rural producer communities and reduce rural small farmers' earnings. Major constraints in transportation and marketing infrastructures, such as "distance, isolation, inadequate access to transportation means, and a lack of capital," exclude many small açai producers from the market (Brondízio 2009). Others participate, but depend on intermediaries, which greatly reduces household profits and contradicts the assumption that the açai boom inevitably ameliorates rural Amazonian poverty.

Chapter 6 seeks to understand the reality of children's lives in Curralinho and Gurupá and to expand knowledge on the multiplicity of concepts that surround childhood in riverine Amazon communities. It also sets the stage to discuss the reality of child labor in Chapters 7 and 8. I begin by contextualizing the cultural construct of childhood locally and temporally through the perspectives of children and adults utilizing their explanations of childhood, who is included and excluded from the experience of childhood, and the qualifications that mark a child's entrance into adulthood. I demonstrate how understandings of childhood and its experience depend on socioeconomic class and familial expectations of children's roles and responsibilities. General themes revolved around middle and elite-class concepts of childhood as a period in life where children are afforded certain rights and freedoms, like playing and going to school, and are free from adult responsibilities and problems. However, this idealistic experience is a luxury rarely afforded to the majority of children in either community. For most, their daily reality revolves around economic household strategies required for survival pitted against poor community infrastructure, especially in schooling.

Education was one of the primary tenets associated with childhood cited by children and adults in both communities. According to the Brazilian Constitution, education is a basic right for all individuals and equal access and standards of quality should be guaranteed. Unfortunately, this basic right is far from being realized throughout Brazil, especially in the rural interior Amazon region. Both municipalities (and the Marajó region as a whole) face multiple challenges in providing basic quality education. Overall, schools lack modern infrastructure and technologies such as computers and internet, transportation is unreliable, many teachers are not properly trained and/or lack education beyond a high school level, and schools have high failure/dropout rates. In the interior communities, school buildings are rudimentary or nonexistent, basic learning materials are deficient, there are multigrade classrooms, and students have no access to education beyond 8th grade. In both communities, there is a disproportionately high rate of age-for-grade disparities, with approximately 59% of elementary school children and 63% of middle school children not in the appropriate grade for their age.

This chapter also situates the local perspectives of children and adults concerning variables that limit, inhibit, and/or prohibit educational success. Five major themes emerged that revolve around poor infrastructure/poor quality education, transportation issues, lack of family/parental support, poverty that prevents families from purchasing necessary items for school, and the problems of families that require the help of their children for economic survival. Combined, these factors force many families to choose between the value of educating their children and the value of their children's work contributions that bolster family sustenance.

Chapters 7 and 8 discuss the hidden nature of child labor in the rural municipalities of Gurupá and Curralinho. In order to analyze the circumstances for and the occurrences of children's work in rural household extractive economies like açaí, I first had to understand Curralinhese and Gurupaense perspectives on child labor. Just as with definitions of childhood, child labor must be located within the sociocultural and economic contexts where it occurs. I begin by contextualizing cultural expectations of work through the perspectives of children and adults focusing on gender work divisions, when children begin to work, and types of work children perform. I then discuss the most common forms of children's work and the gender segregation in daily life, which determines how one behaves, responsibilities they bear, and types of work available to them.

Girls work predominantly in the private domestic sector for their own families or in the homes of others, and some are drawn into exchanges of sex for money; they have few other options. Boys tend to work in more public contexts as street vendors, laborers, and in forest extraction. According to the ILO, domestic labor, prostitution/sexual exploitation, and forest extraction are defined as some of the worst forms of child labor, in which children suffer and are exposed to mental and physical harm. While child labor laws exist to protect the most vulnerable youth from the harshest of conditions, such laws often fail to address children's daily realities that are equally as, if not more, harsh. These conditions are not a result of family choice, but reflect the lack of alternatives in employment and educational opportunities.

My data show that children, especially young boys, participate heavily in açaí production. Their role is significant as they are the primary and essential source of labor to climb the palms and cut the fruit cache. Children are used to pick açaí because they are faster and they are lighter than adults. Harvesting açaí is not only arduous, putting the body in continuous unnatural positions, it is also dangerous. During high harvest season, the fruit caches grow very large and heavy, often equaling or surpassing the height of the child and weighing up to 20 pounds. Children wrap their arms around the palm trunk, holding a machete in one hand and a fruit cache

in the other, and carefully slide down to the ground or canoe. This scenario is repeated countless times each day; with estimates near a collective 1,000,000 climbs daily throughout the Marajó region during peak harvest season. My data document the dangers involved in harvesting açai, with workers exposed to countless health risks, far away from help and communication should something go wrong. Although no official data exist on the frequency or severity of injuries directly related to açai harvesting, nearly every person with whom I spoke gave accounts of injuries, permanent paralysis, and even deaths associated with açai harvesting.

Other major concerns in açai extraction are less deadly but have repercussions for children's education and future prospects. As discussed in Chapter 5, the quality of rural education is poor, contributing to high rates of school evasion, especially during harvest season, when truancy rates skyrocket. Numerous teachers explained that during açai, fish, and shrimp harvest seasons (April through December) children miss school to work in the harvest or mind younger siblings to free up adults for work. Children often must stay home to help their family work, which creates a cycle of falling behind that ultimately contributes to grade failure, distortions in age-for-grade achievement, and an increased likelihood of dropping out of school altogether.

Chapter 9 brings together the diverse, complex, and paradoxical issues surrounding childhood, child labor, intervention, and açai. I begin by focusing on three major contradictions present in national and international interventionist and child labor eradication strategies: the 'cultural imperialism' of applying a universal model of childhood, education as a remedy for the 'child labor problem,' and issues of gender. Intervention strategies based on a single version of childhood are inapplicable to a large portion of children worldwide. A universal definition, especially one based on elite and middle-class standards, is out of context with the lived reality, cultural expectations, and challenges of families and communities. When compulsory education is a major intervention strategy, there is an implicit assumption that children have equal access to quality education and that education will result in increased life opportunities while simultaneously reducing children's workloads. This is unfortunately not the case in impoverished communities like Currallinho and Gurupá, where the quality of education is extremely poor, there is no access to levels beyond middle and high school, and there are few jobs regardless of education level. In these communities, prioritizing school over productive work offers few tangible advantages.

In attempts to understand child labor, there is an underlying implication based on a standard model of childhood that assumes that 'normal,' happy children do not work and that if they do, this is done only out of necessity. However, in many cultural contexts, families do not view working children as an evil in need of eradication; on the contrary, children's work is viewed as a positive means of socialization and cultural identity. In many situations, children's remunerated and unremunerated work contributions reduce demands on parents and probably improve the over-all wellbeing of the family. Through the valuation of their work in family contexts and their active engagement in economic life, children are recognized as contributing members, instead of being made to feel that something is inherently wrong with their lives because they work.

In the final section of this study, I discuss the contradictions in global açai marketing that obscure the involvement of child labor in its production, and I highlight how açai is distinct from other commodities in this regard. Children's work in the production of açai does not suppress adult wages or decrease job availability for adults; in fact, the work that children perform cannot be done by most adults. While this is widely known in rural communities, it is rarely

acknowledged elsewhere, hidden in production growth plans under the terminology of 'household labor' and family 'production.' There is a gendered dimension to this: açai production and commerce are managed predominantly by older males. Men negotiate sales with intermediaries, and neither they nor the manufacturers further up the commodity chain have no legal requirement to question how or who was involved in the harvesting process. Children's labor, like women's labor, is rarely seen, concealed in terminology and hidden behind the thick rainforest canopy of an endlessly expanding number of açai palms.

CHAPTER 2

SETTING

I conducted research in the rural sites of Curralinho and Gurupá with intermittent visits to the urban center of Belém. These sites are all located in the Amazonian state of Pará, which are responsible for 95 percent of the açai production in Brazil (Sanchez 2010). Each location plays a different role in production, sale, and consumption of açai. Both rural communities are heavily engaged in açai production but differ in their market orientations (for local/regional consumption versus national/international export) and corresponding consequences for household income patterns, both positive and negative. Belém, which is the largest city in the Amazon, with a population of over two million, is also the world's açai epicenter where mass quantities are bought and sold daily to local and international businesses. Belém is also the regional center for government agencies and NGOs concerned with child welfare, as well as scholars from the Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi (MPEG) and the Federal University of Pará (UFPA) who specialize in açai research.

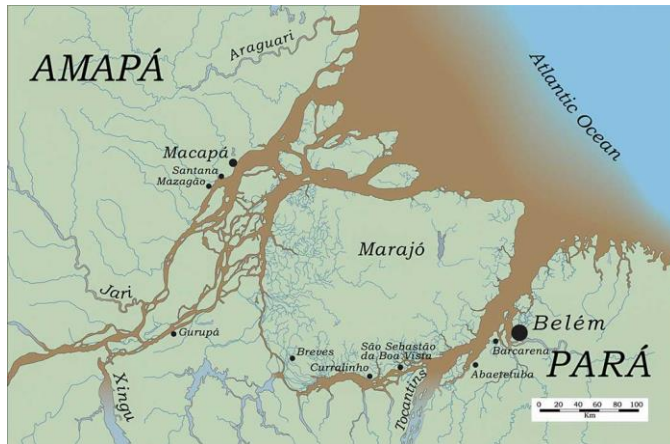
Pará is the second largest state in Brazil, comprising 14.6% of the total national territory and approximately 45 percent of the northern region; it covers 1.24 million square kilometers of the Amazon River basin (Verner 2004). To put these numbers in perspective, the state is roughly the same size as Peru and almost twice the size of the state of Texas. Pará has an extreme poverty rate of 44%, one of the highest in Brazil. This means that nearly half of the state's residents do not have enough money to buy the minimum daily food basket (Verner 2004)—the amount officially considered necessary to satisfy nutritional requirements based on a recommended daily allowance of protein, energy, and nutrients and minerals. Additionally, Pará has one of the highest export rates as well as child labor rates in Brazil.

Within the state of Pará, the municipalities (and towns by the same names) of Curralinho and Gurupá are located in the Marajó archipelago, which is the delta region for the Amazon River (See Map 1). The Marajó Archipelago is comprised of three micro-regions (Arari, Furos de Breves, and Portel) that combine 16 municipalities and cover an area of 104,140 km² with a population of 487,010 (IBGE 2010). Although considered to be one of the states richest in biological and water resources in the country (Ministério da Saúde 2007), the area struggles to overcome basic problems of public health (including sanitation), education, infrastructure development, and economic stability. In a comprehensive study of all 16 municipalities, Instituto Peabiru (2011) found that the Marajó Archipelago micro-regions have the least access to health services, the highest infant mortality rates, and the lowest education rates in the entire state of Pará. These problems are rooted in a long history of underdevelopment and poverty.

The economic strategies of rural residents in the Marajó region are primarily based on the extraction of forest and river products, such as wood, fruits, and various animals. Local communities combine these activities with subsistence farming, relying almost exclusively on family members as the main source of labor. Marajó's economic infrastructure is insufficient in all areas of transportation, energy, and telecommunications (Ministério da Saúde 2007). At the end of 2013, both Curralinho and Gurupá lacked local access to financial institutions, such as banks (Veríssimo et al. 2002, Instituto Peabiru 2011, Oliveira et al. 2011). This is an important factor in both economies, because there are no forms of credit or financing to assist in production

or ways to move resources for credit. Access to these types of institutions would greatly help people in both municipalities, as it would no longer require long expensive trips to larger towns and cities like Belém and Breves to manage basic finances.

Map 1. Marajó Arquipélago, Pará, Brazil



Source: Amazonwaters.org

Historical Background

From the early 1600s to mid-1800s the Amazon region as a whole experienced colonial exploitation, environmental degradation, and “depopulation” that transformed the indigenous population into an underclass entrapped in dependence and poverty (Pace 1998:64-67). Like other Latin American regions and Brazil as a whole, the Amazon experienced several boom and bust cycles, bringing great fortune to the area, only to leave it impoverished again. The most significant period in terms of shaping current day socio-economic patterns was the rubber boom (Barbosa 2000, Pace 1998, Schmink and Wood 1992, Wagley 1976).

In 1839, Charles Goodyear discovered vulcanization, a chemical process that increased the strength and elasticity of rubber despite temperature changes (Pace 1998, Schmink and Wood 1992). The discovery transformed “rubber from a novelty item into a valued commodity on the world market,” aided by innovations in transportation and the expansion of industrial uses (Schmink and Wood 1992:42). The Amazon was the world’s primary producer of natural rubber; between 1850 and 1880, rubber exports increased by 500% and their value increased by 800% (Pace 1998, Weinstein 1983). Until 1910, the region produced at least half of the rubber on the world market. The rubber boom brought new wealth and opportunities to the Amazon, including Gurupá which was among the four largest rubber producing municipalities in the entire region during the early years. Enticed by the prosperity of a booming economy, large numbers of drought-stricken immigrants from the northeast of Brazil migrated into the area, increasing the population by 400 percent (Pace 1998:75-91). However, by 1913 Amazonian rubber lost its dominance in the world market as Asian plantations matched, and then surpassed the Amazon markets in both production and price (Wagley 1976). The new global competition caused rubber prices to plummet, and the flourishing Amazon economic structure heavily based on a monocrop fell apart, leaving its inhabitants impoverished once again.

In 1964, the Amazon faced new problems. The Brazilian military overthrew the populist government, establishing a centralized authoritarian regime that would rule Brazil for the next 21

years (1964-1985) (Bunker 1985; Pace 1998). A major focus of the military government was “to strengthen the economic development policies” through “import-substitution-industrialization,” where goods would be produced locally instead of imported (Pace 1998:164). The principle focus of these policies was the Southeast and South of Brazil. The authoritarian regime forced political stability, tax incentives, wage control measures, and liberal profit remittances, transforming Brazil’s unstable and risky economic reputation into an appealing location for regional and foreign investment (Browder and Godfrey 1997; Schmink and Wood 1992). The result was rapid economic growth during the 1960s and 1970s. However, the growth did not trickle down to the masses, remaining concentrated in the hands of the Southeastern upper-income groups, while the majority of the country lived in destitute poverty.

The Amazon did not escape the authoritarian military regime’s economic policies and was directly affected through a series of development and colonization projects largely focusing on cattle ranching, roads, dams, and mining. The government imposed centralized taxes, regulatory agencies, policies of import substitution and export promotion, and free trade zones to attract foreign and regional interests (Browder and Godfrey 1997). Consequently, the Amazon lost its regional autonomy, becoming an economic, institutional, administrative, and political periphery bound by poorly planned bureaucratic policies and procedures (Browder and Godfrey 1997; Bunker 1985; Pace 1998). While the production of Brazilian staple foods (rice, beans, and corn) was heavily promoted, improvements for subsistence agriculture were nonexistent (Bunker 1985).

Large-scale extractors (mainly involved with timber, but also with some Brazil nuts and other forest products) and cattle ranchers gained large land tracts through perpetual leases; they also received governmental subsidies and tax breaks (Browder and Godfrey 1997; Pace 1992). Colonization projects encouraged interregional migration to the Amazon region and those who migrated were able to buy land tracts cheaply and receive agricultural bank credits (Browder and Godfrey 1997; Bunker 1985). However, the land leased or titled was often already occupied by small scale farmers and extractors, creating conflict and sometimes death over land disputes. The traditional method of gaining land title, through squatting and land improvement, was no longer acceptable. Those who had no official land title became subject to the new titleholders, forcing many inhabitants off lands that had been in their family’s possession for generations.

The Rural Communities

My focus on Gurupá and Currealinho for a comparative study is based on key aspects of their social profiles, including ethnicity, class, and community. The choice of these communities was bolstered by my previous research experiences in Gurupá, where I had done ethnographic fieldwork since 2003, and the wealth of primary data available for each location. Gurupá, the site of Charles Wagley’s famous 1953 study, *Amazon Town*, has been studied intensively by anthropologist Richard Pace since 1985, producing multiple household surveys, interviews, and anthropometric measurements. In Currealinho, Dr. Regina Oliveira da Silva, who is a biologist, coordinator, and researcher in the Human Sciences Department at MPEG, has done extensive research collecting household surveys from extractivist families and interviews with extractivists, intermediaries, and representatives from social and environmental community organizations. My access to these data offered exceptionally rich longitudinal perspectives to assess changes in household economies, demographics, health, and education in both communities.

The residents of Curralinho and Gurupá are often referred to as *caboclos*, which is a multi-ethnic term that incorporates people of European, Native, and African descent and implies a lower-class status (Brondízio 2009, Pace 1998, Pace 2004, Wagley [1953] 1976). This term is used pejoratively and inconsistently throughout the region, with ethnicity lumped together with social class. For this reason, I use the term *ribeirinhos* (riverine dwellers), which does not have these pejorative connotations, is used by the local populations, and may include different ethnic and social classes. Prior research by me and other scholars has shown that, in contrast to many other areas of the Amazon and Brazil, people in these two communities do not see race or ethnicity as locally significant social demarcations (See Pace 1998, Wagley 1976). Rather, class, especially factors of household income and education, are far more salient than ethnicity in local social relations.

Both Curralinho and Gurupá have strong histories of community organizing, with active unions for forest producers (extractivists) and NGOs that address local social and ecological problems; these include the Federação de Órgãos para Assistência Social e Educacional (FASE) (in Gurupá) and Instituto Peabiru (in both communities). In Gurupá, the success of a strong grassroots movement has markedly reduced local income inequality; this is also the only municipality in all of Brazil that has increased forest cover in the last few decades (FASE 2006). Despite these accomplishments, both communities struggle with economic instability, lack of infrastructure, and social inequality.

Curralinho

Located in the estuary region of the lower Amazon on the banks of Marajó-Açu River in the micro-region of Furos de Breves, Curralinho began as a private farm whose owners had many commercial interests and ties to a large group of landowners. Through these ties, the population grew and the area prospered. Due to its central location on the river, it was an obligatory stop for inland-bound boats and the many well-known “hucksters” (salesmen) that traveled up river (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística [IBGE] n.d.). In 1850, the town was founded as a *freguesia* (parish) named São João Batista de Curralinho (IBGE n.d.). The name is the diminutive of the Portuguese word *curral* (corral), which translates to ‘little corral,’ which was how the original founders referred to their little town.

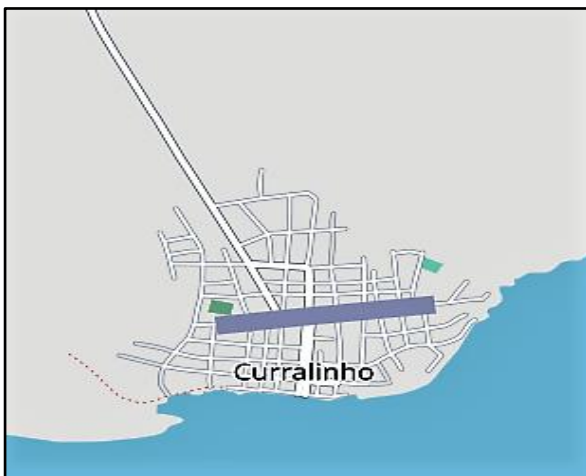
The municipality covers 3,621 km² and has a population of 28,549 residents, with approximately 39 percent (11,000) residing in the town perimeter and 61 percent (17,549) residing in the surrounding rural countryside (IBGE 2010). Curralinho is located 200 nautical miles from the state capital of Belém. There are no roads that connect to Curralinho and all transportation to and from the town occurs either by boat or by small airplane. Travel time by boat from Belém to Curralinho depends heavily on the tides and type of vessel, but generally takes 8-12 hours. The town has a small runway located two miles north of the urban center, which is nothing more than an open field of adequate length for landing. Flight time to Belém is approximately 45 minutes. There are no commercial flights, therefore all trips are contracted for round-trips. Because of the high costs, flights are typically for local authorities and medical emergencies.

Curralinho’s economy is primarily based on the extraction of timber and non-timber forest products (NTFP). Timber sales earned over R\$1.9 million in 2009, making Curralinho the seventh largest timber producer in the Marajó region (Instituto Peabiru 2011). In 2010, palmito and agricultural crops (manioc, corn, beans, etc.) generated approximately R\$337,000 in sales. However, açaí is the most important economic resource for residents within the municipality. In

2009, Currálinho was the sixth largest producer of açaí in the Marajó region, generating R\$1.6 million in sales. While reported açaí profits were lower than timber, the majority of the açaí market in the municipality is informal, distorting actual sales. The issues surrounding this problem will be discussed in Chapter 4.

The urban infrastructure is similar to other municipalities in the region, having an old Catholic cathedral, a town square, old (and new) buildings and houses, a few paved streets, and at least one main dock. The town is connected by two main roads that transect in the center of town (see Maps 2 and 3). They are only partially paved. During the rainy season, beginning in November and lasting through March, many of the unpaved roads throughout the town flood. The inundated roads cause serious transportation and safety issues, especially for the majority of residents who have no choice but to wade through these areas when commuting to work, school, and to conduct daily errands.

Map 2. Currálinho, Pará, Brazil



Source: Guiamais Mapas

Map 3. Currálinho, Pará, Brazil



Source: Wikipedia

Currálinho has a Human Development Index (HDI) of .502, similar to that of Rwanda, placing it in the bottom 10% of Brazil. The HDI is a scale that ranges from 0 to 1 and ranks the quality of life based on four categories: the gross domestic product, infant mortality rate, educational enrollment rate, and adult literacy. Approximately 95% of Currálhenses live in poverty or extreme poverty. More than 60% of adults live on less than R\$140 (US\$60) per month (poverty level) and 35% of adults live on less than R\$70 (US\$30) per month (extreme poverty level). Life expectancy is 71 years, which is almost three years shorter than Brazil's national average (Atlas do Desenvolvimento Humano no Brasil [PNUD] 2016). Life for a large portion of the population is a daily struggle.

Health issues in Currálinho are challenging. The town lacks adequate healthcare facilities and physicians, falling significantly below health standards set by the World Health Organization (WHO) of four hospital beds and one physician per 1,000 inhabitants (World Rainforest Movement 2002). The Ministério da Saúde (2009) reported that Currálinho had .89 beds and .05 physicians per 1,000 inhabitants. A technical nurse who has worked in Currálinho for 12 years offers a ground level view of these statistics, stating that “the hospital has [one] bed, an observation room, a doctor's office, a delivery room, a dressing room, and another room for pick-ups and examinations (mainly for malaria)” (Instituto Peabiru 2011:18; unless otherwise

stated, all translations are by the author). Preventative women's health care, such as yearly gynecological exams, is also unavailable, requiring women to travel to Belém for this type of care. A local teacher from the Boa Esperança community, a small hamlet in the interior, stated that women have "many problems of the womb, including uterine and breast cancer...there is no preventative examination, this must be done in Belém (Instituto Peabiru 2011:18). While Currálinho is closer to the urban center of Belém than several Marajó municipalities, the majority of the population does not have required funds necessary to make annual preventative care trips, as they are costly and time consuming. Average boat fares from Currálinho to Belém are R\$60.00 (US\$35) per person each way and typically require at least one overnight stay due to boat departure schedules. This is a significant financial burden for a family struggling to survive, especially considering the monthly minimum wage in Brazil is only R\$545 (US\$320).

Currálinho struggles to address health issues of adolescent pregnancy, infant mortality, and childhood vaccination coverage. According to the Ministério da Saúde (2009), 37% of births in Currálinho were to adolescents under the age of 18 (16% of which were to adolescents 10- 14 years old). The infant mortality rate averages 22 deaths per 1000 live births, which is much higher than the state average of 18.5 deaths per 1000 live births. While the vaccination rate for children at one year of age has increased significantly, from 43% in 2000 to 82% in 2010, Instituto Peabiru (2011) suggests that the Ministry of Health has not adjusted prevention strategies to address the lived reality of the Marajó region, where many communities are scattered and long distances away from vaccination resources.

Sanitation, potable water, and malaria are serious problems in Currálinho. As of 2010, the municipality has no sewage treatment system and the water quality is poor and "appears rusty" (Instituto Peabiru 2011 page number). Less than 6% of inhabitants have a septic tank, while the majority (and most impoverished) rely on rudimentary systems or ditches. There is a general water network in the town center, but this service only supplies 33.84% of the population, leaving the responsibility of water gathering, safety, and treatment to individuals. More than 60% of the population relies on basic straining (terracotta containers, charcoal filters, permeable stones) or chlorine tablets (provided by local health workers) to treat drinking water (Instituto Peabiru 2011, Ministério da Saúde 2009). The lack of a sewage system and comprehensive water treatment cause innumerable occurrences of intestinal infections and amoebas, and reports of Chagas Disease are increasing (Ministério da Saúde 2009).

Malaria is a major health issue in Currálinho. There was a total of 7,873 reported cases of malaria in 2010, the second highest occurrence rate in the Marajó region (Instituto Peabiru 2011). Approximately 7,000 of these cases occurred between January and August, equaling a rate of one out of every four inhabitants sickened. Because Currálinho had irregularities in their 2009 health reports, the local government did not receive adequate federal funding to fight the disease. According to the Ministério da Saúde, incidents of malaria continue to grow rapidly, reporting 1,068 new cases in January 2011, due to lack of medication and prevention (Galvão e Costa 2011).

Gurupá

Gurupá is located in the estuary region of the lower Amazon River, in the micro-region of Portel. In 1609, the Dutch founded Gurupá, which they called Mariocai, as one of a series of trading posts along the Xingu and Amazon Rivers. The area had maintained indigenous settlements dating back several thousand years (Ribeiro et. al 2016). The Portuguese eventually expelled the Dutch, as well as English and Irish settlers, and established the Fort of Saint

Anthony in 1623. With the fort, Gurupá became a stronghold for control over the lower Amazon (Browder and Godfrey 1997; Hemming 1978, Wagley 1976).

The municipality covers 8,578 km² and has a population of 29,062, with approximately 33 % (9,528) residing within the town perimeter and 67 percent (19,534) residing in the surrounding rural countryside (IBGE 2010). Gurupá is located 500 nautical miles from the state capital of Belém. There are no roads that connect to Gurupá (until now) and all transportation to and from the town occurs either by boat or by small airplane. Travel time by boat from Belém to Gurupá depends heavily on the tides and type of vessel, but generally takes 25-36 hours. Air travel from Belém takes one hour and 15 minutes.

Gurupá has had many boom and bust cycles throughout its history, but the rubber boom (1850 to 1910) was notably significant. The years between 1880 and 1910 were considered the “golden years” for Gurupá as newly found wealth and a flourishing economy brought tremendous growth to the town (Pace 1998:75-91). By 1900, there were 20 general stores, warehouses for rubber, gambling houses, a house of prostitution, and new construction on a large town hall (Wagley 1976). A new gas street lighting system, marble steps leading to the river, and extravagant ironwork cemeteries were being installed. In an extreme show of wealth, some residents sent shirts to Portugal for starching. Gurupá was also an active social and cultural center. There was a local newspaper and occasional grand balls accompanied by an orchestra, champagne, wine, imported liquor, and fine foods. Culturally, the rubber boom firmly institutionalized major traditions and religious festivals for Saint Anthony, held in June, and Saint Benedict, held in December (Pace 1998).

Unfortunately, Gurupá’s dependence on a mono-economy proved nearly fatal to its existence. As rubber prices plummeted, there was a reversal in wealth and population levels. Buildings, like the new town hall, remained unfinished and entire families abandoned their land and houses as they were forced to look for work elsewhere. By 1920, the town’s population had declined to 300 people (Wagley 1976).

With the end of the war, Gurupá once again entered economic depression. The next major changes to occur for the municipality transpired during the military regime (1964-1985). Centralization of government control led to the creation of new civil servant positions in the town, while the military regime’s encouragement of large-scale development projects to obtain forest resources (timber, palmito, rubber, and oil prospecting) led to waves of predatory extraction (Pace 1998). Beyond environmental damage, the extraction booms created a local labor drain and the production of locally consumed food declined drastically. Consequently, between the 1970s and the 1990s, the town experienced frequent food shortages due to the lack of local food production, creating a greater need to import expensive food staples (Pace 1998).

Today the municipality has recovered from the economic depressions, largely due to the boom in açai production, and it continues to grow, reaching an estimated 20,000 or more residents today (IBGE 2016). The original three-street, grid-like layout described by Wagley in the 1950s now stretches more than seven streets back, encroaching farther into the thick mass of rainforest (see Maps 4 and 5). Although the streets have official names, they are mostly referred to as First Street, Second Street, Third Street, etc. There are five main side streets, the longest of which begins on First Street and stretches deep into the interior of the rainforest. On my first visit to Gurupá in 2003, streets Five and Seven were short, eroded, and weed-ridden footpaths that seemed to end as quickly as they began. When I returned in 2005, these same streets had grown tremendously, stretching farther than I could see. Additionally, the narrow dirt paths, once overrun by weeds, had become full size roads, large enough to accommodate dump trucks.

Small, newly built houses lined the sides of the street. During my fieldwork in 2013, I lived in a small wooden house on seventh street, which although was still unpaved, had grown into a main passage complete with markets and churches, and a seemingly endless flow of large construction vehicles that stirred up dust and cast it into the houses as they passed.

Map 4. Gurupá, Pará, Brazil



Source: Guiamais Mapas

Map 5. Gurupá in State of Pará



Source: Wikipedia

Gurupá's economy is similar to Curralinho's, primarily based on the extraction of timber and NTFPs (non-timber forest products), such as palmito, cacao, and açai (Veríssimo et al. 2002, Instituto Peabiru 2011). In 2009, Gurupá was the fifteenth largest producer of açai in the Marajó region, generating reported sales of R\$76,000 with a low estimate of 800,000 baskets during the regular harvest season (Instituto Peabiru 2011). However, these reported açai profits are extremely low considering its economic importance throughout the municipality. There are several explanations for this distortion and the issues surrounding the lack of accurate data, which will be discussed in Chapter 4. The majority of açai was once consumed locally, with the remaining surplus sold to traders in the town for regional sale (Veríssimo et al. 2002). However, as the demand and value of açai has risen, regional export now exceeds local consumption.

Gurupá's economy differs from that of Curralinho in that it is not solely reliant upon açai as its most economically important product. For example, in 2010, palmito and agricultural crops (manioc, corn, beans, etc.) generated more than R\$1.1 million in sales. Timber extraction also greatly surpasses that of açai, making Gurupá the third largest producer of timber in the Marajó region, generating R\$8.9 million in sales in 2009. However, a major part of profits go to *atravessadores*, middlemen, as there are approximately 150-200 illegal sawmills operating throughout the municipality (Instituto Peabiru 2011). Açai is one of Gurupá's leading market commodities, but in contrast to Curralinho's export orientation, most of Gurupá's harvest is consumed locally or sold for consumption within the region. Gurupá's producer families do not depend exclusively on açai; they harvest and sell diverse products, and (based on preliminary observations) have more relative stability in their month-to-month finances.

Gurupá has an HDI (human development index) of .509, similar to Curralinho, placing it in the bottom 10% of Brazil. Life expectancy is 71 years, and like Curralinho, almost three years shorter than Brazil's national average (PNUD 2016). Health issues in Gurupá are considerable, but differ in some aspects when compared to Curralinho. Similarly to Curralinho, Gurupá falls

below WHO health standards of adequate healthcare facilities and physicians. The Ministério da Saúde (2009) reported that Gurupá has 2.6 beds and .07 physicians per 1,000 inhabitants. While there are two doctors in town, a surgeon and a medical scientist, Gurupá lacks the ability to attract and hire new doctors due to demands of “exorbitant wages to stay [in such a remote location]” [translation mine] (Instituto Peabiru 2011:19). Any serious condition or disease requires travelling to Belém with average boat fares from Gurupá to Belém of R\$90 (\$53 US) each way. In comparison to Currálinho residents, it takes three times as long to reach Belém and costs R\$30 (\$18 US) more each way.

Gurupá struggles with similar issues of adolescent pregnancy, infant mortality, and childhood vaccinations coverage like Currálinho. According to the Brazil Live Birth Information System - Secretariat of Health Surveillance [SINASC] (2009), 29% of Gurupá births were to adolescents under the age of 18, including 2.1% to adolescents 10-14 years of age. This adolescent pregnancy rate is slightly less than Currálinho, and significantly less for births to adolescents 14 years of age and under. Its infant mortality rate is the same as Currálinho, 22 deaths per 1000 live births. Gurupá’s childhood vaccination rate is 73%, almost 10% lower than Currálinho’s, but the rate has increased dramatically from 49% since 2000. This again suggests that prevention and intervention strategies do not fully take into account the rural and disparate living circumstances of an interior community like Gurupá, which unfortunately leaves over 25% of *Gurupaense* children in danger and vulnerable to preventable diseases.

Gurupá has problems of sanitation and potable water. Like Currálinho, less than 6% of its inhabitants have septic tanks, while the majority rely on rudimentary systems, ditches, rivers, and lakes (Instituto Peabiru 2011). The town has a water treatment system that supplies homes with safe water, but the interior communities (72% of the population) still face water sanitation problems, due mainly to the difficulty in establishing a treatment system that can accommodate the long distances between interior communities. These rural communities rely on the addition of aluminum sulfate and/or chlorine tablets (if available) to water extracted from wells, ponds (during summer months), and the river itself (during the winter months) (Instituto Peabiru 2011). Due to the lack of comprehensive sanitation and water treatment, waterborne illness and disease are common. Snakebites are also a major problem in the interior communities, representing seven out of ten emergency visits to the town hospital from rural areas.

One striking difference between Gurupá and Currálinho is the rate of malarial infections. Gurupá had 61 reported cases of malaria in 2010 compared to almost 8,000 reported cases in Currálinho. At this time I have no specific explanation for this dramatic difference, but speculate that Gurupá, with the assistance of NGOs and government-sponsored educational programs, has taken a variety of preventative measures over time to decrease the rate of infection. This explanation is supported by local observations by Pace and myself in Gurupá. For example, Pace (personal communication 2011), found that Gurupá “aggressively follows up on malaria outbreaks - isolating the affected and spraying around homes and houses. Malaria now only comes from outside the municipality, it is not indigenous [to the area].” My own observations in 2005 suggest that Gurupá promotes community malaria awareness, in which malaria prevention posters and pamphlets hung throughout frequented public areas (schools, public spaces, government buildings, etc.). The information is presented pictorially and uses culturally familiar objects and scenarios, allowing an observer to understand the information quickly, regardless of education or literacy level.

In 2005, Gurupá also had environmental awareness education that focused on children between the ages of 7-14. The Programa de Erradicação do Trabalho Infantil/Child Labor

Eradication Program (PETI) requires stipend recipients to attend extended education in addition to regular school instruction. It also included discussions about malaria's causes and prevention, and discussed simple actions that the children themselves could take, like dumping out objects with standing water, to prevent mosquito larvae from maturing (Motta 2003). A malaria prevention poster hung on the wall of the classroom, where children spent three hours a day five days a week. Research suggests that successful malaria intervention/prevention community-based initiatives must provide knowledge on the cause, symptoms, transmission, and control of the disease and that children are among the best targets for health promotion (Edson and Kayombo 2007, Mboera 1998). Although results from this type of intervention strategy have not been evaluated in Gurupá, the evidence suggests that talking about malaria increased children's knowledge of the disease and acknowledged children's ability to create change within their environment.

Contemporary Problems in the Research Settings

Instituto Peabiru (2011) has compiled extensive data which documents the life conditions in these two research communities, specifically in areas of health, education, and economic development. They identified seven major health problems in the Marajó region:

1. Insufficient or nonexistent infrastructure in the rural areas.
2. Lack of transport to cities for patients in rural communities.
3. Lack of community health agents.
4. Bad quality of medicinal products.
5. Lack of substantial support policies to combat malaria, sexually transmitted diseases (STD's) and other diseases.
6. Poor water quality and lack of sanitation/sewage services.
7. High rates of adolescent pregnancy.

The region also faces multiple challenges in providing basic education. In 2011 there were 183,398 students enrolled in the Marajó region, representing approximately 37% of the population, with an average federal investment of R\$17.5 million (\$10.3 US) (Instituto Peabiru 2011). The biggest problems stem from rural isolation and the daily struggle for subsistence for most families. These factors are exacerbated by a lack of access to new technologies (such as computers and the Internet), high rates of age-for-grade distortions, high rates of multi-grade classrooms, unreliable/expensive transportation and/or access to schools, poor education quality, and the lack of education beyond middle school (8th grade) in the majority of municipalities.

Tenório et al. (2009) identified seven major problems in rural Amazonian education:

1. Poor infrastructure
2. Teacher workload and job insecurity
3. Concerns of teaching organization in multi-grade classrooms
4. 'Urban-centric' curriculum – meaning that the curriculum does not reflect/include rural Amazonian culture or life
5. High failure and age-for-grade distortion rates due to conditions that affect learning and teaching, such as family labor contribution requirements for many students outside of the classroom
6. Lack of educational support from the Department of Education

7. Implementation of the ‘Nucleation Policy’ that closes small local rural schools and combines students into larger schools that are longer distances from their homes, increasing problems of transportation and the ability to attend school for students

Based on the Índice de Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica (IDEB [Basic Education Development Index]) used to assess the quality of education throughout Brazil, nine Marajó municipalities (out of 16), including Curralinho and Gurupá, have some of the lowest development rates in the entire country, (Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira [INEP] 2017, Instituto Peabiru 2011).

As discussed throughout this chapter, Curralinho and Gurupá face many challenges due to the economic systems in place. The lack of or limited access to basic modern conveniences like banks, ATMs, reliable internet and cell phone service, and even electricity and potable water keep longstanding inequalities firmly in place. Their remote locations, especially for those who reside in the interior, turn the most mundane tasks (like basic healthcare, getting mail, and going to the bank) into expensive and time-consuming endeavors that exceed the ability of some of the communities’ poorest residents. In short, Curralinho and Gurupá present a set of similarities and contrasts in health, education, transportation, and economic profiles to explore in assessing the impact of the açai boom on children’s lives and how this boom is influencing child welfare, either directly (through programs for children) or indirectly (e.g., by improving family incomes, education or health services).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

“All social systems, no matter how grand or far-flung, both express and are expressed in the routines of daily social life” Giddens (1984:36).

This study is based on multi-sited ethnography, rather than the more traditional focus on a single location, complemented by research strategies for both quantitative and qualitative data collection. Gathering data in two different communities located along the major waterway transport route for açai allowed me to observe firsthand how this relatively new market has brought both wealth and poverty at the lowest levels of this commodity chain, where the fruit is harvested, providing insight into the daily struggles, decision-making, and lives of families in two similar, but also very different, locations.

