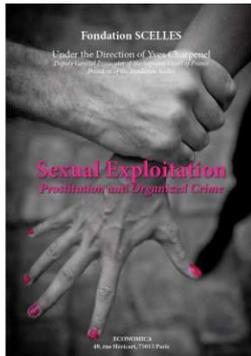




Fondation Scelles

Connaître, Comprendre, Combattre
l'Exploitation Sexuelle

Society at risk, endangered youth



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With the development of new technology, modern society seems to get caught in the viciously accelerating consumerist cycle, sometimes at the expense of the moral code. The most vulnerable and victimized are the children: (11-13 years old), teenagers (14-17 years old), and young pre-adults (less than 20 years old).

During these seminal years characterized by questions, doubts, and fears, young people need beliefs that will strengthen and comfort them. Paradoxically, our youth is exposed to all kinds of intense solicitations, among which they are supposed to develop and to make choices in order to build their own vision of the world.

Representations of power and domination through gender and economic disparities have characterized sexual solicitation of the 21st century. Therefore, 2011 could have been an ordinary year if a series of serious scandals affecting all social and professional milieus and all ages throughout the world had not revealed the spreading trivialization of the

violence against human beings and the sexual excesses which are characterized by the exploitation of women's and children's bodies.

Images, violence, and games: from potentiality to reality

Online games lead to a paradoxical situation because they remove the players from society while at the same time, include them in virtual networks of meetings and false friendships. The first rule of most of these video games is fierce competition. The winner is the strongest and the most violent competitor within a system of gain and loss, and of strength and elimination. In such a vision of the world, there is hardly a place for the female element. Females are usually depreciated to passive or excessively sexualized stereotypes. According to a report by Calysto and the NGO La Voix de l'Enfant, 51% of the 13 to 15 year old teenagers and more than 60% of the 15 to 17 year old teenagers regularly download films from the Internet. 50% of the 15 to 17 year old think that these videos are shocking.

Uncensored videos may be released on the web and particularly on the websites which are

most visited by the youth. As a consequence, young spectators are overfed with violent, raw, cruel, and perverse images that could seriously influence their perception of the world.

A survey carried out in France in 2005¹ showed that 58% of the boys and 45% of the girls watched pornographic images for the first time before they were 13 years old. 58% of boys and 42% of girls estimate that their own sexuality is influenced by pornography.

The virtual characters of adult movies (featuring dominant and degrading behaviors, brutality, insults...) become a model of reality for young people. The limits of dignity and respect can thus vanish from their minds.

The easy access to games and pornographic movies on the Internet perpetuates the danger of an accessible habit or addiction. An uncommunicative young person may be cut from the realities of our world. This may prevent his/her construction of identity, and his/her social integration.

Blogs and social networks may expose our youth to dangerous situations at many levels: they spend several hours per day surfing on the Internet and become addicted to it. Those minors reveal themselves on the Internet through publishing personal pictures, sometimes extremely intimate, which become available to any potential sexual predator.

According to *La Voix de l'Enfant*, approximately 25% of the 11 to 15 year olds spend more than three hours per day on the MSN, 26% of them admit communicating with unknown people, and 10% already met adults through this tool. 75% of the 13 to 17 year olds have their profile in a social network, 87% of the 11 to 13 year olds do not protect the privacy of their profile, and 60% of the 15 to 17 year olds have already published pictures.

In 2011, the efforts made by the networks' operators to protect data and profiles show that they are indeed concerned, but those efforts

seem insufficient in terms of changes in youth behavior.

In April 2011, *Courrier International* told the story of a 6 year old Filipino boy. At the request of a well-known TV entertainer, the child had to dance while stripping in order to earn the equivalent of €160. In the room, the audience enjoyed the spectacle of the crying child encouraged by the entertainer's jeers: "Such is life! Jan Jan [child's name] is forced to learn macho dancing at his age in order to meet the needs of his family." The article portrays this child as a part of "show business and yearning for celebrity story." We rather think of this article as a story of social domination, humiliation, and exploitation of poverty. In Europe, only the broadcasting of movies, videos, and images which show extreme situations of degradation and danger for minors are censored. In France, the Public Prosecutor can seize the documents and prosecute the authors when and if they are known.

The development of child pornography

Legislations are, sometimes, far from being compatible. What is tolerated, and even resulted, in one country, is not always so in another country.

An article published by the *Nouvel Observateur* on February 24th, 2011, quotes a Japanese story: the development of child pornography which broke an all-time record and resulted in a 45% increase in criminal action implicating minors and teenagers according to the Japanese police. As a matter of fact, in Japan, as in Russia, the private possession of pornographic material implicating minors is tolerated. A 1999 Japanese law prohibits the commercial production of videos, pictures, and other pornographic documents exploiting minors. Nevertheless, since 2010, manga and cartoons are not included in this legislation. In these documents, the child's representation is not controlled. Only the encouragement to raping,

to committing incestuous and violent sexual acts involving children is penalized. As a consequence, Japan is the main producer of child pornography in the world.

