

CHAPTER VI: GOALS OR RIGHTS?

As previously discussed, there is considerable controversy over whether certain welfare and security *issues* should be considered as ‘rights’ or ‘goals.’ Those who view such issues as ‘rights,’ for example, would argue that ‘the right to a basic standard of living’ and ‘the right to be free from malnutrition’ must be considered rights in the same category as civil and political rights. However, others view such issues as ‘goals’ to which humanity should devote much work and attention, and argue that defining such issues as ‘rights’ denotes a required implementation that is simply unrealistic.

Within this category are four of the most prevalent world crises—hazardous child labor, poverty, malnutrition, and the rising tide of refugees. Each crisis elicits a great deal of debate over whether individuals are entitled to protection against such ‘abuses’. For example, some children’s rights advocate immediate and fervent efforts to abolish hazardous child labor, asserting that governments and non-governmental organizations must implement strong measures to protect these children and must be held responsible when violations occur. Others hold that hazardous child labor, while unquestionably harmful for the child, is simply a manifestation of much larger societal problems that must be addressed before efforts to eradicate child labor will be effective. Thus, those who hold this view assert that abolishing hazardous child labor is a goal that society must work toward achieving, not a right that requires immediate implementation.

This debate is far from resolution. However, the pervasive nature of hazardous child labor, poverty, malnutrition, and rising numbers of refugees requires that such issues be included in Regional and Human Geography textbooks. This chapter provides a brief introduction to the pervasiveness and significance of each crisis as well as an assessment of the discussions of these issues in the texts.

Hazardous Child Labor

“All over the world children [under 15 years old] work, putting at stake their education, their health, their normal development to adulthood, and even their lives” (International Labor Organization 1999, 1). According to estimates by the International Labor Organization (ILO), about 250 million children throughout the world between the ages of 5 and 14 work—more than half of whom toil for nine hours or more per day, and up to four-fifths of whom work seven days a week, including public holidays (International Labor Organization 1999). Experts estimate that the use of child labor is growing, despite numerous widely recognized declarations and conventions, such as the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, which reinforce a child’s right “...to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education, or to be harmful to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development...”

Child labor is truly a global problem.¹ The Asian realm, being the most densely populated region in the world, has the largest number of child workers (61%) (International Labor Organization 1999). India and Pakistan alone account for approximately a third of all child labors in the world (Schanberg and Dorigny 1996), with estimates ranging as high as 80 million underage workers in India alone. In Pakistan, in fact, underage workers comprise 25 percent of the total workforce (Parker 1998). In relative terms, however, Africa, which has 32 percent of all of the world’s child laborers, comes in first in the *proportion* of children working, with an estimated 41

percent of all African children between five and 14 engaged in commercial economic activity (International Labor Organization 1999).

Of course, not all child labor is equally harmful, and “to treat all work by children as equally unacceptable is to confuse and trivialize the issue” (UNICEF 1997, 5). Indeed,

we have to be careful not to make an automatic assumption that work by children impairs education and intellectual development ... Work itself may be an important component of ‘education’ especially in household-based production systems (Akabayashi & Psacharopoulos 1999, 120).

Clearly, the issue of child labor is complex, and few informed advocates of children’s rights seek to abolish child labor in its entirety. Extreme and violent exploitation of children via forced prostitution and soldiery, as discussed earlier, is unanimously viewed as a grave human rights violation which cannot be tolerated. Other forms of child labor have not received such consensus. The International Labor Organization has, however, developed a well-received classification of child labor, including the designation of the ‘worst forms’ of child labor that should not, in a civil society, be tolerated.

These ‘worst forms’ of child labor can take on many forms and are found in every region of the world. In addition to the thousands of children held in an endless cycle of bonded labor, countless others labor in near slavery as domestic workers, often “receiv[ing] little or no pay, endur[ing] physical or sexual abuse, [remaining] isolated from their immediate family, and rarely attend[ing] school or play[ing] with other children their own age” (International Labor Organization 1999, IP). In fact, domestic child labor is one of the most prevalent forms of child labor in the world.² In South America, the ILO estimates that “20 percent of all Brazilian, Colombian, and Ecuadorian girls between the ages of ten and 14 work as domestics. In rural areas the percentages rise”, reaching as high as 44 percent in rural Ecuador (International Labor Organization 1999). Children also often labor in hazardous *commercial* agriculture, where child labor has been found in some cases to comprise as high as 20-30 per cent of the labor force. This form of child labor “is considered by occupational health and safety experts to be among the most dangerous of occupations” due to extreme climatic exposure, toxic chemicals, and the high incidence of accidents from heavy and sharp machinery and motorized equipment (International Labor Organization 1999).³ Other prevalent ‘worst forms’ of child labor include work in mining and quarries,⁴ in construction and brickmaking, in the manufacture of glass, matches, and fireworks, and work on small fishing platforms in Southeast Asia.⁵

Text Analysis

Pulsipher provides an excellent discussion on the debate over child labor in a box entitled “Should Children Work.” (Full text is provided in Appendix C). Along with a large photograph of “young boys [tying] knots at a carpet loom in India,” the accompanying text describes not only the problem of exploitation of child labor, but also the instances where there are “significant benefits, both psychological and economic, to children and their families” (375). She also raises the following questions regarding the main issues of debate over child labor:

