

## CHAPTER VII

### CONTROVERSIAL HUMAN RIGHTS

In a world with six billion people, differing viewpoints are inevitable. The fact that some human rights issues are controversial is therefore not surprising. And, just as with any other area of controversy, it is only through an appropriate degree of interplay among divergent viewpoints that such controversies can be better understood, and perhaps resolved.

There are many reasons why human rights can be controversial. Some rights are controversial due to the implications of their full enjoyment. If every nation has the right to self-determination, for example, would the recognition of that right lead to the creation, perhaps violently, of thousands of new countries? Would the new world order that is created through this process engender better human rights observance or worse? Most current state governments certainly do not favor the full enjoyment of such a right, as it could undermine their territorial control. Yet stateless nations assert that they do have a right to determine their own future. Clearly, the issue is a controversial one.

Likewise, many people feel that every individual has the right to a wage sufficient to ensure a minimum standard of living. Such proponents often point to low wages at overseas factories of transnational corporations as evidence of the fact that globalization and increasing development have not benefited many of the working poor. However,

transnational corporations, as well as many governments and international governing bodies, assert that such investments actually benefit local residents of the region. Clearly, the notion that a basic human right is being violated is not shared by all.

In addition, some issues become controversial when cultural justification is given for an action that is viewed by outsiders as a violation of human rights. Gender inequity in every region of the world, for example, is frequently justified by referencing cultural and religious beliefs and practices. A commentary on such a practice could run the risk of appearing to criticize the culture. Thus, those afraid of conflict often ignore such issues as female genital mutilation, gender inequity in Afghanistan, or culturally-justified violence against women. Yet resolution on this issue can only be reached by addressing the debate, not avoiding it.

The issues surrounding controversial human rights topics underlie many of the world's current conflicts and reach into the lives of literally billions of people. They must, therefore, be explored in Regional and Human Geography textbooks, despite the lack of consensus. This chapter provides a brief introduction to some controversial human rights, as well as an assessment of the discussions of these rights in the texts.

#### Stateless Nations and the Right to Self-Determination

A 'nation' is defined as "a group of tightly-knit people possessing bonds of language, ethnicity, religion, and other shared cultural attributes. Such homogeneity actually prevails in very few states" (deBlij and Muller 1997, G-9). In our modern world of roughly 200 politically organized territories called 'states', only a handful are significantly homogenous; the vast majority—95 percent—are *multinational*, some unconsenting (Nietschmann 1988). Most modern states are recent creations: only 50

internationally recognized states existed prior to World War II (Cultural Survival 1993).

By contrast, the world's 3,000 to 5,000 *nations* have been around for centuries, even mil-

lennia. Yet

almost none of the world's distinct people are recognized internationally. Their existence, territories, and defensive struggles are largely invisible. Instead, multinational state populations become internationally recognized as "peoples" and "nations" even though they have none of the characteristics (Nietschmann 1988, 88).

The list of 'stateless nations' is long: Palestinians, Mayans, Basques, Miskitos, Pathans, Catalans, Tamils, Yanomami, Tibetans, Oromo, Uygurs, Tigrayans, Sami, Kurds, Western Shoshone, Penan, Orang Asli, Tamacheq, Bougainvilleans, Acehnese, Efe, and Maasai—all are stateless nations, representing only a small percentage of thousands of distinct peoples invisible from the modern map. Some nations have relatively small populations; others number in the millions. The Karen people, whose Kawthoolei nation is unrecognized in the state of Myanmar, number 4.5 to 5 million—larger than 48 percent of the member states in the United Nations. The Oromo nation of East Africa numbers more than 20 million—greater than the population of the continent of Australia (Nietschmann 1988).

Many of these nations have lived 'since time immemorial' on lands now incorporated into a larger political entity. The on-going struggle of many of these groups to resist the total annexation and absorption of their people by the conquering state is a struggle to prevent their nationality, their history, and their way of life from disappearing altogether. To accomplish this end, many nations are asserting their 'right to self-determination'—an internationally recognized right of a people to determine their own path, choose their own political status, and decide the way in which they will develop.

These nations are demanding the right to decide their own future, regardless of how inefficient or backward or strange such a path may appear to those outside their nation.

However, nation people are often overlooked or unknown, both domestically and internationally. In place of recognition as a distinct people, most nation peoples are misidentified as members of the state in which they live. A Uyгур living in the China's Xinjiang province is considered by outsiders to be 'Chinese', despite the fact that "neither he, his language, his people, nor his culture is Chinese [sic!]" (Allen 1996, 12).

Likewise, many nation peoples fighting for greater autonomy are referred to as dissident members of the very state they are fighting against. For example, the Oromo nation, a people for greater recognition of Oromo nationhood and the right to speak the Oromo language, are often simply referred to as "Ethiopian rebels" (Cultural Survival 1993).

In addition, nations are almost universally relegated to minority status or considered an 'ethnic group' within the structure of the conquering state. Such distinctions have ramifications beyond merely semantics. When the British-created state of Burma designated the Burman people—only one of a dozen nations in the area—as the ruling regime of the mythical "Burmese people", the Karen and their Kawthoolei nation were instantly designated as a "Burmese hill-tribe" (Nietschmann 1987). Yet nation peoples such as the Karen ask

How can a people be an ethnic group in its own nation?...Are Karens an ethnic group in Kawthoolei?... An ethnic group is a population that maintains its own cultural identity in another nation. Individuals, and even majorities of a people, may leave their nation—by force or choice—to live in a new country in which they have no historical land or national territory. But a nation people living within its own territory is not an "ethnic group" or a "minority."...Samis may be a minority in Oslo or Stockholm, but in Samiland (also known as Lapland) they are a people (Nietschmann 1988, 88).

A Miskito leader expressed this distinction succinctly, stating “Ethnic groups run restaurants. We are a people... We want self-determination” (Nietschmann 1988, 88).

Nation peoples fighting for greater self-determination are virtually always portrayed as extremists, terrorists, rebels, insurgents, or dissidents. Even nations that espouse non-violent tactics in their fight for self-determination are often misrepresented in order to distort their demands and dissuade outsiders from sympathizing with their cause. For example, Tibetans practice non-violent resistance and “the Dalai Lama has made clear he doesn't want to have an independent Tibet. He wants an autonomous Tibet” (Hanson 1998). However, their struggle is distorted by China’s official media, which reports regularly “on the dangers of terrorism, separatism, and religious fanaticism” in Tibet (Tempest 1996, A2).

Unquestionably, self-determination is one of the trickiest issues in current human rights debates. As most modern states are conglomerations of different groups of people, often thrown together by former colonial powers, state governments are quite necessarily concerned with the potential for fragmentation along national lines. Thus,

[nations] seeking to empower themselves collide with the desire of states to maintain centralized control. Even modest claims for a share of administrative responsibility can touch a hot button in the capital. Pluralism, far from being viewed as an essential building block and a safeguard for competitive democracy, is perceived as a weapon of potential destruction (Welch 1995, 110).

Fearing a threat to their sovereignty, governments thus often translate claims of self-determination to threats of unacceptable secession, and respond with strong opposition, even forcible repression. Fearing disintegration of the state, governments adopt various tactics to weld a heterogeneous people into a united nation. Indeed, the pressures of nation-building and the imperative of maintaining territorial integrity are the primary

obstacles faced by native peoples struggling for greater autonomy and self-determination.

One common tactic is the assimilation of nation peoples into the culture of the ruling nation. Many governments openly seek to persuade nation peoples to assimilate into mainstream culture, as is the case with the Orang Asli, who are being publicly pushed to adopt the 'Malay way of life,' including Islam (Cultural Survival 1993). Other assimilation tactics are more subtle, such as diluting nation populations with people from the dominant ethnic group or forcing privatization of communal lands and then luring individuals to sell their parcels. Such assimilation policies are generally justified as necessary for 'maintaining order'. For example, Deng Xiaoping, asserting that "China has always been called a loose sheet of sand", frequently insisted that without assimilation of the nations on China's periphery, "China will retrogress into divisions and confusion and will then be unable to accomplish modernization" (Alford 1992, 65). Unfortunately, when assimilation tactics are not successful, more aggressive, at times violent, measures have been implemented by states.<sup>1</sup> In virtually all states throughout the world, the compulsion to preserve the inherited territorial integrity and maintain the status quo prevails.

