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Problems and Solutions

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# Preface

The most dangerous period of life for every living thing is the earliest phase of its life span. This is true also for human beings, but with a difference. Unlike other animals and plants, this fundamental reality of life is neither necessary nor inevitable for human beings. For the human child early death, injury, harm, and abuse of all kinds can be prevented, and, in many cases, virtually eliminated. However, in societies across the globe all too often the reality is quite otherwise. Millions of young people throughout the world face early death, violence, sexual, physical, and emotional abuse and exploitation. This need not be the case. The worldwide victimization of young people does not have to occur, or, at least, its incidence can be greatly reduced if purposive action is taken to do so.

In seeking to help achieve this end, this volume documents some of the numerous ways in which young people throughout the world are victimized by others of their species – particularly adults – and what, if anything, is or can be done to curb the harm inflicted on them. Eight distinct forms of victimization are addressed at length in this analysis. Specifically we describe sexual, physical, and economic harm inflicted by others on young people throughout the world. Included are discussions of child prostitution and pornography, economic exploitation, physical and other abuse inflicted on young people in schools and other institutions, the use of children as armed combatants, and the denial of the basic needs and rights of children to such things as a home and education.

The victimizations addressed do not, of course, exhaust the list of possibilities. In choosing which victimizations to investigate our first consideration was to address forms of harm impacting young people in all or most of the world's societies, victimization that are, in effect, global in scope. Second, we sought to include victimizations that are purposive-harms committed by people against young people. Third, of necessity, our choice of topics was limited by the available research and information.

We make no pretense at being experts in youth victimization as such, any of its diverse forms, or the localities in which many of these activities take place. But we do bring together examples and information regarding the numerous ways in which young people are manipulated and exploited against their own wellbeing and interests, and, therefore, the long term interests of us all. In discussing the eight forms

of victimizations addressed, this book attempts to draw together the global literature on child and youth victimization in order to better understand both why such activity exists and its pervasiveness throughout the world. But we also seek to illuminate how the victimization of young people is, or may be, combated. The citations throughout this volume reference information from individuals or organizations, experts in specific topics, that offer readers numerous resources to consult should they care to explore specific issues more fully.

We also do not claim to be exhaustive in our analysis of important forms of youth victimization. In some parts of the world, for example, children are “married off” to others without their fully realizing what has transpired. In some parts of the world, millions of girls and young women suffer greatly from religious or culturally mandated genital mutilation. Each year, millions of children die each year before reaching age five from preventable diseases or the consequences of malnutrition. And everywhere young people can be the targets of psychological and emotional attack from parents or others. Such victimizations have been left out of our analysis. This is not because they are unimportant or do not inflict harm on many young people. In some cases published information on a particular topic may be quite limited. Or, on the other hand, even if a vast reservoir of research has been published, it largely concerns children in a single country, such as the United States. Our goal in this inquiry is to provide a global overview of a number of pervasive forms of youth victimization that appear to be persistent, impact large numbers of young people, are not culturally specific, and have been of concern to human rights organizations for many years.

We have drawn freely from a very large and diverse reservoir of information in our discussions of each form of victimization addressed. Either in general, or specifically, the examples of victimizations addressed here have received considerable attention and much research from child rights activists, the mass media, international organizations, and scholars in varied scientific disciplines, with some fields of inquiry represented more than others. For instance, criminology and criminal justice have focused attention on investigating and understanding the criminal behavior of young people, and what is done and should be done to combat it. Consequently, the sciences of crime have devoted tremendous energy to understanding the illegal behavior of young people. Although victimization clearly falls within their purview, they have largely ignored the other side of the coin, the victimization of children and young people. On the other hand, other scientific disciplines, especially social work and psychology, and to a lesser extent sociology, have produced a sizable literature on the general topic of victimization, and a hefty portion of that work is devoted to the study of child victims and victimization. Specialized journals also focus on research and theories on why such behavior may occur. But most of this inquiry is limited in geographic scope with an occasional reference to research carried out in different societies across the globe. But there is no systematic compilation of what is known about the victimization of children and young people in its diverse forms across the globe in this literature.

Thus, illuminating as it may be, the information provided by scientific disciplines on youth victimization is of limited value in drawing a comprehensive picture of the extent and nature of youth victimization on a global scale. Consequently,

we have relied upon other sources of information to understand its worldwide nature and patterns. Specifically, the vast literature provided by the United Nations, UNICEF, UNESCO, and other international agencies is invaluable for anyone seeking to learn about this subject. In addition, organizations such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and Childwatch International are rich authoritative sources of information and insights. Publications offered by numerous NGOs working in specific countries, or on specific issues, were also heavily relied upon in our research. And much can be gleaned from media stories, especially reports produced by the BBC and other internationally reputable publications.