Multi-sited ethnography is especially relevant as a method to explore how commodities (and their social and political messages) move through the various ‘links’ of production, distribution, and consumption. George Marcus (1995:105) describes multi-sited research as an endeavor that is “designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, or juxtapositions of locations in which the ethnography establishes some form of literal, physical presence, with an explicit, posited logic of association or connection among sites.” Mark-Anthony Falzon (2009:2) describes multi-sited ethnographic methodology as involving a “spatially dispersed field through which the ethnographer moves – actually, via sojourns in two or more places, or conceptually, by means of techniques of juxtaposition of data.”

The methodological strengths of multi-sited ethnography derive from its ability to reach beyond the ‘slice’ of human experience presented in traditional ethnographic ‘case studies,’ and provide a more encompassing perspective through interaction in multiple research settings (Marcus 1995). Multi-sited ethnography is particularly applicable for fieldwork examining commodities traveling a globalized setting because research is not bound to one place/space. As a result, researchers can juxtapose multiple views and places, revealing connections and understandings that otherwise would remain unsuspected or undetected (Marcus 1995). The connections then allow one to analyze the full impacts of seemingly disconnected structures, spaces, and relations to local, national, and global arenas. Angelique Haugerud, Priscilla Stone, and Peter Little (2000:19) point out that “commodity analysis is one means of taking up the challenge to contemporary anthropologists to understand the connections, discontinuities, and contrasts among multiple research sites.”

This is especially applicable in revealing labor conditions and otherwise hidden social and environmental costs involved in producing commodities that will be consumed in distant places far from their point of origin. For example, Jane Collins (2003) uses multi-sited ethnography in her commodity analysis of the global apparel industry. Her research spanned from New Jersey to Mexico in order to provide multiple perspectives on how workers’ experiences compared and contrasted throughout the industry. Had Collins (2003:61) chosen to stay in one location, she would not have been able to gain these insights into the local “social

relations that structure workers' opportunities and freedoms" in the industry. The exploitative labor practices that go into producing 'first world' clothing would have remained hidden.

Deborah Barndt (2008) also used multi-sited ethnography in tracing the commodity chain of Mexican tomatoes to Canadian fast food restaurants. She points out that "the stories of women workers and the tomatoes they move from field to table, from Mexico to Canada, are tenaciously intertwined, making it next to impossible to examine one alone, without considering how it is connected to, and often embedded in, another" (Barndt 2008:3). Collins and Barndt's ability and willingness to move across borders, 'following the thing,' enabled them to understand seemingly unconnected people and places, expose exploitative labor practices, and tell the stories of the workers that endure them.

There are, however, methodological critiques of the approach. Traditional community-based ethnography requires long-term fieldwork in one site, learning the local language, and participant obs defies the main tenet of long-term fieldwork in one location; it has been criticized for lacking depth and stretching itself (and its researchers) too thinly. Haugerud et al. (2000) point out that fieldwork is not complete once one leaves one area, but extends to following chains and communications into the global arena in order to link everyday life across times and locations. Nancy Scheper-Hughes (2004) suggests that such endeavors risk in-depth perspective:

Multi-sited research (even when based on many return and follow-up trips) still runs the risk of being too thinly spread, and demanding a sacrifice of the normally leisurely pace of traditional ethnographic work. I have had to travel, observe, respond, reflect and write more quickly than I am accustomed to (Scheper-Hughes 2004:18).

To achieve the goals of multi-sited research, ethnographers face major challenges of time constraints, positioning, and repositioning within research sites.

One of multi-sited ethnography's biggest limitations is time. In conventional ethnography, staying in one location for an extended period allows ample time to develop rapport with key consultants, develop relationships with the community, and gives the researcher more time to acclimate to the field site and evaluate /adjust research questions. In multi-sited ethnography, time is collapsed and the researcher must move more quickly within each field site, which can strain relationships with key consultants and gatekeepers. This precarious feature can have hazardous effects on the research outcome, as one must get past gatekeepers and other key people within the community (such as religious leaders, political officials, mayors, parents, teachers, etc.) to gain access beyond the periphery and into the core of the field site.

Shorter field stays reduce the time the researcher has to acclimate to each field site and to evaluate and adjust research questions and goals as new information surfaces. As research requires reflexivity, ample time for acclimation is important for interpretation of data and achieving a presence within the community. Charlotte Davies (1999:13) defines reflexivity as a "means of turning back on oneself, a process of self-reference...the ways in which the products of research are affected by the personal and process of doing research." Reflexivity is important because it forces the researcher to reevaluate preconceptions of the field once there and evaluate the misconceptions that often occur during the first phases of fieldwork.

Sufficient time is also needed to adjust research questions and goals, as the researcher may not realize the impact of new information until in another field location. Because there is less time spent in each field site, there is less time for this reflexive process, which in turn can

compromise interpretations of data and the direction of research. The shorter field stint also gives the researcher less time to become ‘inconspicuous,’ meaning that there is not enough time for her/his presence within the community to become ‘normal’ or at least less noticeable. By remaining visible, the researcher faces difficulties in reaching beyond surface understandings because of the novelty of her/his presence.

Researchers conducting multi-sited ethnography are faced with constant problems of positioning. Because one must combine attention to multiple sites, his/her position within these sites changes. Marcus (1995:112) points out that the practice of multi-sited fieldwork “must be conducted with keen awareness of being within the landscape, and as that landscape changes across sites, the identity of the ethnographer requires renegotiation.” This positioning is described as being a “circumstantial activist” (Marcus 1995:113). This term is not used in the same sense as activism in a social movement, but activism in terms of being an ‘ethnographer-activist,’ in which one renegotiates identities in different sites, recognizing that “the politics and ethics of working in any one reflects on work in the others” (Marcus 1995: 113).

Multi-sited ethnography does have solid strengths to contribute to the broader understandings of the seemingly disconnected relationships that often surface in tracing commodities. While my multi-sited research did not cross international borders, it did allow me to collect a set of “situated perspectives relating to the phenomena in question (childhood, child labor, and açai), juxtaposing views and experiences that have traditionally been kept apart” (Collins 2005:12).

Methodological Issues and Approaches to Childhood Research

Working with and researching children and their lives requires special methodological and ethical considerations. Issues of power, age, and status must be considered, as children do not necessarily have the ‘ability’ to consent to involvement in research. Methodologically, research design is contingent upon how investigators perceive children and childhood, viewing children either as active social agents or as future adults contained within the structure of childhood.

Ethnographic research that focuses on or works with children is subject to methodological and ethical issues that are not always present when working with adults. Allison James, Chris Jenks, and Alan Prout (1998) argue that children should be understood, not as lesser beings than adults, but as having different competencies which the researcher must address. The recognition that children can actively participate and communicate their ideas in research challenges the belief that children are somehow less competent than adults. There is an underlying assumption that adults are competent as research participants and as ‘protectors’ of children, which is clearly not always the case. The researcher must consider issues of power, informed consent, and vulnerability when working with children.

The researcher role presents special challenges of power when conducting ethnographic work with children. Primarily, as it is the goal to develop rapport and good relationships with all those involved in the research process, the inherent power differentials between the adult researcher and the child participant aggravate this process. Because children most often are in subordinate positions in society, subject to the control and authority of adults, they expect relationships with adults to follow similar cultural patterns and alter their behavior accordingly. These ‘intergenerational inequalities,’ complicate the rapport-building process (Alderson 1995; Christensen 2004; Mayall 2000).

In order to reduce the unavoidable adult/child power differentials, researchers must act in ways that do not reinforce notions of inequality and authority. Some researchers suggest taking a 'least adult role,' in which the researcher suspends 'all adult-like characteristics.' For example, Nancy Mandell (1991:42) "endeavored to put aside ordinary forms of adult status and interaction – authority, verbal competency, cognitive and social mastery – in order to follow their [children's] ways closely" in her study with preschool children. Anna Laerke (1998), in her study of British schoolchildren, tried to 'fit in' by dressing like them, playing in the sand pit, sitting in the same small chairs, and allying herself with them against the teacher.

While the 'least adult role' seems plausible, most criticize this approach pointing out that one does not need to pretend to be a child in order to understand their perspective or to conduct good research with them (Christensen 2004; Harden et al. 2000; James et al. 1998). Children will see such attempts as a façade and distrust the 'weird' adult who is already overly interested in their lives. This role also seems to 'wish away' the complex differences and similarities between adults and children, which are unavoidable and must be acknowledged and dealt with throughout the research process (Christensen 2004). In reality, one cannot 'go native' when working with children and researchers must find a way to straddle the divide by softening their adult status, but not becoming totally passive in the process (Fine and Sandstrom 1988; Montgomery 2009). Clearly, as Clifford Geertz (1983) argues, "Anthropologists do not have to turn native in order to argue from the native's point of view," just as "childhood researchers need not pretend to be children" (James et al. 1998:183).

Informed consent poses several problems for both the researcher and the child. As children do not have the 'ability' to consent to participation, researchers must get consent from the adult gatekeepers. Because children lack decision-making rights due to their social and legal position as minors, authority of consent is usually delegated to those considered 'responsible' for children, most often parents and teachers (James, Jenks and Prout 1998; Mauthner 1997; Wyness 2006). Gatekeepers, however, do not necessarily protect children in the process of consent, as children face power relations in both the home and at school, they may feel pressured to participate for fear of reprisal if they do not. On the other hand, gatekeepers may deny children's participation, especially if the research is questioning morals or the authority of adults. For example, Jan Mason and J. Falloon (2001) found in their study on the adult-centered nature of the discourse of abuse that many parents overruled their children's decision to participate, barring them from the study. In this way, informed consent is not necessarily problematic due to children's lack of ability to understand the research or the process of consent, but more so because children are subordinate and others decide whether they participate or not (Harden et al. 2000).

Researchers working with children must constantly keep in mind children's vulnerable position in society. While saying that children 'need protection' may be objectionable because this implies that childhood is a period of powerlessness, children are nonetheless vulnerable (James, Jenks, and Prout 1998; Morrow and Richards 1996). Vulnerability takes two forms. First, due to physical weakness and limited social experience, children are dependent upon adults. Second, due to structural vulnerability, children are in a marginalized social, political, and economic position (James, Jenks, and Prout 1998; Landsdown 1994). Ethical issues emerge out of these positions and require the researcher to remain aware of their larger responsibility to protect children.

Children's perceived vulnerability means that a further fundamental difference is the obligations, duties and responsibilities that researchers have towards their subjects are qualitatively different when working with children and relate to adult responsibilities towards children in general. Thus, if a child discloses that he or she is at risk of harm, then the assumption is that the researcher has a duty to pass this information on to a profession who can protect the child/other children at risk...Researchers need to recognize their moral obligations as adults to protect children even when this may mean losing access to, or the trust of, the children concerned if they do intervene (Marrow and Richards 1996:98).

Simply stated, researchers cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality when working with children due to a moral and legal obligation to act on information that concerns abuse or exploitation (Wyness 2006). This adds to the complexity of incorporating children into the research process, as researchers also have a moral and ethical obligation to disclose this information to children. Those who wish to participate must be informed at the time of consent and reminded throughout the research process of circumstances that would result in a breach of confidentiality. This is not done to discourage children from participating or disclosing information, but simply to make them aware of the potential risks involved should they decide to participate.

Child-centered approaches use ethnography as a base and employ a variety of methods to obtain children's perspectives of their lives and how they understand the adult-centered world in which they live. Most researchers who use these methods feel that it allows children a greater degree of autonomy in the research process than is usually possible through experimental or survey styles of research and, as a result, produces more authentic accounts of how children view their social worlds (Prout and James 1990; Qvortrup 1990; Wyness 2006). James et al. (1998) distinguish between the 'minority child,' as a minority in society, and the 'tribal child,' as something distinct from the adult world.

The Minority Child Approach views children as competent participants in a "shared, but adult-centered world" (James et al. 1998). The approach seeks to highlight children's voices by gaining their perspectives and understandings of the adult world in which they are required to participate. Task-centered methods are increasingly common in work with children under this approach. The task-centered methods are influenced by Participatory Rural Appraisal, a form of action research that focuses on empowerment and active involvement of local rural people (Brown et al. 2002; Harden et al. 2000). Through task-centered methods, researchers ask children to express themselves through a variety of activities such as drawing (Mitchell 2006), sentence completion exercises (Morrow 1998), sociometric maps (Pollard and Filer 1999), and using children as researchers themselves (Hecht 1998). Researchers typically use mixed methods under this approach.

The strengths of task-centered approaches are that they assist in building rapport and equalize some of the power differentials between the adult researcher and the child. By working closely with children and asking them to do things that they enjoy, rapport-building becomes easier than if asking them to do things, like interviews, which may seem intimidating or boring. The use of children as researchers helps "to redress the power imbalance between adults and children during the research process by respecting the children's rights and abilities" (James et al. 2007:267-268) and helping "to protect them from covert, invasive, exploitative, or abusive research" (Alderson 2000:243).

A limitation of task-centered methods is that the researcher must acknowledge the appropriateness of children's participation in the research process. While participation can reduce power differentials, it can also be exploitative. Children may also not enjoy or feel competent in the 'fun' activities (like drawing) incorporated into the research process, causing a breakdown in rapport. Helen Roberts (2000:238) points out that there may be times when a child's participation is inappropriate and "we cannot take it for granted that participation in research and the development of increasingly sophisticated research methods to facilitate children's participation is necessarily always in their best interests."

Conducting research with children requires the investigator to account for methodological and ethical concerns involved in the research process. The researcher must contend with issues of power differentials between the adult researcher and the child participant, issues involved in receiving informed consent for the participation of children, and the vulnerability of children during the research process. Appropriate methodology depends on if the researcher views children as a part of the structure of childhood or as active social agents that are competent research participants.

Research Design

I collected ethnographic data over the course of 19 months, from July 2011 through November 2013. Previous research projects and data collected between 2003-2011 from Gurupá and Curralinho by research colleagues and myself provided a wealth of baseline information and reliable contacts. In 2005, I spent two months in Gurupá collecting ethnographic data for my master's thesis in Sociology on folk concepts of childhood and child labor. In 2012, I assisted the Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi (MPEG) and Instituto Peabiru – Programa Viva Marajó on a project administered by Regina Oliveira and Carlos Augusto Ramos in multiple locations around Curralinho as they presented results from their latest research on açai production, education, and maternal and child health throughout the municipality. Because of prior experience in both communities, I had already established working relationships and rapport with key consultants before starting the core of my research in 2013, which assisted greatly in both the process of settling in and data collection in both locations.

To evaluate links between the açai boom and child welfare, I used a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative data collection. Statistical data from official records and findings from household, childhood, and educational surveys were complemented and contextualized by ethnographic participant-observation, informal and unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and participatory photo interviews with children. Pseudonyms are used for all participants throughout this dissertation in order to protect their identity.

Participant-observation, or living in households and participating directly in family and community life, in Curralinho, Gurupá, and rural riverine homesteads during the açai harvest allowed me to learn about daily life, familial and personal relationships, formal and informal economic activities, and the household divisions of labor and work patterns first hand while strengthening rapport with key consultants and community members. It also allowed me to develop relationships with children and adolescents who would later participate in questionnaires and participant photo interviews. In each community I lived with families directly connected to açai production and children's well-being, during which time I made systematic observations of daily life, carefully documenting my observations, conversations, and informal interviews in detailed field notes.

In Curralinho I lived with Íris, who was the secretary of education, and her family. She was a 38-year-old divorced mother of three and had spent over half of her life teaching in different educational settings throughout Curralinho and was directly involved in all levels of educational decision-making in the municipality. Her and her family's hospitality and help were paramount in developing a network of key contacts and consultants in the municipality, local government, and in the capital city of Belém. I spent most week days volunteering at a state middle/high school called Manoel da Vera Cruz Sá (*Escola Estadual Manoel da Vera Cruz Sá* or EMVC) located in the Cafezal neighborhood. This particular neighborhood was located in the “*zona periférica*” (periphery) of Curralinho, where crime and poverty rates were very high in comparison to the rest of the town. On days that I did not spend at EMVC, I split my time between visiting other schools and riverine hamlets, attending countless town hall meetings, training seminars, and official government meetings concerning education, health, açai production, and the environment.

In Gurupá I lived with a rural elementary school teacher, Leticia, who was 28-years-old and her husband Thiago, who was 26-years-old. They were part of a large açai producing family in the small riverine community of Murucupú. I spent part of my time with their family in the interior community of Murucupú, observing and participating in açai harvesting and preparation, and observing at the small riverine school at which Leticia taught. I spent the majority of my time living in the family home in the town of Gurupá, where I visited local schools, observed and taught classes at different schools, and spoke with açai sellers on a daily basis.

I had two key research assistants, one in Curralinho and one in Gurupá, throughout my fieldwork who were both invaluable as work companions, cultural experts, and friends. In Curralinho, Edgar, was a 21-year-old native of the community and part-time English college student in Oeiras, Pará, part-time motorcycle mechanic, and a former teacher at several rural schools in the municipality. He assisted me not only in the major tasks of questionnaire design and implementation, interviewing, and transcription – but also in the mundane everyday problems of transportation, printing, and learning to speak Portuguese like a local. His interest in my research and dedication to help me achieve it was truly something I could have not imagined possible. In Gurupá, Isabel, was a 22-year-old native of the community and Anthropology student at the *Universidade Federal Do Pará* (Federal University of Pará) in Belém. She assisted me in scheduling, interviewing, questionnaire implementation, community meetings, and countless other tasks that were not only imperative to my research, but to my health and well-being. Without their assistance, dedication, and patience, my time in the field would have been much more difficult on all fronts.

In Belém I had two significant research consultants who assisted me throughout the entire 19 months of field research. Dr. Regina Oliveira da Silva of the Museu Goeldi (MPEG) provided me with the base to successfully conduct more than half of the research in this ethnographic study. She assisted not only in introductions to key figures at Instituto Peabiru and MPEG, but also provided unwavering support in countless areas of my daily life and research. She was always available to answer questions, permitted me access to her data on açai collected in Curralinho, allowed me to use her office, helped me find a roommate in Belém, and kept me informed of – and often accompanied me to – cultural events and lectures that pertained to my work. Carlos Augusto Pantoja Ramos, an environmental engineer consultant and previous consultant throughout the Marajó region for Instituto Peabiru and for FASE in Gurupá, was also of great importance to this study. He assisted not only in introductions to key figures and contacts in Curralinho, but also included me in his consultation projects there, taught me the ins

and outs of boat travel on the Amazon, and was always available to answer even my most mundane questions. It is without a doubt that the success of my research is a direct result of their help. Regina and Carlos were and remain to be invaluable friends and “*companheiros de pesquisas*” (comrades in research).

Methods

I conducted countless informal and unstructured interviews and a total of 20 semi-structured, open-ended interviews. Although I already had a large baseline of preliminary data and had spent time in both research locations, I began my field research in January 2013 with numerous daily informal interviews. This method assisted me in settling in during the early phases of living in each community, helped build rapport with those around me, and ultimately uncovered topics and perspectives that I might have otherwise overlooked. Initially, roles were often reversed and I was the one being interviewed during my daily interactions as people were curious about who I was, why I was there, and about my life in the United States. This reversal was not as prominent in Gurupá, where 31 researchers have collectively spent more than 11 years living, working, and advocating in the community since the 1940s (Pace 2017). Currálinho, however, does not have this same long history and researchers, especially solitary, American, female ones, stand out like a sore thumb and tend to draw a lot of attention and questions. As uncomfortable as my initial ‘gringa’ (foreigner) status was (it did eventually dissipate), I used it to my advantage to better my Paraense dialect and to develop questions for more structured interviewing later in the research process.

Unstructured interviews with educators, students, government officials, açai producers, family members, and various others provided a wealth of data on issues of local perceptions of childhood, child labor, education, social problems, and açai. These interviews were particularly useful in understanding what residents saw as the most prevalent social, political, and environmental issues in their communities and their accompanying lived experiences. I used data gathered from these informal and unstructured interviews, my preliminary field visits, and previous field research to develop semi-structured interview questions based on a participant’s area of expertise, revising them as needed throughout my fieldwork, and for the development of ethnographic questionnaires.

I conducted a combined total of 20 semi-structured open-ended interviews in Currálinho and Gurupá. I chose interview participants based on their involvement in education, the environment, and children’s rights. Of the 20 interviews, nine were recorded on a small digital voice recorder and ranged from 25 to 90 minutes in length. These recordings were later transcribed verbatim and totaled more than 132 typed single-spaced pages. Although I asked each interviewee a small set of similar questions about education, açai, and children, I tailored each interview to the participant’s area of expertise. This approach produced a wide range of detailed expert data in areas such as açai management and sales, education issues, violations of children’s rights, and welfare grant programs.

Ethnographic questionnaires provided an abundance of information relating to local concepts of childhood, child labor, education, and açai in both research communities. I designed three questionnaires that focused on different topics and were administered to three different groups of participants. Questionnaire one was administered to both children and adults and contained 26 questions (see Appendix A), seven of which focused on basic demographic information of age, sex, educational level, location of birth, and profession. The majority of the remainder of questions were open-ended and focused on concepts of childhood (What is

childhood, when does childhood begin and end, what nonphysical characteristics determine an adult from a child, do all children have a childhood, do boys and girls experience different childhoods, do children in the city and in the interior experience different childhoods), child work and labor (When do boys and girls begin to have responsibility, what are typical responsibilities for each, when do boys and girls begin to work, what are typical jobs for each), education (When do children start school, at what age do children stop going to school, why do some children not attend school), and differences in urban and rural daily life (What are typical activities for children who live in the city, what are typical activities for children who live in the interior).

Based on convenience sampling, I administered questionnaire one in educational settings in both communities to students, teachers, and administrators. This setting eliminated possible issues of illiteracy in respondents and allowed them to write in answers at their own pace. I chose to use a self-administered method for several reasons. For one, it provided a large number of responses from both children and adults involved in education, either as students or as teachers/administrators. In addition, it eradicated response effects and power imbalances that often occur in face-to-face interviews, especially with children, as respondents tend to be more open or honest when answering questions related to socially undesirable behavior or traits (Bernard 2002). In total, response rate was near 100 percent and I received 132 self-administered questionnaires from children 13-17 years old, and 57 self-administered questionnaires from adults 18-69 years old.

Questionnaire two (see Appendix B) was administered only to adult teachers and contained 34 questions, 16 of which focused on basic demographic information of age, sex, education, marital status, children, etc. The remainder of questions were open-ended and focused on educational structure and problems (Are educational facilities adequate where you teach, what are the major problems in your school, is transportation provided, what are the biggest obstacles in transportation, does your school offer lunch), student problems (What major problems do children face in your school, what is the biggest reason children miss school, are there certain seasons when truancy is higher, what are the most common reasons children drop out of school), government programs and job availability (Do government programs offered in your community help children stay in school, what types of jobs are available for children who graduate/do not graduate).

Based on convenience sampling, I administered questionnaire two to teachers from the interior and the town during interim educational meetings. Like questionnaire one, I chose the self-administered method for the same reasons, but unfortunately did not receive the same results. In total, the response rate was less than 24 percent. Only 14 questionnaires were returned with responses, the remainder were returned blank.

Questionnaire three (see Appendix C) was an attachment to a larger study conducted by Richard Pace and Conrad Kottak of which I was the lead research assistant in Gurupá, “The Evolution of Media Influence in Brazil: A Longitudinal and Multi-Sited Study of Electronic and Digital Media”. Questionnaire three had 25 questions that primarily focused on açai consumption (How often do you eat açai, how many liters of açai does your household consume daily, are there foods or beverages that cannot be consumed with açai, are there illnesses that prevent the safe consumption of açai) and açai availability and price (How much does one liter cost during harvest season, do you have problems finding açai to buy). Based on cluster sampling, in which the town was divided into sections and every third house was selected to

participate, questionnaire three was orally administered to adults 18 years of age and older in Gurupá only. I received a total of 78 responses.

Participatory Photo Interviews with children were an essential part of this research. Reflexive or participatory photo interviews help reduce power imbalances between the adult researcher and child participants by empowering children to make decisions in the research experience. Through photography, children independently and actively choose what images and scenes best reflect their lived experiences. This method invites child participants to take photographs of their daily lives and discuss their subjective meanings of each photo. Research shows that children find this type of interactive task-based activity, compared to “words alone” interview formats, more fun and engaging (Clark-Ibáñez 2004). It also elicits more in-depth comprehensive information. This methodology enhances children’s ability to communicate their own perspectives to the adult researcher and thus offers a more authentic understanding of children’s everyday lives as they are experienced in their work and school, as well as with their family, friends, and community (Hill 1997). The resulting photographs and narratives not only provide ethnographic data that is often difficult to access through traditional observation and interview methods alone, but in the process of doing so, also validates “children’s perspectives and voices, rather than through those of adults” (Jorgenson & Sullivan 2010:13). While this type of task-based activity has been shown to be more fun for children, it also engages children as active participants in the research process. Previous research suggests that this methodology enhances children’s ability to more effectively communicate their own perspectives to the adult researcher and offers a more authentic understanding of children’s lives as they are lived (Jorgenson & Sullivan 2010; Hill 1997).

Utilizing this methodology, participatory photo interviews were a crucial research tool, as it directly incorporated children into the research process, gave them decision-making power over their photos, and enabled them to “speak” through the resulting child-centered reflexive photo interviews. Over the course of eight months, a total of 15 child ‘researchers’ between 11-17 years old participated in this photo project, creating a total of 2174 images and 14 videos. There were a few children that were simply too young to receive cameras, but still wanted to participate in this visual project. Seven children between five and eight years old drew 11 pictures to represent their surroundings (see appendix).

When I first decided to try this methodological approach, I was unsure of the response that I would receive or even whether anyone would be interested in participating. I was overwhelmed at the level of interest and excitement in the project and during the initial phases I had to create a waiting list for later participants. I had six small digital Nikon cameras equipped with the largest memory cards that I could afford, so that participants could take as many pictures as they liked. I did not give any instructions to these ‘young researchers,’ as I called them, apart from a quick tutorial on how to use a camera, and this was only done after an awkward moment when handing the first participant her camera. Ignorantly, I assumed that in the digital age of cell phones and computers that most everyone in both communities appeared familiar with, that using a camera would not be anything new. However, upon seeing the confused look spread across this young girl’s face, I suddenly realized that many of the children that I was surrounded by daily had never used, much less even held a camera.

Aside from the camera tutorial, the only instructions given was that they were to take as many pictures as they liked of whatever they liked for the next week, and suggested daily activities or how they might explain their lives to someone not from their town as examples. I purposely did not tell them anything else, in an attempt not to sway their picture choices based

on my interests or research agenda, and to let them ‘speak’ through their own visual artifacts. While I could not financially compensate them for participating, I did arrange for each participant to receive a hard copy of each photo taken. Photos, however trivial they may have become in a digital First World country, are rare and valued possessions in these small communities.

There was a general disbelief from participants, their friends, and their families that anyone outside of the area would be interested or would want to learn more about their lived experiences. Nonetheless, the participants took their young researcher and photo-taking roles with the utmost enthusiasm and seriousness. One participant took more than 350 photos and several hours of video that ranged from typical household items to a community protest about education and a youth rally. There was also a general belief from most every adult, and some children, that I was *um pouco louca* (a little crazy) to entrust such expensive pieces of my research equipment to children. I simply explained to parents, teachers, and to the participants themselves that I trusted them, that what they had to say was important to me, and that I knew without a doubt that they would care for the equipment properly. I was not disappointed. Not a single camera was damaged during the project, except one that was dropped into the river (which I have almost done countless times) but was easily fixed. I did find it interesting that many of the adults questioned the children’s responsibility concerning the care and use of the cameras, but did not seem to think it anything out of the ordinary for these same children to care for infants, elderly family members, cook, clean, shop, or even have jobs outside of the home.

Once the young researcher returned the camera, I scheduled an interview time with them and loaded all images onto my laptop for review. During the interview, I proceeded chronologically through the images, asking questions about their content, why they took that particular image, etc. These images provided extensive details of daily life and provided information that I would never have had access to, or would have never thought to ask.

By giving these young researchers the chance ‘to speak’ through self-reflexive photography and subsequent narration of these visual artifacts, this dissertation includes their testimonies as real and meaningful evidence. This approach challenges traditional assumptions that view children as incompetent and inarticulate and thus allowed me to engage collaboratively with children to ask about their personal understandings of childhood, their own material and social circumstances, and their role in and contributions to açaí production.

CHAPTER 4

THE CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION OF CHILDHOOD AND CHILD LABOR

What constitutes a child and childhood? The ideal that come to dominate in policy making and in the attitudes and discourses of cosmopolitan publics worldwide views a child as an incomplete or future adult with little personal or social autonomy, or an individual who is separate from adult life and responsibilities and limited to the spaces of school and home (Bluebond-Langer and Korbin 2007, James et al. 1998, Schwartzman 2001, Theis 2001, Wyness 2006). This categorization of childhood as a space separate from adulthood relegates children to the narrow confines of ‘adults in the making.’ It reinforces the idea that children are blank slates, ignoring their agency in decision-making and their ability to influence and change culture.

In contrast, in the anthropological literature which focuses on cross-cultural variations, there is no single universal childhood definition (Cunningham 1998, Lancy 2008, Levine 2007, Montgomery 2009, Nieuwenhuys 1996, Schwartzman 2001, James et. Al 1998) because concepts of ‘the child,’ ‘childhood,’ and by extension, ‘child labor,’ must be culturally contextualized. Robert LeVine (2007:247) points out:

The conditions and shape of childhood tend to vary in central tendency from one population to another, are sensitive to population-specific contexts, and are not comprehensible without detailed knowledge of the socially and culturally organized contexts that give them meaning.

Each definition, therefore, must be understood within its own specific sociohistorical framework, as history, class, culture, ethnicity, religion, gender, etc. all affect what it means to be a child and where, when, and how childhood takes place.

Historically in Western culture, perspectives defining children and childhood have evolved from attitudes that basically ignored children as a group in the past (Ariès 1962) to perspectives that institutionalize, medicalize, and psychologize them today. These changes cannot be explained by any particular transformation in the structure or function of the family, but more directly reflect changes in state policies regarding children which sought to shape and influence future generations of citizens through the control of where, when, and what children are permitted to do. These policies created the parameters of a normative childhood and stem (past and present) from North American and Western European core social values of independence, autonomy, self-control, and power. As a means to produce socially adept citizens, the state expected parents and families, to exercise through restraint and control over their children, not permitting them to act autonomously or as individuals until they themselves became adults.

Philippe Ariès and His Critics

In 1960, Philippe Ariès published *L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'ancien régime* (translated and published in 1962 as *Centuries of Childhood*), which examined children's representations and experiences through history. His main premise revolved around the idea that

the concept of “childhood had a history: that over time and in different cultures, both ideas about childhood and the experience of being a child had changed” (Cunningham 1998). Ariès identified a fundamental break between the medieval and early modern periods in Europe. He emphasized that “in medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist;” there was a lack of “awareness of the particular nature of children” that distinguished them from adults (Ariès 1962:125). Children under the age of seven “did not count” but henceforth fully participated in adult life (Wilson 1980:139). It was only after the beginning of the 17th Century that more contemporary attitudes about children emerged. Children’s place in society changed from a position to which adults were largely indifferent to one that separated them from adult roles and responsibilities and brought “outside management” by teachers, health professionals, and other adults in matters concerning health and hygiene (Wilson 1980).

While Ariès’ study was seen as groundbreaking at the time and is still required reading for students today, critics have questioned his methodology and conclusions. The most common critique of Ariès’ work comes from his choice of data that focused on the elite sector of society, which was not representative of most families or children at the time. He primarily relied on pictorial evidence found in “illustrations of family in art” and “detailed exposition of manuals of etiquette” (Wilson 1980:137). Because these sources were traditionally middle and upper-class luxuries, the analysis excluded the poor and peasant classes, as nearly all impoverished people would have found it financially impossible to commission works of art or write their experiences due to high rates of illiteracy.

Several studies of the same era suggest that the poor and peasant classes did conceptualize children differently than the upper and elite class perspective, not necessarily because they wanted to but because they had to. For example, Hunecke Volker (1994), Claudia Goldin and Donald Parsons (1989), and Michael Haines (1979) examined institutional records from churches, orphanages, etc., places where children were commonly cared for upon abandonment due to poverty or death of parents, and linked poor and peasant family survival mechanisms with these facilities. Because the number of children in a poor family often caused a great burden on the family economy, something the upper classes rarely had to consider, families relied on these facilities to ease their financial burden by abandoning the youngest, and most financially dependent. Data suggests that abandonment of young children was not uncommon and was used as a means of family survival. Hugh Cunningham (1998:1204) suggests, “the extent of abandonment is such that it raises fundamental questions about the value, both emotional and economic, placed on children.” While Cunningham brings forth a critical point, one must consider the larger implications of abandonment. It is highly unlikely that a family’s decision to place any of their children into the care of others was done erratically or with selfish intentions, especially considering that the survival of the entire family, including the ones given up to institutions, depended upon this action. One might suggest that if families placed no value or emotions on their youngest children, records of infanticide would be more telling and parental underinvestment in the remaining children would be more evident in the records.

The Crisis of Childhood

As the ideas and views held about children move toward a more individual existence with rights and responsibilities, this freedom comes with a price. Through the centuries, childhood and children themselves represented a sort of liminal stage in the life cycle, leading many to believe that it was a dangerous period of development. Throughout the sixteenth century and

beyond, children were thought susceptible to evil, had little resolve, and were easily corrupted (James, Jenks, and Prout 1998). These notions continued and “since the middle of the nineteenth century there have been recurring fears about young people being out of control, complaints about binge drinking, criminality and moral degeneration” (Wyness 2006:76). As a result, children are increasingly monitored in order to “contain the threat that unsupervised groups of children and young people are thought potentially to pose” (James, Jenks, and Prout 1998:7).

A major fear produced by the ‘evil’ or deviant child is that it threatens adult stability and challenges the established social order. Before the 20th century, delinquent or ‘bad’ children did not necessarily reflect poorly upon the parent. These children were “seen as a misfortune and the parent deserving sympathy” (Harris 1983:240). Nowadays, society views parents of ‘bad’ children as having some type of character defect, blaming them for actions taken by their children. Some countries, such as Wales and England, have laws in which parents are held responsible for their children’s misdemeanors and face punishments right along with their children (Wyness 2006, 2014). In this, parents must not only care for children’s primal needs, but “they must also bring up children who fit into society and can become active members within it,” as part of the social reproduction process (Montgomery 2009:106).

Normative middle class and elite conceptions and constructs of ‘the child’ and childhood are rooted in sociopolitical ideas that hold the state, the family, and the education system responsible for creating a future adult who will comply with and fit into the established social order. Through laws, discipline, and punishment there is little room for child autonomy, much less the autonomy of parents in relation to their children. If parents do not comply with state laws, such as enforcing school attendance or allowing indulgence in prohibited adult activities, then the state has the power to override paternal rights and can remove their children from the home temporarily or permanently. When so much is at stake, parents have little choice but to acquiesce to state control of their children.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this model of responsibility often formed combative relationships between parents and children that resembled the ‘breaking’ of wild animals. Parents had to “control and constrain” through not sparing the rod in order to “‘save’” children from themselves and their potential to be corrupted (James, Jenks, and Prout 1998:12). While such punishments appear excessive and are less common today, we still find “similar politics of restraint” in the use of boot camps and reform schools, which parents sometimes choose or to which they may be forced to send their children (James, Jenks, and Prout 1998:13).

Michel Foucault’s discussion of discipline and punishment suggests that “the correct training of children is held to give rise to docile adult bodies. Docile bodies are good citizens, pliant members of the social order and, within this classical model, the child’s body becomes the primary site of childhood” (James, Jenks, and Prout 1998:10). Children who fall outside these docile lines, such as those who challenge rules, are delinquent, or ignore structural or generational hierarchies and thus constitute a social and moral threat. Only through protection, correction, and education can these deviant children be brought back to the correct moral order (Wyness 2006).

Child criminals provide an example. Currently, “child criminals are treated by the police and the courts as responsible agents” while at the same time UNCRC deems a person who is under the age of 18 a child and not fully responsible (Wyness 2006:107). There appears to be a bias in the treatment of children who disrupt the set order of society and act with agency (often using poor judgment or committing crimes), in contrast to those who comply to and do not challenge authority and remain within the controlled parameters of the education systems, state

systems, and family systems. Child criminals are increasingly held to an adult status when tried in a court for their crimes in order to get harsher (longer) prison sentences, but at the same time they are denied adult status in every other aspect of life. In effect, “the powerful ogre of the state or the parent is omnipotent and the individual is ‘saved’ from the worst excesses of himself or herself by contracting into the society or the family. Without parental constraint, the life of the child is anarchistic” and must be controlled (James, Jenks, and Prout 1998:11).

The Privatization of Childhood

Childhood historically did not occur behind doors and in closed spaces. It was in the streets, out in the open, and visible for all to see. Around the nineteenth century, ideas regarding children and their ‘need’ to be protected both morally and physically from outside dangers developed in correlation with changes in family structure and state responsibility. Children’s moral and social development became the direct responsibility of parents and was in “the general and collective interests of the state” for their wellbeing due to children’s potential as a future generation (Wyness 2006:97). In a sense, children were being domesticated and ‘psychologized’ into a moral family structure enforced through state measures.

Women, in particular, shouldered more of the responsibility for fostering the ‘morality’ of their children than others in the family. Through different economic, political, and moral forces, society expected mothers to produce a prolonged childhood protected from adult worries of politics, employment, and responsibility regardless of the mothers’ own socioeconomic circumstances (Wyness 2006:97). Children, it was thought, were so susceptible to corruption and immorality that measures to ensure their wellbeing required boundaries to determine proper and improper spaces for children. Boundaries created physical, moral, and conceptual control of children through a gerontocratic hegemony “policed by discipline and legitimized through ideologies of care, protection, and privacy” (James, Jenks, and Prout 1998:38). Through this, children’s access to the community and to the adult population was limited (Wyness 2006).

Compulsory education became one of two acceptable spaces for children, the other being the space of the family. This ideal removed children from workspaces and from the street. Ariès (1962:169) suggests that “the need to isolate, protect, and discipline children was apparent in the ways that schools and classrooms were physically segregated from the rest of the community.” Compulsory education also changed the former family economy, which relied on children’s physical and economic contributions, and allowed the state to “impose middle-class standards of speech, dress, deportment, and civilization” on children by controlling their time and access to spaces beyond the home and the school (Cunningham 1998:1201). As a result of these changes, children became both an economic liability as well as emotionally invaluable to families. Clearly, education was multipurpose and served as a means to control children’s whereabouts, how they spent their time, and as a means to instill world-views that represented larger state and cultural ideas.

