

Hugh D. Hindman. *The World of Child Labor: An Historical and Regional Survey*. Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2009. 997 S. ISBN 978-0-7656-2647-9.

Reviewed by C. Nana Derby

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The World of Child Labor: An Historical and Regional Survey is an eight part, 999 plus page encyclopedic volume edited by Hugh D. Hindman, with contributions from 222 authors and coauthors. Besides an editor's introductory note, the encyclopedia comprises 190 essays that were either original research or the discussions of existing studies. Significantly expansive and relatively miscellaneous in terms of style and themes, this encyclopedia embraces varied perspectives from both practitioners and academics in an approach extensively seminal to the scholarship on child labor. The volume effectually examines the application of social scientific theories and draws the reader's attention to those historical and regional contexts that have engendered and sustained the exploitation of children's labor at disparate levels of intensity and abuse. This mixture of theoretical, historical, cum regional procedure sensitizes the reader to the relevance of socioeconomic transformations, such as industrialization, and to some extent, politico-cultural and traditional influences on the employment of children's labor.

An important conclusion worthy of note in the first part is G. K. Lieten's reference to Hendrick's constructionist view of "childhood" whose fluidity, he observes, has generated both historically and geographically distinct definitions of the phenomenon called "child labor." Attempts to conceptualize child labor from practical and theoretical frameworks and in quantitative terms also

persist throughout Part I. Additionally, the frameworks of historians, which partially examine the tenets of left wing ideologies in the analyses of child labor exploitation, are explicitly defined in several sections of Part I. "Toward an Integrative Theory of Child Labor", authored by Lieten, for instance, characterizes early historians' contributions to the scholarship on child labor as framing children's plight in terms of liberalist "distaste for unregulated capitalism" or "a form of revulsion at the materialism of emerging industrial society" (p. 19). Closely related to this perception of ideology is the author's observation of a "consensus among historians that strong demand for child labor in a limited range of industries was a feature of the early stages of industrialization" (p. 21). Patrick Emerson's focus on foundational and dynamic child labor theories, however, contradicts this observation with the argument that families were not entirely passive in the generation of child labor because when in dire needs, families in the early stages of industrialization permitted their children to work. Drusilla K. Brown's "Global Trade and Child Labor" that dwells on more recent developments of the use of children's labor further elucidates this deviation from liberalists' connotations of child labor when she sketches some instances of positive implications of global trades for children's safety particularly in Central America where the negative correlation between

liberalized trade and child labor has been observed.

Other contributions made under Part I revolve around worst forms of child labor, the sources of which include agriculture, child domestic labor, commercial sexual exploitation of children, children working in the street, children and war, and child bonded labor. There is also a focus on various activities geared towards the elimination of child labor exploitation. Collaborations within the international community particularly those coordinated by agencies such as the World Bank, International Labor Organization and the United Nations as well as their respective subsidiaries are amply outlined. Alec Fyfe, Jaap E. Doek, G. K. Lieten, Mike Dottridge, and William E. Myers dominate the Fourth Section under Part I with their evaluations of the fight against child labor exploitation.

The rest of the encyclopedia, divided into various regions of the world, focuses on the incidence of child labor in some selected developed and developing countries. Like the structure in the first part, these individual essays cover a plethora of issues that characterize child labor in individual countries and how the interplay of social institutions provide fertile grounds for the problem on one hand, and the conditions for effective implementation of measures geared towards its elimination on the other.

This eight-part encyclopedia is meritorious and serves as an outstanding reference material for both new students and faculty to the scholarship on child labor. Vacuums in existing literature such as the application of theory to child labor exploitation are effectively addressed, and the outcome is fundamentally enriching especially given the authors' expositions highlighting both their weaknesses and strengths. Emphases on historical contexts of the problem of child labor are equally creditable. Comparisons made between contemporary child labor and the historical forms, which positively contributed to the industrialization of

today's developed nations, indisputably sensitize the reader, especially practitioners and advocacy groups, to the depth of the problem that they are attempting to fight. The rarity of this mixture of theory, practice, history and social science based on contributions from scholars and practitioners from multidisciplinary academic and professional backgrounds in one book has the potential of bridging gaps among the groups working on the subject. This marriage between practitioners and academics help complement each other's resourcefulness in the pursuit of knowledge on the subject matter as well as its eradication. Potentially, theorists are sensitized to the realities on the grounds, those that strict quantitative and objective investigations may miss. Similarly, practitioners may be able to assess scientific explanations of the phenomenon and where appropriate utilize the frameworks offered. Lastly the provisions of factsheets, as well as statistical information where appropriate, enable the reader to access the information with ease.

This volume is highly indorsed, but there are a few areas that could have been treated differently. For example, individual essays did not distinctively explicate the discussions of various issues relating to child labor, regional or global. Many of the essays seemed repetitive especially when a comparison is drawn among the sections in Part I on one hand, and between Part I and the rest of the encyclopedia, on the other. These inter- and intra-sectional repetitive discussions are observed in the presentations of themes revolving around the history and responses to child labor exploitation. On the history of child labor, the multiplicity of this theme is seen in Colin Heywood's "A Brief Historiography of Child Labor," Lieten's "Toward an Integrative Theory of Child Labor," Hendrick's "Periods of History: Childhood and Child Work, c. 1800 – Present" as well as in sections dealing with European cultures and industrialization. The identification of the various forms of child labor exploitation ranging from commercial sex workers of children through do-

mestic servitude is certainly commendable. Nevertheless, some of the essays lack some essential details. In Martin Verlet's essay on Child Labor in Ghana, for instance, he clearly makes a statement about the distinction between child labor geared towards the child's socialization, and that, which is plainly exploitive. The details of these forms of children's work, abusive or functional, are clearly missing. Additionally, the inclusion of a discussion of the role of traditional practices besides apprenticeship in the emergence and sustenance of the phenomenon beyond the economic implications would have been appropriate.

Throughout the book, limited attention is paid to the incidence of child labor exploitation outside the public arena. In Sub-Saharan Africa and other traditional societies, the prevalence of child labor abuse for non-wage activities is, however, substantial. This thus contradicts the core of the economic theories on child labor exploitation, and to some extent, the depiction of the problem throughout the encyclopedia. Furthermore, with some African children recruited and forced into military conscriptions in war-torn nations, it would have been proper to devote a section or two to some of those countries. Particularly missing from the Sub-Saharan list are Liberia and the Democratic Republic of Congo which, in recent times, have suffered civil strife that affected children's safety enormously. Contemporary slavery and child trafficking are major components of child labor today, and the missing focus on them as well as the discussion of the rights for children in general affect the quality of this encyclopedia.

These shortcomings are, nonetheless, outweighed by the many strengths outlined earlier. Its relevance, comprehensiveness, and the mixture of theory, research, and advocacy contribute enormously to the volume and quality of the literature on child labor exploitation. It is highly recommended.

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