The Apollo project gave humankind its first glimpse of an Earth with no boundaries. Yet even with such images, a world without borders is often hard to conceptualize. Political maps present states as if physical features; with repeated exposure, it is often difficult to think of the world as anything other than its current divisions. Yet while modern political boundaries may seem as though they have existed forever, they are, in fact, recent creations. Many nation peoples and advocates of self-

determination have pointed to the recent increase in localized conflicts based on self-determination demands, and assert that “it [is] naive to expect today's chaotic state system to stabilize at all” (Cultural Survival 1993, 65).<sup>2</sup>

Of course, self-determination “carried to an extreme...means that every one of the thousands of nationalities on Earth should have its own state, which would make for a very large United Nations and a very messy world” (Talbot 2000, 153). Few proponents of the right to self-determination would argue such a scenario. In fact, the majority of groups (60%) currently at war to claim their right to self-determination “seek an autonomous territorial and political relationship *with* the invading state,” and an additional 15 percent of nation peoples “are divided between autonomy and independence” (Nietschmann 1988, 90, emphasis mine). Clearly greater recognition of the right to self-determination denotes more than simply the catastrophic creation of thousands of new mini-states; in some instances “a healthy dose of federalism”, for instance, would recognize rights to self-determination without requiring any alteration of the state’s current boundaries (Richburg 1998).<sup>3</sup>

Understanding the right to self-determination is perhaps more important now than it has ever been, as conflicts surrounding self-determination claims have risen sharply in recent years. All over the world, nation peoples “have taken up arms and are carrying out what are the world’s longest wars” in order to “defend their nations from being annihilated” (Nietschmann 1988, 86). In Africa, for example,

most of the civil wars and conflicts around the continent are, in one way or another, caused by separatist sentiment—the Hutu don’t want to live under the Tutsi, the Habre Gedir think it’s their turn to rule Somalia, the Kikuyu won’t vote for the Luo for president, the Zulus demand an autonomous homeland, the Eritreans have already broken from Ethiopia and gotten their homeland, and on

and on. For the last three and a half decades of independence, those secessionist claims were either swept under the carpet or ruthlessly crushed. The Organization of African Unity even established as one of its inviolable tenets the idea that the old colonial boundaries could never be altered for fear that recognizing the claim of any one group could lead to disintegration and chaos (Richburg 1998, 239).

Such conflicts confirm predictions that, in the post-Cold War international arena, localized conflicts over self-determination issues will rise sharply. One U.S. military expert recently proclaimed “when you’re betting on the future, you’ve always got to be a bit cautious. But I’m as confident as one can be betting that we are going to see a lot more...East Timors, Kosovos, Bosnias, Kashmirs, [and] Chechnyas...” (PBS 2000). In light of this prediction, and the lessons already learned from recent events in places like Yugoslavia, East Timor, and Chechnya, proponents of self-determination urge

a reconsideration of the meaning of self-determination in the contemporary era and the careful reconsideration of the indivisibility of state sovereignty...The declaration of independence by a territorially compact ethnic community, such as that of the Serbs in Croatia or any other group in Yugoslavia, could have been recognized as a legitimate demand for self-determination. By recognizing the equal rights of all peoples in the country to self-determination, international mediators might have been able to lead local actors toward mutual concessions (Burg 1993, 181).

### Text Analysis

The right to self-determination is not explicitly discussed in the geography textbooks assessed in this study. In general, Human Geography textbooks do briefly define self-determination,<sup>4</sup> and Regional Geography textbooks do include conflicts over self-determination movements often in the region being discussed. However, none of the textbooks frame the discussion in terms of the *right* to self-determination, or elaborate on why a particular nation would choose to maintain its distinct culture in the face of assimilation by what is, at times, a more ‘modern’ and ‘developed’ outside world.

Human Geography texts generally provide brief insight into the *motivation* for self-determination. While not always specified as ‘self-determination’ per se, some discussions in Human Geography texts do help explain why a nation would strive to preserve its distinct way of living. For example, Rubenstein states that

people are trying to preserve local diversity in language, because language is one of the basic elements of cultural identity and a major feature of a region’s uniqueness. Language is a source of pride to people, a symbol of cultural unity. As a culture develops, language is both a cause of that development, and a consequence (155).

Apart from scattered comments similar to the above, most Human Geography texts devote little time to self-determination movements. Jordan-Bychkov and Domosh, however, do include a positive portrayal of the successful sovereignty movement in the Russian republic of Sakha, even including a graphic of the coat of arms used by the new republic (see Jordan-Bychkov and Domosh page 170).

In general, however, discussions involving nation peoples, particularly in Regional Geography textbooks, center around the themes of destabilization and devolution. In most texts, the reader is constantly informed that “the presence of different ethnic groups within a state is frequently a *threat* to the unity and the existence

of the state” (Clawson and Fisher 1998, 254, emphasis mine), and is repeatedly provided with “examples of *threats* to the survival of states from the trend toward local diversity” (Rubenstein 1999, 290, emphasis mine). Most texts do include the occasional ‘neutral’ discussions on a particular self-determination movement.<sup>5</sup> Yet, the oft-repeated general theme regarding self-determination movements is summarized in one Human Geography text as follows:

[T]he world has entered a period characterized by an unprecedented increase in the number of new states created to satisfy the desire of nationalities for self-determination as an expression of cultural distinctiveness. Turmoil has resulted because in many cases the boundaries of the new states do not precisely match the territories occupied by distinct nationalities (Rubenstein 1999, 298).

Such statements are true. Homogeneous nation-states are less likely to face an ethnicity-based crisis of state legitimacy, and the last decade has witnessed a sharp rise in conflicts over self-determination movements.

However, instead of examining why a nation would fight to determine its own path and choose its own political status, virtually all discussions take the position of supporting the status quo, assuring the reader that “all states...confront divisive forces—some strong enough to *threaten* their very survival [and the] question is how best to adjust the workings of the state to *ensure* its *continuity*” (de Blij and Murphy 1999, 359, emphasis mine).<sup>6</sup> This pervasive position has the subtle effect of presenting stateless-nation peoples as “rebellious,” “particularly troublesome,” and “problematic for the future of [the state]”—a divisive force threatening the territorial integrity of a neatly-constructed modern state system.<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, one author remarks in an exhausted tone that “states have transferred power to local governments, but this does not placate cultural groups...” (Rubenstein

1999, 267), and asks the leading and overly-simplistic question “To what extent should a country’s ability to provide its citizens with food, jobs, economic security, and material wealth, rather than the principle of self-determination, become the basis for dividing the world into independent countries?” (Rubenstein 1999, 300).

It is not clear why these texts so resoundingly support the ‘nation-building’ imperative of states without also questioning whether some nation peoples should receive greater autonomy. For example, while each text does clearly concede that the current state system has often “superimposed boundaries upon established . . .cultures without regard to the tradition, language, religion, or tribal affiliation” (Fellmann et al. 1997, 427), the general consensus is that state boundaries should not be altered. Some texts even include statements which serve to reinforce the view that preserving the current boundary system has *already* been agreed upon. For example, one Regional Geography text states that in Africa, “although many of the country boundaries slice through tribal territories, the Organization of African States agreed soon after the independence of most African countries that these boundaries should not be altered” (Bradshaw 1997, 90).

Likewise, a Human Geography text states that

As these former colonies have gained political independence, they have retained the idea of the state. They have generally accepted—in the case of Africa, by a conscious decision to avoid precolonial territorial or ethnic claims that could lead to war—the borders established by their former European rulers (Fellmann et al. 1997, 419).

While such statements may lead the reader to believe that “Africans” have decided to retain the inherited boundary structure, it was in fact the ruling elite, not representatives of the continent’s many nations, who were party to such decisions.