Nikolas Rose (1989) suggests that the organized practices placed on children, such as the curriculum in compulsory education and the control of children’s spaces, are an example of Foucault’s concept of governmentality. The state needed to ensure that it produced ‘future generations’ that reflected social and political policies and did so through the rigorous control of children.

Childhood is the most intensively governed sector of personal existence. In different ways, at different times, and by many different routes vary from one

section of society to another, the health, welfare, and rearing of children have been linked in thought and practice to the destiny of the nation and the responsibilities of the state. The modern child has become the focus of innumerable projects that purport to safeguard it from physical, sexual and moral danger, to ensure its 'normal' development, to actively promote certain capacities of attributes such as intelligence, educability and emotional stability (Rose 1989:121).

As a means of controlling knowledge through selection of what is and is not taught, the educational curriculum promotes ideas and "assumptions about how people (that is, largely children)" 'should be' (James, Jenks, and Prout 1998:42). Through the "replication and repetition in paradigmatic styles," it allowed "the control of others through the constitution of the child's body and consciousness into the form of an educational identity" (James, Jenks, and Prout 1998:42). In Marxist terms, education fosters children as future members of a class system that will reproduce itself, keeping them in their social and economic place (Wyness 2006).

The curriculum also equated children and childhood with a state of ignorance, dismissing all previous knowledge learned from family, friends, and life experiences, like a 'blank slate', creating a hierarchy of knowledge and a hierarchy of peers through the design of age/grade progression (Wyness 2006). Children's identities became 'future oriented' as adults and citizens in the making, meaning that they grew less ignorant as they moved through the hierarchical structures toward adulthood. Through these ideals, adults and the state viewed children as a collective to be acted upon and molded, which removed personal autonomy and choice in much of their daily lives.

More recently, during the last half of the twentieth century, children have come to be viewed as individuals with agency and the capability to not only be shaped, but also to shape the society around them. No longer viewed as a singular collective in some senses, children are now seen as individuals with legal rights and responsibilities. Elisabet Näsman (1994: 167) refers to these changes as the "individualization of children" which reflects the current "logic of the modern state." This does not mean that the single individual or his/her 'individuality' is unique, but serves to ensure that everyone, including children, "has the same rights and obligations and to make control and support more efficient" (Pramanik 2007:27).

Children are identified, registered, evaluated and treated as individuals in some context as adult citizens but in others not. One could say that children are historically at the beginning of a process towards individualization where men have long had an established position and women have achieved one during the end of the last century and have made increasing gains during the present century (Näsman 1994:167).

Children now have some voice in defining "their best interests" and they are no longer hidden within the structures of the family or of the institution (James, Jenks, and Prout 1998:7). Age constructions once used as determinates of childhood, such as the universalizing age range set forth by the UNCRC or the age/grade hierarchy in education, no longer diminishes a child's right to be heard, "their developmental capacity to understand their situation and to form a meaningful opinion" now must be taken into account (James, Jenks, and Prout 1998:7). Although compulsory education and state policies still control much of what children do, and

parents are still responsible for their implementation, children have gained some voice in society and are no longer viewed simply as adult ‘becomings’.

Dichotomizing Childhood and Adulthood in the West

In defining the child, we must consider childhood and adulthood as dichotomous. As discussed earlier, childhood is regulated and controlled through various entities, all of which are occupied by adults. In this sense, adults have power and authority over children, which are largely one-sided, and the physical access that adults have to children is mostly taken for granted and unreciprocated (Wyness 2006). For example, adults have the power to exercise punishments and restraint over children while children have little recourse in terms of protest or refusal. Children have limited access to rights and “are subject to more legal controls” in such ways that adults are not (Wyness 2006:31). Debbie Epstein (1993:321) points out that childhood as a status is a very “lowly one,” registering lower than most minority groups or social classes.

Take one example: the frequency with which children are touched by adults. The amount of unsolicited physical contact people receive is a good indication of relative social positions. It has been observed that bosses touch workers, men touch women and adults touch children much more than the other way around. To touch one’s social superior without good reason is an act of subordination. Think how frequently children are shaken off when they use touch to attract an adult’s attention, and how that same adult can freely take hold of the child, adjust his or her hair, or cut short his or her activities (Epstein 1993:321).

Another indication of difference is the way in which children are regulated by age and most adults are not. For example, adults have more freedom in choosing how they spend their time while they simultaneously control how the children around them spend their time (Wyness 2006). Issues of age regulation is often a means of discrimination and way to maintain control over children in the adult world. Specifically, the state denies children fundamental rights like voting and elections as well as denying them access to ‘adult’ permitted activities like having sex, smoking, and consuming alcoholic beverages based on an age definition of adulthood. Näsman (1994:169) suggests that ‘child’ synonyms (minor, under-age, etc.) point to the “generally subordinate position of children, young age bearing a negative symbolic value.”

As Sherry Ortner (1972:1) states, it is a “true universal, a pan-cultural fact” that children are secondary to adults. In children’s secondary status, they are seen closer to nature due to their undisciplined and innocent state whereas adults are closer to culture (Wyness 2006). It is only through disciplinary structures, classrooms, and domestication do children gradually become more ‘cultured,’ meaning more adult-like and capable of handling the responsibilities and privileges granted to adults.

UNCRC

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) currently plays a significant role in defining ‘the child’ as an “individual, autonomous being” and an inheritor of the liberal, humanist ideals that stem from the Enlightenment, a view which has caused problems for universal interpretation and implementation” (Montgomery 2009:6). In 1989, in an international rights treaty, the UNCRC declared that the universal period to be a child is from birth through the age of 18 (Montgomery 2008). Fifty-four legally binding articles outlined

goals dedicated to protecting the child and promoting rights in areas of health, education, nationality, and within the family itself. Because the UNCRC places age and space restrictions on children, one can argue that the notion of 'child' promoted by the UNCRC is based on elite notions and understandings. Within these guidelines, children are allowed only two acceptable places to occupy during childhood, at home or at school.

Ideals set forth in the UNCRC reflect historical trends of managing children and placing them into specific categories and acceptable spaces, which most often reflected elite and middle-class standards. During the late 19th century and early 20th century childhood as a period in life expanded to encompass more time than once previously accepted. Compulsory education played a large part in extending childhood, as the age for leaving school steadily increased, keeping children dependent and unproductive for longer periods of time (Cunningham 1998). Other measures, such as a separate justice system and distinct age laws for things like marriage, drinking alcohol, and smoking tobacco restricted children's autonomy and kept them under the watchful eye of not only their families, but of the state.

These restrictions, while seemingly well-intentioned, regulated family life and changed the existing family economy among the working class and poor, deeming it unacceptable for children to contribute to family subsistence (Cunningham 1998). Children's proper place as seen through state law and compulsory education was now one of dependence and passivity. These ideals, however, lack cultural relativity and ignore the daily reality lived by the majority of families across the globe, past and present. They stigmatize the poor who rely on the work of their children for basic survival and fail to understand the extreme impact that poverty and inequality have on parents' decision-making concerning their children (Hendrickson 2006).

Contradictions of Child Labor: International Debate and Situated Realities

As with childhood, definitions of child labor are problematic. In my review of the literature, I found no agreed upon definition because social expectations vary within and between different cultures. Middle- and upper-class ideals typically hold that children who work have no real childhood and as a consequence, have lost their innocence. For example, ILO-IPEC (2003:3) defines child labor as:

Work situations where children are compelled to work on a regular basis to earn a living for themselves and their families, and as a result are disadvantaged educationally and socially; where children work in conditions that are exploitative and damaging to their health and to their physical and mental development; where children are separated from their families, often deprived of educational and training opportunities; where children are forced to lead prematurely adult lives.

In another view, Eric Edmonds (2002) states that child labor exists if the child works for seven or more hours per week in the home, one or more hours per week in agriculture, for a wage, in the family business, or as a domestic servant. Edmonds goes on to argue that child labor includes any work that impairs a child's physical and/or mental development and wellbeing. In yet another variation, Olga Nieuwenhuys (1996:27) maintains that child labor is "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." Within her definition she is not only referring to the exploitative work performed by children, but also incorporates

many activities that are often overlooked and undervalued when performed by children, such as child minding and domestic work.

Finally, the government of Brazil defines child labor, as established in article 227 of the 1988 Constitution, as any work, paid or unpaid, for one or more hours per week and any type of labor is considered illegal if the child is under the age of 14 (Gustafsson-Wright and Pyne 2002). Brazil allows for exceptions to this law by allowing children 12 and over to work if it is considered a regulated apprenticeship, or if a judge has authorized a child to work.

There are problems with each of these definitions. For example, the ILO statement has such vague boundaries that much is left open for interpretation. Although it is complete in terms of defining the situations to be considered child labor, it outlines no time limits or age structure to which it should apply (Hendrickson 2006). Edmonds' definition is also problematic because it is too restrictive, allowing only one hour per week for agricultural work. One hour is not a realistic time allotment given the requirements of daily life and the types of chores that are considered normal or typical for children raised in agricultural settings. Nieuwenhuys (1996:27) argues that many child labor definitions, such as these above, are too restrictive and often convey an image of "an abstract and sexually neutral child doing economically valued but undesirable work." The Brazilian government's definition is also too restrictive because it considers all and any type of work for children under the age of 14, unless authorized by a judge, to be a crime punishable through a variety of penalties depending on the severity of violation and only allots one hour per week of work for children until the age of 18. Because of these types of difficulties, there is still no agreed upon universal standard to define child labor found in the literature. This creates significant problems for academics and organizations that struggle to determine what really constitutes child labor when activities are not obviously exploitative (Hendrickson 2006).

Another issue that emerges in defining child labor is how to incorporate unpaid household services (UHS) that may jeopardize a child's health, education, or moral development. Unpaid household services are defined by six categories: shopping and errands; cooking; cleaning; laundry; caring for younger, elderly, or disabled members of the household; and other activities which includes household repairs, and depending on the country, fetching water and collecting firewood (Dayioglu 2013). Most of this type of work, which is often repetitive, time consuming, and unending, is performed by girls (and women) based on a patriarchal sexual division of labor within the household that leaves many females throughout the world economically dependent upon the males within their household (see Heidi Hartmann 1981). In addition, this unremunerated labor is rarely valued as authentic work, but instead viewed as a dedication to family and training for a young girl's future role in her own household. This view is reinforced based on the lack of "international instruments [that] exist to collect data on health risks associated with performing household chores." Studies that collect data on children's labor contributions in economic work and UHS in relation to their health and education are extremely rare (Dayioglu 2013:2). The only agreed upon or commonly used threshold is based on an hourly limit of 28 hours or more per week for all age groups, which is extremely difficult to assess based on the private sector in which these unpaid household services are performed.

Type of work and frequency aside, child labor definitions are often based on middle class and elite norms. This is particularly problematic considering that these culturally bound definitions are used to create international policies and interventions concerning children and their work contributions. While reviewing the literature on childhood and child labor, I also reviewed intervention policy literature from many different organizations associated with child

labor. I found that much of the literature was similar in terms of suggested interventions, but it appeared that without an in-depth cultural understanding of a particular region, especially one such as the Amazon, intervention policies could possibly do more damage than good (Hendrickson 2006).

Nieuwenhuys (1996) points out that organizations such as the ILO, UNICEF, the World Health Organization (WHO), as well as the Defense of Children International, Save the Children, and Anti-Slavery International all present similar views on child labor and intervention. She writes that publications from these groups have “a moral preoccupation with abolition through legislation and a zealous belief in the desirability of extending Western childhood ideals to poor families worldwide” (Nieuwenhuys 1996:241). Considering that many of these organizations are prominent in forming and/or enacting intervention policies, one can question the ethical implications of applying Westernized views (Hendrickson 2006). The ILO (2002:1) points out that in the past, many countries were hesitant to admit that child labor existed “within their borders for fear of negative international reaction, including possible trade sanctions.” Nieuwenhuys adds that “international agencies and highly industrialized countries” use modernity as a yardstick by which to condemn countries with a high incidence of child labor as being “backward and undemocratic” (1996:246). In addition, the advocates of child labor often misinterpret the lives of the children that they are trying by judging them according to middle- or upper-class attitudes which view children who work as abnormal. Often, the campaigners for children’s welfare have no conception of a child’s reality and view all child labor as a moral evil in need of being eradicated and banned through legislation (Green 1999).

Over the years, many NGOs and government agencies have published reports and pamphlets about child labor, complete with graphic images of children working. The typical image portrayed in the literature is of young children slaving away in factories, often for international export. In actuality, factory work represents only a small percentage of child labor. A study conducted by UNICEF in 1999 and 2000 found that less than 3% of children work outside of their household (Edmonds 2002). The ILO estimates that there are approximately 250 million children working full or part-time in developing countries and of these, most are working for their own families, performing household duties and assisting with a family farm or business (Bachman 2000; Edmonds 2002).

Child Labor: The Brazilian Case

Reports from Brazil estimate that there are four and a half million working children, ages five to 15 years old. This is nearly 12 percent of the total population for this age group (Kassouf, Dorman, and Nunes de Aleida 2000). Between 2000 and 2010, according to the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE) (2014), child labor rates fell 13.44% and saw the highest declines among child workers between 10-17 years old. In 2000, there were 3.94 million child laborers over the age of 10. By 2010, that number fell to 3.4 million. However, in these observations, there was a 1.56 percent growth of child laborers 10-13 years old during the same years. The most growth, a full one percent, was found in the North, where child laborers represent a total of 27.5 percent of all child labors in the country. The Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílio (Pnad) (2014) showed that from 2013 to 2014 there was a 9.3 percent growth of child workers between 5-13 years old, especially in the agriculture sector, where 62.1 percent of the employed children in this age group work. In 2014, there were more than a half a million child laborers five to 13 years old, almost 100,000 of those workers were between the ages of five and nine years old (Caoli 2015). In recent studies, children who worked between the

ages of 10-13 were at most educational risk, as they had finished elementary school and would not return to complete middle school the following year, or would drop out regardless of grade level (G1 2012).

Gender plays a significant role in how and where children work. Current data show that one out of every two girls works for her family on an unpaid basis (Salazar and Glasinovich 1998). In urban areas, typical work for boys includes shining shoes, selling newspapers, hauling garbage, and performing a multitude of other activities (Hecht 1998). Typical child work reported in rural areas includes collection/production of charcoal, vegetable products, horticultural products, fish, wood, and mining (Gustafsson-Wright and Pyne 2002).

Brazil has institutional mechanisms in place to enforce child labor laws and regulations, as well as committees and programs that seek to eliminate or prevent child labor. As of 2015 there were eight different organizations/agencies responsible for child labor law enforcement, eight different national committees in place to coordinate governmental efforts on child labor, 14 different policies related to child labor – including its worst forms, and 12 different government funded social programs to eliminate or prevent child labor (Bureau of International Labor Affairs 2015:3-8). One might question how so many children continue to work in Brazil when there are countless laws, policies, and preventions in place to monitor and control child labor. The ILO suggests that because there is a shortage of labor inspectors and too few inspections, child labor continues (1988). The Bureau of International Labor Affairs (2015:5) cites the judicial system because it does not “adequately hold perpetrators of child labor law violations accountable, which may lead to a sense of impunity among violators,” as well as corruption among governmental officials. However, if many of the child labor laws were applied as written, many families would suffer greatly. Children work because their families need their assistance to live. In particular, Brazilian child labor laws do not reflect the reality of daily life in Brazil, especially in the North.

CHAPTER 5

THE MORAL ECONOMY OF AÇAÍ

Quem vai ao Pará parou, tomou açaí ficou!
(Musica Carimbó – Pinduca)

Açaí consumption has a long history in the Amazon estuary dating back to pre-Columbian times (Brondízio 2009; McCann 1999; Padilha et al. 2002; Roosevelt et al. 1996). Since the 17th century, rural riverine peoples have relied on the açaí palm not only as a source of sustenance, but also as a source of raw materials for buildings and tools and for medicinal purposes. Over the centuries the plant has proven a reliable economic resource in both times of abundance and crisis (Brondízio 2009). Açaí's cultural and dietary significance are celebrated through Amazonian folklore, songs, and poetry, as well as annual açaí festivals held during the *safra* (harvest season) throughout the Marajó region. In the last 25 years, due to increased regional, national, and now international demand, açaí has become one of the most economically important commodities coming from the Amazon estuary (Brondízio, Safar, and Siqueira 2002). Brondízio (2009:167) suggests that due to the açaí palm's "domestic, regional, industrial, and export uses, [it] is the most important estuarine species, and indeed one of the most economically significant of all 232 Brazilian palm species."

Today the Marajó region is the largest producer of açaí in the world, and the states of Pará and Amapá are responsible for 80% of total production (Instituto Peabiru 2016; Sanchez 2010), and accounts for 98.3% of the national output (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística [IBGE] 2017). In 2009, the IBGE recorded a production value of açaí near R\$161 million (\$70 million) and by 2017 the production value more than tripled to nearly R\$600 million (\$154 million) (IBGE 2017). It would stand to reason, therefore, that the dramatic growth of national and international açaí demand would benefit local Amazonian economies and boost household incomes. However, economic research in the region suggests that this is not necessarily the case. Revenues generated from açaí production have done little to improve major socioeconomic problems or access to social services (education, health, job creation, etc.) in producing communities. This is in part due to the reallocation of profits in the commodity chain. Profits that once came from the local level of production are now concentrated at the higher end of the chain, impacting rural small farmers' earnings throughout the region (Brondízio 2009).

Profits [have] shifted in favor of the processing and export sectors, particularly, the transformation industry that controls storage and aggregation of value to derived products. While producers maintain a secure market, particularly in the northern region, profit opportunities narrow and harvesting decisions, negotiations with middlemen and brokers, and transportation costs play a greater role in economic return for the producer. The 'bottleneck' of infrastructure (on a basic level, storage and transportation; at an advanced level, access to processing, industrial transformation, and retailing) constrains the participation of producers

in the most profitable sectors of a booming economy based on the expansion of the national and international consumption bases (Brondízio 2009:274).

These constraints also affect municipalities as a whole, as a large portion of açaí extraction is based on untaxed informal economic arrangements, giving the state little opportunity to send tax revenue back to the producing communities.

At the most basic level, family-based producers sacrifice much to gain small profits in a booming commodity trade. Current research (Brondízio 2009, Oliveira et al. 2011, Instituto Peabiru 2016) found that açaí production in the Marajó region derives primarily from small family farms, requiring all able-bodied members to contribute in extraction activities, including children as young as six years old. Due to the seasonality of the açaí safra, with peak harvest ranging between August and November, families must concentrate work efforts in order to maximize earnings, postponing normal daily routines, including children's school attendance and related activities (See Chapter 7 for discussion on children's participation in the açaí commodity chain).

The IBGE estimates that there are approximately 118,000 producers of açaí with around 200 thousand tons of açaí pulp produced annually in the states of Pará and Amapá (Instituto Peabiru 2016). However, according to Instituto Peabiru (2016), these numbers are superficial and do not accurately represent the total labor employed, as IBGE "only verifies the amount in hectares of crops and producers" and does not include family farming and other links in the processing chain (16). In a study of açaí production in Currálinho, findings suggest a huge distortion in official data.

In preliminary studies, Instituto Peabiru identified that the local production [of açaí] during the safra would be around ten thousand baskets per day. If only three days of production took place per week, during the four months of peak harvest, only for the Canaticu River [in Currálinho], the production would equal 6,720 tons of açaí fruit, which would generate the value of R\$24.86 million [\$10.8 million]. It should be remembered that Currálinho has other producing regions, which would certainly double this value. Thus, if the official data of R\$2.95 million [\$1.28 million] were compared with the data of only one [large producing] river in Currálinho, there would be a significant difference [in official data] (Instituto Peabiru 2016:35).

Prices received per basket depend on the current market value, type/quality, and destination, ranging between R\$20-60 during the *entressafra* (off season) (January – June) and R\$6-8 during the safra (July-December) (Oliveira et al. 2011). During the *entressafra*, families who produce açaí often reduce their own consumption of the staple food due to the high sale price it can bring created by the diminished availability throughout the Marajó region. This is a significant point, as these off-season sales coincide with the reduction of available traditional food sources that occur during the rainy season (less fish, for example) and possibly affects the nutritional status of producer families.

In order to gain a more in-depth local perspective on the impacts of the açaí boom in Currálinho and Gurupá, I focused on three broad areas of inquiry that repeatedly came up in nearly every interview and conversation about açaí: consumption, infrastructure, and intermediaries.

Consumption

Açaí is an important regional food source for both rural and urban Amazonia. Nutritionally rich, açaí is a good source of fat, protein, fiber, potassium, antioxidants, E and B vitamins, and minerals like copper, chromium, and manganese (Leite and Mochiutti 2001; Rogez 2000). In the state of Pará, consumption estimates during the 2006 safra exceeded 300,000 liters/day of açaí (Guimarães 2006; Rüginitz 2007). However, earlier studies from the late 1990s found much higher consumption rates, estimating that Pará's capital city of Belém alone consumed more than 400,000 liters/day, or more than 60 liters per person annually (Mourão 1999; Rogez 2000). For the urban poor, açaí is a major source caloric intake, with consumption rates more than twice that of milk (Brondízio 2009, Rogez 2000, Murrieta et al. 1999). Without question, açaí consumption rates have grown dramatically since these previous estimates, as hygiene, presentation, and product quality control procedures have been put in place, appealing to new urban middle and upper-class consumers (Melo et al. 2003; Rüginitz 2007).

Image 1. Manual Açaí Extractor Machine



Source: Monte Talley

Image 2. Manual Açaí Extractor Machine



Source: Monte Talley

For ribeirinhos, açaí is a key staple food and consider no major meal complete without it. Everyday families either extract açaí from the forest or purchase the berries in baskets and then using an electric or manual extractor machine (See Images 1 & 2) the mesocarp (rind) of the berry is removed from the seed and simultaneously mixed with water, which forms the fruit into a thick puddinglike porridge called *vinho* (literally wine, but referencing juice). The transformed açaí is served cold, mixed with *farinha* (toasted manioc) and sometimes sugar, at lunch and dinner alongside fish, shrimp, or some type of meat (See Images 3 & 4). There is never any variation in how açaí is served and any addition of fruits, granola, etc. is seen not only as blasphemy, but potentially dangerous. Throughout my time in the Amazon, I encountered countless cultural beliefs in which a large array of fruits (mango, banana, watermelon, cupuaçu, passion fruit, orange) and drinks (cachaça or any alcoholic beverage, lemonade) that should never be consumed with açaí or severe illness/death could occur. Traditional daily consumers also often identified others based on how they ate açaí. For example, if sugar is added, they are Paraense (person of the state), if they do not add sugar, they are Marajoara (person of the pre-Columbian Marajó culture). I never tired of one particular situation that nearly always arose when I ate açaí with new people, as I prefer it without sugar. My hosts would always hand me the sugar container so that I could add it to my bowl, upon which I would say, “sou Marajoara”

(I am Marajoara). Anyone within earshot of me saying this would erupt into howling laughter (often easing the tension of my presence), but the sugar container was quickly retracted with no more explanation needed.

Image 3. Typical Meal – Açaí, Farinha, & Fried Fish



Source: Monte Talley

Image 4. Typical Meal - Açaí, Farinha, Beans, & Rice



Source: Monte Talley

Açaí is a food that is steeped in cultural meaning and greatly valued by its traditional consumers. As açaí passes from one cultural setting to the next, it is creolized, or packed with symbolic meanings that are manifested differently (Freidberg 2004, Stehr 2008). For example, middle and upper-class Brazilians, in the Amazon region and beyond, consume açaí as a type of dessert, transforming the traditional staple or ‘poor’ food into luxury foods like ice cream, pudding, cake, and liquor (Brondízio 2009). In the South of Brazil, it is mixed with guarana (*Paullinia cupana*, a stimulant herb native to the Amazon basin) and used as an energy drink. Since 2011, of the new foods introduced to the world market containing açaí, “22% are represented by juices, 12% energy and sports drinks, 9% snacks, 7% desserts and ice cream, 5% in milk category, and 3% in sweets and candy. The majority of these products were introduced in the United States (30%), Brazil (19%), and Canada (8%)” (Bezerra, Freitas-Silva, & Damasceno 2016:19). By the time açaí reaches international consumers in the varied forms of diet drinks, juice, yogurt, additives in soaps and shampoos, and flavored beer, it becomes “a symbol of health, environmentalism, and social wit” (Brondízio 2009:166).

Besides its healthy and invigorating qualities, the “fetish” of açaí fruit consumption includes elements of rainforest conservation, respect for indigenous causes and products, and representing an icon of the sustainable development agenda proposing alternative forms of land use for Amazônia. Taste and consumption of açaí in new markets embeds all these meanings, while in the region where it is praised as the daily bread, the external outlook of açaí fruit has led it to become revered as a symbol of cultural identity and proud regionalism. It is essentialized as a symbol of the state, local communities, and of regional corporations (Brondízio 2009:166).

The local and regional meanings of açaí are exemplified by the saying at the beginning of this chapter which can be heard and seen throughout the state of Pará: Quem vai ao Pará, parou,

tomou açaí, ficou! It roughly translates to mean that those who go to Pará never want to leave, once they eat açaí, they never do. Açaí is a source of pride for the region, especially now that it is known worldwide. However, the meanings ascribed by national and international consumers, discussed above, obscure the negatives involved in açaí production (Cook and Crang 1996) including, but not limited to, high extreme poverty rates in producing communities, unequal profit returns for harvesters, and the hidden role of child labor in the extraction process.

Research in this region indicates that while some rural families benefit financially from the growing export demand of açaí, for many others it has negative effects due to a reduction in the availability and affordability (Brondízio 2009; Brondízio, Safar, and Siqueira 2002; Instituto Peabiru 2016, Oliveira 2011). My research corroborates this observation, as many families that I spoke with about their açaí consumption habits explained that when it is unavailable (entressafra or sold out) or too expensive, the family table is “*triste*” (sad), and children often refuse to eat anything else when it is not part of the meal. There was also a large number of people that I spoke with in Currálinho, Gurupá, and Belém that have completely stopped eating açaí, except for special occasions, due to the dramatic price increase over the last 10 years.

Since 2008, both Gurupá and Currálinho’s açaí production for export has grown rapidly, while simultaneously reducing local availability and increasing prices by more than 80%. A typical family of four consumes an average of one liter per day. Eight years ago, one liter of high quality açaí (açaí grosso) sold for R\$1.50-2 per liter, equaling an average monthly açaí expenditure of no more than R\$60. Today, one liter of the same quality açaí sells for no less than R\$8, skyrocketing the monthly minimum expenditure to R\$240! In 2013, a single liter of high quality açaí, during the safra, specifically in Belém markets frequented by tourists, often sold for as much as R\$25. Today, that is the average price (R\$16-25) in non-tourist markets. With Brazil’s current monthly minimum wage of R\$937 (US\$287.89), açaí is now a luxury export food out of reach for many of its traditional consumers. As a result, the traditional ribeirinho diet has changed dramatically in a short amount of time. While health impacts from changes in the traditional açaí diet is not the focus of this project, it should be noted that there are few alternatives available to traditional consumers that provide similar nutritional and health benefits like those found in açaí.

In order to understand how the rising price of açaí affects families’ traditional consumption habits, I asked people in Currálinho and Gurupá about eating açaí during almost every conversation throughout my fieldwork. During a semi-formal interview with Nuno, 52-year-old artisanal açaí processor and vendor in Gurupá, I asked him how the increasingly high prices affected his business and families that could not afford to purchase açaí every day. He explained:

It’s difficult, because açaí is a type of vice. Even when the prices are high, people will continue to buy it, they are accustomed to eating it, like an addiction. When they do not have any money they suffer a lot, because they have to go without it...and adults, they understand that they can’t have it, but children, they don’t understand. They are accustomed to eating it and if they can’t, some children refuse to eat. I have a small child, and he won’t eat a thing if he doesn’t have açaí...not one little thing!

Nuno continued, explaining that his business had not been affected by the rising prices and sales were good. During my fieldwork, I purchased açaí from his restaurant almost daily, as he had the best açaí in Gurupá. I used the opportunity to ask him and other family members about the

change in prices and availability. In one conversation, I asked Nuno how he came to process and sell açai for a living. He told me that he originally had no intention of it at all, but he started making it for his family because of shortages in town and the poor quality of what was available. Slowly, word spread and he began selling small amounts to others. After that, he realized that he could make a good living and provide for his family making something that he loved. Business has boomed and Nuno and his family now process an average of 23 baskets (100-120 liters) of açai every day, selling each liter for an average of R\$8. He said that he knows others in town sell it for less, but it is not nearly the same quality as his.

I asked Nuno about açai shortages in town, as I had heard constant complaints from people not being able to find it to purchase. How was a shortage of açai even possible in a place like Gurupá, where it grows without assistance on nearly every shoreline? He explained that Gurupá sometimes does not have much açai because it is being sold to other places for export.

Gurupá is practically an *açaizeiro* [all açai trees], but there are so many buyers [intermediaries] who come through the municipality to purchase açai for companies in other cities, it never makes it to our town. In Belém there are more than 30 factories that make açai pulp, Macapá has four, Breves has one. There is one that is so big that a major portion of our açai goes there...they process 12,000 baskets of açai a day! This is all for export, to places that don't have açai...before this factory existed the açai stayed here [in Gurupá] and stayed cheap for us to buy. However, I think it is good, because there have been some families that lost all of their açai at one time because they had no one to sell it to. Here in Gurupá [the town], there are about 400-500 baskets of açai consumed a day, and while Gurupá is practically made of açai...it is now taken to the factories to make pulp. They take 2-3 thousand baskets of açai from here every day to the factories.

Nuno's explanations about açai shortages in town due to the growth in national and international export are well-founded. Soares et al. (2014:7), in their study on the structure of productivity and economy of forest products in Gurupá, found that the majority of those living on extractive reserves survive on the sale of açai, producing more than 800 thousand baskets during the safra "that are destined for the market in Macapá and Belém." Instituto Peabiru (2016) had similar findings in Currálinho, where 92% of families said that açai was their main source of income, selling to intermediaries that take it to be processed elsewhere.

Infrastructure

In the majority of açai producing communities, there is a lack of infrastructure to harness the profits in the exponentially expanding açai market. While this market growth creates new opportunities for local small-scale farmers, they are still excluded from the most profitable sectors of the commodity chain.

Regional market demand creates differential opportunities for producers according to their land-tenure conditions, distance and access to markets, and access to resources (e.g., credit), and, particularly, processing industries. The lack of access to transformation industries and marketing transfers the most substantial portion of revenues from producers to other sectors, and away from municipalities (Brondízio 2009:14).

For individual family producers, their experiences differ depending on land ownership and distance from urban markets. Many of the small interior ribeirinho communities where the majority of açaí is produced and harvested, date back to the rubber boom, when they were the primary work force for European Landholders (Brondízio and Siqueira 1997). Today, most producers live on small land tracks (1-50 ha) without legal title, but are free to manage, produce, harvest, and sell NTFP and/or agricultural products as they choose (Weinstein and Moegenburg 2004). However, large landholders (50-200 ha), who primarily live in urban settings, “rely on ribeirinho sharecroppers or lessees” and allow their tenants little control over land resources and management, particularly in the harvest and marketing of açaí (Weinstein and Moegenburg 2004:323), likely reducing their tenants’ profits significantly.

For major açaí producing municipalities, the lack of processing industries is a substantial loss of local income, taxes, and the creation of much needed jobs. The losses are significant, considering that in 2014 alone there was more than 123.5 million pounds (56,043,356 Kg) in *reported* sales of açaí pulp throughout Brazil and exported globally, generating more than R\$222 million (\$96.5 million) in revenues (Oliveira et al. 2016). The açaí used to make this pulp ultimately originated in municipalities that have some of the highest underdevelopment and poverty rates in the country, Gurupá and Currealinho included.

Residents of these communities are aware of the potential profits that processing açaí into pulp for national and international export can bring, but the lack of sufficient infrastructure blocks their ability to participate. For example, in a semi-structured interview with Benedito, the director of the Chico Mendes Institute in Gurupá, he explained that one of the major problems throughout the Marajó region that excludes many municipalities from processing açaí into pulp is unreliable and expensive electricity.

We do not have the infrastructure to produce açaí pulp, because in order to do so, you need a good [reliable] energy source to support a processing factory that can freeze and store the product. In our region, our municipalities, our world here in Marajó, açaí producers do not have this structure because, the electricity that we have is not the same electricity that Belém has...almost every single municipality in Marajó are major producers of açaí, with the exception of a couple, and we all depend on the same electric energy and it is not always dependable and it is extremely expensive. Here in Gurupá, every day we see the electricity go out three or four times. Imagine if there were 10 thousand kilos of frozen açaí [pulp] and the electricity goes out...or how much it would cost just to keep that amount of açaí frozen...it would be so expensive. This structure is the problem with açaí and it should change, because for the given time, it is possible to have better.

Benedito’s point concerning the unreliability and excessive cost of electricity is a daily reality for residents throughout the region. During my fieldwork in Gurupá, the electricity in my house was inconsistent. There were outages almost nightly and sometimes during the day, and service did not return for hours. Generally, no one had an explanation for the outage. In Currealinho, which is much closer to the capital city of Belém, the electricity was more dependable and there were significantly fewer outages. However, the inflated cost of electricity is an unfortunate reality for an already impoverished and struggling region. Borges et al. (2017) found that beginning in 2008, the state of Pará pays more per kilowatt of electricity, R\$.479 /kWh, more than any other state in the entire country of Brazil. This is an astounding paradox, as Pará has the Tucuruí and now Belo Monte hydroelectric dams, two of the largest dams in the world, to produce nearly

kilowatts of energy. As Borges et al. (2017:18) put it, “while possessing a notable profile as an exporter of electricity to other states of the federation, is also the cradle of the country’s largest residential electricity tariff.”

While Benedito did not mention water shortages, this is also a paradoxical reality for a region completely surrounded by fresh water. In order to process açaí into pulp, clean water is the most essential component in the process. In Curralinho and Gurupá, water is supplied to most of the town (less than 33% of the total municipal population), but the supply is not always consistent. For example, my home in Gurupá was located $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from the Amazon River. I often shared this space with more than five adults and three children. Every day, without fail, we had no running water from six o’clock in the evening until seven o’clock the next morning, requiring significant planning and preparation for showers, flushing toilets, washing dishes, cooking, etc., not to mention drinking water. There were several occasions when our water was completely out for one to three days, causing significant problems in basic daily needs and hygiene care. Without structural improvements in basic life necessities, like electricity and water, both municipalities will remain the producers of one of the most valuable commodities in the Amazon region, with few socioeconomic improvements to show for it.

Intermediaries (Atravessadores)

The lack of basic and economic infrastructure is especially detrimental to the primarily extractive economy throughout the region not only due to the loss of profits, but also because it creates a reliance on *atravessadores* (intermediaries) for information, sale, and transportation of NTFPs like açaí. The term ‘*atravessador*’ has various interpretations, all of which suggest a pejorative association with words like ‘profit’ and ‘monopolization’ in economic relationships. For example, the Aurélio dictionary (Ferreira 2001:73), the most popular in Brazil, defines an *atravessador* as “one who buys goods at a low price to resell them with great profit.” Capiberibe (2001), in her study on *castanha* (Brazil Nuts) extraction in Amapá, describes the *atravessador* role as a variant in the exploitative productive process known as the *aviamento* system, historically associated with slave-like work relations in rubber and mining extraction in Brazil.

The process is simple: an *atravessador* provides the worker who goes into the jungle with the supplies and utensils necessary to carry out his work (machetes, boots, kerosene, oil, salt sugar, flour etc.). Then, the same *atravessador* buys, at very low prices, all the production withdrawn from the forest. In addition to paying little for the product, he charges a lot for the supplies that he provides, leading the extractivist into a vicious circle of debt, in a kind of “white slavery” (Capiberibe 2001:45-46).

Clearly, not all economic relationships with *atravessadores* are this extreme, but there is no doubt that extractivists’ dependence on them in some cases teeter on the edge of debt-peonage with harvesters of forest products disadvantaged by unjust payments and inflated prices in sale of goods. The majority of extractivists throughout the region rely on *atravessadores* not only for information on current market prices and sale/transportation of their açaí, but also for the baskets used to sell their açaí, in addition to other goods/supplies used in work/home.

Atravessadores sell household goods, like clothing, decorations, and tools, as well as necessities such as food, and non-essential items like alcohol, beer, and cigarettes at extremely high prices, taking advantage of rural producers and the distance and lack of quick access to purchase items from town at a cheaper price. In a semi-formal interview with Reinaldo, the

director of the Conselho Tutelar in Gurupá, he gave an example of price gouging and unethical practices, which was not an isolated event.

The atravessador also sells goods as he goes up and down the river, but at highly inflated prices. For example, in Marajoí, a community a long distance away from town, he will sell one kilo of sugar for twice as much as it costs here in Gurupá. In fact, when it comes to any type of food, the price is doubled. The atravessadores use this method, which raises an inhumane question...I once saw an atravessador passing through Mojú, who sold a chicken for R\$25 [normally R\$5] to a family that had no food in their house.

Prices for goods are already higher in the municipalities located far away from the city of Belém, and prices for basic necessities are sometimes doubled or tripled. For example, a pound of white rice (a staple at lunch and dinner) in Belém sells for an average of R\$1-2. In Currálinho and Gurupá, that same bag costs no less than R\$3, but most often sells for R\$4. For many ribeirinho families struggling to fulfill basic needs, the additional inflation of prices for basic goods sold by the atravessador is opportunistic exploitation of those already struggling.

While atravessadores are major actors in the flow of commercial products to and from the local and regional markets, they create additional 'links' in the commodity chain that rarely benefit local extractors and producers (Oliveira et al. 2011) and are "often 'invisible' actors from the standpoint of decision-makers and research institutes" (Rügnitz 2007:4). Without adequate transportation of goods or communication with economic markets in cities like Belém and Breves, isolation and unfamiliarity create a system in which profits are located in the processing and exporting sectors, as well as in transportation that creates a cycle of dependency on atravessadores for their services (and the inflated prices of necessary household items).