In conducting our research, the internet proved to be an essential means of locating and accessing all manner of information. Wherever possible, internet sources are cited in the reference section to allow readers the widest possible access to the resources we employed in compiling our narratives. Readers with access to the internet should easily be able to locate almost all the material referenced throughout this volume should they care to explore specific topics or cases more fully.

The analysis presented in this volume is based on two major premises. First, and foremost, is the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child. This international agreement provides the foundation that children are to be protected and that in doing so they have certain rights by virtue of their status as "children." The Convention and later protocols have been accepted by almost all nations as legally binding standards for the treatment of young people and recognition of their rights as human beings worthy of respect and nurturance. While some may take issue with some specific aspects of this agreement, it is the single most widely ratified United Nations agreement attesting to its global acceptance as a standard for conduct pertaining to children everywhere in the world. As such, the provisions of this agreement served to guide our assessment of forms of behavior deemed to be victimizing of young people.

Since the international declarations have been agreed to by almost all the world's governments, the second premise concerns the role of governments in the victimization of young people. We fully accept the idea that governments legitimately exist only to serve and protect the governed. As stated so elegantly in the United States Declaration of Independence:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.....

This sentiment that governments are created to secure the wellbeing of the governed is also articulated, in one fashion or another, in essentially all constitutions enacted in various countries since the United States government was established. Although not specifically mentioned in such documents, young people are among those included in the words "people," "governed," or "nation." As such, governments are created to secure and protect their rights and wellbeing as much as those of any other segment of the population. Therefore, if children are victimized and governments fail to take adequate steps to prevent or redress that victimization, such

victimization is not only a function of the individuals engaged in the victimizing behavior, it is also a reflection of the failure of governments to exercise their duty to protect a country's children. To the extent that this failure-to-protect is within the power of government officials, the victimization of children and young people in any society is ultimately a form of government crime. In this regard, a central argument of this volume is that the worldwide, and pervasive, victimization of young people is to be understood as and ultimately addressed as a form of "government crime" against the young.

Newark, NJ, USA

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

In Afghanistan opponents to the very idea that girls would be given an education have thrown acid on girls making their way to school. In an unprecedented case in the United States a woman sued her uncle alleging that when she was a child he had used her in the production of pornographic videos. After being relentlessly teased by fellow students a 12 year old girl jumps from a high building in Japan resulting in her death. In the United States a 13 year old girl committed suicide because of similar harassment from other students. A 10 year old boy in Congo forced to kill his mother is then made to fight alongside the very people who compelled him to commit that atrocity. A 16 year old girl from Slovenia, who thought she was being taken to England to work, finds to her dismay that the work in question is really prostitution in a local brothel. A 12 year old boy picked up by the Brazilian police tells aid workers that he had been subjected to beatings and sexual attacks in the police station where he was detained. In India, an 11 year old boy is “loaned” to a local brick manufacturer to work off the debt owed by his parents. A 10-year old girl, whose family can no longer support her works as a domestic servant in South America, sleeps on the kitchen floor, is not allowed to attend school, and is often abused by her “employers.” In Thailand, a Western tourist purchases a 7-year old girl for a night of sexual acts that leave her physically damaged. And in virtually any city of the world sometimes small armies of homeless youths are found seeking warm places and safe shelter for the night only to be found begging on the streets the next day. Multiply these cases several million times each day and we begin to realize something about the plight of young people throughout the world today.

## The Problem

Evidence abounds demonstrating that young people everywhere are not only subject to all the forms of victimization experienced by adults, but also that they suffer a host of victimizing acts not normally experienced by adults, acts from which they are supposedly protected by virtue of their age and position as dependent

individuals in human society. In an analysis of crime victimization rates in the United States, David Finkelhor and Patricia Hashima (2001: 49) noted that: "... children are among the most highly victimized segments of the population. They suffer from high rates of the same crimes and violence adults do, and then they suffer from many victimizations relatively particular to childhood." This observation applies to the United States, but it is by no means an overstatement to assert that children and young people are the most victimized segment of the world's population and that their victimization is universal, pervasive, and takes multiple forms. These victimizations are not benign or inconsequential. Instead "... victimization has enormous consequences for children, derailing normal and healthy development trajectories. It can affect personality formation, have major mental health consequences, impact on academic performance, and also is strongly implicated in the development of delinquent and antisocial behavior" (Finkelhor and Hashima 2001: 49).