One author alludes to a reason for maintaining the current power structure and boundary system in a box entitled ‘The Mini-states.’ In this discussion, the author asks, “Should size be a criterion for statehood? What is the potential of mini-states to cause friction among the major powers?” The discussion of this issue concludes that

The influence of the United States and other major powers in the United Nations has already been eroded by the small states. Although the United States pays 25% of the UN budget [sic] and has about one and one-half times the population of all the small countries combined, its vote can be balanced by that of any of them. The fact that as many as 50 additional territories may gain independence in the next few years underscores the international interest in them (Fellmann et al. 1997, 422).

Thus, maintaining U.S. hegemony is posited in this text as a reason for unqualified support of maintaining current state boundaries and thus dismissing self-determination claims. Or, perhaps maintaining the current state system is simply because “[i]n the world of geopolitics, the state remains fundamental” and “perhaps most important, states continue to be the units we most frequently use to divide up the world” (de Blij and Murphy 1999, 502).

Regardless of the rationale for this approach, discussions on various stateless nations provide examples of this pervasive tone. The plight of well-known stateless-nations is mentioned often. Self-determination movements in Europe, such as the Basques and the Catalans, feature most, followed by the Quebecois movement in Canada. Outside of the developed realm, Tibetan and Kurdish peoples are discussed most often, though in a more benign manner.

Discussions on Indonesia’s philosophy of Pancasila illustrate the dominant tone. The policy of Pancasila strove for ‘unity in diversity’ by crushing “Indonesia’s Babel of differences... whenever they asserted themselves too strongly” (Mydans 1999).

Explanations in the texts on this policy explain its logic and ‘necessity’, largely overlooking the desires of the over 300 distinct nations that live within the borders of the political entity of Indonesia, a country “so unsure of its unity that it has made oneness an obsession” (Mydans 1999). A brief reassessment of the logic of Indonesia’s ‘nationhood’ would surely be reasonable, especially in light of recent violent conflicts over self-determination sentiments in East Timor, Aceh, and Irian Jaya. However, most texts either support the logic of the policy, or merely define the practice and then move on to the next topic.<sup>8</sup>

In other instances, texts discuss attributes of nation peoples, yet fail to mention that the livelihood they are referring to is in danger of being eroded or lost altogether. For example, in the first chapter *alone* of Bradshaw’s text, Amazonian indigenous groups are mentioned to illustrate that some languages are spoken by very small groups (41), that some societies have very low population densities (40), that some groups make few changes in the natural environment (68), that groups of people are still living outside of the world economy (6), and that the natural environment has a large impact on the livelihood and lifestyles of the people who inhabit it (13). Yet nowhere in this text does the reader encounter the struggle of many Amazonian indigenous peoples to maintain these very attributes of their culture. This is a pressing issue for Amazonian peoples, for without the right to self-determination, many groups fear that their distinct culture will be lost forever. In Brazil, “more nations have disappeared during the twentieth century than at any other time in history. Brazil has lost one Indian nation per year since the turn of the century—one third of its cultural groups” (Cultural Survival 1993, 246). In fact, it is impossible to know precisely how many self-identified nations have disappeared

altogether in Brazil, as many groups were virtually unknown to the outside world (Cultural Survival 1993). Without the right to self determination, many nation peoples in the Amazon basin fear they will be the next statistic. To discuss the general attributes of these groups—their language, their livelihood, their social structures—without mentioning the on-going struggle of these groups to preserve their way of life is to miss a very significant, very central aspect of their culture today.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, self-determination movements are a significant issue in most of the world's stateless nations, and therefore should be discussed more in depth in both Human and Regional Geography textbooks.

#### Transnational corporations and the right to a liveable wage

In an increasingly globalized world, transnational corporations have become some of the world's most powerful economic and political entities. Corporations comprise over half of the largest 100 economies in the world today, and are collectively the most powerful economic force in the world. In fact, the total annual sales of many transnational corporations far exceed the yearly gross domestic product (GDP) of most of the world's countries. The combined revenues of General Motors and Ford, for example, exceed the combined GDP for all of sub-Saharan Africa. Likewise, Japan's top six companies have combined revenues roughly equivalent to the combined GDP of all of South America (Karlner 1997). A single corporation's earnings can even surpass the GDPs of *developed* nations; the total GDP of Austria, for example, is eclipsed by the annual earnings of Japan's Itochu Corporation (Greer and Singh 2000).

Undoubtedly, the investments of these economic entities in developing countries often bring much needed technology, capital, jobs, know-how, and management

techniques. Yet, in addition to economic impacts, it has become increasingly evident that these large and powerful entities also have important social and political impacts.

The growth of the global economy means that multinational corporations today wield considerable influence on human rights. As economically influential actors, they can help bolster a repressive regime or steer it toward greater observance of human rights. As the operators of major business enterprises, they can set an example of indifference to or respect for these rights (Human Rights Watch 1997, xvi).

Empirically there is little evidence to suggest that investment by U.S.

transnational corporations in a developing country is *inherently* bad for human rights in that nation (Spar 1998). Recent history, however, evinces numerous instances where multinational corporations have, in fact, been powerful instruments in cementing the power of dictatorships, blocking social reform, and aiding in the suppression of opposition groups.<sup>10</sup> Yet despite these instances, there exists a pervasive belief that foreign investment in developing countries by transnational corporations is an *unqualified* good, benefiting all parties involved, bringing democracy and greater human rights observance, and ensuring a more equitable distribution of wealth throughout the world. This belief is held by virtually all national and international governing bodies, and is often solidified in the mainstream media. A recent story in *Time* magazine, for example, described the push to end the U.S. embargo against Cuba, stating that “The time is ripe...to invade Cuba again, not with an exile army but with the same products—Nike shoes, burgers and MTV—that have helped promote democracy and capitalism around the world” (Padgett 1999, 62).

Unfortunately this glib premise that foreign investment in the developing world is an automatic good largely overlooks some negative impacts that such investments often

have on wage rates and labor standards in the developing world. The apparel industry provides a representative illustration of this phenomenon. The majority of workers in export-oriented garment industries in countries throughout the developing world are not paid a 'living wage'. In a recent study by the National Labor Committee, workers in China reported average wages of 23 cents an hour, compared to 87 cents an hour determined to provide a living wage. In fact, in many countries, the approximate hourly wages for garment workers were roughly half what is needed for basic subsistence: El Salvadorians received an average of 59 cents a hour, compared to the living wage of \$1.18; Haitian workers received an average of 30 cents an hour, compared to the living wage of 58 cents an hour; Honduran garment workers received an average of 23 cents an hour, compared to the living wage of 80 cents an hour (National Labor Committee n.d.).<sup>11</sup> Powerful transnational corporations contract with manufacturers in the developing world explicitly to take advantage of these incredibly low wage rates. The Walt Disney Company, for example, has been heavily criticized for contracting with suppliers who pay their workers far less than the legal minimum wage. Garment workers making Disney products in a factory in Haiti, for instance, make 28 cents an hour; "Disney claimed it can't afford the 58 cents an hour workers say they could live on" (Bigelow 1997).

Desperate for economic gain, governments in developing nations often find they must compete with other developing nations in luring transnational corporations to invest within their borders. This 'race to the bottom' generally translates into fewer environmental regulations, government assistance in suppressing labor disputes, and most importantly, a deliberate decrease in the national minimum wage, often below what it

would actually take a worker to support him or herself. These low wages are often the main impetus for investing in the developing world, as they improve profit margins for transnational corporations. And while such investment often helps improve the nation's *macroeconomic* profile, such investments offer little promise of decent wages, tolerable working conditions, or security of livelihood. Instead, "the impact worldwide has been a growing insecurity and a downward spiral in labor standards" (Clark 1996).