Eroticization of the image: from Lolitas and mini-misses to the beauty salons for little girls

At the end of 2010, *Vogue* magazine published shots of young girls under the age of 10 years old, who wore make-up and dressed as adults and appeared in lascivious postures. The scandal allowed the disclosure of a set of practices that trivialize the sexuality of minors' bodies. Another example, are the "mini-misses competitions" or beauty pageants in which the little girls must "seduce" the adult judges. In France, the Organization for the professional regulation of publicity (ARPP) and the Council for the ethics of publicity (CEP) reacted strongly to those pictures. But these organizations only express advice which the authorities and advertisement organizations are free to follow or not; they can choose to suppress, withdraw the images, or pay fines.

An additional consequence of the eroticization of little girls' bodies is the early learning of seduction through the parameters of adult beauty. Spas, beauty parlors, fitness clubs, make-up and face care salons for little girls and beauty products specifically conceived for children are multiplied on the market without raising concerns among the parents.

These different forms of conditioning can degrade a young girl's developing conscience and her representation of herself. Turned into an object of seduction, the young girl no longer sees herself through her own eyes, but through the image of seduction reflected by adults, particularly men. Additionally, subjected to the laws of looks and competition, it will be difficult for her to establish, with the other girls, any relationships outside of rivalry.

Pole dances, lap dances, and exotic dances: different aspects of the same problem

Pole dances² are mainly practiced in "hostess bars" almost exclusively reserved for men. Such a practice encourages the consumption of alcohol, often leading to lap dances, and/or to stripteases.

In 2011, some countries, such as the Netherlands and Germany where prostitution is regulated, are worried about the development of such "services" and about the young age of the women who practice them. In Canada, a law passed in 2011 which prohibited these dances. In the province of Quebec, some controls, sometimes leading to the closure of venues, rapidly produced dissuasive effects.

A scandal in the United Kingdom in July 2011 allowed an estimate of the trivialization of these practices. In Bolton, a dance school was offering pole fitness classes to girls as young as 12. In Nottingham, a venue called Make me Fabulous taught pole dance to little girls from 3 to 10, in order to "teach young girls limbering-up exercises with the purpose of seduction". Under the pressure of religious organizations, the dance school of Bolton was closed, while Make me Fabulous was prosecuted.

Such offers, made by extra-curricular leisure establishments (which are probably more ill-informed than deliberately malicious), require increased monitoring by government institutions and NGOs, particularly to raise awareness among the parents of the drawbacks of such activities whose long term consequences may influence self-image as well as respect for others.

Gang banging and sexting: easier transmissions

In 2011, the media warned the public of the role played by mobile phones in relation to the release, within schools, of pornographic

texts and images of minors, as well as sexual attacks by teenagers.

Gang banging³ has almost become a rite of passage among young people, a way of asserting themselves in front of their peers. However, such practices constitute the collective rape of a girl who is often put at the disposal of friends by her boyfriend. Similarly, sexting consists of sending, via a mobile phone, videos of teenagers appearing in dangerous, compromising, or even pornographic situations. The resulting images may be used by former boyfriends looking to get their revenge. Considering this trivialized phenomenon called teen porn, we note the worrisome lack of awareness among adults, and the complete ignorance by youth of the limits of the others' and one's privacy. The oversupply of images and pornographic films, degrading visions of human relations, stereotypes, and sexually aggressive clichés may cause trauma among prepubescent young girls as young as 8 to 12, a latent period for learning. There is no need to mention the anxiety of performance among the 13 to 15 year old boys who have to go through the same stage of self-seeking and training of the body. The confusion generated by confrontation with adult sexual fancies places children and young teenagers in situations leading to outbursts of violence against society (in the best scenario), or against themselves (in the worst scenario). We must recall that, according to the French Inter-ministerial program of September 2011, 50,000 young people under the age of 24 attempt to commit suicide each year.

Child and teenager prostitution

There is a fine line between pornography and prostitution. Poverty and ignorance are brought forth to explain, if not justify, the merchandization of children through prostitution. In a society in which everything can be sold or bought, with the added background of economic crisis, loneliness,

frustration, and lack of reference, new forms of prostitution and procuring are emerging.

New kind of procurers: the Loverboys

When the "first love" is at stake, the very young girls still dream of their "prince charming." Loverboy is the name they give to their "boyfriends" for whom they would do anything. It is also the name of a serious phenomenon affecting all the countries throughout the globe, from Thailand to Taiwan, from Canada to Germany, and recently occurring in France as well. This scourge was denounced for the first time in 1995 in the Netherlands following a sensational lawsuit. The process is always the same⁴. A young man, generally aged 18 to 25, stands by a high school gate and "spontaneously" meets a vulnerable 13 to 15 year old girl he previously picked out. He is polite, courteous and generous towards the teenager; he offers her expensive gifts in order to seduce her. He uses this same persuasion strategy over and over, playing with her emotions and his charm, he afterwards tells her about some temporary economic difficulties he is allegedly experiencing and convinces her to sell her body to a man for the first time. The young girl is in love; she only wants to help her lover boy. Soon men come one after another several times a week, and then several times a day. After a while, the young girl does not attend school anymore; she is isolated from her family and friends, and caught in a vicious circle of prostitution.

