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The Challenges of Change: Causes and Consequences of Child Labor in China

Abstract

The government of China opened its doors to the global economy in the late 1970s, with gradually but steadily increasing competition, trade, and production. The 'Asian Tiger' was fueled by export-led development as the number of factories and production facilities spread rapidly across the country. This rapid economic growth exacerbated labor violations, primarily due to the increased incentives for profits and demands of production on Chinese factories. In order to be more competitive, China required a strong labor force; its citizens were thrust into the global economy.

Keywords

Human rights, China, Labor rights, Children's rights, Forced labor

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The Challenges of Change: Causes and Consequences of Child Labor in China

By Andrea Morley

The government of China opened its doors to the global economy in the late 1970s, with gradually but steadily increasing competition, trade, and production. The ‘Asian Tiger’ was fueled by export-led development as the number of factories and production facilities spread rapidly across the country. This rapid economic growth exacerbated labor violations, primarily due to the increased incentives for profits and demands of production on Chinese factories. In order to be more competitive, China required a strong labor force; its citizens were thrust into the global economy.

As the rate of growth in China accelerates, it does so at the cost of strong labor laws and human rights standards. It is estimated that, of the 250 million children aged 5-14 years who are illegally employed worldwide, 61 percent are in Asia. As China has one of the largest Asian economies and has rapidly transformed its economy in recent years, the issue of child labor is of particular significance within the country. Children are illegally employed to work in dangerous, hazardous conditions, such as the fireworks industry or labor-intensive brick-kilns. Data regarding the use of child labor is extremely difficult to uncover in China. Not only does the Chinese government prohibit the collection of such statistics; there are few, if any, active Chinese and foreign advocacy groups in most of the regions employing children. Even major organizations like UNICEF do not have any accurate numbers on the use of child labor in China.

With the establishment of the Open-Door Policy in the 1970s, it became clear to China’s lawmakers that highly skilled and educated workers were essential if the country was to move toward the competitive global market. As a result, China’s legislation implemented the “9-Year Compulsory Educational Plan” for primary education, requiring at least nine years of school enrollment for all children. Although this plan has been very successful in increasing literacy and basic school reenrollment, the fact remains that “compulsory” education is not without its flaws. The International Labor Organization (ILO) reports that dropouts among children aged 12-16 years have been increasing, although compulsory education is mandatory for those under sixteen. With a national average of 2.2 percent dropout rate, many Chinese provinces (especially within the south) have seen dropout rates rise as high as 9 percent, which points to the likelihood of increasing child labor. This is of specific concern because many of the economic zones with previous cases of child labor use (namely, Hong Kong, Guangdong, Sichuan, and Hainan) are where the higher dropout rates occur.

The lack of education in China is therefore a primary cause of child labor. Throughout the country, educational fees are high, access to schooling can be limited, and many schools lack crucial resources. In rural areas, families cannot afford the costs of education for their children or make the long journeys to the nearest schools, and, in many cases, parents see greater value in sending only their son to school. Children in these areas are often forced to enter the labor force to begin making financial contributions to the family. Therefore, the problems arising from educational weaknesses are two-fold: a lack of strong government enforcement and support, and conflicting cultural and social norms that prevent children from attending school. These issues cause an increase in child labor as more children are out of school, on the streets, and forcefully employed.

Girls in China face rising demands and expectations because of the influence of widening gender gaps, social stratification, and the worsening attitudes of parents. Child labor becomes more common as these trends intensify. As Emily Hannum observes, “applying this theory to the case of

education, investment and socialization decisions made by parents are colored by cultural perspectives about essential abilities, rights and roles of men and women; these cultural perspectives become reified in the different investments, and ultimately educational opportunities, made available to boys and girls.” (Hannum 2009) What is even more shocking regarding the attitudes of parents is that, in some cases, children (especially females) have been sold by their parents into forced labor. Although some of these parents may not be aware of working conditions, these children are forced to work in extremely inhumane conditions for little or no wages.