Açaí producers in Currálinho rely heavily on atravessadores for the sale of their açaí. In 2010-2016, 90% of producers reported that atravessadores were their principal means of commercialization and sale of açaí (Oliveira et al. 2011, Instituto Peabiru 2016). In addition, 95% of producers felt that they did not receive a just price for their açaí, stating that it should be no less than R\$25 per basket (Instituto Peabiru 2016). This is a precarious situation, as producers do not have official contracts with atravessadores and they lack the means to maintain contact with outside market sources for value assessment, leaving them vulnerable to manipulation and price inequalities. For example, in 2009, an açaí cooperative in Currálinho was able to form a contract with a company in Castanhal, selling each basket of fruit for R\$7. Unfortunately, after the fruit left the community, the cooperative was never paid. In 2010, a cooperative had a contract with a different factory to purchase each basket of açaí for R\$9. This time they did receive payment, but it was reduced to R\$7.50 per basket. They were told that the remaining R\$1.50 per basket was to cover the costs of the boat, fuel, and of labor to load and unload the boat when it reached Belém (Oliveira et. al 2011). This is just one of the many challenges faced by açaí producers who rely on atravessadores for the sale and transport of their açaí.

Producers also rely on atravessadores for market information, giving them little power in value negotiation, as they are the ones that establish the sale price, not the producers (Oliveira et al. 2011). For example, Senhor Joferino, president of the Veneza Agroextractivist Cooperative of Marajó, describes "the scheme of the middleman" (Instituto Peabiru 2011:76): during açaí harvest season, the first atravessador (a local) will purchase a basket of açaí (approximately 14

kilos) for R\$7 from the local extractors. He will then sell this basket to a second atravessador, who typically has a large boat with the capacity to hold up to 2000 liters of açaí, for R\$8. This man will then take the massive quantity of açaí on his boat to a nearby city and sell it for R\$10-14 per basket. Joferino says that the profit in açaí production comes in the transport, not the harvesting. Instituto Peabiru (2016) found that 78% of producers obtain information on the current market price of açaí directly from the atravessador. In a booming market, they are dependent on the honesty and fair market practices of atravessadores, which rarely works in their favor.

Açaí producers in Gurupá also rely heavily on atravessadores for market information and the sale of their product. In semi-formal interviews and conversations with growers and small-scale processors of açaí, I was told that nearly all producers sell their açaí to atravessadores, who generally pay R\$6-10 per basket in the interior and then will sell it for more than double at a nearby processing plant in Breves, Macapá, or Belém. They also sell it in major centers of municipalities, like Gurupá and Currálinho. Nuno explained how rapidly the prices and demand for açaí has grown in the last five years.

Açaí here in Gurupá five years ago during the safra sold for R\$1-1.50 per liter, and if the quality was really good, it was R\$2. A basket of açaí never sold for more than R\$8. Nowadays, you can't find a liter for less than R\$5 and baskets cost between R\$15-18. The atravessador who brings açaí to town to sell pays no more than R\$10 per basket and inflates the price, especially if it rains the previous afternoon. The less açaí there is, the more it costs...however, they always pay the same price in the interior, regardless if it rains or not. Last year during the entressafra a single basket of açaí was selling for R\$90!! The average daily price was R\$70 and up...and liters were selling for R\$15-18!

Based on Nuno's comments, atravessadores not only take advantage of their purchasing power by always paying the same price, but also use weather conditions to take advantage of the local buyers who rely on them to deliver açaí to town. Rüginitz (2007) found that rain and the day of the week benefits the atravessador by reducing availability, therefore increasing the sale price. During the rainy season or general showers, the açaí palms become extremely slippery making it near impossible to climb. Also, most fruit collectors do not work during holidays or Sundays, decreasing the availability of açaí for sale on days that follow. Atravessadores understand these dynamics allowing them to augment sale prices, even though they did not pay more.

Two of the largest açaí producing communities in Gurupá are completely dependent on atravessadores. The community of Marajoí, approximately four hours away from town by speedboat, sells almost exclusively to atravessadores. When speaking with Carlos, a life-long resident of Marajoí, he said that he picks around 15 baskets of açaí per day with the help of his young son and sells each basket for R\$5-20 depending on the season. He explained that he has no choice but to use atravessadores due to the distance of his home from Gurupá and because he does not have the means to efficiently transport the açaí before it begins to spoil. Açaí berries are extremely perishable and must be either consumed or processed into frozen pulp in less than 72 hours, ideally no more than 48 hours, after the fruit cache is cut. After 72 hours, the berries are spoiled and cannot be eaten or sold. Every hour that passes once the cache is cut changes the quality, color, and flavor – directly affecting its market value.

Murucupú, also several hours outside of Gurupá, sells almost exclusively to atravessadores. One açaí farmer, who extracts solely with assistance from his family,

acknowledged that it was possible to earn more money if he transported and sold his açai in the town. However, he explained that the trip took more than three hours one way and the ability to sell all of his açai at once for cash to a single purchaser from his home, even at a reduced rate, freed up time to focus on other responsibilities and maintenance of his *açaízal* (açai grove).

In a semi-formal interview with Bertinho, who was once a teacher but now harvests açai on one of the largest açai producing rivers in Curralinho, I asked him about the relationship that producers have with the atravessadores and if the growth of açai consumption worldwide has benefited them.

I believe that the communities that extract acai in the region where I live don't know much about the expansion/globalization of açai consumption, especially since the factories that handle the product are in other cities such as Breves and Macapá or Belém and Castanhal. They just don't have access to this kind of information. The only relationship they have in the commodity chain is with the middlemen who buy the açai from them on the river where they live. The atravessador is the one who sells it to the companies and receives the greater part of the profit, and it is not being passed down. The extractivists, who have the hardest and most dangerous part of the job, do not receive a fair value for açai. To say whether or not they benefit from the worldwide increase in açai consumption is a bit difficult, because the amounts passed on per basket are relative to the harvest period and can vary from R\$7 during the safra all the way up to R\$120 during the entressafra. Year after year the value is fixed and manipulated by the middlemen, not passed on to the extractors if there is increase in demand or price. But, I believe that somehow, they benefit even if it is indirectly.

These examples illustrate the types of dependencies most small family producers in Curralinho and Gurupá have on atravessadores. João M., the director of Instituto Peabiru, sums up the issues involved with the growth in demand of açai by pointing to “the social impact of the activity, land security, environmental issues, the formality [or lack thereof] of the economy, a huge network that today now involves more than 100 thousand families that drives an economy of billions of reais,” but makes little difference in the local communities that produce açai. While some producers have been successful in creating açai cooperatives (see Instituto Peabiru 2016, Pegler 2013, Sanderson 2018 for more on açai cooperatives) many small-scale extractivist families to continue to fend for themselves in a booming market with very little negotiating power.

The significant açai economic boom over the last 25 years has produced enormous profits for the transportation and processing industries but has contributed much less to the municipalities in which the product originates. Due to informal market transactions and reliance on atravessadores, families who perform the most dangerous and laborious job in the açai commodity chain receive only a small fraction of profit, which does little to alleviate the substantial poverty rates and absence of basic necessities like running water and reliable, affordable electricity. Families continue to face difficult decisions concerning their children, their children's labor, and the value of educating their children against the much-needed income their children's contributions can add during the açai safra to their family's well-being and survival throughout the remainder of the year.

CHAPTER 6

RIBEIRINHO CHILDHOOD: GROWING UP CURRALINHESE AND GURUPAENSE

In order to understand children's experiences in these two communities, I first had to contextualize the cultural construct of childhood locally and temporally before examining child labor. I utilized two levels of inquiry to understand local views of childhood, the adult perspective and the child perspective (10-19 years old), focusing on three broad questions: 1) What is childhood? 2) Does every child have a childhood? 3) When do children become adults?

Concepts of Childhood

We know nothing of childhood; and with our mistaken notions the further we advance the further we go astray. The wisest writers devote themselves to what a man ought to know, without asking what a child is capable of learning. They are always looking for the man in the child, without considering what he is before he becomes a man (Rousseau 1993:1-2).

Throughout this research, I found that how one defines childhood has much to do with factors of socioeconomic class and expectations of children's roles and responsibilities within the family. Given that childhood is culturally constructed, it is not constructed the same for all children and is possible "to identify the existence of ...many childhoods, each constructed from our understandings of childhood and what children are and should be" (Lopes 2012: Dalberg, Moss, & Pence 2003:63). Common themes echo a modern elite perspective that places childhood as a separate period in life centered around family, education, and free of adult responsibilities. Childhood is a time to be cared for, protected, dependent, and passive. This is most true in reference to play and work, which have become "conceptually separated – adults work and children play – but this idea is a feature of a particular type of childhood, rooted in specific historical and cultural circumstances (Zelizer 1985; Nieuwenhuys 1996). However, this childhood ideal is not "realized by the majority of Brazilian children," especially those in the Amazon, where the right to "play and not work is long from being realized by many children in this region" (Lopes 2012:80).

What is Childhood?

When interviewing and speaking with adults in Curralinho and Gurupá, I found that a majority of middle/upper-class residents tend to view childhood from a normative elite discourse, in which children's roles are separate from adult responsibilities and work, they are allowed two social spaces within the community, home and school, and their daily lives should be filled with activities that lend to their development into adults. In both communities, explanations of childhood and what children should be doing reflect the current reality of an individual's family and daily life responsibilities. In a semi-structured interview with Benedito

and his wife Soraya in Gurupá, I asked them to describe what a typical childhood should be. Benedito, explained:

A normal childhood should be playing, going to school, having friends...and then only around the ages of 15 or 16 should children begin to work, but not work as in real work, but in the sense of learning how to do things that will benefit them in their lives. Families should help their children develop into adults. I think that children should concentrate on school, so that they can continue in school and to graduate. Children should be playing. It is very important to a child's development. Without it [play], they are being deprived.

Soraya continued: "It is common for children to go to school, to learn to work, and get a job. It's about playing, but kids do have chores to do in and around the house. This is normal."

Currently, Benedito and Soraya have a much more comfortable existence than the majority of Gurupá residents. Benedito, now in his 50s, grew up in extreme poverty in the interior and has spent the better part of the last 20 years working for local and influential NGOs. Soraya, close to the same age, has worked at the local health center for more than 15 years. They own a home and a vehicle, have stable jobs, have been happily married for more than 25 years, and both of their children are college educated. They are part of the middle class in Gurupá.

Ruth is also part of the middle class in Gurupá. She is an administrator at a local elementary school and her husband is a director of a local initiative, they have been married for more than 25 years, own a very nice home on First Street, and her eldest son, who attended high school in Belém, now lives in São Paulo pursuing a career in the Culinary Arts. Her explanations of childhood focused more on family values and role expectations of both parents and children.

To define childhood here is difficult, it really depends on each family and its values. For me, for example, when I grew up my family was very traditional. We lived in the interior and I did domestic work around the house and in the *roça*. In my family, girls were not allowed to wear make-up, dance, or have boyfriends until after they were 15 years old. Until then, life was for other things. Now, for me, I like the traditional ways and I continue to follow them with my family...Normally, girls around 10 start having a lot of responsibility around the house. They do domestic work, washing dishes, clothes, cooking, cleaning the floors, but this only was to help prepare the girl for her future life and the services and responsibilities that she would be responsible for. But, each family here in Gurupá is different and each family here has its own way of doing things and its own values. There are those families who have good families, and then there are those families that don't.

I asked her to explain what she meant by "bad families." She responded by telling me that sometimes these families have adolescent pregnancies, domestic violence, or drug/alcohol abuse. She continued... "it is because the families don't have good values that girls become pregnant at 12, there is a lot of arguing. Here, there is a reality of violence and drug use among kids in those families."

These explanations of childhood, in that children should not be doing work that removes them from education and recreation, while part of that education is learning how to ‘work’ and to become an adult, reflects what Wagley (1976:178) referred to as the “essentially aristocratic” attitudes he found in the town of Gurupá in the 1950s. He wrote, “in the Amazon region the ideal form of the family, the ideal patterns of behavior for its members, and the values attached to family life are those of the aristocratic upper class of the region” Wagley 1976:178). This situation is unachievable by the majority of inhabitants. The family unit is idealized and equated with a loving supportive environment, a private safe haven, that guides the ‘proper’ development of children, while stigmatizing parents and families who are unable to protect their children from the harsh realities of the outside world (Lasch 1977; Wells 2015). Their ideas reflect an elevated socioeconomic class perspective, and a more elite lived reality that is not representative of the majority of families in the region. These middle-class town dwellers found no difficulty in viewing childhood as a separate phase in life and passing judgement on others for their lack of ‘good values’ concerning their children (Hendrickson 2006).

While social class was a salient marker in descriptions of childhood, I found that professionals who worked directly with children daily, regardless of their own class background, based their explanations on the lived reality of the majority of local families. Randel, a 31-year-old Specialist in Education for several middle schools in Currálinho, explained:

Children need to play, they need to have fun – to know how to be children, but many of them do not have this. In all of this town, there is a lack of jobs and the majority of kids have to start working very young, they are raised to work very young. It is a question of helping their parents and to help buy the things they need, like clothes. Poverty is a reality and in this region (the Amazon), there are many who live in poverty. Kids leave here (school) and they go to work, doing jobs of adults.

Bete, born in Gurupá, now in her mid-50s and a director of an elementary school, continued Randel’s sentiments about children and the realities they contend with every day.

A typical childhood? Look here, the majority of childhoods here in Gurupá are spent in the street because the majority of children here are from people that are lucky if they earn a minimum wage or work as an *empregada* (maid). They don’t have the means as a child, in fact, to live a childhood that is like a different time period [carefree of adult responsibility] in which you speak of. A child that is in the street doesn’t have time to play, or do sports or have room to live or have fun. It should be their right, but I think that here in Gurupá most don’t understand these aspects of having fun as a right for a child.

While Randel and Bete are both part of the middle class, in their professions they are constantly surrounded by hundreds of mostly poor 6-18-year-old students. Through this interaction, their views of childhood are clearly based more in the reality of children’s lives. They both know what ideal of childhood *should* be, but focus more realistically on what childhood actually *is*. Even though they both felt that childhood should be a time when children are entitled to certain rights and freedoms, such as playing and having fun, they focused on the reality that most children in both communities are rarely afforded this luxury (Hendrickson 2006).

Paulo, a 27-year-old martial arts instructor and doorman at an elementary school in Gurupá, had some difficulty describing a typical childhood. Although he is a father of a 5-year-old son, when asked, he contemplated for several moments and finally said:

I can't answer that. I don't know how to describe it, because here in Gurupá, it is very complicated. I just don't know how to describe it -- because there are many kids here that have a mother or father at home with no work. The family has to have their kids help to live and survive.

His inability to describe childhood was not uncommon, especially among working-class residents. When interviewing members from the working class about the concept of childhood, many never gave me an explanation, or instead, they described the types of work that children do. I was never sure if they understood the question or if they were just avoiding it. However, during an interview with Caio, a 37-year-old teacher at an interior school in Gurupá, I realized that their descriptions of work *was* an explanation of childhood, and the different experiences and expectations that individual families have of their children.

Childhood is a time when a person lives and passes through the process of growing. Some kids grow up selling things in the streets. The kids who live in the interior grow up working alongside their parents to produce things like açai, farninha, pupunha, laranjas, cupu, etc. to take to town to sell. Not all kids have a childhood (like a separate time in life), because they are never taught this word and it is never used around them. They don't even know what it means or how to have one.

Caio's point about children not having a childhood because they are not taught that there is such a thing is one that I have not encountered in my own research or any current literature. Ariès (1962:125) suggested that before contemporary ideas about children's separate place in society emerged in the beginning of the 17th Century, "the idea of childhood did not exist." He contends that childhood and its social experience depend not only on material conditions, but "also in relation to duties, obligations, restraints, and expectations placed on children" (Bass 2004:15). It seems that not all children and their families, especially those far away from state policies and institutions, separate children from adult roles and responsibilities, especially when their own survival is dependent upon children's labor. In this sense, if one is never exposed to or taught about the elite ideal childhood, its rules and boundaries, then for that child, it never existed in the first place. What children in rural Amazonia do have is a childhood reflective of their family's expectations, modeled in accordance with their day-to-day reality, which means participating in an economic household strategy needed for survival.

When I asked children in both communities to explain childhood, most described it as a separate phase in life when children have no responsibility but to play, have fun, go to school, and be cared for. Themes from their responses included innocence, happiness, playing, attending school, lack of responsibility, and 'unforgettable.' Laura, a 17-year-old 8th grader from Gurupá affectionately described childhood:

It is a period in which children are able to play, receive the most love and care from their family, is the ‘baby’ of the house and everything is good. It is a moment in which laughter and happiness is always on your face.

Bianca, a 15-year-old sophomore from Currálinho described childhood similarly, but focused more on the lack of responsibility that should be enjoyed during this time.

Childhood is what the majority of human beings say is the best time in life for a person. A phase when a person does not have responsibility, and that lack of responsibility is not seen as a fault and you do not get scolded because of it.

Clearly these sentiments reflect an elite normative model of childhood and the ideals of what is expected of children during this time. While some children do have some form of this ideal childhood, the economic circumstances in both communities suggest that they are in the minority. The HDI in Currálinho and Gurupá are in the bottom 10% in Brazil. Almost 95% of Currálinhenses and 88% of Gurupaenses live in either poverty or extreme poverty. According to Fundação Abrinq (2017), the state of Pará has around 428 thousand children living in extreme poverty, the highest percentile among all Northern states, in addition to the highest indices of malnutrition and child labor.

Alexa, a 19-year-old 8th grader from the interior of Currálinho, was one of several respondents who were not so nostalgic about their childhood, even though her description of childhood conformed, more or less, to an elite ideal. While she described childhood as a “very good moment in our lives, where we learn how to play and have fun,” she countered, “but I don’t really know what it is because I did not have a childhood.” She did not elaborate beyond this, except saying that “girls are born with responsibilities, we always have them.” Her understanding of childhood, as separate phase in life free from responsibility and work, did not match her own experience.

Many international labor organizations, NGOs, children’s rights groups, and charitable agencies, in their campaigns to ameliorate human rights issues, promote and apply this version of childhood in developing nations where it is rarely achievable, obliquely condemning other variations that do not fit within its narrow definition (Bass 2004; Ennew 1986). Bass (2004:19) suggests that “adopting this particular vision obfuscates the complex, socially constructed character of the child upon which it rests” and much like “economic globalization, there has also been a globalization of Western concepts of childhood.”

For Alexa and other children whose experiences fall outside the ideal version of childhood, they are stigmatized based on a hegemonic representation of childhood that does not correspond to the real conditions in which most children live their lives in the Amazon and throughout the world. There are just as many different childhoods as there are ideas, practices, and discourses that surround and organize them (Lajolo 2003). To promote one, as the standard from which to judge all others, appears to ostracize children’s experiences and blame their families for the structural insecurities and economic realities that limit their options.

Does Every Child Have a Childhood?

The responses from both children and adults were divided when asked if all children have a childhood. Children in Currálinho (24%) and Gurupá (34%) said that all children have childhoods, that it was simply a phase of development, and it could be either good or bad, but

everyone experienced this time in her/his life. Adults in Currálinho (52%) and in Gurupá (22%) agreed. Bianca, who felt that childhood was the best time in life, stated that all children have childhoods, “it doesn’t matter if it was bad or good, it was still childhood.” Luciana, an 18-year-old freshman from the interior of Currálinho, agreed: “While it might be difficult, you still have one, regardless of the difficulties in your day-to-day life. No family wants to say that they [their children] did not have a childhood, and while that childhood may not have been how you wanted it to be, you still had one.”

Some differentiated between good childhoods and bad childhoods and felt that it had a significant impact on a child’s future self and life. For example, Bruno, an 18-year-old freshman from Currálinho described childhood as “a phase in life when a person is absorbing knowledge, everything is new. The childhood of a person will decide their future. If they have a good and disciplined childhood, they will become a good and disciplined adult.” Nadia, a 17-year-old Senior from Currálinho echoed similar ideas, stating that “if a child has a good childhood, they will be a good person. If their childhood was bad, they will grow up to have many problems.” Fernando, a 25-year-old laborer and senior in high school in Currálinho, agreed with this idea and the importance of childhood as a determining factor in one’s adult life.

I believe that all children have a childhood. When a child doesn’t have a good childhood, they grow up to be immature, they are always sad, they don’t make friends. When a child has a good childhood, they grow up happy, confident, they are likable and intelligent.

Counter to the belief that childhood exists for everyone and cannot be ‘lost’, 56% of Currálinhese children and 42% of Gurupaense children stated that particular life circumstances impeded the experience of a childhood. They linked the loss of childhood directly to working and having adult responsibilities at a very young age, in addition to situations of violence and sexual abuses that ‘rob’ a child of their innocence. More than half of adults in Gurupá (67%) and almost one third of Currálinho (32%) adults agreed. Laura, a 17-year-old 8th grader from Gurupá, explained her perspective on why some children do not have childhoods.

The majority of times, many children must leave their childhood behind, in order to work, to help their parents. They do not have time to play and have fun with friends. Some girls start having lots of responsibility very early.

Her comments focus specifically on children’s responsibility to work and their lack of time to play due to families needing their children’s work contributions for survival. For Laura, a child who does not have time to play is in violation of “the foundational practices of childhood” and her/his rights as a child (Wells 2015:117). However, like the development of the ideal childhood, play was not thought of as a right of children until the late 19th century. Beginning with the child study movement, which saw play as ‘the work of children’ in the process of learning and ‘correct’ development, and later defined as a universal right by the UNCRC (Cross 1997; Wells 2015). Article 31 of the UNCRC (1990:10) states that it is a child’s “right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.” Play is a distinct marker in the status of being a child, separate from the world of adults, and when it is absent and replaced with a responsibility to work, the status of that child, then, also changes.

Just as play, more than any other cultural activity, is intrinsic to childhood, going to school is a fundamental cornerstone involved in that experience. Fabiana, a 16-year-old 8th grader from the interior of Gurupá, explained that children who are deprived of the right to an education are also deprived of their childhoods.

Not all kids have childhoods, or at least the ones they should, because some have to stop pursuing their education in order to work. The majority of these kids need to work, and most of the time, the parents give them the responsibility of taking care of the house and the family, and they aren't able to go to school very often.

Roberto, a 14-year-old from Curralinho, agreed and pointed out that the parents often prevent their children from going to school. He stated, "not all kids have a childhood because many have parents that want their children to work first, then go to school...but a lot of times this (education) doesn't happen because their parents won't let them. They exploit their children." Lucas, a 17-year-old from Curralinho, was a bit more understanding, stating that "there are a lot of families here that do not have the (economic) conditions, and their children have to stop going to school and work to help their family." All three respondents associate childhood within the frame of permitted spaces for children – home and school. For them, a child does not have a childhood when work takes her/him out of school, regardless of the reason. Nalda, a 16-year-old 8th grader from Curralinho, differentiated life in town compared to life in the interior.

Kids in the city play a lot, study a lot, and have very little responsibility. The kids in the interior work during their childhood, because they have to help their parents. These kids have to help in the home, in the roça, fishing, etc. and have little time to study. They are deprived of their childhoods. While we study, play, pass time with our friends, they are working and are without the right to experience this very important phase in life.

Her perspective, that living in town allowed for a childhood compared to life in the interior where children must work, was shared by 36% of Curralinhese child respondents and 26% of Gurupaense child respondents. Common themes in their explanations revolved around access to technology, the ability to be with their friends, and better employment opportunities for their parents. However, Izabela, a 15-year-old 8th grader from Curralinho, was not as optimistic about life in town. She pointed out social problems that children encounter in the city, that those in the interior do not.

Nowadays in Curralinho there are many kids who go to parties, drink, use drugs...and this happens because we do not have a specific place to hang out or play. The prefeitura 'closes their eyes' to this. In the interior, the kids are more innocent of these things, and they are working, picking açai, making farinha, and unfortunately are losing their childhoods. Because their parents do not have a good financial condition, the kids have to help them and work, either going to work or by staying home watching their siblings so that their parents can work.

She continued, pointing out that “unfortunately, this is our reality, a reality that the prefeitura pretends not to see, and tries to hide from society. We are not just kids, but a large part of the Curralinhese population.”

When Do Children Become Adults?

Responsibility was a key characteristic that determined when children became adults. More than half of adult and child respondents, Curralinhese (65%) and Gurupaense (55%), stated that adulthood began once a person had consistent adult responsibilities – such as working, caring for and contributing to her/his family, making important decisions. Arnett (2001:134), found that in the US, “the criteria most important to young people in their conceptions of the transition to adulthood are *qualities of character* that share a common emphasis on *individualism*,” like “*accepting responsibility for one’s self and making independent decisions, with financial independence*”. According to Arnett’s findings and the responses from both communities, a large portion of children *should* be considered adults based on the responsibilities they shoulder daily that contribute to the survival of their families. However, because laws do not legally recognize adulthood until the numerical age of 18, they are only children *acting* as adults, deprived of adult privileges while accepting adult responsibilities.

Predictably, age was the second most identified marker of adulthood. Curralinhese (30%) and Gurupaense (47%) adult and child respondents stated that a child became an adult when he/she turned 18-years-old. What was surprising, however, was that out of all 189 respondents, not a single one stated that having a baby was a marker of adulthood. While many societies throughout the world consider parenthood the ultimate symbol of adulthood, for Curralinheses and Gurupaenses, adulthood and parenthood are not significantly related determinants. Arnett (2001) found similar results in the US, where role transitions – like marriage and parenthood – were not significant markers of adulthood. These results go against sociological and anthropological studies which treat role transitions as definitive criteria for adulthood (Goldscheider & Goldscheider 1999; Hogan 1980; Schlegel & Barry 1991).

Education in Curralinho and Gurupá

According to the Brazilian Ministry of Education (2004), the quality of education and access to education of a population are important indicators of inequalities in both the rural and urban sectors. Eraldo Carmo (2016) points out that in capitalist societies educational policies rarely favor the working class, even when equality is guaranteed. Brazil’s Federal Constitution (1988) states the following:

Article 205. Education, which is the right of all and duty of the state and of the family, shall be promoted and fostered with the cooperation of society, with a view to the full development of the person, his preparation for the exercise of citizenship and his qualification for work.

Article 206. Education shall be provided on the basis of the following principles: I – equal conditions of access and permanence in school; VII – guarantee of standards of quality.

Article 208. The duty of the state towards education shall be fulfilled by ensuring the following: I – mandatory basic education free of charge, for every individual

from the age of 4 (four) through the age of 17 (seventeen), including the assurance of its free offer to all those who did not have access to it at the proper age; V– access to higher levels of education, research and artistic creation according to individual capacity; VII – assistance to students in all grades of basic education, by means of supplementary programs providing school materials, transportation, food, and healthcare. Paragraph 1. The access to compulsory and free education is a subjective public right. Paragraph 2. The competent authority shall be liable for the failure of the Government in providing compulsory education, or providing it irregularly.

These are the basic guaranteed rights of education. Unfortunately, for many Brazilian children, especially in the rural areas, they are far from being realized.

The Marajó region, where Currálinho and Gurupá are located, faces multiple challenges in providing basic quality education. In 2011 there were 183,398 students enrolled in the region, representing approximately 37% of the population, with an average federal investment of R\$17.5 million (\$10.3 US) (Insituto Peabiru 2011). Miguel Arroyo, Roseli Caldart, and Mônica Molina (2004:8) point out a lack of interest in research concerning rural areas of Brazil, stating that only 2% of studies focus on the rural areas and less than “1% of those specifically deal with rural education.” The research that does exist highlights serious disparities in education quality and access. These factors are exacerbated by a lack of access to new technologies (such as computers and internet), high rates of age-for-grade distortions, high rates of multi-grade classrooms, unreliable/expensive transportation, and the lack of education beyond middle school (8th grade) in the majority of locations throughout regional municipalities.

In both communities, children who live in or close to the town centers have access to preschool, elementary, middle, and high school. Children who live in the interior, however, do not always have consistent access to schools, or only have access to elementary/middle schools that are of extremely poor quality (See Table 1 below). Neither community has local access to the Vestibular, the college entrance exam required for entry into free federally funded (and best) universities in Brazil. Students who cannot afford or do not attend a vestibular prep course rarely pass. In order to take the multi-day exam, students must travel to Belém or another large city, requiring not only a costly roundtrip boat ticket, but also a place to stay. Acceptance into Brazilian universities is fiercely competitive and is based on the number of available seats. Candidates are selected from the top score and down. In 2006, there were more than 2,000,000 students competing for one of the 331,105 openings in Brazilian universities (Carvalho and Magnac 2010). These factors combined present families with a situation in which they must evaluate the value of educating their children against the value contributed by their children’s participation in work, which ultimately assists in family sustenance and economic success. Insituto Peabiru (2011) found in interviews and observations that “the absence of a quality educational system in the region has generated a vicious cycle of absolute and functional illiteracy, which in turn influences the formation of decision makers born in Marajó.” As shown in Table 1, the illiteracy rate in both communities for those aged 25 and older represents 1/3 of that age bracket (Currálinho 28.18%, Gurupá 33.65%).

Table 1. Population, Educational Access/Prevalence, and Illiteracy in Currealinho and Gurupá

Population	Currealinho		Gurupá	
	28,549 Total		29,062 Total	
	Urban 10,930 (38.29%)	Rural 17,619 (61.71%)	Urban 9,580 (32.96%)	Rural 19,482 (67.04%)
High Schools	2	0	1	0
Elementary/Middle Schools	3	42	4	90
Population 19 Years of Age and Younger	15,580 (54.7%)		15,169 (52.1%)	
Total Elementary/Middle School Enrollment	9,056		8,978	
Total High School Enrollment	1,319		1,259	
Enrollment of 5-6-Year-Olds	79%		73.33%	
Enrollment of 11-13-Year-Olds	54.51%		51.57%	
15-17-Year-Olds Completed Elementary/Middle School	13.17%		18.99%	
18-20-Year-Olds Completed High School	7.01%		11.15%	
25 & Older Completed Elementary/Middle School	18.38%		18.33%	
25 & Older Rate of Illiteracy	28.18%		33.65%	

Source: IBGE 2010, Atlas Brasil

Currealinho and Gurupá both struggle to meet the educational needs of children in their municipalities. Along with the previously mentioned disparities, major problems exist in every component of education: poor infrastructure, teacher workload/insecurity, high failure rates, lack of support from the Department of Education, Nucleation Policy, and the urban-centric curriculum (Tenório et al. 2009). In order to understand the local perspective, I asked students, teachers, and educational administrators a series of questions (see appendix) related to educational disparities and its effect on truancy and/or dropping out (see Table 2). Respondents

were not limited in the number of issues/problems they cited. Based on their responses, five major themes surfaced that limit, inhibit, or prohibit children’s education in both communities: poor quality education/infrastructure, lack of parental/family support, children must work to help their family survive, families cannot afford necessary school supplies/uniforms, and lack of transportation.

Table 2. Reported Causes of Truancy/Dropping Out in Curralinho and Gurupá

Causes of Truancy and Dropping Out	Curralinho		Gurupá	
	Adults	Children	Adults	Children
Lack of Family Support	32%	34%	33%	47%
Poor Quality EDU/ Infrastructure	20%	0%	69%	0%
Unable to Afford School Supplies	20%	32%	0%	29%
No Transportation	12%	14%	44%	0%
Must work for family survival	24%	28%	33%	21%

While no children from either community cited poor quality education as a reason for truancy/dropping out, nearly every adult that I spoke with involved in education, as well as 20% of Curralinhe and 69% of Gurupaense adult respondents in self-administered questionnaires, stated that it was one of the most substantial problems in the region. They focused on three main factors: the teachers, the curriculum, and the school infrastructure. In a semi-structured interview with Elton, a 34-year-old teacher and Coordinator of Rural Education in Curralinho, he stated that teachers in interior schools lack proper training and are often absent.

Many teachers did not graduate from high school, they have no training, they have only been through middle school. Lots of times kids will spend hours travelling to school, only to show up and the teacher is not there...sometimes they don't show up for a week. Then you have kids that are in 6th and 7th grade and practically don't know how to read.

A former interior teacher and college student, Berto, explained:

We have people teaching that are not qualified at all. For example, when I went to teach in the interior, I didn't have any formal knowledge or training. I had just begun college, I didn't have any certifications, but I wanted to do it...and I needed a job. You have others who don't even graduate from high school and then they go to teach in the interior, with no training, nothing. The teachers in the interior don't make very good money either. They spend 60-70% of their salary just to maintain themselves. You have to pay for your own passage there, buy your own food, pay for a place to stay, and it is usually far away from your friends and family, which is difficult.

Carmo (2016) found similar results in his study of nucleated interior schools in Currálinho, showing that only 18.5% of teachers had education and/or training beyond the high school level.

In a self-administered questionnaire given to teachers, I asked why they chose the profession, an astounding 80% said that they had no other option for work. Nearly everyone that I spoke with told me that there are no stable jobs in either community, aside from being a teacher or working for the prefeitura. Welton, a 37-year-old teacher in the interior of Gurupá, stated that “in the beginning, I became a teacher for lack of any other options. However, as time has passed, I have come to identify with my work and now consider myself an educator.” Rebeca, a 24-year-old teacher in the interior of Gurupá, stated similarly that “I chose this job in truth because I didn’t have an option and I needed to work in order to support myself.” Thiago, a 27-year-old school secretary in Currálinho, explained his choice based on the limited options available as well.

I always liked education and was fascinated by the work, but I come from a working-class family and the jobs that were available to me, that I was born into becoming, were manual labor...working on cars, working in agriculture, fishing, etc. I didn’t want to do any of this and my options were limited. My father was a farmer, my mother was a maid...I saw their suffering and I did not want that for myself. I had to change my reality, and so I decided to study and become a teacher.

While Thiago did have an interest in becoming a teacher, his options were still limited in all other areas of employment. Rafaela, a 34-year-old teacher in Currálinho, told me that she began teaching as soon as she finished high school.

At 17-years-old, I had a contract position with the state to teach 1st through 4th grade. You have to understand, that during that time, there was no other degree offered in the município (county) to further one’s education. I wanted to continue to live with my family and to be able to support myself. Because of these various things, I chose to become a teacher.

Randel, an education specialist in Currálinho, explained how many teachers come to the profession.

Look, one of the biggest problems in all of the Marajó municipalities is the lack of jobs...and there is so much poverty. The majority of people who end up in education are not there because of a commitment to education...even me, I ended up in this [job] because I did not have another option. In order to get more education to do something else, you have to go to [other] places that have a limited number of courses. So, you end up having to become a teacher, because it is the only way to can get a guaranteed job in the region. This affects the quality because you end up seeing teaching as an obligation to earn, solely economic and a job, not with responsibility. Most of the teachers that you see here in Currálinho, they work throughout the municipality. They leave [their homes] at seven in the morning, only stopping for lunch, and then only arrive back [home]

at night. This is how the question of low salaries and wanting to earn more ends up influencing the quality of teaching, because they do not worry [about a job] anymore, it is simply a matter of going there [to school] to work, without the responsibility of knowing if the student has learned anything or not.

Rui, the director of the Conselho Tutelar in Gurupá, had similar comments.

Of the teachers who are in the classroom today, I am not afraid to say that 35-40% of them are there for lack of choice, because if they had another one, they would not be there. They have no desire to work in education, but they are there because it is the only source of income that they have in order to support their families. I am encountering problems with this every day now, as I have recently assumed the presidency of FUNDEB (Fundo de Manutenção e Desenvolvimento da Educação Básica) and I am just starting to see, observing things that I do not agree with. One teacher, he teaches in an interior school 10 hours from here, but all of his family are here in town [Gurupá]. He goes there [to the school] three days a week and has no idea about anything there – he knows no one, he doesn't know the students' families or the community or how families live...he just goes there to work and leaves. What is he going to accomplish in three days of class per week? He's not going to get anything done! In the month of July he was only there four days..FOUR DAYS!! The first semester of school, they should've had 100 days of school...but they didn't even have 60! Now, can you imagine what the result of this school year will be for these students...they will ALL pass!

Teaching is a difficult profession even for the most dedicated and passionate instructor, choosing it out of necessity, or lack of other options, coupled with difficult working conditions creates a fragile learning environment uncondusive to optimal educational success.

The urbancentric curriculum is another point of contention connected to problems involving teachers. If curriculum, as Micheli Gonçalves, Waldir Abreu, and Damião Oliveira (2015:87) suggest, “constructs social and political cultural identities...that aim to guide the educational processes” in these identities, then one based on realities far from its application lends two possibilities; it either seeks to alter the identities of those subjected to it, and/or it ignores and devalues local culture and knowledge. A curriculum with an ‘urbancentric’ focus used in a rural environment not only reinforces the negative sentiment of ‘backwardness’ often expressed in relation to ribeirinhos, and in the Amazon region itself, but also goes against the definition of curriculum itself.

The curriculum illustrates the representations of culture in everyday life, not constituted only by factual knowledge, but also by the representations of this knowledge by individuals and social groups. Therefore, the curricula embody both the conceptions of social life and the social relations that animate that culture (Anaya, Lemos, and Lima 2006:151).

When asked about problems in education, Welton, a teacher in the interior of Gurupá, stated that one major issue is that the content of materials are “outside the reality” of students. In a semi-structured interview with Elton, a rural education coordinator in Currálinho, he spoke at length

about the problems that occur when the curriculum does not match the lived reality of students. He explained that part of the problem is that most teachers that work in the interior are not from there, they are from town (Currálinho) or from large urban areas like Belém. Most of them have little or no knowledge of daily life in the interior and lack an understanding of children's lived experiences there (and sometimes in the town itself if they are from Belém). As a result, they do not alter their curriculum to match the realities of students they are teaching. He continued:

When I speak with teachers or go visit their classes in the interior, I don't see a single difference in their classes there and when they are here in town teaching. They think that they can do the same thing, use the same content. They are not the same and have different realities, and there should be a different curriculum too. What ends up happening is that the student finishes school, but the content that he studied, what he learned, will be of no validity – no use – whatsoever there in the interior. The point of curriculum is to make the student learn something that he will put into practice there, in that reality, in his community. He (the student) thinks, 'I am learning something here that provides no service for me, I can't actually apply it in my life.' There needs to be real changes in the curriculum, we need to readapt it based on the reality of the student and enable the teachers to work in a different way.

