

'Exploitation of Youth - An International Perspective'

Our Youth are our resource for the future - but are we exploiting that resource? Across the world employers know that youth are a source of low waged labour, from teens working in fast food outlets to primary school children whose tiny hands can knot high quality carpets. They often work in dangerous and abusive conditions. Adolescent sexuality provides another rich area for exploitation - sexual tourism is on the increase and young prostitutes of both sexes are a prime attraction. Presentations will look at types of exploitation in differing cultures from the USA to the Far East and raise the question of where lie our responsibilities and our role in prevention?

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The Exploitation of Youth

Exploitation of Youth - An overview and Introduction -

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The Exploitation of youth - how do we define exploitation? In the extreme case, such as in a child or youth being used in pornography, the definition is clear but there remain areas where the dividing line between 'expectation' of youth and exploitation is hazy and the 'goal posts' tend to move depending on the perspective of the observer.

Examples abound in family life - parents differ in their expectations of their children and especially of their adolescent children. What one family considers to be a reasonable degree of involvement in housework, child care or contribution to the upkeep of the family home may by others be considered abusive or bordering on slave labour - certainly that is how many young teens see housework and family chores. We could use a commonly applied definition of abuse to help us here in that an abusive situation may interfere with the well-being of the young person physically,

emotionally or developmentally but we do need to take note of cultural norms. Does being sent out to work hinder the normal development? Yes - if it stops you taking part in education - perhaps not so much if good educational opportunities do not exist. Being made to stay at home to look after younger siblings is an exploitation which deprives youth of school attendance but when the family is poor and mother has to work to put food on the table - which is the lesser evil?

Motivation can also merge with exploitation - if parents push their child to succeed academically and the parents aims and aspirations do not match those of the young person then even a drive for success can be exploitative. This is perhaps particularly noticeable in sport where the child or teenager can be 'doing it for mum or dad'. There is commonly parental over investment in the activity and it's results so that the parent is achieving their own ends in

the process. There may be a symbiotic attachment , a merging between parent and offspring so that the youth is seen as an extension of the parent's 'self' and they fail to see their son or daughter as an individual with his or her own goals. Such intense 'driving' of young people to succeed and compete can lead to a sense of failure - never quite good enough - low self worth and burn out.

Similar processes are seen wherever there is an opportunity for adults to take vicarious pleasure from the activities of children or youth - parents, teachers, coaches can all become involved there are numerous examples in fashion - young models, the media, beauty pageants , dance competitions Any aspect of life where adults might want youth to do what they could not - they succeed by proxy.

Attributes of youth -

Exploitation exists on any levels of society - it is useful to consider what are the attributes of youth and thus how are these attributes used by others? Youth, vitality, a need for independence can be exploited in the labour market. Youth have been traditionally a source of cheap labour, perhaps menial and unskilled, often illegal labour and thus labour which may include an element of danger and lack of attention to health and safety and labour laws and rights. The use of child labour in British mines was the issue which finally provoked the establishment of child protection legislation -