In one report, an explosion at a fireworks factory in Hebei killed one girl and injured 34 more. Investigations found that girls at this “school” were being forced to work for slave wages. The structure and expectations of Chinese society, not to mention the effects of the One Child Policy, place a higher value on having sons. As school costs increase, sons experience greater educational opportunities while female children are often forced to make financial contributions to families through work. Unfortunately, these cultural tendencies have also significantly increased the rate at which female children are given up to orphanages. With few opportunities, these children are most frequently employed in questionable labor positions once they are out of orphanages or, in the worst cases, they are never even formally placed within the system.

As the *International Labor Rights Forum* (2008) states, “rising costs of labor, energy and raw material, and labor shortages...have forced some factory owners to cut costs or find new sources of cheap labor, including child labor.” The rising pressures on the labor supply will, as a result, increasingly encourage the illegal use of children because of the consequences of population control (a drastically declining population since the implementation of the One Child Policy). As the previous generation hits retirement age, the younger generation will be expected to supply the growing needs of the labor force. The challenge here is that there will be significantly fewer workers entering than leaving employment. Children, especially street children and orphans, will be forced or compelled to join the labor force as a way of survival. In many of these situations, children are even being tricked or kidnapped by “employment agencies” and then sold to factories. Even with police teams being formed to investigate alleged cases of child labor abuse, the system is permeated by bribery, corruption, lack of disclosure, and ineffective implementation of labor regulations. Even though Chinese officials have acknowledged these severe human rights abuses, they have yet to take any action that would result in drastic changes. In addition to impeding investigations of reported cases, the Chinese government’s lack of accountability and transparency prevents access to records and documentation of child labor.

The One Child Policy has created a workforce shortage that is increasing illegal child labor, a situation that is also driven by economic incentives and worsened by gender inequality. Without a stricter, sounder anti-child labor policy, increased accountability and monitoring practices from the government and advocacy groups, and a cross-cultural analysis of the root causes, the use of child labor will persist. An examination of the underdeveloped regions suffering from extreme poverty should be conducted, as these are the areas from where laborers tend to migrate in search of paid work. In addition, the social values attached to gender should be evaluated, as child labor is a consequence of the devaluation not only of children, but of female children in particular. Advocacy leaders and civil society groups also must call for increased government transparency and accountability, as well as emphasize government reformation of the educational system. Without active government participation in the elimination of child labor, few meaningful steps can be taken

toward the eradication of this illegal market. China does have legislation and regulations in place that govern many aspects of child labor; however, there is a lack of enforcement and implementation of these laws. Without frequent labor inspections, strict labor policy, and rigorous enforcement from local authorities, child labor unfortunately will continue.

Annotated Bibliography

Hong Kong Liaison Office (IHLO), Play Fair Campaign. 2007. "Child Labour, Forced Labour and 'Work Experience' in China—The Blurred Lines of Illegality." Available online: http://www.playfair2008.org/docs/Child_Labour_July_2007.pdf

Annotation: This report focuses on the worst types of labor in China that employ children. Referencing the China Labor Bulletin, the author examines how there is a growing effort to conduct research through a bottom-up approach. Going directly to the source of the problem—children working in factories and the regions in which they are employed—the conductors of this report interview children instead of just relying on professionals in the field of child labor. The author makes a clear point of emphasizing that advocates in China and the international community should place more emphasis on conducting research from this perspective. The author also cites legislation that does exist in China, which lacks the crucial, strong enforcement of the law. Furthermore, the lack of transparency exacerbates the worsening conditions, as documentation of child labor cases is not released by the government or is unrecorded.

Basu, Kaushik, and Zafiris Tzannatos. 2003. "The Global Labor Problem: What Do We Know and What Can We Do?" *World Bank Economic Review* 17 (2): 147-73.

