Child Labor
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The topic of child labor is difficult to define. Contexts of when and where it occurs varies from culture to culture. When does the labor involved become exploitative? Although the exploitation of child labor cannot be assumed, it can be investigated to decipher the line between exploitation and a culturally defined normalcy.

With most aspects of a society, child labor must have a reason for existing. Historically, evidence of child labor has been present in human society since early subsistence strategies and has persisted through time, both remaining the same and changing forms to suit cultures that utilize it. Exploitation of child labor in industrialized and industrializing societies can create a unique cultural view that determines when child labor becomes a problem. In post-industrialized societies child labor can still be exploitative.

Many different people are affected by child labor. Many different and unique reasons exist as to why people participate in forms of child labor. Different areas in the world suffer from poverty at varying degrees, which can force a family to include children in work or, it appeals to them as an avenue to escape destitution. Political and social situations or factors can create perceived and real needs for child labor. There are also people who can fabricate the perceived needs and create the actual need for child labor, and this can be either for their own personal benefit, or the benefit of others. Possible reasons that child labor can be utilized is because of a need to fulfill capitalistic ideals and consumerist tendencies.

In order to counteract the prevalence of child labor, policies have been set up by groups and organizations, as well as state governments, to create rules and regulations that must be followed by countries. However, many of these groups are based on Eurocentric conceptions/perceptions of child labor and do not often account for non-Eurocentric ideas of
child labor. Since there are generally only Euro-North American answers to the consequence(s) of child labor, the recommendations for developing and creating policies must come from a holistic point of view that considers all aspects of the notions of child labor in its culturally contexted situation.

**Defining Child Labor**

**Defining Childhood**

An important part of understanding the issues of child labor is to first understand what constitutes a child. Though in many Indo-European cultures childhood is a commonly understood set amount of years beginning at birth and ending with adulthood, there are many ways to measure childhood, and many cultures measure it differently. Childhood can be defined in legal, biological, and social terms, each of which will be discussed briefly.

The largest overarching legal definition of childhood comes from the United Nations treaty, The Convention on the Rights of the Child. For the signing parties, The Convention establishes a precedent of protection and assistance so that children are able to “grow to their fullest potential” (UNICEF 2005). The standards of the Convention of the Rights of the Child were negotiated over a ten year period in which governmental organizations, social workers, educators, human rights advocates and others decided upon the content of the document, which was created with the intention of taking tradition, cultural values, and the needs of developing countries into account (UNICEF 2005). This treaty defines a child as “a human being under the age of 18, unless the relevant laws recognize an earlier age of majority” (UNICEF 2005). Of 194 countries, 192 have ratified this treaty. Among those that have yet to ratify are Somalia, due to its lack of a recognized government, and the United States (UNICEF 2005). Legal definitions of childhood have changed throughout history as a result of how cultures understand the
significance and span of childhood (Burke 2008). These changes to the law are directly related to the changing attitudes in industrialized cultures at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century about the significance of childhood and the sentimental, rather than monetary value of children (Burke 2008, Newman 2002).

Biologically, definitions of childhood are based on mental and physical development. Many biological anthropologists consider childhood to be a stage of development that is unique to the human species; this biocultural perspective considers childhood to be a preparation for adulthood (Burke 2008). Thus, childhood is generally associated with chronological age; a time between infancy and youth that includes adolescence (Burke 2008). Biological and social definitions are closely related when defining childhood since social definitions depend greatly on the physical and mental development and capabilities of children.

Newman (2002) argues that childhood is not just a biological stage of development, but a social category that stems from a complex web of beliefs and attitudes of specific cultures at specific times. In many cultures chronological age does not have the emphasis on childhood the way it does in Euro-North American societies, furthermore, chronological age is often associated with biological processes that vary greatly depending on culture and environment (Clark-Kazak 2008). Clark-Kazak (2008) suggests that social age differs from biological age much like gender differs from sex in that even biological facts such as sex and human development can be impacted by social factors. Burke (2008) exemplifies this in a remark made by the sociologist Alison James who points out that “chronological age is sometimes of little use when comparing childhood across very different cultures and societies”. Burke (2008) gives the example of a ten-year-old boy who in one context may be a schoolchild, while a boy of the same age may be the head of a household in another. Social definitions of childhood vary greatly not only between
cultures and societies, but throughout time. In one example, Newman (2002) suggests that European cultures did not consider childhood to be a phase of life worthy of distinction in the 16th and 17th centuries. Often children were treated and considered to be miniature adults, a rather unsentimental view that is thought to be the result of the high mortality rate of children during this time; young children were not expected to live very long (Newman 2002). By the 18th century, the opinion of what constitutes childhood in European cultures was beginning to change (Newman 2002). During this time children were viewed more closely to our current perceptions.

Why is this important and how does it help us understand child labor? Defining childhood is important because the current definition’s affects on our perceptions. Defining a child as an individual in need of protection and unable to sufficiently provide and decide for themselves dictates our responses to child labor and therefore the laws we create and pass. Acknowledging the difference between the three ways childhood can be defined (legal, biological, and social) and how they differ and combine according to time and culture is essential in creating a definition of childhood and subsequently child labor that is encompassing and holistic.

**Work, Labor and Exploitation**

“Childhood” is tenuously understood due to how greatly the definition varies across cultures. “Labor” is equally obscure because of how greatly the definition varies within cultures, specifically cultures involved in a capitalist economy. People often use labor to refer to physical tasks or to certain aspects of work. They often conflate labor and work because both terms refer to means of gaining wages (Hall 1986). The existing body of literature concerning labor and work, on the other hand, seems to consistently use “work” to refer to the overarching concept of the objectives and goals involved in capitalist industries. Labor refers to the means of achieving
these goals as carried out by individuals. It is important to distinguish labor from work because in general, employees are exploited for their labor, not their work.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) provides the standards and regulations that industries must follow in order to employ people as well as protect them from exploitation (ILO 2013a). While the ILO has established conventions and recommendations for regions of the world to follow, each region: Africa, the Americas, the Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Central Asia, has the freedom to establish their own standards. Their standards are accessible to the public on the website. Also available to the public are research and the statistics that identify which regions fall below the standards (ILO 2013a). We will discuss this research later in the report.

*Work*

Work, as defined by the Merriam-Webster (2013) dictionary, is a duty or function that is assigned usually as part of a larger activity to achieve an objective. There is no specific mention of work for economic gain in this definition, and the literature follows this pattern. In capitalist economies, the means of *gaining* subsistence separate further and further from the means of *producing* subsistence (Strauss 2012). While some systems of work are directly involved in the production of food (i.e. farming), there are more systems involved in providing people with the food (i.e. delivery companies, super-markets). Since providing people with food requires great efforts by many individuals, the services involved are valuable. In this way, individuals are able to sell their services, their physical labor, to people who oversee and control the system as a whole.

Mitchell, Marston, and Katz (2003) refer to this separation from the direct sale of goods as reproduction. They explain that individuals who oversee these systems are in control of the
goods as well as the labor involved in providing people with these goods. Individuals in these powerful positions create the objectives and goals and therefore are involved with production and “work”. The people who they hire to carry out these objectives are separated from the original goals and are therefore involved with reproduction and “labor.”

The problem with the separation concept is that it implies that people involved in production are rewarded directly with subsistence. Perhaps in some cases this is true (i.e. the farmer), but in today’s capitalist economies, all forms of work are rewarded with currency. Because the economy is built on historical networks of systems, roughly all of the individuals who are involved sell their services for money, which they use to trade for subsistence (Braudel 1982). In contrast to the separation concept, Braudel (1982) explains that all industries consist of multiple means of production, and everyone is connected to production of subsistence.

While Braudel (1982) makes a valid point, there are still subtypes of work that involve different social qualities, tasks, and skills. For instance, some types of work may be independent of economic gain. Housework and personal hobbies may require duties and goals, but do not contribute to the economy. When a person must pay for the physical labor to carry out their housework or personal hobbies, however, the work that is carried out by those physical laborers is now labor. Because of the trade of labor for wages, labor is a term that is used to refer to something more specific and therefore distinguished from work.

**Labor in Relation to Work**

Labor is defined in the Merriam-Webster (2013) dictionary, as a human activity performed for wages as distinguished from those rendered by entrepreneurs for profits. This definition does not specify what the activity is, except that it is different from the activities carried out by entrepreneurs. The literature on labor operates in accordance with this otherwise
vague definition and fills in some gaps.

Grantham and MacKinnon (1994) explain that with the growth of technology, many types of work have become more efficient and allow for more leisure. Types of work that require manual activities that are relatively unmediated by technology and for wages are considered labor. Although some of the most menial physical tasks use technology (i.e. stapling papers together), this theory is sound when it concerns electronic technology or use of heavily engineered apparatus.