Berto also mentioned the curriculum based on his teaching experience in the interior. He stated that "the didactic materials that are sent to teach in the interior are based in a totally different reality, a different life, with cars, different fruits and foods than what these kids are accustomed to." Learning new things is part of education, but primary learning materials that present daily life with cars, buses, and large buildings are completely foreign to children who travel to school by boat and possibly have never ridden in a car, much less seen or been inside a large building. Josenilda Silva (1993) says that the curriculum is one of the biggest problems that ribeirinho schools face. Even though they represent 69.4% of the educational reality in the state of Pará, the model of education and curriculum is based on urban characteristics that ignores the sociocultural peculiarities of these locations, their cultural richness, and historically constructed knowledge (Silva 1993; Anaya, Lemos, and Lima 2006).

The lack of or difficulty in transportation affects children living in rural areas in both communities where schools are few and far between or where small local schools have been closed due to 'nucleation' and moved to locations much farther away. Adults in Currálinho (12%) and Gurupá (44%) stated that lack of or inconsistent transportation was a major cause of truancy and dropping out of school (See Table 2). In 2004, a national program for school transportation was instituted into law, O Programa Nacional de Apoio ao Transporte do Escolar (PNATE), guaranteeing access to all students (pre-school through secondary education) residing in rural areas that need transportation (Fundo Nacional de Desenvolvimento da Educação [FNDE] n.d.). This program is managed by the state Municipal Secretary of Education and Culture (SEMEC). SEMEC hires local people to use their privately-owned boats to take children, teachers, and other school employees to school and return them home (Instituto Peabiru 2011). Each boat owner receives fuel and pay for their time. FNDE (n.d.:8) requires the following safety measures for water transport:

All vessels used for school transport must be equipped with life vests in the same proportion of its capacity, be registered with the Port Authority, and maintain authorization to traffic in a visible place. It is also recommended that the vessel has cover for protection against the sun and rain, side rails for fall protection, and [be in] good quality and good condition.

However, these safety requirements are rarely achieved in Currálinho or Gurupá, not because of lack of care or concern, but due to lack of financial means to accommodate the sheer volume of students transported each day. Carmo (2016) found that the majority of children (95.8%) who live in the interior depend on daily transportation in order to get to school. For approximately 7000 students in Currálinho and 9000 students in Gurupá, their only transport to school is by boat (Carmo 2016). Giovanna Tedesco, Giovanna Megumi, and Rozangela Gasparini (2015), in their study of rural school transportation in Brazil, found that 90.5% of school boats do not have any life vests, and the remaining 9.5% that do, do not have enough for every passenger. There are other issues involved with transportation, such as a stalling or broken motor, lack of gas, long hours for conductors, and slow reimbursement or nonpayment for purchased gas and time worked. If there are problems with the boat or the driver, children are left without transportation and cannot attend school.

There are also serious issues of safety, in which boat operators are not only responsible for safe driving and care of the boat, but they are also responsible for the safety and care of multiple children as young as five years old during the commute. Carmo (2016), in interviews with parents in the interior of Currálinho, found that many worried about the safety of their children, especially those who are very young. In one interview, a mother stated that “I do worry, because he is only six-year-old, but I let him go because it is required, not because I trust the driver. There are a lot of mothers of small children that won’t allow them to go. Because the bigger children usually do bad things to the little ones” (Carmo 2016:225). Another mother recounted when her son fell out of the boat and the driver was not the one to help him.

No, no I do not have [confidence in the driver]. Now all of my children can swim, but not before. The conductor said that he was not responsible for my son. I did not put my son in school because I wanted to, but you know how things work nowadays. I receive Bolsa Família and they demand that he go to school...my son fell into the water and it was not even him [the driver] who got my son, it was another person who helped. He thinks that it is not his responsibility. I think that there should be no less than two people on the boat, one to take care of the kids and the other to drive, because he is not going to take care of the kids and see what is happening in the front [while driving the boat] (Carmo 2016:225).

Carmo (2016:225) states that these are not isolated incidents, and that there “are situations, that expose the students to constant danger” while being transported to school on the rivers throughout Currálinho. Thiago, a 27-year-old school administrator in Currálinho, pointed out several problems involved in transportation concerning reliability and trustworthiness.

When children do not arrive to school [here in town] from the interior, they will send someone to find out what happened, and they discover that there was no gas

for the boat and the driver did not bother to try and get any. Other times the boat driver will pick up only certain children and leave others at home or when picking up the girls, they were targets of jokes and insinuations [harassment]. Then, there are times when the driver picks them up, but does not show up to take them home, and the students unfortunately must sleep at a friend's or neighbor's house, or someone that they may know in town. This is a big problem.

From this perspective, parents are faced with difficult decisions concerning the transportation of their children to and from school. If a child is unable to return home in the evenings because the driver did not return and there is no other transportation available, even though law guarantees it, there is often no means available to inform the families. There is no cell phone or land line service that reaches into the interior, and CB radios found in many interior homes have a limited radius for communication.

Many students in both communities travel long distances to attend school, some more than two hours each way, often leaving their homes before daylight (5am-6am) and return home very late in the afternoon. In a study conducted in Currálinho by Tenório et al. (2009:10-11), a local teacher and school director describe the hardships that students endure just to arrive at school, often having to leave their homes at dawn without breakfast or food for lunch and travelling over an hour inside loud uncomfortable boats.

They come from the interior by boat and there are some that leave [their homes] so early. The first stop is at 5:30 in the morning, but they don't arrive to school until 7. There are some that arrive without having even a cup of coffee and there are others that arrive eating only fruit that is found on their land (Prof. R.T. Currálinho – PA).

School transportation is a very big concern, because we know what happens, the difficulties [children face], stuck with that noise [from the motor] inside the boat, hungry, bad situations, often there is no food [at school], and great discomfort (Director Nuclear da Escola – N.T. Currálinho).

Elton pointed out that kids give up a lot in order to go to school, especially in the interior, as some live very long distances away from school and spend more than three hours commuting in noisy, gas-fume filled boats.

The type of boat used is so loud, it's not adequate to transport students. The noise from the engine never stops, it must damage their hearing. I don't know how these students do it, arrive to the school to find classrooms that are so hot. There is no air conditioning, there is no fan to cool them. There is no electricity. Often, there is no merenda – school food – and many of the students, most of the time, leave home hungry, with not so much as a cup of coffee before leaving and they arrive to school to find no food. They are so hungry they can't learn. Just imagine, a kid decides to not work during the açaí harvest one day and go to school instead. And he arrives there to the class and the teacher did not show up...he thinks, 'I lost a whole day of work, I could have picked açaí and earned money, instead I came

here for nothing.’ This doesn’t just happen in the interior either, it happens in the towns as well.

Some schools cannot even be reached during times of inclement weather. Rebeca, an interior teacher in Gurupá, stated that children miss school when it is storming, because the wind creates high dangerous waves that are impassable in the small boats, especially when they must cross larger areas of water. At the other end of the extreme, Ceazar, a 37-year-old teacher in the interior of Gurupá, explained that during the dry seasonal summer months when the water is very low, “the boat is unable to reach the school, the only way to get there is by small canoe.”

I experienced this scenario myself when visiting an interior school approximately one hour outside the town of Gurupá. The dry season had already reduced the small waterway significantly and it appeared that the boat was almost touching both banks as we passed. Fernanda, who is a teacher at the school but lives in town, travels each day to work by boat. During our morning commute, as we slowly passed small wooden homes built on stilts along the river’s edge, stopping every few minutes to pick up students, she told me about each family and many of the problems they face. She explained that during the dry season the water gets so low that no boat, other than a canoe, can pass, closing school for up to two months. She pointed out that this is particularly stressful on families, not only because children suffer educationally, but also because the majority of families are extremely poor and sometimes one of the only meals that children receive is at school.

As Fernanda pointed out, many children do not have adequate food intake at home and rely on school lunches for sustenance. It is important to remember that 95% of Currelinheses and 88% of Gurupaenses live in either poverty or extreme poverty, and the state of Pará has one of the highest indices of child malnutrition in the country. Research shows that food insecurity and hunger affect children’s ability to learn and they are more likely to miss school (Levinger 1992, Jyoti et al. 2005, Ramsey et al. 2011, Roustit 2010). It is difficult to imagine how a child, who has left home at five in the morning without any food and spends two hours traveling to school, is expected to learn and focus, knowing that there will be no lunch or snack until they arrive back at home in the afternoon, if even then. Almost every teacher and those involved in education told me that hunger is a major issue for students, and when there is a lack of food at school, students stop coming. Benedita, a 47-year-old interior teacher in Gurupá, cited the lack of merenda as the biggest reason that children do not come to school.

Berto provided an example from his time teaching in the interior about the insecurity of food and the often mundane quality of it in interior schools.

The second school that I taught at in the interior, the kids didn’t eat much of the food provided because for seven straight months, it was the exact same: rice and beans. Nothing else, just this. This is really bad too, because the majority of kids that came to school did so just to eat. They didn’t have food at home. In some of the interior communities, the winter months are especially hard because the river floods and it’s hard to find fish and there is no açaí.

Supporting Berto’s experience, Elton said that the food sent to many of the small interior schools is very basic because they lack a kitchen at the school. Some schools only have a ‘tiny stove’ equivalent to one burner and others must build a fire outside to cook. These schools receive things that are easy to make like powdered juices, crackers, and things like this. The larger

schools equipped with kitchens and stoves to prepare food receive better food like chicken, beans, rice, spaghetti noodles, etc. In my many visits to schools in both communities, it was apparent that the small interior schools did receive inferior quality food, leaving them to serve students a handful of saltine crackers and a cup of fruit punch, while students in town received full meals.

In both communities, school infrastructure is a serious problem. Adequate learning spaces are vital in the educational process for student learning and development (Carmo 2016). Sergei Soares, Renata Razo, e Mayte Fariñas (2006:47) point out that good educational results are directly linked to quality of “teachers, physical infrastructure, approaches and pedagogical inputs [that] have an impact on student learning and progression.” Kenn Fisher (2001) found that building conditions influenced student academic achievement and behavior, especially in factors related to temperature and acoustics. He found “overwhelming evidence” between “the thermal environment and academic achievement and student behavior” (2001:6). Temperatures above 77 °F, especially combined with high humidity levels (above 65%), have detrimental physiological effects that result in decreased mental efficiency, work output, and performance. The average daytime temperature in Curralinho and Gurupá is between 87°F – 94°F, with excessively high humidity (75% and above). Schools located in the urban center rarely have air-conditioned classrooms, are often extremely crowded, and are constantly bombarded with noise from other classrooms and road traffic. Granted, while people in the region are more accustomed to the climate, buildings and classrooms that receive direct sunlight and not equipped with air-conditioning are almost unbearable.

In the interior, lack of air-conditioning, overcrowdedness, and noise are only part of the problem. Schools that do not have a dedicated structure take place in shared spaces of community centers, churches, or even someone’s home. Carmo (2016) found that 50% of Curralinho’s interior schools function in shared spaces. The locations that do have dedicated school structures are typically open-air, with only two full walls separating individual classrooms. The majority of schools lack basic sanitation, electricity, running water, and doors/windows that could offer protection from the near daily torrential downpours and equatorial sun. During the rainy season (December – July), the average monthly rainfall is between 8 – 13 inches. Many interior schools also lack basic educational supplies, like paper, pencils, colored pencils/crayons, and books. Numerous teachers told me that they spend their own money to provide students with minimal supplies, but that it never is enough.

In all my visits to interior schools, I would always bring something to contribute. One school in Gurupá, located in a quilombola reserve approximately one hour outside of town, was especially impoverished. There was no ‘library,’ many of the desks were broken, paper was in short supply, and the merenda was nothing more than a few crackers and two cookies served with a small cup of powdered juice mix. The first day I visited, I brought lollypops and several packs of colored pencils. The following day, I ran into one of the teachers from the school in town. She said that the children were so happy and appreciative of my visit, telling her that it was like Santa Clause had come to their school because they all received treats. Later, in the solitude of my room, I broke down into tears, angry at their reality, and guilty for my own.

Both municipalities have disproportionately high rates of age-for-grade distortions (over-age for expected grade). In Curralinho, 35% of elementary school children and 37% of middle school children have age-for-grade discrepancies. In Gurupá, 59% of elementary school children and 63% of middle school children are not in the appropriate grade for their age. Mary Arends-Kuenning, Ana Kassouf, Ana Fava, and Alexandre Almeida (2005) found that Brazilian children

with age-for-grade distortions were more likely to drop out when they became adolescents. Multiple factors contribute to this problem, and according to the Brazilian Ministry of Education (2004:16), “it is crucial to consider poor school performance in basic education,” as well as poor quality education, that increases the likelihood of dropping out. Children also miss school and fall behind due to work and familial responsibilities outside of school. Many children in the Marajó region stop attending school to work exclusively for their families, or because they have become pregnant and must care for their new children (Instituto Peabiru 2011). This creates a cycle of falling behind, performing poorly, and ultimately dropping out of school altogether. Gilberto Dimenstien (1995:110), in a study of children’s human rights in Brazil, found that there is more than one aspect of this vicious cycle, “they earn less because they have little education. And since they do not have time to study because of work, they continue to earn less. Almost half of these young workers (46.3%) attend school for less than four years.”

Curralinhese (34%) and Gurupaense (47%) children cited the lack of parental/familial support as the most significant factor for truancy and dropping out of school entirely. Curralinhese adults (32%) also cited it as the most significant factor, while Gurupaense adults (33%) cited it as the second most significant factor (See Table 2). Parental involvement and support are consistently related to children’s educational aspirations and academic success (Hara and Burke, 1998; Hill & Craft, 2003; Marcon, 1999; Stevenson and Baker, 1987; Topor et. al 2010). In a semi-structured interview with Randel, a 31-year-old education specialist in Curralinho, he said that it is very common for children to follow in their parent’s footsteps when it comes to education and their future. If the father is a fisherman, that is what the son will do unless he gets an education.

We need to stop this passing of jobs from father to son, and stay at it, because school, in my opinion, is the only form in which we can make these changes, it is the only way to try and change these patterns. To show that to have an education gives possibilities, to have new perspectives, dreams, growth.

Berto, after teaching several years in the region, felt that the majority of children do not receive much, if any, support from their families when it comes to education.

In the majority of ribeirinho families, not all, but many, do not give the necessary support to their children. They don’t work in partnership with the school, and once the student arrives home, the parents never ask if there are any problems, if their child is struggling with anything, what did you learn today? The families just don’t give any attention to this.

Speaking with Rui, the director of the Conselho Tutelar in Gurupá, he also pointed to lack of parental involvement, not only in education, but in their children’s lives in general.

I asked the teachers and school directors here in town how many parents visit the school and they all said that less than 10%. I have parents who come here, complaining about the schools giving their children bad grades and causing them to fail. Then we go to the school and ask what the problem is, the teachers tell the parent and me, ‘your child shows up to school less than 30% of the time.’ The parents then tell me that they see them get dressed for school and leave, but they

have to work and assume that they are in school. They tell me the same thing when I find their children in adult dance halls. I go to their houses and they say, 'I didn't know that my child wasn't at home or was at a dance club,' because they don't ask, there are no conversations about anything. Many times I take a child home that has been involved in risky behavior and the parents take no responsibility for it, they do nothing about it, and the child goes right back out and does the same thing.

In relation to these problems in education, many children and their families see little value in staying in school. The local economies in both Currálinho and Gurupá struggle and there is lack of available jobs for the educated and uneducated. Thiago, a 27-year-old school secretary in Currálinho, pointed out that it is difficult to convince someone to stay in school, when it actually may not affect their financial outcome and the jobs available to them now are the same ones that will be available after they complete school.

In general, the biggest problem that we have is evasion and abandonment [of school], not only here [in Currálinho], but throughout the region. And why? Because, for us, we don't have any companies, we don't have industries, the work that we do have here revolves around the prefeitura (city hall) and local commerce. So the majority of the students conclude, "I'll go be a mototaxi, or I'll go work in the local market...the prefeitura jobs are already full," and it is a hard conclusion. The new workforce entering the market will hardly have a chance unless he has a godfather that has connections. We try to keep them in school, and show them that we will provide support, food, knowledge, and that any proposals and projects that they may be inserted, serves as a means to keep them, so that in the future they can easily enter the labor market. But, unfortunately, to this day, we have not been able to eliminate this issue of evasion. First, because part of the family, I have families today with 7 children who are in school and then as they progress in their studies, they realize that their parents stopped [school] in the 3rd or 4th grade, and begin to ask the question, "if my father stopped in the 3rd or 4th grade, why should I continue? What am I doing here, I've already passed them, I'm in the 6th or 7th grade. What do I do after I graduate? Where do I go? What does this city, this municipality, have to offer me?" We don't have university or college here. We don't have the vestibular here. There is nothing, nothing, nothing! And the other big problem is that at the beginning of the year, we have a large contingent of students who enroll and attend the first semester and have their first or second evaluations, and at the very first sign of a bad grade, they give up.

Thiago's comments summarize the problems that families face in making decisions about their children's education. If no clear advantages are seen in the financial and personal sacrifices that many make in order to educate their children, it is difficult to convince them otherwise.

CHAPTER 7

CHILD LABOR IN CURRALINHO AND GURUPÁ

Current literature on child labor in the Amazon is limited and data on cultural interpretations of child labor in the Marajó region are rare. Estimates of the incidence of child labor in Currálinho and Gurupá vary depending on the entity collecting the information, resulting in substantial distortions in the reported number of working children in each municipality. For example, Brazil's 2010 Census recorded 712 (22.73% of children 10 to 13-years-old) cases of child labor in Currálinho (IBGE 2010). However, the Cadastro Único (CADÚNICO), which is the survey unit utilized by the Federal Government to identify eligibility for social assistance programs like Bolsa Família, recorded only 155 cases of child labor, ages 15 and under, for the entire municipality in 2016. In Gurupá, data disparities between these two entities are larger. The 2010 Census recorded 906 (27.59% of children 10 to 13-years-old) cases of child labor in Gurupá. However, CADÚNICO recorded only 81 cases of child labor, ages 15 and under, for the entire municipality in 2016. OIT (2017) states that while data were recorded through different surveys and periods in both municipalities, there is no way the difference in reported cases could be this large. These sizable discrepancies reflect “the need to expand and strengthen the search for children in these situations to ensure that families are adequately registered, thus guaranteeing access to the social protection system” (OIT 2017:7).

As discussed in Chapter 4, the elite ideal of childhood, which separates children from the daily activities of adults, is a luxury unavailable to many families in Currálinho and Gurupá. Wagley (1976:178) suggests that the ideals of childhood and child labor “differ considerably from the norms of behavior.” While “people of all classes would like to achieve the ideal of protecting their children – the insecure economic plight of most people in Itá (Gurupá), the instability of marital relations, and the resulting broken families do not create a situation favorable” to do so (1976:178). All too often, adults cannot procure sufficient employment to support their families and rely on their children's work contributions for survival. Considering adults' need for children's remunerated and nonremunerated contributions, Shcildkrout (1980) makes an important point about adults' and children's mutual interdependence. She states that “while the dependence of children upon adults is universally acknowledged as a biological and cultural given, the dependence of adults on children is often ignored. In many societies, however, the dependence of adults on children is considerable and often has a significant material base” (481).

In the rural municipalities throughout the Marajó region, child labor is hidden. It is not necessarily hidden purposefully or intentionally, but since most work performed by children takes place in non-public settings, unless one spends a considerable amount of time looking, it will rarely, if ever, be seen. Children are working behind closed doors in their own homes or in the homes of others as domestic servants. They are working deep in the rainforest on their family's roça, planting and processing manioc, and/or fishing. They are also working in the top of the rainforest canopy extracting fruits like açai, palmito, and pupunha for sustenance and sale.

Domestic labor and forest extraction—particularly of açai—are among the activities defined by the ILO as the worst forms of child labor, in which children suffer and are exposed to mental

and physical harm. Yet, child labor laws do not touch these places. These Amazonian children's daily existences resemble nothing of what many consider to be a 'normal' childhood and their guaranteed fundamental rights, as stated by human rights and labor organizations, of basic needs like food and clothing, education, and physical, mental, and emotional protection are infrequently experienced or in some cases totally absent.

The lack of these essential rights is not a result of family choice, but more specifically, their lack of alternatives. Sometimes, there is no other option. As one interviewee from Currálinho stated, "these kids don't even know the word childhood or what it means. They are never taught this word, no one speaks of it." I was told by more than one person that children as young as age 12, especially in the interior, get married, start families, form drinking habits, etc. and by the time they are in their 20s, their lives, bodies, and faces resemble someone that is twice their age. Their hands are calloused from years of hard labor and they often, unintentionally, repeat the pattern with their own children, because like their own parents and those before them, they had few options. As a representative for the Comissão para Erradicação do Trabalho Infantil (Commission for the Eradication of Child Labor [CETI]) stated so clearly at a child labor prevention conference in Gurupá, "the premature work feeds a vicious cycle of misery and destroys dreams."

To analyze the circumstances for and the occurrences of children's work in rural household extractive economies like açai, I first had to understand Currálinhese and Gurupaense perspectives on child labor. As with the cultural construct of childhood, child labor must be located within the sociocultural and economic contexts where it occurs, as social expectations and economic needs are integral in decision-making concerning the allocation of children's time. Child labor cannot be divorced from its socioeconomic significance and must be evaluated "in relation to the total life experience of the child, particularly in future occupational opportunities" (Schildkrout 1980:480). In order to gain a more in-depth local perspective, I focused on three broad questions: 1) Is there a gender division in children's work? 2) At what age do children normally begin to work? 3) What types of work do children do?

Currálinhese and Gurupaense Perspectives

Gender remains a significant factor in the segregation of daily life and work in Currálinho and Gurupá, determining the roles in which boys and girls are expected to engage. Children's behavior tends to mimic adult behavior, following the examples of those around them. Parents and families are guided by gendered expectations that determines who works and where (Gustafsson-Wright and Pyne 2002). Men tend to occupy more dominant and publicly visible roles, whereas women tend to occupy more submissive and less publicly visible roles. Men work in public spaces, often in plain view of the community, and are supposed to be the breadwinners of the family (da Matta 1987). Women oversee the domestic sector, hidden away from the public, caring for the household and the children (da Matta 1987; Wagely 1976). Men avoid domestic tasks, while women are only in public alone if they have a specific reason to do so (Hendrickson 2006). Public life and expected behavior is still very much based on *machismo* (exaggerated masculinity), especially in the Amazon. This forms a hierarchy based on gender and seniority, placing very young children and girls at the bottom and adult males at the top (Nieuwenhuys 1995). While there have always been exceptions (see Wagley's discussion of Dona Dora) and women occupy more nontraditional public roles today than in the past, spaces and activities continued to be defined by gendered norms that require adherence. Men and boys have fewer restrictions in public behavior, but women and girls who do not acquiesce to these

norms often are labeled as 'bad.' A 'bad woman/girl' is defined as one who does not adhere to social expectations, which can generate negative consequences in professional/personal interactions and relationships (Hendrickson 2006).

Gendered divisions in daily life and work in Currálinho and Gurupá, however, do not go unquestioned. Abel, a 15-year-old middle school student in Currálinho, described the inequalities between boys and girls that he sees around him.

Boys have a lot of freedom to play, run around, have fun with their friends, but this is just for us. For girls, it's different and [they] have little freedom because they are women and have things to do at home, like taking care of their siblings. They don't have time to play because they have to learn how to do all of these things [at home]. But this is wrong, everyone should have equal rights.

Comments such as these from the younger generation of men is a sign of a change in attitudes about gender roles and equality. In my interactions in both communities, the differences between the younger generation (25-years-old and under) and the older generation were apparent. In all the households that I lived in and visited, I was constantly surprised by young men and boys doing chores that once would have been considered taboo, like cooking, cleaning, washing dishes, and caring for children, even in the presence of women and other men. However, most of these homes were headed by single women. There was a marked difference in homes with males and females from the older generation, where gendered boundaries in work and daily life were still firmly in place.

Even though changes are occurring, some girls clearly resent the early responsibilities they shoulder and their lack of freedom, or more specifically, resent the freedom that most boys enjoy. Luiciana, an 18-year-old freshman who lives in the interior of Currálinho, stated that "boys have so much more freedom than girls...and because of this, girls feel like prisoners most of the time [at home], while boys can go wherever they want to." This applies to adult women as well, as shown in surveys conducted by Pace (1999) in Gurupá, where the majority of respondents (74%) stated that women should not frequent bars (and never without a male) and that it was ugly for women to smoke (61.4%). While men are afforded the right to drink, smoke, converse loudly, and relax in public spaces, women are expected to avoid these types of behaviors. Women who participate in these activities without a man's presence, or even in the company of men, are also considered 'bad women,' or even prostitutes, depending on the situation (Hendrickson 2006). Women and girls are rarely seen in public spaces alone and 'just doing nothing.'

The general gendered boundaries that appear in adult behavior determines chores and work for children. Boys work outside of the home alone or with their fathers and girls work in the home with their mothers or for another family performing domestic tasks. Based on my research, the predominant types of work for younger children (approximately 14 years of age and under) are limited to a few basic areas. For girls in town, there is domestic work and prostitution. In the interior, girls assist in roça maintenance and producing farinha. For boys in town, they sell goods on the streets as vendors and general manual labor that involves hauling things, dock work, and assisting in construction. In the interior, boys pick various fruits as extractors, collect and cut wood, assist in roça and açáizal maintenance, and fish. Older children have slightly more options. Boys and girls both can work in local shops as store clerks, if there are openings. In town, boys also work as moto taxis drivers as well as go to the interior to extract forest products.

When asking adults and children about the normal age a person begins to work, answers began as early as five-years-old (See Table X). There were no responses for children below four-years-old. In Currálinho, the majority of respondents (48%) said that children began working between the ages of nine and 14-years-old, with only 2% citing children below eight-years-old. In Gurupá, 36% of respondents said that children began working between the ages of nine and 14-years-old, with 14% citing children between the ages of five to eight-years-old. The age group most cited in both Currálinho (35%) and Gurupá (32%) to begin work was 15-16 years old. These numbers, interestingly, coincide with US employment rates in 2014 that show 34% of 16-17-year-old teens worked full or part-time (Morisi 2017).

Table 3. Typical Age Children Start Working (Remunerated/Unremunerated) N=178

Age	Currálinho		Gurupá	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
5-6 Years Old	0%	0%	8%	5%
7-8 Years Old	4%	0%	10%	5%
9-10 Years Old	13%	14%	8%	13%
11-12 Years Old	10%	17%	8%	15%
13-14 Years Old	21%	21%	23%	5%
15-16 Years Old	28%	42%	26%	38%
17+ Years Old	21%	8%	15%	21%

There was no significant difference for starting work age between children living in town and children living in the interior. This surprised me, as the lack of difference contradicted comments given during interviews and in self-administered ethnographic questionnaires. Two possibilities likely explain the difference in responses: sampling and/or question design. I used a convenience sample in both communities. In Currálinho, 81% of participants currently lived in town. In Gurupá, I was able to spend more time in interior communities, and 51% of respondents currently lived in the interior, which possibly explains the higher percentages of children five to eight-years-old starting work (14% Gurupá compared to 2% in Currálinho).

The second possibility is question design. In self-administered questionnaires (see Appendix A), respondents were asked ‘When do boys/girls begin working?’ which prompted responses based on numerical age. However, in a different question, ‘Is childhood the same for children who live in town compared to children who live in the interior?’, 34% of Currálinhenses and 18% of Gurupaenses responded that children in the interior are ‘practically born working’ or ‘they don’t have a childhood because they start working and have responsibilities from the time they are very small,’ whereas children in town focus more on educational, recreational, and leisure activities, starting work when they are much older.

The differences between the age of boys starting work and girls starting work did not necessarily surprise me. In both Currálinho and Gurupá, respondents cited that boys start work earlier than girls until the age of nine. In this context, girls’ work is often regarded as training and a duty to family well-being, not as genuine work, because it takes place in the domestic sector and is largely unremunerated. In most cases, their work produces no physical product, as it often entails the endless repetitive tasks of tending children, washing clothes, cooking, cleaning, and maintaining the domestic area. Although no economic ends are met through domestic work in one’s own home, it does free up others to pursue these ends. Without girls’ domestic

contribution to the household, economic activities of producing and selling would not be possible for others in the home. In contrast, boys' work is often highly valued as it generally entails producing or selling something and is typically remunerated. It often takes place in the public sector and therefore, is more visible, and/or their work has a physical product that can be seen and valued by others.

The gender segregation between boys' and girls' work, the location where each occurs, and whether it is remunerated or unremunerated does not exclude either one from potential mental and/or physical harm. Boys encounter dangers by being unaccompanied in public spaces, leaving them vulnerable to abuse or assault and long hours of manual labor. For those who work in extraction, especially açai, they are exposed to countless dangers. While this ethnographic study focuses on children's work contributions in açai production, performed most often by boys, it is important to include girl's work in this study for three significant reasons. First, throughout the amazon, little data exists on the daily lives of children or their work. This study contributes to the anthropology of childhood, highlighting the hidden nature of children's work and the complexities of their daily lives in this region. Second, based on gendered expectations in both communities, girls are generally excluded from types of work that earn a cash wage (like açai), leaving them dependent upon others to satisfy economic wants and needs. Third, the two most commonly available jobs for girls, domestic work and prostitution, exposes them to hazards related to cooking, cleaning, repetitive tasks, and a work schedule that is round the clock, especially when caring for small children. If they work as a maid outside of their own home, they are exposed to innumerable dangers of mistreatment, mental and physical abuse, sexual abuse and sexual assault, and even death. Due to the isolation of these types of jobs, girls have few resources to ask for help or seek support. Both domestic work and prostitution are considered among the Worst Forms of Child Labor as defined by the ILO.

Girls' Work

Domestic work is the most common type of work performed by girls in Currálinho and Gurupá (and throughout the world). Domestic labor is described as any work that occurs within or around one's home or in the home of another. Typical duties of domestic work include childcare, elderly care, cooking, cleaning, washing and ironing clothes, yard maintenance, and any other activity that keeps a household functioning. Often, these tasks are referred to as training and preparation for a girl's future life in marriage and adulthood, as Ruth explained in Chapter 5 (Ribeirinho Childhood). In other instances, a young girl assumes domestic duties in her family home enabling the mother to work outside the home. While this type of work is unremunerated, it is an important feature of family survival. By freeing the mother from household responsibilities, she can then seek employment that pays a cash wage.

In Currálinho and Gurupá, everyone I spoke with said that most girls begin helping in domestic chores by the age of five and by age eight may be responsible for the majority of work in the home, depending on their family situation. Laura, an 18-year-old 8th grader from Gurupá explained, "at 8-years-old, girls are taking care of their siblings and the [responsibilities of] the entire house. Sometime between eight and ten, some girls will start to work outside the house, sometimes selling clothes or working as *empregadas* (maids) in the house of a family member." It is in these situations, when girls try to earn a wage or exchange work for other benefits, like education and/or better living conditions, that the already existing dangers of the job increase dramatically, especially in terms of exploitation and abuse (Black 2006). Typically, these jobs

are negotiated by a girl's parents, leaving her powerless over the terms and conditions" (Black 2002:2).

On the surface, domestic work may appear nonthreatening and less dangerous when compared to other forms of child labor that are clearly mentally and physically hazardous, such as factory work and mining. However, child domestic laborers are among the most vulnerable, invisible, and inaccessible of all child workers because their work occurs in private informal settings where authorities must have a court order to enter, leaving them reluctant to intervene without proper authorization (Bass 2004: Black 2002: Galvani 2012: Levinson & Langer 2010). According to Decree 6481, passed by Brazil in 2008, domestic child labor is considered one of the Worst Forms of Child Labor defined in Convention 182 by the ILO, and for this reason is not permitted for children under the age of 18-years-old (Presidência da República 2008). UNICEF (1999) cites domestic work as one of the most poorly remunerated, least regulated, and among the lowest in status of all occupations. Unlike jobs that take place in formal settings, domestic work has no regulated hours or pay. The ILO/OIT (2005) found that children in domestic labor work an average of 42.6 hours per week, with hours increasing with age. For those who work alone or in households other than their own, researchers (Bass 2004: Black 1996, 2002: Levinson & Langer 2010) state that domestic work, of which 98% is performed by young girls, puts them in physical and psychological danger. While in some situations "they may be treated kindly and allowed to attend school," there are other situations where "they may be secluded in their employer's home, overworked, verbally abused, beaten, and unable to leave or report their difficulties to kin" (Levinson & Langer 2010:1).

Physically, there are issues of fatigue, accidents, and sexual exploitation. Because domestic work is a 24-hour job, especially when caring for infants and small children, fatigue is common. Accidents such as burns, cuts, and strained muscles can occur during cooking while using sharp knives, boiling water, fires, and gas burners. For homes that lack running water, it must be hauled from another location to complete all domestic tasks. All this may be done while supervising and caring for younger children. Psychologically, there are issues of verbal, physical, and sexual abuse, as well as discrimination, isolation, and deprivation of education and nurturing relationships, all which impact future opportunities and relationships.

For example, in 2005 in Pará, a family from the small interior community of Vigia negotiated a job for their 11-year-old daughter, Marielma, to work as a nanny and housekeeper for a young couple in the capital city of Belém. In exchange for her services, Marielma was to receive clothing, room and board, basic necessities, and be allowed to continue her education. Unfortunately, none of the negotiated benefits occurred and three months after leaving her family, Marielma was dead. The mother lamented, in interviews after her daughter's death, "I promised her a better life. To study, [have new] clothes, shoes, and food" (G1 5/24/2016). According to the police report, the young girl had been raped, tortured, received electrical shocks, and eventually beaten to death. The couple responsible was convicted of several crimes, including child labor, and received lengthy prison sentences (G1 5/24/2016). The case received international attention due to its brutality, but according to Leane Chermont (n.d.), 34% of domestic workers experience violence and 47% experience some type of sexual abuse. While this is but one extreme example, it does reveal the dangers that young girls face in domestic service situations in the pursuit of a better life.

There are also issues of discrimination and educational challenges. Domestic workers have inferior living conditions, including smaller food portions or only receiving leftovers, compared to those who employ or 'care' for them. An empregada generally must wait until

everyone else is done eating before she is allowed to eat, and often eats alone standing in the kitchen or even outside (Black 1996). Educational attainment diminishes, as they are less likely to attend school, or for those who do, they often reach only a lower primary level. While combining the heavy domestic work load with school, these young workers are often too tired to keep up with their school cohort, as their educational responsibilities come only after their domestic duties are completed. As a result, they frequently fall behind, increasing the likelihood of dropping out of school completely (Arends-Kuenning et al 2005; Black 1996).

During my fieldwork, I never personally witnessed overtly abusive or illegal domestic child labor, but that is not surprising considering the hidden nature of the work. However, while staying with a local family during my first visit to Gurupá in 2003, and with another family in northeastern state of Ceará in 2004, I did observe eating restrictions and inferior living conditions of the young live-in empregadas, who both told me that they were 18-years-old. In both homes, they waited to eat until everyone in the house had finished and left the table, eating only what was left, which sometimes was a minimal amount. Both girls attended school in the afternoon, but I never once saw them doing school work. In one home, which was adorned with expensive furnishings, marble floors, and located in one of the most expensive areas of a large cosmopolitan city, the empregada slept in a closet size room off the kitchen on a mat on the floor between a washing machine and a sink, where she washed, dried, and pressed the family's clothes. She related to me many times that she feared that she would lose her job because the mother of the family did not like her attending school, because she said that "it took too much time away from her domestic duties." Meanwhile, the 16-year-old son of the family attended private school, received private tutoring in preparation for the Vestibular exam, and was waited on hand and foot by the empregada, who was only two years his elder.

The combination of physical and psychological factors involved in domestic child labor have lasting repercussions in education, work, and social relationships. Renato Mendes, national Brazilian ILO coordinator for PETI, points out that domestic child laborers are more submissive and introverted, "characteristics developed by a child...[that] assumes an adult role" who has little time for educational and personal development (Galvani 2012). Researchers have found that 68.5% of domestic child laborers are behind in school, affecting future employment opportunities, in addition to the psychological issues of low self-esteem, depression, and relationship problems (Alberto 2005; Alberto & Santos 2011; Black 1996; Levinson & Langer 2010; Oyaide 2000).

According to Nações Unidas no Brasil (ONUBR) (2014), in 2011 Brazil had 258,000 children between 5-17 years old in situations of domestic child labor in homes other than their own. In the same year, the state of Pará had the 4th highest rates of children in domestic work situations (19.3%) in all of Brazil, only after Minas Gerais (31.3%), Bahia (26.6%), and São Paulo (20.3%). Soraya, who works for the health department in Gurupá, told me that "it is really sad sometimes because there are very young girls who are hired to work as empregadas as young as seven or eight. I know of families right now who have this situation." When I asked others if this was a common practice, I was told by many in both communities that yes, this is normal. Several women told me that by the time they were 12-years-old, they were sent by their families to work in the house of another family. The 2010 Brazilian Census reported 53 (4.8% of 782 recorded child labor cases) Curralinhese children and 46 (3.3% of 962 recorded child labor cases) Gurupaense children between 10-15-years-old in situations of domestic child labor (IBGE 2010). Considering the extreme hidden nature of this type of work, these numbers are likely much higher.

Sexual Exploitation of children in/for Prostitution

My initiation to the knowledge that the sexual exploitation of children in exchange for money or goods was a very real and common occurrence in the Amazon began during my master's degree fieldwork in Gurupá in 2005. Still new to the community and struggling to understand Gurupaenses' daily realities, I was naïve to think that the sexual exploitation of children in prostitution (and adult prostitution) did not exist based on the extreme poverty that I saw all around me. Once reliable sources pointed out that it was a common occurrence in the community, I began to understand just how significant of a problem it was, specifically with the involvement of children. The ILO (2008:1) defines child prostitution, or more appropriately worded as the sexual exploitation of children in prostitution so as not to stigmatize or reviolate victims, as "a transaction of cash or in kind to the child or to one or more third parties" by an adult of a child under 18-years-old (see Greijer and Doek 2016 for Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse). Like so many other forms of child labor defined by the ILO as the worst types and a violation of children's human rights, it is hidden behind closed doors and cannot be directly observed. During my first inquiries about its occurrence in 2005, I was assured by nearly everyone that it was a major problem, not only in Gurupá, but throughout the region. In 2013, this was again confirmed in Gurupá and Curralinho based on interviews, conversations, and legal posts regarding the exploitation of children in prostitution.