Is there a problem with the use of child labor in South Asia, or is this a nonissue, the result of different cultural perceptions of what childhood should be? To what extent is this an issue of grinding poverty, rather than outright exploitation? What about children who

work in polluted environments, such as the leather tanning industry, where barefoot children stand in dangerous chemicals while making safety boots for American workers? (375)

The few remaining mentions of hazardous child labor in the other texts, however, are only in passing,⁶ and often in reference to the potential negative impacts on exports. Bradshaw, for example, states “Bangladeshi manufacturers work increasingly closely with their retail customers in Europe, the United States, and Eastern Asia, although some countries are objecting to the use of child labor” (203). The chapter also includes a photograph of four males “engaged in a workshop industry in Bangalore,” two of which appear to be between the ages of 12-15 (176). However, the photograph is intended to illustrate the different ethnicities in India, and neither the picture caption nor the accompanying portion of the text mention child labor. Later in the chapter, however, child labor in a small manufacturing center is described in some detail, with descriptions on pervasive low wages and unsafe working conditions.⁷

Aside from these instances, child labor issues are rarely mentioned, and when they are mentioned, no elaboration is provided. Jordan-Bychkov and Domosh even goes as far as to state that “the changes wrought by industrialization include...the ultimate disappearance of child labor...”(518). Students reading this statement may be given the wrong impression that child labor no longer exists in industrialized nations (as well as the impression that the process of industrialization alone will eventually solve social problems). In reality, “no region of the world today is entirely free of child labour,” including the United States (International Labor Organization 1996).⁸

Poverty & the Right to a Minimum Standard of Living

One in every three human beings alive today lives a life of abject poverty (Karliner 1997). Some even state the figure to be as high as one-half of the world’s population (Clawson and Fisher 1998). Literally billions of people are living a life at the margins of human existence. Despite all the technological breakthroughs of the last few centuries, we still live in a world where one in every five people goes hungry every night, and one in every four people lacks access to even a basic necessity like safe drinking water (Karliner 1997). And because the majority of those existing in absolute poverty live in the world’s most troubled nations, their existence is often “like a cut finger in a country whose guts are spilling out” (Shames 1993, 25). Thus, rather than assistance, frequently the poorest in many societies must fend for themselves, and often find themselves victims of discrimination and, at worst, violent ‘social cleansing.’⁹

It has become increasingly clear that even in an era of unprecedented scientific breakthroughs and awesome human accomplishments, the masses of the world’s poor continue on in poverty, trapped in a vicious cycle where poor nutrition, poor health, lack of earning power, and lack of education feed on each other (Sadik 1992). The United Nations Human Development Report confirms this truth, stating that

What emerges [looking back over the past 50 years] is an arresting picture of unprecedented human progress and unspeakable human misery, of humanity's advances on several fronts mixed with humanity's retreat on several others, of a breath-taking globalization of prosperity side by side with a depressing globalization of poverty (United Nations 1994).

Clearly, many have not benefited from these advances; instead, statistics appear to confirm the opposite. In Africa, for example, “without question, almost all residents... were worse off economically in the early 1990s than a decade or two earlier. Poverty now marks more than three-quarters of the residents of sub-Saharan Africa [according to] a 1990 World Bank report” (Welch 1995, 90).

With most of the benefits of human advances reserved for the wealthy, the gap between the world’s rich and poor grows, doubling worldwide between 1960 and 1991 (Karliner 1997). Statistics are often used as anecdotes to highlight these differences: Tokyo has more telephones than the whole continent of Africa (Iyer 1993); Americans spent as much on jewelry and watches in 1991 than the entire Gross Domestic Product of 20 low-income countries (Godrej 1995); and American children under the age of 13 have more spending money on average each year than the world’s 300 million poorest people (Durning 1990). However, serious implications underlie these anecdotes. The gap between the rich and poor is greatly expanding, making each individual’s “right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well being of himself [sic] and of his [sic] family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care” an unattainable luxury for an ever-growing number of the world’s inhabitants (United Nations 1948, article 25).

To many, narrowing the current income disparities between the rich and poor appears hopeless. Former World Bank president Robert McNamara has confirmed that “it’s absolutely impossible—mathematically and economically—to significantly close the gap [for most nations] within the next 50 years. There’s no way” (*Christian Science Monitor, The* 1988, B7). Indeed, World Bank figures confirm that at current rates of growth, it will take Thailand 365 years to close the income gap. Other nations fare even worse; China will need 2,900 years, while the people of Mauritania will have to wait 3,244 years (*Christian Science Monitor, The* 1988).

Poverty persists largely because the benefits of growth remain in the hands of a small class of elite. In Brazil, the world’s ninth largest economy in terms of gross domestic product, fewer than 1 percent of all landowners control nearly half the country’s land (Petrarolha 1996). Therefore, despite Brazil’s overall economic growth, poverty has actually increased in Brazil, leaving nearly half of the population in a state of absolute poverty, forced to eke out a living on less than US \$2 a day (Novartis Foundation for Sustainable Development n.d.). This inverse relationship has been mirrored in other countries in recent decades. The World Bank has released research findings which confirm that in countries experiencing per capita GDP growth over the last decade, “inequity improved slightly in only about half of the cases and worsened slightly in the other half” (World Bank n.d.).