Annotation: Basu's work focuses on the empirical, theoretical, and strategic aspects of eliminating child labor. The author emphasizes finding solutions that do not cause damage to the regional economies or leave lasting, negative effects on children. Basu's aim is to uncover policies and laws that can be enforced without also exacerbating poverty in states. The author analyzes the causes of the now-global dilemma by discussing the current literature that exists on the subject of child labor. He further examines the suggestions of economists and politicians that countries crack down on child labor by involving trading partners and making the use of child labor punishable in those developing nations.

Cigno, Alessandro, and Furio C. Rosati. 2005. *The Economics of Child Labour*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Annotation: Cigno and Rosati focus on what treaties and conventions identify as the unconditionally worst forms of global child labor. As the authors consider such labor conditions to be child abuse, they concentrate on particular cases that show how limited access to basic utilities cause children to be out of school. In order to assist families, children are forced to work on rural farms or travel elsewhere to work in factories. As a result, the authors demonstrate how children are kept from attending school, but also show that in

some cases, working children and their families may be better off under these conditions than being without work.

Chunli, Xia. 2006. "Migrant Children and the Right to Compulsory Education in China." *Asia-Pacific Journal on Human Rights and the Law* 7 (2): 29-74.

Annotation: Chunli discusses the social division and stratification of the East-West divide that has occurred as a result of the rapid pace of growth and globalization in China. The challenges that migrant workers face are examined in addition to these responses to development. By using the study, "A Survey on the Situations of Migrant Children in China's Nine Cities," Chunli analyzes the astonishing statistics of children who cannot afford to attend school and are forced into labor. Finally, the author examines the various media, advocacy, NGOs, and international institutions and their conventions that have pushed for greater children's rights and stricter enforcement of labor laws. This report provides valuable assistance to those seeking relevant information regarding active anti-child labor groups in China.

Dinopoulos, Elias, and Laixun Zhao. 2007. "Child Labour and Globalization." *Journal of Labor Economics* 25 (3): 553-79.

Annotation: In their work, Dinopoulos and Laixun explain how the use of child labor is prevalent in market economics. By using a comparative study of the effects of child labor from case to case, the authors' aim is to present the idea that child labor can eventually be eliminated through a standard general-equilibrium model of trade. While this study is quite valuable to the application of economics and study of child labor, it does provide readers a denser, more comprehensive perspective on common social, cultural, and politically-focused works of many leading researchers.

Dongfang, Han. 2007. "Small Hands: A Survey Report on Child Labour in China." *China Labour Bulletin*. Available online: <http://www.clb.org.hk>

Annotation: This report by the *China Labour Bulletin* focuses on the various divisions and types of child labor in China. Rather than just giving the factual statistics of specific cases of the illegal use of child labor, the author breaks down the work by region, gender, and categories of labor. The report is further supported by individual interviews with child workers and analyzes the root causes of child labor in China. It allows for a greater multi-dimensional understanding of why child labor exists in China, why it has persisted and perhaps increased in frequency, and also establishes why child labor use in China is different from the types used in other countries.

Edmonds, Eric, and Nina Pavcnik. 2004. "International Trade and Child Labor: Cross-Country Evidence." *Journal of International Economics* 68 (1): 115-140.

Annotation: In a cross-cultural context, Edmonds analyzes the relationship between exposure to trade and child labor measured by openness. By using statistics from the ILO and studying the association between child labor and geographic variation in trade, he argues that trade flows are endogenous to child labor. In addition, he observes that "cross-country data does not substantiate assertions that trade per se plays a significant role in perpetuating the high levels of child labor that pervade low income countries." Finally, Edmonds concludes that this relationship shows that labor structures are largely attributable to a constructive connection between trade and income. This work would be helpful to anyone attempting to quantify the relationship between trade, income, and child labor.