Hall (1986) breaks down subtypes of work into different dimensions, which vary based on the social and communicative qualities of the associated activities. The time an individual spends on these activities for wages is referred to as his or her occupation. Hall theorizes that the activities that involve communication and direct social interaction are examples of work (Donzelot 1991). The activities that involve physical efforts are examples of labor. In order to take into account the occupations that involve a complex combination of both activities (i.e. a neurosurgeon), Hall clarifies and separates the subtypes into five dimensions: professional work, white collar work, blue collar work, semi-skilled work, and unskilled work. Professional and white collar work, as in fields of medicine, law, academia, require a great amount of training. Because this type of work takes time to learn, those who learn it are rewarded more greatly because they are less expendable. Leisure is more attainable to those individuals as well because they have more resources (money) and perhaps more vacation time (e.g. time off for holidays). Professional and white-collar work is more desirable because of the leisure permitted.

Blue collar, semi-skilled, and unskilled work is characterized by physical labor, but blue-collar work generally requires more training than the latter two. Semi-skilled and unskilled occupations involve physical activities that are easy to learn (i.e. lifting and pushing). Although
these occupations are less time consuming to learn than white-collar occupations, people tend to prefer the latter because of the leisure associated with it. Unskilled work requires intimate activity with goods, both repetitive and tedious. Individuals must put in many hours in order to add up the monotonous tasks. Because anyone in good physical health could do this type of work, everyone hired is expendable. The type of work is not expendable, however; on the contrary, it is essential to the production and sale of goods. The low status of individuals who carry out these tasks does not reflect how important their work is, and capitalism’s systems have enabled this inconsistency. The nature of blue collar, semi-skilled, and unskilled work allows for employers to take advantage of individuals doing the labor. It is this type of work for which many people are exploited.

**Exploitation**

According to Mitchell, Marston, and Katz (2003), every person is forced to work because everyone needs subsistence. Because of this, it is difficult to identify when an individual is being exploited for his or her labor. Exploitation in this sense is defined as unfair use of someone/thing for one’s own advantage (Merriam-Webster 2013). People enter the workforce in a capitalist economy fully aware that their services are traded for currency, and in Mitchell, Marston, and Katz’s theory, people do what they must in order to receive that currency. “Unfairness” in this case becomes a matter of moral principle, not of judicial principle, which is why identifying and punishing labor exploitation is still an issue today. The body of literature attempts to define labor exploitation in a mathematical way so as to clarify why labor exploitation is wrong and punishable by law.

Authors have delved into great detail to explain the formula of unfair labor exploitation, but only the overall message is pertinent to the rest of this paper (Wertheimer 2007, Veneziani
2007). The overall calculation is as follows:

\[
\text{amount of labor needed to produce survival materials (income) – the actual labor put in} = \text{level of fairness of use of labor}
\]

The theory stipulates that the closer the difference is to zero, the fairer the use of the individual’s labor. If the difference is negative, then the individual’s use is unfair and is therefore being exploited. Because of the gross simplification of the variables presented in this section, this appears to be a very shaky formula. Veneziani (2007) and others use various statistical analyses to code amount of labor, survival materials, and fairness. For the sake of brevity, this paper encourages readers to check the references for a more in-depth look (See Wertheimer 2007 and Veneziani 2007).

Statistical analysis of labor exploitation is often only as powerful as its interpretation; number codes may imply that there is less gray area than there is in reality. Exploitation is best explained as existing along a spectrum (ILO 2013b, Mitchell, Marston and Katz 2003). Mitchell, Marston and Katz (2003) explain that labor ranges from free, to waged, to exploited. Free labor consists of activities that an individual does voluntarily for no economic gain (i.e. as a hobby); waged labor consists of activities that an individual does voluntarily for economic gain; exploited labor consists of activities that an individual does for economic gain, but the economic gain does not meet the amount or quality of activities done. Employers find various ways to pay as little for labor as possible in order to profit from the work. One common way is by failing to provide employees with a chance to bargain for their wages and working conditions (ILO 2013b). Like many forms of exploitation, this one is an example of impingement on one’s human rights. Many of the ILO’s standards of decent work mean to preserve human rights.

The ILO defines decent work as productive, secure, and respectful of labor rights:
providing adequate income, offering social protection, social dialogue, collective bargaining participation, and freedom to join a union (ILO 2013b). Minor violations of any one of these principles lay in the middle ground between the spectrum of decent work and forced labor. While many forms of work can be forced (breach of contract and discrimination are considered exploitative), the ILO identifies forced labor as the worst form because it often involves compromise of employees’ physical and mental well-being (ILO 2013b). For instance, it is forced labor when an employee cannot bargain with the employer without punishment, which includes withholding of wages, retention of documents, slander, violence, confinement, and/or debt bondage. Not only do many of these punishments place employees in physical danger, but they also compromise the employees’ ability to spend more time with their families. This is especially true for children who are hired for their labor. While preserving their physical well-being is a top priority, much of the controversy surrounding child labor involves their mental well-being. Because childhood is an ambiguous concept, it is a difficult task to distinguish child labor exploitation from adult labor exploitation.

**Differentiating Between Child Work and Child Labor**

The task of defining child work and child labor is complex and goes beyond conjoining the definitions of “childhood” and “work”. It is a heterogeneous issue that involves various combinations of circumstances relating to social structure, the economy and the process of production. It raises issues relating to the acceptability and appropriateness of the work performed, the type and legitimacy of the work that is being done, wages that children may be receiving and the exploitation experienced by some child laborers. Although the terms “work” and “labor” are often used interchangeably, they are not synonymous. Since most children across the globe perform activities that are either work or labor, it is important to create a distinction
between the two so that “light work” which is often encouraged as a part of socialization can be
differentiated from exploitative labor. Differentiating between child work and child labor is a
delicate task, however, because the desirability and acceptability of a child’s activities will vary
across cultures, time and space (Abernethie 1998).

When researching child work and child labor the results vary greatly depending on which
source is used. Opinions on child labor differ both within academic literature as well as between
global organizations. The International Labor Organization (ILO) recognizes the noticeable
differences that exist between the different types of work that children do. As a result, the ILO
(2013b) believes that not all work that is performed by children should be classified as child
labor. Additionally, it is noted that work that would not affect a child’s health and personal
development or interfere with their schooling can be seen as something positive that will provide
them with skills and experience that will aid them in becoming a productive member of society.
As a result, this type of work would not be classified as “child labor”. According to the ILO
(2013b), the term “child labor” is defined as “work that deprives children of their childhood,
their potential and their dignity, and that is harmful to physical and mental development”. The
ILO Conventions state that whether or not “work” can be classified as “child labor” is dependent
on the child’s age, the type of working that they are participating in, the number of hours that
they are working, and the types of conditions that they are working under (United Nations 2013).
According to UNICEF (2003), children who participate in child labor activities are classified as
children between the ages of 5 and 11 who do at least one hour of paid work or at least 28 hours
of domestic work within a week. Additionally, this definition includes children age 12 to 14 that
do at least 14 hours of economic activity, or at least 42 hours of economic activity combined with
domestic work within in a week.¹ Other organizations define child work as being developmental in nature and “adult-guided activities that focus on the child’s growth and enculturation into the families and societies of which they are apart” (Otis, Pasztor and McFadden 2001:612). In contrast, child labor “is driven by child and family impoverishment, market forces, and political apathy concerning the rights of the child” (Otis, Pasztor and McFadden 2001:612-613). These definitions deem child labor as being synonymous with child exploitation because these types of activities are dangerous in nature and interfere with a child’s education (Otis, Pasztor and McFadden 2001).

An issue that arises from these definitions provided by global organizations is that they reflect a Eurocentric bias. When researching child work and child labor, it becomes clear that the greatest cause of this phenomenon is poverty and need. In many societies, households depend on the activities done by their children for survival. However, it is true that poverty is the largest contributing factor to child work and child labor, but it is not the sole reason for child labor (United Nations 2013). For example, the ILO (2013b) states that child work is considered to be child labor when it interferes with a child’s schooling. This definition ignores that fact that basic education is not free in all countries, and is not available to all children worldwide, especially for those who are living in remote rural areas.