The pervasive assertion that foreign investment in developing nations benefits all parties involved is often grounded in the notion that such investment will help improve standards of living throughout the developing world. Yet, the 'rich-poor gap' doubled worldwide between 1960 and 1991, a period in which foreign investment in developing nations skyrocketed (Karliner 1997). As the gap between the world's rich and poor continues to grow, paralleling the growth of foreign investment abroad, it becomes increasingly clear that the benefits of corporate globalization are falling into the hands of an elite group of recipients. The impact on the masses of poor is largely overlooked. Statistics that herald the successes of foreign investment in the developing world generally do not mention impacts on standard of living and wage rates. For example, the additional 50,000 jobs that El Salvador has gained in the last 10 years due to foreign investment has received much acclaim, as has the fact that the nation's exports have jumped 4,000 percent. Yet few economic analyses mention that real wages in the country have been halved, and that the majority of the women who work in the apparel factories that are responsible for most of the investment gains "can't afford to buy the clothes they make, and people who protest are subjected to rape and murder" (Clark 1996). Instead,

this declining wage rate is often presented solely in a macroeconomic fashion as a ‘benefit’ for investment. For example,

In August 1990, an advertisement published in the US trade journal *Bobbin* featured a young Salvadoran woman bent over a sewing machine. The advertisement, sponsored by the US-funded Salvadoran Foundation for Economic and Social Development, was captioned: ‘Rosa Martinez produces apparel for US markets...You can hire her for 57 cents an hour.’ A year later the journal ran the same advertisement—instead of 57 cents an hour, Rosa could now be hired for 33 cents an hour (Cox 1993, 9).

Perhaps it is easy to forget, in light of the macroeconomic successes of much foreign investment by transnational corporations, that every individual is guaranteed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as numerous other declarations, that “Everyone who works has the right to just and favorable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity...” (United Nations 1948).

### Text Analysis

Throughout the texts, discussions abound on globalization, transnational corporations, the Asian miracle, *maquiladoras*, economic integration, specialization in the location of production, outsourcing, and the new international division of labor. Indeed, the texts include 42 separate discussions specifically on the increasing phenomenon of direct foreign investment by transnational corporations in the developing world in order to take advantage of lower wages. Yet 85% (35) of those discussions fail to mention the accompanying problems of wages that are too low, unsafe working conditions, and the repression of labor unions. The majority of texts mention ‘low wages’ in the developing world only when explaining the macroeconomic successes of direct foreign investment by transnational corporations in various regions. Thus, mentions of ‘low wages’ that draw transnational corporations to the developing world are

simply statements on the phenomenon, with no accompanying discussion on the humans involved in this 'new international division of labor'.<sup>12</sup>

In general, the texts adopt what Geographer David Hicks refers to as the "packet-of-tea approach." Using the tea trade to illustrate this approach, Hicks describes the tendency for textbooks to imply a convenient arrangement of producers and users; "they are happy natives singing in the sunshine and we are happy tea-drinkers snug around the fire at home" (Hicks 1988, 18). This approach often leaves the reader to assume that such investments in regions such as the Pacific Rim have been an *unqualified* good. Numerous statements and case studies are found throughout the texts that reflect the glib premise that foreign investment in poor countries is automatically a mutually beneficial phenomenon, and overwhelmingly welcomed by all those in the developing world. For example, Rubenstein states that

To some geographers, the economies of more developed core regions appear to be exploiting the people and resources of less developed peripheral regions. But from the perspective of people in less developed regions, integration into a world economy through trade with MDCs may be a small price to pay to receive material benefits of development, such as a steady job and a television (328).

Later in the text, Rubenstein provides a case study to illustrate this belief. At the beginning of a chapter on Industry, the reader is introduced to Edi Bencomo, a *maquiladora* worker at a General Motors plant in Ciudad Juarez. Bencomo, who "earn's Mexico's minimum wage, approximately 50 cents an hour" comes from a small village where she "saw no future for herself" and "probably would have been unemployed, along with 25 percent of the villagers." Instead, Bencomo moves to the border and works in a *maquiladora* where she receives a free bus pass to commute to work and two meals in the cafeteria "paid for almost entirely by the company." Bencomo likes her *maquiladora* job

and “considers it to be superior to that of her husband, who makes *piñatas*; both are paid minimum wage, but he receives no benefits.” Bencomo and her family do live in a shack, but the reader is assured that this is not because they cannot afford better housing; the infrastructure in the city simply has not been able to keep up with the growing population. In the final statement of the case study, the reader is informed that “General Motors alone has two dozen *maquiladoras* employing more than 25,000 people and is one of Mexico’s largest employers” (370). Thus, the reader assumes that Bencomo is just one of the 25,000 Mexican workers whose lives have been overwhelmingly improved by the *maquiladora* system.<sup>13</sup> By largely omitting ‘both sides’ of this phenomenon, this text, as well as the majority of those surveyed, not only fail to tell the whole story, but also elude to the reader that, as de Blij and Muller state in reference to *maquiladoras* in Mexico, “[a]ll parties benefit from this industrial system” (211). Such a macroeconomic approach, in which the only ‘parties’ considered are the ‘nations’ as a whole, is echoed throughout the majority of the texts.

Thus, multinational corporations are overwhelmingly praised and revered in the texts for their economic successes throughout the world. For example, in an aside entitled “Nike and Economic Globalization” (see Appendix D), de Blij and Murphy focus on the expansion of Nike’s shoe production to Asia. Explaining that “not a single individual in [the corporation’s home state of] Oregon is directly involved in putting a shoe together,” the authors explain how Nike subcontracts their work to Asian manufacturing firms, retaining only professional level personnel in their employ in the United States. Nowhere in the discussion is there a mention of the wages or working conditions at the Asian factories that produce their products. This omission is quite striking, as Nike has long

been perhaps the most criticized and condemned transnational corporation for poor wages and working conditions in the factories that produce its products in the developing world.

It is interesting to contrast de Blij and Murphy's depiction of Nike with that found in Pulsipher, whose text contains 86% (6) of the total mentions of 'the other side' of direct foreign investment by transnational corporations in the developing world. In the chapter on Southeast Asia, Pulsipher explains that

[I]n the late 1990s, the US shoe manufacturing firm Nike became the focus of worldwide outrage over the treatment of its workers in Vietnam, Indonesia, and elsewhere across Asia; the employees were frequently exposed to hazardous chemicals, as well as physical abuse and psychological cruelty on the job. In 1991, Nike laborers in Vietnam were paid US \$1.06 a day and the production cost for a pair of Nike shoes was US \$5.60. Meanwhile, the retail shoe price in America was \$75. While some improvements in working conditions were made, Nike avoided making major changes by shifting the blame onto subcontractors located in Taiwan and Korea who set up and administered the factories (490).

Throughout the text, Pulsipher takes a balanced view, detailing the positives *and* negatives of globalization and foreign investment in developing nations, and explains that

Not everyone has benefited equally from Southeast Asia's "economic miracle." In the region's new factories and other enterprises, it is not unusual for employees to work 10 to 12 hours a days 7 days a week for less than the legal minimum wage and with no benefits. In most of the countries, employers routinely repress labor unions that agitate for better conditions, bribing local and national governments to look the other way. International pressure to improve working conditions has been only moderately effective (490).

Throughout the text, Pulsipher shows what often results when countries participate in 'the race to the bottom' in order to attract transnational corporations, providing examples of conditions at a Mattel factory in China (428-429), at a Levi Strauss subcontractor in Jakarta (510), in the *maquiladoras* along the US-Mexico border (149), and on Del Monte's banana plantations in Costa Rica (133).

Moreover, these discussions are exceptional in illustrating the complexity of this pervasive phenomenon. For example, Pulsipher explains the use of subcontractors by many multinationals as a shield against complicity in these abuses, and describes how and if international pressure has impacted these conditions. Likewise, the text helps students to see the predicament of the workers in these factories by reviewing their options, such as the comment that many plantation workers in Costa Rica cannot simply protest for higher wages because such actions will result in those individuals being “put on a blacklist of people that the plantations agree they will not hire” (133). Unfortunately, such balanced discussions on transnational corporations and the right to a liveable wage are not found in the remainder of the texts.

#### Gender Apartheid in Afghanistan

Mohammed said “Men and women are equal as two teeth of a comb.” Unfortunately, however, the women of Afghanistan have not enjoyed such equality. Since the emergence of the Taliban in 1994, and the de facto control of the country by the regime in 1996, the women and girls of Afghanistan have experienced severe repression and segregation, “the extent to which... is unparalleled in recent history” (Physicians for Human Rights n.d.).