. 2007. "Trade and Child Labor." *Vox: Research-Based Policy Analysis and Commentary from Leading Economists*. Available online: <http://www.voxeu.org/index.php?q=node/399>

Annotation: According to statistics (2007), over 191 million, or 16 percent of children worldwide, are currently in the labor force. Although many of these are at work on farms or in family households, many more are illegally working in factories and industrial plants. Edmonds questions why these children are working and examines the links between international trade and the growing trend of child labor. He argues that, although children are less likely to be working in countries that have more international trade, eliminating these trade-linked jobs does not change the conditions that lead to child labor. By evaluating these issues, the authors find that, in order to decrease or eliminate child labor, we must eliminate the motives for child labor by reducing poverty, reducing high costs of schooling, and improving school systems and access to educational opportunities. This work would be useful for students who want to examine the root causes of child labor through a global finance and economics perspective.

Edmonds, Eric, and Salil Sharma. 2006. "Institutional Influences on Human Capital Accumulation: Micro Evidence from Children Vulnerable to Bondage." Dartmouth College Department of Economics. Available online: <http://www.dartmouth.edu/%7Eeedmonds/kamaiya.pdf>

Annotation: By examining the case of debt-bondage prevalent in western Nepal, the authors examine how institutional influences on human capital accumulation affect vulnerable children. They question how human capital investment decisions are influenced by differences in weak, private property institutions. Using an analysis of the debt-bondage system and a review of its mechanisms, income, credit, and the value of female and child time, the authors argue that there are decreased returns on education, a lack of protected property rights, increased use of child labor, and lower school attendance and attainment. Finally, they conclude that there is a "large, negative association between vulnerability to bondage and both schooling attendance and educational attainment and a positive association between vulnerability and both fertility and child labor." Any professional or

student would be interested in this work in order to study a more broadly-focused examination of the institutional influence of child labor.

French, Howard. 2007. "Fast Growing China Says Little of Child Slavery's Role." *New York Times* (June 20). Available online: <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/21/world/asia/21china.html>

Annotation: The Chinese community was shocked in mid-2007 upon the release of information regarding the use of hundreds of people, many of them children, in the brick kilns of China. Instead of making an effort to address and investigate the issue, the Chinese government promptly evaded the press and prohibited further release of information. French argues that, although child labor is a recognized and severely under-addressed issue in China, the government has directly allowed it to persist through its blatant disregard of such horrific cases and its lethargic implementation of legislation. Many parents are also disgusted by these revelations, as they were tricked into allowing their children to participate in "internship" programs. Economic growth here has, in many cases, become the priority over the rights of children.

_____. 2007. "Ideals and Reality Conflict on Chinese Child Labor." *New York Times* (June 18). Available online: <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/18/world/asia/18iht-china.4.6192697.html>.

Annotation: French examines the reaction of the Chinese and international community to the discovery of forced labor at Chinese brick kilns. As human rights are forfeited for profit, he refers to the case of factories in China as a form of "brutal capitalism." This case, says French, highlights the sacrifices that have been made by the Chinese and what those sacrifices have led to: child labor. Most illuminating in this report is the attitude of the government, whose official comment on the matter was that "harmful information that uses [the brick kiln] event to attack the party and the government" should be prohibited from release. This article by French supports many sources' claims that information about child labor in China is severely undocumented or unreleased, thus making the process of elimination all the more challenging.

Hannum, Emily, Peggy Kong, and Yuping Zhang. 2009. "Family Sources of Educational Gender Inequality in Rural China: A Critical Assessment." *International Journal of Educational Development* 29 (5): 474-486.

Annotation: In this article, the author examines the rural gender gap, analyzing disparities in educational investments in children, parental attitudes and concerns, and the effects on children's subsequent educational attainment. This study is conducted through a survey of 9-12 year old children and their families, the seven-year follow-up, and two case studies comprised of eleven months of fieldwork. The authors also ascertain that not all views of female education are negative; many parents believe that girls would perform much higher

than boys academically, but are concerned about proper gender roles as well as which children will be better able to provide for them in old age.