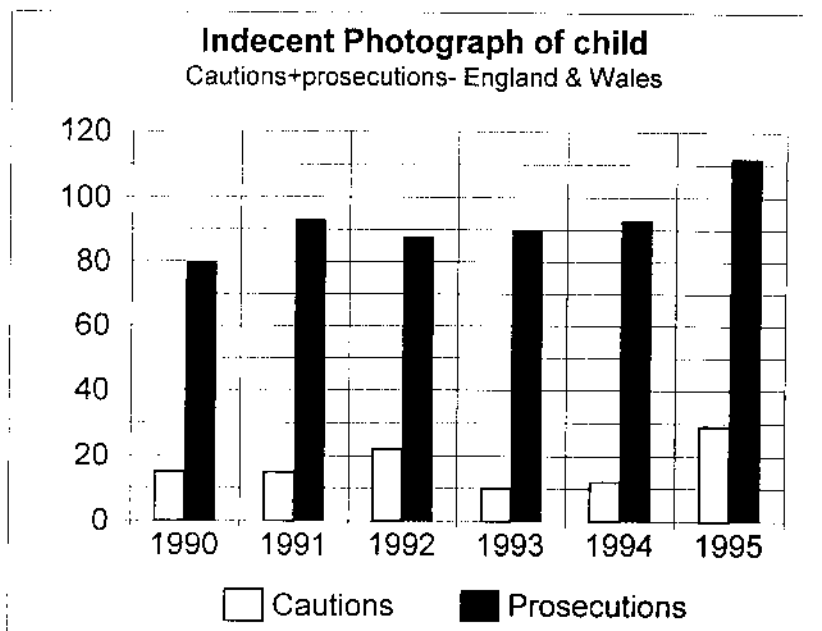
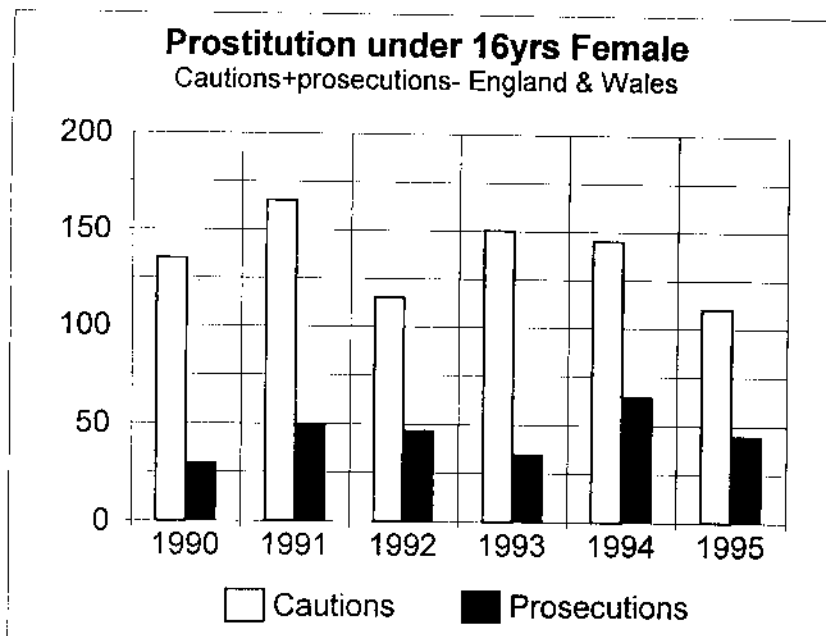
although the animal protection laws were passed first!

Young people have commercial attributes - they have money to spend , they are a buying power to reckon with - hence exploited in the market place. 'Must have ... trainers, clothes, make up etc..

Youth are also sexually 'alive' vital and perhaps seductive, they are aware of their body image and want to look good. They are thus ripe for exploitation in advertising and by advertising. Sexual exploitation may be overt or covert and cover a wide range of activities such as titillating magazine pictures, to a range of pornography, paedophile activities, juvenile prostitution and sexual tourism.

Sexual Exploitation - Looking more closely at the subject of sexual exploitation - we are hampered by lack of accurate reporting, insufficient data, manipulation and 'doctoring' of data when presented by different bodies and a vast difference in quality and quantity of case material derived from different sources.

In Britain the police statistics, produced by the Home Office show us only the tip of the iceberg since statistics are divided into 'cautions' - when police warn a suspect not to re-offend but do not prosecute - and prosecutions, where the case is taken to court. Statistics would seem to indicate that certain offences are more likely to be dealt with by a caution (young girls soliciting) and others by prosecution (e.g. indecent photograph of child). {see graphs}



The categorisation of crimes is often misleading and we also have conflicts over the nature of the offence - for example an abused and exploited girl who is forced into prostitution by an older 'pimp' is technically an 'offender' whereas at the same time she is also a 'victim' - there is confusion between victim and perpetrator. The overall numbers reported via police prosecutions belie the practical experience of anyone working in the field who can be immediately

certain that the true figures are much, much higher.