Corrupt governmental officials and well-connected elite in many nations also perpetuate conditions of poverty. Some of the world’s most impoverished regions have witnessed ‘kleptocracy’ on a scale almost unimaginable. Sierra Leone, once known as the “Land of Iron and Diamonds,” is blessed with significant deposits of ore, iron, bauxite, diamonds and gold. Yet Sierra Leone is one of the world’s most impoverished countries (Maier 1998). Corrupt leadership has likewise reduced Nigeria to one of the world’s poorest nations, despite its position as one of the world’s largest producers of oil. Perhaps most notorious, however, is Congo/Zaire’s Mobutu Sese Seko, whose overseas wealth is estimated to be over \$5 million, all siphoned from the national coffers of a nation that consistently ranks among the world’s poorest (Neier 1990). Indonesia under Suharto, the Philippines under Marcos, Haiti under Duvalier, Somalia under Mohammed Siad Barre, Romania under Ceausescu, Nicaragua under Samosa... the list is long, with each entry representing millions of lives lived in poverty under the shadow of corrupt leadership.

International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank mandated Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) have also come under increasing criticism, as many now hold that “instead of promoting economic stability and reducing poverty, [such programs] do exactly the opposite” (Light 2000). These ‘belt-tightening’ programs often require drastic cuts in health care, education and basic human services, further exacerbating marginalization of the poor and intensifying existing inequities. So severe are the social implications for many SAPs that, in a report recently released by the World Bank, it was admitted that “more than 10 percent of ‘adjustment programs’ in democratic systems led to ‘breakdown of the system 12 months or less after the program started’” (Seabrook 1992, 12). These and other findings have led the United Nations to take the position that debt repayments “should not take precedence over the basic rights of the people of debtor countries to food, shelter, clothing, employment, health services and a healthy environment,” and to ask that international financial institutions “report periodically to the General Assembly and the Council on repercussions of their policies on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights” (*UN Chronicle* 1996).

Text Analysis

As would be assumed considering the tremendous scope and depth of poverty in the world, geography texts provide a great deal of discussion not only on the prevalence of poverty, but also some of the contributing factors and accompanying consequences. As no region of the world is untouched by poverty, regional textbooks mentioned poverty frequently in discussions on developing and developed world regions alike. Likewise, as poverty reaches into many aspects of human existence from urban and rural landscapes to social structures to the economy and industry, human texts mention poverty frequently as well. Only one text fails to mention poverty often; mentions in this text are generally in reference to urban models and the morphology of the built environment. (See Jordan-Bychkov and Domosh pages 418-419, 429, 436, 448, and 466).

Factors contributing to persistent poverty are addressed frequently. Corruption and cronyism feature often, with descriptions of “despotic and self-indulgent leadership . . . corruption, greed . . . [and the tendency to] enhance . . . personal wealth” at the expense of the general populace (Clawson and Fisher 1998, 540). Indeed, statistics on the extensive landholdings of governmental officials and well-connected elite in many nations, as well as accounts of “heads of state and government officials funneling hard-earned money generated from rural areas into foreign banks,” help illustrate to students that poverty not simply an inevitable occurrence—‘an act of God’ (Clawson and Fisher 1998, 517). Pulsipher, for example, includes the following quote from a Pakistani newspaper editor which clearly reinforces the tremendous impact of corruption on a country’s level of poverty: “Pakistan is a country where millions cannot get two square meals a day, yet the prime minister has a fleet of planes, flies to his place in the country in a personal helicopter, and lives in a palace to shame the White House” (394). Texts are also quick to point out that many of world’s most impoverished nations actually have substantial mineral and agricultural resources, and thus *have no reason to be poor*. Many issues related to poverty are also discussed, such as street children in Latin America, ‘sidewalk dwellers’ in India, and impoverished conditions in urban slums. Some texts even tackle issues such as the role of US sanctions on poverty in Iraq, successful programs to combat poverty in Scandinavian countries, and organizations working for landless rural farmers in Brazil.

The role of foreign banking institutions on poverty levels is also discussed often. However, many of the texts do not adequately elaborate on the human dimension of structural adjustment programs (SAPs), mentioning such human consequences only in passing. Clawson and

Fisher's explanation of the current debate over SAPs mirrors the diverse positions taken by the text authors.

Many consider [SAPs], as bitter as they are, to be necessary remedies for decades of unwise fiscal behavior, characterized by excessive government borrowing and spending. Others consider the changes to be an assault on the poor, not worth the international social and political costs (584).

Texts written by political geographers often focus on the impacts of SAPs on nations *as a whole*, with few discussions on the human impacts of these programs (see Bradshaw or de Blij and Muller). In contrast, texts written by social geographers such as Pulsipher frequently explain that "while there have been benefits from SAPs, they have often had a negative impact on poor people"(287). Pulsipher, for example, balances discussions on the beneficial impacts of SAPs not only with macro-level statistics on poverty, but also with vignettes highlighting the impact of such austerity programs on individual lives (see page 298).