Huang, Shirlena, and Brenda Yeoh. 2005. "Transnational Families and Their Children's Education: China's 'Study Mothers' in Singapore." *Global Networks* 5 (4): 379-400.

Annotation: Huang and Yeoh focus on the effects of the transnational project of education on the 'sacrificial mother' and 'study mothers' in Singapore. The authors argue that, in Western society, these mothers frequently are able to return to their previous lifestyle, while in Asian countries these women's lives (and their families' lives) are disrupted. Furthermore, the authors discuss the relationship between these mothers and the continuance of the project of education. The effects of such migration on the lives of families and the influence of globalization are each discussed. Various case studies, literature, interviews, and surveys are utilized in order to examine these issues.

International Labor Organization (ILO). 2002. "A Future Without Child Labor." Available online: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_publ_9221124169_en.pdf

Annotation: This 153-page ILO report is an extremely comprehensive account of many of the aspects of child labor and what the steps toward eliminating it may be. Presented at the International Labor Conference, it focuses on how abolishing child labor should be a worldwide effort in this new millennium. Like many other important articles and reports, it examines the different treatment of girls and boys, especially within categories of labor. Using a three-pillar approach to support the actions of the ILO, it most importantly "clarifies the boundaries of child labor for abolition," which many other reports fail to do. This report provides a good historical background of child labor and cites the most influential advocates of the elimination of child labor.

Law, Wing-Wah. 2007. "Legislation and Educational Change: The Struggle for Social Justice and Quality in China's Compulsory Schooling." *Education and the Law* 19 (3/4): 177-199.

Annotation: In this article, Law analyzes the purpose and restrictions of the use of law to affect educational change. He questions the reasons for solely relying on outdated and ineffective legislation to transform and correct unresolved problems. The author examines how the law, if enforced and implemented thoroughly, can be used as an aid to expand and support children's rights in China. Law argues, "...the realization of legislative change requires favorable economic, social and/or cultural conditions, the support of extra-legal means and a concerted effort by all actors in interpreting and enforcing the law."

Liebel, Manfred. 2004. *A Will of Their Own: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Working Children*. London: Zed Books.

Annotation: Manfred Liebel produces a very unique analysis of global child labor: that of the conditions of child labor from the perspective of children. Unlike many works regarding this topic, Liebel's work seeks to discover the solution to child labor from the very individuals who suffer from and are exploited by it. Using strong empirical findings and giving children an opportunity to contribute to the global dialogue, Liebel engages in direct conversation with the youngest workers of the global economy. Instead of just portraying them as victims, however, the author allows the children to communicate their own observations and experiences and thus contribute to the public discourse. The definitions of work versus labor are reexamined here based on those first hand accounts. Liebel's research would be useful to someone who wishes to conduct an objective, impartial review of the issues of child labor in China and examine many viewpoints on those subjects.

Lyle, Fay (ed.). 2004. "Child Labor." In *Justice for All: The Struggle for Worker's Rights in China*, 59-67. Solidarity Center: American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO). Available online: <http://www.solidaritycenter.org/files/JusticeforAllChinaChapter4.pdf>.

Annotation: This chapter focuses on the measures that have been used within China to discourage child labor. In particular, it discusses whether or not the practices and enforcement of law by the Chinese government comply with international standards. The author discusses, in the context of measuring the successful or failing implementation of legislation, the lack of empirical data within the country to support the claims of authorities that all possible methods are being utilized to deter the use of child labor. Although useful in its examination of child labor in China, the chapter only provides statistical and evidentiary proof of child labor without suggesting any solutions or addressing major developments and efforts currently being made.

Naftali, Orna. 2009. "Empowering the Child: Children's Rights, Citizenship and the State in Contemporary China." *The China Journal* 61: 79-103.