Rianne Verwijs, a researcher from Utrecht, the author of a report on this issue, states that such strategy constitutes "a specific form of human trafficking", because the young girls are quickly "sent" to other regions, and later on to other countries. The researcher also insists on the authorities' incapacity in the face of the magnitude of the problem. "From 200 victims in 2008, the number reached 800 in 2009, 1,500 in 2010, and 3,000 in 2011." The Dutch police already mentioned 5,000 victims

in 2010. They also reported cases of Lovergirls who pushed their boyfriends into prostitution.

Similar cases occur in France as well. In February 2011, a 17 year old procurer who employed three girls aged between 15 and 17 in Marseille, was convicted to 18 months' imprisonment. In Toulouse, two pimps aged 19 and 22, were judged for prostituting two 16 year old girls. In August 2011, a 19 year old "little pimp" was tried in Lille for prostituting his girl-friend who was the same age. Making a census of all the cases would be an endless job.

Student prostitution

In the United States, college fees are extremely high, ranging from \$30,000 to \$50,000 (€23,000 to €38,000) per year. While some students benefit from a scholarship, a large majority take out a student loan, which is almost a lifetime commitment. Even if most of them get a job to make a living, their financial difficulties are significant and aggravated by the current global economic crisis.

As a response to students' financial instability, more and more websites publish ads offering to put a male/female student called a "sugar baby" in touch with a mature "donor" called "sugar mommy/sugar daddy"⁵. The wealthy "donors" are selected depending on the financial guarantees they may offer, their generosity, and their conditions. The students are selected according to age and availability. The "sugar mommy/daddy" will finance his/her protégé's tuition fees, daily expenses, home rent and sometimes trips, cars, or even luxury items. The young people know very well what is expected from them.

In France, the National observatory of student life estimated that there are 45,000 students in situations of extreme poverty, and 225,000 experienced difficulties paying for their tuition. Such observations might explain the increasing number of young people who resort to occasional prostitution. According to

a 2011 study published by *Deutsche Welle* on May 20th, 2011, 18.5% of students in Kiev, 29.2% of students in Paris, and 33% of students in Berlin claimed that they were seriously considering prostituting themselves. Beginning as waitresses, then hostesses in bars, and finally escorts for executives, these young women get soon caught in the cycle of prostitution. According to an article published by *Métro* on April 18th, 2011, some female students from Montpellier spoke out against this confinement in "a downward spiral." They were working in a downtown bar and had to encourage customers to consume alcohol. Some customers asked for fondling and even for sexual relations. From the moment they accepted these propositions, the young women got trapped. Dependent on this quickly earned money, they ended up abandoning college in order to devote themselves entirely to the job.

Policies confronting the increase of pornographic websites

When it comes to cyber-pedocriminality, we may say that minors' protection is on nearly every agenda around the globe, but the emergency, social and economic priorities, cultural habits, and the place of children within societies slow down or even block the implementation of measures to control or prevent danger.

Some countries, such as Canada, under the pressure of the feminist lobbies, take action and/or support innovative actions from NGOs and official organizations. Thanks to associative networks, authorities prioritize informing of parents and educating children, through films or games shown in schools.

Child pornography and child prostitution have complex political dimensions (economic, social, and academic), but there are important differences from one country to another. Let us consider the censoring of pedo-pornographic websites for instance. France and some countries of Southern Europe implemented a control of the sites by encouraging the

suppliers of Internet access (FAI) to block the reported addresses.

An article in *Le Monde* dated May 6th, 2011 explained that a black list of child pornographic websites was produced in accordance with strict criteria. In Norway, the Internet suppliers access adopted, as early as 2004, an "open" filtering system, by isolating the sites containing child pornographic material; they also explained the reasons for the block through a message to the web surfers who viewed those sites. Sweden and Denmark soon followed the same model. Since 2006, the Netherlands have tried to implement a voluntary filtering system of the websites by the suppliers of Internet access (FAI) according to a list established by the authorities. But the initiative was considered inoperative. In contrast, Germany favored the suppression of the content by the FAI rather than blocking the sites.

The policies are varied, whether they consist of control, prohibition, or repression of websites, venues, or organizations, directly or indirectly, which promotes dangerous activities threatening to young people and children. The governments, regardless of their political tendencies, commit themselves to methodological "attempts", sometimes succeeding, sometimes failing, and sometimes facing a boomerang effect. Nonetheless, the violence and the excessive eroticization of children seem deeply rooted in the current liberal consumer society.

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