The Department of Justice for the State of Pará, in attempts to protect children from exploitation for prostitution and sexual violence, as well as to inform them and the general public of the laws and punishment regarding such acts, posted notices on all passenger boats traveling through the Amazon, as well as on all hotel doorways, adult-oriented establishments, and public places throughout Curralinho and Gurupá (and the Marajó region). The notices stated that it was illegal to have sex with children under the age of 15 and that such behavior would not be tolerated. The notice also outlined the applicable punishments for engaging in such misconduct and warned that any questionable behavior needed to be reported immediately to the police. The following is a partial translation of the notice (Hendrickson 2006).

Article 82 of the *Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente* (Child and Adolescent Statute), often referred to as the ECA, states that is it illegal to have a child or adolescent in a hotel, motel, or any other similar establishment without a parent/guardian or without written permission from a parent/guardian. If a violation is reported, the establishment will pay a fine of 10 to 50 minimal wages per violation. If a child or adolescent is found living in such an establishment, the establishment will be closed.

Articles 213 and 214 in combination with article 244-A of the ECA states that it is against the law and considered a crime to have any sexual relations with a child under 14 years of age. Any such acts will be considered rape or attempted rape. Such acts are punishable by law with a prison sentence of six to ten years. Exposing a child or adolescent to prostitution or sexual exploitation carries a sentence of four to ten years in prison. Persons found responsible for placing a child or adolescent into prostitution or in situations of sexual exploitation is punishable by law with a prison sentence of six to ten years.

Article 218 of the ECA states that anyone found assisting an adolescent between the ages of 14 and 18 into prostitution carries a prison sentence of one to four years for each act of facilitation.

Based on the need to place notices in nearly every location that children should not be, let alone by themselves, one must assume that the sexual exploitation of children in Brazil is well recognized as a problem. However, accurate data on its occurrence is exceedingly difficult to obtain and information varies enormously between sources.

For example, Marcel Hazeu and Frans Kranen (2014) conducted a study of available data and statistics on the sexual exploitation of children in Brazil. Their conclusions found “no straightforward answer to the research question regarding the scope and magnitude of the problem” (7). In their study, they found that the National Parliamentary Inquiry (CPI) stated that approximately 500,000 children are sexually exploited throughout Brazil, but state that the CPI could provide no information on how that figure was reached. Other studies cite between 100,000-500,000 (see Juan Petit 2003) and Jennifer Gustafson (2011) estimated that there are 250,000-400,000 children forced into prostitution. In my own attempts to review national and international data on the occurrence of child sexual exploitation in/for prostitution in Brazil, I concluded that of those considered to be the worst forms of child labor, this one in particular is amongst the most hidden, especially in terms of hard data. Like domestic child labor, it occurs in private or secluded areas, but it is even less likely to be reported due to feelings of shame and/or guilt on the victim or family’s part. Arrangements are often made clandestinely among adults, and it is not only illegal, but immoral. According to the Bureau of International Labor Affairs (2015:5), while the Federal Police have a database for cases of human trafficking for sexual exploitation, there are no mechanisms in place “to record violations related to the commercial sexual exploitation of children, including prostitution and pornography.” A cultural expert and ecological consultant that works throughout the Marajó region told the Federação Nacional dos Policiais Federais (FENAPEF 2011) during an interview, “just like malaria cases in Currálinho, which are underreported, the issue of [child sexual exploitation in] prostitution is still not seen by the government. It is a subformation. Data are missing from police stations. The girls do not report it. But it is a fact that pervades their daily lives.”

According to a survey conducted by the Brazilian Federal Department of Highway Police (2014), in conjunction with the Human Rights Secretariat of the Presidency of the Republic, Pará ranks number one in the North for points on roads and highways for the exploitation of children in prostitution and has the second highest number of points in the entire country, only behind Mato Grosso. The study identified 87 critical points throughout Pará (89 in Mato Grosso) where the sexual exploitation of children for prostitution occurs, and that number does not include waterways, which would undoubtedly make that number much higher.

In my attempts to understand the scope of the problem in Currálinho and Gurupá, I interviewed educators, public servants, residents, and directors of the *Conselho Tutelar do Direitos da Criança e do Adolescente* in both communities. Due to the sensitive nature of sexual exploitation in/for prostitution and its physical and psychological consequences, I did not include children in interviews or conversations concerning this topic. Based on my interviews, there were four primary explanations for the sexual exploitation of children; poverty, lack of available employment options, drug addiction, and sexual abuse within the family. In some instances, families were cognizant of their children’s activities in prostitution and actually help them do it,

but there are other cases when families are unaware of what is happening, and children keep the money (or goods) for themselves.

In a semi-structured interview with Sol, a 53-year-old Gurupaense woman, she said that “this [prostitution and the sexual exploitation of children] is a big problem here...many times the parents don’t even know what they [the girls] are doing and the girls don’t tell them...then they [the girls] keep the money and buy things for themselves.” In order to confirm Sol’s statements, I began speaking to everyone that I felt I had established a good relationship with in both communities. One excessively hot afternoon, I stopped into an establishment that I visited often and knew the workers well for some much-needed water and shade. While sitting on the balcony situated over the Amazon River shoreline, I told three of the women workers about some of the things that I had heard about the exploitation of children in/for prostitution in Gurupá. During the informal conversation, Marcia, a woman in her 50s, explained the harsh realities of these young girls and their involvement in prostitution.

Yes, this [prostitution and exploitation of children in prostitution] is a big problem here, especially for girls younger than 15. I know a girl here that works as a prostitute and she is very, very young...her family knows about it. Lots of times there are many young girls, even under 13 who get pregnant because of it. But it is sad about these girls who are prostitutes because all they do is ‘*trabalha trabalha, trabalha, trabalha*’ (work, work, work, work)...they don’t go to school or do anything else because all they are doing all the time is working.

Alma, a struggling 46-year old single mother of 11 children, agreed that prostitution and sexual exploitation of girls under 15 was a problem. She seemed particularly tormented by the question, and I did not pursue the topic with her upon noticing this, but she eventually said:

Yes, it is a problem, it is very common among girls 12, 13, 14, 15....but a lot of times they have to do it in order to help support their families. Many times it is the only way for some families to get money...which they need to buy food, clothes, and other things that cost money like medicine.

I knew from previous conversations with Alma that her eight-year-old son had been sick the previous week and she did not have enough money to buy the medication he needed. Her comments made it clear to me that some families have no resources and are forced to make excruciatingly difficult decisions as a matter of survival. According to Alma and the two other women, families were aware that their daughters were prostituting themselves. Sometimes the parents sent them to do it because they have no other means to earn money to support their families. The eldest woman of the three (in her late 50’s) concluded our conversation in a sad truthful tone, “Yes, this is how it is here...this is our reality.”

In Currálinho, the information was similar and child sexual exploitation in prostitution was often a way for families to survive. Randel, an education specialist in Currálinho, began by explaining that “child prostitution is a big problem and is very complicated in our region. People say that it doesn’t happen here, but it happens all of the time...ending their childhood.” He continued, relating a common cultural belief that I had been told countless times from others, that once a young girl begins to menstruate she is considered a woman. He said that this is one reason that such young girls are involved in child prostitution.

When girls are 12 to 14 they start in prostitution and there are some that are taken to do it by their families, they help them do it because it is a type of work that that brings home money. A lot of parents don't have jobs and don't have a way to get money or to buy the things that their family needs. What you have to understand is that families here are very big...families with 4, 5, 8, and up to 10 people living in a tiny house, sometimes only one room...their situation is very complicated.

Families' financial need was the primary reason given by most, but there were also circumstances of children wanting their own money. The assistant director of the Conselho Tutelar in Currálinho told me that "children themselves turn to selling drugs and prostitution because it's easy and they have no other way to get money." There were also examples of young impressionable girls being swayed by older adolescents into prostitution, often in exchange for drugs.

Thiago, a school administrator in Currálinho, said that child prostitution was only second to drug abuse as one of the most serious issues among children in the community. He then pointed to mototaxis as one of the major facilitators for child prostitution, which I had never heard before.

Here in Currálinho, the primary mode of transportation throughout our town is the motorcycle and mototaxi. These young girls, 10-14-years-old, are easily deceived by older adolescents who have these [motorcycles] and it is the primary vehicle that steals young girls' innocence. These mototaxi drivers are all involved with the issue of prostitution, and when I say all of them, there are no exceptions. In the late afternoons and at night there is a massive movement of motorcycles entering and leaving our fields and streets and 90% of them are teenagers between 13 and 15 years old that are going to prostitute themselves. We typically think that prostitution happens in hotels and small houses, but it doesn't, it happens everywhere...in open fields, soccer fields, deserted roads. The mototaxis arrange the interaction and negotiate a price, sometimes there is money exchanged, but a lot of times the payment comes in the form of drugs. It is like this, 'I'll give you drugs, you give me your body.' That's how it works.

When I asked Thiago about the families of these young girls and if they were aware of their daughter's activities, he said that sometimes they do not know and are shocked when they find out. Other times, however, "when it is reported and agents go to confront the parents, they all say that their daughter does not do this, but many of them know but will never admit it. They aren't going to accuse themselves [of a crime] and admit they know, but they do."

Thiago was the only person in either community that I spoke with who connected mototaxi drivers to child prostitution, and I had no way to confirm his observations for two reasons. One, due to the sensitivity, illegality, and danger involved in making such implications, I could not directly ask about mototaxi drivers' involvement in said activity, as I depended on them daily for my own safe transportation in both communities. Second, Thiago, unfortunately, was the last person I interviewed during my fieldwork on my very last day in Currálinho. In seeking other sources to validate his comments, a recent court case, *Monteiro v. Tribunal Region Federal de Primeira Região* (2014), sentenced a mototaxi driver to three years and four

months in prison for his involvement in encouraging and contributing to the practice of prostitution and child sexual exploitation on boats traveling along the Amazon river. According to court proceedings, Monteiro was part of a criminal scheme that involved boat schedulers, mototaxis, and boat drivers in the municipality of Itacoatiara, Amazonas to provide crew members with women and girls for sex as their ships passed through the region. Although this is just one case involving mototaxis, there was an apparent public need to raise awareness about their involvement in the exploitation of children in prostitution. Movimento de Emaús, an organization that fights for the rights of at-risk children in the Amazon region, formed a campaign to inform mototaxis about their responsibility in the chain of child prostitution. A lawyer for the *Centro de Defesa da Criança e do Adolescente da República de Emaús* (CEDECA-EMAÚS) explained that they are “strategic partners” in exploiting children for prostitution because they are the ones that transport them (Cunha 2017). Their hope was that by raising awareness among mototaxis, they could help in the prevention of sexual crimes involving children.

The Monteiro case points to another major element in the exploitation of children in prostitution and the sexual exploitation of children; the waterways. Currálinho and Gurupá serve as major stopping points for many large passenger and cargo boats travelling throughout the Marajó region. As a result, there is a constant influx of individuals, providing a substantial portion of ‘clients’ looking for ‘entertainment.’ Gabriel, a cultural consultant in Gurupá, explained that as soon as boats arrive, “women and girls flock toward them because they know they [men getting off the boat] have money.” A lot of them are business men or temporary laborers. During a semi-formal interview with Rui, the director of the Conselho Tutelar in Gurupá, he confirmed Gabriel’s observations.

If you watch when passenger ferries or cargo boats stop here in town, you will see young girls going there to work [as prostitutes]. Even when [out-of-town] police arrive here...people have watched girls fight over them...and when he leaves, there is already a baby [gotten someone pregnant].

He then described several incidents where temporary out-of-town workers were reported to his office for inappropriate interactions with young girls, his neighbor’s young daughters included. Unfortunately, the boat docks and private locations in town are not the only places where children are sexually exploited in exchange for money or other goods. The waterways, while constantly bringing people in and out of town, also carry children to and from moving boats.

Throughout my fieldwork, the problem of child sexual exploitation and human trafficking on large passenger and cargo boats in the Amazon received national attention through multiple investigative television specials and reports. Franssinete Florenzano (2014), a lawyer, consultant for the Legislative Assembly of Pará, and a journalist who writes about current events and problems throughout the region, summarized the problem.

The Tajapuru River exposes a cruel and mean face of Marajó’s ecological archipelago paradise...This river, full of boats and ferries, is dramatically associated with girls who dock their canoes to [passing] boats, with typical products to sell like açaí, but in fact they exchange sex for diesel, oil, and food... Girls, between 10-16-years-old, are sadly known as “balseiras” [ferries]. Cities

such as Portel, Breves, Melgaço, and Currealinho, as well as Belém, continue to serve as a route for international human trafficking and sexual exploitation of children, as well as weapons and drugs. To aggravate the situation, those who denounce [these acts] suffer all types of retaliation. It is necessary to help the population to overcome fear, shame, and the temptation to remain silent in the face of abuse and exploitation of children, including many by their own parents and relatives.

In my accumulation of more than 800 hours traveling by boat in the region since 2003, it was a rarity not to have multiple canoes hooking to the boat throughout the day to sell items aboard (see Image 5). Sometimes adults would board alone, but more often than not, it was shabbily clad children accompanied by older siblings. Children as young as six years old (from my observations) wandered around alone among up to 850 passengers (Amazon Star full capacity, not including crew) begging for money/treats/food and/or selling açaí, salted shrimp, various fruits, and jewelry. I would often see these children hanging around the *camarote* (boat cabin) areas, where business men, foreigners, and wealthy passengers had private bunk rooms. Rui explained that boarding boats greatly contributed to the problem of sexual exploitation of children in prostitution, because “you have mothers there waiting in their canoes [in the middle of the river] with their children, taking their children to beg and other things” (See Image 6).

Image 5. Boarding Boats to Sell Goods



Source: Monte Talley

Image 6. Families Waiting in Canoes for Passing Boats



Source: Monte Talley

The former Secretary of Environment in Currealinho, Paulo, pointed to the immense poverty of many families throughout the region, which is then mixed with men who work on boats for weeks at a time. These men are willing to pay money or exchange goods like fuel, oil, and/or food for sexual encounters. Paulo said that a parent or family member “puts the little girl in panties to get on the boat” and while “some say no to children, they accept teenagers” (FENAPEF 2011). According to Itamar Gonçalves, coordinator for a project to combat child prostitution sponsored by Childhood Brasil, 67% of occurrences are due to financial need and 40% of reported cases are concentrated in the North of Brazil (FENAPEF 2011). Mary Kenny

(1997) notes in her urban study of a *favela* (shantytown) in the northeast of Brazil that prostitution is not seen as a permanent occupation.

The exchange of sex for money or goods is considered a temporary solution, a survival strategy, that contributes to the sustenance of the household, generating income that is often equal to or greater than the salary of other fully employed adults in the household (Kenny 1997:136).

It is likely that this is what is happening in Currálinho and Gurupá when parents are involved. It is a means of getting through an economic hardship and not a decision easily made.

Poverty was the most commonly cited explanation during interviews and conversations about families exploiting their own children in prostitution, but then many also said that it was not only a means to make money, but a result of sexual abuse and exploitation within the family. Both Rui and Paulo pointed to the home as an origin of the problem, stating that the rape of young girls by her own father and brothers is still common. Rui referred specifically to his experiences while directing the Conselho Tutelar in Gurupá.

There are major issues of sexual abuse and prostitution of children, and I'm not talking about teenagers, but small children. In the reality of our municipality of 30 thousand people, almost every week there are new cases. Worse yet, a lot of these abuses happen in one's own family, where uncles, parents, brothers are being accused of raping her/him. It is worrisome, because at the rate that it happens here in town, you can only imagine how much it happens in the interior, where it is more difficult to contact someone and file a complaint. It is especially difficult when the crime takes place within the family itself, because the child has no power.

While the Conselho Tutelars keeps records on violations of children's rights within the family, society, and public sector, there is no accessible database for registered offenses. The director of the Conselho Tutelar in Currálinho provided me with some (incomplete) data for the years of 2011 and 2012. These records show that for children two to 11-years-old, there were zero reported cases of sexual exploitation and 12 reported cases of sexual abuse (1 male, 10 females, 1 undisclosed). There were five reported cases of sexual exploitation for children 12-16-years-old (1 male, 4 females) and 26 reported cases of sexual abuse for children 12-17-years-old (1 male, 25 females). There was no additional information provided explaining the types of sexual abuse and exploitation, making the data extremely difficult to interpret.

In Gurupá I received no data from the Conselho Tutelar, although the director repeatedly told me that it would be provided. On the days that I was told to visit the office to receive the data, no one was available to speak to me and the data was never left for me to pick up. After multiple attempts, I gave up. However, during my 2005 fieldwork in Gurupá, I did receive information from the Conselho Tutelar for the years 2002-2004 concerning violations and sexual misconduct with children. In 2002, there were four reported child rapes, two attempted child rapes, one case of child sexual abuse, two child pornography cases, and four reports of children acting in a highly sexually promiscuous manner. In 2003, there were 40 reports of child sexual abuse resulting in pregnancy and 20 reports of child sexual violence. In 2004, there were 22

reports of child sexual violence (Hendrickson 2006). Considering the generally low reporting rate of sex crimes by victims, these numbers are likely much higher.

There are considerable psychological and physiological consequences that victims of child prostitution and sexual exploitation endure, often for their remainder of their lives. The ILO (2008:1) states that sexually exploited children not only suffer “physical violence, unwanted pregnancies, and HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, they also lose self-esteem, feel humiliation, guilt and sadness, and may develop problems with verbal and written communication.” In all interviews and conversations about children exploited in prostitution in both Currálinho and Gurupá, the issue of STDs was a point of major concern, due to increasingly high rates of occurrences among children 14-17-years-old. The director of the Conselho Tutelar in Gurupá said that there were more than 30 registered cases of HIV/AIDS and that children between 14 and 17 years old had the highest rate among all age groups. The director of the Conselho Tutelar in Currálinho also pointed to the high rate of HIV/AIDS and other STDs, which he said is rapidly spread around due to Currálinho’s central location on the river between all major ports.

Boy’s Work

Boys’ work falls into two broad categories. Boys will either sell things on the streets as vendors, or they will go to the interior and collect wood, fish, or pick various fruits as extractors. Beyond this, boys may also help in a family business, loading and unloading cargo from boats, delivering items from local businesses, and helping their fathers with work. Although there may be additional categories, the majority of boys are vendors, extractors, or both. Girls generally participate in these activities only if there are no boys in the home or none old enough to perform them.

When I first began researching child labor in the Amazon in 2003, one of the most predominate types of work for young boys in towns was selling various goods on the streets and at the docks. Ten years later, this work still occurs, but less frequently. There remain families that continue to need the additional income generated by their children. Laura, an 18-year-old 8th grader in Gurupá, said that it was not unusual for young boys to work because “they have the responsibility to help their parents put bread on the table every day,” meaning that their help is required to pay household expenses.

Child vendors’ ages vary, but the majority fall between seven and 15 years old. However, there are some children that work earlier, as pointed out by Fabiana, a 16-year-old from Gurupá, when asked about the typical age and work for boys in town. She said, “normally, it is not uncommon to see many 5-year-old boys working, one job they do is to sell things in the street, like snacks and things. This is very normal.” While they sell a variety of different items and foods, the most common items sold are homemade frozen popsicles called *picolé* or *choppe*, bread, and fried savory dough snacks called *coxinhas* (croquettes).

Picolé is the most common item sold because it is cheap to make and sells for only 50 centavos (\$0.22). It is prepared by the boy’s mother or a family member with sugar and powdered drink mix or fruit juice and frozen in a small, elongated plastic bag that is tied at each end (Hendrickson 2006). Some boys have cooler pushcarts with two wheels that resemble an old-fashioned ice-cream cart, minus the umbrella. However, most boys have Styrofoam ice-chests that have been altered with a piece of rope to create a shoulder strap for easier carrying. One ethnographic questionnaire respondent stated that once boys are “big enough to carry the heavy weight of an ice chest, they start working in the streets.” A full cooler weighs 10-15 pounds, which is quite heavy for the small statured boys carrying them. To protect their

shoulders from the weight and constant rubbing of the strap, many put some type of fabric on top of their shoulder under the rope. I once observed a boy approximately seven years old, during the hottest part of the day in Gurupá, who had either lost or forgotten his shoulder cloth. He walked about 10 steps, moved the ice-chest to the other shoulder, walked a few more steps, sat the ice-chest on the ground for a few seconds, and then continued on, repeating the pattern until he was out of my sight.

Boys who sell bread get up very early, just as dawn is beginning to break, between 5:00 and 6:00 AM. Carrying large trays full of freshly baked baguettes called *bengalas* (walking sticks) or smaller hoagie type buns, they make deliveries to people's homes and/or position themselves in commercial areas and on the docks. A bengala sells for an average of R\$2 (\$1.00) and the smaller rolls sell for an average of R\$1 (\$0.50). Bread with butter or margarine is the most commonly consumed breakfast food in towns and urban centers throughout Brazil and is not usually eaten at any other meal. By nine or 10 in the morning, unless there is a large passenger boat at the dock, no boys will be seen selling bread.

Coxinhas, deep-fried dough stuffed with shrimp, meat, chicken, or cheese, are sold sometimes during the morning hours, but most often are sold during lunch hours and in the evenings, when foot traffic is most heavy. These tasty snacks are eaten with a homemade hot sauce called *tucupi*, that is made from the leftover liquid from squeezing manioc in preparation for flour or *farinha*. The boys carry coxinhas in a plastic container with a lid, which has a bottle of tucupi attached by a string. A coxinha sells for an average of R\$1-2 (\$0.50-\$1.00). I observed only a few boys selling these snacks, as they are also sold at many local bars, in addition to being relatively expensive when compared to picolé.

The commonality that these boys share is the location in which they work. They stay close to the main dock (to sell to passengers on passing riverboats), the main commerce areas of town, and in front of schools. They are also opportunistic when it comes to work time, usually following the daily schedule of people who are heading to and from work or to and from school. They also know the boat schedules so they can be on the dock when a boat arrives or leaves. When a passenger boat arrives, there will be a large group of boys there with their carts, bread, *coxinhas*, and fruit, usually bickering among each other about who is going to get closest to the arriving people (Hendrickson 2006). In Gurupá specifically, everyone told me that I should return to Gurupá in December, for the town's largest festival for *São Benedito* (Saint Benedict). They said that the streets would be full of with boys selling things, all trying to make extra money for their families for the holidays.

The child extractors are usually between seven and 15 years old. These boys will go into the interior to collect various fruits, timber, or to fish. The typical fruits that are collected are açaí, palmito, and pupunha. The extraction of açaí and palmito are the most typical. Both products come from the same palm tree (*Euterpe oleracea*). When I asked Berto, a former teacher in the interior of Curralinho, about the dangers children face when working in the interior, he said that out of all the forms of extraction, it is timber that is one of the most dangerous.

In my opinion, the most dangerous job in the interior is cutting and transporting trees. The wood must be transported from somewhere in the interior to reach the river, where it is then taken to the sawmill. It is moved by oxen or water buffalo pulling the wood and generally it is the kids that are either riding the buffalo or up in front of the buffalo, pulling them. Once there, they help to get it to the ferry. In

the city, the sawmill is a very dangerous place, because you are sawing the logs and run the risk of getting your hand jammed...it is very dangerous work.

According to Instituto Peabiru (2016), the extraction of timber is among the most dangerous jobs, as well as non-mechanized harvesting of sugar cane and pineapple, and most recently the extraction of açaí. The Brazilian Ministry of Health confirms Berto's observations concerning the dangers involved for working children. Since 2007, approximately 40 thousand Brazilian children have been injured while working and more than 50% of those injuries resulted in the amputation of hands and/or arms and even death (Brito 2017). These are only the injuries reported as work related, the actual rates are likely much higher but not directly reported in relation to work.

The ILO (2014) points out that among 26 activities in three economic sectors, the three most dangerous activities that severely injure and kill workers are in agriculture. Even with underreporting and a deficient injury registration system, Brazil ranks number four worldwide for the greatest number of work-related accidents and is the world leader for accidents involving farm equipment (ILO 2014; Instituto Peabiru 2016). For children involved in açaí extraction, this underreporting is even more serious, as injuries are rarely reported as work-related, and no data exists for injuries specifically related to açaí for adults or children. As the national and international demand for açaí continues to grow exponentially, it is likely that injuries related to its production, especially among children, also increases.

CHAPTER 8

AÇAÍ AND CHILD LABOR

The increased national and global demand for açaí has resulted in countless new palms being planted yearly. The younger the palm, the more dangerously thin it is at the top where caches must be cut. It is widely known that these palms cannot bear the weight of an adult, requiring children to climb and harvest the fruit. As in the early industrial age, children were involved in work that “could be best performed by them, such as chimney-sweeping, threading bobbins, crawling under machines” and so forth, exploiting their small physical stature and the lack of educational experience/training needed for such tasks (Schildkrout 1980:480). Today, one of those tasks ‘best performed’ by children is picking açaí, and the dangers associated with it are not only physical. From my research there are also impacts on children’s education and future employment opportunities, as well as social issues that include increased rates of prostitution, underage drinking, and violence.

Instituto Peabiru (2016) estimated that every single day during the safra, there is a collective total of more than 1,000,000 climbs to harvest açaí, but because no data exists on children’s participation in açaí extraction, it can only be estimated that children under the age of 15 make a substantial portion of those climbs. Based on my data and Instituto Peabiru’s data, almost 90% of families that reside in the interior of Currealinho and Gurupá rely on açaí as their main source of income during the safra. This ultimately means that a large portion of those families rely on their children’s labor contributions to assist in the safra.

In order to understand children’s involvement in açaí production and its consequences, I interviewed those involved in açaí production, processing, and sales, as well as educators, civil servants, and individuals in both Currealinho and Gurupá, as well as individuals at the Feira do Açaí in Belém, which is the largest açaí market in the entire country (and world). Three critical facts emerged: 1) children’s labor contributions are essential in açaí harvesting, 2) harvesting açaí is extremely dangerous, and 3) the lack of data about who harvests açaí obscures not only children’s involvement, but also the physical and social consequences of their involvement.

As highlighted in Chapter 4’s discussion of the moral economy of açaí, its commodity chain begins in the rural interior with individual families, small community collectives, and larger landowners who hire help from locals who grow, maintain, and harvest açaí. Instituto Peabiru (2016) found that of these work relationships in Currealinho, 100% are informal, meaning that there are no external monitoring of any kind, including children’s involvement. In reality, the stages of growing and picking açaí is nearly impossible to monitor due to the remote and isolated locations in which the majority of açaí originates. João Meirelles (2016, interview), director of the NGO Instituto Peabiru, pointed out, “without a doubt, we need to urgently address the question of child labor in açaí.” Children’s labor contributions are essential to the açaí commodity chain for two reasons: 1) children’s size, agility, and fearlessness and 2) the cultural significance of children, especially boys, learning the age-old tradition of picking açaí for family sustenance.

Every person with whom I spoke or whom I interviewed told me that children climb for açaí because they are small enough to do so without breaking the tree and killing it. In a semi-

structured interview with Nuno, a small-scale açai processor in Gurupá, I asked him about children's involvement with açai and if their involvement was essential to production. His response left no room for interpretation.

The production of açai would absolutely stop without the work of children. The major part of those who pick açai are children, usually starting around the age of 9...the average is 12. They [the family] are all in the açaizal working and the children are the ones that pick the most açai. The rest of the family stays on the ground removing the berries from the cache and carrying the baskets.

When I asked him why children were the ones to perform this part of the work, he explained that it was "because they are faster and lighter and stronger. Because they are lighter, they can climb any tree and not have a problem. Nowadays, with the maintenance of the açaizal, most of the older and taller trees are removed, leaving the shorter trees, which are very fine at the top and will break from the weight of a larger person." Hervé Rogez (2000) found that the maximum weight for climbing was 130lbs and that males between 12-25 years of age did the majority of picking. In addition to children's small stature and ability to climb more quickly, it was also pointed out that children are also less fearful when it comes to climbing into the dizzying heights of the forest canopy.

Children climbing to harvest açai is not a new occurrence nor is the growing demand of açai responsible for its continuance. Families have been teaching their children how to pick açai likely since the berry's incorporation into the daily family diet. For hundreds of years, thousands if including prehistory, the tradition has been passed down generation after generation, like other traditional staples such as growing manioc, making farinha, and fishing. In both communities, I was told that it was a type of a rite of passage for boys, who treated it with the seriousness of a professional sport. In all my conversations and interviews, almost every man and boy had climbed for açai, and took pride in how efficiently they did it. Once the young boys are taught how to do it, they start practicing on their own as a game, "they climb the tree to see who is fastest...then it becomes a competition and they get into arguments about who can pick the most açai the fastest" (Nuno, personal Interview). One older Gurupaense man fondly described his youthful days of climbing for the fruit, stating that his "childhood passions were soccer, swimming, and getting açai."

When discussing the tradition of children learning to climb for açai with Nuno, he proudly shared a story about his nephew who had mastered the art of picking açai at a very young age.

My nephew, who is six-years-old, already picks açai by himself. In Marajoí, many boys there do this...but one day I watched him go into the jungle alone and he picked six baskets of açai by himself...he picked it, removed the berries [from the cache], everything in two or three hours! I couldn't believe it...I was astonished! It's something that I couldn't do myself.

Nuno then pointed to his 18-year-old son, who works at the family restaurant processing açai, and said, "you see this one here, it was his cousin, but this one right here has never climbed an açaizeiro [açai palm] and has never picked it either!" He said this mockingly, laughing and

playfully shaming his son for being outshone by a six-year-old in an activity that nearly everyone in the interior knows how to do.

João Meirelles, in an interview discussing child labor in the açai productive chain, pointed out a major problem between picking açai for daily sustenance and picking açai based on a growing global demand.

Most of the extraction of açai is traditional family farming—father teaching son, for generations. When the son climbed the açai palm to pick food for his family, it was part of a traditional culture and made great sense. The problem is when a young boy is compelled to climb the açai palm 30 times [a day] to meet an explosive demand for the product (Instituto Peabiru Interview 2016).

The harvesting of açai in the traditional sense to feed one's family is not necessarily seen as a danger, but when it transforms into countless climbs every day, the potential for injury or even death greatly increases. Without exception, nearly every person that I spoke with about the dangers involved in açai recounted stories of injuries and deaths that were a direct result from picking açai.

Dangers Involved in Açai Extraction

Açai harvesting is dangerous work for children and adults alike. Workers are exposed to a variety of health risks in the natural environment, ranging from minor injuries to permanent disability and death. Instituto Peabiru (2016:10), in a study about work conditions in açai extraction, found that açai harvesting “is among the most dangerous jobs in Brazil,” and until recently, the perilous work conditions were not taken seriously and often associated with an exotic and romantic image of indigenous people collecting fruit in the rainforest. To date, no federal or state organization has “considered the peril of the açai worker” and “industries, intermediaries, inspection agencies, and ultimately consumers fail to address” the extreme dangers associated with the work (11). This is to say that there are no official or accurate data on accidents, injuries, or deaths that directly result from açai harvesting, nor do factories that buy açai question who picked it.

The dangers of picking and preparing açai for transport is exacerbated by the isolated rural locations of açai stands (native and propagated) along the river, far away from help and communication if something should go wrong. Due to the traditional nature of the work and absence of mechanized interventions for picking, most workers lack any sort of safety equipment or protective clothing when climbing the thin palms 10-15 meters or more above ground to collect the fruit cache. There are no safety harnesses or ropes used to protect climbers from slips, falls, or cuts. The only equipment used is a *peconha* (see image 7), a loop made either from palm leaves or a cut-up burlap sack, to support the feet while shimmying up the tree, with a machete or large knife (with no sheath) between their teeth, in one hand, or stuffed in their shorts (see Image 8). Typical work attire for climbers and ground workers alike are shorts, t-shirt or long-sleeved shirt (but not always), and sometimes flip-flops or rubber boots, although most climb barefooted.

Image 7. Peconha Made from Palm Leaves



Source: Pantoja Ramos

Image 8. Typical Climbing Attire

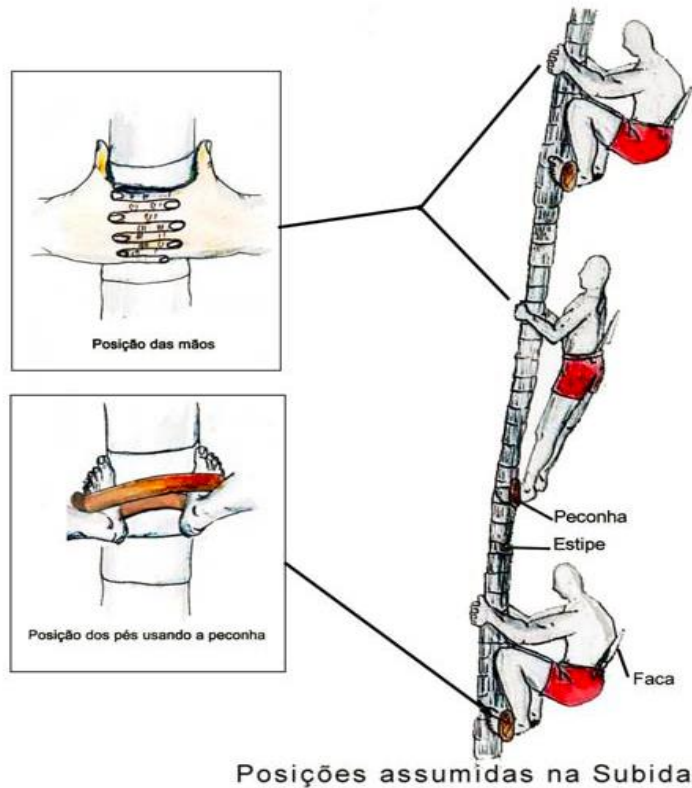


Source: Monte Talley

Images 8 & 9 demonstrates the laborious task and sheer strength needed to climb an açai palm. The climber typically places the machete in his waistband—often handle side down, grabs the trunk of the palm with both hands, places both feet in the peconha and jumps onto the trunk placing a foot on each side, then pushing with the feet, fully extending the body, and pulling with the hands repetitively until reaching the fruit cache. The physically demanding nature of these actions are not only exhausting but places the body in continuous unnatural positions from start to finish. In an analysis of ergonomic principles in the collection of açai, Anaglória Lima, Heloisa Santos, and Tiago Araújo (2008:8) identified the following harmful physical postures required during the climbing and picking process:

- There is a severe deviation in the spine, depending on the position of the legs, and the head and neck are bent backwards to maintain visualization of the fruit cache.
- There is a constant static effort and when the worker stops at the top to cut the fruit cache the legs endure all of the pressure while the trunk of the body leans against the palm.
- There are repetitive blows made with the machete to detach the açai fruit cache from the trunk.
- There are forced positions of the upper limbs during the entire climb, from the ascent on the tree trunk to the descent with the cache in one hand.
- The hands must remain constantly tense and gripping during the ascent and descent.
- The feet are not supported in a position of relief or comfort, on the contrary they are under constant pressure from the peconha.
- There is an exorbitant muscular effort with the spine, because the movement involved in the ascent is like that of an accordion, where the collector stretches himself pulling by the hands and then pushing with the feet strapped in the peconha, when shimmying up the tree to reach the cache.

Image 9. Positions Assumed While Climbing for Açai



Source: Canto 2001

The climber must descend with the fruit caches in hand, as the delicate berries will be lost or severely damaged if dropped from any significant distance.

Technologies do exist that significantly reduce risks for açai workers, but they have not been adopted due to cost, it slows down the work process, and because “the most powerful links in the commodity chain—the industries, processors, wholesalers, retailers” and ultimately consumers, ignore the dangerous working conditions of the açai collector and take no responsibility for their safety (Instituto Peabiru 2016: 9). Considering the sheer volume of açai that is harvested each day, the risks are tremendous.

It is necessary to consider that, daily, during the safra, tens of thousands of people in Amapá, in Pará, and other states in the Amazon, risk their lives by climbing the açazeiros to collect the açai fruit caches. It is estimated, quite generically, that in one day during the safra, if 120,000 fruit collectors climb eight to ten trees each, roughly speaking, this would mean that close to 1,000,000 climbs are made daily during peak harvest. Agile youngsters can climb more than 20 feet high in the açai palm and even jump from one tree to another, exposing them to even greater risks. The size of this data, even if it is imprecise, by itself, exposes the potential for the safety of the extractive worker – the *peconheiro* (Instituto Peabiru 2016: 23).

Jumping from tree to tree without descending dramatically increases chances of injuries but harvesters commonly utilize this practice because it reduces the number of arduous climbs necessary to meet their quota. Oliveira (2011) found that to be considered a good peconheiro, one must be able to fill at least six baskets of açaí, weighing up to 185 pounds total, in a day's work. During the safra, this requires approximately 60 caches and a minimum of 30 climbs, as most trees will have two caches, and some say that it is possible to pick up to 100 caches per day (Canto 2001; Rogez 2000). I was told that many peconheiros will not descend from the canopy until they have four fruit caches. Jumping tree to tree, with the additional weight of each cache, plus a machete in their mouths or stuffed in their shorts exponentially increases the likelihood of countless injuries. Elton discussed this practice and why the peconheiros do it, considering the dangers involved.

The risk is even greater when they have the ability to pass from one tree to another. Often a branch will break from their weight and the weight of the fruit cache they are holding. They don't want to have to continuously go up and down the trees with just one cache, they want to bring down several...and so they pass from tree to tree and this is usually when the accidents happen. I always hear talk about this and how much greater of a risk it is...but there [in the interior], this is work.

The dangers of this work, when one considers the sheer volume of possible injuries that açaí workers themselves point out (See Table 3), are inconceivable. According to surveys of 1,029 families involved in açaí production in Currealinho, 89% of respondents said that someone in their family had been hurt while working in their açaízal (Instituto Peabiru 2016). Of those cases, 54% of victims had to be hospitalized, 9% had to go to Belém for specialized care, 48% required a recovery period of a minimum of 10 days, and 30% required a recovery period of a minimum of 60 days before being able to return to work. This means that one out of every two injuries required hospitalization and one out of every three injuries required two months of recuperation time. To say that açaí harvesting is dangerous work is an understatement.

Table 4, although not all-inclusive, clearly shows myriad of dangers involved in working with açaí. Consequences of accidents affect every aspect of the body, as does the long-term repetitiveness of the continuous physically exhaustive work. Elton used himself as an example when explaining how hard it is to pick açaí.

Climbing for açaí is such hard work. When I taught in the interior, I tried to do it. I went with a friend who did it every day. In order for me to pick just a single basket of açaí, I had to climb four times...and it is tiring, tiring, tiring...I did not realize how hard it was! I could not do the work they do, as they can fill 10 baskets so fast. We all know that it is a job, in reality, that is a whole lot of work and that it is not well compensated for.