As a result, when education is unaffordable, or education is not valued within a family, children are sent to work. Additionally, when children are not receiving education, their families and societies may be likely to relay the cultural norm of labor being the most productive use of a child’s time. In these societies, most children are expected to comply with tradition and are

¹ Type of economic activity, and domestic work, as well as the time period when these hours were accumulated was not specified by UNICEF along with this definition.
expected to help the members of their families by beginning work at a young age (United Nations 2013). As a result, childhood does not last until the age of 18 as it does in many industrialized societies. In fact, there are societies across the globe where the concept of childhood doesn’t necessarily exist. This is a point that should be noted by organizations such as the ILO who currently state that child labor “deprives children of their childhood” (ILO 2013b). Another issue found is the difference in definitions between child work and child labor when child work is done within the private sphere or “family” setting. Many organizations distinguish child work from child labor by stating that child work is associated with adult-guided activities that aid a child’s enculturation within the family and society (Otis, Pasztor and McFadden 2001). These definitions, however, do not consider children to be exploited when working for the family (Abernethie 1998).

“Today, children in all societies perform some form of domestic work, often encouraged as part of their socialization” (Abernethie 1998:99). These types of activities are often constituted as “light work” and may include cooking, cleaning, childcare, and other forms of domestic duties (Abernethie 1998). Work is integral to all societies and child work is often seen as a positive phenomenon that is beneficial to a child. Child work is seen as acceptable in most societies so long as it does not negatively affect the welfare of a child. According to Bhukuth, “child work is defined as an activity that does not harm a child’s physical and mental development” (2008: 387). It is usually associated with socialization where children adopt skills, discipline, and work ethic. Additionally, work can be viewed as a rite of passage in some societies where children are participating in activities that allow them to be viewed as more of an adult. However, since the concept of childhood is a social and cultural construct, this notion would only be applicable to some groups (Abernethie 1998).
“Consequently, it is impossible to define child labor precisely... Trying to draw a dividing line between abusive child labor and beneficial work has involved developing criteria to distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate activities for child... These criteria change across time and cultures, varying alongside changing conceptions of childhood” [Abernethie 1998:98].

When compared to child work, child labor can be more simply differentiated as “activities considered too dangerous to a child’s welfare” (Bhukuth 2008:387). It is this notion that child labor is associated with child exploitation. Today it is widely believed that child labor is primarily associated with wage labor, which involves a third party/employer who is outside of the family. However, this claim denies the prevalence of bonded labor and slavery, unpaid exploitation, social exploitation and exploitative domestic labor. Exploitative waged labor seems more prevalent, but this is only due to the fact that waged labor is more frequently documented and therefore easier to investigate. Much like child work and child labor, it is difficult to classify exploitative child labor and define it in a way that is effective and culturally sensitive (Abernethie 1998). In an attempt to create such a definition, UNICEF’s 1986 Executive Board Paper drew from the Minority Rights Group Report of 1985 and proposed the following formula:

“A child is exploited by: starting full-time work at too early an age; working too long; excessive physical activity, experiencing social and psychological strains, work and life on the streets, inadequate remuneration; too much responsibility too early; work that does not facilitate their psychological and social development; and work that inhibits their self-esteem” [Abernethie 1998:100]

This definition works to preserve human rights, however, it is Eurocentric and culturally insensitive to the point where it should not be used universally.

**Child Labor: History**

*From Foraging to Agriculture*

The shift from foraging to agricultural stationary societies, otherwise known as the
“Neolithic Revolution,” came to embody the foundations of human civilization, as we now know it (Keegan 2006 in Kennett and Winterhalder 2006:xii). It is important to understand that this wasn’t a fast transition, but rather millennia passed before the change from foraging to farming. Foraging theory focuses on capturing “individual food items “where farming focuses on the capture of “individual plants” (Keegan 2006 in Kennett and Winterhalder 2006:xii).

Ethnographic and archaeological evidence helps to explain how the shift from foraging societies to horticultural/agricultural societies happened. Looking at the changing demographics and population-resource imbalance due to the rising population caused humans to turn to agriculture in the late Pleistocene (Kennett and Winterhalder 2006:5). Euro-North American views have looked at foragers past and present as being animal in nature and primitive because they have no control over nature which is associated with agricultural and industrialized societies (Darwin 1874: 643). ?

A line is drawn between distinguishing the parental-investment of humans living in a foraging society from those living in a agricultural or stratified horticultural society. Studies of relationships between mothers and their children in modern foraging societies indicate that humans have shown a very restrained pattern of reproduction featuring high levels of parental investment based on biological adaptations (Lancaster 1987:189). This indicates that a maximization of the average number of children in a mobile, foraging life style places high demands on the mother’s energy and the children contribute little to food production. The mother and child have an intimate relationship where the mother nurses her infant on demand, sleeps with it at night, and carries it during the day (Blurton-Jones and Konner 1976:35). In Hazda children, a foraging society in Tanzania, the children are given errands as young as three years old to perform useful tasks such as picking or digging to plant seeds (Blurton-Jones and Konner
Age, in all societies, plays a different role in food provision. Children generally spend less time in food provision than adults do. Boys and girls do certain tasks that Eurocentric views would label “work” such as gathering food and taking care of younger children (Miller et al. 2006:321).

More recently in our human history, with the abandonment of foraging, and the beginning of a more sedentary life style adopted in horticulture and agricultural societies, women began to bear children every other year. Children began to do more work within the society. Small children in horticultural societies perform tasks such as weeding, defending field crops, and preparing food for cooking (Draper and Harpending 1987 in Lancaster 1987). Many families in these societies need their children to contribute to the economy for basic survival (Hobbs, MacKechnie and Lavalette 1999:72). Children do a lot of the work in horticultural societies and it is argued that they do more work in this type of economy than any other..

The Neolithic revolution was followed by a sharp increase in productivity and population size. In comparison to foragers, early agrarian societies produced food in larger quantities; however, often they were more poorly nourished and suffered from poor health due to closer contact with animals and humans and variable crop success. The average daily working time also increased with agriculture. The rise of Neolithic agriculture is believed to be the key influence on later economic development. Agriculture relied on domestication of animals and plants, since animals were used for plowing, and transportation. Provision of organic fertilizer helped nourish the soil after seasonal use (Miller et al. 2006). Agriculture requires complex knowledge about the environment, including plant varieties, pest management, precipitation patterns and soil types known as indigenous knowledge. Agriculture has been broken down into two forms: farming families and commercial agriculture (Miller et al. 2006). The complexity in its forms,
sustainability, labor inputs and capital inputs are the reasons surrounding the controversy of child labor.

One-sixth of the world’s population is involved in family farming. They rely on family labor to produce most of their foods. Although it is found all over the world, family farming is predominately found in less-industrialized areas. Among family farming, family is the basic unit of production; gender roles and age are marked based on division of labor (Miller et al. 2006). The movement towards a more patriarchal system in both gender and generational relations shows that parents controlled their children by the way they disciplined them and the cultural emphasis for respect of the older generations. Therefore, children contribute to more than half of all household constructive labor. Farming families did not view children’s contribution to households as “child labor”. Instead, they viewed this as survival so that all members of the family including children must contribute to the production of goods. By doing so, they believe children will learn to take responsibility, gain vital skills, contribute to both family income and their own wellbeing (Hindman 2002).

In less-industrialized countries such as Burkina Faso and Ghana, at the age of four, boys start herding goats and sheep. The girls are in charge of watching over the younger siblings while the mother attends the fields. At the age of six, girls are responsible for fetching buckets of water from the communal tap, wells, pumps, or the lake as well as doing dishes and laundry and pounding grains with large wooden pestles in stone mortars. At the age of fourteen, both boys and girls significantly contribute to work by actively engaging in plowing, sowing, weeding and harvesting. Children were working at any age under any condition for any number of hours a day or in a week (Hindman and Smith 1999). In Mali, out of the 30 hours a week children dedicate to education, the extracurricular activities outside of school were farm work, collecting water,
preparing meals and doing maintenance work. This perception of child work is found everywhere, even in North America. In farming families in Canada, children were responsible for contributing to the farm work; in exchange, they inherited the farm or had their parents pay for their education (Hindman and Smith 1999). Even in family farms in the United States where migrant children were allowed to attend school, work in crops came first. Children were working the fields in early spring, while school was still in session and some did not return to school until mid-November or December (Freedman 1994). As with North American farming families, for families in Africa, children were more hands to help out on the family farms.

Although the farming family perception of “child work or labor” differs from the universal definition coined by the UN and ILO, the apprenticeship between parents and children is vital to the survival of the family and builds skills that will help the children for the future.