The association - AAA Accuracy about Abuse publish a regular newsletter which catalogues all media reports and items from a variety of sources piecing together information about paedophilia and related matters - (it can be reached via e mail on morr@aaastar.demon.co.uk) Many of the case reports below are included in their data sheets.

Justification-Sexual Exploitation of youth is a rich field for 'justification' of the practices involved. Some examples include -

- Pictures - are photographs of children in naked or sexual poses art or pornography?
- A recent case in South Africa - the Ron Oliver case - highlighted some of the controversies and resulted in court action.
- 'Research' - Sexual responses of children have been misrepresented and there is abundant controversy regarding the 'Kinsey' findings which had hitherto been regarded as standards since the revelation that one of the workers 'testing' youth was in fact a paedophile.
- 'Harmless' - Paedophiles have argued that sex with children is harmless and that children like it - that it is an initiation and thus desirable. Many controversies exist and there have been examples including an Edinburgh lecturer who was dismissed from his post after publicising such views and including material on the internet.
- Statistics - - Criminologists and Academics - Have stated that society over reacts to nudity and there has been no new pornography in recent years - Such criminologists include a gentleman who turns out to be on the board of the British False Memory Association and is the author of a book 'Somasochism' which states among other things that sadomasochistic sexual practices including bondage, whipping, humiliation, ice, hot wax, burns, branding are neither violent nor dangerous. Other 'academics' who have been involved have been discovered

to be members of the Paedophile group 'Paedika'.

- Prevention - the seriously flawed argument here is that pornography may be used in prevention in that offenders viewing pornographic material and fantasising about their practices will be able to 'split' fantasy from behaviour and thus not re-offend. In practice most professionals would agree that the opposite is true and that viewing pornographic material incites offending behaviour.
- 'Treatment' - a related argument based on the same principles as prevention - that pornographic material can be used for treatment of offenders.
- Education - pornographic material has been suggested as useful for educating students in California. Educated in what one wonders?

Reports - International basis -

Reports of sexual exploitation and paedophilia have come from a variety of sources - these following provide a few examples of the range of problems but also naturally only relate to those exposed by the police - it begs our imagination to think what else lies uncovered.

- In the UK one of the worst cases was probably the Clwyd inquiry into children's homes in Wales in 1996 when 14 inquiries led to widespread revelations of abuse including the involvement of children's workers.
- In Spain in August 97 there were reports of 85 victims of sex rings with videos, pictures, computer diskettes seized and the perpetrators included teachers, doctors, politicians. This unearthed a

ten year operation with wider international links.

- France - June 97 thousands of porn videos were seized which depicted among other violations at least seven rapes, twenty nine cases of sexual abuse, two of bestiality and drugs and gang rapes were involved. This resulted in 600 arrests and it was found that there were over 1,000 individuals on the mailing list of the material including 31 teachers 2 priests and 2 directors of children's holiday camps.
- In Poland in November 1996 a paedophile ring was uncovered including 100 foreigners and a government official.
- An Interpol and UNICEF report in Europe found highest rates in Poland with a new focus on paedophile networks. The Netherlands was said to be a clearing house with customers mainly in Germany and France.
- Holland April 97 British paedophiles were found to have killed five in 'snuff' movies and boys were being imported

from London and eastern Europe and sold in England and Holland

- In Ireland in July 97 a paedophile priest was jailed for 12 years.
- USA Dallas July 97 120 million dollars damages was awarded against a Roman Catholic diocese involved in paedophilia and a 'link up' organisation.
- UK in November 96 'father porn' the biggest ever computer pornography operator was exposed.
- Belgium Jan 97 police exposed sex rings involving murders, rape, torture, videos.

This just gives a short outline of the problems we are facing in looking at exploitation of youth - certainly it seems to be a problems which we need to face on an International basis and this institute would seem to be a suitable venue for collaboration and sharing of ideas and experiences. Hopefully we will be able to begin to formulate some recommendations for future work and possibly intervention.