Table 4. Physical Dangers & Injuries Associated with Açai Harvesting

LOCATION	TYPES OF DANGERS & INJURIES
Head	Bee/wasp/ant attacks, bites from centipedes, scorpions, spiders, etc., attacks from birds nesting in tree, knife/machete falling hitting person working on the ground
Eyes	Low light (especially when cloudy), poked by the tips of sharp leaves and branches
Arms	Fractures (due to falls), abrasions (ascending/descending tree), cuts from knife/machete, straining of muscles
Shoulders & Chest	Tearing or straining of muscles (caused by excessive physical exertion from climbing, carrying heavy loads long distances, jumping tree to tree)
Back & Buttocks	Cuts or stabs from knife/machete or from old branches, fronds, etc.
Legs	Cuts, snake bites, injuries from axe (during açai stand maintenance), long-term/permanent arching of legs due to physical exertion and repetition of holding trees during climbing and cutting
Feet	Calluses, stings from stingrays, shocks from electric eels, spider bites, stomping when removing stumps, strains, pinning
Hands	Strains/cuts/bruising/overuse (climbing and removing berries from cache)
General	Impalement (from knife/machete/tree branches), paralysis/spinal injuries (from falls), stabs or cuts from knife/machete, muscle strain/exhaustion, sprains, slips/falls on slippery surfaces/wet tree trunks, heat exhaustion (paddling/walking/climbing for long stretches in the sun), bites from venomous animals, flipping canoes/boats in strong storms/tides/rain/etc., lightning, injury from falling trees (during açai stand maintenance)

Source: Instituto Peabiru (2016), Personal Field Data 2011-2013

During an ethnographic photo interview with Emanuely, a 15-year-old girl from an interior hamlet in Gurupá, she had taken countless pictures of açai. During her explanations of the photos, she told me that her entire family participated in managing and harvesting açai.

We have an açaiçal and it is only my family that works on it. My father, my mother, myself, and my two brothers [ages 9 and 11]. My father picks açai all day and a lot of times my mother goes with him and she is the one that climbs the trees, because my father has gotten fat [laughing] and can only climb the larger older trees. In the morning we go to school and when we get home [by noon], my brothers go help my father pick açai for usually around 3 hours in the afternoon. I no longer climb, but I pull the berries from the stems and process it for eating.

Removing the berries from the stem may seem less dangerous when compared to climbing, but it exposes the worker to a variety of different dangers. The fruit caches can be loaded with stinging insects and any other small organism that hide in the rainforest canopy, like venomous spiders, of which some are considered the most-deadly in the world.

When I asked Emanuely why she no longer climbed for açai, she told me about an accident that she had when climbing.

I started picking açai when I was around 8-years-old and continued to do so until I was 13...that's when I fell and had to stop climbing. I had been picking açai and had gotten tired. I had cut some açai [cache] and then suddenly I got dizzy and fell...everything just came tumbling down, at least that's how I saw it. The tree was tall and there were two trees banded together...that is where my foot got pinned on the way down, in between the crook, and I was stuck. I didn't break my foot, but it was very swollen and hasn't been the same since. I still get dizzy and tired a lot and I suffer from lots of headaches. After I fell, my father would not allow me to go back up.

Although her foot got caught between two trees on the way down, which did hurt her ankle, it ultimately prevented her from crashing to the ground below, which could have resulted in a much more serious outcome. She suffered from major body pain initially after the fall and continues to have headaches and fatigue that she associates with the accident. However, because nothing was broken or seemingly life threatening, she never received medical attention and the accident was never reported. Had she required medical attention or urgent medical intervention, it would have taken her family a minimum of three hours to arrive at the hospital in Gurupá. Now her younger brothers do the climbing and she stays on the ground with her father helping to remove the berries from the stems.

Emanuelly was lucky in the sense that her injuries were not more severe, as some children have not been so fortunate. When I asked Elton about children being injured when working with açai, he said that there are many cases of children getting hurt or even dying. He said that it is most often a result of climbing and then falling with their knife or machete. He described a personal story about one of his former students who died from a fall while picking açai.

There was a boy, my student, I first met him when I taught in the interior. When he was first in my class he was very small, young, and later, after I had left the interior [to teach in town], when he was around 11 or 12 years old, I learned that he had passed away. He fell from the top of an açai palm and was injured by his own knife. *He died from the injuries from his own knife.* He fell on the knife.

Elton then said that accidents like this, when the child dies, “happen every once in a while, but when this doesn't happen it's almost worse, because they fall from so high and they end up breaking something that hurts everything.” He was referring to cases where falls resulted in paralysis and other life-long injuries. Berto had similar observations and stories.

Picking açai is very dangerous. The trees are very tall and if you fall from there....I have seen various cases of people who have fallen from the trees and died. There are other cases where they broke their spine and couldn't walk again. These accidents aren't necessarily common, but they happen.

At this point in our conversation, he told me that he fell from an açai palm last month, but luckily only bruised his arm. He showed me the bruise, which was the size of my fist and still purple after almost four weeks. Berto assured me that he was fine, that the injury could have been

worse. He then told me about two recent accidents, one which seemed to come straight from a horror film.

Two months ago, a man in his 20s was picking açai on the Pariacá River [two hours away from town] and badly injured his eye. After picking the fruit, he slid down the tree rapidly and a fragment of palm leaf about 2 inches long pierced the corner of his left eye. It stayed there for two weeks until they took him to the doctor, who was able to remove it. This, among many others, are routine accidents that happen when extracting açai. Around the same time that this happened, a young man who lived on the Piriá River [a small hamlet several hours away from town] was picking açai, fell, and died. While climbing up the palm to pick the açai, he cleared away branches from neighboring trees with his machete [a common practice]. One of the branches was very pointed and when he slid down the trunk [usually very rapidly], the branch from the other tree went [impaled] through his anus, entering the thorax, and ending close to his neck.

The issue of impalement is a common concern because the tree is surrounded by ‘a crown’ of smaller trees that “present as a great bundle of skewers,” angled at the buttocks and spine (Instituto Peabiru 2016:47). The man, 28-years-old, had a wife and children, who now have no income and likely will not receive any additional assistance from the state. Because of the informal economy of açai extraction, the majority of workers are not registered with the Rural Worker’s Union—Sindicato de Trabalhadoras e Trabalhadores Rurais (STTR), leaving them helpless to access social benefits when injuries or death occurs (For more examples, see Instituto Peabiru 2016).

Another personal narrative came from Gil, who grew up in the interior of Currálinho and now lives in Belém. He told me about his cousin who had fallen from the top of a very tall açai palm when he was a small child and fractured his leg. He required surgery and many months of recuperation before he could walk normally again. Gil said that he was lucky and pointed to the countless stories that he reads regularly in the newspapers about people being injured or dying while picking açai.

In my own review of Brazilian newspaper articles concerning açai and injuries, I found none that directly related the two. The closest example that I came across was a local news report, “Death of a boy by scorpion sting exposes ribeirinho’s isolation” (G1 2013). The article focuses on the lack of medical access that ultimately resulted in the death of one child and the serious injury of another on an extractive reserve in the municipality of Altimira. However, it only mentions the extractive work that was in progress but does not directly relate it as a causative variable in the incident. A father and his two sons were picking *patauá*, a palm fruit analogous to açai in use, when a poisonous snake bit his 19-year-old son. While the family was tending to the snake bite and preparing to return home to seek help, a scorpion bit his 13-year-old son. Because of the isolated location and lack of communication, medical rescue did not arrive in time to save the younger boy, and he died a few hours later in the family home. Twenty-two hours after the brothers were bitten, medical rescue finally arrived, and the 19-year-old was airlifted to the hospital and survived. The lack of medical access is a daily reality for nearly all people who reside in the interior, made all the worse by risks from the extraction of palm fruits for sustenance and sale.

For example, while I was in a small riverine hamlet several hours outside of Gurupá by speedboat, I went to pick açai with Abrahan, 24-years-old and his eight-year-old nephew, Breno. The safra was just beginning and ripe açai was not yet plentiful. As we made our way down river in a motorized canoe, we scanned the canopy for ripe açai berries. If a cache looked promising, Abrahan pulled the canoe as close to the tree as possible, where Breno, wearing only shorts and a long-sleeved t-shirt, would leap from the boat onto the tree trunk and shimmy up the tall palm with one hand while holding a machete in the other. If the berries were ripe, he would cut the cache and slide down the palm using only his legs, as his arms were wrapped around the palm, but one held the cache – that was nearly as big as him, and the other held the machete.

When growth prevented us from getting close to a tree, Abrahan and Breno would get out of the canoe, balancing barefoot on slippery algae covered fallen trees and layers of debris that floated in the flooded landscape, using the machete to whack brush out of the way as they waded to the açai palm. Once, during the acrobatics necessary to reach the palms, Breno slipped and fell into the dark murky water. He quickly pulled himself up only to realize that he had dropped his machete somewhere in the depths below. It was the only tool we had to cut away foliage and the caches and we were almost an hour away from home. Luckily, after several minutes of searching and arguing between Abrahan and Breno, they found the machete and work resumed.

Watching Breno climb was stressful, as some palms were so tall that I had to use the zoom lens on my camera to see him at the top. I could hear him grunting and straining as he went up and down the trees, a scenario that repeated over and over for the better part of three hours. When the palms were large enough, Abrahan would climb, as they could support his adult weight. After only a few climbs, Abrahan was visibly exhausted. Although he was young and in excellent physical condition—he was an athlete in competitive Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) and a MMA instructor—he rubbed his arms, saying how difficult it was to climb those trees repeatedly. I initially tried to follow them into the flooded areas, but Abrahan said that it was too dangerous and told me to wait in the boat. Trying to be of some use and not just the *gringa* (foreigner) with a camera, I removed the berries from the rough stems (called *debulhando*) as they were brought back. After cleaning just one açai cache, my hands were stained dark purple. By the end of our excursion and more than eight açai caches later, the equivalent of one basketful, my hands were raw, throbbing, and had to be vigorously scrubbed to almost get the stains off.

Heading home we were all exhausted, hot, and our hands and faces were stained purple from the berries that we rinsed in the river and ate along the way only to realize that an afternoon storm was swiftly approaching. Within minutes the sky was almost black, the wind was strong enough to bend back sizable trees, creating waves large enough to tip over into our canoe. In less than one minute, we were engulfed in a torrential downpour quickly filling our boat to a dangerous level. As Abrahan guided the boat, Breno and I used coconut shells to scoop out the quickly accumulating water, but it was of little use and we were forced to seek shelter under a large leafy tree. Once the rain had subsided enough not inundate the boat, the motor would not start. Abrahan and Breno paddled while I continued scooping out water for almost 30 minutes before the motor dried out enough to start again. Our dinner had been well earned, which consisted of the açai we brought back, farinha made by a neighbor, rice, spaghetti noodles, and an armadillo cooked into a stew.

While this is just one example of a family picking açai for their dinner, it demonstrates the innumerable dangers encountered in a single afternoon. Watching both Breno and Abrahan climb, I realized how easily something could go wrong and the countless possibilities that could

result in a lifelong or fatal injury. I also realized that if anything did occur, real medical help was more than four hours away. This is the daily reality for nearly 100% of families that live in the interior.

Açaí and Educational Evasion

As discussed in chapter 5 (Ribeirinho Childhood), rates of school evasion are among some of the greatest challenges in education for both Currálinho and Gurupá. In these communities, where forest extraction is a major economic activity, children frequently miss school during harvest seasons and many do not return afterwards because they feel that they are too far behind to catch up. While açaí is only one of many causative variables in the problem of evasion, it cannot be denied that truancy rates skyrocket during the açaí safra, contributing to grade failure, age-for-grade distortions, and dropout rates as a whole.

Nearly every teacher, educational administrator, and those involved in child protection and rights that I spoke with in both communities explained that during the açaí safra, as well as fish and shrimp harvest seasons (April through December), truancy rates increase dramatically. In a semi-structured interview with three elementary school teachers in Gurupá, they explained that children are often absent because they must help with the harvest or must stay home to care for younger siblings and perform domestic tasks, freeing up parents or adult family members in the home for work. They explained:

Lots of kids miss school or come to class tired. When we ask them why they are late to school or are so tired they tell us that they had to stay home and make dinner or finish up work. During the harvest season of açaí or palmito, or even fishing, lots of kids don't come to school for a long time. In August, lots of kids miss school because of having to help with the [açaí] harvest.

Berto, a former teacher in the interior of Currálinho, said that during the harvest season, there are many children who will come to school a maximum of five times per month for a span of three to four months. When I asked him if it was seen as normal for children to work in açaí extraction and miss school, he explained:

Yes, for families and people, it has become common to see children working in açaí extraction. In my view, the children who work with açaí do not see it as a job, but rather as rewarding and fun, since it is just a part of their daily routine. It would be easy for families to combine both education and work, but during the safra, when people make the most money, they want to take advantage of this moment in order to earn more. In this, they end up thinking that school is not as important as the money earned from açaí, especially since the only other source of income around here is timber.

Berto explained that in general, children do not receive a lot of incentive or support from their families to stay in school. As discussed in Chapter 5 (Ribeirinho Childhood), once children finish school their options for continuing education and/or employment opportunities are limited. He said, “families cannot afford to pay for private college and access to public universities is based on an inhumane competition [Vestibular]. Few are able to graduate and get work or change their lives. When they don't, they start families very young, perpetuating the same cycle.”

This theme of children missing school either to work in the harvest or perform domestic duties to allow others to work in the harvest was constantly repeated in interviews and conversations. One teacher from the interior community of Marajoí in Gurupá summed up what I had heard so many times before. He said that “the principle reason that children miss class, I believe, is due to commitment to their parents, lack of school lunches, and it is necessary for them to help their parents, especially during the açaí safra. Many students go to pick açaí and others must stay home and perform the domestic work.” When speaking with Rui, the director of the Conselho Tutelar in Gurupá, he explained that in the interior especially, children work to help support the family and that parents believe they are teaching them valuable life skills in the process.

It’s not normal [for kids to work], but this is also a contradiction because I have been approached several times by fathers and mothers who tell me, ‘before [being forced to send him to school], my son was working with me, he was learning a profession and later he will know what work is and will be able to support himself.’ I know very well this question of açaí... Nowadays, we know, we are all well aware that the majority of the rural family income comes from boys and girls who work constantly, especially with açaí and fish. The only thing that the parents worry about is that they can’t keep their children out of school...not that this is too much work for them to do, not that they are physically at risk, but it is more that you are going to take away the family’s income. Today, in most cases, their income is greater than that of a family that lives here in town, because you have one child who goes to work in the morning and comes back with 10-15 baskets of açaí – which is the equivalent of more than R\$100. You have some families that have more than three or four boys and they bring in R\$2000-3000 per week. My own brother-in-law has two boys and their income during the safra is between R\$15,000-30,000!

Rui’s comment about parents’ complaints about not being able to keep their children home from school is a result of Brazil’s federal social welfare program called Bolsa Família. The program gives families a financial incentive to keep their children in school, even if they do not feel that the education they are receiving is adequate or beneficial to their children’s future employment prospects. Bolsa Família is a conditional cash transfer (CCT) program targeted at families living in poverty or extreme poverty. All children who are six to 15 years old in families receiving financial assistance must be vaccinated and maintain a minimum school attendance rate of 85% or the family will be suspended from the program and will not receive funds until their children once again meet the requirements. In an interview with Fabricia, who oversees all Bolsa Família cases in the municipality at the Social Assistance Department in Curalinho, she explained some of the major problems with the program. The biggest problem, she said, was that she alone was responsible for keeping track of all 5,542 families receiving benefits from the program every month.

This task is nearly impossible, especially in the interior because some families live so far away and must travel to town...spending a good portion of the money they receive...once a month in order to receive their benefits. It is also a big process for many in the interior because of their working and not attending school

very often or at all. There is a large population who are illiterate and rely on their children to handle all of their business issues for them. Because the schools in the interior are so bad, a lot of the kids are also mostly illiterate. Then there is also often a lot of anger from people who have been suspended from the program and I get yelled at by families, especially when they have not sufficiently met the conditions of Bolsa Família in order to receive their stipends.

In Gurupá, 4,966 families receive Bolsa Família, of which a large portion must also travel to town each month to receive their funds. Increasing school attendance and decreasing child labor are among the goals of the program, however, while school attendance rates have increased it has done little to reduce child labor, and in fact, research suggests an increase in its probability (Araújo 2009; Araújo 2010; Cacciamali et al. 2010; Pais et al. 2017). Karen Wells (2015:92) suggests that “policy interventions that increase school attendance will not always lead to children doing less work—going to school may encroach on children’s leisure time...[and] fail to reduce children’s workloads because they may have to combine work with school.” Another issue is that due to the informal economy of açaí in the interior, there is no record or taxing of the money being made by families that are also receiving Bolsa Família.

Victor, at the Conselho Tutelar in Curalinho, echoed Rui’s explanation of children missing school to help during the harvest and parents teaching their children to work instead of sending them to school.

There is also a type of thinking among local people, that they think that since they worked as children, their children should also work and have no problem with it. This thinking is only reinforced when the education system is not good and the children are not getting the type of education they need in order to succeed. During the açaí harvest season, kids miss months of school and often never return.

As Rui and Victor pointed out, parents complain about not being able to keep their children out of school when their labor contributions are necessary to family success, compounded by the fact that they do not feel that their children are receiving an education that lends to future success. This is a quality issue, where the value that parents place on education is a direct result of the poor quality of education available (Arends-Kuenning, Kassouf, Fava, & Almeida 2005; Bass 2004; Brown 2001; Fallon & Tzannatos 1998; Perusek 2004). In the interior schools, as discussed in Chapter 5 (Ribeirinho Childhood), where teachers are not well trained, lack learning materials/books, have poor quality or no school lunch, and the curriculum does not reflect the local lived reality, parents have a low expectation value for returns on their children’s education. This means that the time and money spent to formally educate their children has little effect on future income, employment, and social advancement (Bass 2004). Enid Schildkrout (1980) points out that in order to understand the occurrence of child labor, it must be evaluated in terms of future “occupational opportunities.” If parents feel they are better preparing their children for the future than the education system, coupled with the lack of employment opportunities for children and adults alike throughout the Marajó region, it is a conundrum that only reinforces a cycle of children working and not regularly attending school. There are very few jobs in either municipality, and there are almost no forms of employment for the educated or uneducated that offer the substantial earnings like açaí during the safra.

Bolsa Família does provide much needed income for struggling families, but many still require their children's labor, especially during the highly lucrative açai safra, in order to make enough money to survive for the remainder of the year. Some families have avoided suspension from Bolsa Família when they fail to meet the educational attendance requirements by requesting, or threatening, teachers to falsify records. Elton said that this is common, especially during açai harvest season, as well as shrimp and fish season, and school attendance records are misreported so that families continue to receive their money, even though their children are not in school. He said that the attendance records and the reality of attendance are completely different.

These children and adolescents, they want to make money and/or help their families make money and it is during this time [safra] that there is so much evasion. So many children miss school during this time. If you go to a school [in the interior] during this period most of the kids are not there in the classroom because they are picking açai or involved in its collection. A lot of times the families will send an excuse or go talk to the teacher and explain why their children aren't in school, and the teachers won't mark them as absent. It is extremely difficult to know if a child is or is not in school...but, if you go to a school during the açai safra, when you arrive there, at least 1/3 of the classrooms will be completely empty.

The issue of misreporting school attendance, while seemingly well-intentioned to help struggling families, not only distorts accurate education data, but also obscures child labor data and its occurrence. According to Rui, the director of the Conselho Tutelar in Gurupá, most of the reports for child labor violations involving forest extraction occur only because they were first reported for lack of school attendance.

Unlike child domestic labor and child prostitution, where data and statistics—albeit widely inaccurate, underreported, and conflicting—are available through a variety of sources, there are no statistics, data, or information of any kind on children's involvement in açai. It simply does not exist. According to a report by the United States Department of Labor (USDOL 2018:8) concerning goods produced by child labor, Brazil has 24 goods in which children's labor contributions are significant in their production: bananas, beef, bricks, cashews, cattle, ceramics, charcoal, cocoa, coffee, corn, cotton, fish, footwear, garments, hogs, manioc/cassava, pineapples, poultry, rice, sheep, sisal, sugarcane, timber, and tobacco. Açai, which had a production value of nearly 600 million reais (\$154 million) in 2017, is not on the list.

The Brazilian Census provides some data on child labor rates, but groups agriculture, livestock, forestry, fishing and aquaculture together as one category. There is no breakdown of information between these vastly different areas of work, only rates of participation by age. In both Currealinho and Gurupá, the majority of children working are in this category (See Table 5). In Currealinho, 10-13-year-olds children represent the largest percentage of workers in this category. In Gurupá, the difference between 10-13-year-olds 14-15-year-olds in this work category is less than one percent. According to BILA (2017), the majority of jobs in this category are considered either hazardous or among the worst forms of child labor.

Table 5. Children Working in Agriculture, Livestock, Forestry, Fishing, and Aquaculture

Age	Currálinho: 6,235 Children (0-17 Years of Age)		Gurupá: 5,998 Children (0-17 Years of Age)	
	Working	No School Attendance	Working	No School Attendance
10-13 Years Old	63.1%	3.6%	84.7%	10%
14-15 Years Old	62.5%	13.1%	85.9%	10.4%
16-17 Years Old	55.4%	28.9%	64.5%	25.6%

Source: IBGE 2010

Although the director of the Conselho Tutelar in Gurupá told me that children are constantly working, especially in the interior, I received no data concerning child labor violations. The Conselho Tutelar in Currálinho only provided minimal information on child sexual exploitation/abuse and the records I did receive for 2011-2013 reported no child labor violations. However, I did receive data from the Conselho Tutelar in Gurupá during fieldwork for my master's degree in 2005 for the years 2002-2004. In 2002, there were 40 reported violations related to vending (bread, picolé, etc.), but no data were gathered for extraction violations. In 2003, there were 23 reported extraction violations for timber and palmito, but no reports were gathered for vending violations. Finally, in 2004, the department gathered information on both vendors and extractors, but only for wood and palmito extraction, for a total of 46 violations (Hendrickson 2006). There were no statistics gathered or reported for children who work in açai extraction for any year.

In an informal interview with João M., the director of Instituto Peabiru, he told me that there is a great need to understand the rate of children's participation in açai production and consequences that result. While Instituto Peabiru has spent considerable time in Currálinho and throughout the Marajó region, they have been unsuccessful in obtaining any data on children working with açai or the injuries that occur as a result. He said, "we've tried to find data and get information from a variety of sources, but it just does not exist!" What I have found is that when accidents occur, they are rarely reported as a result of or in relation to the production of açai, but are generally reported as falls, knife injuries, snake bites, etc, obscuring the data of the actual occurrence. This also applies to school evasion. If children miss too much school because they are working in the harvest or staying home performing domestic duties so that others can work in the harvest, it is often reported simply as evasion or attendance records are falsified showing nothing at all.

According to João M, part of the problem is the way açai arrives to the major markets and factories. Açai arrives to these ports early in the morning when it is still dark, generally through an atravessador or through a network of atravessadores. The majority of those present in the markets are men, and the buyers purchase açai and have no means (or legal responsibility) to verify how the açai was harvested or by whom. As João M. points out, it is not only the child labor involved, but also the danger of the work.

Açai and Social Effects

It has been pointed out many times that children miss school, compromising their educations and possible future employment and earning opportunities in order to work in the açai safra. The most common reason given for this occurrence throughout all conversations, interviews, and questionnaires was that their labor contributions are crucial elements for family

survival. However, there is conflicting information. While some children truly must work to help their struggling families, there are others who work to earn their own money and spend it as they choose. According to Rui, the director of Conselho Tutelar in Gurupá, it is not only the issues of physical risk and educational evasion that results from working with açai, but also the potential dangers that children with substantial earnings can be exposed. This theme, like so many others related to children's involvement in açai, completely lacks data as well as academic/institutional studies that attempt to understand and/or address resulting problems.

Instituto Peabiru (2016) points out that children are drawn to work with açai because of the amount of earnings that are possible, which until now, has been beyond their grasp.

In a successful week during the safra, they [young people] have two hundred or more reais in their hands, values unimaginable, until then, in their social context. The possibility of quick gain with a few days of work, without the necessary financial education, opens doors to consumerism, drugs, alcoholism, and high-risk activities....In any case, what should be taken into account is the exposure of tens of thousands of young people (a number that needs to be better evaluated by competent organizations), many who are not legally old enough to work...in a professional activity that requires substantial strength and is high risk (Instituto Peabiru 2016:22).

The topic of poor financial decision-making by adults/families involved in açai arose in many conversations and interviews in both communities. Olga Neiuwenhuys (1994:199) points out that “among the rural poor, the pressures are overwhelmingly directed at satisfying material wants, be it by a child's own endeavors or by facilitating adult work.” Many that I spoke with disapproved of purchases for ‘material wants,’ or what they referred to as “needless items” (satellite dishes, washing machines, generators, plasma TVs, computers, etc.). This disapproval was especially directed at families that do not save any or enough funds to survive after the safra, who then either go hungry or accumulate high debts until the next safra. However, the topic of children who made similar financial decisions and purchases rarely came up, unless I directly asked. It seems that many found it easy to condemn adults for consumerism and careless spending, but children fall under the radar of blame for making similar financial decisions with their own money.

I had always been given the impression that children working had little power over their earnings and the majority of it unquestionably went to their families. Açai, however, with its high financial yield, appears to be the one exception where some children keep their money, or a substantial portion of their earnings. To clarify, I asked Berto if children working in açai extraction receive their own money. He explained that some children do receive and control the money they earn during the safra, and more surprisingly, some even have their own açaiizals.

Before there was the idea that “he is working to help his family.” Today, though, it is not like that. In the school where I work, there are boys that have their own açaiizals and keep all of the profit for themselves, without any supervisions by their parents. They buy consumer goods and whatever they desire. They even come to school and bring food to have lunch with their former classmates. Do I think this is wrong? In part, yes! They are at an age when they should receive guidance from their parents on how to spend their money.

Berto lives on the Canaticu River, one of the largest açai producing areas in all of Curalinho. He said that he knows six boys in a large extended family, between the ages of eight and twelve, who have their own açaiçals. Their fathers thought it was best to divide up the land between them, so they could have their own. The fathers do help them with sales to atravessadores, but each boy works independently to extract and maintain his own açaiçal and keeps the money he makes.

Instituto Peabiru (2016) found that when young people gain financial autonomy very early, other problems follow—like drug and alcohol abuse, prostitution, and increased exposure to situations of risk. I asked Rui if he had seen any problems in Gurupá as a result of children earning large sums of money from açai extraction.

During the three or four months of the safra, these boys that picked so much açai during the week earn up to 500 reais. It's their money. Come Friday, they party, drink a lot of beer, they buy things at outrageous prices in auction—like a plate of chicken for 100 or 200 reais [normally 5 reais, a type of showboating] and when Monday comes, they don't have a cent to their name. Their money is gone and so they pick more açai and their father and mother never see a cent of this money.

Rui expressed great irritation with these situations, as his job is to protect the rights and well-being of children. He feels that other agencies in town that have a responsibility to assist in these situations do not lend enough support considering their overwhelming caseload. As of July 2013, the Conselho Tutelar, that employs only eight people, had more than 1200 cases. He said that cases must be prioritized, which is an impossible task.

There are cases when a child is a victim, then there are cases when a child makes himself a victim by placing himself in situations of risk. For example, an adolescent is at a bar, drinking beer, and playing pool. He has money, his family has money, yet he is placing himself in a risky situation. This is very different from another family we assist, where the mother came to us with a child crying out of hunger. She asked if we could give her an egg, to stop the child's hunger. We gave them everything that we had in our kitchen. What's the significance of this? Both of these children are in situations of risk, do I go to the one at the bar or do I attend to the one who is starving. Which is the priority?

Berto makes a point to tell me that children are not forced to work or miss school, in his experience, but a large part of it is because they want their own money to buy their own things.

This is a very old discussion, of children missing school or dropping out during the açai harvest season. However, it is not the only reason they miss school. To make farinha (from manioc) is a very long process, from cleaning the areas to plant it, which is generally done by men, but when it comes time to plant, everyone works to plant the crop. But returning to the question of açai, the majority of children in the interior, in truth, work to help the family, their fathers and mothers, and also because they want their own things, like a canoe or motor for it. From my perspective, I did not see children that were forced to work. They

want to do it [work] because they need money to buy the things they want. You see, globalization has already arrived in the interior as well as its technology. Nowadays you will see children there with modern cell phones that they bought with the money they earned picking açai.

One major issue with the purchase of cell phones, especially for children who live or spend the majority of their time in the interior, is that cell/internet service rarely reaches there, reducing their “latest generation” phones to playing games, listening to music, watching downloaded movies, and taking/showing photographs or home movies. While the phones have no practical communication purpose most of the time, they serve as distractions from boredom and may as well serve as social equalizers between children in the interior and children in town. Based on interviews and questionnaires with children in both communities, many children who live in town stigmatize children in the interior for lacking knowledge and experience in modern social and material life. In fact, many respondents described children’s lives in the interior as “innocent, isolated, lacking opportunities and access to technology,” as well as mostly being only about work.

Gender Segregation in Açai

As I discussed at the beginning of this chapter, gender divisions in work and daily life are strictly adhered to in both communities with very few exceptions. Until recently, the difference in girl’s work and boy’s work did not consistently and significantly financially advantage one over the other. However, açai extraction and its profits are not gender equal in opportunity; young boys gain access to large sums of money while girls of the same age are generally excluded and have no equivalent work options.

In all my interviews and conversations about açai, I asked whether girls picked açai, especially since the physical stature of prepubescent children is relatively similar. The most common response was that girls knew how to climb and pick açai, and sometimes did it for family sustenance, but only if the family lacked boys or if the boys were not old enough to climb. For example, Emanuely, who is the eldest child in her family in an interior hamlet in Gurupá, began climbing for açai with her father when she was eight-years-old. At that time, her two younger brothers, four-years-old and one-year-old, were too small to climb. However, when she had an accident at 13 while picking açai, her father prohibited her from climbing again, and her younger brothers were then old enough to take her place. In general, this situation is the rare exception to gender divisions in work.

Açai extraction occurs in the interior, where machismo and traditional patriarchy are well-preserved, and it is considered a male job. Contributions made by women and girls, such as making the baskets for açai or removing the berries from the stem, go unrecognized and unremunerated (See Oliveira 2011, Pereira 2017). Men are responsible for negotiating prices and the sale of açai (Siqueira 2009; Instituto Peabiru 2016). In one conversation I was told that some women, although very few, work in açai but there is no space for girls. Others told me that they had heard of women and girls working in açai, but most had never seen it personally. A few said that some occasionally remove the berries from the cache, generally if they needed necessities like clothing or want to purchase items for an upcoming party. But these cases were temporary for two connected reasons. Women and girls shoulder all the domestic responsibilities and removing açai from the cache is “extremely tiring when you are talking about 20-30 [a minimum of 160-240 caches] baskets per day.” In this, they must combine remunerated açai work with their already fulltime, yet unremunerated, job at home (See Siqueira 2009 for more

discussion on ribeirinho women and the division of labor). In my own experience, my hands, arms, and back were aching and sore after filling just one basket over the course of three hours. I cannot imagine the daily pain endured and the accumulation of physical damage, especially to hands and wrists, that result from the repetitive actions necessary to remove the berries from the cache.

I asked Berto if problems occurred because of the boys' options for significant earnings while girls of the same age have few opportunities.

This is a difficult city for women and girls, they have no prospects. For women and girls in the interior, their options are to be “donas de casa” [housewives]—there is no work for them. Basically what happens is that everyone has dreams, but they end up being frustrated because they don't have equal opportunities. During the safra, everyone [except girls] has money, from the children to the elderly. Because girls don't work in açai and they don't have a source of income, they start looking for easy money—selling their bodies.

While gender differences in children's work with açai was not the focus of this research, it is a topic that clearly needs more examination. Girls, “rather than being directly employed, are engaged in the least valued types of activities, namely domestic work” and caring for younger children (Nieuwenhuys 1994:199). Boys, however, have the opportunity to work in the highly valued (both culturally and financially) extraction of açai. Boys are rarely, if ever, required for domestic chores, but it remains a girl's fate starting in early childhood and throughout adulthood. These contributions are not perceived as work, but more of a devotion to and for the care of the family, while others engage in the *real* (remunerated) work. Girls, in fact, are expected to put the wellbeing of the family above their personal needs and satisfaction, disadvantaging them with respect to boys, who keep part or all of their earnings for their own use (Nieuwenhuys 1994).

Chapter 9

Discussion and Conclusion

Throughout the course of writing this research, I constantly questioned the manner in which I presented the lives of those whose stories and realities fill these pages. Many of these children, mothers, fathers, and families are personally dear to me. They welcomed me into their homes, watched out for me, shared their food with me, and treated me as part of their own family. All the while, in confronting their countless daily obstacles and durable inequalities, never hesitated to give a hug, a smile, or a joke, when I myself, sometimes overwhelmed with the realities and loneliness of fieldwork, could barely muster any of these things. It is my hope, and with the deepest respect for these communities, that I have presented this research so that it may be of value to and for them.

The goal of this research project was to examine children's work contributions in rural household açaí production in relation to the global dispersal of an elite normative childhood model employed in intervention/child labor reduction strategies. Often, these child labor prevention and intervention strategies, seen as fundamental in protecting the dignity and normal development of children, inherently conflict with situated realities and cultural understandings of childhood throughout the world and ignore the impact of extreme poverty and inequality on families and the excruciatingly difficult decisions they often must make concerning their children as a result. This is demonstrated particularly through the use of compulsory education as a major method in the prevention and reduction of exploitative and harmful child labor practices worldwide, which highlights the complexities involved in developing and applying universal standards across cultures. The problems presented in this study expose old problems in structural, political, and economic inequalities formed in a socioeconomic history specific to the Amazon region. For successful formation and application of any intervention strategy, these factors must be considered to effectively address the current situation of children and families in Curralinho and Gurupá.

Contradictions, Paradoxes, and Complexities: There is No 'One Size Fits All'

Working children who fall outside the typical definition of child labor, children working within their own families and for their own financial gain, are "far less attractive objects of compassion than children in employment" (Niewenhuys 1994:198). In Curralinho and Gurupá, this is the type of work that most children do. Their work contributions are shaped, in part, as a response to poor infrastructure and economic processes that severely limit employment opportunities for adults, reinforced by the lack of quality education available to them. While education is typically thought of as a means for children to improve themselves, their future options, and break the cycle of child labor that has been passed down generation after generation, it has not necessarily lived up to this ideal. In these communities, schools often lack basic

educational necessities like books, well-trained teachers, and a culturally reflective curriculum compounded by the dim prospect of access to education beyond middle school or high school.

Throughout my fieldwork in both communities, there were numerous town hall meetings in which local government officials, educators, and citizens addressed the ‘complicated situation’ of deficient educational opportunities and its current and enduring consequences. During one meeting in Curralinho, a local representative and former teacher summarized the issues with the following statement.

It is urgent to improve education here so that the youth can have better days. Right now, there are a lack of jobs and nothing to give them a ‘path’ to success, only a ‘path’ to the street, drugs, and prostitution. They are waiting for someone to give them an opportunity. We as teachers need to continue our own education and graduate, as many teachers here only have a middle school education. People here cannot get a good education, only a lower level education, and in order to continue they must leave [Curralinho] to study – because we have no classes for advancement available. We want people to get an education and give back to their birth place, to help this place...not create a brain drain. Imagine a liberated people?! Only through [quality] education at all levels will there be a real possibility to make this a reality, to make things better, and give the people a real opportunity.

These words received unanimous agreement and applause by all in attendance, but changes will remain elusive until addressed by the upper echelons of governmental power and policy, as pointed out to me months later during a conversation about the educational challenges in the Marajó region. Gil, a 32-year-old native Curralinhese who is now a lawyer in judicial system of Belém, emphatically described the problems and the issues involved in the current situation of education.

The biggest problem begins with the public policies practiced by the Public Power in the country, whether by the federal government, state or municipal (local). Education is not a priority in Brazil, always being relegated to the background. The assistance policy, Bolsa Família, is important in the short term, but it does not guarantee the development of a solid and quality education, because it does not change the lack of appreciation for the educating class (teachers) or make improvements to the school structure. This includes quality school meals and regular and effective provision, as well as the creation of opportunities for qualification, work and employment in other areas of activity for the citizens who make up the population of these municipalities.

He continued, illustrating four major areas in desperate need of rectification.

I believe that education should be treated as an absolute priority by the federal, state and municipal governments. In what way?

1. Valuing the educating class by means of positions, careers, salaries and dignified remuneration. Why does a Judge earn an average [per month] of R\$ 20,000 and a teacher only R\$ 2,000?
2. Investing in the infrastructure of schools and kindergartens, with quality recreational space, libraries, access to the internet, and quality school meals, as well as implementing the school full time with professionals (teachers, pedagogues, psychologists) qualified to educate and take care of the students.
3. Customizing education, through a pedagogical project that contemplates the reality of the students in the interior municipalities in the state of Pará...raising students' critical awareness about the region in which they live, especially for environmental education, sustainable development, preservation and conservation of nature and responsible exploitation of the riches that surround them.
4. Internalization of public universities (federal and state), so that the citizens of these municipalities can have access to higher education, and in this way, can lead to the development of the region in which they live.

It is important to mention that some of these projects already occur today, but in a timid and unbalanced way, sometimes bumping into a chronic problem in our country: corruption in the management of public affairs.

In both communities and throughout the Marajó region, families are well aware of the deficient options in local employment and education and often must prioritize the immediate benefit of their children's work contributions over educational attainment. Gil pointed directly to this situation and said that "because there are not consistent opportunities for work and income generation and adequate structure in the interior schools (almost always abandoned), parents do not encourage their children to go to school and reproduce the culture of child labor as you have observed, in the açaí crop, mainly, as well as in hunting, fishing, and even in timber."