The perception of child work was a continuum into commercial agriculture. However, it shifted from subsistence needs of farming families to the supply and demand of industrialized nations. Commercial agriculture brought in major production of crops for wholesale or retail distribution; crops were now run by big businesses. According to ILO (2013b), about 20 million (two percent) people are working at plantations in less-industrialized countries, and several thousands of those people are children. Employers prefer child work because it is cheap and easy to control and children are plentiful. Therefore, you see a large number of children needed to meet the demands of industrialized nations (USDOL N.d.). Children are working in various cocoa, coffee, sugarcane, tea, and tobacco plantations along with families and are paid under different terms or circumstances (Hindman and Smith 1999). The owners also provide transportation from May- November, the peak seasonal periods. In Kenya, children encompass 58 percent of the coffee plantation labor during peak seasons, and 18 percent of the labor during
the rest of the year (USDOL N.d.). Children working as wage laborers obtained full-time positions as well as performing the same work as adult workers, however they rarely receive the same wages as their adult counterparts. They contribute approximately seven to twelve percent of the total plantation wage workforce (USDOL N.d.). At the cotton plantations in Zimbabwe, men are employed or contracted by plantation owners to collect, weed, and gather cotton (USDOL N.d.). They often brought their wives and children along with them to contribute labor. Even large plantations owned by the government expect children to work in order to stay in school (USDOL N.d.). At the coffee plantations in Kenya, seasonal and migrant workers are paid by the task they perform, so families strongly relied on their children to increase production.

Colonization, shifting global economies, poverty, societal attitudes, the AIDS pandemic, social status, and the general need to be responsible for your family are some of the factors why children or families are working in hazardous environments around the world. On the other hand, plantation owners are employing children or families to meet the demand of consumers. Therefore, when looking at the bigger picture, the controversy of child labor in agriculture is caused by the demand of consumers. The exploitation of children working in plantations is due to the quantity demand of consumers. In order to meet the demand, producers supplied large numbers of children to work in hazardous environments for long hours for low wages. For example, in 1994, a total of $15 million Kenyan coffees were exported to United States (USDOL N.d.). In 1994, the United States imported $5 million of coffee from Madagascar, $34 million from Uganda, and $8 million from Côte d'Ivoire. The United States also imported $138 million of natural rubber from Malaysia, $45 million of sugar from Philippines, $6 million of cane sugar from Thailand and $11 million of tobacco from Indonesia (USDOL N.d.). Industrialized nations such as United States relied on cheaply priced resources from various plantations in less-
industrialized countries worldwide instead of buying fair-trade resources from locals or produce their own resources, perpetuating the cycle of child labor and exploitation.

**The Effect of Industrialization**

Beginning in the 18th century in Europe, the industrial revolution changed the economic environment. With European society becoming more focused on capitalism and industrialism, the idea of child work shifted to adapt to the new societal hub. Dependence on wages became a new standard in the middle and working classes, and the family workforce needed to expand in order to properly provide for the household.

For Britain, industrialization came well before other European countries. “Britain was the inventor of the Industrial Revolution and the first to go through it” (Hindman and Smith 1999). During the early 18th century, as Britain’s economy developed from domestic production to industrialization, society felt that it would never be too early in life to hone the conventions of industry. It was thought that in order to accomplish proper work ethics in children, practice and time within the field were to start as early as possible (D’Avolio 2004). Poor children began working in brickyards, workshops, and other fields amidst parents or other kin members. At this time, there was no set age for children to participate in employment. These juvenile helpers would join as soon as they were useful in the workplace. Some records show workers as young as four years old in the workforce (Davin 1982).

During the proto-industrial stage, or pre-industrial revolution era, the domestic production of textiles, general chain making, and other products were using child labor. They were dependent on the supervision and guidance of the adult, but “children’s work was more auxiliary and recognized as having a learning component” (Davin 1982:634). The rise of larger commerce shifted children into two types of labor during the industrial era: paid and unpaid
work. Unpaid work often included domestic work, such as caring for the younger children of the family. The unpaid work was often held by the young females of the household. Paid juvenile laborers often fell into apprentice positions, where they were able to assist in the field without undermining the work of the adult laborers. As the era continued, the regulation of child labor training in factory and other industry settings fell from the family members power. Although they often worked alongside relatives, the jurisdiction changed hands to those outside the family to the managers and owners. By this time, areas were becoming increasingly urban, and families were more dependent on wages. Outside sources of income were less likely to come by, and therefore families were receptive to this shift in power over child labor regulations (Davin 1982).

The ruling classes promoted child labor. Many in the ruling class owned mills, mines, and estates employed child labor. “Experience had already shown how much could be done by the industry of children, and the advantages of employing them in such branches of manufacture as they are able to execute” (Davin 1982:642). Education became increasingly important to society during the 1860s. Ideologies of protecting childhood through education and nurturing appeared in the wealthier classes. This philosophy did not apply to the children whose families were in economic flux, though (Davin 1982).

Even though it was established at a later period, the United States Industrial Revolution modeled the British form extensively (Hindman and Smith 1999). As far back as 1776, industrialism is found in the United States. Through the revolutionary war, the economy relied heavily on mills for production. Once politically severed from Great Britain, the United States was forced into a state of economic independence. “Supplying their labor, women and children fueled the industrialization of America” (Hindman 2002:33). The early factories that appeared during the industrial boom employed young farm girls of the New England countryside. These
women were often of 16 to 20 years old, with very few children actually in the workforce. Orphans and children of widowed mothers also migrated into the factory setting (Hindman 2002). Child work held some ground within society in “efforts to prevent children from becoming a public charge, and, above all, the Puritan belief in the virtue of industry” (Abbott 1908:15). Though present, children did not hold a large percentage of the workforce population. Like Europe, the boardinghouse method was implemented in the early U.S. model of industrialism. The boarding houses held high standards, in comparison to Europe, during the early 1800s. These standards fell as industrialism grew within the United states, and more laborers were needed to work longer hours. Child work stayed relatively low through the 1800s; in 1870, the child labor force only constituted 5.92 percent of the entire body of laborers (Hindman 2002). These numbers varied, as each state and region held different values on employment of child labor. For example, Rhode Island sustained a higher percentage of children in the workforce than Massachusetts, at this time (Abbott 1908).

The idea of men’s work is culturally embedded, in the United States. Certain types of work were delegated to the women and children. Women and children were placed within the domestic service and textile factory work, where their household skills could be put to economic use. Family wage systems were also implemented during this period of the U.S. industrial era. This system prompted families to join a workforce in groups, so that the entire family may contribute into the household income. This method was beneficial to employers because they were able to hire large groups of laborers at one time. It was also beneficial that these family members created stability among the workforce (Hindman 2002).

Education did not hold a large presence in the conscience of society, during these early industrial years. “Only with industrialization did the movement to educate the masses, implying
universal and compulsory education, gain force” (Hindman 2002:42). Although due to lack of availability and low cultural value, the educational movement was halted quickly. The educational system lacked in solving problems that the working family was facing at the time. School did not provide children with a place to go for the entire time parents were working. Families could not handle the burden of wage cuts in the household, so often children were kept in the workforce rather than put into the educational system (Hindman 2002).

In the early 20th century, anti-child labor and child labor reform movements obtained a forceful presence within the United States. The Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions instituted during 1881, called for the abolition of child labor. Some of these reforms were built upon the ideas of bettering the country through education, while others were established to protect the child from the harsh, industrial environment (Hindman 2002). It was not until 1919 that the International Labor Organization, ILO, was created. From the time of it’s establishment, in 1919, the ILO has moved to abolish child labor through the adoption of standards in minimum age and working conditions for child laborers (D’Avolio 2004). The United States, however, “did not join the ILO until after 1934, well after child labor was on the decline” (D’Avolio 2004:124).

Why does child labor so strongly accompany Industrialization? Tuttle discusses the leading forces behind increased child labor during industrialization. She claims that the supply of child labor increases due to poverty, social customs, and a lack of education (Tuttle 2011:85). In the early phases of industrialization, two major changes must take place:

The production of goods becomes centralized to take advantage of the inanimate source of power. The production of a good is then divided into numerous one-step tasks such that workers become expert at the task. With the division of labor, specialization occurs and unskilled workers replace skilled craftsmen. [2011:88]

Unskilled children are hired over unskilled adults because they are emotionally more
“submissive and docile” and physically more able to perform the required tasks (Tuttle 2011:88)

Tuttle explains that that poor families in industrializing societies must send their children to work for economic security; furthermore, as most of these jobs do not require children to be literate, education has to fall low on the list of priorities (Tuttle 2011:85). Additionally, as children are often expected to care for parents when they can no longer take care of themselves, the earlier a child can begin earning for this future compels some parents to have their children work rather than attend school (Tuttle 2011:86). Many societies, present and past, industrial and preindustrial, hold expectations that children work and contribute to their household income for a number of reasons (Tuttle 2011:86).