Information allowing us to gauge just how serious this problem may be comes from a variety of sources. For instance, estimates of the extent of victimizing acts inflicted on children are provided by surveys that measure the numbers of young people who have experienced different forms of crime and abuse. One example is the annual crime victimization survey conducted in the United States. Data from these surveys consistently reveal that rates of victimization for violent crime decrease with age – the older we get the less likely we are to be the victims of violent attack. Children ages 12–15 not only have the highest overall rate for violent victimization, but they also tend to have the highest or near highest rate of virtually every other form of violent victimization (see, e.g., US Department of Justice 2009: 4). Another kind of survey directly asks children if they had been victimized recently. For example, in a nationally representative sample of youths aged 12 to 17 Finkelhor et al. (2005) found that only some 30% of the children sampled had not been subjected to at least one form of direct or indirect victimization during the previous year. And of the 70% who had been subjected to some form of victimization, on average each child had experienced three victimizations. The researchers report that during the previous year more than one-half of the respondents had been subjected to at least one physical assault, more than a quarter were victims of some kind of property crime, one out of eight had experienced some kind of child maltreatment, more than 8% were victims of a sexual offense, and more than a third had directly witnessed some form of violence or been indirectly victimized in some way. Based on reports of child protection services agencies, the US Department of Health and Human Services (2008) estimated that over 900,000 children were victims of maltreatment in 2006. That represents 12 out of every 1,000 children victimized severely enough that some agency felt it necessary to intervene. Of course, many such interventions do not necessarily mean that actual maltreatment took place, but during one year child protection service agencies in the United States carried out assessments and evaluations of 3.6 million children who had reportedly been victimized in some way.

Research in other countries similarly documents that the young have disproportionately high rates of victimization in virtually all societies. For example, a multinational study surveying youths in European and Latin and North American countries and cities queried respondents about their victimization experiences

(Enzmann et al. 2010). Children reported being victimized in all the localities surveyed, although considerable variation was found in prevalence rates for individual offense types across cities and countries. For example, more than 30% of the American respondents reported being the victims of some kind of property crime, as did respondents from Aruba and Slovenia, while fewer than 20% of the youths in Finland, France, Portugal, Armenia, Lithuania, Russia and elsewhere reported being the victims of a property crime. Similarly, youths in all countries and cities surveyed reported being the victims of assault, but these rates varied from a low of 1.2% in Spain and Portugal to almost 8% in Russia and the Netherlands Antilles.

A study of infant homicides in various countries reports average rates by gender for 39 countries (Hunnicut and LaFree 2007). Most commonly 2 to 3 infants out of every 100,000 children of either gender are murdered each year in the countries for which data were reported. The highest rates were in Finland where on average about 11 out of every 100,000 children are murdered each year. The lowest rates were found in Spain where fewer than 1 out of every 100,000 infant girls and boys are murdered each year.

Other international data reveal not only the universality of child and youth victimization, but are suggestive of the varied and often hidden forms such abuse may take. In a comprehensive analysis of youth violence and child abuse and neglect in the world's societies, the World Health Organization (WHO) paints a dismal picture of the extent and types of victimization to which young people across the globe are subjected (Krug et al. 2002). Defining "youth" as persons between ages 10 and 29, the report contends that across the globe almost 200,000 youth homicides occurred in the year 2000. This means that 9.2 out of every 100,000 youths are killed each year. Of course these rates varied greatly by region. For instance, less than 1 child per 100,000 are murdered in European nations each year, but over 36 per 100,000 die from violence in Latin American countries. Why this great disparity exists has not as yet been seriously investigated by behavioral and social scientists.

The World Health Organization report also documents the extent to which the world's young suffer from child abuse and neglect. As the authors state (Krug et al. 2002: 59) "... there is clear evidence that child abuse is a global problem. It occurs in a variety of forms and is deeply rooted in cultural, economic and social practices." For example, reporting data from a number of studies in individual countries, the World Health Organization notes that about 37% of the youths surveyed in Egypt had been beaten or tied up by parents with 26% suffering physical injuries as a consequence. In South Korea two-thirds of the parents responding to a survey admitted whipping their children while 45% said they had hit, kicked, or beaten a child. In Romania nearly one-half of the parents surveyed said they regularly beat their children. As the report documents, the use of physical punishment by parents and other adults is by no means a limited, or social-culturally specific, phenomenon. People in all parts of the world do it, albeit to greater or lesser extent. The same can be said about child sexual, emotional, and psychological abuse. Significantly, as noted by the World Health Organization report, the violence, abuse and neglect experienced by the world's children is by no means inconsequential. Child and youth victimization contributes to a significant portion of the global burden of

(physical and mental) diseases that victims have while they are children besides those they suffer from in their adult years.