The need to prioritize work over education is exacerbated by the fact that education beyond middle school requires financial and personal resources that exceed most family's means in both communities. Money is needed for travel, living expenses, and private tutoring to prepare a student for the Vestibular, in which students' scores must be in the top of the entire country to receive one of the limited spaces to attend a federal (free) university. Personal resources include reliable connections in distant large urban cities like Belém where children can be sent to live with trusted relatives or friends that will not only assist in their education but will also care for and nurture their development from children into adults. If these options are not available, a child's education either ends or parents can attempt to arrange a work agreement for their child in exchange for room and board with access to education. However, sending one's child to live with others not only violates cultural core values of family in Brazil, but it also exposes the child to innumerable possibilities of danger and exploitation. No matter how trusted or legitimate connections appear, there are no guarantees of safety or fair treatment. A case in point was the example in Chapter 6 about the rape, torture, and murder of 11-year-old Marielma, whose parents negotiated a domestic service job with a family in Belém in exchange for room, board, and access to education unavailable near her home.

Not all stories end as tragically as Marielma's. There are those with happy endings, but not without many hardships and sacrifices. Gil explained the difficulties that children face in the pursuit of education, including his own experience in which he had to leave everything – his home, his family, and his childhood.

It [continued education] is only for those families who have the financial resources and a critical conscience regarding the importance of education in a child's life – who will then will send him to a larger city or to the capital to continue studying, and thus be able to build a better future. I, myself, am living proof of this statistic. I had to leave Curralinho when I was only 13-years-old and came to live in Belém to continue my studies and fulfill my dream of graduating from law school. As a favor to my family, I lived with relatives there and experienced many difficulties during that time. I had to become an adult before I was even 14-years-old.

Gil, while proud of his accomplishments, did not reflect fondly on this time in his life. His narrative is one of the few exceptions of continued education and eventual professional success, as his family had both the financial ability and familial support/connections in Belém to allow him the opportunity. He always wanted to be a lawyer, no different than all children who dream of their futures and professions.

Every child has a desire to learn and to be successful in their life. Children in Curralinho and Gurupá are no exception and clearly want more for their futures than current options provide. When asked, “what do you want to be when you grow up?” in self-administered questionnaires, not a single child indicated a desire for future employment in domestic labor, manual labor, or forest extraction of any kind, which comprise most common job opportunities in both communities, except for teaching (26 responses) and owning a business (3). The overwhelming majority dream of future professions that require continued education and training: lawyer (34), engineer (22), military service (10), veterinarian (5), doctor (4), writer (4), technology (3), psychologist (3), biologist (3), administrator (3), dentist (2), nutritionist (1). There were, of course, the big dreamers who wanted to be soccer stars (3) and fashion models (2), as well as those who simply wanted to make enough money for a good life (3). Based on the current available educational and employment opportunities, in order to achieve their goals, they have no option but to leave their homes and communities for distant cities, or their dreams will remain unrealized.

Without improvements in the quality of local education and its accessibility beyond middle and high school, these children are trapped in a conundrum, a paradox of education in which they are enticed with dreams and aspirations made possible only through education but are denied the education necessary to achieve them. The result is a hopeless frustration that leads to eventual educational abandonment due to a lack of alternatives. Their education is truncated from the very beginning. As Berto pointed out in Chapter 6, “everyone has dreams, but they end up being frustrated because they don't have equal opportunities...after they finish middle [or high] school, they have nothing to do, their families can't afford to send them [elsewhere] to school, few are able to graduate and find work or change their lives...so they start families very young and perpetuate the cycle [of poverty and child labor].”

National and international interventionist and child labor eradication strategies view education as one of the irrefutable tenets in the remedy of the ‘child labor problem.’ Yet, a deeper analysis of its application at the local level suggests that relying on education in this manner is problematic at best and often ineffective, especially when local socioeconomic circumstances and cultural values and expectations are not considered. Using education to reduce child labor in impoverished and underdeveloped communities like Currálinho and Gurupá, and throughout the world, presents three major contradictions: 1) it is based on an elite ideal of childhood 2) it does not necessarily improve a child’s future opportunities 3) it decreases a child’s leisure time, but not necessarily their workload.

First, at the most basic level, these entities rely on a middle and upper class ideal of childhood that are inapplicable to the majority of children in struggling nations across the globe. This dominant paradigm of childhood excludes children from the public sphere, demarcating the home and the school as the only two ‘normal’ and acceptable spaces for them to live out their lives before adulthood. One example is the UNCRC’s use of age and space restrictions in defining a singular ‘universal childhood’, and when applied to a large portion of children worldwide is completely out of context with the daily reality and cultural expectations of families and communities. In these restricted definitions, childhood is placed in the moral economy of the family and if this ideal is violated, it leads to the flawed conclusion that these children have no childhood or are robbed of it prematurely (Nieuwenhuys 1994). This model of childhood, based on elite and middle-class standards, lacks cultural relativity and stigmatizes traditional forms of family economy and poor families worldwide who need their children’s work contributions for daily subsistence and survival.

Second, using education as a remedy to reduce or alleviate child labor assumes that children have equal access to quality education and through its pursuit increases life opportunities. Unfortunately, in Currálinho and Gurupá, and similar structurally/economically challenged communities throughout the world, this is not the case. Education does not necessarily increase employment opportunities or augment future incomes. Education in these rural environments is severely constricted, underfunded, and surrounded by a local economy that offers few options for advancement regardless of education level. Outside of the urban elite zones, education is often a dead end that is little more than a compulsory fulfillment.

Third, using education to decrease the rate of child labor has not necessarily been effective. Current studies (See Amarante et al. 2011; Araújo 2009; Attanasio et al. 2010; Cacciamali et al. 2010; Pais et al. 2017) conclude that compulsory education and CCT programs with attendance rate requirements reduce a child’s free time (play, leisure, etc.) but have little effect on reducing their workload. Going to school does not automatically relieve the demands placed on children or their responsibilities within the household, especially as parents are not convinced of its value based on the poor quality available when their children’s help is needed at home. For many children of the rural poor, expanding education has resulted in an increase of drudgery without the benefit of increased opportunities.

I want to explicitly state that I am in no way proposing that education or attempts to reduce child labor are not important. They are of the utmost importance! What I am suggesting, however, is that for either to be successful, situated realities must be evaluated and integrated into intervention strategies and improvements in access to quality education made available. Any

type of intervention/prevention must incorporate the family reality, including children's own perspectives, into decisions instead of relying on blanket approaches that are rarely appropriate or even applicable in target areas. Randel, a rural education specialist in Curralinho emphasizes this point.

There are massive legislation and laws against all kinds of things, but the laws are made without any real knowledge of the region. To make a law is one thing, but to put it into practice is another. They make laws, but then have no way to put them into practice, nor can they really be applied in our reality here. We have one of the best Constitutions ever made in the world, unfortunately the problem is putting it into practice. What is the use of having a document that defines everything, our right to safety, our right to health, to education, etc...but is not fulfilled by the government itself and cannot be put into practice? If the government does not comply with it, then what good does it do to have laws?

His points also apply to equality and access to education, as guaranteed by the Brazilian Constitution, which should provide children in rural areas with the same chances for success as their urban middleclass counterparts, but this has yet to be achieved. For future success, education is key, but not at the level that it is currently implemented. As the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) points out, "a poor quality education is almost like no education."

Education is not a singular issue, but represents only one sector in the structural inequalities pervasive throughout the Marajó region. If children are to achieve their professional dreams or any type of economic success without the need for their premature labor, structural inequalities that not only relate to them, but also that relate to their families and communities must be addressed. Children are not exploited to the exclusion of their parents or families, but most often right alongside them. There must be employment opportunities, basic quality education, and investment in local infrastructure to change current conditions. Otherwise, families and children alike have little incentive to prioritize education over work, especially when the obstacles blocking their attempts seem unsurmountable.

The Complexities of Children's Work

Economists, human rights advocates, and social scientists have long attempted to explain and analyze the underlying causes of child labor to improve the accuracy, design, and implementation of social protection policies and programs for families and children. There is now a much greater understanding of the varied effects of poverty, adult wage fluctuations, and education on child labor, but the complexities of children's work in rural family/household contexts remains under-theorized and largely absent from assistance and intervention programs. This is concerning considering that the highest rates of child labor throughout the developing world occur in the agricultural sector, most often in family operated enterprises.

In the domain of state concern, rural family-based work tends to be excluded. Economists, recognizing the need for inclusion of children in these contexts, have directed much attention to variables of familial organization, household economies, and globalization. In much of this theoretical work, however, is a general assumption that children will only work when it is economically necessary, most often to help their family meet basic subsistence needs. Kaushik

Basu and Pham Hoang Van (1998) call this the ‘luxury axiom,’ meaning that when household resources rise, the need for and the rate of child labor should decrease. Logically, this makes sense under the right conditions and in the right social context, but similarly to education and intervention strategies, there are contradictions when applied at the local level, especially in rural family labor. Primarily, these theories are based on what David Lancy (2018) calls a Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic (WEIRD) perspective of childhood in which work is not a normative feature. They assume that parents are altruistic towards their children in regards to work and preventing them from it whenever possible, overlooking cultural contexts where children’s work contributions are not only normal but expected. Unlike the US and other wealthy industrialized nations, where children tend to be shielded and excluded from work, rural children and poor children in Brazil and throughout the world see and participate in it as part of daily life.

It is important to recognize that there have been and continue to be cultural contexts in which working children are not a shocking aberration from the truly normal and functional. In fact, many “cultures view and treat working children as a positive phenomenon corresponding to desirable patterns of socialization and integration into productive and reproductive processes” (Schibotto 2001:19). Lancy (2018: ix-1) suggests that work for many children throughout the world is the foundational building blocks of an identity, particularly in gender norms and community expectations and acceptance, that “is intimately bound up with local concepts of family, kinship, gender, economics, social rank, and socialization.” Work, “as a central component in children’s lives, development, and acquisition of culture,” goes unappreciated (Lancy 2018:1). In Currelino and Gurupá, work is based on gendered expectations and demarcated by public and private spaces, but generally situated in local understandings, regardless of sex, as responsibility and contribution as a member of a family unit. Most children are not forced to work, but they are expected to work in some capacity. By contributing through their remunerated and unremunerated labor they ease demands on parents, which may likely improve the overall well-being of the family by distributing the workload throughout its members, instead of concentrating it all on the parents. This is especially true in the domestic family economy. Parents rely on their children’s work contributions, because without them, parents would have to “double or triple their work levels” with likely negative results for the entire family (Lancy 2018:161). In this sense, work for children is normal and is valued in the overall well-being of the family unit.

Throughout the child labor literature it is rare to find a discussion of the positive aspects of working children. In most contexts, children’s work is viewed from a negative perspective and inextricably linked to a call for its abolition (Liebel, Overwien, and Recknagel 2001; Schibotto 2001). It is presented as undesirable and in violation to the normative model of childhood where children should be protected from the economic, political, and public functions of society. However, by condemning the work of children as an evil or abnormality in need of eradication, children (and families) are given the message that something is inherently wrong with their lives. Instead of empowering them, they are made to be victims in need of saving, giving no value to their often significant contributions within the family and to the community. The growing attitude that work is not compatible with childhood only reinforces an elitist model, which “assigns...the social status, that while sheltered, in the end is marginalized and powerless”

(Liebel, Overwien, and Recknagel 2001:10). Instead of preparing children as citizens for their later economic and political functions through active engagement, they are restricted from the spheres of work and politics, ignoring their agency in decision-making and their ability to influence and change culture.

In many of the assumptions about child labor and why children work, there is an oblique implication that ‘normal’ children do not work, and if they do, it is not in pursuit of economic gain or self-interest like that of adults. Essentially, this perspective reinforces the idea that children lack agency in choosing to work, whether for personal gain, to contribute to their families, or to learn a skill. However, as discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, children often do work in the pursuit of rewards (clothes, technology, money, etc.) just as adults, especially when there is a stigma associated with life in the interior when compared to life in town. Throughout my research, I always asked adults and children about work motivations. While the general response indicated that children work to help their families, it was not uncommon to hear, especially from boys, that they worked to also buy things that they wanted. Sometimes the rewards were small, like a few pieces of candy at the end of the day, but they were nonetheless motivations beyond contributing to family well-being. Girls rarely mentioned working to purchase their own things, which is not surprising since their work contributions occur primarily in the domestic domain that rarely pays a cash wage.

The Distinctive Features of Açaí

The globalization of açaí has brought about many changes throughout the Marajó region in the state of Pará. Recognized as a staple food source by the 17th century, its rapid transformation over the last 25 years into an international superfood with an annual revenue exceeding \$150 million-dollars has changed from a traditional subsistence activity into a highly lucrative economic form of income. For families that previously had few cash earning alternatives, growing and harvesting açaí has improved their economic situation, at least during the safra, allowing them to eat better, make improvements to their homes and boats, and improve their overall standard of living. Unfortunately, their profit returns are largely unequal when compared to all other links in the commodity chain, especially considering the extreme danger and physically exhausting nature of the job. For their communities, the lack of processing industries diverts the most profitable sectors in the chain, including taxation, out of the municipality, leaving durable socioeconomic problems, like high extreme poverty rates, lack of employment opportunities, and limited access to social services like education and healthcare, untouched.

The majority of açaí manufactured for national and international export is controlled by only a handful of corporations, impacting not only regional profitability and socioeconomic improvements all the way down the commodity chain, but also the narrative created in its marketing to consumers. In reviewing major açaí manufacturing company websites located in the states of Pará and Amapá, I found that nearly all had a company narrative emphasizing the importance of their commitment to some type of ethical social, environmental, and/or economic production of their product. They all discussed a dedication to sustainability and reduction of deforestation, while others also included commitments to fair trade, organic, and nonGMO production. One company emphasizes the fact that in order to insure quality all of their açaí is harvested *only* ‘by hand’ by locals. This type of marketing raises two significant issues.

First, to the international consumer unfamiliar with açai (**all** of which is harvested by hand because there is no alternative) and life in the Amazon, this often creates a romanticized image of how the ‘exotic’ berries are harvested and by whom – similar, perhaps, to that of Juan Valdez and his burro picking coffee beans in the picturesque mountains of Columbia. Regrettably, this image cannot be further from the reality of açai harvesting, especially concerning family farms.

Two, not a single link in the açai commodity chain, including national and international companies, has a legal responsibility to verify who harvested the product. For companies that claim ethical commitments and fair trade standards, guaranteeing this is nearly impossible as most açai is sold through informal cash transactions from family homes to atravessadores along rivers throughout the Marajó region. Atravessadores do not ask, nor do purchasers further up the commodity chain, who picked the açai, even though it is widely known that young boys are doing a large portion of the climbing. In much of the commodity export literature, terms like ‘family production,’ ‘household labor,’ ‘family labor,’ etc. obscures the true nature involved in this type of enterprise, which most often includes every abled-bodied individual in that household, including children as young as five or six-years-old. Açai is distinct from other commodities and child labor because it does not suppress adult wages or decrease access to jobs because the price paid per basket is based on current market value, not on who does the work. Açai is a family enterprise, but men predominantly negotiate the cash sale of açai with the atravessador. The countless hours of work involved in locating and picking the açai, removing it from the stems, and transporting it to the home for sale is rarely seen by anyone that is not directly involved in these processes. In this sense, açai is a hidden ‘family’ production, in which children’s labor and women’s labor are rarely, if ever, seen.

Based on harvesting labor needs, açai is unique in comparison to other commodities. No other fruit, to my knowledge, specifically requires children or small-statured individuals for harvest when there is no mechanized method of extraction. Due to the increased global demand for açai, the number of trees planted each year has reached epic numbers. Considering the dramatic growth in the past two decades in national and international markets and the sizable profits of those involved, especially in the processing and sale of frozen açai pulp, this suggests that not only does this industry need children’s work contributions, it has *increased* the need for their labor. This means that without the labor of children – especially young boys and adolescents – not only would family earnings suffer, but the amount of açai harvested would decline, ultimately affecting the larger economy.

In one example, among countless initiatives to increase açai production and sale, is a plan set forth for the years 2016-2020 by the state of Pará. The goal of the program is to strengthen and increase açai production through the management and planting of 40,000 hectares of açai, involving 10,000 producers throughout the 16 Marajó municipalities, including Curralinho and Gurupá (Homma et al. 2016). Each municipality will cultivate 2000 hectares over the course of four years, in combination with an educational program that involves teaching rural family producers better açai maintenance and growing techniques. The program estimates the first harvest will take place in 2021 and by the year 2024, once the new stands are established, should generate an estimated 427,200 tons of açai. These new hectares of açai are estimated to directly generate 5000 new jobs, due to the growth in demand for manual labor to maintain the stands

and harvest the fruit. Indirectly, 20,000 workers will be integrated into the job market along the açai productive chain (Homma et al. 2016). Nowhere in this 41-page document sponsored by the government of Pará are children, or their exclusion/inclusion, mentioned. Their labor, while officially unrecognized, is obliquely included in the term ‘family producers.’ New palms equal the need for lighter climbers.

Another factor missing from the plan is the formation of local processing industries in major açai producing municipalities, which could greatly improve major socioeconomic problems throughout the region. Because there are only a few major companies involved in açai manufacturing, small açai producers have little negotiating power and must rely on atravessadores. In an interview with Gil about current problems in communities like Curralinho and Gurupá that produce açai, he spoke directly about this matter.

At the center of economic issues linked to açai production is the strength of big capital, marked by the monopoly of a small group of entrepreneurs. The middlemen represent, in my opinion, only the tip of this ‘iceberg.’ It is the centralization of wealth, which is a secular problem here in Brazil. Some families benefit from the globalization of açai. There are those that have [more land] a larger production and are able to guarantee a significant sales volume directly with the exporters...some even export directly. For families who produce smaller quantities, usually single-family production, they are dependent on middlemen and must sell their product at a much lower price. [They] do not benefit [like they should] from the globalization of the fruit. In this way, the production of açai should be encouraged through the installation of cooperatives, protecting the internal market and guaranteeing access by low-income families. It is also essential to implement management in the extraction of the fruit, through environmental sustainability, which requires a more active and educational presence of the Public Power through its agencies and environmental authorities.

Gil continued, pointing out the seriousness of the situation and its consequences specifically in relation to children.

These issues are directly linked to the problem of education and are responsible for reproducing the reality that you have known here during your research. Children and adolescents actively working in the monoculture and extraction of açai, in exchange for a certain "gain" in money, mainly during the harvest. Hence the problems are diverse – loss of childhood, teenage pregnancy, alcohol and other drug abuse, school evasion... In addition to the serious accidents and dangers of the work itself. In this sense, this reality has hindered the normal development of children in these regions of Pará.

Gil’s summary of the major issues is exactly on point and exposes many of the contradictions involved in the expansion of the açai market and the need for change at all levels of the

commodity chain, highlighting the educational and social issues that result from the incorporation of children's labor during the açaí safra.

For families involved in açaí production, the harvest season is when their children are most likely to miss school. This situation is partially explained by what Sonia Bhalotra and Christopher Heady (2003:197) call the 'wealth paradox,' in which children of land rich households work more than those from land-poor households and "challenges the common presumption that child labor emerges from the poorest households." In the family production of açaí, similar to other studies conducted on growth and positive economic fluctuations in production (see Dumas 2007, Kambhampati and Rajan 2006, Kruger 2007), children are kept out of school in order to maximize income during the lucrative safra. Once the safra is over, children can return to school, but not only confront the previously discussed issues surrounding education, but also to face new issues of age/grade distortion and grade failure, significantly increasing the likelihood of dropping out. Diana Kruger (2007) suggests that economic improvements may not be the 'panacea' to poverty and its problems, especially when families sacrifice their children's education so that they can increase household income during economy growth. It is a type of paradox because the safra provides a source of income that makes school affordable, especially for severely constrained households who must prioritize their children's work over education. However, because the safra and its earnings are temporary, work diverts some, if not all available time away from most other activities – including school, so that families can earn as much as possible to survive or live better throughout the remainder of the year.

One notable positive effect of the açaí boom is that family members, particularly men, who can participate in açaí production no longer have to leave their homes for long periods to work. When I first began studying child labor in Gurupá in 2003, it was common for men to leave the community to find work elsewhere, staying gone for months at a time. Their absences, not only emotionally difficult for families, also caused significant financial problems for the mother and children left behind. In an informal interview in 2005 with Alma, a Gurupaense mother of 11 children, she explained the bleakness that the lack of jobs caused for families.

Because of the lack of jobs, the men have to go to work in the interior far away from here and from home. This is a problem because it leaves the women at home with all of the responsibilities. They have to take care of everything, the children, the house, do all the work in the home, in addition to trying to bring some money in so that they can live while the men are away...it is very common that while the man is away working, the women and children are at home hungry because they have no money to buy food...many families here have very little food to eat, sometimes they have less than a cup of farinha for food (Hendrickson 2006).

The mother of one family in this situation at the time worked as a maid at a local hotel. She told me that because there was no work for her husband in Gurupá, he had to take a job at a cattle ranch nine hours up river. Due to the distance and the cost, he was only able to come home one weekend a month. The rest of the time she lived as a single mother of four children under the

age of 13. She explained that it was extremely difficult because she had “all of the responsibility for care for the children and to work.” She then told me that her 13-year-old daughter took care of most of the domestic responsibilities, “the cooking, cleaning, and the laundry.” While she did not mention childcare, I knew that her daughter was also responsible for the three younger children while her mother was at work, which included getting them ready for and walking them to school each day. She was responsible for her siblings six days a week, in addition to the domestic responsibilities, and going to school herself. With the growth in açai, some families no longer have to be split apart to earn a living, even if they all must participate in the work.

Alternatives to Work?

There are important questions that are rarely considered when analyzing child labor in regards to a child’s alternatives. Specifically, what would these children be doing if they were not working? What local options or alternatives are available to them, especially when the quality of education is poor and the community lacks adult employment opportunities? What are the consequences for children and their families without their work contributions? The negative associations that child labor tends to evoke is based on a type of “ethical universalism,” where moral sentiments are taken as absolute validity, making no adaptation to different cultural contexts (Schibotto 2001). There is an assumption that happy children do not work, that it is harmful to them, and their lives would be better without it. However, to focus only on the dangers and negative consequences of child labor “fails to take account of the price that the children would have to pay if they did not work. As they [children] themselves say, ‘if we did not work, we would remain illiterate, would have to go around in our underpants, rot in poverty and die of hunger’” (Leibel et al. 2001:59).

One alternate perspective of children working is the suggestion that it keeps them out of trouble. In an interview with Selma, a 19-year-old single mother of a toddler in Gurupá, she explained that work was good for kids because it kept them out of trouble.

Kids work because they have to work and help their parents. This is good really, because the kids don’t have time to get into trouble. For example, there are many boys here [in town] who don’t work and often because of this, and because no work exists here for them to do, they get into drugs and drinking, and they smoke. They will fight and argue – because they have nothing else to do. There is no work for them and they have too much time on their hands. Sometimes many of these boys will want clothes or see things in stores that they want, but because there is no work or a way for them to make money, they will rob people or places to get the money to buy the things that they want.

While Selma’s perspective is not one that is commonly discussed, especially considering the negative connotations of child labor and children working, her observations about her community did have merit. According to data that I received from the Conselho Tutelar in Gurupá in 2005, there were more than 150 cases of children drinking alcohol, 90 cases of children participating in gang activities, 23 cases of physical violence among children and adolescents, and 38 incidents of vandalism. These were only the reported cases investigated by the Conselho Tutelar, the actual occurrence rate is likely higher. Unfortunately, I was unable to

receive any data on these incidents in Currálinho, but based on my observations, interviews, and conversations, I have no doubt that the data are equivalent.

Both directors of the Conselho Tutelares in Currálinho and Gurupá discussed issues of rising child/adolescent alcohol/drug use, crime, and delinquency because ‘they have nothing else to do.’ This is not to say that child labor is good and should be utilized as a means to reduce deviancy in children. The major point is that in both communities there is a lack of focused activities or spaces for children while on almost every corner there is a bar or pool hall. Just as Izabela, a 15-year-old 8th grader in Currálinho, pointed out in Chapter 5 concerning social problems in her community, the growing rate of children going to parties, drinking, and using drugs. She related this directly to the fact that children do not have anything to do or a specific place to hang out or play. Her most powerful point and clear example of agency came in her statement that the “prefeitura ‘closes their eyes’ to this [the situation of children in the community]. Unfortunately, this is our reality, a reality that the prefeitura pretends not to see and tries to hide from society. We are not just kids, but a large part of the Currálinhese population.”

Final Reflections

The purpose of this study was to examine children’s roles in açaí production and its effects, contributing to an under-theorized dimension of human rights concerns: the question of the moral and ethical evaluation of children’s labor activities in family/household contexts. I focus on the hidden nature of children’s work in these rural household contexts, which is often excluded from child labor and intervention policies based on the erroneous assumption that children working within a family environment are less vulnerable to harsh treatment, exploitation, and danger. My ethnographic case study of açaí production documents work conditions, education, effects on income, and the attitudes toward children and childhood in these rural Amazonian communities, showing how these contrast to national and international discourses regarding child labor, child rights, and public policy. This case study highlights the complexities of developing and applying universal standards for human rights across cultures. Three contradictions within child labor and child rights discourses are apparent: the ‘cultural imperialism’ of applying an elite model of childhood, education as a means of remedy for the ‘child labor problem,’ and issues of gender.

Throughout this work, I have questioned the application of a universal childhood, which is most often based on a WEIRD (Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic) perspective that is child centered, where a child is economically worthless but emotionally priceless and only allowed within the two acceptable spaces of the home and the school. When this perspective is applied within child labor and child rights discourses, it is often clouded with moral preoccupations that fail to account for the lived reality of the majority of children worldwide. In particular, as in the communities presented in this study, it ignores social, cultural, and historical contexts in which children’s labor contributions to the family economy are essential, valued, and not viewed as something in need of eradication – but as part of a normal childhood in which children learn valuable social and economic skills that will serve them throughout life based on locally available options. It also ignores structural factors, like poor education quality and access, in which rural children throughout the world face each day.

This study has revealed previously unexamined issues of gender inequalities in children's roles in sustainable forest production. Common definitions of child labor and child labor legislation focus predominantly on economically valued work, often excluding unpaid work contributions of family members. The focus on income generation, or economically valued work, legitimizes a social division of labor that is essentially based on the subordination of females in society, as most of their work occurs in the private domestic sector and is viewed as economically worthless. Açaí provides a powerful example of gender segregation and exclusion, as current discourses on child labor fail to account for how ideologies of gender are perpetuated within the family, and the legitimation of the moral role of girls within the domestic domain articulated to the adult, outside and largely male world of cash (Nieuwenhuys 1996). As with the case of açaí, boys are able to earn money for themselves while girls have few options, either wholly depending on others or seeking to earn money by one of the few means available to them, prostitution. Their other option is domestic service in other's homes, in which they receive little to no pay. More often than not, domestic work is in exchange for room and board and possible access to education that is not available near their homes, requiring these young girls to leave the safety and care of their families, exposing them to countless dangers and exploitation.

Last, but certainly not least, this study brings children to the forefront in the research process, with a child-centered approach that incorporates children into the process of generating ethnographic knowledge. My study uses children's own voices to describe their lives as they are lived, rather than solely relying on the perspective of adults. This is a significant departure from the overwhelmingly adult perspectives that dominate ethnographic writings and childhood/child labor literature. Their narratives illustrate the plurality of childhoods and their varying cultural constructions within local socioeconomic realities, undercutting the applicability of a standard unitary model. Major intervention organizations, such as the ILO, UNICEF, WHO, etc., who are prominent contributors in the formation and application of policies regarding children and child labor, all exhibit some variation of this model which is problematic. Without considering the plurality of childhoods and cultural variations, intervention policies and programs will continue to struggle or fail in addressing the enduring issue of child labor and its underlying causes. As a result, families will continue to prioritize work over education, not simply based on the cultural importance and valuation of their children's work, but also because of the bleakness in future options and alternatives. This is especially true for children involved in family production and household labor. Many children in both communities must work and contribute to their family's daily survival, often to the exclusion of school.

The dramatic increase in açaí's economic value has brought new prosperity for many families involved in its production. In Currálinho and Gurupá, comprised mostly of small family enterprises, profits are significantly reduced due to a lack of accessible processing facilities and a near complete dependency on atravessadores for the sale and transport of their açaí. This situation not only reduces family income, but also transfers jobs and taxable sales to other municipalities, leaving much needed infrastructure improvements in producing communities untouched.

Recommendations and Future Research

These diverse, complex, and paradoxical issues surrounding childhood, child labor, intervention, and açai require more research to gain a further understanding of the açai boom and its (unforeseen) consequences at the local level and beyond. There are three significant areas of inquiry related to açai production that lack any sort of comprehensive data: children's involvement in harvesting, work-related injuries for adults and children, issues of increased drug and alcohol consumption, prostitution, and violence. Without a clear understanding of each, it is difficult to adequately formulate any sort of intervention or policy suggestions that will improve families lives instead of making them more difficult.

The dramatic increase in incomes during the açai safra results in both positive and negative consequences. Many families live better and can not only afford necessities, but also make home and boat improvements, and purchase 'luxury' items like TVs, generators, and washing machines. The increase in incomes also brings new problems. In my own interviews in both communities and research conducted by Instituto Peabiru (2016) in Curalinho, respondents said that children's access to drugs, alcohol, and other risky behaviors and situations increases dramatically during the safra. The sale of alcohol increases significantly, as do the number of bars, often operating clandestinely in homes, giving children direct contact with alcohol, drugs, parties, and the resulting consequences. Because açai is cash-based and access to banks is either completely lacking or hours away, all earnings are kept in homes and has led to an increase in home invasions and robberies. I was told that many families had been robbed "of all the money they had been saving to start a better life," and was growing more common. The number of robberies during the entressafra is also growing, as there is no money to purchase "vices" (drugs and alcohol) formed during the safra (Instituto Peabiru 2016:66). These negative consequences associated with the growth of açai production and sale need to be evaluated in order to formulate practical protective measures for children and their communities.

The increased global demand for açai and the exponential growth of new açai palms throughout the region ultimately increases the need for children's labor contributions in production. As a result, there is a desperate need for comprehensive data on children's participation in açai production, especially in family-based enterprises, and related injuries of both adults and children. A clearer understanding of these two variables would provide insight as to where improvements and interventions would be most effective. Education is one area that immediately needs attention in relation to the açai safra (and in general). Clearly the larger structural issues discussed throughout this research cannot be ameliorated quickly, but based on my observations there are several smaller elements that could alleviate some of the strain placed on children who must work out of necessity and go to school.

- Flexible or alternate school schedule around the açai harvest season
- Remedial support and "catch-up" courses designed specifically for children who have missed a significant period of school (due to harvest season) (see Rosati and Lyon 2006)
- Adopt a curriculum that reflects the sociocultural reality of children in the interior
- Provide family (parental) incentives for educational involvement, not just CCTs based on requirements for children's attendance

- Improve merenda for interior schools
- Remove the nucleation policy so children no longer spend 2-3 hours traveling one way to school

While these suggestions do not remove children from work, they do seek to combine children's lived reality with successful educational attainment.

What I wish to emphasize with this research is that the work of children deserves to be valued, not only for their contributions to their families, but also to the community and the local economy. Their endurance in the pursuit of a better life deserves recognition and appreciation. Education, for many, is often an obstacle that offers few benefits for families struggling to meet daily needs. Until the structural inequalities that persist in both communities are addressed and the quality and accessibility of education surpasses the immediate gains of a highly lucrative commodity like açai, parents will continue to face the dilemma of prioritizing their children's time between school and work. Children will continue to face the educational paradox of professional dreams and no means to achieve them, while national and international açai consumers are marketed a responsible, sustainable, and ethical product in which the realities of its production have been ignored and obscured. Açai generates more than \$150 million in annual revenue but begins in impoverished underdeveloped communities that have minimal access to healthcare, education, and sanitation and lacks basic infrastructure. Consumers, especially international ones, will never know that the açai they purchase likely started with the small hands and bodies of children who perform the most arduous and dangerous job in the entire commodity chain, sacrificing their education to help their families survive and eke out a minimal existence with basic necessities and occasional 'luxuries.'

APPENDIX A: CHILD AND ADULT ETHNOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Idade: _____

Sexo: _____

Data de nascimento: _____

Local de nascimento: _____

A ultima serie completa: _____

Profissão/Trabalho: _____

Quando voce crescer e ser adulto o que voce gostaria de ser? _____

Onde você mora em Curralinho (na cidade/comunidade no interior): _____

Em sua opinião, quando as crianças se tornam adultos? _____

Normalmente, como você determina se alguém é um adulto? _____

Quais são atividades/responsabilidades típicas dos adultos em Curralinho? _____

Quais as características (não físico) determinar uma criança/adolescente de um adulto? _____

Na sua opinião, o que é a infância? _____

Quando é que a infância tem início e fim? _____

Existe uma diferença entre a infância de uma menina e de um menino? Por favor, explique. _____

É a infância o mesmo para as crianças que moram na cidade em comparação com crianças que moram no interior? Por favor, explique. _____

Quais são atividades típicas das crianças que moram na cidade de Curralinho? _____

Quais são atividades típicas das crianças que moram no interior de Curralinho? _____

Voce acha que todas as crianças tem infância? Por favor, explique. _____

Normalmente, as crianças em Curralinho começam a escola quando? _____

Normalmente, as crianças em Curralinho param de estudar depois de qual idade? _____

Por favor, explique por que algumas crianças em Curralinho não freqüentam a escola. _____

As meninas começam a ter responsabilidade quando? Por favor, explique que tipos das responsabilidades. _____

Os meninos começam a ter responsabilidade quando? Por favor, explique que tipos das responsabilidades. _____

Normalmente, as meninas em Curralinho começam a trabalhar quando? Por favor, explique quais os tipos de trabalho. _____

Normalmente, os meninos em Curralinho começam a trabalhar quando? Por favor, explique quais os tipos de trabalho. _____

APPENDIX B: TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Nome: _____ Sexo: _____ Idade: _____

Cidade de nascimento: _____ Estado civil: _____ Filhos: _____

Profissão: _____ Você escolheu essa profissão porque? _____

Sua escolaridade? **Ensino médio** **Nível superior incompleto** **Nível superior completo** **Pós Graduação**

Qual é a universidade ou faculdade que se formou ou está se formando? _____

Curso em que se formou ou está se formando? _____ Que ano se formou ou formará? _____

Qual escola você trabalha atualmente? _____

Você já trabalhou em outra escola anteriormente? **SIM NÃO** Em qual(es) comunidade(s)? _____

Qual o ano/serie você trabalha? _____ Normalmente, quantos alunos você tem por aula? _____

Tem vestibular em Gurupá para os alunos ingressarem na faculdade? _____

A sua escola oferece estrutura adequada para receber os alunos? _____ Se não, explica as problemas maiores na sua escola: _____

Quais são os maiores problemas que as crianças têm em sua comunidade? _____

A sua escola tem transporte para os alunos? Qual o tipo? _____

As maiorias dos estudantes chegam à escola em quanto tempo? _____

Há problemas com o transporte para estudantes? Se sim, explica. _____

A sua escola oferece merenda para os alunos? _____

O que você acha que é a principal razão da falta dos alunos nas aulas? _____

Você tem alunos que faltam às aulas porque precisam ajudar sua famílias em casa ou no trabalho? Explique. _____

Há épocas do ano em que os alunos faltam mais aulas do que os outros? Se sim, quando e porquê? _____

Em sua opinião, quais são os principais motivos dos alunos não concluírem o ensino fundamental e médio? _____

Você acha que programas como a Bolsa Família, a Bolsa Verde, PETI, ou PROJOVEM ajudam as crianças a ficar na escola? Explique. _____

Que tipos dos trabalhos existem em Gurupá para os jovens que se formaram de ensino médio ou faculdade? _____

Que tipos dos trabalhos existem em Gurupá para os jovens que não se formaram de algum nível? _____

Você acha que crianças tem a capacidade para influenciar e mudar a cultura? Sim ou não, explique. _____

Você conhece as crianças que não podem frequentar a escola? Se sim, explique porque eles não podem frequentar escola. _____

Nos últimos 20 anos, a extração e exportação do açaí cresceram muito no estado do Pará. Você acha que a vida das famílias em Gurupá que tiram e vendem açaí são melhores por causa deste crescimento? Explique _____

Escreva abaixo algumas coisas que você acha importante sobre as crianças, as escolas, sua comunidade, e/ou cultura em Gurupá, Marajó, ou Brasil – fica vontade: _____

APPENDIX C: AÇAÍ QUESTIONNAIRE

Por quanto tempo você mora na cidade de Gurupá? _____

Você morou no interior de Gurupá? Se sim, qual(a)s comunidade(s) e por quanto tempo (em cada)? _____

Em sua opinião, a vida é melhor no interior ou na cidade? **Interior** **Cidade**
Porque? _____

Se você pudesse escolher uma profissão para seus filhos, qual seria? _____

Se seus filhos pudessem escolher qualquer profissão, qual seria? _____

Você acha que eles podem conseguir essa profissão? **Sim** **Não**

Porque? _____

Você tem filhos acima de 15 anos de idade que trabalham para obter dinheiro? **Sim** **Não**

Se sim, que tipo de trabalho que eles fazem? _____

Você toma açaí? **Sim** **Não** **As vezes**

Se não toma açaí, porque? _____

Se sim, quantas vezes por dia/semana você toma açaí durante a safra? por dia: _____ por semana: _____

Quantos litros? por dia: _____ por semana: _____

Quantas vezes por dia/semana você toma açaí durante a entressafra? por dia: _____ por semana: _____

Quantos litros? por dia: _____ por semana: _____

A safra do açaí começa e termina quando? _____

A entressafra do açaí começa e termina quando? _____

Quanto custa um litro do açaí na safra? _____

Quanto custa um litro do açaí na entressafra? _____

Nos últimos dez anos, você tem dificuldades para tomar ou obter o açaí? _____

Se sim, porque (preço, disponibilidade) explica. _____

Existe coisas que as pessoas não podem comer/tomar junto com açaí? **Sim** **Não**

Se sim, lista nas categorias abaixo e explica porque.

Frutas: _____

Bebidas: _____

Remédios: _____

Existem algumas doenças que te impede de tomar açaí? Quais? _____

Como você saber para não tomar açaí com essas coisas/doenças? _____

Você acha que a barragem de Belo Monte vai ser boa ou ruim para Gurupá? Como? _____

Você conhece alguém que foi para Altamira para trabalhar na barragem de Belo Monte? **Sim** **Não**

Quantos pessoas? _____

Quantos anos eles têm? _____

Você acha que esse trabalho em Altamira é bom ou ruim para os Gurupaenses? **Sim** **Não**

Porque? _____

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