Tuttle also discusses the causes of an increase in demand for child labor in a transitioning, industrializing society. The three main contributing factors she lists are an increased need for cheap labor, a rise in technologically labor-intensive jobs, and weak political action against child labor (Tuttle 2011:86). For the past two hundred years, children have worked in the same types of industries in industrializing societies: primarily agricultural labor, textile work, and mining (Tuttle 2011:88). To garner a more specific understanding of child labor in industrializing societies and economies, we shall discuss specific contexts.

Colonization was a major force in the spread of industrialization around the globe. Colonial Africa, from the 19th into the mid 20th century, experienced a major increase in child labor with industrialization. As colonization expanded, children were the predominate demographic sought after in labor trafficking, more so than in precolonial times, and even more after colonial states attempted to quell the trade: “This was so because children were easier than adults to capture, transport, control, and assimilate into new lives as servile laborers. They had longer productive lives ahead of them than did adults” (Grier 2011:173-4).
Industrializing Africa also had a large number of untrafficked and more voluntary child workers. Grier writes that many children, in fact, left their homes for growing towns and cities during the time of industrialization in colonial Africa to flee the increase of work in cash-crop farming—these children found jobs in mining, as hawkers, as domestic servants, and as shop assistants (Grier 2011:174). Other children migrated with their families and worked to help with financial support as the family transitioned and settled into city life (Grier 2011:174).

The evolution of colonial schooling in Africa reflected the growing need for workers in an industrialized economy. Part of the colonial schooling that African children underwent involved a required “industrial skills” lesson each day that was in actuality a guise to get students to grow food crops, build furniture, and complete needlework without pay (Grier 2011:175). Groups of students in South Africa and colonial Zimbabwe protested the unpaid labor by boycotting school (Grier 2011:175), though Grier does not discuss the specifics or the effectiveness of these incidents. Colonialism was undeniably a major factor in the facilitation of child labor in Africa (Grier 2011:175).

During the earlier colonial period that took place in Latin America (late 15th to early 19th century), children were perceived to have reached the “age of reason” at 7 years of age (Kuznesof 2011:317-318). At this age, children were held as morally responsible for their actions and could begin paid work, boys usually learning a skill or profession in somebody’s house and girls usually completing domestic tasks such as sewing or embroidering (2011:318). Boys could also go to school while girls were rarely given the chance to become literate (Kuznesof 2011:318). According to an 1831 census in Minas Gerais, Brazil, 20% of children listed occupations by the age of 10, as did nearly half of children ages 13 and 14 (Kuznesof 2011:318).
Until the 20th century, education in Latin America was essentially synonymous with work as education was often an apprenticeship or another type of job (Kuznesof 2011:319). Today, child labor and education continue to compete: despite the increased standardization of education of the past century, children are working in agriculture starting as young as 5 (Kuznesof 2011:219-220). Furthermore, in Guatemala, Ecuador, Peru, and Colombia, between 16 and 27% of children in the workforce are under the age of 12 (Kuznesof 2011:220).

In China, child labor, or tong gong, increased significantly along with the growth of British and Japanese textiles (Howard 2011:871). Poverty and population growth during the Republic of China era (1911-1949) perpetuated child labor (Howard 2011:871). Schooling was so scarce in China that in the 1930s there was 1 middle school for every 300,000 children, forcing child labor to be a necessity of economic survival; additionally, parents whose children could not go to school preferred them to be working in factories which was seen as safer than roaming the streets (Howard 2011:872). Additionally, many mothers employed at manufacturing plants preferred to not leave their children home alone and would bring their children to work with them; “thus, children entered the factories as babies and by the age of five began assisting their mothers” (Howard 2011:872). The textile industry rose as one of the major employers of children, generally paying them 1/3 to 1/2 the wages of an adult man (Howard 2011:873).

Around the same time, the contract labor system in China was a major supplier of child labor: children were often sent from the country by a contractor who would pay parents a dollar each month for their services (Howard 2011:873). Most of the children recruited through the contract labor system were girls sent to work in silk factories and cotton mills (Howard 2011:873). Boys, meanwhile, were more commonly apprenticed to learn a trade (Howard 2011:873). Child labor, though still present in China, was reduced in the 1930s due to the need
for skilled male labor and the increase in state-owned industrial employers that had to follow
industrial legislation, and again after the 1949 Revolution (Howard 2011:875).

Who, Where and Why

Who is Affected

There are many different aspects of child labor, and many factors that affect the problem
as well as the way it is perceived. The biggest issue in relation to child labor is cultural
differences in definitions of childhood, social issues, economic concerns, family values, and
what is perceived as normal. D’Avolio (2004) claims that there are three main factors of cultural
beliefs which influence child labor. She states that many countries do not view children and
childhood the same way children and childhood are viewed in industrialized countries. Next, she
points out that there are often hierarchies in communities that influence who works. Lastly, she
concludes that many societies do not educate young girls because it is not seen as beneficial

Children who often take part in child labor tend to come from poverty and must work in
order to survive. There are also many cases where children are forced to work because they are
orphaned, such as AIDS orphans in Africa. Children who are orphaned must work not only for
their own survival, but also because they are supporting their siblings as well. Often education is
not free in these countries, which can then lead to child labor as well (D’Avolio 2004:136-137).
This is because families will “take into account their valuation of child time in its various
possible uses and allocate it accordingly” (Edmonds and Pavcnik 2005:208). In other words, the
child’s time is better spent working because it benefits the family, which includes the children
themselves.
Who Benefits

Many industrialized societies recognize child labor only for its negative aspects and situations. However, according to Edmonds and Pavcnik (2005), the biggest form of child labor is being employed by their parents to work in agriculture as well as doing domestic chores (203-204). As Michele D’Avolio (2004) notes in her article, children in the 19th century U.S. often worked in similar, if not the same situations. She also points out that often “families in developing countries have many children so they can increase the family’s income by sending the children to work” (D’Avolio 2004:136). It is often not only beneficial, but also necessary for families to have their children work in order to live. Many industrializing countries resist laws against child labor because if children of poor families do not work, then the family would not be able to survive and would face “hunger, homelessness, and possible starvation” (D’Avolio 2004:133).

Another group that benefits from child labor are companies who use children to produce their goods, which they sell. There are also companies who employ children in the services sector of trade. Companies in the industry sector often use child labor because they are able to pay the children less than what they would have to pay workers in industrialized countries, the ILO (2013a) defines the industrial sector work as “mining and quarrying, manufacturing, construction, and public utilities (electricity, gas and water)”. The same is true for those children working in the services sector or who work in “wholesale and retail trade; restaurants and hotels; transport, storage, and communications; finance, insurance, real-estate, and business services; and community as well as social personal services” (ILO 2013b). Those that employ children as
workers are able to make more money since they are able to pay the children less, which creates a higher profit for themselves.

Not only do companies benefit from child labor, but consumers benefit as well. Since the labor is cheaper, the product or services can also be sold for less money. Consumerism allows for child labor due to the fact that consumers want to be able to buy products for the least amount possible. Companies then use child labor as a way to meet the demands of consumers. Countries who have been pressured to create more laws regarding child labor sometimes feel that those who are pressuring them are more interested in “self-serving economic motives” (D’Avolio 2004:132) than ethics, because these cheap products benefit individuals, but not other companies who have their factories in industrialized countries that do not allow child labor.

Where it Occurs

Child labor is a global force. According to the ILO there are approximately 215 million children laboring in the world today between the ages of 5 and 17 (ILO 2013c), with the highest numbers in Asia (127.3 million) and Africa (48 million). Other regions maintain child labor numbers around 17.4 million in Latin America, and 13.4 million for the Middle East and South Africa (USDOL 2012).

Despite Eurocentrism in the ILO, it is recognized that not all child labor is exploitative or hazardous. It is recognized that out of the 215 million children working today, 126.3 million work in conditions hazardous to their health (ILO 2009). Work is gendered, dependent on the region of the world where the labor occurs. Some countries are more gendered than others, just as the type of labor these children perform changes by region. However, the International Labor Organization (ILO 2013b) states that 59% of these children are between the ages of 5 and 17 and work in the agriculture sector; 25.6% work in the services sector, while 7% work in industries,
and 7.5% work in areas that are not defined.

In Brazil, male children work in agriculture at a rate of 63.6 percent, while female children work in the services sector (43 percent) (ILO 2009). The difference in gendered work begins to beg the question of which labor is more harmful, to the child. However, this is a difficult question to answer. While agriculture is considered one of the most dangerous fields of labor in many countries, due to the use of machinery, long hours outdoors exposed to the elements and toxins, work in the private sector has detriments other than the potential for physical harm. As child labor in agriculture in Latin and South America has experienced a decrease, labor in the home and household has remained at the same levels, or increased, with countries like Honduras reporting 79.8 percent of girls working in the home, to El Salvador's 62.3 percent.