Unquestionably, geography texts mention poverty often, and discuss poverty-related issues frequently. Statistics on poverty rates abound in Geography texts: "...60 percent of all Puerto Ricans...live below the poverty line" (deBlij and Murphy 1999, 231); "...70 percent of all Bolivians still live in poverty" (de Blij and Muller 1998, 264); "...one out of four Russians now lives below the poverty level" (Clawson and Fisher 1998, 272). Yet most students reading university-level texts have lived lives little touched by the pain of chronic poverty. Statistics relay the extent of the problem, but clearly more is needed to help students understand what is arguably the defining life characteristic for one-third of humanity. Few attempts are made to bridge this gap. Pulsipher does, however, provide numerous vignettes, highlighting human lives in an attempt to bring the 'concept' of poverty to the level of individual lives. In addition, de Blij and Murphy occasionally ask reflective questions to encourage a deeper understanding of poverty. A moving photograph of a young street child in Saigon is accompanied by the question "Will her life change for the better?" (385). In addition, the text occasionally employs hypothetical 'first-hand encounters' to encourage students to reflect more deeply on the reality of poverty for one-third of the world's inhabitants. For example, when discussing the disparities of wealth and poverty in international tourism locales in the Caribbean, the following question is posed:

But can you imagine the feelings of the local residents? What would you think if a very expensive and exclusive resort were built in your neighborhood, and you and your family, who were economically disadvantaged, were expected to work there (for good wages, perhaps) to serve the needs of the vacationers? You might welcome the money, but would you resent the wealthy tourists? (303)

More such attempts are required, however, as a student who lacks an understanding of the impact of poverty on real lives is a student who lacks an understanding of the lives of one in every three humans alive today.

Malnutrition and Food Insecurity

According to the widely ratified *Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition*, "Every man, woman and child has the inalienable right to be free from malnutrition

in order to develop their physical and mental faculties" (Art. I). Yet every three days, "the same number of people die of starvation as were killed by the Hiroshima atomic bomb" (Helmuth 1989,48). In fact,

Within one minute after you have begun reading this sentence, twenty-five men, women, and children, mostly children, will have died from hunger. In the next hour, the death toll will be about fifteen hundred. Within 24 hours, over thirty-five thousand will have starved to death (Totten 1989, 161).

The numbers are truly staggering, and often conjure up media images of sudden famines brought on by war, drought or natural disaster. Indeed, recent famines and international hunger-relief efforts in war-torn locales such as the horn of Africa have received a great deal of international press, often because of the difficulties encountered in such hunger-relief operations.¹⁰

Yet such famines are only the tip of the iceberg. Less than 10 percent of hunger deaths throughout the world are due to famine. The much larger issue is chronic, persistent hunger—a silent, day-by-day struggle, which, according to the 1996 World Food Summit, is experienced by an estimated 840 million of the world's poor (Hunger Site, The 2000). And while some regions have made notable improvements in the past few decades, demonstrating that large-scale hunger can be overcome, the Food and Agriculture Organization's annual *State of Food Insecurity in the World* report consistently confirms that roughly one-seventh of humanity exist in a state of unremitting malnourishment and 'food insecurity' (U.N Food and Agriculture Organization n.d.).

The devastating physical and psychological impacts of hunger are well known. Without sufficient nutrition, the human body becomes so weak that it can do very little, and one's ability to concentrate is greatly reduced (Totten 1989, 162). Moreover, many of the world's most pervasive and deadly diseases, such as kwashiorkor, are brought on by chronic hunger. Children are particularly vulnerable. Recent research indicates that reductions in physical growth and impaired brain development can accompany even mild cases of undernutrition when experienced by young children during critical periods of growth (Tufts University 1998). This increased vulnerability helps explain the overwhelmingly large percentage of hunger-related deaths in the 0-5 age cohort—about twenty-five thousand of the thirty-five thousand people who die each day of hunger or diseases brought on by hunger are under the age of five (Totten 1989).

Chronic hunger is a truly global phenomenon. While there are numerically more chronically hungry people in Asia than in any other region, chronic hunger and serious undernourishment are also pervasive in Africa, Latin America, and throughout the world (U.N Food and Agriculture Organization n.d.). Even in the United States, one of the wealthiest nations in the world, chronic hunger afflicts millions. The U.S Department of Agriculture found that in 1999, one of the most prosperous years in the nation's history, 31 million Americans were either hungry or were unsure of where their next meal would come from (Hunger Site, The 2000).

Text Analysis

All eight texts discuss malnutrition and issues of food security, although, on the whole, Human Geography texts provide more in-depth discussions than Regional Geography texts. Many

comments on the extent of malnutrition are used simply as illustrations for discussions on population pressure and the earth's carrying capacity. For example, Fellmann et al. tersely remarks that

Starvation, the ultimate expression of resource depletion, is no stranger to the past or present. By conservative estimate, some 70 people worldwide will starve to death during the 2 minutes it takes you to read this page; half will be children under 5. They will, of course, be more than replaced numerically by new births during the same 2 minutes. Losses are always recouped (125).