As revelatory as victimization studies of various kinds may be, they grossly under-count the true rate of child and youth victimization while under-representing the varied types of victimizations young people experience. To obtain a true global estimate of the extent to which young people are subjected to victimizing acts, we would have to add to the long list of “crimes” normally counted in victimization reports the numbers of young people victimized by a host of things not usually included in these counts. Where possible, reports of these rates are presented throughout this volume. Thus, besides the number of young people murdered in what are considered “normal” criminal acts, we should count those killed in combat while serving in some armed force or the other. In addition to the numbers of below-age girls (and boys) subjected to rape or sexual assault, we should add the numbers found in brothels throughout the world, depicted in pornographic films and photos, or sexually victimized by their employers in whose households they work. Data on assaults reveal that, as a group, young people are frequently subjected to physical attack. But the reports are unlikely to include the often serious physical and other injury children may receive from an older sibling at home, or from a parent whose child-rearing philosophy is “spare the rod, spoil the child.” These and a host of other victimizations are not normally treated as, or even recognized as, crimes in typical criminal-victimization surveys and, therefore, not counted as such. Indeed, when it comes to the young, not only do such surveys often grossly undercount their criminal victimizations, they also leave out much of the stuff that would be counted as crimes if experienced by adults.

One may find estimates of these forms of victimization in child welfare data, surveys of self-reported victimization in specific countries, or research into particular forms of victimization such as estimates of the number of child soldiers, working youth, or young people involved in prostitution. But even then much is excluded, never regarded as worthy of being counted. And compiling diverse measures together to arrive at reasonably accurate estimates of how many young people across the globe are victimized in which ways is, at best, a tricky matter and, scientifically, a highly challenging pursuit. But, if the data on the diverse ways young people are harmed by others in human societies across the globe were added to measures of their criminal victimization experiences, very quickly it would become clear to anyone that childhood is an exceedingly dangerous time of life for human beings everywhere. Indeed, if the varied forms of child and youth victimization were collectively counted as a single disease, we could only conclude that “victimization” is the number one health problem faced by young people around the world.

## **Varieties of Victimization**

Common crimes are things that young people in all societies experience. In addition, with varied probabilities of encountering them, young people in the world's societies are also subject to a variety of actually or potentially harmful experiences



that normally involve acts of criminality in order to occur but that are rarely so considered or so treated by authorities. In fact, not infrequently, authorities may actually be committing these acts. For example, in Brazil it is a crime for a police officer to beat any child held in detention. However, this behavior has been reported frequently. Yet, it is practically unheard of for any officer to be severely disciplined for doing so or to face criminal prosecution as a result. Similarly it is illegal to employ children as prostitutes in Cambodia. But, practically no one has ever been imprisoned in that country for doing so. International law forbids conscripting anyone below age 15 to serve in the armed forces. Yet, hundreds of thousands of teenage youths across the globe have been forced to serve in combat units and sometimes die in the service of some government or insurgent army. To date not one individual has even been convicted for this crime, much less punished for their activities.

In this volume we analyze eight forms of victimization impacting the lives of literally tens of millions of young people each year found in all the world's societies. Chapter 2 addresses the exploitation of child labor. Chapter 3 focuses on the lives of street children. Chapter 4 covers the exploitation of young people as soldiers in armed services. In Chapter 5 we examine the trafficking of young people for sexual and economic exploitation. The issues of child pornography and pedophilia are analyzed in Chapter 6. And in Chapter 7 we discuss the abuse of children in institutions like schools, prisons, and orphanages. Chapter 8 focuses on how many young people across the globe are denied the very essential requirement for living in modern times, a basic education. And Chapter 9 address the problem of bullying in schools and elsewhere.

Two of these forms of victimization involve the sexual exploitation of young people – trafficking and pornography. Two involve their exploitation as substitutes for adults – child soldiers and child labor. Two are concerned with the neglect of children in need – street children and the denial of education. And two chapters focus on young people being victimized in situations of care – being abused in institutional settings and bullying at school. In each case, the children victimized may suffer physical, psychological, and emotional trauma. Their life chances are directly or indirectly diminished because of the harm they experience. Some of these forms of victimization are found in abundance in some societies while some, like children in armed combat, are nearly non-existent in others. Other victimizing experiences, such as physical assault by adults or other children, appear to be truly universal. In some cases the problem may impact specific segments of particular societies (e.g., girls more than boys). None, however, are specific to any single country, culture, or social-economic system. Children are victimized in every way imaginable virtually everywhere. As such, the global victimization of young people reveals the extent to which the lives of young people in all human societies depart from the ideal portrayals of, or international pronouncements regarding, the sanctity of childhood.

Yet, while highlighting these eight forms of victimization reveals the dark underside of humanity and our inhumanity toward the weak and dependent, the global, national, and local efforts of countless people to combat this inhumanity are enlightening. Child and youth victimization may be universal, pervasive, and timeless. But it is not beyond our ability to combat. The world's children can be educated.