To date, the Taliban has issued edicts forbidding women to work outside the home, to attend school, to leave their homes unless accompanied by a male relative, to make noise when they walk, to talk to a man that is not a blood relative, to wear white shoes or socks, to laugh in public, to allow themselves to be seen by passers-by through the windows of their homes or vehicles, or to seek medical care by a male doctor (Physicians for Human Rights n.d.; *WIN News* 1997; Prussel 1998; Filkins 1998).

Instead, they must, under threat of violence, cover their bodies from head to toe in a body-length covering called a *burqa*, a garment that allows only a small mesh opening through which to see and breathe.

Women are punished brutally for infractions, usually in the form of summary, public beatings by the religious police, a division of the Taliban's Department for the Propagation of Virtue and the Suppression of Vice (Physicians for Human Rights n.d.). Violators have been beaten, maimed, and killed for even minor taboos. "One elderly woman was beaten with a metal cable and had her leg broken because her ankle was inadvertently showing" (Prussel 1998). In defense of such punishment, the head of the Department told a reporter, "Some women want to show their feet and ankles... They are immoral women. They want to give a hint to the opposite sex" (*WIN News* 1997).

Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), one of the few organizations allowed to assist the women of Afghanistan, surveyed the mental and physical toll of these edicts and found that "the general climate of cruelty, abuse, and tyranny that characterizes Taliban rule has had a profound affect on women's mental health," with mental stress and depression rates as high as 81%. In fact, half of all women surveyed met the diagnostic criteria for posttraumatic stress disorder. Significant symptoms of anxiety rates were experienced by 86% of the women, and 21% percent indicated that they had suicidal thoughts "quite often" or "extremely often" (Physicians for Human Rights n.d.).

Likewise, the impacts on physical health are also quite profound. In a country devastated by 10 years of warfare, many households are headed by widows who must beg for food to feed their families since women are forbidden to work. In Kabul, for example, one in every eight families—about 35,000 families total—are headed by

widows (Filkins 2000). Moreover, most women are unable to seek medical care, as women are prohibited from interacting with male doctors and female doctors are prohibited from working (Prussel 1998). According to the PHR study, the health of over 70% of the women had deteriorated and half of the women described instances of being denied medical care despite serious illness (Palmer 1998).

Surveys of women in Afghanistan have found that 95 percent of the women disagree with Taliban dress codes and other restrictions, as well as the proposition that Islam imposes restrictions on women's human rights (Physicians for Human Rights n.d.). One former principal stated, "Our life has become a prison... Women do not exist" (Drevillon 1998). Indeed, PHR's report concluded that

To our knowledge, no other regime in the world has methodically and violently forced half of its population into virtual house arrest, prohibiting them on pain of physical punishment from showing their faces, seeking medical care without a male escort, or attending school...It is difficult to find another government or would-be government in the world that has deliberately created such poverty by arbitrarily depriving half the population under its control of jobs, schooling, mobility, and health care. Such restrictions are literally life threatening to women and to their children (Physicians for Human Rights n.d.).

### Text Analysis

The Taliban's rule of Afghanistan is included in six of the eight texts. Of the texts that discuss the Taliban, three (Clawson and Fisher, de Blij and Muller, and Jordan-Bychkov and Domosh) fail to mention the desperate situation of the country's women, discussing only the rise of the group and their refugee camp origins. Rubenstein, whose text is published a full three years after the Taliban took control of the country, devotes a two page boxed aside to Afghanistan, yet refers to the status of women only once, stating "Supporters of fundamentalist Islamic principles, Taliban is imposing strict Islamic law

in the territory it controls, including loss of rights for women and strict dress codes” (293).

In contrast, two texts provide more in-depth discussions of the desperate situation of women in Afghanistan. In de Blij and Murphy’s “Chapter 31: Gender and the Geography of Inequality,” a discussion on “Women in Islamic Countries” discusses the violence against women and restrictions on their basic rights, stating that

A substantial number of women held professional jobs ranging from nurses to teachers; all were instructed to resign. Many women wore modern dress; all were told to don head-to-toe traditional clothing. Press reports described women being stoned to death for adultery as affairs begun during pre-Taliban days suddenly risked capital punishment. Afghanistan’s return to stability came at a high price for women (442).

Likewise, Pulsipher asserts that “women in Afghanistan have arguably the most difficult lives” under Taliban rule (381). She explains how “the liberalization of women’s roles are viewed as particularly dangerous to the traditional Muslim Afghan ways of life” and provides the following examples of how the lives of women in Afghanistan have been severely restricted under this regime:

The Taliban favor the extreme seclusion of females: women are not to work outside the home or attend school, and they must wear a completely concealing heavy black veil whenever out of the house. The Taliban have even decreed that women shall not make a sound as they walk, as the sound of their footsteps is distracting and potentially erotic to men (381).

Perhaps the minimal discussion, or lack of discussion entirely, on the condition of women in Afghanistan in the remaining texts could be due to the currency of this issue. It is possible that the publishing period of some texts was particularly long, therefore precluding the author from including this issue in the text.<sup>14</sup> However, the Taliban did emerge as a dominant force as early as 1994 and took control of the capital in 1996.

Despite these potential complications, the situation of women in Afghanistan under the Taliban is included in this study because the severity of the repression experienced by over one half of the population of the country would seem to require that a *significant* portion of discussions on Afghanistan be centered on these issues. Short statements on the presence of gender inequality in Afghanistan do little to really explain the current crisis to students who live in a country where gender inequity is measured by pay scales and percentage of seats in Congress. A text that is truly concerned with the human rights of women would surely need to include this dire situation; unfortunately, most do not.

#### Female Genital Mutilation

“At this very moment about 8 to 10 million women and girls...are at risk of undergoing one form or another of genital mutilation” (*British Medical Journal* 1999). Conservative estimates place the number of girls subjected to this practice worldwide at around 114 million (Toubia 1995). Most people assumed that female genital mutilation (FGM) would vanish as Africa modernized. On the contrary, “it has become a badge of pride” (Greer 1999), and if current trends persist, the UN estimates that around 200 million girls will be subjected to FGM in the twenty-first century (*UN Chronicle* 1999).

FGM is found largely in the countries of the Sahel, from Senegal to Somalia. In many countries on the horn of Africa, such as Ethiopia, Djibouti and Somalia, “virtually all women, in Muslim, Christian and even Jewish communities, have endured some form of female genital circumcision” (Greer 1999). Often incorrectly compared to male circumcision, “a more appropriate analogy would be between clitoridectomy and removal of the entire penis” (*British Medical Journal* 1999, 1). In some regions, the practice also

involves stitching the vagina closed until marriage (*Jet* 1999). The procedure is often crude and unsanitary, and always painful. According to one human rights observer, “As family and friends look on, the initiates lie down on a drop cloth. Using a razor blade, a traditional surgeon removes the clitoris and labia minor” (*Newsweek* 1999). Infections, abscesses, infertility, gangrene, difficult childbirth, painful sex, and even death often result (*Economist, The* 1996c).

The cultural meaning of FGM varies widely. “It is considered, variously, a cleansing ritual, a female rite of passage, a guarantor of chastity, a boost to fertility or to male sexual pleasure, and a cure for ‘sexual deviance’” (*Economist, The* 1999b, 45). Many proponents argue that the practice is necessary to preserve virginity until marriage, contending that unless a woman's genitals are surgically reduced, wearing tight clothes “will make her want any man, any boy, for sex” (Cooperman 1997, 51). Amal Abd El Hadi, a women’s rights campaigner in Egypt, confirms that such myths are common in rural areas and contribute significantly to the persistence of the practice (Cooperman 1997).