However, more in-depth discussions on food security and malnutrition are provided in all four Human Geography texts. For example, the chapter entitled *A Geography of Nutrition* in de Blij and Murphy's text provides an excellent discussion on the extent of malnutrition and its impact on health and human development, especially of children. In this chapter, the authors discuss the contribution of political and social dislocation on the occurrence of famine, detail some 'recent developments' and 'areas of improvement,' and provide a balanced assessment of the problems in food security, including ten 'key arenas' for helping to prevent a food crisis.

Human Geography texts also provide discussions on global food production and the importance of infrastructure and distribution systems, helping students to understand the human element of differential food scarcity. For example, in a discussion entitled 'Can the World Be Fed?,' Jordan-Bychkov and Domosh explain that

If the world food supply is sufficient to feed everyone and yet hunger afflicts one of every 6 or 7 persons, then some cultural or social factors must be responsible. The answer is that poverty and politics, not food shortage, causes hunger. ... Bangladesh suffered a major famine in 1974, a year of record agricultural surpluses in the world (125).

The authors continue on to explain the complexity of redistribution of the world's food supply, stating that

Even when major efforts are made to send food from wealthy countries to famine areas, the poor transportation infrastructure in Third World countries often prevents effective distribution. Political instability can disrupt food shipments, and the donated food often falls into the hands of corrupt local officials. Famine then is mainly a cultural phenomenon. Its immediate causes could be environmental, but the failure to relieve hunger has a cultural explanation (126).

Regional Geography texts also discuss malnutrition and food scarcity, although to a lesser degree than Human Geography texts. While discussions on malnutrition are largely confined to chapters on Sub-Saharan Africa, the discussions in these chapters are quite extensive and include a broad range of vital issues in global food security. For example, in addition to Bradshaw's two page 'World Issue' box on famine in Africa (100-101), Pulsipher explains the link between famine and political and civil human rights observance by sharing comments from Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen of Harvard University (341),¹¹ Fellmann et al. explains the complexity of foreign aid as a solution to problems of food scarcity (350), and Rubenstein compares resource efficiency of meat production to that of grain production for direct human consumption, concluding that "[w]ith a large percentage of the world's population undernourished, some question this inefficient use of grain to feed animals for eventual human consumption" (148).

Outside of chapters on sub-Saharan Africa, however, discussions on malnutrition and famine are very limited. Discussions on North Korea, for example, are confined largely to historical, political and economic issues, despite the fact that a famine has ravaged the nation since 1995, killing an estimated 10 percent of the population between 1995 to 1998 alone (Lee 1998). UN observers have likened the severity of the current famine in North Korea to the devastating famine that wracked Ethiopia in the mid-1980s (PBS 1997). In fact, observers in 1998 reported that “to survive the persisting food shortages, North Koreans are eating weeds, grasses and corn stalks that are mashed into powder and sometimes mixed with flour to make noodles or cakes” (Lee 1998). Only very brief mentions are made in the texts of North Korea’s on-going famine.¹² One text erroneously states that “In North Korea in the late 1990s...malnutrition was widespread and famine *threatened*...” (de Blij and Muller 1998, 388, emphasis mine).

Interestingly, one aspect of world malnutrition that is not discussed often in the texts, despite the pervasive focus on increasing globalization, is the growing percentage of foodstuffs that are produced for export in nations where the remaining domestic food supply is insufficient to meet the needs of a country’s population (Greer and Singh n.d.). Fellmann et al. briefly touches on the phenomenon, stating

Even in those world regions favorable for Green Revolution introductions, its advent has not always improved diets or reduced dependency on imported basic foodstuffs. Often, the displacement of native agriculture involves a net loss of domestic food availability. In many instances, through governmental directive, foreign ownership or management, or domestic market realities, the new commercial agriculture is oriented towards food and industrial crops for the export market or towards specialty crop and livestock production for the expanding urban market rather than food production for the rural population (267).

While a cryptic tone distances this phenomenon from the real players involved—the malnourished in poor nations and the already largely well-nourished in rich nations—this statement does hint at an increasing phenomenon that is either overlooked or only briefly mentioned in other texts.¹³ Instead, the texts describe export agriculture and malnutrition separately, as if unrelated. The situation in the Philippines illustrates the importance of linking the two phenomena.

[W]hile the Philippines has increased general food production by 50 percent, three fourths of Filipino children under the age of five are not receiving enough food. This might be *partly* explained by the fact that only a small amount of what foreign companies produce is sold to the people in that country. For example, Dole and Del Monte, two US-based companies, export 90 percent of what they produce, and only 10 percent of their produce is sold to the Filipinos (Totten 1989, 179).

An indirect mention of this phenomenon is found in Clawson and Fisher.¹⁴ In order to ensure a balanced, truthful depiction of the world, this phenomenon is particularly important to include in those texts that describe the benevolent role of the United States in rescuing the malnourished of the world through food aid (See Rubenstein pages 356 and 511 for example).