India has experienced increasing numbers of child laborers in recent years, due mostly to the increased need for products in other countries, and the economic, social, and political climate in India. India has the highest official number of estimated child laborers in the world, at 12.6 million (UNICEF, n.d.). Unlike some other regions, the most harmful industry in India is not agriculture, although it is an expansive sector. Instead, many Indian children work in carpet weaving, glass blowing, lead mining, stone quarrying, and the garment industry (UNICEF, n.d.). Sub-Saharan Africa, while it does not contain the highest number of child laborers, experiences the greatest density of child laborers as workers.

**Economic Factors**

This next section will be comprised of analysis, models, and economic measures of child labor exploring how these factors integrate into global markets, economies and the growth of developing countries. The family household functions as an economic unit. The head of the
family determines the production of its members. Children are viewed as economic units providing useful functions. Functions the child performs consists of two types of functions; short term and long term. Children who provide an immediate income and children who attend school and acquire training and skills to maximize the utility to produce future income (Bachman 2000). Utility function analysis makes the distinction that returns produced by education, namely, earning power, outpaces direct work of return; families highly prioritize education rather than sending their children to work (Bachman 2000). Other features of utility function analysis explain that working children reduce the work load for adults. Children often work because other family members are ill or are required to work because they are depended upon to care for elderly and younger siblings, and a child’s income is needed for the survival of family. Children may decide to escape their family and then work because parents treat them harshly. Economists indicate harsh treatment as a lack of parental altruism, but this only accounts for a small portion of child labor determinants. An alternative model that can be applied is the household bargaining model. Parents bargain with the employer about the hours and wages of the child who is or will become employed. The idea is that children who work long hours and are fed little are unproductive. If children are fed well, work is minimal and the production is not profitable for the employer. The balance that is struck are the wages, amount of food, and the hours that are maximized to return to the parent and employer (Lessler 2010). The supply of child labor at home is determined by the utility of parents sending their children to work or sending them to school, then comparing the two by their payoffs. Education, wage premium, life expectancy, cost of school and extra income if needed are taken into account (Lessler 2010).

Children have always worked in agricultural, domestic and informal sectors of a nation’s economy. But, increasingly, children are moving into the industrial sector of global commerce.
This next model of analysis tends to show that child labor is inefficient and injurious to a nation’s economy, in both the short and long runs. The framework is based upon the 18th century theories by Adam Smith. The key determinants of the wealth of a nation are the proportion of the population engaged in productive labor and relative productivity of the labor force (Hindman and Smith, 1999). The dependent and independent variables are featured below. The dependent variable(s), are economic growth, which is total volume of output for a society, efficiency, the effective utilization of available resources, wealth and income distribution and the most important dependent variable is GDP, which is the total volume of goods and services produced among the divided population (Hindman and Smith, 1999). The independent variable(s) are associated with the proportion of the population engaged in productive labor, which is the percentage of the total population with estimates of hours worked. The second independent variable is the productivity of the labor force, which is the output per unit of labor. Other measures to take into account are the short term aspects of productivity in technology and human capital in the long term, when evaluated accordingly, child labor and adult labor, the theory concluded.

In the short run, elimination of child labor or reducing the hours worked, performed by child labor, reduces a nation’s wealth, and also reduces the proportion of the population engaged in labor production. In the long run children who work as child laborers in industrial settings or manufacturing would harm the next generation of adult workers due to mal nourishment, exposure to toxins, abuse by their employers or mangled body parts from unsafe working conditions. The portion of those child laborers, continue to perform labor into adulthood but are less productive, and some are likely to become unable to work. The long run productivity is the creation of a productive workforce. The challenges involved are the needs for creating the
workforce by the basis of human capital, which is made up development, allocation, utilization and conservation; this is highly important. Development is the need for skills and training, allocation is the market process, matching workers with the appropriate job. Utilization is how is the worker is used, and conservation is the maintenance of the employee and their retired lives (Hindman and Smith, 1999). But children who work in such settings and environments do not receive these human capital benefits. Child labor deprives children of access to human capital needs and schooling, and also prohibits future development.

**Political Factors**

Political factors are closely related to economic factors in child labor. The most obvious political factors that lead to and encourage child labor are nonexistent or ineffective laws and policies of countries that limit or outlaw child labor. While some of the world's governments do have strict laws prohibiting child labor, many do not, and still others have laws that contain exceptions for some of their largest industries (University of Iowa Labor Center 2004). It is simple to place blame on those governments, and to expect easy solutions in enforcing laws and closing loopholes. However, it is not nearly as simple as it might initially seem. Many of the same countries that do not strictly limit child labor are also industrializing. Child labor, then, is actually a large part of these countries' economies, whether they are working in industry or agriculture. Many of the countries have extensive traditions of using child labor in their economic institutions and without child labor involvement, many may not be able to sustain the economic output they currently have. In addition, the growth of the global economy has placed pressure on many countries to refrain from strongly protecting worker's rights and child labor (University of Iowa Labor Center 2004).

While some organizations point to an increase in international trade as a solution to
eliminating child labor through the spread of wealth to those areas, international trade actually
seems to contribute to the problem (University of Iowa Labor Center 2004). As consumerism
within the indo-european world drives an engine demanding cheap, plentiful products, multi-
national companies are looking to reduce their labor costs as a way to meet that demand and
maximize income. This, then, inevitably brings them to move their production to countries with
lower wages and lower worker safety restrictions. These countries often also have limited wealth
and so welcome foreign company investment as a way to stimulate their economies (University
of Iowa Labor Center 2004). This in turn, creates a cycle as countries and governments compete
for foreign corporation investment. Corporations look for the best way to maximize profits by
limiting costs. Governments, in competition with other countries, avoid extensive labor
protection laws in order to secure foreign corporation investment. It then becomes an ongoing
cycle of boosting national economy with foreign corporation investment, but at the cost of
worker protection rights overall, including child labor laws (Edmonds and Pavcnik 2005). Even
international pressure to enact child labor laws cannot outweigh the economic benefits the
countries may recieve from corporate investments. Unfortunately, many of these benefits and
gains are only experienced by a small portion of the population, so the hopes of improving
overall economic status though international trade, are not currently being fulfilled (Edmonds
and Pavcnik 2005).

Aside from competition between countries for foreign investment, there is also a simple
correlation between child labor and the industrialization process. Child labor was an intrinsic
part of the industrialization process in the United States and Europe at the turn of the 19th
century (University of Iowa Labor Center 2004). In the United States, child labor laws did not
become implemented until the Great Depression created a need to lessen competition for jobs.
The elimination of children from the job market was seen as a solution to both child labor concerns and the availability of jobs (University of Iowa Labor Center 2004). If child labor is strongly linked to initial industrialization and the need for a large, unskilled workforce, then countries are unlikely to enforce child labor laws. The ultimate goal of increasing economic output and achieving industrialization would outweigh the need to limit child labor in many political spheres. The lack of effective child labor policies in many countries is intrinsically linked to issues of economic growth and industrialization. Solutions to the issue of child labor must focus on limiting these causes as well as addressing consumerism and consumer demand in industrialized countries that drives the system.

**Social Factors**

There are also a number of social factors that contribute to child labor. Aside from issues of poverty that can drive children into the labor force in order to help their families survive, labor can also be valued as a way to improve status. Entering the labor force at a younger age can be seen to enhance children’s ability to negotiate and move up in the workforce later on in their lifetime (Edmonds and Pavcnik 2005). Labor is also seen in many communities as more valuable than education. Education may pay off in the long term, but entering the labor force at a young age can be seen as the more valuable of the two options both for a family in general, but also for the child (Edmonds and Pavcnik 2005). While the labor itself may be harmful and exploitative to the child, if it is seen as being valuable in and of itself, then both children and families will continue working as a way of survival and attempting to better their status.

Other social factors include family issues of health and composition. In Sub-Saharan Africa, families may not be headed by adults, whether because of epidemics such as HIV/AIDS, or political conflicts and wars. In these cases, in order to support themselves and their families,
which may be composed of children physically too young to work, children may be forced to enter the labor force (University of Iowa Labor Center 2004). By necessity, these children are entering the labor force to replace the adult heads of their family who are no longer present or cannot work any longer. There are no social programs in many of these countries (due to reasons of cost, or political upheaval and unrest). The only survival option for these families and children is to enter the labor force (University of Iowa Labor Center 2004).