Proponents also contend that the practice is a religiously sanctioned ritual, required under Islamic law. Yet many vocal Muslim opponents have shown that the practice has pre-Islamic foundations, and is evidenced in the fact that FGM is not practiced in Islamic countries outside of Africa, including the rest of the Middle East or Asian Islamic countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Bangladesh or Pakistan (*Economist, The* 1996). Cairo's Higher Council has challenged FGM’s religious justification, ruling that “there is nothing in the Koran authorizing female circumcision” (Digges 1998). Yet despite proclamations by the sheik of Cairo's Al-Azhar Mosque that the practice is

unIslamic, an estimated 70 percent of Egyptian women still undergo some form of FGM (Cooperman 1997). Eliminating the practice has proven more difficult than simply passing a law or issuing a proclamation. Recent attempts to legislate against the practice have failed, and have even caused a sudden surge in cutting either in defiance of the law or in an attempt to beat the deadline (Masland 1999).<sup>15</sup>

Regardless of the cultural underpinnings for the practice, “A woman gets circumcised to survive,” explains Nahid Toubia, Sudan’s first female surgeon and director of Global Action against Female Genital Mutilation Project. “A girl who does not undergo FGM...will be considered...unfit for any respectable man to marry” (*Economist, The* 1996). Thus, among many communities, “circumcision remains the door to dignity, identity and community acceptance” (Masland 1999).

### Text Analysis

Only one text discusses this practice that has greatly impacted the lives of over 114 million women. Pulsipher, in the chapter on Sub-Saharan Africa, provides an excellent discussion on FGM and the current controversy over whether such a custom is a violation of a woman’s basic human rights. A map detailing the proportion of females who have undergone genital mutilation is also included.

### Culturally-Justified Violence Against Women

“Domestic violence has been one of the principle causes of female injury in almost every country of the world” according to a recent annual report by one of the world’s most respected human rights monitoring and advocacy organizations, Human Rights Watch (Human Rights Watch 1997, 392).<sup>16</sup> Studies on domestic violence in countries throughout the world have revealed alarming statistics: eighty percent of

Pakistani women report being subjected to domestic violence (Hassan 1996); four million American women are victims of intimate domestic abuse each year; and Russian officials report that domestic violence led to an estimated 15,000 female deaths in 1993 alone (Human Rights Watch 1997, 392).

Domestic violence against women persists because “most countries [are] at best ineffectual and at worst negligent in taking action to end such abuse” (Human Rights Watch 1997, 391). Numerous studies confirm that domestic violence is treated lightly in many regions of the world. A survey of domestic abuse victims in Peru, for instance, found that a large percentage of women were told by police, prosecutors, and justices of the peace that “they deserved to be beaten for being disobedient, stubborn, or refusing sex with their partners” (Human Rights Watch 1997, 395). In Egypt, police routinely forcibly return women fleeing domestic violence to the homes of their violent husbands. Kenya has even legalized domestic abuse; recent efforts to remove the stipulation that wife abuse is the traditional right of every male from the Kenyan Family Code was resoundingly squashed after massive campaigning by men throughout the country (Hosken 1994).

More significant to the rise and persistence of domestic violence against women, however, is the persistence of social acceptance for such abuses. In many regions, the corruption of cultural or religious values in order to suit the desires of the abuser has had startling results. In some parts of the world, for example, a family’s ‘honor’ is justification for killing a wife or sister who has committed an act of sexual indiscretion, or, at times, has merely been rumored to have committed such an act. Exact figures on the extent of such ‘honor killings’ are impossible to come by, yet experts estimate that thousands of women are killed each year by relatives seeking “to ‘cleanse’ the family

name” (Prusher 1998). Despite conventional wisdom, increasing modernization has not caused a decline in the practice; in fact, honor killings are on the rise. According to Amnesty International,

the number of such killings appears to be steadily increasing as the perception of what constitutes honor widens. The flimsiest of suspicions, such as a rumor spread in a village, or in one extreme case, a man’s dream of his wife’s adultery, is enough to elicit lethal violence. Women are not even given a chance to clear up possible misunderstandings. Tradition decrees only one method to restore honor—to kill the offending woman (Amnesty International n.d.).

Although such standards of honor and chastity are intended to apply equally to both sexes, surveys confirm that men engaged in an ‘illicit relationship’ largely went unpunished, while “women were killed on the merest rumor of ‘impropriety’” (Amnesty International n.d.).

Killing to protect the honor of the family is rooted in ancient, *pre-Islamic* local customs. In addition to adultery, ‘honor killings’ are also often justified for dating without permission, for seeking a divorce, for attempting to remarry after a legal divorce, or even for being the victim of rape or molestation—all of which are viewed to have defiled the honor of their male relatives (Rodgers 1995). Statistics in countries throughout the Middle East as well as parts of South Asia evince the pervasive nature of this problem. In Jordan, for example, roughly one-third of all murders are “crimes of honor” (Prusher 1998). In Alexandria, Egypt, one study found that 47 percent of murdered women were killed by a family member following a rape (Nelson, 1996). In Pakistan, “two warring tribes reportedly killed their own women whom they considered ‘disgraced’ after rescuing them from their enemies who had abducted them” (Amnesty International n.d.).

In fact, “a whole ‘honor killing industry’ has sprung up.” Honor killing is increasingly being used to settle personal scores and seek revenge, often directed at the men of a family. In addition, “reports abound about men who, having murdered a man over issues not connected with honour, kill a woman of their own family as [an alleged adultress] to the murdered man to camouflage the murder as an honour killing,” as such a killing will not be punished as harshly (Amnesty International n.d.). In addition, tribal systems generally call for the family of the murdered woman to be compensated by the man accused of impropriety, despite the fact that the murder was carried out by the woman’s own family. Thus, the lure of financial gain has been the motivation for some men to accuse their own wives, mothers, or sisters in order to extract compensation or land (Amnesty International n.d.).

Unfortunately, there are often few places that a woman who fears imminent death can flee for safety. Many such women have led sheltered, guarded lives and have very little practical knowledge about the world outside of their own village, nor do they possess the money needed for transportation and shelter. “Many of the women who simply run in panic without plan or goal, are caught and killed in the fields, hiding in a graveyard or trying to reach a road” (Amnesty International n.d.).

The corruption of the traditional Hindu practice of dowry has also led to increased domestic violence against women—a violence that often leads to the death of the new bride. This violence occurs when

...the husband or in-laws of a newly married woman may think it is justified to murder her if they consider her dowry inadequate, so that a more lucrative match can be made. One popular method is to pour kerosene on the woman and set her on fire—hence the term “bride burning.” One in four deaths among women aged 16 to 24 in the urban areas of Maharashtra state...is attributed to “accidental

burns.” About 5,000 “dowry deaths” occur in India every year, according to government estimates, and some observers think the number is actually much higher. Subhadra Chaturvedi, one of India’s leading attorneys, puts the death toll at a minimum of 12,000 a year (Nelson 1996, 33).

Dowry killings represent the collision of faltering ancient Hindu values and rising twentieth-century consumerism. While the traditional practice of dowry was to ensure the bride a premortem inheritance from her parents (Mandelbaum 1999), the modern practice has taken on a grisly commercial aspect. Many modern families “feel compelled to buy their way into a marriage alliance with ‘gifts’ of cash, jewels, and consumer goods” equal to the groom’s standing. Employment at a government bureaucracy, for example, could enable a man to command a dowry worth \$100,000 (*The Wilson Quarterly* 2000, 96).

Dowry killings are rarely the result of poverty. To the contrary, it is the relatively affluent that is increasingly viewing “the dowry system [as] a convenient way of fulfilling greed for luxury items” (*Time* 1990, 39). In general, killers are “solid, middle-class citizens, confident of their middle-class values, but willing to murder if that will help them achieve what they perceive to be the essentials of a good middle-class life” (Bordewich 1986). The practice is, however, spreading to the less affluent communities, who seek to emulate the behavior of the middle class, and is also spreading beyond Hindu communities to Moslem and Christian families.<sup>17</sup>

Individual accounts are compelling, and illustrate not only the tragedy of these killings but also the lack of justice.<sup>18</sup> In the vast majority of cases, investigating police generally rule such killings to be suicides or accidental deaths. Thus, despite the Antidowry Prohibition Act of 1980, the Cruelty to Women Law of 1983, and the Women

Repression Law of 1995, the weak enforcement of these laws, particularly in rural areas, leads to a conviction rate of less than 5% (*WIN News* 1997).