Refugees

One out of every 280 people on earth is a refugee (U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees n.d). When *intranational* refugees, or internally displaced persons (IDPs), are included, the number

jumps to one of every 123 people (Newland 1994). In total, around 50 million people alive today have been forced to flee their homes, and the number is climbing (U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees n.d). A recent Amnesty International report found that the total number of refugees more or less doubled in the last decade (Anderson 1997), and increased tenfold since the mid-1970s (Kirschten 1994). This increase is due largely to the transformation of the ‘rules of warfare,’ where “refugees are no longer a *consequence* of violence but its very *purpose*. Here, displacement is no longer a grim by-product of human passions but a strategic goal of total wars waged by armies, not against other armies, but against civilians” (Brauman 1996, 28). Indeed, recent localized conflicts have spawned some of the largest and fastest mass migrations of the century, including the incalculable exodus of more than two million Rwandans into neighboring countries in just six months time (Brauman 1996).

“To be a refugee is to exchange one injustice for another, one form of suffering for another” (Brauman 1996, 25). Having been driven from their homes, refugees often suffer from severe depression, anxiety or other psychological reactions. Indeed, many have been deeply traumatized after witnessing almost unimaginable violence. Refugees also often arrive at the camp already malnourished, as farming and commerce has typically been interrupted in their home areas due to conflict or natural disasters. Malnutrition is one of the most serious problems facing refugees—killing many outright and leaving others vulnerable to deadly diseases such as cholera, dysentery, and acute respiratory infections. Prolonged exposure to these severe health risks is common, as refugee camps often become new homes for refugees who are unable to return to their place of origin. For example, *since early 1990*, more than 100,000 Somalis have lived in small huts built from sticks and plastic sheeting in the desert climate of northeastern Kenya, waiting for an end to the civil conflict which drove them from Somalia (Doctors Without Borders n.d.). Indeed, whole generations have been born and died in ‘temporary’ refugee camps.

Most refugees are women and children. It is estimated that half of all refugees in both Kosovo and Rwanda are under 18 years old. Such statistics underscore the tremendous social impacts of a refugee crisis, where countless children are exposed to terror and misery on a massive scale, creating a generation of brutalized and scarred children (*Economist, The* 1999a). Moreover, women face the additional danger of rape. Indeed, sexual assaults in refugee camps have risen sharply in recent years. Human Rights Watch has even confirmed a sexual assault rate as high as 25% in a UNHCR refugee camp for Burundians in Tanzania (Human Rights Watch 1997).

Unfortunately for the world’s 50 million displaced persons, receiving refuge and asylum has become increasingly difficult. Despite legal prohibitions against forcing refugees to return to their country of origin, a practice called *refoulement*, the sharp rise in the world’s refugee population has been accompanied by a sharp rise in involuntarily repatriation of refugees to the very countries in which they were persecuted. In developed nations, where refugees had largely been extolled for ‘voting with their feet’ during the Cold War, new loopholes have been created to keep out refugees, who are now often viewed as a burden and a security threat. The European Union, for example, has recently adopted rules enabling member states to reject asylum for refugees claiming persecution by rebel groups, even when the applicant’s state government has failed to provide protection from the rebels (Human Rights Watch 1997).

Developing nations, who shoulder the majority of the world’s refugee crises, have likewise “depart[ed] from their traditions of hospitality and move[d] toward forced repatriation by cruelly blunt tactics like cutting off food supplies” (Anderson 1997). Thailand, for example, forcibly returned 20,000 refugees to Burma in 1997 and refused entry to new refugee seekers,

leaving thousands of people massed along the Burmese-Thai border vulnerable to attack (Human Rights Watch 1997). In Africa, where the largest population of refugees and displaced persons can be found, recent increases in forced repatriation have created “a humanitarian and security crisis of mammoth proportions on the continent” (Human Rights Watch 1997, 6).

Text Analysis

All textbooks assessed in this study include discussions on the plight of the world’s refugees. While the extent and depth of discussion varies widely, on the whole, both Human and Regional Geography textbooks include general statistics on the number of refugees in the world as well as some discussion on major refugee crises throughout the world. Most of the texts also include at least one photograph depicting either a refugee camp or waves of refugees fleeing for safety. One particularly thorough discussion is found in de Blij and Murphy’s text, where a significant part of ‘Chapter 6: Migration and Its Causes’ is devoted to ‘The Geography of Dislocation.’ In this section, related terminology is defined, the characteristics that distinguish a refugee from a migrant are detailed, and the ‘regions of dislocation’ are described.

Most ‘discussions’ of refugees are, in truth, *mentions* of a recent refugee crisis, with, at times, a brief description of the contributing factors that caused people to flee their homes. Most common *mentions* include the expulsion of the Armenian minority from Ottoman Turkey during World War I, the flight of ethnic Pathans into Pakistan following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the recent events accompanying the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia, and the refugee waves that accompany on-going civil wars in Eastern Africa.

The majority of references to refugees are devoted to relaying the course of events leading up to the specific crisis being discussed. For example, the 1994 refugee crisis in the Great Lakes region of Africa caused tremendous loss of refugee life and disrupted millions of additional lives. Seven of the eight texts discuss the Rwandan refugee crisis, yet the majority of discussions focus entirely on facts leading up to the violence and the numbers of people involved. Little discussion is devoted to relaying social, physical, and psychological impacts experienced by the Rwandan refugees, nor of the millions of other peoples throughout the world who are forced from their homelands each year. Pulsipher does attempt to ‘humanize’ the statistics somewhat by providing a vignette about an internally dislocated family in Somalia and its efforts to survive in a temporary home (354). Rubenstein similarly provides a vignette following one Rwandan family that was forced to flee its comfortable home and live in a refugee camp with millions of other Rwandans (230).