In traditional agricultural economies especially, child labor is actually relied upon to remain viable. In agrarian societies, having many children is a way of ensuring a labor force that maintains the farmstead. Children are a less costly alternative than hiring outside labor to help run and maintain the farms (Effland 2005). In addition, the number of children one had was seen to both increase one’s economic and social status. The more children, the larger the labor force for the farm, and so the greater the ability to produce a surplus. Children of agrarian societies, then, are traditionally expected to be a part of the labor force, whether that work might now be seen as exploitative or not, and removing child labor from the equation without alternatives or compensation may involve the collapse of the base of the system (Effland 2005).

**Current Policy**

With such a complex and sensitive topic as child labor, it is only natural to assume that there are many laws and policies written within both state and international legislation addressing this global problem. The United Nations and its specialized agency that covers labor laws, the International labor Organization or ILO, have many laws concerning child labor and the protection of children around the world. However, many countries still lack strong policies in regards to child labor and some, even though they may have policies, do not to enforce them strongly or at all.
There have been two conventions within the United Nations and the ILO, which propose agreements between countries dealing with child labor. The Convention on the Right of the Child was the first international legal instrument used to incorporate all aspects of human rights for children (United Nations, 2013). This convention helped define a child and defines the human rights that all children in the world should have. This convention alone is the most endorsed human rights agreement, with only two countries not signing (United Nations 2013). In 1973, Convention No. 138 on the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment was held. This convention focused on the work that should not be done by children either because they are too young, or it is too dangerous or unsuitable for them. It also identifies the ‘minimum age’ in which children can work (United Nations 2013). This framework, which we can see in the chart below, states the guidelines to minimum age requirements and restrictions in relation to child labor. As of 2010, this convention has been ratified by 156 of the 183 members of the ILO (United Nations 2013).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>(ILO 2013a)</th>
<th>The minimum age at which children can start work.</th>
<th>Possible exceptions for industrialized countries</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hazardous work</strong></td>
<td>Any work which is likely to jeopardize children’s physical, mental or moral health, safety or morals should not be done by anyone under the age of 18.</td>
<td>18 (16 under strict conditions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Basic Minimum Age</strong></td>
<td>The minimum age for work should not be below the age for finishing compulsory schooling, which is</td>
<td>15</td>
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generally 15.

**Light work**  Children between the ages of 13 and 15 years old may do light work, as long as it does not threaten their health and safety, or hinder their education or vocational orientation and training.

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In 1999, another convention was held, this time focusing on the worst forms of child labor. Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, was held to ‘secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour as a matter of urgency’ (United Nations 2013). During this convention, the ILO defined the worst forms of child labor as, ‘all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, the use, procuring of offering of a child for illicit activities, and work which by nature or circumstances in which it is carried out could harm the health or safety of a child’ (United Nations 2013). Although this convention aims at prohibiting hazardous work, it ultimately leaves defining hazardous work to the nation with consideration from employee and worker organizations and international standards (United Nations 2013).

Even though the United Nations and the ILO have outlined and implemented these standards, there are still many areas of the world where child labor is prevalent. One of the main reasons this is true is because it is still ultimately up to the country to enforce these policies.

In the United States, the government works with many other foreign countries, United Nation agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGO’s) to identify and prevent child labor from occurring and assisting children who have been involved in exploitive labor. The United States is a partner of the United Nations and the ILO and has ratified both Convention
No. 138 and Convention No. 182. The U.S. also has some further polices regarding children and child labor (U.S. Department of State 2002). One of the first policies implemented was in 1913 where all but 9 states had set the minimum age for paid labor to be 14 (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2000). Next, the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 (FLSA), set standards for minimum wages, allowed overtime, and also guided most of the laws made in the United States regarding child labor, which are then enacted by the Department of Labor (DOL) (USDOL 2013a). It is specifically stated by the DOL that any job cannot jeopardize health or educational opportunities for employees (USDOL 2013a). Individuals under the age of 18 may not partake in mining or manufacturing, and youths under the age of 16 cannot be employed in jobs that involve the use of ladders, loading or unloading materials, and driving, among other activities (USDOL 2013a). These laws and guidelines are punishable by federal court, with up to $11,000 per infraction and up to $50,000 if there is a death involved (USDOL 2013a).

Furthermore, in 1930, the U.S. Tariff Act was put into place and gives the Department of Homeland Security and Customs Enforcement the responsibility of refusing the entry of any goods that are identified as being made by the hands of forced labor, including children. In relation to this, The Department of Labor in 1998 included Executive Order 13126, which prohibits the procurement of any items made by forced child labor and also identifies a list of such items and countries (U.S. Department of State 2002). Furthermore, the United States employs the Harkin-Engel Protocol to make sure chocolate that is imported and consumed by people in the U.S. does not come from any children working under exploitive labor, and to certify that cocoa beans have been grown, harvested, and produced without any child labor (U.S. Department of State 2002). There is also a participation in the African Growth and Opportunity Act, Caribbean Basin Initiative, and the Generalized Systems of Preferences which all contain
criteria on whether or not a country is correctly taking steps towards implementing internationally recognized worker rights, including child labor laws (U.S. Department of State 2002). The United States has also signed many free trade agreements, which requires enforcement of child labor policies in trade-related sectors of international governments. While the United States has a long list of policies, it is not alone among industrialized nations in addressing child labor exploitation.

In Canada, the earliest age for waged work is 14 years old in the provinces of New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Labrador, Ontario and Quebec. In Alberta and British Columbia, the accepted age is 15 years old, while in Manitoba 16 years old is the accepted age (NAALC N.d.a). In Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Saskatchewan, children younger than 14 may work most jobs without a permit, with exceptions. Depending on which province one lives in, permission may be needed from their parent or guardian, and in some cases school principal. In Canada the latest a youth can work is 11pm, and the amount of time a week a youth can work is restricted (NAALC N.d.a). Each province has specific limitations and laws that their young employees must abide by, such as British Columbia requiring a permit from the Employment Standards Branch. (NAACL N.d.a)

Mexico also has many laws and guidelines to help protect their youth from labor exploitation. Mexico allows their young to work at the age of 14, but if they are under the age of 16 they must have finished secondary school, middle school, or have permission from a labor inspector (NAACL N.d.b). Parents or guardians must give permission as well, and youths may not work past 10:00 P.M. All youths who work must also have a work certificate. Birth, school, and medical certificates are required. Work that serves or sells alcohol, such as bars and liquor stores are forbidden/nor allowed. Mexico also allows children to join labor unions, but they
cannot become a leader until the age of 16 (NAACL N.d.b).

In South America, many countries have similar laws and regulations regarding child labor. For example, Peru monitors child labor through the Ministerio de Trabajo y Promocion del Empleo (MTPE) (Ehow 2013). Children from the age of 12 to 14 are allowed to perform certain jobs as long as they are still attending school. For youths under 18, night work is not allowed. In Argentina, the Argentine Ministry of Labor guides labor for youths (Ehow 2013). All youths can work at the age of 14 with a permit. In addition, work is only allowed after finishing compulsory school and having medical certification. In Chile no one under the age of 15 is allowed to work and if they are under the age of 18, they must have permission from a parent of guardian.

In Pakistan, a child is defined as a person younger than fifteen. The minimum age for employment in shops, commerce, industry, and work at sea is fourteen, and fifteen for working in mines and railways (USDOL 2013b). In 1991, The Employment of Children Act was put into place by the Pakistani government and prohibited the employment of children in certain occupations and regulates their work conditions. This act declared that no child is allowed to work overtime or during the night. Even though an earlier law was already in place banning children from working in industries such as cigarette making, cement manufacture, cloth dying, etc., the 1991 act added industries such as shoe-making, fishing, and metal and wood crafting among others (USDOL 2013b). Even though these laws are established within Pakistan, the enforcement of these labor laws is limited because of a lack of manpower and expertise in Pakistan’s Department of Labor as well as an acceptance of child labor within the country. Pakistan also has implemented task forces to enforce mechanisms and penalties under the laws as well as have provincial governments provide data on cases and fines for child labor. Still these efforts have come up short. According to the government of Pakistan, there has only been one
case of child labor laws not being followed found within its provinces (USDOL 2013b). Because of this, a National Committee on the Rights of the Child was set up and is empowered to visit places of employment to check on their compliance with the laws in place and monitor enforcement and protection issues related to children and child labor (USDOL 2013b). Even though Pakistan is a party to the ILO, it is not in agreement with the Convention No. 138 on the Minimum Age for Admission to Employment. These policies are the proper steps towards eradicating child labor, yet the lack of enforcement of these policies allows Pakistan to be non compliant regarding child labor.