### Textbook analysis

Domestic violence against women is discussed infrequently in both Regional and Human Geography textbooks. The majority of the texts, in fact, neglect the subject almost entirely. A few texts however, do mention its occurrence, with two texts providing some excellent, in-depth discussions. For example, de Blij and Murphy's "Chapter 31: Gender and the Geography of Inequality" is devoted to contemporary women's issues such as domestic violence. In a section entitled "Family and Social Conditions," the authors elaborate on the "global, cross-cultural phenomenon" of domestic violence, and provide the following alarming statistics to illustrate the "astonishingly high" incidence of domestic violence in regions throughout the world:

A recent UN survey investigated 1500 divorce cases in Austria; violence against the wife was cited in nearly 60 percent of the cases. In a study done in Thailand, more than 50 percent of women from a Bangkok slum area reported regular beatings by their husbands. A study from Brazil reported two dozen unpunished domestic murders in one state alone; the murdered wives had been killed by "justifiably" jealous husbands (441).

This section also includes a detailed discussion on dowry deaths.

In India, where Hinduism prescribes reverence for life, girls are still forced into arranged marriages. Disputes over the bride price to be paid by the bride's family to the groom's father often lead to the death of the bride, who may be punished for her father's failure to fulfill the marriage arrangement. In modern times such "*dowry deaths*" should not occur at all, or at least should be declining sharply. But official figures indicated otherwise: in 1985, the number was 999...and in 1989, the latest figure for which data is available, 2436 perished. These figures report only confirmed dowry deaths; many more are believed to occur but are reported as kitchen accidents or other fatal domestic incidents (441).

Governmental efforts to prevent dowry deaths, as well as difficulties in enforcing such edicts, are also elaborated on.<sup>19</sup> A similar discussion on dowry deaths and governmental efforts to eradicate them is also included in Pulsipher's chapter on South Asia,<sup>20</sup> as is a discussion on honor killings in the realm in which she states

very young women have been stone to death for alleged relationships with men in which they had no choice. In several cases, the victims, as young as 13, had gotten pregnant after being raped by village men, who were not punished (381-382).

Apart from these few discussions, however, domestic violence in any form is either rarely mentioned or absent altogether.

#### Summation of Coverage

Controversial human rights are not discussed in the texts. The issues *surrounding* some of the rights are discussed, such as the importance of low wages in attracting foreign investment in developing countries or the increasing occurrence of nation peoples fighting against the powers of the state. Yet the *rights* that accompany these issues are, almost without exception, entirely absent from the texts. The texts largely discuss these issues from the vantage point of the state or the corporation, and almost never that of the *individuals* working in the factories or the *individuals* who wish to preserve their distinct way of life. Moreover, the majority of the texts do not even *mention* the selected human rights that involve cultural justifications for deviations from international human rights norms.

---

Notes

<sup>1</sup> “It doesn't take sophisticated weaponry to destroy indigenous peoples, although Iraq employed poison gas to eliminate the Kurds. Measles-infected blankets have effectively destroyed Brazilian Indians when decrees have failed” (Cultural Survival 1993, 69).

<sup>2</sup> Proponents point to the numerous failed attempts to unite disparate nations, and call into question basic assumptions about states and their relationship to nations. “Even in the supposedly more sophisticated or developed countries like Kenya, thirty years of independence and ‘nation building’ ...still failed to create any real sense of national identity that could transcend the tribe” (Richburg 1998, 104-105).

<sup>3</sup> For example, in Africa

tribalism need not necessarily be a corrosive influence—and that’s where again the questions of separation, secession, and self-determination arise. Africa could do with a healthy dose of federalism to defuse tribalism; a tribe that can vote for its own kind, to control a regional or local government, is less likely to feel oppressed by a central government controlled by another tribe. Regions and provinces and towns given true autonomy will empower the peoples who live there. Right now, countries that call themselves ‘federal,’ like Nigeria, really only make a mockery of the term (Richburg 1998, 104-105).

<sup>4</sup> For example, Fellmann et al. et al. states, “Numerous ethnic groups large and small are asserting their identities and what they perceive as their right to self-determination, the freedom to control their own political status” (434). Rubenstein states

Ethnic groups have been transformed into nationalities because desire for self-rule is a very important shared attitude for many ethnicities. To preserve and enhance distinctive cultural characteristics, ethnicities seek to govern themselves without interference. The concept that ethnicities have the right to govern themselves is known as self-determination (243).

<sup>5</sup> For example, Jordan-Bychov and Domosh state

Federalist-type government reduces such core verses periphery tensions and decreases the appeal of separatist movements....Russia, too, has been obliged to adopt a more federalist structure to accommodate the demands of ethnic minorities, and 31 ethnic republics within Russia have achieved considerable autonomy (168).

<sup>6</sup> The perils of diversity seems to be a general tone in the texts coauthored by de Blij. In discussing globalization and the “gradual reduction of regional contrasts” in the Regional text, the authors state, “In an ideal world, regional differences would be

eliminated altogether” (38). In the Human text, the authors lament, “If only all the languages were members of the same family, the same branch of the tree! But things are not that simple” (124). Perhaps such comments are made in jest. However, they do seem to support an underlying view that diversity is problematic.

<sup>7</sup> Word choice can be a subtle but powerful tool in communicating negative images of groups fighting for self-determination. Clawson and Fisher’s discussion of the Zapatistas illustrates this point. The *entire* discussion on Zapatistas in the text is as follows:

The isolation, rugged terrain, and poverty of Mexico’s South has also provided refuge, in recent years, to two anti-government guerilla movements: the publicity-seeking Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN), led by its increasingly romanticized, ski-masked leader, “Comandante Marcos”... (596)

<sup>8</sup> Examples from the texts include the following:

The overarching goal of the newly independent government was to forge national unity from a diverse array of ethnic groups that inhabited the far-flung island realm. The achievement of unity was particularly difficult because of the political, economic and cultural domination of Jawa, the most populous island. In pursuit of the goals of national unity, the government institutionalized the motto of Pancasila, meaning ‘unity in diversity’... [R]eligious freedom has generally been respected... While Pancasila has been relatively successful, some problems of national integration remain in peripheral regions. One of the most troublesome is on the former Portugese island of Timor, which was annexed in 1976. Government troops have waged a ruthless twenty-year war against an ever-persistent resistance movement on the eastern half of the island. Such tensions on Indonesia’s periphery are based on both cultural and economic differences with the Jawa-centered core region (Clawson and Fisher 1998, 386).

After describing the practice, Pulsipher does discuss the ecological damage of such a policy (page 482), and later states that “[t]he policy is applauded as nation-building by those who see homogenization of Indonesia’s cultural diversity as desirable” (510). This statement may be an off-hand attempt to express a differing view to such an approach.

<sup>9</sup> The nomadic lifestyle is also often mentioned in the texts. From the impact on the environment to modes of livelihood to structures of societies, nomads are mentioned a considerable amount of times in both Human and Regional Geography textbooks. However, none of the texts discuss efforts made by nomads to retain their traditional culture in the face of government pressure to settle, nor do the texts elaborate on the reasons why a nomadic group would desire to preserve its traditional lifestyle apart from the larger society—a society that is often ‘more developed’ than that of the nomadic

---

peoples. At most, it is stated that nomads are often “reluctant to cooperate” in efforts to forcibly resettle them.

Without an understanding of the desires of the nomadic peoples, students who read of resettlement schemes of nomads may consider such efforts to be resoundingly positive to all those involved. Indeed, the presentation of resettlement efforts by government officials often result in presenting the government as benevolent protectors of a people who have too long clung to traditional, perhaps ‘backward’ ways of living. For example, Israeli advisor on Arab affairs justified an effort to settle Bedouin nomads by stating “We want, as a democratic government, to give all citizens the modern services that a state should give its citizens” (Ellwood 1995, 8). Students who lack an understanding of the desires of some nomadic groups to retain their traditional ways, despite how foreign they may appear to outsiders, may consider such statements without the necessary depth of understanding needed for a balanced assessment.

Unfortunately, such an approach is not taken in the texts. The following examples from a Regional Geography text and a Human Geography text represent the treatment of this subject in the texts assessed in this study.