Annotation: The author's purpose here is to illuminate "the often latent relationship between changes in childrearing views and practices and governing ideologies in modernity." Naftali discusses the recent development of children's rights and the increasingly prominent dialogue regarding these entitlements. Parents are now the most crucial advocates of these rights, as the proper treatment of children should begin at home. She also argues that the historical attitude that children should be able to care for and account for themselves is outdated, and actually leads to the continued neglect of children and their rights. For a more in-depth understanding of the reasons behind child labor, the author provides a unique perspective on the domestically-influenced causes.

Ngai, Pun. 2007. "Gendering the Dormitory Labor System: Production, Reproduction, and Migrant Labor in South China." *Feminist Economics* 13(3/4): 239-258.

Annotation: Pun Ngai, of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, examines the use of dormitory labor in China and how it shapes migrant workers' lives. Ngai analyzes the results of a 2003-2004 case study of an electronics factory in South China to demonstrate how dormitories act as settings of "control and resistance...and provides workers with the opportunities to resist management practices and achieve some victories in improving working conditions." The paper is broken down into the situations of workers in dormitories, the formation and establishment, and the various categories of dormitories and their regulations. This article provides a concise overview of a specific case of labor in China.

Qiao, D. P., and Y.C. Chan. 2005. "Child Abuse in China: A Yet-to-be-Acknowledged 'Social Problem' in the Chinese Mainland." *Child and Family Social Work* 10 (1): 21-27.

Annotation: The authors' main goal is to show how the problem of child abuse is misunderstood and mistreated and why the issue has not been thoroughly recognized by the government. As China is a signatory of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, there needs to be a greater effort by leaders to achieve effective dialogue, legislation, and enforcement. The authors question whether or not this is just a social problem and what the punishment for parents who abuse their children should be. Finally, they cite several main causes to this problem, namely: inadequate public concern; differences in understanding about child mistreatment within a historical and cultural context; family as the private sphere; policy agenda and priority; state of socio-economic development; and the construction of social problems.

Samuels, Harriet. 1997. "Child Victims of Immigration Law and Policy: A Study of the Effect of Hong Kong Immigration Law on Children and Their Families." *The International Journal of Children's Rights* 5 (1): 97-122.

Annotation: Although several entitlements of children are now protected by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Samuels argues that immigration law and policy have been neglected as states attempt to maintain their power over entry, regardless of the main statutes and articles of the Convention. The author calls for a better understanding of the context and scope of Hong Kong's history in order to conceptualize current immigration regulations. She claims that the stringent nationality laws in place are "contrary to human rights because of the serious implications leading to marriage difficulties and children being left to fend for themselves." An advocate trying to eliminate child labor or a student examining the causes of child labor would be greatly aided by the information that Samuels provides.

Schlemmer, Bernard. 2000. The Exploited Child. London: Zed Books.

Annotation: In his book, Schlemmer compiles several works from leading scholars linking the use of child labor, how it relates to economic systems, the structure of exploitation, societal family structures as a cause of child labor, and the pursuit of profit in the global market. The author uses much of this research to sustain his argument that, although international treaties and conventions are well-intentioned, they do not create strong enough mechanisms to deter the use of child labor or enforce child labor regulations. Schlemmer also claims that there are very few professionals working whole-heartedly toward creating a resolution eliminating the use of child labor, but he neglects to acknowledge the positive effects of international organizations and advocacy groups.

Tong, Xiaojun, and Shizhen Lu. 2004. "China." In Cathryne L. Schmitz, Elizabeth KimJin Traver, and Desi Larson (eds.), *Child Labor: A Global View*. Westpoint: Greenwood Press.

Annotation: Xiaojun and Shizhen review the history of child labor in China, beginning with the mid-1800s. As this kind of analysis is lacking in many works today, the historical outline provides important context within which to examine the case of Chinese child labor. Readers are not limited to a purely statistically or politically-driven commentary. In addition, the authors concentrate on many of the social views and customs that led to the continuation of child labor in the country.

UNICEF. 2007. "China: Statistics." Available online:
http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/china_statistics.html.