India is another country that is central to the discussion of child labor. There has been much legislation about child labor and children that has been implemented throughout the years. Within both levels of government in India, some of the major laws and developments include The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation Act, 1986, The Factories Act, 1948, The Mines Act, 1952, The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) of Children Act, 2000, The Minimum Wages Act, 1948, and the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (ILO 2009b).

The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act bans the employment of children under fourteen within sixteen different occupations and 65 processes that can be hazardous to children. This act was implemented in 1986 and through the years has added more occupations to the list including eateries and motels in 2006; timber handling, the beverage industry, and the pencil industry among others in 2008 (ILO 2009b).

The Factories Act of 1948 prohibits the employment of any child below the age of fourteen, but allows for children ages fifteen to eighteen to work in factories only with a certificate of fitness from a doctor. It also limits children between fourteen and eighteen to work
only four and a half hours each day and not at all during the night (ILO 2009b).

The Mines Act which was implemented in 1952 states that no child below the age of eighteen can work in a mine with the exception of apprentices above sixteen under supervision (ILO 2009b). The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection) of Children Act was established in 2000 and states that any individual who ‘procures a juvenile or child for the purpose of any hazardous employment and keeps him in bondage and withholds his earnings or uses such earnings for his own purpose shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend three years and also be liable for fine’ (ILO 2009b). This act is in direct agreement with the United Nation’s Convention of the Rights of the Child.

The Minimum Wages Act, also of 1948 determines minimum wages for all employees working within establishments or in homes. Within India though, state governments can revise the minimum wage. Although this is true, this act can be seen as an effective way to prosecute employers who hire children and pay them below minimum wage (ILO 2009b).

Lastly, The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act of 2009 can be seen as legislation that tries to combat child labor. This law allows for free and compulsory education to all individuals between ages six to fourteen. The aim of this policy is to provide these children in India with educational opportunities so that they do not have to join the work force and work for wages (ILO 2009b). All of the legislation and steps that the government of India has taken provides us with a better example of the struggle to eradicate child labor.

**Recommendations**

Both demands and needs exist that lead to child labor. Since the Industrial Revolution, poverty has driven children into the work force. The global demand from consumers for cheap and plentiful products is creating a demand for inexpensive labor that is too often met through
child labor practices. Child labor must be combated at both ends of the spectrum. Working to curtail the effects of poverty and provide greater economic opportunities for both children and adults will reduce the need for child labor. The promotion of fair trade will reduce the demand for child labor. Fair trade also has the potential for curtailing the effects of poverty. The consumers of the world are responsible for creating the demand for child labor and other exploitative labor practices. The decisions one makes when shopping for groceries, clothing, electronics, for example, can be decisions that lead to the perpetuation of child labor.

Fair trade is the promotion of products that have been produced by non-exploitative labor practices that provide workers with fair wages and safe work conditions allowing them to directly benefit from the profits of their labor. Non-profit organizations like Fair Trade USA audit companies “at every level of the supply chain” (Fair Trade USA 2010a) to ensure that there is “a high level of transparency and traceability in their global supply chains” (Fair Trade USA 2010a). Once a company has received a certification from Fair Trade USA, their products then earn the right to bear the fair trade certified label, which assures “consumers that their purchases are socially and environmentally responsible” (Fair Trade 2010b). This system allows for consumers to make decisions that can help to reduce both the need and demand for exploitative labor by choosing to pay a premium for fair trade goods.

A key to reducing exploitation of child labor is the willingness of consumers to pay higher prices for fair trade goods. Children are commonly preferred for labor because they can be paid less for the same level of work that could be performed by adults. They are also more easily manipulated and exploited. Child labor practices result in higher profits for companies and lower prices for consumers. The child laborers are the ones paying the hidden costs. Fair trade practices pass that cost onto consumers, serving to alleviate the unnecessary suffering of children. Once
these hidden costs are placed upon the consumers, profits gained through them are then redistributed to workers through fair trade practices.

Globalization is increasing competition amongst industrializing nations. Nations are not encouraged to reform labor policies because doing so makes them less competitive amidst a global economy. When businesses outsource labor internationally, they are creating a global demand for inexpensive labor. This results in an increased demand for exploitative labor. If the global demand for exploitative labor is reduced, industrializing nations will experience less pressure to refrain from labor policy reform. If the industrialized nations are outsourcing jobs internationally, they should be responsible for ensuring that fair trade standards are met first and foremost before any other negotiating factors. If a business cannot or will not engage in fair trade practices, that business should only utilize domestic labor rather than outsourcing to industrializing nations that allow exploitative labor. Rather than creating a demand for inexpensive and exploitative labor, consumers and businesses alike should be encouraged to create a demand for fair trade.

Purchasing goods locally can help to deter exploitative labor and reduce poverty in one’s immediate area. The promotion of local products through farmers markets, co-ops and community gardens will help individuals reduce their contribution to the global demand for exploitative labor. The establishment of more organizations like GardenShare in Saint Lawrence County, New York, that work to combat hunger and poverty through the promotion of farmers markets, co-ops and community gardens will also help to curtail the global demand for exploitative labor. (GardenShare 2013)

Families often make the decision to send their children into the work force because of financial obligation. This can happen for a number of reasons low wages, illness, injury, lack of
work, elderly who are unable to work, etc. Through promoting fair wages for all workers, we increase workers abilities to provide for their families. The greater this opportunity can be expanded, the more we lessen the likelihood of creating a necessity for children to enter the work force in order to meet the financial needs of their family. This also provides the opportunity for children to increase their human capital. Human capital is the knowledge, skills, abilities and experiences an individual acquires that creates greater economic opportunities for their future, without necessarily improving one’s current economic standing. For children, human capital gain is most ethically achieved through education and child work, both of which serve to provide children with socialization, enculturation, skills, abilities, knowledge and experiences that can serve to increase future societal economic standing. Human capital gains for children can lead to the elimination of the need for child labor within the family over the course of one generation. Once a child has reached adulthood, the knowledge, skills and abilities gained through education and child work experiences will lead to increased economic standing over their parents, subsequently reducing the need for their children to enter the work force.

Eliminating the need for child labor relies upon providing children with opportunities for human capital gain. Industrializing nations are where instances of child labor and lack of educational opportunities are most frequently seen. Efforts should be made to provide all children with free education regardless of nationality, sex, race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the term “childhood” can be determined through culturally specific lenses that are based on legal, biological, and social aspects. Even the activity a child does is definable. Child work, which is any activity that is considered “light work,” socialization, and rites of
passage, is considered to be not as exploitative. Child labor, however, is associated with child exploitation and often referred to in comparison with child work. Exploitation can be measured by the amount of labor needed to produce survival materials (income) and subtracting the actual labor put in from it. If there is more labor than income, it becomes exploitative labor. European and U.S. understandings of children and labor are similar and are generally based upon schooling and the educational needs of children.

In a historical context, foraging and horticultural societies did what they needed to subsist. However, child “work” in this situation was generally done with mothers, so the question is can this kind of work be considered exploitative in nature? Children, historically, have worked in agricultural environments due to a multitude of factors, including poverty, societal attitudes, and social status. The high consumer demand for resources causes a higher need for laborers and workers in agricultural industries; therefore, employers look for the most cost-effective avenues of profit, which often entails children being brought into their work environment. Technological advances also contribute to exploitative child labor in that, initial industrialization did not provide safe working environments for the adults, let alone children.

Those affected by exploitative child labor generally come from poorer families, non-industrialized, and industrializing countries. Depending on the situation, families can benefit financially from putting their child in the work force or for the survival of the family. Consumers and companies are also benefactors of the labor of children, although consumers benefit much more indirectly, having to wait for the final product to reach them and never meeting the manufacturers. This can, in essence, blind the consumer to what goes into making the goods that they buy. Child labor exists both exploitatively and non-exploitatively world-wide, this includes Euro-North American areas as well as industrializing and non-industrialized areas. When people
seek opportunities, it results in them moving or “migrating” to wealthier nations or areas. This travel may leave children vulnerable to trafficking and exploitative child labor.

Recommendations of the most efficient ways to prevent exploitative child labor are to begin at the level of the consumer, by utilizing fair trade products and buying locally if possible. Halting international outsourcing of labor and educating consumers on exploitative child labor are other ways in which child labor can become less exploitative. Child labor is a universal activity that occurs cross-culturally, being a useful or necessary activity in one culture and dangerous and exploitative in another. This difference is why it is hard to create policies that protect the child in order to provide protection it is necessary to be as holistic as possible in creating a definition of what child labor is.
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