Today, pastoral nomadism is a declining form of agriculture...now, with modern weapons, national governments can control the nomadic population more effectively. Government efforts to resettle nomads have been particularly vigorous in China, Kazakhstan, and several Middle Eastern countries, including Egypt, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Syria. Nomads are reluctant to cooperate, so these countries have experienced difficulty in trying to force settlement in collectives and cooperatives. Governments force groups to give up pastoral nomadism because they want the land for other uses...Some nomads are encouraged to try sedentary agriculture...Others are still allowed to move about, but only within ranches of fixed boundaries. In the future, pastoral nomadism will be increasingly confined to areas that cannot be irrigated or that lack valuable raw materials (Rubenstein 1999, 348).

...nomadism recently has declined in importance throughout the region. Much land once reserved for grazing has been converted to agricultural use...The reluctance of many countries to see large groups of nomads moving from one place to another has put a lot of pressure on pastoralists to settle. Thus, in the second half of the twentieth century many changes have taken place in the nomadic way of life, and many herders have become sedentary (Clawson and Fisher 1998, 440).

<sup>10</sup> Transnational corporations are rarely benign forces in the countries in which they do business. Some extraordinary examples include: the U.S corporation United Fruit’s assistance in the early twentieth century in masterminding a coup in Guatemala; the U.S. corporation ITT’s central role in overthrowing Salvador Allende’s popularly

elected government in Chile; and U.S. mining and oil companies' close relationships with dictatorial regimes in Africa (Spar 1998).

Moreover, transnational corporations often actively request the help of their governments in furthering or protecting their interests in developing nations. Such assistance has sometimes involved military force. For example, the United States invaded Guatemala in 1954 to prevent the government in Guatemala from taking—with fair compensation and interest—some unused land ‘belonging to’ United Fruit Company. The land *was* going to be redistributed to impoverished peasant farmers (Greer and Singh n.d.).

<sup>11</sup> This pattern is echoed in export apparel industries throughout the world in countries such as: Bangladesh--9-20 cents an hour; Burma--4 cents an hour; Colombia--70-80 cents an hour; Dominican Republic--69 cents an hour; Guatemala--37-50 cents an hour; India--20-30 cents an hour; Indonesia--10 cents an hour; Mexico--50-54 cents an hour; Pakistan--20-26 cents an hour; Romania--24 cents an hour; Sri Lanka--40 cents an hour; and Thailand--78 cents an hour (National Labor Committee n.d).

<sup>12</sup> For example, in de Blij and Murphy’s discussion on the “new international division of labor” (beginning on page 322), no mention is made of fact that the low wages that drive this division of labor can often be grossly insufficient to provide an adequate standard of living. Likewise, in de Blij and Murphy’s discussion on Weber’s least cost theory, ‘low wages’ are repeatedly mentioned, and wage comparisons are provided to illustrate the wage differences between regions, yet nowhere in the discussion is there mention of the corresponding standard of living that accompanies such low rates. He states “In 1994 the daily wage of a factory worker in Shanghai’s Pudong district was one-fortieth that of a Japanese worker in a similar job and one-thirtieth that of a Taiwanese worker. . .similar developments are affecting Thailand and Malaysia.” In this discussion, he also discusses NAFTA and the relocation of industries along the border, “where wages were lower and profits would be higher” (298), yet fails to mention that corporations concentrate in the maquiladora “free trade zones” largely because even the minimum workers’ rights provisions that are required by NAFTA do not apply to these border zones (Garcia-Lepe 2000).

<sup>13</sup> A similar scenario is included in Clawson and Fisher’s discussion on maquiladoras. An acknowledgement is made that job stress is high and that social and environmental problems have arisen around the maquiladoras, yet the text implies that the wages provided are more than adequate by comparing the average hourly rate to that of “other Mexican jobs” (594). This comparison is not valid, as the border zone, where the vast majority of maquiladoras are located, has a significantly higher standard of living than most other regions in the nation (Garcia-Lepe 2000).

<sup>14</sup> The two textbooks that were published in 1997 (Bradshaw and Fellmann et al. et al.) were also the two texts that did not include discussions on the Taliban. However,

the remaining texts, all published between 1998 and 2000, all include at least a mention of the Taliban.

<sup>15</sup> Gerry Mackie, a political scientist from Oxford University, reminds us that “Criminal law works only when the criminals are the minority...It is not possible to criminalize the entire population without the methods of mass terror” (*Economist, The* 1999b). Thus, the sole effect of such legislation is that health professions are prohibited from being involved. The practice remains, and is driven ‘underground’, making the procedure more dangerous than it was prior to legislation.

When Senegal passed a law prohibiting the practice, one village reportedly mutilated 120 girls en masse in defiance of the law. Moreover, in many nations where the practice is banned, laws are not enforced. In Guinea, the practice carries the death penalty. Yet the government has never enforced the law, fearing a repetition of what happened when the practice was forbidden during colonial days, when girls who, regardless of the legal prohibition, lived in a society where un mutilated girls are considered unclean, would defiantly perform the operations on themselves, conducting what was called Ngaitana, or "I cut myself" (*Economist, The* 1999).

Instead of legislating against the practice, human rights advocates urge emphasis on education, arguing that “the best way to bring about change...is to avoid cultural judgment and concentrate on health” (*Economist, The* 1999). Such advocates liken the practice of FGM to that of female footbinding in China, a practice that lasted for over 1,000 years, yet was eradicated in a single generation.

[In China], the pivotal innovation was to form associations of parents who pledged not to footbind their daughters or to let their sons marry footbound women. The ‘convention’ hypothesis predicts that promotion of such pledge associations would help bring female genital mutilation to an end (Mackie 1996).

<sup>16</sup> While men are also victims of domestic violence, 96 percent of all acts of domestic violence are directed toward women (Pulsipher 2000).

<sup>17</sup> One survey in Bangalore of Hindu, Moslem, and Christian families of all social classes found that roughly three quarters of families demanded a dowry for their sons or were preparing to pay one for their daughters (Bordewich 1986).

<sup>18</sup> Mandlebaum interviews families who have lost daughters to dowry deaths. The following interview with one father relays the depth of the problem:

Manju Singh's parents felt obliged to present a significant endowment, even though she held a bachelor's degree from Delhi University while her fiance was a village shopkeeper. Her father, Nawab Singh, has a thirty-one-item list of the bounty he gave, including 70,000 rupees (close to one year's salary), a scooter, a

---

color TV, 224 grams of gold jewelry, 2 kilograms of silver, bedroom furnishings, and thirty-five suits of clothes for the groom's side. Several months after the wedding, he says, Manju's in-laws demanded a washing machine, a refrigerator, and 50,000 rupees. 'So many things,' the school teacher recalls for me harriedly over his lunch break. 'I tried to give as much as I could.' Nonetheless, he alleges, Manju's in-laws began to harass and beat her in a spiral of domestic violence leading to her death. 'She was burned by them purposely for dowry,' says Nawab Singh (Mandelbaum 1999).

<sup>19</sup> The remainder of the text reads:

Indian governments (federal as well as state) have set up legal aid offices to help women who seek assistance, and in 1984 the national legislature passed the Family Courts Act, creating a network of 'family courts' to hear domestic cases, including dowry disputes. But the judges tend to be older males, and their chief objective, according to women's support groups, is to hold the family together, that is, to force the threatened or battered woman back into the household (411).

<sup>20</sup> The text reads:

For some years now, a practice in India called 'bride burning' or 'dowry killing' has been reported, in which a husband and his relatives stage an 'accidental' kitchen fire that kills his wife. Her death enables the widower to marry again and collect the dowry that, by custom, comes with a wife. The government of India released figures in 1987 that affirmed 1786 such deaths in that year alone; and the numbers have been rising every year throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. In some cases, the threat of bride burning is used to extort further dowry from a wife's family (383).

Pulsipher then continues to describe the history of dowry and bride price in the region, as well as how changing customs are contributing to the growing incidence of both bride burning and, additionally, female infanticide.

Bradshaw, in his 'Introduction to Southern Asia', does mention bride-burning in passing, stating that "as people move toward secular modes of living, religious issues from bride-burning to pulling down the buildings of other religions remain at the forefront of public order issues in India" (175). However, the issue is not discussed further.