In addition to these vignettes, Pulsipher describes, in greater detail than most of the texts, the conditions experienced by refugees at a camp, stating that

The residents may show enormous ingenuity in creating a community and an informal economy under dire conditions. Nevertheless, the toll in social disorder is high. Children rarely receive enough schooling. Years of hopelessness and extreme inconvenience take their toll on youths and adults, alike, leading some to violence (278-280).

DeBlij and Murphy also relay a sense of the human tragedy of the refugee situation when they state that “whatever their numbers, refugees tend to be the most powerless, deprived, threatened people in the world. Often they face death while governments and relief agencies quarrel over rescue plans” (86).

Summation of Coverage

The coverage of each topic varies widely. Child labor is largely absent from both Regional and Human Geography texts. Poverty, malnutrition, and refugees, on the other hand, are discussed often. Many of the 'discussions,' however, are either *mentions* of its occurrence or are largely details on the 'facts' of the issue. Little insight into the human dimension of poverty, malnutrition or refugees is given, providing the student with little opportunity or incentive to 'step into the skin of others' and develop a deeper understanding of what such issues mean for the *individuals* involved.

Notes

¹ The following are estimated percentages of working children between the ages of 10 and 14 years old for the year 1995: In Asia: Bangladesh--30.1%, Bhutan--55.1%, China--11.6%, East Timor--45.3%, India--14.4, Nepal--45.1%, Pakistan--17.7%, Turkey--24%. In Africa: Burkina Faso--51.1%, Burundi--49%, Côte d'Ivoire--20.5%, Egypt--11.2%, Ethiopia--42.3%, Kenya--41.3%, Mali--54.5%, Niger--45.1%, Nigeria--25.8, Senegal--31.4, Uganda--45.3%. In Latin America: Argentina--4.5%, Brazil--16.1%, Mexico--6.7%. In Europe: Italy--0.4%, Portugal--1.8% (International Labor Organization 1996).

² Most child domestics are between the ages of 12 and 17 years old, although some surveys by the ILO have identified children as young as five or six. According to one survey in Bangladesh, for example, 38 percent of child domestic workers were between the ages of 11 to 13 years old, and 24 percent were five to 10 years old. This same survey found that child domestics worked 10 to 15 working hours per day and were often victims of physical, mental and sexual abuse.

In some countries, it is common for a child domestic to have been given by his or her parents to an employer to be brought up, often under the assumption that the child will be better provided for as an unremunerated servant in an affluent household. Often, the tie with the natural family is thus severed at a young age, making the child domestic totally dependent on the employer for clothing, food, and shelter, thus forcing the child to continue to work without pay. Such bondage arrangements are illegal in virtually every country. (International Labour Organization 1999).

³ In many regions of Asia and Latin America, young children are employed to hold the flags that guide the airplanes that spray pesticides over agricultural lands. As children are biologically more susceptible to chemical hazards and radiation than adults, this form of labor is particularly hazardous (International Labour Organization 1999).

⁴ Working in mines and quarries is one of the most dangerous jobs, even for adults. One in every five girls and one in every six boys working in mines is seriously injured in the course of their work.

In Africa, for example, children as young as 8-9 descend 30 metres into the ground and spend seven or eight hours a day digging through narrow passages without ventilation or

proper lighting and with earth frequently caving in. In the Mererani gem mines in the United Republic of Tanzania, boys often hide in mine tunnels deep underground during blasting to improve their chances of being the first to find exposed gems. The bonuses received for these finds are their only hope of pay. As a result of such risk-taking, many children suffer serious injury or lose their lives (International Labour Organization 1999).

Hazards faced by children working in the mining industry include: electrocutions; falls from improperly built scaffolding and heights; cave-ins due to insufficiently reinforced trenches; extreme weather conditions and exposure to intense heat; musculo-skeletal disorders and fatigue; serious injuries from carrying heavy loads; injuries from falling objects and tools; health impairments from noise and vibration; eye injuries from flying material; explosions, fire hazards, and toxic fumes from burning substances; and exposure to toxic chemicals, hazardous fibres, and dust (International Labour Organization 1999).

⁵ In Indonesia, surrounding the islands of Sumatra and Java, there are between 1200 and 1500 fishing platforms on stilts roughly one half to several kilometers out in the ocean. Young boys are taken out to the platforms to fish for krill, and are forced to live on the small platform for periods up to six months. Fresh water and food are scarce, and the only form of shelter is usually inadequate for the three to six young children on the platform at one time (Parker 1998).

⁶ For example, Clawson and Fisher mention child labor in the chapter on South Asia, although they do not elaborate. In discussing Bangladesh, Clawson and Fisher's only reference is to say "Child labor is widespread..." (426). In the South Asia chapter summary, they state "High tech manufacturing plants may be situated adjacent to grimy industries exploiting child labor" (427).

