

often in cooperation with nongovernmental organizations. These initiatives include the promotion of investment and trade principles, demands on suppliers in developing countries, and the labeling of products.

Despite these efforts, given the many and complex interests embedded in child labor issues, strategies to combat the adverse effects of child labor must operate at many different levels and include all stakeholders, including children themselves.

See also: **Child Labor in the West; Globalization; International Organizations; Work and Poverty.**

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INTERNET RESOURCES

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ANETTE FAYE JACOBSEN

Child Labor in the West

Children have always worked. In preindustrial times peasant children aided both parents in their work as soon as they

could make themselves useful, and they contributed to supplement the income of the household. Children's access to work was regulated by their strength and work ability. Industrialization promoted changes concerning children's wage-work. Children at work became a political and social issue.

Child labor is employment of children who are less than a specific legal age. The specific minimum age for when children were allowed to work in certain trades varied from nation to nation. A limit was, however, often set at twelve or thirteen years around the turn of the twentieth century. Legislation had actual and cultural consequences. Age—more than body and physical strength—shaped the conceptions of children's identity.

Child Labor in Western Societies: Development and Change

The history of child labor in Western societies is a history of how children were partners in the family economy. In a household economy the condition of children was strongly shaped by the family's status and labor requirements. Whether the nature of the family enterprise was agricultural production, industrial employment in an artisan or putting-out system, or some combination, children were expected to begin contributing to the work at a young age. As participants in a family enterprise, children were incorporated into adult roles early on. Socialization centered on the gradual introduction of children into the household economy.

As early as the eighteenth century, industrialization led to the employment of very small children in British textile mills, and in the nineteenth century children played an important role in key industries such as textiles and coal mining. In the British coal industry in the mid-nineteenth century, 13 percent of the labor force was under the age of fifteen. In Belgium, the percentage was even higher: in the coal and coke industry, children under sixteen constituted 22.4 percent of the total workforce of forty-six thousand in 1846.

Child labor was gender divided. Whereas boys worked in industries such as sawmills and coal mines, girls worked in the textile and garment industries. According to the censuses of 1871 from Lancashire, England, one girl in four aged between ten and fifteen worked in cotton manufacture. In the 1870s nearly one in three of Bedfordshire's girls between the ages of ten and fifteen were employed in straw plait trades, whereas one in nine of the Buckinghamshire girls in the same age group worked as pillow lace-makers.

In the United States rapid industrialization after the Civil War (1861–1865) increased the child labor force and introduced new occupations for children. According to the nationwide census of 1870 about one out of every eight children in the United States was employed. By 1900 approximately 1,750,000 children, or one out of six, had wagework. Sixty percent were agricultural workers, and of the 40 percent in industry over half were children of immigrant families.



Child labor in the West was often divided along gender lines. Boys worked in saw mills and coal mines but most textile mill workers, such as this girl photographed by American photographer Lewis Hine at the start of the twentieth century, were female. The Library of Congress.

Life imposed heavy burdens of work on all members of immigrant farm families in North America. Life was even harder for a huge contingent of single immigrant children who migrated from the United Kingdom to Canada between 1869 and 1919. Seventy-three thousand neglected children from urban areas, “unaccompanied by parents and guardians,” were transferred to Canadian families, often on remote farms. Ten times as many families as could be provided with a British child volunteered to take one into their homes. The reason for this was that in preindustrial and rural Canada families needed children for the work they could do. The immigrant children worked as farm laborers and domestic servants.

How were the conditions for child laborers in industry compared with agriculture? In France, research shows that industrialization intensified work for some children, as workdays in factories were long and more structured. On the other hand, rural life in late-nineteenth-century France was rigorous and primitive, and young men from certain rural

areas were more often rejected for military service than young men from cities, challenging the “misery history” of industrial child labor.

Another historical myth is that industrialization broke down traditional family ties and dissolved working-class families. A case study of what was the world’s largest textile plant at the turn of the twentieth century—the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company in New Hampshire—dispels the myth and illustrates how families adapted to changing work patterns and survived. In a sharecropping village outside Bologna, Italy, a local textile mill strengthened family unity by promoting coresidency of children and parents. Rather than passing their childhood as apprentices and servants in the houses of relatives or strangers, children of peasant families now had the opportunity to live at home with their parents while working in manufacturing.

Children’s contributions to family income varied in amount and as a percentage of the total across the family’s life cycle, becoming greatest after adult male earnings had

peaked. Figures from the United States indicate that children were likely to contribute about one-third of family income by the time the adult male was in his fifties. In Europe, children's contributions were even greater; about 41 percent when the head was in his fifties, and in some cases even higher. In a textile town in Catalonia, Spain, when the head of household was in his late fifties children were contributing just under half the family income, and when he was over sixty, more than two-thirds. In France, a study of family incomes noted that the contribution of children's wages to family income actually rose from 10 percent in 1907 to 18.5 percent as late as in 1914. The male breadwinner norm was hardly an actuality in these areas. Children, primarily boys, were considerable wage earners. Girls were needed as domestic workers in the households.

By the late nineteenth century British children for the most part no longer participated in key industries such as mining and textiles. In 1911 over one-quarter of employed males under age fifteen worked in service industries in Britain. This was work that was marginal to the economy. In Norway statistics show a similar change in the child labor market. In 1875 children worked in such major industries as agriculture, tobacco, and glass manufacture. Of a total of forty-five thousand industrial workers, about three thousand were children. By 1912, however, their role had been sharply restricted, and, typically, boys were distributors of newspapers and girls worked in domestic service. Thus by the early twentieth century, the essential role of children's labor was on the decline.