Annotation: This is an in-depth report of the statistics regarding children in China. Of particular concern is the data about child labor, for which there are no figures. Although there are statistics for all other categories, it is important to note that the lack of information concerning child labor stems from the corresponding lack of documentation in the country. If UNICEF, a well-known and prominent organization, is unable to collect data regarding child labor, then it is important to question how accurate most reports of child labor in China are and what kinds of barriers prevent UNICEF from attaining such data.

Veeck, Ann, Laura Flurry, and Naihua Jiang. 2003. "Equal Dreams: The One Child Policy and the Consumption of Education in Urban China." *Consumption, Markets and Culture* 6 (1): 81-94.

Annotation: The authors analyze how public policy initiatives and economic growth change the elements of gender equality, particularly the educational opportunities given to sons and daughters. Through a multi-faceted analysis of the different factors leading to educational opportunity, the authors have found that males and females in urban areas experience relatively similar opportunities. Their examination is threefold: literature of past and present gender equality and educational opportunities in China, theoretical support for the observed

changes in urban china through gender stratification theory, and the results of a survey of 220 households in the Yangzhou region.

West, Andy. 2002. "Childhood and Children's Rights in China." In Bob Franklin (ed.), The New Handbook of Children's Rights: Comparative Policy and Practice. New York: Routledge.

Annotation: West focuses on the social and historical context of children, childhood, and children's rights in China. By outlining the geographic, demographic, and historic aspects that have continually affected children, West asserts that, in analyzing the lives of children, "there are difficulties because of local differences in culture, society, environment etc., but there are also benefits, in obvious cross-locality issues, and in a macro-perspective on economic and other policies." He further supports his argument by referring to the influence of globalization, international business, and trade policies. He criticizes the historical prevalence of a Western-focused discussion regarding children's issues in China, claiming this has created a counterproductive, externally-centered dialogue. Western images have been heavily used and have resulted in both a desire for and rejection of Western ideals. West's work provides a greater understanding of the influence of the West on the situation of child labor in China.

Weston, Burns H. (ed.). 2005. Child Labor and Human Rights: Making Children Matter. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Annotation: This book draws upon the knowledge and research of leading human rights professionals. Using the idea of the application of human rights as a solution to child labor, Weston analyzes multiple cases around the world as a foundation for building the human rights argument against child labor, specifically abusive child labor. By focusing on rights guaranteed through major treaties and conventions, and advocated by leading international organizations, this book addresses several of the boundaries (not just political ones) that must be overcome in an effort to end the illegal use of child labor.

White, Ben. 1994. "Children, Work and 'Child Labour': Changing Responses to the Employment of Children." *Development and Change* 25 (4): 849-978.

Annotation: White provides an analysis of the changing global responses to the employment of children and how this issue is perceived and addressed by international institutions and state governments. He argues that the various national and international assumptions regarding child labor are contrary to the perceptions and needs of children. White claims that lobbyists who push for stricter regulations and legislation toward countries using child labor are actually exacerbating the situation, as employers within these countries continue to make efforts to hide such criminalized actions. Any type of children's rights legislation, therefore, does not take effect in these regions because the existence of child labor is not officially acknowledged. White analyzes historical myths of child labor eradication, attitudes and

responses to employment, and the challenges faced by governments and activists in light of the rapid opening of trade and markets in the 1990s.

Zhao, Yaohui. 1997. "Labor Migration and Returns to Rural Education in China." *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* 79 (4): 1278-1287.

Annotation: An analysis of low returns and schooling rates in China is conducted in this work. Zhao examines the relationship between labor migration from the rural to urban areas and accessibility to schooling, and finds that there is a large urban-rural income difference and incentive for secondary education. Through the use of household survey data, the author provides information on government policies and a framework for analyzing the demand for schooling. She estimates effects of schooling on labor migration, calculates the rate of return to school, observes recent trends in schooling rate, and concludes with the summarized findings.