⁷ This section in Bradshaw's South Asia chapter reads:

The Kanpur area specialized in tanned leather goods. Its small tanneries have good markets for their products, but invest little in their technology, training, health and safety, or environmental treatment of the toxic effluent. They pay low wages, employ children, and rely on unskilled, destitute labor for the 'quality handmade' goods. For example, the Sultan Tanneries produce tanned leather goods mainly for export. Their workers take home one-tenth of the wages they might earn in the United States or Europe, working barefoot without protective clothing in an unfiltered atmosphere of toxic fumes and liquids, to make safety boots for core countries. Small factories in Moradabad specialize in quality brass goods for export and sale in design shops in the core countries. They are also made by workers that include children for low wages (200).

⁸ In the United States in 1990 alone, the U.S. Department of Labor's "Operation Child Watch" found over 42,000 child labor violations. In addition, a 1998 study by Doug Kruse of Rutgers University estimates that there are 148,000 illegally employed minors in an average week (The Child Labor Coalition n.d.). This fact *is* acknowledged in the North America chapter of Pulsipher's text, which includes a photograph of a young immigrant farm worker in the US, and a caption describing how "many child migrant workers in the United States...[go] to school only intermittently" (101).

⁹ With an alarming increase in violence against the homeless, human rights activists have had to coin a new term for this organized terrorism against the economic underclasses. *Social*

cleansing has occurred in regions throughout the world, and often target street children, whom “governments [often treat] as a blight to be eradicated rather than as children to be nurtured and protected” (Human Right Watch 1997, 384). Human rights observers and international groups agree that social-cleansing is generally part of a systematic, planned campaign against a particular group based on low economic status (Wirpsa 1993).

Statistics on social cleansing are shocking. According to America’s Watch, four street children were killed *each day* on Brazilian streets between 1988 and 1990. In Colombia in 1992 alone, 505 murders occurred that were attributed to social cleansing. The frequent implication of police officers in these killings was confirmed in the U.S. State Department’s 1992 human rights report on Colombia. In Bogota, death threats—printed professionally on large posters in red and black ink— were plastered to the walls of buildings, inviting indigent people and common delinquents to their own funerals. The posters stated that the “hosts” of the funerals were the ‘businesspersons,’ ‘civic groups’ and the ‘good people’ of Bogota (Wirpsa 1993).

¹⁰ The United States’ ‘Operation Restore Hope’ in Somalia proved that “dumping food into a country without government or police force...only heighten[s] the lawlessness” (Richburg 1998, 57).

The food brought in by the relief agencies was the only thing left to steal in a city stripped bare. By some estimates, 50 percent of the food donated to Somalia was looted at ports, warehouses, feeding kitchens, or in between. Somalia was one big extortion racket. Laborers, truck drivers, and armed security men all demanded huge sums of money and a share of the cargo to let the relief agencies deliver the food. The airport was controlled by a gang that demanded payment to let mercy flights land (Caputo 1993, 102).

Similar corruption and misuse of aid also occurred in the Sudan, where relief agencies investigating the persistent high rate of malnutrition despite adequate supplies of relief food for the civilian population concluded that the nation’s rebel army, the SPLA, “deliberately kept some children in a thin and sickly state to justify continued high levels of relief food the SPLA could divert” (Human Rights Watch 1997, 76).

¹¹ Pulsipher’s quote from Amartya Sen reads:

He points out that famine is rarely a problem in independent democratic countries where there is a free press. ...Famines never kill the rulers, so bad rulers have little incentive to cure the problems. It is probably no accident that Zimbabwe and Botswana, where democracy is beginning to flourish, have successfully prevented famine and raised standards of living. In comparison, Zaire/Congo, Rwanda and Ethiopia, with repressive dictatorships, have not only fallen far short of meeting basic needs but have descended into horrendous civil violence (341).

¹² Pulsipher states that

Agriculture has been failing for several years, and recurrent cycles of floods and droughts have brought on extensive famine. Though the government has been unwilling to release much information, it is possible that up to 2 million people have died of hunger. The government has responded ineffectively to this dire situation (464).

de Blij and Muller reference the famine and the resulting food aid merely as an illustration on potential improved political conditions between North Korea and its neighboring states of South Korea and Japan.

Devastating floods during the summer were followed by a drought that caused widespread famine. North Korea was forced to accept rice shipments from South Korea and Japan in further concessions that yielded a first glimpse of a future normalization of relations between South Korea and Japan (459).

¹³ Clawson and Fisher mention this problem in passing when discussing Central America (599), and indirectly refer to the relationship in their section on India (413). de Blij and Muller very briefly mention this phenomenon, stating that in the Caribbean, “the best land [is] always used to raise cash crops for the export trade rather than staples for local consumption (many countries—most notably Haiti—are chronically food-deficient)” (213). de Blij and Murphy also briefly discuss this issue in their text when illustrating the remnants of colonialism in Africa (199, 395).

¹⁴ Clawson and Fisher state “the ongoing conversion of land from subsistence to export crop production is one of the principle reasons why...the Philippines...must continue to rely on food imports” (380).