Child Labor Revisited: New Perspectives

Why did child labor decrease around the turn of the twentieth century in Western societies? An increase in children's school attendance is part of the explanation. Research from Sweden, Denmark, and Chicago indicates that one of the key motives for the introduction of compulsory schooling laws was to control and abolish child labor. In Norway the number of days at school increased by 50 percent from 1880 to 1914. At that time children were schoolchildren and part-time workers.

A crusade against child labor developed in most Western countries in the late nineteenth century. The modern order of childhood demanded actions against the "social evil" and for child labor laws. The child labor laws were hardly effective, as they did not provide for sufficient enforcement. Compulsory schooling laws were more effective, and the debates on child labor had an educative impact as well. States, educationalists, politicians, and philanthropists joined in the efforts to get children out of the factories and into school. In the United States, the NATIONAL CHILD LABOR COMMITTEE (NCLC) was organized in 1904. The committee helped organize local committees in every state where child labor existed, held traveling exhibits, and was the first organized reform movement to make wide use of photographic propa-



William Blake's "The Chimney Sweeper" from his *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (c. 1802–1808) details the misery of a young chimney sweeper's plight. In the eighteenth century, childhood was increasingly seen as a time of innocence that needed to be protected. Child labor, which had been considered a necessity for the family's survival, began to seem like abuse. Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge, UK/Bridgeman Art Library.

ganda. In 1915 the NCLC published 416 newspapers and distributed more than four million pages of propaganda materials. The propaganda promoted—here and elsewhere—changing attitudes and practices regarding childhood. The well-known photographer LEWIS HINE was one of the NCLC's crusaders. In 1908 Hine resigned from his job as a teacher and devoted his full career to photography and to his work as a reporter for the NCLC.

Whereas child labor was considered both economically valuable and ethical in preindustrialized societies, it was increasingly understood as uncivilized as industrialization progressed. Traditionally, the history of child labor is inscribed within this framework of progress and morality. E. P. Thompson, writing in 1963 about the Industrial Revolu-

tion in Britain, concluded that child labor was interpreted as “one of the most shameful events in our history,” a reminiscence of a barbarian and dark past. In later years, however, a broader cultural perspective on child labor has opened up various nuances. One crucial question challenged the traditional perspective on child labor: because work is an important component of the human identity, why should children at work not experience the value of their efforts?

Within a cultural perspective, working children and their families moved from the periphery to the center of study. Child labor was interpreted as a meaningful activity in which children made themselves self-reliant and responsible for the support of the family. Working children were sometimes, but not always, victims. According to a new regime that condemned child labor, children were supposed to PLAY and go to school. The schoolchild as norm was gradually perceived as “natural” and “universal.” As history is a way of seeing the past through the filters of the present, the complexity of child labor in the past turned out to be difficult to depict.

On the societal level, changing family strategy from “all hands at work” to a male breadwinner strategy, state action for compulsory schooling, and change of employment from paternalism to capitalism profoundly changed the conditions of child labor. Nevertheless, children continued to work as part-timers and as full-time laborers in many parts of the non-Western world. In the late twentieth century, child labor expanded enormously in the world as industry globalized, and child labor also reemerged in Western societies. The history of child labor is hence a history of continuity, and child labor remains an issue in the early twenty-first century.

See also: Economics and Children in Western Societies: From Agriculture to Industry; European Industrialization; Placing Out; Work and Poverty.

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Child Pornography

Child pornography refers to visual representations of children that are considered obscene. It is both a cultural issue and a legal definition. Child pornography is a problem about which North Americans, and to some extent Europeans, have been acutely concerned since about 1980, but overtly sexual images and texts involving children have always been made. Cupid, for instance, a mythological figure who incites lust, has always been represented as a child or adolescent. Prior to about the eighteenth century, childhood SEXUALITY was considered normal—one among many natural traits education was supposed to discipline in order for a child to attain adult social status—and therefore pictures of sex involving children were considered to be only one among many types of pornography. With the advent of a modern ideal of absolute childhood sexual innocence in the eighteenth century, however, explicitly sexual representations of children became socially unacceptable.

Many respectable Victorian images of and stories about children contain sexual overtones or betray unconscious sexual desires. These implications, however, were not apparent to anyone who was utterly convinced of childhood innocence at any time between the early nineteenth century and the late twentieth century. Charles Dodgson (better known by his pen name of LEWIS CARROLL), for instance, made photographs of semi-dressed or nude children, and would have been sincerely shocked by the innumerable late-twentieth-century allegations of child pornography that now plague his reputation. By the 1960s and 1970s, however, novels such as *LOLITA*, as well as other aspects of popular culture, had begun to stir a public sense of apprehension about the literary or visual abuse of children for sexual purposes. Shortly thereafter, the growing focus on CHILD ABUSE, child ABDUCTION, and other concerns about child safety turned public attention to the potential problems of pornography.

Legally, child pornography was first distinguished from adult pornography in the United States in 1982, with the case of *New York v. Ferber*. Over the course of the next fourteen years, a succession of legal decisions or government reports broadened the definition of child pornography until it meant any photographic image, of real children or not, that in any one person’s opinion might seem “lewd.” Key cases, government reports, and legislation include the 1986 Attorney General’s Commission on Pornography (the Meese Report), *Massachusetts v. Oakes* (1989), *Knox v. the United States* (1991–1994), and the 1996 Child Pornography Prevention